

**OPINION 6**  
STOP PUTTING THE CART  
BEFORE THE HORSE

**WORLD 9**  
RUSSIA DROPS CHARGES  
AGAINST PRIGOZHIN

**MONEY 10**  
SLOWDOWN IN INDIA'S  
START-UP STORY

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IND TO FACE  
PAK ON  
OCTOBER 15  
12 SPORT

## Modi bats for UCC

BJP won't adopt a policy of appeasement but satisfaction of all, says PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday took a stinging swipe at the Opposition by describing their unity bid as "guarantee" for corruption and batted for the introduction of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), saying, "How will the country be able to run with such a dual system?"

Modi maintained that the BJP would not adopt the policy of "tushnikaran" (appeasement) but that of "santhustikaran" (satisfaction) of all communities and criticised them for supporting triple talaq. Speaking about the alleged "discrimination" faced by the backward Muslims when the BJP was not in power at the Centre, he said, "Those who do vote-bank politics have destroyed Pasmanda Muslims and they did not get any benefits."

Modi regretted that there was no discussion on the plight of the Pasmanda Muslims in the country who are not treated equally but considered lowly and untouchable and were discriminated against for endless generations by their more privileged brethren and were exploited by the "vote-bank politics."

The Prime Minister further



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan, BJP national president JP Nadra and MP BJP president VD Sharma during an interaction programme with BJP booth workers under the 'Mera Booth Sabse Mazboot' campaign, at Motilal Nehru Police Stadium in Bhopal on Tuesday. PTI

said even the Supreme Court has advocated for the Uniform Civil Code, but those practicing vote-bank politics are opposing it. While drawing attention to what he said was the "vote-bank and appeasement politics," Modi sought to affirm that "the BJP is working for 'Sabka saath, Sabka vikas' and giving Muslims all benefits of Government schemes like PM Ayushman Bharat and PM Awas Yojna."

Talking about the Uniform Civil Code, Modi said, "We are seeing that work is being done to instigate such people in the name of Uniform Civil Code. If there is one law for one member in a house and another for the other, will the house be able to run? So how will the country be able to run with such a dual system?"

"If you want the welfare of your sons, daughters, and

grandchildren, then vote for the BJP and not any family-oriented parties," he said.

Modi also said those supporting triple talaq were doing grave injustice to Muslim daughters.

"Triple talaq doesn't just do injustice to daughters... Entire families get ruined. If triple talaq is an essential part of Islam, then why was it banned in countries like Qatar, Jordan, Indonesia," Modi asked.

Modi said that in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, South India, especially in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu, and a number of other States, many castes were bereft of development because of the policy of appeasement.

In the interactive session with the BJP workers in Bhopal where Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and BJP president JP Nadra were also pre-

sent, Modi was asked by a BJP worker about the Opposition parties' bid for unity vis-à-vis the BJP to which he replied saying, "You seem to be very angry with them, but you need to sympathise with them... daya karni chahiye."

He said the Opposition parties are "more restless and worried today than they were in 2014 and 2019 elections. 'Aaj jo chatpatahat aap Opposition mein dekh rahain hain vo pahle nahin thi,' Modi said.

"Those who used to be staunch enemies of each other are today prostrating before each other... they are worried and scared, which signals that voters have already made up their minds to elect the BJP again in 2024 Lok Sabha polls," said Modi amidst heavy clapping and slogan-shouting.

Continued on Page 2

## CAG special audit now into CM house fix up

Centre issued order after May 24 letter by Delhi L-G

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India will conduct a special audit into alleged "irregularities and violations" in the "reconstruction" of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's official bungalow at Flag Staff Road.

The Union Home Ministry has recommended the special CAG audit taking note of a May 24 letter by Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena which pointed out "gross and prima facie financial irregularities" in the "reconstruction" of the Chief Minister's official residence. A massive controversy broke out in April this year after it was revealed that over Rs 52.71 crore had been spent to renovate the Chief Minister's official residence.

In his letter to the MHA, Saxena said the "alleged irregularities" were highlighted by the media after which Delhi's Chief Secretary submitted a factual report on April 27 and then again on May 12. "The reports detailed deviations, violations from rules, regulations and guidelines by the Public Works Department and the Delhi Government in the name of renovation of the Chief Minister's residence," he said. According to the reports of the Chief Secretary, a full-fledged construction/re-construction of a new building was carried out by the PWD in the name of renovation, the L-G's letter said. Contd on Page 2



## BJP is desperate, CAG probe last year found no financial irregularities: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) criticised the Central Government's decision to initiate a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit into the reconstruction expenses of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's official residence. The party accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of resorting to desperate measures due to their anticipated defeat in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and said a CAG investigation was conducted last year, revealing no evidence of financial irregularities.

The reconstruction of the Chief Minister's residence had previously sparked a

political battle in the capital city, with the BJP demanding an investigation into the matter and the AAP claiming that the house was in a dilapidated state as it was constructed in 1942.

Expressing strong displeasure, the AAP issued a statement saying, "This move by the Modi Government reeks of desperation as the BJP anticipates an inevitable defeat in the forthcoming 2024 general elections. Regarding the CAG inquiry into the reconstruction expenses of the Chief Minister's residence, it is important to note that it was already conducted last year, revealing no evidence of financial irregularities."

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### CAPSULE

#### CAD NARROWS TO 0.2% OF GDP IN Q4 FY23: RBI

Mumbai: India's current account deficit (CAD) narrowed to USD 1.3 billion or 0.2 per cent of GDP in the January-March quarter of FY23, mainly due to moderation in the trade deficit and a robust increase in services exports, RBI data showed on Tuesday. P10

#### MUST RETAIN LAW ON SEDITION: PANEL CHIEF

New Delhi: Amid a clamour for repeal of the law on sedition, Law Commission chairman Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi on Tuesday said the present situation from Kashmir to Kerala and Punjab to the North-East makes it must to retain the law to safeguard the "unity and integrity of India".

#### COURT TO PASS ORDER ON BRIJ'S CHARGESHEET

New Delhi: A Delhi court said on Tuesday it will pass an order on July 1 on whether to take cognisance of the charge sheet filed against BJP MP and outgoing WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh in a case of alleged sexual harassment of six women wrestlers.

#### Supertech owner arrested by ED in PMLA case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday arrested the Supertech chairman and owner, R K Arora, on charges of money laundering, according to official sources. Arora was taken into custody under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after an extensive round of questioning at the federal agency's office in New Delhi. He is expected to appear before a special PMLA court on Wednesday. Contd on Page 2

## White House condemns online harassment of scribe by Indians

WSJ reporter had posed question on democracy in India during Modi-Biden joint Press conference

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

In a strong condemnation of the alleged online harassment faced by Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reporter Sabrina Siddiqui, the White House has termed the incident as "unacceptable" and "antithetical to the very principles of democracy." Siddiqui had posed a question on democracy in India during a joint Press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joe Biden in Washington last week.

White House National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications, John Kirby, addressed the issue during a media interaction late on Monday in Washington. Kirby stated that the White House was "aware of the



reports of that harassment" and emphasised that the online abuse Siddiqui faced was completely unacceptable.

According to the Wall Street Journal, since asking the question, Siddiqui has been subjected to "intense online harassment from people inside India." The newspaper also highlighted that Siddiqui's Muslim faith had become a target for harassment.

Kirby reiterated the White House's stance, stating, "It's unacceptable. And we absolutely condemn any harassment of journalists anywhere under any circumstances. That's just - that's completely unacceptable. And it's antithetical to the very principles of democracy that - you're right - were on display last week during the state visit."

Continued on Page 2

## Diwali a school holiday in NYC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/NEW YORK

New York City has officially declared Diwali as a school holiday, recognising the cultural significance of the festival and celebrating the diversity of its residents, including the Indian community. Mayor Eric Adams announced the decision, describing it as a "victory" for the city and its various communities.

Mayor Adams expressed pride in the passage of the Bill by the State Assembly and the State Senate, stating his confidence in the Governor's approval. Speaking from City Hall during a special announcement, he said, "This is a victory, not only for the men and women of the Indian community and all communities that celebrate Diwali, but it's a victory for New York."

New York Assembly Member Jenifer Rajkumar, the first Indian-American woman elected to a New York State



office, highlighted the long-standing efforts of the South Asian and Indo-Caribbean community in securing this recognition. She emphasised that Diwali would now be enshrined as a school holiday in law, underscoring the importance of the occasion for over 600,000 Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jain Americans across New York City.

Rajkumar celebrated the broader significance of the decision, stating, "Today, we proudly say that Diwali is not just a holiday. It is an American holiday, and the South Asian community is part of the American story."

Continued on Page 2

## Help us help Manipur, pleads Indian Army

'Women are blocking routes, interfering in our operations'

PTI ■ IMPHAL/ NEW DELHI

Women activists were deliberately blocking routes and interfering in operations by security forces in violence-hit Manipur, the Army said, urging people to help it in restoring peace in the Northeastern State. Terming such "unwarranted interference" detrimental to the timely response by security forces, the Army's Spokes Person shared a video on Twitter late on Monday of some such incidents.

The statement came two days after a stand-off in Imphal East's Itham village between the



Army and a mob led by women that forced the forces to let go of 12 militants holed up there.

"Women activists in #Manipur are deliberately blocking routes and interfering in Operations of Security Forces. Such unwarranted interference is detrimental to the timely response by Security Forces during critical situations to save lives and property. The Indian Army appeals to all sections of population to support our endeavours in restoring peace. Help us to Help Manipur," it tweeted.

Continued on Page 2

#### Rahul to visit State on Jun 29, says Cong

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will visit violence-hit Manipur from June 29-30 and meet people in relief camps and interact with civil society members, party general secretary KC Venugopal said on Tuesday.

This is the first visit of the Congress leader to the northeastern State embroiled in ethnic violence since May 3.

## 'Do you consider countrymen brainless?': Allahabad HC raps makers of Adipurush

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a scathing rebuke, the Allahabad High Court on Tuesday lashed out at the creators of the film Adipurush for its dialogues and raised doubts about whether the film's disclaimer belittles the intellect of fellow countrymen and the youth.

The court slammed the film makers and directed the inclusion of Manoj Muntashir Shukla, the co-writer of the film, as a party in the case. Shukla has been served a notice, compelling him to respond within one week.

Justice Rajesh Chauhan and Justice Shri Prakash Singh presided over the bench hearing the petition seeking a ban



on Adipurush. Expressing their concerns, the judges asked, "Do those responsible for the disclaimer consider the countrymen and youth to be brainless? You showcase Lord Rama, Lord Laxman, Lord Hanuman, Ravana, Lanka, and then claim

it is not Ramayana?" The court emphasised that the film's dialogues are a matter of great significance, as Ramayana holds an esteemed position in society. It highlighted that people read Ramcharitmanas before leaving

their homes and stressed that certain elements should not be tampered with in films.

Addressing the issue, the bench remarked, "If we overlook this matter, citing the belief that people of this religion are tolerant, will it also be tested?" It raised questions about the responsibility of the film certification authority, inquiring whether it had fulfilled its obligations.

Drawing attention to the portrayal of Lord Hanuman and Sita, the court observed, "It is commendable that people did not disrupt law and order despite watching the film. However, the depiction of Lord Hanuman and Sita seems insignificant."

Continued on Page 2

## Soaring prices of tomatoes make consumers see red

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Tomato prices have witnessed a sharp increase across the country, leaving consumers grappling with the soaring costs of this essential kitchen staple. In retail markets tomato is being sold in the range of Rs 80-120 per kilogram. Vegetable vendors and wholesalers attribute the price hike to disruptions in tomato supply caused by heavy rainfall in key producing States.

Mother Dairy's Safal stores have seen a doubling of tomato prices in the past week, with rates reaching nearly Rs 80 per kilogram. The rains have severely affected tomato supplies, resulting in a demand-supply gap. The best quality tomatoes at Safal stores are currently priced at Rs



78 per kilogram, while lower-priced varieties are also available.

Mother Dairy operates more than 300 Safal stores in the Delhi-NCR market.

AgriTech startup Otopy, which sells fresh fruits and vegetables through a mobile app, is

selling tomatoes at Rs 86 per kilogram.

Similarly, e-commerce platform Big Basket is offering tomatoes at prices ranging from Rs 80-85 per kilogram.

Regarding the price surge, a spokesperson from Mother

Dairy said, "With the onset of monsoon, the tomato crop is currently going through a seasonal transition. Rainfall in areas such as Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand has impacted the crop and restricted its supply, resulting in a demand-supply gap."

Consumer Affairs secretary Rohit Kumar Singh assured consumers that the spike in tomato prices is a temporary seasonal phenomenon and expects prices to normalize soon. "It is a highly perishable commodity. Transportation gets affected in areas that received sudden rains. It is a temporary issue. Prices will cool down soon. It happens every year during this time," Singh said.

Continued on Page 2

# People will throw BJP out of power: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday hit out at the BJP Government saying it was not going to last beyond six months as the people of the country had read through their bluffs and would throw them out of power in the next year's general elections.

Though the Chief Minister made no direct remark on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech at Bhopal from where he attacked the Trinamool Congress — an important part of the '19-party anti-BJP alliance' — for its alleged involvement in a plethora of scams that could breach Rs 24,000 crores mark, Banerjee said the BJP leaders were feigning secular by reaching out to the minority communities sensing defeat in the parliamentary elections.

Mamata was addressing a panchayat election rally at Jalpaiguri in North Bengal. "The next Lok Sabha polls will be held in February-March ...



which means the BJP government will not last beyond that period," because their anti-people policies and vindictive approach had angered the entire nation. She said that the BJP leaders were Sensing defeat which was why they were trying to clean their image by sharing pictures with some richer members of the Muslim community but "that will not yield any price because they Muslims are only businessmen and do not care about the poor and downtrodden."

Attacking the Modi Government for hiking prices

of all the essential commodities she said, "it is an irony that the rice that the people get for Rs 2 per kg has to be boiled on a gas that they have to purchase for Rs 1,200 ... when you raise such uncomfortable questions they will shut your mouth ... they will stop central funds," adding, "you can stop funds, you can stop projects but you cannot stop us from telling the truth ... you have been exposed ... your lies have been exposed and you will be thrown out of power after six months."

Reacting to the Modi's Bhopal remarks TMC

spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said, "before blaming the Trinamool Congress the Prime Minister should have considered the conduct of his tallest leader in Bengal who is one of the FIR named accused in Narada scam ... similarly there are many other leaders in the BJP who are big scammers ... But the Prime Minister is blind to them."

Claiming that the BJP's balloon had burst, Ghosh said, "Modi and his generals had broken all records of too-and-fro journey to Bengal in 2021 but were miserably defeated ... they know that they are going to face the same fate this time round ... so whatever he said was a panic reaction ... he is extremely afraid after seeing secular forces uniting nationally... and so he is making such meaningless statements."

Elsewhere, TMC second in command Abhishek Banerjee too launched a blistering attack on the Prime Minister saying he should change his mindset adding "his mindset is taking him away from the people."

## Mamata's chopper makes emergency landing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday had a providential escape when the chopper she was flying in from Jalpaiguri to Siliguri Bagdogra Airport developed snags soon after it faced air turbulence in the midst of heavy rains and strong winds.

She was coming after addressing a panchayat election rally in Jalpaiguri district. She was scheduled to land at Bagdogra airport off Siliguri in Darjeeling district some 30 miles away.

# Jilted lover attacks ex with sickle in broad daylight, locals save her

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a grim reminder of similar acts of violence indulged in jilted lovers, a 22-year-old man attacked his female friend with a sickle in a fit of rage after she repeatedly spurned his efforts to maintain his relations with her in Pune's downtown Sadashiv Peth on Tuesday morning, only to be chased and caught by youngsters minutes later.

In a broad daylight incident that took place at 9.55 am, the accused — identified as one Shantanu Laman Jadhav — stabbed the victim girl in her arm and her boyfriend, using a sickle, when the girl who was riding pillion on a scooter with her friend.

The victim girl, who had her boyfriend had stopped briefly near Swad Hotel at Sadhashiv Peth and was conversing with him with, Jadhav accosted them and stabbed



both of them with a sickle. After being stabbed, the panicked boy ran away, while the accused chased and stabbed the girl.

However, two youngsters — who were present on the scene of crime — saved the life of the victim girl, by chasing the accused boy, catching hold of them, accosting him and handing him over to the Vishrambag police.

The injured girl and her boy friend were admitted to a

nearby hospital where they are currently undergoing treatment.

Preliminary investigations have revealed that the victim girl and the accused were in love while both of them were studying in a college at Kothrud locality. However, after finishing education, the victim girl joined another college at Sadhashiv Peth for higher studies. After a dispute, the relations between them had soured.

## MoU inked to generate employment for ex-servicemen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of providing a second career to ex-servicemen, the Directorate General Resettlement (DGR), Ministry of Defence on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IBM to engage ex-servicemen and to facilitate their seamless integration into the civilian workforce.

Through this MoU, the DGR will collaborate with IBM to tap into the rich talent pool of ex-servicemen for relevant job opportunities that may continue to arise at the company and its affiliates.

As part of this association, IBM aims to bridge the gap between military service and civilian employment, by providing veterans with exciting opportunities for professional growth and personal development.

The DGR and IBM will collaborate, on a continuous basis, to identify ex-servicemen with skill set and aptitude suitable for various open positions within the company. After assessment and short listing of candidates, IBM will leverage its resources and expertise to facilitate the recruitment, training, and up skilling of ex-servicemen for those roles.

Major General Sharad Kapur, Director General (Resettlement) said, "Our partnership with IBM India would bring in more visibility for our Ex-servicemen to the industry and corporates and help in achieving the objectives of providing skilled manpower and giving a dignified second career to our Ex-servicemen."

## 'Sleep disorder, insomania can increase risk of stroke'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People suffering from insomnia or any type of sleep disorder may be more likely to have a stroke, according to a study published in the journal Neurology. The study revealed that the connection between insomnia symptoms and stroke was particularly strong in individuals under the age of 50. Those who experienced five to eight symptoms of insomnia had nearly four times the risk of stroke compared to people with no symptoms.

Participants with more than five symptoms of insomnia had a 51% increased risk of stroke, while those with one symptom had a 16% increased risk.

However, the researchers emphasised that the study does not establish a cause-and-effect relationship between insomnia



symptoms and stroke; it only demonstrates an association.

"There are many therapies that can help people improve the quality of their sleep, so determining which sleep problems lead to an increased risk of stroke may allow for earlier treatments or behavioral therapies for people who are having trouble sleeping and possibly reducing their risk of stroke later in life," Wendemi Sawadogo, from Virginia Commonwealth University in the US, said.

## BJP is desperate, CAG probe...

From Page 1

The AAP further stated that the decision to initiate a fresh CAG audit is a clear reflection of the BJP's frustration, paranoia, and authoritarian tendencies. The party accused the BJP of being troubled by its successive electoral defeats in the Delhi Assembly polls and asserted that the CAG's move is an attempt to tarnish the reputation of Delhi's honest Government. The AAP claimed that the BJP, in its pursuit of revenge, is inadvertently orchestrating its own downfall through such chaotic and ill-conceived actions.

## White House condemns...

From Page 1

Following Kirby's statement, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre stepped up to the podium and reaffirmed the administration's commitment to freedom of the Press. She stressed the importance of allowing journalists to carry out their work without intimidation or harassment.

"We're committed to the freedom of the Press, which is why we had the Press conference last week. We certainly condemn any efforts of intimidation or harassment of any journalist that is trying to do their job," she said.

During the Press conference, Siddiqui had questioned Modi about improving the rights of Muslims and other minorities in India, as well as

upholding free speech.

"India has long prided itself as the world's largest democracy, but there are many human rights groups who say that your Government has discriminated against religious minorities and sought to silence its critics. As you stand here in the East Room of the White House, where so many world leaders have made commitments to protecting democracy, what steps are you and your Government willing to take to improve the rights of Muslims and other minorities in your country and to uphold free speech?" she asked.

In response, Modi asserted that there was "no question of discrimination" in India and highlighted the country's democratic principles embedded in the Constitution.

## KCR offers prayers at Pandharpur

PNS/TN RAGHUNATHA ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

Undeterred by the Congress' accusation that he was undertaking a "political pilgrimage", Telangana Chief Minister Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao on Tuesday visited the famed Vithoba temple at Pandharpur and offered prayers to the presiding deities Lord Vitthal and his consort Rukmini.

After driving down to the temple town of Pandharpur town in Solapur district from Hyderabad, KCR took darshan of the presiding deities Lord Vitthal and Rukmini ahead of the auspicious Ashadhi Ekadashi festival on June 29.

KCR's decision to arrive in Solapur along with party leaders in a huge convey of 600-odd vehicles had triggered a major controversy in the state.

Charging that the Bharat Rashtira Samiti (IBRS) was the BJP's 'B' Team and it would not make any impact in Maharashtra, the State Congress president Nana Patole had on Monday come down heavily on Telangana chief



minister K. Chandrashekar Rao for trying to take political advantage of pilgrimage to Pandharpur. "Pandhari's Vari (pilgrimage to Pandharpur) is a matter of devotion and faith for all of us. KCR should not take political advantage of it," Patole had said.

KCR was welcomed by the temple authorities. After a brief puja, the chief minister made an offering of a box to the Lord. He was later garlanded by a Trustee.

Later KCR was escorted to a hall outside where he was

felicitated by the temple authorities with a gold-and-saffron shawl draped around his shoulders, mementos comprising statues of Lord Vitthal and Rukmini in a glass case, and a large painting of the Lord.

Accompanying him in his tour to Maharashtra are his entire Telangana cabinet, all his party MLAs and parliamentarians and party office-bearers on the 'mega-pilgrimage' that has evoked sharp reactions from the state political parties.

After the 'temple yatra', KCR visited the home of senior NCP leader Bhagirath Bhalke in Sarkoli town. Later he addressed at Sarkoli where Bhalke and hundreds of his supporters joined the BRP.

In a related development, Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena MP and chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut said that KCR's visit to Solapur would have no impact on Maharashtra police. "There will be no impact of Telangana Chief Minister KCR on Maharashtra politics. If KCR indulges in this kind of dramas, he will lose power in Telangana state as well"

## CAG special audit...

From Page 1

The report also flagged that the ownership of the property was not ascertained by the PWD before commencing the construction, it said.

The mandatory and pre-required sanction of the Building Plans in terms of applicable building bylaws were not obtained from the Building Committee of the PWD till now, according to the letter, based on the reports.

"Initially the proposal was to provide additional accommodation in the residence of the Chief Minister, however later on the proposal was approved by the Minister for an entirely new construction after demolition of the existing building," it said. The initial cost for construction work was Rs 15 to Rs 20 crore, the report said, adding that it was inflated from time-to-time, it said.

As per the report, a total of Rs 52,71,24,570 (approximately Rs 53 crore) has been spent till date which is more than three times the initial estimate, the letter said.

"Further, records show that to avoid approvals from the Principal Secretary (PWD)

who has been delegated powers for giving financial sanction above Rs 10 crore, split sanctions of amount less than Rs 10 crore on every occasion were obtained convolutedly," the report said, according to the letter.

The report had also flagged the "gross violation of the MPD-2021" or Master Plan for Delhi (MPD) which is the law of the land in matters of land and spatial development/redevelopment, it said.

"To avoid obtaining approval of Competent Authority for felling/transplantation of trees of more than 10 numbers, as per Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, split approvals were taken five times for felling/transplantation of 9,2,6,6 and 5 i.e total 28 trees. This issue regarding violation of Environmental Laws is also pending before NGT," it said.

