

**OPINION 6**  
INDIA-US RELATIONS: ON AN EQUAL FOOTING

**WORLD 9**  
CHINA'S MILITARY THREAT IN SCS INCREASING: WU

**MONEY 10**  
OVER TWO-THIRDS OF ₹2K NOTES RETURNED WITHIN MONTH: RBI

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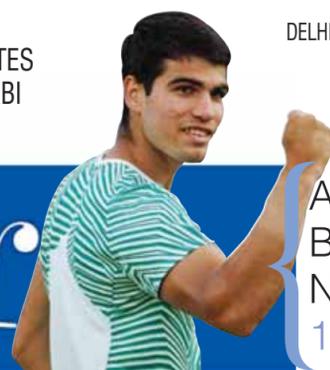
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## India, Egypt key partners now

In Cairo, Modi and El-Sisi ink 'Strategic Partnership' pact as two nations move towards achieving \$12 billion bilateral trade target in five years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/CAIRO

India and Egypt on Sunday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties in Cairo during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. The two leaders focused on trade and investment, Defence and security, renewable energy, cultural, and people-to-people ties. They also signed a pact to elevate the bilateral relationship to a 'Strategic Partnership'.

"An agreement to elevate the bilateral relationship to a 'Strategic Partnership' was signed by the leaders," Arindam Bagchi, spokesperson, Ministry of External Affairs, tweeted. "Three MoUs in the fields of Agriculture, Archaeology and Antiquities and Competition Law were also signed," he added.

On Saturday, Modi met his Egyptian counterpart Mostafa Madbouly and held a round-table meeting in Cairo. Modi said:

"This is a remarkable year for our shared relations. At the beginning of this year, President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi visited India as a chief guest in the Republic Day celebration, where we signed an agreement to elevate our bilateral relations to a strategic partnership."

Modi added that Egypt and India were swiftly moving towards achieving the \$12 billion target in bilateral trade within the next five years. He added that in the past six months alone, Indian companies have invested around \$170 million in Egypt.

He also emphasised that the increasing cooperation between the two sides in the field of renewable energy



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Al-Hakim mosque in Cairo, Egypt, on Sunday. PTI

reflects a joint commitment to environmental protection. Modi also said many Indian companies are investing in green hydrogen and electric vehicles.

The Egyptian Prime Minister said the growing trade exchange between the two countries, which reached \$7 billion in 2022, shows real potential in increasing trade volume in the coming five years to \$12 billion, as agreed upon during the Joint Trade Committee meeting held in July 2022. He praised current levels of Indian investments in

Egypt, which stand at \$3.5 billion, adding that the country is ready to receive more Indian capital.

Madbouly cited agreements signed between the two sides during the recent visit by officials from the Suez Canal Economic Zone Authority to India last week as an example of promising growth for Indian investments in Egypt and the region.

He stressed Egypt's keenness on developing a strategic relationship between the two countries in the field of strategic commodities, expressing

interest that India would become a major supplier of wheat to Egypt. It also wants more cooperation with India in the fields of healthcare and pharmaceutical production.

The Egyptian Government is keen on providing Indian companies with all the facilities needed to implement and expand their investments in the country, he stressed.

EgyptAir, the country's national carrier, is set to launch direct flights between Cairo and New Delhi, in addition to existing flights between Cairo and Mumbai, as a step to boost air travel between the two countries, Madbouly said.

India is keen to further expand ties with Egypt, a key player in the politics of both the Arab world as well as Africa. It is also seen as a major gateway to markets in Africa and Europe.

Egypt is traditionally one of India's most important trading partners in the African continent. More than 450 Indian companies are registered in Egypt, of which around 50 are active in various sectors with a combined investment exceeding \$3 billion, according to official data.

The Defence and strategic ties between India and Egypt are on an upswing in the last few years. The Indian and Egyptian Armies conducted the first-ever joint exercise in January this year.

Egypt has already shown interest in procuring Tejas light combat aircraft, radars, military helicopters, and other platforms from India.

In July last year, the IAF participated in a month-long tactical leadership programme in Egypt with three Su-30 MKI jets and two C-17 transport aircraft. In September, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh paid a three-day visit to Egypt.

### Egypt bestows highest state honour on Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi after being conferred with the 'Order of the Nile' award by Egyptian President El-Sisi, in Cairo, Egypt, on Sunday. PTI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/CAIRO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday was conferred with Egypt's highest state honour 'Order of the Nile' by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Cairo. This is the 13th such highest state honour that various countries across the world have conferred upon Modi. Giving details of Modi's talks with the Egyptian President, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra later said Sisi conferred on Modi, the 'Order of the Nile' honour which is the highest civilian award in Egypt.

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## Mob forces Army to release 12 militants

One of KYKL ultras freed by Manipuri mob planned 2015 ambush in which 18 soldiers died

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/IMPHAL

In a dramatic development amidst the ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur, the Indian Army was forced to release a group of 12 militants belonging to the separatist organisation Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL). The militants were surrounded by a massive crowd of around 1,500 people, predominantly led by women.

Initially, the security forces had apprehended the militants along with a significant cache of arms, ammunition, and war-like stores in a carefully planned operation based on specific Intelligence inputs from Itham Village in Imphal East. However, their plans were thwarted when the surrounding mob swiftly intervened, preventing the security forces from carrying out the operation despite repeated appeals.

The decision to release the militants was defended by the Indian Army, describing it as a "mature" move that exemplified the humane approach of the armed forces. The Army cited the sensitivity of using force against a mob, particularly one led by women, and the potential for casualties as factors contributing to their decision. Consequently, all 12 militants were handed over to a local leader. One of the 12 militants who was released by the Army has been identified as the self-styled Lt-Col Moirangthem Tamba, also known as Uttam Lt-



(Right) An aerial view of the area where the Army was surrounded by a huge mob led by women, forcing it to release a group of militants.

Col Tamba. He is considered the "mastermind" behind a notorious ambush in 2015 that targeted a convoy of the 6 Dogra Regiment, resulting in the tragic loss of 18 soldiers' lives. The KYKL, to which Tamba belongs, is an insurgent group primarily comprising Meitei individuals. Established in 1994, KYKL is recognised as a banned terrorist organisation by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The involvement of such a prominent figure within the group has added further weight to the concerns surrounding their activities and the need for sustained efforts to counter their operations.

The Army has said, acting on specific Intelligence, it launched an operation in Village Itham (6 km East of Andro) in Imphal East. "Specific search after laying cordon was under-

taken to avoid hardships to other locals in the area. In the ensuing operation, 12 KYKL cadres were apprehended along with arms, ammunition, and war-like stores. Positive Identification of self-styled Lt-Col Moirangthem Tamba alias Uttam (Mastermind of 6 DOGRA ambush cases of 2015) amongst the 12 apprehended cadres was done," the Army said in a tweet.

It further said that a mob of approximately 1,200-1,500 people, led by women and the local leader immediately surrounded the target area and prevented security forces from going ahead with the operation.

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### Will fight WFI chief in court not on streets, say wrestlers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A day after asserting that they could hit the streets again to resume their agitation against WFI chief, the protesting wrestlers on Sunday said the fight against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh will be fought in the court and not on roads.

Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia posted identical tweets where they said the Government has fulfilled its promise of filing a chargesheet against Singh.

"In this case, the wrestlers' (fight) will continue till we get justice but it will be in court and not on road," the statement on Twitter read. "Regarding the reform in WFI, the election process, as promised, has begun. We will wait for fulfillment of promises made by the Government regarding the July 11 elections."

A few minutes after posting the statement, Vinesh and Sakshi tweeted that they are taking a break from social media for a few days. On Saturday, in a live address on social media, the trio of Vinesh, Sakshi and Bajrang had attacked former wrestler and now BJP leader Yogeshwar Dutt for questioning the IOA ad-hoc panel's decision to grant them exemption from Asian Games trials.

In that address, the wrestlers had asserted that their fight against Singh will continue and they will deliberate how to continue this fight after evaluating the chargesheet filed against Singh. "People are asking us why are we silent. The time (to suspend protest) was till June 15. This fight will continue, whether it is on the mat or off the mat, but the fight for justice will continue," Vinesh had said.

## Short-lived revolt with long-term results for Putin



A file photo of the rebels in the streets of Moscow.

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian Government troops withdrew from the streets of Moscow and people flocked to parks and cafes Sunday following a short-lived revolt by a mercenary forces that weakened President Vladimir Putin and raised questions about his ability to wage war in Ukraine.

The march on the capital by Wagner troops led by Yevgeny Prigozhin and the late-night deal that eventually halted it severely dented Putin's reputation as a leader who is willing to ruthlessly punish anyone who challenges his authority. That may open the door for others who are unhappy with Putin's two-decade grip on power, especially after his ill-fated invasion of Ukraine.

Under terms of the agreement, Prigozhin will go into exile in Belarus but will not face prosecution and his forces won't either. Neither Putin nor Prigozhin have been heard from since the deal, reportedly brokered by Belarussian President

Aleksander Lukashenko, was announced late on Saturday night.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken described the weekend's events as "extraordinary," recalling that 16 months ago Putin appeared poised to seize the capital of Ukraine and now he has had to defend Moscow from forces led by his onetime protege.

"I think we've seen more cracks emerge in the Russian façade," Blinken said on NBC's Meet the Press. "It is too soon to tell exactly where they go and when they get there, but certainly we have all sorts of new questions that Putin is going to have to address in the weeks and months ahead."

It was not yet clear what the fissures opened by the 24-hour rebellion would mean for that war. But it resulted in some of the best forces fighting for Russia in Ukraine being pulled from the battlefield: Prigozhin's own Wagner troops and Chechen ones sent to stop them. Continued on page 2

## Patriotic Democratic Alliance may be Opp front's name

Final decision to be taken at Shimla meet

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

Speculation is rife regarding the name of the newly-formed Opposition front, which comprises parties such as the Congress, the Janata Dal (U), the RJD, NCP, TMC, DMK, Left, and others.

Sources said the front may be called the 'Patriotic Democratic Alliance'. The formal announcement of the name, contingent upon consensus among all participating parties, is anticipated during the forthcoming Opposition meeting scheduled in Shimla next month.

The initial meeting, held in

Patna on Friday, saw the participation of 17 political parties, including the AAP with the aim of collectively challenging the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the forthcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The naming of the alliance holds significance as it reflects the shared vision and principles of the diverse parties involved.

The term 'Patriotic Democratic Alliance (PDA)' gained attention on Sunday when CPI general secretary D Raja referred to it in a Press release discussing the party's action plan for the Opposition meeting. However, Congress sources denied the emergence



of such a name, suggesting it could be a product of the Left's imagination.

Meanwhile, sources from other parties, including the RJD and the JD(U), revealed that the name had been proposed and might receive

approval during the Shimla meeting called by Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge.

A senior Congress leader noted that the UPA, although still in existence, has lost political relevance and certain leaders within the alliance have

voiced concerns about its current name.

The Congress-oriented front, UPA, could potentially be replaced with a new name that ensures equal representation among all stakeholders.

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## Woman electrocuted at New Delhi Rly Stn



A file photo of the woman who was electrocuted at the railway station. (Right) The site where she was electrocuted.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A woman was electrocuted after she touched an electric pole at New Delhi Railway Station while trying to walk through a flooded road on Sunday. The deceased has been identified as Sakshi Ahuja, a resident of east Delhi's Preet Vihar.

She reached the railway

station on Sunday at 5.30 PM with her sister and three children to catch the Bhopal Shatabdi Express. However, outside the station, when she was crossing a waterlogged road, she held on to an electric pole for support and got electrocuted. The incident took place near exit gate number 1 of the station.

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## Ballabgarh-Palwal Metro link gets green signal from Haryana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday announced that the State Government has given approval for metro connectivity from Ballabgarh to Palwal, which will ensure better connectivity and pace the development of the area.

Khattar, while addressing the Gauravshali Bharat Rally at Gajpuri village in Palwal, said that the Central and State Governments are taking remarkable steps towards ensuring inclusive development. "Big projects like metro and national highways are coming up in Haryana with the help of the Central Government," he said while extending gratitude towards the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said: "Our Government



has made unprecedented development in Palwal and Faridabad region. With the coming of many major State highways, better connectivity has been facilitated. Development of Jewar Airport will also pace the industrialisation and other development works in the area. It is a matter of pride for the region that the Mumbai expressway is also passing through these districts, which will connect the region with other parts of the country," Khattar said that while fol-

lowing the slogan of "Haryana Ek-Haryanvi EK", development works are being carried out in the entire State without any disparity.

"By implementing the Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP), Haryana is playing an active role in directly giving benefits of Government schemes to the last person. Keeping the focus on all aspects related to Property ID and PPP, their permanent solution will be done within the next two months, for this about 1000 employees have been made available to the urban local bodies department, so that information related to property ID can be collected," he said.

The Chief Minister said that on this day, June 25, 1975, the Congress Government imposed an "emergency" on the nation.

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# Amarnath yatra track illuminated for pilgrims

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory administration in Jammu and Kashmir along with Shri Amarnath Shrine Board Authorities (SASB) has for the first time illuminated the arduous yatra trek for the ease of Amarnath pilgrims.



in place to ensure a smooth and safe yatra".

The engineers of the Power Development Department led by their Principal Secretary Rajesh Prasad have been working round the clock to illuminate the yatra trek. While supervising the work on ground zero, PDD Secretary Rajesh Prasad said, "I have personally supervised the work on ground zero. I have passed necessary instructions to the staff

working on the ground and the contractors to ensure the entire work is finished in time". Rajesh Prasad said, "I am satisfied with the overall performance of the entire team. The field engineers and their support staff were happy after they completed the daunting task of illuminating the yatra trek".

The Department of Information and Public Relations Sunday also released a video highlighting efforts made by the UT administration and jawans of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and other technicians, laborers and local residents in creating required infrastructure facilities for the pilgrims en route the yatra trek. "The Government of Jammu & Kashmir is committed to ensuring a safe and comfortable pilgrimage for Yatris," the information department said.

# Amid violence Bengal Govt reminds Govt of Raj Dharma

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Amid ongoing violence in various parts of the State ahead of the panchayat elections Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose on Sunday reminded the Mamata Banerjee Government of the power of the common man and the Raj Dharma (King's duty) that it should perform.

Saying that whatever was going on in the villages was "not a happy thing," the Governor reminded that Chief Ministers, Governors and all the political leadership were there to serve the people adding, the power the politicians enjoy come from the people and so they should not underestimate the power of the common man.

The Governor's stern message came on a day when reports of political attacks and bombings came from various parts of the State. While CPI(M) candidates were attacked at

Jalapur and Kalna in Burdwan district, those of the BJP were beaten up at Karimpur in Nadia district. Again the ruling Trinamool Congress complained of an attack by armed saffron men at Bhetaguri in Coochbehar district. The car of a panchayat candidate was smashed by alleged BJP supporters, the TMC men complained.

This even as Congress and the TMC men fought with bombs and guns in various parts of Murshidabad, and Malda districts sources said.

The TMC immediately hit back with a hard-hitting statement even as its spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that Bose was behaving like an agent of the BJP at Raj Bhavan. "His acting like an agent of the BJP, the party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who as the Chief Minister of Gujarat was once reminded of his own Raj Dharma by the then Prime Minister Atal Behari

Vajpayee," Ghosh said adding it was the TMC that always followed its Raj Dharma unlike the BJP which was dealing the opposition governments in a vindictive manner.

"No one has to remind us of our Raj Dharma because in Bengal Mamata Banerjee Government has started a number of popular schemes like Kanyashree, Rupashree, Sabuj Saathi etc and the benefit of those schemes are not confined to the TMC men only ... the BJP, CPI(M), Congress and all other parties get it in equal measures ... but when you look at the BJP the central government has stopped all our funds after they were defeated in the 2021 Assembly elections," Ghosh said. As for the Governor himself, "he should follow his own Raj Dharma by not acting according to the BJP's agenda and by not converting the Raj Bhavan into a BJP party office," Ghosh said.

## Goods train derails after colliding with stationary coach

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The horror of Bahanaga returned once again in the South Eastern Railways when 12 bogies of a goods train on Sunday derailed after colliding with a stationary relief coach at Onda station in Kharagpur-Bankura-Onda section, Railway sources said adding the reason of the accident would be known only after a thorough investigation.

This is the second accident in less than a month's time bringing back the horrific memories of the Coromandel Express mishap at Bahanaga near Balasore killing about 290 people.

# Patriotic Democratic Alliance may be Opp front's...

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A JD(U) leader highlighted that the UPA acronym has often been associated with corruption by the BJP. Therefore, the Congress should have no objections if the new front adopts a fresh name.

The leader pointed out that the BJP frequently criticises the UPA Governments led by Manmohan Singh, citing scams like 2G and coal, which continue to haunt many UPA constituents.

During a CPI Press conference in Patna on Saturday, State secretary Ramnaresh Pandey also referred to the meeting of the 'Patriotic Democratic Alliance'.

The Press release stated that the alliance had resolved to remove the BJP and safeguard the country, with further discussions on the alliance's action plan scheduled to take place in Shimla.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar took the initiative to organise

the Patna meeting on the advice of West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee.

Notable attendees at the meeting on June 23 included RJD chief Lalu Prasad, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Kharage, NCP supremo Sharad Pawar, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Ministers Mehbooba Mufti (PDP) and Omar

Abdullah (National Conference), CPI leader D Raja, CPI-M General Secretary Sitaram Yechury, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK leader MK Stalin, among others.

Congress Legislature Party leader in Bihar, Shakeel Ahmed Khan, clarified that no decision has been made regarding the alliance's name.

The final decision on the name will be taken during the meeting scheduled to be held in Shimla next month.

# Ballabgarh-Palwal Metro gets green signal...

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"Emergency remained an 'unforgettable phase' in the history of the nation and it was totally opposite to the Constitutional values. People suffered torture in jails and did agitations for the restoration of democracy, we should remember all such warriors," he added.

Union Minister of State Krishan Pal said that the Prime Minister Modi has been working for the upliftment of every

class for the last nine years as a "Pradhan Sevak", and "India has made a different identity on the global stage under him".

Haryana Transport Minister Mool Chand Sharma said that CM's leadership has worked to give a new direction to Haryana. "There is a glaring contrast of day and night between Haryana in 2013 and Haryana in 2023. Today, Haryana is touching new heights of development in every field. The newly added

four NH at Faridabad is set to pace the progress of the district," he said.

Haryana Cooperation Minister Dr Banwari Lal said that the service system has completely transformed due to the digital revolution in Haryana in the past nine years. "Commendable steps are being taken in the direction of digital revolution and Government service is reaching people through the ease of a click," he added.

# Short-lived revolt with long-term results for...

From Page 1

But Ukrainians hoped and some analysts suggested that the Russian infighting could create opportunities for their army, which is in the early stages of a counter-offensive to take back territory seized by Russian forces.

"These events will have been of great comfort to the Ukrainian government and the military," said Ben Barry, senior fellow for land warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Another question is what will happen to Prigozhin-owned Wagner, in general. The military contractor has deployed forces in several countries where they are believed to fight for Russian interests.

Under terms of the agreement that stopped Prigozhin's advance, Wagner troops who didn't back the revolt will be offered contracts directly with the Russian military, putting them under the control of the

military brass that Prigozhin was trying to oust.

The deal appears to be a "hasty" arrangement designed to protect Prigozhin and safeguard his money and his family, Phillips O'Brien, a professor of strategic studies at St. Andrews University in Scotland. "What we don't know is if he saved Wagner," O'Brien wrote in his online newsletter. "It's not clear how many of his mercenaries are coming with him to Belarus, or how many will be forced to now sign contracts with the Russian military."

In their lightning advance, Prigozhin's forces on Saturday took control of two military hubs in southern Russia and got within 200 kilometers (120 miles) from Moscow before retreating.

In a scene that plays into Putin's fear of a popular uprising, video taken by The Associated Press on Saturday in Rostov-on-Don showed people cheering Wagner

troops as they departed. Some ran to shake hands with Prigozhin, who was riding in an SUV.

The regional governor later said that all of the troops had left the city. Russian news agencies also reported that Lipetsk authorities confirmed Wagner forces had left that region, which sits on the road to Moscow from Rostov.

Moscow had braced for the arrival of the Wagner forces by erecting checkpoints with armored vehicles and troops on the city's southern edge. About 3,000 Chechen soldiers were pulled from fighting in Ukraine and rushed there early Saturday, state television in Chechnya reported. Russian troops armed with machine guns put up checkpoints on Moscow's southern outskirts. Crews dug up sections of highways to slow the march.

By Sunday afternoon, the troops had withdrawn from the capital, and people swarmed the streets and flocked to cafes. Traffic returned to normal and roadblocks and checkpoints were removed, but Red Square remained closed to visitors. On highways leading to Moscow, crews repaired roads ripped up just hours earlier in panic. Anchors on state-controlled television stations cast the deal ending the crisis as a show of Putin's wisdom and aired footage of Wagner troops retreating from Rostov-on-Don to the relief of local residents who feared a bloody battle for control of the city. People there who were interviewed by Channel 1 hailed Putin's role.

But the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War warned that "the Kremlin now faces a deeply unstable equilibrium."

The "deal is a short-term fix, not a long-term solution," wrote the institute, which has tracked the war in Ukraine from the beginning.

Prigozhin had demanded the ouster of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, whom Prigozhin has long criticized in withering terms for his conduct of the war in Ukraine.

The U.S. Had intelligence that Prigozhin had been building up his forces near the border with Russia for some time. That conflicts with Prigozhin's claim that his rebellion was a response to an attack on his camps in Ukraine on Friday by the Russian military.

In announcing the rebellion, Prigozhin accused Russian forces of targeting the Wagner camps in Ukraine with rockets, helicopter gunships and artillery. The Defense Ministry denied attacking the camps.

