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NEW DELHI, TUESDAY JUNE 27, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 33 Issue 176
*Air Surcharge Extra If Applicable



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Monsoon brings both relief, ruin

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI/SHIMLA/JAIPUR

As monsoon rains continue to lash parts of North and West India bringing relief from the heatwave that killed over a hundred people, the downpours also brought destruction, with incidents of lightning strikes in Rajasthan resulting in the death of at least four people and hundreds of commuters remaining stranded in Himachal Pradesh (HP) due to flash floods and landslides.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the monsoon has now covered 80 per cent of the country. According to IMD scientist Dr Naresh Kumar, after advancing through Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR, and Haryana, the southwest monsoon has now reached Gujarat, Haryana, and Punjab. This year's monsoon has witnessed a unique occurrence as it simultaneously reached Delhi and Mumbai, a phenomenon that has not happened in the past 62 years.

While the normal onset date for the monsoon in Mumbai is June 11 and for Delhi is June 27, the rain clouds followed an unusual path, resulting in a lag over several western States before covering the entire country.

"The last time the monsoon covered both Delhi and Mumbai at the same time was June 21, 1961. That year, the monsoon covered the remaining parts of the country on the same day," said an IMD official.

In Himachal's Mandi district, hundreds of commuters, including tourists, were stranded as the Chandigarh-Manali National Highway got blocked due to flash floods and landslides. A total of 301 roads have been closed in the State, and 140 power transformers have

Mercury comes down but lightning strikes in Raj kill four; hundreds of commuters stranded in Himachal due to flash floods, landslides in J&K



Heavy machinery being used to clear the blocked Chandigarh-Manali highway following a landslide triggered by continuous rain in Himachal Pradesh, in Mandi district, on Monday

been disrupted. Flash floods occurred near Khotinallah, causing the commuters to be stranded since Sunday evening. The alternative Mandi-Kullu route, previously blocked due to landslides, has been opened for small vehicles after almost 20 hours.

Restoration work is currently underway, with explosives being used to clear heavy boulders blocking roads. One-way traffic is expected to be restored within the next couple of hours. However, stranded commuters have been advised not to move towards Mandi until the road is fully opened.

Public Works Department Minister Vikramaditya Singh

informed that 180 out of the 301 blocked roads would be reopened by Monday evening, 15 by Tuesday, and the remaining roads by June 30, depending on the weather conditions. The State has deployed approximately 390 earth movers and heavy machinery to clear the roads.

In Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) heavy rains brought relief from the sweltering heat but also triggered landslides at multiple locations, blocking the crucial Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and other roads. Authorities closed all schools up to class 10 in Ramban due to the threat of flash floods. The 250-km

Jammu-Srinagar national highway, the only all-weather road connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country, was blocked due to landslides and shooting stones. However, the stranded vehicles were cleared later in the day, allowing for one-way traffic.

Delhi experienced pleasant weather conditions with 2 mm of rainfall recorded in the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 AM. The weather office predicts a generally cloudy sky with light to moderate rain for the day, and the maximum temperature is expected to reach 30 degrees Celsius. In Rajasthan, the first monsoon rains claimed four lives and left four others injured

due to lightning strikes in different parts of the State. Dinesh (21) was struck by lightning in Pali district, while two cousins, Hariram (46) and Kamal (32), lost their lives in Baran's Patpadi. A 10-year-old girl was also fatally struck in Chittorgarh.

Madhya Pradesh is also bracing for heavy rainfall, with the IMD issuing an 'Orange Alert' warning for heavy to very heavy and extremely heavy rainfall in isolated places until Tuesday morning. Mumbai witnessed a house collapse in the Ghatkopar area, injuring four individuals, amidst moderate to heavy rains in the city and its suburbs.

Delhiites to shell out more for power now

Tariff hike will not hit consumers whose electricity consumption is 200 units or below

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Consumers will have to pay more for power in the national Capital now. Accepting the power distribution companies' (discoms) petitions to increase tariffs on the basis of the high cost of power purchase, the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) in its order dated June 22, has allowed BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) to charge 9.42 per cent more on top of the prevailing rates, BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) 6.39 per cent, and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) 2 per cent for the next nine months (from July 2023 to March 2024).

Electricity consumers residing in South Delhi, West Delhi, Trans-Yamuna areas of Delhi, Old Delhi, and New Delhi would be affected by the change in power tariff. The new rates came into effect on June 23. However, the hike will not impact consumers whose electricity consumption is 200 units or below.

These charges will be in addition to the PPAC (Power Purchase Agreement Cost) already applicable for these areas which are 28 per cent for NDMC, 20.69 per cent for BRPL, and 22.18 per cent for BYPL. There will be relief for the consumers residing in the areas where TPDDL (Tata



Power Delhi Distribution Limited earlier NDPL) distributes electricity as there will be no increase for them. This includes areas of North and Northwest Delhi. The PPAC has been increased from 27 to 31 per cent in the last three years. Interestingly power tariff is being increased in Delhi for the last few years indirectly through PPAC.

The Opposition BJP and Congress slammed the Arvind Kejriwal Government for hike in power tariff and demanded that the Government withdraw it. Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri demanded a special session of Delhi Assembly and stated that the BJP legislative group will stage a protest outside the Chief Minister's residence against this issue on Tuesday at 2 PM.

Responding to the power tariff hike, Delhi Power Minister Atishi said the consumers who get free electricity up to 200 units will not be hit by the latest rise in tariffs. However, she added other consumers will have to pay about an 8 per cent surcharge. She also blamed the Central Government for the power tariff hike in the national

Capital. "The electricity tariff in Delhi is increasing only because of the mismanagement of the Central Government and the increasing rates of coal blocks," Atishi said.

Since, the PPAC computed is high in value on account of blending of coal and increased gas prices, the DERC has approved BYPL and BRPL to levy additional 9.42 per cent and 6.39 per cent PPAC over and above the ongoing PPAC of 20.69 per cent with both PPACs having validity till nine months from the issuance of this order.

The PPAC is revised every three months and it can increase or decrease depending on the prevailing prices of fuel such as coal and gas used in power generation.

The Tata Power DDL spokesperson said the PPAC has increased by 1.49 per cent for Tata Power DDL by DERC as per the latest order on June 7 this year. This decision has been made in response to the rising costs associated with power generation mainly due to increased blending of imported coal as per MOP directions.

Continued on Page 2

Religious freedom body ex-chief flays Obama for minority remark

Former USCIRF man says, ex-Pres should compliment India more instead of criticising it

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

criticizing it. India is the most diverse country in human history," said Moore. He also said India is not a perfect country, just like the US, but its diversity is its strength. "It's not a perfect country, just like the US is not a perfect country, but its diversity is its strength... Even in that critique, President Obama couldn't help but also compliment Prime Minister Modi, and I certainly understand why, having spent some time with him."

Obama had said if he had a conversation with Modi, he would discuss the rights of ethnic minorities in India and what would happen if their rights were not protected.

I think the former President (Barack Obama) should spend his energy complimenting India more than



Continued on Page 2

Telangana boost: 35 BRS leaders join Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

In a big jolt to Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) in Telangana, 35 of its senior leaders, including former MP Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and ex-Minister Jupally Krishna Rao, joined the Congress on Monday.

This comes after former Congress president Rahul Gandhi recently expressed confidence in the party's victory over the BRS in the forthcoming Assembly elections scheduled for later this year.

The leaders officially joined the Congress in the presence of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi. Congress General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal and A Revanth Reddy, the chief of Congress in Telangana, were also present during the meeting. During a Press interaction prior to an Opposition meet in Patna last week, Rahul specifically mentioned



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader Rahul Gandhi, Telangana Congress president Revanth Reddy and others during a meeting where several former Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leaders joined Congress, at AICC headquarters, in New Delhi, on Monday

Telangana and expressed the Congress' determination to win all forthcoming Assembly polls in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, while noting that people would be surprised by the results in Telangana.

The Congress party aims to seize power from the BRS, which has held control in Telangana for nearly a decade.

In November of the previous year, Rahul led the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', extensively traversing the State. With the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and the recent rally held by Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi in the State on the eve of the Karnataka polls last month, the Congress has set its sights on Telangana.

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Days after Opp unity meeting Mamata slams Cong, CPI(M)

Bengal CM accuses them of conspiring with BJP to defeat TMC in rural polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Days after attending the meeting of the Opposition parties in Patna, TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday launched a scathing attack on the Congress and the CPI(M), accusing them of being duplicitous and conspiring with the BJP to defeat her party.

Asserting the significance of the forthcoming panchayat elections, Banerjee declared, "The BJP will lose the parliamentary elections. We will defeat the BJP at the Centre and oust them from India and form a development-oriented Government."



West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee speaks during an election campaign for the state Panchayat elections, at Chandamari in Cooch Behar district, on Monday

She directly blamed the Congress and the CPI(M) for their contradictory actions, stating, "There in Delhi, the Congress and CPI(M) are joining hands with us to fight the Narendra Modi Government, but here in Bengal, they are conspiring with BJP to defeat us... But we will break that unholy alliance... we will not let their evil designs succeed in Bengal."

Continued on Page 2

Centre mulls Ashoka Rock Edicts Circuit showing India's rich heritage

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is actively exploring the idea of creating an integrated circuit dedicated to the Ashokan rock and pillar edicts that dot the landscape of India. Drawing inspiration from the successful Buddhist circuit, this endeavour aims to showcase the historical and cultural significance of these remarkable edicts.

A recent report on tourism by the esteemed Niti Aayog highlights several locations where these rock edicts are scattered, including Girnar in Gujarat, Sopara in Maharashtra, Sannati in Karnataka, Yerragudi



in Andhra Pradesh, and Dhauli and Jaugada in Odisha. One can also encounter famous Ashokan pillar edicts in Delhi, Meerut, Topra, Vaishali, Rampurva, and Lauriya-Nandangarh in Bihar.

India, often hailed as the "Land of the Buddha", holds immense significance in the origins of Buddhism, with Gautam Buddha having founded the religion here approximately 2,500 years ago.

Throughout ancient India, under the reign of Mauryan kings, Gupta rulers and Satavahana rulers, an array of splendid Buddhist stupas, viharas, chaityas, pillars, and rock edicts were erected.

Today, Buddhism boasts a global following of nearly 500 million adherents, solidifying its position as the fourth-largest religion globally.

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Wrestlers move court, seek WFI head chargesheet copy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Female wrestlers who have accused Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the outgoing chief of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), of sexual harassment approached a Delhi court on Monday to request a copy of the chargesheet filed against him.

The police had filed a chargesheet against Singh, who is also a BJP MP, under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), including assault, sexual harassment, stalking, and criminal intimidation on June 15. The Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate



(ACMM) Harjeet Singh Jaspal, who is scheduled to review the chargesheet on Tuesday, directed the complainant's lawyer to apply for a certified copy of the court copying agency.

The chargesheet also mentioned Vinod Tomar, the suspended assistant secretary of the WFI, for his alleged involvement in the offenses.

She was among the seven female grapplers who accused Singh of sexual harassment. Both the FIRs describe multiple instances of alleged sexual harassment, including inappropriate touching, groping, stalking, and intimidation by Singh over a period of ten years at various locations.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

CHINESE BALLOONS SPOTTED OVER ASIA
London: The British media on Monday reported new evidence of China's spy balloon programme, including flights over Japan and Taiwan, months after US-China relations were derailed when one such airship was shot down off the US coast. Working with an AI company which sifted through huge amounts of data captured by satellites, the BBC has found multiple images of balloons crossing East Asia. The company found evidence of one balloon crossing northern Japan in early September 2021.

RLY PANEL TO PROBE ELECTROCUTION DEATH
New Delhi: The Northern Railway on Monday said that it has formed a committee to probe the incident at the New Delhi Railway station complex where a woman teacher died of electrocution and is conducting a safety audit of all electrical installations across its stations. The incident took place near gate number 1 when Sakshi Ahuja was on her way to board a train to Chandigarh. P3

CCPA PENALISES RAU'S IAS STUDY CIRCLE
New Delhi: The consumer protection regulator CCPA has imposed a penalty of Rs 1,00,000 on Rau's IAS Study Circle for publishing misleading advertisements as out of 143 aspirants, 111 belonged to the Interview Guidance Program which comes into play only after an aspirant has cleared the Prelims examination and the Mains Examination of the UPSC-CSE. "Hence, claiming that an aspirant is a 'successful student' of RAU's IAS Study Circle, constitutes misleading advertisement under the Act," the CCPA said.

₹56K CR CLEARED FOR 16 STATES BY CENTRE
New Delhi: The Ministry of Finance has approved Capital Investment proposals of Rs 56,415 crore for 16 States in the current financial year under a special assistance scheme announced in the budget. P10

KCR's BRS 'B' team of BJP, alleges Cong

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI



Charging that the Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) was the BJP's 'B' Team and it would not make any impact in Maharashtra, the Opposition Congress on Monday came down heavily on Telangana chief minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu for trying to take political advantage of pilgrimage to Pandharpur. Talking to media persons at Tilak Bhavan here, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress president Patole said: "Pandharis Vari (pilgrimage to Pandharpur) is a matter of devotion and faith for all of us. KCR should not take political advantage of it."

"Ashadhiwari is happening in Pandharpur. We have been given to understand Telangana Chief Minister KCR is bringing a fleet of 600 cars from Hyderabad this year. Given that in Pandharpur, one million warkaris gather on Ashadhi Vari, it is right for KCR to bring more people from outside?", Patole asked. "In his criticism of KCR's party, Patole said: BRP from Telangana is trying

to enter Maharashtra politics but it will not be of any use. Warkari and the common man are hoping that a government will come in Maharashtra under the Congress leadership," Patole said. "KCR has not done any work in Telangana in 9 years. He has not done anything concrete for Dalits, tribals, minorities, backward classes. Even now, onions are more expensive in Telangana. It has come to light that the farmers of Maharashtra were cheated when they sold onions in Telangana," Patole said. "The KCR government is beating the drums of the work done by them by giving big advertisements in the papers. One who works does not feel

Cong raps Shinde Govt for 2 lynching cases in Nashik

PNS ■ MUMBAI



The Maharashtra Congress on Monday held the EKnath Shinde-led Shiv Sena-BJP government responsible for the lynching of a Kurla man allegedly by cow-vigilantes in Nashik on June 24. Identifying the lynched man as Afaan A. M. Ansari, 32, hailed from Kurla, Maharashtra's Congress Working President M. Arif Naseem Khan charged that law and order had broken down in the state. "Or how else can anyone explain two incidents of lynching in Nashik district?", he asked. Though the Nashik police had arrested 11 persons in connection with the mob-killing on suspicions of transporting 450 kgs of beef on Saturday, the state Congress is in mood to accept the explanations given by the state government. "Both the incidents are shocking. They happened in the same district located 25 kms apart, under similar circumstances... Is there some link?", Khan asked.

While demanding a compensation of at least Rs 10 lakh for the families of both the deceased, Khan also rooted for stringent punishment for the accused. Based on the complaint by Shaikh who is undergoing treatment in a local hospital, the Nashik Police registered an FIR arrested 11 persons on Sunday, and further investigations are underway. The samples of the beef have been sent for forensics to ascertain whether it is from buffalo or cow, and the report is awaited.

Meanwhile, the mortal remains of Ansari were brought to Kurla on Monday, amid a protest aggrieved by the incident. The video clips of the attack have gone viral on social media evoking sharp reactions from the people.

2006 Aurangabad arms haul case HC suspends convict's life sentence, grants him bail

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After 17 years of incarceration in the 2006 Aurangabad arms haul case, the Bombay High Court suspended the life sentence of Afroz Khan Shahid Pathan and granted him conditional bail in the case after holding that there was no prima facie evidence to show that he had gone to Bangladesh to collect funds for the terror activity. While also dismissing the charge against him that Pathan was part of the larger conspiracy, a HC division bench of Justice Revati Mohite Dere and Justice Gauri Godse observed: "Neither of the aforesaid confessions where there is a reference to the applicant, prima facie show that the applicant had in fact gone to Bangladesh and had got funds or that the applicant had knowledge or reason to believe the purpose for which, he was sent to Bangladesh or of the larger conspiracy".

While allowing the bail application made by him 2017, the HC bench said that Pathan had spent 17 years in jail, did his post graduation, a six months' course in Yogfg, was working in the jail hospital hospital and had helped the jail authorities by holding counselling and de-radicalisation courses for prisoners. "The applicant has been in custody for the last 17 years. It appears that the applicant whilst in custody completed his B.A through IGNOU and secured 63% and later did his Masters in Political Science. It also appears that the applicant has done a 6 month Yoga Course and is working in the Jail Hospital at Talajo. It also appears that the applicant is conducting counselling and de-radicalization sessions in Prison with the help of Jail authorities", the court observed.

After suspending his conviction, the HC bench ordered Pathan's release on a conditional bail of Rs 50,000 pending the hearing and final disposal of his plea. Pathan's conviction was based on confessions made by two co-accused, Mohammed Amir and Sayeed Aakif, call detail records and an email sent to Amir. The confessional statements had said that Afroz was prepared by another accused to visit Bangladesh illegally along with accused Mustafa to fetch funds from accused Juneed, a Pakistani national and member of Lashkar-e-Taiba.

The HC bench also noted that the call records do not show that Pathan was in Bangladesh. Further, the email written by him was not incriminating, the c

It may be recalled that on August 2, 2016, a special Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) court on Tuesday sentenced Afroz and six others to life imprisonment in the 2006 Aurangabad arms haul case. The Prosecution's version in the 2006 Aurangabad haul case was that after they chased a Tata Sumo jeep and an Indica car on Chandwad-Manmad highway near Aurangabad in the state on May 8, 2006, the ATS sleuths conducted raids at Malegaon, Nashik, Aurangabad and Beed and seized 43 kg of deadly RDX, 16 AK-47 assault rifles, 50 Chinese-made grenades and over 3,200 rounds. Pathan who had surrendered to the police and was then arrested in 2006.

Modi to flag off 5 Vande Bharat trains in MP today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a day-long visit to Madhya Pradesh on June 27 during which he will flag off five Vande Bharat trains and launch the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission, his office said on Monday.

The prime minister will reach Rani Kamalapati railway station around 10:30 am and flag off five Vande Bharat trains, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. The launch of five routes same day same time has been kept a low key affair as against the earlier ones inaugurated with much fanfare because of the tragic Balasore train accident that has claimed about 300 lives last month end.

Keeping with the commitment of Ministry of Railways run atleast one Vande Bharat train in every state by June end, five Vande Bharat trains that Modi will flag off are -- Rani Kamalapati-Jabalpur Vande Bharat Express, Khajuraho-

Bhopal-Indore Vande Bharat Express, Madgaon (Goa)-Mumbai Vande Bharat Express, Dharwad-Bengaluru Vande Bharat Express, and Hatia-Patna Vande Bharat Express.

The Hatia-Patna Vande Bharat Express will be the first Vande Bharat train for Jharkhand and Bihar. Enhancing connectivity between Patna and Ranchi, the train will be a boon for tourists, students and businessmen. Compared to the current fastest train connecting the two places, the Hatia-Patna Vande Bharat Express will help save about one hour and 25 minutes of the journey time.

The Rani Kamalapati-Jabalpur Vande Bharat Express will connect Mahakaushal region (Jabalpur) to the Central region (Bhopal) of Madhya Pradesh. Tourist places like Bheraghat, Pachmarhi, and Satpura, etc.

Will also be benefited by the improved connectivity, the statement said. The train will be about 30 minutes faster than the existing fastest train on the route, it said. The Khajuraho-Bhopal-Indore Vande Bharat Express will improve connectivity of Malwa region (Indore) and Bundelkhand region (Khajuraho) to Central region (Bhopal), the statement said. It

will benefit important tourist sites like Mahakaleshwar, Mandu, Maheshwar, Khajuraho and Panna. The train will be about two hours and 30 minutes faster than the existing fastest train on route, it said. The Madgaon (Goa)-Mumbai Vande Bharat Express will be Goa's first Vande Bharat Express. It will run between Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus and Goa's Madgaon station. It will help save about an hour as compared to the current fastest train connecting the two places, the statement said.

