

OPINION 6
SYNCRETISM: A VISION
FOR INDIA'S FUTURE**WORLD 9**
NATO PRESSES TURKIYE TO
APPROVE SWEDEN'S MEMBERSHIP**MONEY 10**
GST MOP-UP CROSSES ₹1.5 LAKH
CR FOR THIRD MONTH IN A ROW

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11 SPORT

Judicial probe to resolve Manipur violence: Shah

HM emphasises need for dialogue as sole solution to ongoing crisis

PNS ■ IMPHAL

In a significant development aimed at resolving the recent clashes in Manipur, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Thursday to set up a judicial probe led by a retired Chief Justice of a High Court. Shah announced this during a Press conference, stressing the imperative need for dialogue as the sole solution to the ongoing crisis.

Furthermore, Shah unveiled plans to establish a peace committee under the leadership of Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uikey. This committee will consist of representatives from all political parties, as well as members from the Kuki and Meitei communities and various social organisations.

Its primary objective is to facilitate constructive discussions and foster peace-building efforts in the region.

During the Press conference, Shah declared, "We will soon announce a judicial probe headed by a retired High Court Chief Justice and set up a



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses a Press conference in Imphal on Thursday PTI

peace committee."

In an additional endeavour to address the situation comprehensively, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will launch an investigation into multiple FIRs alleging criminal conspiracies behind the violence in Manipur.

Despite the recent outbreaks of violence, Shah expressed optimism regarding the state of affairs, affirming that violence is merely a temporary phase and that misunderstandings will eventually be resolved.

He revealed that he personally visited relief camps, met with representatives from the Kuki and Meitei civil groups, and engaged in discussions pertaining to the peace process. Leaders from both the Meitei and Kuki communities, along with other civil

society representatives, assured Shah of their unwavering commitment to easing tensions and addressing misunderstandings. Shah also disclosed plans to establish an Inter-Agency Unified Command to enhance coordination among various security agencies operating in Manipur. Presently, approximately 10,000 personnel from the Army and Assam rifles have been deployed in the State, in addition to the Central and State police forces.

In response to concerns regarding the Indo-Myanmar border, Shah emphasised the criticality of completing the border fencing between the two countries.

The porous nature of the border has raised apprehensions about drug smuggling and the movement of militants. Additionally, biometric data

of individuals arriving from neighbouring countries is being collected to monitor the influx of refugees from Myanmar.

Addressing the origins of the clashes, Shah clarified that the ethnic riots were triggered by the Manipur High Court's request to the State Government for its opinion on granting Scheduled Tribe status to a particular community.

When questioned about the Kuki community's demand for a separate administrative unit, the Minister refrained from making any sensational statements, reiterating the central government's unwavering commitment to preserving Manipur's territorial integrity. Shah proudly highlighted the accomplishments of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government in Manipur over the past six years, underscoring that the State has remained free from strikes, curfews, and blockades, experiencing substantial growth and harmony.

Shah assured the public that the Government would soon announce a relief and rehabilitation package. This package aims to provide financial assistance to families who have suffered losses, injuries, or property damage as a result of the violence. The funds will be directly transferred to the bank accounts of the victims and their relatives, serving as a crucial step toward recovery and restoration.

Ties with Nepal 'super hit': Modi Nepal PM hails Modi's 'neighbourhood first policy'

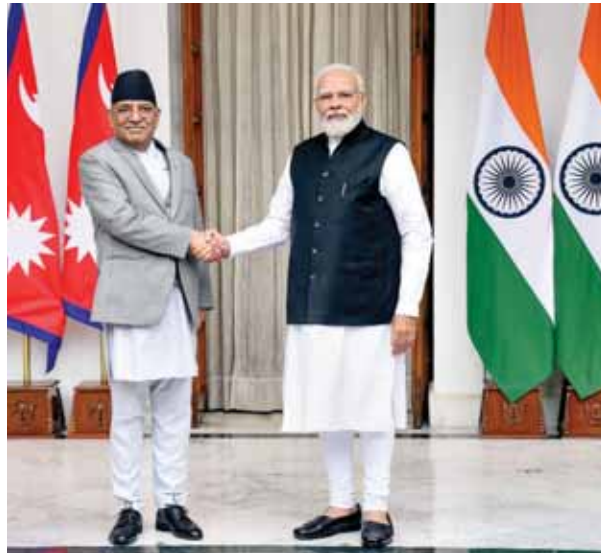
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India and Nepal on Thursday reviewed their historic bilateral ties during talks here between Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda," and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He described the relationship between the two countries a "hit" and said the two sides will strive to take their relationship to "Himalayan heights."

The two Prime Ministers also jointly unveiled the e-plaque of the Kurtha-Bijalpura section of the Railway. Both leaders jointly flagged off the Indian Railway cargo train from Bathnaha in Bihar to Nepal Custom yard.

The two sides also signed seven agreements to boost cooperation in a range of areas, including extension of cross-border petroleum pipeline, development of integrated check posts and boosting cooperation in hydroelectric power. One of the key pacts signed was the revised India-Nepal treaty of transit.

Prachanda arrived here on Wednesday on a four-day visit. It is his first bilateral visit



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Nepali counterpart Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' during their joint press statement after a meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Thursday PTI

to a foreign country since he assumed office in December last year.

The Nepalese PM said he appreciated Modi's "neighbourhood first policy".

In his media statement after the talks, Modi said he and Prachanda took many important decisions to make

the partnership between the two countries a "super hit" in the future. The two leaders remotely inaugurated a number of projects and laid the foundation stone of some others.

"We will continue to strive to take our relationship to Himalayan heights. And in this spirit, we will resolve all

issues, be it boundary related or any other issue," Modi said in the presence of Prachanda.

Modi also referred to his priority in strengthening ties with Nepal after he took charge as Prime Minister nine years back. "I remember, nine years ago, in 2014, within three months of taking office, I made my first visit to Nepal. At that time I had given a 'hit' formula for India-Nepal relations — Highways, I-ways, and Trans-ways," Modi said.

"I had said that we will establish such a relationship between India and Nepal that our borders do not become barriers between us," he said.

Modi said he was feeling proud to say after nine years that "our partnership has been really a 'hit'."

Following the talks, the two leaders virtually inaugurated integrated check posts at Rupaudiha in India and Nepalgunj in Nepal. They also virtually flagged off a cargo train from Bathnaha in Bihar to Nepal custom yard.

To further strengthen cultural and religious ties, "PM Prachanda and I decided that projects related to Ramayana circuit should be expedited," Modi said.

CAPSULE

LAWRENCE BISHNOI GANG 10 SHOOTERS ARRESTED

Gurugram: Ten shooters allegedly associated with gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldie Brar were arrested here, police said on Thursday. Four pistols, 28 live cartridges, two vehicles and seven police uniforms were seized from their possession, they said, adding one of the vehicles recovered was reportedly stolen from Delhi.

CONG SHOULD CELEBRATE INDIA'S SUCCESS: RIJJU

New Delhi: With India reporting 7.2 per cent growth rate, Union Minister Kiren Rijju on Thursday asked the Congress to celebrate it and not take "sadistic pleasure" by undermining the country's success stories.

TMC'S ABHISHEK LEADS RALLY IN NANDIGRAM

Nandigram: Senior TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee led a 20-km-long march to Nandigram in Purba Medinipur on Thursday, taking the fight for the panchayat elections to the stronghold of Leader of Opposition Suvedu Adhikari who defeated Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in this seat in the 2021 Assembly polls.

All must resolve to fight terror, its financing: EAM at BRICS meet

Jaishankar urges BRICS nations to show sincerity in reforming UNSC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/CAPE TOWN

In a veiled attack on Pakistan, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday described terrorism as the key threat to international peace and security and said all nations must take resolute measures against this menace, including its financing and propaganda. In his opening remarks at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting here, Jaishankar also said that terrorism must be combated in all its forms and manifestations, and never be condoned under any circumstances.

"Among the key threats to international peace and security is that of terrorism. All nations must take resolute measures against this menace,



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar shake hands with Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan at BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, in Cape Town on Thursday PTI

including its financing and propaganda," the Minister said at the forum attended by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor among others.

Jaishankar has in the past described Pakistan as the "epi-centre of terrorism" where terrorists like Hafiz Saeed, Masood Azhar, Sajid Mir and Dawood Ibrahim are sheltered.

He also called on BRICS nations to demonstrate their

sincerity in reforming multilateral institutions, including that of the UN Security Council. "For two decades, we have heard calls for reform of multilateral institutions, only to be continuously disappointed. It is, therefore, imperative that BRICS members demonstrate sincerity in regard to reforming global decision-making, including that of the UN Security Council," he said in his opening remarks at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting here.

IAF aircraft crashes in K'taka field, pilots hurt

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW
DELHI/CHAMARAJANAGAR
(KARNATAKA)

A Kiran trainer aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) on Thursday crashed in an open field at a village in Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka. The two pilots, including a woman, managed to eject safely from the plane before the mishap. A mandatory court of inquiry was initiated by the IAF to find out the cause of the crash.

The training aircraft, which took off from the air force station in Bengaluru, crashed in the morning at Bhogapura village. It was good fortune that aircraft hit the ground on barren land and not in the nearby village, a villager said.

District officials said the pilots, identified only as Tejpal and Bhumika, sustained minor injuries. No casualties were reported. According to the IAF, the pilots were on a routine training sortie when the incident occurred. A court of inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the cause of accident.

PNS ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR

In a significant development, a Khap Mahapanchayat held in Muzaffarnagar on Thursday announced its decision to form a delegation to meet President Droupadi Murmu to seek justice for wrestlers who have bravely come forward with allegations of sexual abuse against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the BJP MP and outgoing chief of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI).

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday came out in support of protesting wrestlers who have been seeking arrest of WFI chief stating that she will fight till they get justice.

"I will request the wrestlers to continue their movement. This fight is for life, for independence, for humanitarian justice," she said.

But Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur maintained that the Government is handling the issue "sensitive," and has agreed to the wrestlers' earlier demands.

Security was tightened at Delhi's border points on Thursday in view of a call for nationwide demonstrations given by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) in support of wrestlers protesting against WFI chief.

Security personnel are maintaining strict vigil at the



Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait addresses a Khap 'Mahapanchayat' organised over the ongoing protest by wrestlers against WFI President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, at Soram village, in Muzaffarnagar on Thursday PTI

border points and extra pickets have been put up to prevent any untoward incident, Delhi Police officials said.

Led by farmer leader Rakesh Tikait, the mahapanchayat was convened by Bhartiya Kisan Union

leader Naresh Tikait, a day after they successfully dissuaded several prominent wrestlers from discarding their hard-earned medals into the Ganga river as a mark of protest against the alleged inaction of the police regarding the accused.

Delhi excise case: Hyd trader turns approver; pardoned

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Thursday allowed Hyderabad businessman P Sarath Chandra Reddy, accused in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam, to turn approver.

Special Judge MK Nagpal allowed his prayer and granted pardon to Reddy on an application moved by him. Special Judge Nagpal passed this order on May 29. Former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia is also an accused in the case.

The development may compound the legal woes of other accused in the politically sensitive case for both Sisodia and the AAP, which is only regional political outfit that runs the Governments in Delhi and Punjab.

The court made the decision on an application moved by Reddy, who in his application said, "I am ready to make true disclosure voluntarily about the case and want to be an approver in the case."

Reddy was recently granted bail by the Delhi High



Court on medical grounds.

According to the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Reddy is the head of Hyderabad-based company Aurobindo Pharma, and was also engaged in liquor business.

Reddy had in the past accused the ED of putting undue pressure and using force on witnesses to sign "pre-dictated" statements. However, in the course of investigation, he had later said the allegations were "baseless".

The CBI and the ED have alleged that irregularities were committed while modifying the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22, undue favours were extended to licence holders, licence fee was waived or reduced and L-1 licence was extended without the competent authority's approval.

Democracy no more in NCERT Class X book

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



the Class 11 Chemistry textbook, which includes a quote by American chemist Glenn T Seaborg stating that the Periodic Table is the most important concept in chemistry.

The NCERT justified the changes by stating that reducing content load on students is crucial in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The National Education Policy 2020 also emphasises the need to decrease content load and promote experiential learning.

AAP gets DMK support on ordinance row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Thursday accused the Centre of creating a crisis in the non-BJP ruled States and said the ruling DMK would strongly oppose the Central ordinance on control over administrative services in the national Capital.

"The Centre is creating a crisis to the Aam Aadmi Party and is preventing a duly elected Government from functioning independently.

Despite the Supreme Court verdict in favour of the AAP Government, the Centre brought the ordinance.

The DMK will strongly oppose it," Stalin, who is president of the DMK, told reporters outside his Alwarpet residence here.

Flanked by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, addresses the media after their meeting at his residence in Chennai on Thursday PTI

Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, Stalin described Kejriwal as his "good friend" and said the discussion between them on opposing the ordinance was fruitful.

"The Chief Ministers in the non-BJP ruled States and also the political party leaders

should extend their support in opposing the ordinance," Stalin urged.

"This sort of healthy discussion among the Opposition parties should continue to protect the democracy in the country," he added.

Accusing the BJP-led

Government of bringing the ordinance nullifying the Supreme Court order, Kejriwal, who air-dashed to Chennai and sought Stalin's support, said the DMK agreed to strongly oppose it and stand by AAP Government and the people of Delhi.

"This ordinance should be collectively defeated in the Parliament as it is undemocratic, against the federal structure and unconstitutional," he said and termed the coming together of opposition parties to defeat the ordinance as semi-finals to the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Mann said the DMK Government had to put up a fight against a Governor who not only refrained from passing the Assembly bills but also did not read out the speech prepared by the State Government.

Four IEDs weighing 63 KGs recovered from Tonto

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a breakthrough against naxal activities, the police and paramilitary forces on Thursday recovered four IEDs from the Tonto police station area in West Singhbhum. The recovery of these deadly explosives has sent shockwaves through the region, highlighting the persistent threat of insurgency and the vigilant efforts of security forces.

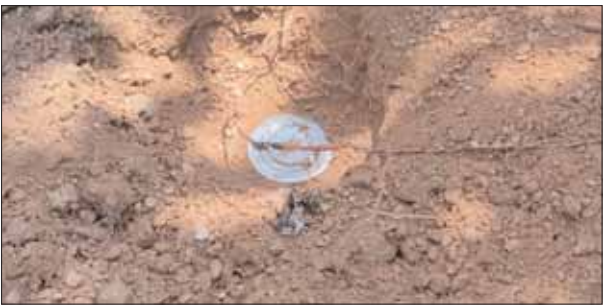
The recovered IEDs weighed 63 kgs and were planted on the forest paths at Tumbhaka under the Tonto thana area.

According to police sources, the detection of such a number of IEDs was made possible from the intelligence

inputs gathered from the villagers. After getting to know about the exact spots of the plantation of those IEDs, the police and paramilitary forces carried out the recovery exercise with great caution.

A large number of CPI-Maoist rebels have entered into the Tonto and Goelkera police station areas in the dense Kolhan forest division since January this year. Having entered into the forest division, the Naxals had planted an unspecified number of IEDs at strategic points inside the jungle, intending to cause harm to the paramilitary forces.

Acting on credible intelligence, a joint operation was carried out by the West



Singhbhum Police and paramilitary forces in coordination with the state intelligence agencies. A police official stated, "The recovery of these IEDs is a major achievement in our ongoing efforts to neutralize the threat posed by extremist groups. These devices were designed with the intention to

cause widespread destruction and loss of life. Our swift action and the coordination between various security agencies played a crucial role in preventing any untoward incident."

The recovery operation was carried out meticulously, with bomb disposal squads and expert personnel ensur-

ing the safe retrieval and subsequent defusing of the IEDs. The explosives, which consisted of a lethal combination of locally-sourced materials, were sophisticatedly rigged and concealed to inflict maximum damage.

Further investigations are underway to determine the source and intended target of these IEDs. Preliminary analysis suggests the involvement of an extremist group known for its anti-government activities in the region. Authorities are leaving no stone unturned to identify and apprehend the individuals responsible for the manufacture, storage, and placement of these explosive devices.

The recovery of these IEDs

has served as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by security forces in combating insurgency and maintaining law and order in the region. It highlights the continued need for heightened vigilance and intelligence-gathering to pre-empt such threats.

The West Singhbhum Police have issued a public advisory, urging citizens to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities or objects to the authorities immediately. Efforts are also being made to raise awareness among the local population about the risks associated with insurgency and the importance of collaborative efforts in ensuring a peaceful and secure environment.

GAIL reduces CNG prices in Seraikela – Kharsawan and West Singhbhum

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR:

GAIL Gas Limited has slashed CNG Prices in Seraikela-Kharsawan District in Jharkhand by Rs. 1.50/Kg following the pricing mechanism in line with the GOI's guideline to pass on new Domestic gas pricing benefits to its customers. The New CNG Prices in the District will be Rs 89.50 per kg. w.e.f 1st June, 2023. This is the second Price Reduction since April 2023, wherein the total Price has been reduced by Rs. 7.5 Rs per kg.

The usage of CNG as a preferred fuel will contribute to reducing the carbon footprint and improving the quality of

life. GAIL Gas is operating 7 CNG Stations in Adityapur at locations like Kandra, Kuchhidih & Chauka, Shankaradih & Ranganati, NH-33 and Chaibasa. The availability of CNG towards West Bengal and Odisha is also encouraging long-distance journeys on Clean Fuel CNG.

Further, CNG shall be available from two more CNG stations, Auto Cluster & Gamharia Automobiles, Adityapur. It will further strengthen the CNG network in Seraikela – Kharsawan & West Singhbhum District and will encourage long journeys between Jamshedpur, Kandra and Seraikela etc.

Controversy on the Inauguration by President or Prime Minister



AJAY PANDEY

It's time to allow the Nation to move on. There is a point in discussing a Constitutional propriety, when there is none that could be offered on the table at this stage when an event had already taken place. Past is past and is a mere prologue.

However, a legacy of history and ethos of national values never change with a mere pompous show.

Her Excellency herself seems to be toeing the line of Government of India as others did in our cherished democratic history. Though, we have examples in history

when Dr. Rajendra Prasad, our 1st President challenged the wisdom of Pandit Nehru on Socialist Model and the Postal Bill was Pocket Vetoeed by Giani Jai Singh. Else, even a controversial bill is not returned to Parliament for reconsideration.

Technically, even the opposition missed the point while the media lapped on versions by both the Ruling party as well as Oppositions.

Let us elaborate: Inside the precinct of Parliament, any Minister and their Head or Head of Government are only a parliamentarian or simply an MP. He or she draws his or her salary as MP. There is no different salary structure for the Council of Ministers and of the PM of India. Though all powerful in their Executive domain, inside Parliament, their role, rights and duties are limited. They can introduce government sponsored bills; answer starred and unstarred questions. Nothing more.