A possible motivation for Prigozhin's rebellion was the Russian Defense Ministry's demand, which Putin backed, that private companies sign contracts with it by July 1.

**OFFICE OF CHIEF ENGINEER (BUILDING)**  
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2	2023_PWPJUI_284987_1	CONSTRUCTION OF CM RISE SCHOOL BUILDING AT GOVERNMENT MODEL HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL BADARWAS DISTRICT SHIVPURI (M.P.) 2ND CALL	SHIVPURI	2786.00 LAC	1393000/-	50000/-	18 MONTHS
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4	2023_PWPJUI_284968_1	CONSTRUCTION OF PHC BUILDING AND 1 NO G TYPE QUARTER AND 1 NOS H TYPE QUARTER WITH WATER SUPPLY, SANITARY AND ELECTRIFICATION WORK AT PARA BLOCK ATER DISTRICT BHIND (M.P.) 2ND CALL	BHIND	236.11 LAC	236110/-	15000/-	15 MONTHS
5	2023_PWPJUI_284955_1	THIRD CALL CONSTRUCTION OF 50 SEATER SENIOR BOYS HOSTEL BUILDING WITH WATER SUPPLY, SANITARY AND ELECTRIFICATION WORK AT MALANPUR DISTRICT BHIND (M.P.) 2ND CALL	BHIND	307.73 LAC	307730/-	15000/-	18 MONTHS
6	2023_PWPJUI_284730_1	CONSTRUCTION OF 50 SEATER BOYS HOSTEL AMBAH DISTT. MORENA (M.P.) 2ND CALL	MORENA	308.37 LAC	308370/-	15000/-	18 MONTHS
7	2023_PWPJUI_284743_1	CONSTRUCTION OF 50 SEATER GIRLS HOSTEL AMBAH DISTT. MORENA (M.P.) 2ND CALL	MORENA	310.37 LAC	310370/-	15000/-	18 MONTHS
8	2023_PWPJUI_284541_1	ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND DPR CONSULTANCY FOR CONSTRUCTION OF DPR WORK AT BUILDING PWD TIKAMGARH (M.P.) 2ND CALL	TIKAMGARH	100.00 LAC	1000000/-	10000/-	12 MONTHS
9	2023_PWPJUI_284538_1	CONSTRUCTION OF NEW MEDICAL COLLEGE BUILDING AT CHHATARPUR DISTRICT CHHATARPUR (M.P.) 3RD CALL	CHHATARPUR	24712.02 LAC	5000000/-	50000/-	24 MONTHS

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G-15420/23

# Woman...

From Page 1

As per a preliminary enquiry, it was raining and the victim was walking towards the station when she lost her balance and grabbed an electricity pole to stop falling when she came in contact with some exposed wires, a senior police officer said.

A police team led by Assistant Sub-Inspector Gaikwad reached the spot and rushed Ahuja to the Lady Hardinge Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared her brought dead, said Apoorva Gupta, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Railways).

"We were going to Chandigarh. I was in the parking area when I received the info that my daughter has died due to electrocution. This has happened due to the negligence of the concerned authority," said Lokesh Chopra, father of the deceased woman.

Onlookers rushed her to a hospital in an attempt to save her life, but she died during treatment, police said. Visuals showed naked electric wires at the bottom of the pole, which is suspected to have caused the freak accident.

The body was shifted to a mortuary. After this, the victim's sister, Madhvi Chopra,

gave a complaint alleging negligence on the part of the authorities concerned, she said.

A case under Sections 287 (negligent conduct with respect to machinery) and 304 A (causing death by negligence) of the Indian Penal Code was registered against unidentified persons and an investigation has been initiated, Gupta added.

"Crime team and experts from the Forensic Science Laboratory, Rohini, inspected the spot," the DCP added. Railways and the police are probing the incident. The woman is survived by her husband and two minor children, her family said.

Taking note of the first death this monsoon, the power distribution companies - BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) and BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL), have issued monsoon advisory, urging people to stay away from electrical installations like electricity poles, sub-stations, transformers, streetlights and follow simple safety guidelines ahead of the monsoon season. The Discoms also advised getting the entire wiring in your premises thoroughly checked and tested by the Licensed Electrical Contractor.

# Mob forces Army to release...

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"Repeated appeals to the aggressive mob to let the security forces carry on with operation as per law did not yield any positive result. Keeping in view the sensitivity of the use of kinetic force against a large irate mob led by women and likely casualties due to such action, a considered decision was taken to hand over all 12 cadres to a local leader. Own Columns lifted the cordon and left the area with weapons and war-like stores recovered from insurgents," the Army added in the tweet.

The clashes in Manipur originated from a "Tribal Solidarity March" organised by the All-Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM). The march was held to protest the inclusion of the Meitei community, the majority group in the region, in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category. This demand emerged following a directive from the Manipur High Court on April 19.

The ST category, a provision in Indian law, grants certain reserved benefits, such as Government jobs, college admissions, and electoral seats, to historically marginalised communities. However, the Kuki community strongly

opposes the inclusion of the Meitei community, fearing potential job losses and reduced opportunities due to the Meiteis' advantageous demographic and political position.

Recent weeks have witnessed a surge in violence, mass displacement, and widespread destruction of property, making it one of the most severe ethnic conflicts Manipur has experienced in decades. The clashes between the Meitei and Kuki communities have resulted in over 100 fatalities and the displacement of approximately 40,000 individuals.

The escalating violence has seen numerous incidents of arson, with homes, churches, temples, shops, and businesses being set ablaze. The primary driving force behind the unrest is the Meitei community's demand for tribal status, which would provide them with access to economic benefits and quotas in Government jobs and education.

In response to the crisis, the Centre formed a three-member judicial panel on June 4 to investigate the violence. Additionally, an all-party meeting was held on June 24, during which Home Minister Amit

Shah assured attendees that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been closely monitoring the situation and providing guidance with great sensitivity.

However, critics have voiced their discontent, accusing Prime Minister Modi of remaining silent and absent from the high-level meeting while the State continued to grapple with unrest. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi criticised the Prime Minister, stating, "Manipur has been burning for 50 days, but the Prime Minister remained silent."

Protesters in Manipur have expressed their frustration by displaying posters featuring Modi's face alongside the words, "Still missing. Have you seen this man? Status: blind and deaf."

As Manipur strives to restore peace and stability, the release of militants by the Indian Army has added another layer of complexity to the ongoing ethnic tensions in the region.

The Government's efforts to address the underlying issues and seek a lasting solution are of paramount importance in preventing further escalation of violence and fostering reconciliation among the communities involved.

# New thrust areas identified for clean Yamuna

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In the ongoing efforts to rejuvenate the Yamuna River, the High-Level Committee (HLC), chaired by Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, has identified new thrust areas in addition to the existing eight action points. These new initiatives were presented for review during the fifth meeting of the HLC, based on experiences and progress made thus far.

The newly identified action points include the delinking of sewerage lines and stormwater drains caused by faulty interconnections, prevention of waste dumping from bridges across the Yamuna River, and de-silting of sewer lines below 1000 mm diameter. These initiatives will complement the existing eight tasks that the HLC has been monitoring and implementing. To rectify faulty



interconnections between the sewerage system and stormwater drainage, the HLC aims to ensure full capacity utilization of stormwater drainage. The Irrigation and Flood Control Department (I&FCD) has been

tasked with providing an agency-wise list of stormwater drains connected to sewer lines, with the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) already identifying 539 points of faulty interconnections. The committee has instructed the

relevant agencies to submit timelines for the disconnection of these faulty interconnections. Another focus area is the prevention of waste dumping from the bridges over the Yamuna River. The HLC plans

to cover ten bridges and ensure that the agencies responsible for their maintenance provide wire mesh/netting and adhere to repair timelines. Progress has been made on some bridges, while data is awaited for others, with corrective measures and repairs scheduled accordingly. According to official, the half a kilometre of Wazirabad Barrage Road bridge is provided with wire mesh/net which is partially damaged and the repair of this by the Public Works Department (PWD) is likely to be completed by this month.

The 0.57 kilometre Interstate Bus Terminus (ISBT) near Kashmere Gate bridge is provided with wire mesh/net which is partially damaged and the repair of this by the PWD is likely to be completed by this month. The 0.93 kilometre Old Iron railway bridge is provided with wire

mesh/net which is intact and the maintaining agency is Northern Railways Bridge Department. The 0.55 kilometre of Geeta colony bridge is provided with wire mesh/net which is missing in 12 square metre/theft and corrective measures will be undertaken by the PWD, which is likely to complete the work in one month from the date of commencement.

The 0.6 kilometre ITO bridge is provided with wire mesh/net which is missing in 50 square metre/theft and corrective measures will be undertaken by the PWD, which is likely to complete the work in one month from the date of commencement. The 0.55 kilometre railway bridge downstream of ITO bridge is not provided with wire mesh/net and is maintained by Northern Railways. The timeline of March 2024 is fixed for pro-

viding wire mesh/net. Additionally, the de-silting of sewer lines below 1000 mm diameter, spanning approximately 442.63 kilometers, is a priority. By the end of December this year, 442.63 kilometers of sewer lines below 1-meter diameter will undergo de-silting, in addition to the ongoing de-silting of 200 kilometers of trunk-peripheral sewer lines.

As of May 2023, 26.08 kilometers of de-silting has already been completed. The HLC continues to monitor and review the progress of the eight specific heads of action aimed at achieving specific targets for the rejuvenation of the Yamuna River.

These include 100% treatment of sewage, trapping of all drains, construction of sewerage networks in unauthorized colonies and JJ clusters, industrial effluent management

through CETPs, septage management, restoration and rejuvenation of Yamuna floodplains, utilization of treated wastewater, and the environmental management plan of Najafgarh Jheel. The HLC was also informed that Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has prepared a list of 539 points of faulty interconnections from storm water drains in the first phase. Out of these 539 storm water drains, 309 are still connected to DJB's sewerage system.

Out of these 309 drains, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) accounts for 286, PWD 19, Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (DSIIDC) accounts for 03. The Committee instructed that Drain Owning Agencies (DOAs) will submit timelines for disconnection of faulty interconnections during the next meeting of the HLC.

## Rahul should prove he is selling mohabbat in his dukaan: Saurabh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Invoking Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 'mohabbat ki dukaan' statement, Delhi Minister and AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj on Sunday urged he should show a big heart saying Rahul should prove he is selling 'mohabbat' in his 'dukaan'.

As Congress leader Rahul is seems to be reluctant on the Ordinance issue, the AAP has forward a new condition as the party's national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar said Congress should not project Rahul as the leader for the third time in a row. In a veiled at Congress, Kakkar said, "If the country is to be saved, then at first the Congress should announce that they will not bet on Rahul for the third time and won't force the opposition. In the interest of the country, this is more crucial



than saving the Constitution".

In a reply to Maken, Kakkar also replied that Congress leaders including Maken and former MP Sandeep Dixit had also made statements against the AAP and that "respect is a two-way street". Kakkar in turn, questioned why Maken was objecting to the AAP contesting elections when the Congress could not defeat the BJP in Gujarat for the last 30 years.

"Will Kejriwal be blamed

for the Congress party's failures in Gujarat? AAP did not contest elections in Assam, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Manipur, Arunachal, then why Congress lost there?" Kakkar said in reply. Earlier, Bharadwaj appealed Rahul to show a big heart. Bharadwaj said, "I always see that Rahul talks about love and says that BJP spreads hate. If Rahul is running 'Mohabbat ki Dukaan', whoever reaches out to him can get that love... he has to show this also."

AAP leader also called upon the Opposition parties to put aside their difference and fight unitedly against the BJP in the next Lok Sabha polls.

This comes after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal told Rahul Gandhi to forget the differences and move forward together at the opposition

meeting in Patna but he did not show any interest in his request. He requested Rahul "with folded hands" to fix a meeting to resolve differences, the latter declined. Congress, however, maintained that Rahul kept mum about the ordinance. Bharadwaj also had advised for the Congress on public perception. He said being egoistic is fine, but there's a threshold beyond which people and other parties will start feeling that the new government after regime change is high on ego.

"When he said that his party spread love then he has to show this also. Right now he (Rahul Gandhi) is not in power so he is not having an ego but what if he becomes egoistic when he will be in power. So he needs to be balanced and shows that he is spreading love," Bharadwaj said.

## Kejriwal seeks Cong's help on ordinance yet ridicules its leaders, alleges Maken

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The war of words between the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party is far from over as Congress leader and former Union Minister Ajay Maken has now unleashed a fresh diatribe against Arvind Kejriwal and his party for taking swipes at his party and alleged that Arvind Kejriwal's proclamations on Opposition unity are not for cohesion but a "calculated move to sabotage it to 'curry favour' with the BJP."

Maken said Kejriwal seeks the Congress' help for the ordinance yet unabashedly ridicules its leaders, including Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot in Rajasthan, one of them is a very senior leader. "His ministers place prerequisites on our alliance, while their chief spokesperson publicly disparages our party and leaders on the day of the Opposition party



meeting. To brazenly criticise and then demand support, is this how alliances are sought, Kejriwal?" Maken said on Twitter. "So do they (AAP) really want the support of the Congress or make peace with us?" Maken said.

In a scathing attack at Kejriwal, the Congress leader further said Kejriwal betrayed Prashant Bhusan, Yogendra Yadav and the founders of the Anna Movement. The AAP-Congress face-off had dominated the opposition's first formal meeting in Patna on Friday. "Kejriwal's political

manoeuvres in recent weeks have left many baffled. However, let me elucidate the truth. His desperate attempts to evade imprisonment on corruption charges, wherein two of his colleagues are already jailed, are reasons for these actions," the Congress leader claimed.

Kejriwal's proclamations of Opposition unity are not for cohesion but a "calculated move to sabotage it and curry favour with the BJP. Past actions of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Parliament, the Delhi Legislative Assembly, or elsewhere only reinforce their surreptitious alliance with the BJP", he said.

Maken alleged that AAP was using corruption money to fight elections in several states to "help the BJP" and harm the Congress. "Kejriwal's betrayals are infamous - just ask Prashant Bhusan, Yogendra Yadav, and the founders of the Anna

movement..." Maken said in a scathing attack on the Delhi CM. In Hindi, it's aptly said about him, 'Aisa koi saga nahin, jisko Kejriwal ne Thaga Nahin...'. Maken said. "However, be assured Kejriwal, your deeds have not gone unnoticed. Your massive corruption and utilisation of these ill-gotten funds to sabotage the Congress in Goa, Gujarat, Punjab, Himachal, Uttarakhand, and Assam, just to help the BJP, won't be forgotten," the Congress leader said.

The Congress leader said, "However, be assured @ArvindKejriwal, your deeds have not gone unnoticed. Your massive corruption and utilization of these ill-gotten funds to sabotage @INCIndia in Goa, Gujarat, Punjab, Himachal, Uttarakhand, and Assam, just to help the BJP, won't be forgotten."

## Stay away from power installations, says discoms' monsoon advisory

New Delhi: Though the monsoon has given respite from the scorching heat, the power distribution companies - BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) and BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL), on Sunday issued monsoon advisory, urging people to stay away from electrical installations like electricity poles, substations, transformers, streetlights and follow simple safety guidelines ahead of the monsoon season.

The Discoms also advised to get entire wiring in your premises thoroughly checked and tested by the Licensed Electrical Contractor.

A BSES spokesperson added that some of the unique problems during monsoons are water-logging, strong winds uprooting trees, falling branches that damage electricity installations resulting in outages. "Adhering to simple safety guidelines and maintaining social distancing from electricity infrastructure, BSES and its consumers together can help ensure safe and incident free monsoon season," he said.

## ₹1,716 cr dev projects inaugurated in Noida

STAFF REPORTER ■ GREATER NOIDA

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday inaugurated multiple state development projects worth Rs 1,716.66 crore in Noida. He also addressed a public meeting in Gautambuddh Nagar on Sunday as part of BJP's 'Maha Jan Sampark' campaign.

The development projects include Ved Van Park situated in Sector-78, a sub-station in Sector 123 which costs around Rs 142 crore etc. The Parthala Signature Bridge flyover was also inaugurated by UP CM Yogi Adityanath on June 25, giving big relief to commuters coming to Noida, Greater Noida, and Ghaziabad.

The Parthala flyover has been opened after its inauguration. There used to be a huge traffic jam on the Parthala roundabout here in the morning and evening during office peak hours. Due to this it was not easy to travel to Greater Noida West. To end this jam, the Noida Authority has got this flyover built at a cost of Rs

81 crore. The chief minister also addressed a public meeting in Sector-21 A's Noida stadium as part of BJP's 'Maha Jan Sampark' campaign.

While addressing a huge public meeting in the stadium, the CM said that today due to the improvement of law and order in UP, people want to come from abroad to invest in Noida.

The weather has cooled down just like the mafia has cooled down in Uttar Pradesh. Inaugurating the Ramnath Goenka Marg, a 2.2-km road stretch in Noida Sector 10 the Chief Minister said this was a significant day in more ways than one given that Emergency was declared on June 25 in 1975 to "strangle democracy".

During his speech at an inaugural function of the Rs 200 crore-robot manufacturing plant of Reliance group firm Adverb, the chief minister said the government has approved investment proposals worth about Rs 36 lakh crore that emerged out of a memorandum of understanding signed during state's investor summit a year ago.

## Kejriwal questions Yogi Govt over power cuts in UP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday questioned the Uttar Pradesh Government over the alleged power cuts in the State. "There have been frequent power cuts in Uttar Pradesh. Electricity is not free in Uttar Pradesh. Electricity is quite expensive in UP. So why are there so many power cuts," Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi.

Kejriwal also said his government is providing free electricity in Delhi and there are no power cuts in the National Capital.

"Electricity is also free in Delhi and it comes 24 hours. There is no power cut. Delhi has a government of educated professional honest people," the Delhi Chief Minister said in another tweet. Earlier in the year, the Delhi Cabinet unanimously approved the proposal to give a subsidy on electricity. Union Minister Smriti Irani had earlier criticised



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying that Kejriwal failed to deliver on his promises of providing round-the-clock electricity and clean water.

A survey conducted by a social media platform LocalCircles showed 86 per cent of the households in Noida and 94 per cent in Uttar Pradesh have experienced daily power outages in the ongoing month of June. The findings are based on responses from over 14,000 respondents located in 56 of the 75 districts of the state. As many as 100 people have died due to extreme heat in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the last three days.

## BJP leaders highlight achievements of 9 years of Modi Govt

New Delhi: Union Minister Sardar Hardeep Singh Puri, former Chief Minister of Gujarat Vijay Rupani, President of Delhi BJP Virendra Sachdeva and Member of Parliament Manoj Tiwari addressed a public gathering on completion of 9 successful years in the service of the country by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Babarpur in North East Lok Sabha constituency.

Addressing the gathering, Puri on Sunday attacked the Congress over the imposition of Emergency in 1975, while asserting that it was the only time when "the country's democracy was trampled". The Union minister also highlighted the achievements of nine years of the Modi government, while asserting that the prime minister's schemes are appreciated across the world. He also attacked Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over non-implementation of the Centre's ambitious Ayushman Bharat scheme. He called the Emergency a "black day" in the country's democracy. Not only political activists but students and journalists were also put behind bars, he said.

## Car hits autorickshaw, two critically injured

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a horrific incident, a speeding Lamborghini car ramed an auto-rickshaw in Delhi on Sunday. Two people were critically injured in the incident. According to the reports, a 24-year-old was driving the luxury car when it hit the auto on the Savitri Cinema flyover in south Delhi.

The auto driver and his passenger — an engineer at IndiGo — have been hospitalised. "They are not in a position to give a statement currently," police said.

Disturbing visuals captured at the scene of the Delhi Lamborghini accident depict the auto-rickshaw in a mangled state, serving as a chilling reminder of the forceful impact.

The luxury car involved in the collision also suffered significant damage, emphasizing the magnitude of the accident and the subsequent injuries caused. The police further added that Rajveer, the accused, has been detained and his medical examination is being done. "His medical would con-



firm if he had consumed alcohol or not," police said. The car sustained damage due to the impact. However, the auto-rickshaw got mangled due to the incident. Prince Gautam, 31, was on his way to his office at the airport from his home east of Kailash when the accident happened around 7 am.

Rajveer, the accused, has been detained and his medical examination is being done, police said. "His medical would confirm if he had consumed alcohol or not," police said.

The Delhi Lamborghini accident has sparked widespread public concern regarding road safety and the irresponsible behavior of some drivers on the city's streets.

## SP Marg sees plantation drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Thousands of citizen volunteers joined forces today to participate in a large-scale cleaning and plantation drive on a 3-kilometer stretch along SP Marg. This initiative came in response to Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena's recent visit to the area on June 17, during which he announced a comprehensive revamp plan for the Ridge along SP Marg and the Malcha Mahal. The enthusiastic volunteers, between Dhaulakuan and 11 Murti, actively contributed to the removal of solid waste and debris that had been strewn around the vicinity. They diligently cleared the



ground and planted trees following a triple grid pattern. The selected tree species for this project included Gulmohar, Jacranda, Amaltash, and Chinar, strategically planted to optimise space utilisation.

The presence of Lieutenant Governor Saxena himself during the drive boosted morale among the volunteers, who were commended for their dedicated efforts.

## Monsoon's arrival brings relief to Delhi-NCR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi-NCR weather turned pleasant on Sunday morning as monsoon's arrival brought overnight rainfall for the national capital and adjoining areas. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday declared the onset of the southwest monsoon over Mumbai and Delhi simultaneously after 62 years.