Last month, the Delhi Government's Vigilance Directorate submitted a report to the L-G on the expenses of the renovation of the Chief Minister's house. According to that report, Kejriwal's official residence incurred a total cost of Rs 52.71 crore.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed that the owners of Shri Pradeep Sahni S/o Late O.P. Sahni and his wife Smt. Kiran Sahni, have severed all their relations with their son Sidhant Sahni. Both of my above-named children have also disowned and debarred his said son from all their movable and immovable properties. Anybody dealing with Sidhant Sahni will do so at his/her/their own risk and responsibilities and my clients will not be responsible for any act, deed or dealing done by Sidhant Sahni.

Mansoor Ansari (Advocate) B-43A, Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019 Phone No.: +91 97111 77423

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Santosh Devi who is purchasing the built up built-up Property bearing No. 3895-A/13, area measuring 20.8 Sq. Yds., part of Plot No. 4, out of Kharsa No. 106/3, situated in the area of Village Chowki Mubarkabad, Delhi State, colony known as Kanihya Nagar, Ganesh Pura, Tri Nagar, Delhi; from Mrs. Prerna Jain W/o Mr. Manish Jain, who is owner of the aforesaid property vide Sale Deed 03.05.2014, which is duly registered vide Document No. 4879, at Sub-Registrar, V/A, Delhi; and intend to mortgage against the financial assistance from Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Limited. That the Sale Deed dated 31.10.2011, registered vide Document No. 15.5.15, at Sub-Registrar, V/A, Delhi is Lost / Misplaced / Not available. An Information Report regarding lost of aforesaid document has been lodged on 26.06.2023 vide LR No. 592845/2023. To comply the requirements of BANKING, we give this public notice that if any person having any type of claim/right/interest/ creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.

Lucern Legal LLP Plot no. 136, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049; Contact # 011-40046316

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER, CONSTRUCTION WING, UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM E-32, JUDGE FARM, HALDWANI, DISTT. NAINITAL (PIN 263139)

Letter No.: 1770/Nivida-Anubandh/Haldwani/106 Date : 26-06-2023

### E-Tender Notice

- Name of the work:-** Construction of Govt. Food Science Training Centre Ramnagar, District-Nainital.
- Estimated Cost:-** Rs. 144.39 Lakh (without G.S.T.)
- Period of Completion:-** 12 Months
- Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:-** 27-06-2023 (10:00 hrs)
- Online Bid submission: End date :-** 17-07-2023 (17:00 hrs)
- Date & Time of Technical bid Opening :-** 19-07-2023 (11:00 hrs)
- Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid:-** General Manager (Kumaon), Nirman Wing, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Haldwani.
- Pre-bid meeting details (if required) Date & Place :-** 30-06-2023 (11:00 hrs) Project Manager, Construction Unit, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Haldwani.
- For further details, details of subsequent Amendment / correction documentation etc. may be obtained from the e-Procurement portal [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in)**

GENERAL MANAGER

## Modi...

From Page 1

"In 2024 elections main BJP ki prachand vijay tay hain" (in 2024 LS elections BJP's roaring majority is decided), announced the Prime Minister with Nadda and Chouhan clapping along with the BJP workers.

Taking a dig at the Opposition unity, he said, "You must have seen a group photo of Opposition party leaders, this is a guarantee of corruption of 20 lakh crore." Modi was referring to various corruption cases faced by Opposition party leaders.

Modi asked workers to understand the importance of groundwork at the booth level and the feedback coming from the booth-level workers. "Even PM-CM policies depend on booth workers," he said and maintained that "BJP is not the party where leaders sit in air-conditioned rooms and issue 'fatwas'."

"But for the booth committee, Ujjwala Yojna could not even be thought of, but you gave the feedback and the poor got LPG," Modi said and asked party workers that they should carry out their booth work with "seva bhav" and try to be "social workers".

Earlier, Modi inaugurated five Vande Bharat trains virtually on Tuesday, connecting various cities across the country. The event took place at the Rani Kamalapati railway station in Bhopal, where he gave the green signal to two semi-high-speed trains physically and flagged off the remaining three virtually. The ceremony was attended by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and Union ministers Narendra Singh Tomar and Jyotiraditya Scindia.

## Supertech owner arrested...

From Page 1

The ED will seek his further remand, then. The money-laundering case against the Supertech group, its directors, and promoters stems from multiple FIRs registered by the police departments in Delhi, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.

In April, the ED had already attached assets worth more than Rs 40 crore belonging to the real estate group and its directors.

According to a statement released by the ED in April, the company and its directors were involved in a "criminal conspiracy" to deceive individuals by collecting funds as advance payments for flats in their real estate projects.

## Diwali a school...

From Page 1

She referenced the civil rights tradition in America, noting that Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist individuals have played an important role, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. himself acknowledged Mahatma Gandhi's influence on his movement of nonviolent social change.

Mayor Adams, alongside community leaders, diaspora representatives, city officials, and lawmakers, emphasized the ever-evolving nature of New York City as a welcoming home for diverse communities. He asserted that the school cal-

endar should reflect the city's reality and ensure the acknowledgment of all communities.

Congresswoman Grace Meng, First Vice Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, expressed her happiness at the imminent realization of their efforts. Meng emphasized the importance of acknowledging and appreciating Diwali as an observance alongside holidays of other cultures and ethnicities, reflecting the city's rich and vibrant diversity. She also highlighted her introduction of a bill in Congress to establish Diwali as a federal holiday.

## Help us help Manipur, pleads Indian...

From Page 1

The stand-off in Itham went on throughout Saturday, and ended after a "mature decision" by the operational commander keeping in view the sensitivity of use of force against large irate mob led by women and likely casualties due to such action, officials said.

Twelve members of the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), a Meitei militant group, involved in a number of attacks, including the ambush of a 6 Dogra unit in 2015, were holed up in the village, they said. The security personnel left with seized arms and ammuni-

tion. Meanwhile in New Delhi, Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uikey called on Union Home Minister Amit Shah here on Tuesday, two days after the restive state's Chief Minister N Biren Singh met him.

Nearly 120 people lost their lives and over 3,000 have been injured ever since the ethnic violence broke in Manipur nearly two months ago.

"The Governor of Manipur, Ms. Anusuiya Uikey called on Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri @AmitShah," Shah's office tweeted.

Singh met Shah on Sunday after the meeting said he had briefed the Home Minister about the "evolving situation on the ground" in Manipur and that the State and Central Governments have been able to control the violence to a "great extent".

In another development, the Manipur Government has decided to invoke "no work, no pay" rule for its employees who are not attending office.

The General Administration Department (GAD) has been asked to furnish details of employees who are not able to attend their offi-

cial work due to the prevailing situation in the State. A circular issued late on Monday night by GAD Secretary Michael Achom said: "In pursuance of the meeting chaired by the Chief Minister on June 12 and decision taken at para 5-(12) of the proceedings, all employees drawing their salaries from General Administration Department, Manipur Secretariat are informed that no work, no pay may be invoked to all those employees who do not attend their official duty without authorised leave."

Manipur Government has one lakh employees.

# ₹2 lakh tunnel loot case solved, 7 held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the arrest of seven people, the Delhi Police have successfully solved a robbery case that occurred inside the Pragati Maidan tunnel in the national Capital over the weekend. The incident, captured on CCTV cameras, involved four armed robbers on motorcycles forcefully stopping a car and stealing a black bag from it before fleeing the scene.



The victims of the robbery were identified as Patel Sajan Kumar, a delivery agent for a private company, and his associate. They were en route to Gurugram with a bag containing Rs 2 lakh in cash when the four robbers on two motorcycles intercepted their cab, brandishing firearms, and snatched the money at gunpoint.

The accused have been identified as Usman Ali alias Kallu, Irfan, Sumit alias Akash, residents of Burari; Anuj Mishra alias Sanki, a resident of Bhalaswa Dairy; Kuldeep alias Lungad, a resident of Jahangirpuri; Pradeep alias Sonu, a resident of Baghatp in Uttar Pradesh; and Amit alias Bala, a resident of Loni in Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh, police said. They were following the taxi and chose to stop it inside the tunnel as they had a higher chance of success to execute the robbery. People usually do not stop in tunnels and drive through them at speed, according to police.

The victims had booked the taxi from Red Fort and when it entered the Pragati Maidan tunnel, the four men waylaid the vehicle, they said. Police said the victims tried to resist, but the accused snatched a bag, containing the cash, at gunpoint and fled. The police revealed that the robbery was orchestrated by a man named Usman, who was driven by the need to settle his debts. The Pragati Maidan tunnel was strategically chosen to minimize any potential resistance. This 1.5 km tunnel connects New Delhi with Sarai Kale Khan and Noida. Usman, a resident of Burari and a delivery agent, was well acquainted with the flow of cash in the Chandni Chowk area due to his extensive work there. In order to alleviate his financial burdens, he devised a robbery plan and enlisted the help of his cousin, Irfan. Anuj Mishra, also known as Sanki, Kuldeep, alias Lungad, and Sumit, alias Akash, were recruited as additional accomplices. Sumit, a vegetable vendor, accompanied Usman during the reconnaissance mission around Chandini Chowk, while Anuj, a mechanic at the

# CM raps LG, says 'jungle raj' prevailing in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a scathing attack on Centre Land Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena over Delhi's law-and-order situation following a robbery inside the Pragati Maidan tunnel, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday claimed that "jungle raj" was prevailing in a city gearing up for the G20 Summit.

He asserted that if the AAP government is given the charge of law and order, it will make Delhi the "safest city" in the country. Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi hit back,

claiming that Kejriwal wants control over the city's law and order "to protect his corrupt ministers and MLAs".

Interacting with reporters on the sidelines of an event to inaugurate new electric vehicle charging stations, Kejriwal said, "It seems that the Centre does not have a solid plan to improve the law-and-order situation in Delhi. Some men carried out a robbery inside the Pragati Maidan underpass. The G20 Summit will be held near the underpass. People are feeling unsafe in Delhi. This is 'jungle raj', the chief minister said. The chief



minister also cited another incident and asked, "What is happening in Delhi? Should the national capital have a law and order situation like this?" A delivery agent and his associate were allegedly robbed

of Rs 2 lakh at gunpoint by four motorcycle-borne men inside the Pragati Maidan tunnel. Five people have so far been arrested in connection with the Saturday incident.

Reacting to the Chief Minister's comments, Lekhi said "Arvind Kejriwal is running a government where the (former) deputy chief minister (Manish Sisodia) is in jail for corruption. His (former) minister Satyendar Jain has recently come out on bail.

"Over 40 MLAs are indulging in corrupt and criminal activities. Tahir Hussain was

involved in the killing of an Intelligence Bureau officer in the northeast Delhi riots while Amanatullah Khan was stealing cylinders and storing them in Okhla. I guess it is to protect all these criminals why he (Kejriwal) wants law and order in his hands," the Union minister claimed.

Earlier, speaking at the inauguration of 42 charging stations, Kejriwal also claimed that pollution levels in the national capital have declined since 2014. Kejriwal inaugurated 42 new ultra-low-cost EV charging stations at an event at GTB Nagar.

# Teen electrocuted in Taimoor Nagar's waterlogged street

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

30 mins before woman electrocuted at Railway Station, teen had died in same way



The national Capital witnessed two cases of deaths due to electrocution and that too within a span of half an hour on Sunday. While a 34-year-old woman was killed in front of the New Delhi Railway station, a 17-year-old youth died near 30 minutes prior to Sakshi Ahuja's death.

He was identified as Sohail. He was electrocuted to death

after suffering an electric shock on a water-logged pathway in the area of New Friends Colony (NFC). It is being said that a live electric wire had fallen on the pathway, which led to the incident.

The death of 17-year-old Sohail has come to light on a day the National Human Rights Commission sent notices to the chairman of the

Railway Board, the Delhi government and the city police over the woman's death, pointing to "life-threatening lapses" and "apparent negligence of the authorities".

Sohail, a Bengaluru resident, had come to his uncle's house in south Delhi's New Friends Colony about 45 days ago for his holidays. He used to stay at his uncle's house during the day and go to the house of another relative, Jamal, in East Delhi's Seemapuri at night to sleep.

Amid heavy rain since Saturday night, the teenager left Jamal's house early on Sunday to return to his uncle's house. He reached Taimoor Nagar near his uncle's house around 5 am and found that a street was waterlogged.

When he stepped into the

water to get across, passersby heard Sohail scream and collapse. They noticed a wire in the water and called the police, who got the power disconnected. Members of Sohail's family - which is originally from West Bengal - said he was taken to a hospital, where he was declared dead. The police have registered a complaint and begun an investigation.

Half an hour later and 16 km away from Taimoor Nagar, Sakshi Ahuja, a 34-year-old teacher, reached New Delhi railway station around 5:30 am with her children - aged seven and nine - father and other members of her family. She held on to an electric pole to avoid puddles when she suffered a massive electric shock, causing her death.



# 70-year-old dragged on road, robbed of ₹1 lakh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 70-year-old trader was dragged on the road in northeast Delhi's Harsh Vihar when he tried to resist two robbers who snatched his bag containing Rs 1 lakh cash and fled the spot, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place on June 19 when the victim, Sansar Singh, was going home in Ghaziabad after closing his general store in Mandoli area, they said, adding no arrest has been made in the case.

According to police, Singh was sitting on a motorcycle as a pillion outside his shop when two men reached there and tried to snatch his bag. When he resisted, one of the robbers threatened him with a pistol and took away his bag containing the money, police said.

The incident was captured on a CCTV camera. In the CCTV footage, Singh is seen sitting on a pillion on the motorcycle when two men came towards him and tried to snatch a bag from his hand. When the victim tried to resist, he got dragged and the robbers managed to escape with the bag.

The victim who fell on the road was later seen standing up while the two men got onto a bike standing on the opposite side of the road. Police said an associate of the robbers - the third suspect in the case - was waiting for the duo so that they could escape from the spot immediately after the incident.

Efforts are being made to identify the suspects and teams have been formed to nab them, police said. A case was registered at Harsh Vihar police station.

# BJP, Cong welcome CAG probe into CM's bungalow renovation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP and Congress on Tuesday welcomed a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) probe into alleged irregularities in the construction of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's official bungalow in the national Capital. While senior Congress leader Ajay Maken called for a full blown criminal investigation, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly and BJP leader Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said laws were flouted in the construction of 'Sheeshmahal'.



Addressing a news conference here, Bidhuri said laws were flouted in the construction of the bungalow and in this connection the BJP MLAs submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister on June 24, 2021.

It was clearly stated that of law did not permit Chief Minister's residence beautification as being done in the Corona period and information about the expenses was also sought in writing. Bidhuri said we had asked Kejriwal whether any permission has been taken from Delhi Urban Art Commission to demolish this house, but Kejriwal had no answer, whereas at that time only the first instalment of

the construction of the house had been approved. Bidhuri also said that we also asked him whether you got the sanction plan passed and also from whom permission was taken for the dozens of trees that were removed. We have asked whether tenders were floated for the Rs 53 crore spent, he added. The BJP leader questioned that there were 21 officers' flats behind the Chief Minister's residence, out of which 8 flats were demolished and the rest were merged with the Chief Minister's residence, from whom permission was taken to do all this.

Manoj Tiwari, MP, said Kejriwal is sure to go to jail after the investigation against corruption in Sheeshmahal begins.

residence, Maken said the criminal investigation is not just needed; it's a demand of justice. "It's outrageous that public money was squandered on Dior-polished imported marble, million-rupee curtains, and kitchen appliances worth crores, all while demolishing a British-era heritage structure and callously decimating trees," he said.

"Sheesh Mahal Breaking News: Encouraged to see the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General) stepping up to scrutinize the egregious expenditure of Rs 171 crore of public funds on Arvind Kejriwal's opulent 'Sheesh Mahal'. Yet, this mere audit barely scratches the surface of this flagrant misuse of resources," the Congress leader also said.

The former union minister said this "extravagance" unfolded amidst the COVID crisis, when Delhiites were gasping for oxygen, struggling for livelihoods, and battling hunger.

"Mr. Kejriwal, your audacious actions have revealed a chilling truth. You have morphed from a champion of the 'Aam Aadmi' and an anti-corruption crusader to a figure steeped in corruption, indulging in a king-like lifestyle in your 'Sheesh Mahal'. A sad but fitting testament to your reign," he said.

# BJP, Cong hold protest against city Govt's power tariff hike

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress on Tuesday staged a protest against the Arvind Kejriwal Government over the power tariff hike in the city. Delhi BJP MLAs staged a sit-in near the Chief Minister's residence in the Civil Lines area over hike in the electricity tariff in the city.

The Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri led the protest and said power tariff has been increased three times from what it was before 2014.

Electricity distribution companies here have increased the power purchase adjustment cost (PPAC) by upto more than nine per cent following approval of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission, DERC, which would result in a hike in the monthly bills of consumers not getting subsidy.

The BJP will continue to protest against the PPAC hike unless it is reversed by the Kejriwal government, Bidhuri said. "Why Kejriwal who frequently calls special sessions of the Assembly on different issues is not convening a special session now to discuss the electricity



rates?" a protesting BJP MLA asked, with many echoing this.

The Delhi Congress on Tuesday staged a demonstration against the AAP government in Delhi over a hike in power tariffs in the national Capital. Party leaders and workers, who gathered outside the AAP's office in central Delhi, alleged that the city government has "failed to fulfil its promise" of providing free electricity to consumers. Congress leader Jai Kishan said that Atishi has misled the people on the power tariff hike.

The Aam Aadmi Party government always claims that

since they came to power, electricity rates in the capital have not increased.

However, the reality is that every year, permission is given to electricity companies to hike rates through the "backdoor", they charged.

"Electricity bills are burdening the public due to fixed charges, power purchase adjustment costs, and surcharge for pensions for retired electricity employees," Bidhuri claimed.

On Monday, Delhi's Power Minister Atishi had said the power tariff was increasing due to the Centre's mismanagement.

# Delay in administering oath of office to DERC chief, LG writes to CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor DVK Saxena has written a letter to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal expressing his concerns regarding the delayed administration of the oath of office to Justice (Retd.) Umesh Kumar, who has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC).



The LG has highlighted that Justice Kumar had confirmed his availability for the oath ceremony starting from June 26, 2023, onwards, but the process has not yet been initiated.

Emphasizing the importance of following the prescribed constitutional and statutory provisions, the LG has pointed out that the President has already appointed Justice Kumar as the Chairperson of DERC through a duly notified Gazette notification on June 21, 2023. The next step, as mandated by the relevant statutes, is for the Minister-in-Charge of Power to administer the oath of office to Justice Umesh Kumar. The Department of Power,

withhold or unduly delay the administration of the oath. Deviating from established governance processes without statutory backing can lead to anarchy and must be avoided at all costs.

Furthermore, the LG warned that disregarding or violating the constitutional scheme by failing to promptly administer the oath of office and secrecy to the Chairperson (designate) of DERC would be a serious matter. The vacant position of the Chairperson of DERC is of significant importance, and since the President of India has already appointed Justice (Retd.) Umesh Kumar, it is imperative to expedite the oath administration process.

Therefore, the LG urges the Chief Minister to ensure that the Minister of Power promptly administers the oath of office and secrecy to Justice (Retd.) Umesh Kumar without any further delay, preferably by June 28, as indicated in his communication dated June 26, 2023. This action will ensure the smooth functioning of the regulatory commission and uphold the principles of constitutional governance.

# HREAT recovers ₹39.88 crore from errant developers

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Haryana Real Estate Appellate Tribunal (HREAT) has recovered Rs 39.88 crore while the Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (HRERA), Gurugram has recovered Rs 8.61 crore from errant developers and refunded buyers over the last four years from 2019 to May 2023.

The authority has been pursuing concerned offices of district collectors for carrying out the recovery process.

According to a HRERA document, it has refunded a total of Rs 39,88,44,778 crore to buyers from 2019 to May 31, while the buyers have received Rs 8,61,19,277 crore through the HRERA court from 2020 to May 31. The HRERA authority said that they had also issued warrants to different promoters during the recovery process. Meanwhile, the HRERA, Gurugram announced that it has pronounced more than 7,000 judgments within five years.



Till February 2023, The court has decided 4,115 cases of delayed possession charges (DPC). According to officials, more than 3.5 lakh units in different projects registered with the authority are directly under its supervision. More than 2.54 lakh units have already been delivered to allottees by promoters. The HRERA Gurugram has received 25,509 complaints till February of which 12,640 cases were pursued further by the complainants through the court and the remaining 12,869 cases have been settled between the parties outside court due to interventions of HRERA.

# Tower in Chintels Paradiso cordoned off after balcony found 'sagging'

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A tower in Chintels Paradiso Apartment complex in Sector 109 has been cordoned off after a balcony of a flat was found to be "sagging".

While the builder of the apartment complex has sealed the main gate of the unsafe Tower F, two families continue to stay in the tower.

In a letter to the district administration the Chintels Paradiso builder has asked for an intervention in the matter and get the two families to vacate the Tower F flats. The District Town Planner (DTP) said that a team will visit the housing society on Wednesday.

Some towers, including Tower F, of the society were declared unsafe by the authorities after two persons died last year when Tower D partially collapsed.

Earlier in May, district authorities issued a notice asking residents to vacate towers E and F within 15 days. Two other towers have also been declared unsafe. As a precautionary measure, the developer of Chintels



Paradiso has barricaded Tower F and has issued an alert for all residents of the society to avoid going near the unsafe tower. The builder said in its letter to the district administration that the "sagging" balcony poses a serious threat but despite repeated requests, two families continue to stay in the unsafe tower.

"It has come to our notice that the balcony of F 403 is sagging and poses a serious threat to residents' movement. As per your directions no repair should be carried out in structures. Keeping the safety of residents in mind we are cordoning off the F tower area," the letter reads.

"In case of any mishap, we should not be held responsible as all precautions have been taken to make sure residents avoid use of the affected area," it

said. The developer added that fencing has also been done around the tower so that no one can go near the area surrounding the unsafe tower.

"Despite repeated requests two families are still living in the F tower. We request you to intervene in interest of their safety and immediately get the flats vacated," the developer said in the letter.

In response, a district administration official said they will visit Chintels Paradiso on Wednesday. "We got the letter from the builder and our team will go to the society tomorrow and find the reason the two families are not vacating the flats," DTP (enforcement) Manish Yadav said.

Meanwhile, Jitender Malik, a resident who is yet to vacate his family's Tower F flat said he will vacate it in a week even though there are "no issues" with the flat. He said it is painful to vacate the house without any alternative accommodation or compensation.

"I am in the process of vacating though there are absolutely no issues above the 6th floor," Malik said.

# PM's UCC remark bid to divert attention from real issues: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Tuesday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his comments on the UCC with the Congress saying he was making such remarks only to divert attention from the real issues like unemployment and Manipur violence and AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi asking whether the country's pluralism would be "snatched away" in the name of the UCC.

Congress general secretary, organisation, KC Venugopal said the Prime Minister can say anything, but "he has to answer the real questions of this country - unemployment, price rise and Manipur issue".

"Manipur has been burning for the last 60 days. Why has the PM not uttered a single word? These are all diversionary issues. He wants to run away from the real issues of the country, that is why they are only trying to divert the issues," he said.

Addressing a gathering of party workers in Bhopal, the Prime Minister made a strong pitch for the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), saying the Constitution calls for equal rights for all citizens. Modi also said the opposition is using the issue of UCC to mislead and provoke the Muslim community.

Hitting back, Owaisi asked whether the country's pluralism and diversity would be "snatched away" in the name of UCC. "It



seems Modi did not understand Obama's advice properly. Will the PM end 'Hindu Undivided Family' (law) because of HUF, the country is losing Rs 3064 crores every year.