The Dharwad-Bengaluru Vande Bharat Express will connect important cities in Karnataka -- Dharwad, Hubballi and Davangere -- with the state capital Bengaluru. It will immensely benefit tourists, students and industrialists, etc. In the region and will be about 30 minutes faster than the existing fastest train on the route, it said.

Modi will also attend a public programme in Shahdol district around 3 pm. He will honour Rani Durgavati, who ruled Gondwana in the mid-16th century; launch the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission and kick-start distribution of Ayushman cards.

Man booked for defecating, urinating inside aircraft

New Delhi: In a shocking incident on a Mumbai-Delhi Air India flight, the Delhi Police have apprehended a male passenger upon arrival at the airport for allegedly engaging in disruptive behavior by reportedly defecating and urinating inside the aircraft, leaving fellow passengers and crew members astonished and concerned.

According to the FIR accessed by IANS, Ram Singh, a passenger seated on seat no. 17F, on Air India's Flight AIC 866 from Mumbai to Delhi on June 24 defecated, urinated and spat in the aircraft on row-9.Singh is a resident of Tehri Garhwal in Uttarakhand. "This misconduct was observed by the cabin crew of the flight and subsequently a verbal warning was issued and the passenger was secluded from the surrounding passengers," the FIR read. "This situation was promptly communicated to me, Capt. Varun Sansare, the Pilot-In-Command.

An immediate message was relayed to the company, requesting security assistance to escort the passenger upon arrival. The incident caused agitation among a number of other passengers on board the aircraft," read the complaint filed by the flight Captain.

"Rajender Kumar Meena, the Head of Air India Security, attended to the situation and personally escorted the passenger. Subsequently, a report detailing the incident was submitted to the local police station near IGI Airport T-3 in New Delhi," the FIR further read.

Staff Reporter

Days after Opp unity...

From Page 1

Banerjee's strong criticism of the Opposition parties came amidst ongoing violence in the State, with reports of poll-related violence and 10 deaths in the last 16 days. On Monday, during clashes with the Left Front in Domkal, Murshidabad district, four TMC men sustained bullet injuries.

The CPI(M) denied the charges. In a separate incident earlier in the morning, the wife of a local TMC leader in Domkal suffered grave injuries when a bomb kept inside her house suddenly exploded, according to sources.

The Chief Minister also targeted the Border Security Force (BSF), alleging their bias towards the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and their intimidation of voters in border areas. Addressing an election rally in Coochbehar, Banerjee revealed, "I have information that some

BSF officials are working at the behest of the BJP... they are threatening the voters... asking them to vote in favour of the BJP... but I will ask the people to remain united and not to get scared by the BSF... I will ask the women of the villages to resist any kind of coercion from the front so that the BSF people cannot shoot the men down like they have done in the past."

The Chief Minister criticised the BJP Government's interference in the State's affairs, asserting, "Law and order is a State subject and no one has any right to interfere in it." She called on the police officers to register FIRs against those responsible for the killings in Coochbehar, making reference to previous incidents where alleged smugglers were shot dead by the BSF. Meanwhile, tensions escalated between the State Election Commission and the Union Home Ministry as

the commission sent its third letter to the Ministry, requesting the deployment of 485 companies of central forces.

When asked about the deployment areas, the commission responded, "It is the State Government's job to deploy forces."

As Opposition parties questioned the intentions of the newly-appointed State Election Commissioner Rajiva Sinha, known for his proximity to Mamata Banerjee, Pradesh Congress president Adhir Chowdhury expressed concerns, stating, "It seems that he has no intention to conduct free and fair elections." Approximately 5.67 crore voters are expected to exercise their franchise in the July 8 panchayat polls, where nearly 75,000 candidates will be elected for zilla parishads, panchayat samiti, and gram panchayats.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Yogesh Madan S/o Shri M.L.Madan R/o EC-268, Maya Enclave, Maya Puri, South West Delhi, Delhi-110064 have changed my name from Yogesh Chander to Yogesh Madan for all future purposes.

PD(077)A

Delhiites to shell out more...

From Page 1
The Commission had sought details from BRPL in writing of Short-term Open Access (STOA) credit received from DTL in PPAC computation for the period of FY 2017-18 to FY 2022-23 and BRPL vide its email dated 21/06/2023 submitted that till FY 2021-22 they have considered the credit of STOA in computation of PPAC. It is also noticed that in FY 2022-23, BRPL received STOA credit of Rs. 128.70 crore.

"The Surplus/deficit, if any, will be allowed with carrying cost, on verification of Power Purchase Cost and Transmission Bills, in True-up of relevant Financial Year," it said.

As per the Ministry of Power (MOP), Government of India directions dated November 9, 2021, every State Regulatory Commission has to place a mechanism for Automatic pass through of fuel and power procurement cost in tariff for ensuring the viability of power sector. In case of Delhi there is no automatic pass through but the Discoms levy PPAC only after approval of DERG.

Telangana boost...

From Page 1
Following their meeting with the Congress leadership, the BRS leaders announced their decision to join the Congress during a press conference. They are scheduled to address a public rally in Khammam, Telangana, in the first week of July, in the presence of Priyanka. "Winds of change are sweeping through Telangana. In significant boost to the Congress party's 39;s prospects, more and more people are aligning with us to carry forward the message of love and prosperity," Congress said on its social media platforms.

The party added, "Today, senior leaders from Telangana joined the Congress party in the presence of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, general secretary (Organisation) K C Venugopal, AICC Telangana incharge Manikrao Thakre, Telangana PCC president Veavath Reddy, and other senior leaders at AICC HQ, New Delhi." Highlighting the significance of the event, Pawan Khera, the head of Congress's 39; media department, said at an AICC press conference, "This winds of change started with 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', the effect of which you saw in Karnataka.

Today, many important leaders of Telangana are joining the Congress party, and all of them have held extensive discussions after meeting the top leaders of the party." A Revanth Reddy, the Telangana Congress chief, said, "Many important leaders of Telangana joined our party today.

Together, we will expose how the BJP and BRS are deceiving the people of Telangana. I thank all these senior leaders from the bottom of my heart. Among the prominent leaders who joined the Congress were six-time former MLA Gurnath Reddy, ex-MLA and Zila Parishad chairman Koram Kanakaiah, former MLA Payam Venkateswarlu, District Cooperative Central Bank (DCCB) ex-chairman Muvament Vijaya Baby, sitting DCCB chairman Thulluri Bramhaiah, ex-chairman of SC Corporation Pidamarthi Ravi, Marked State vice chairperson Borra Rajshbekhar, Municipal chairperson Warya, and Mandal Praja Parishad chairman S Jaipal, as well as other senior BJP leaders.

Centre mulls Ashoka...

From Page 1
By crafting an integrated circuit showcasing the Ashokan edicts, India seeks to illuminate its rich Buddhist heritage and enthrall visitors with its profound cultural tapestry. An archaeologist from the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) welcomed the proposal made in the report titled "Promoting Spiritual Tourism in the Land of Buddha".

He said such site attracts tourists, including Buddhist monks from neighbouring nations.

"That is the reason we have decided to spruce up the Ashoka Rock Edict site, located near Kailash Hills in south Delhi. According to the survey, the stone edict dates back to 273-236 BC which was discovered in 1966," he noted.

It is among three inscriptions, which include the teachings of Lord Buddha, built by Mauryan emperor Ashoka. The other two are -- the Delhi Topra Pillar installed in Feroz Shah Kotla, and the Ashoka Pillar in Kamla Nehru Ridge near Hindu Rao Hospital.

Such sites are of not only historical and spiritual importance but also have huge tourism potential, agreed an official from the Union Tourism Ministry.

Meanwhile, the archeologist explained that the edicts of Ashoka are a collection of more than thirty inscriptions on the pillars of Ashoka, as well as boulders and cave walls, attributed to emperor Ashoka who reigned from 268 BCE to 232 BCE.

Historical monuments Ashokan rock edicts dating back to 260 BC -- in Odisha's Ganjam district which has the emperor's directive to Mauryan officers inscribed on it, including the famous declaration of the Mauryan king that "all men are my children" is waiting for conservation.

The rock edicts also contain the famous Ashokan doctrine that "conquest through love is greater than conquest by sword". The inscription is engraved on three different tables on the vertical face of a rock in an old fort near the bank of the river Rushikulya. Bringing these edicts under a particular circuit would ensure their conservation which are of great historical importance, said the official.

Presently, the Buddhist Circuit programme has been initiated to promote integrated development of holy Buddhist sites across the country. The Buddhist Circuits have been identified in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Bihar.

commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives The former USCIRF commissioner told ANI that Modi's historic visit to the US was an occasion to be celebrated. "And so I think, you knew, it was the time to celebrate a historic visit, you know, rather than leveling some criticism on it, you know, with your friends, particularly when it comes to democracy. With your friends, it's sometimes better to privately criticize and to publicly, publicly praise. That's good geopolitics," Moore said.

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S.No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Amount	Tender Publication
1	01/Adv./SM/2023-24	Advertising Rights on unipole on BOT Basis Near irrigation drain on Noida-Gr. Noida Expressway and Near Mahamaya Flyover for a period of 01 Year, Noida	79,98,720.00	Second Time

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CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

Atishi blames Centre for power tariff hike

'NTPC is selling power to Delhi at 25-50% hike over DERC ordered rate'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



As the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) accepted the power distribution companies' pleas to increase tariffs on the basis of the high cost of power purchase, Delhi Power Minister Atishi on Monday clarified that power consumers with monthly usage of over 200 units will have to pay more after an 8 per cent hike in the power purchase adjustment cost (PPAC).

She further blamed the Central Government for the power tariff hike in the national Capital.

Atishi said the hike will not impact consumers whose electricity consumption is 200 units or below. There will be a 8 per cent hike in PPAC surcharge in power bills of those consumers who do not get subsidy, she said. "I just want to tell the consumers that only the Centre is responsible for this hike."

"The Centre's NTPC selling electricity to Delhi at a massive 25-50% hike over DERC stipulated rates. This is India's first coal supply crisis ever, caused by the Central Government's failure to ensure sufficient production. It has forced the use of imported coal, which is 10 times costlier than domestic coal. This is despite no lack of coal mines or availability of coal in the country," she said.

"If the Central government decides to raise the cost of coal, the PPAC and the prices of NTPC power, the entire country will suffer from an electricity price hike. The Centre has 'forced' coal buyers to purchase at least 10 per cent imported coal, which costs 10 times more than Indian coal. Domestic coal is priced around Rs 200 per tonne while the imported variety costs Rs 25,000 a tonne, the Delhi Power Minister claimed.

"We want to know from the Centre if there is a nexus with coal importers which is why coal buyers are being forced to purchase imported coal at 10 times higher prices," she asked.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government administration said

the fresh rise in power tariffs will not affect the consumers. "Consumers will not be directly affected by this increase. Under the Power Purchase Agreement, electricity prices keep increasing and decreasing. Electricity becomes cheaper in winter, while the price increases slightly in summer. In every quarterly review, there is a marginal increase or decrease in the prices under the power purchase agreement," an official statement by the Delhi NCT administration said.

The PPAC is revised every three months and it can increase or decrease depending on the prevailing prices of fuel such as coal and gas used in power generation. Atishi alleged, "I want to say that if the electricity is getting costlier in Delhi, it is only because of the Centre's mismanagement."

Noting that discoms are allowed to increase or lower the PPAC for three-month periods, Atishi said, "The prices of electricity have been increased because, due to the Centre's mismanagement, there is an artificial shortage of coal in the country for the first time in the last 70 years, shooting its prices (up)."

Kejriwal Govt has cheated Delhiites in name of giving free power: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



The Delhi BJP lashed out at AAP Government saying Arvind Kejriwal Government has cheated the people of Delhi in the name of giving free power, as electricity bills in the national Capital are set to go up with the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) allowing power distribution companies (discoms) to increase power purchase agreement cost.

Addressing a Press conference, BJP MPs Manoj Tiwari and Ramesh Bidhuri, demanded the Kejriwal government to withdraw the hike. In a related development, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Monday held a meeting with all MLAs and decided to protest over the power tariff hike at the residence of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday. BJP MLAs also demanded a special session of the Delhi Assembly to discuss the power tariff hike.

Tiwari said Kejriwal is a cunning Chief Minister who first allows power tariff hike and then with his ministers lies on the issue.

At the Press conference, Bidhuri showed some electricity bills in which electricity theft bills were waived by Kejriwal government and all these electricity bills belonged to a particular religious community which was exposing the politics of appeasement of Arvind Kejriwal. Why are the electricity theft bills of Batala

because since then why the increased rate did not come down", he said. This is a direct cheating with the people of Delhi. In 2022, PPAC was increased in summer, then why not decreased in winter and now it has been increased again and this total amount is Rs. 4000 crores which should be recovered from Arvind Kejriwal.

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At the Press conference, Bidhuri showed some electricity bills in which electricity theft bills were waived by Kejriwal government and all these electricity bills belonged to a particular religious community which was exposing the politics of appeasement of Arvind Kejriwal. Why are the electricity theft bills of Batala House and Jamia areas being reduced?

He said that Kejriwal, who talked about investigation against Ambani, should explain why he did not get power discoms works audited for 9 years. Not only this, where is the more than Rs. 16,033 crore collected in the name of fixed charges. Where is the account of 26 thousand crores given to private companies in the name of subsidy? Why didn't Kejriwal give the account of total Rs 75,000 crore to the people of Delhi?

After meeting with BJP MLAs, Leader of Opposition demanded a special session of Delhi Assembly. The BJP MLAs have also decided to hold a protest hike at the residence of Kejriwal on Tuesday. Bidhuri alleged the Kejriwal government has hiked electricity rates in the capital city by up to 10 per cent through the backdoor.



Railway panel to probe teacher's electrocution at New Delhi station

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Northern Railway on Monday said it has formed a committee to probe the incident at the New Delhi Railway station complex where a woman teacher died of electrocution and is conducting a safety audit of all electrical installations across its stations. The incident took place on Sunday morning near gate number 1 when 34-year-old Sakshi Ahuja was on her way to board a train to Chandigarh.

According to a preliminary inquiry, Ahuja was walking towards the station in the rain when she lost her balance. She grabbed an electricity pole to break her fall and came in contact with some exposed wires lying on the spot.

The Railways is responsible for the maintenance of all electrical installations on its premises, officials said. "We are awaiting a report from the GRP (Government Railway Police) on the incident. Further action will be taken by the Railways after that. A committee has also been formed to probe the incident and find the cause of the incident. Necessary action will be taken and those found guilty will be taken to task," Northern Railway spokesperson Deepak Kumar said.

"A detailed inquiry will be conducted and the guilty will be punished. A system is also being set in place to ensure the non-occurrence of such incidents in the future," he added.

The Delhi Police on Monday said it has written to the divisional railway manager asking as to who was responsible for the maintenance so that suitable action can be taken.

It has also asked the Central Electricity Authority of India to inspect the site at the New Delhi Railway Station complex where a woman teacher died of electrocution and give its opinion about how the incident may have occurred, an official said.

Delhi Police spokesperson SumanNalwa said, "We have registered a case and an investigation is being carried out." She said the site has been examined by forensic teams.

Draft Delhi grievance redressal rules OK'd

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) VK Saxena has approved draft Delhi Grievance Redressal Rules for addressing grievances related to Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and Fair Price Shops (FPS) pending since 2013. Central assistance may be withheld if the rules are notified on or before this month end.

Giving his nod to the proposed rules, the LG also questioned the Delhi government for unexplained and unforfeivable delay. The Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court had directed the AAP government in 2017 to frame rules and constitute the Commission the same year. Delhi has not constituted a State Food Commission and not framed Grievance Redressal Mechanism as mandated by the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 even after 10 years. The Mechanism and the Commission meant to look into critical aspects of transparent and corruption free implementation of the TPDS under NFSA, was even ordered to be put in place by the Supreme Court and the High Court way back in 2017, within the deadline 2017 itself.

However, despite the Supreme Court's clear orders, the

Redressal Mechanism and a State Food Commission, mandated by the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 for attending to grievances related to the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), even after 10 years of the Act coming in effect.

What is even more shocking is the fact that such mechanism and body which was meant to redress grievances like non-opening of Fair Price Shops, non-issue of Specified Food Article (SFA), weight discrepancy of SFA and overcharging for ration, etc., has been treated with such negligence and lackadaisicalness by a government that has, on more than one occasion, made serious political issue out of PDS and FPS.

"It has taken about six years for the file to be sent to the Lt. Governor for approval, and that also under pressure from the Govt. of India which expressed its inability to continue with the Central Assistance, if the above mentioned rules and body were not put in place by June 30th, 2023. It will be in the fitness of things to mention here that this laxity on the part of government has also been in violation/contempt of orders passed by the Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court," Raj Niwas said in a statement.

government had been sitting on the file for the past six years and has finally moved only after threat from the Central Government that Central Assistance under NFSA will be withheld if the Mechanism and the Commission are not put in place by end of June.

What was even more shocking, the LG noted, was the fact that such mechanism and body which was meant to redress grievances like non-opening of Fair Price Shops, non-issue of Specified Food Article (SFA), weight discrepancy of SFA and overcharging for ration, etc., has been treated with such insensitive negligence and lackadaisicalness by a government that has, on more than one occasion, made serious political issue out of PDS and FPS.

While approving the draft, Saxena observed "It is indeed shocking that the National Capital yet does not have a Grievance

Armed men rob delivery agent of ₹2 lakh at gunpoint inside Pragati Maidan tunnel

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



A delivery agent and his associate were robbed of Rs 2 lakh at gunpoint by four motorcycle borne men inside the Pragati Maidan tunnel in New Delhi on Saturday. Police said the two men were on their way to Gurugram to deliver a bag full of cash when they were robbed by four motorcycle borne robbers. Police said they have detained two people.

The day-light robbery was caught on a security camera installed in the tunnel. The Delhi Police has received a dramatic CCTV footage in the incident.

The footage then showed both the car gates open and the man at the rear end being handed over a black-coloured handbag, apparently carrying money.

The two then quickly hopped on to their waiting motorcycle and accelerate away with their accomplices.

Sharing a video of the purported incident, the chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena's resignation and reiterated his demand that Delhi's law and order should be handed over to the local government. Kejriwal said that Saxena should make way for someone who can ensure the safety and security of the residents of Delhi, and even called on the central government to hand the law and order to the AAP-led government.

"LG shud resign. Make way for someone who can provide safety n security to the people of Delhi. (sic)," he said in a tweet,

tagging a news report. "If Central govt is unable to make Delhi safe, hand it over to us. We will show u how to make a city safe for its citizens (sic)."

The 22-second video appears to show that the four men were trailing the cab on two motorcycles and intercepted it inside the tunnel as other vehicles passed by. The video shows four robbers on two motorcycles walloping the Ola cab - which the delivery agent had booked from the Red Fort area - as it enters the tunnel on the Ring Road. As the cab stopped, the two armed robbers riding pillion got down from their respective motorbikes, one quickly going to the driver's seat and the other to the rear gate, both apparently whipping out their pistols. All four were wearing helmets.

AAP promises to redevelop schools under MCD in 5 yrs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday promised to redevelop all schools under the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) in the next five to seven years. He was speaking after inaugurating Sarvodaya Co-ed school in Libaspur village. The Chief Minister further highlighted the Delhi government's efforts in narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor through transformative changes in the education system.

Kejriwal said its classrooms, labs, library and halls are far better than those in private schools of Delhi. "Earlier, the condition of government schools in Delhi used to be terrible. Classes were held inside tents, ceilings of schools were broken. There were no toilets or facility even drinking water. Poor families were compelled to send their children to such schools but the AAP government bridged the gap between the rich and the poor in education in Delhi," Kejriwal said.

