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SENSEX, NIFTY HIT
ALL-TIME HIGH

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BUT NOT FULLY:
WARNER
12 SPORTS



MODI'S MOSCOW HUG

India embraces all weather friend Russia

PIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW
DELHI/MOSCOW

India and Russia on Tuesday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties and ongoing Ukraine conflict with Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying peace dialogue does not succeed amidst guns and bullets. He also said no solution is possible in the battlefield. Modi said stronger ties between India and Russia will greatly benefit the people. He was officially conferred Russia's most prestigious civilian honour — the Order of St Andrew the Apostle — by President Putin for exceptional services in promoting bilateral ties between the two countries. On his bilateral talks with Putin, Modi in his opening remarks said he conveyed to Russia President and assured the world community that India is on the side of peace and was ready to contribute in ending the conflict in Ukraine. “For a bright future for the new generation, peace is most essential...Peace talks do not succeed amidst bombs, guns and bullets,” he said. The Prime Minister also referred to his informal meeting with Putin on Monday and said listening to the Russian president lent



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, left, and Russian President Vladimir Putin in embrace during an informal meeting at Novo-Ogaryovo residence, outside Moscow, Russia, on Monday

“hope”. While Modi did not explicitly mention Monday's Russian missile attack on a children's hospital in Ukraine, he said it was “heart-wrenching” to see innocent children dying. “Be it war, conflicts, terror attacks — everyone who believes in humanity is pained when there is loss of lives. But when innocent children are murdered, when we see innocent children dying, it is heart-wrenching. That pain is immense,” Modi said.

Ukraine frowns upon India

It is a huge disappointment and a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal in Moscow on such a day

— Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

“At our meeting yesterday, we listened to each other's views on Ukraine and I also placed before you the Global South's expectation on peace and stability,” Modi said. The Prime Minister also highlighted Russia's help to India in the energy sector. When the world was facing shortage of food, fuel and fertilisers, we did not allow our farmers to face any problem and our friendship with Russia played a role in that, Modi said. “We would want our cooperation with

Russia to expand further so as to ensure welfare of our farmers,” he said. The Prime Minister also flagged concerns over challenges of terrorism. “India has been facing the challenge of terrorism for around 40 years; I condemn all forms of terrorism,” Modi said. He said the world has to face multiple challenges in the last five years — first due Covid-19 and then because of various conflicts. Modi called terrorism ‘horrible’, and condemned Moscow terror attack adding Moscow and Dagestan too have been a victim of terrorist attacks. “India has suffered from terrorism. We know how horrible it is. Recently there were terrorist attacks in Moscow and Dagestan... We condemn terrorist attacks,” Putin said during his bilateral meeting with Modi. Last week, terrorist attacks in Derbent and Makhachkala, two of the largest cities in Russia's Dagestan, killed 21 people and left 46 injured. Modi also said talks with Putin covered ways to diversify India-Russia cooperation in trade, commerce, security, agriculture, technology and innovation. “We attach great importance to boosting connectivity and people-to-people exchanges” he added.

Jammu terror trail: Shocking incursions

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Massive combing and search operations were launched on Tuesday by the Indian Army, along with a team from the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Jammu and Kashmir police, to pin down the perpetrators behind the ‘audacious terror attack’ on two Army vehicles. Five soldiers sacrificed their lives repulsing the attack near Badnota village of Machhedhi in the Billawar tehsil of Kathua district on Monday. The Army's elite para-commandos and sniffer dogs also joined the search operation while drones and helicopters were pressed into service for surveillance. Some of the eyewitnesses were also questioned by the security forces to gather more information about the group of suspected foreign terrorists. It is learned some of the villagers in the area had spotted suspicious movement of outsiders in the area but failed to timely inform the local police or other agencies for necessary follow-up action. Director General of Police R R Swain also flew to the area to oversee the operation on the ground. Accompanied by ADGP Anand Jain, DGP Swain



Indian Army personnel during a counter-terror operation following a terrorist attack on an Army convoy, in Kathua district, on Tuesday

conducted an aerial survey of the area and reviewed the ongoing operations. A team of National Investigation Agency (NIA) officials has been sent to Kathua in the Jammu region to extend all possible support to the police in its investigation. So far the probe agency has not registered a case to investigate the terrorist attack. The scope of the search operations was expanded to encompass large areas in the adjoining districts of Udhampur and Kathua, including Basantgarh, Seoj (a high-altitude area in Udhampur), and the upper reaches of Bani, Daggar, and Kindli in Kathua district.

Reacting strongly in New Delhi, the Indian Government also sent out a stern warning claiming the sacrifices made by the soldiers in the Kathua ambush will not go ‘unavenged’. India will defeat the evil forces behind the attack. Since October 11, 2021, 43 bravehearts have sacrificed their lives in different terror attacks and encounters in the Jammu region. The counter-terrorist operations were temporarily stalled late Monday evening due to bad weather conditions. The suspected group of foreign terrorists also fled the spot taking advantage of the darkness and bad weather conditions.

Weather forecasting to get tech upgrade



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of widespread social media jokes and public skepticism over recent weather predictions particularly for Delhi-NCR by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Centre has announced major upgrades in weather forecasting infrastructure across key Indian cities, including Delhi NCR. As per plans, three dopplers radars and 180 automatic weather forecasting systems have been proposed for the national Capital and its adjoining regions while Mumbai will get four more In Mumbai, to take the tally to 6. Also, Kolkata is set to receive additional radar soon. Waking up to the urgent need to have accurate equipment, the Government has plans on deploying

advanced technologies, including additional Automatic Weather Stations (AWS), radars, and a high-performance Computing (HPC) System with 20 petaflops capacity. These enhancements aim to align Delhi's forecasting capabilities with global standards, ultimately improving public safety and economic resilience against unexpected weather changes. “These upgrades are not limited to metro cities but will also benefit cities with populations exceeding 10 lakh. The overarching goal is to bolster weather forecasting capabilities in tier towns and remote areas nationwide,” Union Science and Technology Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said after holding a special high-level meeting convened to address public concerns amid the ongoing monsoon season across India.

He acknowledged the public dissatisfaction with the accuracy of recent forecasts, marked by several missed yellow and orange alerts. In fact failure in accurate alert has caught the citizens many times unaware, leaving them in the uncertainty as they suffered in severe heatwaves conditions on the one hand and flood like situation on the other. The IMD is continuously improving weather forecast systems to help the common man and share the benefits of world-class weather forecasting technology, said the Minister even as he acknowledged that the recent monsoon season in Delhi has been marked by significant public dissatisfaction and skepticism over the accuracy of weather forecasts by the IMD. According to experts, there are only 34 radars present in the country as of now. The number has increased by just 6 in the last 5 years. In contrast, the United States of America (USA) does weather prediction with almost 200 doppler radars. A media report quoted JP Sharma from Skymet saying that, “The Numerical Weather Model depends on how much data you have given and what the quality of data is. If you provide the wrong information, then it will get rejected.

Delhi drowns, in yet another downpour

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As heavy and sudden rain, lashed different parts of the national Capital on Tuesday, Delhiites were caught off guard as the rain created waterlogging in key areas and threw traffic out of gear. Laxmi Nagar, Central Secretariat, Delhi Cantonment, Palam, Safdarjung, Parliament Street, Dilshad Garden, ITO and Greater Kailash, among others, recorded heavy rain.

The Public Works Department (PWD) said until afternoon, it received 22 calls regarding waterlogging and around three to four complaints of uprooted trees. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) received 11 calls regarding waterlogging and seven complaints of uprooted trees. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had earlier predicted that moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning



A commuter gets drenched during rains in New Delhi on Tuesday

Ranjan Dimri

was likely to occur in many places. The maximum temperature recorded in Delhi was 33.2 degrees Celsius, three notches below the normal. The minimum temperature settled at 27.2 degrees Celsius, 0.7 degrees below the normal. Additionally, the Spicejet airline said all departures and arrivals in Delhi and their consequential flights may get affected due to the bad weather and asked passengers to keep a check on their flight status.

Relief eludes Kejriwal in liquor scam

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A special court on Tuesday took cognisance of the seventh supplementary chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate in the money-laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy “scam”. The ED has named Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Aam Aadmi Party in the supplementary chargesheet. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja took cognisance of the chargesheet noting that there is sufficient material on record to proceed against the accused persons and listed the matter on July 12, when all the accused would be physically produced before the court. The probe agency had filed a 200-page chargesheet naming Kejriwal and the AAP as accused in the case on May 17. The ED has alleged that Kejriwal was intrinsically involved in the acts



File Photo: PTI

of policy formulation, kickback scheme and the final use of the proceeds of crime. The ED pointed out that Kejriwal is involved in the commission of grave economic offences and there is ample evidence on record to link him to the commission of the offence of money laundering. In its chargesheet, which is the

eighth in a series of charge sheets filed by the ED since November 2022, the ED claimed that Kejriwal was directly involved in formulating the excise policy and demanded kickbacks from the South Group in exchange for awarding them favours. The ED also alleged that Kejriwal was involved in using ₹45 crore of the proceeds of crime in AAP's Goa election campaign. Simultaneously, the court also took cognisance of the eighth supplementary chargesheet filed by ED and issued production warrants to Vinod Chauhan and issued summons to another accused Ashish Mathur, also named in the eighth supplementary chargesheet. Kejriwal's legal woes escalated when he was apprehended by the ED on March 21. Although he secured bail from the trial court, the High Court has since intervened, suspending the release order.

Hathras A Conspiracy?



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government on Tuesday suspended the local SDM, a circle officer and four others based on the SIT report on the Hathras stampede that did not rule out a “big conspiracy” behind the incident. The SIT report also flagged lapses on the part of the local administration that led to the incident that claimed 121 lives on July 2. The report held the organisers responsible for the stampede, claiming they did not make arrangements to manage the crowd and also fixed the responsibility of administration, according to official sources. It said the local police and administration did not take the event seriously and failed to provide proper information to senior officers. The stampede at the ‘satsang’ of self-styled godman Surajpal alias Narayan Sakar Hari alias Bhole Baba claimed 121 lives. “In its preliminary investigation, the SIT has held the event organisers primarily responsible for the stampede on the basis of eyewitnesses and other evidence. The SIT did not rule out any big conspiracy behind the incident and has stated the need for a thorough investigation,” officials said.

Main accused in BMW case held

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Seventy two hours after he Srammed his BMW into a two-wheeler at Worli in south-central Mumbai killing a fisherwoman and injuring her husband, the Mumbai police tracked down the Shinde Shiv Sena deputy leader Rajesh Shah's absconding son Mihir Shah and arrested him from Shahpur town in the neighbouring Thane district. One of the search teams that had been on the look for the 24-year-old Mihir Shah traced him to Shahpur, 73 kms away from Mumbai.

Organ Racket in National Capital busted

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

India's emergence as a global medical tourism hub in recent times has been marred by several cases of organ theft, raising concerns among agencies and Ministries about blow to the country's reputation. To combat this menace, the Centre recently issued advisories for international patients. India's growing popularity as a premier medical tourism destination is evident from the influx of approximately 2 million patients from 78 countries each year, seeking medical, wellness, and IVF treatment. This booming



Delhi Police Crime Branch personnel with men arrested for their alleged involvement in an organ transplant racket exposed by them, in New Delhi, on Tuesday. The Crime Branch arrested seven people, including a doctor

PTI

industry currently generates \$6 billion annually which is projected to soar to \$13 billion by 2026, bolstered by the Indian Government's ambitious ‘Heal in India’ initiative, according to the CII (Confederation of Indian Industry). However, with no let-up in incidents of organ thefts, the health tourism industry faces a serious threat. The latest being a major organ donation transplant racket running in Delhi-NCR region with links to Bangladesh busted by the Crime Branch of Delhi Police. According to the Delhi Police on Tuesday, a total of seven people, including a Delhi-based

doctor and the racket's Bangladeshi kingpin, have been arrested. Acting on a tip-off, the Crime Branch had been working on the case for two months. A majority of the donors and recipients are from Bangladesh brought to India on the basis of the fake documents for the surgeries. Former National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) Head Dr Vimal Bhandari, while talking about the issue of such rackets, said the onus of cross-checking the documents of the patient and the donor to ensure that such incidents do not happen lies on the authorisation committee.

149 city buses non-operational, efforts on to restore facility

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The 'Life Line' of Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, has once again suddenly come to a halt as 149 city buses have stopped operating. These buses running on 10 routes remained halted for the last 6 days due to the ticket collection dispute, due to which about 40000 passengers are facing trouble every day. Actually, 149 buses running on 10 routes of Bhopal city have been closed since Thursday. As of Tuesday, it has been 6 days since these buses have been closed. The reason for this is the demand to reduce the amount given per km by the ticket collection agency 'Chalo App' in these buses,

The reason for this is the demand to reduce the amount given per km by the ticket collection agency 'Chalo App' in these buses, but in the last 6 days, BCLL and the officials of the corporation could not find a solution to this problem

but in the last 6 days, BCLL and the officials of the corporation could not find a solution to this problem. In such a situation, more than 40 thousand passengers traveling daily in these buses are facing problems. Conflict between BCLL and Chalo Company has stopped the wheels of 149 buses in Bhopal. The reason for stopping the wheels of these 149 buses in Bhopal is the conflict between BCLL and Chalo

Company. Actually, there are two operators in the capital Bhopal, one of which is a bus operator and the other is a ticket operator. This ticket agency Chalo App has demanded to reduce the amount to be paid per kilometer. Angered by this, bus operator Maa Associates is not taking out its buses from the depot. Cut collection company Chalo App has demanded Rs 25 per kilometer instead

of Rs 32. In protest against which the bus operators did not take out the buses from the depot. Passenger buses are not running in many different parts of the capital Bhopal including 10 routes - Kokta, Mandideep, Ayodhya Nagar, Gandhi Nagar, Bhauri, Airport, Misrod, Bairagarh, Lalghati, Karond. Due to which students and common passengers are facing a lot of problems. Students and common people waiting for the bus at the stoppage said that this is the only means we have which gives us the facility to travel in the city at a low cost, but now it is closed due to which we are getting troubled. Students said that they are

getting late for coaching every day. We recharge the pass but do not get a bus on that route. Money is being spent from both sides. Bus route number from where to where total buses are operating are bus no. 115 Gandhinagar- Ayodhya Nagar total number of operating buses 17, bus no. 113 Idgah Hills- AIIMS total number of operating buses 10, 116 Putlighar to CRPF Camp Bangrasia 16, 205 Karond- Bairagarh Chichli 10, 204 Bhauri-Mandideep 02 208 Kokta- Lalghati 26, SR-8 Coach Factory- Bairagarh Chichli 31, TR-1 Akriti Eco City- Chirayu Hospital 33,311 Nariyal Kheda- LNCT College 02 and 106 Misrod- Airport 02 respectively.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla being welcomed by Minister for Housing and Urban Development Kailash Vijaywargiya, BJP MP Shankar Lalwani and Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava upon his arrival in Indore, Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

HC dismisses rape case as the victim was in ralationship

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has dismissed a rape case filed by a woman against a man, noting that the two had been in a relationship for over 10 years and had physical relations out of their 'own free will.' In his order dated July 2, Justice Sanjay Dwivedi noted that the case appears to be an abuse of process of law. According to the order, the woman and man are well-educated individuals who had a consensual physical relationship for over 10 years. They ended their relationship after the man refused to marry her. The court stated that this does not justify registering a rape case against the petitioner (man). "In my opinion, as per the factual circumstances, as have

been narrated by the prosecutrix (woman) in her complaint and also in her statement of 164 CrPC, this case cannot be considered to be a case of rape as defined under Section 375 of IPC (Indian Penal Code) and the prosecution is nothing but appears to be an abuse of process of law," the court said. In this matter, the court said, even IPC section 366 (inducing a woman to compel her for marriage) is not made out against the man. "Therefore, the offence under Section 366 of IPC registered against the petitioner at the later point of time is also liable to be quashed," it said. The man was booked for rape and other charges by the Police Station Mahila Thana in Katni district in November 2021. He eventually moved to the High Court for relief.

Humidity witnessed in Bhopal, many other parts of the State

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Under the present weather conditions a Cyclonic circulation and trough line passing through Madhya Pradesh is making a strong system of rain active and inducing heavy rainfall. Heavy rain occurred in some areas of Indore at around 3 pm in the afternoon. At the same time, humidity is felt due to sunshine in many districts including Bhopal-Sagar. It rained lightly in Gwalior at around 4.30 pm. The Meteorological Department has issued an alert of heavy rain in 18 districts including Sheopur, Chhindwara, Shivpuri on Tuesday. Senior Meteorologist said that in the last 48 hours, it rained in more than 30 districts of the state. Cyclonic circulation is active over North-East and South Rajasthan. At the same



time, the monsoon trough has come down further. It is passing through Raissen, Mandla in the state. Due to these systems, there is heavy rain in the entire state. This phase will continue for the next one week. Heavy rain occurred in some areas of Indore at around 3 pm. 1.7 inches of rain in Betul, 1.25 inches of water fell in Khajuraho

Rain continues in Madhya Pradesh. On Monday also, it rained in many districts of the state. Betul received the maximum rainfall of 42 mm i.e., 1.7 inches. Khajuraho received 1.25 inches of rain. Bhopal also witnessed heavy rains. Rain was also recorded in Balaghat's Malajkhand, Narmadapuram, Indore, Khandwa, Khargone, Narmadapuram's Pachmarhi

and Ujjain. During the last 24 hours rainfall was recorded at some places in districts of Rewa division; at some places in districts of Gwalior, Chambal, Jabalpur, Shahdol, Sagar divisions; at many places in districts of Indore, Ujjain divisions; all places in districts of Bhopal, Narmadapuram divisions and the weather remained generally dry in all the remaining districts. The maximum temperature increased significantly in the districts of Sagar division and there was no significant change in temperatures in all the remaining districts. They remained much below normal in the districts of Indore division; they remained generally below normal in the districts of Bhopal, Gwalior divisions and normal in all the remaining districts. The minimum temperature increased significantly in the districts of Rewa division

and there was no significant change in temperatures in all the remaining districts. They were common in the districts of Rewa constituency and common in the districts of all other constituencies. From yesterday till today morning, thunderstorms and strong winds occurred in Bhopal, Vidisha, Raissen, Sehore, Rajgarh, Narmadapuram, Betul, Harda, Burhanpur, Khandwa, Khargone, Barwani, Alirajpur, Jhabua, Dhar, Indore, Ratlam, Ujjain, Dewas, Shajapur, Agarwalwa, Mandasaur, Neemuch, Guna, Ashoknagar, Shivpuri, Bhind, Morena, Bhopal, Purkalan, Singrauli, Rewa, Mauganj, Maihar, Anuppur, Shahdol, Umaria, Dindori, Katni, Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Chhindwara, Pandhu, Seoni, Mandla, Balaghat, Patna, Damoh, Chhatarpur, Sagar.

