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MY BEST: BUMRAH
12 SPORTS



BJP keeps plum of Cabinet pie



(Left to right): Amit Shah (Minister of Home Affairs; and Minister of Cooperation), Rajnath Singh (Minister of Defence), Nirmala Sitharaman (Minister of Finance; and Minister of Corporate Affairs), Piyush Goyal (Minister of Commerce and Industry), Ashwini Vaishnaw (Minister of Railways; Minister of Information and Broadcasting; and Minister of Electronics and Information Technology) and Chirag Paswan (Minister of Food Processing Industries)

RAJESH KUMAR/DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

There is no big change in the Team Modi 3.0 as some of the top Ministers will continue with their erstwhile portfolios hence giving no scope to the major coalition partners — TDP, JD(U) — to flex their muscles to take the reins of important Ministries. The allocation of portfolios underlined Prime Minister Narendra Modi's faith in his colleagues, especially those handling the frontline Ministries which shaped and drove the Government's policies and programmes. Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nirmala Sitharaman, S Jaishankar and Nitin Gadkari — have been retained with their respective Ministries from the previous regime — Home, Defence, Finance, External Affairs and Road, Transport and Highways portfolios, to give impetus to first 100 days as mandated by Modi before going for the Lok

Sabha polls this March. Now all eyes will be on the full annual Budget to be presented by the Modi regime in the third term as the aspirations of alliance partners like review of controversial Agniveer schemes etc has to be on the platter. The new Cabinet-led by Modi aimed for continuity while trying to strike a balance between giving space to BJP bigwigs and accommodating NDA allies. Now, sources said that there is a possibility that BJP will continue to keep the Lok Sabha Speaker's post with itself and not budge to the demands of TDP as speculated. Sources said the Modi Government was reluctant to give the important Cabinet portfolios to its alliance partners. Notably, the NDA partners — TDP and Janata Dal (United) could not get the Cabinet portfolios which they demanded. TDP's Kinjarapu Ram Mohan

Naidu will be the new Civil Aviation Minister, a post previously held by Jyotiraditya Scindia. TDP leader C Pemmasani, who is the richest candidate of the Modi Government, will be Minister of State for Rural Development and Communications while Scindia will be Cabinet Minister for communications and development of northeastern region. Piyush Goyal who emerged successful in the Lok Sabha polls has been retained as Minister of Commerce while Ashwini Vaishnaw to accelerate as Railways Minister and in addition, will return in the newly formed NDA Government as the Information and Broadcasting Minister, a position previously held by Anurag Singh Thakur. The NDA partners TDP and JD(U) were lobbying for Railways Ministry but the Modi Government was reluctant to give it to its

partners. Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will be the new Agriculture Minister as well as Rural Development, and ex-Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar will now head the Ministry of Power and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs which previously held by Hardeep Singh Puri. Dharmendra Pradhan will continue heading the Education Ministry. Gujarat BJP president Chandrakant Raghunath Patil has been appointed as the new Jal Shakti Minister. Alongside Patil, V Somanna and Raj Bhushan Choudhary have been appointed as Ministers of State in the Ministry of Jal Shakti. Somanna also takes on the role of Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways, according to an official statement. Dr Jitendra Singh is MoS (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Science and

Technology; MoS (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Earth Sciences; MoS in the Prime Minister's Office; MoS in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; MoS in the Department of Atomic Energy; and MoS in the Department of Space. Arjun Ram Meghwal is MoS (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Law and Justice; and MoS in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. Jadhav Prataprao Ganpatrao is MoS (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Ayush; and MoS in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. RLD leader Jayant Chaudhary is MoS (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship; and MoS in the Ministry of Education. Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan is all set to become the new Minister of Food Processing Industries.



Army personnel during a search operation after a bus carrying pilgrims was ambushed by terrorists, in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir, on Monday. At least 9 people were killed and 33 others suffered injuries in the terror attack on the bus, according to officials PTI

Manhunt to nab J&K terrorists

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A day after suspected Pakistani terrorists desperately tried to widen the 'arc of terror', by targeting a passenger bus ferrying pilgrims via Shiv Khori Shrine to the Katra base camp in Reasi district, a joint team of security forces involving elite para commandos of the Indian Army on Monday launched a massive manhunt to track down the perpetrators behind the 'dastardly' attack. Despite the terror attack pilgrims remained undeterred as they arrived in large numbers to offer prayers at the Shiv Khori shrine on Monday. While supervising the ongoing search operations in the area, Senior Superintendent of Police, Reasi, Mohita Sharma told reporters on ground zero at least two terrorists were involved in the terror attack on Sunday. A total number of nine people, including four members of a family from Jaipur in Rajasthan, were killed and 41 others received critical injuries when their bus came under attack by a group of hiding terrorists. It is believed the terrorists belong to the same group of foreign terrorists responsible for targeting Army personnel in the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch in recent months.