He further said the AAP government has been focusing on improving schools run by the

Minimum temp settles at 25.4 degrees

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Muggy weather conditions prevailed in Delhi on Monday even as some parts of the national Capital received rains, keeping the mercury in check.

There was a cloud cover over Delhi throughout the day with Safdarjung observatory recording a high of 33.2 degrees Celsius, four notches below the season's average, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

The minimum temperature was recorded at 25.4 degrees Celsius, three degrees below normal. Humidity levels oscillated between 98 per cent and 69 per cent.

The Safdarjung observatory did not receive any rainfall between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm on Monday. However, Palam observatory received 1.4 mm, Ayanagar 0.6 mm, NDO Ghaziabad 0.5 mm, and Najafgarh 2 mm of precipitation during this period.

The weather office has issued a 'yellow' alert for Tuesday and forecast generally cloudy skies with moderate rain or thundershowers.

Facing difficulty in acquiring land from farmers for Noida International Airport: YEIDA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA



The Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) on Monday admitted facing difficulty in acquiring land from farmers near the upcoming Noida International Airport with compensation rate being the point of conflict.

The land is to be developed by the YEIDA for industrial, commercial and residential allotment in the region along the Yamuna Expressway's upcoming sectors 17, 17A, 18, 20, 22D, 22E, 24, etc, it said in a statement after its 77th board meeting held in Greater Noida.

The YEIDA, which functions under the Uttar Pradesh Government, manages land and development along the 165-km-long Yamuna Expressway which covers parts of Gautam Buddha Nagar, Aligarh and Agra districts in western Uttar Pradesh. YEIDA's chairman Narendra Bhooshan and CEO Arun Vir Singh, among other officers, attended the meeting.

The YEIDA on Monday said in the last board meeting on February 20, the proposal was approved to acquire land in industrial sectors adjacent to Noida International Airport such as sectors 21, 28, 29, 32, 33, 10 and 9 and for the acquisition of 500 metres of land in the north, east and west sides of the airport for the construction of

peripheral road around it and to check encroachment.

The approved rates for land acquisition were Rs 3,100 per square metre (including ex gratia, annuity and seven per cent population plot amount) or Rs 2,728 per square metre (including ex gratia and annuity) along with seven per cent developed plot, it said.

"Now the farmers of the area are demanding a uniform land purchase rate in the YEIDA area and are refusing to give land at lower rates, due to which the authority which is also acquiring land in other sectors like sector 17, 17A, 18, 20, 22E, 22D, 24 etc, is facing difficulties in purchasing land for other important projects such as institutional, residential, commercial, industrial, etc," the YEIDA said in the statement.

Desilting of Delhi drains nearly done

'Waterlogging spots being monitored with CCTV cameras'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Work on desilting of drains in Delhi is "nearly complete" and other potential waterlogging spots are being monitored using CCTV cameras. Authorities are rushing to complete the job as the monsoon arrived in the national capital on Sunday, two days before its scheduled

onset, bringing respite to Delhiites from scorching heat. Drains along smaller roads are maintained by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and those along wider roads are done by the Public Works Department (PWD). "Our work on desilting is nearly complete," a senior MCD official said.

Mayor Shelly Oberoi on

June 1 instructed officials that desilting work of drains in the city should be done by June 15. She also said permanent and temporary water pumps should be installed at places prone to waterlogging, and sensitive places should be monitored through CCTV cameras.

A PWD official too said the work of desilting of drains is "almost complete". "Yesterday, the work carried out by the department were assessed, and there were no major hiccups. We had installed CCTV cameras to monitor underground sumps and waterlogging spots.

Man kidnaps child, takes ransom via UPI; arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA



A 30-year-old man, who had kidnapped a child and taken the ransom via UPI on his mobile wallet, has been arrested by the Noida Police who used his digital footprints to trace him, officials said on Monday.

The six-year-old boy who was kidnapped and taken to Gurugram has been recovered safely and reunited with his family, according to the police.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central Noida) Anil Kumar Yadav said the boy was picked up from Naya Bansa village, under Phase 2 police station limits, last week and an FIR was lodged under the Indian Penal Code section 364A (kidnapping for ransom) after the family approached them with a complaint. The boy had gone missing on June 22 and was found sitting on a bench near the NSEZ metro station on June 23 after the kidnapper released

him post a payment of Rs 30,000 by the child's family, police said. The child's father runs a small eatery, they said. "When the kidnapper called the father for ransom, the police used electronic surveillance and other manual inputs to trace the caller, who kept telling the father not to inform the police. Our first priority was ensuring the safety of the child," Yadav said.

The money was taken in two instalments and withdrawn from a Jan Seva Kendra in Noida. The officer highlighted that the caller had demanded payment through the PhonePe app and the police suggested to the family to go ahead with the payment so that it could be traced.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI

Office of the Executive Engineer (Pr)-II/Central Zone
Under Sewa Nagar Flyover, New Delhi-3

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<https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app>. NIT No. EE-Project-II/CNZ/TC/2023-24/1 Date: 21.06.2023

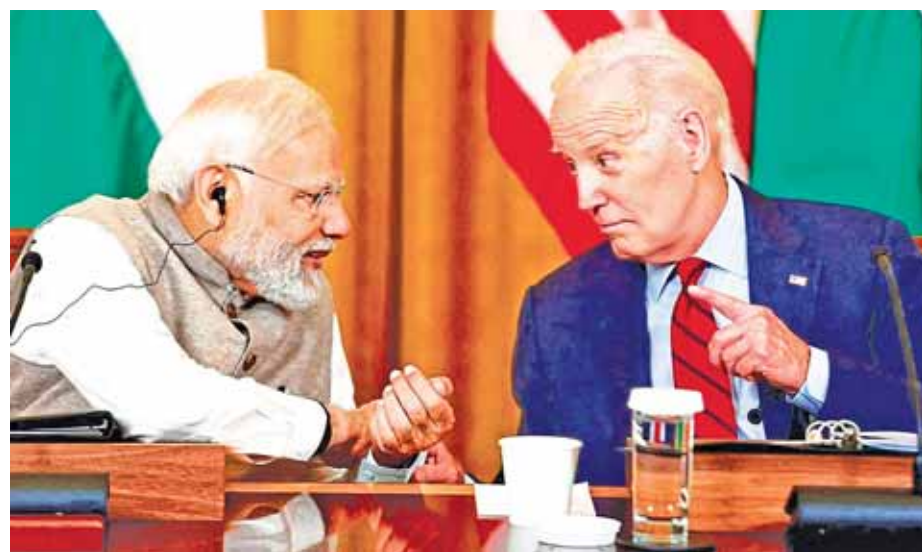
Name of work : Construction of 30 nos class rooms, 2 Store rooms, 2 Computer rooms, 2 office rooms, 2 library rooms, one hall (equivalent to 3 rooms), 2 science rooms and one toilet block for Girls, one toilet block for boys and one toilet for CWSN children at each floor in SDMC Prty. School Lai Kuan Chungi No. 2, Ward No. 94-S, CNZ (Balance work on the risk & cost basis) New Ward No. 179.

Estimated Amount Rs. 7,33,07,895/- for part 'A' Tender Amt. Rs. 5,43,30,316/- for Part 'A' & Part 'B' item Rate, Earnest Money Rs. 14,66,200/-, Time of Completion 12 Months, Tender Cost Rs. 1,770/-, H/A XL-VII-Edu.

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PM: India, US friendship a force of global good



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ WASHINGTON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said friendship between India and US is a force of global good and it will make planet better and more sustainable. He made this observation in response to a tweet by President Joe Biden saying the India-US relationship is among the "most consequential" in the world with bilateral ties more dynamic than ever.

Tagging Biden's tweet, Modi said on Twitter, "I fully agree with you, @POTUS @JoeBiden! Friendship between our countries is a force of global good. It will make a planet better and more sustainable."

"The ground covered in my recent visit will strengthen our bond even more," he said.

This exchange between the two leaders came after the two countries elevated their strategic technology partnership during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic state visit to the US last week.

He concluded his visit late Friday during which he held wide-ranging talks with Biden. Modi also addressed the joint session of the US Congress, becoming the first Indian leader to do so twice.

The visit included an impressive welcome ceremony attended by a record 7,000 people on the South Lawns of the White House, a state dinner attended by some 500 people, and a round table with honchos of technology companies, entrepreneurs, officials and CEOs.

The White House, in its weekly email update, said Modi's state visit affirmed the deep and close partnership between the US and India, strengthened their shared commitment to a free, open, prosperous and secure Indo-Pacific, and shared resolve to elevate their strategic technology partnership, including in defence, clean energy and space.

"The leaders discussed ways to further expand the United States and India's educational exchanges, people-to-people ties, as well as our work together to confront common challenges from climate change, to workforce development and health security," it said.

Prime Minister Modi's visit saw India and the US signing several major deals to boost cooperation in key areas such as defence, space and trade.

General Electric Aerospace has announced that it has inked a pact with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to jointly produce fighter jet engines for

the Indian Air Force's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-MK-II Tejas. Modi and Biden hailed the "landmark" pact to jointly produce jet engines in India to power military aircraft and the US drone deal.

India announced its intention to procure armed MQ-9B SeaGuardian drones from General Atomics. This advanced technology will increase India's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities.

India also decided to join the Artemis Accords, which advance a common vision of space exploration for the benefit of all humankind. "By taking the decision to join the Artemis Accords, we have taken a big leap forward in our space cooperation. In fact, in short, for India and America partnership, even the sky is not the limit," Prime Minister Modi told reporters at a news conference at the White House with President Biden.

In another big-ticket announcement, computer storage chip maker Micron said it will set up its semiconductor assembly and test plant in Gujarat entailing a total investment of USD 2.75 billion (around Rs 22,540 crore). Internet giant Google also announced that it will invest USD 10 billion in India's digitalisation fund.

PC takes dig at Sitharaman, counters claim on Modi Govt's achievements

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister and seasoned Congress leader P Chidambaram took a dig at Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday, countering her claim regarding the achievements of the Modi Government. Chidambaram contended that the Modi government's apparent success in certain areas is a result of building upon the foundations laid by its predecessor, the UPA government.

In a series of tweets, Chidambaram countered Sitharaman's article highlighting the achievements of the Modi government over the past nine years. He acknowledged that many of the examples cited by the finance minister are true,



but he emphasized that these achievements are common for any government that has ruled for a significant period of time.

Chidambaram specifically addressed Sitharaman's mention of five examples where the opposition had taken the government to court and lost. Disagreeing with her assessment, Chidambaram pointed out that the Supreme Court had already declared triple talaq illegal prior to the passage of a parliamentary law, the Article 370 case is still pending in court, and several cases under the GST laws remain unresolved.

In terms of India's top

rankings in milk, honey, fruit, and vegetable production, Chidambaram emphasized that these achievements were attained years ago and have been maintained since. He reminded Sitharaman that the Aadhaar system, which plays a crucial role in Direct Benefit Transfer, was conceived, developed, and implemented during the tenure of the UPA government.

Chidambaram also criticized the finance minister's claim of constructing 11.72 crore toilets, highlighting the issue of many of them remaining unused and inoperable due to water scarcity.

"While every government has its own set of achievements, the success of the Modi government in certain areas can be attributed to the groundwork laid by the UPA government," Chidambaram asserted.

Sitharaman, in her statements, had criticized the Opposition for their limited role in Parliament, suggesting that their focus was more on disruption and delays through court petitions rather than engaging in debates. She specifically mentioned that over 15 cases, including those related to GST, Article 370, vaccination, triple talaq, and Central Vista, were argued by the Opposition and ended in their defeat.

The exchange between Chidambaram and Sitharaman highlights the ongoing political discourse and the contrasting viewpoints on the accomplishments and legacy of the Modi government.

Modi chairs meeting with senior Cabinet colleagues, officials on Manipur situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After returning to India from his foreign visits, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting on Monday with senior Cabinet colleagues and officials and reportedly reviewed the Manipur situation among other things.

The meeting was attended by Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Urban Affairs and Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

Senior officials including P K Mishra, the principal secretary to the prime minister, were also present.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs a meeting with senior ministers and officials after his return from state visit to US and Egypt, in New Delhi. PTI

Modi arrived here in the early hours of Monday from State visits to the US and Egypt.

"What's happening in India, Prime Minister Modi asks BJP President Nadda after setting foot on the country's soil after his six-day visit to the US and Egypt during which several landmark agreements were

signed.

He was received at the Delhi airport by Union Minister of State for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi and BJP chief Nadda. BJP leaders and party MPs from Delhi such as Harsh Vardhan, Hans Raj Hans and Gautam Gambhir were also present.

"He asked Nadda ji how it is going here, and Nadda ji told him that party leaders were reaching out to people with the report card of the nine years of his government, and the country is happy," BJP MP Manoj Tiwari told reporters when asked what the prime minister asked them after meeting them

at the airport.

Speaking to newsmen, BJP MP Parvesh Verma said the prime minister asked what was happening in the country and how was the party's public outreach programme going on.

A number of senior union ministers have been, for days, addressing press conferences on the 'milestones' achieved by the Prime Minister's foreign visits and how it has raised the status of the country as a global power and also that Modi as a global leader. Union IT and Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnav was the latest minister to mark-out on Monday the 'achievements' of the PM's US and Egyptian visit.

BJP organisation is already reaching-out to the public on the PM's flagship programmes and the delivery of benefits to poor and deprived sections of the country under its month-long 'sampark se samathan' campaign across the country in the run-up to the Lok Sabha poll, next year.



India, Oman focus on boosting bilateral ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Oman on Monday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties during talks between National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval and the Oman leadership including Sultan Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, there. The two sides also explored ways to further strengthen military and security ties and fight the scourge of terrorism.

Doval also delivered a written message from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Oman's ruler that dealt with "various aspects of cooperation," the Oman News Agency reported.

The NSA also reportedly conveyed to the Sultan greetings from the Prime Minister and wishes for Oman's progress and prosperity. Sultan Haitham reciprocated the greetings and wishes.

At a separate meeting between Doval and Oman's foreign minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, the two sides discussed strategic relations between the two countries and "aspects of cooperation about promising sectors in technological, military and mining spheres," the Oman News Agency reported.

The discussions also covered issues like investment and cultural fields. The two officials further discussed a number of regional and international issues and underscored emphasis of the leadership of the two countries on "espousing policies of constructive dialogue and international cooperation." Sayyid Badr also congratulated India for successfully hosting the G20 meetings.

HC modifies jail term of 5 convicts in gangrape case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday modified the punishment awarded by a trial court to five convicts of a 2014 gang-rape case from life sentence for the remainder of their natural lives to life imprisonment.

The High Court said the five convicts — Aman, Rahul, Mohd Wasim, Sunny and Bal Kishan — have failed to demonstrate any illegality in the trial court's verdict which had convicted them of various offences. The five men approached the high court challenging their conviction and sentence.

"Considering the facts and circumstances in entirety, background of the appellants, strata of society they belong to, their age and that they (except appellant Aman) are the first time offenders and have expressed remorse, we are of the considered opinion that for the offence punishable under section 376(D) (gangrape) IPC, life imprisonment shall meet the ends of justice."

"Thus, appellants' sentence of imprisonment under Section 376(D) IPC is modified from 'life for the remainder of convicts natural life' to 'life imprisonment'," a bench of Justices Mukta Gupta and Poonam A Bamba said in a 35-page judgment.

According to the prosecution, the victim woman, residing in Nepal, was going to Jalandhar to meet her sister. She had come to Delhi to board a train for Punjab in April 2014 when the incident took place. She met one of the five men at a railway station here who took her outside on the pretext of getting her food. She was instead taken to Rajghat in a van in which four other accomplices of the man were already present, the prosecution said.

Thereafter, they took her to a room where all the five men raped her, the prosecution said. It said she later met a person to whom she narrated her ordeal and police were informed.

NIA conducts raids in Kashmir to unearth terror conspiracy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday carried out a series of raids in four districts of Kashmir as part of its ongoing investigations into the conspiracy of newly-formed offshoots of banned Pakistan-backed terrorist organisations aiming to destabilise Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the NIA, the raids targeted 12 locations in Kulgam, Bandipora, Shopian, and Pulwama as part of the latest crackdown on the terror network in the Valley.

The searched locations were residential premises belonging to hybrid terrorists and Over Ground Workers associated with the newly-formed offshoots and affiliates of the proscribed terrorist outfits. The premises of sympathizers and cadres of these organizations were also extensively searched during the operations.

"The NIA has recovered several digital devices containing substantial incriminating data during these searches. The agency will subject them to a thorough examination to unravel the details of the terrorist conspiracy, which it began investigating a year ago after registering a suo moto case on June 21, 2022," the NIA stated.

The newly-floated terror outfits currently



ly under investigation by the NIA include The Resistance Front (TRF), United Liberation Front Jammu and Kashmir (ULFJ&K), Mujahideen Gazwat-ul-Hind (MGH), Jammu and Kashmir Freedom Fighters (JKFF), Kashmir Tigers, PAAF, and others.

These organizations are affiliated with Pakistan-based outfits such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), Al-Badr, and Al-Qaeda, which have been banned by the Government of India.

The individuals whose premises were searched are under the NIA's scrutiny for their involvement in activities related to the collection and distribution of sticky bombs/magnetic bombs, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), funds, narcotics, and weapons.

The NIA's investigations reveal that these individuals have been engaged in spreading terror, violence, and subversion in Jammu and Kashmir. The agency further stated that Pakistani operatives were utilizing social media platforms to promote terrorism, while drones were being employed to transport arms, ammunition, explosives, and narcotics to their operatives and cadres in the Kashmir valley.

Hold all-India drive to corner BJP in 2024 LS poll: CPI(M) to Opp

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) on Monday urged all Opposition parties to jointly conduct all-India campaigns on important issues of national concern and joint protest against the BJP Government. The polit bureau issued a statement asking opposition parties to have State level coordination to corner BJP in 2024 Lok Sabha election.

"The CPI(M) proposed that the Opposition parties must jointly conduct all-India campaigns on important issues of national concern and joint protest actions on issues of rapidly deteriorating people's livelihood."

"At the level of each state, discussions amongst the opposition parties must begin to minimise the advantage BJP gets from a division in opposition votes, in the coming 2024 general elections,

said the PB statement, citing the CPI(M)'s proposal in the recent meeting of 17 Opposition parties in Patna.

"The CPI(M) underlined the need for cooperation among the Opposition parties to safeguard the secular democratic character of our Republic and the guarantees provided by our Constitution to the people on democratic rights and civil liberties and fundamental rights," said CPI(M) after the two day long PB meeting.

CPI(M) also blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for keeping silent on Manipur violence.

"The 'double game' BJP Government has totally failed in controlling the situation. PM Modi refused to even comment on the situation! The Home Minister's visit on May 29, full 26 days after violence began, has had no effect on the law-and-order situation," it said.

National sickle cell anaemia elimination mission to be launched

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission at a public programme in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh, on Tuesday with a target that no baby should be born with the genetic blood disorder condition by 2047.

As announced in the budget 2023-24, the mission will focus on awareness building, universal screening of seven crore people in the age group of 0-40 years in affected tribal areas and counselling through collaborative efforts of central ministries and state governments.

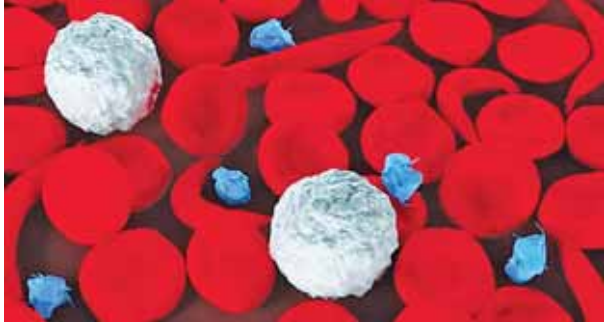
The Mission will be implemented in 278 districts of 17 high focused states in the country namely Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Uttar

Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, and Uttarakhand.

