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NEW DELHI, MONDAY MAY 15, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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**VIRAT'S RCB
BEAT ROYALS BY
112 RUNS IN IPL**
12 SPORT

CAPSULE

SHERPA EQUALS MOUNT EVEREST GUIDE RECORD
Kathmandu: A Sherpa guide scaled the summit of Mount Everest on Sunday for the 26th time, equalling the record set by Nepalese guide Kami Rita for the most ascents of the world's highest peak. Pasang Dawa Sherpa, 46, reached the summit (8,849-m peak) on Sunday morning along with a Hungarian climber. This year also marks the 70th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Everest in 1953 by New Zealander Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay. P8

CYCLONE MOCHA HITS B'DESH, MYANMAR
Dhaka: Super cyclone Mocha made landfall along the Myanmar-Bangladesh coasts on Sunday after intensifying into the equivalent of a category-five storm, causing extensive damage to the southeastern coastlines and forcing the evacuation of over five lakh people in low lying areas. The Cyclone Mocha, one of the most powerful cyclones seen in the country in nearly two decades - made landfall shortly after midday on the Teknaf shorelines before making its way through the Naf River that divides Bangladesh and Myanmar.

IOA TO TAKE CHARGE OF WRESTLING BODY
New Delhi: The protesting wrestlers on Sunday termed the Indian Olympic Association's (IOA) decision to take charge of all the activities of the Wrestling Federation of India as the "first step" in their fight against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the former WFI chief. The country's top wrestlers, including Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik and Vinesh Phogat among others, have been protesting at the Jantar Mantar for the last 22 days demanding the arrest of Brij Bhushan for alleged sexual harassment. P3

Kharge to take call on next K'taka CM

Congress may opt for rotational chief ministership to keep both hopefuls Siddaramiah, Shivakumar happy

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

As anticipated the newly-elected Congress MLAs on Sunday authorised party president Mallikarjun Kharge to pick the next Chief Minister of Karnataka.

Sources within the top leadership of the party told *The Pioneer* that the Congress has no choice but to adjust by opting for rotational Chief Ministers for two-and-a-half-years each, in the five-year tenure of the Government. "Both are important — former Chief Minister K Siddaramiah for being the old warhorse and an acceptable caste leader while Karnataka Congress chief DK Shivakumar burnt the midnight oil to wrest power from the BJP in the just-concluded polls," confided a leader who is privy to the discussions.

Amidst sloganeering by party workers loyal to the probables — Siddaramiah and Shivakumar — the scheduled Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting at a private hotel in Bengaluru passed a unanimous resolution authorising the party chief to pick its leader. Sources also said both the factions — Siddaramiah and Shivakumar — are also discussing the relevance of rotation

postings as the commitment made on the same lines in Chhattisgarh was never fulfilled.

When Bhupesh Baghel was appointed the CM in 2018 then rival TS Singh Deo, who is a Cabinet Minister in Chhattisgarh, is believed to have been promised elevation to the CM's post after two-and-a-half-years but that did not happen and the State is now preparing for the term-end Assembly polls.

Hiccups were reported at the end of the half tenure when Deo and Baghel had to camp in Delhi and at one point the Government was in jeopardy.

This has been a precedent in the Congress for decades that in the process of formation of Governments, the CLP ultimately authorises the party president to nominate the CM. The Congress scored a thumping win in the May 10 Assembly polls as it secured 135 seats out of 224, while the BJP bagged only 66.

Earlier in the day Congress central observers, along with AICC general secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal held a meeting with the Leader of Opposition in the outgoing Assembly Siddaramiah and Shivakumar.

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Senior Congress leaders Randeep Surjewala, KC Venugopal, Siddaramiah, DK Shivakumar and others during the Congress Legislature Party meeting, in Bengaluru, on Sunday

Will brainstorm poll debacle, says Bommai

Bengaluru: Karnataka BJP has decided to do a detailed analysis of the overall poll results and also constituency-wise outcomes to find out the reasons for the party's debacle in the Assembly election, outgoing Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said on Sunday. In the May 10 elections to the 224-member Assembly, the Congress scored an emphatic victory with 135 seats, while the ruling BJP and the former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda-led Janata Dal (Secular) secured 66 and 19, respectively. Rejecting the Congress's claim that it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's defeat, he said multiple factors have contributed to the party's performance and they will all be analysed. A meeting of all newly-elected members and candidates will be held soon in this regard. Some BJP leaders including Bommai met under the leadership of State BJP president Nalin Kumar Kateel at the party headquarters here on Sunday and held discussions. "We have had informal discussions regarding the results and regarding getting information from various regions.

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MVA to fight 2024 LS, Assembly polls as team

Seat sharing talks soon

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Having decided to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly polls as a grand alliance, the three constituents of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) — Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress — will be holding seat-sharing talks soon. At a joint meeting held at NCP chief Sharad Pawar's south Mumbai residence the leaders of the three MVA constituents decided to contest the forthcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly polls as an alliance. Also, they decided to initiate seat-sharing talks among them in the coming weeks.

Interacting with media persons along with State Congress president Nana Patole and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, State NCP chief Jayant Patil said at the meeting that the leaders discussed the Congress' victory in Karnataka, the Supreme Court verdict on the crisis in Shiv Sena in June last year and future plans of the three MVA constituents in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls in the State.

Patil said the three MVA parties would hold seat-sharing negotiations for the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in the coming weeks. "As it happened in Karnataka, we expect to perform well in both the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in Maharashtra," Patil said. While the Lok Sabha polls will be held



Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders Sharad Pawar, Uddhav Thackeray, Nana Patole, Balasaheb Thorat and others during a meeting at Pawar's residence, in Mumbai, on Sunday

in May next year, the State Assembly will in the normal course be held in October 2024. Patole said there is a lot of anger against the ruling BJP among the people. "The people vented their anger against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the Assembly polls in Karnataka... We intend to hold a fourth Vajramuth (iron fist) rally in Pune where we intend to felicitate the Chief Minister of Karnataka," Patole

said. Raut denied that there is any rift within the MVA and said, "The Karnataka Assembly poll outcome should be seen as a victory of the Opposition parties in the country.

"The Congress' victory will have a positive impact on polls in Maharashtra. The BJP will suffer a massive debacle in Maharashtra as well. The MVA constituents will soon arrive at seat-sharing arrangements for both Lok Sabha and Assembly polls."

Cong, TMC lock horns over who will lead Opp in 2024

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Karnataka election results have triggered a fresh war of words over the leadership issue in 2024 between the Congress and the Trinamool Congress (TMC).

While the Congress Lok Sabha Leader Adhir Chowdhury has claimed that

no party other than the Congress can lead a united Opposition against the BJP and that "only the Congress being a pan-Indian party can unite the Opposition," the TMC continues to insist on its "one against one" theory implying regional parties will have to be given upper hand in areas where they are stronger. (P5)

Globalisation is the reality of our times, says EAM in Stockholm

Multipolar world feasible only by multipolar Asia, asserts Jaishankar

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/STOCKHOLM

Underlining the importance of Asia in global affairs, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday said a multipolar world is feasible only by a multipolar Asia. He also said the more the European Union (EU) and Indo-Pacific deal with each other the stronger will be their respective appreciation of multi-polarity.

Addressing the EU-Indo Pacific Ministerial meeting at Stockholm, Jaishankar called on the leaders to consider six points, which include globalisation, Indo-Pacific and leveraging of market shares. On globalisation, he said, the EU



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets Defence Minister of Sweden Pål Jonson during his visit to Sweden on Sunday

has major stakes in Indo-Pacific developments, especially as they pertain to technology, connectivity, trade and finance and it has to, in respect for, and observance of (the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) UNCLOS. The Minister said India and EU need a regular, comprehensive and candid dialogue, especially with regard to the Indo-Pacific. He stressed that talks are not just limited to the crisis of the day. He said

transformations underway in India will merit the EU's attention. Highlighting that Indo-Pacific is increasingly central to the direction of global politics, Jaishankar said, "The EU and the world is better off with additional drivers of production and growth."

Noting that the leveraging of market shares, production capacities and resources are issues that can no longer be overlooked, he said a strategically more aware Europe should not limit its consciousness geographically.

Calling Indo-Pacific a complex and differentiated landscape, the Minister emphasised that the EU and Indo-Pacific will become stronger if they deal more with each other. In such an engagement with the Indo-Pacific, the External Affairs Minister hoped that the EU would naturally seek like-minded partners. India is certainly among them, he added.

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Centre pushes DPSUs, India Inc towards Atmanirbharta

Import of 928 items banned to promote domestic Defence industry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a push to Indian public sector undertakings (PSUs) and the industry to attain self-reliance quickly, the Government has banned import of 928 items thereby saving Rs 715 crore. These items will be procured from the Indian industry.

This was the fourth such list of items to be issued in the last two years restricting import of weapons and or systems or sub-systems, Defence Ministry officials said here on Sunday. Giving details of the latest ban, they said the fourth list is in continuation of the previous three that were released in



December 2021, March 2022 and August 2022 respectively. These lists contain 2,500 items which are already indigenised and 1,238 (351+107+780) items which will be indigenised within the given timelines.

Of 1,238, some 310 items (1st list- 262, 2nd list- 11, 3rd list- 37) have been indigenised, so far. They said in order to promote 'Atmanirbharta' in Defence and minimise imports by Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), the Ministry of Defence has approved fourth Positive Indigenisation List of 928 strategically-important Line Replacement Units (LRUs)/Sub-systems/Spares & Components, including high-

end materials and spares, with import substitution value worth Rs 715 crore.

The DPSUs will undertake indigenisation of these items through different routes under 'Make' category and in-house development through the capabilities of MSMEs and private Indian industry, thereby providing impetus to the growth in economy, enhanced investment in Defence and reduction in import dependence of DPSUs. In addition, this will augment the design capabilities of the domestic defence industry by involving academia and research institutions. The DPSUs will soon initiate procurement action for these notified items.

The four lists restricting imports covers sensors, ammunition, towed artillery guns, short-range surface-to-air missiles, cruise missiles and off-shore patrol vessels, next-generation corvettes, airborne early warning systems, tank engines and radars. Contd on Page 2

Govt to do ₹300-cr equity infusion in Alliance Air

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is set to make an equity infusion of Rs 300 crore in regional carrier Alliance Air, which is facing financial headwinds, according to a senior official. Alliance Air, earlier part of Air India, is now owned by AI Assets Holding Ltd (AIAHL), a special-purpose vehicle formed by the central Government.

The disinvestment-bound Alliance Air operates around 130 flights daily. In recent months, there have been instances of strikes by pilots to protest against non-restoration of salaries to the pre-Covid level and non-payment of allowance, among other issues. The Finance Ministry has approved an equity infusion of ₹300 crore into Alliance Air, the senior Civil Aviation Ministry official said. Specific



details could not be immediately ascertained. Flights under 'Alliance Air' brand are operated by Airline Allied Services, which changed its name to Alliance Air Aviation Ltd. The company's authorised capital is ₹2,000 crore and the paid-up capital is ₹402.25 crore, as per the latest data available with the Corporate Affairs Ministry. Alliance Air, which saw its net loss widen to ₹447.76 crore in fiscal 2021-22, has been grappling with financial woes. The carrier's cash loss widened to ₹224.18 crore in the financial year ended March 2022.

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CISCE results: 98.94% students pass in Class 10, 96.93% in 12th

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The CISCE on Sunday declared the Class 10 and Class 12 results with 98.94 per cent and 96.93 per cent of students, respectively, clearing the Board examinations.

Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) Secretary Gerry Arathoon said the Class 10 (ICSE) examination was conducted in 63 written subjects, of which 21 were Indian, 14 foreign and two classical languages. "The Class 12 (ISC) examination was conducted in 47 written subjects of which 12 were Indian languages and three were foreign languages and one classical language," he said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits 'Jana Shakti', an exhibition at the NGMA, in New Delhi, on Sunday. This exhibition contains works by India's top artists on themes covered in 'Mann Ki Baat' such as Swachhata, water conservation, agriculture, space, India's northeast, Nari Shakti and Yoga, and Ayurveda

Google to expand its Dark Web monitoring tool to all mail users

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Google has announced that it will expand its Dark Web monitoring to all Gmail users in the US and later to international markets. The Gmail users will now be able to run scans to see if their Gmail address appears on the Dark Web and receive guidance on what actions to take to protect themselves.

Previously, only available to Google One subscribers in the US, the Dark Web scan feature will be available to all Gmail users in the next few weeks. "We'll soon be expanding access to our Dark Web report to select international markets," the company informed. Google Core services SVP, Jen Fitzpatrick, said that the com-



pany protects Gmail users from nearly 15 billion unwanted messages daily, blocking more than 99.9 per cent of spam, phishing and malware. "Now, we're further expanding spam protections in Google Drive by introducing a new view that makes it easier to separate and review your files, decide what you might view as spam, and stay safe from potential unwanted or abusive content," he announced. Drive will also automatically classify content

into a spam view just like Gmail does, protecting users from seeing dangerous or unwanted files. The company is also launching a new tool to help people evaluate the reliability of visual content they find online. 'About this Image' will provide users with important context like when an image or similar images were first indexed by Google, where it may have first appeared, and where else it's been seen online like a news, social or fact-checking site.

Google recently became the first major tech company to enable passkey sign-in on its own platform. Passkeys combine the advanced security of 2-Step Verification (2SV) with the convenience of just unlocking the device.

K'taka DGP Sood is CBI's new Director

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday appointed Karnataka Director General of Police (DGP) Praveen Sood as the next Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

"Approval of the Competent Authority is hereby conveyed to the appointment of Praveen Sood, IPS (KN:86) as Director, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for a period of two years from the date of assumption of charge of the office vice Subodh Kumar Jaiswal, IPS (MH-85) consequent upon completion of his tenure," reads an official order of the Personnel Ministry issued on Sunday. The incumbent CBI Director Jaiswal completes his tenure on May 24.

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'Deaths due to illicit booze worried me'

Stopped me from banning alcohol: Baghel

PTI ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday said he didn't have the courage to ban alcohol in the state when he witnessed deaths due to consumption of spurious liquor and other harmful substances after outlets were shut during the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

He stressed the need for running campaigns against not just liquor but all kinds of addiction. Baghel was speaking at the launch of 'Nashamukt Chhattisgarh Abhiyaan' (addiction free Chhattisgarh campaign) at Prajapita Brahmakumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya centre Shanti Sarovar in Raipur.

He also hailed the spiritual and meditation centre's 'Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan', calling it a commendable initiative towards building society and appealed to people to ensure their participation in making Chhattisgarh addiction-free.

"Addiction usually starts from childhood or young age. Initially they start from 'sutta' (smoking) as a hobby and it



gradually becomes a habit. As stress increases they start smoking more cigarettes. If stress is more in the evening, drinking of liquor starts. Finally they land in the hospital. Addiction is not good in any form. It causes only harm. It is very harmful for all of us physically and mentally. It affects the person, the family and the society as a whole," he said. Being the chief minister, Baghel said he can order prohibition in the entire state "right now" even as he wondered if it will solve the problem of addiction.

The CM said he learnt about the problems that cropped up when liquor shops were closed during the country-wide lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19.

"All the shops were closed, transportation was closed, families were staying behind the doors, but complaints of domestic violence started surfacing. Despite the lockdown in force for a long time, it was seen that people managed to arrange stuff for addiction," he said.

When people did not get anything, they even consumed sanitizer and many lost their lives due to it, said the Congress leader.

"I did not have courage then to order a liquor ban after witnessing people dying due to consumption of spurious alcohol and other substances during the lockdown. I don't want to implement anything that will cost lives," he added. Organisations that deal with de-addiction can be helpful for persons dependent on various forms of intoxication, he said. "We have to end this social evil together with the support of people," he said.

When it comes to banning intoxicating substances, women immediately favour it as if only men consume them, he said. "Before the 2018 assembly elections, there was pressure from women to ban liquor. We had then announced to ban liquor (as a poll promise). Liquor ban means we have to move ahead towards an addiction free society. Even during the 'Bhent Mulaqat' programme (CM's public interaction drive), some people said that alcohol should be banned," he said.

The CM said they have constituted a committee headed by their party MLA Satyanarayan Sharma to study the issue and it has visited other states where prohibition is in force.

Centre to monitor progress of startups funded by it: Min

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has proposed the setting up of a mechanism to oversee the nurturing and progress of startups as their numbers have risen to more than a lakh, Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh said on Sunday.

He said such a mechanism will closely follow the growth of Startups, see how to sustain them so that they do not lose out, especially those that have received technical and financial support from the Government.

Singh was addressing the valedictory function and Awards Ceremony of the National Technology Week Exposition at Pragati Maidan here.

The minister said over the years start-ups have witnessed a shift from IT to Biotech and Earth Sciences as new opportunities have opened in Oceanography. He also debunked myths surrounding startups. "One is age factor, I have seen a scientist setting up a startup after retirement; second is higher qualification, you just need to be an innovator, having an inherent quest for creativity," Singh said.

Principal Scientific Advisor Ajay Kumar Sood suggested that there should be a Startup Day & Week on the patterns of the National Technology Day & Week. S Chandrasekhar,



Secretary Department of Science & Technology, said every startup that took part in the Exposition was very conscious of sustainable development.

"By Amritkaal, we hope to cease all greenhouse emissions and minimize damage to the environment," he said. Singh also presented the National Technology Awards for successful commercialisation of innovative indigenous technology.

The national technology week celebrations began on May 11, the 25th anniversary of the Pokhran-II nuclear tests carried out in 1998.

The National Technology Day celebration was started in 1999 by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to honour Indian scientists, engineers and technologists, who worked for India's scientific and technological advancement and ensured the successful conduct of Pokhran tests in May 1998.

SC trashes appeal of ex-ISRO scientist against dismissal from service

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has junked a scientist's plea challenging his dismissal from service by ISRO, saying the space agency was justified in suspecting his honesty and integrity on account of his unauthorised association with a South Korean institution involved in rocketry research, a strategic subject of his employer.

The apex court was hearing the special leave petition of V R Sanal Kumar, a former scientist at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) of the Indian Space Research Organisation in Thiruvananthapuram against the order of his dismissal from service which was upheld by the Central Administrative Tribunal and the Kerala High Court.

Kumar, who had joined the ISRO in 1992, was dismissed with effect from September 1, 2003 under the Department of Space Employees' (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules for joining Andong National University, South Korea and assisting Prof H D Kim, Head of School of Mechanical Engineering, without permission from his employer.

Upholding the decisions of CAT and the Kerala High Court, a bench of justices M R Shah and C T Ravikumar said, "It is not the mere unauthorised absence of the appellant that actually weighed with the authority and evidently, the



organization is perfectly justified in casting suspicion on the honesty, integrity, reliability, dependability and trustworthiness in view of the factual situation obtained in this case...

"... Besides entertaining the stand that his unauthorized association with foreign institution, especially in the area of propulsion, which is a strategic research and development subject in the organization and based on which the nation's rocketry and ambitious launch vehicle programs are/were advancing, was a matter of concern for the security of the State."

It said when such conduct of a scientist in a sensitive and strategic organisation comes to light, then the decision to impose dismissal from service cannot be said to be "illegal or absolutely unwarranted." It noted Kumar's unauthorised association with a foreign institution in the area of propulsion—a strategic research and development subject in ISRO and based on which the nation's rocketry and ambitious

launch vehicle programs were advancing—was a matter of concern for the security of the state.

The bench said it did not find any reason to interfere with the high court's judgment dismissing the challenge against the CAT's order. "The appeal, therefore, must fail and accordingly, it is dismissed, however, without any cost," it said.

The bench also noted the submissions of Kumar, according to which he was a high-profile scientist with a specialisation in rocket propulsion with proven credentials at par with a NASA scientist.

"He would further state that he is second to none in the space programme and is having all potential to become the Chairman of ISRO and is the best suitable candidate for the post with immediate effect," the bench noted.

The top court said the facts of the case revealed that Kumar, without permission from the competent authority, went to South Korea and joined Andong National University, where he assisted a professor who was the head of the school of mechanical engineering and continued his association with the foreign institution involved in the research on rocketry.

It said Kumar was repeatedly advised not to have any contact with any external agency, such as the university, without permission from appropriate authorities in ISRO.

K'taka DGP Sood is CBI's new...

From Page 1

Fifty-nine year old Sood is a 1986-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Karnataka cadre and the senior-most IPS officer in the country after Research and Analysis Wing chief Samant Kumar Goel (1984-batch, Punjab cadre) and Jaiswal.

Goel has got two extensions of one year each after his two-year tenure ended in 2021. The government is likely to name a new chief of RAW in the backdrop of a series of intelligence failures like the Saudi Arabia-Iran peace deal brokered by China, takeover of Myanmar by the army there, resurgence of neo Khalistan movement, lack of assessments on Nepal and the latest hap-

penings in Pakistan among others. Sood's name was cleared on Saturday in a meeting of a high-powered committee comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, as reported by The Pioneer on Sunday. Chowdhury, a Congress leader, had given a dissent note on the selection of Sood as the next CBI director.

Sood was on top of the list on a panel of three names comprising him and Madhya Pradesh DGP Sudhir Saxena and NIA DG Dinkar Gupta. Born in Himachal Pradesh and schooled in the national capital, Sood has an

impressive educational background. He is an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi, Indian Institute of Management (IIM)-Bangalore and Syracuse University in New York. Sood had cracked the civil services examination in the first attempt. He was scheduled to retire in 2024 but will now have a fixed two-year tenure.

Currently the director general of police in Karnataka, Sood was earlier superintendent of police of Bellary and Raichur districts, deputy commissioner of police (law and order) and additional commissioner of police (traffic) in Bengaluru City, and commissioner of police of Mysore City. The IPS officer has also served

as police advisor to the government of Mauritius. His initiatives to use technology to better traffic management and provide efficient services to citizens has earned him awards like the National E-Governance Gold Award for "Most innovative use of technology for traffic management" in 2011 and the Prince Michael International Road safety Award in 2006.

During his tenure as Additional Director General of Police (computer wing), Sood oversaw the implementation of Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS) in Karnataka for real-time monitoring and sharing of information by connecting police stations with Central network.