"When PM Modi speaks about UCC, he is speaking of Hindu Civil Code. I challenge him to abolish Hindu Undivided Family (law), can he do so," he asked.

"They are also opposing reservations for backward Muslims. His government has stopped scholarships for poor Muslims. If Pasmada Muslims are being exploited, what is Modi doing about it? Before seeking votes from Pasmada Muslims, BJP workers should go door-to-door and apologise that their spokespersons and MLAs tried to insult our Dear Prophet," Owaisi

tweeted.

State minister and senior JD(U) leader Vijay Kumar Chaudhary also alleged that by touching upon the UCC, Modi was aiming at communal polarisation. RJD leader Manoj Jha said the Prime Minister should not make such issues an instrument of "dog-whistle politics".

"Before speaking, the Prime Minister should have examined what the 21st law commission had said, deeply analysed debates of the constituent assembly without taking help because those out to help you, end up causing harm through you," Jha said. Jha said the Hindu religion also has a lot of diversity and it cannot be painted with one brush.

# Modi inaugurates 5 Vande Bharat trains virtually

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/BHOPAL/ RANCHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated five Vande Bharat trains virtually on Tuesday, connecting various cities across the country. The event took place at the Rani Kamalapati railway station in Bhopal, where the Prime Minister gave the green signal to two semi-high-speed trains physically and flagged off the remaining three virtually. The ceremony was attended by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and Union ministers Narendra Singh Tomar and Jyotiraditya Scindia.

With the launch of these five trains, the total number of indigenous semi-high-speed trains operating in the country has reached 23. Earlier this month, Minister Vaishnaw had pledged to connect each state through a Vande Bharat Express train by the end of June, and the remaining states on the list were Goa, Bihar, and Jharkhand.

At the Ranchi railway station, Jharkhand Governor CP Radhakrishnan, Union Minister



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off five Vande Bharat Express trains, at Rani Kamalapati Railway Station, in Bhopal, on Tuesday

Annappurna Devi, and BJP state president Deepak Prakash were present for a special program marking the flagging off. Similarly, Goa Governor PS Sreedharan Pillai, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, and other dignitaries attended the function at Madgaon railway station in Goa. In Mumbai, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis, and other officials welcomed the train.

"These trains will improve connectivity in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa, Bihar, and Jharkhand," said Prime Minister Modi in a tweet.

This is the first time that multiple Vande Bharat trains have been launched on a single day. Two of the trains are dedicated to Madhya Pradesh, where Assembly polls are scheduled later this year.

The five semi-high-speed trains launched are as follows: Rani Kamalapati (Bhopal)-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, according to an official statement.

# Cong releases 'mohabbat ki dukaan' video as fight goes virtual

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In the ongoing fierce social media battle between the two, the Congress has released an animated video that depicts the BJP employing divisive tactics while portraying Rahul Gandhi as the unifying force who dismantles a "market of hate" (nafrat ka bazaar) and replaces it with a "shop of love" (mohabbat ki dukaan).

The one minute and 43-second video, shared on the official Twitter handle of the Congress, showcases an animated character of Prime Minister Narendra Modi driving a chariot with democracy, media, and bureaucracy symbolically chained on top. Although the video did not explicitly mention elections, the online exchange between the two parties on social media has become increasingly heated.

The animated video also features Home Minister Amit Shah attempting to create a divide between a Hindu and a Muslim individual. However, Rahul intervenes and brings the two communities together.

The video highlights Rahul's Bharat Jodo Yatra as he walks across the country, uniting people. The iconic song "kisi ki muskurahaaton pe ho nisaar" from the movie "Anari," with modified lyrics, plays in the background.

The modified lyrics convey the message, "sabhi ke waaste ho jiske dil mein pyaar, Gandhi usi ka naam hai" (whose heart is filled with love for everyone, Gandhi is his name).

In one scene, Rahul is seen traveling in a truck, and as he passes a signboard reading "market of hate" (nafrat ka bazaar), it falls down, revealing a backdrop of a "shop of love" (mohabbat ki dukaan). The Congress shared the video on Twitter with the caption "mohabbat ki dukaan".

During the Bharat Jodo Yatra, Rahul had stated that he was opening "shops of love" in the "market of hate," which has now become a recurring theme for the Congress party's future political endeavors.

Responding to Rahul's "shop of love" narrative, BJP Chief J P Nadda recently retorted that the former Congress president was not running a "shop of spreading love" but had instead established a "mega shopping mall of hatred".

# EAM inaugurates New Delhi Hall at SCO Secretariat in Beijing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ BEIJING

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday inaugurated an exquisitely designed 'New Delhi Hall' at the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) Secretariat in Beijing virtually and said it depicts a "mini-India" and will foster a better understanding of the country's culture.

The inauguration came ahead of next month's SCO summit to be held for the first time under India's Presidency. The Secretariat of the eight-member SCO grouping comprising China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan is located in the high-end diplomatic area in Beijing.

While the six founding members China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have their halls highlighting their cultures and unique features, India is the first to add its own 'New Delhi Hall' which is officially opened ahead



Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat speaks at the newly inaugurated New Delhi Hall at the secretariat of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), in Beijing, on Tuesday

of the July 4 SCO summit to be held in virtual format. Pakistan may have to await its turn to set up its hall.

In his video address, Jaishankar said, "I am delighted to inaugurate the New Delhi Hall at the SCO Secretariat today amidst the august presence of the SCO Secretary General and other distinguished colleagues".

"I am particularly pleased to note that this is being done under the first-ever SCO presidency which will conclude soon with the SCO Summit," he said. The New Delhi Hall,

Jaishankar said, is conceived to be a "mini-India" in the SCO Secretariat and will showcase various facets of Indian culture.

"To make you visualise the depth of India's artistic tradition and cultural identity, the Hall has been designed with exquisite patterns and motifs representing the rich architectural craftsmanship found throughout India," he said. The hall, with its traditional design, is also equipped with modern technologies to facilitate meetings both in physical and virtual formats, he said.

# Total length of NH increased by 59% in last nine years: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari announced on Tuesday that the total length of national highways (NH) in the country has increased by approximately 59% in the last nine years, making India the second-largest road network in the world after the USA.

Speaking at a press conference, Gadkari said, "The total length of National Highways was 91,287 km in 2013-14, which has increased to 1,45,240 km in 2022-23, marking a rise of more than 59% during this period. Over the past nine years, the length of 4-lane national highways has nearly doubled. In 2013-14, the length of 4-lane NH was 18,371 km, which has now increased to 44,654 km."

The minister emphasized the special focus on expanding the road high way network in the NorthEast region, where projects worth more than Rs 2 lakh crore are currently under-



Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways Secretary Anurag Jain and National Highway Authority Of India (NHAI) Santosh Kumar Yadav during a media briefing on 9 years of achievements of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, in New Delhi, on Tuesday

way. Additionally, he mentioned the development of 670 roadside facilities along the national highways to enhance travelers' experience.

Gadkari also highlighted the significant increase in toll collection due to the introduction of FASTag.

He stated that toll revenues rose from Rs 4,770 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 41,342 crore in 2022-23. The government aims to further increase toll revenue to Rs 1,30,000 crore by 2030, he added. The implemen-

tation of FASTag has not only boosted toll collection but also reduced waiting times at toll plazas.

"In 2014, the waiting time at toll plazas was 734 seconds, whereas in 2023, it has reduced to 47 seconds. We are optimistic that we will bring it down to 30 seconds soon," Gadkari said.

The minister pointed to the transformative impact of FASTag on travel experiences in India, saying it has revolutionized toll payments by elim-

inating the need for cash transactions. Research indicates that this breakthrough has saved approximately Rs 70,000 crore in wasted fuel expenses caused by waiting at toll plazas.

Gadkari also discussed the success of the NHAI's INVIT (Infrastructure Investment Trust) model, which witnessed overwhelming response. Within the first day of its availability on the Mumbai Stock Exchange, the bond saw seven times oversubscription. He urged investors to consider investing in NHAI INVIT, which offers an attractive interest rate of 8.05%, surpassing traditional bank rates.

Highlighting the ministry's commitment to green initiatives, Gadkari mentioned that NHAI has transplanted over 68,000 trees and planted 3.86 crore trees over the past nine years. Furthermore, the NHAI has developed more than 1,500 "amrit sarovars" (holy ponds) along the national highways across the country as part of water rejuvenation initiatives.

## PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE

Branch Office: ICICI Bank LTD Office Number 201-B, 2ND Floor, Road No 1 Plot No -B3, WIFI IT PARK, Wagle Industrial Estate, Thane (West) - 400604.

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Physical Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Jagnarayan Soni & Ranjudevi Jagnarayan Soni/ (LBAHR0002011496)	Unit No 348, Pratistha Residency, Nr Navjivan Hotel, N H No.8, Ankleshwar, 198, Kevadia Colony- 393151/ June 23, 2023	June 25, 2021 Rs. 7,85,924.00/-	Bharuch/ Angul/ Delhi

The above-mentioned borrower(s)/ guarantor(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : June 28, 2023  
Place : Delhi  
Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

## ICICI Bank PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

[See proviso to rule 8(6)]  
Notice for sale of immovable assets

This E-auction Sale notice for sale of Immovable assets is being issued by ICICI Bank Ltd. (on underlying pool assigned to ICICI Bank by Dewan Housing Finance Ltd.) in relation to the enforcement of security in respect of a housing loan facility granted pursuant to a loan agreement entered into between DHFL and the following borrower(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder.

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price/ Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Anamika Biswas (Borrower), Amal Kumar Biswas (Co-borrower) QZDEL00005039991	P. No.11, Third Floor With Roof (R.H.S) Kt. No. 80/5, Villi Hastal, Roop Vihar Om Vihar Phase V, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi. Area: 585 sq. ft.	Rs. 29,88,967/- as on June 20, 2023	Rs. 18,05,000/- Rs. 1,30,500/-	July 20, 2023, From 11:00 AM- 12:00 Noon	August 09, 2023, From 11:00 AM- 12:00 Noon

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited (URL Link-https://disposahub.com). The Mortgagors/ notices are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till August 08, 2023 before 5:00 pm failing which, this secured asset will be sold as per schedule. The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) to ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before August 08, 2023 before 5:00 pm and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before August 08, 2023 before 05:00 pm along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before August 08, 2023 before 5:00 pm, Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the E-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 9372730494/8584874809

Please note that Marketing agencies 1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited., 2. Augco Assets Management Private Limited, 3. Hecta Proptech Pvt Ltd have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4ps

Date : June 28, 2023  
Place : Delhi/ NCR  
Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited



# Philippines, India to review bilateral ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian and the Philippines will review the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties during the four-day visit of the latter's Foreign Secretary Enrique A Manalo to India beginning Tuesday. The two sides will focus on maritime security, trade and investment, health and tourism.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here Manalo's visit will provide an opportunity to comprehensively review bilateral relations between India and Philippines and to explore ways to further deepen and strengthen them.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Manalo will co-chair the fifth meeting of India-Philippines joint commission on bilateral cooperation (JCBC) on June 29.

The secretary of foreign affairs of the Philippines is visiting India at the invitation of Jaishankar. The MEA said both sides will review the entire gamut of bilateral relations, including political, defence, security, maritime cooperation, trade and investment, health and tourism at the JCBC.

It said the two sides will also discuss regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

# Cashless treatment facilities for CGHS expanded

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Tuesday expanded cashless treatment facilities for the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) beneficiaries as it brought AIIMS Delhi, PGIMER Chandigarh and JIPMER Puducherry under the CGHS ambit.

A memorandum of agreement (MoA) to this effect was signed between the three medical institutions and the CGHS under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the presence of Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan here. On May 20, MoAs were signed between the CGHS and the All India Institutes of Medical Sciences located in Bhopal, Bhubaneswar,

Patna, Jodhpur, Raipur and Rishikesh.

"The extension of patient-care facilities at AIIMS-New Delhi, PGIMER-Chandigarh and JIPMER-Puducherry to the CGHS beneficiaries on a cashless basis will be particularly beneficial for the pensioner beneficiaries of the CGHS. It eliminates the need for them to submit individual reimbursement claims and follow up for approvals," Bhushan said.

With this new initiative, the CGHS beneficiaries will have direct access to state-of-the-art treatment facilities at these medical institutions, without the hassle of making upfront payments and seeking reimbursements from the CGHS.

The streamlined process



Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan

will save time, reduce paperwork and expedite the settlement of individual claims, Bhushan said. "Previously, the CGHS pensioner beneficiaries availing treatment at these institutions were required to make payments upfront and claim reimbursement later from the CGHS," he said and appreciated the development and highlighted that the CGHS is a significant service-oriented vertical

of the health ministry through which existing and retired employees can avail medical services. "The government aims to expand the number of hospitals empanelled under the CGHS to provide excellent tertiary-care facilities aligned with the rising requirements of the patients," Bhushan said.

He also noted that the agreement will help expand the reach of the CGHS services across the country, allowing the beneficiaries to avail the CGHS facilities at the institutes of national importance (INIs) in their respective states. Additionally, the CGHS has revised certain rates of treatment and medical care, further facilitating access to treatment facilities for patients, Bhushan said.

# CVC asks CVOs not to seek perks for additional charge assignments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aiming to uphold transparency, the Central Vigilance Commission has asked chief vigilance officers (CVOs) not to request perks and facilities from the organisations where they hold only additional charge.

According to an official order, the CVO acts as a distant arm of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) to check corruption in an organisation. Every organisation is required to have a separate CVO, and major ones appoint full time CVOs. Sometimes, an officer appointed as CVO in an organisation is given additional charge of another on a temporary basis due to administrative reasons.

"CVOs should not request for or avail of any facility, perks,

perquisites etc. from the organisation, where they are holding only additional charge," the Commission said in the order issued to secretaries of all Central government departments, chief executives of public sector banks and enterprises among others.

The organisations where an officer is holding the post of CVO as additional charge should continue to provide him or her the required support for discharging official duties, reads the order issued on Monday.

"Such support may be in the form of use of office premises, adequate support staff, secretarial assistance in office, telephone, other office equipment, travel, accommodation on official tours etc. as may be required for discharge of official duties," it said.

# Lowest rung ITBP personnel to be promoted for 1st time

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tailors, cooks, water carriers, barbers, gardeners, cobblers, sweepers and washermen, lowest rung personnel in the constabulary of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) will be promoted for the first time in their careers.

The move comes after the Centre approved a much-awaited cadre review of the constabulary comprising these ranks.

Last week, the Union finance ministry approved the cadre review proposal for the group 'C' Tradesmen cadre of the ITBP, with the creation of 984 new head constable posts for these ranks by re-calibrating the existing strength, sources said.

There are eight tradesmen cadre categories in the ITBP - tailor, cobbler, gardener, cook, water carrier, barber, washerman and sweeper (safaikarmi). The

ITBP secures the Indo-China frontier.

The total number of such tradesmen was 7,097 in the 90,000 personnel strong force and their strength will remain the same after this cadre restructuring, they said.

The final proposal that has been approved by the government has abolished some existing posts and used them to create promotion posts in the rank of head constable for five cadres.

The tradesmen cadre is considered the backbone of any operational or administrative unit of the paramilitary forces including the ITBP as they ensure that the combat troops are battle or task ready all the time and in any security theatre, officials said.

They move and remain with the combat units at both forward and rear locations. These personnel are also combated to meet any exigency.

# PM's booth mantra a source of energy for workers: Patel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Regional President (Kashi Region) of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Dilip Singh Patel said that the mantra given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Bhopal (capital of Madhya Pradesh) to more than one million party workers across the country was a source of energy and inspiration for the party workers prior to forthcoming 2024 parliamentary elections. The party has made arrangements of big LED screens to help the workers at booth level listen to the PM in his parliamentary constituency.

Modi addressed the booth workers across the country through virtual medium in the programme 'Mera Booth Sabse Mazboot' from Bhopal in which while replying to the queries of several party workers from different parts of the country, the PM threw focus on the importance of service which virtually makes a party worker perfect in his/her action and decision.

Patel said that the PM's address was really amazing and a source of energy as the PM in his address urged the booth workers to work at the booths with a service attitude, understand the problems of the people and make every possible effort to remove them. UP Ministers, people's representatives, BJP office-bearers and others also heard PM's Sanvad (dialogue) programme held



BJP workers listening to the PM's virtual address in Varanasi on Tuesday.

through the virtual medium on LED screens in different Mandal units in the city.

The senior party leaders were of the view that Modi's speech filled the booth workers with enthusiasm prior to the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections and expressed their confidence that the BJP would win all the 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh and the BJP government would be formed at the Centre under the leadership of Modi, once again.

Former UP Minister and MLA from City South Dr Neelkanth Tiwari, regional media co-incharge Santosh Solapurkar, Mandal President Nalin Nayan Mishra, Narsingh Das, Yogesh Singh Bablu,

Abhijit Bhardwaj, Vishnu Yadav, Dilip Sahni, Dilip Kushwaha, Kanaklata Mishra, Rohit Pathak, Deepak Jaiswal, Sunny Rastogi, Sudhir Tripathi, Vijay Sonkar, Krishnanand Pandey and many others were present on the occasion.

In this sequence, BJP workers also listened to PM Modi's virtual address under the chief hospitality of City South MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari at Baranwal Dharamshala located in Piyari under Pandit Deendayal Mandal, Dr Tiwari said that the country's successful PM virtually addressed and interacted with more than one million booth workers across the country through the booth programme. He said that the

party workers got guidance from the PM on various subjects.

Dr Tiwari further said that the PM gave the mantra of service to the workers as it is the strongest point of any organisation. He said that the BJP workers had helped every class without any discrimination during the corona pandemic period. Besides, he added that the party workers also help the people get the benefits of various schemes of the central and state governments to the needy and beneficiaries. He expressed confidence that in the 2024 elections, BJP would form its government at the Centre with a thumping majority, once again.

# IIT (BHU) improves world ranking

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Indian Institute of Technology (Banaras Hindu University) has gained an individual ranking position of 571, for the first time in the QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University Ranking (WUR) 2024. The QS World University Ranking assessment is based on nine ranking indicators including academic reputation, employer reputation, citation per faculty, faculty to student ratio, international faculty, etc. In the previous year, the institute was listed first time in QS World ranking and placed in the band of 651-700. This year the ranking of the institute improved significantly to the individual

ranking position 571.

Having been classified as a publicly funded institute with a very high research intensity in a focused subject area (Engineering and Technology), the institute has been consistently performing well in research and discovery, one of the key ranking evaluation parameters of QS WUR. Particularly, citation per faculty (CPF) has been the strongest ranking parameter of the institute and this year the institute ranked at 78 globally under this parameter compared to last year's rank of 115. Further, among the Indian institutes evaluated by QS, IIT (BHU) secured 7th position under this research parameter (CPF).

The Institute has got the best ranking so far and the Institute fraternity is very much excited and encouraged for better performance in the future on all parameters.

The institute has published a total of 9,240 Scopus-indexed papers in the domain of Engineering & Technology, Natural Sciences, Life Sciences & Health and Arts & Humanities during 2017-2021 and received a total of 92,822 citations (excluding self-citations) during 2017-2022.

IIT (BHU) Director Prof Pramod Kumar Jain congratulated the faculty members and research staff of the institute for their immense contribution on the research front that

enabled the institute to achieve this mark globally.

He also stated that the institute has initiated several new academic and research collaborative activities with the international universities and research organisations and will continue to work hard to improve its performance in the regional and global rankings in the future.

Dean (R&D) Prof Vikash Kumar Dubey has also congratulated all stakeholders of the institute. We hope to have a much better ranking next time due to several new initiatives taken under leadership of the director Prof Jain, he added.

# CRS conducts safety inspection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), North Eastern (NE) Circle, Mohammad Latief Khan, along with Chief Administrative Officer (Construction) SC Srivastava and Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) Ramashray Pandey, conducted a safety inspection after the completion of doubling-cum-electrification work of Aunrihar-Sadat (19 km) rail section. After the inspection, the CRS also conducted a speed-trial of this section at maximum speed, touching 129 kmph by his CRS special train on Monday evening.

This 19 km section is a part of Bhatni-Aunrihar rail section (117 km) for which Rs 1,177 crore has been approved and on the route as many as 12 major and 108 minor bridges are being constructed. The CRS started his inspection from Aunrihar Junction railway station where he conducted a safety test of the station's panel room, IPS room, relay room and battery room along with the trailing point of the line connecting the Aunrihar-Mahpur rail section. Thereafter, while inspecting the newly constructed second line on the Aunrihar-Sadat rail section by motor trolley, he reached a bridge and inspected its foundation. Then he reached Mahpur station and tested the standard distance from the line of track studding, ballast spreading, packing/housing, glue joint and switch extension joint, overhead traction and traction pole. After inspection of Mahpur station, Khan planned saplings in station premises there along with other officers.

Continuing his inspection, the CRS boarding on a motor trolley reached another bridge and inspected the foundation,



CRS Mohd Latief Khan inspecting Aunrihar-Sadat rail section of Varanasi Division of NER on Monday.

pillar, approach, girder, concrete block, fittings and necessary arrangements for maintenance like safe walk path etc. He also inspected a major bridge before reaching Sadat railway station where he checked new yard plan, station working rule, station panel, points and crossing and newly installed signals as per doubling project. With the completion of this phase of this project, new business will be encouraged in Purvanchal region, especially in Ghazipur district areas.

ADRM (Infra) Rahul Srivastava, Chief Electrical Engineer (Construction) OP Singh, Chief Engineer RK Bajpai, Chief Electrical Engineer (General) VK Yadav, Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (Planning) RK Singh, Deputy Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety (Signal) Ashish Pandey, Executive Director of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) Kamal Nayan, Chief Project Managers Kamal Kumar Talreja and SPS Yadav, Senior Divisional Engineer

(Coordination) Rakesh Ranjan, Senior Divisional Operations Manager AP Singh, Senior Divisional Engineer-2 Satyam Singh, Senior Divisional Safety Officer Ashutosh Shukla, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (General) Pankaj Kesharwani, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction) RN Singh, Senior Divisional Signal and Telecom Engineer Rajat Priya and other officers of NER and RVNL were also present during the inspection of the CRS.

TWO CRIMINALS NABBED: The police on Tuesday claimed to have nabbed two criminals who joined an e-commerce company as delivery boys and stole mobile phones, smart watches and other goods worth lakhs from the godown. Producing the both criminals before the media persons at Manduadih police station here, the ACP, Rohania Vidush Saxena informed that two gangsters of Gorakhpur stayed at a hotel in Varanasi in early June and

joined the job as delivery boys in e-commerce company Flipkart by producing fake Aadhaar card. After a few days, both took away mobile phones, smart watches and other goods from the godown of the company situated in Chandpur under Manduadih police station, he added. On the basis of a complaint lodged by the local authority of the godown on June 23 last, the Manduadih police started an investigation into the matter and traced their location at Hariharpur in Marauli with the help of electronic surveillance and nabbed both the criminals late Monday night. The arrested criminals confessed their crime and informed the cops that both were waiting for someone to steal the stolen booties. The arrested delivery boys identified as Krishna Mohan Gond (25) and Vishal Kumar (25) are the residents of Gorakhpur and both are also gangsters of this district. Several criminal cases are pending against both in Gorakhpur.

# Prayagraj airport to be given a facelift

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In order to improve air connectivity of Sangam city with the rest of the country before the Mahakumbh-2025, the Yogi Adityanath government has decided to give the Prayagraj airport a major facelift.

From air connectivity to expansion of terminal and number of flights, Prayagraj airport has left behind the airports of many cities.