According to reports, around 20 percent of children with SCD die by two years of age and 30 per cent children from tribal areas die before they reach adulthood. Most of them suffer periodic episodes of extreme pain. A major symptom of sickle cell anemia, pain develops when sickle-shaped red blood cells block blood flow through tiny blood vessels to the chest, abdomen and joints of the patients.

It is estimated that about one in 86 births among STs have SCD that affects haemoglobin in red blood cells, which can result in morbidity and mortality. Therefore, early detection, management, and treatment of the disease is critical.

During the event, the Prime Minister will also distribute sickle cell genetic status cards to the beneficiaries, according to a statement from the prime minister's office (PMO) on Monday.



"The mission aims to address the pressing health challenges posed by sickle cell disease, particularly among the tribal population. The launch will mark a crucial milestone in the Government's ongoing efforts to eliminate SCD as a public health problem by 2047," the statement added.

Modi will also kickstart the distribution of about 3.57 crore Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) cards in the State. The card distribution campaign is a step towards realising the prime minister's vision of reaching out to every beneficiary to ensure 100% saturation of welfare schemes.

The State has the highest tribal population in terms of numbers as per Census 2011. The focus of the government is on how we can eliminate SCD on the basis of awareness.

Welcoming the long-awaited move, Dr Nita Radhakrishnan, Associate Professor, Department of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology, Post Grad-

uate Institute of Child Health, Noida said that since carriers are often asymptomatic, it is vital to do HBA2 levels for people living in States that have high prevalence of SCD. HBA2 if done mandatorily in the first 3 months of pregnancy can help detect affected babies as well.

In fact the SCD is such a deep entrenched health problem among the tribals that two years ago, a pilot project was launched by the Prime Minister for screening in Jhabua and Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh and 89 tribal blocks included in the second phase of project.

A total of 993114 persons have been screened so far. Out of whom 18866 have been detected HbAS (Sickle Trait) and 1506 (HbSS sickle diseased). Further, the state government has established an Integrated Centre for Hemophilia and Hemoglobinopathies in 22 tribal districts for treatment and diagnosis of patients.

NIA arrests 1 in CPI(M) terror funding case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday arrested one person in the CPI (Maoist) terror funding case in connection with efforts being made for the revival of the banned outfit in Magadh Zone of Bihar.

Anandi Paswan alias Anand Paswan, 46, has more than five criminal cases registered against him in various police stations of Bihar. Raids conducted at the premises of Anandi, a resident of Nirakhpur village in Kinjar police station area of Arwal district of Bihar, had also led to the seizure of illegal arms and ammunition on February 12, 2022.

This is the fourth arrest in the case related to the terror financing network being jointly operated by CPI (Maoist) cadres and Over Ground Workers (OGWs) in the Magadh region, the NIA said.

Tarun Kumar, Pradyuman Sharma and Abhinav alias Gaurav were earlier nabbed by the NIA, which had chargesheeted two accused in this case on January 20, 2023.

"NIA investigations so far have revealed that the proscribed terrorist organisation, CPI (Maoist), was trying to raise funds for procurement of arms and ammunition, and recruitment of new cadres to further its criminal and violent designs for reviving itself in the Magadh Zone area. They were liaising with Naxals and OGWs incarcerated in various jails in order to revive and strengthen Naxal activities in this region," the agency said.

NIA had suo-moto registered the case on December 30, 2021 and continues to investigate the matter.

PM Modi has made every Indian proud, says Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that today in the manner the entire world is giving respect to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it has made every Indian proud. Addressing a public meeting at Jagatpur Inter College grounds here on Monday to highlight the nine years of Modi government at the Centre, he said that in the manner Modi was welcomed by American President and respected in the US Parliament, it just showed how the image of the country has created on the world stage by the PM.

“Today wherever Modi visited, the country honoured him with its highest award, citing the example of Egypt which has changed the country’s image and status across the world during the last nine years leadership of the PM,” he said, expressing his full confidence about thumping win of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2024 parliamentary elections.

“As Modi is the representative of Kashi, the people of the city should be more proud than how during the nine years, Banaras has emerged as a model of development,” said the CM.

Yogi further said that during the corona pandemic period when the entire world was facing a serious crisis, India used it as an opportunity to show its humanitarian face by



supporting several nations by providing them vaccines and other necessary materials. “Both India and Pakistan got their independence in 1947, but today in India 80 crore people are getting free ration while our neighbouring nation is fighting for every Roti (bread),” he said, adding that not only this, today we moved ahead in our economy pushing back a country (UK) which had ruled us for centuries. “It just showed our strength which we had gained during the last nine years under the leadership of Modi,” he said.

Launching a scathing attack on the opposition, he said that several of those parties which came into existence to oppose the Congress are not hesitating today in joining hands with it in view to fight

against the BJP but the lotus would bloom again in 2024, said the CM confidently. “The reason of Modi’s popularity is his service, good governance and effective decision that led the nation to a new height today,” said Yogi, adding that recently when G-20 conference was held in Varanasi, the delegates were overwhelmed to see the grandeur of Ganga- aarti and beauty of this holy city.

The function was organised by the BJP as a part of its month-long campaign to celebrate the successful nine years of Modi government. It was also attended by Union Minister Dr SP Singh Baghel, UP Ministers Anil Rajbhar, Ravindra Jaiswal and Darashankar Mishra ‘Dayalu,’

MLAs Neelkanth Tiwari, Saurav Srivastava, Awadhesh Singh, Sunil Patel and T Ram, Mayor Ashok Tiwari, Zila Panchayat chairperson Poonam Maurya, regional BJP chief Dilip Singh Patel, district present Hansraj Vishwakarma, city president Vidya Sagar Rai and many other senior party leaders.

Earlier, after landing at the Police Lines helipad, the CM first visited Kal Bhairav temple where he offered aarti and then he reached Kashi Vishwanath temple and offered prayers as he always did during his visits to this city of Lord Shiva in the recent time. During the last few days, it was the third visit of the CM in this parliamentary constituency of the PM

FIR against Bajrang Dal, VHP men for tearing down building

PTI ■ KANPUR

Police have lodged an FIR against office bearers of Hindutva outfits, including Bajrang Dal and Vishva Hindu Parishad, for tearing down the wall of an under-construction building near Kanpur and creating a ruckus over it, officials said. According to the FIR, the leaders of the Right-wing outfits on Saturday demolished the makeshift tin-shed boundary and a newly constructed wall apart from damaging furniture and other infrastructure at the site in Banar Alipur, Shahzadpur village under Akbarpur Police Station area in Kanpur Dehat district.

A Bajrang Dal leader said that a church was being built without obtaining prior permission and the local administration did nothing to stop its construction. The FIR named

13 persons including Bajrang Dal’s district convenor Gaurav Shukla and another 70-80 unidentified people, an official said, adding that so far no arrests have been made.

Station House Officer (Akbarpur) Satish Kumar Singh said the protesters also misbehaved against government officials, including Tehsildar Ranvijay Singh, when they tried to persuade the protesters to not take law into their hands. They also put up saffron flags at the site, wrote ‘Jai Shri Ram’ on the walls, damaged CCTV cameras and statues installed at the site, an official said.

The FIR has been registered under IPC sections 147 (rioting), 149 (unlawful assembly in prosecution of the common object) 120B (criminal conspiracy), 186 (voluntarily obstructs any public servant in

the discharge of his public functions) 323 (voluntarily causes hurt), 504 (intentional insult leading to breakdown of public peace) 425 (damage to property), 427 (damage to property amounting to more than fifty rupees), 353 (criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) and 34 (common intention), police said. Bajrang Dal’s Prant Sanyojak Ajeet Raj told PTI that a church was being built near a missionary school without the permission from the Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) and the district administration.

“We made a complaint against it. We demanded that the church be demolished or we would launch a large-scale protest,” Raj said.

As the administration did nothing, members of Bajrang Dal and other outfits protest-

ed at the site of the under-construction building on Saturday for which they were booked under various charges, Raj added. KDA’s Officer on Special Duty (OSD) Avneesh Kumar Singh also lodged an FIR against one Sanjay Joseph for allegedly making illegal construction for the past several months without seeking prior permissions and getting its map sanctioned by the KDA.

“The structure being built for the past several months was sealed on June 16 after officials found that the construction was being made without obtaining approval for the map,” he told PTI.

He said the site was sealed again on Monday and the police were requested to maintain a close vigil to ensure no illegal construction is done there.



Members of the Meitei community stage a sit-in protest seeking immediate end to the violence in their native Manipur, in Pune, on Monday

PTI

UP exporting farm products worth ₹19k cr today: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the state has been exporting agricultural products worth Rs 19,000 crore yearly at present and in the next four years, there is a target of making it double. He was addressing a function at newly-constructed Integrated Pack House for Food and Vegetable Export at Karkhiyaon here on Monday evening from where, later on, he flagged off the first consignment of the delicious Banarasi Langra mango, a horticulture product of this region of Purvanchal (eastern UP) which has received a Geographical Identification (GI) tag recently, to Sharjah in United Arab Emirates (UAE). Besides, green chillies and other vegetables through three containers were also flagged off.

The CM said that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country has made a remarkable growth. “The PM had promised that by 2022 the income of the farmers would be doubled and in many areas, the same had more than the doubled today,” he said, adding that today the government is giving several benefits and subsidies to the farmers apart from technological and infrastructural support. He said that on every kilogram of agricultural product export, a farmers gets subsidy of Rs 15.



CM Yogi Adityanath flagging off consignment of fruits and vegetables from pack house in Varanasi on Monday evening

“Today, about 12 crore farmers are being benefitted under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Nidhi,” he said

UP Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi said that the pack house constructed with the cost of around Rs 15 crore would be very helpful to the farmers of Purvanchal (eastern UP) as they can now directly send their different products to different countries. He said that in the pack house fruits and vegetables have to go through many processes to prepare the product of international standard

and keep their freshness, taste and other properties intact apart from taking special care to help the products do not contain pests and any kind of disease. The function was also attended by senior officers of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) including its Deputy General Manager (DGM) Dr CB Singh who said that apart from this consignment of Langra mangoes, about 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 soon and apart from this, preparations are on to send other products including okra (Bhindi).

The function was also attended by UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Dinesh Pratap Singh and Ravindra Jiswal, MP from Machhlishahr BP Saroj, MLA from Pindra Dr Awadhesh Singh, Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture) Devsh Chaturvedi and senior local administrative and police officers.

Gang-rape case registered after court’s intervention

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Charva police station of Kaushambi had to register a gang-rape case after the intervention of the court. The police was not registering the FIR but after the order the court, they registered a case against four persons involved in the gang

rape two months ago. The girl was sleeping in a hut near the village all alone on April 15 when four youngsters of the village entered it and gangraped her. They threatened her girl that she will be eliminated if she went to the police. The girl returned home and narrated the ordeal. Her

family members first took her to a hospital and then went to the police station with an application accusing four persons of the village of gang-raping her. Family members waited for weeks for police action. After visiting the police station a number of times, father of the girl decided to move the court

seeking justice. On the orders of the court, the police registered a case under different sections against Gunda, Sikandar, Rahul, and Satish of the village. The victim was taken to a hospital for medical examination after two months of gang rape. No arrest has been made so far in this connection.

7 couples reunite under Project Milan

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Seven couples reunited under Project Milan on Sunday. Due to some misunderstanding they were living separately and the matter was referred to the Family Counselling Centre at Police Lines.

After separate sittings the counsellors were successful in getting the couples to agree to live together. The entire process was completed in the presence of sub-inspector (S-1) Shashi Tiwari, women constables deployed at the centre, counsellor Nirmala Rai, Dr Krishna Singh and others.

ARRESTED: The Katra Kotwali police arrested 13 gamblers and recovered Rs

11,320 from two places on Sunday. SP (City) Srikant Prajapati said the police already had a feedback about the gambling in the area and was active. SHO Katra Kotwali Venkatesh Tiwari on being tipped off by got informed through an informer about the gambling in Ganeshganj area under Katra Kotwali police station.

The police raided two places and nabbed Umesh Soni of Ganeshganj under Katra Kotwali police station along with two others from one place and recovered Rs 6,150 and a deck of playing cards from their possession.

The police nabbed Chandrabali of Nakahra road under Katra Kotwali police

station along with nine others from the other place and recovered Rs 5,170 as well as playing cards. After registering two FIRs the police sent the accused to the court for further action.

POSSESSION: The possession of patta land was handed over to 101 beneficiaries of Kothi village under Lalganj block on Sunday. On June 3 during her visit to Lalganj tehsil the DM was informed by some beneficiaries of the said village that the patta for residential land had been granted to 103 beneficiaries in 2020 but they were still deprived of the land.

Taking the matter seriously the DM directed the officials to solve the problems of the

aggrieved. In compliance with the DM’s directions the tehsil officials provided the possession of the land to 101 beneficiaries.

PROGRAMME: A programme organised by BJP, former teacher and President Award recipient Prabhu Nath Barnwal said the Emergency was a ‘black chapter’ of Indian democracy. He shared his experiences of the Emergency period.

The programme was also addressed by Anamika Chaudhary, Bindra Prasad Vishwakarma and others. The persons who had ‘struggled for democracy’ during the Emergency were honoured. The vote of thanks was proposed by BJP district president.

DM reviews preparations of Dastak Abhiyan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam, while reviewing the preparations for the month-long Special Communicable Disease Control Campaign and Dastak Abhiyan (door-to door drive) scheduled to be started from July 1, said that there should be no negligence and stressed the need for better coordination between the concerned departments. At a meeting held here on Sunday, the DM directed that proper arrangements should be made for effective control of vector-borne diseases in the city as well as in the rural areas. “If dirty water collection is found anywhere, action will be taken against the officer responsible for it,” he said, adding that for the success of the drive, the concerned

departments should prepare their micro plans well in time and implement the same. “Special attention should be paid to those areas where cases of infectious diseases were more in the previous years. Block development officers (BDOs) should pay attention to cleanliness in the rural areas along with cutting the bushes with the help of sweepers and ensure spraying of anti-larvae. Shallow hand pumps should be identified and a red mark should be put on them. Along with this, people should be told not to use such hand pump water for drinking,” Rajalingam further said that the block and tehsil level meetings should be held to review the preparations as well as progress and in such meetings the presence of officers is mandatory. He asked the officers to organise pro-

grammes for awareness and prevention as well as identification of such places where there is a possibility of mosquito-borne disease cases. “The trained health workers should go door-to-door to inform people about prevention and treatment of communicable diseases,” he said. The DM expressed displeasure over the absence of officers of some departments in the meeting and directed to take action against the concerned. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal said that through this campaign, it is our aim to spread the message of education and behavior change related to communicable diseases like dengue, malaria etc to every household and family. He said that in order to create awareness among children about communicable diseases,

quiz related to it should be organised in schools and parents-teachers should be sensitised for prevention and treatment of communicable diseases by forming a WhatsApp group. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that the campaign starting from July 1 will run in two phases. In the first phase, the workers of the Malaria department will assess the vector density in the high risk areas identified on the basis of the statistics of mosquito borne diseases in the previous years while making area wise planning. The second phase will start from Dastak on July 17, in which ASHA and Anganwadi workers will visit homes and inform people about the dangers of communicable diseases and their prevention.

Onsite emergency plan rehearsed at IFFCO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Onsite emergency plan was rehearsed (mock drill) at IFFCO Phulpur unit. In the meanwhile ammonia leakage-like situation was created from plant-5 A/B common section line in ammonia receiver V-1 area of Urea-1 into upstream flange of SD-6 control valve.

First the leakage started after that the fire brigade tried to control the ammonia leakage and the rescue team took the injured to the hospital. After this a review meeting of the onsite emergency plan was held with the local administration with IFFCO management and all head of departments.

The teams of Fire & Safety (IFFCO), local administration, Fire department Uttar Pradesh, Security department cooperated in the rehearsal.

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi					
TENDER NOTICE					Date: 27.06.2023
Sealed tenders under two parts (Un priced & priced) are invited for the supply of following material from all bidders:-					
NIT No.	Brief Tender Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/23-24/RB/PR/RJ/1144	SUPPLY OF VARIOUS RATINGS OF PSS	7.00 Crore	7,00,000/-	18.07.2023 15:30 HRS	18.07.2023 16:00 HRS
Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 1180/-					
For any query call on 011-49107235 or e-mail on Brl.Eauction@relianceada.com					
For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submission of tender documents etc. please visit our website www.bseshdelhi.com .					
Regd. Off: BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 Corporate Identification No.: U40109DL2001PLC111527 Telephone No.: +91 11 4910 7235 Website: www.bseshdelhi.com					

BSES Yamuna Power Limited, Delhi					
NOTICE INVITING TENDER					Date: 27.06.2023
Sealed tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) is invited for the following works:					
NIT No.	Brief Description	EMD Value (₹)	Estimated Cost (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/VS/NK/18	Construction of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging substitution building at Rajghat-1 DTC depot (D) Daryaganj, BSES Delhi	3.80 Lakh	1.90 Crore	17.07.2023 15:00 Hrs	18.07.2023 15:30 Hrs
CMC/BY/23-24/RS/VS/NK/19	Construction of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging substitution building at IP bus depot (D) Daryaganj, BSES Delhi	3.80 Lakh	1.90 Crore	17.07.2023 15:00 Hrs	18.07.2023 16:00 Hrs
Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 1,180/-					
For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submission of tender documents, corrigendum etc. please visit our website www.bseshdelhi.com -> BSES YAMUNA POWER LTD-> Tender-> Open Tenders.					
Regd.Off: BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110032 CIN: U40109DL2001PLC111525 Website: www.bseshdelhi.com					



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Russian roulette

The coup attempt, though now neutralised, gives an idea of what is going on in Russia

The attempted coup in Russia has sent shockwaves through the international community, raising concerns about stability in the region and fate of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The attempted overthrow of President Vladimir Putin's Government holds significant implications for the dynamics of the war and poses a profound threat to his grip on power. Yevgeny Prigozhin, the architect of the coup, was once close to Putin but has a longstanding disdain for the Defence Minister who, he thinks, has misled Putin and the nation on Ukraine. Wagner, the private army of Prigozhin, was about to invade Russia but its campaign has since ended. Prigozhin, a billionaire who runs a private army business, had been contemplating a mutiny for some time. Once a confidant of Putin, he marched with his mercenaries towards Moscow but a deal seems to have halted the campaign. However, there is currently no knowledge of Prigozhin's whereabouts. It seems unlikely that he and Putin can co-exist for long, even if Prigozhin agrees to stay in Minsk. The Wagner chief has become a rival, and a possible post-Putin President. The attempt may be over for now, but Russia is entering another unpredictable phase. The coup attempt can be attributed to a deep-seated dissatisfaction among certain factions within Russia. Widespread corruption, economic stagnation and diminishing civil liberties have fuelled public anger, leading to increased opposition to Putin's regime.



The discontent within the Russian political elite has intensified as different factions vie for power and influence, seeking to capitalise on the perceived vulnerabilities of the incumbent government. The protracted conflict with Ukraine has strained Russia's resources, both financially and militarily, and further eroded public support for Putin's policies. The coup attempt adds a new layer of instability to an already volatile situation in the region. A successful coup, if and when it comes along, could prompt a change in Russia's priorities and foreign policy approach. New leadership might reassess the costs and benefits of the conflict, potentially seeking a diplomatic solution or reducing the intensity of Russia's involvement. This shift could provide an opportunity for de-escalation of the conflict. Prigozhin's attempt also exposes deep divisions within the Russian political establishment. This internal fragmentation could hinder Russia's ability to pursue a unified approach to the Ukraine conflict, potentially weakening its overall position and diminishing its influence on the international stage. If left unaddressed, these factors could eventually undermine Putin's authority and lead to further challenges to his rule. To secure his position, Putin will likely resort to tightening control, suppressing dissent and potentially adopting more hardline measures. As the situation unfolds, it is crucial for the international community to closely monitor the developments and seek opportunities for dialogue and de-escalation.