UCC will come in country: Himanta

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will be implemented in the country and polygamy would come to an end. He was addressing "Hindu Ekta Yatra" organised by Telangana BJP president and Lok Sabha MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar at Karimnagar.

"There are some people in India who thought they can marry four women. That was their thinking. But, I say you will not be able to do four marriages."

Those days are going to come to an end. That day is not far. Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is going to come in India and

time has also come to make India a true secular nation," Sarma said. The Assam Chief Minister had recently said the State government has constituted a four-member expert committee to examine the legislative competence of the state legislature to enact a law to end polygamy.

Without naming Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, Sarma, who is senior BJP leader said in Telangana "Ram Rajya" is coming in place of "Raja's rule".

"Raja has just five months left. We need 'Ram Rajya' in Telangana and that is our goal. Based on Hindu civilisation we have to make 'Ram Rajya' in Telangana," he said. Telangana Assembly elections are sched-

uled to be held later this year. Sarma said the Telangana government again and again arrests Bandi Sanjay Kumar and he comes out and the government will not succeed in keeping him in jail. "Like Hanuman ji established 'Ram Rajya', we are confident that Bandi Sanjay will establish 'Ram Rajya' in Telangana," he said.

He called upon the people to watch "The Kerala Story" movie. "Today we are working against 'Love Jihad' in Assam. We are taking steps towards closing madrasas education in the State," Sarma said pointing out that the government has shutdown 600 madrasas in his state. Targetting AIMIM president and Hyderabad MP

Asaduddin Owaisi, Sarma said the new India is not afraid of him. "I want to tell Owaisi that I will shutdown 300 more madrasas this year," he said.

The Assam Chief Minister said he saw on television some people saying, on the outcome of the Karnataka Assembly election, that nothing more will happen in the name of Hindu in the country, and asserted that as long as sun and moon exist, India will have Nationalism and Sanatan (Dharma).

Sarma said "Hindu Ekta is not against any religion. I believe as long as Hindus will be there in India there will be wellbeing in the country. Today you see the situation in Pakistan."

Kharge to take call...

From Page 1

Kharge had deputed former Maharashtra Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde, AICC general secretary Jitendra Singh and former AICC general secretary Deepak Babaria as observers for the election of the CLP leader. The party received a boost in its strength when an independent MLA extended his support to the Congress.

AICC general secretary in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala said Latha Mallikarjun, who got elected as an independent from Harapanahalli Assembly segment has extended unconditional support to the Congress party in the State. Latha Mallikarjun, is daughter of veteran leader and former Deputy Chief Minister, late MP Prakash.

CISCE results: 98.94%...

From Page 1

Girls outshone boys in both the exams with nine students sharing the top rank in Class 10 while five shared the first rank in Class 12. In Class 10, nine students shared the top rank with 99.80 per cent marks. They are Rushil Kumar, Annanya Karthik, Shreya Upadhyay, Advay Sardesai, Yash Manish Bhasein, Tanay Sushil Shah, Hiya Sanghavi, Avishi Singh and Sambit Mukhopadhyay.

In Class 12, five students shared the first rank with 99.75 per cent. They are Riya Agarwal, Ipsita Bhattacharya, Mohd Aryan Tariq, Subham Kumar Agarwal and Manya Gupta.

BJP to brainstorm of K'taka poll debacle

From Page 1

We have come to a decision to do a detailed analysis of the overall results and to get a constituency-wise analysis," Bommai said. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, he said despite BJP's vote share remaining same, seats have come down. continued on page 2

The analysis of constituency-wise vote share may give the reasons for it, like segment-wise anti-incumbency, among others.

"It has also been decided to call a meeting of all elected members, followed by a meeting of all candidates to have detailed discussions regarding organising and strengthening

the party in the days to come," he added. Stating that BJP doesn't work only for elections, Bommai said organising the party is a constant process.

Quoting the example of the 2013 Assembly polls when BJP got just 40 seats, he said, "But in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, the party got 19 seats. Today, we are in an even better position and will make all preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls in the days to come."

Karnataka has 28 seats in the Lok Sabha, of which the BJP currently holds 25. "Accepting the defeat with utmost humility, we will identify the reasons for it, rectify and move forward," he added. Responding to a question on

the Congress terming the Karnataka poll outcome as Modi's defeat, Bommai said, "It cannot be Modi's defeat. Modi is for the entire country, not just for Karnataka. He had come for campaigning here. Congress might have won in Karnataka but has seen defeat across the country. Is it the win of local leaders or State leaders?"

Answering a question on the possibility of BJP State chief Kateel resigning, taking responsibility for the poll defeat, Bommai said there is no such question and it has not been discussed.

He also said that no discussions have taken place as to who will be the Leader of the Opposition. Claiming that the

BJP did not fight this election on the basis of Hindutva agenda, Bommai said in response to a question: "It is in some people's mind."

We fought on the basis of the development agenda of the 'double-engine Government'. It is Congress and its manifesto which tried to polarise the people."

Regarding Congress doing well in the Lingayat belt, he said, "Whether it is Lingayat belt or Vokkaliga belt, it is the combination of communities. It is not just one community which will make you win or lose...It also depends on selection and incumbency of the candidate, so we will do detailed analysis."

Govt ...

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Four companies that were earlier part of Air India are now under AIAHL. These are Air India Air Transport Services Ltd, Air India Engineering Services Ltd, Airline Allied Services Ltd and Hotel Corporation of India Ltd. All the four companies are proposed to be divested by the Government in due course.

The Expression of Interest (EoI) for Air India Air Transport Services and Air India Engineering Services are likely to be floated soon. Loss-making Air India along with Air India Express was taken over by Tata Group in January 2022.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE & INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF UTTARAKHAND LTD.
29, IIE, SAHASTRADHARA ROAD (IT PARK), DEHRADUN
Ph No. 0135-2607292, 2708100 Fax No. 0135-2708100 Web site : www.siidcul.com

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE NIT-:SIIDCUL/2023

SIIDCUL invites online bids for "Selection of agency for Manpower Services in Various Industrial Areas of SIIDCUL for a period of Two Years". The tender document would be available from 15.05.2023 till submission date i.e. 22.05.2023 up to 14:00 Hrs. Tender document can be downloaded from <http://www.uktenders.gov.in> and www.siidcul.com. Corrigendum (if any) will be uploaded on the above websites only. MD, SIIDCUL

NOIDA New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida (U.P.)
website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website www.noidaauthorityonline.in & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

S.N.	Job No.	Name of Work	Amount (Rs.)	Publishing
1	08/SPE/PE (PH-I)/E-T/2023-24	Cleaning & Desilting of Drain of Various Location in PH-I Area Zone-III	87.76 Lakh	1st Time
2	10/SPE/PE (PH-I)/E-T/2023-24	Cleaning & Desilting of Drain of Various Location in PH-I Area Zone-V	86.01 Lakh	1st Time

The above tenders can be uploaded from dated 15.05.2023 to 29.05.2023 upto 5:00 P.M. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 30.05.2023 at 11:00 A.M.

Office Sector-94, Noida Dy. GM/Sr. Project Engineer (Public Health) NOIDA
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

कार्यालय नगर पालिका परिषद् शिवपुरी (म.प्र.)
क्रमांक./न.पा.प./निविदा/23/2911 शिवपुरी, दिनांक :- 12.05.2023
Email: cmoshivpuri@mpurban.gov.in
// निविदा सूचना //

निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु केन्द्रीयकृत प्रणाली में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदाओं आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा का विस्तृत विवरण वेबसाईट <https://mptenders.gov.in> पर देखी जा सकती है। टेण्डर परचेस ऑनलाईन कर सकते है।

क्र.	टेण्डर क्रमांक	निविदा जारी दिनांक	कार्य का नाम / आमंत्रित दर	1. कार्य की लागत 2. धरोहर राशि 3. निविदा प्रत्र की राशि	निविदा प्रत्र खरीदने की अंतिम तिथि	कार्य की समयवाधि
1	2023_UAD_275583_1	11.05.2023	Providing unskilled labour through outsource	1. ₹. 70,00,000.00 2. ₹. 52,500.00 3. ₹. 10,000.00	09.06.2023	12 माह
2	2023_UAD_262637_2	11.05.2023	DE-SLUDGING WORK IN ULB AREA	1. ₹. 6,00,000.00 2. ₹. 6,000.00 3. ₹. 2,000.00	24.05.2023	12 माह
3	2023_UAD_274782_1	09.05.2023	Selection and Empanelment of Agency as Project Implementation Unit for Technical AND Administrative Support for Solid Waste Management, IEC Activities, Door To Door Garbage Collection And Transportation Work ACCORDING TO SS GUIDELINE	1. ₹. 1,70,00,000.00 2. ₹. 85,000.00 3. ₹. 12,500.00	07.06.2023	12 माह

मुख्य नगर पालिका अधिकारी
नगर पालिका परिषद् शिवपुरी

Centre pushes DPSUs, India Inc...

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The government wants to reduce dependence on imported military platforms, and has decided to support domestic defence manufacturing. The defence ministry has set a goal of a turnover of USD 25 billion (Rs 1.75 lakh crore) in defence manufacturing in the next five years which includes an export target of USD 5 billion (?35,000 crore) worth of military hardware.

Globalisation is reality of our times, says EAM

From Page 1

Stating that India is also rapidly expanding its global footprint and will intersect with that of the EU more in the coming years, Jaishankar highlighted that transformations underway in India, like digital public delivery or green growth Initiative, certainly merit the EU's attention. The External Affairs Minister said any evaluation of the Indo-Pacific will naturally factor in the Quad as a platform for global good. Jaishankar arrived in Sweden for a three-day visit to participate in the EU-Indo-Pacific Ministerial meet on Saturday. He met his Swedish counterpart Tobias Billstrom and his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi in Sweden. He met with his Indonesian counterpart partner Retno Marsudi and Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan at the EU-Indo-Pacific Ministerial.

Aaditya, Kejriwal discuss 'prevailing political situation'

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After a "favourable" judgement by the Supreme Court last week pertaining to their political status and jurisdiction, the leaders of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Shiv Sena (UBT) on Monday met to develop a bonhomie to confront the BJP on all issues including the forthcoming sessions of Parliament as well the next year Lok Sabha elections.

Both the Arvind Kejriwal led AAP and Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena UBT are in talks separately with other non-BJP parties including JDU's Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and over-



all the Congress. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray accompanied by party colleague and a Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi called on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal at his Civil Lines resi-

dence in the national Capital. Thackeray also met Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and newly elected Jalandhar MP Sushil Kumar Rinku. The Shiv Sena also complimented AAP leaders for being recognised as

a national party by the election commission recently, sources said.

While several political connotations are being talked about this altogether in a different and separate meeting of the two political entities, sources in AAP said after the Karnataka Assembly elections, the Opposition parties have realised that Prime Minister Narendra Modi can be shaken in 2024 if they are united.

Kejriwal took to Twitter and posted pictures of his meeting with Thackeray. "I got an opportunity to host Aaditya Thackeray at my residence today. I held a detailed conversation with him on the current political devel-

opments", the AAP national convenor tweeted.

Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi and AAP MP Sanjay Singh were also present in the meeting along with Aaditya Thackeray.

Earlier on Saturday evening, Thackeray attended the ring ceremony of AAP Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chaddha and actor Parineeti Chopra at Kapurthala house in the national capital where Kejriwal was also present where the meeting was first decided.

According to sources, the meeting lasted over an hour and the discussions revolved around BJP's hate politics, their misuse of Central probing agencies and

the trend observed now decimation of BJP in maximum number of States.

The meeting of Kejriwal and Shiv Sena UBT leader Thackeray can also be a part of this episode. It is also believed that Shiv Sena can do something big by taking the Aam Aadmi Party together in UBT Maharashtra.

Recently, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Kejriwal government that services will be under the state government in Delhi.

On the same day, the top court ruled that it cannot restore the Uddhav Thackeray government as Thackeray had resigned on his own, has come as imme-

diated relief to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

For Uddhav Thackeray, the Supreme Court decision contained a morale booster as it heavily criticised the Governor's conduct in the political battle. The bench said that the Governor's decision to order a floor test for the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government as well as his decision to appoint the whip nominated by the Shinde group were wrong.

Kejriwal had supported the Uddhav Thackeray when Eknath Shinde faction got separated from the Shiv Sena and claimed the party and its symbol. In February this year, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his

Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann had met Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray at his Mumbai residence 'Matoshree'. Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha were also present.

The meeting came days after the Election Commission allotted the 'Shiv Sena' name and 'bow and arrow' symbol to the faction headed by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar along with his deputy Tejaswi Yadav had recently met with his counterparts in Jharkhand and Odisha to discuss opposition unity. Kumar and Yadav had also met Thackeray in Mumbai last week.

Politics of hate doesn't work forever: AAP on BJP's Karnataka defeat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP should learn from its defeat in the Karnataka assembly elections that "politics of hate" does not work forever, the AAP said on Sunday.

Addressing a press conference here, AAP Rajya Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sanjay Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also have to understand that "the time of contesting elections on non-issues, playing politics of hate and throttling opposition is going to end."

"Such a result is bound to come when you won't talk about price rise, unemployment, Adani scam, Agniveer and farmers issue and contest election on fake and non-issues," Singh added.

The AAP leader said the Congress won the Karnataka assembly polls as people found it an alternative in view of the "40 per cent commission" regime of the BJP in the state.

"Karnataka polls result is a big indication and warning to the BJP that politics of hate and efforts to make non-issues as issues of election won't continue for long and meet the same fate," he said.

Singh accepted the AAP candidates' defeat in all the 209 assembly seats from where they contested, maintaining that it was a direct contest between the Congress and the BJP, and in such a situation



there is hardly any scope left for "any third party" in elections.

"Definitely, Karnataka polls result is not good in our favour," he said.

"But there is no need to be disappointed about that," he added.

Singh said AAP leaders and workers in Karnataka will continue to remain in touch with the people.

"They will keep doing their work and take (Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convenor) Arvind Kejriwal's policies to the masses, then definitely in future good results will come," he added.

When asked if the Congress' victory in Karnataka poses a challenge to the AAP, Singh said, "In Gujarat, it was said that the BJP won in the assembly polls due to AAP joining the fray. In Karnataka, people were saying the BJP will gain as the AAP is contesting the election. Then how did the Congress win?"

Wrestlers welcome IOA's move Say decision to take charge of WFI first step in our fight for justice

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The protesting wrestlers on Sunday termed the Indian Olympic Association's (IOA) decision to take charge of all the activities of the Wrestling Federation of India as the "first step" in their fight against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the former WFI chief.

The country's top wrestlers, including Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik and Vinesh Phogat, have been protesting at the Jantar Mantar for the last 22 days demanding the arrest of Brij Bhushan for alleged sexual harassment of women wrestlers.

The IOA, through its letter on May 12, asked the secretary general of WFI to hand over the official documents including financial instruments to its ad-hoc panel, making it clear the outgoing office bearers shall have no role in the running of the federation.

"The WFI said it has no issues in obeying the IOA order since they were already co-operating with the authorities.

"This (the dissolution of the current WFI) is the first step in our fight for justice. Our fight has begun in right earnest, it's a victory for us... And we will continue or fight until we get justice," said Bajrang, the Tokyo Olympics bronze medal-



list.

Asian Games gold medalist Vinesh Phogat rued that not a single ruling party's woman parliamentarian had met the "to extend support in our fight for the dignity of women".

She said that from Monday onwards the wrestlers will give letters by hand or via e-mail to all women parliamentarians of the ruling party to come and support them.

"When they talk about the safety of women in the country, then we too are their daughters and they should come out and support us," she said.

"We are writing an open letter to them (ruling party's women parliamentarians) and our fellow wrestlers will deliver those letters by hand. We will also send letters via e-mail. We feel that our voice, our grievances, have not yet reached them... We feel that after they receive the letters they will come and support us," added Vinesh.

Vinesh also requested the people gathered at Jantar Mantar to visit their respective district headquarters on May 16 and give a memorandum in support of the wrestlers.

"We request the people supporting us to also launch a

satyagraha andolan (nonviolent resistance) for just one day for the dignity of women," added Vinesh.

Meanwhile, the IOA's three-member ad-hoc committee has made it clear that the process to elect new WFI office bearers will be completed within the 45-day time frame and that the charge will be handed back to the elected body.

"Once the elections will be held, the administrative powers will go back to the WFI. The newly elected officials will run the show. It's just a temporary move that ad-hoc is managing the affairs of the federation," an official told

Councillor Pawan returns to AAP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BJP councillor Pawan Sehrawat on Sunday returned to Aam Aadmi Party's fold and said it was like "coming back to my family".

The Arvind Kejriwal-led party termed his return as a "big blow to the BJP" in Delhi.

AAP's MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak made the announcement during a press conference here, and said there were "a bit of organisational differences" in between, because of which he "felt sad and had joined the BJP".

Though he may have physically gone to the BJP, but his mind was with the AAP only, Pathak said.

"He (Sehrawat) was in constant touch with me, and all misgivings were removed and today he has returned to the same family, with the same honour, to his seat. So, we welcome back Pawan to his family (AAP)," the party's MCD in-charge told reporters.

The Bawana councillor had joined the BJP in February, ahead of a crucial MCD House meeting, and had alleged that he felt "suffocated" due to "corruption" in the party led by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Pathak and Sehrawat shook hands in front of the mediapersons after the announcement made by Pathak. AAP is the ruling party in the 250-member House of the MCD. Party councillor Shelly Oberoi was re-elected as mayor on April 26.

Sehrawat later also addressed reporters and said, "I have returned to my family



(AAP) today. And, we will take forward the work of the AAP and work shoulder-to-shoulder with CM Kejriwal."

The councillor from ward no. 30 had left AAP to join BJP due to "certain misunderstandings," the AAP later said in a statement.

"However, once all misunderstandings were cleared at the organisational level, he made the decision to return to the AAP," it said.

Pathak said Sehrawat is "coming back to his family, back to where his heart has always belonged, with the same respect and honour that he had before."

"Today is a very happy occasion. And, happy, because, call him my dear friend, my dear brother, Pawan, who won from Bawana ward no. 30 (in the MCD polls) for the second time with a very huge margin, has returned," he told reporters.

The AAP tweeted in Hindi about the development and quoted Pathak.

"AAP gave a big blow to BJP. BJP councillor from Bawana Pawan Sehrawat has returned to AAP. Just before the election of the Standing Committee in Feb, he had gone to BJP but his mind remained in AAP. That's why today again councillor Pawan Sehrawat has joined 'AAP'. - @ipathak25," it tweeted.

2020 DELHI RIOTS CASE

Court pulls up SI for incomplete probe, refers matter to top cop

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A court here has deprecated the Investigating Officer in a case related to the 2020 north-east Delhi riots for his "casual and unprofessional conduct", and referred the matter to Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora for appraisal of the investigation.

Additional Sessions Judge Pulastya Pramachala was hearing a case registered by the Khajuri Khas police station under various offences, including rioting, theft, robbery and arson, against some persons.

"I deem it fit to refer this matter to the Commissioner of Police in order to make an appraisal of the investigation done by SI Vipin Kumar in this case as well as...conduct of mis-reporting the facts to his higher officer," the judge said in an order



passed last week.

Ten complaints are clubbed in the case and the court had earlier on May 1 sought clarification from the Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) regarding the time of each incident along with the relevant evidence.

"Matter is referred to DCP to make an assessment of investigation done by the initial IO (Kumar), who did not place on record sufficient material... to show what exact investigation was done qua each complaint...

and to show with reference to the admissible piece of evidence, the time of each such incident, and the basis of pointing out the finger towards the accused persons for each of these incidents," the court said in its earlier order.

During the subsequent proceedings on May 10, the judge said according to the DCP's report, the officer had called for a report from the IO and as it was not found specific, the present station house officer (SHO) and Kumar were directed to provide the court with a more specific synopsis.

Also, the assistant commissioner of police and SHO of the Khajuri Khas police station were directed to review the entire case and if required, ensure further investigation by another IO, the judge said noting the report.

Body of Class XII student missing since Friday found in drain

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The body of a CBSE Class 12 student, who went missing after being placed in the compartment category in two subjects in the board examination, was recovered from a drain in Delhi's Aman Vihar area, police said on Sunday.

The victim went missing from her home around 3.30 pm on Friday after the CBSE examination results were declared, they said. Her father had informed the police that the girl was depressed after being placed in the compartment category in two subjects and left a suicide note before running away from home, a senior officer said.

The Police Control Room was informed and an extensive search operation launched to



find the girl. Wireless messages were also flashed to all SHOs but the girl could not be traced, he said. On Sunday, the police received information about the body of a girl lying in a drain in Aman Vihar. The police pulled out the partly submerged body with the help of locals and shifted it to the Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital for post-mortem, the officer added.

The body was later handed over to her parents. No foul play was found in the inquiry conducted so far, the police said. Inquest proceedings have been initiated, the police said.

Woman kills self less than month after wedding

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 23-year-old woman died allegedly by suicide in north-west Delhi's Jahangirpuri area on Sunday, less than a month after her wedding, police said. During preliminary inquiry, it was revealed that the woman committed suicide by hanging herself from a ceiling fan using a saree, the police said.

The woman, who lived in Bhalswa village in Jahangirpuri, got married on April 22 and the sub-divisional magistrate of the area has been informed about the incident for necessary action, they said. Legal proceedings under relevant section of the CrPc has been initiated, the police said, adding the post-mortem reported was awaited.

Doctors remove 6.5-cm tumour from man's food pipe at hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 30-year-old man has received a new lease of life after undergoing a challenging surgery for removal of a large tumour from his food pipe at a hospital here, doctors said on Sunday.

The patient was recently admitted at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) with difficulty in swallowing, where, after investigations, doctors found a "large tumour of the size of 6.5 cm", bulging in the food pipe region, they said.

The hospital, in a statement on Sunday, claimed that this was "one of the largest tumours removed endoscopically in India". According to Anil Arora, chairman, Institute of Liver Gastroenterology and Pancreatic Biliary Sciences, at the hospital, "We recently removed a large submucosal

tumour (6.5 cm in size) from the food pipe (oesophageal leiomyoma) -- a tumour arising from the muscular layer of oesophagus and protruding into the lumen causing dysphagia) in the 30-year-old male patient".