Technically, the PM

addresses the Speaker or DY. Speaker as Speaker Sir or Speaker Madam; exactly the same way as other MPs do.

So, who is the de-facto authority inside the House even though the Parliament of India also includes the President of India as per our Constitutional scheme?

The answer is? It's the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Deputy Speaker of the Rajya Sabha or the Vice President of India when he or she conducts the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha. They sit on higher pedestal. The floor for the PM is much lower than "Chair" and is at the same level as other MPs, who are occupying the front row of any of the houses.

Hence, to us, the best option that could have been explored by the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariat was to have a joint inauguration by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Deputy Speaker or the Vice President as Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

It could have been followed by a written speech of the President since there was no point in inviting her when the Parliament was not in session.

Further, the speech could have been followed by the speech of the Prime Minister, by the Leader of Opposition, a few veteran Parliamentarians and by a few foreign parliamentarian dignitaries.

It was a good time to invite speakers of Legislative Assemblies along with the Chief Minister as well as House Speakers from different Parliaments around the world.

THE WRITER IS A TECHNOCRAT TURNED BUREAUCRAT, WHO LOVES FLYING AIRCRAFT AND HAS ALSO AUTHORED TWO BOOKS. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE PERSONAL. AJAY PANDEY, IRS, PRESENTLY PURSUING ACADEMIC WORK, CAN BE REACHED ON HIS EMAIL ID AJAY-PANDEY@GMAIL.COM

FREE DENTAL CHECK-UP CAMP ORGANIZED BY DENTAL COLLEGE

PNS : HAZARIBAG

Hazaribag College of Dental Sciences and Hospital organized a free dental check-up camp on Thursday at the Anganwadi center of Luta village located in Katkamdag block. In this, along with free dental check-up, free eye check-up was also done. In which a total of 67 villagers took advantage of the camp and received free consultation from dentists. During this the doctors conducted oral health awareness and education programme. The team of doctors explained in detail about the diseases occurring in the mouth and teeth and its prevention in the camp. Special information was given on dental care. In the same camp, services like removal of bad teeth were also provided. Many patients took advantage. On this occasion, the local public representatives of the panchayat expressed their gratitude to the Dental College for providing free basic treatment and appreciated the dental team and medical team.

'Community participation for water conservation need of hour'

Construction of small dams needed to conserve water: Rajendra Singh

PANKAJ : DHANBAD

Dr Rajendra Singh, renowned environmentalist and water conservationist, considered as "Waterman of India" highlighted the significance of community driven decentralized water management system in ensuring proper utilization of water.

Singh was delivering the keynote address at IIT-ISM as part of a lecture series being organized by the Department of Environmental Science and Engineering under Mission Life here.

Beginning his lecture in interactive way he said that our traditional Indian way of living had the in built system where the community used to ensure effective management of water but as we modern era of development began started on concentrating primarily on extraction of resources without concentrating on rejuvenation or replenishment of the same leading to the generation of problems,

like flood, drought etc.

He stressed upon the need for conservation of rivers and said that making large dams over the rivers are not going to water instead of that small but multiple dams are required in order to conserve water.

He narrated the initial phase of his transformation from a government servant to an environmentalist after leaving his job as an Ayurveda doctor and later working incessantly for conservation of rivers with the help of common people.

Elaborating about the advantages of a community driven decentralized water management system citing the example of Jaisalmir, from where a lot of trade used to take place from the Middle East from than 700 years ago. It throws light on the effectiveness of traditional community driven decentralized water management system.

He further said that during that period there was a com-

munity driven system where the common people were informed on a regular basis about the availability of water in their area and that was the reason for the lack of water crisis in those days.

"This is time to nourish water and call upon technocrats to come forward with innovative ways of nourishing, rejuvenating and replenishing our earth in order to ensure their sustainability," said Singh.

Prof Dheeraj Kumar, Deputy Director informed that IIT (ISM) has taken a lot of steps towards water conservation and the institute at present has 700 KLD of Sewage Treatment capacity and treated water is used for watering the plants in the institute etc.

Dr Anshumali, HoD Environmental Science and Engineering while delivering the welcome address apprised the gathering about the life of and work of Dr Rajendra Singh.

Chairman, SAIL inaugurates new facilities in BGH

R SHARMA : BOKARO

Sustained efforts of the Medical department of BSL has resulted in a few remarkable developments which culminated with the inauguration of some rewarding projects of the department by New SAIL Chairman Amarendra Prakash on 1st of June, 2023. SAIL Chairman inaugurated high end equipment like State-of-the-art Neurosurgical Operating Microscope KINEVO 900 and Edge-II ultrasound machine in the Operation Theatre of Bokaro General Hospital and dedicated them to the service of people. Notably State-of-the-art Neurosurgical Operating Microscope KINEVO 900 (manufactured by Carl Zeiss) is the most advanced equipment in the healthcare



sector of not only Jharkhand but eastern part of the nation. This equipment will enable our Neurosurgery department under the leadership of Dr. Anand Kumar, HoD, Neurosurgery to render global standard operative care and significantly enhance the outcome and scope of Brain and Spine surgeries in this landscape.

Besides these, SAIL

Chairman also visited the Orthopaedics Ward of the Hospital (Ward 2-B) to witness a demonstration of the in-patient module of the new Hospital Management Information System which is under implementation and operating successfully in many wards of the Hospital. He also visited the auditorium of school of Nursing, BGH where CMO (M&HS), DR. B.B Karunamay

congratulated him on behalf of the entire department on assuming the leadership of SAIL. Prakash encouraged the students in the successful organisation of the Environment Conservation Drive which was being celebrated today with a Workshop conducted by the ECS department of BSL on the topic followed by Quiz Program and Poster competition for Biomedical Waste Management in the auditorium of the School. Congratulating the whole team of BGH for achieving these significant goals, Prakash reiterated SAIL's commitment towards providing better healthcare to not only SAIL family but to millions of residents of the region as a mark of larger social responsibility.

AMC Chas presides review meeting of PM SVANidhi scheme

PNS : BOKARO

Additional Municipal Commissioner Anil Kumar Singh in the office of Chas Municipal Corporation on Thursday held a review meeting on Prime Minister SVANidhi scheme. In the meeting, AMC Chas informed the committee in detail about the Prime Minister SVANidhi scheme and directed to cascade information in proper manner to create awareness about Vendors sustainability. Notably Street vendors represent a very important constituent of the urban informal economy and play a significant role in ensuring availability of the goods and services at affordable rates at the doorstep of the city dwellers. Therefore, there is an urgent need to provide credit for working capital to street vendors to resume their business.

During the meeting taking reference above it was informed that under the scheme, a total of 1660 street vendors were identified in the Chas Municipal



Corporation area. In which 1054 street vendors were provided a loan of Rs 10,000 under the scheme. In the second phase, a loan of Rs 20,000 has been given to 274 beneficiaries, who repay the loan by completing the installment of this amount to the concerned bank. Notably at the same time, a loan of Rs 50,000 has been made available to 22 beneficiaries who repay the loan by completing the installment of this amount to the concerned bank in the third phase. Presently the applications of some beneficiaries of

the second and third phase have been received, to whom the work of providing loan is under process.

AMC Anil asked the nodal officers of all the concerned departments to update the eligible beneficiaries with the related schemes and upload them on the portal as per the target. PM SVANidhi, coordinator of the fund scheme was asked to provide the list of all the beneficiaries to the nodal officer. At the same time, asked to ensure wide publicity by putting up hoardings/banners of the camp to be organized from June 05 to June 10 at the newly constructed building premises of Durga Mandir, Ramrudra Plus High School Chas and Chas Municipal Corporation located in front of Vegetable Market V2 Mall so that everyone can be benefited from other schemes as well. During the meeting, Lead Bank Manager Sanjeev Kumar, District Labor Superintendent Praveen Kumar, PM SVANidhi Coordinator Prashant Kumar etc. were present.

Tusker Menace: Herd of 14 elephants breaks wall of gaushala

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The tranquil town of Chakulia is currently grappling with an alarming rise in tusker menace as a herd of 14 elephants broke through the 50 feet boundary wall of the local gaushala (cow shelter), causing widespread concern among residents. The gaushala belongs to Calcutta Pinjrapole Society, situated at Naya Bazaar.



The incident, which occurred during the early hours, left the Gaushala premises in shambles as the mighty pachyderms effortlessly breached the sturdy structure. Witnesses reported the heart-wrenching sight of cows stampeding in panic, while the elephants seemed undeterred by the chaos they had unleashed. Local authorities, wildlife experts, and forest department officials swiftly responded to the distress call and arrived at the scene to assess the situation. A forest official stated, "This is a grave escalation in the tusker-human conflict that we've been monitoring in this region. The increased encroachment on elephant habitats is causing these magnificent animals to venture into populated areas, resulting in dangerous encounters."

As news of the incident spread, concerned residents gathered near the gaushala, expressing their worries over the recurring instances of elephant intrusion in their vicinity. Radha Devi, a resident of Chakulia, shared her anguish, saying, "We fear for the safety of our children and livestock. It's high time the authorities take immediate measures to address this escalating issue and ensure the safety of both humans and elephants." The Forest Department has initiated an investigation into the matter and has deployed additional personnel to monitor the movement of the elephant herd. Wildlife experts are collaborating with local authorities to develop strategies that aim to mitigate human-elephant conflicts and prevent such incidents from occurring in the future.

Dr. Sanjay Sharma, a renowned wildlife expert, emphasised the urgency of finding a long-term solution, stating, "It is imperative that we strike a balance between conserving elephant habitats and ensuring the safety of human settlements.

NPU extends date of exams in larger interest of students : Controller

M F AHMAD : DALTON-GANJ

The Nilamber Pitamber university Daltonganj has taken a proactive role in matters of its different semester examinations.

Controller of the university examinations Dr Sheo Pujan Prasad Singh said the examination form filling is now purely online. Students are to give their cell phone number in the examination form which is linked to their Aadhar card.

Here their problem is growing. A good number of



VC Ram Lakhan Singh and Pro VC Deep Narayan Yadav at the farewell function in the NPU today.PNS

students are having cell phone numbers without its linkage to the Aadhar card. District Informatics Officer Palamu Ranvir Singh said cell phone link-

ing to Aadhar card does take some time and students should go for it. He suggested students to visit Aadhar cards centre for this. Sensing the problem of the students the NPU issued an extended date for MA, MSc M Com second semester 2021-23, BA, BSc BCom third semester 2021-24 and BA BSc BCom first semester 2022-26 upto June 8. Controller of the university examinations Dr Sheo Pujan Prasad Singh said "We have extended the dates for the following semesters. We will be

watching if by then the comfort level of the students in form filling increases."

He said if the problems with the students in linking their cell phone number to Aadhar card remain large then the university may consider further extension of a couple of days then but as of now it is June 8 only.

Meanwhile VC Ram Lakhan Singh and Pro VC Deep Narayan Yadav were given a warm send off on completion of their three years term here in the university.

AISECT University helps Taekwondo players to participate in National level sports competition

PNS : HAZARIBAG

In Jharkhand state level open selection competition organized for national sports on May 28 and 29 by the education department and sports department of the Jharkhand government, five players from Hazaribag made their place for the national sports. After which Chandan Kumar, the instructor of Hazaribag Taekwondo Association, urged financial support for

the two players selected for the National Games through an application at AISECT University.

Accepting this request, Dr. Munish, Registrar of AISECT University, along with providing financial assistance to the players as per the application, along with kits, sent the players and their coach Chandan Kumar to Delhi. Bunty Kumar under 73 kg and Alok Ranjan under 45 kg have been selected in the men's category for

the 66th National School Games Federation of India National Games. These players will participate in the 66th National School Games Federation of India's National Games to be held from June 6 to June 12 at Chhatrasal Stadium, Model Town, Delhi. Encouraging the players, Dr. Munish Govind, Registrar of AISECT University, said that it is a matter of pride that the players of Hazaribag district are

participating in national level competitions on the basis of their ability. He said that AISECT University is in favor of promoting sports along with studies and positive steps will continue to be taken by the university for the encouragement of sports persons in the times to come. While encouraging the players, Vice-Chancellor Dr. PK Nayak expressed the hope of returning after performing better.

CM for live verification development schemes being run in State

Reviews plans uploaded on the Johar portal in a high-level meeting, asks officials to speed up the schemes according to the budgetary provisions

PNS : RANCHI

For good governance, it is necessary that the schemes are completed on time. Quality should be taken full care of in the plans. In particular, the budgetary provisions made for various departments in the budget should speed up the works. For this, the officers will have to work with full accountability and seriousness," said Chief Minister Hemant Soren while reviewing the schemes uploaded on the Johar project portal in a high-level meeting with the Principal Secretaries / Secretaries of the departments in the Ministry of Jharkhand on Thursday.

He said that the first review of the Johar project portal took place today. Many changes need to be made in this. Ministers will also be present in the meeting that

will be held in this regard, so that a detailed review can be done at every level. He said that many schemes run by the government are related to many departments. In such a situation, there should be better coordination between different departments, so that it can be implemented in a better way. He told the departmental secretaries to do proper monitoring of all the schemes, so that if there is any kind of hindrance or problem in it, its solution can be found. This will have the advantage that the schemes will be completed on time.

The CM asked the departmental secretaries to assess the schemes run by their respective departments and review them in detail, so that they are implemented properly and everything can move forward smoothly. There should be constant monitor-

ing of the schemes, he said.

The CM said that there will be live verification of whether the schemes are being implemented or not, at what stage is the progress of the plans, quality work is being done or not. It is being arranged with the help of information technology. Under this, information about the progress of all the schemes will be taken from the site. All of you officers should complete your preparations for this.

The CM directed the officers to fix the timeline of all the schemes. Under this, time should be fixed for preparing DPR regarding the schemes, starting the process of tender, starting the work and its completion. If there is a delay in the schemes, then at what level, how much delay has taken place, its outline should also be decided. He also asked the officers to



Chief Minister Hemant Soren holds a high level review meeting with senior officials at Project building in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

change their working style and ensure their actions with full accountability. He asked

the Principal Secretaries/Secretaries of the departments to fix their

schedule every month. Include field visits for at least 3 to 4 days in this so that they can know the ground reality of all the schemes on site and accordingly further strategy can be decided.

The CM said that many complaints are being received regarding the pipeline being laid for water supply schemes. While questions are being raised about the quality of the pipes, the standards are not being followed in laying them. It can easily explain how the water supply scheme will be successful. He told the officials that there should not be any kind of negligence in laying the pipeline. Whatever standards have been set in it, it should be fully followed.

The CM said that many public welfare schemes are being run by the government. But, many times there are disparities in it. Its benefits do

not reach the needy. This is not fair in any way. All the officers should take it seriously and ensure that the work of taking the public welfare schemes to the needy and the beneficiaries.

Soren said that in such a big system of the state government, some mistakes keep happening in the implementation of the schemes. But, its number should not be so much that good governance gets affected. The authorities need to pay attention to this. If mistakes are being made somewhere, quick initiative should be taken to solve them.

Till 2023, there is information about 1138 schemes on the Johar Project Portal. In this, the foundation stone of 931 schemes has been laid, whereas, 207 schemes have got the approval of the cabinet. And the work of 595 schemes has been completed.

The CM instructed the offi-

cers to speed up the progress of various schemes and complete the schemes in time, including the Ranga Simra-Hiran-Dumil Shrirampur-Horbandh-Simalghab road construction work schemes under Sahibganj district.

In the high-level review meeting, Chief Secretary Sukhdev Singh, Development Commissioner Arun Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary L. Khyangate, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Sanjay Srivastava, Principal Secretaries Avinash Kumar, Prashant Kumar Singh, Secretaries Vinay Kumar Choubey, K. Ravi Kumar, Manish Ranjan, Rajesh Kumar Sharma, Amitabh Kaushal, Sunil Kumar, Rahul Purwar, Kripinand Jha, Praveen Toppo, Jitendra Kumar Singh, Vipra Bhal, Manoj Kumar and other senior officials were present.

JERC suggests increase in electricity tariff upto 6.5 %



PNS : RANCHI

Electricity has become costlier in Jharkhand after four years with the effect of June 1. For general consumers, an increase of up to 5 paise per unit has been made. Along with this, the fixed charge has been increased by Rs 25 for urban consumers and Rs 30 for rural consumers.

On the other hand, electricity for high tension special service for furnace industries, iron smelting industries has been made cheaper by 35 paise. The electricity rates of industries area have been increased. High and low tension industries supply electricity rate has been increased by 15 paise. Railway and military service electricity has become expensive. The commission has given relief to the consumers of irrigation and agriculture work. There was no increase in it. But the fixed charge has been increased from Rs 20 to Rs 40.

The new electricity tariff 2021-22 was announced by Jharkhand Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) Chairman, Justice Amitabh Kumar Gupta, Member Technical, Atul Kumar and Member Law, Mahendra Prasad during a press conference held on Thursday. He told that JBVNL had proposed a hike of up to 17 per cent, but we have approved the hike up to six and a half per cent after listening to the views and opinions of both JBVNL and the consumers. This increase will be considered effective from June 1, 2023 in the entire State.

A decision of the commission in the interest of consumers has been taken such as if the consumer makes the payment within 5 days of the bill date, the consumer will get an instant discount of 2 per cent on the payment of the bill and 1 per cent discount will be given on the amount paid within the due date of the entire amount of

the bill made through online or any digital mode, subject to a maximum limit of Rs.250.

Load factor rebate will be given to all consumers. Whose load factor will be more than 65 per cent. Whose maximum limit will be 15 per cent and voltage rebate will be applicable only on energy charges. If the user JSERC, the voltage rebate will be up to 3 per cent at 33 KV, up to 5 per cent at 132 KV.

The fixed charge collection hours will be linked to the supply number. At least 23 hours power supply time for HT consumers and 21 hours for LT consumers was kept. Full security money deposited will be refunded within one month of switching to prepaid metering and installation of prepaid meter. The commission has retained the rebate of 1 per cent every month. The maximum limit of which will be up to 3 per cent of the billing amount if the bill is not given for 2 consecutive months.

The commission said in its report that it is multi-tariff. That is, this increase has been done including the remaining financial years 2022-23, 2023-24. For the rest of the financial year, the Commission will approve the financial true-up of JBVNL only. The Commission will take a further decision on the new tariff plan to be filed by JBVNL for the financial year 24-25 in November this year. It may be known that the tariff of the financial year 2019-20 is currently applicable in the state. In 2020-21, the commission did not increase the electricity rate in view of the corona infection. While after this the action could not be taken in three financial years due to the commission being defunct.