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PICTALK



An installation depicting a sea turtle made from used plastic bottles at Edward Elliot's Beach, in Chennai

The darkest phase of our democracy



BANDARU DATTATRAYA

The Emergency is etched in the memory of the nation as its darkest hour. Many individuals paid the price of upholding democracy and its values

In the Independent history of India, June 25, 1975, was the darkest day, which will haunt generations to come. The direct consequence of the Emergency was the suspension of various democratic rights. Many draconian laws were enacted during this period, posing a serious threat to democratic values. It adversely impacted civil liberties. All the fundamental rights listed in Articles 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, and 42 were suspended. Fear was all-pervasive. Uncertainty had gripped us. The entire country had become a de facto prison.

At that time I was working as a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Pracharak for Nizamabad and Adilabad zone, belonging to the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh, now in Telangana. I had come to know that all my colleagues had been arrested. The Lok Sangharsh Samiti had been formed to carry out the agitation against Emergency. JP Narayan was spearheading the movement.

I used to wear a kurta and pyjamas but had to go to pants, a shirt, coat and tie. I did not go for any haircut. I changed my name to Dharmendra and went underground and kept mobilising people for agitation against the Emergency. At that time all newspapers were censored and only government news was published. So, we started a bulletin with facts and distributed it among the people secretly.

I would like to share with readers some incidents and horrible experiences we underwent during the Emergency. We had called some people to gather at Ramalaya temple in Nizamabad for a secret meeting. It was also an occasion to celebrate the marriage of engineer Venkateshwar Reddy. Around 300 people came.

I and ABVP worker Indrasen Reddy alias Jaan were getting ready for the meeting. But cops in devotees' clothes were looking for us. They inquired from the people what was going on, and were told that Satyanarayana Vrata had been organised. When we moved towards the meeting hall, they followed us. Left with no option, I and Reddy jumped off from the 20ft temple wall. Though Reddy was alright, I sustained an ankle injury.



I and Indrasen Reddy ran away to a bus stop 20 km away. We reached our secret place in Hyderabad from Medak district, now in Telangana. At the temple, police arrested some people and inquired about us. Police asked them where Bandaru Dattatraya was. The situation was terrible. A large number of people had been arrested and harassed. Still, we were not demoralised. We continued with our agitation and mobilising the people.

Finally, we reached the Bellampally mining area. Warangal Vibhag Pramukh Shridhar Ji was with me. We were having a meal at a small hotel when the police took us into custody. They took us to the police station and started questioning us. Within a few hours, Shridhar disclosed his identity but I did not say anything. I was quite determined not to disclose my identity. The police kept me in another room. Shridhar was arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) and was sent to Warangal Jail.

However, the police were not ready to give up on my case. They continued questioning and torturing me. Police wanted to know: How many more friends were in my group? Where were their hide-outs? Where is your printing

press? What is the source of finances? What is your communication network? For three days, I did not share anything with them.

One day, Murali, a head constable from Adilabad, came to the police station. He hailed me as he knew me: "How are you, Dattatraya Garu?" Everybody in the police team was astonished. They tortured me and warned me of severe action and even electric shocks, but I did not reveal anything to them. At last, they arrested me under the MISA and sent me to Chanchalguda Central Jail, Hyderabad.

In jail, I met people of different ideologies and even Naxalites, who had been arrested under MISA. Former Union Ministers Bangaru Laxman, A Narendra, N Narasimha Reddy, former Labour Minister of Telangana, Mohammad Abdul Aziz, chief of Andhra Pradesh unit of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Chera-banda Raju and Varavara Rao were also in our jail. There were others as well belonging to different ideologies and outfits, including Anand Marg, but all united in protesting against the Emergency. I discussed issues of national importance and challenges arising out of the Emergency for democracy with different

people. I also studied a lot.

Meanwhile, my elder brother Manik Prabhu expired due to jaundice. I was allowed to take part in his funeral under police escort. Later, I got one month's parole as well. In jail, every week my mother late Eshwaramma used to come to meet me with fruits and eatables. She used to sell onions at Osmangunj market as a small vendor. Every time her visit used to give encouragement and confidence to fight for democratic values. One day my mother's brother — my maternal uncle — came to her. He told her that if I give an undertaking not to do such things, he shall be able to get me pardoned.

But my mother did not accept his condition. She said: "My son has not done anything wrong. He is fighting for a greater cause of the nation." My mother told me this during a jail visit. Even the police officer, who used to accompany her during the meeting, was surprised to hear her words. He just folded his hands in respect. Though my mother had not studied at all, she was very much influenced by the dedication and work culture of the Sangh people.

(The author is the Governor of Haryana. The views are strictly personal)



A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND HARASSED. BUT WE WEREN'T DEMORALISED. WE CONTINUED WITH OUR AGITATION AND MOBILISING OF THE PEOPLE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AWAY FROM PROPAGANDA FILMS

Sir — In the unfolding tapestry of recent years, Bollywood has undergone a profound metamorphosis, evolving into a captivating platform that some discern as a vessel propelling the agenda of the ruling party. This trajectory commenced with the advent of a biopic depicting the esteemed Prime Minister, masterfully portrayed by Vivek Oberoi and, since then, this trend has shown an unwavering determination to persist. Films such as *Uri*, *Kashmir Files* and *Kerala Story* serve as apt examples of this shift, deftly navigating the cinematic landscape to subtly or overtly cast specific communities in the role of antagonists.

However, it is the audacious production of *'Adipurush'* that has ventured even further beyond the confines of convention, transcending ordinary limits with unprecedented fervour. The fact that a Chief Minister hailing from the Bharatiya Janata Party has bestowed his blessings upon this cinematic endeavour raises inquisitive eyebrows and further kindles the swirling controversy enveloping these ventures. In stark contrast to the earlier films, which deftly balanced the dual goals of entertaining audiences while delivering profound social messages, the current panorama of Bollywood appears to be increasingly characterised by the crafting of propaganda-laden cinematic spectacles, artfully interweaving political motives with controversial narratives.

Md Imdadullah | Muzaffarpur

MANIPULATING THE PREAMBLE

Sir — This refers to your report *'Maya flays Telangana CM for tampering with Preamble'* (June 25). BSP honcho Mayawati's allegation that the words 'secular' and 'socialist' are deleted from the Preamble of the Constitution printed on the cover of the social science book of Class 10 published by the Telangana state education board is to be viewed seriously for substantial reasons. Overtly, this deletion is not accidental or inadvertent, but emphatically a deliberate negligence apparently to facilitate vested interests.

Titanic adventure claims five lives



The underwater adventure which ended with the lives of five explorers while on an expedition to the Titanic shipwreck is a matter of concern and raises many questions. The remains of the Titanic, which sank on its maiden voyage in 1912, were found in 1985 and the ship remains an attraction for nautical experts and underwater tourists. The search for the missing submersible, the Titan, grew increasingly desperate since Thursday, when its estimated 96-hour air supply had been expected to run out. The outpouring of shock and grief was massive all over the world for the lives lost and the adventure gone all horribly wrong, especially in the light of reports that the company operating the submersible may have cut corners on safety. The debris was located by a remote-controlled underwater search vehicle (ROV); separate pieces were discovered that allowed authorities to confirm they came from the Titan, including a tail cone, but the bodies are yet to be recovered.

Even the most reliable of technologies can fail against adverse natural circumstances and, therefore, accidents will keep happening. With the growth in deep sea tourism, we must be aware of more tragic incidents like this. A recent example is of the train accident in Odisha where 275 persons died. Even earlier, there were accidents on a ropeway in Uttarakhand, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. Here, the question arises who is liable for the disaster and while the assumption would be that OceanGate will be held responsible for whatever happened to the five passengers, legal technicalities around the Titan complicate the situation. OceanGate, a Washington-based company, routinely asked all its passengers to sign waiver forms releasing them of any responsibility, even in death, before embarking on the deep-sea expedition. Also, questions about Titan's safety were raised in 2018 during a symposium of submersible industry experts and in a lawsuit by OceanGate's former head of marine operations, which was settled later that year.

Yash Pal Raihan | Jalandhar

Her claim that the Telangana regime has tampered with the Constitution is to be considered for tangible causes. Secularism is the backbone of our democracy and the removal of the word 'secular' from the Preamble of the Constitution virtually jeopardises the secularistic status of the country. The Union Government should not hesitate to initiate appropriate action against the political/bureaucratic authorities concerned.

Thomas KM | Muvattupuzha

OPPN MUST ACT RESPONSIBLY

Sir — The meeting of 17 Opposition parties on June 23 is a crucial moment in Indian politics. To succeed, they must address two crucial aspects. Firstly, national programmatic unity is crucial. The

Opposition should strive for a shared vision that challenges the BJP's perspective. Anti-communal polarisation, unemployment benefits, old age pensions, women's welfare and affordable education and healthcare are components of this shared vision. Secondly, electoral understanding at the state level is vital. The Opposition must recognise the significance of strategic cooperation; state-specific alliances will be crucial for maximising their chances of success. Despite potential leadership concerns, the primary objective should be a unified message of inclusivity, secularism and national care.

Vishal Mayur | Tumkur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Global collaboration will revolutionise education

International collaboration in New Education Policy (NEP) may change the educational paradigm of the country



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

In recent years, international collaborations in education have been on the rise, and so is the case with India. Such collaborations allow teachers, students, administrators, institutions and universities to compare, exchange and collaborate on a range of emerging educational, scientific, technological and teaching issues and methodologies to create an effective and contemporary system of education to cater to the newer needs of the youth. Such collaborations don't just open up the window to the world-class education system, they also offer a better international, social, cultural, economic and geopolitical understanding to the students, besides generating a sense of empathy and new skill sets in the youth.



It is encouraging that the Government of India has made a number of strides in the recent past. On the one hand, it brought into force the New Education Policy (NEP) to change the educational paradigm of the country, it goes on to collaborate with top institutions and universities of the world to make the educational system competi-

Education Minister held a meeting with the US Secretary of Commerce with a focus on forging stronger linkages in the skilling sector. The collaborations aim to strengthen institutional mechanisms for making the Indian skill ecosystem more vibrant as well as for building the workforce of the future with a focus on 3S-Skilling, Start-ups and SMEs. Just a couple of days earlier, India and Australia also signed an ambitious agreement, which will help ease the mobility of students and professionals between the two countries. They also agreed to establish a joint task force for mutual recognition of qualifications, which covers both education and skill qualifications of the two countries and will help facilitate two-way mobility of young people for education and employment purposes.

Earlier, known for its best school education, Finland evinced interest to collaborate with India on the knowledge front. India can benefit from Finland's best practices in ECCE, teacher training, and digital education among others. Finnish Universities may also collaborate with Indian

Higher Education Institutions through joint, dual degrees and twinning programs.

Moreover, research also suggests that those having had their education from international universities are better able to adapt to changes at the fast face and adapt to the changing realities and circumstances. They find more similarities than differences with students from other parts of the world, hence working effortlessly with them. They are also better prepared to discover new career avenues and opportunities than their counterparts receiving education domestically. International collaboration can be extremely rewarding for schools, especially in less developed and developing countries. India still faces a shortage of quality teachers and teaching methodologies to rise to the occasion. Here, such relations and collaborations may prove highly fruitful, as they allow teachers to learn newer things by questioning their incumbent process, practices and notions, reinvent themselves and adopt new strategies.

(The writer is a senior journalist)



FIRST COLUMN

CLAIM THE UNCLAIMED DEPOSITS

If you identify an account that belongs to you, you can claim the balance



S KALYANASUNDARAM

If you identify any account that belongs to you, then you can claim the balance

The Reserve Bank of India is on a mission mode to make the banks identify the beneficiaries of unclaimed deposit accounts and settle the dues. Banks classify accounts under operative, inoperative and unclaimed.

Operative and Inoperative accounts

A saving, as well as a current account, is classified as 'inoperative' or 'dormant' if there are no transactions in the account for over a period of two years. Interest credited by the bank on the balance in the account and any charges debited by the bank is not considered transactions for this purpose.

Unclaimed Deposits

Further balances in savings / current accounts which are not operated for 10 years, or term deposits not claimed within 10 years from the date of maturity are classified as "Unclaimed Deposits".

Unclaimed deposits transferred to RBI

Balances in unclaimed deposits are transferred to the "Depositor Education and Awareness" (DEA) Fund maintained by the Reserve Bank of India. Recently, the Reserve Bank has also announced the setting up of a Centralised Web portal for the public to search unclaimed deposits across multiple banks.

A new initiative by RBI

The Reserve Bank of India has announced a '100 Days 100 Pays' campaign for banks to trace and settle the top 100 unclaimed deposits of every bank in every district of the country within 100 days. This campaign will start on 1st June 2023.



Why unclaimed deposits?

There are various reasons the customers leave their deposit accounts without operating for a long time. Account holders shift their residence from one town to another town or from one place to another place within the same town or city. Sometimes fixed deposit receipts are misplaced and the depositor could have lost track of the deposit.

How to trace unclaimed deposits?

Individual banks have provided search facilities on their website. As mentioned earlier, the RBI is trying to provide a separate portal for all the banks. Until that materializes, one has to verify bank-wise. The search facility is also not uniform across banks. For example, the Indian Bank website mandates you to provide just the name of the account holder. When you search, you will get details of the address and signatory, which you can match.

The Punjab National Bank portal has made feeding address details optional. The State Bank of India portal has made it mandatory to provide the address. But even if you provide the name of the city or town, it opens and provides details. There is no need to feed the complete address. The Bank of Baroda portal allows you to search by providing your name or address or even an authorized signatory. This seems to be more user-friendly.

One is also not sure whether all the banks have provided this facility as one notices that banks like UCO have not made it available on its website. Such banks just provide a PDF file containing all the names and one has to use Control-Find to search. It is time for RBI to ask banks to provide it in a user-friendly format.

(The writer is a retired banker)

Equip SMEs with a robust export policy



AS MITTAL

Educating SMEs about the global value chain and applying best practices will help them grow their business by strengthening their e-commerce platform



Cross-border trade is an area with great potential. As the fourth digital business revolution begins, e-commerce is democratizing global markets by opening the door for SMEs to do e-business wherever they are. Referring to the digital revolution AI (Artificial Intelligence) while addressing the US Congress during his recent visit to US, Prime Minister Narendra Modi defined AI as -America and India. Hope AI partnership potential rises to the next level and will also fuel the e-commerce export potential for Indian SMEs. The bone of the debate is how India can use it with its size and capabilities. India's current e-commerce exports are still well below their potential. E-commerce exports are only \$2 billion, which is less than half per cent of \$447.46 billion exports in 2022-23.

It is estimated that global e-commerce exports will reach \$2 trillion by 2025. To explore the potential of e-commerce in the range of \$200 billion to \$250 billion by 2030, India needs to solve the SME exporter's problems by formulating an E-Commerce Export policy.

However, the new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023 reflects India's ambition to become an export hub and provides some measures for e-commerce exports. FTP took several initiatives to increase the value limit of exports through couriers by increasing e-commerce exports from Rs 5 lakhs to Rs 10 lakhs per shipment. E-commerce through "Dak Niryat Kendra" to SMEs providing outreach services from states like Punjab and other external border regions to access international markets.

The current regulations place a heavy burden on exporters. The backbone of the Indian economy is 64 million small and medium-sized businesses, which account for 45% of Indian production and 40% of exports. But there are no relevant laws.

WHY A SEPARATE E-COMMERCE EXPORT POLICY?

Since the requirements for e-commerce exports are very different from those for general commodity exports, the e-commerce

export policy should be a stand-alone document covering all aspects of legal compliance. E-commerce exporters face many challenges, from return policies to payment and compliance issues, and 90% of e-commerce exporters in India are small and medium-sized businesses. To this end, FISME (Indian Small and Medium Enterprises Federation) has conducted detailed studies on the e-commerce export policies of some major countries promoting the e-commerce export business.

India's SMEs are waiting for the special e-commerce export policy to be enacted as the draft was placed in the public domain in 2019. Since then, the business has grown in many ways but is looking to create a good environment to promote e-exports. The e-commerce export policies of China, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and other countries have helped many small and medium-sized businesses to sell worldwide.

At first, China dominated cross-border e-trade, but now even countries like Vietnam and Cambodia have surpassed China because their banks, customs and shipping in the middle are more synchronized for any type of fast international trade.

The E-Commerce policy has to align with the amendments proposed in the Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Law of 2020 by the Department of consumer affairs. In addition to the Direct Foreign Trade Law and the Consumer Protection Law, e-commerce is also regulated by the Information Technology Act and the Competition Act.

GREEN CHANNEL NEEDED

It is important to synchronize the entire ecosystem. The e-commerce export policy should be

jointly formulated by the customs and the directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) after necessary changes in their regulations, including redefining the responsibilities of sellers and simplifying payment facilitation, accounts and procedures. National Trade Ecosystem to bring together the RBI, Customs, DGFT, GSTN, India Post, couriers, e-commerce companies and the user to form a centralized technology platform as a single green channel for e-commerce exports, simple documentation and customs clearance for shipments to ensure delivery on time. Another major issue is certificate compatibility. Anyone entering the e-commerce business should be familiar with e-commerce, e-payment, e-signature, e-shipping and other digital solutions.

SMEs rely on online platforms for value-added services such as international expansion and on-time payment guarantees. However, it is said this is against FEMA (Exchange Administration Act) regulations as the platform is responsible for collecting payments while ownership of the product remains with the seller. Refunds are a major issue for third-party e-commerce exporters, and RBI guidelines for business-to-business (B2B) exporters need to be revised accordingly.

The 25% discount limit is limited to e-commerce sales, discounts and returns. Exporters must have annual turnover and all import restrictions must be lifted. These exporters can be facilitated with separate customs clearance regimes for their goods, waive import duties on rejected goods, and treat returned goods as non-commercial goods, reducing costs and expediting the delivery of goods worldwide. It is

customary and allows these exporters to refund.

India allows 100% FDI in the e-commerce model but does not allow FDI in the inventory-based model. Sometimes sellers-commerce and e-commerce platforms ignore rules that prohibit high discounts and seller privileges. They also tried to clarify the rules for foreign direct investment in e-commerce.

THE WAY FORWARD

Hope AI (America, India) mutual trust sharing has an opportunity to support our SMEs exports and level the playing field through an e-commerce export policy. Educating SMEs about the global value chain and applying best practices will help them grow their business by strengthening their e-commerce platform.

It also needs to protect unknown small businesses from cyber scams. States can work with Districts Industries Centers (DICs) to establish Export Facilitation Cells (EFCs) to identify products and markets and meet export compliances.

There is no doubt that cross-border e-trade can play a major role in helping India to achieve the one trillion US dollar export milestone. The E-commerce domestic market size of \$22 billion in 2019, grew to \$49 billion in 2022 and is expected to grow to \$60 billion in 2023.

The e-commerce domestic market performance over the past three years proves beyond any doubt that at a certain level of confidence and certainty in the robust ecosystem which builds a broader base for a good market of e-commerce, no stone to be left untouched as Indian SMEs are poised to become the global market leaders.



AT FIRST, CHINA DOMINATED CROSS-BORDER E-TRADE, BUT NOW EVEN COUNTRIES LIKE VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA HAVE SURPASSED CHINA

(The author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika Group, Vice Chairman of Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board. Views expressed are personal)

PM Modi makes valuable connections on his US visit

Modi's State visit has strengthened the ties between the two countries and reinforced his association with the diaspora and business leaders

The Indian Diaspora in countries like the U.S., U.K., and Australia has become a robust and influential community. Modi has been working to win over this community even as Gujarat's chief minister. He has continued to build strong relationships with them in countries like America, Great Britain, and Australia, which has proven beneficial. Prime Minister was pleased that he received top honours from Washington. It included a state dinner at the White House, prestigious guest accommodations at the Blair House, and an opportunity to address the U.S. Congress for the second time in nine years.