These types of large tumours are traditionally removed by surgery which has far more morbidity and is associated with longer hospital stay, the doctors said. The procedure used for this patient is known as "submucosal tunnelling and endoscopic resection (STER)", the hospital said. According to Dr Shivam Khare, consultant, Department of Gastroenterology, at SGRH, "In the STER procedure, firstly we injected saline at the base of the tumour that helped us lift the tumour, and create a tunnel all around it, by dissection of fibrous tissue around it, and in separating it from all layers of food pipe".

59K challans issued in Noida, 1K vehicles seized in 15-day drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

A total of 58,685 challans — an average of over 3,900 daily — were issued for violation of traffic rules in Noida and Greater Noida during a 15-day campaign, according to data. Police also seized nearly 1,000 vehicles during the drive.

Launched on April 28, the 'Discipline of the Road - 1' campaign focused particularly on checking wrong-lane driving and illegal parking, among other violations, a senior official said.

According to the official data, 58,685 challans were issued during the campaign period. Of these, 7,792 were for wrong-



lane driving/riding and 14,430 for parking violations.

The traffic police towed 1,128 vehicles while 996 were impounded for violations even as FIRs were lodged in five cases during the fortnight, the data showed. The total penalty amount from challans during the campaign was Rs 4,91,600 (Rs 4.91 lakh), according to the official figures.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Anil Kumar Yadav said the campaign has been effective and learnings from it will be implemented in future to further enforce traffic rules in Noida and Greater Noida.

"The campaign has been effective but we have identified some (traffic violation) hotspots where we will continue enforcement of traffic rules," Yadav told PTI.

"At some places where we have identified wrong-lane driving due to structural issues, we will be communicating with the Noida authority to resolve those issues," he said.

Chenu Gang member accused of robbery-murder arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 26-year-old man has been arrested in connection with a case of dacoity and murder in North Delhi's Civil Lines area, police said on Sunday. The accused, Mohit Chauhan of Loni, is a sharpshooter of the "Chenu Gang", they said.

The arrest was made in connection with the incident of murder-cum-dacoity that took place in the Civil Lines area on May 8 in which a person was shot dead, police said, adding that the accused was previously involved in 19 criminal cases, involving robbery, dacoity and murder.

Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ravindra Singh



Yadav said information was received by police that Chauhan was the main shooter in the case and was living in Bhogpur village in Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh.

"Our raiding party laid a trap near Rajputana Dhaba along the Bulandshahr-Aligarh Highway. The suspect came on a motorcycle to meet his uncle and was apprehended," he said.

Capital records max temp of 40.9 deg C

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The maximum temperature in the national capital on Sunday settled at 40.9 degrees Celsius, a notch above the season's average temperature, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The minimum temperature was recorded at 25.9 degrees Celsius, it said.

The relative humidity oscillated between 30 and 60 per cent and the department has predicted partly cloudy sky with strong surface winds for Monday.

The maximum temperature is likely to hover around



42 degrees Celsius while the minimum is expected to settle at 24 degrees Celsius on Monday, officials said.

On Saturday, the maximum temperature was 41.8 degrees Celsius while the minimum was 22 degrees Celsius.

City logs 26 fresh Covid cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi on Sunday recorded 26 fresh Covid cases with a positivity rate of 1.49 per cent, according to data shared by the city government's health department.

With the fresh cases, Delhi's case tally climbed to 20,40,447. The death toll remained unchanged at 26,651, the health department said in its bulletin. The national Capital has not reported any Covid-related deaths in the last two days. The health department did not issue a health bulletin on Saturday.

State polls will keep political pot boiling till 2024 LS battle

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Assembly elections in Karnataka may be over, but a series of other State polls this year will keep the political pot boiling till the 2024 Lok Sabha battle.

At least three assembly election could also take place alongside the Lok Sabha polls.

After Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram would go for polls this year.

The northeastern states of Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya were the first to have assembly polls in 2023.

The last part of 2023 would witness a series of assembly polls with terms of legislative assemblies of Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Telangana ending on different dates in



December this year and January 2024.

While the term of the 40-member Mizoram assembly ends on December 17, the tenures of the Chhattisgarh and the Madhya Pradesh legislative assemblies conclude on January 3 and January 6, 2024, respectively.

The tenures of the

Rajasthan and Telangana assemblies end on January 14 and January 16, 2024, respectively.

Polis in these five states being held together cannot be ruled out at this stage.

Besides the scheduled polls, assembly elections in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir can also not be ruled

out this year.

Sources had earlier said that elections in Jammu and Kashmir may be held in the summer of 2023 after winter conditions subside, and the timing would depend on the security scenario.

After the conclusion of the 62-day long Amarnath Yatra from July 1 to August 31, a possible window sometime in October this year could be available for polls in Jammu and Kashmir.

The terms of the legislative assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Odisha are ending on different dates in June next year.

Since Lok Sabha polls are usually held in April-May, there is a likelihood that assembly elections in the three states could be held simultaneously with the parliamentary exercise.

Indian Navy test fires BrahMos missile



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The indigenously designed and manufactured guided missile destroyer INS Mormugao on Sunday successfully test-fired the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. It hit the 'bulls eye' when the ship undertook its first firing of the BrahMos missile, navy officials said here.

Giving details, they said the firing from the frontline warship demonstrated the navy's fire-power at sea.

"INS Mormugao, the latest guided-missile destroyer, successfully hit 'bulls eye' during her maiden BrahMos supersonic cruise missile firing," a Navy official said.

Odisha's Millet Mission may go global soon

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Odisha Government's much-touted Odisha Millet Mission (OMM) launched in 2017 may go global soon with the World Food Programme identifying it as one of the best practices that can be replicated in other States in India and other countries in Africa as part of South-South collaboration.

Back home, it recently added yet another feather in its cap with the UNDP and Niti Aayog hailing it as 'Model of Millets in India'. It has been included in the compendium 'Best practices in social sector: A compendium, 2023' jointly prepared by the UN body and the country's top think tank. The document was released recently.

The Compendium also notes that "World Food Programme identified OMM as one of the best practices that can be replicated in other states and



other countries in Africa as part of South-South Collaboration."

The OMM, which was launched with an aim to revive millets on farms and plates, simultaneously focusing on production, processing, consumption, marketing and inclusion of millets in government schemes, was initiated in 30 blocks covering 7 districts in 2017, then extended to 84 blocks covering 15 districts by 2021.

This is further scaled up to 143 blocks in 2022 covering 19 districts, reaching out to 1.18

Lakh farmers covering 54,495 hectare.

Tribal development Cooperative Corporation Ltd has been chosen as nodal procurement agency which partners with Farmers Produce Organisations (FPOs) and Women Self Help Groups to procure finger millet (ragi) to be distributed in PDS and ICDS. Involvement of WSHGs and FPOs which are considered to be the backbone of any rural economy make the OMM fit for the case for being a game changer in the social sector.

SC to hear plea of lawyers body for action against VP, Rijiju over remarks on judiciary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Bombay Lawyers Association (BLA) against Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar over their remarks on judiciary and the collegium system for appointment of judges.

The lawyers' body has moved the top court challenging the Bombay High Court's February 9 order dismissing its plea on the ground that it was not a fit case to invoke the writ jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution.

As per the apex court website, the appeal of the BLA is listed for hearing before a bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Ahsanuddin Amanullah.

The Bombay Lawyers Association (BLA) had claimed that Rijiju and Dhankhar showed lack of faith in the Constitution with their remarks and conduct. It had sought orders to restrain Dhankhar from discharging duty as the vice president, and Rijiju as the cabinet



inet minister for the central government.

In an appeal, the lawyers body said the "frontal attack not just on the judiciary but the Constitution" by the two executive officials has lowered the prestige of the Supreme Court in public.

Rijiju had said the collegium system of appointing judges was "opaque and not transparent". Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar had questioned the landmark 1973 Kesavananda Bharati judgement that gave the basic structure doctrine.

Dhankhar had said the verdict set a bad precedent and, if any authority questions Parliament's power to amend the Constitution, it would be difficult to say "we are a democrat-

ic nation".

"It is submitted that the Petitioner herein filed the PIL before the High Court of Judicature at Bombay praying therein to declare the Respondent no 1 and 2 as disqualified candidates to hold any constitutional posts of Vice President and Minister of the Union Cabinet, respectively, based on their behaviour, conduct and utterances made in public," the petition has said.

The two constitutional functionaries, it said, showed lack of faith in the Constitution by their conduct and utterances made in public and by attacking its institutions, including the Supreme Court, and showing scant regard for the law laid down by the Supreme Court.

"The conduct of Respondent Nos 1 and 2 appeared to have shaken public faith in the Supreme Court and the Constitution," it said.

The plea said the vice president and the Union minister have affirmed oaths that they will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution. "However, their conduct has shown lack of faith in the Constitution of India," it said assailing the high court's order dismissing its PIL.

They have launched a frontal attack on the institution of judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, in most derogatory language without any recourse which is available under the constitutional scheme to change the status quo as per the law laid down by the Supreme Court, it said. The BLA quoted the statements of the dignitaries made at certain functions. The high court had on February 9 dismissed the public interest litigation (PIL).

"We are not inclined to grant any relief. The petition is dismissed. Reasons would be recorded later," the high court had said.

Jaipur serial blasts: Apex court to hear appeal of families of victims against acquittal of accused



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear on May 17 an appeal by some of the family members of those killed in the 2008 Jaipur serial blasts challenging the Rajasthan High Court verdict acquitting four men, who were handed down death penalty by a trial court in the case.

Jaipur was rocked by a series of blasts on May 13, 2008 when bombs went off one after another at Manak Chawk Khanda, Chandpole

Gate, Badi Chaupad, Chhoti Chaupad, Tripolia Gate, Johri Bazar and Sangneri Gate.

The explosions left 71 people dead and 185 injured.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Rajesh Bindal considered the submissions of senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for some of the families of the victims of the blasts. The senior lawyer also sought a stay on the high court's judgement.

The Rajasthan government had on April 25 filed an appeal challenging the high court verdict in the case.

The top court on May 12 permitted family members of the victims of the blast to file an appeal against the verdict and listed the petition with that of the state government for hearing on Wednesday.

"Diary No...Is taken on board. Permission to file SLPs (Special Leave Petition) is granted. Leave granted. Liberty is granted to file an application for early hearing after respondents are duly served. List on May 17...Along with SLP(Crl)...(of Rajasthan government)," the bench ordered on Friday.

SC to hear Navlakha's plea for shifting out from Mumbai public library under house arrest



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is likely to hear on Monday a plea of activist Gautam Navlakha, who is under house arrest in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, that he be shifted from a public library in Mumbai to some other place.

A bench of Justices K M Joseph and B V Nagarathna had on April 28 directed the CBI to file its reply within two weeks on Navlakha's petition seeking to be shifted from the public library to some other place in the city as the facility needs to be vacated.

Besides, the top court also directed Navlakha to deposit another Rs 8 lakh toward expenses for making available police personnel for his security.

Shah to inaugurate training programme on legislative drafting

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate a training programme on legislative drafting here on Monday.

The programme is being organised by the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies (ICPS) in collaboration with the Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE), an official statement said.

It is aimed at creating an understanding of the principles and practices of legislative drafting among officers of Parliament, state legislatures



and various ministries, statutory bodies and other government departments, it added.

Legislative drafting has a major impact on the interpretation of policies and the regulations implemented for the welfare of the society and the state, the statement said.

Since legislative draftsmen are responsible for producing legislation which promotes democratic governance and gives effect to the rule of law, it is necessary that they are im p a r t e d training from time to time to sharpen their skills, it added.

Navies of India, Indonesia begin six day exercise



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy's indigenously designed and built anti-submarine warfare corvette INS Kavaratti arrived at Batam, Indonesia to participate in the 4th edition of India-Indonesia Bilateral Exercise 'Samudra Shakti' from May 14-19, navy officials said here on Sunday.

They also said an Indian Navy Dornier Maritime Patrol aircraft and Chetak helicopter is also participating. The Indonesian Navy will be represented by KRI Sultan

Iskandar Muda, CN 235 Maritime Patrol Aircraft and AS565 Panther Helicopter.

Exercise 'Samudra Shakti' is aimed at enhancing interoperability, jointness and mutual cooperation between both the navies.

The Harbour phase will comprise Cross deck visits, professional Interactions, Subject Matter Expert Exchanges, and sports fixtures. During the Sea Phase, weapon firing, Helicopter Operations, Anti-submarine warfare and air defence exercises and boarding operations are planned.

Bats' proteins can play key role in fighting inflammatory diseases, ageing, says Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A protein called ASC2 in the bats that helps it develop extraordinary immune defense against pathogens like Covid-19 and Ebola can play a key role in fighting inflammatory diseases and ageing in humans, a team of scientists has said.

The research, published in the journal Cell, is focused on multi-protein complexes called inflammasomes that are responsible for the overactive inflammation that causes serious symptoms in many diseases.

The team discovered that a bat protein called ASC2 has a powerful ability to inhibit inflammasomes, thereby limiting inflammation.

Bats have attracted great attention as a likely reservoir of the SARS-CoV-2 virus responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic. But this unique ability to host yet survive viral infections could also



have a very positive impact on human health if we can understand and exploit how they achieve this," said Professor Wang Lin-Fa, at Duke-NUS Singapore's Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) Programme.

The study "suggests that the high-level activity of ASC2 is a key mechanism by which bats keep inflammation under control, with implications for their long lifespan

and unique status as a reservoir for viruses," explained Dr Matae Ahn, Adjunct Researcher at the EID Programme.

The bat protein, tested in mice, showed good results. Expression of the bat protein in genetically-modified mice dampened inflammation and reduced the severity of the diseases driven by various triggers, including viruses, the team said.

Examination of the ASC2 protein in detail identified four amino acids in the molecule that were key to making the bat protein more effective at dampening inflammation than its corresponding human protein.

This provides valuable insight for the development of drugs that can mimic the anti-inflammatory effect of the bat protein.

The next step for the team is to investigate the potential of their findings for treating humans.

"We have filed patents based on this work and are exploring commercial partnerships for drug discovery. We are hoping to develop a new class of anti-inflammatory drugs for inflammation-driven human diseases," Prof Wang said.

Prof Wang strongly believes that it is time to focus on the more promising aspects of what makes bats special "to help fight the human diseases of the future."

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल पर्यावास भवन, नार्वे ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नया रायपुर, अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.) 492002

// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली की अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता कि (1) मेसर्स गुरुश्री मिनरल्स प्राइवेट लिमिटेड, (छिटापडरिया डोलोमाईट क्वारी डायरेक्टर- श्री मुकेश बसल), पार्ट ऑफ खसरा क्रमांक - 30/5, खसबा - 3,036 हेक्टेयर, उत्खनन क्षमता - 1,50,537 टन प्रतिवर्ष, (2) मेसर्स गुरुश्री मिनरल्स प्राइवेट लिमिटेड, (छिटापडरिया डोलोमाईट क्वारी डायरेक्टर- श्री मनमोहन शर्मा), पार्ट ऑफ खसरा क्रमांक - 30/4 एवं 30/5 भाग, 4,068 हेक्टेयर, उत्खनन क्षमता - 1,50,672 टन प्रतिवर्ष (3) मेसर्स गुरुश्री मिनरल्स प्राइवेट लिमिटेड, (छिटापडरिया डोलोमाईट क्वारी डायरेक्टर- श्री मनमोहन शर्मा), पार्ट ऑफ खसरा क्रमांक - 5/2, एवं 5/20, 4,162 हेक्टेयर, उत्खनन क्षमता - 2,50,647 टन प्रतिवर्ष, ग्राम-छिटापडरिया, वलखंड डोलोमाईट, तहसील- जेजपुर, जिला- सक्ती (छ.ग.) में स्थित कुल 03 डोलोमाईट खदानों (गोण खनिज) के द्वारा पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 15/05/2023, दिन सोमवार, समय 11:00 बजे, स्थान - शा.उ.मा. शांला छिटापडरिया, तहसील - जेजपुर, जिला- सक्ती (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है। कलेक्टर, कार्यालय कलेक्टर एवं जिला सहायकारि, जिला- सक्ती द्वारा जारी आवेश पत्र क्रमांक 1606/रा.अर./2023 सक्ती दिनांक 12/05/2023 में किये गये संकेतानुसार पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु नियत उक्त संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई को अपरिहार्य कारणों से स्थगित किया जाता है। उक्त संयुक्त लोक सुनवाई आयोजन हेतु आगामी तिथि की सूचना पृथक से दी जायेगी।

सदस्य सचिव
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,
नया रायपुर, अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Almost seven years after the passage of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, the Union Health Ministry has now notified the standards of public and private healthcare institutions to ensure accessibility of healthcare facilities and services to the persons with disabilities (PwDs).

The RPwD Act, 2016 mandates the Central government to formulate rules laying down standards of accessibility inter-alia for facilities and services provided to the public in urban and rural areas as well as in all parts of government and private hospitals and other healthcare institutions and centres



such as Primary health centres, community health centres, Sub-district hospitals, district hospitals, first referral units, dispensaries, medical laboratories and diagnostic centres etc.

Now, the Union Health Ministry has framed the guidelines themed 'Accessibility

homes, private clinics, and others such as sub centres, primary health centres, community health centres, sub-district hospitals, district hospitals, first referral units, dispensaries, medical laboratories and diagnostic centres should be made accessible, says the guidelines.

A notification signed by Rajiv Majhi, Joint Secretary in the Ministry was issued on May 4.

The standards have been framed by a panel headed by Dr Anil Kumar Gaur, director of All India Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Mumbai. The other members include Dr Naveen Kumar, Additional Professor (PMR) from JIPMER, Puducherry, Dr Sanjay Kumar Pandey,

Additional Professor (PMR), AIIMS Patna and Abhishek Bose, architect from CPWD, Union Urban Development Ministry. However, there is no representation or any activist from the disability sector in the panel.

The Standards calls for providing universal access i.e. the facilities are designed ensuring that the environment, facilities, services and products including the information and communication technology services and products can be used by everyone regardless of his ability or disability.

It includes building structure guidelines such as parking, ramps, staircases, lifts, wash-rooms and drinking water facil-

ities that are applicable to all kind of healthcare facilities including in say ophthalmology, gynecology and cancer covered under the Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021.

Medical equipment and furniture, including the examination tables and chairs, lifts for shuffling persons with locomotor disability, gynaecological examination table, radiological diagnostic equipment, mammography equipment and chairs, densitometer and adjustable height stretcher, weighing scales, commodes and shower transfer benches, among others have been defined.

War of words between Cong, TMC over who will lead Opp in 2024

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Karnataka election results have triggered fresh war of words over the leadership issue in 2024 — between the Congress and the Trinamool Congress

While Congress Lok Sabha Leader Adhir Chowdhury has claimed that no party other than the one he represents can lead a united opposition against the BJP and that “only the Congress being a pan-Indian party can unite the Opposition,” the Trinamool Congress continues to insist on its “one against one” theory implying the regional

parties will have to be given upper hand in the areas where they are stronger.

“The Karnataka election results have proved beyond all doubt that it is only the Congress which as a national party can lead the fight against the BJP ... there is no alternative to the Congress in national politics,” Chowdhury, who is also the Bengal Pradesh Congress president, said.

In an apparent jab to the TMC he said that it was irrelevant as to which small group said what about how things should be in the national politics.

Like Mamata Banerjee took no cognizance of the



Congress in her Saturday speech by refusing to congratulate its leaders for their landslide victory in the southern State Chowdhury too ignored the existence of TMC in the

national political map saying, “it is irrelevant as to what the tiny groups say ... after the Karnataka elections it is clear that no party other than the Congress can take on the BJP ... it is the Congress that is going to take the centre stage.”

Reacting to posers he said, “there are only two fronts in the country now. One is the communal front of the BJP and another is the secular front led by the Congress ... Only the Congress and no one else has the power to defeat the Narendra Modi government.”

On Mamata Banerjee’s claim that “the road to Karnataka started from Bengal in 2021 when the TMC roared

back to power with overwhelming majority,” the PCC president said that Banerjee had “betrayed the cause of opposition unity both inside and outside Parliament ... she has betrayed the cause of opposition unity in Meghalaya, Goa, Tripura and all other places ... hence it is irrelevant what they say now.”

The TMC which had last month lost its national party status had strongly been pushing for the Bengal Chief Minister’s right to prime ministership until the party lost the Tripura and Meghalaya polls.

He said that the TMC which has been playing a “B Team” to the BJP for the past

several years should now think of winding up. “This party of thieves will not survive the 2024 elections ... so the honest people in the TMC should start thinking of joining the Congress,” Chowdhury said.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh reacted to the PPC president’s statement saying the Congress was the C Team of CPI(M) which itself was the B Team of the BJP in Bengal. “The Congress should think of bare survival in Bengal instead of getting TMC men to join its ranks ... The Karnataka victory has made them over ambitious ... they should remember that they are just another party in the

opposition ranks.”

He called upon the Congress to join the fight against the BJP instead of building up hegemony once again.

Meanwhile, in an eye-catching development various local committees of the CPI(M) continued to take out small area-wise processions celebrating the Congress victory in Karnataka. When asked to comment on his rally at Jadavpur, CPI(M) central committee member Sujana Chakrabarty, a strong votary of Left-Congress alliance in Bengal said more than anything else his party was celebrating the fall of BJP

Manipur violence: CM in Delhi to meet PM, Shah

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh and four members of his cabinet have gone to Delhi to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday to discuss the situation in the northeastern state shaken by violence for the past several days, a source said.

The issue of the ongoing suspension of operation (SOO) with militant organisations of the state is also likely to be discussed, the source said.

The chief minister’s visit to Delhi also followed the demand by 10 tribal MLAs belonging to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi group in Manipur for a “separate administration” for their region in the wake of recent violent clashes between the Meiteis and tribals.

Of the 10 legislators, 7



Violent clashes broke out in the north-eastern state after a ‘Tribal Solidarity March’ was organised in the 10 hill districts on May 3 to protest against the Meitei community’s demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. The clashes were preceded by tension over the eviction of Kuki villagers from reserve forest land, which had led to a series of smaller agitations. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur’s population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Tribals -- Nagas and Kukis -- constitute another 40 per cent of the population and reside in the hill districts. The chief minister had on Monday said that 60 people were killed, 231 injured and 1,700 houses including religious places burnt in the ethnic violence that rocked the northeastern state for the past few days.