Minor girl raped by her neighbour

The accused locked the minor in a room as soon as she reached home and later he committed the crime

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A case of rape of a minor girl was reported with the Kolar police, accused committed the crime when she was alone at home. The accused took the minor to his house in the name of meeting his sister-in-law, stating that she was calling her. The accused locked the minor in a room as soon as she reached home. After this, he committed the crime. After this, the accused exploited the minor by threatening her for two months. When the victim told the matter to her cousin, the matter reached the family. After this, a complaint was lodged at the police station. The victim has told the police that about 2 months ago she was alone at home. Parents had gone to work. Brother and sister had gone to school. During this time, Kuldeep, who lives in Basti, came to her house. He said that Bhabhi is calling you. The minor believed the young man and went with him. As soon as the minor reached, the young man locked the room from inside. After this, he raped her by threatening her. Since the incident, the teenager started staying lost. When the family asked, she told everything. After which the police registered a case against the accused.



Sadhus participate in a Bhandara during the culmination of two-day Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra at Jagdish Temple in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

Panja wrestlers exhibit their skills at competitions

PNS ■ GWALIOR

Panja wrestlers from various parts of the country showed their skills in different weight categories during the Panja National Wrestling Competition held at the Dr. Bhagwat Sahai Medical College Auditorium here today. 150 players from 6 states participated in this competition, in which Ritesh Kumar got second place in 60 kg weight category, Kashi got third place, Ajay Bijoria got fourth place, Raman Kumar got fifth place. Similarly Prashant, Ankit, Islam Khan, Mir Zafar Ali won in 70 kg. Anil, Madhusudan, Aniket Kumar, Shivam Gurjar won in 80 kg weight category. Abdul, Gulshan Majhi, Jang Bahadur, Ravneet Kakkar of Chhattisgarh were the winners in 90 kg weight category. Devendra Singh, Tanishq Mishra, Gaurav Singh, Krishna



Rajawat won in 90 plus. The organization's president Keshav Pandey told that a cash prize of 18 thousand rupees was given in each weight category and a cash prize of 15 thousand was given to the champion of champions. In total, cash prizes worth 1.05 lakh were given. Devendra from Haryana won the Sharma Memorial Open Arm Wrestling overall Championship. The competition was inaugurated by Devendra Pratap Singh Tomar and the prize dis-

tribution was done by LIC's SDM Khalil Ahmed Khan. Secretary of Madhya Pradesh Panja Wrestling Association Tariq Khan from Bhopal, President Uttar Pradesh Arm Wrestling Praveen Singh Jadoun, Secretary of Gwalior Arm Wrestling Organization Dr. Aditya Bhadauria, Vice President Dr. Vishal Yadav, Treasurer Thakur Yogendra and special guest Lakshmi Sharma from Security Agency were present in the said competition.

Review meeting of officials of Registration and Stamp held

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In the meeting, Divisional Commissioner Deepak Singh reviewed the progress of registration and stamp of all the districts of Indore division in sequence

registered documents. In the meeting, he took information regarding the revenue collection and fulfillment of targets in registration and stamp from the development projects, construction of national highways, state highways and rural roads in various districts of the division. Deputy Commissioner Seli Kanash, Deputy Inspector General Registration Zone Indore Balkrishna Mourya, Senior Registrar and Stamp Amresh Naidu District registrar Deepak Sharma along with District Registration Officers of Indore, Dhar, Jhabua, Alirajpur, Badwani, Khandwa, Khargone and Burhanpur were present in the meeting.

Pediatrics department organizes lectures

Bhopal: Under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Ajai Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal, Department of Pediatrics is pleased to announce lectures focused on severe neurological conditions in children. This educational event will take place on July 10, from 2:00 PM to 4:30 PM in the Seminar Room of the SMART unit, located within the hospital building complex at AIIMS Bhopal. The session will feature two distinguished speakers:- 1. Dr. Pankaj Pal, a renowned Pediatric Neurologist from GMC Bhopal, will present on the "Approach to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome." Dr. Pal's extensive experience in managing acute encephalitis will provide valuable insights into early diagnosis, treatment strategies, and patient management. 2. Dr. Rachana Dubey, a leading Pediatric Neurologist from Medanta Hospital Indore, will deliver a lecture on the "Approach to Movement Disorders." Dr. Dubey's expertise in pediatric movement disorders will offer attendees a comprehensive understanding of the latest advancements in diagnosis and therapy.

NEERI to probe reality of garbage dumping site in Bhopal: Apex court

Bhopal: A big decision has been taken regarding the scientific execution of Adampur Garbage Dumping site in Bhopal. Senior environmentalist Subhash C. Pandey said the special bench of the Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) to investigate the reality of the dumping site. The report has to be submitted after an investigation in 3 months. The next hearing of this case will be held on 21 October 2024. Environmentalist Dr. Pandey said that the historic order of the Supreme Court will provide a big relief to thousands of residents and villagers living around Adampur Garbage Dumping site. At the same time, hope has also arisen that now not only the groundwater of Adampur and its surroundings will be saved from being poisonous, but the quality of water of other water resources and the Ajnaal river passing nearby will also improve. After the order, NEERI i.e., NEERI will investigate and submit the report. This institution is from Nagpur. The investigation and monitoring of the Supreme Court will also increase the capacity of the processing units operating in Adampur Garbage Dumping site. At the same time,

the heaps of garbage lying for years will also be eliminated. After this, a green belt will be developed around Adampur Garbage Dumping site. Environmentalist Dr. Pandey said that the Ajnaal river is a tributary of India's holy river Ganga. This will also free this river from pollution. Which will ultimately achieve remarkable success in making the Ganga river pollution free. He said, today's order of the Supreme Court will set an example for the entire state, because now all the government agencies and responsible departments will have the fear that if there is too much laxity in the matter, then investigation can also be done by national institutions like NEERI. The urban waste of the entire city has been dumped in Adampur Garbage Dumping site since 2018. It was being set on fire repeatedly, for which Dr. Pandey filed a petition against Bhopal Municipal Corporation in the National Green Tribunal Bhopal in the year 2023. In which, considering the facts of Dr. Pandey to be correct, NGT imposed a fine of Rs 1 crore 80 lakh on Bhopal Municipal Corporation, but the Municipal Corporation challenged the said case in the Supreme Court and requested to waive the fine imposed.



Students go through books during an orientation programme for children organised at Swami Vivekanand Library in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

AIIMS Bhopal student receives ICMR-PG thesis

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Prof. (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director and CEO of AIIMS Bhopal, congratulated Dr. Karmugil Tamil, a postgraduate (MD) student from the Department of Biochemistry, for securing the highly competitive ICMR-PG Thesis 2023 Financial Support. Among over 1,000 applicants, Dr. Karmugil was awarded a

grant of Rs 1 lakh for her groundbreaking research proposal. Dr. Karmugil's research will focus on evaluating serum IgA levels in patients with chronic rhinosinusitis and bronchiectasis treated at AIIMS Bhopal. This study aims to deepen the understanding of the pathogenesis of recurrent infections associated with these conditions, which significantly affect

the Indian population. The findings from this research are expected to contribute to better management and treatment strategies for these diseases. "This achievement not only highlights the academic excellence of our students but also underscores AIIMS Bhopal's commitment to advancing medical research that addresses critical health issues in India," said [rpf Ajai Singh].

Modi in Moscow: Amid dip in global temperature

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/MOSCOW

Underlining the time tested ties between two countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday described Russia as India's "all-weather friend" and hailed President Vladimir Putin's leadership in strengthening the bilateral relationship over the past two decades. He termed Russia as "Sukh-dukh ka saathi."

He also announced that India has decided to open two new consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg cities of Russia in a bid to further boost travel and trade with the country. India currently has two consulates in Russia at St Petersburg and Vladivostok.

The Prime Minister's praise of Putin, during an address to the Indian diaspora in Moscow, came amid attempts by Western powers to isolate the Russian leader over the war in Ukraine. "On hearing the word Russia, the first word that comes to mind of every Indian is India's all-weather friend (sukh-dukh ka saathi) and a trusted ally," Modi said.

"No matter how low the temperature dips below minus during Russian winter,



India-Russia friendship has always remained in 'plus', it is full of warmth. This relationship is built on the strong foundation of mutual trust and mutual respect," the Prime Minister said.

Modi said he had a special appreciation for "his friend" President Putin for steering India-Russia friendship to greater heights over the last two decades. The Prime Minister said for a long time the world had seen an "influence-oriented global order". "But, what the world needs right now is confluence not influence and no one can deliver this message better than India which has a strong tradition of worshipping confluences," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said India was undergoing a transformation and the pace of development over the past 10 years has taken the world by surprise. Modi said India was changing as it believes in the strength of its 140 crore citizens who are now dreaming of turning their resolve of 'Viksit Bharat' into reality.

"Today's India is full of self-confidence, unlike the situation before 2014, and this is our biggest capital," Modi said. "When people like you bless us, even the biggest goals can be achieved. You all know that today's India achieves whatever goal it sets its mind to," the prime minister said.

The Prime Minister said it

was in his DNA to challenge all the challenges and India will write a new chapter of global growth in coming years.

Modi said it was exactly a month ago that he took oath as prime minister for the third consecutive term when he had made the resolve to work at thrice the strength and speed to fulfill the aspirations of the country.

"Our government envisions making India the world's third-largest economy, build three crore homes for the poor and turn three crore poor women in villages to 'lakhpati didi'," the Prime Minister said amid chants of 'Modi, Modi' and 'Modi hai toh mumkin hai'. "In several goals of the government number three has assumed significance," he said.

He said India was the country which sent Chandrayaan to a place on the moon where no country has gone before and has given the world the most reliable model for digital transactions. "India's development of the past 10 years was just a trailer, we will see much faster growth in the next 10 years," Modi said.

As regards opening the new consulates, the Prime Minister made the announcement of the opening of new

consulates at Kazan and Yekaterinburg while addressing the Indian diaspora here during his two-day visit to Russia. "I want to share some good news with you all. We have decided to open new consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg. This will enhance travel and business trade," Modi said.

Yekaterinburg is Russia's fourth largest city which has emerged as an important economic centre. The city had hosted four FIFA World Cup matches in 2018 when the sporting event was held in Russia.

Located on the confluence of the Volga and Kazanka rivers, Kazan is a cultural and educational hub and an emerging economic centre in Russia. Russia will also host the BRICS Summit in October in Kazan.

Modi on Monday began a high-profile visit to Russia for the 22nd India-Russia annual summit with President Vladimir Putin, his first trip since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The prime minister, after concluding his engagements in Russia, will, on July 9, leave for Austria on the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to that country in over 40 years.

Moscow agrees to repatriate all Indians operating as support staff to Russian military

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/MOSCOW

Taking cognisance of India's call to end the recruitment of Indians as support staff to the Russian military, Russia has broadly heeded to this and also agreed to ensure repatriation of those still working in the force, sources said on Tuesday.

It is learnt that Moscow agreed to release the Indians after the issue was brought up by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an informal meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday night. The Russian president hosted a private dinner for the Indian prime minister at the former's residence in Novo-Ogaryovo on the outskirts of Moscow late on Monday evening.

Modi on Monday began a two-day high-profile visit to Russia for the 22nd India-Russia annual summit with President Putin, his first trip since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Last month, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the issue of Indian nationals serving with the Russian Army remains a matter of "utmost concern" and demanded action from Moscow over it.



An announcement on Russia's decision to discharge all the Indians working as support staff to the Russian Army is expected to be made after summit talks between Modi and Putin on Tuesday. Russia has broadly agreed to our request on the issue, the sources said.

On June 11, India said two Indian nationals, who were recruited by the Russian Army, had been killed in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which took the number of such deaths to four.

Following the deaths of two Indians, the MEA demanded a "verified stop" to further recruitment of Indian nation-

als by the Russian Army.

In a strongly-worded statement, it said India demanded that there be a "verified stop to any further recruitment of Indian nationals by the Russian Army" and that such activities would not be in "consonance with our partnership."

Earlier in March, 30-year-old Hyderabad resident Mohammed Asfan succumbed to injuries sustained while serving with the Russian troops on the frontlines with Ukraine. In February, Hemal Ashwinbhai Mangua, a 23-year-old resident of Surat, died in a Ukrainian air strike while serving as a "security helper" in the Donetsk region.

Large-scale atrocities against Dalits in TN: Union Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister L Murugan on Tuesday alleged large-scale atrocities were taking place against Dalits in Tamil Nadu and claimed that even political leaders were not safe in the state under the DMK government.

A delegation of the Tamil Nadu BJP unit, led by the party's state vice president VP Duraisamy, will approach the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Human Rights Commission later in the day, urging them to take appropriate action in the matter, Murugan told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here. Senior leaders of the BJP Tamil Nadu unit, including Duraisamy, were present at the press conference.

"After the DMK came to power in May 2021, there has been a tremendous increase in the atrocities against Dalits in Tamil Nadu. A survey is telling that every year more than 2,000 cases of atrocities against



Dalits are filed in the state," Murugan said.

He referred to a series of incidents of alleged atrocities against Dalits since 2022 and some incidents of attack and murder of the BJP leaders in the state, putting the blame on the "complete failure" of Chief Minister MK Stalin.

"Recently, K Armstrong, a Dalit leader and BSP state president was murdered," he said, alleging that "even political leaders are not safe" in the state under the DMK rule. "Scheduled caste leaders and people do not have security. They are facing harassment under the DMK government," he said.

"A delegation of BJP Tamil Nadu unit, led by Duraisamy, is going to submit a memorandum to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and National Human Rights Commission today in this connection, urging them to take appropriate action in the matter," the Union minister said.

Murugan said the DMK claims that it is the pioneer of social justice but the ruling party is not following the idea of social justice in the state.

"Stalin doesn't have the moral right to talk about social justice because of the incidents of atrocities against Dalits taking place in the state," he charged.

No open court hearing of same-sex marriage pleas: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to allow open court hearing of pleas seeking review of its last year's judgement declining legal recognition to same-sex marriage. In a setback to gay rights activists, a five judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud had on October 17 last year refused to accord legal backing to same-sex marriage, saying there was "no unqualified right" to marriage with the exception of those that are recognised by law.

The apex court, however, had made a strong pitch for the rights of queer people so they don't face discrimination in accessing goods and services that are available to others, safe houses known as 'Garima Greh' in all districts to provide shelter to members of the community facing harassment and violence and dedicated hotline numbers which they could use in case of trouble. A five judge bench comprising the CJI and Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Hima Kohli, BV Nagarathna and PS



Narasimha are scheduled to consider in chambers the pleas seeking review of the judgement on July 10.

On Tuesday, senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and NK Kaul mentioned the matter and urged the CJI to hear the review petitions in an open court.

"I say that if these petitions can be heard in the open court..." Kaul asked the court. These are the constitution bench review matters which are listed in chambers, the CJI told him. As per the practice, the review pleas are consid-

ered in chambers by judges. In its judgement, the bench had held that transgender people in heterosexual relationships have the freedom and entitlement to marry under the existing statutory provisions.

It had said an entitlement to legal recognition of the right to union, akin to marriage or civil union, or conferring legal status to the relationship can be only done through "enacted law".

The five-judge constitution bench headed by CJI Chandrachud had delivered

four separate verdicts on a batch of 21 petitions seeking legal sanction for same-sex marriages. All five judges were unanimous in refusing to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act and observed it was within Parliament's ambit to change the law for validating such union.

While the CJI had written a separate 247-page verdict, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul (since retired) had penned a 17-page judgement in which he broadly agreed with Justice Chandrachud's views.

Justice S Ravindra Bhat (since retired), who authored an 89-page judgement for himself and Justice Hima Kohli, had disagreed with certain conclusions arrived at by the CJI including on applicability of adoption rules for queer couples. Justice PS Narasimha had said in his 13-page verdict that he was in complete agreement with the reasoning given and conclusions arrived at by Justice Bhat.