Modi's cooperation with the U.S. has increased despite a previous visa denial. It was



KALYANI SHANKAR

due to India's growing economy, strong military and educated immigrant workforce. The ties have moved from a non-interference policy of PM Nehru to this more engaged approach. Over the decades, the BJP has built a powerful overseas lobby. "The Friends of BJP" is an influential organization in America. From the 60s, the Hindu Swayam Sevak Sangh had been functioning in the U.S. as the Sangh Parivar's overseas outfit.

During the earlier BJP regime, the diaspora received increased recognition. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee initiated the Pravasi Divas and conferred honours upon Indian Americans. He also appointed an NRI as a roving ambassador. Nevertheless, the U.S. gov-

ernment declined to acknowledge a second envoy. Modi pampered them by providing many facilities, like a more accessible visa regime and an Overseas Indian card. The Diaspora wants voting rights, but this will take a long time.

Throughout his speeches, including his address to the U.S. Congress, Modi expressed great admiration for Indian Americans. He presented India as a rapidly growing global power. Instilling a sense of national pride in them, he used their support to strengthen his constituency in India.

Indian Americans responded by showing up in large numbers to interact with Modi. They chanted slogans such as 'Modi Modi', 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', and 'Vande Mataram' upon his arrival in

New York. They cheered him during President Biden's welcome speech on the South Lawn of the White House.

The PM called them "the real strength" of the U.S.-India relationship. "I have come here many times, but today for the first time, the doors of the White House have been opened for the Indian American community in such large numbers," he replied.

Applauding the diaspora, Modi said they were "brilliant in every field, not just Spelling Bee," and have played a significant role in the country's relationship with America.

The diaspora reciprocated enthusiastically. In 2014, Modi's meeting at the Madison Square event impressed Americans. Later the "Howdy Modi" rally in Houston sur-

prised President Trump.

Both Biden and Modi acknowledge the political power of the four-million-strong Indian American community. They are the second-largest and fastest-growing community in the U.S. Their votes are crucial in several swing states. In the 2020 elections, 74% of Indian American voters supported Biden, highlighting their importance in the political landscape.

Modi has had the opportunity to meet and interact with three American Presidents — Obama, Trump, and Biden. All three have included more members of the Indian Diaspora in their administrations. Currently, Biden has appointed 130 Indian Americans to key positions. Vice President Kamala

Harris and presidential hopeful Nikky Halley are both trailblazers in their own right. Some business leaders are heading over two dozen American companies, including Google chief Sundar Pichai and Microsoft's Satya Nadella.

India and the United States have strengthened business and defence ties over the past decade, with India becoming a member of international groupings like Quad and G20.

However, in Washington, groups favouring and against Modi came together to either support or protest against him. Modi's human rights track record has not gone unnoticed. On June 20, 75 U.S. Senators and Members of Congress wrote a letter to President Biden, highlighting concerns over issues such as the 'shrinking

of political space and the rise of religious intolerance." Moreover, six lawmakers boycotted Modi's address to the U.S. Congress.

Despite their differing opinions, Washington and New Delhi agree that the visit was necessary and beneficial for the two countries. Modi acknowledged the success of his visit, stating that he had participated in multiple programs and discussions to enhance the friendship between India and the USA. The South Block intends to capitalize on the visit's success and pave the way for the upcoming G20 summit in September in New Delhi. These efforts are expected to enhance the Prime Minister's reputation both nationally and internationally.

Russia tries to project sense of order after revolt; uncertainty swirls

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu made his first public appearance since a mercenary uprising demanded his ouster, inspecting troops in Ukraine in a video released on Monday aimed at projecting a sense of order after the country's most serious political crisis in decades.

But uncertainty still swirled about his fate, that of rebellion leader Yevgeny Prigozhin and his private army, the impact on the war in Ukraine, and even the political future of President Vladimir Putin.

A feud between Wagner Group leader Prigozhin and Russia's military brass that has festered throughout the war erupted into a mutiny that saw the mercenaries leave Ukraine to seize a military headquarters in a southern Russian city and roll seemingly unopposed for hundreds of miles toward Moscow, before turning around after less than 24 hours on Saturday.

The Kremlin said it had made a deal that Prigozhin will move to Belarus and receive an amnesty, along with his soldiers. There was no confirmation of his whereabouts on Monday,

although a popular Russian news channel on Telegram reported he was seen at a hotel in the Belarusian capital, Minsk. Russian media reported a criminal probe against Prigozhin continued, and some lawmakers called for his head.

In a return to at least superficial normality, Moscow's mayor announced an end to the "counterterrorism regime" imposed on the capital on Saturday, when troops and armoured vehicles set up checkpoints on the outskirts and authorities tore up roads leading into the city.

The Defence Ministry video of Shoigu came as Russian media speculated that he and other military leaders have lost Putin's confidence and could be replaced.

Shoigu was shown in a helicopter and then meeting with officers at a military headquarters in Ukraine. The video was widely broadcast on Russian media, including state-controlled television. It was unclear when it was shot.

General Staff chief Gen Valery Gerasimov, also a main target of Prigozhin's ire, has not appeared in public. It was unclear what would ultimately happen to Prigozhin and his forces



In this photo released on Monday by the Russian Defense Ministry Press Service, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, center, and Yevgeny Nikiforov, the commander of the Western Military District, right, inspect a command post of one of the formations of the Zapad (West) group of Russian troops at an undisclosed location of Ukraine. Shoigu made his first public appearance Monday since a mercenary uprising demanded his ouster, inspecting troops in Ukraine. (Russian Defense Ministry Press Service. AP

under the deal purportedly brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Saturday that Putin has given his word that Prigozhin will be allowed to go to Belarus.

The RIA Novosti state news agency cited unidentified sources in the Prosecutor General's office as saying the criminal case against Prigozhin

hasn't been closed, despite earlier Kremlin statements. The Interfax news agency carried a similar report.

Should the case continue, Prigozhin's presence in Belarus — a staunch Kremlin ally — would offer little protection against arrest and extradition.

It was unclear how many resources Prigozhin has to draw on, and how much of his sub-

stantial wealth he can access. Police searching his St. Petersburg office on the day of the rebellion found 4 billion rubles (USD 48 million) in trucks outside the building, according to Russian media reports confirmed by the Wagner boss. He claimed the money was intended to pay soldiers' families.

Several Russian lawmakers called for tight regulations of private military companies under a new law set to be considered — and some argued that Prigozhin must be punished. Andrei Gurulev, a retired general and currently a lawmaker who had a rift with the mercenary leader, said Prigozhin and his right-hand man Dmitry Utkin, a former military officer who runs Wagner, deserve "a bullet in the head."

"I firmly believe that traitors in wartime must be executed," he said. Prigozhin appeared nonchalant in some of the last video taken during the rebellion. As a convoy carrying him in an SUV drove out of the southern city of Rostov-on-Don after its brief occupation on Saturday, he was asked how he viewed the result of his revolt, according to footage posted on Russian social media.

EU urges caution amid doubts about Putin's grip on power

Brussels (AP): European Union ministers urged caution on Monday over a failed revolt by mercenary soldiers in Russia. This came after the incident raised troubling questions about Russian President Vladimir Putin's grip on power and whether Wagner group fighters might install themselves just over the border in Belarus.

At the talks in Luxembourg, some EU foreign ministers leaned the short-lived uprising led by Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin to Putin unleashing Frankenstein's monster of his own creation, and to some powerful and evil spirit.

But several others, concerned that they might be seen to be offering support, were at pains to point out that the revolt remains an internal Russian affair, and that many questions remain unanswered, including Prigozhin's

precise whereabouts and whether he may be taking troops with him. Most seemed to agree that the incident will have security implications for Europe and that the important thing is to help Ukraine take advantage of the situation.

"We are analysing this carefully," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock told reporters. "There are also risks involved, which we are still unable to assess at the moment. For us Europeans, the only thing that matters is to support Ukraine."

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, who was chairing the meeting, said that the monster that Putin created with Wagner is "acting against his creator." He added that "the political system is showing fragilities, and the military power is cracking."

"It's now the moment to support Ukraine, more than ever," Borrell said.

Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg told reporters that Putin "can't get rid of the ghosts he summoned, and they're going to haunt him now." He cited the revolt as proof that "there are cracks in the power structure."

Prigozhin was granted exile in Belarus, just 35 kilometres from Lithuania's capital Vilnius. It remains unclear what charges he might face, if any. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who brokered the deal, gave few details. Russian leaders, whether civilian or military, have not commented on the situation.

Wary of the insecurity that this might mean for his country, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said he wants to see "very specific plans" for his allies to reinforce NATO's eastern flank, including Estonia, Latvia and Poland.

Pro-reform Mitsotakis wins second term in Greek poll

AP ■ ATHENS

Greece's centre-right leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis was formally sworn in as prime minister Monday after easily winning a second term with a record-high margin over the left-wing opposition, in an election that also ushered new far-right parties into Parliament.

With 99.70 per cent of the vote counted, Mitsotakis's New Democracy party had 40.55 per cent — more than twice the main opposition Syriza's 17.84 per cent. It was the largest margin of victory seen in half a century and slightly expanded ND's 20-percentage-point lead in a previous election five weeks before.

Mitsotakis, 55, was sworn in after being formally handed the mandate to govern by Greek President Katerina Sakellariopoulou, and was due later Monday to name his new cabinet that's to assume its duties on Tuesday.

"My aim was to secure a



Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, left, takes the oath during a swearing in ceremony at the Presidential palace, in Athens, Greece, on Monday. AP/PTI

stable government with a parliamentary majority. Unfortunately, two elections were needed for that," he said in a televised meeting with Sakellariopoulou, who as head of state holds a mainly ceremonial role.

"I have committed to implement major, deeply-needed reforms over the next four years, (and) have a strong mandate to do that," he said. Mitsotakis spoke with

with Syriza getting 48. The May election had failed to provide Mitsotakis with a majority due to the one-off electoral system then in force, which prompted the new vote.

Centre-left PASOK elected 32 lawmakers and the Stalinist-rooted Communist Party 20. The remaining 42 seats will be shared between three far-right parties — including one endorsed by a jailed former top official in a defunct, Nazi-inspired party — and another representing the far-left. Athenian Chrysanthi Tzetzenkou said the extreme right's parliamentary entry worried her. "Of course, everyone's opinion is respected," she added. "Let's hope for a balance. Voter turnout was nearly 53 per cent, compared to 61 per cent in May.

Mitsotakis campaigned on a platform of securing economic growth and political stability, cutting taxes and boosting incomes as Greece gradually recovers from a nearly decade-long financial crisis.

Sakellariopoulou about the "surprise" entry of marginal parties, which raises the number represented in Parliament from five to eight, but added: "I think our democracy is mature enough to handle whatever temporary turbulence (ensues)." Held under a new electoral law that boosts the first party, Sunday's vote gave ND a comfortable majority of 158 seats in the 300-member Parliament,

exposed, he said. "We as the Federal Republic of Germany explicitly acknowledge our responsibility and our obligation as a NATO member state, as the largest economy in Europe, to stand up for the protection of the eastern flank," Pistorius said.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda welcomed the announcement and said his country wants to build up the needed infrastructure by 2026.

"We have a strong political willingness in Lithuania to find the necessary financial resources to be able to finance the infrastructural needs," Nausėda said after meeting with Pistorius and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. Germany's military, the Bundeswehr, has already been present in Lithuania, which borders Russia and Belarus, for six years with several hundred soldiers.

NATO chief's last-ditch bid to bring Sweden into the fold

Brussels (AP): NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Monday that he will call an urgent meeting in the coming days to try to overcome Turkish objections to Sweden joining the military organisation. It's a last-ditch effort to have the Nordic country standing alongside the allies at a major summit next month.

NATO requires the unanimous approval of all members to expand. Türkiye accuses Sweden of being too lenient toward groups that Ankara says pose a security threat, including militant Kurdish groups and people associated with a 2016 coup attempt.

Stoltenberg said he has held fresh talks on Sweden's candidacy with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as well as senior officials from Sweden and neighbouring Finland.

Germany offers to station 4,000 troops in Lithuania

AP ■ BERLIN

Germany is willing to send around 4,000 troops to Lithuania on a permanent basis to strengthen NATO's eastern flank, German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said during a visit in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius on Monday.

"Germany is prepared to permanently station a robust brigade in Lithuania," Pistorius said. He said infrastructure and facilities will need to be created to accommodate the soldiers and their families.

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine early last year, the German government pledged last June to have a combat brigade ready to defend Lithuania in the event of an attack, German news agency dpa reported. Until now, however, there have been differences

over whether the soldiers should be permanently stationed in Lithuania or only sent there temporarily for exercises. The Lithuanian government has demanded a permanent presence, while the German government was very reluctant to do that.

Pistorius explained the German government's decision to offer the brigade to Lithuania was not only because of Russia's war on Ukraine, but also because of Germany's own history, saying that until the end of the Cold War, Germany was the country on NATO's eastern flank. "We were the ones who could always rely on our NATO partners to stand by us in an emergency and to stand up and fight with us for our freedom and security in Germany," he said. Now, Poland and the Baltic countries are particularly

The next big advance in cancer treatment could be a vaccine

AP ■ SEATTLE

The next big advance in cancer treatment could be a vaccine. After decades of limited success, scientists say research has reached a turning point, with many predicting more vaccines will be out in five years.

These aren't traditional vaccines that prevent disease, but shots to shrink tumors and stop cancer from coming back. Targets for these experimental treatments include breast and lung cancer, with gains reported this year for deadly skin cancer melanoma and pancreatic cancer.

to work. Now we need to get it to work better," said Dr. James Gullely, who helps lead a center at the National Cancer Institute that develops immune therapies, including cancer treatment vaccines.

More than ever, scientists understand how cancer hides from the body's immune system. Cancer vaccines, like other immunotherapies, boost the immune system to find and kill cancer cells. And some new ones use mRNA, which was developed for cancer but first used for COVID-19 vaccines.

For a vaccine to work, it needs to teach the immune system's T cells to recognize cancer as dangerous, said Dr.

Nora Disis of UW Medicine's Cancer Vaccine Institute in Seattle. Once trained, T cells can travel anywhere in the body to hunt down danger. "If you saw an activated T cell, it almost has feet," she said. "You can see it crawling through the blood vessel to get out into the tissues." Patient volunteers are crucial to the research.

Kathleen Jade, 50, learned she had breast cancer in late February, just weeks before she and her husband were to depart Seattle for an around-the-world adventure. Instead of sailing their 46-foot boat, Shadowfax, through the Great Lakes toward the St. Lawrence Seaway, she was sitting on a

hospital bed awaiting her third dose of an experimental vaccine. She's getting the vaccine to see if it will shrink her tumor before surgery.

"Even if that chance is a little bit, I felt like it's worth it," said Jade, who is also getting standard treatment. Progress on treatment vaccines has been challenging. The first, Provenge, was approved in the U.S. in 2010 to treat prostate cancer that had spread. It requires processing a patient's own immune cells in a lab and giving them back through IV. There are also treatment vaccines for early bladder cancer and advanced melanoma.

Denmark to start training of Ukrainian pilots on F-16s

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

Denmark's government said Monday that the training of Ukrainian pilots on F-16 jets has started and the retirement of Scandinavian country's fleet of aging US fighters has been moved up two years.

The replacement fighters, F-35s, will be operative by 2025, acting Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said. Initially, the switch was planned for 2027.

Lund Poulsen said that NATO-member Denmark "has taken the step of starting a training and further education effort for the Ukrainian pilots."

"We will also consider whether we should make a concrete donation to Ukraine of the Danish F-16 fighters, and how many there should be," he said.

Ukrainian pilots must spend six to eight months of training before a possible donation of Danish F-16 aircraft can become a reality, Lund Poulsen told Danish broadcaster DR.

"This does not mean that you cannot make a decision beforehand. But (the F-16 planes) will be in Denmark until 2024," Lund Poulsen said.

Denmark has ordered 27 F-35A fighter jets, which will replace the more than 40-year-old F-16s, of which Denmark has 30 operative planes.

The switch to the F-35A Joint Strike Fighter jets is taking place from late 2023 to the end of 2025.

Ukraine pushes forward with its counteroffensive

AP ■ KYIV

The armed rebellion against the Russian military may have been over in less than 24 hours, but the disarray within the enemy's ranks was an unexpected gift and timely morale booster for Ukrainian troops.

The spectacle of Yevgeny Prigozhin's mutiny in the critical military command and control hub in the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don, and later Russia's scramble to fortify Moscow as troops marched to spend the country's military leadership was greeted "with applause" by commanders of Ukraine's Eastern Group of Forces, said its spokesperson, Serhii Cherevaty.

"Soldiers at the front lines are positive about it," he said. "Any chaos and disorder on the enemy's side benefits us." A video of well-known Ukrainian drone commander "Magyar" watching the revolt while eating enormous amounts of popcorn went viral. A plethora of gleeful memes mocking Russian leader Vladimir Putin inundated social media, and state-

ment after statement from Ukraine's top brass described the turmoil as a sure sign of more instability to come.

The debacle appears to be resolved, for now, with Prigozhin's exile to Belarus in

a deal mediated by Minsk. But for Ukrainians watching, the damage was done: Russian vulnerabilities were exposed, and by agreeing to concessions hours after branding Prigozhin a back-stabbing traitor, Putin appeared weak and desperate.

The short-lived rebellion did not noticeably affect Russian army posture along the 1,000 kilometre front line in eastern Ukraine, but it could give Ukraine the impetus it needs to intensify its counteroffensive, which military leaders have admitted is going slower than expected.

In the short term, it distracted attention from the war and diverted some resources from the front," said Nigel Gould-Davies, a senior fellow for Russia and Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Affairs.

But in the longer term, he said, it shows lack of unity among Russia's fighting forces. "It's terrible for Russia's morale. The officers and soldiers alike. It's very good for Ukraine's morale."

On Russian Telegram channels, milbloggers urged Russian soldiers to stay focused on the war. "Brothers! Everyone who holds a weapon at the line of contact, remember, your enemy is across from you," read one message.

Ukrainian soldier Andrii Kvasnytsia, 50, who was

injured fighting in the eastern city of Bakhmut, where battles are nonstop along the southern flanks of the salt-mining town occupied by Russian troops, said "Everyone is excited."

"My friend called me today and he said: 'Andrii, I haven't been drinking for so many years, but today I have a good reason to drink,' he said. "It is all hard, not easy, but we will certainly win." He spoke to The Associated Press in Kyiv, where he is recuperating. As Wagner troops marched toward Moscow, Hanna Malyar, Ukraine's deputy defense minister, announced progress in several directions along the front line where fighting has been raging for weeks, and that Russian advances further north were thwarted.

"The enemy's weakness is always a window of opportunity, it allows us to take the advantage," she told AP, adding that it was too early to assess how the political game playing out in Russia might give Ukraine the military upper hand. Ukraine stepped up attacks in several directions in the southeast earlier this month, a move that signaled its much anticipated counteroffensive had begun. But progress has been "slower than desired," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has acknowledged.

Public Notice section containing multiple real estate and legal notices, including one from Prakash Gupta regarding property in Kharsa No. 638/11 and another from Mrs. Satyawati Yadav regarding property in No. 1089.

Indian Railways advertisement for CORRIGENDUM NO.9 to the Tender No. WTA-532, detailing the terms and conditions for manufacturing and maintenance work.

M.P. Madhya Kshetra Vidut Vitaran Co. Ltd. advertisement for a tender notice regarding supply and execution of work, including details on tender specifications and contact information.

Centre clears ₹57 K cr assistance for 16 States

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Finance has approved capital investment proposals of Rs 56,415 crore for 16 States in the current financial year under a special assistance scheme announced in the budget.