BAU TO HELD 2-DAY PLACEMENT FAIR AND BAU-INDUSTRY MEET-2023

PNS : RANCHI

On the initiative of Birs Agriculture University (BAU) Vice-Chancellor (VC), Dr Omkar Nath Singh, for the first time a two-day placement fair and BAU-Industry Meet-2023 is being organized in BAU. Final year students of all colleges under BAU will be able to participate in this program organized under the joint aegis of BAU Student Counseling and Placement Cell and ICAR - National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP).

The inauguration ceremony of the program will be held at 11 am on Friday in the auditorium located at the Agriculture Faculty of BAU.

Minister of Labour, Planning, Training and Capacity Development Department, Government of Jharkhand, Satyanand Bhokta will be the chief guest of the ceremony and General Manager of NABARD, Ranchi, Gautam Kumar Singh will be the guest of honour. Singh said that this program will prove to be a milestone for the students of the university. With this program, emphasis will be laid on strengthening cooperation, coordination and relations between agricultural universities and industries and promoting employment opportunities for university students in the private and NGO sector. The VC said that final year graduate and post-graduate



students of all the colleges of the university, including Agriculture, Veterinary, Forestry, Agricultural Engineering, Fisheries, Horticulture, Dairy Technology, Biotechnology and MBA, will be able to par-

ticipate in this program. University Coordinator (University Student Counseling and Placement Cell), Dr BK Jha informed that Federation of Jharkhand Chamber of Commerce (FJCCI) will also participate in

the programme. "Through the meet, the industries in the university will get an opportunity to showcase their products and services for the first time and employ quality human resources. More than 10 companies will participate in the fair, out of which one company will give placement only to post graduate students," he added.

Apart from this, interaction with BAU Alumni for students, panel discussion with experts on the possibilities of employment for graduate and post graduate students of agriculture and allied subjects, sensitization of students by experts and counseling programs by institutions have also been organized.

DSPMU VC MADE INTER-IM VC OF NPU

Dr Tapan Kumar Shandilya, Vice Chancellor of Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University Ranchi has been notified as interim VC of the Nilamber Pitamber University Daltonganj. Similarly the vice chancellor of the Ranchi University Dr Ajit Kumar Sinha will be the ad-hoc VC of the VB University Hazaribag. These two notifications have been issued by the Governor's secretariat late in the evening today. The posts of the VCs of these two universities fell vacant in just two days.



SAIL Chairman Amarendu Prakash presents a sapling to Chief Minister Hemant Soren during a courtesy meeting in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

WANTED MAOIST RAJESH ORAON KILLED IN ENCOUNTER

PNS : RANCHI

Extremist of CPI Maoist organization, Rajesh Oraon, on which the Government announced a reward of Rs 3 lakhs, was killed in an encounter between police and Naxalites. This encounter took place on Thursday on the way to Anjandham of Sadar police station area. The Jharkhand Police had declared a reward of Rs 2 lakh and the NIA had declared a reward of Rs 1 lakh on Rajesh. Oraon was originally a resident of Hutar village of Ghaghra police station. For the last several years, the police have been looking for Rajesh Oraon. Rajesh was an active member of Ranthu Oraon and Lazim Ansari's squad. Several cases have been registered against him in the police stations of Gumla and Latehar districts. This has been confirmed by the DIG of Ranchi range, Anoop Bithare. NIA was also looking for Oraon. The NIA had also registered a case against him in connection with the murder of four policemen in Latehar's Chandwa. On July 17, 2022, on the instructions of the NIA, the Ghaghra police pasted an advertisement at Oraon's house. The NIA probing the murder of four policemen in Jharkhand has arrested Patiram Manjhi with a reward of Rs 1 crore, Rs 10 lakh, Ajit Oraon alias Charles, Saurabh da five lakh, Naveen, Ravindra Ganju, Chhotu Kherwar, Aman Ganju, Neeraj Singh Kherwar and Four lakhs on Mrityunjay Bhuiyan, Manish Yadav, Santu Bhuiyan, Nagendra Yadav, Sheetal Mochi, three lakh each on National Ganju, Kundan Kherwar, Khatesh Ganju, Ranthu Oraon, Anil Turi, two lakhs each on Pradeep Singh Kherwar, Rajesh Oraon.

BJP kick starts mega outreach programme today

PNS : RANCHI

The BJP on Thursday embarked on the largest-ever ground connect in the party's history with an eye on the 2024 General Election. Prime Minister Narendra Modi kick-started the "Maha Jan Sampark" with a political rally at Ajmer in election-bound Rajasthan. In Jharkhand too the ground connect programme has started by State BJP.

On May 29, Minister of State, Union Minister of State Road Transport and Highways General VK Singh discussed the achievements of nine years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi government through power point presentation in Ranchi with a media interaction, while the State President and MP Deepak Prakash, in a press conference at the state office, informed about the month-long Maha Sampark Abhiyan.

State Convenor of Maha Public Relations Campaign cum State General Secretary Dr. Pradeep Verma told that on coming 2 and 3 June party cadres will visit important places which the Modi government or State government under BJP regime has developed in all 81 assembly constituencies of the state. The State BJP has termed these places as Vikas Teerth.



Dr. Verma told that State President and Member of Parliament Deepak Prakash will attend the program at Birs Munda Park, Jail Road, located under Ranchi assembly constituency, at 3 pm. State Organization General Secretary Karmaveer Singh ji will attend the program organized by the Government of India at Lohardaga Railway Station at 11 am on June 3. On June 3, at 11 am, Union Minister Arjun Munda will be the chief guest of the program of Har Ghar Nal Jal Yojana Sthal in Khuntapani under Kharsawan assembly constituency. Union Minister Annapurna Devi will attend the program organized on June 3 at Medical College Karma of Koderma assembly constituency. State General Secretary Dr. Pradeep Verma will attend the program on June 3 at the site of Hundru Bridge constructed under Khijri assembly constituency.

State General Secretary Balmukund Sahay will address the program organized at Kasturba Gandhi Residential School, Nagdi, Hatia assembly constituency at 11 am on June 2.

AGRICULTURE MINISTER PARTICIPATES IN MINISTERS' MEET AT SRINAGAR

CENTRE SHOULD FIX AIM AND PROVIDE FACILITIES ACCORDING TO GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF STATE: BADAL



State Agriculture Minister Badal speaks during Agriculture Ministers' conference in Srinagar on Thursday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

On the occasion of World Milk Day, a meeting was held in Srinagar today under the chairmanship of Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Purushottam Rupala, this meeting was held at Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Center Jammu and Kashmir, where Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha was also present, Ministers from different states had reached

here, Jharkhand Government's Agriculture Animal Husbandry and Cooperative Minister Badal and Departmental Secretary Abu Baqr Siddique were present in the programme.

Badal said during the program that the central government should set a target at the national level. For other schemes including milk production and also give a target to different states of the country on the basis of their geographical area, by which we can do better.

JSCMPF celebrates World Milk Day

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand State Cooperative Milk Producers Federation (JSCMPF) celebrated World Milk Day on Thursday in the premises of Medha Dairy's plant located at Hotwar in the State Capital, under the joint aegis of Shradha and Indian Dairy Association, Jharkhand Chapter. The program was presided over by President JSCMPF, Pawan Kumar Marwaha,

and General Manager of Shradha, Jaidev Biswas. In his address, Marwaha explained the importance of dairy from the point of view of nutrition and employment in today's context. He exhorted the farmers of Jharkhand to join milk related businesses, especially Medha Dairy.

On the occasion Jaidev Biswas, underlining the importance of co-operatives in the White Revolution, congratulated

ownership of Sudha's three dairy plants till date. Even today the milk of the farmers of Bihar comes to the dairy plant here. Badal said that you should work to resolve this issue going on between the two states. He said that in 2014, during Hemant Soren's government, MoU was signed with NDDB, which is till 2024.

Under the Chief Minister's Livestock Scheme, we give subsidy ranging from 75 per cent to 90 per cent to our farmer brothers. Our state is

a tribal dominated state. We are constantly striving to improve, we have set a target of milk production of 92,00,000 liters of milk this year.

Badal also placed before the Union Minister the matter of Jharkhand government declaring 226 blocks as drought-hit. He said that the central team had come on a tour of Jharkhand, they have also submitted their report, if the central government gives money for drought relief, then lakhs of cattle herders

will be benefited. He said that this department is not related to you, but cattle rearers will get benefit, so I request you to coordinate and help us in getting it. He said that NDDV, which fixes milk price, should monitor it needed. There are such cows in our state, which give 1 to 2 liters of milk, we give cows to the farmers by bringing them from outside, then the farmers are not able to make arrangements for their fodder, while we give maximum subsidy even in the fodder of the cow. He said that keeping in view the geographical area, the technical aspect should be relaxed in order to keep the price of milk stable, by doing this the farmers would be benefited more.

Badal said that we do not have a diagnostic lab to check the diseases caused by animals. It should be given by the central government; consultancy support should be given to revive the bacon factory. We need all kinds of support in opening modern 24x7 referral hospitals. Agriculture Director Chandan Kumar was also present during the programme.

Centre's panel refuses to keep Cheetahs fenced in

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajesh Gopal, the head of the Centre's high-level committee set up to monitor the cheetah reintroduction project and country's top tiger expert on Thursday dismissed the South Africa and Namibia suggestions that the imported predators should be kept in a fenced habitat to save them from poaching and minimize human-animal conflict. He said that it is against India's basic tenets of wildlife conservation.

"India does not want fenced habitats for cheetahs like the ones in South Africa and Namibia as it is against the basic tenets of wildlife conservation," he said amid flak the Government has been drawing following death of three predators that were brought to India from Africa for Project Cheetah in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno Palpur Sanctuary over the past couple of months.

Over the last week, three cubs too have died.

He echoed views of many wildlife experts in the country that fences can disrupt natural animal movements and impede genetic exchange between populations.

"We have our own socio-cultural issues. We have been handling tigers for the last 50 years and we know what the human-wildlife interface is. We can handle cheetahs too," Gopal said, adding that seven more cheetahs, including two females, will be released into the wild by the third week of June.

The Union Ministry has already made clear that the cheetahs will be allowed to move out of KNP and will not necessarily be "recaptured unless they venture into areas where they are in significant danger". All the predators are fitted with satellite collars.

Experts from South Africa and Namibia, who are helping reintroduce cheetahs in India, have recommended fencing their habitats to prevent poaching, habitat fragmentation and minimise human-animal conflict. However, experts in India say fences can disrupt natural animal movements and impede genetic exchange between populations.

"It's absolutely bogus to think of fencing the habitats. It goes against the basic tenets of wildlife conservation. What happened in a fenced park there (in Africa) will not happen here. Our understanding is that regional networks of protected areas should merge into a national network of protected areas so that there is porosity for wildlife gene flow," said Gopal, chairman of the 11-member cheetah steering committee.

"We have our own socio-cultural issues. We have been handling tigers for



the last 50 years and we know what the human-wildlife interface is. We can han-

dle cheetahs too," he said, adding that seven more cheetahs, including two females, will be released into the wild by the third week of June.

South African wildlife expert Vincent van der Merwe, who is closely involved with the project, had earlier said, "There has never been a successful reintroduction (of cheetahs) into an unfenced reserve in recorded history. It has been attempted 15 times in Africa and it failed every time.

"We are not advocating that India must fence all of its cheetah reserves, we are saying that just fence two or three and create source reserves to top up sink reserves."

Source reserves are habitats that provide optimal conditions for reproduction of a particular species. These areas have abundant resources and favourable environmental conditions. They can support self-sustaining populations that produce a surplus of individuals, which can then dis-

perse to other areas.

Sink reserves, on the other hand, are habitats that have limited resources or environmental conditions that are less favourable for the survival or reproduction of a species. Sink reserves rely on dispersing individuals from source reserves to maintain their population numbers.

Officials said the Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh, is being prepared as an alternative habitat for cheetahs by November.

To address the issue of cheetah-people interface, Gopal said a GIS-based landscape fragmentation analysis will be conducted to help the state authorities identify vulnerable areas.

"We cannot say the cheetahs will spend their entire lives in Kuno. They will enter human settlements and there will be some issues. We have to foresee and be ready for it," he said.



Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar greets Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' during a meeting, in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

ED grills J'khand Cong MLA Pradeep Yadav in money laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday interrogated Jharkhand Congress MLA Pradeep Yadav as part of its investigation into a money laundering case.

On Tuesday, the agency had conducted searches at a dozen locations in Jharkhand linked to Yadav, a five-time legislator from the Poraiyahat seat and deputy leader of the Congress in the Assembly, officials said.

After the questioning on Wednesday, the MLA said he will soon approach the court over the ED action. He claimed the ED found nothing objectionable in its raids so far.

Yadav alleged that the BJP was using Central agencies to target the Opposition leaders.

Fifty-seven-year-old Yadav and another MLA's premises were searched by the Income Tax Department last year as part of a tax evasion probe against some business groups engaged in coal trading and transportation, extraction of iron ore and production of sponge iron in Jharkhand.

The money laundering investigation is based on this tax evasion case as the violation of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act is a predicate offence.

PM SVANidhi seeing fastest rollout, says Hardeep Puri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday said the PM SVANidhi scheme, launched to help street vendors get easy loans, is witnessing one of the fastest roll-outs among all Government schemes.

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister was speaking at an event on the completion of three years of the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi, also known as PM SVANidhi.

According to a statement, the minister at the event said the PM SVANidhi has led to an unparalleled wave of financial inclusion and digital literacy in the countries cities and small towns. The scheme, launched on June 1, 2020, with an aim to instil 'Swarozgar, Svavlamban, Swabhimaan' (Self Employment, Self-Sustenance, and Self-Confidence) in street vendors has become one of the fastest growing microcredit schemes of the central government and has given people access to credit and social security schemes, the statement said.

Puri on Thursday also launched a PM SVANidhi mobile app to ease the loan application process for street vendors. He also interacted with the beneficiaries of the scheme.

NCPCR launches drug, tobacco-free India drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Welcoming the Centre's move of bringing tobacco regulation on OTT (over-the-top) platforms which have seen nearly 100% increase in viewership on kids' content during the pandemic, health experts and child rights activists led by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) feel that proposed amendments to the COTPA Act is an urgent necessity in creating a tobacco-free environment for impressionable minds.

On its part, the NCPCR launched a nationwide campaign 'Addiction Free Amrit Kaal', an initiative aimed at promoting a tobacco and drug-free India with the help of children. The children rights body Chairperson Priyanka Kanoongo said that under this unique drive, children, who are the most affected by indirect tobacco use, have been made members of 'Prahari Clubs' established in schools. They will serve as the government's eyes and ears, sharing information if any tobacco-selling shops exist near their schools,



he said. Highlighting the link between tobacco products and drug addiction, Kanoongo noted that the entertainment industry plays a significant role in enticing children into tobacco use. While there are rules requiring warnings on tobacco product scenes in films, there was a pressing need for regulations regarding OTT platforms which have gained popularity in recent times and were being misused, he said, informing that the NCPCR had been seeking regulation of tobacco use on OTT platforms.

At the same time, he battled for a robust Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), which, he said, can serve as an important tool in curbing tobacco use, especially among children. "This legislation encompasses stringent

measures to restrict all forms of tobacco advertising at the point of sale and put an end to the practice of designated smoking zones in public places. These smoking zones pose significant harm to children who are exposed to tobacco smoke in these areas," Kanoongo said during the event organised in technical partnership with Tobacco Free India, a citizens' group..

Dr Uma Kumar, Head of Rheumatology at AIIMS, Delhi, highlighted the health risks associated with drug and tobacco addiction as over 13 lakh people succumb to the toxic product. "The COTPA Amendment Bill will not only save lives but also reduce the burden on the healthcare system, she added. Dr Jagdish Kaur, regional advisor, Tobacco Free Initiative, WHO echoed the same views as she gave insight into the global perspective on addiction prevention and control. She warned that as people are becoming more aware about the tobacco menace, the industry is adopting innovative ways to trap the youth. "We are glad that a move has been initiated to regulate OTT contents," she said.

Doesn't sound real: Sibal on WFI chief's 'will hang self if allegation proved' remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Thursday took a swipe at Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's remarks that he will hang himself even if a single allegation is proved against him, saying it does not sound real. The swipe by Sibal, a senior advocate who represented the protesting wrestlers in the Supreme Court, came a day after Singh, who is facing sexual harassment charges levelled by female wrestlers, said all wrestlers are like his children and he will not blame them as his blood and sweat have also gone into their success.

"I am once again saying that even if a single allegation is proven against me, I will hang myself," Singh had said while addressing a programme in Uttar Pradesh's Barabanki. In a tweet, Sibal said, "Brij Bhushan: 'Ready to hang myself if single allegation proved.' Suicide? Doesn't sound real!"

"Sounds familiar: PM on notebandi said wait...for just 50 days...if shortcomings ready to accept any punishment...After 50 days nothing



happened then, nothing will happen now!" Sibal said. The wrestlers, including Olympic medalists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia and Asian Games gold medallist Vinesh Phogat, who were protesting at Delhi's Jantar Mantar since April 23 demanding Singh's arrest, were removed from the site by police on Sunday after

they tried to march towards the new Parliament building following its inauguration. They were detained and were released later.

The Delhi Police has registered two FIRs against Singh. The first FIR pertains to the allegations levelled by a minor and it has been lodged under the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act along with the sections of the Indian Penal Code concerning outraging modesty. The other FIR has been registered over complaints from women wrestlers pertaining to outraging modesty.

India, Russia review ties, discuss issues of global interest



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Cape Town

PTI

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/CAPETOWN

India and Russia on Thursday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties and issues of global interest during talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Capetown. Both the ministers are there to participate in the foreign ministers' conclave of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Jaishankar is also likely to hold bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Qin Gang.

After holding talks with the Russian Foreign Minister on the sidelines of the conclave, Jaishankar said in a tweet "Good to meet FM Sergey Lavrov of Russia in Cape Town

this morning on BRICS FMM sidelines. Our discussions covered bilateral matters, BRICS, G20 and SCO."

India will hold the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and G-20 summits in July and September respectively.

In the last few months, India has become a leading importer of discounted crude oil from Russia notwithstanding increasing disquiet in the West over the procurement in view of Russian invasion of Ukraine. India's economic engagement with Russia has been on a major upswing in the last one year, largely due to its procurement of discounted Russian oil.

India has, so far, refrained from voting against Russia in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) regarding its military action in Ukraine. New Delhi has all along called for resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

On Wednesday, Jaishankar said these are still "early days" for conflict resolution between Ukraine and Russia as presently, the focus is on problems such as a grain corridor, nuclear issues and matters related to the exchange of prisoners of war.