The judges were unanimous in holding that queerness is a natural phenomenon and not "urban or elite" occurrence. In

his judgement, the CJI had recorded the assurance by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Centre will constitute a committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for the purpose of defining and elucidating the scope of entitlements of queer couples who are in a union. The LGBTQIA++ rights activists, who had won a major legal battle in 2018 in the Supreme Court which decriminalised consensual gay sex, had moved the apex court seeking validation of same-sex marriage and consequential reliefs such as rights to adoption, enrolment as parents in schools, opening of bank accounts and availing succession and insurance benefits.

Some of the petitioners had urged the apex court to use its plenary power, "prestige and moral authority" to push the society to acknowledge such a union which would ensure LGBTQIA++ lead a "dignified" life like heterosexuals. LGBTQIA++ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, asexual and allied persons.

CBI arrests two more in NEET-UG paper leak case



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested two more persons, including a candidate, from Patna in connection with the alleged leakage of NEET-UG paper, taking the total number of arrests by the agency to 11, officials said Tuesday.

NEET-UG aspirant Sunny who hails from Nalanda and father of another candidate Ranjit Kumar who is from Gaya have been arrested, they said.

The CBI has so far arrested eight persons in Bihar NEET-UG paper leak case and one each in connection with alleged manipulation in Gujarat's Latur and Godhra, and one from Dehradun in connection with general conspiracy, the officials said. The agency had earlier arrested principal and vice principal of Hazaribagh-based Oasis school in the case and two persons who allegedly pro-

vided safe premises to NEET candidates where burnt question papers were recovered by the Bihar Police.

The CBI, which is probing the alleged irregularities in the medical entrance exam, has registered six FIRs. The FIR from Bihar pertains to leakage of paper while the remaining from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra are linked to impersonation of candidates and cheating.

The agency's own FIR on a reference from the Union Education Ministry pertains to a "comprehensive investigation" into the alleged irregularities in the examination. NEET-UG is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions. This year, the exam was conducted on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including 14 abroad. More than 23 lakh candidates had appeared for the test.

Meet outlines steps to empower physically challenged persons

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Providing accessible infrastructure, employment opportunities, and education to people with disabilities is crucial for ensuring their full participation and inclusion in society, Rajesh Aggarwal, Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD), Ministry of Social Justice, and Empowerment, said, stressing on diversity rather than disability with the nature of humanity.

He was speaking at the ASSOCHAM's 6th Conference on Empowering Persons with Disabilities through Accessible & Assistive Technology here on Tuesday. Aggarwal also emphasised the gathering to not help people PWD with charity purposes but include them with designated job profiles and not quota.

For enhancing education, he gave examples of use of devices such as braille displays, speech-to-text software, and adapted learning tools to facilitate learning. Providing necessary workplace accommodations such as ergonomic chairs, specialized keyboards, and software solutions to support productivity, he added.

Focused on the theme 'Innovation and Sustainable Solutions for Equal Opportunities,' the conference aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat, aspiring to position India as a Global AT Hub. Driven by competitive manufacturing costs, sup-



porting government policies like Make in India, India can position itself as a key player in the global market, said the experts. A joint knowledge report "Accessibility for all: embracing digital transformation with universal design" prepared by ASSOCHAM and EY was also released at the event.

Anil Rajput, Chairperson of the ASSOCHAM National CSR Council said "According to the WHO, 16 per cent of the world's population, which is over a billion people, have some form of disability, and 80 per cent of these live in the developing countries. With mobility being a critical factor in the lives of PwDs, he urged automobile manufacturers to bring in the latest technologies in vehicles for disabled people that are being used in different parts of the world. Amit Singh, Partner, EY

stressed on collaboration among government and private sector to create sustainable solutions for civil society and reducing barriers to participation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the field of emerging technologies by augmenting assistive devices' capabilities, personalizing experiences, and boosting accessibility. The country has a significant portion of its population that have disabilities that require immediate attention and solutions, he added.

Dr. Sara Varughese of CBM India addressed the pressing need for socially inclusive infrastructure, while Dipendra Manocha of DAISY Forum of India advocated for government policies to support mass production of assistive devices, aiming to lower costs and broaden availability.

Congress attacks Centre on unemployment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Modi government has only one mission and that is to "keep the youth jobless", Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged on Tuesday in a scathing attack against the Centre on the issue of unemployment.

The Modi government may be refuting independent economic reports like the one by Citigroup on unemployment but how will it deny government data, Kharge asked in a lengthy social media post citing various reports.

"The truth is that Modi government is solely responsible for shattering the dreams of crores of youth in the last 10 years," he alleged. Kharge said the latest government data punctures the government's claims. According to NSSO's (National Sample Survey Office) Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises, in the manufacturing sector, 54 lakh jobs were lost in unincorporated units in the seven years between 2015 and 2023, he said.

"In 2010-11, 10.8 crore employees were employed in unincorporated, non-agricultural enterprises across India, which has become 10.96 crore in 2022-23 - that is, a marginal increase of only 16 lakh in 12 years," he said. Kharge cited the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), to state that the urban unemployment rate is at 6.7 per cent (Q4, FY24).



"Modi government beats the drum of employment generation in the Formal sector by showing EPFO data, but even if we assume that data to be true, it has seen a 10% decline in new jobs in 2023," he said.

A report by IIM Lucknow, after analysing government data, shows that unemployment growth, high unemployment among the educated, low participation of women in the workforce are prevalent in the country, Kharge said.

He said the Modi government rejects independent economic reports because they expose their "shameless attempt to whitewash".

According to the CMIE (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy), the current unemployment rate in the country has reached 9.2 per cent, he said, adding that it is a whopping 18.5 per cent for women.

"According to the ILO report, 83% of the unemployed in the country are youth. According to the India Employment Report 2024, between 2012 and 2019, about 7 crore youth joined the labour force, but there was zero growth in

employment - only 0.01%" he added.

The Congress chief also referred to the 2023 report from Azim Premji University to say that 42.3 per cent of graduates under the age of 25 in the country are unemployed. "According to the latest report of Citigroup, India needs 1.2 crore jobs annually, and even 7% GDP growth will not be able to create enough jobs for our youth. Under the Modi Govt, the country has achieved an average of only 5.8% as GDP growth," he said.

"Be it government jobs, or private sector, self-employment or unorganised sector - Modi government has only one mission 'Keep the youth jobless', Kharge said. The Congress, which has been attacking the government over the issue of unemployment, on Sunday cited the Citigroup report to allege that the Modi government had accentuated India's "unemployment crisis" with the decimation of job-creating MSMEs through the "Tughlakian demonetisation, a hastily rushed GST, and rising imports from China".

Dehra hypoll: Making poll debut, Sukhu’s wife seeks votes in Himachal CM’s name

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Vote for the CM and not the MLA. This is the slogan of Congress candidate Kamlesh Thakur, wife of Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, who is making her debut in electoral politics from the Dehra Assembly seat. Dehra is one of the three assembly constituencies besides Hamirpur and Nalagarh where bypolls will be held on Wednesday. The seats fell vacant after the three independent legislators -- Hoshiyar Singh (Dehra), Ashish Sharma (Hamirpur) and K L Thakur (Nalagarh) who had voted in favour of the BJP in the Rajya Sabha polls held on February 27 -- resigned from the House on March 22. The BJP fielded all the three former independent MLAs from their respective seats after they joined the saffron party. A total of 13 candidates are contesting the bypolls in the three segments with 2,59,340 voters. While the by-elections would not make much difference in the House as the Congress has a majority with 38 out of 68 members and the BJP has 27 members, in Dehra, the prestige of the chief minister will be at stake as Kamlesh Thakur is taking



on Hoshiyar Singh -- one among the nine MLAs who voted against the Congress candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls. “Vote for the CM and not the MLA. Now, Dehra will also become the constituency of the CM,” Kamlesh Thakur told people while canvassing implying that voting for her meant voting for the CM and hence “development.” “I will not need to go to the Secretariat to get your work done, I will get it done from the chief minister at home,” said Kamlesh Thakur, who is pitted against two-time Independent MLA from Dehra and now BJP candidate Hoshiyar Singh. Dehra constituency was carved out after delimitation in 2012 and senior BJP leader and former minister Ravi Inder Singh was elected in 2012 as the MLA while

Hoshiyar Singh won as an Independent in the 2017 and 2022 assembly polls. The BJP gave a ticket to Hoshiyar Singh, ignoring the objections raised by former ministers Romesh Dhawala and Ravi Inder Singh, and set the stage for a virtual straight contest between the Congress and the BJP. The no-holds-barred campaigning was marred by mud-slinging and insinuations, vitiating the atmosphere. While Hoshiyar Singh has been attacking Sukhu, saying those who de-notified several educational, health and other institutions are talking of development, the Congress leaders have accused the three independents of “selling their souls” to the BJP and asking people to reject the ‘sold out’ leaders.

The Congress led by Sukhu also questioned why the MLAs resigned after 15 months and were now seeking re-election. “There was no need for them to resign as Independent MLAs can support or oppose any party and even if they win, they would have to sit in the opposition,” Sukhu said. He accused them of working for their own interests and not the people and alleged that the BJP, the Congress rebels and the Independent MLAs had hatched a conspiracy to topple the elected Congress government in the state. In the Hamirpur assembly segment, Ashish Sharma has crossed swords with Congress’s Puspender Verma who lost by a margin of 12,899 votes in the 2022 assembly polls. Hamirpur is the home district of Sukhu and the parliament constituency of former Union minister and BJP leader Anurag Thakur. Hamirpur assembly constituency has been a stronghold of the BJP. Of the 14 elections, including one by-election, held since 1967, the BJP and its earlier incarnation, the Jan Sangh and Janta Party won 10 while the Congress won three, including a by-election.

Modi’s tree plantation campaign has become people’s movement: Birla

PTI ■ INDORE

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday said by launching the “Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam” campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sent a message of adopting an environment-friendly lifestyle to the world battling climate change. Birla said the plantation drive has become a people’s movement across the country. The Speaker planted a sapling on the premises of the Border Security Force in the Bijasan area in Indore as part of the “Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam” campaign. Former Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan and state cabinet minister Kailash Vijayvargiya were also present. Talking to reporters, Birla said, “The world is battling climate change, and to address these challenges, Prime Minister Modi has given a new message to the world to adopt an environment-friendly lifestyle and started the ‘Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam’ campaign.” During the G20 Speakers’ Summit in New Delhi last year, the countries of this global alliance resolved to make the initiative to adopt



an environment-friendly lifestyle a people’s movement, he said. “Indore, the country’s cleanest city, has taken a new initiative to plant 51 lakh saplings. With this, it will also become the greenest city in the country in the coming days,” he said. According to officials, under the “Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam” campaign launched on June 5 on World Environment Day, 5.50 crore saplings will be planted across Madhya Pradesh, and of these, 51 lakh will be planted in Indore alone. The plantation drive in Indore will culminate on July 14.

Dharavi redevelopment project a big scam, says Prithviraj Chavan

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan on Tuesday claimed the Dharavi slum redevelopment project in Mumbai was a “big scam” and demanded a white paper on it from the Maharashtra government. Speaking in the Maharashtra assembly on budgetary demands of the revenue department, Chavan said the entire project will be scrapped once there is a change in government after the state assembly polls due in October. Dharavi is Mumbai’s biggest slim cluster. The Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT), both part of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, have been opposing the multi-billion dollar Dharavi redevelopment project being executed by the Adani group. “The Dharavi redevelopment project is a big scam and the state government should come out with a white paper, or else when the next government comes to power in October the entire project will be scrapped,” Chavan said. The former state chief minister asked if the recent



handing over of a dairy land in Kurla for the Dharavi redevelopment project was mentioned in the original tender. There is no mention which government land is being given for Dharavi redevelopment...Whether it is Deonar, Mulund, salt pan land, he said. “This should be investigated as to how much government revenue loss is there,” the Congress leader said. He claimed that government land was being given to industrialists at very low prices and all revenue entitled to the government has been waived. The multi-crore Dharavi slum redevelopment project involves no land transfer to the Adani group but to the Maharashtra government’s departments.

Normal life disrupted in parts of coastal Karnataka due to torrential rain

PTI ■ MANGALURU /UDUPI/SIRSI (KARNATAKA)

Normal life was disrupted in the coastal and Western Ghats districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada following heavy to very heavy and incessant rains over the past few days, officials said. Uttara Kannada district Collector K Lakshmi Priya said there was heavy rain in the coastal parts of the district on Monday and 313 people had taken shelter in eight care centres opened in Honnavar Taluk and they were provided with basic facilities. As a result of the ‘excess rain,’ many low-lying areas in the undivided Dakshina Kannada (including Udupi) were flooded. However, on Monday there were no incidents of flooding inside Mangaluru city, but inundation was reported in lower parts of Bantwal town situated near the riverfront. Officials at Karnataka State Natural Disasters Monitoring Centre (KSNMDC) said they were closely monitoring this area and that a rescue team was on standby. Meanwhile, in Uttara Kannada, 10,600 cusecs water was released from the four gates of the Kadra reservoir of Kali river on Monday, as the water level crossed the danger threshold. Incidentally, when 6,000 cusecs of water was released on Saturday, to relieve pressure off the overflowing Kali river, downstream villages of Kadra dam, Kadra, Mallapur, Kerodi, Baira Balani, Karga, Ulag and Halaga were affected.



Areas that witnessed torrential rains in Uttara Kannada on Monday were Sirsi, Siddapur and Yellapur, as well as parts of Malnad (ghats) area of Uttara Kannada. Many houses were flooded in Kadatoka area of Honnavar taluk and a team from National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) had to be deployed to rescue villagers. As rain water entered houses at many places in Udupi, people had to be rescued by firefighters in rubber dinghies. The worst affected areas were in Kalsanka, Bailakere, Mathadabettu, Gundibail, Padigaru and Sagri. Firefighters used rubber dinghies to ferry women, children and elderly persons to safety. In Uttara Kannada, Colonel Hill in Honnavar, a hillock on which one of the area’s famous monuments, a British era column, stands, collapsed at places on National Highway 66. With heavy rainfall expected according to the Met

department, the administration of both Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts issued an orange alert in their respective jurisdictions until July 11. An orange alert means very heavy rainfall of 11 cm to 20 cm. All three districts (Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada) declared a holiday for schools and PU colleges on Monday. A holiday has been declared by the authorities in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi for schools and PU colleges on Tuesday also. Meanwhile, Uttara Kannada MP Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri on Monday visited affected areas in Shashihital and Gunda village and Bhaskeri of Kumta constituency as well as care centres in Honnavar taluk and met the affected people. Karwar MLA Satish Sail offered ‘bagina’ (an offering to rivers in spate, a tradition followed in Karnataka) to Kadra reservoir on Monday.

Assam flood situation improves marginally, 18.80 lakh still affected

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The flood situation in Assam improved marginally as the number of people reeling under the deluge in 27 districts decreased to around 18.80 lakh, officials said on Tuesday. The toll in this year’s flood, landslide and storm rose to 85 with six more deaths reported on Monday, they said. Several major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, continued to flow over the danger level at different places with a forecast of rain in isolated places. The affected population was 18,80,700 in 27 districts as compared to almost 22.75 lakh people suffering from the deluge on Sunday, the officials said.



Dhubri with nearly 4.75 lakh people reeling under water was the worst-hit district, followed by Cachar with over 2.01 lakh and Barpeta with nearly 1.36 lakh suffering from the flood. The administration has been operating 543 camps and

relief distribution centres in 25 districts, taking care of 3,45,500 displaced people at present, the officials said. Rescue operations by multiple agencies, including National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and SDRF are being carried out across the

affected areas. The Regional Meteorological Centre in Guwahati said on Monday that a cyclonic circulation lies over Assam and neighbourhoods up to 1.5 km above the mean sea level. In the next 24 hours,

thunderstorms and lightning are very likely to occur at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura, it added. The Brahmaputra river is flowing above the danger mark at Nimatighat, Tezpur, Guwahati, and Dhubri. Other major rivers that have breached the red mark are Subansiri at Badatighat, Burhidihing at Chenimari, Dikhou at Sivasagar, Disang at Nanglamuraghat, Kopili at Dharamtul, Barak at BP Ghat, Sankosh at Golokganj and Kushiyara at Karimganj town. Damage to infrastructure, including embankments, roads and bridges, has been reported from different parts of the state, the officials added.

Gujarat man seeks ₹20 lakh compensation for death of his college going son in Rajkot fire

PTI ■ RAJKOT

The father of a 20-year-old engineering student, who was killed in the TRP game zone fire in Gujarat’s Rajkot city on May 25, has moved the district consumer dispute redressal commission, seeking Rs 20 lakh compensation from the firm which ran the ill-fated facility for the death of his son. Twenty-seven persons lost their lives in the fire at the game zone. One Rasik Vekaria, a businessman, has moved the Rajkot District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission demanding a compensation

and punitive damage of Rs 20 lakh from the firm for its negligent approach and deficiency in service, his lawyer Gajendra Jani said on Tuesday. Vekaria has sought compensation on the ground that his only son Nirav, a second-year engineering student, had a bright academic career ahead before the tragedy struck due to the negligence of the firm and its partners. The Collector, Commissioner of Police and Municipal Commissioner of Rajkot have also been made parties for the purpose of bringing all the documentary evidence related to this



complaint, Jani said. Judge K M Dave has issued notices to nine respondents, including Raceway Enterprises, its partners, as well as Rajkot collector, police commissioner, and municipal commissioner, he said. The complaint by Vekaria was filed on June 29, and the notices were issued

on July 6. The matter will be heard on August 2. As per the complaint, Raceway Enterprises and its partners offered its products through various types of advertisement for activities such as games, amusement, sports and racing under the name of TRP Game Zone. “Lured by such a description, Nirav and other customers were attracted to the game zone and paid the amount fixed by it to enjoy its various products, such as trampoline, artificial wall climbing, racing, bowling, jumping, etc,” the complaint stated. When the fire broke out on May 25, Nirav and others

could not get out safely from the game zone and died prematurely in the blaze, it said. The complaint accuses the firm of being negligent regarding safety for its customers by not making fire extinguishers available, nor providing insurance cover. Nirav, the firm’s customer, received defective service from the firm and died due to its negligence, it said. “The complaint has demanded that the partners of the firm and the owners of the place where the firm used to operate should pay a compensation of Rs 20 lakh to the family of deceased Nirav Vekaria,” Jani said.