The revamp of the Civil Enclave or popularly known as Prayagraj airport is being done keeping in mind the convenience of tourists and devotees coming from other countries in the Mahakumbh to be held here in 2025.

According to Airport Director RR Pandey, the government plans to redevelop the airport at a cost of Rs 175 crore. The works have been initiated and the tender process will be completed next month.

The number of aerobridges, passenger boarding bridge which connects the aircraft doors to the airport terminal, will be added as the expansion of flight movement in the airport will increase, he said.

Deputy General Manager of Prayagraj airport Pramod Kumar Singh said at present the number of aerobridges is two and four more will be added before Mahakumbh. With this, the airport will become the first in UP with six aerobridges.

The official added that there has been continuous expansion of air connectivity of city. After Lucknow and Varanasi, Prayagraj airport has now reached the third position in terms of flights and passenger movement.

"Currently, 24 domestic flights operate from this airport to 12 cities. After the expansion, their number will also increase to more than 16," Pandey said.

The number of passengers travelling by air from here is also increasing daily. Last year 5,48,310 had travelled by air from Prayagraj airport.

The airport has achieved an important position in terms of increasing number of passengers every month and every year and at present it is at the third position in the state.

It currently has one terminal whose area is 6,700 sqm. At present, 320 passengers

can sit here. Under the expansion plan, a new airport terminal building of 9,500 sqm will be constructed, which will have a seating capacity of 500.

In this way the capacity of this place will be 820 passengers till Mahakumbh. Keeping in view the environmental protection standards in the new terminal building, solar energy will be used in the entire building.

Apart from this, there is a plan to increase the capacity of Prayagraj airport's apron to accommodate 15 aircraft.

LIGHT & SOUND SHOW: The light and sound show organised at Chandrashekhar Azad park popularly known as Company Garden in the Sangam city has failed to entertain the morning walkers, who claim that the sheets fitted around the periphery of the park for the show blocks the outside view and fresh air.

The 45-minute show is held every evening at 7 pm. Introduced under the Smart City project, the show is a way of entertainment and enjoyment for the local public.

However, the morning walkers claim that they are facing inconvenience after the authorities encircled an area

for the show and 'spoiled' the beauty of the park as well as hindering the path for them and for those doing yoga or other exercises in the morning hours.

Due to the show, the park is covered with green sheets to block the view of the show to the outsiders. The morning walkers say due to changes in the park for the show, they feel suffocated while spending time in the park.

"Sometimes, the entry to the park is closed in the morning. We also suggested that the park should remain open till 10am for us to have some fresh air," said Kishore Varshaney, president of the Morning Walkers Association, adding that ever since the light and sound show has started they have been facing the problem.

The association has also submitted a memorandum to Divisional commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant and the Mission Manager (Technical) of Smart City Project in this regard. Varshaney claimed that the flower and vegetable show will also be affected if the area gets covered with these sheets. The flower and vegetable show was a part of British culture which has been followed for years in the city.

# 'Steps to ensure smooth Kanwar Yatra'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The district administration has initiated several steps to ensure smooth Kanwar Yatra during the upcoming holy month of Shravan beginning from July 4 to August 31. This also includes installing of CCTVs in temples and to provide best of the facilities and security to them.

In a recently held meeting, chaired by Police Commissioner Ramit Sharma and District Magistrate Sanjay Kumar Khatri, instructions were given that all roads

falling in the path of Kanwar Yatra route should be repaired by July 1. Instructions were given that sufficient lighting should be made available on the road crossings. The 'bhandra' (community feast), which are put up in between the routes, should not result in crowding and for that these 'bhandras' should be run at certain distance from the main roads. Parking arrangements must be provided outside every temple in the city and CCTVs should be installed for security purposes.

Likewise, the DM instructed for the availability of doctors, ambulances at community health centres (CHCs) and primary health centres (PHC) falling on the yatra route.

"All basic facilities should be ensured. A control room should be set up.

Besides, all sloping and potholes on the ghats should be repaired and barricading should be ensured wherever required," the DM said.

While reviewing the preparations of the temples of

the city, the DM ordered videography and installation of CCTV cameras where necessary.

While reviewing the traffic, he said arrangements for traffic and parking should be ensured and PS system etc. should also be installed. He also instructed officials to instal water tankers on yatra routes.

Commissioner of Police Ramit Sharma said the festivals would be celebrated according to the tradition and no new trend should be started.

# Prominent educationist dies at 101

PTI ■ THRISSUR

Eminent educationist, teacher, voyager and writer P Chitran Namboothiripad died following age-related ailments, family sources here said on Tuesday. He was 103. A prominent figure in the cultural arena of Kerala for decades, Namboothiripad was known for his progressive outlook, contributions in the education sector as the Director of Public Instructions and service as the secretary of the Kerala Kalamandalam.

He used to hit headlines until recent times over his frequent trips to the Himalayas despite his advanced age. He undertook over 30 voyages to the region. An established writer, Namboothiripad's travelogue 'Punyahimalayam', an account of his Himalayan voyages, was well-received among the readers. People from various walks of life consoled the death of Namboothiripad. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan hailed his contributions in diverse fields.

# 180 couples tie the knot at mass marriage

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

As many as 180 couples exchanged nuptial vows during a mass marriage organised under the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana under the aegis of Social Welfare department at GIC ground on Monday. Addressing the gathering the speakers praised the initiative of CM Yogi Adityanath who is sensitive to the respect of the deprived class. Prominent among those who blessed the couples were MLAs Ratnakar Mishra, Rama Shankar Singh Patel, Dr Vinod Bind and chairman NPP Mirzapur, Shyam Sundar Keshari.

WARNED: Divisional Commissioner Dr Muthukumarasamy B while holding the meeting to review progress in priority works of the government on Monday warned the officials to get 'golden cards' prepared under Ayushman Bharat Scheme as per the target otherwise remain prepared to face the music.

OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER-II  
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI  
4th FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI- 110001  
R.C.No. 34/2016  
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE  
ICICI BANK VS. RAJIV SINGH "ORDER"  
Dated : 07.06.2023

As per my order dated 07.06.2023 the under mentioned properties will be sold by Public e-auction sale on 21.07.2023 in the said Recovery Certificate.

The auction sale will be "online e-auctioning" through website: [www.bankeauctions.com](http://www.bankeauctions.com)  
Date and Time of Auction : 21.07.2023 between 03:00 P.M. to 04:00 P.M.  
(With extensions of 5 minutes duration after 04:00 P.M. if required).

S.No.	Property Description	Reserve Price (In Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (In Rs.)
1.	Flat No. PP/ D-1201, 12th Floor, Plot No. 1/2, Vaibhav Khand, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad-201010, Uttar Pradesh	Rs. 43,00,000/-	Rs. 4,30,000/-

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- The auction sale will be "online through e-auction" through website portal: [www.bankeauctions.com](http://www.bankeauctions.com).
- The EMD shall be paid either through Demand Draft/Pay Order in favour of the "Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi-A/C R.C. No. 34/2016". The said Demand Draft/Pay Order qua EMD, alongwith self-attested copy of Identity (voter I-card/driving license/passport), which should contain the address for future communication, and self-attested copy of PAN card, and in the case of company, copy of resolution passed by the board members of the company or any other document confirming representation/attorney of the company also, must reach the Office of the Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi latest by 19.07.2023 before 4:00 P.M. The EMD or original proof of EMD received thereafter shall not be considered.
- The envelope containing EMD, along with details of the sender, i.e. address, e-mail ID and mobile number, etc., should be super-scribed "R.C. No. 34/2016".
- The property is being sold on "as is where is basis" and "as is what is basis".
- The bidders are advised to go through the portal [www.bankeauctions.com](http://www.bankeauctions.com) for detailed terms and conditions for e-auction sale before submitting their bids and taking part in the e-auction sale proceedings and/or contact Sh. Rajeev Ranjan, Manager, ICICI Bank Ltd. 3rd Floor, Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karolbagh, New Delhi-110005, Mobile no. 8584874809, Email ID [ranjan.ra@icicibank.com](mailto:ranjan.ra@icicibank.com).
- Prospective bidders are required to register themselves with the portal and obtain login ID and Password well in advance, after deposit of EMD, which is mandatory for bidding in the above e-auction, from M/s. C1 India Pvt. Ltd., Udyog Vihar, Phase-2, Building No. 301, Gurugram Haryana- 122015, Telephone No. 7291981124/25/26, Contact Person: Mr. Vinod Chauhan, Mobile No. 9813887931, Email Id: [delhi@c1india.com](mailto:delhi@c1india.com) and [support@bankeauctions.com](mailto:support@bankeauctions.com).
- The interested bidders may avail online training on e-auction, after deposit of EMD, from M/s. C1 India Pvt. Ltd., Udyog Vihar, Phase-2, Building No. 301, Gurugram Haryana- 122015, Telephone No. 7291981124/25/26, Contact Person: Mr. Vinod Chauhan, Mobile No. 9813887931, Email Id: [delhi@c1india.com](mailto:delhi@c1india.com) and [support@bankeauctions.com](mailto:support@bankeauctions.com).
- Only those bidders holding valid user ID & Password and confirmed payment of EMD through demand draft/pay order shall be eligible to participate in on line e-auction.
- The prospective buyer may inspect the site on 05.07.2023 and 06.07.2023 from 10.30 A.M. to 04.00 P.M.
- The interested bidders, who have submitted their bids not below the reserve price by 19.07.2023 in the office of the Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi, shall be eligible to participate in the e-auction to be held from 03.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M. on 21.07.2023. In case bid is placed in the last 5 minutes of the closing time of the auction, the closing time will automatically get extended for 5 minutes.
- The bidders shall improve their offer in multiples of Rs.1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lac Only).
- The unsuccessful bidder shall take the EMD directly from the Office of Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi immediately on closure of the e-auction sale proceedings.
- The successful / highest bidder shall have to prepare and deposit Demand Draft/Pay Order for 25% of the bid/sale amount, after adjusting the EMD, favoring Recovery Officer II, DRT-II, Delhi, A/C R.C. No. 34/2016 by next bank working day i.e. by 04.00 P.M. with this Tribunal, failing which the bid shall be forfeited.
- The successful/highest bidder shall deposit, through Demand Draft/Pay Order favoring Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi, A/C R.C. No. 34/2016, the balance 75% of the sale proceeds before the Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi on or before 15th day from the date of auction of the property, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day be Sunday or other holiday, then on the first office day after the 15th day alongwith the pondage fee @2% upto Rs. 1,000 and @1% on the excess of such gross amount over Rs. 1000/- in favour of Registrar, DRT-II, Delhi. (In case of deposit of balance amount of 75% through post the same should reach the Recovery Officer as above). In case of default of payment within the prescribed period, the property shall be re-sold, after the issue of fresh proclamation of sale. The deposit after defraying the expenses of the sale, may, if the undersigned thinks fit, be forfeited to the Government and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold.
- The successful/highest bidder shall be at liberty to comply with the provisions of Section 194-IA of the Income Tax Act for paying the applicable TDS on the auction amount proposed to be deposited before this Forum. In such an event, the successful/highest bidder must produce the proof of having deposited the said amount before this Forum while paying the balance sale proceeds.
- CHFI/CH Bank is directed to serve the Sale proclamation on CDs through Dasti, speed post, courier and by affixation at the conspicuous part of the property and by beat of drum in its vicinity and a copy of the same be placed on the notice board of the Tribunal.
- Sale proclamation be also published in the Newspapers in English as well as in vernacular language, having adequately wide circulation in the area.
- CHFI/CH Bank is directed to confirm the publication of advertisement in the Newspapers and original proofs of the publication be filed before next date of hearing.
- The undersigned reserves the right to accept any or reject all bids, if not found acceptable or to postpone the auction at any time without assigning any reason whatsoever and his decision in this regard shall be final.

SCHEDULE OF THE PROPERTY

Description of the property to be sold	Revenue assessed upon the property or any part thereof	Details of any encumbrance to which property is liable	Claims, if any, which have been put forward to the property, and any other known particulars bearing on its nature and value.
Flat No. PP/ D-1201, 12th Floor, Plot No. 1/2, Vaibhav Khand, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad 201010, Uttar Pradesh	Not known	Not known	Not known

Matter be listed on 06.07.2023 for filing affidavit of service of E-auction sale notice with proofs of service (including track results qua speed post and courier) and dasti, original proofs of publication in newspapers and wider publicity including website for the purpose of e-auction.

(Dattatrey Bajpayee)  
RECOVERY OFFICER-II,  
DRT-II, DELHI



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Monsoon is here

The changing monsoon patterns in India represent a complex challenge

This year the monsoon has reached different parts of the country in a new pattern. In many areas, it rained heavily in two days. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has said that heavy rain is expected in 25 states in 48 hours. Usually, the monsoon reaches Mumbai by June 11 and Delhi by June 29. But this time the monsoon reached both the metro cities on the same day. With monsoon rains lashing across the country, the policymakers would be taking a sigh of relief as one of the most unpredictable weather phenomena has not taken them for a ride this year. The monsoon patterns have exhibited significant changes, bringing both challenges and opportunities for the agricultural sector and the nation's overall economic stability. Call it climate change or our wrongdoing to nature that monsoon has increasingly been erratic over the years. Over the years, there have been noticeable alterations in the monsoon's behavior, with variations in its onset, duration and spatial distribution of rainfall. These changes are attributed to global climate patterns, including the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), as well as local factors such as urbanisation and deforestation.



There has been an increase in erratic rainfall patterns, characterised by intense bursts of rainfall followed by prolonged dry spells. Such irregularity poses challenges for agricultural planning, as farmers struggle to adapt their traditional practices to the evolving climate conditions. The delayed onset and erratic rainfall pose risks such as water scarcity, crop failures and reduced yields. Traditional crops, such as rice and wheat, are particularly vulnerable to these climate shifts. This necessitates the development and adoption of climate-resilient crop varieties, better water management techniques and efficient irrigation systems to ensure food security and sustainable agriculture. While the changing monsoon patterns present challenges, they also create opportunities for diversification in the agricultural sector. Farmers are increasingly exploring alternative crops and agricultural practices that are better suited to the evolving climate conditions. For instance, drought-resistant crops like millets, pulses and oilseeds are gaining prominence as they require less water and exhibit resilience against climatic variations. This diversification can contribute to a more sustainable and adaptive agricultural system, reducing dependence on a few staple crops and enhancing the resilience of rural livelihoods. Farmer education and awareness about climate-smart practices, such as conservation agriculture and watershed management, are crucial for enhancing adaptive capacities at the grassroots level. Furthermore, the Government should formulate necessary policies to incentivise sustainable land use practices, afforestation and the preservation of water bodies.

### PICTALK



Deer wandering at Deer Park, in New Delhi

# Stop putting the cart before the horse

The change is introduced following a strategic assessment and holistic review. India is guilty of transgressing this concept and principle



ASHOK K MEHTA

India and US have taken one giant step in defence technology transfer and upgrade that makes their Global Comprehensive Strategic Partnership approach an alliance but allows India to preserve its strategic autonomy. In 1971 India joined USSR in an alliance that curiously mentioned India's strategic autonomy. India is on the cusp of a transformative revolution in national defence and security incorporating change in an adhoc fashion. As a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff which is the forerunner of the current Integrated Defence Staff, I have watched India undertake defence reforms in fits and starts and piecemeal. But a different beginning was made in the mid-1980s with a firm foundation for initiating and incorporating change systematically and logically against a strategic canvas.

The DPS integrated tri-service team carried out an elaborate evaluation of the Strategic and Technological Environment comparable to the contemporary Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). From that evaluation emanated the 15-year Defence Plan which was referred to by then Defence Minister KC Pant in Parliament. It was the first time ever that an Integrated Defence Plan was devised. Another milestone was the significant change that occurred in national security policy following the Kargil Review Committee Report in 2000. Sadly its recommendations were implemented in bits and parts.

Although many defence reviews and several task forces have made piecemeal recommendations, no holistic review or any White Paper has been sought nor presented in Parliament. To date, parliament has not called on the government to do an SDRS which is mandatory in all democracies. When a new government takes up office in Whitehall UK, it is required to present SDRS or whenever the strategic environment changes, like in Ukraine, the government presents an Integrated Review or an Integrated Review Refresh, as done recently in the UK. It is the long view of the future and what it might reveal internationally and



domestically. The point is, change is introduced following a strategic assessment/holistic review. India is guilty of transgressing this concept and principle.

Fast forward to 2019. A Defence Policy Committee was created under NSA Ajit Doval which was expected to write the National Security Strategy (NSS) (equivalent to SDRS). He was elevated from MoS to Cabinet rank but NSS remained a mirage. From NSS hatched the National Defence Strategy. Till then, the Defence Ministers' Operational Directive was the Magna Carta. It was written by the Army's Military Operations Directorate and refined by the MoD. The last one was signed by Defence Minister AK Antony in 2009. Another was attempted in 2015. It contained orders for a two-front war to be fought for 30 days on an intense scale and 60 days normally. In 2013, Army Chief Gen VK Singh created a storm by writing to then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that war stocks were sufficient for just 10 days of intense war. In 2020 the Operational Directive was fine-tuned with war stocks upgraded to 20 days intense and accepted by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. It is mysterious how the nature and duration of the war



THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE CDS WERE CHANGED AFTER THE FIRST INCUMBENT GEN BIPIN RAWAT DIED IN AN ACCIDENT. HIS REPLACEMENT WAS CURIOUSLY A RETIRED THREE-STAR GENERAL

two-front, Cold start, nuclear or conventional - were decided without an strategic review.

The CDS was announced at the end of 2019 along with establishing the Department of Military Affairs, planning for integrated theatre commands and associated inter-service procedural changes, atmanirbharta in defence and the Agniveer recruitment scheme in 2022. These were groundbreaking changes. Further, the criteria for selecting CDS were changed after the first incumbent Gen Bipin Rawat died in an accident. His replacement was curiously a retired three-star General; the first time in the history of CDS appointments anywhere that someone who had not been a service chief was appointed to the job. Before being elevated to four-star rank and CDS, Gen Anil Chauhan worked with Mr Doval as security advisor to National Security Council Secretariat. The selection from a contrived system was baffling. The revolutionary reforms implemented since 2019 were unaccompanied by any inking of a strategic assessment. No NSS nor NDS was forthcoming or expected.

When President Joe Biden came into office, an NSS document was prepared by NSA Jake Sullivan. Defence Minister Lloyd Austen then produced

the NDS. What the SDRS does is: informs the people and the armed forces who their adversaries are and how the government evaluates threats, challenges and opportunities from their behaviour. The three priorities in defence scenarios are Taiwan, the South China Sea and LAC. The centrality of NDS is in the concept of integrated deterrence that India must work to operationalize as on its own it cannot deter China for a long time to come. This could lead to jointness in the defence ecosystem as done in the joint production of GE414 jet engines. Cooperating and collaborating with the US in defence is perhaps the only way for the capability to catch up with China.

India is fighting shy of naming China as a threat and challenge. Even so, it is not too late to write a White Paper on China and then an Integrated Defence and Security Review. But all one gets is the end-of-the-year report card from different ministries. This is insufficient and archaic for aspiring world power.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

Sir - The implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India is an involute issue that has been debated for many years. While some argue that a UCC is compulsory to promote gender equality and gregarious equity, others argue that it would be an infringement of religious liberation and would lead to the erosion of cultural and religious identities. The decision on whether or not to implement a UCC should be made with careful consideration of all the implications and should take into account the views and concerns of all communities. Another paramount aspect to consider regarding Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India is the potential impact it could have on the country's social fabric. The implementation of a UCC could lead to a consequential change in the way people live their lives, particularly in matters related to marriage, divorce, and inheritance. This could lead to resistance from some communities who may feel that their cultural and religious identities are being threatened. It is consequential to take into account the views and concerns of all communities while implementing a UCC. Additionally, the implementation of a UCC should be done in a phased and gradual manner, to ascertain that it does not lead to social unrest or conflict.

Sambhav Jain | Ujjain

### PUTIN SURVIVES A COUP

Sir - The short-lived mutiny of Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the Wagner private military company, not only exposed the growing uncontrollable feud between the warlord and Russia's top defence leadership but also the weakening position of Russian President Vladimir Putin in the country's complex power dynamics.

Mr Putin has averted an all-out civil war, but he cannot escape the question of why he failed to prevent this feud in his security circle from escalating into such a humiliating public crisis. The rivalry between the Defence Ministry and Wagner was hardly a secret. Before the Ukraine war began in February 2022, Mr Putin seemed

### Violence on OTT platforms



In earlier days there was a feeling of dreadfulness and fear among the population when exposed to a murder case. That is not the same with this generation. This generation finds a different form of entertainment in the rising number of shows on OTT platforms that portray murder cases involving serial killers. The excessive

circulation and portraying of murder cases on OTT platforms have led to a desensitization towards the gravity of such crimes. As viewers consume these shows as a form of entertainment, the line between fiction and reality can be blurred, this can result in reduced emotional impact and less understanding of what the actual families and the victims went through. Other than desensitization, by showing intricate details and creative approaches they unknowingly give away dangerous knowledge. The organizations in question should establish specific guidelines for production units, outlining the rules and regulations to be followed during the filming of this genre of film.

Deepti Mahanti Bhavana | Bhubaneswar

all-powerful, presiding over a huge but cohesive administration and expanding Russia's influence abroad. Sixteen months later, with limited Russian territorial gains in Ukraine, Mr Putin's challenges at home are mounting. He may have brought temporary peace between his generals and warlords, but the reasons behind the mutiny remain unaddressed. If he wants stability, Mr Putin should first bring the war to an end and put his house in order.

Tauqueer | Chennai

### AUSPICIOUS TIME

Sir - Be it on the occasion of the launch of satellites or an oath-taking ceremony following an electoral win; the "auspicious time" of doing so is meticulously taken care of! Bahanaga high school, in Odisha, was demolished and rebuilt so as to "get relief from the ghosts" of dead passengers (following the greatest railway disaster in India) laid there before getting shifted to the morgue! What messages do get imparted to the students and upcoming generation by the school authorities, scientists and lawmakers; thereby making a mockery of the Article 51A (h) of the Constitution which expects every citizen to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform?

When Indian society is seen to be gallantly marching towards the nadir in terms of rationality and scientific reasoning; the Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah arrives as a bright exception who is truly educated and enlightened enough to deliver a "double punch" against superstition by opening the South door of the Chief minister's office in Vidhana Soudha; that too on a Saturday alleged to be a day of "misery"!

By consigning all silly talks and illogical thoughts to oblivion; Siddaramaiah has nicely defined a good Vaastu as one where one gets a healthy mind, clean heart and concern for people and where natural light and fresh air would come in. May this light of rationality, sanity, scientific temper, logic and reasoning - as being transmitted by Siddaramaiah - eradicate the darkness of superstition embedded within the mindset of the dominant section of Indians, irrespective of "class" "academic degree" "post" and "position", and inspire them to lead a healthy way of life by nurturing compassion within the hearts for fellow human beings.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Kerala's infamous material alteration

Universities in the State, once famous for their quality, have fallen into an abyss from where it is difficult to salvage their dignity

The acronym MA stands for Master of Arts, a postgraduate degree awarded by universities across the world in literature, humanities or arts. Some universities offer an M A degree in Mathematics. But if the trend in Kerala is any indication, the term M A stands for Material Alteration. The last name is a phrase from the Negotiable Instruments Act that governs rules and regulations dealing with the acceptability of Bank cheques.