The last time both cities were hit by monsoon at the same time was on June 21, 1961. While the monsoon was delayed by 14 days in Mumbai and two days advance in Delhi. The normal date for monsoon onset (1961-2019) over Mumbai is June 11, and for Delhi, it is June 27. According to IMD, however, this has made it a highly unusual monsoon year where both cities recorded an onset

simultaneously. "The Southwest Monsoon has advanced over Mumbai and Delhi today (June 25)," an IMD official said. This is the earliest arrival of the southwest monsoon in Delhi since 2020 and 2015, when it arrived on the same date - June 25. The last time it arrived earlier than this was in 2013 when it reached Delhi on June 16.

Residents of the NCR region, including Noida, Gurugram, Faridabad and Ghaziabad, woke up to a rainy Sunday with heavy rainfall with lightning and thunderstorm. Even as rain brought the much needed relief for Delhi and adjoining areas, reports of waterlogging and traffic jams in Delhi and NCR came in after the overnight downpour. According to IMD, Safdarjung weather station recorded 48.3mm of rainfall in a 24-hour



People walk amid rain as the southwest monsoon advances over in New Delhi on Sunday

period till 8:30am on Sunday - most of it being recorded in the early hours of the day. Among other stations, Lodhi road received 59.6mm of rainfall till 8:30 am, Ayanagar 54mm, Ridge 27.4mm and Palam 29.6mm. Till 8:30am on Sunday, Delhi recorded 71.4mm of rain-

fall so far this month. The long-period average (LPA) for Delhi for June is 74.1mm, which is likely to cross in the coming days. The IMD classifies it as 'very light' rainfall when it is between 'trace' and 2.4mm in a 24-hour period. 'Light' rainfall between 2.5mm and 15.5mm;

'moderate' between 15.6mm and 64.4mm and 'heavy' rainfall when over 64.4mm is recorded in a single day. The IMD termed monsoon activity over Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi as 'vigorous'. According to IMD, monsoon activity is considered 'vigorous' if recorded

rainfall is more than four times the normal or it is fairly widespread or widespread. In Gurugram, areas that were affected included Civil Hospital at Sector 10; Southern Peripheral Road (SPR); Basai village; Subhash Chowk; Rajeev Chowk and Narsinghpur.

# FM slams Obama over minorities quips

## '6 Muslim nations bestowed highest civilian honours to Modi'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pointing-out that six of the 13 highest civilian honours bestowed on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, are come from the Muslim dominated countries, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday accused Congress and other Opposition parties of raising "non-issues without data" as she also severely lashed-out at ex-US President Barack Obama for picking on India on the treatment of the minority community.

Addressing a press conference here on the Prime Minister's just concluded US visit and the ongoing one to Egypt, the first by any Indian premier after a gap of 26 years, Sitharaman defended the Modi-government against the Opposition charges of discrimination against minorities in the country.

"The Prime Minister himself, in the press conference in the US, has said how his government works on the 'Sabka



Saath, Sabka Vikas' principle and doesn't discriminate against any community. But the fact remains that when people join in this debate and highlight issues which are non-issues in a way," Sitharaman said. She also lashed-out at ex-US President Obama for picking on India on the minorities

issue in his recent interview with CNN in which he said he would raise the subject of Indian Muslims with Prime Minister Modi. "I was shocked. When PM Modi was campaigning in the US — and by campaigning I mean speaking about India — a former President of the US is speaking about Indian Muslims."

"And I am saying this with restraint because it involves another country. We want friendship with the US but there too we get remarks about religious freedom in India. A former President — under

whose rule six Muslim-majority countries were bombed with more than 26,000 bombs — how will people trust his allegations?" she said.

Accusing the Congress and other opposition parties of raising "non-issues, without data" in the face of electoral defeats, the finance minister said these charges are as the opposition is not being able to counter Modi electorally and on his "pro-poor policies."

"There are issues to be raised which are being raised at the state level about law and order.

There are people taking care of it. To just allege without basic data in hand just tells us that these are organised campaigns," said the senior BJP leader hitting-out at the opposition.

"Out of the 13 awards that has been given as Prime Minister of the country, six have been given by countries where Muslims are in the majority," she pointed-out and cited the latest honour

bestowed on Modi by Egypt. Sitharaman also detailed as how "well" Modi was received in Egypt by grand Mufti and Indian Muslim Bohra community in Egypt.

The Prime Minister Modi was on Sunday conferred with the 'Order of the Nile', Egypt's highest honour, by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi at the Presidential palace in Cairo.

"I think because they can't counter the BJP or PM Modi electorally - the Karnataka election result notwithstanding - that is why they are running these campaigns.

And the Congress has had a big role in this in the past few elections," she said countering opposition charges on discrimination in the country.

Sitharaman also said Congress in the past also sought to win election with the help of Pakistan. On the opposition unity bid, the BJP leader asked whether they have given any worthwhile plan as what will they do if they were to come to power?

# While Manipur burning, Modi silent, Shah ineffective: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Hitting out at the Narendra Modi Government over the situation in violence-hit Manipur, Congress on Sunday said that while the north-eastern state is burning, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is silent, Home Minister Amit Shah is ineffective and chief minister N. Biren Singh is "non-functional".

After the national convention by 10 like minded parties on peace in Manipur, congress chief spokesman Jai Ram Ramesh said that he participated in the convention organised by 10 like-minded political parties to share his thoughts on the political, administrative and humanitarian disasters in the state of Manipur.

The meeting was held at the Harkishan Singh Surjeet Bhawan which was addressed by leaders from different political parties.

"You cannot have unanimity but you can have consensus. That is how the Constitution of India was made.... So it is through consensus, only



Photo by Ranjan Dimri / Pioneer

through listening to everybody, being sensitive that you can really restore trust (in Manipur).

It is going to be a long process. It is not going to happen in weeks, it is going to take months, it may take years but we have to start the process," Ramesh said at the convention.

While Manipur is burning, the prime minister is silent, the home minister is ineffective, and the chief minister is non-functional, he said.

Ramesh said that to move ahead, the chief minister should be replaced immediately. Ramesh said former Manipur

chief minister Okram Ibobi Singh took 10 years to restore some semblance of order and then the process of development was started.

"We live in hope that Manipur which was an example of unity through diversity in India is brought back to the path of normalcy at the earliest," he asserted.

Ramesh's remarks come a day after the Congress said peace in violence-hit Manipur is not possible under Chief Minister N Biren Singh and demanded that prime minister replaces him immediately.

# Reports in social media on US predator drones deal trashed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of alleged fake news regarding the forthcoming deal for 31 Predator armed drones between India and the US, Ministry of Defence on Sunday said some speculative reports that emerged in sections of social media referring to the price and other terms of purchase have ulterior motives and are aimed at derailing the due acquisition process.

"Some speculative reports emerged in sections of social media referring to the price and other terms of purchase (Of predator drones). These are uncalculated for, have ulterior motives and are aimed at derailing the due acquisition process. Price and other terms and conditions of the purchase are yet to be finalised and



subject to negotiations," the Defence Ministry said in a statement. "In this regard, all are requested not to spread fake news and misinformation which can have serious impact on the morale of the Armed Forces and adversely impact the acquisition process," the statement added.

It said the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) on June 15 accorded the

Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the acquisition of 31 MQ-9B (16 Sky Guardian and 15 Sea Guardian) High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) for tri-services from the USA through Foreign Military Sale (FMS) route. The AoN included the number of UAVs to be procured along with associated equipment.

# West plan fails as Wagner rebellion falls flat

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The reported Western propaganda to blow the private military contractor Wagner Group engaged in the war in Ukraine out of proportion has fallen flat and the Russian troops are now holding ground in the captured territory.

The Wagner Group is one of the several private militias fighting the war in Ukraine and has a total strength of 5,000 fighters. Wagner boss Prigozhin's reported call for an armed rebellion has fizzled out following negotiations by Belarus and the mercenary group's dues have been cleared.

The Wagner Group is now all set to return to the warzone in Ukraine soon, geopolitical analysts said. The analysts said the game changed following discussions by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan who had ear-

lier quelled such a coup in his military. Erdogan shared his experience of handling the military coup in Turkey.

Besides fighting along with the Russian troops in Ukraine, the Wagner Group is also training the pro Bashar al-Assad regime militias in Syria and these militias are said to be giving a tough time to the US-led militias seeking to oust the Assad regime. This led the Western powers to fuel the propaganda war around the Wagner Group.

Despite having boots on the ground in Ukraine, the Russian government does not maintain a direct contact with the Wagner to avoid foot-printing.

The Western propaganda is first relayed by the television channels in India and later on picked up by the news outlets in the West which run false flag operations attributing the channels operating from here. Besides the Wagner Group,

Chechen fighters and Ukrainian Christian rebels are also fighting alongside the Russian troops in Ukraine. From the Ukrainian side, Western militias are fighting the war on behalf of Kyiv.

Till now, the Russian forces were backing the Wagner Group in fighting on the ground and allowing them to hold territory but with the reported dissidence in the private military contractor, Moscow is unlikely to trust to that level anymore and will station its troops in Ukraine to hold the ground.

The Wagner Group and Russian Army forces jointly participated in the battle of Artemovsk, also known as Bakhmut.

This joint operation resulted in the liberation of the Donbass city in late May, following eight months of intense fighting. The battle had significant implications as it pinned down large concentra-

tions of Ukrainian troops, allowed Russia to train its mobilized reserves, and dealt a major blow to Ukraine's offensive plans, according to the Sputnik news.

Sputnik News reported that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was briefed by senior officials on Saturday about the developments in Russia involving the Wagner Group private military company (PMC) and its head Yevgeny Prigozhin.

The Russian news outlet quoted an Indian daily to report that Modi was informed about the events on his plane en route to Cairo from Washington, where he traveled for an official state visit to meet President Joe Biden and US business leaders.

The Russian Armed Forces continue to carry out combat missions on the contact line with the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the area of the special military operation, the Russian news agency reported.

# PM pays homage to those who resisted Emergency

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to those who resisted the Emergency imposed by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on June 25, 1975, as the country marked the 48th anniversary of this significant event. In a tweet, Prime Minister Modi acknowledged the 21-month period as an "unforgettable chapter in our history" and emphasised that it stood in stark contrast to the democratic values cherished by the Indian Constitution.

He expressed his respect for the courageous individuals who resisted the emergency and worked towards upholding the spirit of democracy. Union Home Minister Amit Shah echoed these sentiments, describing the emergency as an indelible "black spot" in Indian democracy.

# 'Lack of clarity in Opp's approach to take on BJP'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Days after a mega conclave of Opposition parties, Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president, KT Rama Rao, on Sunday said, "Our fight against the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections should be based on principal issues before the country, but unfortunately, we seem to be obsessed with dislodging someone or putting somebody there, and that should not be the agenda. The agenda should be how the basic priorities of the country have to be met."

Rama Rao, who is a state minister and son of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, also asserted, "Our party will never compromise on the issue of core welfare principles for the country." He emphasised that the BRS will form an alliance only with those political parties with which they see a common agenda for the benefit of the people. "The fight should be on principal issues before the country," he told in an inter-



view here. "Unfortunately, we are losing the plot there. We seem to be obsessed and worried about dislodging someone or putting somebody there, and that should not be the agenda. The agenda should be how the basic priorities of the country have to be met."

Rama Rao expressed his concern about the lack of clarity in the Opposition's approach. "You should not be uniting against somebody. You should be uniting for something. What is that something, nobody is able to figure out," he said, referring to the meeting of 16 opposition parties held in Patna on Friday to forge unity

against the BJP in the 2024 General Elections. The BRS did not attend the meeting hosted by JD(U) supremo and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

The BRS working president indicated that the party is willing to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections on its own and make an impactful beginning by winning a sizeable number of seats. The BRS, formerly known as the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), was rechristened and registered as a national party in October last year. The next Assembly polls in the state are due by the end of this year.

Rama Rao reiterated his belief that alliances centered around the Congress or the BJP would not succeed, as these national parties have been a "disaster" for the country. He stressed the importance of political parties aligning on a principle welfare agenda that matters to the country. "What matters to the country today is

the creation of employment, wealth for farmers, irrigation, and rural livelihood," he said. "These are things that matter, not hijab or halal and 'bakwas' around religion." Rama Rao asserted that the BRS is opposed to those parties which have hindered the development of India.

"Those two principal parties are the BJP and Congress," he claimed. "The Congress governed for 50 years, while the BJP for 15 years. Had both worked properly, this situation would not have arisen." He blamed both parties for the country's lagging progress.

On the participation of regional leaders, Mamata Banerjee (TMC) and Arvind Kejriwal (AAP), in the Patna meeting, Rama Rao said, "You have to understand they have their own agendas and set of priorities and own vision for the country. I cannot find fault with Kejriwal or Banerjee for attending the meeting.

# NITI Aayog suggests ways to increase footfall of Buddhist tourists in India

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Flexible charter flight rules, direct airline connectivity between India and key cities in Buddhist countries, connecting the primary Buddhist destinations by luxury/premium trains, concept of "Hotel on Wheels", improved wayside amenities with adequate health and hygiene, linking destinations and creating subsidiary destinations to hold tourists post pilgrimage activities and tying ups with Chinese, Japanese & Thai banks & financial institutions for in destination ATMs/Cash Dispensation facilities.

These are some of the major suggestions among a few others that have been recommended by Government's major think tank, NITI Aayog in its latest report seeking to

enhance the footfall of the Buddhist tourists in India which is at present very miniscule. In its report, "Promoting Spiritual Tourism in the Land of Buddha" the Niti Aayog took exception that even though India has a significant number of Buddhist sites in different States, the number of foreign Buddhist pilgrims visiting the country is not only paltry but also marginally declined over the years when compared to other Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka and ASEAN.

It pointed out that given the fact that India has been recognized as a destination for spiritual tourism since ages for both domestic and international tourists, it must unleash the potential of spiritual tourism. "Against this backdrop, the potential of Buddhist tourism may be

explored to attract tourists, especially in the post pandemic era. India is known as the 'Land of the Buddha' as Gautam Buddha founded Buddhism about 2,500 years ago in this region," said the report making the case for cashing in on the growing sector. Needless to say, with a global populace of nearly 500 million, Buddhism is the 4th largest religion in the world and offers huge tourism revenue opportunities. Majority of the Buddhists live in China (50%), Thailand (13%), Japan (9%), Myanmar (8%), Sri Lanka (3%), Vietnam (3%), Cambodia (3%), South Korea (2%), India (2%) and Malaysia (1%). Though steps have been taken to cash in on the sector, for which various projects have been proposed as the art of the Buddhist circuits in five Indian

states under the Swadesh Darshan scheme. These are Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, most of them are way behind their scheduled deadlines. "Slow disbursal of funds and poor monitoring of projects have been cited as the major reasons for the slow progress under the Scheme," noted the think tank in the report.

Apart from these, a number of factors like inadequate public infrastructure and tourist facilities at Buddhist tourist sites, limited multi-lingual guides, limited visitor interaction with, limited online marketing of Buddhist heritage sites and lack of information about authentic local arts, crafts shops, have led to a decline in Buddhist tourist footfall over the years.

# Uphold standards of pharma products: Health Min to firms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has emphasised the Government's zero-tolerance policy towards substandard drugs and called upon the pharmaceutical industry to establish a self-regulatory body to uphold the standards of pharmaceutical products.

The Minister made these remarks during the closing ceremony of the 8th Global Pharmaceutical Quality Summit organized by the Indian Pharmaceutical Association (IPA) in Mumbai. Highlighting India's reputation as the "Pharmacy of the World," which was solidified during the Covid-19 crisis, Minister Mandaviya empha-

sized the crucial role played by the Indian pharma industry. He praised their efforts in following government instructions and ensuring the production of essential medicines and vaccines to combat the pandemic.

The responsible approach of the industry, according to the Minister, enabled India to supply medicines and vaccines to over 150 countries, contributing significantly to global healthcare.

Minister Mandaviya also stressed the importance of maintaining high-quality standards in the pharmaceutical sector. While acknowledging that there may be instances where a few individuals compromise product quality, he affirmed the government's unwavering stance against such

practices. He called upon the industry to establish a self-regulatory body dedicated to monitoring and upholding the quality of pharmaceutical products, ensuring that no compromises are made.

Sudarshan Jain, Secretary General of the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, expressed the industry's commitment to providing quality-assured and affordable medicines worldwide.

He acknowledged India's resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the country's emergence as a global leader in pharmaceutical production. Jain emphasized the need for continuous investments in quality systems, technology, and talent to meet the evolving demands of the healthcare landscape.

# Bring patients to mainstream health system, traditional healers told in MP

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Institute of Research in Tribal Health (NIRTH) has launched a one-of-its-kind study in Madhya Pradesh's two tribal-dominated districts — Dindori and Umaria aiming to persuade traditional healers to help bring the patients of their community to mainstream health system if their local treatment failed to address the ailment.

NIRTH is the only permanent institution of the Indian Council of Medical Research dedicated to improving tribal health and also the WHO Collaborating Centre for the Health of Indigenous Population in India. The move follows concern that reliance on traditional healers is a common practice across



tribal communities. But being from particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) their health remains a constant concern despite various government health schemes launched for them.

According to various studies tribal people are presently having varied medical problems ranging from infectious diseases like TB to chronic one such as diabetes.

"But instead of going to government health centres, we

have found that tribal people have tremendous faith in the local healers. Irrespective of the kind of disease they are having, they will first go to these healers, and take their advice and medicine.

"Only when they fail to get relieve they approach clinicians in the public or private sector. By that time, it's too late in many cases," said Dr. Nishant Saxena, a social scientist from NIRTH, Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh.

"So, no doubt these tribal doctors have the 4A advantage, i.e. availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability in the ecosystem of tribal community," said Dr Saxena.

"Studies show the number of patients approaching the tribal healers is sizable -- from 16

to 40 per cent." India is home to more than 10.43 crore Scheduled Tribe (ST) people accounting for 8.6% of the country's total population.

Among the 705 STs, 75 groups are categorized as PVTGs whose number is estimated to be 28 lakhs. Moreover, the study also aims to recognize the services of these healers whose traditional knowledge is fading as youth are not interested in taking up the tradition.

The need of the hour is to integrate the traditional healers, known as Gunia, Guni or Bhumka in Baiga, Bhil and Bhamra tribes into modern medicine.

The study spanning three years being conducted in collaboration with the State Health Department will cover 1.5 lakh

PVTGs from Baiga community residing in Umaria, located adjacent to Chattisgarh border and Dindori districts. Gradually, more districts with a tribal population will be covered.

"Till date there are no policies to recognize and acknowledge the services being provided by these healers for the community at large.

The study envisages to draw attention to this critical policy gap which, if filled, could help in achieving universal health coverage for all, especially in tribal areas," said Dr Aparup Das, Director NIRTH and coordinator of the study.

Efforts will also be initiated to scientifically validate these practices, which when proven beneficial could be utilized for the betterment of all.

# Yogi to flag off consignment of Langra mangoes to Sharjah today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The delicious Banarasi Langra mango, a horticultural product of this region of Purvanchal (eastern UP) which has received a Geographical Identification (GI) tag recently, will be directly sent from Kashi to Sharjah in United Arab Emirates (UAE). The first consignment of Langra mangoes from the newly-constructed Integrated Pack House at Karkhiyaon will be flagged off from Kashi to Sharjah directly by the CM on Monday. The function will also be attended by UP Agricultural Minister Surya Pratap Shahi. Later, in the late afternoon Yogi will also address a public meeting at Jagatpur Inter College. The Union Minister Dr SP Baghel and other senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders will also participate in the same programme.

Though in the recent past, consignments of several agricultural products from the region were sent abroad but it would be the first time when the entire processes will be done here before sending the same to abroad as the government is engaged in removing the middlemen from among the farmer entrepreneurs and the exporters. To help the farmers double their income, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority



Integrated Pack House in Karkhiyaon in Varanasi.

(APEDA) is making continuous efforts. There will be single window clearance for export from this pack house as per the international standards. The equipment engaged in the Integrated Pack House for Food and Vegetable Export are indigenous. The pack house is accredited by APEDA for export as per international standards.

APEDA's Deputy General Manager (DGM) Dr CB Singh said that the consignment of four to five metric tonnes of Banarasi Langra mangoes will be sent to Sharjah from the Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur here. Apart from this, 30 to 35 MT of green chillies will be sent to Dubai and Doha via Mumbai through a 40 feet reefer (refrigerated

container by a water vessel. Apart from this, preparations are on to send other products including okra (Bhindi).

With the sending off this consignment, the CM will also give a big gift to the farmers of Purvanchal with the opening of this pack house constructed about 10 kilometers from the airport.

The pack house is equipped with adequate resources for export by sea, land and air. Pack house has been housed in about 4,461 square feet area at a cost of Rs 15.78 crore where the farmer entrepreneurs will also be given training to prepare products according to the demand of the international market. This will be the third integrated pack house in UP after Saharanpur

and Lucknow.

Dr Singh said that the most important work of the pack house is to prepare the product as per international standards and demands. "Different countries have different demands and this pack house works to meet their demand," he said, adding that the APEDA is active for export and helping the farmers to double the income. "Fruits and vegetables have to go through many processes in the pack house to prepare the product of international standard and keep their freshness, taste and other properties intact. Special care is taken that these products do not contain pests and any kind of disease. The equipment engaged in the Integrated Pack House are indigenous. Especially Banarasi Langra mangoes have to go through vapor heat and hot water treatment process, only then Langra mangoes will be able to be sent abroad," said the APEDA DGM, highlighting the names and capacity of equipment fitted in the pack house including Vapor Heat Treatment Unit-2500 Kg/Batch (4 Hours); Hot Water Treatment Plant-500 Kg/Batch (1 Hour); Mango / Fruit Processing, Grading & Sorting Line -2000 Kg/Hr; Vegetable Processing Line -1000 Kg/hr; Cold Room -2 20-MT; Pre Cold Room -2 15-MT and Ripening room -10-MT capacity.