Maha to bring new law to crack down on bogus pathology labs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Minister Uday Samant on Tuesday said the state government has drafted a law to crack down on bogus pathology labs, which will provide punishment to violators. During the Question Hour in the state assembly, Samant, the higher and technical education minister, said the proposed law would entail proper rules and regulations, and flying squads would be formed to check violations. Unregistered pathology laboratories will not be allowed to operate, he said.

The issue concerns the urban development, public health and medical education departments, Samant said. BJP MLA Ashish Shelar said bogus pathology labs were looting money and playing with people’s lives. Several collection centres that have come up over the years should be registered, he said, demanding criminal cases against violators. NCP (SP) legislator Rajesh Tope said the Nursing Home Act should be amended if the state government can’t implement the new law soon. To this, the minister said the draft of the new law was ready, and if needed, the

Nursing Home Act would also be amended. Yogesh Sagar of the BJP said pathology forms a base for any surgery, and the poor end up going to bogus labs for testing. Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Ajay Choudhary claimed that bogus pathology labs work in connivance with government hospitals. The discussion took place on a question by BJP legislator Sunil Rane, who sought data about the number of pathology labs in Mumbai. He expressed surprise at the government’s reply that under existing rules of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act

1888, there was no provision for registration of pathology labs. Fire NOC, certification from the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories, certification for good clinical practices, and registration for bio-medical waste disposal are required, he said. The minister said the Maharashtra Paramedical Council had authorised 7,085 candidates to operate pathology labs since 2019, and of these, 182 were in Mumbai. There were 197 labs in civic-run hospitals in Mumbai, he added.

HC dismisses petition by Chinese national seeking nod to go back to her country

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has dismissed a petition filed by a Chinese national accused in alleged loan app scams, seeking permission to travel back to her country, pending trial on the grounds of meeting her ailing father. A single judge bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna passed the order on the plea by 42-year-old Hu Xiaolin, who is allegedly involved in a series of Chinese loan app scams known as “Power Bank app scam”, in which customers were coerced and cheated of several crores of rupees in Karnataka and Kerala. The court took note of the

Chinese Criminal Code, according to which once a person becomes an accused, he is not permitted to move out of the country till the trial gets completed. “The petitioner being a Chinese national is undoubtedly aware of the law that prevails in China in treatment to (of) a foreign national or an alien, as described in its laws. If laws in China prohibit such exit of a foreign national under the aforesaid circumstances, laws of India cannot be made flexible on any score whatsoever, as it is a case of a Chinese national who is involved in multiple crimes,” it said.

The court also said that, if the petitioner is permitted to move out of the shores of the nation, despite the plethora of crimes pending against her, it would become impossible to conclude trial, as it would be permitting her to flee justice and create a dent in the majesty of law. According to sources, Xiaolin had come to India in 2017 and married Anas Ahmed, an Indian national, and is residing at present in Bengaluru. The cases were registered against Xiaolin and her husband based on the complaint filed by Razorpay Software Private Limited, a payment gateway. The petitioner was arrested

and released on bail conditions which include that she would not leave the country without prior permission from the court. According to sources, the petitioner submitted that the Kerala high court had permitted her to visit China and come back in connection with cases registered in Kerala. To this, the Karnataka HC said: “The High Court of Kerala granting permission to travel will not bind this Court to consider the issue on merits, as the order passed by the High Court of Kerala does not indicate the crimes or the practice prevailing in China to other nationals including Indian nationals.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Strong message

PM Modi's Russia visit signals India's intent to preserve its strategic autonomy and pursue its national interest

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Moscow for a two-day state visit. The visit comes after a long gap as the last time PM Modi visited Russia was in 2019. Since then, a lot has happened in the international arena and India and Russia have emerged as reliable friends. This visit holds profound implications for India-Russia relations, and it sends nuanced messages to both China and the West. India and Russia share a long-standing relationship rooted in historical, strategic, and economic cooperation. This visit underscores India's commitment to maintaining and strengthening these traditional ties. The partnership between the two nations spans various sectors, including defence, energy, space, and nuclear technology. By reaffirming these bonds, PM Modi signals India's intent to preserve its strategic autonomy and resist external pressures to align exclusively with any single global power bloc. India's relationship with China has been marked by border tensions. PM Modi's visit to Russia is a strategic manoeuvre in this delicate



balance. Russia and China have their own close ties. However, India's engagement with Russia serves to remind China that India has strong partnerships beyond its immediate neighbourhood. PM Modi was welcomed at the airport by Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister, Denis Manturov, a higher-ranking official than the Deputy Prime Minister who greeted Chinese President Xi Jinping on his recent visit. This underscores the significant importance Russia places on its relationship with India and is in contrast with Xi Jinping's welcome, where the lower-ranking Deputy Prime Minister received him. On the other hand, India's relationship with Western powers, particularly the United States, has grown significantly in recent years. However, by visiting Russia, PM Modi communicates India's desire to maintain an independent foreign policy. This visit is a reminder that India will not be swayed into a singular alignment with Western interests. It underscores India's multipolar approach to international relations, where it seeks to engage with all major powers based on mutual interests and benefits. To put things in perspective Russia happens to be the major supplier of arms to India and India made no bones about buying Russian oil despite western sanctions. One of the critical aspects of PM Modi's visit is the focus on economic and energy cooperation. Russia is a significant supplier of energy resources, including oil and natural gas. Strengthening this energy partnership helps India secure its energy future while diversifying its sources. Defence cooperation has been a cornerstone of India-Russia relations. PM Modi's visit likely includes discussions on furthering defence ties and technology transfers. Furthermore, India has challenges in its neighbourhood and by leveraging its friendship with Russia, it can always have an edge. Besides, Russian support would come handy in India's bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations. India's engagement with Russia is vital for world peace and fostering a multipolar world which is the best guarantee for world peace.

PICTALK



NDRF personnel rescue trapped people from the flooded areas in Tanakpur

PTI

The Imperative of upskilling strategies in modern business

By investing in learning and development initiatives, organisations not only equip their workforce with essential skills but also drive sustainable growth

In today's fast-evolving business environment, the ability to adapt and thrive through continuous learning has become indispensable for sustained success. To remain competitive amidst technological advancements, economic shifts, and geopolitical changes, businesses must adopt proactive upskilling strategies. These strategies empower organizations to innovate and stay resilient, ensuring readiness to tackle uncertainty and adapt to evolving market demands. A crucial aspect of fostering organizational success lies in developing a robust upskilling plan tailored to the needs of C-suite executives. This comprehensive approach focuses not only on enhancing technical competencies but also on cultivating strategic thinking and leadership abilities. CEOs play a pivotal role in this endeavor by investing in tailored Learning and Development (L&D) programs. These initiatives aim to refine communication skills, enhance adaptability, manage crises effectively, and unleash influential leadership potential. Strategic thinking involves



synthesising information from diverse sources and cultivating collaborative relationships with stakeholders. These competencies are pivotal for making informed decisions and driving organizational progress. Embracing technology-centric strategies that incorporate cutting-edge skills such as Generative AI, Machine Learning, Data Analytics, and Cybersecurity is essential for navigating complexities and maintaining market competitiveness. To effectively implement upskilling initiatives, organizations must first identify skill gaps within their workforce through regular assessments and performance reviews. Tailoring training programs to address these specific needs is key. Technology plays a crucial role in modern L&D, with e-learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and mobile appli-

cations offering flexible and accessible training options. Research underscores the importance of fostering a culture of continuous learning. Encouraging cross-functional experience is another pivotal element of a robust development plan. Leaders benefit from rotating through various roles and departments, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the organization and fostering better decision-making. Building strong internal and external relationships is crucial, enabling effective collaboration and leveraging partnerships for innovation and growth. The 2024 Business Outlook Report highlights that a significant majority of small and medium-sized enterprises have either implemented or plan to implement upskilling strategies. Failure to do so risks falling behind in a competitive landscape. McKinsey & Company supports this, citing that investment in employee development enhances engagement and retention. AI-powered Human Capital Management (HCM) systems are transforming how

organizations manage skills gaps. These systems analyze workforce data to identify current competencies and predict future skill requirements, recommending personalized development opportunities. Tracking metrics such as employee engagement, course completion rates, and skill acquisition is crucial for refining L&D strategies aligned with business objectives. Creating a culture that values learning is pivotal for upskilling success. Leaders must champion continuous development by setting an example, fostering an environment where learning is encouraged and rewarded. This involves integrating development goals into performance reviews, providing incentives for learning activities, and ensuring visible support from CEOs and senior leaders. Such a culture not only keeps businesses abreast of industry changes but also fosters sustainable growth and innovation, securing a competitive edge in the market.

(The writer is CEO, TimesPro; views are personal)



ANISH SRIKRISHNA

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(The writer is CEO, TimesPro; views are personal)

Babas thrive on social equality deficit

The Hathras incident points to a deeper societal neglect of marginalised communities, offering a fertile ground for dubious leaders to emerge as champions of social reform



SIDHARTH MISHRA

The unfortunate incident in Hathras is finding a very despicable narrative in social media. Nobody seems to be mourning the death of 120-odd people belonging mostly to the Dalit community but contesting the fact that a godman had emerged from the Jatav community. We political analysts talk of undercurrents in polls and leave it unexplained. The emergence of a Baba like Surajpal Singh explains it. In times when the most powerful of the political leaders with the help of all the money and machinery at their disposal find it difficult to get 25000 people to attend a rally, there must be something in Surajpal Singh's modus operandi which saw a gathering of 250000 people. When the BJP blames the Hindu voters for deserting it, particularly in Uttar Pradesh during the last parliamentary elections, its answer lies in the Hathras incident. The opposition leaders led by Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav have blamed the administration for the tragedy and in a way covertly if not overtly taken a stand in defence of the Baba. It's not only about a Surajpal from the Jatav community but several others like Rampal from the Jat community in Haryana, who have challenged the upper caste monopoly on Hindu spiritual discourse. They have their methods that challenge the Puritan practices but they are applauded by their followers for it. The police report filed in the matter states that organisers "underreported the number of expected attendees, did not cooperate in managing traffic, and concealed evidence after the stampede, which occurred when people stopped to collect soil from the path of the baba's vehicle." The FIR indicated that the police and administration did everything possible with available resources. The FIR ironically also shows that how the administration, not just district but pan-India, has been completely unaware of the swelling undercurrent. When such a large gathering of people clamber to clutch dust particles



kicked up by a departing godman's car, it reflects that the government and society have failed to engage with the poor and the deprived. Poverty is not as an economist would define it but that of ignorance and inequality. This provides just the fertile ground for a Baba from the community to emerge as a 'social reformer'. The social reform programmes of the government, be it the 'sarvodaya' of the yore or the 'antodaya' of the current times, have focussed on cash transfer and not social equity transfer. This explains the financial sinews of Surajpal and others like him. The financially prosperous in the community donate liberally as he talks of ending social discrimination. In his discourses Surajpal talks of equality and empowerment. He advocates education and even facilitates the admission of children from his community into upmarket schools. He routinely condemns caste-based discrimination and preaches universal brotherhood. What got his following soaring was that during the Covid-19 pandemic, he is reported to have facilitated food and medicine distribution and other such succour to the poor from the community. During the second wave of the pandemic, in

“THE SOCIAL REFORM PROGRAMMES OF THE GOVERNMENT, BE IT THE ‘SARVODAY’ OF THE YORE OR THE ‘ANTODAY’ OF THE CURRENT TIMES, HAVE FOCUSED ON CASH TRANSFER AND NOT SOCIAL EQUITY TRANSFER. THIS EXPLAINS THE FINANCIAL SINEWS OF SURAJPAL AND OTHERS LIKE HIM

May 2021, when contagion was at its peak, Surajpal organised a camp in Farrukhabad. The district administration had allowed the presence of 50 people but several thousand attended. Such 'social movements' are not alone in western Uttar Pradesh where Surajpal operates. People flock to 'Deras' of different hues, especially in the region of Haryana-Punjab. Though all these Deras have followers among every caste, most followers are Dalits and backward caste people, who are often economically weaker too. Punjab has been witness to the emergence of a large number of Deras due to prevailing inequality in the social and economic order and the marginal position of the Dalits in society. According to rough estimates given by Sikh scholars, there are more than 9,000 Sikh and non-Sikh Deras in 12,000 villages in Punjab. Of these, there are about 300 major Deras across Punjab and the neighbouring Haryana. Out of these almost a dozen have over one lakh devotees each. Going by these standards Surajpal's Ashram has if not more at least as strong a numerical strength as the major Deras of Punjab like Radha Soami (Beas), Dera Sacha Sauda (Sirsa),

Nirankari, Namdhari, Diya Jyoti Jagran Sansthan (Nurmahal), Dera Sant Bhanirwala (Ropar), and Dera Sach Khand (Ballan). As of now, a judicial commission has been set up to enquire into the matter. The commission would blame Surajpal, his devotees and the administration for the tragedy. The state would also for some time act with full might carrying out arrests. Once the public outcry dies down, the media would withdraw its cameras and post it at another news event. The matter under judicial probe too will hit a dead end. Probably nobody wants to answer why Babas like Surajpal get a tailor-made pitch to mould public emotion. Through their clout they come to command political influence and every political party wants them on their side. No wonder Congress and Samajwadi Party are backing Surajpal Singh in the same way as the BJP government of Haryana gave liberal furloughs to murder convict Ram Rahim Singh of Dera Sacha Sauda. The wrath of Babas could be politically harmful. (The writer is the author and president of, the Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REEVALUATE CANDIDACY CRITERIA

Madam — The radical Sikh preacher and chief of 'Waris Punjab De', Amritpal Singh, who is imprisoned in Assam's Dibrugarh district under the National Security Act, and Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, who is in Delhi's Tihar jail for a terror funding case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, were granted parole to take their oaths as members of the Lok Sabha on July 5. This event took place amid heavy security in and around the Parliament complex. People are wondering how, under our constitution, both individuals were allowed to run for MP and won convincingly as independents. This reflects on the electorate's choices, not the country's policies. Moreover, while both Amritpal (31) and Rashid (56) took their oaths to uphold the Constitution, they have no faith in it. I believe it is high time our Parliament revisited the criteria for election candidates. Anyone facing charges of terrorism or anti-national activities should not be allowed to contest elections, regardless of their popularity. Any individual who does not respect India's integrity and sovereignty should be ineligible to file a nomination. Instead, an affidavit affirming faith in the Constitution and National Integrity should be a prerequisite for candidates. **Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee** | Faridabad

CELEBRATING TRUE HEROES

Madam — At a recent event in Kozhikode, Kerala, Union Minister Suresh Gopi referred to the cleaning staff as "superheroes" for their efforts in maintaining the cleanliness of the venue. He also invited them to sit in seats reserved for special guests, which they did hesitantly. Kudos to the minister for recognizing and honoring the work of a group of workers who are often overlooked. We hope this generous gesture will inspire more such acts of appreciation for those who typically remain on

Mumbai battles monsoon rains



Mumbai, India's financial capital, has come to a standstill as heavy rain lashes the city, causing widespread flooding and disruption. The city's residents are struggling to cope with the torrential downpour, which has led to waterlogging in many areas, particularly low-lying regions like Sion,

Andheri, and Kurla. The rain has also caused significant damage to property and infrastructure, with reports of wall collapses and tree falls disrupting daily life. The city's drainage system has been overwhelmed, leaving many areas submerged in water and hindering emergency services. The heavy rain has also affected the city's transportation systems, with flights and trains delayed or cancelled, and major roads clogged with traffic. Schools and offices have been forced to shut down, and the authorities are working hard to mitigate the situation. However, the city's residents are bracing themselves for another day of heavy rain and flooding, as the weather forecast predicts more rainfall in the coming days. The situation has sparked discussions on the need for improved urban planning and infrastructure to handle such extreme weather events.

Purva Pandya | Ujjain

the margins of social functions. Even Gandhiji once said, "Sanitation is more important than Independence."

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

AGENDA OF PM'S RUSSIA VISIT

Madam — As Prime Minister Narendra Modi traveled to Russia on Monday, July 8, there was anticipation about whether he would address the issue of Indian nationals fighting for the Russian army in the conflict zone and ensure their safe return to India as soon as possible. The prime minister will hold summit talks with President Vladimir Putin amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine during this visit, which is his first trip to Russia since 2019 and the first since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. India has a longstanding relationship with Russia, initially with the USSR, thanks to the diplomatic and strategic initiatives of various Congress governments over the decades. More recently, during his ten years as Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh met with Russian Presidents Vladimir Putin and Dmitry

Medvedev 16 times, either in India or Russia. In comparison, this is only Mr. Modi's 11th meeting with President Putin after a decade in office. Between FY14 and FY23, India's exports to Russia stagnated, dropping from USD 3.17 billion to USD 3.14 billion, while imports surged dramatically from USD 6.34 billion to USD 46.21 billion. Such an imbalanced trade relationship is unsustainable in the long term and has harmful effects on our domestic industry. According to the Indian Embassy in Moscow, at least 50 Indian nationals have joined the Russian army. Many others have been "duped" into fighting in a war where they have no stake, aside from a chance to escape the poverty and unemployment crisis perpetuated by the current administration. Will the prime minister address the plight of these youth and ensure their safe return to India as soon as possible?