In order to boost capital spending by states, the 'Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment 2023-24' scheme was announced in the Union Budget 2023-24. Under the scheme, special assistance is being provided to the states in the form of a 50-year interest-free loan up to an overall sum of Rs 1.3 lakh crore during the financial year 2023-24.

The Department of Expenditure has approved capital investment proposals of Rs 56,415 crore to 16 states in the current financial year under the 'Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment 2023-24' scheme, a finance ministry statement said. Capital investment projects in diverse sectors have been approved, including



health, education, irrigation, water supply, power, roads, bridges, and railways.

Funds for meeting the state share of Jal Jeevan Mission and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana have also been provided to the states under this scheme to enhance the pace of the projects in these sectors.

A similar scheme titled 'Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment for 2022-23' was also executed by the finance ministry in the last

financial year. Under the scheme, capital investment proposals of Rs 95,147.19 crore were approved and an amount of Rs 81,195.35 crore was released to the states in the last financial year.

The scheme for financial assistance to states for capital investment/expenditure, first instituted by the Ministry of Finance in 2020-21 in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, has given a very timely boost to capital spending by states.

DIAL launches self-baggage drop facility to cut wait time

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) launched the self-baggage drop facility on Monday, reducing wait time for passengers by 15 to 20 minutes. According to DIAL, the facility can cater to up to three passengers per minute. A 14 self-baggage drop machines – including 12 fully automated and two hybrids – have been installed at Check-In Row P of Delhi IGI Airport's Terminal 3.



Passengers can use the SBD facility through a two-step process. After generating their boarding passes and baggage tags at the Self Check-In kiosk, passengers have to tag their check-in baggage.

At the SBD facility, they will have to scan their boarding pass, declare that their luggage is free of prohibited/dangerous items, and load their baggage onto the designated belt.

Once the process is completed, the baggage will be automatically transferred to the sorting area and subsequently onto the aircraft. In case the weight of the check-in baggage is beyond the limit allowed by the airline, then the

check-in baggage will not be accepted by the machine. There will be airline staff near the facility to help passengers. "DIAL has been working relentlessly towards maximising passenger experience at the Delhi airport through various digitisation and automation initiatives.

The Self-Baggage Drop facility aims to make the passengers self-reliant while at the same time reduce the time taken for baggage processing significantly..." DIAL CEO Videh Kumar Jaipuria said. DIAL, a GMR Airport Infrastructure Ltd-led consortium, operates Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport in the national capital.

Airtel Biz CEO Chitkara steps down

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The Chief Executive Officer of Bharti Airtel's enterprise arm Airtel Business, Ajay Chitkara, has resigned from the company, according to a filing. Following the resignation, Bharti Airtel has restructured leadership in the enterprise arm by dividing it into three segments. "Ajay Chitkara, CEO Airtel Business, has decided to move on from Airtel. He will continue with the company until the third week of August 2023," Bharti Airtel said.

Airtel Business will now operate as three businesses and channel segments – Global business, led by Vani Venkatesh, Domestic business, led by Ganesh Lakshminarayanan, and Nxtra Data Centers, led by Ashish Arora, the company said.

"Airtel Business is a jewel in our overall portfolio and presents an exciting growth opportunity going forward. I am looking forward to working closely with Vani, Ganesh and Ashish to help scale this business. I also want to acknowledge Ajay's contributions. In his 23 long years with Airtel Ajay has delivered significant impact," Bharti Airtel MD and CEO Gopal Vittal said.

Rupee falls 9 paise to 82.04 against dollar amid geopolitical worries

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined by 9 paise to close at 82.04 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday amid geopolitical concerns and firming crude oil prices. Volatility in equity markets and FII outflows also weighed on the market sentiment, analysts said.

After opening lower, the rupee staged a recovery to hit the day's high of 81.94 in morning trade amid early gains in equities and a weaker greenback in the overseas markets.

However, the local currency retreated from early highs amid volatile stock markets and touched a low of 82.05 in afternoon trade at the interbank foreign exchange market.

The rupee closed at the day's low level of 82.05, showing a loss of 9 paise over the previous close of 81.96 against the US dollar. Analysts said that geopolitical concerns after a short-lived armed rebellion in Russia eroded the appeal of riskier assets. The dollar index, which



gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, eased 0.15 per cent to 102.75. Crude oil price benchmark Brent crude was up 0.53 per cent at USD 74.24 per barrel.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex retreated from early highs to close almost flat at 62,970, showing a loss of 9.37 points. The broader Nifty advanced 25.70 points to close at 18,691.20.

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Friday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 344.81 crore, according to exchange data.

Sebi comes out with disclosure formats for compliance reports on governance, annual secretarial by REITs, InvITs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Monday came out with disclosure formats for compliance reports on governance and annual secretarial for emerging investment vehicles – REITs and InvITs.

These would come into force from the financial year 2023-24 onwards, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in four separate circulars.

Under the format for compliance report on governance, Sebi said infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) and real estate infrastructure trusts (REITs) will have to disclose the name of the investment managers, the composition of the board of directors of the investment managers as well as the composition of committees, meetings of the board of directors, along with meetings of committees, on a quarterly basis.

In addition, the regulator has issued separate formats for the financial year that need to be submitted by the investment managers of InvITs and REITs.

For the governance report, such investment managers are required to submit a quarterly compliance report to the stock exchanges within 21 days from the end of each quarter. The report needs to be signed either by the compliance officer or the chief executive officer of the investment manager.

With regard to the annual secretarial compliance report, Sebi said the investment manager of the InvIT and



REIT will have to appoint a practising company secretary on an annual basis to examine the compliance of all applicable rules, consequent to which, the practising company secretary is required to submit a report to such investment managers.

In the format for the annual secretarial compliance report, the investment managers of the investment instruments have to disclose the compliance with the regulatory norms, deviations and observations made by the practising company secretary.

In addition, disclosures need to be made about actions taken against the InvIT and REITs, their promoters and directors either by Sebi or by stock exchanges and the action taken by the investment manager to comply with the observations made in previous reports.

The investment manager of the InvIT and REIT is required to provide all such documents

as may be sought by the practising company secretary for the purpose of providing a secretarial compliance report.

The investment manager of these investment instruments will have to submit the annual secretarial compliance report in a new format to the stock exchanges within 60 days from the end of each financial year.

The compliance report on both governance and annual secretarial would also be made part of the annual report of the InvITs and REITs.

REITs and InvITs were introduced in India to provide investors with an opportunity to gain exposure to real estate and infrastructure projects respectively, with diversification of risks through pooling arrangements.

Generally, REITs invest majority in completed and rent-generating real estate assets. Privately placed InvITs can invest in under-construction assets as well as completed and revenue-generating assets.

ASBA-like facility for secondary market trading introduced

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to safeguard investors' money from misuse and default by stock brokers, Sebi on Monday introduced a supplementary process for trading in the secondary market based on blocked funds in an investor's bank account, instead of transferring them upfront to the trading member.

This is similar to Application Supported by Blocked Amount (ASBA)-like facility already available for the primary market which ensures that money from an investor gets moved only when an allotment happens. The new facility will become live by January 1, 2024, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular.

Under the framework, funds will remain in the account of client but will be blocked in favour of the Clearing Corporation (CC) till the expiry date of the block mandate or till block is released by the CC, or debit of the block towards obligations arising out of the trading activity of the client, whichever is earlier. Further, settlement for funds and securities will be done by the CC without the need for handling of client funds and securities by the

member. The process safeguards clients' assets from misuse, brokers' default and consequent risk to their capital.

While a UPI block upon creation would be considered towards collateral, the same would also be available for settlement purposes. For the clients who prefer to block lump sum amounts, their block can be debited multiple times, subject to available balance, for settlement obligations across days.

The facility will be provided by integrating Reserve Bank of India (RBI)-approved Unified Payments Interface (UPI) mandate service of single-block-and-multiple-debits with the secondary market trading and settlement process called 'UPI block facility'.

To begin with, the facility will be made available in equity cash segment. The CCs may extend the facility to additional segments subsequently.

Explaining the features of new framework, Sebi said that the facility would be optional for investors as well as stock brokers. Since an investor is allowed to have trading accounts across multiple stock brokers, an investor can choose to avail UPI block facility under some broker and non-UPI based trading under others.

Sensex, Nifty end on mixed note in volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty closed on a mixed note in a volatile trade on Monday amid weak trends in the global markets.

While auto, IT and pharma shares advanced in a restricted trade, selling in index heavy-weight Reliance Industries, HDFC twins and Tata Consultancy Services capped the gains.

In a lacklustre trading, the 30-share BSE Sensex dipped 9.37 points or 0.01 per cent to settle at 62,970, logging its third day of decline. During the day, it hit a high of 63,136.09 and a low of 62,853.67. The NSE Nifty edged up by 25.70 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 18,691.20. It moved between 18,722.05 points and 18,646.70 in the day trade. "The global market exhib-



ited a negative bias as concerns regarding economic growth emerged in light of the political instability in Russia. This instability led to an increase in oil prices, driven by worries over potential supply disruptions, given Russia's status as one of the largest oil producers," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. The domestic front,

the market experienced limited downside as the pharma and auto sectors provided support, he added. From the Sensex pack, Tata Consultancy Services, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Larsen & Toubro, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tech Mahindra and HDFC were the major laggards. On the other hand, Maruti

rose the most by 1.67 per cent. Tata Motors, Titan, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India and IndusInd Bank were the top gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul ended in the green, while Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. Equity markets in Europe were trading lower. The US markets ended in negative territory on Friday.

"Weak Asian and European cues dampened the domestic market sentiment, as benchmarks ended mixed in a range-bound session amid selective buying in key sectoral stocks. Global markets are dictating trends back home and investors don't want to be in a hurry to take long positions in times of high uncertainty," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak

Securities Ltd. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 1.04 per cent and smallcap index jumped 0.71 per cent.

Among the indices, healthcare advanced 1.45 per cent, auto jumped 1.04 per cent, consumer durables (0.98 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.89 per cent), commodities (0.66 per cent) and FMCG (0.60 per cent).

Energy emerged as the only laggard. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.45 per cent to USD 74.18 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 344.81 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. On Friday, Sensex fell 259.52 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 62,979.37 points while Nifty declined 105.75 points or 0.56 per cent to end at 18,665.50 points.

India should focus on stable power transmission: GTRI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India should focus on ensuring a stable power transmission system and increasing renewables in the energy mix rather than on capital-intensive green hydrogen, think tank GTRI said in its report on Monday.

Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that global private investments in green hydrogen are low, with rich countries providing substantial subsidies.

India should carefully consider the viability and costs before subsidizing its use, GTRI co-founder Ajay Srivastava said. The report said that green hydrogen is 6-8 times more expensive than standard energy options, making it eco-



nomically challenging and the cost of producing green steel using this hydrogen is 40-60 per cent higher compared to regular steel.

"India should focus on stabilizing grid power and increasing its renewable energy share rather than investing in an expensive green hydrogen ecosystem," it said adding the transportation and storage of

green hydrogen require specialized infrastructure due to its flammability and corrosiveness, increasing costs and safety concerns. It also said that India should evaluate using grey and blue hydrogen to a greater degree. Hydrogen is called grey, dark blue, light blue or green based on the intensity of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere during its production.

Hydrogen, the product, remains the same in all cases. Grey hydrogen account for almost all the Hydrogen used in the world. It is primarily used in oil refining (33 per cent), ammonia for making nitrogenous fertilizers (27 per cent), methanol (15 per cent) and steel making (3 per cent).

At the current price, for

green hydrogen to become widely adopted in any country, massive government subsidies and policies would be required to make other energy sources more expensive, it said.

"Therefore, while India can engage in research-level activities related to Green Hydrogen, subsidizing its use may not be advisable," it added. It said that green hydrogen is a promising new energy source, but it is still in its early stages of development and is expensive.

"India should refrain from subsidizing green hydrogen and leave it to develop on its intrinsic merits," the report said adding Indian industry should explore optimizing costs by combining use of grid power and grey and blue Hydrogen.

S&P retains India's GDP growth at 6%

Says it will be fastest growing country in Asia Pacific

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Monday retained India's GDP growth forecast at 6 per cent saying it will be the fastest growing economy among Asia Pacific nations. The GDP growth forecast for the current and the next fiscal has been kept unchanged from the forecast made in March partly on account of domestic resilience.



"We see the fastest growth at about 6 per cent in India, Vietnam, and the Philippines, S&P Global Ratings said in its quarterly economic update for Asia-Pacific. "The medium-term growth outlook remains relatively solid. The Asian emerging market economies remain among the fastest growing ones

in our global growth outlook through 2026," said Louis Kuijs, Asia-Pacific chief economist at S&P Global Ratings. S&P said retail inflation is likely to soften to 5 per cent this fiscal from 6.7 per cent, and the RBI is expected to cut interest rates only early next year. "In India, under the assumption of normal

monsoons, we expect headline consumer inflation to soften to 5 per cent in fiscal 2024 from 6.7 per cent. Softer crude prices and tempering of demand will bring down fuel and core inflation, respectively.

"The inflation and rate hike cycles have peaked, in our opinion. But we expect the Reserve Bank of India to cut rates only in early 2024, as it wants to see consumer inflation moving to 4 per cent—the centre of its target range," Kuijs said.

S&P has lowered the growth forecast for China to 5.2 per cent from 5.5 per cent for 2023. "For the rest of the region, we have left it broadly unchanged, in part because of domestic resilience," S&P said.

Tata Power, Le Roi Hotels partner to install EV charging infra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Power on Monday said it will install EV charging infrastructure at various hotel locations of Le Roi Hotels and Resorts across India.

In a statement, Tata Power said it has "partnered with Le Roi Hotels and Resorts to install EV charging stations across their hotels at various locations in the country, in a collaborative effort to promote green mobility and enhance the sustainability of tourist destinations".

Tata Power will install 16 chargers spread across 8 locations. There will be a balanced distribution of 8 fast DC (CCS-II) chargers and 8 AC (Type II) chargers, offering a comprehensive range of charging solutions for electric vehicle owners.

The locations include Udaipur, Digha, Haridwar, Jammu, Tehri, Raipur, Corbett and



Koti. "We aim to empower both residents and travellers to wholeheartedly embrace electric mobility with utmost confidence, creating a seamless and convenient experience for all," Virendra Goyal, Head of Business Development (EV Charging) at Tata Power, said.

DJOKOVIC STILL WIMBLEDON FAVOURITE: ALCARAZ

AFP ■ LONDON
Carlos Alcaraz believes he is capable of winning Wimbledon after claiming his first title on grass on Sunday by beating Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-4 in the final at Queen's Club.
The Spaniard's fifth title of the season also takes him back to the top of the world rankings, but he said Novak Djokovic remains the favourite to win Wimbledon for an eighth time next month.
Alcaraz was playing on the grass for just the third tournament in his career and showed an impressive development through the week at Queen's after nearly falling to French lucky loser Arthur Rinderknech in the first round.
The US Open champion won his next four matches without dropping a set and is confident of going beyond the fourth round at Wimbledon for the first time.
"I have quite a lot of confidence heading into Wimbledon. I ended the week playing at a high level, so right now I feel one of the favourites to win Wimbledon, but I have to get more experience on grass," said Alcaraz.
"Novak is the main favourite



to win Wimbledon, but I will try to play at this level to have chances to beat him or make the final."
"I saw a statistic that Novak has won more matches at Wimbledon than the other top 20 players (combined). What can you say about that you know? Novak is the main favourite to win Wimbledon. That's obvious.
"But I will try to play at this level, to have chances to beat him or make the final at Wimbledon."
Djokovic has reigned supreme in SW19 since 2018. He has not lost on Centre Court in 10 years since losing to Andy Murray in the final.
But Alcaraz is hoping to have the crowd on his side should the top two seeds meet in the final.
"I saw that Djokovic has never lost a match on Centre Court since 2013 when he lost against Andy so it's ten years without losing a match on cen-

tre court, it's crazy. But I hope to have the crowd behind me to change that stat." De Minaur had dumped out Murray and world number 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.
"I'm content because I know I left it all out there and I try to play the way that I want to play," said De Minaur.
"So that's a big positive for me coming into Wimbledon."
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.
He then needed lengthy treatment as he had strapping applied to his right quad.
Alcaraz's movement did not seem affected as he again pounced on 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 the Spaniard's booming serve dug him out of trouble as four straight points secured the title and a return to world number one.



Modric extends Real Madrid contract until 2024

AFP ■ MADRID
Veteran Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric will stay at the club for another season after renewing his deal until June 2024, the Spanish side said Monday.
Modric, 37, remains a key player for Madrid and decided to stay despite strong interest from Saudi Arabia, looking to recruit him at the end of his previous contract, which expires this month.
The Croatian follows Toni Kroos, Dani Ceballos and Nacho Fernandez in extending his time at Madrid this summer.
"In his 11 seasons defending our shirt, he has played 488 games and won 23 trophies," said Real Madrid in a statement.
Modric has lifted the Champions League five times with Madrid since joining in 2012 from Tottenham, as well as La Liga on three occasions and two Copas del Rey.
Turning 38 in September, 2018 Ballon d'Or winner Modric faces stiff competition next season at the Santiago Bernabeu.
Madrid signed England international Jude Bellingham from Borussia Dortmund for over 100 million euros (\$109 million) earlier in June, while Kroos, Ceballos, Eduardo Camavinga, Aurelien Tchouameni and Fede Valverde are jostling for places.
Youngster Bellingham said at his presentation he was looking forward to learning from Modric and Kroos in particular.
Modric finished second with Croatia in the Nations League and has not yet announced whether he will retire from international football, as was rumoured, or if he will continue until the 2024 European Championship next summer.

Hollywood actors buy stake in F1's Alpine Racing

AFP ■ LONDON
Hollywood actors Ryan Reynolds, Rob McElhenney and Michael B. Jordan are among a consortium that has bought a 24 percent stake in Formula One team Alpine Racing.
Alpine's parent company Renault announced on Monday that the group will invest 200 million euros (\$218 million) for their stake, valuing the team at \$900 million, to help Alpine's "growth strategy and sporting ambitions".
"Deadpool" star Reynolds and "It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia" creator McElhenney have already enjoyed success with sporting investments as owners of football club Wrexham.
Backed by major investment, the Welsh side were promoted to the fourth tier of the English Football League in April for the first time in 15 years.
"Creed" and "Black Panther" star Jordan also has a stake in Premier League club Bournemouth.



Reynolds' Maximum Effort production company has teamed up with Otro Capital and RedBird Capital Partners, who recently took control of AC Milan and have a stake in Fenway Sports Group, owners of Liverpool and the Boston Red Sox.
"Alpine F1 team will benefit from the investor group's collective expertise and track record in the sports industry," said a statement released by the Renault Group.
Alpine's F1 engine-making entity in the suburbs of Paris is not part of the transaction and will remain entirely owned by Renault.
Since the Renault team was rebranded as Alpine in 2021, they have managed one Grand Prix victory and two other podium finishes.
Alpine finished fourth in the constructors' championship last season and sit fifth in the standings eight races into the 2023 season.