# Gauhati High Court stays Wrestling Federation of India elections

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) elections, delayed several times, were stalled yet again with the Gauhati High Court on Sunday staying the July 11 polls on a petition filed by the Assam Wrestling Association.

The Assam Wrestling Association, in its petition filed against the WFI, IOA ad-hoc panel and the Sports Ministry, said though it was entitled to be an affiliated member of the WFI, it was not granted recognition.

The state unit claimed that the then WFI Executive Committee had made recommendation for its affiliation at the Federations' General Council in Gonda, on November 15, 2014 but it was denied recognition.

The IOA ad-hoc panel had fixed June 25 as the last date for receiving the names for the electoral college while the elections were fixed for July 11.

The petitioner contended that unless their body is affiliated to the WFI, and they can nominate their representative to the electoral college, the election process should be stalled. The court directed the



respondents -- WFI ad-hoc body and the Sports Ministry -- that till the next date is fixed for hearing they should not proceed with the elections of the Executive Committee of the WFI.

The court has fixed July 17 as the next date for hearing.

"Really? So were they sleeping when WFI held elections in 2015 and 2019. Why have they approached the Court now."

Can't you guys smell that something is fishy here. Someone is trying to influ-

ence the WFI elections. It's clear," said an official from the previous WFI set-up.

"Actually, Assam was only an associate member without voting rights. If it had a problem with that, why did it not make an effort to reach out to the court in 2015 itself," the official added.

Assam Wrestling Association (AWA) said in its petition that they were "actively involved" in promoting wrestling in the state and had organised various national and state-level tournaments at the "behest" of the

WFI.

The state association said in its plea that despite "several efforts" it did not get recognition.

AWA said that unless they don't get affiliation from the parent body, they would not be able to nominate their representative to the electoral college for the upcoming elections.

The state of Assam will be deprived of its representative to take part in the election of the executive committee of the WFI and its wrestlers will be deprived of participation in national tournaments, the petition said.

The WFI, before being suspended by the Sports Ministry, had set May 7 as the election date. Sports Minister Anurag Thakur, after his meeting with protesting wrestlers, had said that WFI elections will be held by June 30. The IOA then announced that elections will be held on July 4 but the Returning Officer set July 6 as the new date.

However, after five disaffiliated state bodies staked claim to be eligible for voting, the Returning Officer yet again delayed the elections by five days, setting July 11 as the poll date.

# DM, CP inspect CM's meeting venue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Commissioner of Police (CP) Mukta Ashok Jain, District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam and other senior administrative and police officers inspected the Jagatpur Inter College grounds on Varanasi-Prayagraj highway where Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will address a public meeting on Monday late afternoon. Both the officers studied all the arrangements at the stage and grounds in case of rains as for the last three days, the city has received spells of rains. Besides, they also went through all the security and other arrangements there. They also asked the concerned police and other officers about the parking of vehicles and traffic control in the area. During their visit, the CP and DM also inquired about the adjoining areas. They instructed the concerned officers to ensure completion of all the arrangements on time. Two helpads have been constructed there. At the meeting site there would be separate entries for VIPs and the general public. Meanwhile, senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders led by regional presi-



DM S Rajalingam, CP MA Jain inspecting Yogi's public meeting site at Jagatpur in Varanasi on Sunday.

dent Dilip Singh Patel also reviewed the arrangements. The party workers have intensified their efforts to make the meeting a success as through the meeting, the nine years achievements of central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is also an MP from Varanasi parliamen-

tary seat, would be highlighted as the event is also a part of party's month's long programme. In the meeting it is also expected that some beneficiaries of government schemes will also share their experiences and change of life. The DM also visited Integrated Pack House at

Karkhiyaon from where Yogi will flag off the first consignment of Langra mangoes to Sharjah (UAE) directly. The DM during his stay there held talks with the senior officers of APEDA and others and looked after all the arrangements. He also gave some instructions to the concerned officers.

# Broken idol of Shankaracharya covered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As per the instructions of the Shankaracharya of Jyotish Peeth Swami Avimuktেশ্বরानंद Saraswati, the broken idol of Adi Shankaracharya installed at the Kashi Vishwanath temple gate at Dedsipul in Dashashwamedh area was covered on Sunday. Media in-charge of Jyotishapeethadishwar Sanjay Pandey said that one of the hands of the idol of Adi Shankaracharya, located above the entrance of the Kashi Vishwanath temple near Dedsipul in Dashashwamedh Marg, was broken for months.

According to him, when Shankaracharya Swami Avimuktेश্বরानंद came to know about it, he was extremely heartbroken and got upset. He also shared the picture of the broken idol on his Facebook Page expressing his anger. On the instruction of the Shankaracharya, under the leadership of Sanjay Pandey a team went to Dedsipul and covered the broken idol with saffron cloth. Later, the delegation also informed the Kashi Vishwanath temple administration about the sentiments of the Shankaracharya Ji Maharaj.

Pandey urged the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kashi Vishwanath temple Sunil Verma and urged either to replace the broken idol or allow him to repair the same. The CEO said that it is a matter related to the Tourism



Broken idol of Adi Shankaracharya covered near Dedsipul area in Varanasi on Sunday.

department but he promised that the broken idol would be repaired by Monday. In this direction, before covering the broken idol, Pandey also talked

to ACP Dashashwamedh Awadhesh Pandey over phone. He was accompanied by Satish Agrahari, Rakesh Pandey, Vineet Shankar Gupta etc in

the delegation.

**NCC CADETS TAKE OUT RALLY:** The NCC cadets of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) on Sunday organised a programme on varsity campus and also took out an awareness rally to make the students and common people aware of the ill impact of drugs under the Drug-Free India Fortnight. The NCC cadets of SSU are organising Stuff-Free India Fortnight from June 12 in the compliance of the directives of Narco Coordination Mechanism Centre and it will conclude on Monday.

The NCC Officer Dr Satyendra Kumar Yadav said that the drug is root cause of all the diseases and added that the drug addiction is a mental disease and it spoils the life not only of a person but also of the family.

The key speaker and Dean of Ved-Vedang Faculty Prof Amit Kumar Shukla said that the drug harms not only the body but also the mind and a drug addict suffers from many diseases.

The PRO of the university Shashindra Mishra emphasised on making a drug-free campaign as a mass movement and said that drug addiction keeps the person away from the family and drug addicts suffer from the negativism which spoils the life. The cadets also took out a rally from the varsity to Jagatganj and made people aware of its adverse impact on body as well as life through posters and banners.

# Mahakumbh: Temple, ten roads to be developed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As part of beautification of the city ahead of Mahakumbh-2025, the ancient Nagvasuki temple situated besides Ganga river along with 10 roads in Sangam area will be developed on high priority. Also, the artificial lake inside the historic Chandra Shekhar Azad (CSA) Park will be renovated.

The Urban Development department released the first installment of the total sanctioned amount of over Rs 21.26 crore allocated for developing the temple and surrounding area as well as beautifying the roads in its vicinity. A total of over Rs 2.36 crore has been

released as the first installment by the department for developing the temple alone.

Kumbh Mela Officer Vijay Kiran Anand said Rs 1.19 crore will be spent on renovation of the artificial lake in CSA Park. Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA) will restore the temple, the 10 roads and the lake. After the release of the first instalment, now the PDA will take out the tender for the temple, road and the pond, he added.

The works to be undertaken, include development of Nagvasuki temple at a cost of Rs 4.76 crore and for which Rs 2.36 crore has been released as first installment. The roads are to be developed at a cost of

over Rs 32.18 crore and for which Rs 18.89 crore has been released as first installment.

The roads that will be developed in the first phase include construction of divider and ensuring greenery from Andawa crossing to Sahson crossing, beautification and improvement of the road leading from Phaphamau bridge road to Ganga, beautification and improvement as well as widening of road from Naini railway station to Prayagraj-Mirzapur national highway, beautification, improvement and widening of road from Cheeki railway station gate-2 to COD crossing marg, beautification, improvement and widening of Naini railway sta-

tion approach road under the overbridge at FCI road as well as Bela Cachar interlocking reconstruction from Prayagraj-Lucknow road to STP road on Phaphamau side.

The other works to be undertaken include Bela Cachar parking interlocking, culvert construction from PDA road on the banks of Basna drain in Phaphamau, road widening, beautification on both sides of Gangeshwar Mahadev Temple near Amitabh Bachchan Pulia till the river, widening and beautification of road from Amitabh Bachchan Pulia to Shukla market as well as widening and beautification of road from IERT bridge to Ganga bank.

# STF nabs wanted cattle rustler

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A team of Prayagraj field unit of Special Task Force (STF) arrested a wanted cattle smuggler near Chheoki railway station under Naini police station. Mohamad Anees carried a reward of Rs 25,000.

STF DSP Navendu Kumar, said a team of UP STF led by sub-inspector Dharmendra Singh got a tip off about presence of Anees near Chheoki railway station. "The team immediately rushed to the site and arrested Anees who was on his way to his home in Pratapgarh from Mumbai," said the DSP.

During interrogation, Anees confessed that he along with his family members was involved in cattle smuggling and sale of beef. He along with

his father and brother had even gone to jail in this connection in 2020 in Pratapgarh. Besides having cases registered against him at Mandhata police station of Pratapgarh, he also has a criminal case lodged at Raniganj police station of Pratapgarh, Kumar said.

Anees, after getting released from jail, had fled to Mumbai to evade police action following provisions of Gangster Act being invoked against him. He remained in Mumbai for two years making a living by driving a taxi and decided to return home for the forthcoming festival of Eid al-Adha, the DSP said.

**SHIFTED:** Police Commissioner Ramit Sharma is now in a mood to crack down on station house officers.

A day ago after sending Karchhana police station inspector to the Lines and appointing new charges in Karchhana and Khuldabad, the workplace of 10 more inspectors and sub-inspectors has been changed. Of these, inspector Bara, Sarai Mamrej and Mauaima have been sent to the Lines.

Inspector Virendra Kumar Sonkar, who was in charge of Kheri police station in Yamunanagar, will now be SHO Bara Kotwali. Inspector Sanjay Kumar Dwivedi, who was in charge of election cell, has been made in charge of Kaundhiyara police station. Bara Inspector Anil Kumar has been sent to the Lines by police commissioner. Sub-inspector Naveen Kumar Singh, who was till now post-

ed as SSI in Kaundhiyara police station, has been sent to the vacant seat of station head Kheri after Virender Kumar Sonkar was given the charge of Bara police station.

Inspector Virendra Kumar Sonkar has been shifted from Kaundhiyara and made in-charge of Mauaima police station. Sarai Mamrej police station incharge Tarunendra Tripathi and Mauaima Inspector Suresh Singh were sent to the Lines. Yogesh Pratap Singh, who was SHO of Atarsuiya, has been given the charge of Sarai Mamrej. Inspector Ashwini Kumar has been posted as SOG in charge from Police Line while SOG in-charge inspector Vinod Kumar Yadav has been made inspector-in-charge of Atarsuiya police station.





## FIRST COLUMN

## CELEBRATION AND MOURNING CAN COEXIST

Opposites are complementary rather than contradictory



RAVI VALLURI

Manikarnika Ghat at Varanasi is well-known for two soul-stirring acts. At one end of the ghat, Lord Shiva is venerated by the devout and at the other end the dead are consigned to flames. One pause to wonder whether *celebration and mourning* can occur simultaneously. Well, these two singular emotions are nothing but a reflection of a sutra or knowledge point from the Art of Living. Simply put, it means that *opposite values are complementary*.

During a course, a devotee was to ask Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar how opposite values are complementary rather than contradictory.

The spiritual Master replied in his enigmatic manner which left everyone spellbound. "Do you watch movies? Now suppose you talk to a director and tell the director, 'Why do you want a villain in your movie? Why you want all these thrills? You should have just made everything very smooth.' What would he say? A boy was there and a girl was there, they met each other and they got married. They got children and that's it, movie ends. There is no thrill, the girl did not get lost or there is no drama, no tears and no anger and none of those big issues. Will anybody watch that movie? Even a love story will not be watched, isn't it? So, is your question answered? Opposite values are complementary."

Human life and the history of nations are replete with vicissitudes and synodic curves. There is no straight line in life. India was partitioned into two countries; India and Pakistan. The country was sandwiched between West and East Pakistan.

Even as India was freed from the foreign yoke there was a massive migration as millions of Muslims and Hindus trekked to their new homelands. The celebration was accompanied by wailing and mourning as reckless religiosity and vengeance subsumed the voice of sanity and reason. Ironically celebration was once again dovetailed with mourning.

This division on religious lines was planned and executed by the evil mind of the cartographer Cyril Radcliffe who had never been to India, and without understanding the composite culture of East and West Bengal.



Closer scrutiny makes it evident that what happened in Bengal in the 1940s and especially during the tragic bifurcation had the seeds sown way back by the Machiavellian ideology of the British and Lord Curzon and soon their celebration got converted into mourning of Indians in general and Bengalis in particular.

Meanwhile, down the line in post-independence history, there was palpable tension between the provinces of East and West Pakistan. Much to their horror, the Pakistani generals discovered that the scissoring of a country and formation on the basis of religion did not pay the required dividends as the entity lacked cultural homogeneity.

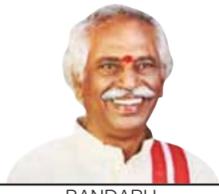
Mujibur Rahman, the prominent Awami League leader had won the elections in undivided Pakistan with widespread support but the Punjabi Pakistani generals were reluctant to part with power. Their celebration turned into a mourning as India helped to raise and assisted the Mukti Bahini in East Pakistan which retaliated against the abuse of power by the leaders of West Pakistan.

The epochal day of 26 March 1971 is considered the official Independence Day of Bangladesh. There was widespread celebration in India at the dismemberment of Pakistan. One state celebrated its Independence Day, while the other was plunged into mourning and darkness. Certainly, fact is stranger than fiction.

(The writer is the CEO of Chattisgarh East Railway Ltd, East West Railway Ltd and is a faculty of the Art of Living)

## Collective action can curb the drug menace

A wholesome approach is needed to check drug abuse; rehabilitation not social isolation can cure the drug addicts



BANDARU DATTATRAYA



The problem of drug abuse has assumed a critical proportion globally. This year's World Drug Day is appropriately themed 'People First: Stop Stigma and Discrimination, Strengthen Prevention.' It is a grim reality that the victims of drug abuse suffer from familial, social isolation and repudiation. It causes a lot of mental and physical distress and trauma to them. They are also deprived of accessing the help they need. It makes their life and that of their families miserable and much tougher. Hence, there is a need for a people-centred approach to drug policies, which are focused on human rights and compassion! Helping the victims of drug abuse with a social and emotional salve and at the same time putting an effective check on the growing tentacles of drug and illicit trafficking is indeed a gargantuan task but not an impossible proposition. It requires collective efforts and a wholesome approach to achieve the goal of freeing our country from drug abuse.

This year's World Drug Day is a call to "raise awareness about the negative impact of stigma and discrimination on people who use drugs and their families; raise awareness about the AIDS and hepatitis epidemics among people who use drugs and expand and strengthen HIV and hepatitis prevention programmes; promote evidence-based, voluntary services for all people who use drugs; educate about drug use disorders, available treatments and the importance of early intervention and support; advocate for alternatives to imprisonment for drug-related crimes such as community-based treatment and services; combat stigma and discrimination by promoting language and attitudes that are respectful and non-judgmental, and empower young people and communities to prevent drug use and addiction."

Quite often we read and hear about the children of well-off, elite and middle-class families being caught consuming banned substances at pubs. The process of licensing should be stricter and the delicensing of such entities should be expe-



THERE IS A NEED TO FURTHER GALVANISE ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO PROTECT OUR PEOPLE FROM DRUG ABUSE AND BREAKING THE SPINE OF ILLICIT DRUG SUPPLY CHAINS

(The writer is the Governor of Haryana. The views expressed are personal)

dit. At the same time, I see an important role for society in checking the menace of drug abuse. Society should boycott drug suppliers and users. A social ecosystem should be evolved where the victims of drug abuse should be rehabilitated properly and those behind supplying drugs are socially boycotted. Parents should also be counselled on how to deal with their children and keep them away from the menace of drug abuse. Strong family values will be an asset for us in our fight against drug abuse.

In the ancient Indian value system, there was a lot of emphasis on building the character of children. As a child, our teacher used to make us memorize that if health is lost, something is lost; if the character is lost, everything is lost. Our forefathers were very particular about the character-building of their children. The concept of gurukul was very much rooted in the idea of creating a value-based society, which deals with social evils like drug abuse effectively. Home, school and place of worship are three key components of building a value-based social ecosystem. We need to give serious thought to our ancient ways of addressing social challenges along with usual but tested means and mechanisms to prevent the spread of any evil, which eats into our vitals.

It is indeed gratifying to see a whole lot of things being done to tackle the challenge of drug abuse and rehabilitate the victims. There is, however, no scope to be complacent and miser in devoting necessary resources and attention to effectively deal with every aspect of the drug problem. There is a need to further galvanize all stakeholders to protect our people from drug abuse and break the spine of

illicit drug supply chains. The Narcotics Control Bureau should act strictly against drug suppliers. Equally important is better coordination between the agencies of Central and state governments including police forces in mounting effective surveillance in vulnerable areas in particular bigger cities and bordering areas to check drug smuggling.

Given the magnitude of the problem of drug abuse, we need to work with a wholesome approach where every stakeholder has a role to play. As per the National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India conducted by the Ministry through AIIMS National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC), Ghaziabad, in 2018, the estimated number of children and adolescents aged 10-17 years consuming alcohol, cannabis, opioids, sedatives, inhalants, cocaine, amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and hallucinogens was pegged at 6.06 per cent, while 24.71 per cent adults aged between 18 and 75 were found to be indulging in drug abuse.

It is a matter of happiness that the Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is implementing a scheme of National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) under which financial assistance is provided to the State Government and Union Territories Administration for preventive education and awareness generation, capacity building, skill development and vocational training and livelihood support for from drug addicts. During 2021-22, there were as many as 285559 beneficiaries under NAPDDR. The majority of beneficiaries were from Andhra Pradesh (15,295), Delhi (17,019), Haryana (6,940), Himachal Pradesh (12,619), Madhya Pradesh

(48,929), Punjab (9,555), Rajasthan (22,103), Telangana (6620), Uttar Pradesh (16503) and West Bengal (7639).

Similarly, Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) was launched in August 2020 under which special emphasis is laid on the participation of stakeholders such as women, children, educational institutions, civil society organizations, etc., who may be directly or indirectly affected by substance use. Till now, through the various activities undertaken on the ground over 12 crore people have been reached out. Four thousand plus Yuva Mandals, Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYKs) and NSS volunteers, Youth Clubs have also been associated with the NMBA. The contribution of over 2.05 crore women has also been vital in reaching out to a larger community through Anganwadi Centres and ASHA workers, ANMs, Mahila Mandals and women SHGs. Over 1.19 lakh educational institutions have conducted activities with students and youth to educate them on substance use under NMBA across the country till now.

As a lot is being done to check the menace of drug abuse, we should have comprehensive digital content to create awareness among people about the repercussions of drug abuse. We can also have related chapters in textbooks and films as well for cautioning the masses against falling into drug traps. The idea is to adopt a wholesome approach not only to check drug abuse but also to rehabilitate its victims. Instead of isolating them socially, we need to reach them with compassion and help so that they realize their mistakes and return to normal life. It is high time for us to rise to the occasion and end the menace of drug abuse for a healthy, wealthy and peaceful future!

## Vaccination can eliminate the cancer of the cervix!

To protect our girls, the Government must consider launching HPV vaccination under the immunisation programme

A recent tweet by the Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare highlighted a new milestone achieved by India in securing the health of new mothers in the country. Sustained systemic efforts over a decade and targeted health initiatives have helped India bring down the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births or the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 130 in 2014-2016 to 97 in 2018-2020. With this, India has accomplished the National Health Policy target of an MMR of less than 100 and aspires to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal target of an MMR of less than 70 per lakh live births by 2030. This achievement bolsters the gov-



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ernment's resolve to create a responsive healthcare system for women, including reducing the burden of cancer of the cervix through timely prevention.

A decade back, deaths due to cancer of the uterine cervix and maternal deaths were both pegged at around 72,000 per year. However, cancer cervix has rapidly surpassed maternal mortality and has become the second most common cause of cancer deaths amongst women in India. This is a distressing sign for a life-threatening disease that is almost entirely preventable but 48.35 crore Indian women above the age of 15 years and older continue to be at risk. In 2020, over 1,20,000 women in India were reported to have cancer of the cervix, resulting in more than 77,000

deaths.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) has been established as a cause of cancer of the cervix. More than 90% of cancer cervix cases are due to high-risk HPV type. HPV, much like the influenza virus, is a ubiquitous virus and can enter the body through small abrasions in the skin and mucosa. The virus can stay in the cells for extended periods and can either remain dormant or proliferate. While most low-grade infections spontaneously resolve within two years, persistent infection results in cancer of the cervix. Early cancer can be completely asymptomatic. Hence, we may not know when a woman will develop pre-invasive or invasive cancer and a woman could be harboring cancer for

several years only discovering it at an advanced stage. Invasive cancer of the cervix can cause a foul-smelling vaginal discharge or pelvic pain and is undeniably the most dreaded form when it invades adjacent organs like the bladder and rectum. Once this happens, the survival rate dramatically decreases and treatment becomes more complex.

In addition to undergoing the harrowing experience of cancer treatment and associated toxicities, cancer survivors also have to battle with long-term issues such as menopausal symptoms, severe leg swelling (lower limb lymphedema), sexual dysfunction, infertility, social judgement and rejection. Unfortunately, this cancer is mostly diagnosed in young

women between 35 to 45 years of age when they are in the prime years of their lives.