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

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FIRST COLUMN

DISCOVERING TRUE STRENGTH

The soul's intrinsic qualities of peace, love, and wisdom give us true strength and power




RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Mahatma Gandhi has defined power in 2 forms, one is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. According to him power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment. However, the world that we live in today has a different scenario wherein power spells authority, strength, capability and superiority. If we walk down history lane, we can see that all good and bad endeavours by individuals or groups in the past were directed at garnering power.

Be it world wars, political uprisings, revolutions, religious propaganda, scientific research, technological innovations, economic strategies, or ethnic-cultural dominance, almost everything was aimed at being powerful or being in the seat of power. So what is it about power that makes most of us go crazy after it? Well!! The simple reply to this would be .. Who doesn't want to be powerful & experience the adrenaline rush? Of course, all of us just love that moment of power that allows us to do what we want to do on our terms.

Power has different meanings for different people, but the most common association of power is with money and that is why the rich and the powerful people in society always make headlines due to their high net worth. Another common imagery of power goes with political leaders who are seen as synonymous with power. In the 21st century, science and technology combined with marketing has also become another means of power along with media which has also emerged as a highly influential medium of power. It won't be exaggerating to say that media is one such source that affects all other powers as it can help to highlight downplay or even destroy the power value of all the above-mentioned powers. However in reality these are all outer forms or sources of power and since they are based on outer reality they tend to deplete or change and perish with time also they are unstable, unreliable and often disempowering. If that is so then what is the True source of power? The majority of us are unaware of the reality that True power is rooted in human consciousness i.e. in the soul. Yes!! But it's unfortunate that most of us, in our quest for power, totally forget that money or status



is the only means from which temporary power can be derived. Such power is also limited in its outreach, value or benefit.

The sense of 'I' and 'mine' turns such power into a limitation and it has its influence for a limited period on a limited area of life to a limited degree. On the other hand, true power will be unlimited, benevolent and universal in its impact & hence it will automatically empower others. Therefore to reclaim our real power we need to first understand who we are and live life from a spiritual perspective because when the spirit is awake and aware it is indomitable. When we become aware of how powerful we are from within, we become free from all kinds of desires.

Remember! A person who can control his thoughts and emotions and live by the highest values of peace, love, truth and joy under all circumstances is truly powerful. Such a person can influence and bring about change not only in his life but also in others' lives and the world around him. As children of the Supreme, every human being is a soul inherent with core values like peace, joy, love, purity, wisdom, power and bliss. Due to gross ignorance about these very values, we lose our true power and start searching for it in the wrong sources. That is why today the whole human race has become weak and impure. But! Now the Supreme Source of Power himself is guiding us all to regain our lost power and sovereignty by imparting knowledge of spirit (soul) through which we would become the rulers of our inner kingdom. So what are we waiting for? Let's just begin the journey to experience real power by connecting to our true selves and the Supreme Source.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and a popular columnist; views are personal)

Airfares to surge amidst aircraft shortage

Indian air travelers are bracing for a steep hike in ticket prices as India is feeling the repercussions of a significant disruption in Boeing's production schedule



Airfares to shoot up sharply as airlines in India, the third largest in the world, face a shortage of aircraft. The airlines are to suffer as the US Boeing is in crisis for its Starliner space vehicle leakage and two fatal crashes defrauding the US government. Boeing has lost more than \$32 billion since 2019. Fewer companies could lose that kind of money and not be facing bankruptcy. Boeing may face three years of probation, independent safety audits and a penalty of \$ 487.3 million in penalty. It has put its new aircraft manufacturing off schedule causing delivery of far fewer planes to airlines in India. It would hamper the growth of the industry here and limit the capability to offer seats to fliers. It would result in severe seat shortages and spiralling fares.

The US Justice Department might charge Boeing with fraud if it does not plead guilty to two deadly Max crashes in 2018 and 2019 killing 346 people. The case stems from the department's determination that Boeing violated an agreement that was intended to resolve a 2021 charge of conspiracy to defraud the US government. Boeing is charged with misleading regulators who approved the 737 Max and set pilot-training requirements to fly the plane. The company blamed two relatively low-level employees for the fraud. Boeing reached a \$2.5 billion settlement for the 2018 and 2019 Ethiopian crashes with the Justice Department in January 2021 to avoid prosecution on a single charge of fraud — misleading federal regulators who approved the plane.

Boeing blamed the deception on two relatively low-level employees. In March 2019, an Ethiopian Airlines 737 MAX crashed, killing all 157 on board, after which regulators around the world grounded MAX aircraft. The crashes were blamed on a flaw with a newly-



BOEING REACHED A \$2.5 BILLION SETTLEMENT FOR THE 2018 AND 2019 ETHIOPIAN CRASHES WITH THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT IN JANUARY 2021 TO AVOID PROSECUTION ON A SINGLE CHARGE OF FRAUD — MISLEADING FEDERAL REGULATORS WHO APPROVED THE PLANE

inducted system for pushing the aircraft nose down to prevent the plane from stalling.

This week the justice department's criminal fraud section told a federal court Boeing violated terms of the settlement by failing to make promised changes to detect and prevent violations of federal anti-fraud laws. The determination means that Boeing could be prosecuted "for any federal criminal violation," including the charge of fraud that the company hoped to avoid with the settlement, the Justice Department said.

The company handed over 27 planes in January, its lowest tally since September, compared with 67 deliveries in December. It sold three Boeing 737 Max planes but also logged three cancellations. As it was grappling with the situation on January 5, 2024, a door plug blew out on an Alaska Airlines flight at 16,000 feet shortly after take-off from Portland, Oregon. None was injured but it ripped off headrests and exposed passengers to a gaping hole in the 26th row. Bolts holding a door panel were also found missing, the US National Transportation Safety Board reported.

This led the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to halt Boeing's planned production increases till it was satisfied with the quality control issues.

The Max planes that Air India wants to buy, Boeing says, would have to rework about 50 of the undelivered planes because of incorrectly drilled holes in 22 fuselages or the larger outer shell that encompasses the main aircraft body.

It is a new production glitch that could slow deliveries further. Various FAA safety inspections would periodically stop the production line. The FAA says that it would allow the variant of the 737 Max 9 with the door plug to fly again — after demanding checks to the bolts on every plane. The family of two MAX victims want Boeing to face a criminal trial and pay a fine of \$ 24.8 billion. They are against plea bargaining saying this was just a reworking of "letting Boeing off the hook". In such a situation, the hope of Air India Express and Akasa getting their deliveries does not look bright.

Questions arise about how the two airlines agreed to the deal of MAX, which still has not cleared safety issues. China has reportedly cancelled some of its bookings. Amid such situations in June 2022, Tata Sons signed the agreement during the Paris Air Show for 20 Boeing Dreamliners, 10 Boeing 777X widebody aircraft, and 190 Boeing 737 MAX narrow-body aircraft along with 250 Euro Airbus for \$ 70 billion, according to Tata Sons and Air India chairman N Chandrashekar.

In June 2023, IndiGo made the world's largest aircraft order by signing a deal for 500 A320 neo family planes from Airbus. IndiGo is expecting some Airbus 320 deliveries.

But that would not suffice the needs of the growing number of passengers. IndiGo is set to ground many aircraft. So would Spicejet, which met with several security issues. The delays, which are said to be unavoidable, would create a

shortage of aircraft almost with all major airlines, IndiGo, Spicejet, Akasa and Air India.

Jet Airways and Go First have gone bankrupt adding to the shortage. The Boeing crisis could hit India hard with Air India and Akasa having fewer aircraft and an overall shortage of seats for domestic and international routes spiralling fares. Airlines in India carried a record 152 million passengers in 2023, a 30 per cent increase from 2022 and a 5 per cent rise over 2019. According to the Director General of Civil Aviation, the domestic air traffic from January to May rose 4 per cent during the period to 13.8 million.

The aviation industry fears that the reduced aircraft delivery is set to impact the aviation market severely more so as several passengers rise more owing to a fallacious dynamic Indian Railways fare structure. It hikes train fares to the level of air fares making people prefer to travel by air. This is impacting the railways and the airlines alike.

Fares in certain destinations like Kochi-Delhi Kolkata-Delhi Mumbai-Delhi or Guwahati-Delhi could skyrocket and match some of the international routes as the country does not have an integrated transportation approach.

If the rail fares are cut and the reservation system rationalised, it could take off a significant load from the airlines. The unimaginative system predicts a scramble for airline tickets by the end of December winter vacation.

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

Leadership shifts in the UK and Iran signal a new era of moderate politics

The recent election results in the UK and Iran reflect a broader global trend of voters favouring leaders who advocate for inclusivity and moderation

There has been a change of leadership in both the United Kingdom and Iran. In the UK, Rishi Sunak of the Conservative Party has been succeeded by Keir Starmer of the Labour Party. In Iran, the people have elected Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist and relatively liberal candidate, as their new President.

The Iranian presidential election was necessitated by the death of the former President, Ebrahim Raisi, in a helicopter crash in May. These shifts, one in Europe and the other in Asia, represent a change in the mindset of people across continents. Both countries, with their rich traditions and civilizations, have seen their electorates reject hardliners in



AKHILESH SUMAN

favor of moderate leaders and parties.

This highlights how, when given the choice, people make thoughtful decisions on a large scale, guided by the current needs rather than the incessant rhetoric of hardliners invoking civilization and nationalism.

The Labour Party in Britain had been out of power for the last 14 years. Many predicted the party's demise and

believed the country would remain under Conservative rule indefinitely. The Conservatives, driven by their nationalistic desires, even led the UK out of the European Union, isolating the nation from its neighboring democracies. It is noteworthy that while the Conservatives' loss marks a historic low in the context of British democracy, the significant increase in seats for the Liberal Democrats, from 11 in 2019 to 72 now, represents a historic high.

As the Liberal Democrats are considered somewhat more left-leaning than even the Labour Party, there is a renewed emphasis on improving the quality of life for the common man, more so than at any other time in



renew ties with the European Union, and Iran may aim to improve relations with the West.

It will be interesting to see if Keir Starmer will reconsider Brexit and move the UK closer to the EU. Similarly, as the new Iranian President promises to "extend a hand of friendship to everyone," it

remains to be seen whether this will lead to peace with the USA and, eventually, with tech-rich Israel.

It will also be intriguing to observe if the Iranian leader can persuade the Supreme Leader to return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) framework, which is the main reason for

Iran's isolation in the West. These election results suggest a potential leftward shift in global politics, with significant changes occurring in both major European and Asian countries.

This could mean that governments will need to focus more on job creation and improving the quality of life for their citizens. Britain is currently facing financial difficulties and high inflation, despite soaring property prices.

Similarly, the Iranian people are feeling the weight of ever-increasing sanctions imposed by the US and its allies. Iranians need a new economy and a new approach to their relations with the West. While Western nations are cautiously optimistic

about the change in Iran, they are confident that the new Labour leadership in the UK will adopt a pragmatic approach. Moving away from the Conservative tactics of unnecessary assertiveness driven by nostalgic colonial attitudes, the UK will need to redefine its strategy and engage more openly with the public.

Finally, there is a message for political parties worldwide: if you stay connected with the grassroots and continue to address the issues of the common people in pragmatic ways, you will remain relevant and potentially revive.

(The writer is a senior journalist and has been covering foreign affairs and international politics; views are personal)

New UK lawmakers gather to be sworn in

AP ■ LONDON

Hundreds of newly elected lawmakers trooped excitedly into Parliament on Tuesday after the UK's transformative election brought a Labour government to power. The halls of the labyrinthine building echoed with excited chatter as the 650 members of the House of Commons gathered — 335 of them arriving for the first time. That compares to 140 new lawmakers after the last election in 2019. The seat of British democracy took on a back-to-school feel, from the rows of lockers temporarily installed in wood-paneled corridors to the staff holding “Ask Me” signs ready to help bewildered newcomers. The new House of Commons includes the largest number of women ever elected — 263, some 40 per cent of the total —



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer, background center, poses for a photograph with the new intake of Scottish Labour Members of Parliament, outside no 10 Downing Street, in London on Tuesday. AP

and the most lawmakers of colour, at 90. The youngest new lawmaker is Labour's Sam Carling, 22. He is one of 412 Labour legislators elected last week who will cram onto green benches on the government side of the House of Commons. Opposite them will be a

shrunken contingent of 121 Conservatives, a vastly increased number of Liberal Democrats, 72 strong, and a smattering of representatives from other parties including the environmentalist Green Party and the anti-immigration Reform UK.

Rishi Sunak names shadow Cabinet

PTI ■ LONDON

Rishi Sunak, the interim UK Opposition Leader until his Conservative Party finalises the process to choose his successor, has named a shadow Cabinet who will take their place in the House of Commons as the new members of Parliament begin being sworn in on Tuesday. The 44-year-old British Indian leader had to contend with some high-profile resignations and missing Tory MPs who lost their seats in the party's worst electoral defeat in last week's general election, which the Labour Party won with a landslide.

David Cameron, a former prime minister who was parachuted into the House of Lords by Sunak to become his foreign secretary last year, has resigned and the portfolio will now be shadowed by his former deputy Andrew Mitchell. “It's been a huge honour to serve as foreign secretary, but clearly the Conservative Party



in Opposition will need to shadow the new foreign secretary from the Commons,” said Cameron in a social media post. “As a committed Conservative I will continue to support the party and help where I can as we rebuild from the very disappointing election result,” he said. Richard Holden resigned as party chairman after what he said was a “very tough set of results” and has been replaced by former economic secretary

to the UK Treasury Richard Fuller as interim chairman. James Cartlidge has been appointed shadow defence secretary and Ed Argar shadow justice secretary, after the former ministers in those briefs – Grant Shapps and Alex Chalk – lost their seats. Kemi Badenoch, former business secretary, has been named shadow levelling up secretary after Michael Gove had stepped down as an MP, and Kevin Hollinrake will shadow Badenoch's former ministerial role in the Opposition. Former Home Office minister Chris Philp will be the new shadow Leader of the House of Commons for the Tories after Penny Mordaunt suffered a defeat in the polls. Many of the other portfolios will mirror their former ministerial posts from the Opposition benches, with Jeremy Hunt named as shadow chancellor, James Cleverly as shadow home secretary and Indian-origin Claire Coutinho as shadow energy security and

net zero secretary. Sunak and his shadow Cabinet will be in place for the early business in the Commons, with the State Opening of Parliament scheduled for July 17 when the King's Speech will lay out the Keir Starmer-led government's plans for the parliamentary calendar ahead. Starmer, meanwhile, has been whizzing around different parts of the United Kingdom before setting off on his first overseas tour as British Prime Minister to Washington for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit. His Cabinet, with a record number of women ministers including British Indian Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy, had their second meeting with him at 10 Downing Street on Tuesday. Foreign Secretary David Lammy has been on a hurriedly organised European visit to Germany, Poland and Sweden. Chancellor Rachel Reeves made her maiden policy speech on Monday, promising mea-

asures such as planning reforms to get the economy growing again. While Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner has the additional brief of Levelling Up Secretary, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has a big challenge of illegal migration to tackle as Labour ditches the Tory plan to deport them to Rwanda. Pakistani-origin Shabana Mahmood as Justice Secretary has to get to grips with an overflowing prison population and John Healey as the Defence Secretary has to set the UK's strategy amid ongoing global conflicts. Wes Streeting as the new Health Secretary has set up meetings with striking National Health Service (NHS) junior doctors to find a resolution to the long-drawn crisis and Jonathan Reynolds will be preparing for his Department for Business and Trade to pick up on key issues, including the India-UK free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations.

To counter China, NATO moving closer under US leadership

AP ■ WASHINGTON

In the third year of the war in Ukraine, NATO is set to deepen relations with its four Indo-Pacific partners, which, although not part of the military alliance, are gaining prominence as Russia and China forge closer ties to counter the United States and the two Koreas support opposing sides of the conflict in Europe. The leaders of New Zealand, Japan and South Korea for the third year in a row will attend the NATO summit, which starts Tuesday in Washington, DC, while Australia will send its deputy prime minister. China will be following the summit closely, worried by the alliance's growing interest beyond Europe and the Western Hemisphere. “Increasingly, partners in Europe see challenges halfway around the world in Asia as

being relevant to them, just as partners in Asia see challenges halfway around the world in Europe as being relevant to them,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week at the Brookings Institution. America's top diplomat said the US has been working to break down barriers between European alliances, Asian coalitions and other partners worldwide. “That's part of the new landscape, the new geometry that we've put in place.” Countries with shared security concerns are strengthening ties as competition escalates between the United States and China. Washington is trying to curb Beijing's ambition to challenge the US-led world order, which the Chinese government dismisses as a Cold War mentality aimed at containing China's inevitable rise. On Monday, Beijing responded angrily to unconfirmed

reports that NATO and its four Indo-Pacific partners are expected to release a document laying out their relationship and ability to respond jointly to threats from cyberattacks and disinformation. Lin Jian, a spokesman for the Chinese foreign ministry, accused NATO of “breaching its boundary, expanding its mandate, reaching beyond its defence zone and stoking confrontation”. The war in Ukraine, which has pitted the West against Russia and its friends, has bolstered the argument for closer cooperation between the US, Europe and their Asian allies. “Ukraine of today may be East Asia of tomorrow,” Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told the US Congress in April. The US and South Korea accused Pyongyang of supplying Russia with ammunition, while Russian President Vladimir Putin visited North

Korea last month and signed a pact with leader Kim Jong Un that envisions mutual military assistance. South Korea and Japan, meanwhile, are sending military supplies and aid to Ukraine. The US also says China is providing Russia with machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that allow it to make weapons to use against Ukraine. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol will bring to Washington “a strong message regarding the military cooperation between Russia and North Korea and discuss ways to enhance cooperation among NATO allies and Indo-Pacific partners,” his principal deputy national security adviser, Kim Tae-hyo, told reporters on Friday. New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said discussions would “focus on our collective efforts to support the rules-based system”.