In an interview to DD India, Jaishankar noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing 41 per cent of the global population, 24 per cent of the global GDP and 16 per cent of the global trade. Jaishankar is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with his other BRICS counterparts including Chinese foreign Qin Gang.

NIA Special Court declares SFJ's Multani proclaimed offender

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA Special Court, Chandigarh, on Wednesday declared accused Jaswinder Singh alias Multani a Proclaimed Offender (PO) in the Model Jail Tiffin Bomb case of April 2022. Multani, a member of the banned 'unlawful association' Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), is currently based in Germany and has a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against him. The NIA Court had issued the NBW against him on January 5, 2023.

The NIA had also declared a reward of Rs 10 lakh and opened an LOC (Look Out Circular) against Multani.

"Multani has been identified as the mastermind behind planting of the IED bomb outside the wall of Model Jail, Buraill, Chandigarh with the intention of spreading terror and causing violence. The tiffin bomb, along with a detonator, was found in a black bag outside the Jail on April

22, last year," the NIA said in a statement. The case was originally registered against unknown persons by Chandigarh Police as FIR Number 33 under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908. The NIA subsequently took over the case in May 2022, and re-registered it with additional provisions under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

The NIA probe revealed that Multani had masterminded the crime from Germany. "He was in touch with pro-Khalistan operatives based in India, Pakistan and other countries, and was using them to promote violence and terror.

He was identifying, recruiting, motivating and radicalising youth of Punjab through social media, as per the investigations. He was also sending/raising funds and coordinating the movement of arms and ammunition, as well as explosives from Pakistan into India," the agency said.

ICG, DRI seize ₹20 cr gold from fishing boats in Gulf of Mannar in TN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in a joint with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and Customs seized 32.689 Kgs of gold valued at approximately ₹20.2 Crores from two fishing boats at Gulf of Mannar area in Tamil Nadu. The consignment was being smuggled into India from Sri Lanka.

Giving details here, Coast Guard officials said on Thursday based on a specific input from the DRI regarding illegal smuggling of contraband from Sri Lanka to India, a joint operation was launched by Indian Coast Guard and DRI on May 30.

The joint teams deployed by both agencies kept a close surveillance on fishing vessels



operating in the Gulf of Mannar, especially near Indo-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

On the morning of May 30, the joint team from Indian Coast Guard and

DRI, detected a suspicious boat approaching Mandapam fishing harbour. When challenged, the boat tried to evade apprehension but was finally apprehended in north Gulf of Mannar.

While being chased, the suspects threw the consignment into water prior interception.

62 DT plants may be solution to food security worries

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid concerns that frequent A and extreme weather conditions are all set to threaten global food security, Indian researchers have stumbled upon at least 62 Desiccation-Tolerant (DT) Vascular Plant Species in the biodiversity hotspot, the Western Ghats which, they said, could have applications in agriculture, particularly in areas with scarcity of water. These plants can become so dry they crumble in the hand, but if remoistened, will begin making proteins within minutes.

In other words, said the researchers that the DT plants are able to withstand extreme dehydration, losing up to 95 per cent of their water content, and they revive themselves once water is available again,

said the research published in the Nordic Journal of Botany.

In the inventory of 62 species, 16 are Indian endemic, and 12 are exclusive to the Western Ghats outcrops, highlighting the biodiversity region's importance as a global DT hotspot. In addition to rock outcrops, tree trunks in the partially shaded forests were found to be crucial habitats for DT species, the study said.

"This unique ability allows them to survive in harsh, arid environments that would be uninhabitable for most other plants. DT plants have been studied for their possible applications in agriculture, particularly in areas with limited water resources. In tropical regions, they are the predominant occupants of rock outcrops," said the study by scientists from ARI, Pune.

UPSC comes to aid of Manipur candidates

Offers alternative centres to people from strife-hit State to appear for recruitment tests for Govt jobs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has offered alternative centres to candidates from Imphal, Manipur to appear for Enforcement Officer/Accounts Officer and Assistant Provident Fund Commissioner examination, scheduled to be held on July 2, an official statement issued on Thursday said.

Manipur, which has been hit by ethnic conflict for nearly a month, witnessed a sudden spurt in clashes and firing between militants and security forces on Sunday, after a relative lull for over a fortnight. The death toll from the clashes since the ethnic violence began on May 3 has gone up to 80, officials said.

For the prevalent situation in the State of Manipur, the Commission has decided to offer alternative centres to the candidates of Imphal (Manipur) centre of the Enforcement Officer/Accounts Officer and Assistant Provident Fund Commissioner Examination, 2023, which is to be held on July 2, 2023, said the statement issued by the personnel ministry.

These candidates will be offered Aizawl (Mizoram), Kohima (Nagaland), Shillong



(Meghalaya), Dispur (Assam), Jorhat (Assam), Kolkata (West Bengal) and Delhi, it said.

The centre change option will be available to the candidates of Imphal centre through the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) facility, the statement said.

A message in this regard will be sent to each candidate on his/her registered mobile number with the Commission. The candidates must use their said registered mobile number to avail this facility through IVRS.

Alternatively, a candidate may also contact the UPSC through telephone numbers 011-23070641, 23381073, 23384508 and 23387876 from 12 noon of June 2 till 5 pm of June 12.

Moreover, the option of

change of centres for such candidates will also be available on the website of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) from 12 noon of June 2, 2023 to 5 pm of June 12, 2023 on round-the-clock basis, the statement said.

On receipt of centre change options from the willing candidates through any of the above modes, they will be allocated to the venues of their chosen centres and accordingly, their e-admit cards will be released, it said.

A message confirming the change of centres shall be sent to each such candidate on his/her registered mobile number, the statement said, adding that the e-admit cards will be available for downloading from the UPSC's website.

Pawar calls on Shinde; sparks speculation

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that sparked fierce speculation in the State's political circles, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar on Thursday called on Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde at the latter's official residence 'Varsha' at Malabar Hills in south Mumbai.

Though the purpose of the meeting was not immediately known, 82-year-old Pawar spent more than half an hour with Shinde.

Incidentally, this was the first meeting between the two leaders after the transfer of power that took place under most dramatic circumstances in June last year.

Shinde, then a senior Shiv Sena leader, had rebelled against the then Chief Minister



and Sena president Uddhav Thackeray, walked out of the party along with 40-odd MLAs leading to the collapse of the Government Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), a grand alliance comprising Shiv Sena, the

NCP and the Congress. Shinde later teamed up the then Opposition BJP to form a new Government in the State.

Pawar's meeting with Shinde came at a time when Uddhav Thackeray was out of the country.

Informed sources said that Pawar had gone to meet Shinde to invite the latter for the 75th anniversary function of the Maratha Mandir group.

Later in the night, Shinde - speaking to a leading Marathi television channel - said that his meeting with Pawar he and the NCP supremo did not discuss any political matters. He said that the NCP chief had come to meet him for a function. "Don't read too much into this meeting," the Chief Minister told the TV channel.



Pak intruder shot by BSF in Samba

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A Pakistani intruder was shot dead by BSF troops along the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's (J&K's) Samba district in the early hours of Thursday.

The incident took place near Mangu Chak border outpost (BoP) in Samba sector around 3.00 AM.

A Jammu-based BSF spokesman in a statement said, "In the early hours of Thursday, alert BSF troops noticed suspicious movement of a person, who crossed the IB from Pakistan's side, in Samba area. He was challenged by the troops but the intruder kept advancing towards the border fencing. The troops opened fire, killing him."

The BSF has launched a search operation along the IB in Samba sector as the intruder's body is lying in the forward area.

This is the second such incident of infiltration in Jammu division in the last two days.

On Wednesday, the Army foiled an infiltration bid with the arrest of three terrorists along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district.

The terrorists, from whom a huge consignment of arms and narcotics was recovered, were arrested after an exchange of fire near the border fence, according to a Defence spokesperson.

Meanwhile, continuing its crackdown on harbouring terrorists and providing logistic support to them, the State Intelligence Unit (SIU) Anantnag, on Thursday attached an under-construction residential house of a terrorist associate in Danwathpora Kokernag area of Anantnag district used for terrorist activities after obtaining necessary sanctions from the competent authority.

During the course of investigation in case FIR No. 103/2022 of Police Station Kokernag under UA(P) Act, one under-construction residential house belonging to terrorist associate namely Mohammad Ishaq Malik son of Mohammad Saifullah Malik resident of Danwathpora Kokernag has been found used by terrorists of proscribed terrorist outfit HM.

Major blaze averted by alert Rly staff



Fire in Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express compartment stopped from spreading to BP fuel depot close by

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A major tragedy was averted by alert Railway staff who stopped a blaze in the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express compartment from spreading to a Bharat Petroleum fuel depot located a few meters away.

The fire broke out in the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express in the wee hours of Thursday as the train was getting ready for its journey to Alappuzha. A general compartment was gutted in the fire but fortunately no casualty has been reported. Later in the day, a migrant labourer from West Bengal was taken into custody by the police. Further investigations were on at the time of going to Press.

This is the second such incident to take place in Kerala during the last two months. Interestingly, on April 1 this year the same train met with arson as a Delhi youth set the train on fire that led to the death of three persons, including an infant.

The recurrence of the mishap has shocked police officers as well as the people of the State despite the fact that no untoward incidents took place. But what is intriguing is the fact that a Bharat Petroleum fuel depot was hardly a few meters away from the ill-fated compartment and had it not been for the alertness of the Railway staff, the fire would have led to an inferno.

While police officers remained tight-lipped, Dr Jacob Thomas, former Director General, Kerala Police told The Pioneer that it was a matter of concern. "The Inspector-General of Police, P Vijayan, who led the investigation into the April 1 fire was unceremoniously removed as the head of the anti-terrorism squad. It was his expertise and quick actions that led to the arrest of the Delhi youth within days of the incident from Maharashtra. But what he got in return was brickbats, and that does not augur well for the Service," said Dr Thomas.

Mekedatu project: We won't trouble you, be generous, says Shivakumar to TN Govt

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday raised a pitch for the contentious Mekedatu balancing reservoir across Cauvery river near Kanakapura and appealed to the Tamil Nadu Government to be generous.

Shivakumar, who hails from Kanakapura and is an MLA from there, said the Karnataka Government will have to make preparations required for the project. He also insisted that it will benefit not only Bengaluru but also the farmers of Tamil Nadu.

"With regard to Mekedatu, we had marched for water (in 2021). Tamil Nadu will not have any problem. After our march, (the then) Chief Minister (Basavaraj Bommai) had earmarked Rs 1,000 crore for the project. It has been proposed but has not been spent yet. We have to make the requisite preparations," Shivakumar told reporters here.

He said, "It's not that we have any hatred for Tamil Nadu or wage a war against it. Those residing there are our brethren and their brethren are here as well. So, there is no scope for hatred or jealousy. It is our project. It will benefit them as well. We have to help all the farmers in the Cauvery basin."

Stating that the key to unlock the Mekedatu issue is with the Centre, Shivakumar said there were orders on how much water Karnataka has to release. He wondered how Tamil Nadu will be at loss if Karnataka sets up a power plant there.

"We will store water and supply it to Bengaluru. It has been approved in the Cauvery Tribunal award. So there is no need to panic," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

He appealed to the Tamil Nadu Government to consider the project as it will not affect their interest.

"I request you (Tamil Nadu Government) that we will not trouble you. Be generous. We



too are generous. We are neighbouring States. We have fought enough and seen enough legal battles. It never helps. May we deal with it harmoniously. It will help in providing drinking water and benefit your farmers as well," Shivakumar said.

The Mekedatu multi-purpose (drinking and power) project involves building a balancing reservoir near Kanakapura in Ramanagara district. The estimated Rs 9,000-crore project, once completed, is aimed at ensuring drinking water to Bengaluru and neighbouring areas (4.75 TMC) and it can also generate 400 MW of power.

Karnataka has maintained that the project within its territory will benefit both States as the surplus water stored can be managed between the two during a distress year, and its implementation will in no way affect the interests of Tamil Nadu's farming communities, as there will be no impact on its share of water.

However, the neighbouring state is of the view that the project would "impound and divert" the uncontrolled water flow due to Tamil Nadu from Kabini sub-basin, the catchment area below Krishnarajasagara, and also from Simsha, Arkavathy and Suvarnavathi sub-basins besides other small streams.

Gujarat Govt to challenge acquittal of six people in 2013 rape case against Asaram

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat Government will move the High Court to challenge the acquittal of self-styled godman Asaram's wife, their daughter and his four disciples in a 2013 rape case in which he was sentenced to life imprisonment, an official said on Thursday. A court in Gandhinagar on January 31 sentenced Asaram to life imprisonment in the rape case filed by his former woman disciple in 2013.

Asaram's wife Laxmiben, their daughter Bharati, and his four disciples, who were accused by the prosecution of aiding and abetting the crime, were acquitted by the court for want of evidence. "The State's legal department passed a resolution on May 6 and directed the prosecution to file an appeal against the acquittal of six accused by a Gandhinagar court in the 2013 rape case against self-styled godman Asaram," special public prosecutor in the case, RC



Kodekar said.

The prosecution has also sought the Government's consent to challenge the Gandhinagar court's January 31 order, in which it suggested that life sentences for Asaram in Jodhpur and Ahmedabad cases should run concurrently. The Government's consent for the same is awaited, Kodekar said. The octogenarian godman is currently serving a life term in a Jodhpur jail in another case of raping a minor girl at his ashram in Rajasthan in 2013. The Gandhinagar court sentenced Asaram in the case for raping a woman disciple, who hailed from Surat, on several occasions from 2001 to 2007 at his ashram at Motera near Ahmedabad before her escape.

HC allows girl to reappear for NEET-UG exam being held specially for Manipur students

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday permitted a 18-year-old girl to reappear for the National Entrance Examination Test Under Graduate (NEET-UG) to be held for the second time for students of strife-torn Manipur as she could not complete the exam paper the first time due to a broken wrist.

A vacation Bench of Justices Manish Pitale and Neela Gokhale heard a plea filed by Dhanashree Jagatap seeking permission to reappear for the exam.

According to Jagatap, she arrived at the NEET-UG examination centre on May 7 but fell on the ground due to rush in the queue, resulting in dislocation of her right wrist joint.

She was taken to a nearby hospital and was later brought back to the centre where she was



allotted a writer, Jagatap said in the plea.

However, while the time period for the exam was three hours and 20 minutes, she started the exam late but was not given extra time to finish her paper, due to which she could not attempt the last part pertaining to Physics subject, Jagatap's plea said.

Seeking a direction to the National Testing Agency to permit her to reappear, Jagatap, in her plea, said although the NEET-UG examination is conducted only once every year, this

year due to sudden outbreak of violence in Manipur, NEET-UG 2023 examination is being held separately for students of that state.

The re-examination for students from Manipur is to be held in Bengaluru in Karnataka on June 6.

When the plea came up for hearing on Thursday, the Union government said it was willing to permit Jagatap to reappear for the exam on June 6 but on the condition that she shall not rely on the marks obtained by her in the May 7 examination.

Gujarat: Dalit man thrashed for wearing good clothes, sunglasses; seven booked

PTI ■ PALANPUR

A Dalit man was allegedly beaten up by a group of people from an upper caste community at a village in Banaskantha district of Gujarat as the accused were upset with him for wearing good clothes and sunglasses, police said on Thursday. The incident occurred at Mota Village in Palanpur taluka on Tuesday night, they said, adding that the victim and his mother, who was also attacked by them, were undergoing treatment at a hospital at present.

A FIR was filed against seven people on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim, Jigar Shekhia. The complaint said that when the victim was standing outside his house on Tuesday morning, one of the seven accused approached him. He abused the victim and threatened to kill him saying he was "flying too high these days". The same night, when the complainant



was standing outside a village temple six accused from the community with Rajput surname came towards him. Armed with sticks, they asked him why he was dressed up and wore sunglasses. They then thrashed and dragged him. When his mother tried to save him, they assaulted her, threatened to kill her and tore her clothes.

The FIR against the accused was registered under IPC sections pertaining to rioting, outraging the modesty of a woman, voluntarily causing hurt. They were also booked under relevant sections of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. No arrest has been made so far.



Dark clouds cover the skyline above the under-construction Tirupati Balaji temple ahead of its inauguration, in Jammu, on Thursday. PTI Photo

FIRST COLUMN

IMPORTANCE OF PM MODI'S US STATE VISIT

Domestic politics aside, there is much at stake for PM Modi's upcoming state visit to the US



Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be on a high-profile visit to the United States later this month. The state visit would be the first for the PM, and for the president of the USA and the second during his current tenure, as a host. This visit is happening against the backdrop of many high-profile visits by Indian and American diplomats, secretaries and ministers setting the ground, plank by plank, in what could be one of the most significant milestones in the India US bilateral relationship. The last such fillip to the relationship came in the period from 2005 to 2009 when India went nuclear and, US keeping aside its domestic political reservations and ally concerns (read Pakistan), eased India into the nuclear club, finally culminating in, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's state visit to the US. A state visit is the highest level of honour and prestige accorded bilaterally, and is considered to be the top-notch level in diplomatic relationships.

Prime Minister Modi's scheduled state visit was supposed to have been preceded, by his meeting with US President Joe Biden, at least thrice in less than a month. These included bilateral meetings during G7, to which India was invited, a meeting in Papua New Guinea and a QUAD leaders' summit before culminating in a state visit. However, President Biden had to cut short his trip to the Pacific Ocean Island nation and Australia, due to domestic issues, leading to a few hurried meetings on the sidelines of the G7 in Japan.

The domestic environment for both India and the US is just warming up, to what would be an extremely hot and noisy space for the world's oldest and largest democracy. India and the US face general elections next year and the domestic political climate, if not decibels, are already exceeding tolerable limits. Moving forward it would be unbearable and rough. This casts the dice for these leaders, both of whom are seeking re-election (PM Modi for the third term and President Biden second term), to make it worthwhile for their respective constituencies, which will send them back to the top posts. The US president would have to ensure that his voters, if not the congress and some of his colleagues, see the value of upgrading the India-US bilateral relationship, despite, India's conspicuous silence on Ukraine (except for It is not a time for War statement), close relations and dependencies on Russia and some uncomfortable questions regarding human rights, religious freedom etc.

Indian Prime Minister on his part would like to take the spectacle quotient a tad higher than the Howdy Modi, grand concerts event, when

PM Mod and then President Donald Trump, jointly addressed thousands of Indian Americans in Houston. The PM would expect a significant outcome from the state visit, albeit the cheering crowds, public events would definitely be a part of the package. The PM who was recently on a visit to Australia and Pacific island countries, where he got a rock stars welcome, addressed large cheering crowds in packed arenas and was even called "the boss" by the Australian PM. The Indian American groups are also prepping up for PM Modi's visit, as many of them are expected to participate in some key official ceremonies at the white house, including witnessing the 21-gun salute and perhaps yoga sessions led by Indian PM on International World yoga day on June 21st.