Benjamin Mendy faces UK retrial for alleged sex offences

AFP ■ UK
French footballer Benjamin Mendy will return to a UK courtroom Monday for the start of his retrial for two alleged sexual offences, five months after a jury cleared him of multiple other counts.
Manchester City player Mendy, 28, will be back in the dock at Chester Crown Court in northwest England to face one count of rape and one of attempted rape.
Jurors in his last trial, which ended in January, failed to reach verdicts on the two charges involving two different women.
The panel of seven men and four women had cleared the defender of six other counts of rape and one of sexual assault against four women following a six-month trial.
The judge in January had immediately set a new trial date of Monday for the two counts on which the jury did not return a verdict.
Mendy, whose contract with Manchester City expires at the end of this month and is reportedly not set to be renewed, has denied all the charges filed against him.
As the not guilty verdicts were read out in court in January, Mendy covered his face



with both hands, gently rocking back and forth.
Jenny Wiltshire, one of his lawyers, said at the time that the footballer was "delighted" that he had been acquitted of most of the charges he faced.
She added at the time that he looked forward to "clearing his name in relation to the other two charges so he can start rebuilding his life".
'PREDATOR' ACCUSATIONS
Mendy was accused alongside Louis Saha Matturie, 41, an alleged "fixer", who was found not guilty by the jury of three counts of rape relating to two teenagers.
Jurors also failed to reach verdicts on three counts of rape and three counts of sexual assault against Matturie by five other women.
He faces a separate retrial later this year.
The prosecution had alleged that Mendy was a sexual "predator" who raped or sexually assaulted young women procured by Matturie at parties at his luxury home south of Manchester.
Mendy denied ever forcing any woman into sex and both said any sexual activity they had with women was consensual.
Mendy joined Manchester City from French club Monaco in 2017. He has played 75 times for City, but his playing time was limited by injuries and a loss of form.
He has not played since August 15 2021 - days before he was hit with an initial charge of four counts of rape and one count of sexual assault.
The last of his 10 caps for France came in November 2019, after the defender won the World Cup in 2018.



Koulibaly begins Chelsea exodus to Saudi Pro League

AFP ■ LONDON
Senegal captain Kalidou Koulibaly became the latest star name to head to Saudi Arabia on Sunday as he joined Al-Hilal from Chelsea, the Premier League club confirmed.
Koulibaly joined the Blues just last year from Napoli for a reported £33 million (\$42 million).
However, the 32-year-old struggled in the Premier League as Chelsea finished 12th -- their lowest league finish since 1994.
"Kalidou Koulibaly has left Chelsea after completing a permanent transfer to Saudi Professional League side Al-Hilal," Chelsea said in a statement.
"We would like to thank Kalidou for his contributions on and off the pitch during his time at Stamford Bridge and wish him well for the next stage of his career."

Backed by the nation's sovereign wealth fund, the Saudi Pro League is luring big names from the major European leagues with the promise of huge salaries. Cristiano Ronaldo's move to Al Nassr in January started the trend.
His former Real Madrid teammate Karim Benzema and French World Cup winner N'Golo Kante of Chelsea have recently joined Al-Ittihad.
Chelsea could be set to further profit from the Saudi investment. Goalkeeper Edouard Mendy is reportedly close to joining Al Ahli, while Moroccan winger Hakim Ziyech is on the brink of a move to Al Nassr.
The English club need to sell players before the end of the month to try and comply with financial fair play regulations after spending over £500 million on new signings over the past 12 months.
He moved to City from Borussia Dortmund, where he won the Bundesliga and German Cup in 2012.
Gundogan scored 60 goals in 304 appearances for the club, winning 12 major trophies.
"Ilkay has been tremendous, absolutely tremendous," said City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak.
"To be the captain of this club in this historic treble, lifting the Premier League first and then the FA Cup and then the Champions League, he will go down in the folklore of Manchester City forever."
City's director of football Txiki Begiristain highlighted Gundogan's mental attributes.
"Ilkay's intelligence, leadership and commitment to the club -- both on and off the field -- has been an inspiration to everyone," said Begiristain.

Barcelona confirm Gundogan signing from Man City

AFP ■ BARCELONA
Ilkay Gundogan has signed for Barcelona on a free transfer at the end of his Manchester City contract, the Catalan club said Monday.
The German midfielder, 32, has agreed a two-year deal with the option for a year's extension and a release clause of 400 million euros (\$436 million).
"He is bringing his presence, nose for goal and reading of the game which has made him one of the best midfielders of the past decade," said Barcelona in a statement.
Gundogan has been an influential presence for Pep Guardiola's City side since joining in 2016, captaining the team to a stunning treble this season.
The midfielder netted twice in the FA Cup final win over rivals Manchester United and Guardiola admitted City were trying to renew his deal.
Manchester City are poised to seal the arrival of Mateo Kovacic from Chelsea to help replace Gundogan, who won five Premier League titles during his time at the club, as well as helping them earn their first ever Champions League win this season.
"This club made me realise all my dreams and I will forever be thankful for this opportunity," Gundogan told Manchester City's club website.
"I will carry City always in my heart. Once a blue, always a blue." Gundogan was the first signing Guardiola made after arriving at City, joining for around 20 million pounds (\$25 million).
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NEW ADVENTURE
Barcelona's new signing bolsters a midfield with plenty of options, including young Spaniards Pedri and Gavi, and Dutchman Frenkie de Jong.
However coach Xavi Hernandez has said the club still need to sign a defensive midfielder after captain Sergio Busquets left for Inter Miami at the end of his contract.
Barcelona moved for Gundogan after failing to secure the return of Lionel Messi at the end of his deal with Paris Saint-Germain.
The club's all-time record goalscorer and greatest ever player was tempted by a return but finally opted to join Inter Miami, with Busquets following him there.
Gundogan turns 33 in October but finished the season in some of the most sparkling form of his career.
The midfielder netted six goals in his final seven games for City as he helped the club seal their treble, prompting them to make a final and keep him.
"If he goes to Barca it would be an extraordinary signing, we're fighting for him to stay," said Guardiola last week.
"If he signs for Barca, I'll tell him that he will have a great time there."



Mexico crush Honduras, Haiti stun Qatar in Gold Cup

AFP ■ MIAMI
Luis Romo struck twice as Mexico crushed Honduras 4-0, while a stoppage time winner from Frantzzy Pierrot gave Haiti a 2-1 victory over Qatar in the CONCACAF Gold Cup on Sunday. Jamaica held the United States to a 1-1 draw in the opener on Saturday and then Trinidad and Tobago defeated St Kitts and Nevis 3-0 in the other group A game on Sunday in Fort Lauderdale.
Mexico, the record eight-times winner of the tournament for North and Central America and the Caribbean, came into the clash with Honduras in Houston after firing Argentine coach Diego Cocca and appointing Jaime Lozano on an interim basis. Cocca was dismissed after the Nations League semi-final 3-0 defeat to the United States and El Tri made the perfect start to Lozano's reign.
It took just 51 seconds for Mexico to find the target when Romo collected a clearance, took one touch and then, from the edge of the box, drilled the ball into the bottom corner.
Pierrot's shot hit the outstretched arm of defender Tarek Salman and Duckens Nazon made no mistake with the penalty kick. Derrick Etienne hit the post for Haiti, who pushed forward in search of a late winner and they were rewarded late in stoppage time when Carneij Antonio broke down the left and squared for Pierrot who slotted in the winner.
Heavy rain in South Florida delayed the start of the all-Caribbean clash at Inter Miami's DRV PNK stadium and when Trinidad and St Kitts took to the field, there were still heavy patches of water. Alvin Jones opened the scoring two minutes before the break with a well-taken effort, chesting down a lofted ball from Neveal Hackshaw and firing home.
Ajani Fortune doubled the lead with a solo effort in the 65th minute, jinking past two defenders before firing into the bottom corner from the edge of the box.
An own goal from Jameel Ible, who turned in a low Levi Garcia cross, completed a comfortable win for Trinidad.
Mexico were facing Honduras in Group B later on Sunday.

MUMBAI, KOLKATA LIKELY TO HOST WC SEMIFINALS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium and the Eden Gardens in Kolkata — both iconic venues — have emerged as the frontrunners to host the two semifinals of the 2023 World Cup. This means the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai — another venue with a rich legacy — could lose out on organising one of the biggest games of the ODI showpiece.

"Mumbai's Wankhede and Kolkata's Eden Gardens are two likely venues for the World Cup semi finals. Earlier, Chennai was also in the race but it seems Eden is slightly ahead now," a BCCI source told PTI on Monday.

"One of the reasons could be the November weather in Chennai where there is always chance of rain."

Twelve hosting associations were called in Mumbai on Monday to discuss the details and finalise the venues before Tuesday's official announcement.

If India qualify for the semifinals, they will play their last-four stage game in Mumbai.

The Wankhede Stadium hosted the final of the 2011 World Cup, in which a



Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led India beat Sri Lanka to end a 28-year-old title drought, while the Eden Gardens played host to the summit showdown between Australia and England in the 1987 edition, in which the former country prevailed.

There will be 10 teams at this year's World Cup. As hosts, India have qualified directly, as have Afghanistan,

Australia, England, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Pakistan, and South Africa through the 2020-2023 ICC Cricket World Cup Super League.

Two other teams will make it to the World Cup through the World Cup Qualifiers, which is being currently played in Zimbabwe.

Apart from former champions Sri

Lanka and the West Indies, the Qualifiers also feature Ireland, Nepal, the Netherlands, Oman, Scotland, the UAE, the USA, and hosts Zimbabwe.

At the World Cup in India, the 10 teams will play each other once in a round-robin league featuring 45 matches. These will be followed by the semifinals and the final.

ICC World Cup trophy sent to space

PTI ■ DUBAI

In a spectacular first, cricket's global governing body started the World Cup trophy tour by launching the coveted silverware into the stratosphere, 1,20,000 feet above the earth before it made a stunning landing at the Narendra Modi Cricket Stadium in Ahmedabad. This was achieved after the trophy was attached to a bespoke stratospheric balloon, and some stunning shots were captured of the trophy sitting on the edge of the earth's atmosphere from 4k cameras.

The 2023 edition of the trophy tour will be the biggest by far, giving the fans a chance to connect with the silverware in various countries and cities around the world.

Starting on June 27, the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup trophy will travel to 18 countries, including Kuwait, Bahrain, Malaysia, USA, Nigeria, Uganda, France, Italy, the United States of America and the host country India, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said in a press release.

Through innovative activations and events in different countries, the trophy tour will provide a chance to one million fans to have their own personal interactions with the silverware.

The Narendra Modi Cricket Stadium is set to host the final of the ODI showpiece, which the country is hosting later this year.

"The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Trophy Tour is an important milestone in the countdown to what will be the biggest ICC Men's Cricket World Cup ever," ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said.

"This Tour will see the iconic silverware meet heads of states, launch community initiatives and



support cricket development programmes in addition to visiting some of the most iconic landmarks around the globe.

"Cricket has more than a billion fans and we want to give as many people as possible the opportunity to get up close to this famous trophy that has been held aloft by some of the greatest legends of our sport."

BCCI secretary Jay Shah added, "Cricket unites India like no other sport and excitement is building across the country as we prepare to host the 10 best teams in the world over six weeks of heart-stopping cricket.

"As we countdown to the World Cup, the Trophy Tour is a fantastic chance for fans to be part of the event wherever they are. The Tour will travel extensively across India and seek to inspire communities to share the excitement of cricket's greatest spectacle, while providing an opportunity to showcase iconic venues, cities and landmarks throughout the country."

The trophy tour will begin on June 27 in India, travel around the globe and then return to the host nation on September 4.

'Root Playing Bazball Is Keeping Us In Game': Labuschagne

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Marnus Labuschagne opined that Joe Root's aggressive 'Bazball' approach is keeping Australia in the game as none of England's batters reached fifty in the second innings of the opening Ashes Test at the Edgbaston.

Australia are currently one up in the Ashes 2023 five-match Test series. Australia managed to hold on to the victory as England continued to play in their style throughout the course of five days. The most visible evidence of England relinquishing control of the contest was Root's dismissal on day four. They had been barely ahead of the game since reaching almost 400 in 78 overs on the first day before declaring.

"From my perspective, him playing that method and those shots are keeping us in the game," Sydney Morning Herald quoted Labuschagne as saying after training at Lord's on Sunday before the second Test, which begins on Wednesday.

"I use that second inning as an example. He probably had an opportunity to shut us out and take the game away from us completely. But the method and the way he was playing kept us in the game and, evidently, he played an unbelievable inning, but he ended up getting 40 [46] and if he turns that 40 into 80-plus, we're chasing 300 and that's going to be a pretty big effort," Labuschagne said.

"So I think that's the benefit for us, the way they're play-



ing. They're playing aggressive cricket, and he's doing it with a different method, which is great, but it brings in other opportunities for us. Hopefully, at some point in the series, that will keep paying off," the Australia No.3 batter said.

That score was based on Root's undefeated century, and he appeared to be on track for another in the second innings until he bizarrely rushed spinner Nathan Lyon and was stumped for the first time in his long and successful career.

Ten players in England's second innings reached double digits, three reached the 40s, but none hit a half-century, leaving Australia with a winnable target

of 282. Labuschagne believes Australia were below their best but still won.

"I really enjoy the way they play, I'm not going to lie. As a cricket watcher, watching the series prior, I've loved it. I think it's exciting, it's entertaining, it's good to watch, but at the end of the day we played pretty under par to what I think the standard of our team is at," he said.

"I thought from a batting point of view Uz [Usman Khawaja] was outstanding but I think most of the other batters, we want to be better than that standard," Labuschagne said. England will play against Australia in the second Test match at the Lord's on Wednesday



Ashleigh Gardner claims 8/66 as Aus beat Eng by 89 runs

SIANS ■ NOTTINGHAM

Spinner Ashleigh Gardner starred with the ball, claiming a brilliant 8/66 in the second innings as England were bowled out for 178 before lunch on day five of the one-off Women's Ashes Test, handing Australia an easy 89-run victory, here on Monday.

Ashleigh's effort means she finishes the one-off Test with an astonishing 12 wickets, after previously picking four wickets in the first innings, with her haul being an Australian record. For England, debutant Danni Wyatt top-scored with 54 before she was trapped lbw by Ashleigh as Australia wrapped up the match within 21 overs on final day's play.

Ashleigh also became the

second bowler to take eight wickets in an innings in women's Tests, after India's Neetu David took 8/53 against England in 1995. Her overall match figures of 12/165 are second-best figures in women's Tests after Pakistan's Shaiza Khan took 13/226 against West Indies in 2004.

The result means Australia will need to win only two of the six white-ball matches to retain the Ashes in the multi-format, with the first of the three T20Is starting from July 1 in Birmingham. England resumed day five from 116/5, chasing a record target of 268, after losing five wickets in quick succession on day four left them requiring 152 more runs to get an improbable win.

Danni and Kate Cross

added 25 runs for the sixth wicket before the latter was caught behind for 13 off Ashleigh, who spun a vicious web around the England batters to outclass them with ridiculous ease.

Despite Danni hanging around for some resistance, she couldn't find support from the other end. Amy Jones was stumped by Alyssa Healy, Sophie Ecclestone was trapped lbw and Lauren Filer was castled for a duck, before Danni finally fell to give Australia four points.

For England, they had their moments with Tammy Beaumont scoring 208 in first innings, and Sophie Ecclestone taking a 10-wicket haul in the match, recording five wickets in both innings. But it was ultimately overshadowed by Ashleigh's stunning efforts.

Rinku set to earn India call-up

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian team will take on West Indies in all format, T20I, ODI and Test. The series will start from July 12. On Friday, the BCCI announced India's 50 over and Test squads. Young stars like Yashasvi Jaiswal and Mukesh Kumar got the national call-up.

Though the BCCI is yet to announce India's squad for the five-match T20I series. According to reports in the Times of India, Kolkata Knight Riders star Rinku Singh is set to make his India debut in the 20-over format. The 25-year-old scored 474 runs in 14 games at an average of 59.25 and a strike rate of 149.52.

Rinku became an overnight sensation when he crashed 67 runs off 33 balls and hit five consecutive sixes when they needed 28 runs to win off the final five balls. Rinku put on a power-hitting display for Yash Dayal defeated the Gujarat Titans by an incredible three wickets.

HARDIK PANDYA TO LEAD THE SIDE

India's star all-rounder Hardik Pandya will continue as the captain of the T20I side for the series against the West Indies, while the seniors will stay out of the team. Pandya has been leading Team India in the T20I format since the 2022 T20 World Cup.

According to reports in Cricbuzz, Pandya will lead the side and that there will be no



place for seniors. While the report does not mention the name of the seniors, there are few veterans who haven't played a T20I since the 2022 World Cup.

Meanwhile, India's former head coach Ravi Shastri has stated that it should be Rohit, who should lead India in the upcoming World Cup but Pandya should be passed the ODI captaincy after the tournament home.

"After the World Cup, I feel he should take over captaincy in white-ball cricket. Rohit should lead India in the World Cup, no question there," Shastri said to The Week.

Dutch stun West Indies in super over as Zimbabwe demolish USA

AFP ■ HARARE

Two-time champions West Indies face an almighty task to qualify for the Cricket World Cup after losing to the Netherlands in a thrilling final group game decided by a super over Monday.

Nicholas Pooran's second hundred of the qualifiers propelled West Indies to a commanding 374-6, but Teja Nidamanuru hit 111 in reply and the Dutch needed one from the final ball for victory.

Jason Holder took a brilliant catch to deny Logan van Beek as the scores finished tied, but Van Beek blasted Holder for 30 runs in the super over to set up a remarkable win in Harare.

Van Beek then restricted the West Indies to just eight off five balls as he removed Johnson Charles and Romario Shepherd with successive deliveries to seal an extraordinary triumph. "I cannot really explain it at the moment. We wanted to do something special," said Van Beek.

"I have been playing for a long time. The amount of games I have lost from those situations, it was just satisfying to get across the line."

"Now we have a chance to go to the World Cup in India and that is really huge," he added.

Pooran blasted an unbeaten 104 off 65 balls after openers Brandon King (76) and Charles (54) both made half-centuries as the West Indies put together an imposing total batting first.

King and Charles provided a strong platform with a 101-run opening partnership. Shai Hope added 47 in another century stand with Pooran



before Keemo Paul smacked a quick-fire 46 not out.

The Netherlands reached 76 without loss to start the chase, but it wasn't until Nidamanuru and captain Scott Edwards (67) came together that they looked in with a chance of actually succeeding. Once they fell in consecutive overs, Van Beek and Aryan Dutt took up the challenge only to falter with five runs needed off the last five balls and with the finish line seemingly in sight.

After failing to close it out off the

final delivery from Alzarri Joseph, Van Beek exploded in the super over to leave the West Indies in real danger of missing the World Cup later this year.

"We let ourselves down there," said Hope, the West Indies captain. "We know what we have to do now. It is an unfortunate situation we have put ourselves in."

The Netherlands advance as runners-up of Group A and carry over two points, but the West Indies start with zero and need to beat Scotland,

Oman and Sri Lanka with their hopes hanging by a thread.

ZIMBABWE HAMMER USA

Hosts Zimbabwe made it four wins from four as they crushed the United States by 304 runs, the second biggest winning margin in terms of runs in ODI history.

Zimbabwe's Sean Williams led his country to their highest ODI score Zimbabwe's Sean Williams led his country to their highest ODI score © WILLIAM WEST / AFP/File



Sean Williams hit 174 off 101 balls as Zimbabwe made their highest one-day total with a mammoth 408-6 and then bowled out the USA for just 104.

They narrowly missed breaking the record for the biggest margin of victory in a one-day international, set at the start of the year when India thrashed Sri Lanka by 317 runs in Thiruvananthapuram.

"It was a fantastic wicket. The way we started out there, it was a little slow, so we thought if we could pick the

intensity up against the spinners, we could see where we go from there," said Williams.

Zimbabwe advance to the Super Six stage as group winners and carry through four points, well placed to secure a spot at the October-November tournament in India.

"We have found our momentum and we are looking forward to carrying it," added Williams. Wicketkeeper Joylord Gumbie struck a steady 78 at the top of the order but Williams played the starring role as Zimbabwe

stepped on the accelerator once the stand-in captain arrived at the crease.

Williams hit 21 fours and five sixes before he was caught in the deep in the penultimate over, with Sikandar Baza scoring 48 off 27 balls and Ryan Burl hammering 47 off just 16 deliveries.

Only three USA batsmen reached double figures as Richard Ngarava and all-rounder Raza both took two wickets while three run outs compounded a dismal performance from the Americans.