EU halts Georgia's accession to bloc, freezes financial aid over much-criticised law

AP ■ TBILISI

Georgia's accession to the European Union has been halted, and some of the bloc's financial support to the South Caucasus country has been frozen after the Georgian authorities adopted a new law that critics feared would curb democratic freedoms, the EU Ambassador in Georgia said Tuesday. According to Pawel Herczynski, EU leaders made the decision to halt the process during the last summit of the European Council, and it came in the wake of the Georgian authorities adopting the law on “foreign influence” despite weeks of protests. In addition, a total of 30 million euros (USD 32.5 million) in financial support, earmarked for Georgia's Defence Ministry in 2024, has been frozen, Herczynski said at a news conference. “This is only the first step, there will be other steps. Our

direct support to the government of Georgia will be limited, and we will seek to redirect support from the government of Georgia to civil society and the media,” he said. “It is sad to see EU-Georgia relations at such a low point, when they could have been at an all-time high.” The law, which came into effect last month despite mass protests and a veto from the country's president, requires media, nongovernmental organisations and other non-profit groups to register as “pursuing the interests of a foreign power” if they receive more than 20 per cent of their funding from abroad. The opposition has denounced the bill as “the Russian law” because Moscow uses similar legislation to stigmatize independent news media, organisations and individuals critical of the Kremlin, and called its passage a sign of neighbouring Russia's hold

over Georgia. EU officials have repeatedly denounced the law as undemocratic and said it would hinder Georgia's path to EU membership. The bloc agreed to grant membership candidate status to Georgia in December on condition that it fight disinformation, including against the EU, bring its foreign and security policies into line with the bloc's, and introduce new justice reforms, among other measures. Membership talks did not get underway. To start talks with a candidate, the 27 EU nations and that country must agree on a negotiating mandate. EU experts must also conduct a screening procedure, to analyze how much work needs to be done to bring Georgia's laws and standards into line with those of the bloc. Once those preconditions have been met, an intergovernmental conference would

be called with Georgia to officially launch the start of talks. Each step requires unanimous agreement from the EU member nations and can be blocked at any point. At a summit on June 27, EU leaders warned Georgia that its path toward membership would be blocked unless the “foreign influence” law was repealed. They called “on Georgia's authorities to clarify their intentions by reversing the current course of action which jeopardizes Georgia's EU path, de facto leading to a halt of the accession process.” In the days before the summit, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the bloc was considering “putting a hold to our financial assistance to the government” in Tbilisi and downgrading political contacts. It was not clear how much money overall would be affected.

Israeli forces push deeper into Gaza

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

Israeli forces advanced deeper into the Gaza Strip's largest city in pursuit of militants who had regrouped there, sending thousands of Palestinians fleeing on Monday from an area ravaged in the early weeks of the nine-month-long war. Hamas warned that the latest raids and displacement in Gaza City could lead to the collapse of long-running negotiations over a cease-fire and hostage release, after the two sides had appeared to have narrowed the gaps in recent days. Israeli troops were again battling militants in areas that the army said had been largely cleared months ago in northern Gaza. The military ordered evacuations ahead of the raids, but Palestinians said nowhere feels safe. Most of the population of 2.3 million has been displaced, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands are packed into sweltering tent camps. Israel ordered the evacuation of northern Gaza in the first weeks of the war and has prevented most people from returning. But hundreds of thousands of Palestinians remain, living in shelters or the shells of homes. “We fled in the darkness amid heavy strikes,” said Sayeda Abdel-Baki, a mother of three who had sheltered with relatives in the Daraj neighbourhood. “This is my fifth displacement.” Residents reported artillery and tank fire, as well as airstrikes. Gaza's Health Ministry, with limited access to the north, did not immediately report casualties. Israel issued additional evacuation orders for areas in other neighbourhoods of central Gaza City. The military said it had intelligence showing that militants from Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad group were in the area, and called on residents to head south to the city of Deir al-Balah. Israel accuses Hamas and other militants of hiding among civilians. In Shijaiyah, a Gaza City neighbourhood that has seen weeks of fighting, the military said troops raided and destroyed schools and a clinic that had been converted into militant compounds.

The war has decimated large swaths of urban landscape and sparked a humanitarian catastrophe. Israel and Hamas seem to be the closest they have been in months to agreeing to a cease-fire deal that would pause the fighting in exchange for the release of dozens of hostages captured by Hamas in the October 7 attack that triggered the war. CIA Director William Burns returned to the region Monday for talks in Cairo, according to Egypt's state-run Qahera TV, which is close to the security services. An Israeli delegation was also heading to the Egyptian capital, Israeli media reported. But obstacles remain, even after Hamas agreed to relent on its key demand that Israel commit to ending the war as part of any agreement. A key part of that shift, officials told The Associated Press, is the level of destruction caused by Israel's rolling offensive. Hamas still wants mediators to guarantee that negotiations conclude with a permanent cease-fire, according to two officials with knowledge of the talks. The current draft says the mediators — the United States, Qatar and Egypt — “will do their best” to ensure that negotiations lead to an agreement to wind down the war. Israel has rejected any deal that would force it to end the war with Hamas intact — a condition Netanyahu reiterated on Sunday. Hamas on Monday said it is “offering flexibility and positivity” to facilitate a deal, while accusing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of “putting more obstacles in the way of negotiations”. Meanwhile, Hamas' top political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, warned mediators of “catastrophic consequences” if Israel continued its operations in Gaza City, saying Netanyahu and the army would bear “full responsibility” for the collapse of the talks, the group said in a subsequent statement. The two officials said there's also an impasse around whether Hamas can choose the high-profile prisoners held by Israel that it wants released in exchange for hostages.

Newly elected French lawmakers negotiate to form next government

AP ■ PARIS

Newly elected lawmakers arrived Tuesday at the National Assembly, France's lower house of parliament, for talks seeking to cobble together a government majority after a chaotic election result left the legislature split among left, centre and far-right parties. President Emmanuel Macron on Monday asked his prime minister, Gabriel Attal, to continue handling day-to-day affairs, less than three weeks before the start of the Paris Olympics. Macron leaves Wednesday for a NATO summit in Washington. Sunday's election left no faction even close to the majority needed to form a government, raising the risk of paralysis for the European Union's second-largest economy. While a fractured parliament is not uncommon in Europe, the situation is unprecedented in France's modern history.

Leaders of the leftist coalition, the New Popular Front, which won the most seats, say they should form a new government. The three main parties in the coalition — the hard-left France Unbowed, the Socialists and the Greens — began negotiations to find a candidate for prime minister. The New Popular Front “is the leading Republican force in this country and it is therefore its responsibility to form a government ... to implement the public policies expected by the French people,” Green lawmaker Cyrielle Chatelain said. Hard-left lawmaker Mathilde Panot said, “France Unbowed lawmakers are going into the National Assembly not as an opposition force... but as a force that intends to govern the country.” Their talks are complicated by internal divisions. Some are pushing for a hard-left figure while others, closer to the centre-left, prefer a more consen-

sual personality. France's prime minister is accountable to parliament and can be ousted through a no-confidence vote. Members of France Unbowed and the Greens arrived Tuesday morning at the National Assembly. The Socialist lawmakers, who include former President Francois Hollande, were to gather in the afternoon. The top negotiator for the Socialist party, Johanna Rolland, said the future prime minister won't be Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the divisive hard-left founder of France Unbowed who has angered many moderates. Speaking on France 2 television Tuesday, she suggested the leftist coalition could possibly work with centre-left members of Macron's alliance. “We will be open,” she said. Mélenchon, who did not run in the legislative elections, also joined the talks at the National Assembly on Tuesday afternoon. Yael Braun-Pivet, a member of Macron's centrist alliance

and former president of the National Assembly, said “in my view, the French people sent us a clear message. They did not want to give an absolute majority to any specific political bloc so they're ordering us to listen to one another, work together and that's what we need to do.” According to official results, all three main blocs fell far short of the 289 seats needed to control the 577-seat National Assembly, the most powerful of France's two legislative chambers. The results showed just over 180 seats for the New Popular Front leftist coalition, which placed first to beat Macron's centrist alliance, with more than 160 seats. The far-right National Rally party of Marine Le Pen and its allies were restricted to third place, although their more than 140 seats were still way ahead of the party's previous best showing of 89 seats in 2022. Macron has three years remaining in his presidential term.

Indian-origin jailed for rape in Singapore

Singapore (PTI): An Indian-origin Singaporean bar owner was sentenced to jail for 13 years and four weeks on Monday and will receive nine strokes of the cane for raping a runaway 17-year-old girl after allowing her to work for him. Raj Kumar Bala, 42, was convicted of a charge each of raping and molesting the victim and pleaded guilty to a third charge of harbouring a runaway under the Children and Young Persons Act, Channel News Asia reported. Defence lawyer Ramesh Tiwary said his client has asked to be released on bail pending appeal, according to the channel's report. The court heard that the victim was 17 in February 2020 when she ran away from the Singapore Girls' Home. She found out about a job opportunity at Bala's Don Bar and Bistro in Dunlop Street in the Little India precinct of hotels, motels and eateries through another runaway who

was working there. The other runaway was also sexually assaulted by Bala in a charge that stood down for the time being. The victim went down to the bar to interview for the job and met Bala, who described the job duties to her, including serving customers and making drinks. He offered her the role, saying she could stay at the bar with other runaways. The victim worked at the bar for a few days, but police received a tip-off about people who absconded and worked there. They raided the place in the early hours of February 22, 2020. The victim fled with another girl to escape the raid, before being picked up by Bala. He drove them to his condominium, telling them they could stay there, before drinking alcohol with the girls. He raped the victim while she was heavily intoxicated and also engaged in sex acts with the other girl.

Displaced families struggle amid ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict

AP ■ MUWASI

On his key chain, Hassan Nofal keeps the keys to two homes. One is to the house of his grandparents in what is now southern Israel, which he says his family was driven out of by Israeli forces in 1948 and to which they've never been able to return. The other is to Nofal's house in northern Gaza that he had to flee last year after Israel launched its campaign of bombardment and offensives in the territory. Over the nearly nine months since, Nofal and his family have been uprooted four times, driven back and forth across the Gaza Strip to escape the onslaught. Nofal said he is determined to make sure his key doesn't become a keepsake like his grandparents'. “If my house key becomes just a memory with me moving forward, then I don't want to live anymore,” he said. “I must return to my house ... I want



to stay in Gaza and settle in Gaza with my children in our house.” Israel has said Palestinians will eventually be allowed to go back to their homes in Gaza, but it is not clear when. Many homes have been destroyed or heavily damaged. Israel's assault in Gaza, triggered by Hamas' October 7 attack on southern Israel, has driven some 1.9 million of the territory's pre-war population of 2.3 million Palestinians from their homes. Most of

them have been uprooted repeatedly since then, fleeing over and over across the length of the strip to escape a series of ground offensives. Each time has meant a wrenching move to a new location and a series of crowded, temporary shelters – whether at the homes of extended family, UN schools, or tent camps. Along the way, families have struggled to stay together and keep a few possessions.

Hurricane Beryl kills four, plunges 3 million into darkness in Texas

PTI ■ HOUSTON

At least four people were killed, and nearly three million homes and businesses were left without power as powerful tropical storm Beryl, which brought damaging winds and floods, slammed into Texas early on Monday. Beryl brought Schools, businesses, offices, and financial institutions to a halt soon after it made landfall near Matagorda as a category 1 hurricane, the National Hurricane Centre said on Monday evening. Flooding, rains and tornadoes were possible across portions of eastern Texas, Western Louisiana. Two people were killed after trees fell on homes, and a civilian employee of the Houston Police Department was killed when he was trapped in flood waters. One more person was reported dead in a fire incident.



A detail of down trees on Memorial drive and Wescot street in Houston, on Monday, after Beryl came ashore in Texas as a hurricane and dumped heavy rains downtown. AP/PTI

Officials asked residents to stay home on Monday night as floodwaters from Beryl began to recede, and crews started surveying the damage. “Don't let the clear skies fool you,” Mayor John Whitmire said at a news conference. “There were no immediate reports of widespread structural damages,”

he said. “We still have dangerous circumstances.” Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo offered a similar message: “We're not out of the woods yet... Let's just wait until tomorrow. Doing a damage assessment on your own property is one thing, but driving around unnecessarily — we really ask that you avoid it.”

Kyiv mourns as rescuers make last-ditch efforts

AP ■ KYIV

Rescue operations stretched into a second day at a major Kyiv children's hospital struck by a Russian missile, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday, adding that 38 people were killed and almost 200 injured in an intense daytime barrage that smashed into cities across the country. Zelenskyy said on the social platform X that 64 people were hospitalized in the capital as well as 28 in Kryvyi Rih and six in Dnipro — both in central Ukraine. It was Russia's heaviest bombardment of Kyiv in almost four months and one of the deadliest of the war, hitting seven of the city's 10 districts. The strike on the Okhmatdyt children's hospital, which interrupted open-heart surgery and forced young cancer patients to take their treatments outdoors, drew an international outcry. Kyiv city administrators declared Tuesday an official day of mourning. Entertainment events were prohibited and flags lowered in

the capital. Russia denied responsibility for the hospital strike, insisting it doesn't attack civilian targets in Ukraine despite abundant evidence to the contrary, including Associated Press reporting. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday repeated that position, pointing to a Russian Defense Ministry statement that blamed a Ukrainian air defense missile for partially destroying the hospital. The Russian onslaught Monday came on the eve of a NATO summit in Washington where alliance countries are expected to pledge new military and economic support for Ukraine. Earlier on Monday, Russian missiles blasted cities across Ukraine on Monday, damaging the country's largest childrens hospital and other buildings in a fierce assault that interrupted heart surgeries and forced young cancer patients to take their treatments outdoors. At least 31 people were killed, officials said. The daytime barrage targeted five Ukrainian cities



Rescuers and volunteers clean up the rubble and search for victims after a Russian missile hit the Okhmatdyt hospital in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Monday

AP/PTI

with more than 40 missiles of different types, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on social media. Ukraine's air force said it intercepted 30 missiles. More than 150 people were wounded. It was Russia's heaviest bombardment of Kyiv in almost four months, hitting seven of the city's 10 districts. At least seven people were killed in the capital, including two staff members at the hospital. Strikes in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's birthplace in central Ukraine, killed 10. The attack on the Okhmatdyt children's hospital caused debris to fall into heart patients' open chests in the middle of surgery. Cancer patients had their beds wheeled into parks and onto the streets. "It is very important that the world should not be silent about it now and that everyone should see what Russia is and what it is doing," Zelenskyy said. Russia denied attacking the hospital and said the strikes hit military targets. The assault unfolded a day before Western leaders who have backed Ukraine were

scheduled to begin a three-day NATO summit in Washington to consider how they can reassure Kyiv of the alliance's unwavering support and offer Ukrainians hope that their country can survive Europe's biggest conflict since World War II. Zelenskyy said during a visit to Poland that he hopes the summit will provide more air defense systems for Ukraine. In a statement, US President Joe Biden called Monday's missile strikes "a horrific reminder of Russia's brutality". "It is critical that the world continues to stand with Ukraine at this important moment and that we not ignore Russian aggression," the statement said. At the hospital in Kyiv, rescuers searched for victims under the rubble of a partially collapsed, two-story wing of the facility. At the main 10-story building, windows and doors were blown out, and walls were blackened. Blood was spattered on the floor in one room. The intensive care unit, operating theatres and oncology departments all were damaged, officials said.