The only silver line is that the cancer of the cervix is almost entirely preventable. We know that it is caused by a virus and that there are effective vaccines already used globally to help prevent it. Vaccinating young girls long before they are exposed to this virus can aid in primary prevention. Regular screening after the age of 30 and effective treatment through surgery or radiation, can eliminate the second most common cancer in women in India. Advocating the vaccine to every young girl between the age of 9-14, that they see in their practice, and advising screening of women between 30-49 years with a high-precision HPV DNA test

will be the two strongest pillars in this fight against cancer cervix. As a member of the World Health Assembly, India committed to WHO's Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative to accelerate the elimination of cancer of the cervix by 2030. The 90-70-90 target set by the initiative requires 90% of girls to be fully vaccinated with the HPV vaccine before the age of 15, 70% of women to be screened with a high-performance test by the age of 35 and again by the age of 45, and 90% of women identified with cervical cancer (pre-cancer or cancer) to receive treatment. In an endeavour to meet the commitment and protect our girls, the Government of India must consider launching HPV vaccination funded and imple-

mented under the immunization programme.

As we celebrate cervical cancer awareness month this January, each one of us can play a part in helping the country secure the health of its women. So, get informed—find out more about cancer of the cervix and educate the young women around you.

Women represent the cornerstone for a family's overall health and hence investing in their health and ensuring their access to quality care goes a long way in ensuring the well-being and future of a society. The necessary tools to stop women from suffering and dying from this preventable disease are available; thus our girls will live to see a world free of this deadly disease.

## Belarus an awkward landing place for mercenary boss

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian mercenary boss Yevgeny Prigozhin was notorious for unbridled and profane challenges to authority even before the attempted rebellion that he mounted Saturday. The reported agreement for him to go into exile in Belarus would place him in a country where such behavior is even less acceptable than in his homeland.

Prigozhin on Sunday was uncharacteristically silent as his Wagner private army forces pulled back from Russian cities after a Kremlin announcement that he agreed to depart for Belarus; it remains unclear whether he's actually there.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko reportedly negotiated the deal. But Prigozhin's maverick ways are at odds with Lukashenko's harsh repression of dissent and independent media. In power since 1994, the leader often called "Europe's last dictator" launched a brutal crackdown on 2020 protests against his rule; hundreds were sentenced to lengthy prison terms, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski. Under

Lukashenko, Belarus became almost unilaterally tied to neighbouring Russia, agreeing to form a still-in-progress "union state."

Although Belarus' army is not known to have taken part in Russia's war on Ukraine, the country allows Russia to base troops there that have fought in Ukraine and made a deal this year for deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons.

Lukashenko is a vehement ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Prigozhin's stance toward the Kremlin leader is murky. Even as his fighters moved swiftly toward Moscow on Saturday, Prigozhin did not criticise Putin directly and instead claimed his aim was to oust the Russian defense establishment which he has denounced as corrupt and incompetent, complaining that it undermined his forces fighting in Ukraine. The Belarus deal removes Prigozhin's control of Wagner, but it's unclear whether any of his fighters would follow him to Belarus, either out of a sense of loyalty or due to dismay with being absorbed into the Russian military as contract soldiers.

## Russian diplomat flies to Beijing for talks

**Taipei (Taiwan):** A top Russian diplomat flew to Beijing for talks with the Chinese government on Sunday, just a day after a rebellion by a Russian mercenary commander fizzled out. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko met with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang to discuss "international and regional issues of common concern," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a one-line statement on its

website. Russia and China, while not formal allies, have maintained close ties throughout Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, which China has refused to condemn.

Rudenko's visit comes after Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of private mercenary army Wagner Group, ordered his troops to march on Moscow in the greatest challenge to President Vladimir Putin in his more than two decades in power. AP

# China, SL FMs discuss economic crisis

PTI ■ BEIJING

Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Ali Sabry on Sunday held talks with his Chinese counterpart Qin Gang here on the future trajectory of the bilateral ties and his country's serious economic crisis leading to its foreign debt default.

Sabry is visiting China for the first time after Sri Lanka's debt crisis led to massive political and economic turmoil in the island nation last year.

An official readout of the meeting between the two leaders quoted Qin calling for promoting the joint construction of high-quality Belt and Road (BRI) projects.

China will continue to assist in Sri Lanka's economic and social development and the improvement of people's livelihood to the best of its capacity, the readout quoted Qin as saying. China is the biggest lender to Sri Lanka with its loans accounting for ten per cent of Colombo's total foreign debt which exceeds USD 51 billion.

In March this year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) extended a nearly USD 3 billion bailout facility to debt-ridden Sri Lanka to help stabilise the country's economy after it was jolted by a devastating economic crisis last year.

Debt-ridden Sri Lanka is still struggling to normalise its crisis-hit economy after it declared its first-ever debt default in April last year.

India has rushed about USD four billion in assistance in the form of line credit and other modes to help Sri Lanka which has virtually declared insolvency and defaulted on all

foreign loans. While backing the IMF loans for Sri Lanka, China was silent on reports that it will not back the global lender's debt reduction targets for it to clear the loan and has offered a two-year moratorium on repayment of its loans by Colombo.

The official readout of the Qin-Sabry talks made no mention of any discussions on the issue of the loan.

According to official figures, Sri Lanka's total debt is USD 83.6 billion, of which foreign debt amounts to USD 42.6 billion and domestic debt amounts to USD 42 billion.

In April 2022, Sri Lanka declared its first-ever debt default, the worst economic crisis since its independence from Britain in 1948, triggered by forex shortages that sparked public protests.

## Lanka MPs told to stay put in Colombo

**Colombo (PTI):** Sri Lanka's ruling party parliamentarians have been asked to remain in Colombo for a crucial unscheduled session of Parliament on the decision on Domestic Debt Restructuring, sources from the ruling party said. Sri Lanka is currently negotiating with its external creditors on debt restructuring as required by the International Monetary Fund's bailout conditions. Before the next review in September, Sri Lanka has been asked by the Washington-based global lender to reach an agreement with all its creditors. It was said that external creditors were adamant that the government announce

its Domestic Debt Restructuring (DDR) plan in advance. In March, the IMF extended a nearly USD 3 billion bailout facility over a period of four years to debt-ridden Sri Lanka to help stabilise its economy after it was jolted by a devastating economic crisis last year.

According to media speculation, the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) ruling party members are expected to vote in a special session of parliament which is likely to happen next weekend. The government is expected to announce its plan for domestic debt restructuring (DDR) in the ongoing economic crisis.

## Airstrike hits busy market in Syria, kills at least nine



**Jisr Al-Shughur (Syria):** An airstrike early on Sunday over a busy vegetable market in northwestern Syria killed at least nine people, activists and local first responders said.

Activists and Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that Russia, a top ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, launched the strike over the strategic opposition-held town of Jisr al-Shughur near the Turkish border.

The strike comes a day after Moscow's top mercenary group briefly revolted against Russian President Vladimir Putin. Opposition-held northwestern Syria's civil defense organisation known as the White Helmets said over 30 people were wounded, and expected the death toll to increase.

"We're hearing that the critically wounded have been dying after reaching the hospital," Ahmad Yaziji of the White Helmets told The Associated Press. "It was a targeted attack in the main vegetable market where farmers from around northern Syria gather." Farmers rushed the wounded to the hospital in bloodied vegetable trucks, while activists shared urgent calls for blood donations.

Neither Syria nor Russia commented on the airstrike, though Damascus says strikes in the northwest province targeted armed insurgent groups. Northwestern Syria is mostly held by the militant group Hayat Tahrir al Sham, as well as Turkish-backed forces. AP

# 'US govt has 'vital role' in opposing abortion'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Former President Donald Trump said the federal government should play a "vital role" opposing abortion but again failed to provide specifics on what national restrictions he would support if elected to the White House again. Trump's remarks to a group of influential evangelicals Saturday on the anniversary of the Supreme Court overturning the national right to an abortion stood in contrast to that of his former vice president and 2024 rival Mike Pence.

Pence, speaking at the same conference a day earlier, challenged every GOP presidential candidate to support the passage of a national ban on abortions at least as early as 15 weeks of pregnancy.

Trump, the GOP front-runner, has been reluctant to endorse a national ban and has suggested restrictions should be left to the states. He has even suggested that pushing for increased abortion restrictions would be a political liability for Republicans, despite his three Supreme Court nominees making up the majority of justices who voted to overturn Roe v. Wade last year.

Trump, in his speech before the Faith & Freedom Coalition's annual



conference, continued to offer a muddled answer. He said he believes "the greatest progress is now being made in the states, where everyone wanted to be."

"One of the reasons they wanted Roe v. Wade terminated," he said, "is to bring it back into the states where a lot of people feel strongly the greatest progress for pro-life is now being made."

But the former president also added, "There of course remains a vital role for the federal government in protecting unborn life."

Trump said he supports three exceptions to abortion restrictions in

cases involving rape and incest or when the life of a mother is in danger.

He took full credit for his role in the overturning of the landmark ruling and said he was "proud to be the most pro-life president in American history."

Though white evangelical Christians were initially reluctant to back Trump in 2016, his promises to appoint justices to the court who would overturn Roe — and the ruling's eventual overturning — have earned him deep support in the evangelical movement.

As he took the stage Saturday, he received a standing ovation from the crowd of hundreds, with some attendees standing on their chairs to see him enter.

The enthusiasm was markedly higher for Trump than it was the previous morning, when Pence and a number of other presidential hopefuls addressed the conference.

One candidate, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, was met with boos when he criticised Trump in his remarks Friday.

On Saturday night, the crowd broke into sustained chants of "We want Trump!" halfway through the former president's remarks.

"Were your other candidates treated this way?" Trump said with a smile.

Trump, in his remarks, promised that if elected to the presidency again, he would appoint "appoint rock-solid conservative judges in the mold" of Justice Clarence Thomas and former Justice Antonin Scalia.

He also repeated false claims that he's made before that abortion rights supporters want to "kill a baby" in the ninth month of pregnancy or even after a birth.

The Republican former president also vowed that before Election Day next year, he will release the list of names of potential justices he would consider appointing to the Supreme Court.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, seen as Trump's closest rival for the GOP nomination, has made the promise of an even more conservative Supreme Court part of his pitch to attempt to differentiate himself from Trump.

DeSantis, who addressed the Faith and Freedom conference Friday, declared that if elected president, he would nominate and appoint Supreme Court justices in the mold of Thomas and Justice Samuel Alito, who authored the ruling in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organisation case last year that ended constitutional protections for abortion.

## Mahadevan receives honorary doctorate

**London (PTI):** Award-winning singer-composer Shankar Mahadevan has been conferred an honorary doctorate by Birmingham City University (BCU) in England in recognition of his contribution to music and the arts. The 56-year-old singer, who is a member of the accomplished Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy trio of music composers, received the honour from the university's Vice-Chancellor Professor Philip Plowden at a ceremony in Birmingham on Saturday. "Globally acclaimed Bollywood singer, composer and actor Shankar Mahadevan has been awarded an honorary doctorate from Birmingham City University in recognition of his outstanding contributions to music and the arts," the university said.

## UK-India week kick-starts with Young Leaders Forum

PTI ■ LONDON

BJP Tamil Nadu state president BK Annamalai, singer-songwriter Armaan Malik, London Deputy Mayor for Business Rajesh Agrawal and prominent entrepreneurs and professionals from India and the UK came together for a Young Leaders Forum in London, which kick-started UK-India Week 2023. The annual event, organised by UK-headquartered India Global Forum (IGF) to bring together senior ministers, policymakers and business chiefs to explore bilateral ties across all spheres of collaboration over the course of six days, opened with the theme of "Empowering Future Changemakers" on Saturday. The student-led gathering at the Nehru Centre in London covered topics ranging from Western media perceptions of Indian democracy and prospects

of dual citizenship for the Indian diaspora to employment opportunities in an artificial intelligence (AI) landscape. "Democracy is heavily intertwined in our DNA," said Annamalai, in response to a question about perceptions of Indian democracy in the West.

"Indian politics operates in an Indian way, to evaluate with a Western lens will naturally fail... If anyone wants to protest in India, they can block a highway for nine months. That is how deep our democracy is. We allow our protesters to do that, even Britain does not," he said. "If someone thinks dual citizenship isn't possible, I'll say wait for another few years. We are open to listening to you, we will listen to you," said the BJP leader, in response to another question. Singer-songwriter Armaan Malik, behind several chart-

toppers in Bollywood, was asked about the role he sees AI playing in his field.

"I think we are at a stage in music where we really don't know what all AI has in store... I just feel like it shouldn't replace the whole art of songwriting," said the singer. Fellow songwriter Ananya Birla, daughter of prominent Indian industrialist Kumar Mangalam Birla, spoke of her motivation behind setting up a microfinance initiative. "Having an impact on this world beyond the economic gain is important to the youth... I felt guilty that my family that had money could access money easily from banks, but people who really needed money couldn't access it because they didn't have physical collateral," said the founder of Svatantara Microfin, which provides microfinance to women entrepreneurs in rural India.

## Greeks vote in 2<sup>nd</sup> election in 5 weeks

AP ■ ATHENS

Greeks headed to the polls for the second time in less than two months on Sunday, with the conservative party in power a strong favourite to win with a wide majority after a campaign focused on economic growth and security.

The vote is overshadowed by a major shipwreck just over a week ago that left hundreds of migrants dead or missing off the coast of western Greece.

But the disaster is unlikely to significantly affect the overall outcome as Greeks are expected to focus on domestic economic issues.

Conservative leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis, 55, is eyeing a second term as prime minister after his New Democracy party won by a huge margin in May elections — but fell short of gaining enough parliamentary seats to form a government. With a new electoral law now favour-



ing the winning party with bonus seats, he is hoping to form a strong majority in the 300-member parliament.

His main rival is Alexis Tsipras, 48, who leads the left-wing Syriza party and served as prime minister from 2015 to 2019 — some of the most turbulent years of Greece's nearly decade-long financial crisis.

Tsipras fared dismally in the May elections, coming a

distant second, 20 percentage points behind New Democracy. He has since been trying to rally his voter base, a task complicated by splinter parties formed by some of his former associates. Sunday's vote comes after hundreds of migrants died and went missing in southern Greece when an overcrowded fishing trawler heading from Libya to Italy capsized and sank. The shipwreck drew

criticism over how Greek authorities handled the rescue, as well as over the country's restrictive migration policy.

But the disaster, one of the worst in the Mediterranean in recent years, has done little to dent Mitsotakis' 20-point lead in opinion polls over Tsipras, with the economy at the forefront of most voters' concerns.

As Greece gradually recovers from its brutal financial crisis, voters appear happy to return to power a prime minister who delivered economic growth and lowered unemployment.

"Our expectations are that the country will continue the path of development that it has had in recent years," said insurance company employee Konstantinos, who arrived early in the morning at a polling station in northern Athens with his newly-wed bride Marietta, still in her wedding dress, straight from their wedding reception.

## Taliban leader: Women are provided with 'comfortable and prosperous life in Af'

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The supreme leader of the Taliban released a message on Sunday claiming that his government has taken the necessary steps for the betterment of women's lives in Afghanistan, where women are banned from public life and work and girls' education is severely curtailed. The statement from Hibatullah Akhundzada was made public ahead of the Eid al-Adha holiday, which will be celebrated later this week in Afghanistan and other Islamic countries.

Akhundzada, an Islamic scholar, rarely appears in public or leaves the Taliban heartland in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province. He surrounds himself with other religious scholars and allies who oppose education and work for women.

In his Eid message Akhundzada said that under the rule of the Islamic Emirate, concrete measures have been taken to save women from many traditional oppressions, including forced marriages,



"and their Shariah rights have been protected".

Moreover, "necessary steps have been taken for the betterment of women as half of society in order to provide them with a comfortable and prosperous life according to the Islamic Shariah", the message continued.

Lately, Akhundzada appears to have taken a stronger hand in directing domestic policy, banning girls' education after the sixth grade and barring Afghan women from public life and work, especially for nongovernmental organisations and the

United Nations.

The message was distributed in five languages: Arabic, Dari, English, Pashto and Urdu. Akhundzada said the negative aspects of the previous 20-year occupation related to women's wearing of the hijab and "misguidance" will end soon.

"The status of women as a free and dignified human being has been restored and all institutions have been obliged to help women in securing marriage, inheritance and other rights," he added. Despite initial promises of a more moderate rule than during their previous

stint in power in the 1990s, the Taliban have imposed harsh measures since seizing Afghanistan in August 2021 as US and NATO forces were pulling out.

They have barred women from public spaces, like parks and gyms, and cracked down on media freedoms. The measures have triggered a fierce international uproar, increasing the country's isolation at a time when its economy has collapsed — and worsening a humanitarian crisis. Akhundzada reiterated his call for other countries to stop interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

He said the Taliban government wants good political and economic relations with the world, especially with Islamic countries, and has fulfilled its responsibility in this regard. Akhundzada's message also condemned Israel's behaviour toward the Palestinians and called on the people and government of Sudan to set aside their differences and work together for unity and brotherhood.

## 1 killed, many hurt as roller coaster derails in Sweden park

**Stockholm (AP):** One person was killed and several others injured when a roller coaster derailed in Stockholm on Sunday, Swedish TV reported.

Park officials told public broadcaster SVT that that one of the carriages on the Jetline roller coaster derailed and fell to the ground at the Grona Lund amusement park. "It is incredibly tragic and shocking," park spokeswoman Annika Troselius told SVT. "Unfortunately we have been informed that one person is killed and many are injured." Police said seven people, both children and adults, were hospitalized after the accident. The amusement park was evacuated to facilitate the work of rescue crews. SVT reporter Jenny Lagerstedt, who was standing in line for another ride, said the carriage fell from a high altitude with passengers inside. "Suddenly I heard a metallic thud and then the rides started to shake," she said.

## Man convicted of killing Sikh taxi driver in dispute over fare in UK

**London (PTI):** A man has been convicted of killing a Sikh taxi driver in central England in 2022, following an argument over the method of payment of his fare.

Tomasz Margol, 36, was found guilty at Wolverhampton Crown Court this week of 59-year-old Anakh Singh's manslaughter in an incident which occurred in October 2022. He will be sentenced for the crime next month.

"This was a senseless and tragic act of violence," said Detective Inspector (DI) Michelle Thurgood, from the Wolverhampton Police CID.

"Singh was a law-abiding man of good character who was simply trying to do his job. Our thoughts remain with Singh's family at this difficult time," she said.

Singh had picked up Margol in his taxi before the two got into an argument over the method of payment for the journey.

"This escalated to Margol subjecting Singh to a sickening assault including headbutting, punching and kicking him while he was on the floor," the police said.

Having carried out CCTV enquiries, officers identified Margol and arrested him at an address a few miles away later that day. When he was arrested, Margol made a significant comment to the arresting officers: "It's about what happened today... about the beating."

Anakh Singh's family paid tribute to the "loving husband, father and a well-respected member of the community".

"This loss has left us heartbroken and has forever changed our lives. We miss him dearly. We would also like to thank everyone who has supported us during this tough time," they said.

## 'South Africa government fully supports yoga'

**Johannesburg (PTI):** South African Deputy President Paul Mashatile has hailed the Consulate General of India in Johannesburg for setting a record for the continent of Africa as over 6,000 enthusiasts filled the grounds of the iconic Wanderers Stadium here to participate in a yoga session.

The yoga session was held in the South African city on Saturday as part of International Yoga Day, which is celebrated around the world on June 21. Amid loud applause from thousands of participants sitting on their colourful yoga mats, Mashatile said the South African government fully supported yoga. He hailed Consul General Kumar and his team for having worked hard to bring together different communities to participate in the yoga session. "We are going to continue to support this event with the Consul General and others. Our relationship with India dates back to the time of Mahatma Gandhi when he started his (Satyagraha) movement here in South Africa more than a century ago in 1893.

# China's military threat in SCS increasing significantly: Wu

PTI ■ TAIPEI

The Chinese threat in the South China Sea is increasing significantly as a large number of armed maritime militias are operating in the region at China's behest besides its deployment of an array of warships and other military assets, Taiwanese Foreign Minister Jaushieh Joseph Wu has said, calling for united efforts by all stakeholders to deal with the challenge.

Wu also cited China's growing military activities in the Indian Ocean Region including its attempt to control key ports in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Djibouti and hoped that New Delhi is paying "close attention" to it.

In an interaction with an international media group, the Taiwanese foreign minister said the countries having stakes in the South China Sea must join hands in combating the challenge emanating from China's rising military muscle-flexing in the region and that Taiwan is ready to share its experience in dealing with the Chinese threat.

There have been growing global concerns over China's sweeping claims of sovereignty over all of the South China Sea, a huge source of hydrocarbons. Several countries in the region including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei, have counterclaims.

"India is also facing a threat in its northern borders with China. It is not only the military threat coming from the North; but it is also the Indian Ocean that India might face some challenge," Wu said.

The Taiwanese foreign minister said time has come for democratic countries to join hands to face the common



challenges from China including through sharing of resources with each other.

"China is trying to secure ports along the Indian Ocean — in Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and all the way to Djibouti. The lessons that we learnt from port Hambantota in Sri Lanka are significant to us," he said.

China considers Taiwan as part of its territory. The self-governed democratic island has positioned itself as a democratic power that is ready to contribute its part in the world's fight against China's expansionism. China's ruling Communist Party says Taiwan is a province of the country and has repeatedly warned that the island must unite with China, by force if necessary. Beijing has threatened to attack if Taiwan declares formal independence or delays talks on unification.

Wu said China was responsible for the economic crisis in Sri Lanka as well as that Beijing does not care about the financial situations in these countries. It is repeating the same model in Myanmar and some

other countries.

"We should pay close attention to these developments. This is also something I am sure the Indian government is paying very close attention to and in that regard, I would like to say that the federal democracies facing common challenges from the PRC (People's Republic of China), need to work with each other," he said.