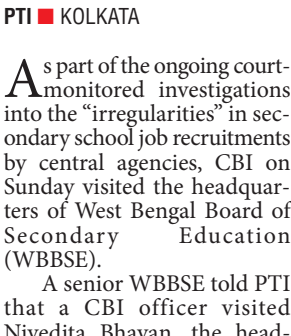
CBI visits Bengal board head office in school jobs scam

PTI ■ KOLKATA

As part of the ongoing court-monitored investigations into the “irregularities” in secondary school recruitments by central agencies, CBI on Sunday visited the headquarters of West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE).

A senior WBBSE told PTI that a CBI officer visited Nivedita Bhavan, the headquarters of the board, at Salt Lake township in the afternoon and went through some documents.

“Our staff extended all cooperation to them. It was not that a CBI team raided our office. One CBI officer came, apparently as part of the ongoing probe, and went through some papers after unlocking a few rooms. He then left,” the official said.



He said WBBSE stood for transparency in the system. “Investigations are continuing and if there has been any irregularity in the past, the board will do whatever is asked by agencies to correct them. We have nothing else to comment on this,” he said. Several people were arrested by CBI and ED in connection with alleged irregularities in the recruitment of teaching

Cong weak in several parts of country, BJP needs to be countered State-wise: Vijayan

PTI ■ THRISSUR

The Karnataka assembly poll result is the people’s “reply” to the BJP and the Sangh Parivar that they cannot continue to do whatever they feel like in the country, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said here on Sunday.

At the same time, Vijayan said the Congress should also realise that it is not as strong as it was in the past and batted for a “state-wise” strategy of uniting anti-BJP forces to take on the saffron party.

“The BJP, RSS and Sangh Parivar’s stand was that they can do anything they want in the country. It is to this stand that the people of Karnataka have given a resounding reply. They have shown they will not allow them to continue like this,” Vijayan said.



In all the southern states, except Karnataka, it was non-Congress parties that were in power, the chief minister said after inaugurating a public meeting organised by the LDF as part of its second anniversary celebrations. “We should work according to the changing scenario on the ground and the Congress needs to realise that. It needs to realise that is not the same Congress that was in power in the country for several years. It is weak in several parts of the country.

Former West Bengal education minister Partha Chatterjee, ex-School Service Commission (SSC) chairman Subir Bhatnagar, former SSC advisor Shanti Prasad Sinha and ex-WBBSE president Kalyanmoy Ganguly are among those arrested in connection with the case.

K’taka template can be implemented in other States: Pawar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Communist Party of India (CPI) leader D Raja on Sunday met NCP president Sharad Pawar at his residence in Mumbai and discussed providing an alternative to BJP, a meeting coming a day after the saffron party’s drubbing in Karnataka elections.

Addressing reporters after the meeting, Pawar indicated that the Karnataka template needs to be implemented in other states, and for that, like-minded parties will have to work on a common minimum programme (CMP).

“The Karnataka assembly elections have given a message. We need to work on creating a situation like Karnataka in other states. The Congress alone gave an alternative to the BJP in Karnataka, but in other states, like-minded parties will have to work on a common minimum programme (CMP),” the NCP chief said.

He will work on both fronts (of creating a strategy



like Karnataka and the CMP) and we are starting this process, he added. Raja spoke about a common understanding to defeat the BJP. “The state-level strategy can be worked out. We may find some time to interact in Delhi now. The BJP can be defeated and it will lose the 2024 parliamentary as well as state (Maharashtra) elections. The myth of the party being invincible has been broken,” he said referring to the Karnataka poll outcome. In Karnataka, the Congress won 135 seats out of 224, while the ruling BJP and the former prime minister H D Deve Gowda-led Janata Dal (Secular) secured 66 and 19 seats, respectively.

On day 4, Pilot’s Jan Sangharsh Yatra gets ‘overwhelming response’

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot’s “Jan Sangharsh Yatra” on the issues of corruption and government recruitment exam paper leaks continued to draw support from people on its fourth day on Sunday.

On Sunday, the dissident Congress leader resumed his foot march from Mehla town in Jaipur district and moved towards Mahapura, where he is scheduled to stay the night.

He covered a distance of around 25 km on Sunday.

On Monday, Pilot will hold a public meeting near Kamla Nehru Nagar along the Ajmer highway on the culmination of his five-day yatra.

“The yatra is getting overwhelming response from people. Be it the youth or the elderly, all are attending the padayatra,” an aide of Pilot said.

Pilot began the foot march from Ajmer on Thursday, challenging Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and



the party’s top brass as assembly elections in Rajasthan approach. The yatra mounts further pressure on the party leadership as it hopes to retain the state in the elections at the end of the year. The march comes days after Gehlot accused the MLAs involved in the 2020 revolt of taking money from the BJP. Pilot and 18 other

Farmers should keep pace with changing times: Vice President

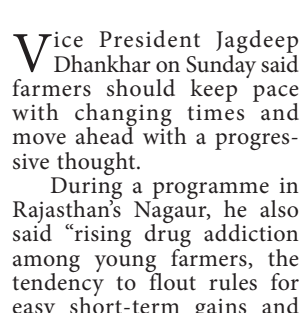
PTI ■ JAIPUR

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said farmers should keep pace with changing times and move ahead with a progressive thought.

During a programme in Rajasthan’s Nagaur, he also said “rising drug addiction among young farmers, the tendency to flout rules for easy short-term gains and involvement of youngsters in criminal activities” are matters of concern.

India is a country of farmers and it is because of the “sweat and blood” of a farmer that the economy of the country is progressing, Dhankhar said.

Referring to advancements in farming across the world, including Israel, which has climatic conditions similar to Rajasthan and has partnered with the state in the agriculture sector, he said farmers should keep pace with changing times as well as move ahead with a progressive thought.



“We must go beyond what is happening in Israel, we must go beyond what is happening in the world in agriculture and animal husbandry,” the vice president said. Farmers have always been proactive in adopting changes, he said. On the issue of drug addiction and flouting of rules by youngsters in rural areas, Dhankhar said, “Playing with the law will not only cost them dearly but also bring disrepute to the rural farming community.” “No one is above the law, sooner or later the noose of the law will surely tighten

(around them),” he said. The vice president also unveiled a statue of former parliamentarian and freedom fighter Nathuram Mirgha. Earlier, Dhankhar offered prayers at the Brahma temple in Pushkar town in Ajmer district and visited Veer Tejaji’s birthplace in Kharnal in Nagaur. The vice president along with his wife Sudesh Dhankhar reached Pushkar in a helicopter where they were received by Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) chairman Dharmendra Rathore, the divisional commissioner and other officers. From the helipad in mela ground, they reached the temple amid tight security arrangements and offered prayers. They later reached the famous Tejaji temple in Kharnal in Nagaur and offered prayers to the folk deity Veer Tejaji.

One killed, 8 injured in Maha’s Akola clash

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

One person was killed and eight others were injured, while several two-wheelers and two fire brigade vehicles were set on fire, when a violent clash broke out between members of two communities over an offensive social media post at Akola in eastern Maharashtra late on Saturday night.

Uneasy calm prevailed in Rajarajeshwar Sethu of Harihar Peth locality in Akola city on Sunday, after district collector Neema Arora enforced section 144 of Indian Penal Code in Akola city, banning unlawful assembly of people with deadly weapons.

The police detained more than 26 persons in connection with the rioting that took place in the old town areas of Akola, where groups belonging to two communities clashed over a controversial post put out by a youth on Facebook. The rioting mobs indulged in stone pelting, arson and efforts to unleash



an atmosphere of intimidation in the affected locality. In the rioting that lasted for one and a half hours, irate mobs set ablaze several two-wheelers and a couple brigade vehicles. The rioters also attempted to set a few houses on fire. Confirming one death and injuries sustained by eight persons, including two policemen, Akola’s Superintendent of Police Sandeep Ghuge said that trouble broke out after a social media post went viral. There was stone pelting. Several vehicles were damaged. We have deployed heavy

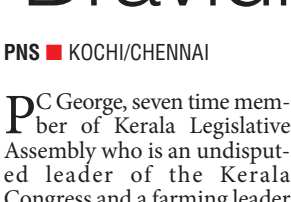
George slams Stalin for ‘Dravidian land remark’

PNS ■ KOCHI/CHENNAI

P.C. George, seven time member of Kerala Legislative Assembly who is an undisputed leader of the Kerala Congress and a farming leader has issued a stern warning to parties like the CPI-M and DMK for speaking about secessionism from the Indian Union.

Reacting to statements issued by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin that the concept of Dravidian land is round the corner following the debacle of the BJP in Karnataka election, George said it was highly improper of the DMK leader to say so. “It shows his ignorance of Indian Constitution and how narrow minded the Dravidian concept is. I heard some of the CPI-M leaders of Kerala too speaking in terms of separatism and this does not augur well for the concept for India,” George told *The Pioneer*.

He said the defeat of the BJP in Karnataka was the fall out of local issues. “The Government failed to address



expressed confidence that Modi would make it for the third term. R V Giri, former president of the Consortium of Indian Farmers Association, said that the farming community has been let down by the BJP Government in Karnataka as well as the DMK Government in Tamil Nadu. “This together with the high handed behavior of some BJP leaders resulted in the failure of the party. Whoever rules India and the State, should never ignore the interests of the farmers. They should get the price recommended by the M S Swaminathan Commission for the products they cultivate. It is a reasonable demand,” said Giri. He said that similar result was waiting for the DMK as the Government has not paid the price of sugar cane to hundreds of thousands of sugarcane farmers in the State. “This is in gross violation of the order issued by the Sugarcane Commissioner that the price of sugarcane should be paid within 14 days of cutting the crop.

Five die in TN hooch tragedy

PTI ■ VILLUPURAM

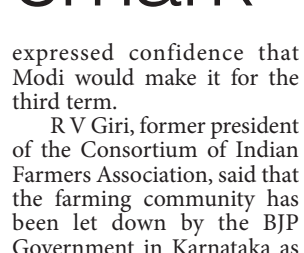
Five persons, including a woman, died after allegedly consuming spurious liquor in the district, police said on Sunday.

Four police personnel were suspended in connection with the incident, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin said. All the five were admitted to a government hospital late on Saturday where three of them died initially. Two others, including the woman, died on Sunday without responding to treatment, police said.

One person has been arrested in connection with the incident and the police are on the lookout for some more individuals.

The incident occurred at Ekkiyarkuppam at Marakanam near here on Saturday night.

Underlining his government’s resolve to eradicate the menace of hooch and drugs, chief minister Stalin said four police personnel, including two inspectors, have been sus-



ended in connection with the incident. He had announced Rs 10 lakh as relief to each of the families of the three men who died earlier. AIADMK general secretary and Leader of Opposition, K Palaniswami, said during his party-led 10 year rule (2011-21), there was no place for illicit liquor in the state and blamed the ruling DMK’s “inefficiency” for the deaths. “Steps should be at least taken now against illicit liquor” he said in a social media post. PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss sought against officials concerned over the sale of hooch and reiterated his party’s demand for ending nationalisation of liquor sales in the State as well as implementation of prohibition.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Satraps matter

Congress won handsomely in Karnataka but this may not have a great impact on 2024 general poll

The biggest takeaway from the Bharatiya Janata Party's defeat in the Karnataka election is that strong state leadership is important in Assembly polls. It is true that the BJP has won without a chief ministerial face in the past but it does not mean that it can happen all the time. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah make an excellent election-winning duo, but the saffron party must realise that it cannot rely on Modi all the time. The problem, however, is that the big two are not very fond of all state leaders. This was the reason that they ensured the exit of the BJP's strongest state leader, BS Yediyurappa. This was despite the fact that Yediyurappa was the architect of the saffron party's rise in Karnataka—the only southern state where the BJP is a party of some consequence. His forced exit did not go down well with his own community, Lingayats. With about 17 per cent of the state's population, they are a big vote bank, and have been favourably inclined towards the BJP. Other Lingayat stalwarts like former chief minister Jagdish Shettar and former deputy chief minister Laxman Savadi were denied tickets. Shettar rebelled and joined the Congress. Though he lost the election, such developments were not taken kindly by the community. The community is said to have a major influence in 78 Assembly constituencies. The Congress reportedly won in 54 such constituencies.



Another takeaway is about the diminishing appeal of divisive issues that political parties espouse frequently—the issues like those of hard

Hindutva and of Mandalite leaders. Former Karnataka chief minister Basavaraj Bommai, apparently in a bid to establish his Hindutva credentials, focused on hijab, halal meat, love jihad, land jihad, etc. The BJP top brass also tried to conflate Bajrang Dal with Bajrang Bali. But everything, including emotive issues, has a use-by date. Besides, the governance deficit is not very easy to be filled with an excess of sanctimoniousness and sentimentalism. There were serious charges of corruption against the Bommai government; sloganeering and red herrings could not whitewash its alleged misdemeanours. It must be mentioned here that the lessons must be learnt from the result of Karnataka election by not just the BJP but also the Congress and other Opposition parties. The high command culture can damage all parties. Similarly, recourse to high-flown rhetoric, mindless populism, and social justice divisiveness can be harmful to not just the nation but also the parties and leaders espousing them. As for Karnataka election's on the general poll next year, BJP detractors would like to call it the beginning of the end of the Modi regime. But just as one swallow doesn't make a summer, a loss in a state doesn't mean that the BJP's election machine has become rickety: 2024 will be another year.

PICTALK



Fishermen return after encountering rough sea owing to Cyclone Mocha, in Thiruvananthapuram

SCO must be free from Chinese influence

To be effective, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation needs to come out of Chinese influence and push its own cherished goals, writes **Sumit Jha**

The meeting of the foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the Indian city of Goa took place on 4-5 May to review the progress of the grouping. In doing so, Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar proposed the New Delhi declaration and four joint statements on cooperation on de-radicalisation strategies, promotion of millets and sustainable lifestyles to address climate change and digital transformation.

True, since its creation in 2001, SCO has expanded its size by inducting more countries as members and observers. Efforts have also been taken to institutionalize the grouping. In turn, SCO has become the largest organisation in terms of geographic scope and population, covering approximately 60% of the area of Eurasia, 40% of the world population. Moreover, with the presence of three major world powers – China, Russia, and India – as well as some oil and gas rich countries – Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, the eight-member organisation is seen to play a crucial role in shaping the nature of regional and global politics.

However, even a cursory glance at the functioning of SCO reveals some fundamental limitations facing the organisation. One such structural problem is China's intent to dominate SCO. After all, the creation of SCO lies in China's desire to improve ties with Asia to achieve its interests in the post-cold war era. Thus, the Shanghai Five (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan) was formed in 1996 to enable China to resolve border problems with its Central Asian neighbours, Beijing's political, security and economic interests led to the creation of SCO. More to the point, China's foreign policy objectives have had a profound impact on the philosophy and objectives of SCO.

For example, while the idea of promoting cooperation among member countries to fight against the evils of terrorism, separatism, and extremism is a major objective of SCO,



China is interested only in protecting itself from the menace of terrorism. More to the point, since there is an increasing concern in the Chinese strategic community that a close historic, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious proximity between a majority of people in the Xinjiang and Uighurs residing in neighbouring Central Asian countries can pose a serious security threat to China, Beijing has taken initiatives to prevent the influence of foreign terrorism and separatists in Xinjiang.

Furthermore, with the return of the Taliban, the Xi Jinping regime has become more anxious about security situations in the Xinjiang province, given the nexus between Uighur separatists and the Taliban terrorist organisation. Consequently, China lost no time in recognising the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Beijing is also contemplating the possibility of including Kabul as a member of SCO.

On the other hand, China has remained hostile to SCO taking tough efforts to eradicate terrorism. This is evident from the fact that China has openly supported Pakistan and other countries

which are protector of terrorist organisations. Moreover, China has consistently thwarted global efforts to deal with the menace of terrorism.

China has also brazenly violated the SCO charter that talks about respecting sovereignty, territorial integrity of member states, non-use of force or threat of its use in international relations and seeking no unilateral military superiority in adjacent areas. One example in this regard is its efforts to undermine India's sovereignty over the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. But China's bullying behaviour is not limited to only SCO member countries.

Another limitation facing SCO is the uneven economic benefits that China has succeeded in garnering from other member countries. More to the point, China enjoys surplus trade with all member countries of SCO. China's imports and exports with other member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) touched a new high of \$250 billion in 2021-2022. This trend confirms the imperialistic tendency of China.

China's assertive posturing contradicts SCO aims to move towards developing a democratic and equitable international political order. In fact, one issue on which Beijing can easily be cornered is the lake of democratic space in China and the Chinese Communist regime's attempt to undermine the liberal-democratic international order.

Of course, other member countries of SCO are fully aware of China's clandestine purpose. India has in fact questioned China's move to undermine SCO's fundamental principles. But New Delhi finds itself alone on this matter in the grouping. The dependence of Russia on China due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has further strengthened China's position in the SCO.

Hence, amid high expectations from this region grouping towards promoting peace, security, and development in Eurasia and beyond, the immediate challenge facing SCO is to free itself from China's clutches. Only time will tell if it will happen or not.

(The writer is Assistant professor, Dept of Political Science, DU)



THE CREATION OF SCO LIES IN CHINA'S DESIRE TO IMPROVE TIES WITH ASIA TO ACHIEVE ITS INTERESTS IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HANGING SWORD OF ARREST

Sir — Al Qadir Trust for the study of the Sufi sect, Al Qadir University was to be built in Punjab province in Pakistan in 2019. In the same case, Imran Khan is accused of having scammed 50 billion rupees. On behalf of Imran, the lawyers have requested the High Court to consolidate all the cases and their hearings. In one corruption case, Imran was granted bail for two weeks by the Islamabad High Court, but in many other cases, Imran is under remand. During the hearing, Imran's lawyer told Imran it is true that they left the court in a panic by shouting slogans, but the judge got angry and left the court. After that, the court started after Friday prayers, Imran's bail was granted, but after two weeks, the hanging sword of arrest will be on Imran. This political instability in Pakistan is evident.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

REMOTE CONTROLLED GOVT

Sir — All public policies of Bhagwant Mann's government in Punjab are being controlled through the remote control of Delhi's Kejriwal government. This was an allegation of all opposition parties in Punjab. However, AAP's Lok Sabha bye-election win for its candidate Sushil Rinku has proved them wrong. In all nine legislative constituencies of Jalandhar, congress has lost. The people of Jalandhar have given a huge mandate to AAP due to their pro-people policies like monthly 300 free units of electricity per household, immediate compensation to farmers for crop loss due to recent untimely rains, accessibility of their MLAs to common people, and frequent visits of CM Bhagwant Mann and Kejriwal to all sects of society. Though Jalandhar is a traditional seat of Congress but still it fails to unite its MLAs. Sidhu Moosewala's father though campaigned against the AAP party but he too failed to convince voters for the Congress party. The SAD-BSP alliance

Congress wins hands down in Karnataka



With the poll predictions for Karnataka coming true to the hilt, proving the Congress with a landslide victory on 135 seats in a 224-member assembly and thereby placing it in a cosy position to form the government as well, besides leaving the ruling BJP, and JD(S) with 66 and 19 seats in their kitties respectively, the scenario comes across as a clear indication that Rahul Gandhi-led 3500

km long 'Kashmir to Kanyakumari foot-march paid the party high dividends. However, for the BJP's consolation, the party retained its vote share of 36%. Interestingly, many political pundits are also of the view that the Karnataka results will have a huge bearing on and, simultaneously, decide the direction for the next year's much-hyped Lok Sabha polls also. What it all boils down to is that the elections are and should be contested on the real issues the common people are generally faced with given that leading them up the garden path with promises of freebies galore might fleetingly distract their attention but at the end of the day, it is the real issues that matter to them. On the face of it, Lady Luck is smiling at the Congress but as they say that politics is an unpredictable game replete with a lot of indecision and, hence, what happens next is an exciting question. Let's wait and watch the way this political cookie crumbles next!

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

too failed to garner any votes as anti-incumbency against SAD continues especially in rural areas. The BJP failed to make even entry into rural Punjab as farmers still remember the controversial farm bills and the death of 700 farmers. Overall AAP's victory proves their great efforts of outreach to the common man through mohalla clinics and better education facilities in schools etc.

Harvinder Singh, | Jalandhar

MATERNAL DEATHS

Sir — Globally, in 2020, there was one maternal death every two minutes. Most of the deaths were in low and lower middle-income countries. In 2020, there were 223 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, and one of the United Nations (UN) lofted SDG achieving less than seventy maternal deaths per one lakh live births by 2030 looks tough though not impossible. The latest report from the UN has said

that India leads the countries that have the highest number of maternal deaths, stillbirths, and neonatal (newborn) casualties. Notwithstanding the fast pace of development of health care and infrastructure in India, the maternal mortality rate remains a cause for concern. It is incumbent upon the Centre to upgrade India's primary health centres with investment by way of personnel and funds. The WHO mandate of 8 antenatal checks of a pregnant woman has to be scrupulously adhered to. Care of a mother and child does not end in staff and medicines. Potable water and an uninterrupted supply of electricity are essential for unhindered care. As the nation has successfully recovered from the pandemic, it is time for healthcare personnel to focus on mother and child.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Agritech farm inputs give higher yield

AgriTech platforms provide high-quality input for farmers which has proven to be instrumental in driving up crop yields



RAJ YADAV

The screen flashes, and Bimal Roy's 'Do Bigha Zameen' comes to life with an opening scene of farmers anxiously looking at the sky. As the clouds gather, so do the farmers, expecting the rains to bestow their fields. It has been 70 years since Roy's classic, and this scene is as true of Indian farmers today as it was just after Independence, looking upward for innovations to empower them.