Manipur CM's security convoy ambushed, Biren not present at spot

PNS ■ IMPHAL/NEW DELHI

Suspected militants ambushed the advance security convoy of Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh in Kangpokpi district on Monday morning, leaving one personnel injured. The convoy was on its way to violence-hit Jiribam district when it came under attack around 10.30 am near Kotlen village along a stretch of National Highway-53, police officials said. Multiple gunshots were fired at the vehicles of the security forces, who retaliated, a police officer said. The driver of one of the convoy vehicles suffered bullet injuries on his right shoulder, and he is being taken to a hospital in Imphal, the officer said. "Security forces have reached the ambush site, around 36 km from the state capital, and launched combing operations to trace the gunmen," he said. "CM Biren Singh, who is yet to reach Imphal from Delhi, was planning to visit Jiribam to take stock of the situation in the district," said an official. "Two police outposts, a forest beat office and at least 70 houses were torched in Jiribam by suspected militants on Saturday in a fresh bout of violence in the ethnic strife-torn state. Biren was in Delhi to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which he described as his responsibility as a Chief Minister. Singh condemned the ambush and termed it a direct attack on himself and the people of the State, assuring that the "rule of law" will be established. Speaking to reporters at Shija hospital, where the injured person is undergoing treatment, Singh said, "It is very unfortunate and highly condemnable. It's an attack on the Chief Minister, which means a direct attack on the people of the State. The state government has to do something... We will take a decision." Singh explained that fortunately the person was not seriously injured.



Modi thanks estranged leaders of Canada, Pak

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of frosty ties between India and Canada, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday responded to a congratulatory message from his Canadian counterpart Justin Trudeau and said New Delhi looks forward to working with Ottawa based on mutual understanding and respect for "each other's concerns". Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, meanwhile, on Monday congratulated Modi for forming a Central Government for the record third time. In a social media post, Sharif said "Felicitations to Narendra Modi on taking oath as the Prime Minister of India." Modi thanked Sharif for his congratulatory message, on retaining the top office for a third term. "Thank you @cmshehbaz for your good wishes," Modi said in reply to Sharif's message on X. Incidentally, Pakistan Prime Minister's "felicitations" come days after Pakistan Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in an official statement it would be premature to congratulate Modi. Former Pakistan Prime Minister and ruling party chief Nawaz Sharif also congratulated Modi for forming a Central Government for the record third time. He noted that the Lok Sabha election mandate reflects the confidence of the people in Modi's leadership and urged to "replace hate with hope". "My warm felicitations to Modi on assuming office for the third time. Your party's success in recent elections reflects the confidence of the people in your leadership. Let

us replace hate with hope and seize the opportunity to shape the destiny of the two billion people of South Asia," he wrote on X. The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd". "Thank you @CanadianPM for the congratulatory message. India looks forward to working with Canada based on mutual understanding and respect for each other's concerns," Modi said in a post on X. In his June 6 message, Trudeau said Canada stands ready to work with the new Indian Government to advance the ties if they are anchored to human rights, diversity, and the rule of law. "Congratulations to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his electoral victory. Canada stands ready to work with his Government to advance the relationship between our nations' peoples anchored to human rights, diversity, and the rule of law," the Canadian Prime Minister said. India has been maintaining that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistani elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity. There have been instances of pro-Khalistani elements threatening to harm Indian diplomats. Days after Trudeau's allegations last year, India had asked Ottawa to downsize its diplomatic presence in the country to ensure parity.

Get ready for second-degree burns

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Northwest India, including regions like Jammu division, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, and parts of Jharkhand and Odisha in the East, is bracing for another bout of extreme heat in the coming days, with temperatures expected to soar over 45 degrees Celsius. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued warnings, indicating that heatwave to severe heatwave conditions are likely to prevail over these areas in the next five days. This looming heatwave comes on the heels of a series of intense and prolonged heat waves experienced across the country in April and May. Tragically, many States, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Odisha, have reported heatwave-related deaths and illnesses. Since March, nearly 25,000 suspected cases of heat stroke and 56 deaths have been recorded as per data shared by the National Centre for Disease Control, with States like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh being the worst hit. However, these figures might be just the tip of the iceberg as data from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Delhi which also



experienced blistering weather were not included. The IMD has forecast that the heatwave is likely to affect several States, including Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Gangetic West Bengal. As per the IMD bulletin, heatwave conditions are likely in pockets of Jammu division, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, and Odisha during the next 5 days; Himachal Pradesh from June 12 to 14; Uttarakhand from June 11 to 14; Rajasthan on June 12 and 13; Madhya Pradesh from June 12 to 14. Heatwave conditions are also likely in parts of Gangetic West Bengal until June 13. Heatwave to severe heatwave

conditions are predicted in isolated pockets from June 10 to 12 and in parts of Bihar from June 10 to 12. They were likely in parts of Uttar Pradesh until June 14. IMD director general M Mohapatra said the fresh spell of heatwave is expected mainly due to an anticyclone which is causing subsidence of hot air over northwest India. "The onset of heatwaves is often attributed to anticyclones, which result in the subsidence of hot air over affected regions. This phenomenon leads to the compression and heating of air, creating a heat dome effect that traps heat and suppresses cloud formation. Consequently, cooler air currents are displaced, exacerbating the heat," explained a Met official.