The Taiwanese foreign minister said the growing Chinese military activities in the South China Sea should be a matter of concern to all countries in the region.

"If you look at China's naval activities in the South China Sea, it is something for all of us to feel worried about. From the data that I can see, from the briefings that I received, I can say that there are more than a dozen Chinese military vessels that are patrolling the South China Sea region.

"And it is not only the military vessels. China also has a large number of maritime militia with fishing boats. There are

hundreds of them and they listen to orders of the PLA (People's Liberation Army)," he said.

The Taiwanese foreign minister said the Philippines had plenty of problems with the maritime militia as hundreds of them in fishing boats come and surround some areas, adding it is a "hard problem for the Philippines."

He said there is a possibility of Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia facing the same problem and that "this requires all of us to find ways to deal with the challenges posed by the Chinese in the maritime domain."

Wu also referred to China seizing control of Sri Lanka's southern deep-sea port of Hambantota and said there are lessons to be learnt from it, adding Beijing is also responsible for causing financial difficulties for Colombo.

"There has been a relentless military threat against Taiwan. If you see the situation in South China Sea, China has been flexing its military muscle, especially trying to intercept military vessels or surveillance aircraft coming from other countries in an undemocratic and unprofessional manner, creating tensions in the South China Sea. The tensions in the South China Sea have been rising tremendously," he said.

In 2017, Sri Lanka signed a USD 1.1 billion deal with China for the control and development of Hambantota port for 99 years. The deal triggered concerns in India as well as many neighbouring countries.

India does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan but both sides have trade and people-to-people relations.

# Milchan testifies at Netanyahu trial over 'supply line' of gifts

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Hollywood producer Arnon Milchan was testifying Sunday at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption trial to answer questions about an alleged "supply line" of champagne and cigars funneled to the Israeli leader and his wife said to have been in exchange for help with Milchan's personal and business needs.

Milchan, who appeared by videoconference from the English city of Brighton, near where he is based, is a key witness whose testimony is essential for prosecutors who are trying to prove that Netanyahu committed fraud and breach of trust in one of three cases brought against him.

Prosecutors hope Milchan's testimony, which extends through this week and next, will paint a picture of plush favours granted to Netanyahu and his wife that allegedly spurred the Israeli leader to use his position of power to advance Milchan's interests.

The defence will try to lay out their case that Netanyahu wasn't acting in Milchan's personal interests and that the gifts were just friendly gestures. Prosecution and defense lawyers are questioning Milchan in a hotel conference room in Brighton.

While no journalists are allowed to be present there, Netanyahu's wife Sara, on a private visit to Britain, will sit in.

Milchan's testimony, expected to last six hours a day, is being aired in a Jerusalem courtroom for judges and other lawyers — who can also ask questions of him — and for journalists and other attendees to watch. Milchan is not charged in the case.



Israeli Channel 13 aired footage of Sara Netanyahu and Milchan walking separately up the stairs in the hotel. A screen was set up in the Jerusalem courtroom to air the testimony. According to the indictment, Milchan, whose production credits include such hits as "Pretty Woman" and "12 Years a Slave," gave Netanyahu and his wife boxes of cigars and crates of champagne over a period of several years that, along with jewelry, amounted to a value of nearly USD 200,000 — what the indictment describes as a "supply line" of lavish gifts.

The indictment accuses Netanyahu of using his influential perch to assist Milchan to secure a US visa extension by drawing on his diplomatic contacts, among them former Secretary of State John Kerry.

Prosecutors also accuse Netanyahu of working to push legislation that would have granted Milchan millions in tax breaks.

"Considering the many links between the defendant Netanyahu and Milchan, the defendant Netanyahu should have entirely avoided dealing

with Milchan's affairs," the indictment says.

It says Netanyahu and the Israeli-born Milchan had had ties since 1999.

Milchan is testifying in one of three cases being brought against Netanyahu. The other two, for which he is charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust, accuse Netanyahu of exchanging regulatory favours with powerful media moguls for more positive coverage.

Netanyahu, who is expected to attend some of Milchan's sessions, denies wrongdoing, claiming he is the victim of a witch hunt orchestrated by a liberal media and a biased justice system.

Netanyahu's legal woes have dogged him politically, putting his fitness to rule while on trial at the center of a political crisis that sent Israelis to the polls for five times in under four years. They also have fuelled accusations by critics that Netanyahu is pushing a contentious government plan to overhaul Israel's judiciary as a way to escape the charges. Netanyahu denies those charges.

# Israel PM briefly freezes wind turbine project

Jerusalem (AP): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered a brief freeze in construction on a wind turbine project in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights that set off a rare clash between Druze residents and police.

Netanyahu said late Saturday he agreed to a pause on the project during this week's Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday, which is meant to allow time for talks to defuse the crisis. The project is expected to resume next week. A statement from Netanyahu's office said he made the decision based on advice from security officials.

The Druze oppose the plan, which would install more than two dozen 200-metre tall turbines throughout their land. The landowners said the turbines will harm their agricultural output and that the energy company behind the project didn't consult with them in good faith, a claim the company denies.

Last week, thousands of residents demonstrated against the project, storming a police station, throwing stones and fireworks, setting tires on fire, vandalising police cars, blocking roads and even shooting live fire into the air, according to police.

Israel captured the Golan, a strategic plateau overlooking northern Israel, from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel subsequently annexed the area in a move that was recognised by former US President Donald Trump in 2019. But most of the international community considers the area to be occupied territory. While Druze leaders still profess allegiance to Syria, relations with Israel are normally good. The Golan is a popular vacation destination for Israelis and is filled with hotels and restaurants, and most residents speak Hebrew fluently. Violent clashes with Israeli authorities are rare.

# Sikh man shot by gunmen in Peshawar

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Pakistan police on Sunday arrested some suspects in connection with the murder of a Sikh man here who was shot dead by unidentified gunmen, in a probable case of targeted killing.

Manmohan Singh, 35, was on his way to the interior city area of Peshawar from Rasheed Garhi, a suburban locality of Peshawar when some armed men attacked him near Guldara Chowk Kakshal, which comes under the jurisdiction of Yakka Toot police station. This is the latest incident of targeted attacks against minority communities in Pakistan. Though Singh was shifted to a hospital, he was pronounced dead by the doctors, police said.

Some suspects have been arrested in the murder of Singh who was a 'Hakeem' (Unani medicine practitioner), Ashfaq Anwar, the city police chief in Peshawar told reporters.

The police chief said that they are close to arresting the main accused involved in the murder. Police have been directed to ensure the protection of life and property of law-abiding citizens in the province. They are investigating the case from different angles.

This is the second incident

of armed attack on a Sikh man in the Yakka Toot area in the last 48 hours. A Sikh man was injured after he sustained bullet wounds on his legs on Friday.

The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) is investigating the armed attack on Sikh trader Tarlok Singh who was injured in the attack on Friday.

The police believe that two attacks on Sikh men in Peshawar within 48 hours may be target killings but the real facts would come after thorough investigations.

A Sikh businessman was shot dead in the city by unknown assailants in March.

About 15,000 Sikhs live in Peshawar, mostly in the Jogan Shah neighbourhood of the provincial capital Peshawar.

of the members of the Sikh community in Peshawar are involved in business, while some also have pharmacies.

In September last year, a well-known Sikh 'Hakeem' (Unani medicine practitioner) was shot dead by unidentified gunmen inside his clinic in Peshawar.

In 2018, Charanjit Singh, a prominent Sikh community member, was killed by unknown men in Peshawar. Similarly, news channel anchor Ravinder Singh was killed in 2010 in the city.

# Hajj pilgrims perform final rituals in Mecca before heading to Mina

AP ■ MECCA

Pilgrims streamed into Mecca's Grand Mosque on Saturday to perform their final rituals before heading to Mina in preparation for the Hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam and one of the largest religious gatherings in the world.

They moved through the white marble courtyards of Islam's holiest site to perform the tawaf, the walking circuit around the Kaaba, the cube-shaped structure covered in a black, gold-embroidered cloth, their fervent recitations ringing through the air.

People on the ground floor closest to the Kaaba shuffled due to the sheer number of participants. Those on the upper floors were able to

walk more briskly, even run. Pilgrims raised their hands in supplication, took selfies or video, and phoned their relatives as they performed the tawaf.

They then walked or ran between two hills in a reenactment of Hagar's search for water for her son, Ismail, a story that occurs in different forms in Muslim, Christian and Jewish traditions. Pilgrims must enter a state of spiritual purity, known as ihram, for the Hajj.

Men wear seamless white robes, a rule intended to promote unity among rich and poor. Women cover their body and hair.

In between rituals and the five daily prayers, which bring the area to a solemn standstill,

pilgrims sought out shade, snacked and flocked to the many shops and air-conditioned malls encircling the Grand Mosque to relax before the arduous days ahead. Saudi Arabia has restored full pilgrim capacity for this year's Hajj, following three years of dramatically reduced numbers due to the pandemic, with more than 2 million Muslims expected to take part. "I think this year (the) crowd is too much" said Mahboub Morshed, a 42-year-old software engineer from Bangladesh, referring to the thinner attendance of previous years. "But the government and this management (Ministry of Hajj and Umrah) is trying to manage this very smoothly."

# Pakistan police arrest nine terror suspects from Punjab province

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan police have arrested nine alleged terrorists belonging to ISIS and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from different districts in Punjab province who were planning to target key installations and some religious place, an official said on Sunday.

A CTD spokesperson said it conducted 33 intelligence-based operations in different

districts of Punjab during the last week and arrested nine terrorists with weapons and explosives. The terrorists were arrested from Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalpur and Multan districts of Punjab.

"The terrorists wanted to target important installations and some religious places in different cities of Punjab," the spokesperson said.

The CTD spokesperson

# Guatemalans to elect new President

Guatemala City: Guatemalans will elect a new president and vice president Sunday as well as fill all congress seats and hundreds of local posts after one of the most tumultuous electoral seasons in the Central American nation's recent history. A little more than 9 million people were registered to vote, but many Guatemalans expressed disappointment with their presidential choices after three opposition candidates were excluded by authorities. A large number of null ballots were expected, and experts said a low turnout was likely.

With none of the 22 presidential candidates polling near the required 50 per cent threshold for winning outright, a second round of voting on August 20 between the top two finishers was almost certain. President Alejandro Giammattei made a push Friday to ease doubts about the electoral process and the widespread complaints.AP

# Seven killed in bus collision in Pakistan's Sindh province

Islamabad (PTI): At least seven people were killed and 42 others injured in a collision between two passenger buses in the Sindh province of Pakistan on Sunday, officials said.

Benazirabad Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP) Mohammad Younis Chandio said the accident took place on the Mehran Highway near Nawabshah around 4 am when two passenger buses en route from Karachi and Peshawar collided with each other. The injured are being treated at the People's University of Medical and Health Sciences, Dawn News

# Seven killed in bus collision in Pakistan's Sindh province

quoting him as saying. According to the DIGP, the collision occurred because of the high speed of the vehicles. He added that the Mehran Highway was closed to traffic after the accident and vehicles were diverted towards the National Highway.

Earlier this month, at least 13 people, including five women, were killed and 31 others injured when a bus veered off the Islamabad-Lahore Motorway and overturned near Kallar Kahar. Traffic accidents are common in Pakistan due to poor maintenance of roads and vehicles.

Public Notice: This is to inform the Public at large that Smt. Shikha Rathan W/o. Sh. Arun Rathan is the Title Holder in possession of DDA Built Up Freehold Property Bearing Plot No. 58, Third Floor, Category-II, Wazirpur Residential Scheme, Ashok Vihar, Phase-II, New Delhi-110052 addressing 90.00 sq. mtrs., hereinafter referred to as 'Schedule Property' vide Conveyance Deed dated 31.12.2019, registered as Registration No. 19926, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 75/10, pp. 57-60 on 31.12.2019 in the Office of the Sub Registrar-VII, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi. That the Original Documents w.r.t. the Schedule Property, i.e. (i) Allotment Letter dated 05.05.86, (ii) Offer to Possession Letter dated 23.07.87, (iii) NOC for Water & Electricity dated 23.07.87, (iv) Possession Slip, (v) General Power of Attorney (registered) dated 22.06.06, have been lost, misplaced and are untraceable as date, in lieu of which Information Report dated 04.10.2019 bearing LR No. 1162775/2019 was filed with Delhi Police. This notice is thus issued to Public at large, i.e. any Person(s), Company(ies), Authority(ies), Society(ies), Organisation(s), Financial Institution(s), Bank(s), HUF(s) etc. having any knowledge, custody or possession of the above mentioned lost/ misplaced original documents or otherwise having any claims, rights, title, interests, possession etc. in the Schedule Property by way of Ownership, Succession, Inheritance, Sale, Mortgage, Exchange, Charge, Lien, Gift, Trust, Encumbrance etc., or objection to the sale of the Schedule Property presently intended by the Title Holder, may come forward with supporting documents, to be delivered to the undersigned within 15 days from the date of this Publication, post expiration of which, any claim(s) or objection(s), if raised or received, shall be treated as null & void and as waived, and the Title Holder shall proceed to sell the Schedule Property as presently intended.

Parvish Kumar (Advocate) 27, Basement, Shivshikha Vihar, Delhi-92. Address Number: 353, Saket, New Delhi. Cont. No: 9999228183

Public Notice: To be known to all that 1, SANDEEP SHOREWALA S/O LATE SH. PADAM NATH SOREWALA, R/o H. NO. AC-50, TAGORE GARDEN, NEW DELHI have applied for issuance of Certified copies vide File No.E.3 (306)63/LAB in DDA. The original documents, i.e. DEED AND ALLOTMENT LETTER, POSSESSION LETTER, SITE POSSESSION AND SITE PLAN of the above said property has been lost. An NCR/LR/NO.584559/2023 dated 23.06.2023 to this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. 9810376721 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (LAB) G or Director(Land), C Block, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi

Public Notice: RAJESH MAHNA (ADVOCATE) G-47, Masjid Moth, Greater Kailash-II, New Delhi-110048, Ph: 7373900606

COURT NOTICE: IN THE COURT OF Shri Vikash Judicial Magistrate - 1st Class, Gurugram M/s IIFL Home Finance Ltd. VS Myraj M CIS No. 28249/2018 CNR No. HRGR03-042363-2018 Next Date: 17-07-2023 Publication issued to: Myraj M: S/o Murgesan S P, Address Door No. 6/60 Srinivasam Palayam Mariaman Temple Karuvelappattai Tiruchengode Namakkal 637304. Also at: Door No. 6/60 Old SF No. 271 part new SF No. 417/5 patta no. 320 Srinivasam College Karuvelappattai Village Tiruchengode Taluk 637304. In above titled case, the accused could not be served. It is ordered that accused should appear in person or through counsel on 17-07-2023 at 10.00 a.m. For details logon to https://highcourtdc.gov.in/?trs=district\_notice&district=Gurugram Dated, this day of 14-06-2023. Judicial Magistrate - 1st Class Gurugram

COURT NOTICE: IN THE COURT OF Shri Vikash Judicial Magistrate - 1st Class, Gurugram M/s IIFL Home Finance Ltd. VS M Balamurugan CIS No. 8764/2018 CNR No. HRGR03-019960-2018 Next Date: 14-07-2023 Publication issued to: M Balamurugan: S/o 1/386 Chennamalaikavundam Pudur Sembiyannalur Avinashi Govt. School Coimbatore. In above titled case, the accused could not be served. It is ordered that accused should appear in person or through counsel on 14-07-2023 at 10.00 a.m. For details logon to https://highcourtdc.gov.in/?trs=district\_notice&district=Gurugram Dated, this day of 09-06-2023. Judicial Magistrate - 1st Class Gurugram

COURT NOTICE: IN THE COURT OF Shri Vikash Judicial Magistrate - 1st Class, Gurugram M/s IIFL Home Finance Ltd. VS Sudhanshu Agrawal CIS No. 8766/2018 CNR No. HRGR03-019963-2018 Next Date: 14-07-2023 Publication issued to: Sudhanshu Agrawal: R/o H. No. 41 Old Ashoka Garden Prabhath Petrol Pump Bhopal. In above titled case, the accused could not be served. It is ordered that accused should appear in person or through counsel on 14-07-2023 at 10.00 a.m. For details logon to https://highcourtdc.gov.in/?trs=district\_notice&district=Gurugram Dated, this day of 09-06-2023. Judicial Magistrate - 1st Class Gurugram

# Previous passengers recall ill-fated Titan

AP ■ BOSTON

Talk to someone who rode on the Titan submersible, and they're likely to mention a technological glitch: the propulsion system failed or communications with people on the surface cut out. Maybe there were problems balancing weights on board.

They are also likely to mention Stockton Rush, the OceanGate Expeditions CEO, who died on the fatal trip this week. He has been described by past passengers as both a meticulous planner and an overconfident pioneer.

In the wake of the Titan's fatal implosion near the Titanic shipwreck on Sunday, some people who embarked on the company's deep-sea expedi-

tions described experiences that foreshadowed the tragedy and look back on their decision to dive as "a bit naive."

But others expressed confidence and said that they felt they were "in good hands" nearly 13,000 feet (3,962 meters) below the ocean's surface. "I 100% knew this was going to happen," said Brian Weed, a camera operator for the Discovery Channel's "Expedition Unknown" show, who has felt sick to his stomach since the sub's disappearance Sunday. Weed went on a Titan test dive in May 2021 in Washington state's Puget Sound as it prepared for its first expeditions to the sunken Titanic. Weed and his colleagues were preparing to join OceanGate Expeditions to film the famous

shipwreck later that summer.

They quickly encountered problems: The propulsion system stopped working. The computers failed to respond. Communications shut down.

Rush, the OceanGate CEO, tried rebooting and troubleshooting the vessel on its touch screens.

"You could tell that he was flustered and not really happy with the performance," Weed said. "But he was trying to make light of it, trying to make excuses." They were barely 100 feet (30 meters) deep in calm water, which begged the question: "How is this thing going to go to 12,500 feet — and do we want to be on board?" Weed said. Following the aborted trip, the production company hired a consultant with the US

Navy to vet the Titan.

He provided a mostly favorable report, but warned that there wasn't enough research on the Titan's carbon-fiber hull, Weed said. There also was an engineering concern that the hull would not maintain its effectiveness over the course of multiple dives.

Weed said Rush was a charismatic salesman who really believed in the submersible's technology — and was willing to put his life on the line for it.

"It was looking more and more like we weren't going to be the first guys down to film the Titanic — we were going to be maybe the 10th," Weed said of the possible Titan expedition. "I felt like every time (the vessel) goes down, it's going to get weaker and weaker. And that's

a little bit like playing Russian roulette."

For work projects, Weed has swum with sharks, rappelled into remote caves and snowshoed through Siberia. But he and his colleagues pulled out of the dive to the Titanic.

"I didn't have a good feeling about it," he said. "It was a really hard choice to make."

Mike Reiss, a writer for "The Simpsons" television show, said he had positive experiences on the dives he made with OceanGate, including to the Titanic wreck site.

"When my wife first came to me with this (idea), I said to her, 'Well, this sounds like a fun way to get killed,'" Reiss said. "I knew (the risks) going in there. I always felt I was in good hands."

# India to remove customs duties on 8 US products

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will remove additional duties on eight US products, including chickpeas, lentils and apples, which were imposed in 2019 in response to America's measure to increase tariffs on certain steel and aluminium products, government sources said.

During the recent state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the US, both countries decided the termination of six WTO (World Trade Organisation) disputes and the removal of these retaliatory tariffs on certain US products.

In 2018, the US imposed an import duty of 25 per cent on steel products and 10 per cent on certain aluminium products on grounds of national security. In retaliation, India in June 2019 imposed customs duties on 28 American products.

The duties on these eight US-origin products would revert to the current applied most-favoured-nation (MFN) rate after India notifies the rescinding of additional duties, one of the sources, who is aware of the development, said.



The tariffs would end in 90 days.

As part of the agreement, India will be removing additional duty on chickpeas (10 per cent), lentils (20 per cent), almonds fresh or dried (Rs 7 per kg), almonds shelled (Rs 20 per kg), walnuts (20 per cent), apples fresh (20 per cent), boric acid (20 per cent), and Diagnostic Regents (20 per cent), the sources added.

The duties were increased on 28 US products in 2019 in retaliation to the US decision to increase duties on certain steel and aluminium products.

US lawmakers and industry leaders have welcomed the announcement of an agree-

ment with India to end these duties.

The US is the largest trading partner of India. In 2022-23, the bilateral goods trade increased to USD 128.8 billion as against USD 119.5 billion in 2021-22.

"India has announced it is lifting retaliatory tariffs that all but shut down the Indian market for Washington's more than 1,400 apple growers and now our growers will once again have access to this USD 120 million market," Cantwell, the Democratic Party lawmaker, has said in a statement.

India was Washington's second export market for apples.

# Will strive to get CPI down to 4%; El Nino challenge for food inflation: Das

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Governor Shaktikanta Das has said the Reserve Bank will strive to get headline inflation to its 4 per cent target but flagged El Nino as a challenge to its efforts.

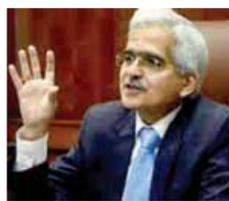
In an exclusive interview with PTI Bhasha at his office here, Das exuded confidence that the economy will grow at 6.5 per cent in FY24, as estimated by the RBI earlier.

The central bank's rate hikes by a cumulative 2.50 per cent since May last year, coupled with supply-side measures from the government, have helped get the inflation down to 4.25 per cent in May from a peak of 7.8 per cent in April last year, Das said.

"We continue to be watchful on the inflation front. We expect inflation to be at 5.1 per cent in FY24, and we will continue to strive and get it down to 4 per cent," he added.