Agriculture has been the backbone of sustenance and livelihood in India, marking a significant aspect of the country's socioeconomic landscape. With 55% of our population dependent on agriculture, it remains one of India's primary industries. Traditionally, farmers in India have encountered restricted access to credible information concerning the quality of agricultural input, including seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. The farm-to-fork food value chain is extremely protracted and is riddled with multiple stakeholders who might not necessarily prioritize the welfare of farmers. This compels them to depend on local suppliers and inter-

mediaries to procure such input, resulting in low valuation. Increasing intermediaries and other factors in this chain engender a reduction in transparency. As we head into our Amrit Kal, accompanied by their innovative digitized designs, AgriTech platforms emerge as the much-needed relief clouds, safeguarding farmers against unadulterated input. AgriTech platforms enable farmers to procure dependable and superior quality input by harnessing technological advancements such as data analytics and machine learning. These platforms safeguard farmers against the aforementioned malpractices by bridging the last mile between the suppliers and farmers via doorstep delivery, providing input from the fac-

tory to the farmer. Directly working with peer partners, retailers, and farmers, negotiating prices and dispatching goods, these platforms circumvent the involvement of intermediaries and local suppliers.

Often classified under disruptive tech for having revolutionized the agriculture sector and existing procurement arrangements, AgriTech platforms procure high-quality input for farmers, including high-yielding varieties (HYV) seed, which has proven to be instrumental in driving up crop yields. In addition to providing farmers access to authentic and high-quality input, AgriTech startups offer knowledge support by connecting them to experienced agronomists from the industry. By leveraging their expertise, AgriTech platforms guide farmers on the optimal selection of seed and agro-practices suitable for Indian and specifically regional farming conditions, thereby improving the likelihood of a successful harvest. The accessibility to such expert advice has been crucial in enhancing the efficiency

and effectiveness of farming practices, enabling farmers to make informed decisions and optimize their crop yields.

Amidst a considerable emphasis on technology adoption in our contemporary era, AgriTech Platforms have emerged as a catalyst in the endeavour to neutralize the effects of substandard inputs on farming.

The potential for growth in the Indian Agrotech markets has become increasingly apparent, with an increasing number of startups entering the industry and building seamless digital platforms that can fully integrate value chains and fruitful harvests.

With government support and the introduction of cutting-edge technologies such as 5G, these platforms have ripened a fertile ground for disruptive innovation in the agriculture sector. We may have come a long way from Do Bigha Zameen but aided with these platforms, the relief clouds may not be far away, and we might be looking at another revolution in India: one bought about by AgriTech (The writer is the Founder and CEO, of Gramik)



FIRST COLUMN

BE LIKE BUTTER ON WATER

Humans should be like the lions of self-control, kicking frogs of weakness



RAVI VALLURI

Aeons ago once someone posed a question to Buddha, the enlightened one. The query was as to how his followers and disciples, who lived a plain sailing manner and lead an uncomplicated life partaking only one meal a day, were always suffused with jollity and appeared radiant and tranquil. Buddha paused and then calmly replied, "They do not repent the past, nor do they brood over the future. They merely live in the present. Thus, they are radiant. By worrying over the future and brooding over the past, fools dry up like green reeds cut down in the sun."

Those whose minds are cannonaded by thoughts of past events are bound to be fretful and woebegone and the ones who only think of the future are filled with anxiety and are trapped in the cesspool of consternation.

Now between "what was" and "what will be" there is a vast space which can be termed as "Now". This is our authentic sanctuary where we can dwell in silence and peace.

Most people do not know how to live in the present moment and they lose it. The present becomes the past and the future becomes present. Because they do not live in the present moment, they live either in the past or in the future. On average the human mind is bombarded by 60 to 70 thoughts a day and the majority of them are negative. We need to upend the pyramid and break false glass ceilings. Every tomorrow is determined by every today. One should undertake rigorous Sadhana and achieve freedom from the preponderance of past and future to attain eternal bliss by living in the present. And this state is eternal bliss.



One should remain a witness to whatever occurs in life. By adopting such an attitude, we provide room for divinity in the cosmic dance of life. The reality of life is the present moment and not the memories of the past which are dead and gone. A person who lives in the present moment lives an unalloyed life, and he is the happiest individual. It is akin to the breath we have exhaled or the mass of water in a river that has crossed us as we sat on the banks of the river. We merely need to focus on the present moment and try to appreciate the eternal truth, which is beyond time and space. During our stay here on planet Earth, humans should remember that we are only troupers. We may be called upon to play any kind of role, be it tragic or comic and we must enact it with aplomb.

Stars, planets, plants, animals, and human beings are all let loose on a beautiful cosmic stage, with each one playing an assigned part. Only very few people understand the meaning of the play because many of us do not pause to think deeply about it. The few exalted people may remain dutifully in the world; however, they are like butter on water and not like the easily-diluted milk which is not properly churned, since humans are mortals, we should not burden ourselves with earthly limitations. The only purpose of life is to get away from the delusion of the material world.

Humans should travel this world like the lions of self-control and ensure that the frogs of weakness do not kick us around. We should always perform small and important duties with deep attention, and mindfulness remembering that the almighty is guiding and stimulating every worthwhile effort we undertake to achieve a noble mission.

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

Pakistan faces multiple challenges

Imran Khan's confrontation with the army may end his political career and endanger his life



KS TOMAR



Pakistan is witnessing multiple levels of confrontations like the supreme court and president, Arif Alvi versus Shehbaz Sharif government and former prime minister, Imran Khan's head-on collision with the powerful army which may create a civil war-like situation leading to the imposition of either emergency or take over by the army.

Pakistan is heading towards chaos and a civil war-like situation which can be attributed to the confrontation between former prime minister, Imran Khan and the army which rules the roost and commands the authority to create or destroy any government or political leader in this country. Imran's supporters went on a rampage and the police could do nothing which is allowing the army to step in and control the violence.

IMPACT ON INDIA

The existing turmoil in Pakistan immensely affects India as instability may give an impetus to terrorist groups that are being given shelter by the Sharif government and army. Second, chaos in Pakistan may also give a fillip to the terrorists' activities in Kashmir and China can exploit such a grim situation to harm India.

ARMY MAY TRY TO REGAIN ITS PRESTIGE

It happened for the first time in the history of Pakistan when a politician like Khan dared to challenge the authority of the army which has endangered his life besides taking a hundred percent risk of ending his political career. Army chief, Asim Munir is playing safe though the present prime minister got full support from the army which may be called if the civil administration collapses. Army is confronting the terror attacks which have increased and people are feeling unsafe. It is a fact that such incidents of terror attacks have been gradually lowering the confidence of the public. Imran Khan's

onslaught on the army was an error of judgement as he may certainly face a vicious type of retaliation in future though the Shehbaz Sharif government may be kept at the forefront. Khan took on ISI which oversees the internal security and is known for infamous tactics to crush even political rivals.

IMRAN'S BIGGEST POLITICAL BLUNDER

The biggest blunder committed by Khan pertains to his assessment of undermining the powerful army which was accused of hatching a plot to kill him. It has been solely responsible for the storming of rangers in the courtroom to arrest him though in a case related to a corruption case involving an allegation of earning billions of rupees through illegal land transactions. National Accountability, an anti-corruption body, arrested Imran with the help of rangers who whisked him away thereby resulting in violence by Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) workers who went on a rampage in several parts of the country.

THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF IMRAN IS UNCERTAIN

Analysts opine that entry into the army may endanger the political career of Imran who may be tried and jailed to keep him away from general elections. Khan may go Nawaj Sharif's way which will create a void in his Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) and new leadership will be required. Shehbaz Sharif seems to be scared of the popularity of Imran after he was ousted from premiership last year with the help of the army. But Imran Khan forgot that the army rules the roost

in Pakistan and he undertook a misadventure of lambasting army officials (ISI) for ensuring his defeat in parliament and later conspiring to kill him.

Imran had also accused America of helping Shehbaz in snatching the power from him and it had irked the army which keeps in touch with the US administration. Imran Khan was the creation of the army and former army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa played the main role but ex-PM turned against Bajwa and tried to have a say in promotions of the army which was unacceptable hence lost his prime minister's post.

Khan has been demanding elections in Punjab province and the supreme court had fixed May 15 as a date to hold polls but the Shehbaz government refused to honour the verdict which led to open confrontation. Second, Imran is facing more than 140 cases including Toshakhana's expensive gifts of millions of rupees and a case was filed against him in August 2022 Third, EX PM stands disqualified by the Pakistan election commission on the charges of corrupt practices on Oct 21, 2022.

PAKISTAN'S WOES DO NOT END HERE

It is irony of circumstances that common people in Pakistan are fighting for survival as prices of essential commodities have gone sky high including 20 Kg Atta for Rs 2,100-Rs 2,599, Milk for Rs 120-Rs 130 per litre etc. but the Shehbaz Sharif government and main opposition led by former PM, Imran Khan are bloodthirsty of each other one former wants to stick to Chair and latter wants to snatch power which may force the public to come on the streets like Sri Lanka.

Pakistan is facing a serious crisis thereby endangering the survival of democracy which has been compounded owing to the confrontation between executive and judiciary besides the head-on collision of President Arif Alvi with the Shehbaz Sharif government thereby putting the future of countrymen at stake. While helping bankrupt and economically depressed Pakistan, IMF has forced it to accept yet another retreat hence Shehbaz Sharif government had to agree to impose a 1 per cent poverty tax on firms earning Rs 15 crore, 2 per cent on those earning Rs 20 crore, 3 per cent on over Rs 25 crore and 4 per cent on Rs 30 crore and above. In the original budget, the government had set a 2 per cent poverty tax only on those earning Rs 30 crore and above. Pakistan's negotiating team led by Finance Minister, Miftah Ismail, agreed on an understanding on the 2022-23

budget after the authorities committed to generating Rs 43,600 crore more taxes. Moody's Investors Service has downgraded Pakistan's credit rating outlook to negative from stable due to its sinking economy and lack of resources mobilization. The IMF has not signed an agreement with Pakistan to restart a \$6.5 billion loan which has been stalled since Nov 2022 and has endangered economic survival.

Experts say that Pakistan is in deep soup and arson and looting by ex-PM, Imran Khan's supporters may push the country into anarchy which is not good for the entire region everything will depend upon the role of the army which needs to adopt restraint to save democracy in this troubled nation.



THE BIGGEST BLUNDER COMMITTED BY KHAN PERTAINS TO HIS ASSESSMENT OF UNDERMINING THE ALL-POWERFUL ARMY WHICH WAS ACCUSED OF HATCHING A PLOT TO KILL HIM

(Writer is a political analyst and a senior journalist)

India needs to adopt smart protein to feed its growing population

With smart protein being the key to feeding 10 billion people by 2050, India must catch up with the global smart protein landscape

It's not every day that leaders from around the world sit together to share a meal. Yet, last year, at the United Nations COP27 conference, when senior officials from Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia, and other countries gathered around the table to share some delicious chicken, it wasn't the company that made the dinner special - it was the food. It was Good Meat's cultivated chicken, grown directly from animal cells, that gave the officials their first taste of a future of food that underpins the climate goals that are at the very heart of the conference.

That clever piece of chicken is what we call smart protein - part of a category of pioneering foods made from plants, microorganisms, or



POORVASHA KAR

(The writer is Innovation Associate at Good Food Institute India)

cells that provide a viable alternative to animal-derived meat, eggs, and dairy. As of today, fermentation-derived and cultivated protein products (like the GoodMeat chicken) are not commercially available in India, the plant-based sector boasts 400+ products and 60 brands. While the sunrise sector is brimming with potential and optimism, there is a widening chasm in its startup ecosystem. On the one hand, a handful of entrepreneurs have been able to push through their challenges and bring a stellar product to the market - one that resonates with the mass market. On the other hand, some entrepreneurs continue to push forward in the industry one step at a time but are yet to build relevance

and a loyal customer base.

While these entrepreneurs have different destinations, they encounter similar obstacles in terms of forming a strong founding team, accurately assessing market and technical viability, fundraising from investors, and developing a strategic business plan. For a first-time entrepreneur, it is daunting to unravel the legal, financial, and commercial processes of setting up a start-up on its own. This complexity only increases in a nascent sector like smart protein where the underlying ecosystem is still being built from the ground up.

This often leads smart protein entrepreneurs to face unique industry challenges like unclear regulatory policies, shortage of skilled talent, and

lack of market sizing data. Yet, the most critical bottleneck is the lack of R&D infrastructure required at the lab, pilot, and large manufacturing scale to convert experimental solutions into market-ready products. While the food processing sector in India is well established, there is limited availability of equipment required for conducting novel food R&D and running pilot trials.

Often, even the limited pieces of equipment are spread across universities and research parks and gated by levels of bureaucracy, complex partnership agreements, and high lab fees. Needless to say, as most startups at this stage are self-funded, they don't have the capital or volumes required to set up their facilities

or hire talent that can operate them.

While this may paint a grim picture, let's not forget that the smart protein sector is already home to a rapidly growing cohort of resilient startups. To multiply this number and move towards a future of sustainable food, the need of the hour is to bridge the gap between the two kinds of entrepreneurs and create structures that can improve the ease of setting and scaling up smart protein startups.

Ask any early-stage smart protein startup what they need and you'll get a similar laundry list: technical mentorship, infrastructure access, skill enhancement, capital from investors, and entrepreneurial support. Though this might feel like a big ask, several

organizations and industry experts have stepped up to embrace the challenge and are committed to providing a significant leg-up to these startups. There are nearly 900+ accelerator programs active in India with little to no focus on this growing industry. Their mandate is often restricted to fintech, healthcare, climate tech, SaaS and logistics startups.

This leaves early-stage smart protein startups to compete for limited spots in sector-agnostic programs that aren't able to support all their requirements of technical expertise and food innovation infrastructure. One niche program that aims to fill this gap is the India Smart Protein Innovation Challenge (ISPIC). While these initiatives are a

good start, they are only that. With smart protein being the key to feeding 10 billion people by 2050, nearly a sixth of whom will be Indian, there's much work to be done to support the right innovators and bring India up to speed with the global smart protein landscape.

To truly create an industry capable of transforming how the future of food is made, decision-makers in India too, need to gather around a table over a smart protein meal. They too, need to acknowledge food technology solutions to the ecological crisis and commit to turning 'food for thought' into actual food. After all, how exciting would it be to serve plant-based keema and biryani at COP28?

'Aim to liberate areas occupied by Russia'

AP ■ BERLIN

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Sunday that his country is preparing a counteroffensive designed to liberate areas occupied by Russia, not to attack Russian territory. Speaking during a news conference with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin, Zelenskyy said Ukraine's goal is to free the territories within its internationally recognized borders. The Washington Post cited previously undisclosed documents from a trove of US intelligence leaks suggesting that Zelenskyy has considered trying to capture areas in Russia proper for possible use as bargaining chips in peace negotiations to end the war launched by Moscow in February 2022.

This would put him at odds with Western governments who have insisted that weapons they provide must not be used to attack targets in Russia.

Asked about the report, Zelenskyy said: "We don't attack Russian territory, we liberate our own legitimate territory."

"We have neither the time nor the strength (to attack Russia)," he said, according to an official interpreter. "And we also don't have weapons to spare, with which we could do this."

"We are preparing a counterattack for the illegally occupied areas based on our constitutionally defined legitimate borders,

which are recognized internationally," Zelenskyy said.

The Ukrainian president is visiting allies in search of further arms to help his country fend off the Russian invasion, and funds to rebuild what's been destroyed by more than a year of devastating conflict.

A Luftwaffe jet flew Zelenskyy to the German capital from Rome, where he had met Saturday with Pope Francis and Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni.

It was his first visit to Berlin since the start of the war and came a day after the German government announced a new package of military aid for Ukraine worth more than 2.7 billion euros (USD 3 billion), including tanks, anti-aircraft systems and ammunition.

Zelenskyy thanked Scholz for Germany's political, financial and military support, saying the country is now second only behind the United States in providing aid to Ukraine — and joked that he is working to make it the biggest donor.

"German air defense systems, artillery, tanks and infantry fighting vehicles are saving Ukrainian lives and bringing us closer to victory. Germany is a reliable ally! Together we are bringing peace closer!" he wrote on Twitter after the meeting.

Scholz said Berlin has so far given Kyiv some 17 billion euros in bilateral aid and that it can expect more in future.

"We will support you for as long as

necessary," he said, adding that it is up to Russia to end the war by withdrawing its troops.

After initially hesitating to provide Ukraine with lethal weapons, Germany has become one of the biggest suppliers of arms to Ukraine, including Leopard 1 and 2 battle tanks, and the sophisticated IRIS-T SLM air-defense system. Modern Western hardware is considered crucial if Ukraine is to succeed in its planned counteroffensive against Russian troops.

Zelenskyy said one reason for his latest visit to allied capitals was to forge a "fighter jet coalition" that would provide Ukraine with the combat planes it needs to counter Russia's air dominance.

Germany has said in the past that it doesn't have the F-16 jets Ukraine needs and Scholz responded to questions about possible plane deliveries by referring to the anti-aircraft system it has provided to Kyiv.

"That's what we as Germany are now concentrating on," he said.

In Ukraine, officials on Sunday denied that the country had anything to do with the downing of two Russian helicopters close to the border the day before.

In a joint statement after their meeting, Scholz and Zelenskyy said they support efforts to bring those responsible for atrocities in Ukraine to justice and noted the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir

Putin. Zelenskyy first met with President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Germany's head of state, who was snubbed by Kyiv last year, apparently over his previous close ties to Russia, causing a chill in diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Germany. Since then, both Steinmeier and Chancellor Olaf Scholz have visited Ukraine. After meeting Scholz and other senior officials at the chancellery, the two leaders flew to the western city of Aachen for Zelenskyy to receive the International Charlemagne Prize, awarded to him and the people of Ukraine.

IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

Zelenskyy's chief aide, Andriy Yermak, said Sunday that five civilians died in Ukraine's southern Kherson region when an unexploded Russian shell blew up.

Overnight, Russia launched a "massive" attack on Ukraine with Iranian-made Shahed explosive drones, which left more than 30 people wounded, according to the Ukrainian military.

Eighteen of the 23 drones were shot down, but those that got through, and wreckage from those intercepted, damaged 50 apartment buildings, private homes and other buildings, the military said without providing further details. Russia also hit the western city of Ternopil and southern city of Mykolaiv with rockets, wounding an unspecified number of civilians.



Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, right, greets Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at Bellevue Palace in Berlin, Germany on Sunday.

Imran Khan slams Pakistan Army

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan hit out at the country's powerful army in his first address after an Islamabad court set him free, saying it should be ashamed of jumping into politics and could form its own political party.

Addressing the nation from his Lahore home on Saturday, Khan took strong exception to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) allegations against him and said the spokesperson of the army's military wing was not even born when he represented Pakistan in the world.

"I kept Pakistan's flag high world over. Never has ISPR made such a statement. You should be ashamed of yourself. Why have you jumped into politics. Why don't you make a political party," Khan said in an hour-long maiden speech after the Islamabad High Court gave him blanket relief in all 145 cases registered against him.

His remarks came in response to ISPR Director-



General Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry's statement in which he called Khan a "hypocrite".

"Listen to me Mr DG ISPR...you were not even born when I was representing my country in the world and earning a good name for it. You need to be ashamed of yourself for calling me a hypocrite and anti-Army," he said in a harsh rejoinder.

A triumphant Khan returned to his Zaman Park home in Lahore on Saturday after having locked himself in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) premises for hours for

tion case and barred the authorities from arresting the former Pakistan prime minister in any case registered anywhere in the country until Monday.

During Khan's address, video clips were shown of how army trucks dropped 'unidentified' plainclothesmen, who joined PTI protesters and provoked them to unleash violence and ransack public property.

Khan distanced himself from violent protests that erupted in the wake of his arrest on Tuesday from IHC premises by Pakistan Rangers, asserting that "violence and vandalism is not my philosophy".

Khan's arrest triggered unrest in Pakistan that continued till Friday and led to several deaths and dozens of military and state installations being destroyed by the protesters. For the first time in Pakistan's history, the protesters stormed the army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi and also torched a corps commander's house in Lahore.

fear of re-arrest despite being granted bail on Friday.

Before leaving for Lahore, the 70-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief hit out at the "imported government for kidnapping" him despite the IHC granting him bail in all cases.

The 70-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief also tore into Pakistan's Army chief General Asim Munir and blamed him for his "abduction" after a court set him free.

In a major relief to Khan, the Islamabad High Court on Friday granted him protective bail for two weeks in a corrup-

China, Russia increasing military collaboration, Japan FM warns

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi expressed concern on Saturday about Russian and Chinese military cooperation in Asia and said the security situation in Europe could not be separated from that in the Indo-Pacific region since Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Speaking at a meeting of European and Indo-Pacific foreign ministers in Sweden, Hayashi said Russia's war in Ukraine had "shaken the very foundation of the international order" and must face a united response by the international community.

"Otherwise, similar challenges will arise in other regions and the existing order which has underpinned our peace and prosperity could be fundamentally overturned," Hayashi said.

Japan firmly backs Ukraine in the war but China says it remains neutral while declaring a "no limits" relationship with



Moscow and blaming the US and NATO for provoking the conflict.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, in March at the same time as Chinese President Xi Jinping met Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

Hayashi accused Beijing of "continuing and intensifying its unilateral attempts" to change the status quo in the East and South China seas by force and increasing its military activities around Taiwan.

"In addition, China and Russia are strengthening their military collaboration, including joint flights of their bombers and joint naval exercises in the vicinity of Japan," Hayashi said.

China, which claims most of the South China Sea as well as Japanese-held islands in the East China Sea, says it has the right to defend its sovereignty and development interests.

Hayashi also warned that North Korea was "escalating provocations" in the region by conducting ballistic missile launches "with a frequency and in a manner that are unprecedented".

He joined dozens of ministers from the European Union and the Indo-Pacific region for the meeting just north of the Swedish capital. China was not invited to the talks.

"Since the aggression of Russia to Ukraine, the security situation here in Europe and the security situation in the Pacific are not separable," Hayashi said as he arrived.

Suspected Islamic extremists kill over 30 civilians in Burkina Faso

AP ■ OUGADOUGOU (BURKINA FASO)

An attack by suspected Islamic extremists on a village in the west of Burkina Faso killed 33 civilians, the provincial governor's office said.

The provisional death toll from the Thursday evening attack on the village of Youlou in Mouhoun province was announced in a press release.