It would be worth remembering that PM Modi's visit would also follow opposition leader Rahul Gandhi's ten days trip to the US, where he interacted with a wide array of stakeholders, civil society, think tanks etc on questions surrounding Indian democracy. The larger questions regarding shrinking space for democratic manoeuvre and political opposition in India, which have been brought out by the opposition leader during his earlier visits to UK etc and which have led to some influencer groups doubting Indian democratic credentials, could have been contained, by the time PM Modi lands in the US. Domestic politics aside there is much at stake for PM Modis' upcoming state visit to the US.

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal)

Judgement, education and effective action

Whether one is the top man or the so-called bottom man, there is always an element of decision-making vested in the role



One of the critical components of decision-making is the ability to decipher decision spaces. Consider the example of a doorkeeper. By any standards, it is a lowly rank and humble in many ways. Yet, in times of knocking at the door, that position becomes more important than that of the Chairman himself. It is the doorkeeper's decision to let somebody in or keep him out. It is a power loaded with security concerns and at times with grave implications of time, life and death. Consider a situation where somebody is ill, and a doctor has been summoned in the late hours of the evening to the building to take care of the ailing person.

The doctor does not get a security clearance, but his entry into the building is critical. Like anything else, there is a risk involved, and somebody may be impersonating the doctor; there may be a rogue doctor or the doctor himself may be very impatient—the possibilities are several. The judgement of the gatekeeper and the judgement to be exercised on the spot make him the kingpin, not only for the moment of the act but indeed for much else, besides.

The derivation is obvious: everyone needs to have effective decision-making skills. The story goes that King Shivaji approached his Rajgad Fort near Pune, in the early hours of the morning after



THE PRIME MINISTER HAS TO NOT ONLY LEAD BUT ALSO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KEY DECISIONS. HIS ABILITY TO JUDGE AND DECIDE WHO TO CONSENT TO, AND TO WHAT EXTENT IS CRUCIAL.

(The writer is a policy analyst)

a long long ride and wanted to enter the Rajgad Fort. He had enemies at his heels. The head of security of the fort had it from the king (Maharaj) himself (in this case, Shivaji Maharaj) that no exceptions would be allowed for entry into the fort before dawn.

Shivaji Maharaj had some enemies in his hot pursuit, which he had evaded. The Head of Security took the call that the order of the Maharaj was sacred and Shivaji would not be let into the fort. Shivaji tried to explain to him that his life may be at risk and that he had been exercising his supreme powers by ordering a gate to be opened. The Head of Security refused to comply. When Shivaji asked him who would be responsible for his security, the Head of Security responded, "I am the head of security, and I shall be responsible. We shall make preparations for your comfort outside the fort, and you will be absolutely safe. Our full force will protect you and protect you successfully." The story concludes that Shivaji was finally allowed entry into the fort only at dawn. One of his first acts after his entry was to elevate the rank to the Head of Security.

The narrative, as it is, needs no comment. The larger part of the story is that it makes a point. In the ultimate analysis of the making of the human being: health and judgement are the two most important things. Judgement cannot be taught; it cannot be 'given.' It has to grow from within. It is a judgement that makes a person.

Judgement is both subtle and growing. In a parliamentary system, the Prime Minister is the head of the Executive. He has to not only lead but also be responsible for the key decisions. His ability to judge and decide who to consent to, and to what extent is crucial. He has also to assess to what extent amalgamate the various strands of advice received.

This brings us to the essence of training of the mind and education. The current rollout of the National Education Policy raises these questions in many ways. With increasing frequency, it is being asked many, how so many people, who do not even finish their school education become such original thinkers and make such brilliant contributions. Rabindra Nath Thakur is a common reference.

Indeed, many formally educated people do not get very far and flounder in the race of life in a worse-than-mediocre pattern. This appears as an enigma when it is actually it is not so. The truth is that creativity and judgement propelled even those who had not completed their formal education to higher levels of achievement. Higher levels of achievement do not necessarily follow high degrees. In the case of the educated, the natural achievements which would have followed creativity were sharpened and results were better than if they had not been educated at all.

It is soulful to remember this and use it as a compass to navigate one's own career and those dependent on one. The meaning, the content, the delivery, and the keeping alive of the educational processes are important phenomena. The whys and wherefores of this process need to be understood and developed more fruitfully as a part of any project related to the educational process. Hopefully, as the National Education Policy makes its rollout, these questions will not only surface but get addressed.

Caribbean medical degree can lead to a career in the West

Pursuing medical education in a Caribbean university is a viable route to a career in medicine in the West, although it is not without its challenges

In recent years, there has been a significant surge in the demand for doctors and the aspirations to pursue a medical career. However, the available resources and facilities have struggled to match the pace of this demand, resulting in a considerable gap. Consequently, numerous students have opted to relocate to different countries in search of admission to medical courses, as the distribution of requirements and available facilities remains imbalanced.

To pursue a medical career in the USA or Canada, students typically follow a structured path. Upon finishing their undergraduate degree, students are required to clear the MCAT exam as a prerequisite for admission to medical school. Once a student enters



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medical school, they spend another 4-5 years in a medical school which would include their pre-clinical and clinical. Once the student is done with clinical rotations and graduates from medical school, s/he applies for residency. Students submit applications through the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP). Depending on the specialisation they opt for, many doctors complete their residency programs in 3 to 7 years.

To become a doctor in the US/Canada, students have the option to pursue a Caribbean medical college route. This involves selecting a reputable and accredited medical school in the Caribbean and completing a 2-year pre-med program, followed by 2 years of pre-clinical studies. The stu-

dents then continue their clinical rotations in the USA/Canada. Studying medicine in the Caribbean region offers a multitude of benefits for aspiring medical students aiming to become practising doctors in the USA, UK, and Canada.

These advantages make Caribbean medical schools an appealing choice for those seeking a top-tier education, practical exposure, and a unique cultural experience. Additionally, these medical schools hold recognition from esteemed international organizations like the World Health Organization and the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, ensuring that graduates can practice medicine across all 50 states in the US or in the UK,

and Canada, among other various countries worldwide.

Lower Financial Burden: Studying MBBS at leading Caribbean medical colleges generally comes at a lower cost compared to US medical colleges, including both public and private institutions. While certain Caribbean colleges may have costs that approach those of US medical colleges, the overall expenses remain significantly more affordable.

Hassle-free Admission: Unlike other foreign medical universities, getting admission to top Caribbean medical colleges is less complex. Apart from decent credentials at the school level, you need to clear the country-specific medical entrance exam such as NEET in India. Most Caribbean colleges have rolling admissions

with three intakes- January, May and September.

Diverse Learning: Caribbean medical universities attract a diverse student population from various countries and cultural backgrounds. This multicultural environment fosters a rich learning experience, promoting cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

Gateway to the US: The Caribbean region is globally recognized for its esteemed medical schools. These institutions hold accreditation from prominent international organizations including the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and Other Health Professions (CAAM-HP), World Health Organization (WHO), and the Educational

Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). Such recognition empowers graduates to pursue medical practice in diverse countries across the globe. International medical graduates (IMGs) have a vital role in the American healthcare system, making up 25 per cent of the existing U.S. physician workforce. Among these IMGs, 18 per cent are graduates of Caribbean medical schools, indicating that approximately 4.5 per cent of licensed doctors in the U.S. obtained their MD degrees from Caribbean institutions.

Accredited Medical Schools: While choosing a Caribbean medical school, it's very important to check the recognitions and accreditations to ensure quality edu-

cation. Only schools that are recognized by CAAM-HP and accredited by the US Dept of Education, New York State Education Department and other US & Canadian medical education-related departments/bodies should be chosen to ensure a smooth transition into USA / Canada.

Pursuing a medical education at a Caribbean medical school offers a viable route to a rewarding career in medicine, although it is not without its challenges. While the entry requirements may be less stringent compared to those in the US, achieving exceptional grades and excelling in USMLE exams are still essential for securing a position in an American residency program.

NATO presses Turkiye to approve Sweden’s membership

AP ■ OSLO/NORWAY

NATO on Thursday ramped up pressure on member nation Turkiye to drop its objections to Sweden’s membership as the military organisation seeks to deal with the issue by the time US President Joe Biden and his counterparts meet next month. The 31-member alliance is also looking at boosting Ukraine’s non-member status in NATO and preparing a framework for security commitments that it can offer once the war with Russia is over. Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time allied leaders meet in Lithuania on July 11-12. The allies also hope to make progress on long-term funding and the security plan for Ukraine at the same event, Stoletenberg said. He said the allies continue to agree that Ukraine will become a NATO member but that in the meantime the

alliance should provide it with security commitments and substantial new funding. “Our focus today was on how we can bring Ukraine closer to NATO where it belongs,” he said. “No one knows when the war will end, but we must ensure that when it does we have credible arrangements in place to guarantee Ukraine’s security in the future and break Russia’s cycle of aggression,” Stoltenberg said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the allies were “focused on helping Ukraine to build up its medium- and long-term security capacity so that if and when the current aggression settles, Ukraine has the full capacity to deter future aggression”. “NATO has a role in that in terms of the work it can do to bring Ukraine up to NATO standards,” he said. He did not elaborate. Fearing they might be targeted by Moscow after Russia invaded Ukraine last year,



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, listens as a NATO foreign minister gives a statement to the media, at Oslo City Hall, during a meeting of NATO's foreign ministers in Oslo on Thursday. AP/PTI

Sweden and Finland abandoned their traditional positions of military nonalignment to seek protection under NATO’s security umbrella. Finland became NATO’s 31st member country in April.

NATO must agree unanimously for countries to join. Turkiye’s government accuses Sweden of being too lenient on terrorist organisations and security threats, including militant Kurdish groups and people

associated with a 2016 coup attempt. Hungary has also delayed its approval, but the reasons why have not been made publicly clear. Stoltenberg said that he would travel to Ankara “in the near future to continue to address how we can ensure the fastest possible accession of Sweden.” He said his and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s staffs were working on dates for the trip. “My message is that Sweden has delivered, and the time has come to ratify Sweden,” he told reporters at the conclusion of two days of informal talks between alliance foreign ministers to prepare for the summit in Lithuania. Others echoed his comments. Its time for Sweden to join now,” Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt told reporters. “I’m confident that also Hungary will ratify the accession protocol,” Stoltenberg said.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said that “it is essential that we can finally welcome Sweden as the 32nd member.” She stressed that the Swedish government has Berlin’s “full support”. Sweden’s foreign minister, Tobias Billström, said that “it is time for Turkey and Hungary to start the ratification of the Swedish membership to NATO”. He said that “everything (that) bars Sweden joining NATO will be seen as wine for (Russian president Vladimir) Putin”. For months, Sweden, Finland and Turkiye held talks to try to address Ankara’s concerns. Billstrom said he expected things to be made clear at a new meeting of this “permanent joint mechanism” in coming weeks. He noted that as of Thursday, Sweden had tightened its anti-terrorism laws. It is now it illegal to finance, recruit for or publicly encourage “a terrorist organisation”, or to travel abroad with the inten-

tion of joining such groups. The time may be ripe for movement. Sweden’s membership became embroiled in campaigning for elections in Turkiye, which Erdogan won on Sunday. Erdogan has also been seeking upgraded US fighter jets, and Washington signalled this week that they might be delivered. “I spoke to Erdogan and he still wants to work on something on the F-16s. I told him we wanted a deal with Sweden. So let’s get that done,” Biden said on Monday. On Tuesday, Blinken insisted that the issues of Sweden’s membership and the fighter jets were distinct. However, he stressed that the completion of both would dramatically strengthen European security. “Both of these are vital, in our judgement, to European security,” Blinken told reporters. “We believe that both should go forward as quickly as possible; that is to say Sweden’s accession and moving forward on the F-16 package more broadly.”

N Korean leader’s sister slams US for criticising failed satellite launch

AP ■ SEOUL

The powerful sister of North Korean Kim Jong Un on Thursday accused the United States of “gangster-like” hypocrisy for criticizing her country’s failed launch of a military spy satellite and insisted a successful launch will be made soon. Kim Yo Jong said North Korea’s efforts to acquire space-based reconnaissance capabilities were a legitimate exercise of its sovereign right and restated the country’s rejection of UN Security Council resolutions that ban it from conducting any launch involving ballistic missile technology. Her comments on state media came a day after the rocket carrying the satellite failed. North Korea said the rocket lost thrust after a stage separation and crashed in waters off the Korean Peninsula’s western coast. Washington, South Korea and Japan had quickly criticized the launch. Adam Hodge, a



spokesperson at the US National Security Council, said Washington strongly condemns the North Korean launch because it used banned ballistic missile technology, raised tensions and risked destabilizing security in the region and beyond. In her statement, Kim Yo Jong briefly mentioned Hodge’s comments before saying the United States “is letting loose a hackneyed gibberish prompted by its brigandish and abnormal thinking.” “If the DPRK’s satellite launch should be particularly censured, the US and all other

countries, which have already launched thousands of satellites, should be denounced. This is nothing but sophism of self-contradiction,” she said, using the initials of North Korea’s formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. She noted how the United States closely monitors the North through its own reconnaissance satellites and other aerial assets, calling the Americans a “group of gangsters” who would deem it as “illegal and threatening” had North Korea attempted to send a satellite into space by balloon. “The far-fetched logic that only the DPRK should not be allowed to do so according to the (UN Security Council’s) resolution’ which bans the use of ballistic rocket technology irrespective of its purpose, though other countries are doing so, is clearly a gangster-like and wrong one of seriously violating the DPRK’s right to use space and illegally oppressing it,” she said.

Bombing kills 3 in Kyiv

AP ■ KYIV

Russia launched a pre-dawn missile barrage on Ukraine’s capital Thursday, killing 3 people including a 9-year-old and her mother, officials said, and damaging apartment buildings, schools and a children’s hospital. It was the highest casualty toll from a single attack on Kyiv over the past month. A 33-year-old woman died as she and others waited to enter a locked Kyiv air raid shelter, leaving her and others at the mercy of falling missile fragments, according to her husband. Officials ordered an investigation into what happened. The latest Russian attack, using what Ukrainian officials said were short-range Iskander ground-launched missiles, coincided with events scheduled in Kyiv to celebrate International Children’s Day. Those events were cancelled. Ukrainian air defences shot down all 10 cruise and ballistic missiles launched by the Kremlin’s forces, but falling debris caused damage and casualties on the ground, wounding 16 people, according to author-



Police inspect a building damaged by a Russian night attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Thursday. AP/PTI

ities. Russia has kept up a steady barrage on the Ukrainian capital and other parts of the country in recent weeks as Kyiv readies what it says is a counteroffensive to push back Moscow’s troops, 15 months after their full-scale invasion. Kyiv was the target of drone and missile attacks on 17 days last month. Ukraine’s first lady, Olena Zelenska, said one child was in hospital after the attack. “Children’s Day has to be about

safe childhood, summer, life,” she tweeted. “But today it is about new crimes of (Russia) against children.” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba tweeted that the dead included a 9-year-old girl, her mother and another woman. At the Kyiv air raid shelter that was locked, Yaroslav Riabchuk said he and his wife of 17 years, Natalia, were outside with others when he ran around the back of the building to summon the guard in charge.

Russian court prepares way for new trial against jailed Kremlin foe

Moscow (AP): A Moscow court on Wednesday set a new date for a hearing paving the way for another trial of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny that could keep him in prison for decades. The Moscow City Court initially scheduled for Wednesday a preliminary hearing to discuss technical issues related to the trial of the Kremlin’s arch foe but moved it to June 6 without giving a reason. The court rejected a request by Navalny’s lawyers for more time to examine voluminous case materials. Navalny has said that the new extremism charges which he rejected as “absurd” could keep him in prison for another 30 years. He said an investigator told him that he would also face a separate military court trial on terrorism charges that could potentially carry a life sentence.

Court charges 5 men for Irish peacekeeper’s killing

Beirut (AP): Lebanon’s military tribunal on Thursday charged five men with the killing of an Irish UN peacekeeper in December, a senior judicial official said. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, alleged all five are linked with Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The indictment followed a half-year probe after an attack on a UN peacekeeping convoy near the town of Al-Aqbiya in Lebanon’s south, a stronghold of Hezbollah. The shooting resulted in the death of Pvt. Seán Rooney, 24, of Newtown Cunningham, Ireland, and seriously wounded Pvt. Shane Kearney, 22. The wounded peacekeeper was medically evacuated to Ireland. Two other Irish soldiers sustained light injuries. The indictment includes evidence from bystanders’ testimonies, as well as audio recordings and video footage from surveillance cameras, the Lebanese official said.

Turkish election body confirms Erdogan’s victory in runoff vote

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkiye’s election board certified the results of the May 28 presidential runoff election on Thursday, confirming that Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been a dominant force in Turkish politics for the past two decades, has won a third term as president. Ahmet Yener, the head of the Supreme Electoral Council said Erdogan won 52.18 per cent of the votes, while main opposition party leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu garnered 47.82 per cent. According to these results, it is understood that Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been elected president and the results were sent to the Official Gazette for publication,” Yener announced. He said turnout was 85.72 per cent. Already Turkiye’s longest serving leader, Erdogan, 69, can now govern until 2028. Unconfirmed reports say he is scheduled to take the oath of office on Saturday, after which he is expected to announce the lineup of his new



Cabinet. Erdogan faces a host of domestic challenges, from a battered economy to pressure for the repatriation of millions of Syrian refugees and the need to rebuild after a devastating earthquake in February that killed 50,000 and leveled cities. Investors will be watching closely to see if Mehmet Simsek, a respected former finance minister and deputy prime minister, is reappointed to head the economy portfolio, for signs of a return by Erdogan to more conventional econom-

ic policies. Inflation in Turkiye hit a staggering 85 per cent in October before easing to 44 per cent last month, according to official figures, although independent experts say the true rate is much higher. Critics blame the turmoil on Erdogan’s policy of keeping interest rates low to promote growth. Economists generally recommend raising rates to combat inflation. The Turkish lira has lost around 10 per cent of its value since the start of the year.