On the high borrowing costs, Das said interest rates on loans may have a direct relation with inflation, and if inflation cools down on a durable basis, people can expect lower interest rates on loans.

The governor explained that the Russia-Ukraine war, which led to a shoot-up in the



commodity prices, led to a surge in inflation, but added that crude prices are not a concern from an inflation perspective now as they've come down to USD 76-76 a barrel.

Food inflation has also come down, Das said, adding that measures like the Food Corporation of India releasing wheat and rice stocks have also helped. Targeted cuts in duties on certain products have also helped, he added.

When asked about the challenges on the inflation front, Das pointed to 2-3 factors like the volatile international situation due to geopolitics and the monsoon situation domestically.

"Although there is an expectation of a normal monsoon, there are concerns around El Nino. We will have to see how serious it is. Other challenges are primarily weather-related events, which can have an impact on food infla-

tion," Das said, adding that we will have to grapple with these uncertainties.

Meanwhile, on the growth front, Das said the RBI has taken all the factors into consideration while arriving at its estimate of a 6.5 per cent expansion in real GDP and is confident of the economy attaining the same even though other watchers like IMF estimate it to be much lower.

He said the bank credit growth of around 16 per cent is sustainable, and the RBI is watchful of the developments on this front.

There is a lot of demand for credit from corporates as well, including for project loans as well, he said, underlining that the overall credit growth is broad-based.

The rupee has been less volatile in the calendar year 2023, and the domestic currency has strengthened against the dollar, Das said, reiterating that the RBI will continue with its efforts to reduce volatility.

Das said he is confident that the rupee will not get impacted even if the US Fed hikes rates, pointing out that the domestic currency has been stable, even in the face of a 5 percentage points increase in rates in the US.

# Coal India executives threaten to hold strike over pay conflict

PTI ■ KOLKATA,

A body of executives of Coal India Ltd on Sunday threatened to go on a strike unless their pay conflict with non-executive employees is addressed.

The Coal Ministry has said it approved a wage revision agreement that was reached with trade unions for non-executive employees of the miner.

All India Association of Coal Executives (AIACE), in a letter, to the Coal India chairman said that the new wage agreement for non-executive employees will result in a pay conflict with executives.

The association demanded that executive employees must be compensated by "allowing pay-protection through personal pay package" to them so that their salary does not fall below the wage of workers.

"We have requested Coal India to initiate appropriate needful actions immediately to provide personal pay (PP) to executives and eliminate the conflict latest by September 30, 2023.

"Otherwise, executives may



be compelled to resort to agitation including strike, if needed afterwards," AIACE general secretary P K Singh Rathor said.

The Coal Ministry had approved a wage revision agreement that was reached with trade unions for "non-executive" employees of Coal India Ltd.

In a communication to Coal India on June 22, the ministry said, "The MoA (memorandum of agreement) for NCWA-XI as signed by Coal India Ltd, Singareni Collieries Company Limited and trade union representatives, has been confirmed."

The agreement provides for a 19 per cent of minimum guaranteed benefit from July 1, 2021, on emoluments - basic, variable dearness allowance, special dearness allowance and attendance bonus - besides a 25 per cent increase in allowances.

# Goyal holds interaction with over 50 top-performing YouTubers in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has held an interaction with over 50 top-performing YouTubers in India on various issues like popularising handicrafts, benefits of millets and consumer awareness, an official said.

The interaction was held on June 23.

YouTubers who participated in the discussions include Vivek Bindra, Gaurav Chaudhary (Technical Guruji), Viraj Sheth (Co-founder Monk Entertainment), Ganesh Prasad (Think School), Shlok Srivastava (Tech burner), Prafull Billore (MBA Chai Wala), and Anushka Rathod (Anushka Rathod Finance), among others, the commerce and industry ministry official said.

"Minister Piyush Goyal held a fruitful interaction 'SAMPARK SE SAMVAD' with an interesting group of top-performing YouTubers in India, from diverse genres who are experts at demystifying content of any nature,"



the official said.

The issues discussed during the interaction included consumer awareness and protection (with a special focus on fake websites), cyber security, ways to boost tourism, popularising handlooms and handicrafts, and creating more content on the benefits of millets, among others.

The minister also invited the content creators to further propagate the five resolutions, including making India a developed nation in the next 25 years.

YouTubers expressed keenness to roll out content on their channels about government programmes and policies to educate their audience and also work as fact checkers countering misinformation.

# Adani eyes ₹90,000 cr EBITDA in 2-3 years

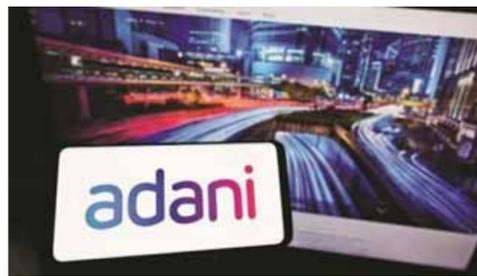
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Embattled Adani group is eyeing a 20 per cent year-on-year growth in pre-tax profits to reach Rs 90,000 crore EBITDA in 2-3 years on the back of robust growth in businesses ranging from airports to energy, according to a company note.

Earlier this month, the group repaid loans aggregating USD 2.65 billion to complete a prepayment programme to cut overall leverage in an attempt to win back investor trust post a damning report of a US short seller.

The ports-to-energy conglomerate is now looking at robust growth in sectors such as airports, cement, renewables, solar panels, transportation and logistics, and power and transmission, it said adding several of Adani's new infrastructure investments will also begin to fructify and generate cash in the coming years.

Adani is expected to see an increase of more than 20 per cent in EBITDA on a consolidated basis in the coming years as it drives robust and sustainable growth across its business portfolio. Its target EBITDA of over Rs 90,000 crore is expect-



ed by FY23, the note said.

In recent years, the group has made substantial investments in ports and completed significant projects across renewables, transportation and ports.

Businesses such as airports and renewables are also exhibiting improved cash flows. Its solid asset base, built over three decades, supports resilient critical infrastructure and ensures high asset performance throughout their life cycles.

The group's listed portfolio EBITDA increased 36 per cent yoy to Rs 57,219 crore in FY23 (April 2022 to March 2023 fiscal). Core infrastructure businesses, which constitute 82.8 per cent of the portfolio including energy, transport, logistics,

and flagship Adani Enterprise Ltd's infrastructure ventures, registered a robust 23 per cent yoy growth in EBITDA to Rs 47,386 crore.

AEL's existing businesses also delivered a strong performance with a 59 per cent yoy growth to Rs 5,466 crore. AEL's existing businesses comprise 10 per cent of its portfolio.

With about 83 per cent of its EBITDA being generated from core infrastructure businesses, the Adani Group's portfolio operates in utility and infrastructure sectors, providing assured and consistent cash flows. The group has set its sights on growth across diverse sectors such as airports, cement, renewables, solar panels, ports, power, and transmission.

# More than two-thirds of ₹2K notes returned within a month of withdrawal: RBI Guv

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das has said that within a month of the recall order, more than two-thirds of the Rs 2,000 currency notes have returned to the system.

In a surprise move, but as part of the clean note policy, the Reserve Bank had on May 19 ordered the recall of the Rs 2,000 banknotes worth around R 3.62 lakh crore.

On June 8, announcing the second monetary policy review of the fiscal, Das had said around Rs 1.8 lakh crore worth of the Rs 2,000 notes have been returned, accounting for approximately 50 per cent of the notes in circulation as of March 31, of which 85 per cent were in deposits and the rest in exchange.

"More than two-thirds or Rs 2.41 lakh crore worth of the Rs 3.62 lakh crore (as of March 31, 2023) of the now-recalled 2000 banknotes have come back to the system as of mid-last week," Governor Das told PTI Bhasha in an interview at the RBI headquarters last week.

Of the total money that has come back to the system, as much as 85 per cent are in deposits and the rest in cur-



rency exchanges, he explained.

Though the central bank has set September 30, 2023, as the last day for exchange/deposits, Das said the deadline is not something cast in stone and that, people need not rush to claim their money.

Das also said the note recall will have no impact on the monetary stability but refused to comment on a recent analyst report that claimed that the move would lead to higher consumer spending, which has been under stress for some time, and which in turn would help prop the economy up and grow over the projected 6.5 per cent.

"I don't see any negative

impact of the note recall on the economy at all," Das said.

The central bank and the government project the GDP to clip at 6.5 per cent this fiscal, with Q1 printing in at 8.1 per cent and then tapering off in the subsequent quarters.

After issuing the recall order on May 19 and asking banks to open special counters to collect the notes from the public from May 23, the central bank said the existing 2,000 denomination banknotes would continue to be legal tender.

Later, Das said he was not sure whether he would ask the government to cancel the legal tender status of these notes after the September 30 deadline.

# Andhra leads laggards in State capex in FY23; K'taka, Bihar cross 100%

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Most large states have fallen behind their budgeted capex targets by a wide margin in FY23, which was pegged at Rs 7.4 lakh crore but could spend only Rs 5.71 lakh crore or 76.2 per cent only, according to an analysis.

Only four states -- Karnataka, Sikkim, Arunachal and Bihar -- have over-achieved their targets, while Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh's capex spending stood at 98 per cent each. Eleven states fared better with 80 per cent target achievements, as per the analysis by Bank of Baroda economists.

As against this, in FY21, the underachievement level was a high 72 per cent, primarily due to the pandemic emergency spending, and had improved to 95 per cent in FY22.

Surprisingly, none of the 25 states whose data are available has been able to achieve the target by even three-fourths as the peak success rate is only 72.4 per cent, according to the analysis.

This is surprising as the Centre had disbursed the required amounts for the year. The poor show was led by Andhra, which could spend only 23.1 per cent or Rs 6,917 crore of the Rs 29,917 crore budgeted for the past fiscal; followed by Haryana, which spent only 48.1 per cent or Rs 10,604 crore of the Rs 22,047 crore, and Rajasthan managed to



cross the halfway mark (50.2 per cent) or 19,650 crore of the Rs 39,148 crore. Tripura could spend only 41.3 per cent or Rs 2,185 crore of the Rs budgeted Rs 5,285 crore, and Nagaland spent 47.7 per cent or Rs 7,936 crore of the Rs 16,650 crore, the analysis showed.

On the other hand, Maharashtra leads the pack with a 72.4 per cent target achievement, with Rs 60,499 crore being put to use from the Rs 83,530 crore budgeted for FY23.

Surprisingly, Kerala, which is a traditional laggard, comes to the second slot, achieving 69.4 per cent of the budgeted capex of Rs 19,330 crore, spending Rs 13,407 crore; and Uttar Pradesh comes third with 69 per cent or Rs 93,555 crore of the Rs 1,35,677 crore.

Uttarakhand is a close fourth with 68.4 per cent of the Rs 11,987 crore; Meghalaya at the fifth slot (67.8 per cent of the Rs 3,233 crore), Bengal next with 67.6 per cent of the Rs

33,144 crore; Assam (64.5 per cent of the Rs 24,064 crore); Punjab (61.1 per cent of the 10,930 crore); Telangana (59.6 per cent of the Rs 29,064 crore).

Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh alone, with Rs 2.19 lakh crore budgeted capex, contribute 29.2 per cent of the total but fared poorly, thus bringing down the all-states average to 70 per cent or thereabout, according to the analysis. On the contrary, according to the report, the Centre has met its targets in terms of actual capex in various areas and loan disbursements to the states.

Punjab and Andhra -- the two states that top the freebies list -- also exceeded their deficits too.

Normally, states tend to wait for the fourth quarter to push projects and investments to assess their fiscal balances and therefore, fail to identify enough projects in such a short period, leading to target missing.

# 'Liquidation scheme for AIFs to aid in deriving max value for unliquidated investments'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The introduction of liquidation scheme for alternative investment funds (AIFs) by market regulator Sebi provides an additional avenue for managers and investors to derive the maximum value for unliquidated investments, experts said on Sunday.

The new scheme provides flexibility to AIFs to deal with investments that are not sold due to a lack of liquidity during the winding-up process.

Also, it allows such unliquidated investments to be either sold to a new scheme of the same AIF (liquidation scheme) or to be distributed in-specie to investors of the AIF.

The regulator, on June 15, amended rules to permit AIFs to launch a liquidation scheme. Sebi, last week, laid out the modalities for launching the scheme and in-specie distribution to investors.

Dipen Ruparelia, Head of Products, Vivriti Asset Management, said these regulatory changes are a long-term positive for the corporate governance in the debt and AIF industries and will go a long way toward investors' confidence in the AIF.

"While the amendment and the Sebi circular aim to benefit the investors, some aspects lack clarity, such as benefits to schemes that have already exceeded their tenure, and consequences where the AIF/manager fails to achieve the minimum bid of 25 per cent of the unliquidated assets,"



Punit Shah, Partner, Dhruva Advisors, said.

Also, one needs to consider the tax implications arising from the transfer of unliquidated assets by the original scheme in exchange for units of the liquidation scheme. This could lead to capital gains in the hands of the unit holders liable to taxation, he added.

Under the scheme, AIFs are required to transfer assets not sold during the winding-up process to a new liquidation scheme or distribute such unliquidated investments in-specie after being subject to a 75 per cent consent by the value of investors in each case.

For launching a liquidation scheme, the AIF is required to obtain the consent of 75 per cent of investors by the value of their investments and will have to arrange a bid for a minimum of 25 per cent of the value of the unliquidated investments.

Further, they have to offer a full exit to the dissenting investors out of the bids arranged by the AIF/manager. For the value at which the unliquidated assets will be sold by the original scheme to the liquidation scheme -- which can

be one rupee if the AIF/manager fails to arrange the minimum bid.

The payment to the original scheme will be in the form of the units of the liquidation scheme, which will onward be distributed in-specie to the investors of the original scheme.

In case the AIF decides to distribute unliquidated investments in-specie, similar to the process under the liquidation scheme, the AIF will have to obtain the consent of 75 per cent of investors by the value of their investments and will have to arrange a bid for a minimum of 25 per cent of the value of the unliquidated investments. Further, dissenting investors have to be offered a full exit out of the bids arranged.

If the AIF fails to obtain requisite investor consent for the launch of the liquidation scheme or in-specie distribution of unliquidated investments, then the unliquidated investments will be mandatorily distributed to investors in-specie without the requirement of obtaining the consent of 75 per cent of investors by the value of their investment in the scheme of the AIF.

# Vedanta donates ₹155 cr to political parties in FY23



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Anil Agarwal's mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd donated Rs 155 crore to political parties through electoral bonds in the fiscal ended March 2023, according to the company's latest annual report.

The donation was higher than Rs 123 crore the firm gave in 2021-22 (April 2021 to March 2022), the annual report for 2022-23 said.

It did not give the names of the beneficiary political parties.

The Modi government had, in 2017-18, introduced the system of electoral bonds for electoral funding. This was to provide an alternative to the cash donations. Anyone could buy electoral bonds from the State Bank of India (SBI) and donate them to any political party. Political parties then encash them. The scheme does not

require political parties to mention the names and addresses of those contributing by way of electoral bonds in their contribution reports filed with the Election Commission of India annually.

In the last five years, Vedanta has donated a cumulative Rs 457 crore to political parties via electoral bonds.

In the annual report, Vedanta said it made donations of Rs 160 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal. These "include contributions through electoral bonds of Rs 155 crore".

In the previous financial year, the donations totalled Rs 130 crore, including Rs 123 crore contribution through electoral bonds. The donations to political parties were more than Vedanta's corporate social responsibility (CSR) spending of Rs 112 crore in 2022-23 and Rs 37 crore in the previous year, the report showed.

# ALCARAZ BECOMES WORLD NO.1

AFP ■ LONDON

Carlos Alcaraz will return to world number one after beating Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-4 on Sunday to win his first title on grass at Queen's Club.

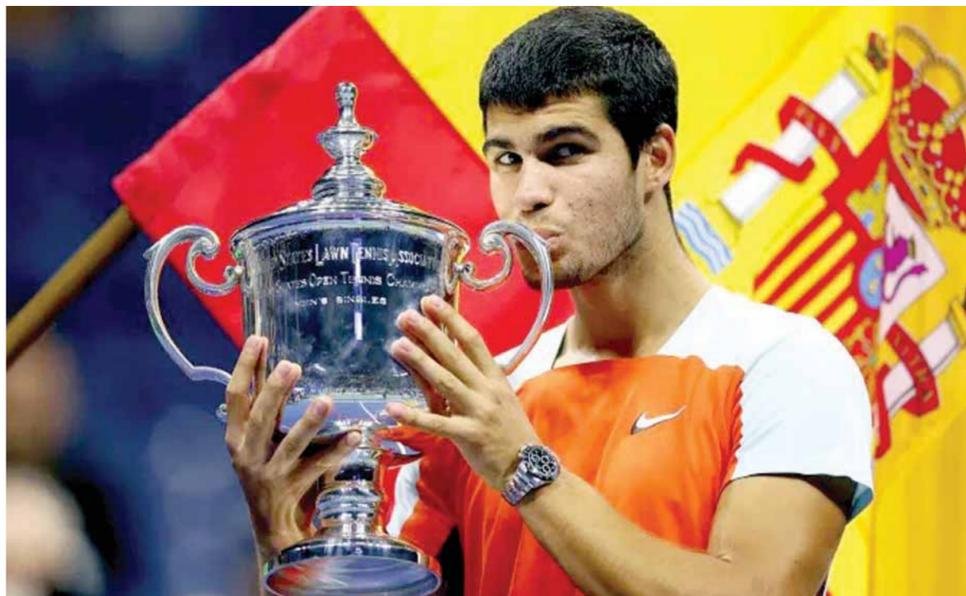
The Spaniard's fifth title of the season moves him back ahead of 23-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic at the top of the rankings.

Alcaraz was playing on the grass for just the third tournament of his career.

The 20-year-old has failed to get past the fourth round in two previous attempts at Wimbledon, but his impressive showing suggests he will be the biggest threat to Djokovic securing an eighth title at the All England Club next month.

After battling past French lucky loser Arthur Rinderknech in the first round, Alcaraz did not drop a set in his final four matches at Queen's.

De Minaur had dumped out Andy Murray and world num-



ber six Holger Rune on his route to the final.

But the Australian was left to rue Alcaraz's ability to win the big points in a tight contest.

De Minaur had two break points for the chance to serve for the first set when he led 4-3.

Alcaraz responded, though, to hold serve and immediately break the world number 18 in the next game before serving out for the set.

The US Open champion needed lengthy treatment between the two sets as he had strapping applied to his right quad.

However, Alcaraz's movement did not seem affected as he again pounced with his only break point to move ahead 3-2 in the second set.

Two rare errors gave De Minaur some hope in the final game as Alcaraz found himself 0-30 down.

But his booming serve dug him out of trouble as four straight points secured the new world number one the title.



## Bublik defeats Rublev to win Halle title

AFP ■ HALLE WESTFALEN

Zverev in the last four.

Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik defeated third seed Andrey Rublev in three sets to win the biggest title of his career at the Halle Open on Sunday.

Bublik won 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in the final of the traditional Wimbledon warm-up tournament in Germany.

The Kazakh took the first set after breaking Rublev in his opening service game.

Rublev responded by winning the second set in similar fashion but Bublik raced 3-0 ahead in the deciding before clinching his second ATP title.

"This means the world to me, I've been struggling for a year and a half now. It was hard work," he said of his 95-minute triumph.

The 48th-ranked Bublik faced a difficult path to the final, making his way past Borna Coric, Jan-Lennard Struff and Jannik Sinner, before downing home favourite Alexander

"I was walking through the little hall of fame here before entering the court for the very first time," recounted the 26-year-old.

"I was like 'wow, the different names, a lot of guys I'm familiar with."

"But I could not even imagine I would win this tournament. I'm really, really happy."

Bublik chalked up 42 winners on the way to victory, compared with Rublev's tally of 23.

World number seven Rublev finished runner-up in Halle for the second time in three years having lost the 2021 final to France's Ugo Humbert.

Bublik's win means Rublev's bid to become the first player in history to win an ATP 500 title on all three surfaces continues.

The Russian previously won on the clay in Hamburg and the hard courts of Vienna, Dubai, Rotterdam and St Petersburg.

## Top seeds Krejckova, Ostapenko face off in Birmingham final

AFP ■ BIRMINGHAM (UNITED KINGDOM)

Top two seeds Barbora Krejckova and Jelena Ostapenko will meet in the final of the Birmingham Open after coming through their semi-finals in contrasting fashion on Saturday.

Krejckova has been untouchable so far this week. The world number 12 is yet to drop a set as she eased past China's Zhu Lin 6-3, 6-2.

"I'm really happy with the way I played today," said the 2021 French Open champion.

"It's always difficult to play on the grass because the game can change quickly, so I'm happy how I handled the match and that I'm in the final."

By contrast, Ostapenko has been taken to a deciding set in all four of her matches in Birmingham, but has battled through to reach her first final of the season.

The Latvian came from behind after dropping the opening set to fourth seed Anastasia Potapova to win 5-7, 6-2, 6-4.

"Every match I play a little bit up and down but in general I'm happy I came



through this match," said Ostapenko.

"It's important to win these matches where sometimes you are not playing your best but you just fight for every point."

On their form on grass this week, Krejckova appears the favourite, but Ostapenko has won four of the six meetings between the pair, including a straight sets victory when they last met in Rome in May.

## Tsitsipas says 'uneducated' Kyrgios remarks 'misinterpreted'

AFP ■ PARIS

Stefanos Tsitsipas on Saturday denied making racist comments over bitter rival Nick Kyrgios, claiming his remarks that the Australian firebrand played "uneducated" tennis have been "misinterpreted".

The world number five also told Netflix's Break Point series that Kyrgios brought "an NBA basketball attitude" to tennis.