Provincial governor Babo Pierre Bassinga called the attack "cowardly and barbaric". He said in the statement that the attack happened around 5 pm as residents were at work in their fields beside the Mouhoun river.

The governor said security actions were underway to counter the extremists.

Bassinga urged the population to increase their vigilance and to collaborate with security forces.

Greece protests arrest of mayoral candidate in Albania

AP ■ ATHENS (GRRCE)

The detention of a mayoral candidate belonging to the Greek minority in Albania has raised tensions between the two neighbouring countries.

Greece's Foreign Ministry released a statement on Saturday demanding the release of Dionysis-Fredi Beleri, a candidate for mayor of the Albanian city of Himare, which has a strong Greek minority presence.

Greek media reported that Beleri was arrested by Albanian police early on Friday on charges of vote buying, two days ahead of local elections.

A court confirmed on Saturday that he would remain in custody.

The Greek ministry's announcement implies that the case could negatively impact Albania's application to join the European Union.

"Today's decision of the Vlora District Court, if there is no irrefutable evidence, constitutes a scandal.

The arrest of a mayoral candidate two days before the elections is not within the rule of law.

The decision to detain the mayoral candidate in custody induces a full reversal of the rules of equality in the municipal elections in Himare, a significant centre of the Greek national minority in Albania," the ministry's statement says.

"Such a decision will also have repercussions on the European Union's relations with Albania, as adherence to European rules and the principles of the rule of law is a prerequisite for this European path.

Decisions such as today's, which violate these principles, mean that in practice Albania is not following the European path," the announcement continues.

US President Biden's re-election pitch faces daunting challenges

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A showdown with Congress that has the nation's creditworthiness at stake; a frenzied scene at the border as pandemic restrictions ease; a pivotal foreign trip meant to sustain support for Ukraine and contain a more assertive China in the Indo-Pacific.

Three weeks since launching his reelection campaign, President Joe Biden is confronting a sweeping set of problems in his day job that defy easy solutions and are not entirely within his control.

If, as his advisers believe, the single best thing Biden can do for his reelection prospects is to govern well, then the coming weeks can pose a near-existential test of his path to a second term.

Economists warn that the country faces a debilitating recession — and worse — if



Biden and lawmakers can't agree on a path to raising the debt limit. Biden wants Congress to raise it without precondition, equating Republicans' demands for spending cuts with ransom for the country's full faith and credit.

The expiration of the COVID-19 public health emergency meant the end of special pandemic restrictions on migrant procedures on an already taxed US-Mexico border.

Guinea and Australia. Biden will try to marshal unity among Group of Seven leading democratic economies to maintain support for Ukraine as it prepares to launch a counteroffensive against Russia's invasion, and to invigorate alliances in the face of China's forceful regional moves.

Biden put his ability to solve problems at the core of his pitch to voters in 2020 and it is central to his argument for why, at 80, he's best prepared for four more years in the White House.

"I'm more experienced than anybody that's ever run for the office," Biden told MSNBC this month. "And I think I've proven myself to be honourable as well as also effective."

Yet the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 undercut Biden's image as an effective manager, sending his approval ratings sharply down and he's still working to recover.

Sherpa climbs Everest 26th time

AP ■ KATHMANDU

A Sherpa guide scaled the summit of Mount Everest on Sunday for the 26th time, equalling the record set by a Nepalese guide for the most ascents of the world's highest peak.

Pasang Dawa Sherpa, 46, reached the summit (8,849-m peak) on Sunday morning along with a Hungarian climber, according to expedition organiser Imagine Nepal Treks.

Dawa, who made his first successful climb in 1998, matched the record number of summits with Kami Rita Sherpa.

Meanwhile, Rita is currently stationed at the Everest base camp and is planning to scale for a record 27th time.



Interestingly, Dawa equalled Rita's record in the year that also marks the 70th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Everest in 1953 by New Zealander Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay.

Nineteen mountaineers, including five foreigners, reached the summit of the world's highest peak this weekend.

Sherpa guides fixed ropes and made paths for the hundreds of climbers who will attempt to scale the peak over the next few weeks.

"On Saturday a team of nine rope-fixing climbers from

Nepal reached the summit," said Yuvaraj Khatiwada, director at the Department of Tourism, Nepal.

On Sunday, five foreigners climbed the summit of Mount Everest.

They include Naila Kiani and Nadia Liakhoso from Pakistan, Jessica Rai Wadel from the USA, Marton Ceterper from Hungary, and Liansu Cui from China.

Kiani became the second woman from Pakistan to raise the country's flag at the world's highest peak.

Samina Baig was the first woman mountaineer from Pakistan to scale the mighty Everest in 2013.

Nepal has issued a record 466 permits to climb Mount Everest this spring, officials said.

Black youth shaken a year after Buffalo massacre

AP ■ BUFFALO (US)

It's hard for Jamari Shaw, 16, to have fun at the park with his younger brothers in their East Buffalo neighborhood. He's too busy scanning for danger, an aftermath of a gunman's attack that killed 10 Black people at a local grocery store. Sometimes, 17-year-old Alanna Littleton stays in the car when her family drives to that supermarket from their home just down the street. "It's such a level of tension," Alanna said.

As the city on Sunday marks one year since the racist massacre, many young Black people in Buffalo are grappling with a shaken sense of personal security and complicated feelings about how their community was targeted.

While the white supremacist got life in prison for the killings, others face a lifetime of healing.

"I'm definitely gonna carry this with me," Jamari said after school last week. On May 14, 2022, an 18-year-old emerged from his car and began shooting people at the Tops Family Market, with the stated goal of killing as many Black people as possible. He wore body armour and livestreamed as he fired on shoppers and workers, killing 10 and wounding three more.

The killer from Conklin, New York, a small town about 200 miles from Buffalo, wrote online that his motivation was preserving white power in the US, and he chose to target Buffalo's East Side because it had a large percentage of Black residents. Since the mass shooting, Jamari notices emptier basketball courts in his neighbourhood. People seem to stay inside more. He feels a hesitancy to drop into Tops now to get water or Gatorade before sports practice like he used to — a feeling of danger from anyone.

Syria's main insurgent group seeks to move away from al-Qaida past

AP ■ IDLIB (SYRIA)

The leader of an insurgent group that rules much of northwest Syria rose to notoriety over the past decade by claiming deadly bombings, threatening revenge against Western "crusader" forces and dispatching Islamist religious police to crack down on women deemed to be immodestly dressed.

Today the man known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani is trying hard to distance his group, Hayat Tahrir al Sham, known as HTS, from its al-Qaida origins, spreading a message of pluralism and religious tolerance.

As part of the rebranding, he has cracked down on extremist factions and dissolved the notorious religious police. For the first time in more than a decade, a Mass was performed recently at a long-shuttered church in Idlib province.

Al-Golani told a recent gathering of religious and local officials that Islamic law should not be imposed by force. "We don't want the society to become hypocritical so that they pray when they see us and don't once we leave," al-Golani said, pointing to Saudi Arabia, which has relaxed its social controls in recent years after decades of strict Islamic rule.

The pivot comes at a time when al-Golani's group is increasingly isolated. Countries that had once backed insurgents in Syria's uprising-turned-civil-war are restoring relations with Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Saudi Arabia, a one-time Assad foe, reversed course and led a push resulting in Syria's return to the Arab League last week, after 12 years of regional isolation.

Even Turkiye, the main remaining state backer of



armed opposition groups in Syria, has signalled a shift.

This week, the Turkish foreign minister met with his Syrian counterpart in Moscow, the first such meeting since 2011. The foreign ministers of Russia and Iran, Assad's main allies, also attended.

The meeting marked a significant step toward Damascus and Ankara restoring ties, even as the presence of Turkish troops in northwest Syria remains a sticking point.

At the same time, the United States considers HTS a terrorist group and has offered a USD 10 million reward for information on al-Golani's whereabouts. The United Nations also designates it a terrorist organisation.

Earlier this month, the US and Turkiye jointly slapped sanctions on two people who allegedly raised money for militant groups, including HTS.

Al-Golani rose to prominence in the early months of the Syrian uprising in 2011, when he became the leader of al-Qaida's branch in Syria, known at the time as the Nusra Front.

Militants and top officials from Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida flocked to the group's base of operations in northern Syria, where many of them were later killed in US strikes.

Israel-Gaza clash: Thaw after days of fighting

AP ■ GAZA CITY

A fragile ceasefire between Israeli forces and militants in the Gaza Strip appeared to be holding on Sunday after a five-day clash that killed 33 Palestinians and two people in Israel.

The latest round of Gaza fighting was sparked on Tuesday when Israeli jets killed three top commanders from the Islamic Jihad militant group in response to earlier rocket launches from Gaza. Those killings set off a barrage of militant fire and the conflagration threatened to drag the region into another all-out war until an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire took hold late Saturday.

While the calm appeared to bring a sense of relief to Gaza's 2 million people and hundreds of thousands of Israelis who had been largely confined to bomb shelters in recent days, the agreement did nothing to address the underlying issues that have fuelled numerous rounds of fighting between Israel and Palestinian militant groups in the Gaza Strip over the years.

In Gaza, residents surveyed the latest damage caused to their surroundings, with gaping holes left in the apartments serving as what Israel said were hideouts for the six senior Islamic Jihad members killed during this round.

Gaza's main cargo crossing with Israel reopened Sunday after warnings that keeping it closed would force Gaza's sole power plant to shut down, deepening a power crisis.

Israel was gradually lifting restrictions on residents in southern Israel, which had borne the brunt of the rocket fire. Israeli officials expressed satisfaction with the latest battle, having killed at least six members of Islamic Jihad's top brass in what it says were pinpointed strikes based on solid intelligence.

But at least 13 of those killed in Gaza were civilians, among them children as young as 4 years old, as well as women. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the targeted attacks on the militants' hideouts would reverberate around the region.

"Israel's enemies in Gaza



Smoke rise from an explosion caused by an Israeli airstrike targeting a building in Gaza on Saturday. The building was owned by an Islamic Jihad official. AP/PTI

and much farther than Gaza know that even if they try to hide, we are able and prepared to reach them at any time," he told a meeting of his Cabinet.

Israel has faced criticism in the past from rights groups over the civilian casualties in its bombardments in Gaza.

Israel says it does its utmost to avoid harming civilians in its strikes and says militants operate from within the territory's

densely populated areas to fire rockets indiscriminately at Israeli communities.

Even if some of the strikes were precise, others destroyed the homes of uninvolved Palestinians.

"If they want to target a house, let them target it alone. Why destroy the whole neighborhood? Why?" said Mai Sarson, whose house in Deir el-Balah was reduced to ruins in

an Israeli strike.

Throughout the fighting, Israel's repeated airstrikes targeting Islamic Jihad and its command centers and rocket-launching sites showed no signs of stopping the rocket fire, prompting Islamic Jihad to declare victory and sending cheering Palestinians out into the streets late Saturday.

The Israeli military reported over 1,400 launches throughout the fighting, with some rockets reaching as far as the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem areas.

Israeli jets struck more than 400 targets, according to a preliminary military tally, which also showed about a fifth of the rockets were misfired and landed in Gaza, while most of the rest were either intercepted or landed in open areas. An 80-year-old woman and a Palestinian labourer who was working inside Israel were killed by rocket fire. A Palestinian human rights group said three people, including two children, were killed in Gaza by errant rockets. It was the latest in a long series of battles between Israel and

Palestinian militants in Gaza since the Islamic militant group Hamas seized control of the seaside territory in 2007.

Israel and Hamas have fought four wars, and there have been numerous smaller flareups as well.

The more powerful Hamas has praised Islamic Jihad's strikes but remained on the sidelines during the latest round of fighting, limiting the scope of the conflict.

As the de facto government held responsible for the abysmal conditions in the blockaded Gaza Strip, Hamas has recently tried to keep a lid on its conflict with Israel. Islamic Jihad, on the other hand, a more ideological and unruly militant group wedded to violence, has taken the lead in the past few rounds of fighting with Israel. Saturday's deal did not address many of the causes of the repeated fighting, including Israel's ongoing blockade of Gaza, the large arsenals of weapons possessed by Hamas and Islamic Jihad and Israeli policies in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem.

Erdogan's leadership in balance as polls close in Turkiye



Youngsters stand next to giant election billboard of Turkish President and People's Alliance's presidential candidate Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a campaign rally in Istanbul, Turkey on Saturday. AP/PTI

AP ■ ANKARA

Election polls closed on Sunday in Turkiye, where President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's leadership of the NATO member country grappling with economic turmoil and the erosion of democratic checks-and-balances hung in the balance after a strong challenge from an opposition candidate.

The election could grant Erdogan, 69, a new five-year term or unseat him in favour of the head of an invigorated opposition, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who has promised to return Turkiye to a more democratic path. If no candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the vote, the race will be determined in a May 28 run-off.

Voters also elected lawmakers to fill Turkey's 600-seat parliament, which lost much of its legislative power under Erdogan's executive presidency. If his political alliance wins, Erdogan could continue governing without much restriction. The opposition has promised to return Turkey's governance system to a parliamentary democracy if it wins both the presidential and parliamentary ballots.

Opinion surveys indicated the increasingly authoritarian leader entered the election trailing a challenger for the first

time. Erdogan has ruled Turkey as prime minister or president since 2003. Pre-election polls gave a slight lead to Kilicdaroglu, 74, the joint candidate of a six-party opposition alliance who leads the center-left, pro-secular Republican People's Party, or CHP.

Voting began at 8 am (0500 GMT) and polls closed at 5 pm (1400 GMT). Under Turkiye's election custom, news organizations are barred from reporting partial results until an embargo lifts at 9 pm (1800 GMT). There are no exit polls.

More than 64 million overseas voters, were eligible to vote in the elections, which come the year the country will mark the centenary of its establishment as a republic. Voter turnout in Turkiye is traditionally strong, reflecting citizens' continued belief in democratic balloting.

Yet Turkiye has seen the suppression of freedom of expression and assembly under Erdogan, and it is wracked by a steep cost-of-living crisis that critics blame on the government's mishandling of the economy. Turkiye is also reeling from the effects of a powerful earthquake that caused devastation in 11 southern provinces in February, killing more than 50,000 people in unsafe buildings.

Opp favoured to win in Thailand

AP ■ BANGKOK

Vote counting was underway on Sunday in Thailand's general election, touted as a pivotal chance for change nine years after incumbent Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha first came to power in a 2014 coup. He is now running against the daughter of the politician who is the military's top nemesis. The polls closed at 5 pm and some results were expected in early evening, with a fuller picture coming later Sunday night.

Thai elections use paper ballots that are counted publicly at polling stations.

The opposition Pheu Thai Party, headed by Paetongtarn Shinawatra, is widely predicted to win at least a healthy plurality of the seats in the 500-member lower House.

After casting her ballot, Paetongtarn said every vote is important for effecting change

in Thailand and that she has high hopes for the final result.

who heads the next government won't be decided by Sunday's vote alone. The prime minister will be selected in July in a joint session of the House and the 250-seat Senate.

The winner must secure at least 376 votes and no party is likely to do that on its own.

Pheu Thai won the most seats in the last election in 2019, but its archrival, the military-backed Palang Pracharath Party, succeeded in cobbling together a coalition with Prayuth as prime minister.

It relied on unanimous support from the Senate, whose members share the military's conservative outlook and were appointed by the military government after Prayuth's coup. Prayuth is running for reelection, although the military this year has split its support between two parties.

Prayuth is backed by the United Thai Nation Party; his deputy prime minister, Prawit Wongsuwan, another former general, is the standard bearer for Palang Pracharath.

Prayuth has been blamed for a stuttering economy, shortcomings in addressing the pandemic and thwarting democratic reforms, a particular sore point with younger voters. At his polling station, he also encouraged people to come out to vote.

"The increased youth vote and general awareness of the damage caused by military rule are key factors likely to determine the results of this election," said Tyrell Haberkorn, a Thai studies specialist at the University of Wisconsin. "After nine years of military rule, people are ready for a change, even those who were not interested in rocking the boat before."

Pheu Thai is the latest in a string of parties linked to pop-

ulist billionaire Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted as prime minister by an army coup in 2006. Paetongtarn Shinawatra is his daughter.

Her aunt, Yingluck Shinawatra, who became prime minister in 2011, was toppled in the coup led by Prayuth.

Pheu Thai and Paetongtarn, the most popular of the party's three registered candidates for prime minister, are strides ahead of the competition in the opinion polls.

But there is no sign that the country's military-backed conservative establishment has warmed to them.

"I think the conservative-royalist side, underpinning the military, the monarchy, their backs are against the wall. Change is coming and they have to find a way to deal with it," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a political scientist at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University.

NYC converting hotels to emergency shelters for asylum seekers

AP ■ NEW YORK

The historic Roosevelt Hotel in midtown Manhattan shuttered three years ago, but it will soon be bustling again — reopening to accommodate an anticipated influx of asylum seekers just as other New York City hotels are being converted to emergency shelters.

Mayor Eric Adams announced Saturday that the city will use the Roosevelt to eventually provide as many as 1,000 rooms for migrants who are expected to arrive in coming weeks because of the expiration of pandemic-era rules, known collectively as Title 42, that had allowed federal officials to turn away asylum seekers from the US border with Mexico.

Across the city, hotels like the Roosevelt that served tourists just a few years ago are being transformed into emergency shelters, many of them in prime locations within walking distance from Times Square, the World Trade Centre memorial site and the

Empire State Building. A legal mandate requires the city to provide shelter to anyone who needs it.

Even so, Adams says the city is running out of room for migrants and has sought financial help from the state and federal governments.

"New York City has now cared for more than 65,000 asylum seekers — already opening up over 140 emergency shelters and eight large-scale humanitarian relief centres in addition to this one to manage this national crisis," the mayor said in a statement announcing the Roosevelt decision.

The storied hotel near Grand Central Terminal served as election headquarters for New York Gov. Thomas Dewey, who in 1948 was said to have wrongly announced from the Roosevelt that he had defeated Harry Truman for president.

As the city faces growing pressure to expand its shelter system, it is turning to vacant hotels for those who need a roof and a

place to bunk down as they sort out their lives. One of them is the Holiday Inn, located in Manhattan's Financial District. A few months ago, signs in the lobby windows of the 50-story, 500-room hotel said it was closed.

Scott Markowitz of Tarter Krinsky and Drogin, attorneys for the hotel's owner, said reopening as a city-sponsored shelter made financial sense.

"They rent out every room at the hotel at a certain price every night," Markowitz said, adding that it is bringing "substantially more revenue" than normal operations would have brought in. It's not new for the city to turn to hotels for New Yorkers without homes when shelters and other options weren't available. During the pandemic, group shelters made it difficult to comply with social distancing rules, prompting the city to rent out hundreds of hotel rooms as quasi-COVID wards. As the pandemic eased, the city became less reliant on hotels.

Stained glass window shows Jesus Christ with dark skin, stirs questions about race

Warren (US): A nearly 150-year-old stained-glass church window that depicts a dark-skinned Jesus Christ interacting with women in New Testament scenes has stirred up questions about race, Rhode Island's role in the slave trade and the place of women in 19th century New England society.

The window installed at the long-closed St Mark's Episcopal Church in Warren in 1878 is the oldest known public example of stained glass on which Christ is depicted as a person of color that one expert has seen.

"This window is unique and highly unusual," said Virginia Raguin, a professor of humanities emerita at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, and an expert on the history of stained-glass art. "I have never seen this iconography for that time."

The 12-foot tall, 5-foot wide (3.7 meters by 1.5 meters) window depicts two biblical

passages in which women, also painted with dark skin, appear as equals to Christ. One shows Christ in conversation with Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, from the Gospel of Luke. The other shows Christ speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well from the Gospel of John.

The window made by the Henry E Sharp studio in New York had largely been forgotten until a few years ago when Hadley Arnold and her family bought the 4,000-square-foot (371-square-meter) Greek Revival church building, which opened in 1830 and closed in 2010, to convert into their home.

When four stained-glass windows were removed in 2020 to be replaced with clear glass, Arnold took a closer look. It was a cold winter's day with the sunlight shining at just the right angle and she was stunned by what she saw in one of them: The human figures had dark skin. AP

Serbia: 13,500 weapons collected in amnesty

AP ■ BELGRADE (SERBIA)

Serbian authorities on Sunday displayed many of around 13,500 weapons they say people have handed over since this month's mass shootings, including hand grenades, automatic weapons, and anti-tank rocket launchers.

The authorities have declared a one-month amnesty period for citizens to hand over unregistered weapons or face prison sentences as part of a crackdown on guns following the two mass shootings that left 17 people dead, many of them children.

Populist President Aleksandar Vucic accompanied top police officials on Sunday for the weapons' display near the town of Smederevo, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of the capital, Belgrade.

Vucic said the approximately half of the weapons collected were illegal while the



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic (right) inspects weapons collected as part of an amnesty in Smederevo, Serbia. AP

other half were registered weapons that citizens nonetheless handed over.

He added the weapons will go to Serbia's arms and ammunition factories for potential use by the armed forces.

"After June 8, the state will respond with repressive measures and punishments

will be very strict," he said of the post-amnesty period. "What does anyone need an automatic weapon for? Or all these guns?"

Serbia is estimated to be among the top countries in Europe in guns per capita. Many are left over from the wars of the 1990s and held illegally.

Obesity speeds up loss of immunity from Covid vaccines: Research

Cambridge (UK): COVID vaccines are very effective, but for some groups they don't generate as strong an immune response. These groups include older adults and people with weakened immune systems, for example due to cancer or other medical conditions. They tend to already be at heightened risk from COVID.

Likewise, obesity — and its association with several other conditions such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and chronic kidney disease — leads to an increased risk of severe COVID. The effect of obesity on COVID vaccine effectiveness, however, has not been well understood. But our new study in Nature Medicine finds obesity is linked to faster loss of immunity from COVID vaccines.

We know people with obesity have an impaired immune response to other vaccines including those for influenza, rabies and hepatitis.

COVID vaccines generate antibodies which recognise the spike protein, a protein on the surface of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID) that allows it to attach to and infect our cells. The vaccines also prime immune cells called T cells to protect against severe COVID if we do contract the virus.

Because immunity acquired after two doses wanes in the months afterwards, many countries have elected to administer booster vaccines to maintain immune protection, particularly in vulnerable groups.