Search on for dozens buried in deadly Indonesian landslide

AP ■ JAKARTA

Rescue workers dug through tons of mud and rubble on Tuesday as they searched for dozens of missing people after a landslide hit an unauthorized gold mining area on Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing at least 23 people. More than 100 villagers were digging for grains of gold on Sunday in the remote and hilly village of Bone Bolango when tons of mud plunged down the surrounding hills and buried their makeshift camps, said Heriyanto, head of the provincial Search and Rescue Office. Rescuers recovered more bodies on Tuesday in the devastated hamlet where the gold mine is located. "Improved weather allowed us to recover more bodies," said Heriyanto, who goes by a single name like many Indonesians. According to his office, 66 villagers managed to escape from the landslide, 23 were pulled out alive by rescuers, including 18 with injuries, and 23 bodies were recovered, including three

women and a 4-year-old boy. About 35 others were missing, it said. National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said torrential rains that have pounded the mountainous district since Saturday triggered the landslide and broke an embankment, causing floods up to the roofs of houses in five villages in Bone Bolango, which is part of a mountainous district in Gorontalo province. Nearly 300 houses were affected and more than 1,000 people fled for safety. Authorities deployed more than 200 rescuers, including police and military personnel, with heavy equipment to search for the dead and missing in a rescue operation that has been hampered by heavy rains, unstable soil, and rugged, forested terrain, said Afifuddin Ilahude, a local rescue official. "With many missing and some remote areas still unreachable, the death toll is likely to rise," Ilahude said, adding that sniffer dogs were being mobilized in the search. Videos released by the National Search and Rescue

Agency show rescue personnel using farm tools and their bare hands to pull a mud-caked body from the thick mud and placing it in a black bag to take away for burial. Monsoon rains cause frequent landslides and flash floods in Indonesia, an archipelago nation of more than 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near floodplains. Informal mining operations are common in Indonesia, providing a tenuous livelihood to thousands who labor in conditions with a high risk of serious injury or death. Landslides, flooding and collapses of tunnels are just some of the hazards facing miners. Much of gold ore processing involves highly toxic mercury and cyanide and workers frequently use little or no protection. The country's last major mining-related accident occurred in April 2022, when a landslide crashed onto an illegal traditional gold mine in North Sumatra's Mandailing Natal district, killing 12 women who were looking for gold.

Pak authorises ISI to intercept, trace calls for national security

Islamabad (PTI): The Pakistan government on Tuesday formally authorised the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the country's premier spy agency, to intercept and trace calls for national security. The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication issued a notification under the Pakistan Telecommunication (Reorganisation) Act, 1996 to this effect. "In exercise of the powers conferred under Section 54... the federal government in the interest of national security and in the apprehension of any offence, is pleased to authorise the officers not below the rank of grade 18 to be nominated from time to time by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to intercept calls and messages or to trace calls through any communication system," the notification further read. Sources said that the notification followed after the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formally decided at the cabinet level to allow the ISI to trace and record calls. The decision appears to be a part of the government's efforts to tighten the noose on social media platforms as the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) used them to approach its supporters despite the narrowing of space on the traditional media.

ment will prioritise and have precedence in the telecommunications system over any licensee to safeguard national defence or security against foreign threats. "The federal government in the interest of national security and in the apprehension of any offence is pleased to authorise the officers [...] to be nominated from time to time by ISI to intercept calls and messages or to trace calls through any communication system," the notification further read. Sources said that the notification followed after the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formally decided at the cabinet level to allow the ISI to trace and record calls. The decision appears to be a part of the government's efforts to tighten the noose on social media platforms as the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) used them to approach its supporters despite the narrowing of space on the traditional media.

Pak SC reserves judgment in plea about reserved seats allotment

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Tuesday reserved its judgment in a key petition by the opposition Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) party about getting its due share in the reserved seats in Parliament and provincial assemblies. The appeal was filed after the Election Commission of Pakistan rejected the SIC's plea for awarding its share in the 70 reserved seats in the National Assembly and another 156 in the four provincial assemblies. The SIC became prominent after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party-supported candidates joined the party after winning the elections as jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's PTI could not contest the polls and was not eligible to claim the seats reserved for women and minorities. The seats were awarded to the winning parties based on proportional representation. The ECP had rejected the SIC plea for reserved seats as it had not contested the elections and got strength when PTI-backed

independently elected candidates joined after the elections. Its appeal against the ECP decision in the Peshawar High Court was also turned down. Subsequently, the party challenged it in the Supreme Court. A 13-member bench headed by Chief Justice Faez Isa and comprising justices Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Munib Akhtar, Yahya Afridi, Aminuddin Khan, Jamal Mandokhail, Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Ayesha Malik, Athar Minallah, Syed Hasan Rizvi, Shahid Waheed, Irfan Saadat Khan and Naeem Akhtar Afghan heard the case. Chief Justice Isa announced at the conclusion of the proceedings that the panel decided to reserve the verdict for mutual consultation. He did not give any date for the announcement of the judgment, which is expected this week. "We will see if a short judgment can be announced," the chief justice remarked while reserving the judgment. Earlier, the Supreme Court on May 6 in a major relief to the PTI, suspended the Peshawar High Court's decision about rejecting

the SIC plea. Following the ruling, the ECP on May 14 suspended the victory notifications of 77 candidates who belonged to other parties and were declared successful on the reserved seats. The final ruling by the top court in the case would decide the fate of those 77 reserved seats. Though it may not change the current power structure, the changes in the overall number game in the assemblies may impact the law-making process in the country. The problem of the PTI began when just before the general election, it was deprived of its symbol of cricket bat by the ECP for failure to hold the intra-party election according to its Constitution. It forced PTI to field its candidates as independents. PTI candidates joined the SIC to secure a due share in the reserved seats, but the ECP rejected the SIC plea for reserved seats by saying that it had not contested elections and also did not provide a list of candidates for the reserved seats within the stipulated time, which was mandatory.

Suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targets ship in the Gulf of Aden

Dubai (AP): A suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted a ship in the Gulf of Aden on Tuesday, the latest assault by the group on the crucial maritime trade route. The captain of the ship reported an explosion in close proximity to the vessel off the coast of Nishtun, Yemen, close to the country's border with Oman, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said. The ship, whose name and flag were not released, and all crew are safe, the UKMTO said in a warning to mariners. The explosion took place in the farthest reaches of the waterway earlier targeted by the rebels, the centre said. It did not elaborate on what caused the explosion, though the Houthis have been known to use drones and missiles as well as bomb-carrying drone boats. The Houthis did not immediately comment.

However, it can take hours or even days before they acknowledge carrying out an attack. The last reported Houthi attack in the region took place June 28. The rebels have targeted more than 60 vessels by firing missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed a total of four sailors. They seized one vessel and sank two since November. US-led airstrikes have targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes on May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say. The Houthis maintain that their attacks target ships linked to Israel, the United States or Britain as part of rebel support for the militant group Hamas in its war against Israel in the Gaza Strip. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the Israel-Hamas war — including some bound for Iran.

Pakistan PM urges int'l community to recognise 'burden of Afghan refugees'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The head of the UN refugee agency Filippo Grandi on Tuesday met with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss the situation of millions of Afghan refugees living in uncertainty since Islamabad announced a repatriation plan of what it called "undocumented aliens" last year. During his meeting with Grandi, Commissioner of the UNHCR, Sharif urged the international community to recognise the "burden of Afghan refugees" being shouldered by Pakistan and demonstrate "collective responsibility" to deal with the issue, the Dawn newspaper reported. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) arrived in Pakistan on Sunday on a three-day visit. "The prime minister stressed that the international commu-

nity must recognise the burden being shouldered by Pakistan while hosting such a large refugee population, and demonstrate collective responsibility," a statement from the PM's Office said. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader added that despite numerous challenges, the country had hosted Afghan refugees with exemplary respect and dignity. Sharif sought UNHCR's support in mobilising adequate resources to supplement Pakistan's efforts in this regard, urging the global refugee agency to play its role in coming up with durable solutions to address the situation of Afghan refugees. The prime minister emphasised that the international community needed to be mindful of the socio-economic challenges and security threats that Pakistan was facing,

the Dawn reported. "The UN High Commissioner expressed gratitude for Pakistan's generosity and hospitality in hosting millions of Afghan refugees for the past many decades and assured that UNHCR would continue to work closely with Pakistan to fulfil the basic needs of the Afghan refugees," the statement added. Pakistan launched the first round of repatriation of what it called "undocumented aliens" in November last year. While no official data has been released as to how many of the estimated undocumented Afghans have left their country since November, the newspaper quoting informed sources said that half a million immigrants returned to Afghanistan via Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan in the first round. On Monday, Grandi met with Pakistan's Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Amir

Muqam, and said that UNHCR would organise a global dialogue, most likely in October, to discuss refugee-related issues, the Dawn said. "Pakistan would be specially invited at this occasion," the UNHCR chief said. He expressed the hope that the event will create a new dimension and avenues for the support of refugees across the globe. "Currently, there are 1.45 million registered Afghan citizens card holders and this does not include a great number of unregistered Afghan refugees and other nationals," federal minister Muqam said. He added that it was a "matter of concern" that there was a decline in support for Afghan refugees and development funds for their hosting areas in Pakistan. "We need exclusive, generous and sustainable interventions," he said.

Australia appoints spl envoy to confront rise in antisemitism

AP ■ MELBOURNE

The Australian government named a special envoy on Tuesday to confront a rise in antisemitism across the country since the Israel-Hamas war began. A similar envoy will soon be appointed to challenge Islamophobia in Australia and both will promote social cohesion, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told reporters at the Sydney Jewish Museum. Albanese's own Sydney office has been targeted with pro-Palestinian graffiti as rival activists clash over the Israeli-Hamas war in Australian cities and university campuses. Albanese appointed Jillian Segal, a Sydney lawyer and business executive, to be "special envoy to combat antisemitism in Australia" for three years. She will consult with community groups and report back to Albanese and Multicultural Affairs Minister Andrew Giles. Segal called statistics on antisemitism in Australia "shocking". Reports of antisemitism spiked 700 per cent immediately after Hamas militants sparked the war in Gaza by attacking Israel on October 7, and are still running 400 per cent to 500 per cent higher than before the

conflict, she said. The reports include Jewish-owned businesses being boycotted and vandalised as well as Jewish artists being excluded or subjected to social media shadow bans that restrict their visibility on platforms, Segal said. Unfortunately there is no single answer to the perennial problem of antisemitism," she said. "But the creation of this role shows a determination by the government to confront this evil and to ensure that it does not erode the goodness that exists in our society," she added. Albanese said a graffiti attack that marked his inner-Sydney office as a Hamas target in December was being taken seriously and acted upon. He also condemned last month's vandalism with spray paint at the Australian National Korean War Memorial and the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in the national capital, Canberra. "I have spoken with members of the Jewish community here, in Melbourne, right around Australia, who have not felt safe, members of the Jewish community whose children are worried about wearing their school uniform in our capital cities," Albanese said.

Taliban's morality police contributing to climate of fear among Afghans: UN

AP ■ NEW YORK

The Taliban's morality police are contributing to a climate of fear and intimidation among Afghans, according to a UN report published Tuesday. Edicts and some of the methods used to enforce them constituted a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the report said. The Taliban set up a ministry for the "propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice" after seizing power in 2021. Since then, the ministry has enforced decrees issued by the Taliban leadership that have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, like dress codes, segregated education

and employment, and having a male guardian when they travel. "The punishments attached to non-compliance with instructions and decrees are often arbitrary, severe and disproportionate," said the report from the UN Mission in Afghanistan. "Sweeping bans with a discriminatory effect on women have been introduced. Human rights violations, as well as the unpredictability of enforcement measures, contribute to a climate of fear and intimidation among segments of the population." The mission said it documented at least 1,033 instances between August 2021 and March 2024 where ministry employees applied force during

the implementation of orders, resulting in the violation of a person's liberty, and physical and mental integrity. "This includes the use of threats, arbitrary arrests and detentions, excessive use of force by de facto law enforcement officials and ill-treatment." These instances mostly affected men, who were punished for allegedly violating Taliban orders or because their female relatives had breached them, according to the report. It said the ministry's role was expanding into other areas of public life, including media monitoring and eradicating drug addiction. "Given the multiple issues outlined in the report, the position expressed by the de facto authorities that

this oversight will be increasing and expanding gives cause for significant concern for all Afghans, especially women and girls," said Fiona Frazer, the head of UNAMA's Human Rights Service. The ministry rejected the UN report, calling its findings false and contradictory. "Decrees and relevant legal documents are issued to reform society and should have their implementation ensured," the ministry said. The mission's report comes a week after a Taliban delegation travelled to Qatar to attend a UN-sponsored meeting on increasing engagement with Afghanistan amid the country's economic challenges and humanitarian crises.

Pak completes bridge at Kartarpur Corridor after 2.5-year delay

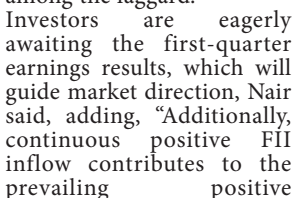
Lahore (PTI): Pakistan has finally completed the 420-metre-long bridge at the Kartarpur Corridor zero line after a delay of two-and-a-half years, an official said on Tuesday. The need for the Kartarpur bridge arose from the vulnerability of the zero-line area to flooding, emphasising the importance of constructing a safe and secure passage for the visitors of the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Kartarpur Saifullah Unit Deputy Secretary Saifullah Khokhar told PTI. "We have completed the bridge from our side on the zero-line Kartarpur Corridor. Now it is up to India to complete its side of the bridge, especially a 10-foot disputed one," he said. "The bridge

will be functional once the Indian side is completed," Khokhar added. Earlier, flooding incidents had disrupted visitors' movements to the Kartarpur Sahib. The first deadline to complete the construction of the 420-metre-long bridge was December 2021. The construction works, however, had come to a halt temporarily because of some financial constraints and political issues. The Public Development Fund funded the project with an estimated cost of PKR 4.53 million. The Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) and National Engineering Services of Pakistan (Nespak) collaborated to carry out the construction.

	PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD. (Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001) Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813 (Contact No. 96461-17604, 96461-17659)
Tender Enquiry No. 1680/EMC/O&M/PC-2566 Dated: 08-07-2024	
Chief Engineer/ O&M (P&P Cell-II), GHPT, Lehra Mohabbat, invites E-tender for the Procurement of Leakage Current Analyzer for Surge Arrester, Quantity as per NIT. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 08-07-2024 from 17:00 Hrs. onwards	
Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in	
GHTP-52/24	
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PTI ■ MUMBAI

Among Sensex shares, Maruti Suzuki India jumped over 6 per cent amid reports that the UP government waived registration taxes on



Among the indices, auto jumped 2.17 per cent. Consumer durables (2.01 per cent), realty (1.23 per cent).

The BSE benchmark declined 36.22 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 79,960.38 on Monday. The NSE Nifty dipped 3.30 points or 0.01 per cent to 24,320.55.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

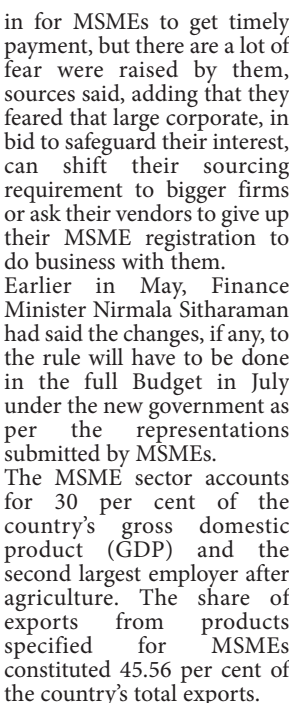
"The value of the index for March 2024 stands at 64.2 vis-à-vis 60.1 in March 2023, with growth witnessed across all sub-indices," the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a statement on Tuesday. Improvement in FI-Index is mainly contributed by usage dimension, reflecting deepening of financial inclusion, it added. The FI-Index comprises three broad parameters — access (35 per cent), usage (45 per cent), and quality (20 per cent) — with each of these consisting of various dimensions, which are computed based on a number of indicators. In August 2021, the central



Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.06 per cent to 104.72.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

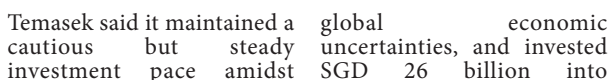
MSMEs fear that due to this provision, large buyers could cold-shoulder MSME suppliers and start buying either from those MSMEs that are not registered with Udyam or from non-MSMEs. The amendment was brought



PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore investor Temasek expects India's growth to remain firm over the next two years, driven by infrastructure-led capital expenditure, and a recovery in private consumption. Temasek on Tuesday reported an SGD 7 billion rise in its Net Portfolio Value (NPV) to SGD 389 billion for the financial year ended March 31, 2024, mainly driven by gains to the US and India investments. India has continued to see strong economic momentum alongside improving macro and political stability, the

company said in a statement. “We expect growth to remain firm over the next two years, primarily driven by infrastructure-led capital expenditure, accelerated supply chain diversification and a recovery in private consumption,” Temasek said. Temasek said its Net Portfolio Value (NPV) rose by SGD 7 billion to SGD 385 billion for the financial year ended March 31, 2024. “The increase was mainly due to our investment returns from the US and India, offset by the underperformance of China’s capital markets,” it said.



opportunities in sectors such as technology, financial services, sustainability, consumer, and healthcare aligned with the four structural trends of digitalisation, sustainable living, future of consumption, and longer lifespans. Excluding Singapore, the US continued to be the leading destination for Temasek's capital, followed by India and Europe while it has also stepped-up investment activities in Japan. Temasek divested SGD 33 billion for the year. Of this, about SGD 10 billion was due to the redemption of

capital by Singapore Airlines and Pavilion Energy for their mandatory convertible bonds and preferential shares respectively. Overall, Temasek had a net divestment of SGD 7 billion, compared to a net investment of SGD 4 billion a year ago.

“We invested in Electric Vehicle companies Mahindra Electric Automobile in India and BYD in China, sustainable battery solutions provider Ascend Elements in the US, and electrolyser manufacturer Electric Hydrogen in the US,” it added.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Khadi and Village Industries' annual turnover crossed Rs 1.5 lakh crore for the first time in FY 2023-24 with over 10 lakh new jobs generated during the fiscal, its Chairman Manoj Kumar said on Tuesday. According to provisional figures for 2023-24 released by KVIC, a 315 per cent increase in production and a 400 per cent rise in sales were registered in the last 10 years. New employment generation also witnessed an 81 per cent increase during the decade starting from 2013-14. "For the first time, over 10 lakh new jobs were created and our turnover crossed Rs 1.5 lakh crore in 2023-24," Kumar said. Surpassing all previous figures, there has been an increase of almost 400 per cent in sales, nearly 315 per cent in production, and 81 per cent in

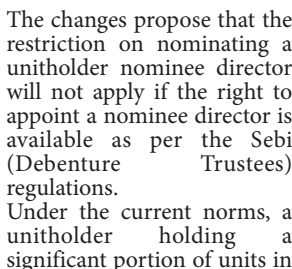
new employment generation compared to the financial year 2013-14, KVIC stated. KVIC's sales were Rs 1.34 lakh crore in 2022-23.