European summit opens in Moldova

AP ■ BULBOACA

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived at a sprawling summit of some 50 European leaders in Moldova on Thursday, becoming the focal point of an event that seeks to quell regional conflicts and shore up unity in the face of Russia’s war. The meeting of the European Political Community, a pan-continental gathering of heads of state and government from 47 countries, brings together leaders from European Union nations and others to the 27-member bloc’s south and east — a region pushed to a turning point in its relationship with Moscow by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine last year. The EU, represented at the summit by the bloc’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel, wants to use the summit to reach out to many Eastern European countries that spent decades either within the Soviet Union or under its immediate sphere of influence, and to bolster the conti-



Moldova’s President Maia Sandu, right, greets Italy’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during arrivals for the European Political Community Summit at the Mimi Castle in Bulboaca, Moldova on Thursday. AP/PTI

nent’s unified response to Russian aggression. The choice to hold the summit in Moldova, a former Soviet republic of around 2.6 million people, is seen as a message to the Kremlin both from the EU and the pro-Western Moldovan government, which received EU candidate status in June of last year at the same time as Ukraine. Moldova, Europe’s poorest country which is cradled by Ukraine on three sides, aspires to join the EU by the end of the decade, and has consistently

signalled its support for Ukraine and taken in refugees fleeing the war. Speaking from the summit venue, a 19th-century castle and vineyard around 35 kilometers (21 miles) from the capital, Chisinau, Moldovan President Maia Sandu said a major aim of the summit was “restoring peace on the continent” and protecting democracy in Moldova and Ukraine from threats posed by Russia. “We need to reconfirm our support for Ukraine as it resists Russian

aggression,” she said. “Ukraine keeps Moldova safe today, and we are very, very grateful for that.” Zelenskyy, the first foreign leader to arrive at Thursday’s summit, entered an expansive courtyard of the castle in his trademark olive green shirt and cargo pants before meeting with Sandu on a red carpet. He thanked the Moldovan people for hosting Ukrainian refugees, and said both Ukraine and Moldova were destined to work “shoulder to shoulder” for EU membership. “What is very important: our future in the EU,” he said, adding that his country is ready to enter NATO whenever the Western military alliance is ready to accept it. “I think security guarantees are very important, not only for Ukraine, but for our neighbors, for Moldova, because of Russian aggression in Ukraine and potential aggression in other parts of Europe,” Zelenskyy said. Other summit participants include German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Amazon workers protest return-to-office mandate

Seattle (AP): Telling executives to “strive harder,” hundreds of corporate Amazon workers protested what they decried as the company’s lack of progress on climate goals and an inequitable return-to-office mandate during a lunchtime demonstration at its Seattle headquarters Wednesday. The protest came a week after Amazon’s annual shareholder meeting and a month after a policy took effect returning workers to the office three days per week. Previously, team leaders were allowed to determine how their charges worked. The employees chanted their disappointment with the pace of



the company’s efforts to reduce its carbon footprint — “Emissions climbing, time to act” — and urged Amazon to return authority to team leaders when it comes to work location. Wearing a black pirate hat and red coat, Church Hindley, a quality assurance engineer, said

working from home allowed him to live a better, healthier life. “I’m out here because I refuse to just sit idly by while mandates are dictated from above down that don’t make sense and hurt the planet, hurt families and individual lives,” Hindley said.

Technology radically changing sleep pattern

Loveborough: From sleep trackers to wakefulness drugs, the 21st century has seen an influx of new technology that could radically alter the way we sleep. Many of these new technologies chase the dream of optimised slumber. They promise to help tailor our sleep schedules to fit around our social lives, help us sleep for longer or even skip a night’s sleep altogether. Here’s how technology is permeating our sleep, and what the future holds. TIME TO WAKE UP Sleeping pills have recently been joined by a wave of wakefulness drugs, purportedly safer and more powerful alternatives to caffeine.



It seems that they work best on people who are already sleep deprived and don’t have a huge effect on those who are already well rested. Modafinil is touted for its cognition enhancing effects (especially in sleep-deprived people) and can supposedly keep people awake and alert for several days at a time. Some scientific studies are showing that

this may indeed be the case, although results are mixed, with other research showing the effects are similar to caffeine. The drug was developed to help people with narcolepsy but some have started using it for its focus-enhancing effects. It is a controlled drug (prescription only) in most countries. People who use it for cognitive enhancement or wakefulness are buying it on the black market or getting it from friends who have a prescription. Modafinil is popular with students — in 2020, Loughborough University researchers found that, of 506 students surveyed at 54 UK universities, 19% had taken cognitive enhancement sub-

stances. But people who take them for non-medical purposes are risking their health. Studies of the safety of these drugs do not consider this type of use. We don’t know what using these drugs to stay awake for long periods of time does to people’s bodies. But we do know that disrupting your sleep pattern (for example, shift work) is linked to health problems such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Recent studies suggest some people are combining sleep and wakefulness pills to manage their body rhythms and optimise their sleep or unwind after a day of hard work. The effects of taking wakefulness pills with other drugs is largely unknown. In the UK sale or supply of

a prescription-only or unlicensed medicine is a criminal offence. Whereas in the US, even possession of stimulants without a prescription is a crime. SMART SLEEP Many people already use smart watches, smart jewellery and fitness bands to track their sleep — for example, alarms that wake people up at the optimal point in their sleep cycle and motion sensor apps that analyse sleep patterns. New ways of tracking sleep could soon include donning a pair of pyjamas embedded with sensors to track changes in posture, and heart rate, whose algorithm creates a breathing pattern to mimic and help you fall asleep.

PTI president arrested

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Extract of the Standalone Audited Financial Results for the Quarter and year ended 31st March, 2023							
(Rs. in lacs)							
S. No	Particulars	Quarter Ended 31.03.2023 Audited	Quarter Ended 31.12.2022 Unaudited	Quarter Ended 31.03.2022 Audited	Year Ended 31.03.2023 Audited	Year Ended 31.03.2022 Audited	
1	Total Income from operations (net)	38.06	17.73	27.67	101.51	206.23	
2	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period (Before tax and after exceptional items)	16.11	(4.79)	(4.72)	12.07	100.72	
3	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax (after Extraordinary items)	30.38	(4.79)	4.21	26.34	93.15	
4	Total comprehensive income for the period (comprising profit/(loss) for the period after tax and other comprehensive income after tax	30.38	(4.79)	4.21	26.34	93.15	
5	Equity Share Capital	1630.03	1440.03	1440.03	1630.03	1440.03	
6	Earning per share (before extraordinary items) (of Rs. 10/- each)	0.186	(0.033)	0.029	0.162	0.647	
	Basic	0.184	(0.029)	0.025	0.157	0.554	
7	Earning per share (after extraordinary items) (of Rs. 10/- each)	0.186	(0.033)	0.029	0.162	0.647	
	Basic	0.184	(0.029)	0.025	0.157	0.554	
Note :							
The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly/Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/Annual Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange websites. (www.bseindia.com) and company website www.mymoneyviews.com							
For and on behalf of the Board of Directors							
Place : Delhi				Sanjay Sethi			
Dated : 30/05/2023				Whole Time Director			
				DIN : 00305190			

A compromise, the package restricts spending for the next two years, suspends the debt ceiling into January 2025 and changes some policies, including imposing new work requirements for older Americans receiving food aid and green-lighting an Appalachian natural gas line that many Democrats oppose. It bolsters funds for defence and veterans, and guts new money for Internal Revenue Service agents.

"It's not just a marriage, it's the presentation of the future king of Jordan," said political analyst Amer Sabaileh. "The issue of the crown prince has been closed."

GST mop-up crosses ₹1.5 lakh crore for third month in a row

Up 12% in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST collections crossed Rs 1.50 lakh crore for the third month in a row, recording a 12 per cent increase in May at over Rs 1.57 lakh crore, according to the official data released on Thursday.

The collections, tax experts said, reflects a continuation of the good economic performance across states witnessed since last year.

The Gross Good & Services Tax (GST) revenue collected in the month of May, 2023 is Rs 1,57,090 crore of which Central GST is Rs 28,411 crore, State GST is Rs 35,828 crore, Integrated GST is Rs 81,363 crore (including Rs 41,772 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is Rs 11,489 crore (including Rs 1,057 crore collected on import of goods), a finance ministry statement said.

"The revenues for the month of May 2023 are 12 per



cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year," the ministry said.

During the month, revenue from import of goods was 12 per cent higher and the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) are 11 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month

last year.

May is the third month in a row that tax collections from goods sold and services rendered have crossed Rs 1.50 lakh crore. In April GST revenues had touched a record high of Rs 1.87 lakh crore, while in March it was Rs 1.60 lakh crore.

May is the 14th month in

a row when monthly GST revenues came in more than Rs 1.4 lakh crore. Collections have crossed the Rs 1.5 lakh crore-mark for the 5th time since the implementation of GST on July 1, 2017.

KPMG in India National Head (Indirect Taxes) Abhishek Jain said the GST collection matches with the government

budget estimates for this fiscal.

"With extensive department GST audits lined up before September 2023, these figures may likely go up from here in the months to come," Jain added.

Deloitte India Partner M S Mani said these collections, while being lower than the previous year-end month, pertain to supply transactions undertaken in April.

"While the collections in absolute terms are lower than the previous month -- which had an embedded year-end impact -- it reflects a continuation of the inherently good economic performance across states witnessed since last year," Mani added.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said GST revenues in May 2023 have modestly exceeded expectations.

"Over the next few months, we expect GST revenues to print at Rs 1.55-1.65 trillion and record an expansion of 10-11 per cent in YoY terms, broadly in line with the nominal GDP growth expected in FY2024," Nayar said.

EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said GST collection figures for May 2023 further strengthen the belief in India's macroeconomic stability and continued growth momentum as we see a 12 per cent YoY growth.

"While the figures are comparatively moderate as compared to collections of April, however that's primarily on account of last fiscal year closure activities getting accumulated and accounted for in the collections of last month," Agarwal said.

Tax Connect Advisory Partner Vivek Jalan said the budget 2023 has projected an uptick of 12 per cent in GST collections in FY23-24 vis-a-vis last financial year.

Although GST from import of goods and services has shown a growth of 12 per cent this month vis-a-vis last month, the collection from domestic transactions has shown a growth of 11 per cent which is below the budget expectations, which maybe a point for the GST Council to ponder upon, Jalan added.

Sebi to auction properties of 7 business groups

On June 28 to recover investors' money

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday said it will auction 17 properties belonging to seven business groups including MPS Group, Tower Infotech, and Vibgyor Group on June 28, with a total reserve price of Rs 51 crore, in a bid to recover investors' money.

Apart from these, the regulator has put on block properties of Prayag Group, Multipurpose BIOS India Group, Waris Finance International Group and Pailan Group of companies, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notice.

The 17 properties being auctioned include land parcels, storied buildings, flats, and a commercial space situated across West Bengal.

Inviting bids, Sebi said auction of the properties will be conducted through online mode between 11 am and 1 pm. Further, total reserve price has been pegged at Rs 51 crore for the assets and Quikr Realty has been engaged by Sebi to assist in the sale of these properties.

Of the total properties to be auctioned, five belong to MPS Group, four relate to Vibgyor, three pertain to Pailan Group of companies, two belong to Tower Infotech and one each to Multipurpose BIOS India Group, Prayag Group and Waris Finance.

The regulator said the bid-

ders should make their own independent enquiries regarding encumbrances, title of properties put on action and claims, among others prior to submitting their bids.

These firms had raised funds from investors without complying with regulatory norms, which prompted Sebi to take action.

Earlier, the regulator had attached some of their properties after directives asking them to refund investors' money along with interest did not materialise. In these matters, the markets regulator had also attached demat and bank accounts.

Going by the Sebi orders, MPS Group of companies includes MPS Greenery Developers that collected Rs 1,520 crore from investors through illegal Collective Investment Schemes (CIS).

Prayag Infotech had made an offer of redeemable preference shares between 2007-2008 and 2011-12 and mobilised at least Rs 131.37 crore from over 1.57 lakh investors.

Vibgyor Allied Infrastructure had issued optionally fully convertible debentures to 49,562 investors in 2009 and raised Rs 61.76 crore.

Tower Infotech had raised nearly Rs 46 crore from more than 49,000 investors through issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) and redeemable preference shares between 2005 and 2010.



Markets extend losses for 2nd day in highly volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower in highly volatile trade on Thursday due to selling in banking, metal and energy counters amid a mixed trend in the global markets.

Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 193.70 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 62,428.54 even after a positive beginning. During the day, it fell 263.1 points or 0.42 per cent to 62,359.14.

The NSE Nifty fell 46.65 points or 0.25 per cent to finish at 18,487.75.

"Despite challenges in the global economies, the domestic market displayed better than estimated Q4 earnings growth, along with 7.2 per cent GDP growth in FY23, adding buoyancy to the market during the week.

"However, today the market closed with a marginal negative bias in which banks witnessed heavy profit-booking. Investors turned cautious in anticipation of inflationary pressure in the US after raising the US debt ceiling," said

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel fell 3.42 and Kotak Mahindra Bank declined 3.31 per cent. ICICI Bank, ITC, HDFC Bank, UltraTech Cement, HCL Technologies and Maruti were among the major laggards.

Tata Motors, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma, Nestle, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers.

Meanwhile, S&P Global Ratings said Reliance Industries Ltd's operating performance is likely to remain resilient over the next two years, as the firm's growing presence in the digital and retail segments will temper softer earnings in the energy business.

Reliance shares fell 0.51 per cent to close at Rs 2,462.05 apiece on BSE.

Institutional investors lapped up Coal India's share in the maiden government's stake sale this fiscal, with Rs 6,500 crore bids pouring in on the first day of the offer for sale.

Coal India output grows 9.5% to record 60 MT in May; offtake rises 4% to 63.7 MT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) has reported a 9.5 per cent year-on-year rise in monthly production to a record 60 million tonne (MT) in May 2023. The miner, along with its subsidiaries, had produced 54.7 MT of coal in the same month last year, CIL said in a statement on Thursday.

"CIL's May 2023 production rose to a record 60 MT, logging 9.5 per cent growth over the same month last year with an increase of 5.2 MT. Considering the production for May generally hovers in the range of 40-



48 MT, the CIL output surge in the current fiscal's May was substantial. All the subsidiaries have listed positive growth," the statement said.

Progressive production in April-May 2023 was 117.5 MT, 8.6 per cent higher from 108.2 MT in the year-ago period.

Rising risk appetite may affect some banks' intrinsic credit profiles: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A rise in risk appetite among Indian banks highlights the importance of assessing individual banks' ability to withstand expected and unexpected balance-sheet stress as part of the analysis of their intrinsic creditworthiness, said Fitch Ratings in a report.

Banks' loan growth over the financial year ended March 2023 (FY23) reached 15.4 per cent, the highest since FY12.

"We believe, this partly reflected pent-up credit demand following the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as strong nominal GDP growth, and we expect some normalisation in FY24," the global rating agency said on Thursday.



However, rapid loan growth and higher exposure to certain asset classes are also likely to indicate greater risk appetite and could affect risk profiles, it said, adding increasing risk appetite reflects in part banks' efforts to boost returns after funding costs rose over 2022, even as they manage asset growth relative to capital.

Notably, credit card lending and personal loans exposure rose to 10.2 per cent of system loans by FY23, from 7.5 per cent

in FY18, it said.

"We view such unsecured categories as most vulnerable to potential stress, though exposures among our rated entities remain manageable, and improvements in risk controls and loan-book granularity should help to reduce risks associated with any future asset-quality deterioration relative to previous cycles. We also expect tighter regulatory supervision to slow unsecured lending in the year ahead," it said.

Shareholders to take call on listing: Future Generali India MD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Future Generali India Insurance has been profitable since 2014 but the decision to list the company on exchanges would be taken by shareholders, managing director Anup Rau said on Thursday.

Future Generali India Insurance Company Limited is a joint venture between the Generali Group with a majority 74 per cent stake, and remaining with the Future Group.

India continues to be most attractive market for insurance players and premium for general insurance segment is expected to grow at 20 per cent in the next few years, he said.

Meanwhile, private general insurer announced the launch of its new health insurance product - DIY Health - which offers flexibility and freedom to choose the coverage as per the customers' needs.

This comprehensive product celebrates the power of choice, offering a base plan with 17 base features, complemented with a wide array of 20 modular features.

This modular health insurance product would enable customers to not only choose the most relevant features as per their life needs but also enables them to further tweak or modify the policies annually, ensuring their health insurance remains as unique and special as they are, he said.



TCS, Reliance, Jio top best Indian brands 2023 ranking

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Technology giant TCS and India's most valuable company Reliance Industries have topped the list of the country's most valuable brands, according to Interbrand, the renowned global brand consultancy. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) topped the 2023 50 Most Valuable Indian Brands list with a brand value of Rs 1.09 lakh crore.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd is at No.2 spot with a brand value of Rs 65,320 crore. His group's telecom and digital unit Jio is also in the top 5 with a brand value of Rs 49,027 crore. "Celebrating its 10th year, the Best Indian Brands report has become a definitive guide to the nation's brand landscape since its inaugural publication in 2014," Interbrand said.

This year's edition showcases remarkable growth, with a total list value of Rs 8.3 lakh crore (USD 100 billion), marking a significant 167 per cent increase over the past decade. This is the first time the total value of the table has surpassed the USD 100 billion mark.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa at CBRE, said, "As we look ahead, the intersection of real estate and the EV sector presents exciting opportunities and challenges.

BUSINESS BRIEF

RDSS FOR NDMC APPROVED

NEW DELHI: Ministry of Power (MoP) has approved Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) for the NDMC area of New Delhi with a project cost of Rs 337 cr. The agreement was signed by Saurav Shah, ED-PFC and Dr. Ankita Chakravartty, Secretary, NDMC in the presence of senior officials of both PFC and NDMC.

NFL RECORDS HIGHEST-EVER PROFIT

NOIDA: National Fertilizers Limited (NFL) has achieved its best-ever operational performance by setting new records of Production, Sales, Turnover and Profit during the financial year 2022-23. The results of Company for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2023 were approved by the Board in its meeting on May 29, 2023.

PREVENTIVE VIGILANCE WORKSHOP HELD

NEW DELHI: A three-day Workshop on Preventive Vigilance was conducted at Mussoorie from May 24-26 for E2-E7 Level. The participants were from NRTS-I, NRTS-II and NR-III. The Workshop was inaugurated in a traditional manner by Dharmendra Kumar Madan, CVO, POWERGRID by lighting the Lamp. V K Singh, Director (Personnel), A K Mishra, ED (NR-1) and others were present.

DHILLON, CMD, PFC BAGS AWARD

NEW DELHI: Ravinder Singh Dhillon, Chairman & Managing Director of Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC), a Maharatna Company and India's leading NBFC in the power sector, was conferred with the prestigious "SKOCH INDIA ECONOMIC FORUM AWARD" in recognition of his stellar leadership, path-breaking energy transition initiatives, remarkable achievements and contribution to the accelerated development of the Power Sector.