One is likely to ask what Material Alteration has to do with the postgraduate degrees awarded by the universities in Kerala. The sad fact is that the universities in the State, well known once for their standards and etiquettes have fallen into an abyss from where it is difficult to salvage their dignity and quality. The last 14 days saw more than six cases of students fabricating fake M-A, M.Com and Ph D Degrees from various colleges that come under the jurisdiction of Kerala University and Mahatma Gandhi University.

All the students were leaders and activists of the Students Federation of India (the students' wing of the



CPI-M) and the fabrication of the counterfeit and fake degrees was done with the connivance of the party bosses. R Bindu, Kerala's Minister for Higher Education, whose academic and professional qualifications themselves were under the shadows of clouds, came out in the open and declared that these were isolated incidents to which one need not give any importance. M V Govindan, the party's Kerala secretary, issued a stern warning to the media persons asking them not to write anything against the SFI or the CPI-M. This has been the practice of the CPI-M when the party finds the going tough. Way back in 1982, when E K Nayanar was the chief minister with the support extended by the A K Antony faction of the Congress, a similar incident happened. The CPI-M which has an inherent hatred for the Congress wanted to do away

with the Congress in the State once and for ever. The party unleashed a reign of terror across Kerala, physically assaulting the Congress leaders and demolishing the offices of the Congress party. When the agitated Congress leaders like Oommen Chandi warned the CPI-M that they would be forced to withdraw from the Government if the CPI-M continued with the practice of its class annihilation, the then minister of home T K Ramakrishnan when the Congress Government at the Centre had deputed agents of its secret police to finish off top Congress leaders in the State. Senior Congress leaders like Aryadan Mohammed asked Ramakrishnan for proof. While a timid Ramakrishnan withdrew from the face, the Congress pulled out of the CPI-M led front leading to the downfall of the Nayanar Government.

What the present Pinarayi Vijayan government has done is file cases against journalists who reported on the fabrication of fake degree certificates by SFI leaders. It is interesting to note that all young CPI-M leaders consider it a priv-

ilege to possess a Ph D degree which allows them to add the prefix Doctor to their names. If they are asked about the subject of their research and what have they substantiated through their studies, chances are that they may cock a snook at the person who asked the questions. The CPI-M led by Vijayan which was returned to power in the 2021 assembly election has made a mockery of democracy and has thrown decency to the winds whereas they were expected to be more responsible towards the requirements of the people. All initiatives like Silver Line Rail, K Phone, K Vaccine, and start-up ventures labelled as development programs are embroiled in corruption. Adding insult to injury is the finding that there exists a Green Light WhatsApp group of senior police officials in Kerala Police to extend help to the anti-national elements. The second innings of Pinarayi Vijayan's tenure are full of disharmony and cacophony.

(Writer is Special Correspondent, The Pioneer. Views expressed are personal)



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

## FIRST COLUMN

CHOOSE GOOD NOW,  
BAD CAN WAIT

For spiritual growth, postpone what is bad and do what is good



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Many times, it so happens that we plan something for a certain date but due to some unforeseen circumstances and factors, we are unable to implement it, as a result of which we have to postpone our programme to some other date. This kind of postponement is quite natural for most of us and it is not due to lethargy, lack of zeal or lack of care on our part. No! It is the sea change in the situation that makes a forceful demand on us to alter and postpone our charted activity so much so that we are unable to withstand its forceful thrust and push it aside so as to make headway.

There may, however, be other kinds of cases of postponement that clearly reflect our wavering mind, our shaky stand, our weak commitment, the frailty of our conviction or the failure of our courage. This would be considered a flaw in our nature, waxing and waning of our will, lack of the strength of our spirit to put a plan into action under trying circumstances, difficult situations and tricky and hard conditions when we are besieged by surmountable troubles and tribulations. If we can overcome the hardships imposed by these circumstances, it would be fit and wise to maintain a high level of courage and to try our very best to take our plans to their culmination into high success.



Many people form a habit of not applying their minds seriously to problems and programmes. Such people easily get confused and they are perplexed even when there is a slight change in the situation or there is a very small difficulty. They always depend on or wait for others, or, if they take decisions, they do not stick to them. They make slow or slovenly efforts and are so lax that they cannot maintain a consistent level of enthusiasm and efficiency in their life. They sleep over matters when actually they should be alert and active. Their conscience does not pull them up if they are neglectful and slack. Some even think that God, Nature or good luck would do it for them. They become so thick-skinned that they do not even mind if others point out this bad and harmful habit of theirs nor do they feel any twitches of their conscience.

It is in fact a sin against one's own self and against others as this prevents a person from attaining any high goal in life and deprives him of many achievements. It is not a small error or personality trait but it is something which may cause many problems. However, in contrast to this, there is also a good form of postponing. If one has a habit of postponing, one should better transform it into this kind. Then postponing becomes of many advantages as one can use this to put off certain bad indulgences or activities. In this way, he should go on postponing for his own good. It has been observed by psychologists that if a person postpones his anger even for an hour, the tempo of his anger comes down very fast. Similarly, by postponing, again and again, the act of drinking alcohol, one develops the power of self-control and is, finally, able to give up that bad habit forever. This kind of postponement, therefore, becomes salubrious. So, if we want our moral growth or spiritual development, we should adopt the formulae of postponing what is bad and doing, without delay, that which is good, for, if we postpone what is good then it is likely that our mind may change or our enthusiasm may become less. We will thus be deprived of the fortune of doing good acts if we postpone them. It would, therefore, be fit and proper to put our good thoughts into action at the earliest. So, the slogan for the good should be 'Now' and the slogan for the bad should be 'Later' or 'Never'.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist for publications across India, Nepal & UK)

SRSB makes push  
to achieve SDGs

The Sustainability Reporting Standards Board (SRSB) feels that environment issues must be incorporated into a company's strategies and operations

SANJEEV SINGHAL  
AND  
NIDHI GARG

Organizations that adopt sustainability reporting get a competitive edge in a market where consumer awareness is rising, in addition to helping the world's efforts to address urgent environmental and social concerns. Investors give due importance to ESG aspects in their decision-making processes, and consumers are expecting more goods and services from businesses that exhibit ethical and sustainable business practices. Governments and regulatory organizations are also stressing the need of achieving sustainable development and enforcing higher reporting standards.

As a statutory body, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) regulates the profession of Chartered Accountants in India. A strong tradition of public service and economic development has distinguished the ICAI as the world's leading body of knowledge for accountancy. With the mission to formulate comprehensive and globally comparable standards for measuring and disclosing non-financial information about an entity's progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, the ICAI constituted the Sustainability Reporting Standards Board (SRSB) in February 2020. Several initiatives have been launched by the Board over the years to revolutionize the ideology behind sustainable reporting such as the introduction of Sustainability Assurance Engagement Standards, certificate courses on BRSR reporting, social audit standards, etc.

In May 2021, SEBI made a notable shift towards the adoption of the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) framework in recognition of the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach towards sustainability reporting. The BRSR framework acknowledges that sustainability issues should not be ignored or considered as a side issue, instead, they ought to be thoroughly incorporated into a company's overall operations and strategies by acknowledging the connection between sustainability and commercial performance. BRSR framework focuses on transparency and comparability. Organizations can give stakeholders reliable information about their sustainability practices by adopting a standardized approach to reporting and can also better streamline decision-making, increase transparency, and align sustainability with their core business strategy. This makes it possible for stakeholders to assess the sustainability performance of various businesses and make educated decisions.

The sustainability board of ICAI has come out with an innovative approach towards measuring an organ's ISAR ion maturity towards BRSR. On 18th March 2021, SRSB launched its Sustainability Reporting Maturity Model (SRMM Version 1.0) as a grading/scoring methodology for Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) released by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) as part of its initiatives to build the sustainability ecosystem in the nation. This maturity model records an organization's progress towards sustainability reporting through four distinct degrees of sustainability maturity. The model integrates the most recent international trends and advancements in sustainability reporting. To increase the effectiveness of the model, the SRSB collaborates extensively with a variety of stakeholders including academics, civil society organi-



THE BRSR  
FRAMEWORK  
ENCOURAGES  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
BY MANDATING  
THAT  
BUSINESSES SET  
PRECISE GOALS  
AND TRACK THEIR  
ADVANCEMENTS  
IN THE DIRECTION  
OF  
SUSTAINABILITY

(The writer is the  
Founder Chairman of,  
the Sustainability  
Reporting Standards  
Board and Governing  
body member of, the  
Institute of Social  
Auditors of India)

zations, and other professionals from around the nation. Based on the changes brought in by the SEBI BRSR circular, SRMM Version 1.0, was further updated to Version 2.0 by the board. To assist organizations in implementing the SRMM, the SRSB has also set up a network of training and support facilities. It is also creating several tools and resources to assist organizations with their sustainability reporting.

The SRMM offers organizations looking to improve their sustainability reporting practices several advantages. SRMM is a self-assessment tool that gives organizations a clear structure and path so they can evaluate where they are now and where they need to improve. Organizations can efficiently prioritize their tasks and allocate resources by assessing their maturity level, which provides them with insights into their strengths and limitations. Secondly, the model also encourages organizations to go up through the levels, promoting the maturity of sustainability reporting. The approach helps organizations gradually improve their reporting procedures and incorporate sustainability into their primary business strategy by outlining a clear path. The model has four unique stages, each of which corresponds to a different level of sustainability reporting maturity. All 4 levels are defined based on the overall range of scores that a corporate entity has scored within a fiscal year using the BRSR scoring system. The SRMM has a total score of 300 points divided across all the sections of BRSR. By assigning a score of 75 out of 300 to leading indicators, firms are encouraged to set goals for achieving them. Each maturity level depicts the current state of sustainability reporting and motivates the company to achieve a higher stage as the new reporting cycle begins. A company may use the SRMM scoring mechanism to self-assess its BRSR reports and assign a score for each

parameter reported as per the format given in SRMM which will further decide the maturity stage of reporting achieved by the company. The SRMM document released by SRSB clearly defines the methodology for calculating a company's score. As the current BRSR format is general and is applicable to all sectors, therefore, it might be a possibility that certain indicators are not applicable for a particular type of industry, e.g., if the concept of "Extended Producer Responsibility" is not applicable to a particular industry, then the grand total score would be reduced by 3 and will become 297 and further the maturity level will be calculated as a percentage of the score achieved out of score applicable. This feature of SRMM makes it even more useful.

A company scoring up to 25% falls in the first stage or the Formative stage of SRMM. This stage implies that the company is in the nascent stage of reporting and is still outlining the fundamental facts and identifying the need and responsibility of BRSR. These companies are actively trying to collect data and establish policies related to sustainability. A company scoring more than 25% and up to 50% falls under the Emerging stage which is the 2nd stage in the SRMM. Level 2 organizations tend to be more aware of the importance of BRSR and have a strong mechanism for reporting the same, but these businesses are constantly working towards enhancing and establishing the current internal control system and collecting data for disclosures.

Level 3 or the Established Stage is achieved when a company has a BRSR score of more than 50% and up to 75%. These organizations have established business strategies and functional systems for reporting BRSR parameters efficiently. Such organizations are actively involved in compliance functions and are more focused on improving and accelerating the qualitative aspects

of their business.

A company with a score of more than 75% qualifies for the highest level of sustainability reporting maturity - Level 4 and is in the stage of leading by example. At this level, sustainability is deeply ingrained in the culture and ethos of the company. Organizations actively work to have a beneficial social, environmental, and economic impact. They demonstrate creativity and adopt cutting-edge sustainability trends and best practices. Companies that are a part of Level 4 are constantly involved in innovative methods so as to enhance their disclosures and work towards becoming a market leaders. As they advance through the levels, organizations become industry leaders in sustainability reporting, link sustainability with their core business strategy, enhance transparency and accountability, and create value. The SRMM is a useful tool in the effort to create a company environment that is more ethical and sustainable. Offering a road map for improving their sustainability reporting practices, it aids organizations in prioritizing their efforts. It encourages organizations to develop from fundamental compliance to more sophisticated and integrated reporting practices as it leads them through the four degrees of maturity. Organizations can improve their knowledge of where they stand right now and the steps necessary to advance to higher levels of sustainability reporting maturity by using the SRMM. By measuring sustainability performance, setting targets, and monitoring progress, organizations can improve their environmental, social, and economic impact. Considering this, it is a call to action for businesses to adopt the SRMM and work towards a more responsible and sustainable future. Organizations may increase their credibility, fulfil stakeholder expectations, and help the world's sustainability goals by putting SRMM into practice.

## Rural girls are yet to attain computer literacy

Many schools in rural areas have computer infrastructure, but it is often insufficient to provide proper computer education to the students, especially girls

In today's era of advanced technology, where Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital innovations are transforming lives, it is disheartening to acknowledge that several remote villages in India still lag behind, lacking even the most basic digital literacy. Talking about remote hilly villages in Uttarakhand, the privilege of knowledge and access to digital literacy still remains elusive, especially for girls. One such village is Selani, located in the Garur block of Uttarakhand, where Mamta, an adolescent girl, faces numerous challenges in accessing computers.



JANKI DOSAD

Centres (CSC), which serve as the primary delivery points for e-services. Due to the absence of computers in her own school and village, Mamta must rely on the CSC to fill out any applications related to education or scholarships. However, due to her lack of computer skills, Mamta and her friends find themselves dependent on the distant CSC for their basic needs.

Mamta lamented, "In order to have computers in our village, we first need a reliable network. Currently, even filling out a simple form for college or other courses requires us to travel long distances. Unfortunately, we often miss deadlines due to lack of information or money to cover travel expenses. After

completing higher secondary education, the career options for girls diminish significantly as we are not provided with computer education. Furthermore, we do not have any facilities nearby to access digital services and learn. Consequently, girls are frequently compelled into early marriages, with limited choices available to them."

Lack of access to computers may seem like a minor problem, but its impact on people's lives, particularly girls living in rural areas, is significant. Acquiring basic computer skills can empower these girls, providing them with access to knowledge that allows them to make informed decisions. Moreover, computer literacy opens up opportunities for

employment once they have completed their education.

According to a recent report, digital literacy rates among women in India are significantly lower compared to men, with only 23% of women being digitally literate compared to 59% of men. One of the primary reasons for this disparity is the lack of access to digital infrastructure and opportunities, particularly in close proximity to where girls live. As a result, they are unable to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge in this field, leading to the mentioned data.

Sangeeta Devi, a mother of an adolescent girl from the village, highlights the challenges faced by girls in pursuing digital literacy. "Due to safety concerns, it is not fea-

sible to send girls from the village to the towns for computer classes. However, establishing a computer centre within the village would greatly facilitate their learning process. This would provide a convenient and safe environment for girls to access digital education, empowering them with valuable skills for the future," Sangeeta shared.

Kumari Asha Dosad, another teenager from the village, expressed her frustration about the current situation. "It has been two years since I completed 12th grade, and I find myself sitting at home with no prospects for the future," lamented Asha. Like many others, Asha aspires to achieve something meaningful in her life, but she can't see

any way forward. She understands that computers can be powerful tools for acquiring knowledge, but unfortunately, she and her fellow villagers have no means to access this valuable resource. Despite their strong desires, they have been unable to accomplish anything due to the lack of opportunities.

Neelam Grundy, a development practitioner from the region, similarly highlights the significance of digital literacy for adolescent girls. She believes that it is crucial for them to possess this skill set as it empowers them and makes them self-reliant. "While women and girls in cities have multiple opportunities for self-reliance, those in rural areas rarely have such prospects.

Several factors contribute to this disparity, including the lack of educational opportunities, gender-based discrimination, and the absence of free and accessible computer literacy programs. Consequently, girls in rural areas are deprived of holistic development," expressed Neelam.

Many schools in rural areas have computer infrastructure, but it is often insufficient to provide classes to the students. As a result, some students, who have the facilities and consent from parents can acquire the knowledge by going to centres in the towns. While the rest who lack such privileges remain entrenched in an unyielding cycle of adversity.

# 'Sharif, Zardari meet in UAE over Pak polls, seat sharing'



PTI ■ ISLAMABAD  
Former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif and former president Asif Ali Zardari have reportedly met in the UAE to consult and decide on the timing of the next general elections in the country and "their respective share" in the future set-up, a media report said on Tuesday.

The meeting between Nawaz Sharif, the supreme of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Zardari, the co-chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), both parties a partner in the ruling coalition Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), happened in Dubai on Monday afternoon to hammer out a consensus on a number of key issues like finalising names for the caretaker set-up and deciding who will get what key position if the two partners win the next elections, the Dawn News reported.

"The uncertainty surrounding the next general elections may end soon after detailed deliberations by the top leadership of the two main coalition partners in the federal government are concluded in the UAE," said the report, citing sources.

Insiders said that it was decided that elder Sharif of PML-N and Zardari of PPP, would "talk directly" on these issues instead of allowing a prolonged debate "at the lower level", which would be a waste of time. Pakistan, currently in the throes of a major political as well as economic crisis, started preparations for the

# US calls on Pakistan to take steps to disband all terrorist groups: Official

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US has been consistently calling on Pakistan to step up efforts to permanently disband all terrorist groups like the LeT, JuD and their various front organisations, a top state department official has said.

Addressing the media on Monday, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said the US will raise the issue regularly with Pakistani officials and will continue to work together with it to counter mutual terrorist threats.

"We have also been consistent on the importance of Pakistan continuing to take steps to permanently disband all terrorist groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and their various front organisations," he said.

"We will raise the issue regularly with Pakistani officials, and will continue to work together to counter mutual terrorist threats, as we discussed during our March 2023 CT dialogue," he said.

Miller was responding to a question on the India-US joint statement issued during the state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi here.

In the joint statement, both US President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Modi reiterated the call for concerted action against all UN-listed terrorist groups including al-Qaeda, ISIS/Daesh, Lashkar-e-Taayyiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and Hizbul-Mujahideen. The two leaders strongly condemned cross-border terrorism, and the use of terrorist proxies and "called on Pakistan to take immediate action to ensure that no territory under its control is used for launching terrorist attacks."

Miller declined to comment on India's response to former US president Barack Obama's statement about minority rights in India.

In an interview with CNN on Thursday, Obama reportedly said if India does not protect the rights of "ethnic minorities", there is a strong possibility at some point that the country starts pulling apart.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and other senior ministers have slammed Obama for his statement, saying, "He (Obama) should also think about how many Muslim countries he has attacked (as US president)".

Singh's comments came a day after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman hit out at Obama, saying his remarks were surprising as six Muslim-majority countries had faced US "bombing" during Obama's tenure.

In response to another question, Miller said, "We regularly raise concerns about human rights in our conversations with Indian officials. And you saw President Biden speak to this himself in the joint press conference that he held with Prime Minister Modi."

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# Netanyahu: China invited me for visit

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday that he has received an invitation for an official visit to China, but did not disclose whether or when the trip would take place.

The Israeli leader made the announcement during a meeting with visiting members of the US Congress. The invitation follows several recent overtures by Beijing to increase its diplomatic footprint in the region and comes at a time of heightened friction between the Biden administration and Netanyahu's ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox government.

Netanyahu's office said the "projected visit" to China would be his fourth as prime minister. It said it notified the Biden administration, which has a rocky relationship with China, about the invitation last month. It declined to comment on possible dates for the trip.

China has taken a more strident role in Mideast diplomacy in recent months, brokering a deal to restore ties between Israel's archenemy, Iran, and Saudi Arabia in April and hosting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Beijing earlier this month.

Israel and China have close economic relations, but Israel's diplomatic and security ties with the US have precluded closer collaboration with China.

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, returned to power in late 2022 after forming a coalition with ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox allies, the most hardline and religious government in Israel's 75-year history.

After launching an attempted overhaul of the country's judiciary in January while Netanyahu is on trial on corruption charges, the government has faced weekly mass protests as well as criticism from Washington. In light of that contentious judicial overhaul, as well as the government's aggressive advancement of West Bank settlements, Netanyahu has not yet been invited for a White House visit. Such visits are normally standard practice for Israeli leaders.

# Hipkins visits China to boost economic ties

AP ■ TAIPEI

New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins discussed his country's interest in boosting economic ties with China during a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Tuesday.

Hipkins said the focus of his meeting with Xi was to "reaffirm our close economic relationship by supporting businesses (to) renew their connections with Chinese counterparts and helping grow new ones to support New Zealand's economic recovery."

Hipkins is on a five-day visit to China, his first since becoming prime minister in January, along with a business delegation representing areas including tourism and education. Before starting his visit, he described New Zealand's relationship with China as a "critical part of our economic recovery."

New Zealand officially entered a recession this month after its economy contracted for two consecutive quarters. Officials

say China is key to three of New Zealand's engines for post-pandemic economic recovery: exports, tourism and education.

China is New Zealand's largest export market, and Wellington over the years has managed to maintain warmer ties to Beijing than some of its Western allies.

New Zealand has issued critical statements about China's human rights and foreign policy practices, but has generally experienced less friction with China than other countries in the region such as

Australia. Xi praised "the great importance" of China-New Zealand ties, saying Hipkins' visit was "very meaningful," according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Earlier in the day, Hipkins attended a meeting of the World Economic Forum in the Chinese port city of Tianjin alongside other foreign officials and joined a signing ceremony for four New Zealand exporters and their Chinese counterparts, according to a statement from his office.



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# China's economic growth accelerating: Li Qiang

Beijing (AP): China's No. 2 leader said Tuesday that economic growth accelerated in the latest quarter and expressed confidence it can hit the ruling Communist Party's official target of 5 per cent for the year.

Premier Li Qiang, speaking at a conference in the eastern city of Tianjin, gave no figure for the three months ending in June but said it was faster than the previous quarter's 4.5 per cent.

The world's second-largest economy rebounded from 2022's unusually weak 3 per cent growth following the end of anti-virus controls on travel and business activity. But that faded faster than expected. Consumer and factory activity weakened in May and record-setting youth unemployment spiked up.

"It is expected that the second quarter will be faster than the first quarter," Li said

# Japan to reinstate South Korea as preferred trade partner

Tokyo: Japan announced a decision on Tuesday to reinstate South Korea as a preferred nation with fast-track trade status starting July 21, virtually ending a four-year economic row that was further strained during their bitter historic disputes.

Trade Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura told reporters that Japan and South Korea have also agreed to set up a framework to review and follow up on the systems as needed.

Japan and South Korea have been rapidly mending their ties as they deepen three-way security cooperation with Washington in response to growing regional threats from North Korea and China.

A reinstatement of South Korea's preferential status next month would end a four-year trade dispute that began in July 2019 when Japan removed South Korea from its "white list" of countries given fast-track approvals in trade as ties deteriorated over compensation for Japanese wartime actions.

Japan's tightening of trade controls against Seoul was an apparent retaliation for South Korea court rulings in 2018 that ordered Japanese companies to compensate Korean workers for abusive treatment and forced labour during World War II, when the Korean Peninsula was under Japanese occupation.

Japan also tightened export controls on key chemicals used by South Korean companies to make semiconductors and displays, prompting South Korea to file a complaint with the World Trade Organisation and remove Japan from its own list of countries with preferred trade status.

Their ties have improved rapidly since March on an initiative by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's government to resolve disputes stemming from compensation for wartime Korean forced labourers. Yoon also travelled to Tokyo for talks with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and agreed to rebuild the countries' security and economic ties. AP

# UN: Taliban takeover in Af claims over 1k civilian lives

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The United Nations said Tuesday it has documented a significant level of civilians killed and wounded in attacks in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover — despite a stark reduction in casualties compared to previous years of war and insurgency.

According to a new report by the U.N. mission in Afghanistan, or UNAMA, since the takeover in mid-August 2021 and until the end of May, there were 3,774 civilian casualties, including 1,095 people killed in violence in the country.