Several studies have suggested that following COVID vaccination, antibody levels may be lower in people with obesity than in the general population.

Earlier in the pandemic, we assembled a team of researchers from the University of Cambridge and the University of Edinburgh to

investigate the effect of obesity on vaccine effectiveness over time.

Using a data platform called EAVE II, the University of Edinburgh team, led by Aziz Sheikh, examined real-time healthcare data for 5.4 million people across Scotland.

In particular, they looked at hospitalisations and deaths from COVID among 3.5 million adults who had received two vaccine doses (either Pfizer or AstraZeneca).

They found that people with severe obesity, defined as a body mass index (BMI) over 40, had a 76 per cent increased risk of hospitalisation and death from COVID after vaccination compared to those with a BMI in the normal range. The risk was also moderately increased in people who were obese (a BMI between 30 and 40) and those who were underweight (a BMI lower than 18.5).

The risk of severe disease



from breakthrough infections after the second vaccine also began to increase more quickly among people with severe obesity (from around ten weeks post-vaccination) and among people with obesity (from around 15 weeks) compared with people of a normal weight (from around 20 weeks).

INVESTIGATING FURTHER

Our team conducted experiments to characterise the immune response to a third dose, or booster, of mRNA COVID vaccines (those made by Pfizer and Moderna) in people with severe obesity. We studied 28 people with severe obesity attending

Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, and measured antibody levels and function as well as the number of immune cells in their blood post-vaccination. We compared the results to those from 41 people of a normal weight.

Although antibody levels were similar in samples from all participants before booster vaccination, the ability of antibodies to work efficiently to fight the virus, known as "neutralisation capacity", was reduced among people with severe obesity. In 55 per cent of people with severe obesity we either couldn't detect or quantify neutralisation capacity, compared to 12 per cent of people with normal BMI.

This might mean COVID vaccines induce lower quality antibodies in people with obesity. It's possible the antibodies are not able to bind to the virus with the same strength as in people of a normal weight. After a booster, antibody

function in people with obesity was restored to the same level as those of normal weight. However, using detailed measurements of B cells, which are responsible for antibody production and immune memory, we found that these immune cells developed differently in the first couple of weeks after vaccination in people with obesity. By repeating measurements of immune responses over time, we could see antibody levels and function declined more rapidly after the third dose in people with severe obesity.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

There were some limitations in both parts of the study. For example, BMI data was only collected once in EAVE II and therefore we cannot exclude changes in BMI over time. Also, the number of people included in our in-depth immunology study was relatively modest.

Nonetheless, immunity from COVID vaccines doesn't seem to be as robust or long-lasting in people with obesity.

With severe obesity affecting 3 per cent of the UK population and 9 per cent of the US population, these findings have important implications. First, COVID boosters may be particularly important for this group. Our study also highlights the need for more targeted interventions to protect people with obesity from severe COVID.

Evidence shows weight loss of at least 5 per cent can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and other metabolic complications of obesity. Interventions that can lead to a sustained reduction in weight (such as lifestyle modification, weight loss drugs, and bariatric surgery) could similarly improve COVID outcomes. Weight loss may likewise improve vaccine responses, but we need more research to investigate.

Adopt early warning system: NHB to HFCs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Regulator for housing finance firms NHB has asked housing finance companies with asset size of over Rs 1,000 crore to adopt an early warning signals (EWS) framework to check financial frauds and also to prevent accounts from turning into non-performing assets.

National Housing Bank (NHB), in a recent circular, said analysis of the frauds reported by the housing finance companies (HFCs) has revealed that the reasons behind accounts being identified as fraud accounts are seller impersonation, submission of fake income/ employment documents, submission of fake title deeds, a collusion of the builder and borrower. It has also been observed that such deficiencies are identified only when the borrower stops paying the EMIs after the disbursement of the loans, NHB said.

"It has been therefore decided that an Early Warning Signals (EWS) Framework should be adopted by the HFCs



so that an alert is triggered before the account turns into non-performing asset (NPA) or declared as a fraud account," it said.

NHB circular further said that tracking of the EWS must be integrated with the credit monitoring process in the systems of the HFCs so that it becomes a continuous activity. Through the EWS framework, HFCs will be encouraged to take into account fraud risks in their risk management practices. NHB has asked the housing finance companies to place the circular before their boards for information and to devise

an implementation strategy. "The mechanism needs to be put in place by April 1, 2024," it said. The NHB has provided an indicative list of EWS for individual borrowers (retail).

This includes 'disbursement of loan done without meeting all pre-disbursement conditions', 'occupation of the borrower has changed', 'adverse developments in the sector in which the borrower is employed', and 'company is unable to contact the borrower during credit monitoring'. The regulator has also suggested an indicative list of EWS for corporate and project loans.

NPCI seeks tie-ups for intl acceptance of RuPay debit card

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is exploring options for further tie-ups to strengthen the global acceptability of RuPay debit cards. Currently, RuPay cards are accepted at the points of sale (PoS) machine powered by Discover of the US, Diners Club, JCB of Japan, Pulse and Union Pay of China.

This needs to be strengthened, and NPCI is working in this direction so that users of RuPay cards are at par with those using Visa or Mastercard, sources said. In March 2012, RuPay went global by tying up with Discover Financial Services to bring international services to Indians.

It has strengthened its network capabilities by launching RuPay JCB Global Card in association with JCB International Co Ltd in July 2019. The RuPay JCB Global card can be used at RuPay card accepting points in India and JCB card accepting points out-



side India for PoS, E-Commerce and ATM. RuPay, a product of NPCI, is the domestic card payment network of India, with wide acceptance at ATMs, POS devices and e-commerce websites across India. Earlier this year, the Union Cabinet approved a scheme worth Rs 2,600 crore for the promotion of RuPay debit cards and low-value BHIM-UPI (Bharat Interface for Money- Unified Payments Interface) transactions.

Under the scheme, the banks are provided financial incentives to foster Point of Sale (PoS) devices and e-commerce transactions using RuPay and UPI. The scheme is aimed at building a robust digital payment ecosystem and promoting UPI Lite and UPI123PAY as economical and user-friendly digital payment options.

Changes in anti-money laundering law can hamper FDA facilitation: CAs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chartered accountants are seeking clarifications on the finance ministry's recent notification on extending the ambit of anti-money laundering law as it can adversely impact ease of doing business and facilitation of foreign investments.

According to industry sources, chartered accountants (CAs) and company secretaries often act as formation agents for foreign companies setting up businesses in India and often provide their own address for communication in the initial phase.

They also act as resident directors of the foreign company trying to establish presence in the country and also operate bank accounts on behalf of their clients.

Industry sources said there is no way that an accountant can know whether the money that an investor is bringing into India is bonafide or laundered money and verify its source. In view of the pending review by the global watchdog on terror financing and money laundering scheduled later this year, the



finance ministry has in recent months tightened and expanded the scope of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). As part of the exercise, chartered and cost accountants and company secretaries have been included in the ambit of the PMLA, if they undertake specified activities on behalf of their clients.

These transactions include buying and selling of properties; management of bank accounts or other assets; and management of the companies, limited liability partnerships or trusts. In another notification, the ministry said that entities and individuals working as 'formation agents', or acting as

director/secretary/partner too would be covered under PMLA provisions. It would also apply to individuals or entities who provide a business address or correspondence address for a company/LLP/trust.

According to industry sources, the activities mentioned in the notifications are performed by CAs for foreign companies trying to start their business in India. "Chartered accountants cannot check the money trail for companies bringing money to India to start business. It is the job of Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and RBI to check the source of investment," a source said.

According to sources, the chartered accountants are in touch with the finance ministry and seeking guidance on the recent changes in the anti-money laundering law.

At the most, a monetary penalty may be imposed on CAs and not the strict provisions of the PMLA law as several of these activities are part of the temporary hand-holding and accounting support required for facilitating foreign investment.

Strong macro outlook, good earning season bring FPIs to Indian shores

₹23,152 cr investment in May so far

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have shown strong buying interest in Indian equities in May and invested more than Rs 23,152 crore in the first fortnight due to lower chances of further rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve, a strong domestic macro outlook and a good earning season.

With this, now Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have become net buyers of equities in 2023 so far by attracting Rs 8,572 crore, data available with the depositories showed.

Going forward, FPI flows should remain robust for the rest of the month as the global risk on the environment continues for some more time given that major macro data like the US non-farm payroll numbers and CPI numbers have been mostly in line with market estimates, Manish Jeloka, Co-head of Products & Solutions, Sanctum Wealth, said.

"Since the rupee is strong and the dollar is expected to decline in the near term, FPIs are likely to continue buying in India. The improvement in India's macros also favours continued inflows into India," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

According to data from the depositories, FPIs invested a net sum of Rs 23,152 crore in Indian equities in the first fortnight during May 2-12. This came following a net infusion of Rs 11,630 crore in equities in April and Rs 7,936 crore in March. The March investment was mainly driven by bulk investment in the Adani Group



companies by the US-based GQG Partners. However, if one adjusts for the investments of GQG in Adani Group, the net flow is negative. Moreover, in the first two months of the year, FPIs pulled out over Rs 34,000 crore.

Sanctum Wealth's Jeloka said that intervention by governments globally seems to have brought some sense of stability to US regional banks that led to a risk-on environment after a turbulent period in March, leading to an improvement in FPIs flow in April and further in May.

"Lower chances of further rate hikes by the US Fed, strong domestic macro-outlook, and a good earning season have bought foreign investors towards Indian shores," Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said.

Also, the rupee strengthening against the dollar has supported FPIs buying. Further, recent market volatility and sporadic correction have also provided some rationality to valuations, he added.

Apart from equities, FPIs have invested Rs 68 crore in the debt market in first fortnight of May. In terms of sector, financials continue to be the favourite sector of FPIs. Besides, they were buyers of capital goods and autos too.

Anarock: Housing sales up 48% in FY23 driven by higher volumes, prices



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Housing sales rose 48 per cent year-on-year to Rs 3,47 lakh crore during the last fiscal across seven major cities on higher volumes and better price realisation, according to Anarock.

Real estate consultant Anarock reported that sales of residential properties in value terms increased to Rs 3,46,960 crore last fiscal from Rs 2,34,850 crore in 2021-22.

In volume terms, sales grew 36 per cent to 3,79,095 units in 2022-23 from 2,77,783 units in the previous year. The data pertains to the transactions of primary (fresh sale) housing market. "India's residential real estate segment continues to show boundless forward momentum, and is setting unprecedented benchmarks," said Anuj Puri, Chairman, Anarock Group.

According to the data, housing sales in Delhi-NCR rose 42 per cent to Rs 50,620 crore last fiscal from Rs 35,610 crore in the previous year. In Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), sales grew 46 per cent to Rs 1,67,210 crore from Rs

1,14,190 crore. Housing sales in Bengaluru increased 49 per cent to Rs 38,870 crore from Rs 26,100 crore. In Pune, housing sales rose 77 per cent to Rs 33,730 crore from Rs 19,100 crore.

Sales in Hyderabad went up 50 per cent to Rs 34,820 crore from Rs 23,190 crore. Chennai saw a 24 per cent growth in sales to Rs 11,050 crore from Rs 8,940 crore. Housing sales in Kolkata increased 38 per cent to Rs 10,660 crore during the last fiscal from Rs 7,720 crore in the previous financial year.

Commenting on the trend, Gurugram-based luxury realty firm Krisumi Corporation MD Mohit Jain said the housing sector has undergone a transformation in recent years, becoming more mature and fundamentally robust.

"While there is significant demand from end-users, investors are also returning to the market," Jain said. Signature Global, which is into affordable housing, Chairman Pradeep Aggarwal said millennials are now actively investing in real estate, contributing to the overall rise in property sales.

Analysts: WPI inflation, global trends to drive domestic stock markets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic stock markets would be driven by inflation numbers, global trends, and the last batch of Q4 earnings this week, analysts said.

Markets will also react to industrial production data and consumer inflation numbers that were released after market hours on Friday.

"Participants will react to macroeconomic data viz. IIP and CPI first, which were released post-market hours on Friday. WPI inflation data is also scheduled on May 15. Apart from economic releases, global cues, especially the performance of the US indices and the trend of foreign flows will also be in focus for cues," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Retail inflation declined to an 18-month low of 4.7 per cent in April mainly due to falling prices of vegetables, oils and fats, and came closer to Reserve Bank's target of 4 per cent, showed government data released Friday.

India's industrial production growth slipped to a five-month low of 1.1 per cent in March from 5.8 per cent in February 2023, mainly due to poor performance of power and manufacturing sectors, according to official data released on Friday.

As the earnings season is in full swing, big names like Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ITC, IOC, JSW Steel and GAIL will announce their numbers during the week along with several others, Mishra added. The Congress returned to power on its own in Karnataka after 10 years, knocking the BJP off its only southern perch on Saturday as



voters decisively backed the grand old party desperately seeking electoral revival ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. "The recently-concluded Karnataka election has resulted in Congress emerging as the clear winner. While this may have a sentimental negative impact on the market, it is important to note that much of this outcome has already been factored in by investors."

"Therefore, it is unlikely that we will witness a significant reaction from the market in response to this development," Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd, said. Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 973.61 points or 1.59 per cent.

"The overall market sentiment remains positive, however, it is important to note that the prices are currently trading near a crucial resistance level. Given this, there is a possibility of profit-booking or a correctional fall in the near future," said Arvinder Singh Nanda, Senior Vice President, Master Capital Services Ltd.

"While global cues are relatively muted, market participants will be keeping a watchful eye on the direction of US markets, bond yields, and the dollar index, which could potentially impact Indian equities," Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd, said.

ED, SEBI, RBI on trail of three top brokers for fraudulent trade

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Three top brokers of the country have come under the scanner of multiple regulatory and enforcement agencies, including for suspected money laundering and fraudulent trading activities amounting to several thousands of crores of rupees, senior officials said on Sunday.

The officials also said that the three brokers, whom they refused to identify citing the ongoing nature of the investigations, have also been found to have been connected to PEPs (politically exposed persons) and the role of a key family member of a senior political leader in a key industrial state is also being investigated.

The investigations have been underway for 4-5 years on multiple fronts against the three top brokers, who head organisations with businesses spread across multiple segments of the capital markets and the financial services sector including brokerage, investment advisory services, portfolio management, asset management fund and non-banking financial services.

The agencies and regulators involved in the investigations so far include the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED), while these three have now made references for bringing in the CBI into the picture due to the suspected involvement of PEPs, the officials said. While suspected money laundering activities facilitated by the capital market brokers have always been under the scanner, this could be the first major case of some top-ranking brokerage

and financial services sector players being caught for the web of complex financial market transactions they weave to hide their money laundering activities, they added.

The investigations have involved scrutiny of multi-layered financial and banking transactions, transfer of funds to and from several tax havens, call data records and also social media conversations.

Requests were also sent to several foreign jurisdictions for administrative assistance on identifying the trail of fund transfers amounting to thousands of crores of rupees. While some such jurisdictions, including Switzerland, have already responded, the affected parties have challenged any information sharing citing confidentiality clauses.

As per the laws prevailing in various countries, the concerned banking or financial institutions give an opportunity to their respective clients before sharing the information with any foreign country.

The officials said the three brokers first came under the scanner for their role in a case involving a spot commodity exchange but soon they were found to be engaged in large-scale money laundering activities, including for their brokerage and fund management clients.

The scope of the investigation was expanded after some politically connected persons were found to be involved, they added. In most cases, it was Sebi that suspected a possible money laundering angle in the activities of these brokers and accordingly, the matter was flagged to other agencies and departments for further investigations.

Hero MotoCorp set to roll out record number of products this year: CEO

New Delhi: Hero MotoCorp is gearing up for highest ever model introductions this fiscal as it looks to consolidate market share especially in the premium bike segment, according to the company's CEO Niranjan Gupta. The country's largest two-wheeler maker plans to introduce new bikes, including the first product under the Hero MotoCorp-Harley Davidson tie-up, during the ongoing financial year.

The company has leadership in the budget bike segment (100-110cc) and is looking to enhance presence in the 125 cc and also drive in models to bring in volumes and enhance profitability in the 160-cc and above space. "We'll have product launches every quarter of this fiscal year. Probably this fiscal, we'll see the maximum number of launches ever seen in company's history," Gupta said in an analyst call. PTI

Let's build Twitter 2.0 together, new CEO Linda Yaccarino urges Musk

New Delhi: The soon to be Twitter CEO, Linda Yaccarino, former Chairman of Global Advertising and Partnerships at NBC Universal, on Sunday said she is prepared to build Twitter 2.0 and transform the business together with Musk and millions of platform users.

Yaccarino, who will start in six weeks in her new position, will focus primarily on business operations. "I've long been inspired by your vision to create a brighter future. I'm excited to help bring this vision to Twitter and transform this business together," she posted.

"I'm just as committed to the future of this platform. Your feedback is VITAL to that future. I'm here for all of it. Let's keep the conversation going and build Twitter 2.0 together," Yaccarino further commented. There have been some concerns too regarding Yaccarino's appointment as the new Twitter



CEO. A user posted that she is not here to improve the user experience but wants Twitter to be a 'safe space'. "She represents advertisers, and her natural inclination is to limit speech, and pander to those who push woke ideology on the world. You will have to watch her like a hawk. No doubt she'll bring in advertising revenue in the short term, but she's a long-term mistake," posted a user named Billboard Chris.

Musk replied: "I hear your concerns, but don't judge too early. I am adamant about defending free speech, even if it means losing money." IANS

SEBI floats consultation paper for regulating all web-based platforms

New Delhi: Capital markets watchdog Sebi has floated a consultation paper for regulating all web-based platforms offering fractional ownership of real estate assets to protect small investors.

Such fractional ownership of real estate assets is proposed to be brought as Micro, Small and Medium REITs under Sebi's Real Estate Investment Trusts rules. The proposed regulatory framework would help develop the real estate market, provide investor protection measures and lead to an orderly development of this sector and the market, Sebi said in its consultation paper.

Typically, fractional investment of real estate through fractional ownership platforms (FOPs) is an investing strategy in which the cost of acquisition of real estate is split among several investors, who invest in

securities issued by a special purpose vehicle (SPV) established by an FOP. Such SPVs purchase real estate assets. FOPs allow investors to own a certain percentage or fractional share in the real estate asset through the securities issued by the SPVs. Some FOPs are operated by real estate agents or brokers (before the property is purchased) and as property managers thereafter.

Sebi noted that there has been a mushrooming of web-based platforms offering fractional ownership of real estate assets in the past 2-3 years. These platforms provide investors with an option to invest in buildings and office spaces, including warehouses, shopping centres, conference centres etc. The minimum investment on these FOPs ranges from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 25 lakh. PTI

Netherlands emerges as key trading partner of India in FY 2022-23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Netherlands has emerged as India's third largest exports destination after the US and UAE during 2022-23 on account of a surge in shipment of goods such as petroleum products, electronic items, chemicals, and aluminium goods, according to the data of the commerce ministry.

India's trade surplus with the Netherlands has also increased from USD 8 billion in 2021-22 to USD 13 billion in 2022-23. The Netherlands has taken over major destinations such as the UK, Hong Kong, Bangladesh and Germany, the data showed. India's exports to the Netherlands rose by about 48 per cent to USD 18.52 billion during 2022-23 as against USD 12.5 billion in 2021-22. In 2021-22 and 2020-21, the out-

bound shipments to the European country stood at USD 12.55 billion and USD 6.5 billion, respectively. The exports are registering healthy growth continuously since 2000-01, when India's exports to that nation was USD 880 million.

Further, in 2021-22, the Netherlands was the fifth largest destination for Indian exports as against ninth in 2020-21.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said the Netherlands has emerged as a hub for Europe with efficient port and connectivity with the EU through road, railways and waterways. In the calendar year, India's exports to the country increased to USD 18.1 billion in 2022 from USD 5.5 billion in 2017. IANS

Netflix plans to cut \$300 mn in spending this year: Report

San Francisco: Streaming giant Netflix is reportedly slashing its spending by \$300 million this year, including related to hiring.

According to a new report from The Wall Street Journal, one of the reasons behind the spending cut is that Netflix delayed its plans to crack down on password sharing from the first quarter to the second quarter this year. It means that the revenue Netflix expected from the move is now shifted to towards the second half of the year, the report said.

"The company urged staff earlier this month to be sensible with their spending, including in relation to hiring, but noted that there would not be a hiring freeze or additional layoffs," the report added. The streaming company launched its crack down on password sharing in Canada, New Zealand, Portugal and Spain earlier this year. IANS

MAN CITY CLOSER TO TITLE

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Ilkay Gundogan said Manchester City are showing their experience at the business end of the season after the German scored twice in a 3-0 win on Sunday that kept Everton looking over their shoulders in the relegation battle.

City moved four points clear of Arsenal, who are in action later at home to Brighton, with three games remaining for both sides.

The defending champions' superior goal difference means five points from their remaining matches will likely be enough for a fifth title in six seasons.

"We have a very experienced team and competing in the last few games of the season is not a new situation for us, and that helps us a lot," said Gundogan. "It's about staying calm and trust in your abilities."

Everton remain just one point outside the relegation zone and could slip into the bottom three if Leicester beat Liverpool on Monday.

By contrast to the 'Toffees' troubles, City are still well on course for a treble and could afford the luxury of an afternoon off for some of their stars ahead of Wednesday's Champions League semi-final, second leg against Real Madrid.

"It's a dream come true being here," said City coach Pep Guardiola. "The only team in Europe to be fighting in all competitions. Still it is not over, in the Premier League is it never over. We need two



more wins to be champions." Guardiola made four changes from the side that drew 1-1 in the first leg in the Spanish capital on Tuesday with John Stones, Bernardo Silva, Kevin De Bruyne and Jack Grealish left on the bench. It took the visitors 35 min-

utes to find their rhythm, by which point they should have been behind as Mason Holgate somehow spooned over a glorious chance to open the scoring after James Tarkowski headed down a corner. Within three minutes of Holgate's sitter, the game was

over as a contest. **GUNDOGAN ON A HIGH** Guardiola had stern words for Gundogan despite the German scoring twice in last weekend's 2-1 win over Leeds after the midfielder missed a late penalty having been given

the chance to complete his hat-trick by Erling Haaland. Gundogan made amends with a stunning touch to control and then flick home Riyad Mahrez's cross in one movement to break the deadlock. Moments later, he created the second with a floated cross

that invited Haaland to power home his 52nd goal of the season with just his third touch in 39 minutes.