POWERGRID DISTRIBUTES COTTON BAGS

NEW DELHI: As a part of Swachhhta Pakhwada action plan, and to contribute towards Swachh Bharat Mission launched by Prime Minister, POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED (POWERGRID) distributed cotton bags to the general public at Bahu Plaza, Jammu on May 31, 2023.

Gold falls by ₹150 to ₹60,250; silver jumps ₹150

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices eased Rs 150 to Rs 60,250 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a fall in yellow metal price overseas, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had ended at Rs 60,400 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver, however, jumped Rs 150 to Rs 72,900 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 60,250/10 grams, down Rs 150 per 10 grams," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, gold was quoting lower



at USD 1,955 per ounce, while silver was marginally up at USD 23.27 per ounce.

Comex gold prices edged lower in Asian trading hours on Thursday as the dollar and bond yields rebounded from lows in Wednesday's session, Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities, said.

Rupee rises 33 paise to close at 82.42 against US dollar

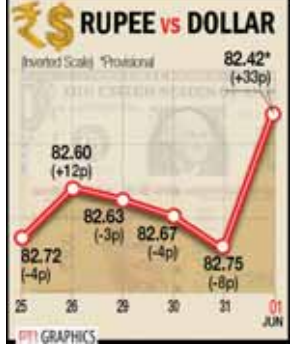
PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 33 paise to close at 82.42 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as positive macroeconomic data strengthened investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.54 against the US dollar and settled at 82.42 (provisional), up 33 paise over its previous close amid sustained foreign fund inflows.

During the day, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 82.36 and a low of 82.54.

On Wednesday, the rupee closed at 82.75 against the US currency.



The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.20 per cent to 104.12. Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures advanced 0.17 per cent to USD 72.72 per

barrel.

"The Indian rupee strengthened amid stellar economic data and foreign fund inflows. It has clocked the best single-day gain in almost two months following dollar inflows and lower commodity prices," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities said.

Foreign institutions bought USD 4.5 billion of domestic stocks in May, the most since November.

Though the spot USDINR fell on Thursday, technical is signalling a continuation of the bullish trend, Parmar said, adding that looking ahead, traders will eye on Friday's US payrolls data ahead of the Federal Reserve's June meeting.

E-vehicle makers require 13 mn sq ft real estate space by 2030

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Electric vehicle manufacturers will need around 13 million square feet of real estate space by 2030 to make targeted 23 million units of two-wheelers and 4 million units of four-wheelers, according to CBRE.

Real estate consultant

CBRE South Asia released a report, 'Electric Vehicles in India - New Wheels on the Roads', on Thursday that focuses on the trends, growth, and influence of electric vehicles (EVs) on the real estate sector in India.

"Real estate requirements of manufacturing facilities of 4-wheeler and 2-wheeler (4W

and 2W) electric vehicles is estimated to be around 13 million square feet by 2030 as a result of the government's EV adoption targets," it said.

Moreover, EV battery manufacturing facilities would require 2,400 acre of land to accommodate the production of 200 GWh of batteries by 2030.

By 2030, this real estate requirement will allow a production capacity of about 4 million units of 4Ws and 23 million units of 2Ws.

The Indian EV market is expected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 49 per cent between 2021-2030 and cross annual sales of 17 million

units by 2030. The consultant noted Built-to-Suit (BTS) and leased facilities are largely preferred by EV manufacturers at present due to ease of capital deployment, flexibility in lease terms, speed to market and location advantages. However, an owned facility provides more scope for customisation, save monthly rental outgoings

and has better prospects for land price appreciation, it added.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa at CBRE, said, "As we look ahead, the intersection of real estate and the EV sector presents exciting opportunities and challenges.

SEVILLA END SEASON WITH EUROPA LEAGUE TITLE

AP ■ MADRID

It was the usual ending for Sevilla in an unusual season for the Spanish soccer club. Sevilla won the Europa League trophy yet again on Thursday after a season in which it went through coaching changes and had to fight just to avoid relegation in the Spanish league.

The team's struggles were quickly forgotten with its victory on penalties over Roma in the Europa League final on Wednesday in Budapest, which gave the club a record seventh title in the second-tier European competition.

What looked like a season to forget turned into triumph after another impressive campaign by the Spanish club in the competition where it has been dominant in recent years. Five of its titles came within the last 10



years — 2014-16, 2020 and 2023.

This time, Sevilla eliminated European powerhouses Manchester United in the quarterfinals and Juventus in the

semifinals. It had gotten past Fenerbahce and PSV Eindhoven in previous rounds.

On Wednesday, the team beat José Mourinho-coached Roma 4-1 in a penalty shootout

after a 1-1 draw.

Sevilla's turnaround this season came after the club decided to replace Jorge Sampaoli with José Luis Mendilibar in March. Before Mendilibar arrived, the

team had won only twice in eight games in all competitions, with five losses. Since he took over, Sevilla lost only twice in 16 games.

"I'm happy to be here, to have won for the club, which was having a hard time when we got here," Mendilibar said. "We have done something good that can have repercussions for the good of the club."

The coach who had spent a large part of his career with Eibar came on a contract until the end of the season but was expected to stay with Sevilla following his successful stint.

"He transformed us," said Sevilla defender Jesús Navas, the only player from the current squad who was with the club when it won the Europa League title for the first time in 2006. "He got the best out of us and the result is there. He deserves to be with this club for a long time."

Sampaoli had taken over for Julen Lopetegui after the team's unusually poor start to the season. Sevilla had finished fourth in the league the last three seasons, only behind powerhouses Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid.

This time it is sitting in 11th place entering its final match at Real Sociedad on Sunday, and will only make it to the Champions League again next season thanks to its Europa League title.

Sevilla made it to the Champions League quarterfinals in 2018, but since then had only once advanced past the group stage.

Having to play in the second-tier Europa League has certainly turned out OK for Sevilla, though, and on Thursday it will be parading to celebrate yet another European title with its fans.



Neville backs City

AP ■ MANCHESTER

As a part of Manchester United's treble-winning team of 1999, Gary Neville admits he is in fear ahead of Saturday's FA Cup final.

United is the only team to win the three major trophies in a single English soccer season — the Premier League title, Champions League and FA Cup.

Now Manchester City is in contention to replicate that feat, having already secured the league title.

City has the chance to win its second trophy this season when it faces United in the FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium, which would set up a possible treble when the team coached by Pep Guardiola meets Inter Milan in the Champions League final in Istanbul on June 10.

"I do fear it is on the cards," Neville told The Associated Press. "City have not got there yet, but they look like they are on the way, on the path. They've got a great manager, they've got great players, but they've still got to get over the line. Anything can happen and we just pray and (have our) fingers crossed. It doesn't bear thinking about."

City has overtaken United as English soccer's dominant team over the past decade and has just won its fifth league title in six years. But the club has yet to match United's greatest ever achievement, and has yet to ever win the European title.

And now United has the chance to end its rival's trophy pursuit at Wembley on Saturday.

United manager Erik ten Hag has enjoyed an impressive first season in charge, having led United to success in the League Cup in February, as well securing a return to the Champions League next season. But Neville still considers City the favorite in the final.

"I think they will almost be disappointed now if they don't win it (the treble)," Neville said. "They'll be expected to win every game. The Cup final might present an issue or two, it is Manchester United, but they are far better than the teams they've got left to play."

City put together an unstoppable run to win the title and has blown away some of the best teams at home and abroad in its charge toward the treble. Liverpool and Arsenal were beaten 4-1 and Real Madrid lost 4-0 at Etihad Stadium in the Champions League semifinals.

Former City women's player Jill Scott believes City will be too strong for United.

"I went to the Arsenal game and it could have been 7-0," she told the AP. "The football they played was incredible."

"I can't see City not coming away with that FA Cup win. Sometimes in a one-off game anything can happen, but I just think they will be far superior."

United looking to stop treble-chasing City

AP ■ LONDON

The roars grew louder inside Old Trafford as Erik ten Hag addressed Manchester United fans from the middle of the field, reminding them of the role they have in protecting the club's greatest ever achievement.

There was one game to go this season, the United manager told the baying crowd, and his players standing right in front of him were ready to give their all to beat Manchester City in the FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium.



"We count on you as well," he said, pointing to the supporters, who by now were punching the air in defiance. "They will give everything when you are at our backs, and I'm sure we've a really good chance to take the cup back to Old Trafford."

As rallying cries go, it was pretty much pitch perfect from Ten Hag, who knows exactly what's at stake on Saturday in a local derby with widespread repercussions.

For United, this is about much more than capturing a second trophy of the season — after the English League Cup in February that ended the club's six-year title drought — to cap an encouraging first season under Ten Hag. It's also about preserving United's proud status as the only English team to have won the league-FA Cup-European Cup treble in the same season.

City, after all, is two wins from emulating that feat, having already clinched the Premier League title and booked its place in the Champions League final against Inter Milan in Istanbul on June 10.

That United can ruin City's treble bid adds more spice to the first cup final between the rivals, which is taking place about 170 miles (270 kilometers) south of Manchester.

City starts as the undoubted favorite on the back of its stunning form since February that reeled in long-time leader Arsenal in the Premier League race and saw Bayern Munich

and Real Madrid swept aside in the Champions League knockout stage.

Before a much-weakened team — featuring a bunch of youth players — lost at Brentford 1-0 in a league match with little riding on it last Sunday, City went on a 25-match unbeaten run in all competitions and won 20 of them. Along the way, Madrid was beaten 4-0, Bayern 3-0 and Arsenal 4-1. Back in October, City thrashed United 6-3.

All those games were at home, though, and City hasn't been quite so machine-like on the road. And that's not the only source of hope for United, which is seeking its 13th FA Cup title — with only Arsenal (14) having more.

City manager Pep Guardiola talks often of his players having "rhythm" but that might have been lost after he chose to rotate his lineups for the final two league games, with the title wrapped up. Before the loss at Brentford, City was possibly fortunate to come away from Brighton with a 1-1 draw.

Erling Haaland has 52 goals in all competitions in a stunning first season at City but it's just one goal in his last six games for the Norway striker.

Meanwhile, United won its final four matches in the league, conceding just two goals in that period. And in the last meeting between the teams, United won at Old Trafford 2-1 in January — albeit after a debatable equalizing goal from Marcus Rashford.

Sabalenka refuses to take questions on Ukraine war

AP ■ PARIS

Aryna Sabalenka, a Belarusian tennis player seeded No. 2 at the French Open, declined to answer questions about Russia's invasion of Ukraine after she won a match on Wednesday.

After her first-round win Sunday, Sabalenka had said no Russian or Belarusian athletes support the war, but she was asked Wednesday to personally condemn Belarus' role in supporting Russia's invasion.

"I've got no comments to you," the Australian Open champion said in a press conference after her 7-5, 6-2 victory over



Iryna Shymanovich in the second round at the Grand Slam tournament.

Sabalenka's first-round opponent, Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine, had urged reporters to ask the 25-year-old Sabalenka if she personally supports or

opposes the war.

Sabalenka was asked — in the context of potentially becoming the world's No. 1 player — about whether she supports Belarus' authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko. "I have no comments to

you, so thank you for your question," she replied.

Next was the question about Belarus' role in the war.

When a third question was posed, the moderator stepped in, and Sabalenka added: "You've got enough answers from me, and I've got no comments to you." On Sunday, Kostyuk had refused to shake hands with Sabalenka after their match on Court Philippe Chatrier.

After that match, Sabalenka said: "Nobody in this world, Russian athletes or Belarusian athletes, support the war. Nobody. How can we support the war? Nobody — normal people — will never support it."

Gael Monfils withdraws with wrist injury

AP ■ PARIS

A thrilling five-set victory took a toll on Gael Monfils, whose withdrawal from the French Open handed No. 6 Holger Rune a walkover to the third round.

The 36-year-old Frenchman said he has a strained left wrist and can't continue.

He battled Sebastian Baez for nearly four hours on Court Philippe Chatrier before beating the Argentine 3-6, 6-3, 7-5, 1-6, 7-5 in a first-round match that ended at 12:18 a.m. local time Wednesday.

The victory was Monfils' first at tour level this year, as the veteran was coming back from heel surgery.

"Actually, physically, I'm quite fine. But I had the problem with my wrist that I cannot solve," he said. "The doctor say was not good to play with that type of injury. Yesterday was actually very risky, and then today definitely say I should stop."

Monfils reached the semifinals at the French Open in 2008 and made it to the quarterfinals on three other occasions.

French Open hopes AI can help players block death threats, hate

AP ■ PARIS

Frances Tiafoe says he receives death threats via social media after he loses professional tennis matches. Jessica Pegula says the same. So does Donna Vekic — directed at just her or her family, too.

"Everybody gets them after a loss," said Tiafoe, a 25-year-old from Maryland who was scheduled to play in the French Open's second round on Thursday and was a semifinalist at last year's US Open.

"It's just how society is today. I know how that affects people's mental health. That's very real."

Sloane Stephens, the 2017 champion at Flushing Meadows and 2018 runner-up at Roland Garros, says she often deals with racist messages directed at her online, and said some prompted the FBI to investigate.

"It's obviously been a problem my entire career. It has never stopped," said Stephens, who is Black. "If anything, it's only gotten worse."

In a bid to try to protect athletes from that sort of abuse at Roland Garros during the 15-day Grand Slam tournament that ends June 11, the French Tennis Federation (FFT) is paying a company to provide play-



ers with software that uses artificial intelligence to block these sorts of negative comments.

Every contestant in every category — singles, doubles, juniors, wheelchair competitors and so on, for a total of around 700 to 800 — is allowed free access to Bodyguard.ai for use on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. A few dozen players had signed up for the service as of the start of this week, according to Bodyguard.

"This is really important for us: for the players to be very comfortable and be able to focus on the competition. Tennis is mental. It's really what you have in your mind that counts; you're making 1,000 decisions during a match," said FFT CEO

Caroline Flaissier, who put the cost to the federation at somewhere between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

"We know that there is a lot of cyberbullying," she said. "We have to address that major issue, so we thought let's do a test."

That includes monitoring social media used by the FFT and the French Open itself. An FFT spokeswoman said Wednesday that 4,500 messages had been deleted out of the 79,000 received on those accounts since May 21.

Yann Guerin, head of sports for Nice-based Bodyguard, said the company's software — which is constantly updated by employees who might notice new words or emojis that should be part of

the screening — needs less than 100 milliseconds to analyze a comment and delete it if it's "hateful or undesirable." He cited the example of one player who participated in qualifying rounds last week, before the start of the tournament proper.

"He lost ... so he was disappointed. Then he checked his phone and was like, 'Whoa,'" Guerin said, estimating that more than 70% of the comments that athlete received would fall under the heading of "toxicity." "Very bad," Guerin said. "Not bad. VERY bad."

That's nothing out of the ordinary, according to players.

"It's a big issue in tennis. We get these stupid and abusive comments all the time. And to be honest, we are tired of it," said Daria Kasatkina, a 26-year-old from Russia who was a 2022 semifinalist in Paris. "People just do that and they don't get punished. Nothing. Only we suffer from reading all of this (expletive)."

Several players, from various countries, described distasteful messages arriving via apps.

Usually accounts are flooded after a defeat — often, they say, from gamblers disappointed to lose money wagering on a match.



Novak Djokovic moves on from Kosovo comments

AP ■ PARIS

Novak Djokovic sure seemed like someone ready to move on from the latest non-tennis issue he's been involved in during a Grand Slam tournament. Criticised after his previous match for comments about clashes in northern Kosovo between ethnic Serbs and NATO-led peacekeepers, the 22-time major champion stayed away from political matters on Wednesday night.

When his 7-6 (2), 6-0, 6-3 victory over Marton Fucsovics in the second round of the French Open ended, Djokovic, a 36-year-old from Serbia, wrote on the lens of a TV camera — a custom at more and more tennis tournaments — and kept it simple, with an autograph and a smiley face.

It was quite different from what happened after his win Monday, when Djokovic drew attention for writing in Serbian, "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia. Stop the violence," and then speaking out about the matter at a news conference with reporters from his home country.

That drew rebukes from a member of France's government, French Open tournament director Amelie Mauresmo and the Kosovo tennis federation.

Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera warned Djokovic over Wednesday morning not to wade into such international issues again at Roland Garros, saying his comments were "not appropriate." Speaking on TV station France 2, Oudea-Castera said Mauresmo encouraged Djokovic and his entourage to maintain "neutrality" on the field of play.

Asked about Oudea-Castera and Mauresmo, Djokovic responded: "I have no more comment on that. I said what I needed to say."

Russian Olympic cycling medalists barred from races

AP ■ AIGLE (SWITZERLAND)

Two Russian track cyclists who won medals at the Tokyo Olympics were ruled ineligible to race Wednesday for breaching rules monitoring their neutrality during the war on Ukraine.



Anastasia Voinova and Mariya Novolodskaya cannot race in International Cycling Union (UCI) events from Thursday, the governing body said in a document posted on its website. The world championships are held in August in Glasgow, Scotland.

"This ineligibility will apply for as long as the ad hoc rules regarding Russia and Belarus remain in force," the UCI said in the document without detailing the breaches.

A rules update published May 3 takes effect Thursday and specifies "the strictest neutrali-

ty towards the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus at any time since the beginning of the war in Ukraine is required" to race in UCI events.

The UCI can deny neutral status to riders or officials "who are or have been contracted to the Russian or Belarusian military" or who have shown support for the war in interviews or social media posts. Taking part

in pro-war demonstrations or displaying the "Z" symbol that is associated with the invasion of Ukraine also should be disqualifying.

At the Olympics held in 2021, Voinova took bronze in women's team sprint on the track after getting silver in the event at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. The 30-year-old racer is also a multiple world champion.

Harjai Milkha leads, Nihal second

PTI ■ EDINBURGH

Harjai Milkha Singh proved he is a chip of the old block as he finished strongly with three birdies in the last five holes to card 2-under 70 and take sole lead in Boys 13 category of the US Kids Golf European Championship here.

Playing in extremely cold and freezing conditions, Harjai, son of Indian golf legend Jeev Milkha Singh, and grandson of the Olympic icon the late Milkha Singh, leads at 2-under 142.

With rounds of 72-70, he is two ahead of three others at tied second.

The Indians, who gained an entry into the event after solid showings on local Tours, had another fine day at the highly competitive European Championship.

While Harjai is in sole lead in Boy's 13, Nihal Cheema, the youngest member of the 16-strong Indian squad, is tied-second in Boys under-7. Bengaluru's Adit

Veeramachaneni is sole third in Boy's 9 section, and Vihaan Jain is tied-fifth in the Boy's 13 competition.