That compares with 8,820 civilian casualties — including 3,035 killed — in just 2020, according to an earlier UN report.

The Taliban seized the country in August 2021 while US and NATO troops were in the final weeks of their withdrawal from Afghanistan after



two decades of war. According to the UN report, three-quarters of the attacks since the Taliban seized power were with improvised explosive devices in "populated areas, including places of worship, schools and markets," the report said. Among those killed were 92 women and 287 children. The figures indicate a significant increase in civilian harm resulting from IED attacks on places of worship — mostly belonging to the minority Shiite Muslims — compared to the three-year period prior to the Taliban

takeover, according to a press statement that followed the report.

The statement also said that at least 95 people were killed in attacks on schools, educational facilities and other places that targeted the predominantly Shiite Hazara community. The statement said that the majority of the IED attacks were carried out by the region's affiliate of the Islamic State group — known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province — a Sunni militant group and a main Taliban rival.

Most recently, she has held the role of Executive Vice-President Sustainability, Policy & Impact at NorthStar Earth & Space. Prior to that, she spent over 18 years as the Secretary-General of the Global Satellite Operators Association, a statement issued here said on Monday. Holla-Maini's experience includes service as a mem-

# Hancock: UK was ill-prepared for pandemic because resources were diverted to Brexit

AP ■ LONDON

Britain was ill-prepared for a pandemic partly because government resources had been diverted away from pandemic planning to brace for a possibly chaotic exit from the European Union without a deal, the UK's former health secretary told an inquiry on Tuesday.

Matt Hancock also said officials had to scramble to source protective equipment, set up mass testing and contact tracing systems "from scratch" once the coronavirus pandemic broke out because the UK's planning attitude was entirely "geared towards how to clear up after a disaster, not prevent it".

"The doctrine of the UK was to plan for the consequences of a disaster — can we buy enough body bags? Where are we going to bury the dead?" Hancock said.

"Large-scale testing did not exist and large-scale contact



focus instead on the threat of a "disorganised Brexit".

Britain's government was consumed in 2019 with the possibility of crashing out of the EU without a deal on the departure terms in place. A bitterly divided Parliament rejected then-Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit plan three times. The UK eventually left the trade bloc in 2020.

As health secretary, Hancock became one of the best-known politicians in Britain as he led efforts to halt the spread of the coronavirus before he was forced to quit in June 2021, when he was caught breaking social distancing rules with an aide. Pictures of him kissing the aide in government offices were splashed across front pages at the time.

Hancock acknowledged that an official pandemic preparedness board paused its work in 2018 to 2019 because resources were moved away to

after the scandal had become public knowledge.

Three lower-ranking managers also took plea deals in the 2 1/2-year-long trial in Munich.

Stadler had been charged with fraud and false certification by prosecutors who said he let cars with rigged software be sold even after the scheme was uncovered by the US Environmental Protection Agency in September 2015.

The scandal cost Volkswagen more than USD 30 billion in fines and settlements and saw two US executives sent to prison. It pushed the entire auto industry away from reliance on diesel engines, which had been almost half the auto market in Europe, and helped accelerate the shift to electric vehicles.

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focus instead on the threat of a "disorganised Brexit".

# Aarti appointed as Director of UN Office for Outer Space Affairs

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed Indian-origin satellite industry expert Aarti Holla-Maini as Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) in Vienna. Holla-Maini of the United Kingdom will succeed Simonetta Di Pippo of Italy. UNOOSA works to promote international cooperation in the peaceful use and exploration of space and in the utilisation of space science and technology for sustainable economic and social development.

Holla-Maini brings to this position over 25 years of professional experience in the space sector including in managerial and advocacy func-



tion. Most recently, she has held the role of Executive Vice-President Sustainability, Policy & Impact at NorthStar Earth & Space. Prior to that, she spent over 18 years as the Secretary-General of the Global Satellite Operators Association, a statement issued here said on Monday. Holla-Maini's experience includes service as a mem-

# Former Audi boss convicted of fraud

Berlin (AP): A German court found ex-Audi boss Rupert Stadler guilty of fraud in connection with the automaker's diesel emissions scandal Tuesday, making him the highest-ranking executive convicted over cars that cheated on emissions tests with the help of illegal software.

The Munich regional court handed Stadler a suspended prison sentence of 21 months and ordered him to pay a large fine as part of an agreement between his lawyers, the judge and prosecutors after he pleaded guilty last month, German news agency dpa reported.

The former head of Volkswagen's luxury division admitted wrongdoing and regret for his failure to keep rigged cars off the market even

after the scandal had become public knowledge.

Three lower-ranking managers also took plea deals in the 2 1/2-year-long trial in Munich.

Stadler had been charged with fraud and false certification by prosecutors who said he let cars with rigged software be sold even after the scheme was uncovered by the US Environmental Protection Agency in September 2015.

The scandal cost Volkswagen more than USD 30 billion in fines and settlements and saw two US executives sent to prison. It pushed the entire auto industry away from reliance on diesel engines, which had been almost half the auto market in Europe, and helped accelerate the shift to electric vehicles.

# Epstein suicide blamed on jail guard misconduct

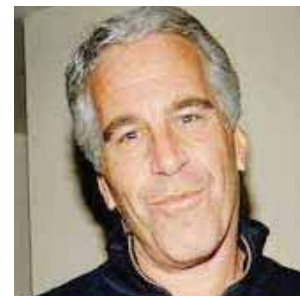
AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Justice Department's watchdog said on Tuesday that a "combination of negligence and misconduct" enabled financier Jeffrey Epstein to take his own life at a federal jail in New York City while he was awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

Inspector General Michael Horowitz cited the federal Bureau of Prisons' failure to assign Epstein a cellmate after his previous one left and problems with surveillance cameras as factors in Epstein's death.

Horowitz also said that Epstein was left in his cell with too many bed linens, which are a security issue and were used in his suicide.

The inspector general issued a report detailing find-



ings of his investigation into Epstein's August 2019 death, the last of several official inquiries into the matter. He reiterated the findings of other investigations that there was no indication of foul play, rebutting conspiracy theories surrounding the high-profile death. Horowitz echoed previ-

ous findings that some members of the jail staff involved in guarding Epstein were overworked. He identified 13 employees with poor performance and recommended charges against six workers. Only the two workers tasked with guarding Epstein were charged, avoiding jail time in a plea deal after admitting to falsifying logs. The report comes more than four years after Epstein took his own life at the Metropolitan Correctional Centre while awaiting trial on sex trafficking and conspiracy charges.

It also comes weeks after The Associated Press obtained thousands of pages of records detailing Epstein's detention and death and its chaotic aftermath.



# Russia drops charges against Prigozhin

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian authorities said Tuesday they have closed a criminal investigation into the aborted armed rebellion led by mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin and are pressing no charges against him or his troops. The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said its investigation found that those involved in the mutiny, which lasted less than 24 hours after Prigozhin declared it Friday, "ceased activities directed at committing the crime," so the case would not be pursued.

It was the latest twist in a series of stunning events that have brought the gravest threat so far to President Vladimir Putin's grip on power amid the 16-month-old war in Ukraine. Over the weekend, the Kremlin pledged not to prosecute Prigozhin and his fighters after he stopped the revolt on Saturday, even though Putin had branded them as traitors and authorities rushed to fortify Moscow's defences as the mutineers approached the capital. The charge of mounting an



Yevgeny V. Prigozhin, the Wagner leader, leaving the city of Rostov-on-Don, Russia, on Saturday. (File photo) Agencies

armed mutiny is punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

Prigozhin escaping prosecution poses a stark contrast to how the Kremlin has treated those staging anti-government protests in Russia, where many opposition figures have gotten long sentences in notoriously harsh penal colonies.

The whereabouts of Prigozhin remained a mystery on Tuesday. The Kremlin has

said he would be exiled to neighbouring Belarus, but neither he nor the Belarusian authorities have confirmed that.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he had no information on the 62-year-old head of the Wagner private military contractor.

An independent Belarusian military monitoring project Belaruski Hajun said a

business jet that Prigozhin reportedly uses landed near Minsk on Tuesday morning. The media team for Prigozhin did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, a close Putin ally who brokered a deal with Prigozhin to stop the uprising, didn't immediately address Prigozhin's fate in a speech on

Tuesday. Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron hand for 29 years, relentlessly stifling dissent and relying on Russian subsidies and political support, portrayed the uprising as the latest development in a clash between Prigozhin and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.

Their long-simmering personal feud has at times boiled over, and Prigozhin has said the revolt aimed to unseat Shoigu, not Putin.

Lukashenko framed the insurrection as a significant threat, saying he put Belarus' armed forces on a combat footing as the mutiny unfolded.

Like Putin, he couched the Ukraine war in terms of an existential threat to Russia, saying: "If Russia collapses, we all will perish under the debris."

Peskov refused to disclose any details about the Kremlin's deal with the Wagner chief. He said only that Putin had provided Prigozhin with "certain promises ... certain guarantees," with the aim of avoiding a "worst-case scenario." The mercenaries shot down at least

six Russian helicopters and a military communications plane as they advanced on Moscow, according to Russian news reports.

The Defence Ministry didn't release any information about casualties, but media reports said at least a dozen airmen were killed.

Asked why the rebels were allowed to get as close as about 200 kilometers (about 125 miles) from Moscow without facing any serious resistance, National Guard chief Viktor Zolotov said authorities tried to assemble a strong force capable of stopping the onslaught.

"We concentrated our forces in one fist closer to Moscow," he told reporters. "If we spread them thin, they would have come like a knife through butter." Zolotov also said the National Guard lacks battle tanks and other heavy weapons and now would get them. In a nationally televised address Monday night, Putin again blasted organisers of the rebellion as traitors who played into the hands of Ukraine's government and its allies.

# Belarus president says Prigozhin is in his country

AP ■ MINSK

Yevgeny Prigozhin, owner of the private army of inmate recruits and other mercenaries that has fought some of the deadliest battles in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is in Belarus after his abortive armed rebellion against the Kremlin, Belarus' president said on Tuesday. The exile to Belarus of the 62-year-old owner of the Wagner Group was part of the deal that ended the short-lived mutiny in Russia. He and some of his troops would be welcome to stay "for some time" at their own expense, President Alexander Lukashenko said.



The Russian Defence Ministry said preparations are under way for Wagner to hand over its heavy weapons to the Russian military. Prigozhin had said his troops were preparing to turn over their weapons ahead of a July 1 deadline for them to sign contracts to serve under the Russian military's command.

Russian authorities also said on Tuesday that they have closed a criminal investigation into the uprising and are pressing no charges against Prigozhin or his troops after the negotiated deal. The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said its investigation found that those involved in the mutiny, which lasted less than 24 hours, "ceased activities directed at committing the crime."

Still, Russian President Vladimir Putin appeared to set the stage for charges of financial wrongdoing against Prigozhin. He told a military gathering that Prigozhin's Concord Group earned 80 billion rubles (USD 941 million) from a contract to provide the military with food, and that Wagner had received over 86 billion rubles (over USD 1 billion) in the past year for wages and additional items.

"I hope that while doing so they didn't steal anything or stole not so much," Putin said, adding that authorities would look closely at Concord's contract. For years, Prigozhin has had lucrative catering contracts with the Russian government. Police who searched his St.

Petersburg office over the weekend said they found 4 billion rubles (USD 48 million) in trucks outside, according to media reports confirmed by the Wagner boss. He said the money was intended to pay soldiers' families.

Over the weekend, the Kremlin had pledged not to prosecute Prigozhin and his fighters after he stopped the revolt on Saturday, even though Putin had branded them as traitors and authorities rushed to fortify Moscow's defences as the mutineers approached the capital.

The charge of mounting an armed mutiny is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Prigozhin escaping prosecution poses a stark contrast to how the Kremlin has treated those staging anti-government protests in Russia, where many opposition figures have gotten long sentences in notoriously harsh penal colonies.

Prigozhin's specific whereabouts were not known on Tuesday.

The series of stunning events in recent days constitutes the gravest threat so far to Putin's grip on power amid the 16-month-old war in Ukraine. In addresses Monday and Tuesday, Putin has sought to project stability. Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron hand for 29 years while relying on Russian subsidies and support, portrayed the uprising as the latest development in a clash between Prigozhin and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.

# Muted reaction to revolt in Russia belies anxiety over war in China

AP ■ BEIJING

China's muted reaction to the Wagner mercenary group uprising against Russia's military belies Beijing's growing anxieties over the war in Ukraine and how this affects the global balance of power. China's ruling Communist Party called the swift end of the 22-hour revolt Moscow's "internal affair," with state media affirming China's support for Russia.

Chinese observers said the incident showed how overblown Western rhetoric was regarding the "Russian internal conflict" and that President Vladimir Putin's hold on power remains secure.

But the uprising also threatens to deepen growing anxieties in Beijing over Russia's war in Ukraine.

China claims to be neutral over the war but has backed Russia in practice, blaming the US and NATO for provoking Russia's full-on and thus-forth thwarted invasion of the eastern European country while continuing with frequent state visits,

economic exchanges and joint military drills with Russia.

"Of course, this incident also shows the complexity, delicacy, and uncertainty of Russia's internal situation," Shen Yi, a professor of international relations at Fudan University in Shanghai, wrote on his blog.

The Wagner rebellion has "likely raised doubts about whether Beijing made the right bet in designating the Kremlin, and Putin specifically, as a close ally and partner," said Patricia M. Kim, an expert on Chinese politics and foreign policy at the Brookings Institution think tank in Washington, DC. "Chinese leaders must be concerned that China's strategic alignment with a weakened Russia may turn out to be a net burden rather than a plus to China's strategic interests," Kim said. It remains unclear whether China will nudge Putin to "cut his losses and scale back his ambitions in Ukraine," and whether the Russian leader would be receptive to any such suggestions, she said. China is seen as closely watching the

conflict in Ukraine for indications of possible ramifications to its threat to enforce a blockade, invade or coerce the self-governing island democracy of Taiwan, a close US ally, into accepting the Communist Party's control.

Economic competition with the US is also a key issue, accentuated by the prospect of economic sanctions targeting wealthy Russians, Kim said.

"Watching Russia's isolation has also increased urgency in Beijing to become more self-reliant, to reduce its overall vulnerability," she said.

Chinese state military academics worry about Russia's underwhelming performance in the war, and that China has not sufficiently adapted its defense structure away from the former-Soviet Union model on which it was based. As to the recent developments in Russia, "China realises that the system is more brittle than they thought, that Putin is more incompetent than they would love to see," said Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center

# Biden calls mutiny 'struggle within Russian system'

Washington (AP): President Joe Biden declared Monday that the United States and NATO played no part in the Wagner mercenary group's short-lived insurrection in Russia, calling the uprising and the longer-term challenges it poses for President Vladimir Putin's power "a struggle within the Russian system."

Biden and US allies supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion emphasized their intent to be seen as staying out of the mercenaries' stunning insurgency, the biggest threat to Putin in his two decades leading Russia. They are concerned that Putin could use accusations of Western involvement to rally Russians to his defense.

Biden and administration officials declined an immediate assessment of what the 22-hour uprising by the Wagner Group might mean for Russia's war in Ukraine, for mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin or for Russia itself. "We're going to keep assessing the fallout of this weekend's events and the implications from Russia and



Ukraine," Biden said. "But it's still too early to reach a definitive conclusion about where this is going."

Putin, in his first public comments since the rebellion, blamed "Russia's enemies" and said they "miscalculated." He did not specify whom he meant.

Over the course of a tumultuous weekend in Russia, US diplomats were in contact with their counterparts in Moscow to underscore that the American government regarded the matter as a domestic affair for Russia, with the U.S. only a bystander, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

# Russian airstrike kills 6 militants in Syria

Idlib (Syria): A Russian airstrike on Tuesday targeted a military post of a group linked to al-Qaeda in northwest Syria killing at least six militants, medical officials and a war monitor said. The airstrike on the Jabal al-Zawiya area in the northwestern province of Idlib came two days after another airstrike on a busy vegetable market in the same province killed at least nine people.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said the Tuesday morning airstrike killed eight militants and wounded other members of the al-Qaida-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS.

Medical officials in the area said the strike killed six militants and wounded others.

It is not uncommon to have conflicting figures of casualties in the aftermath of airstrikes on Idlib province, the last remaining rebel stronghold in war-torn Syria. AP

# 'US to send \$500 mn aid to Ukraine'

Washington (AP): The Pentagon will announce it is sending up to USD 500 million in military aid to Ukraine, including more than 50 heavily armored vehicles and an infusion of missiles for air defense systems, U.S. officials said Monday, as Ukrainian and Western leaders try to sort out the impact of the brief weekend insurrection in Russia.

The aid is aimed at bolstering Ukraine's counteroffensive, which has been moving slowly in its early stages. It wasn't clear Monday if Ukrainian forces will be able to take advantage of the disarray in the Russian ranks, in the aftermath of the short-lived rebellion by Yevgeny Prigozhin and the Wagner mercenary group that he has controlled. An announcement on the aid package is expected Tuesday. This would be the 41st

time since the Russian invasion into Ukraine in February 2022 that the U.S. has provided military weapons and equipment through presidential drawdown authority. The program allows the Pentagon to quickly take items from its own stocks and deliver them to Ukraine.

Because the aid packages are generally planned in advance and recently included many of the same critical weapons for the battlefield, the contents weren't likely chosen based on the weekend rebellion.

But, the missiles and heavy vehicles can be used as Ukraine tries to capitalize on what has been a growing feud between the Wagner Group leader and Russia's military brass, with simmering questions about how many of Prigozhin's forces may leave the fight.

# UN report finds Russia tortured, executed civilians in Ukraine

AP ■ BERLIN

Russian forces carried out widespread and systematic torture of civilians who were detained in connection with its attack on Ukraine, summarily executing dozens of them, the United Nations human rights office said Tuesday. The global body interviewed hundreds of victims and witnesses for a report detailing more than 900 cases of civilians, including children and elderly people, being arbitrarily detained in the conflict, most of them by Russia.

The vast majority of those interviewed said they were tortured and in some cases subjected to sexual violence during detention by Russian forces, the head of the UN human rights office in Ukraine said.

"Torture was used to force victims to confess to helping



Ukrainian armed forces, compel them to cooperate with the occupying authorities or intimidate those with pro-Ukrainian views," said Matilda Bogner.

The report, which covers a 15-month period from the start of the Russian invasion to May 2023, also documented 75 cases of arbitrary detention by Ukrainian security forces, saying a significant proportion of these also amounted to

enforced disappearances.

More than half of those detained by Ukrainian forces also reported being tortured or mistreated, usually while they were being interrogated or immediately after arrest, said Bogner.

Ukraine gave UN investigators "unimpeded confidential access" to detainees at official detention centres, with the exception of a group of 87 Russian sailors, she said. "The Russian Federation did not grant us such access, despite our requests," Bogner said. The UN rights office has previously documented the detention and summary execution of Ukrainian prisoners of war by Russia.

The latest report found that Russian forces also carried out at least 77 summary executions of civilians.

# SL parliament to discuss debt restructuring on Saturday

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Parliament has been convened for a special session on July 1 to discuss the government's plan for domestic debt restructuring (DDR), a special gazette notification issued here said on Tuesday. The move follows the cash-strapped government's action to declare a special bank holiday on June 30, leaving the banks to remain shut for an unprecedented five days in a row. The central bank governor Nandalal Weerasinghe announced on Monday that a five-day cooling-off period for the banks was required in view of the DDR programme.

Signed by Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, the gazette notification said the urgent parliament session would be convened at 9:30 am on July 1. President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is also the minister of finance, explaining the DDR programme on Tuesday said the government aims to restructure USD 17 billion out of the total USD 41.5 billion external debt over a five-year period. Allaying public fears over the instability of the bank system with DDR, Wickremesinghe said: "Restructuring local debt will have no effect on the banks' deposits and the interest rate won't be affected". Wickremesinghe said that Sri Lanka's total debt by 2022 stood at USD 83,000 million — 128 per cent of the island

nation's GDP.

"At USD 42,000 million, our local debt was more than our foreign debt," he said.

Wickremesinghe said: "We want to reduce the amounts or get time extensions for repayment." After the DDR is approved by the cabinet, which will also meet on Wednesday in a special session, it will be referred to the public finance committee in parliament ahead of Saturday's parliamentary session, Wickremesinghe stressed.

Sri Lanka, which announced its first-ever sovereign default in April 2022, negotiated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout of USD 2.9 billion.

# Italian group calls off pasta strike

Milan (AP): Italians can celebrate lower pasta prices but must face higher prices across the board for fruit and vegetables.

Italy's industry ministry reported last week that prices of pasta had fallen by an average of 0.3 per cent in May compared with a month earlier, saying that a monitoring system it set up had the intended effect of reducing prices. As a result, the Assoutenti consumer group called off a pasta strike planned for this week, intended to force down prices by reducing demand. President Furio Truzzi told The AP, however, that despite the overall decreases, pasta prices are obstinately high in some cities and that the group was still considering targeted strikes later this summer. The price of a kilogram (2.2 pounds)

of pasta had dropped to 1.12 euros (USD 2.32) in the Adriatic port city of Ancona from a high of 2.44 euros in March, and to 2.02 euros in Genova from a peak of 2.38 euros. The price dipped below 2 euros in many cities. But inflation is still an issue for Italian kitchens. Vegetable prices in May rose an average of nearly 15 per cent over the previous year, accelerating from an 11 per cent increase in April, while potato prices went up 22 per cent, compared with the 9 per cent increase registered a month earlier, according to the Italian statistics agency, ISTAT. Assoutenti is pushing for a similar monitoring board for fruit and vegetable prices, which it said could be the result of speculation tied to recent storms that damaged some crops.

**APPENDIX-IV A**  
[See proviso to rule 8 (6)]  
**Notice for sale of Immovable Property**  
E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to **Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. (CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029) ("Secured Creditor")**, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on **31.07.2023** from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of **Rs. 59,47,426.51/- (Rupees Fifty Nine Lakh Forty Seven Thousand Four Hundred Twenty Six and Paise Fifty One only)** pending towards **Loan Account No. HHLDP00514883**, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till **22.06.2023** with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. **23.06.2023** along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from **SUNIL PAHWIA, KAZIEN PAHWIA TECHNOCRATS PVT. LTD. and CHARU PAHWIA**.

The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be **Rs. 60,00,000/- (Rupees Sixty Lakh only)** and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be **Rs. 6,00,000/- (Rupees Six Lakh only)** i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**

**PROPERTY NO. 1**  
ENTIRE UPPER GROUND FLOOR OF BUILT - UP PROPERTY BEARING NO. 252 (WITHOUT ROOF RIGHTS), AREA MEASURING 25.90 SQUARE METERS, BLOCK / POKKET - D-11, SECTOR 7, ROHINI, NEW DELHI - 110085 ALONGWITH ONE - FOURTH UNDIVIDED SHARE IN STILL PARKING AND WHICH IS BOUNDED AS FOLLOWS:-  
EAST : PLOT NO. 257 WEST : OPEN  
NORTH : PLOT NO. 251 SOUTH : PLOT NO. 253

**PROPERTY NO. 2**  
ENTIRE UPPER GROUND FLOOR OF BUILT - UP PROPERTY BEARING NO. 253 (WITHOUT ROOF RIGHTS), AREA MEASURING 25.90 SQUARE METERS, BLOCK / POKKET - D-11, SECTOR 7, ROHINI, NEW DELHI - 110085 ALONGWITH ONE-FOURTH UNDIVIDED SHARE IN STILL PARKING AND WHICH IS BOUNDED AS FOLLOWS:-  
EAST : PLOT NO. 257 WEST : OPEN  
NORTH : PLOT NO. 251 SOUTH : PLOT NO. 256

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. [www.indiabullshomeloans.com](http://www.indiabullshomeloans.com). For bidding, log on to [www.auctionfocus.in](http://www.auctionfocus.in)

Date : 24.06.2023  
Place : DELHI

Sd/-  
Authorized Officer  
Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Kunti Devi w/o Mr. Santosh Kumar who is purchasing vacant Plot No. 48, measuring 50 sq. yds. i.e. 41.8 sq. mtrs. out of Kharra No. 439, situated at Shivra Film City-9, Village Achheja, Pargana & Tenshi Dadr, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. from Mr. Anil S/o Mr. Braham Singh, who is owner of the aforesaid property vide Sale Deed dated 30.05.2022 (Document No. 19437), and same to be financed & mortgaged by Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. That the Original Sale Deed dated 09.11.2020 executed by Mr. Om Dutt Sharma HUF Karfa of Mr. Om Dutt Sharma in favour of Mr. Virashi Kumar S/o Mr. Rakesh Singh (Document No. 20200), is misplaced/lost. If anyone having any type of claim/right/title/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, within 07 days from the date of this notice, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien, disputes etc.