Everton boss Sean Dyche showed he too was already thinking about his side's final two games of the season by replacing talismanic striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin, who has missed most of the season through injury, with Neal Maupay at half-time.

"He felt a tight groin, but a tight groin can become a damaged groin," said Dyche. "It would have been a harder call if it had been 0-0 but at 2-0 I had to make a call."

Guardiola could not have wished for a more serene second-half to prepare for the visit of the European champions in midweek as another moment of brilliance from Gundogan made it 3-0 six minutes after the restart.

The 32-year-old is probably into the final month of his seven-year stay in Manchester with his contract up at the end of the season and Barcelona reportedly ready to pounce on a free transfer, but looks set to go out on a high.

Gundogan curled a free-kick beyond the desperate dive of Jordan Pickford for his ninth goal of the season.

Goal difference could be decisive in the battle to beat the drop and Everton did at least manage to stop the bleeding at three.

Indeed the home side came closest to scoring in the final quarter when Amadou Onana's header came crashing back off the crossbar.

West Ham miss chance to seal PL survival



AP ■ LONDON

West Ham wasted a chance to seal their Premier League survival as goals from Bryan Mbeumo and Yoane Wissa clinched Brentford's 2-0 victory on Sunday.

David Moyes' side would have been guaranteed to avoid relegation with a victory in west London.

But Mbeumo and Wissa netted in the first half to leave the Hammers still needing one win from their last two games to be sure of staying up.

West Ham are six points clear of third bottom Leeds, who have just two matches left. However, second bottom Leicester would move

within four points of the east Londoners if they beat Liverpool on Monday.

With games against relegation rivals Leeds and Leicester to come in their remaining fixtures this was a missed opportunity for West Ham to put their lingering relegation fears to bed.

West Ham are dreaming of a first major trophy since the 1980 FA Cup after beating AZ Alkmaar 2-1 in the Europa Conference League semi-final first leg on Thursday.

But they have now only won one of the seven top-flight matches that have come within three days of their playing in Europe this season.

Chelsea agree on terms with Pochettino: Reports



AP ■ LONDON

Chelsea are on the verge of hiring Mauricio Pochettino as their new manager after agreeing terms with the former Tottenham boss, according to reports on Sunday. Pochettino is reportedly set to join Chelsea at the end of this season as he returns to the Premier League four years after his sacking by Tottenham.

The Argentine will replace interim manager Frank Lampard at Stamford Bridge as Chelsea co-owner Todd Boehly bids to get his troubled club back on track after a dismal season.

Pochettino will be Chelsea's sixth permanent manager in five years after Boehly sacked Thomas Tuchel in September and then axed Graham Potter in April.

Pochettino, who has also managed in the Premier League with Southampton, left Paris Saint Germain in July 2022 and was replaced by Christophe Galtier.

Pochettino guided Tottenham to the Champions League final in 2019 when they finished as runners-up to Liverpool.

He also led the north Londoners a second place finish in the Premier League in

2017 and the League Cup final in 2015, missing out on the silverware to Chelsea on both occasions.

Despite failing to end a Tottenham trophy drought that stretches back to 2008, Pochettino was widely admired by his players.

Tottenham striker Harry Kane recently bemoaned the change in the club's culture since the Argentine's exit.

Following his Tottenham stint, the 51-year-old took over at French side Paris Saint Germain in January 2021.

They finished second in Ligue 1 in 2022, winning the Coupe de France and the Trophee des Champions, which were the first trophies of Pochettino's managerial career.

Pochettino led PSG to the French title in his second season but departed after failing to make an impact in the Champions League, with a last 16 capitulation against Real Madrid especially damaging to his reign.

Considered for the Manchester United job before Erik ten Hag's appointment last year, Pochettino will arrive in west London to find a club in crisis.

Chelsea, who last won the title in 2017, are currently 11th in the Premier League.

Kerr strikes as Chelsea win FA Cup final

AP ■ LONDON

Sam Kerr's second-half goal proved the difference as Chelsea beat Manchester United 1-0 to win a third successive women's FA Cup final in front of a record-breaking crowd at Wembley on Sunday.

But it needed a desperate block from Chelsea goalkeeper Ann-Katrin Berger in the seventh minute of added-on time to deny United an equaliser in front of a crowd of 77,390 -- a world record attendance for a domestic women's football match.

Chelsea manager Emma Hayes's decision to bring on Pernille Harder just before the hour proved a turning point in a match where United had the better of the early exchanges.

It took United, in their first women's FA Cup final, just 20 seconds after kick-off to put the ball into the Chelsea net only for the goal to be disallowed for offside.

Chelsea, the reigning English women's Super League champions, failed to clear Ella Toone's cross from the right and Leah Galton swept the ball in.

But the flag had gone up, with VAR confirming Toone had moved a fraction too early.

Real Madrid beat Getafe in La Liga

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid warmed up for their decisive Champions League semi-final visit to face Manchester City with a 1-0 win over Getafe on Saturday in La Liga.

Marco Asensio broke the deadlock in the 70th minute with a deflected strike from distance, in a game of few chances.

Carlo Ancelotti rotated heavily to keep his key players fresh ahead of the second leg battle with Pep Guardiola's City, following the 1-1 draw last Tuesday in Madrid.

Ancelotti lined up with just three of the side that started the first leg -- goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, Eduardo Camavinga and Fede Valverde.

Camavinga limped off in the final stages with knee pain sustained in a clash with Juan



Iglesias. Ancelotti said the French midfielder would not take long to recover. "He twisted his knee a bit, it's a blow, nothing more, he will recover very quickly," Ancelotti told reporters. "Tomorrow he will rest like

the others who played today and I think from Monday he will train with the team, he doesn't have a problem."

Ancelotti added: "The knee is stable, it hurts him a bit now, but the important thing is stability and he has that, 100 per cent."

Relegated Elche stun Atletico with rare win

AP ■ MADRID

Atletico Madrid fell to a surprise 1-0 defeat at relegated Elche on Sunday, confirming that Diego Simeone's side are no longer mathematically in contention to win La Liga.

Leaders Barcelona can win the title later on Sunday with a win at city rivals Espanyol and Atletico, third, can no longer catch them.

Atletico, who have been in sensational form since the World Cup, were inexplicably blunt against

bottom-of-the-table Elche, who earned only their fourth win of the season.

Fidel Chaves broke the deadlock in the 41st minute, when Atletico goalkeeper Ivo Grbic badly flapped at a throw-in, leaving the winger with an open goal.

After Real Madrid beat Getafe on Saturday they overtook Atletico by two points.

Earlier Valencia snatched an important late victory at Celta Vigo to climb provisionally to 14th, three points above the relegation zone.

AP ■ ROME

Djokovic, Swiatek into Italian Open last 16

Novak Djokovic reached the last 16 of the Italian Open on Sunday after winning a battle with Grigor Dimitrov 6-3, 4-6, 6-1, while blistering Iga Swiatek thrashed Lesia Tsurenko 6-2, 6-0.

Six-time Rome champion Djokovic initially looked in improved form compared to his sluggish tournament opener against Tomas Etcheverry but again had a fight on his hands against the former world number three.

No longer wearing the elbow brace he had in Friday's second round match, Djokovic looked to have shaken off the injury which forced him to miss last week's Madrid Masters.

The 22-time Grand Slam title winner lost his serve in the first game of the match but broke back immediately and in

game four broke again to tip the first set in his favour.

Djokovic served out to take the lead and in game three of the second set broke former world number three Dimitrov, who handed the initiative to the Serb with a weak backhand into the net.

However Dimitrov levelled the set at 4-4 with a break of his own, angering Djokovic who was convinced that the shot which won the game was long, and drew huge roars from the Foro Italico crowd when he claimed the set.

However Djokovic has reached at least the quarter-finals in each of his 16 appearances in Rome and a powerful third set display ensured his passage into the fourth round.



It was his 11th win in 12 meetings with Dimitrov. Losing finalist in Madrid last weekend, Swiatek looked

again in imperious form as she breezed into the last 16 of the women's draw. The 21-year-old is trying for

her third straight Rome title and made light work of Tsurenko after a slightly bumpy start. Swiatek lost the first two

games but then rattled off 12 in a row in a powerful demonstration of why she is world number one and favourite to defend her Roland Garros title.

"I'm just trying to be consistent and trying to play my game. I treat every match as a final, I try to have the right mindset," said Swiatek on court.

Swiatek now faces either Donna Vekic or Ljudmila Samsonova in the fourth round after extending her winning streak in the Italian capital to 13 matches.

Her bid for a Rome hat-trick will be helped by six of the world's top 10 women players being eliminated early.

Fifth-ranked Coco Gauff of the United States was defeated by Marie Bouzkova of the

Czech Republic 4-6, 6-2, 6-2. It was Bouzkova's third career Top 5 win but first on clay.

Also heading for the exit was world number eight Maria Sakkari who was beaten 7-5, 6-3 by Marketa Vondrousova.

Gauff and Sakkari join world number two Aryna Sabalenka, third-ranked Jessica Pegula, world number four Caroline Garcia and seventh ranked Ons Jabeur in being dumped out of the tournament.

Former world number one Victoria Azarenka withdrew with a right leg injury handing Madison Keys of the United States a free pass into the last 16.

MEDVEDEV'S ROME JOY Daniil Medvedev won his first ever match in Rome, 6-4, 6-

2 against Emil Ruusuvuori, the former US Open champion winning a second round match which was postponed to Sunday due to the torrential rain which hit the Italian capital on Saturday.

In much balmy conditions the world number three was dominant on a clay court surface he is famous for not liking.

Few would back him to go deep in Rome but his performances on clay have improved, reaching the quarter-finals at the Monte Carlo Masters.

"Every time I come to a tournament I know I can play well, so I'm happy to finally get the win here in Rome," said Medvedev.

Fifth-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas will take on home hope Lorenzo Sonego in the third round after finishing off Nuno Borges 6-3, 6-3.

RCB CRUSH RAJASTHAN BY 112 RUNS

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Royals dished out one of the most inexplicable batting performances of the Indian Premier League as they were dismissed for just 59, suffering a massive 112-run defeat to Royal Challengers Bangalore here on Sunday.

Chasing 172 for a win, the Royals suffered a stunning batting collapse to be bundled out in just 10.3 over for the third lowest total in IPL history with only Shimron Hetmyer (35 off 19 balls) and Joe Root (10 off 15 balls) scoring in double-digit figures.

It was RR's second lowest total as they just about managed to go past their earlier lowest of 58 against the same opponents in 2009 by one run.

RR batters failed to give a fight as they kept on playing shots when the situation demanded to stick for a while on a slow and tricky wicket.

RCB bowlers exploited the lack of application by RR batters and game sense as all of them returned with wickets. Wayne Parnell was the pick of the bowlers with three wickets for 10 runs from his three overs. Michael Bracewell and Karn Sharma took two wickets each while Mohammed Siraj and Glenn Maxwell got one each.

With the win, RCB jumped to the fifth spot with 12 points from 12 matches to be in contention for a play-off berth while RR moved down to sixth with 12 points from 13 matches.



The Royals lost five wickets for 25 runs in the powerplay with Parnell taking two, including that of Jos Buttler (0) and captain Sanju Samson (4).

But it was Siraj, who had opened the floodgates by getting the wicket of in-form Yashasvi Jaiswal (0). The youngster failed to control his

shot and offered a simple catch to Virat Kohli at mid-off in the second ball of the RR run chase.

It was a rare instance as both RR openers got out for ducks as Buttler departed in the next over off a short and wide delivery off Parnell. Two balls later, Samson

was out as he committed for a shot too early and the ball loomed up high in the air for Anuj Rawat to take a well-judged catch.

Three wickets down for 11 runs after two overs, the Royals survived the next two overs before Devdutt Padikkal, who came in as 'Impact Player' in

place of Yuzvendra Chahal, was dismissed for four off Bracewell as Royals' procession to the dressing room continued.

Root's first IPL outing with the bat also turned out to be a nightmare as he was trapped LBW decision, becoming Parnell's third victim.

RR batters threw away their wickets, match was lost in powerplay: Sangakkara

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Head coach Kumar Sangakkara feels Rajasthan Royals' batters threw away their wickets, adding that the IPL match was lost in the powerplay itself after half the side was sent packing by Royal Challengers Bangalore here on Sunday. "It was a poor batting performance. We bowled well to keep them under 170, which on this pitch was going to be a good chase," Sangakkara said.

"I think we got a little bit carried away in the powerplay, thinking that we had to score too many runs there and try to be ultra positive," he said at the post-match press conference.

"It was a case of trying to build partnerships but unfortunately we were five down coming out of the

powerplay that was probably the end of the game," the Sri Lankan legend added.

The RR batters were guilty of going for big shots instead of trying to settle in.

"They didn't really get us out but we got ourselves out, it was pretty obvious to see. So, it was not about one individual it's about the whole batting unit and we weren't good enough today," Sangakkara said.

The loss meant RR slipped to the sixth place with 12 points from 13 matches. With only one game left, their chances of reaching the play-offs look slim.

"We'll have to wait, have one game left, unfortunately, now other results will have to go our way, we got to play for some pride and make sure we win it," the coach said.

continued their strong form on a slower pitch but the Royals produced a disciplined bowling effort to stop RCB to a competitive total.

Anuj Rawat hit 29 not out off just 11 balls down the order to take the RCB total past the 170 mark as they added 51 runs in the last five overs.

Australian left-arm spinner Adam Zampa (4-0-25-2) and pacer KM Asif (4-0-42-2) were the most successful Royals bowlers while Sandeep Sharma got one wicket.

Kohli punished Sandeep for a boundary in the first over for bowling a short and wide ball, but he and du Plessis could not get too many boundaries after the introduction of spinners.

Zampa was introduced in the second over but was hit for a six by du Plessis in the fourth over. Ashwin and Chahal also did reasonably well as RCB could only score 42 for no loss in the powerplay.

The Royals got their first breakthrough in the form of Kohli (18 off 19 balls) in the seventh over with Asif claiming the prized wicket. The ball ballooned up in the air and Yashasvi Jaiswal took a fine catch.

RCB were unable to step up the gas as they were 78 for 1 at the halfway mark. But by then Maxwell had settled down and he began to impose himself on the RR bowlers.

Maxwell hit two fours off Sandeep in the 13th over and followed it up with a six off Ashwin in the next to push the scoring rate.

KKR beat Chennai to spice up last 4 race



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Crucial Fifties from Rinku Singh and Nitish Rana kept Kolkata Knight Riders' (KKR) playoffs hope alive as they registered 6 wickets victory over Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023 match here at MA Chidambaram Stadium on Sunday.

Nitish played an unbeaten knock of 57 runs off 44 while Rinku scored vital 54 runs in 43 deliveries for KKR. For CSK, Deepak Chahar bagged a three-wicket haul, while other bowlers failed to grab any wicket for their team. Chasing a target of 145, Kolkata suffered early hiccups as Chennai Super Kings bowlers delivered fiery

boundary. KKR captain Nitish also brought up his stunning fifty in just 38 deliveries.

Moeen Ali's direct throw gave CSK a vital breakthrough as he run out well-set batter Rinku Singh for 54.

The right-handed batter Andre Russell then came out to bat. KKR needed 4 runs in 12 balls to victory. In the penultimate over Nitish Rana slammed winning four and clinched a 6-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings.

Earlier, Shivam Dube's crucial unbeaten knock of 48 (34)* powered Chennai Super Kings to a total of 144/6 in the first innings against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Dube's 48 included three sixes and a single four. His knock came when CSK were losing wickets at regular intervals. After a bright start to the game, CSK suffered a major blow as they lost the wicket of Ruturaj Gaikwad in the fourth over for a score of 17(13). Varun Chakaravathy got the much-needed breakthrough and after this wicket, the flow of runs started to slow down for the hosts.

Ajinkya Rahane and Devon Conway kept the scoreboard ticking and pounced on every opportunity to find a boundary. However, Chakaravathy once again struck the breakthrough as he claimed the wicket of Ajinkya Rahane tried to get things going for CSK as he charged down to the pitch and tried to go over long-on.

Rinku was the aggressor of the batting pair, smashing boundaries regularly. After 10 overs, KKR batters dominated CSK batters as they took their team's total beyond the 100-run mark.

Rinku showed his swash-buckling form as he slammed a much-needed half-century in 39 balls with a powerful

I don't have an answer for that performance: Samson

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson had "no answer" to the dismal performance his batters dished out in the match against Royal Challengers Bangalore on Sunday, getting bundled out for 59, the third-lowest innings total ever in the IPL.

Faf du Plessis' RCB won the match by 112 runs after posting 171 for five. The visitors finished off the opposition in just 10.3 overs with South African quick Wayne Parnell emerging the most successful bowler with 3/10 from three overs.

The famed Royals batting simply crumbled with the home team reduced to 5/28 in powerplay from which it could never recover.

On the floundering campaign in the second half of the IPL, Samson said, "That is a

great question, actually. I was thinking about it and where it went wrong. Sorry, I do not have an answer for that."

Four Royals batters, including openers Jos Buttler and Yashasvi Jaiswal, were out for duck, while Sanju Samson could only score four runs.

Samson, though, put up a brave front saying IPL is a tournament where a turnaround can happen within a couple of days.

"We all know the nature of the IPL. We know things can change in a couple of days. Funny, funny things happen at the end of the league stages. We have to be strong, be professional and think about the game we are playing in Dharamsala. You have to keep your hopes high and try your best," he added.

The margin of defeat means the Royals' net run rate has taken a severe beating



even as RCB leapfrogged them on the points table to be placed fifth with 12 points, while RR, stranded on 12 points, dropped to sixth.

The Royals skipper said their strategy to go hard in powerplays had come unstuck, adding that his batters had little choice but to take risks,

wicket will slow down.

"Today, it did not work out. That (match) could have gone to the wire, it could have been a tight match if we had a decent powerplay. I felt that (RCB's score) was a par score on this wicket."

RCB skipper du Plessis said the improvement in the net run rate (NRR) after the big win will do his side a world of good. He added the pitch was really difficult to bat on and that the later order batting by Anuj Rawat (29 not out) helped the team past 160.

"We needed it, in terms of the NRR. It was a really difficult pitch when we batted first. Even in the powerplay, the ball was keeping low and we felt that 160 would be a good score. Those hits towards the end pushed us to a very good score. We have not quite managed to do it (finish off strongly) well."

Gujarat Titans look to seal playoff berth against SRH

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Titans pride themselves on consistency and would be expected to produce a solid show against Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL here on Monday after a rare 'flat' performance.

Another win should be enough for defending champions Gujarat Titans to seal a play-off berth while Sunrisers, who have only four wins from 11 games, are all but out of the reckoning.

Barring Rashid Khan, who starred with both ball and bat against Mumbai Indians, the bowlers had a forgettable outing and no one had answers to the special hitting ability of Suryakumar Yadav.

"As a group we weren't there. In bowling also we were very flat. Didn't have clear plans or didn't execute," skipper Hardik Pandya had said after their fourth loss in 12 games.

With the bat, the prolific top-order could not get going and despite a blinder from Rashid Khan at number 8, the Titans fell short. The star spinner was back at his best with the bowl to end up with his best figures of the season.

The skillful Mohammed Shami had a rare off day and he would be expected to conjure up magic with the new ball. Mohit Sharma, who was used in the middle and death overs earlier in the season, bowled with the new ball against Mumbai but the move did not play off. Sunrisers, on the other



A win should be enough for defending champions Gujarat Titans to seal a play-off berth while SRH, who have only four wins from 11 games, are all but out of the reckoning

hand, will be at the mercy of other teams after losing to Lucknow Super Giants from a winning position. They could not defend 80 runs off the last six overs with Nicholas Pooran playing a game changing innings.

The failure of the top-order and the star bowlers not performing as per expectations has let Sunrisers down this season. Anmolpreet Singh has replaced Mayank Agarwal at the top but is yet to make an impact.

Rahul Tripathi too has not set the stage on fire, having totalled 199 runs in 11 games at an underwhelming strike rate of 129.14. The skipper, Aiden Markram, has not led from the front with 207 runs from 10 games at a strike rate of 129.37.

The handling of pacer Umran Malik, who last played on April 29, has also been questioned. The positive has been the performance of Abdul Samad, who is finally living up to his potential after years of promise.

India lose to Chinese Taipei 1-4 in Sudirman Cup opening match



PTI ■ SUZHOU

Double Olympic medalist PV Sindhu's gallant fight ended in agony as India made a dismal start to their Sudirman Cup campaign, going down to the formidable Chinese Taipei 1-4 in their group C opening round tie here on Sunday.

There was, however, no lack of fight from the Indian players as Tanisha Crasto and K Sai Prateek started on a positive note in the mixed doubles contest but they ran out of steam in the end, losing 21-18, 24-26, 6-21 to world No. 30 Yang Po-Hsuan and Hu Ling Fang.

World Number 9 HS Prannoy then couldn't find his 'A' game, going down 19-21, 15-21 to world No. 5

Chou Tien Chen as India lagged 0-2 after the first two matches.

Sindhu was then handed the responsibility to bring India back into the tie but it was always going to be a tough task with her nemesis and former world No. 1 Tai Tzu Ying standing across the net.

The 27-year-old from Hyderabad, who hasn't been in the best of form lately, produced a gritty performance after the opening game reversal but couldn't go the distance with Tai Tzu Ying managing a 21-14, 18-21, 21-17 win in an hour and four minutes.

It allowed Chinese Taipei take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match tie.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty then fought hard before losing 13-21, 21-17, 18-21 to Lee Yang and Ye Hong Wei in the men's doubles match in a little over an hour as India further slumped to 0-4.

World No 17 Treasa Jolly and P Gayatri Gopichand then showed tremendous grit as they recovered from an opening game loss to eke out a 21-15, 18-21, 13-21 win over Lee Chia Hsin and Teng Chun Hsun in the final women's doubles tie to help India avoid a cleansweep.