All three Indian girls figured in top-seven. First day co-leader Mahreen Bhatia slipped to tied third with a 75 in Girl's 13-14 category at the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club.

Naina Kapoor (81-85) rose to tied-fifth in the Girl's 11 section but Ananyaa Sood (77-75) slipped from tied-sixth to seventh in Girl's 12.

In Boy's 13, one of the most competitive sections, Harjai was 2-over after seven holes with one birdie and three bogeys, but a birdie on eighth saw him turn in one-over.

On the back nine, Harjai was in full flow as he birdied three times in last five holes. The birdies came on 14th, 15th and 17th holes. With one more round to go Chandigarh golfer is two ahead of American Colin McAskin (73-71), South Africa's Jordan Botha (75-69) and England's Kodi Dean of (77-67).

Thailand Open: Kiran moves to QFs, Ashmita bows out

PTI ■ BANGKOK

India's Kiran George continued his good run as he cruised into the quarterfinals of the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament, beating world number 26 China's Weng Hong Yang in straight games here on Thursday.

Kiran, the world number 59, took 39 minutes to beat his higher-ranked Chinese opponent 21-11, 21-19 in the men's singles round of 16 clash.

It is the first time that Kiran has reached the quarterfinal at a BWF World Tour Super 500 event.

The 2022 Odisha Open winner will face the winner of the match between Ng Ka Long Angus of Hong Kong and Toma Junior Popov of France in last eight clash on Friday.

However, it was the end of the road for 23-year-old Ashmita Chaliha, who went down 18-21



13-21 to former Olympic and three-time World Champion Carolina Marin of Spain.

Later in the day, Saina Nehwal, Lakshya Sen and the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will play their respective pre-quarterfinals.

The BWF World Tour is divided into six levels, namely World Tour Finals, four Super 1000, six Super 750, seven Super 500, and 11 Super 300 in order. One other category of tournament, the BWF Tour Super 100 level, also offers ranking points.

WE ARE USED TO DUKES BALL: AXAR



PTI ■ PORTSMOUTH

Switching from playing T20s to the longest format of the game is difficult but practising with the red ball through the IPL will help in the tough transition at the World Test Championship final against Australia, feels India all-rounder Axar Patel.

Most members of the Indian team head to the marquee event after playing T20 cricket in the IPL for over two months.

Additionally, while the SG balls are used to play the red-ball format in India, the Dukes ball will be used for the WTC final.

However, India are well prepared for the twin challenges. To familiarise themselves with the Dukes ball, which is used in English conditions, the 'Men in Blue' have been working with it.

"We knew about this before the start of the IPL. So even dur-

ing the IPL, it was discussed that we will bowl with the red ball," Axar told ICC.

"We had red balls, so we were using them. You know when and how to play, how much time you have. This mental switch from white ball to red ball is obviously tough, but we have enough time," Axar added.

The left-arm spinner, however, said that the focus is on hitting the right spot irrespective of the ball used.

"We switch from white ball to red ball. It is a similar switch to go from SG to Dukes, you have to use your talent and skill. You have to execute your plan, your bowling rhythm. Irrespective of the ball, if you bowl a good ball at a good spot, it works.

"So, that's what we're doing. Since the match is in England, which is different from India, we are planning what lines and

lengths will work here. The same thing in practice, we are good to go."

The first batch of Indian players, including the likes of Virat Kohli and Axar, landed in London early last week and have been preparing for the final, scheduled to be held at The Oval from June 7 to 11.

"Those who did not qualify (for IPL Playoffs) got more time. So I don't think there will be many problems because we have had a good time to prepare." "The difference is the Dukes ball remains shinier for longer. But during the IPL, we had ordered the ball, so were practising with it and have gotten used to it," Axar said.

The Indian team will also have to quickly adapt to the relatively cooler conditions in England, having played the IPL in sweltering heat.

"We came after playing IPL,

where it was 40-45 degrees in India. After that it feels great here. We have taken out our winter clothes and are roaming around wearing jumpers. It's also a bit windy. Whenever we come to the UK, we enjoy the weather. It remains a little cool, there is no heat."

In stark contrast to India's spin-friendly pitches, the conditions in England are more suited to swing bowling.

"Obviously, the conditions in India and England are different. The fast bowlers have more of a role here. In India, spinners play a more important role," Axar said. "The conditions are the same for both teams. In England, the wind assists swing bowling and offers good bounce if you bowl at the right spots.

"The team is getting together slowly, so the planning will go on. We'll leave the planning to our bowling coach."

Oz need to be wary of Pujara, Kohli: Ponting

PTI ■ LONDON

Australia will have to guard against the "thorn in their side" Cheteshwar Pujara and a "back at his best" Virat Kohli if they are to counter India in the World Test Championship final at The Oval next week, feels legendary cricketer Ricky Ponting.

India's Test batting mainstay Pujara could provide valuable insights to his teammates, having played extensively at Sussex in the English County Championship, while Kohli is at his absolute best having cracked two centuries and six half-tens for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the recently-concluded Indian Premier League.

"The Australian team will be talking about Virat, no doubt about it, and they'll be talking about Pujara. They're the two," Ponting said on 'The ICC Review'.

Pujara is known to relish the challenges thrown at him by Australian bowlers, having scored more Test runs and centuries against them than any other side, and his contribution would be crucial to India's chances of lifting the WTC trophy in their second attempt.

"Pujara has been a thorn in their side a lot in the past, and in Australia, and this wicket will potentially be a lot more like an Australian pitch. They know that they'll have to get him early," opined the former Australian captain.

Pujara, who bats at No. 3, has 2,033 runs and five centuries in 24 Tests against Australia, and skipper Rohit Sharma will hope he makes a couple of more vital contributions for the side in the



WTC final.

Kohli, apart from his sparkling form in the IPL, had smashed 186 in the fourth Test against Australia in March during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and would be itching to have a go at the Pat Cummins-led side.

"They also know that Virat over the last few weeks is probably just about back to his absolute best, albeit in T20 cricket. He told me that the feeling he's getting right now is that he's almost back to his best, and that's an ominous warning for the Australians going into a one-off game," said Ponting.

Ponting is also mightily impressed with young Shubman Gill's performance in the IPL and the 23-year-old's exploits in the last two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar series.

Gill hit three centuries for Gujarat Titans in IPL. "He looks like a terrific young guy. He's got that bit of attitude about him as

well. He's got a bit of swagger. He has some serious class. That sort of front-foot pull shot that he plays against the fast bowlers will be a shot that he'll probably need against this Australian attack," said Ponting.

With the pace bowlers likely to do a lot of heavy lifting during the one-off Test, Ponting believes veteran Mohammed Shami will have to be at his absolute best against the strong Australian batting lineup, given that Jasprit Bumrah is not in the frame owing to injury.

"I think he has to step up or try and take his game to another level if India are going to win this game. When you talk to the Australian batters as well, they understand how good Shami is whether it's new ball or old ball, whether it's in Australia or India.

"They know the skillset he's got and how dangerous he can be. It's going to have to be him," added Ponting.



Australia head into the WTC final against India wary of their dismal Oval record

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

As Australia begin preparations for the World Test Championship final against India, the men from Down Under would be eager to put their past struggles at The Oval behind them.

In over 140 years of Test cricket in England, Australia have had one of the worst records at The Oval, which will host the final from June 7 to 11 between the top two Test sides.

Australia, who played at The Oval in 1880 in what was the first-ever Test in England, have managed a mere seven wins from 38 Tests at the famous South London venue, putting their success rate at the venue at 18.42 per cent, their poorest across England.

Australia have won just twice in the past 50 years at The Oval. On the other hand, they have 17 wins from 29 matches at The Lord's at a success rate of 43.59 per cent, which is better than hosts England's 39.72 per cent from 141 games and South Africa's 33.33 per cent at the same venue.

Australia have a success rate of 34.62 per cent at Headingley, 30.43 per cent at Trent Bridge, and 29.03 per cent and 26.67 per cent at Old Trafford and Edgbaston respectively.

India, on the other hand, haven't fared too well at the venue either having won two, drawn seven and lost five games. But the Rohit Sharma-led side will be boosted by the 157-run win over England here in 2021, which was its first victory at the venue in a Test match in 40 years.

According to cricket.com.au, Australia will have their first full training session in the UK on Thursday in Beckenham, which is 20km from central London.

Pat Cummins and his men will train at Kent's out-ground across the weekend as both sides will be granted access to facilities at The Oval only two days prior to the fixture.

And while The Oval is likely to favour the pacers, Beckenham is known to have a batter-friendly track.

Australia finished the 2021-23 WTC cycle on top of the table, their only loss being the 2-1 away defeat to India earlier this year.

They haven't beaten the Men in Blue, both home and away, in eight years — four successive series defeats.



Key for both teams will be to dismiss Smith and Kohli early: Finch

PTI ■ LONDON

Former captain Aaron Finch believes that he will put his money on Steve Smith even though Australia will also need to get rid of star India batter Virat Kohli as early as possible in what promises to be an enticing World Test Championship final, starting June 7 at the Oval here.

"Both (Kohli and Smith) will be batting at number four, so the key is to try and get them as early as possible. Early wickets to expose them to the brand new ball will be absolutely key. I will always side with Steve Smith, I think his record is outstanding, but it will be a very good contest," Finch told Star Sports.

India vs Australia rivalry brings out the best in both teams, he said.

"I think the rivalry is held in such high regard in both countries, that I think it brings out the best in both teams," he added.

"Obviously, India has had the better of Australia in the last three series I think, so both teams will rise to the occasion no matter where it's played, at home or away or this time at neutral territory. It's just a must watch thing."



'Conway has caught Williamson bug to keep learning'

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Former New Zealand spinner John Bracewell believes charismatic batter Devon Conway has caught the "Kane Williamson bug" to "keep learning from past mistakes and making rapid improvements in his batting technique."

Conway, a late entrant into the New Zealand setup at 29, took the cricketing world by storm by smashing a double hundred on Test debut against England in 2021 to become only the seventh batter to do so in the longest format.

Conway, now 31, also played a vital role for Chennai Super Kings in only his second IPL season, scoring six half-centuries and aggregating 672 runs with a highest of an unbeaten 92 and an average touching 52.

His opening partnerships with Ruturaj Gaikwad formed the cornerstone of CSK's record-equalling fifth title. The all-format New Zealand cricketer was third on the IPL's Orange Cap list behind Shubman Gill and RCB's South African skipper Faf du Plessis.

"I think he's been an absolute magician in terms of his adaptability to all three formats, his skillset and his (growth)," Bracewell, who played 41 Tests garnering 102 wickets and 1000-plus runs, told Sen Radio.

"I like the way he's become

ing a better cricketer all the time, so he's obviously caught the Kane Williamson bug of being a learner, not a guy that actually just sits there and relies on being talented," said the 65-year-old. Conway has so far amassed 1212 Test, 508 ODI and 632 T20I runs, and Bracewell believes the cricketer can rival the best in the business.

"His game is just continuing to progress and that's something that Kane Williamson had introduced into the New Zealand side along with (former wicketkeeper) BJ Watling.

"That's something that Devon Conway's picked up and moved forward with him taking it to another dimension."

Bracewell believes Conway will play a huge role during the ODI World Cup, scheduled to be held in India in October-November this year, given that Williamson would unlikely have recovered completely from an ACL injury he suffered in the IPL.

"He's one of a series of components, but he's certainly an important one," said Bracewell.

"One, that he knows those (Indian) conditions (and) two, that he's extremely adaptable in terms of now he's opening the batting in T20. So he has that adaptability to be able to move up and down the order and fit in, so that makes him a good replacement for somebody like Kane."

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni successfully underwent a left knee surgery in a Mumbai hospital on Thursday, raising hopes of playing in the 17th edition of Indian Premier League next year.

Dhoni, who led Chennai Super Kings to their fifth IPL title, had flown to Mumbai from Ahmedabad after the final on Monday and consulted renowned sports orthopaedic surgeon Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, who is also on the BCCI medical panel and had performed surgeries on a number of top Indian cricketers, including Rishabh Pant.

"Yes, Dhoni has had a successful knee surgery at the Kokilaben Hospital in Mumbai on Thursday. He is doing fine and the surgery happened in the morning. I don't have details. I am yet to get all the details about



the nature of surgery and other things," CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan confirmed to PTI.

"He will be discharged in a day or two. He would be resting for a few days before his extensive rehabilitation starts. It is now expected that he would have enough time to get fit to play in the next IPL," another source close to CSK management told PTI on conditions of anonymity.



will be completely the iconic captain's call.

After the IPL final, Dhoni had said: "If you circumstantially see, it's the best time to announce retirement. The easy thing for me to say is thank you and retire. But the hard thing to do is to work hard for nine months and try to play one more IPL season. The body has to hold up. But the amount of love I have received from CSK fans, it would be a gift for them to play one more season.

"The way they've shown their love and emotion, it's something I need to do for them. It's the last part of my career. It started over here and full house was chanting my name. It was same thing in Chennai, but it will be good to come back and play whatever I can. The kind of cricket I play, they feel they can play that cricket. There's nothing orthodox about it and I like to keep it simple."

Ronaldo absent with injury as Saudi soccer season ends

AP ■ RIYADH

Cristiano Ronaldo's first season in Saudi Arabia came to an end, although the star forward was absent as Al-Nassr beat Al-Fateh 3-0 to finish in second place in the league.

Ronaldo, who signed for the Riyadh club in December before scoring 14 goals in 16 league games, picked up a muscle injury four days previously and was rested ahead of Portugal's European Championship qualifiers against Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iceland in June.

In the 38-year-old Ronaldo's absence on Wednesday, Anderson Talisca took center stage to score twice. He also assisted Mohammed Marwan for a third. Al-Ittihad, which had already secured the league championship in the penultimate round, celebrated a first title since 2009 with a 2-0 win against Al-Tai.



Abderazzak Hamdallah of Morocco opened the scoring with a second-half penalty that also secured the golden boot with his 21st goal of the season. Former Leeds United and Wolverhampton winger Helder Costa added the second in injury time. It's the first league title won by coach Nuno Santo, just 18 months after the Portuguese tactician was dismissed by Tottenham Hotspur in the English Premier League.

Al-Hilal, champions last season, finished in third spot with a 3-2 win over Al-Raed.

The league will expand from 16 to 18 teams next season.

Pathirana set to make ODI debut ahead of WC qualifiers



AP ■ HAMBANTOTA

Sri Lanka has unleashed some special bowling talents ahead of big events over the years.

In the case of Lasith Malinga, he was thrown into the deep end during a so-called Top End tour of Australia in 2004. In the case of Ajantha Mendis, he was introduced just before the Asia Cup and he starred with six wickets against India in the final as Sri Lanka clinched the trophy in 2008.

The same blueprint is to be followed with 20-year-old Matheesha Pathirana, who will make his ODI debut in the three-match series against Afghanistan that gets underway on Friday.

Although Pathirana has played just one Twenty20 International, he is already a star after performing a key role for Chennai in the Super Kings' run to a record fifth Indian Premier League title.

Pathirana bowls with a unique round-arm action and Sri Lankans hope that he'll be quite a handful for batters during the World Cup qualifiers later this month in Zimbabwe. Sri Lanka, which won the 1996 World Cup title and has twice been runner-up, needs to go through qualifying because of its slide down the International Cricket Council rankings in the one-day format.

Afghanistan has no such issues after qualifying automatically for the showpiece event later this year in India.

Bowling is Afghanistan's strength, with three Afghan players featuring in the list of top 10 bowlers in official ICC rankings. Leg-spinner Rashid Khan will miss the first two games because

of a lower-back injury, but off-spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi will find the conditions in Hambantota to their liking.

Afghanistan also has left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmed, who was quite a handful for Gujarat Titans during the IPL.

Although bowling is the team's strong point, Afghanistan also some solid batting.

Ibrahim Zadran showcased that he is a star in the making during the ICC Under-19 World Cup and since graduating to the senior side, he has smashed three centuries in just eight one-dayers. That includes a career-best 162, the highest score by an Afghan in ODIs.

Friday's series-opener will be the first international to be staged at Hambantota in more than three years.

The series was hastily arranged after Sri Lanka failed to automatically qualify for the World Cup, and will provide an opportunity for the selectors to take a final look at some of the players before they submit the squad to the ICC before the June 10 deadline.

Sri Lanka has recalled test captain Dimuth Karunaratne to the squad. Karunaratne was fired as ODI captain and dropped from the squad in 2021. However, with the batting unit not able to utilize the full quota of 50 overs often enough, the need for Karunaratne's stable presence has been felt.

The hosts also have recalled fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera, who is returning after seven months following ankle surgery.

SQUADS:

SRI LANKA: Dasun Shanaka (captain), Kusal Mendis (vice-captain) Pathum Nissanka, Dimuth Karunaratne, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dhananjaya de Silva, Charith Asalanka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana, Dushan Hemantha, Chamika Karunaratne, Dushmantha Chameera, Matheesha Pathirana, Lahiru Kumara, Kasun Rajitha.

AFGHANISTAN: Hashmatullah Shahidi (captain), Rahmat Shah (vice-captain), Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran, Riaz Hassan, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Ikram Alikhail, Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan, Mujib ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Abdul Rahman, Fazal Haq Farooqi, Farid Ahmad Malik.

You had a lot of selfish characters playing for England: Harmison

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England pacer Steve Harmison has hinted that quite a few senior players in the side did not contribute to the team spirit in the late 90s and early 2000s, but all that changed during the 2005 Ashes series, which the hosts won 2-1.

Responding to former Australian quick Jason Gillespie's assessment that he had noticed a big change in the England side during the 2005 Ashes, Harmison, who was part of the 2005 side, said that, "The difference between that and 2003,

2001 and 1999, 1997, was in 2005 we were a team."

Gillespie had suggested that he had never seen such camaraderie in the England team during previous series between the two sides.

"I noticed a big difference in the England side in the '05 Ashes... we'd never felt that as an Australian side before," Gillespie told 'Sen Radio' on Thursday.

"England would normally go out in dribs or drabs going onto the field... (but this time) it was really noticeable that as soon as the umpires walked out there,



(England skipper) Michael Vaughan was straight out there, everyone was straight out there, quick chat and then they would literally run to their fielding positions, the bowler would run

and hand his cap to the umpire and before our batters were halfway onto the ground, the whole England team was set up ready to play, ready to rock," added Gillespie.

Harmison, 44, who played 63 Tests taking 226 wickets, said quite a few "selfish" players contributed to the poor culture in the England side.

"We'd grown up as a team, we played as a team and we behaved off the field like a team (in 2005). In 1997, 2001, 2003/04, you had a lot of selfish characters playing for England," said Harmison.