**Lucem Legal LLP**  
B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank, Sector 2, Noida, UP - 201301, Contact # 0120-4269379

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to public at large that my client Mr. Sunil Kumar who is the owner of Second Floor without roofrights rights ("Floor") Property bearing Pvt. No. 7, area measuring 98 sq. yards i.e. 81.93 sq. meters Part of Kharra No. 504/2, Situated within Extended Abadilidhara of Village Bura, Dahi 110094 by virtue of Sale Deed dated 18.02.2022 executed by Smt. Shyamveer, Smt. Shyamveer who is the owner through Sale Deed dated 01.12.2014 executed by Smt. Rashmi Devi, That, Original Sale Deed dated 01.12.2014 executed by Smt. Rashmi Devi in favour of Smt. Shyamveer vide Doc. No. 10393, SRD - I, Delhi, Regd. On 01.12.2014 is lost and original F.I.R. has been lodged with the Delhi Police on 22.06.2023. Anyone who finds the same is requested to send to the below mentioned address. If anyone misuses the same shall be liable under relevant provisions of the law of the land. If any person(s) has/have any claim upon the said property with respect to the "Ownership" please contact us within 07 days from the date of this notice on the number & address mentioned herein below, failing which my client(s) shall not be held responsible in any manner whatsoever.

Mohd Khairul Hussain (Advocate)  
A-36, Kailash Colony, Khaitan & Khaitan  
New Delhi 49, Mob. 9810391672

**Registered Office Address:** Unit No.601, 6th Floor Piramal Amiti Building, Piramal Agastya Corporate Park, Kamani Junction, Opp Fire Station, LBS Marg, Kurla (West), Mumbai-400 070. CIN: L65910MH1984PLC032639, Website: [www.piramalfinance.com](http://www.piramalfinance.com)  
**Branch Address:** Dhiraj Baug, Building "A" Ground & 1st Floor, Beside Axis Bank, Opp. Monalisa Building, Agra Road, Hari Niwas Circle, Naupada, Thane (West) - 400 602.

**DEMAND NOTICE**  
Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) [formerly known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.(DHFL)] under Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below, in connection with above, notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to PCHFL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to PCHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date	Description of secured asset (immovable property)
(LC No. 13100001786 of Delhi - Pitampura Branch) Shree Ram Avtar Fruit Company India Pvt Ltd (Borrower) Ram Avtar Singh (Co Borrower) Rajwati Singh (Co Borrower 2)	29-05-2023 / ₹ 7944923 / (₹ Seventy Nine lakh Forty Four Thousand Nine Hundred Twenty Three Only) NPA (11-03-2023)	B-11/14, Upper Ground Floor Krishan Nagar, Village Ghondli, Illajga Shahdara Delhi, New Delhi - 110051
(LC No. 19600043471 of Gurugram - MG Road Branch) Lakshmi Devi (Borrower) Raj Kumar Pahadia (Co Borrower 1)	29-05-2023 / ₹ 722394 / (₹ Seven lakh Twenty Two Thousand Three Hundred Ninety Four Only) NPA (11-03-2023)	Flat No. E 1408 14TH Floor Tower E Roof Alayasa Sector 102 Gurgaon Gurgaon Haryana - 122001

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of PCHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Date : 28-06-2023 Place: Delhi Sd/- (Authorised Officer) Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited

# CAD narrows to 0.2% of GDP in Q4 FY23

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's current account deficit narrowed to \$1.3 billion or 0.2 per cent of the GDP in the January-March quarter of FY23, mainly due to moderation in the trade deficit and a robust increase in services exports, RBI data showed on Tuesday.

However, for the 2022-23 fiscal, the current account balance recorded a deficit of 2 per cent of GDP compared to 1.2 per cent in 2021-22.

India's current account deficit (CAD) decreased to USD 1.3 billion (0.2 per cent of GDP) in Q4:2022-23 from USD 16.8 billion (2.0 per cent of GDP) in Q3:2022-23, and USD 13.4 billion (1.6 per cent of GDP) a year ago [Q4:2021-22], as per the RBI's 'Developments in India's Balance of Payments during the Fourth Quarter (January-March) of 2022-23'.

The sequential decline in CAD in the fourth quarter of 2022-23 was mainly on account of a moderation in the trade deficit to USD 52.6

INDIA'S CAD PROFILE (IN \$ BN)		
	Q3:FY22	Q4:FY23
Current account balance	-22.2	-18.2
Goods	-59.7	-72.7
Services	27.8	38.7
Primary income	-11.5	-12.7
Secondary income	21.3	28.5

Current account balance (deficit/surplus) as % of GDP: 2.7% (Q3:2022-23), 2.2% (Q4:2022-23)

Note: '-' denotes deficit. Source: RBI

billion from USD 71.3 billion in the preceding quarter, coupled with robust services exports, it said.

Net services receipts increased, on a sequentially and year-on-year (y-o-y) basis, on the back of a rise in net earnings from computer services.

The central bank had been maintaining that the CAD, a key indicator of the country's balance of payments, would remain man-



ageable.

Private transfer receipts in the January-March period, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, increased to USD 28.6 billion, up by 20.8 per cent year-on-year.

In the financial account, the RBI said net foreign direct investment (FDI) at USD 6.4 billion was higher than USD 2.0 billion in Q3 2022-23, although lower than a year ago (USD 13.8 billion).

Net foreign portfolio investment (FPI) recorded an outflow of USD 1.7 billion - driven by the equity segment compared to an outflow of USD 15.2 billion during the corresponding period a year ago.

Net external commercial borrowings (ECBs) to India recorded an inflow of USD 1.7 billion against an outflow of USD 2.5 billion during the third quarter of 2022-23 and an inflow of USD 3.3 bil-

lion in the final quarter of 2021-22.

"There was an accretion to the foreign exchange reserves (on a BoP basis) to the tune of USD 5.6 billion as against a depletion of USD 16 billion in Q4:2021-22," the RBI said.

Regarding BoP during 2022-23, the RBI said the current account balance recorded a deficit of 2.0 per cent of GDP in 2022-23 compared to a deficit of 1.2 per cent in 2021-22 as the trade deficit widened to USD 265.3 billion from USD 189.5 billion a year ago.

Net invisible receipts were higher in 2022-23 due to an increase in net exports of services and net private transfer receipts, even though net income outgo was higher year-on-year.

Net FDI inflows at USD 28 billion in 2022-23 were lower than USD 38.6 billion in 2021-22.

The fiscal year also witnessed a depletion of USD 9.1 billion of the foreign exchange reserves (on a BoP basis).

# Slowdown in India's start-up story: Unicorn additions fall to 3

PTI ■ MUMBAI

New additions in the coveted unicorn list declined sharply in 2023, indicating a slowdown in the Indian start-up ecosystem, a report said on Tuesday.

India added only three unicorns - startups having a valuation of over \$1 billion - in 2023 against 24 in the year-ago period, as per the ASK Private Wealth Hurun Indian Future Unicorn Index 2023.

The slowdown in unicorn additions is indicative of a "slowdown in India's startup ecosystem", the report - which comes amid a slowdown in investor interest in what is being termed as "funding winter" - said. The overall number of unicorns also declined to 83 from 84 in the year-ago period.

ASK Private Wealth's chief executive and managing director Rajesh Saluja said unsustainable business models adopted by startups have led to a dip in valuations but stressed



that funding to the right companies continues.

Hurun India's chief researcher Anas Rahman Junaid, however, said that the Indian startup story has high potential and he sees the overall number of unicorns in India touching 200 in the next five years.

He said China has over 1,000 unicorns and if India were to grow economically, startups will be very important.

Junaid said the overall number of startups in the list, which has startups valued at over USD 250 million, stands at 147 in 2023 compared to 122 in the year-ago period.

A total of 18 companies got

dropped off the list last year, but there were over 40 new additions as well, as per the report. Saluja said the overall funding to the startups on the list grew by 6 per cent to USD 18.8 billion.

Junaid explained that Hurun used regulatory filings and interviews with startup investors to arrive at the valuations and then subsequently make the index of unicorns (valued at over USD 1 billion), gazelles (valued at over USD 500 million which are likely to turn unicorns in three years) and cheetahs (valued at USD 250 million likely to turn unicorn in five years).

# Sebi asks CRAs to disclose about non-cooperating issuers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to boost transparency, capital markets regulator Sebi on Monday asked credit rating agencies to disclose lists of issuers who are non-cooperative with them.

This comes after Sebi observed over the time the number of issuers that are non-cooperative with CRAs (Credit Rating Agencies) have increased, with a vast majority of INC issuers being unlisted and small entities.

In this regard, to provide enhanced transparency and information regarding non-cooperative issuers to various



stakeholders, market participants and investors, Sebi said, "CRA shall disclose two lists of issuers who are non-cooperative with the CRA, separately for securities that are listed, or proposed to be listed, on a recognised stock exchange, and other ratings."

The list would be disclosed

in a prescribed format and the disclosure would be updated on a daily basis, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular.

The new circular will be applicable with effect from July 15, 2023, it added.

Under the rules, every CRA has to carry out periodic reviews of all published ratings during the lifetime of the securities, unless the rating is withdrawn. However, in case a client does not cooperate with the CRA, the CRA is required to carry out the review on the basis of best available information or in the manner specified by Sebi.

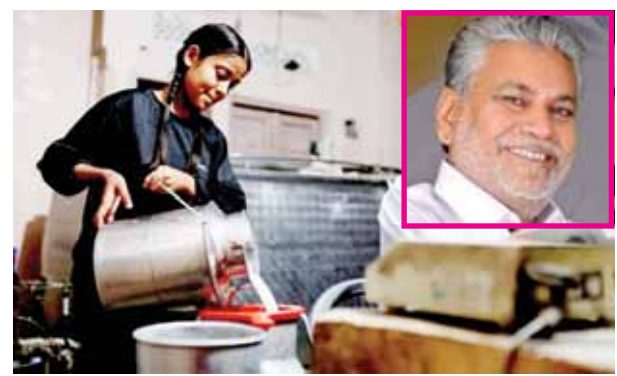
# Milk prices risen, but no supply shortage of dairy products: Rupala

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday asserted that there is no shortage of milk and other dairy products in the country, although milk prices have risen in recent months.

Animal Husbandry, Fishery and Dairying Minister Parshottam Rupala, while briefing media on the Modi government's achievements in the last nine years, said the sector is likely to grow at 7 per cent in 2023-23 fiscal against over 6 per cent in 2022-23.

"I will definitely admit that there has been an increase in milk prices...Government is trying its best to address the problem by increasing milk



production and availability," he said.

Leading milk suppliers like Amul and Mother Dairy have hiked prices of milk multiple times in the last one year, citing increasing procurement

costs of milk from farmers. For instance, Mother Dairy has increased milk prices by Rs 10 per litre between March and December 2022.

Stressing that there is no shortage of milk and milk

products in the country, Rupala said that recently, there were reports of shortage, but that issue was "created", and the ground reality is different.

"Our total milk collection is not more than 35 per cent. This means, there are still a lot of supplies in our own country, which we have not tapped. We are making efforts to tap it. We will tap this and boost the supply," he added. Asked if imports are required in the coming months, Rupala said, "For consumers, there is no need to worry about the shortage of milk and milk products."

There is no possibility of facing any shortage in the supply and stock of milk. The country has enough quantity of

skimmed milk powder and the milk chain is functioning smoothly, he added.

The minister, however, did not give a timeline for any reduction in milk prices.

When asked about fodder shortage leading to a rise in prices, the minister shared that the government is providing subsidies under a new scheme to improve the availability of fodder. It is a major input cost for farmers.

Milk production in India, the world's largest producer, rose by 83 million tonnes to (221 million tonnes) in the last nine years. Per capita consumption has also increased to 449 grams in 2022 from 303 grams in 2014, he added.

# Sensex snaps three-day losing run; HDFC twins shine

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark index Sensex ended a three-session losing streak to close nearly 450 points higher on Tuesday, helped by intense buying in index majors HDFC twins, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank amid a mixed trend in the global markets.

Besides, a firm trend in financial, realty, teck and IT counters also supported the domestic equities, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 446.03 points or 0.71 per cent to settle at 63,416.03 points. During the day, it advanced 497.54 points or 0.79 per cent to 63,467.54 points.

NSE Nifty climbed 126.20 points or 0.68 per cent to end at 18,817.40 points.

"Short covering ahead of Wednesday's F&O expiry may have triggered a sharp rebound



in key benchmark indices despite a lacklustre trend in Asian and European indices.

"Investors have once again bet big on India's sound economic fundamentals by latching to banking and realty shares and shrugged off negative catalysts like hawkish Fed, mounting Chinese growth concerns, Russian crisis and erratic monsoon so far," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research

(Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd. State Bank of India was the best performer in the Sensex chart, rising 1.59 per cent, followed by HDFC, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank, Tata Motors, NTPC and Bajaj Finserv.

The merger of housing finance major HDFC with the country's largest private lender HDFC Bank will be effective

from July 1, HDFC Chairman Deepak Parekh said on Tuesday.

The stock of HDFC climbed 1.59 per cent to settle at Rs 2,762.50 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 2.26 per cent to Rs 2,781. Shares of HDFC Bank advanced 1.38 per cent to end at Rs 1,658 per piece after gaining 2.23 per cent to Rs 1,672 during the day.

Maruti, ITC and Hindustan Unilever were the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.61 per cent, and the midcap index advanced 0.38 per cent.

Among the indices, financial services jumped 1.35 per cent, realty climbed 1.27 per cent, bankex (1.20 per cent), metal (0.97 per cent), teck (0.66 per cent), IT (0.61 per cent) and healthcare (0.55 per

cent). FMCG and oil & gas were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the green, while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower.

Equity markets in Europe were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended in the negative terrain on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.12 per cent to USD 73.35 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 409.43 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

In a lacklustre trading on Monday, the BSE benchmark dipped 9.37 points or 0.01 per cent to settle at 62,970 points, logging its third straight session of decline. The Nifty had edged up 25.70 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 18,691.20 points.

# Researchers from US universities visit Bengal jute mills to rejuvenate industry

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A group of researchers from US universities visited several jute mills in and around Kolkata as part of an international collaborative project that seeks to find out causes affecting their productivity and other issues, an official said on Tuesday.

The team comprises researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Morgan State University of the USA, besides those from the Indian Institute of Engineering Science & Technology (IIEST) of Shibpur near here.

The project, supported by MIT, will study the transformation of the production process and modernisation in



the mills, their productivity and labour engagement, infrastructure condition, environment, heritage buildings, and land utilisation," IIEST Prof Souvanic Roy said.

The research group will also identify the issues of the mills affecting their productivity, their role in the future of cities, deficiencies and corrective measures to be taken for

their proper functioning, he said.

The project will continue for a year and discussions will be held with various stakeholders such as mill owners, workers and the Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA).

The recommendations will be submitted to the central and state governments, the IJMA, and other authorities.

# HDFC-HDFC Bank merger to be effective July 1: Parekh

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The reverse merger of the housing finance major HDFC with its banking subsidiary HDFC Bank will be effective July 1, Corporation chairman Deepak Parekh said on Tuesday.

"Almost all the approvals are in place, and we hope to complete the merger process effective July 1. The boards of HDFC and the bank are meeting separately on June 30 after office hours to clear and approve the merger, which will be effective July 1," Parekh, flanked by his deputy Keki Mistry, told reporters.

Parekh was talking to reporters after dedicating the HT Parekh Legacy Centre (Deepak Parekh's uncle who founded the country's first home finance company in 1978 after he retired from ICICI Ltd in 1977) at the Ramon House, the headquarters of the housing finance major, which handles over Rs 6 lakh crore of home loans in its book.

HDFC vice-chairman and chief executive Keki Mistry said after the all-stock merger, the shares of HDFC will cease to be traded from July 13 or 14.

"Effective July 13 or 14 or latest by July 17 for sure,



HDFC shares will be trading as HDFC Bank shares. Frankly speaking, I can't tell you an exact date for this as this process is up to the exchanges to decide and execute," Mistry explained.

Termed as the biggest transaction in the history of India, Inc, HDFC Bank on April 4, 2022, agreed to take over its parent, which is the largest pure-play mortgage lender, in a USD 40-billion all-stock deal, creating a financial services titan with a combined asset of over Rs 18 lakh crore.

The combined shares of the HDFC twins will have the highest weighting on the indices at close to 14 per cent, much higher than the present index heavyweight Reliance Industries with a 10.4 per cent weightage.

Once the deal is effective, HDFC Bank will be 100 per cent owned by public shareholders, and existing shareholders of HDFC will own 41 per cent of the bank. Every HDFC shareholder will get 42 shares of HDFC Bank for every 25 shares they hold.

# Third edition of electric vehicle innovation challenge launched

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The third edition of the iCreate's electric vehicle innovation challenge -- EVangelise 23 -- was launched here on Tuesday to identify and nurture startups, which can help solve real-life challenges of the EV ecosystem by providing indigenous solutions.

This time, the focus is to identify startups which can develop EV components for four-wheelers, heavy-duty mining and construction vehicles like mining trucks, earthmovers and crawler drill machines, said iCreate CEO Avinash Punekar.

iCreate, or International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology, is a state-government-supported innovation-based startup incubator having its campus near the city.

"The aim of EVangelise 23 is to identify and nurture game-changing innovations, which can help solve real-life challenges in our EV eco-system. One of the main challenges is our dependence on foreign technology and components for all classes of electric vehicles," Punekar told PTI ahead of the launch event here on Tuesday. Thanks to the startups working in the EV sector, the dependence on foreign parts and technology has been reduced because these entities



have indigenised 85 per cent of components, which are currently used in electric vehicles, mostly two-wheelers and three-wheelers, he said.

"This year, our focus is on developing components for four-wheelers as well as heavy vehicles, such as earthmovers and mining trucks," said Punekar.

To nurture startups working in that area, iCreate has already inked an MoU with Technology Innovation in Exploration & Mining Foundation (TEXMiN), a mining technology innovation hub of the Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad.

# WB approves \$300 mn loan to improve quality of school education in Chhattisgarh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The World Bank on Tuesday said the board of executive directors has approved a USD 300 million loan to help expand and improve the quality of education in government-run schools in Chhattisgarh.

The project aims to benefit about 4 million students, mostly from poor and vulnerable communities in the state.

Almost 86 per cent of schools in the state are run by the government.

While enrolment at the elementary school level is 95 per cent, it is only 57.6 per cent at the senior secondary level and the enrolment for boys is 10.8 per cent lower than that for girls, it said.

This is due to the non-availability of science and commerce education across many senior secondary schools, a shortage of trained science and the lack of necessary infrastructure like laboratories and facilities, it said.

The Chhattisgarh Accelerated Learning for a Knowledge Economy Operation (CHALK) aims to improve access to education



across all grades, and also address the growing demand for science and commerce studies at the senior secondary level, it said.

For schools in remote locations, it will also provide access to residential facilities for male students and teachers, it added.

The project will help develop and operate around 600 model composite schools -- from Grades 1 to 12 -- and offer science and commerce at the senior secondary level, it said, adding, these schools will provide a quality education through trained teachers, strong school leadership and management, and adequate infrastructure facilities for learning.

The support will also include climate-proofing school infrastructure using environmentally sound construction practices, it said.

# Chhetri works his magic but India split points with Kuwait

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Sunil Chhetri worked his magic but India had to split points with Kuwait after an acrimonious 1-1 draw in their last group match in the SAFF Championship here on Tuesday.

Chhetri had put India on the road to victory with an injury-time strike in the first half but an own goal by Anwar Ali in the added time of the second half spoiled the home side's march. This was also the first goal India conceded in nine matches.

The result meant that India and Kuwait ended up on seven points but the latter topped Group A on better goal average.

India will play Lebanon in the semifinal while Kuwait will take on either Bangladesh or Maldives.

Already qualified for the semifinal, both India and Kuwait pressed forward from the whistle, giving some entertaining moments.

India organised their attacks through both the wings while Kuwait mainly relied on sorties through the left flank during that passage.

The Blue Tigers nearly went ahead in the sixth minute but Chhetri failed to connect with a cross from Akash Mishra by a whisker. Kuwait too had their own chance when Shadab Al Khaldi's ripper of a shot from just outside the box went inches over the bar in the 20th minute.



But, slowly but surely, India snatched the control of the match and they could have netted the first goal in the 35th minute but Anwar Ali's header off an Anirudh Thapa corner lacked the desired direction.

India's persistent tries bore fruit in the injury time. Thapa took a rather low flag kick from the right side and

Chhetri effected a classy, tumbling volley to beat Kuwait goalkeeper Abdul Rahman, whose desperate dive went in vain.

It was Chhetri's fifth goal of this tournament from three matches and overall 24th goal in 26 SAFF championship matches.

Armed with a 1-0 lead, India

went ahead in full steam in the second half but saw their head coach Igor Stimac being sent off with a red card, second time in this tournament.

Stimac engaged in an animated argument with match officials and was eventually flashed a red card in the 81st minute. The Croatian was earlier given marching orders in the match against Pakistan for interrupting their player from taking a throw-in.

But the harsh moments did not end there as India's Rahim Ali and Kuwait's Al Qallaf were sent off.

The melee ensued after Qallaf pushed down India's Sahal Abdul Samad in the 84th minute and Rahim, in turn, pushed the Kuwait player to the ground. After that there was not enough time for either side to force a result.



## Nepal end SAFF C'ship on bright note, beat Pak 1-0

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A persistent Nepal ended their SAFF Championship campaign on a bright note, beating Pakistan 1-0 in a Group A match here on Tuesday.

Nepal's Aashish Chaudhary (80th minute) broke the deadlock and ensured that Pakistan went back home winless. Nepal and Pakistan were already out of contention for a semi-final berth after losing their earlier matches.

The first half was rather tepid with both the teams struggling a bit to find their range and rhythm, although Nepal enjoyed superior possession.

The pace picked up in the second half as Nepal and Pakistan went for the jugular. The first clear chance came Nepal's way as a cross from the right wing found Nawayug Shrestha unmarked but his

header sailed over the bar.

Nepal intensified their sorties and came close to scoring a goal in the 60th minute. Manish Dangri just had to slot the ball past Yousuf Jjaz Butt but a weak shot was parried away by the Pakistan goalkeeper.

Eight minutes later, Shrestha took a lovely free-kick that curled into the Pakistan goal but the woodwork denied the Nepal midfielder.