The remarks were recorded at Wimbledon last year after the two men fought out a controversial third round tie in which Tsitsipas claimed Kyrgios should have been defaulted for hitting the ball into the crowd.

Kyrgios, who won the match and went on to finish runner-up to Novak Djokovic in the final, said "Tsitsipas had 'serious issues' after the Greek described him as 'evil' and a 'bully'."

On Saturday, Tsitsipas hit back at claims on social media that his lat-



est comments about Kyrgios were racist.

"It has come to my attention that some individuals have misinterpreted my comments regarding Nick Kyrgios, labelling him as uneducated and accusing him of bringing a basketball mentality into tennis, insinuating racism where none exists," Tsitsipas wrote on Facebook.

"I deeply regret if my words were misinterpreted or caused offence, as

that was never my intention.

"My previous remarks were not meant to undermine his intelligence or abilities. Instead, I simply intended to express my perspective on certain aspects of his playing style, drawing comparisons to the passion and intensity often associated with basketball.

"It was an attempt to highlight the dynamic and captivating nature of his approach to the game, not a criticism of his character or capabilities."

Tsitsipas added: "I deeply regret any hurt or offence my words may have caused. Moving forward, I commit to being more mindful of my words and the impact they may have."

The 28-year-old Australian shrugged off the controversy.

"It was a very heated battle -- sometimes as players we go into these press conferences without digesting the match.



## Vinesh seeks additional time & not exemption from Asiad trials

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vinesh Phogat on Sunday posted an undated letter on social media to prove that the six protesting wrestlers did not demand exemption from Asian Games trials and they sought only time till August for preparation.

Vinesh shared a picture of the letter, which mentions six wrestlers, including herself for some extra time for training ahead of the trials.

The six protesting wrestlers were handed one-hour trials by the IOA ad-hoc panel, a move that was criticised by several established and upcoming wrestlers as they demanded fair trials for everyone.

Vinesh, though, did not say if they are willing to appear in full trials, like all other wrestlers.

"It is requested to you that due to their participation in the wrestlers' protest, the below mentioned wrestlers need some additional time to prepare for the trials for the Asian Games and the World Championships," the undated letter, addressed to Sports Minister Anurag Thakur, read.

The request was made for protesting wrestlers Bajrang Punia (65kg), Sakshi Malik (62kg), her husband Satyawart Kadian (97kg), Sangeeta Phogat (57kg), Jitender

Kumar (86kg) and Vinesh (53kg) herself.

"Hence it is a request to you that trials must be held for these wrestlers after August 10, 2023," the letter, signed by all six wrestlers mentioned, added.

Along with sharing the letter, Vinesh wrote on her Twitter page, "The protesting wrestlers had only requested to postpone the date of the trials, since due to our participation in the protests for the last six months, we did not get enough time for practice."

"We understand that this is a serious matter, which is why we are sharing this letter with you. The enemy is trying to break the unity among the wrestlers, we cannot let them have success," Vinesh added.

It has been learnt that coaches Gian Singh and Ashok Garg, who were added to the IOA ad-hoc panel, had sought exemption for six wrestlers.

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is supposed to give 'entries by name' to the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) of all the Indian squads by July 15.

To accommodate the wrestlers' request for August 10 trials, it also approached OCA for deadline extension. The OCA is yet to respond to the request.

## Messi calls adapting to PSG 'very tough', speaks of a 'rupture' with fans

AFP ■ FRANCE

Lionel Messi has called his start at former club Paris Saint-Germain "very tough", dubbing two successive failed Champions League bids a "massive disappointment".

"I came to Paris because I liked the club, because I had friends in the dressing room... it seemed easier for me to adapt rather than another destination I could have gone to," Messi told beIN Sports in an interview broadcast Sunday.

"In reality, it was a very tough adaptation, much harder than I expected... with a new gameplan, new teammates, a new city."

"I arrived late, I didn't have a pre-season. The start was difficult for me, my family."

Messi, 36, signed for PSG in the summer of 2021 after 17 seasons at Barcelona, but will now head Stateside to Inter Miami in the MLS after quitting the French capital.

Messi's first season, during which he scored 11 goals in 34



games for PSG, was made harder after he contracted Covid during the winter break back in Argentina, meaning he

was sidelined for a month.

"It took me time to re-find my physical form," he admitted, adding that the 2022 World

Cup in Qatar -- which Messi won with Argentina -- also took its toll.

"It's not an excuse but the World Cup played a big role. Some came back later than others, some were injured, like Neymar."

"I think, generally, the level of Ligue 1 and the Champions League was affected by the World Cup."

Messi admitted that Champions League losses to Real Madrid in 2022 and Bayern Munich this season were a "massive disappointment".

There were even sections of PSG fans who turned on Messi, whistling at him from the stands.

"In the beginning, it was great, I received a lot of encouragement... but later on a part of the Parisian fanbase treated me differently. The majority treated me well, but there was a rupture with a part of the public," he acknowledged.

## B'desh beat Maldives to keep themselves in semis contention

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Bangladesh kept themselves in the hunt for a semifinal berth in the SAFF Championship with a gritty 3-1 win over Maldives here on Sunday.

Hamza Mohammad (17th minute) struck Maldives in front but Bangladesh pushed back through Rakib Hossain (42nd minute), Tariq Kazi (67th minute) and Shekh Morsalin (90th minute) to collect three important points in a Group B match.

Maldives also have three points, courtesy their 2-0 win over Bhutan in the first match. Now, both Maldives and Bangladesh are in a must-win situation against Lebanon, who also have 3 points, and Bhutan in their respective last league matches on June 28.

Despite a win was mandatory for them to stay afloat, Bangladesh did not show much urgency in the initial stages of the match. Maldives made full use of that laxity to go ahead through Hamza.



The goal seemed to have made Bangladesh players realise the need to be more proactive, and it reflect-

ed in their moves. They mounted quick counter attacks and closed ranks whenever

Maldives tried to add to their goal tally. The experienced Rakib was the

## Arteta wants stronger Arsenal squad to challenge Man City

AFP ■ LONDON

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta believes the Gunners have to strengthen in the transfer market if they are to topple Manchester City as Premier League champions next season.

Arteta's men topped the table for much of last season, but faltered down the stretch after suffering injuries to key players.

City went on to seal their fourth Premier League title in five years and complete the treble by winning the FA Cup and Champions League.

Both clubs are reportedly in a bidding war for West Ham captain Declan Rice, while Arsenal are also set to land Kai Havertz from Chelsea.

"That is our ambition," Arteta told Marca on his hopes of winning the title.

"We know the difficulty: it's the best league in the world and next season is going to be the toughest league in Premier League history.

"Why? It already was last year. I've been here for 22 years and I've never seen a competitive level like that. So much quality, so much organisation, so many resources, so many good coaches

"That's the level and to win the Premier League you have to be the best. That's why you have to strengthen."

Few expected Arsenal to even pose a title challenge having finished outwith the top four for the previous six seasons.

But Arteta admitted he is still hurting after leading the Premier League most of the way from August through the April.

"To this day, it still hurts me deep inside not to have won the Premier League after 10 months of fighting with City," he added.

"There were three or four injuries to important players and from then on, everything got complicated. When we had the full team, we were consistent. As soon as problems came, it wasn't enough for us.

kingpin of Bangladesh fightback and fittingly he secured the equaliser when he headed the ball past Maldives custodian Hussain Shareef off a free kick.

Bangladesh continued in the same vein the second half too and pressed forward consistently for more goals. Their efforts bore fruits in the 67th minute when Kazi exploited a goal mouth melee following a corner kick.

He gently tapped in the ball amid the confusion to take his side 2-1 up, and, surprisingly, Maldives players seemed to have sapped all energy.

On the other hand, Bangladesh players appeared even more sprightly and orchestrated several moves to take the match further beyond their opponents.

Bangladesh snuffed out any faint hopes that Maldives harboured of levelling the scores when Shekh Morsalin expertly evaded Shareef to thud the ball into the net to make it 3-1 in the 90th minute.

# FORMER-BCCI SELECTOR REVEALS WHY SARFARAZ IS EXCLUDED FROM TEST TEAM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sarfraz Khan's non-inclusion in the Indian team for the West Indies tour was criticised by none other than Sunil Gavaskar, but BCCI sources claimed that his below-par "fitness level" as well as alleged "off-field conduct" has influenced the decision.

The Mumbai batter scored 2566 runs in the last three Ranji seasons. He scored 928 runs in the 2019/20 season, 982 in the 2022-23 and 656 in the 2022-23 season.

The 25-year-old has a very impressive career average of 79.65 after 37 red ball games, so it was very surprising that the two-time former India U-19 World Cup player had to make way for someone like

Ruturaj Gaikwad, whose career average is 42-plus.

"The angry reactions are understandable but I can tell you with some degree of certainty that the reason behind Sarfraz getting ignored time and again is not just cricketing one. There are multiple reasons for which he hasn't been considered," a BCCI official privy to selection developments told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"Are the selectors fools to not consider a player who has scored 900 plus runs in successive seasons? One of the reasons is his fitness which isn't exactly of international standard.

"He has to work hard, maybe shed weight and come back leaner and fitter as it's not just batting fitness that is sole



criteria for selection," the source added.

However, a source close to Sarfraz said that he has recently scored 16.5 in YoYo test during his stint at NCA.

According to the BCCI official, fitness is not the only reason for his non-selection.

"His conduct on and off the field hasn't exactly been top notch. Certain things said, certain gestures made and some incidents have been taken note of. A bit more disciplined approach would only do him a world of good. Hopefully, Sarfraz along with his father and coach Naushad Khan will work on those aspects," the senior official added.

Reportedly, Sarfraz's celebrations after his hundred against Delhi earlier this year

during a Ranji game, didn't go down well.

Asked if IPL performance and perceived weakness against short ball has also contributed to his non-selection, the source replied, "That's a perception built by media. Do you think there could be any cricketing reason?"

"When Mayank Agarwal broke into Indian Test team, he scored 1000 first class runs in one month. Did MSK Prasad's committee check his IPL credentials? Ditto for Hanuma Vihari, who came through domestic and A team ranks. If their IPL and white ball record wasn't checked then, why would SS Das's committee reinvent the wheel now?"

Simple. The reason is not a cricketing one," he added.

As of now, it will be difficult for Sarfraz to make it to the team.

Just think about it. Why was Sarfraz not even among the reserves for the World Test Championship?

Suryakumar Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal were the two reserves after Ruturaj pulled out due to his marriage.

Right now, according to the pecking order, Ajinkya Rahane is at No 5 and Gaikwad is the reserve middle-order batter who can also be used as a floater.

So once Rahane fails, most likely Gaikwad will get a chance. Also it is difficult to rule out Suryakumar Yadav, who is playing Duleep Trophy for West Zone. And if Shreyas Iyer gets fit, then the road to an international call-up could get much tougher for Sarfraz.

## Ponting offers technical advice to Labuschagne

PTI ■ LONDON

Former captain Ricky Ponting has offered technical advice to Australia batters Marnus Labuschagne and Travis Head to counter England's bowling attack ahead of the second Ashes Test starting Wednesday at the Lord's.

Australia won the opening Test at Edgbaston, Birmingham by two wickets in what was the first match of the new ICC World Test Championship cycle.

There were a number of impressive individual performances, but Labuschagne and Head struggled in the Ashes opener.

Ponting wants Labuschagne to go back to basics to find success, and has offered one-on-one time to the 28-year-old right-hander.

"I'll wait for them to come and ask me. It's not my place, I'm not one of the coaches, I'm just a past player that's sitting back and analysing what a lot of these guys are doing," Ponting said in the ICC Review.

"But I would like to catch up with him (Labuschagne) and have a chat about his batting, because I think what I've seen over the last couple of weeks, as far as I'm concerned, I think he's over complicating things a little bit."

"I think he has to trust and believe in what's made him the No.2-ranked Test batsman for the last couple of years and go back to trusting that. I would actually tell him to watch some video of when he's actually played his best, and remember those things and do that all over again."

Ponting also believes Head needs to work out a plan to get through that initial phase of bouncy attacks from England bowlers.



"Firstly, he's now going to be aware that it's going to happen. He's going to expect that," said the legendary batter.

"I think he has to work at it in his own mind. What's the best way for him to combat that type of bowling? Is it going to be to take it on? Is he going to have success if he tries to hook and pull balls that are into his body? Does he find a way to be able to duck and weave and get out of the way a bit better and try and wear bowlers down?"

Ponting believes going into the second Test the main threat for Head will be the pace of Mark Wood if England decides to field him.

"Stuart Broad was probably their quickest bowler last week. Ben Stokes has been the enforcer for England in the past doing that, but his body is not going to allow him to do that role for England either."

"Coming into Lord's, it could be Mark Wood. They might bring Wood into the team, which offers something a bit different. He's obviously a lot quicker and bowls a really good short ball," he said.

"He (Head) has to be aware of it, and if there is only the one bowler in the team that he thinks can do it, then find a way to get through that one spell."

## Anderson promises 'more aggression' against Australia

AFF ■ LONDON

Veteran fast bowler James Anderson on Saturday vowed England would be "more positive, more aggressive, more entertaining" when they look to level the Ashes series at Lord's next week.

Australia won the opening Test at Edgbaston by two wickets after England skipper Ben Stokes had declared his team's first innings at 393 for eight.

Some critics said that decision allowed Australia to

keep a foot in the door of the match which they then gratefully exploited.

"I think we'll go more positive, more aggressive, more entertaining," said 40-year-old Anderson who endured a tough first Test in which he took just one wicket.

"We want to try and make sure people go home happy as they did each day at Edgbaston."

He added: "Just because we're 1-0 down I don't think we'll try anything different. I



think we showed enough last week to show we can win the next four if we keep playing like that and iron a few things out. We'll go exactly the same."

Anderson was speaking at the London Stadium where he threw out the ceremonial first pitch in the baseball game between the Chicago Cubs and St Louis Cardinals.

Australia rival Nathan Lyon also shared the occasion.

Off-spinner Lyon said throwing the first pitch was the first time he had picked up a ball since leaving

Birmingham.

"It was an absolutely incredible Test win and to be able to play a part in that was extremely special," the 35-year-old said.

"It is going to go down as one of the best Test matches I've played in."

"The mood has changed. There's a lot of work we need to do. We feel like we can still get a lot better, and we need to get a lot better if we want to compete against England and the brand of cricket they're playing."

## SL thrash Ireland in World Cup qualifying

AFF ■ BULAWAYO (ZIMBABWE)

Sri Lanka powered into the Super Six stage of the Cricket World Cup qualifying tournament with a crushing 133-run win over Ireland on Sunday that eliminated their opponents.

Scotland also made it three wins from three in Group B as they beat Oman by 76 runs, with both teams joining Sri Lanka in reaching the next round.

Opener Dimuth Karunaratne made a run-a-ball 103 and Sadeera Samarawickrama hit 82 as Sri Lanka compiled an imposing total of 325 all out off 49.5 overs after being put in to bat in Bulawayo.

Mark Adair took 4-46 and Barry McCarthy claimed 3-56 but Ireland's pace spearhead Josh Little conceded 78 runs in eight wicketless overs.

"If I get a start, I want to go for the big one," said Karunaratne.

"In the morning, there was something for the bowlers, but when the swing stops we can get some boundaries. I was waiting for that... don't try to hit them hard, just time them well."

Karunaratne and Samarawickrama put on 168 for the third wicket after Kusal



Mendis was trapped lbw first ball by McCarthy.

Charith Asalanka (38) and Dhananjaya de Silva (42 not out) also chipped in as Ireland sought to limit the damage in the closing overs.

Ireland needed a victory to keep their qualification hopes alive, but they lost experienced opener Paul Stirling for six and the wheels soon came off.

Captain Andy Balbirnie's dismissal reduced Ireland to 57-3 and Lorcan Tucker was bowled for a duck the next over before Wanindu Hasaranga pinned Harry Tector in front for 33.

Curtis Campher, who made a century in the gut-wrenching

loss to Scotland, briefly countered in his knock of 39 but once he top-edged to the wicket-keeper Ireland were all but doomed.

"We knew they had good spinners and they bowled well and cleaned us up," said Balbirnie.

"Hugely disappointing not to get to the Super Sixes but you've got to move on."

Hasaranga finished with 5-79, giving the Sri Lankan leg-spinner 16 wickets in three qualifiers so far in Zimbabwe.

In the group's other game, Brandon McMullen smacked 136 off 121 balls -- his first ODI century -- and skipper Richie Berrington added 60 as Scotland

set Oman a target of 321.

Oman slumped to 72-4 in response before wicketkeeper Naseem Khushi made an entertaining 69.

He was one of five wickets to fall to Chris Greaves as the leg-spinner picked up 5-53 and Oman ended well short on 244-9.

"We've had three different matchwinners which shows our character," said Berrington, whose side take on Sri Lanka in their final group game.

"We know the importance of every point, so Tuesday's going to be a big one against Sri Lanka. We have a lot of belief and know we need to get better with every game."

## Head laughs off England's 'nice chat' in Ashes

AFF ■ LONDON

Australia batsman Travis Head is unconcerned by England's "nice chat" ahead of the second Test at Lord's.

Head's team are 1-0 up in the five-match contest after a thrilling two-wicket win in the series opener at Edgbaston although for some members of the England side, buoyed by their aggressive 'Bazball' approach, it is as if the defeat has not registered.

England seamer Ollie Robinson, criticised by Australia greats Matthew Hayden and Ricky Ponting for his expletive-laden send-off to Usman Khawaja at Edgbaston, spoke this week of his surprise at the tourists' "defensive" approach and suggested they would need to change to win the series.

And home opener Zak Crawley predicted on Times Radio recently that England would win at Lord's by 150 runs.

"We're only going for the lunch (at Lord's), apparently,"

Head jokingly told 9News Sydney. "Yeah, they (England) have got this mantra they're going at."

"Not just on the field but off the field they are throwing some nice chat out, but this team is truly just worried about what we need to do to win the second Test to go 2-0 up and put some pressure on them."

Australia trained at Lord's on Sunday, where the second Test starts on Wednesday.

One concern for Australia is that star batsmen Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith managed a mere 35 runs combined across four innings at Edgbaston.

Labuschagne also suffered a painful blow to a finger on his right hand while batting in the nets on Saturday.

Meanwhile Ponting, one of the outstanding batsmen of his generation and now working as a broadcaster during the Ashes, said he would be happy to help Labuschagne if the batsman asked him for assistance.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

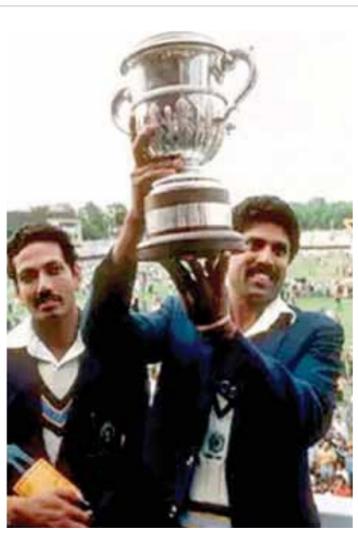
On this day in 1983, Kapil Dev and his India side made history, as they won the ICC Cricket World Cup for the first time. Lord's was the scene for India's greatest cricketing triumph at the time, as they beat two-time winners West Indies by 43 runs to lift the coveted trophy.

The West Indies entered the finals as the favoured, having won the previous two world cups in 1975 and 1979. Put to bat first by WI, India had a disappointing start, losing their star batter Sunil Gavaskar for just 2. Afterwards, it was Kris Srikkanth and Mohinder Amarnath who helped India recover from this early hiccup, forming a 57-run stand, which was broken by pacer Malcolm Marshall by dismissing Srikkanth for 38.

Yashpal Sharma and Mohinder Amarnath then carried on, but a well-set Amarnath was dismissed for 26 by pacer Michael Holding. India was 3/90 at that stage. From then onwards, nothing really went right for India as they kept losing wickets at regular intervals. Sandeep Patil with a 27 tried to keep things steady for India.

# Still feels like yesterday!

On this day 40 years ago India beat West Indies to win 1983 World Cup title



Also, Captain Kapil Dev (15), Madan Lal (17) and Syed Kirmani, the wicket-keeper (14) tried their best to support Patil but Windies' bowling attack overpowered them, ending their knocks prematurely. Kirmani and bowler Balwinder Singh Sandhu (11\*) stitched a vital 30-run stand in the end, taking India to 183 in 54.4 overs before all the batters were back in the hut.

Chasing 184, the Windies were not of the most ideal start, losing Gordon Greenidge for just 1 run at the team's score of five. Sandhu the medium pacer had done the job for India by giving his side some early momentum.

Richards continued to look good, smashing seven majestic boundaries fitting the occasion of the final and a batter of his stature. It looked like he could continue for long and help WI complete

a hat-trick of World Cups.

But Lal gave Team India perhaps its biggest breakthrough by dismissing Richards for 33 off 28, with Kapil Dev taking a marvellous running catch. Larry Gomes (5), Captain Clive Lloyd (8) and Faoued Bacchus (8) fell quickly, sinking WI to 6/76, on the brink of a humiliating defeat. The trio of Binny-Sandhu and Lal took these wickets.

Afterwards, wicketkeeper-batter Jeff Dujon and Malcolm Marshall tried to stabilise the innings for WI, stitching a stand of 43 runs which was broken by medium pacer Mohinder Amarnath by dismissing Dujon for 25. He also took the wicket of Marshall soon.

With the Windies at 124/8, the rest of their batting could not do much. Kapil Dev and Amarnath delivered two final blows to the Windies, ending their innings at 140.

Madan Lal (3/31) and Mohinder Amarnath (3/12) delivered in heaps for India at their medium pace. Sandhu also bowled well, taking 2/32. Kapil Dev and Roger Binny also took a wicket each. The day belonged completely to India and its pace attack in particular.