"The production of Khadi and village industry products, which was Rs. 26,109.08 crores in the financial year 2013-14, reached Rs. 108,297.68 crores in the financial year 2023-24, a jump of 314.79 per cent, while the production in the financial year 2022-23 was Rs. 95956.67 crores. This continuously increasing production is strong evidence that the Khadi and Village Industries Commission has done historical work in rural areas," KVIC said.

"In the financial year 2023-24, KVIC's efforts have created 10.17 lakh new jobs in rural areas, strengthening rural India's economy," it stated. The KVIC Chairman said the demand for Khadi and village industry products made by rural artisans is increasing.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a consultation paper, Sebi said these amendments will provide clarity on the nomination rights of directors to the boards of REIT (Real Estate Investment Trusts) and InvITs (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) managers. In the proposed amendments, the markets watchdog has addressed market participants' requests for clarification on the rights of unitholders to nominate a director to the board of the investment manager or manager of REITs and InvITs.



an InvIT or REIT has the right to nominate a director provided their unitholding exceeds a specified threshold. “It has been represented by market participants to provide clarity on the availability of the right to nominate a director on the Board of Directors of the Investment Manager of InvIT

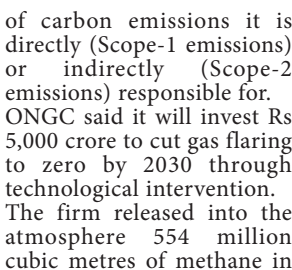
/ Manager of REIT, to a unitholder where such nomination right is also available to a unitholder in the capacity of lender to the Investment Manager / Manager or the InvIT/REIT (or its HoldCo(s) or SPVs)," Sebi said.

"...It is proposed to amend the Master Circular for InvITs dated May 15, 2024 and Master Circular for REITs dated May 15, 2024 to provide that the restriction relating to the right to nominate a Unitholder Nominee Director shall not be applicable if the right to appoint a nominee director is available in terms of the Sebi (Debtenture Trustees) regulations," it added.

Sebi has invited public comments and suggestions on the draft circulars till July 29.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It listed clean energy projects even as it looks to boost its hydrocarbon output to meet the country's energy needs. ONGC will invest Rs 97,000 crore by 2030 in setting up 5 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity, green hydrogen, biogas, pump storage plant and offshore



2021-22 (base year), mostly because it was an incidental by-product of oil or the quantity was not economical enough to pipe it to consumers.

ONGC will spend Rs 30,000 crore in setting up 5 GW solar parks that will convert sunlight into electricity and turbines that will do the same with wind energy. It will add 1 GW of solar and onshore wind capacity by 2035 and 2038 at a cost of Rs 5,000 crore each.

It will invest Rs 40,000 crore by 2030 and a similar amount by 2035 to set up two 1,80,000 tonnes per annum green hydrogen and/or 1 million tonnes of green ammonia projects.

ONGC, which has installations in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal to produce oil and gas from below the seabed, is also looking at installing offshore wind turbines to generate

0.5 GW of electricity by 2030 and double it by 2035. The first 0.5 GW offshore wind project is likely to cost Rs 12,500 crore and the next about Rs 12,000 crore. By 2038, it will add another 1 GW of offshore wind energy capacity at an investment of Rs 25,000 crore, the document said. The company is also looking at investing Rs 20,000 crore for setting up 3 GW of pumped storage plants to meet electricity requirements when renewable sources like sunlight and wind energy are not available. The remaining investment will be in biogas, carbon capture and other clean energy projects. All this while it continues to hunt and produce more oil and gas. Crude oil, which companies like ONGC pump out from below the seabed and from underground reservoirs, is a primary source of energy. It

is processed in oil refineries to produce petrol, diesel and jet fuel. With the world looking to transition away from fossil fuels, companies around the globe are looking at new avenues to use crude oil.

Gas produced in a similar fashion is used to generate electricity, produce fertiliser or convert into CNG to power automobiles or into PNG to fire kitchen stoves.

Scope 1 emissions are from directly emitting sources that are owned or controlled by a company. Scope 2 emissions are from the consumption of purchased electricity, steam, or other sources of energy generated upstream from a company's direct operations.

ONGC produced 21.14 million tonnes of oil in 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024) and 20,648 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

However, it is the Taiwan Excellence Pavilion featuring products from 24 Taiwanese brands across AI application, ICT, industrial applications, lifestyle, and medical sectors which is drawing a large



BUMRAH, MANDHANA NAMED ICC PLAYER OF MONTH FOR JUNE



PTI ■ DUBAI

Hero of India's victorious T20 World Cup campaign, Jasprit Bumrah added another feather to his hat when he was on Tuesday named the 'ICC Men's Player of the Month for June'. It was double delight for India as women's team vice-captain Smriti Mandhana was also named the 'Women's Player of the Month' by the global body.

Mandhana won her first ICC Women's Player of the Month after playing a starring role in India's sweep over South Africa in the ODI series last month. Bumrah came out on top in the men's vote from compatriot Rohit Sharma and Rahmanullah Gurbaz of Afghanistan, while Mandhana won the women's award by overcoming England's Maia Bouchier and Sri Lanka's Vishmi Gunaratne.

Bumrah, who bagged 15 wickets to be adjudged the Player-of-the-Tournament in the T20 global showpiece last month, also claimed the Men's Player of the Month accolade for June, the ICC announced. "I am delighted to be named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for June," Bumrah said in the ICC statement. "It's a special honour for me following a memorable few weeks spent in the USA and West Indies. We have had a

lot to celebrate as a team, and I'm delighted to be able to add this personal accolade to the list." The 30-year-old was at his dependable best in the USA and Caribbean and bowled at an average of 8.26, at an astonishing economy rate of 4.17. He joined Virat Kohli (a two-time winner in his own right) as India players to claim the Men's T20 World Cup Player of the Tournament award. India were the first team to

win the men's T20 World Cup without losing a game all tournament. Barring a washout against Canada in the first round, the Rohit Sharma-led India went on to win all eight matches they played in the tournament. "To perform as well as we did at the tournament and lift the trophy at the end is incredibly special, and I will carry those memories with me forever," Bumrah said. "I wish to congratulate my

captain Rohit Sharma and Rahmanullah Gurbaz for their excellent performances in the same period, and I am humbled to have been chosen as the winner." In the women's game, Mandhana set the tone with a commanding 117 in the first outing in Bengaluru. Despite an early stutter by the hosts in which they fell to 99 for five, Mandhana remained resolute, and benefitted from some lower order resistance to guide India to a formidable score of 265 from their 50 overs, which proved far beyond the Proteas. Mandhana went one better in the second match, hitting her second successive century and top scoring in a game that saw 646 runs in total. The opener blitzed the South African bowling attack, smashing 136 in 120 balls and in tandem with her captain Harmanpreet Kaur, posted just enough to see off the resurgent visitors. She came close to sealing a hat-trick of hundreds in the final outing, falling agonizingly on 90 in a stylish effort that ensured India recorded a comfortable victory to close out the series. During the period, Mandhana recorded 343 runs at an average of 114.33, with a strike rate of over 100, earning her the Player of the Series award. "I'm really glad to have won the ICC Women's Player of the Month for June. I'm really happy with the way the team has performed and I'm happy to have contributed. For us, we won the ODI and the Test series and hopefully we can continue our form and I can further contribute to win more matches for India," Mandhana said.



Retired Warner says he is open to play Champions Trophy next year

PTI ■ SYDNEY

David Warner has declared his international career a "closed chapter" but at the same time, the Australian battering great won't mind padding up in the Champions Trophy next year should he be selected, something that has been described as an "emergency option" by his ODI captain Pat Cummins. Warner retired from ODIs after Australia's World Cup-winning run in November last year, while his last Test was against Pakistan in January. His final T20I came against India on June 24 at the shortest format's recently concluded global showpiece. "Chapter closed!! It's been an unbelievable experience to play at the highest level for such a long period. Australia was my team. The majority of my career was at the international level. It's been an honour to be able to do this. 100+ games in all formats is my highlight," Warner wrote in an Instagram post on Monday. "I will continue to play franchise cricket for a while, and I am also open to playing for Australia in the Champions trophy if selected," he added. This is not the first time that Warner has shown interest in playing the 50-over tournament. Even while announcing his ODI and Test retirement in January, he had said he'd be open to playing the Champions Trophy, which is set to return after an eight-year hiatus in Pakistan next year. Back in January when Pat Cummins was asked about Warner's return for the Champions Trophy, Cummins had said "I think it's probably time to

give some others a crack [in ODIs], but knowing that he's going to still be playing cricket." "So it might be more of a kind of break glass in an emergency option. But, you know, David is going to be scoring runs somewhere in the world. So you never quite know that this is (the end)." Reflecting on his illustrious career, Warner, who retired as Australia's highest scorer and seventh-most prolific batter in the world in T20 format with 3,277 runs from 110 matches at an average of 33.43 and strike rate of 142.47, thanked his family, fans and teammates. "For all the cricket fans out there, I truly hope I have entertained you and changed cricket, especially tests, in a way where we scored a bit faster than others. We cannot do what we love without the fans, so thanks. "I want to say thanks to everyone out there who has made this possible. My wife and my girls, who sacrificed so much, thank you for all your support. No person will ever know what we've been through. From 112 Tests, he has scored 8,786 runs at an average of 44.59 with 26 hundreds and 37 fifties between 2011 and 2024. He also scored 6,932 runs from 161 ODI matches at an average of 45.30 with the help of 22 centuries and 33 half centuries. "To the players and staff, thanks for putting up with me. No more what's app junk, your ears are now going to be free of my voice. This team has had unbelievable success the last few years and long may this continue. Pat cummins, Andrew old Mac and staff have got this," he added.

SLC denies report of drinking party inside team hotel during recent T20 World Cup

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan Cricket Board on Tuesday described a media report which claimed that its players were involved in a drinking party inside team hotel during the recent T20 World Cup as "entirely false, fabricated, and baseless". A weekend newspaper had on July 7 claimed that the Sri Lankan players had a drinking party inside the team hotel before the match against South Africa, which the islanders lost by six wickets in New York on June 3. "Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) wishes to issue the following clarification regarding an inaccurate article titled 'Drinking Party Inside Team Hotel Before South Africa Match?' published in a weekend newspaper on July 7th and subsequently circulated on social media. "SLC categorically and strongly

refutes the contents of the article and confirms that no such incidents, as described, have occurred. Therefore, SLC states unequivocally that the news report is entirely false, fabricated, and baseless," the SLC said in a statement. Sri Lanka secured only one victory at the T20 World Cup, defeating the Netherlands. The islanders were eliminated in the group stage as they finished third after losing to South Africa and Bangladesh, while their game against Nepal was washout out. "We vehemently believe that such false reporting unfairly damages the reputation of Sri Lanka Cricket, its officials, and the players," the SLC added. "In light of the said false allegations, Sri Lanka Cricket has requested that the respective newspaper publish a 'Right of Reply' to address and rectify the damage caused to Sri Lanka Cricket."

It will be tough to fill Kohli's shoes, says Gaikwad

PTI ■ HARARE

India batter Ruturaj Gaikwad knows well that it will be "tough" and "hard" to replace retired Virat Kohli at number three spot in T20Is and said he is just focusing on making valuable contributions with the bat in whatever position the team leadership deems fit. The retirement of Kohli, skipper Rohit Sharma and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja from the shortest format following the T20 World Cup triumph has opened the doors for the upcoming players and Gaikwad is one such talented batter who has the potential to seal the No. 3 spot. "This is a big topic and I think it's not the right point to think about it. To even compare with him (Kohli) or try to fill in his shoes is relatively very tough and very

hard," Gaikwad said on the eve of the third T20I against Zimbabwe. "As I had said in the IPL as well, it is difficult to fill my best shoes as well. Definitely, you want to start your career, you want to start the way you want, you want to play your own game. So that's the priority right now. "Focus on one game, focus on how you can contribute towards the team in whichever position you play and make sure you are on the winning side more often than not." Gaikwad has batted at No. 3 position for India in the first two T20Is against Zimbabwe but the Pune-born cricketer said he has no preference and will bat wherever the team requires him. "No, wherever the team wants, I will bat there. There is no problem. There is not much difference between the

opening and the number 3 because you have to play the new ball. So there is not much difference," he said. Gaikwad led the Chennai Super Kings in the IPL this year and he said captaincy has made him to get more involved in the game though it didn't make any difference to his batting. "Actually, to be honest, nothing has changed much. Because my batting has been the same as before. I have to play with responsibility and try and finish it on my own," he said. "It's just that the way you look at the game, I think every first time you are more involved now in the game since you have captained the IPL franchise for a long period of time. "So you tend to be into the game for a longer period of time instead of just staying in the boundary outside and just

focusing on one ball. As I said, batting wise it's not made much difference." Young opener Abhishek Sharma had spoken about how Gaikwad helped him in "keeping perspective" as he went hammer and tongs to blast a match-winning 47-ball 100 in the second T20I. "Actually, communication is not from a senior player," Gaikwad said. "It comes from a batting partner because obviously with non-strikers you feel something about a particular bowler or particular conditions and you have to have that confidence to go and share with your partner whatever you feel and what are the right options, what to do in certain situations. "Definitely this is something which I have been doing it being part of all the teams whether state team, IPL team or Indian team as well..."

Focus on Jaiswal's batting position as stronger India ready to make statement against Zimbabwe

PTI ■ HARARE

India will find it tough to choose between Yashasvi Jaiswal's seemingly effortless flamboyance and Abhishek Sharma's uber-cool aggression at the top when they rejig their combination to make space for World Cup-winning squad members in the third T20 International against Zimbabwe here on Wednesday. The arrival of Jaiswal, Sanju Samson and Shivam Dube, all of whom were part of the main team during the title-winning run last month, gives the Indian team a formidable look in the most important game of the series as visitors look to press home the advantage after the booster shot of a series-levelling 100-run victory in the second match. Abhishek, the left-handed opener, did enough to live up to his pre-series hype with a 46-ball century in only his second game and did look the part opening the innings. However, Jaiswal, with a handsome strike rate of 161 plus in 17 T20I matches, including a hundred and four half-centuries, does have the first claim to be skipper Shubman Gill's opening partner by virtue of being the reserve opener of the first-choice T20 team. Although rare but it is not

uncommon for batters to be dropped in the very next match after a milestone innings. Case in point were Manoj Tiwary, immediately after his maiden ODI hundred against the West Indies in 2011, and Karun Nair after his triple hundred in a Test match against England in 2016. But skipper Gill is unlikely to let that happen with his best friend since their U-14 days and someone who scored his first international ton with a willow borrowed from the former. So, it could well be a case of one of the two southpaws batting at one drop. Sanju Samson, who normally bats at No. 3 for Rajasthan Royals, might come in at No.5, while Ruturaj Gaikwad, who batted at No.3, will probably drop down a place to No.4. As far as the changes in the playing eleven are concerned, Jaiswal is likely to replace B Sai Sudharsan, who was selected only for the first two games. Samson will come in place of



Dhruv Jurel, who had a good outing behind the stumps. Dube, the only player who was a part of T20 World Cup playing XI, is likely to walk in to replace Rryan Parag. The imposing batter could be an even bigger nemesis for the Zimbabwean spinners during the back-10. As far as Zimbabwe is concerned, their batting has left a lot to be desired with scores of 115 while batting first and 134 in the second essay chasing 235. On the Harare Sports Club track where there is a bit of extra bounce available for the spinners, Ravi Bishnoi (6/24 from 8 overs) and Washington Sundar (3/39 in 8 overs) have proved to be unplayable at times. Bishnoi, who normally bowls 20 to 22 googlies in his 24 balls per match, has varied his pace brilliantly and with home skipper Sikandar Raza being kept quiet, the other batters haven't looked good enough to counter the Indian bowling attack. The 13-run shock

defeat in the opener was a timely wake-up call for the young visiting side and it did well to play without five specialist bowlers in the second game where batting first became an advantage. For skipper Gill, a good score would be a necessity after two dry games and he is just too good a player to fail thrice. That could prove to be an ominous sign for the home team bowlers, who don't have even one guy with express pace. In a nutshell, it could be another one-sided game. **TEAMS (FROM)** **India:** Shubman Gill (captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Abhishek Sharma, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sanju Samson (wk), Shivam Dube, Rinku Singh, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan, Mukesh Kumar, Rryan Parag, Dhruv Jurel, Khaleel Ahmed, Tushar Deshpande. **Zimbabwe:** Sikandar Raza (captain), Faraz Akram, Brian Bennett, Johnathan Campbell, Tendai Chatara, Luke Jongwe, Innocent Kaia, Clive Madande, Wessly Madhevere, Tadiwanashe Marumani, Wellington Masakadza, Brandon Mavutsa, Blessing Muzarabani, Dion Myers, Antum Naqvi, Richard Ngarava, Milton Shumba.