Just as it appeared that the match was heading for a goalless draw, Sanish Shrestha found Aashish inside the box with a through pass. Aashish cleverly pushed the ball under a diving Yousuf to give Nepal a 1-0 lead.

Nepal had a few more chances to double the lead after Pakistan opted for a downright attacking game to find the equaliser. However, both the teams were unsuccessful in their respective ventures.



## Swiatek looks ahead to Wimbledon with opening win

AP ■ BERLIN

With one eye on Wimbledon next month, world number one Iga Swiatek came from behind to win her first grass court match of the season at Bad Homburg on Monday.

Playing at the traditional SW19 warm-up tournament for the first time, the Pole defeated German world number 58 Tatjana Maria in three sets 5-7, 6-2, 6-0.

Maria broke Swiatek twice in the first set, taking advantage of a number of unforced errors from Swiatek.

The four-time Grand Slam winner however gained her composure ahead of the second, winning the next two sets while dropping just two games.

Swiatek was clearly looking forward to next week's All England Club Grand Slam, which starts on July 3.

"She has a different game style," Swiatek said of her "tricky" opponent. "But I'm pretty glad that I figured it out, because I guess problem solving on grass is the most important thing."

"I really just wanted to look forward and think about what I could change.



"I know I have the game for that. I just had to find it a little bit." Swiatek thanked the fans including "a lot of Polish people as usual" for helping her comeback efforts.

The 22-year-old Swiatek has won three of the past five Grand Slam titles, including defending her French Open crown earlier in June.

Despite her strong form, she is yet to demonstrate her strengths consistently on grass, with a 7-5 career record on the surface.

Swiatek's best mark at Wimbledon is 2021's appearance in the fourth round, having made at least the semi-

finals of every other major. Swiatek will take on Jil Teichmann in the last 16.

Earlier on Monday, eighth seed Varvara Gracheva defeated Jaqueline Cristian in straight sets while fourth seed Mayer Sherif came from a set down to beat German Anna-Lena Friedsam.

Canadian fifth seed Bianca Andreescu overcame a tough three-set battle against Brit Sonay Kartal, while seventh seed Italian Elisabetta Cocciaretto was eliminated at the hands of unseeded Czech Katerina Siniakova.

## Rybakina withdraws from Eastbourne

AP ■ LONDON

Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina pulled out of the Eastbourne International on Monday due to a viral illness, raising doubts over her defence of the title at the All England Club next week.

The world number three had been scheduled to play Wang Xiyu on the first day of main draw action at Eastbourne on Monday.

Rybakina also withdrew ahead of her third round match at the French Open citing illness earlier this month and fell to a shock defeat by Donna Vekic in the second round of the German Open last week.

The Kazak's absence meant that Russian Daria Kasatkina was the highest ranked player in action on Monday as she beat Ukrainian Anhelina Kalinina 6-3, 6-1 in a politically-charged match.

Kasatkina will face Karolina Pliskova in round two after the Czech advanced when Elise Mertens retired in the deciding set of their clash.

Dubai-based world number 11 Kasatkina, who was banned from competing in Britain last

year due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, acknowledged that Ukrainians are in a "way worse situation" and conceded she cannot see an imminent end to the fighting.

"My family, my parents are still in Russia," she said. "As you can see, the last few days it's been a big mess also there."

"It's been a tough year, and we don't know how long it's going to be. Honestly, so far I don't see the end."

"(It) feels shit, honestly. I'm not going to hide it. It's tough to face the circumstances for such a long time already," said Kasatkina, who was booed off court earlier this month following her defeat by Ukraine's Elina Svitolina at the French Open.

"I'm just trying to be a good human in this scenario. That's all I can do."

There was some joy for the home fans as Brits Harriet Dart and Jodie Burrage came through tough three-set encounters against China's Zhang Shuai and American Lauren Davis respectively.

Jessica Pegula, Ons Jabeur, Coco Gauff and Petra Kvitova are among the big names in action on Tuesday.

## Rabiot extends Juve deal until 2024



AP ■ TURIN

Adrien Rabiot has signed a one-year extension to his Juventus contract until 2024, the Serie A club said on Tuesday.

France midfielder Rabiot will reportedly earn a net salary of seven million euros next season after deciding to stay in Turin following his best campaign since arriving from Paris Saint-Germain in 2019.

The 28-year-old was one of the few bright spots of a troubled season for Juve which

ended with no trophies and a seventh placed-finish in Italy's top flight.

He scored a personal best of 11 goals for Juve in all competitions, setting up six more, and was a fixture in France's run to the World Cup final.

Juve's low league placing was due to a 10-point deduction for illicit transfer activity, and Rabiot has decided to stay at a club which might not have European football next term despite earning a spot in the the Europa Conference League.

## Denis Suarez rejoins Villarreal

AP ■ VILLARREAL

Villarreal sealed the signing of midfielder Denis Suarez from Celta Vigo on Tuesday at the end of his contract.

"(Suarez) will wear the yellow shirt for the next three seasons," said Villarreal in a statement, confirming his deal up until 2026.

The former Manchester City and Barcelona youth player, 29, spent last season on loan at Espanyol, who were relegated from La Liga.

Suarez joined Villarreal in 2015 from Sevilla, before moving back to Barcelona the following year after the Catalans activated a buy-back clause they had maintained.

In his one campaign with the Yellow Submarine,



Suarez thrived and helped the team reach the Europa League semi-finals and finish fourth in La Liga.

The midfielder failed to earn regular football at Camp Nou, and Barcelona loaned him to Arsenal before selling him to Celta in 2019 for 13 million euros (\$14 million).



## Brazil aims high at Women's WC

AP ■ SAO PAULO

Marta has won the world player of the year award six times but has never won the Women's World Cup in five previous attempts with Brazil.

That's something she and the team want to change.

Marta has been recovering from a knee injury but the 37-year-old striker is expected to play a role in Brazil's bid for the title at the tournament co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

Brazil will be coached at a World Cup by a European for the first time; Pia Sundhage has had nearly four years to transform the team.

Sundhage, who led the United States to two Olympic gold medals, called up Marta for friendlies against England and Germany in April but the forward remained in Florida to recover from a muscle injury in her left leg.

She later declared she was 100% ready to play, although the doubts over her fitness have persisted.

Regardless of Marta's level of fitness, Sundhage believes Brazil is among a group of 10 teams that could win the title.

The coach also insists her team has improved since the penalty shootout loss in the quarterfinals to eventual champion Canada at the Tokyo Olympics, a result that cast doubt on the team rebuilding job started in 2019.

Brazil, one of the three South American teams in the tournament, is expected to advance to the knockout stage in Group F. The group also includes France, the team that eliminated the Brazilians four years ago in the round of 16, Jamaica and Panama.

Only eight players involved in Brazil's last Women's World Cup campaign are expected to go to Australia for the group games — goalkeeper Leticia; defenders Kathellen, Rafaelle and Tamires; and forwards Bia Zaneratto, Debinha, Geysa and Marta.

Brazil performed well in the two latest friendlies despite Marta's absence, holding European champion England to a 1-1 draw before losing the Finalissima on penalties at Wembley Stadium on April 6. Days later, Brazil beat second-ranked Germany 2-1 in Nuremberg.

The 30-year-old Andressa Alves is expected to combine with Marta in Brazil's attack. She scored 14 goals in 35 matches for Roma during the season, although she'd been likely to be on the bench for Brazil until Atletico Madrid striker Ludmila sustained an ACL injury that should rule her out.

One of Brazil's new strengths that gives fans hope, even if Marta is unfit, is the young and intense midfield duo of Ary Borges and Kerolin.

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United on Tuesday projected record annual revenue of up to £640 million (\$815 million) in its financial year to the end of June even as a distracting takeover saga rumbles on.

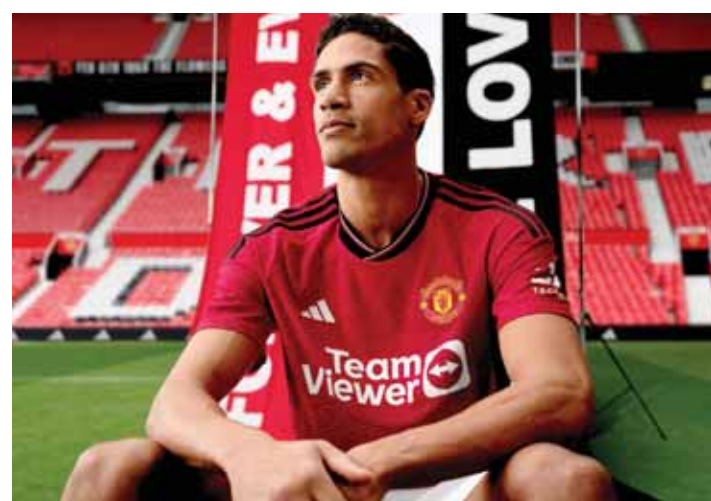
United's owners, the Glazer family, are weighing up offers for the club from Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Al Thani and British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, the founder of chemicals firm Ineos.

The Glazers first indicated they could sell by initiating a strategic review in November but the bidding process has dragged on.

Reports have suggested Sheikh Jassim's bid, which is for 100 percent of the club, is now the most likely to be accepted. Sources close to the Qatari bid have indicated their eagerness to close the deal, with the summer transfer window now open.

Supporters staged fresh protests against the Glazers at Old Trafford on

## Man Utd expect record revenue despite takeover saga



Tuesday as the club launched its kit for next season.

Revenue guidance for the current financial year was raised to a figure of between £630 million and £640 million in the third-quarter financial results for the period ending March 31, 2023, which were released on Tuesday.

The club posted record revenues of £627 million in 2018/19.

The current figures are driven by record match attendance and match-day revenues. Ticket sales for the 2022/23 season surpassed the previous record set in 2016/17, with 2.4 million sold.

Global memberships also hit 360,000, which United said was the largest paid membership programme in world sport.

## Boxer Ankit Narwal bows out of Elorda Cup

PTI ■ ASTANA (KAZAKHSTAN)

India's Ankit Narwal went down in a tough bout to Sultan Mussinov of Kazakhstan in the opening round of the Elorda Cup here on Tuesday.

Ankit put up a strong resistance in the 63.5kg category but lost by unanimous decision (0-5) and exited the tournament.

Six Indian boxers will open their campaign on Wednesday with 2016 World Championships silver medallist Sonia Lather (57kg) facing Viktoriya Grafeyeva of Kazakhstan.

Shvinder Singh Kaur (50kg) and Poonam (60kg) will also be in action. While Shvinder will take on Turapbay Gulnar of Kazakhstan, Poonam will square up against Issayeva Shakhnaz of Kazakhstan.

Zoram Muana (51kg), Hemant Yadav (71kg) and Sanjay (80kg) will also begin their campaign on Wednesday.

# Ahmedabad to host India-Pak game & WC final

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The world's largest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad will play host to the big-ticket ODI World Cup group match between India and Pakistan on October 15 besides staging the grand finale on November 19, the ICC announced on Tuesday.

The tournament will begin on October 5 with a clash between defending champions England and runners-up New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, which is the largest in the world with a seating capacity of 1,32,000 spectators — 32,000 more than the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

The two semifinals of the mega event will be played at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium and the Eden Gardens in Kolkata — both iconic venues with a rich legacy — on November 15 and 16 respectively, as per the schedule announced on Tuesday.

Ringling in the 100-day countdown to the ODI showpiece, the ICC said hosts India will begin their campaign with a mouth-watering clash against Australia on October 8 in Chennai.

With Guwahati among 12 venues picked to host the matches including warm-up games, it's the first time the World Cup is entering the northeast India.

There will be a total of 10 venues — Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Dharamsala, Delhi, Chennai, Lucknow, Pune, Bengaluru, Mumbai and Kolkata — hosting the matches in the tournament proper.

Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram in addition to Hyderabad will host the

warm-up games from September 29 to October 3.

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

The Wankhede 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 prevailed.

Pakistan had earlier asked for their match against India to be shifted to either Chennai, Bengaluru or Kolkata, but the ICC and BCCI rejected their request.

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.

## 9 GAMES, 9 CITIES

For a team looking for its



first ICC title in 10 years, it will be a humongous challenge for Rohit Sharma's men to go all the way in a tournament wherein they play at nine different venues — most for any team — across the country and needless to say, in different conditions.

And it will be no exaggeration to say that India's perfor-

mances in the first week itself could set the tone for them — Australia are a different beast in World Cup events, Afghanistan's spin threat is only growing, and Pakistan always challenges India to bring their 'A' game forward.

While India's record in ICC World Cup tournaments against Pakistan is not invincible any-

more, the tension, the challenge, the pressure on the day and the gargantuan expectations that the team would deal with for this game alone, let alone the World Cup, will push them to the hilt.

Adding to it will be the pressure of travelling — the hosts India are the only team to play

at as many as nine different venues during the league stage. In the hot and humid weather of Chennai and on a track expected to be on the slower side and support spin, India would hope to trouble the Australians with their spin attack on October 8.

While Afghanistan's spin

threat will challenge India in Delhi on October 11, the Rohit-led team would know that their neighbours from north are no more pushovers in ODI cricket — for they have qualified for the World Cup ahead of the former champions in the West Indies and Sri Lanka.

The pitch for the marquee

clash against Pakistan in Ahmedabad on October 15 is expected to be a batting haven. India will look to make the most of the vast crowds that will fill up the world's largest stadium in the city and beat their arch rivals one more time in a World Cup.

Bangladesh have also been a tricky side to face especially in ODI cricket — a format where they are the most comfortable and dangerous. Having beaten India last year in a bilateral ODI series will keep the Bangladeshi side confident and India will be required to make the most of an expected batting-friendly pitch at Pune on October 19.

India's next game, however, will once again be one of their toughest in the competition. New Zealand have a stunning record against India and in the early winter days in October, facing the Kiwis in the lap of the Himalayas in Dharamsala on October 22 is likely to test India's batting adequately.

India will not mind a week's gap as they would move to Lucknow for the next clash against England on October 29 — a venue where run-making was the toughest in this IPL.

The Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai is indeed a favourite for India's batting mainstays Rohit and Virat Kohli, wherein they will play the one of the qualifying teams on November 2.

But the challenge and pressure will hit its peak again in three days' time as South Africa could be more than handful at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata, where the dew factor in early November too could influence the game heavily.

India will have their last league game against the other qualifying side in Bengaluru on November 11.

## Sehwag urges India to win WC for Kohli like 2011 batch did for Tendulkar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Drawing inspiration from its last World Cup triumph, India is looking to win the upcoming tournament for Virat Kohli like the batch of 2011 won it for Sachin Tendulkar, feels former opener Virender Sehwag.

Since winning the 2011 World Cup which Kohli was a part of, India have won only one ICC event — the 2013 Champions Trophy — and their wait for lifting a trophy in another global event has now lasted more than a decade.

"We played that World Cup for Tendulkar. We won the World Cup, and it was a great exit for Sachin paaji," Sehwag said during an ICC event to announce the World Cup schedule.

"Virat Kohli is (now) in Sachin Tendulkar's shoes. The way he plays, he talks, he looks after the others and the way he plays cricket with his passion, he is the one now. Everybody is looking to win this World Cup for Virat Kohli," he added.

"Virat Kohli is the same now. Everybody will look to win the World Cup for him. He always gives more than 100 per cent. I think Virat Kohli is also looking (forward) to this World Cup. (About) 100,000 people will watch you at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. Virat knows how the pitches will behave. I am sure he will score a lot of runs and he will do his best to win the World Cup for India."

Sehwag said India are favourites to win their blockbuster clash against Pakistan on October 15 in Ahmedabad because they can handle pressure



comparatively better.

Sehwag said, "I feel that now India handles the pressure that is why they win whereas Pakistan have a burden that they haven't won against India. In the 1990s, they were good at dealing with pressure but after 2000, India soak it better. If any player says that they don't feel pressure, I don't think it's right. We used to say it too but at the end of the day, we know it's an India versus Pakistan game and emotions run high," he said.

Sehwag said players from countries like England and Australia tend to do well if the wickets are good but the same players struggle against spin.

"A player from the subcontinent has a better idea (of playing spin) than someone coming from outside," he said, adding

that India and Pakistan could end up playing a final before the final if they meet in the semifinals. Sri Lankan spin legend Muttiah Muralitharan said since the World Cup is in the subcontinent, spinners will have a big role to play and agreed with Sehwag that India, England, Australia and Pakistan could be the favourites for the semifinals.

"I am looking forward to the India-England match. That will be a tough match. England is playing really well at the moment. India is one of the favourites in my mind because they are playing at home and they know the conditions really well. They know how to win in India," said Muralitharan, adding that Adil Rashid would be his pick as the most successful bowler in the competition.



## Bumrah bowling seven overs a day at NCA nets

PTI ■ BENGALURU

When is Jasprit Bumrah returning to the Indian team? Neither the injured pacer nor the ones working on him have a definitive answer to that.

But the good news is that Bumrah has bowled seven overs in a day at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) nets, a development that will bring smile to the Indian fans looking forward to the 2023 World Cup with optimism. The schedule for the mega event was released in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Bumrah had undergone surgery for a recurring back niggle in New Zealand in March and since then he has been on the recovery path. Bumrah has last played for India during the home T20Is against Australia in September, 2022. So, will he be able to make a comeback during the T20I series against Ireland or in the Asia Cup?

"For an injury of this nature, it is not wise to set any timeline as constant monitoring is necessary. But it can be said that Bumrah is recovering well and he has bowled seven overs at NCA nets. It is a steady increase

in his workload from the light workouts and bowling sessions of the initial period. "He will play a few practice matches (at NCA) next month, and there will be a close assessment of his fitness then," a source tracking the development told PTI.

Ramji Srinivasan, former strength and conditioning coach of Team India, said extreme care should be taken while bringing back Bumrah.

"He should not be hurried. Playing practice matches at the NCA is a good step as it will help tune his body to the demands of a match. But he should be made to play in some actual (domestic) matches before bringing him to top level cricket.

"The demands of international cricket are different and the body should be absolutely ready to take that amount of workload. Recovering from stress fracture is a delicate exercise and Bumrah should be allowed maximum recovery time," Ramji told PTI. KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer, who have also been recuperating at NCA, are also progressing as expected, though no specific timeline has been set for their return as well.

## PCB unsure but ICC 'confident' Pakistan will travel to India for ODI WC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/KARACHI

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is still apprehensive about sending its team to India for the ODI World Cup but International Cricket Council (ICC) is "confident" that the Babar Azam-led team will compete in the 50-over showpiece.

The ICC on Tuesday announced the fixtures for the October 5-November 19 tournament and rejected PCB's request to not schedule their matches in Chennai and Bengaluru against specific teams.

PCB did not want to play Afghanistan on a spin-friendly track in Chennai and also wanted to avoid facing Australia in Bengaluru. As part of the announcement in Mumbai, it was confirmed that Pakistan will lock horns with India in Ahmedabad on October 15 and take on Australia (October 20) and Afghanistan (October 23) at pre-decided venues.

Soon after the announcement, the PCB made it clear that its participation in the ODI World Cup will be subject to government clearance.

"Our participation in the World Cup and us playing in Ahmedabad on October 15 or in Mumbai if we qualify for semi-finals will all be dependent on government clearance," said a PCB official.

The PCB official said the government has not yet issued any NOC to the PCB to travel to India and since it was a sen-



sitive issue, the Board can only move forward after getting clear directives from its government. "We have already informed the ICC that our participation in the tournament or any issues over venues is linked to firstly the PCB getting clearance from the government to travel to India," the official said.

Pakistan have a signed participation agreement to compete and the world governing body "100% expects them to be there and has had no indications to the contrary."

"All members have to abide by the rules and the laws of their country and we respect that. But we're confident Pakistan will be in India for the men's cricket World Cup," an ICC spokesperson told PTI.

Pakistan last played in India in 2016 in the T20 World Cup. The two teams play each other in the ICC events and Asia Cup due to the tense relations between the two countries.

The ICC not entertaining Pakistan's request to relocate two matches was on expected lines as it usually addresses concerns over venues on potential security threat and not on cricketing grounds. With the elections for the post of PCB chairman now postponed at least until July 17, it remains to be seen how the Board reacts to the World Cup schedule announcement.

With the Balochistan High Court issuing a stay order against the holding of elections for the Chairman's post on Monday on petitions filed by two former members of the PCB's cricket management committee, confusion reigns in Pakistan cricket at the moment.

After Najam Sethi's resignation, the Board is being run by interim chairman Ahmed Shehzad Farooq Rana. Zaka Ashraf, nominated for the chairman's post, has to win votes of the Board of Governors to officially take charge of the key post.

## England call up Tongue in all-pace attack for 2nd Ashes Test

AP ■ LONDON

Seamer Josh Tongue has replaced Moeen Ali in England's team for the second Ashes Test against Australia at Lord's. Spinning all-rounder Moeen suffered a burst blister on his right index finger in the narrow two-wicket defeat in the series opener at Edgbaston.

Worcestershire paceman Tongue, 25, is preferred to the express pace of Mark Wood — whose career has been blighted by injuries — for the match, which starts on Wednesday.

Seamer Chris Woakes and leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed were also overlooked in preference of Tongue, who impressed with a maiden five-wicket haul on his debut against Ireland earlier this month.

"We wanted to play Mark Wood but we felt while he could definitely start the game, we felt an extra week of build-up and loading him would give him a better chance to play fully from Headingley (third Test) onwards.

"And we brought Tongue into the team as a like-for-like with Woody. I'm looking forward to seeing Tongue continue his great start he had against Ireland here.

"Me and Mark are great friends, we go back a long way...I spoke to him about how I'd want him to operate in this game and he was very honest with me. He wasn't sure if he'd be able to give what he's known for throughout this Test match. So the decision was made to allow him to keep building his body up to give himself the best opportunity to go out from Leeds onwards to play a full part."

Speaking about Moeen, Stokes



added: "We turned up here and have seen a lot of grass on the wicket, it is a bit green.

"Traditionally Lord's offers more for seamers and with how Mo's finger has recovered, actually recovered really well, I thought we would get more with four seamers and went with Tongue."

Meanwhile all-rounder Stokes said he had suffered no adverse reaction from a longstanding knee problem after bowling at Edgbaston. "Being able to bowl that longer spell on the last day was another confidence boost for me," he said. "At the moment, things are looking good and hopefully I can play even more of a part with the ball in this game."

England team for second Test at Lord's: Ben Duckett, Zak Crawley, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (capt), Jonny Bairstow (wkt), Stuart Broad, Ollie Robinson, Josh Tongue, James Anderson

## SL down Scotland to bolster WC hopes



AP ■ BULAWAYO

Sri Lanka defeated Scotland by 82 runs on Tuesday in Bulawayo to advance to the Super Six stage of the Cricket World Cup qualifiers with maximum points.

Opener Pathum Nissanka made 75 and Charith Asalanka scored 63 as Sri Lanka were bowled out for 245, with Scotland spinners Chris Greaves (4-32) and Mark Watt (3-52) combining for seven wickets.

Scotland slid to 73-5 in reply and were eventually dismissed for just 163 after two run outs in the same over sealed their fate despite an enterprising 56 net from Greaves.

Sri Lanka, the 1996 champions, go through as winners of Group B and will start on four points in the next round ahead of matches against the Netherlands, Zimbabwe and the West Indies. Scotland carry over two points following Sunday's win over Oman, the third team to qualify from the section.

The next phase of the tournament begins Thursday when hosts Zimbabwe play Oman. The top two finishers in the Super Six will qualify for the World Cup in India in October and November.