Delhi Police scores big in India-Pak T20 match

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Known for its witty post and humorous takes, the Delhi Police's handle on social media platform X (formerly Twitter) has left netizens laughing through its unique meme soon after the blockbuster India-Pakistan clash in the T20 World Cup in New York as the Indian team beat its archrivals in a low-scoring nail-biting clash. The post garnered over one million views in less than a day. As millions were glued to their screens as India defeated Pakistan by six runs in the highly-anticipated T20 World Cup 2024 on Sunday, celebratory posts flooded social media. As fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah

ended the game by taking three wickets, the Delhi Police were quick to share a quirky post while tagging the New York Police Department (NYPD). The police posted, "Hey, @NYPDnews We heard two loud noises. One is 'Indiaaaa.. India!', and another is probably of broken televisions. Can you please confirm?" The post went viral almost immediately. It was reposted by over 7,700 people, reached over one million views, was liked by over 46,000 people, and had more than 1,200 comments. However, this is not the first time that the police department is deploying social media for its use.

Big cat photobombs oath pageant

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his 72 members Council of Ministers were taking oath for his third consecutive term on Sunday, an uninvited guest caught the attention of social media users at the grand forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The Delhi Police, however, through its social media handle said claims of a wild animal at the ceremony are false. "It was not wild. Ignore such baseless rumors," the police said in a post. A short video clip of the ceremony has gone viral in which netizens noticed an animal roaming in the corridors of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The animal, allegedly a leopard, was seen casually



walking in the Rashtrapati Bhavan when the official procedure was being carried out. The incident took place when Madhya Pradesh MP

Durgadas Uikey, also known as DD Uikey, was taking oath as one of the Union Ministers. In the video, an animal was seen casually walking at the Rashtrapati Bhavan when the

official procedure was being carried out on the stage. Several internet users took to social media and commented "Was it a leopard? An ordinary cat? Or a dog?" as the video was widely shared. Some alleged that the animal was a leopard while others wondered if it was a pet animal and some even raised questions over the video's authenticity. Some users even claimed that the video was edited with a focus on its background. Reacting to the viral video, a user wrote, "So wild animals are now casually roaming about in Rashtrapati Bhavan?? That is not a pet animal. What was the security doing?? Did all the CCTV footages break? Were the security personnel sleeping in the control room?"

Police uncover Naxal hideout, seize arms and ammunition in West Singhbhum

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a continued drive to eliminate Naxalite presence in the West Singhbhum district, police personnel have been relentlessly running campaigns with significant success. In the latest sequence of these operations, a major action was undertaken in the villages of Regadahatu and Tumbahaka within the Tonto police station area. Security forces successfully recovered a large cache of weapons, cartridges, and other materials from a Naxal hideout in the hilly area of Sekarpi. Providing details of the



operation, West Singhbhum Superintendent of Police Ashutosh Shekhar disclosed that top leaders of the banned CPI Maoist Naxalite organiza-

tion, including Misir Besra, Anmol, Mochu, Chaman, Kande, Ajay Mahato, Sagen Angaria, and Ashwin, along with their squad members,

are actively moving in the Kolhan area for subversive activities. In response, Chaibasa Police, in collaboration with Cobra 209, teams from the 203 and 205 battalions, Jharkhand Jaguar, and several CRPF battalions, have formed a joint task force and are continuously conducting operations.

Starting from October 10, 2023, a comprehensive joint operation has been underway in the border areas of villages Kuida, Chhota Kuida, Maradiri, Meralgada, Hathiburu, Tilaybeda, Boypaisang, Katamba, Bayahatu, Boroy, and Lemsadih under Goikera

police station, as well as the border areas of villages Husipi, Rajabasa, Tumbahaka, Regada, Patatorb, Goburu, and Luiya under Tonto police station. Based on reliable intelligence, a specific operation team was assembled on Sunday, leading to significant discoveries.

During the operation, teams from Chaibasa Police, Jharkhand Jaguar, and CRPF's 174 and 197 Battalions uncovered a substantial Naxal dump in the Sekarpi forested hills near Regadahatu and Tumbahaka. The cache included: - 7.62 mm Light Machine Gun (LMG) - 01- 7.62 mm LMG butt and

barrel - 01- 303 bore rifle - 01- 7.62 mm Self-Loading Rifle (SLR) - 01- 2-inch mortar - 01- Revolver - 01- 0.22 bore Desi rifles - 04- Volt action barrel cocking handle - 01- Desi rifle - 01- Desi double barrel rifle - 01- 303 bore rifle butt - 01- 9 mm pistol - 01- Various live cartridges - 435- Desi pistol magazine - 02- Magazine pouch - 01- Mobile phones - 09- Naxal literature - 05- Various daily use items

The Superintendent of Police emphasized that the anti-Naxal operations are ongoing in the area, accompanied by necessary legal actions. The discovery of such

a significant arsenal is a testament to the effectiveness of the coordinated efforts by multiple security forces, including Chaibasa Police, Cobra units, Jharkhand Jaguar, and the CRPF.

This campaign underscores the commitment and relentless drive of the security forces to restore peace and security in the region by dismantling Naxalite networks and ensuring the safety of the local populace. The success of these operations not only disrupts Naxalite activities but also sends a strong message about the resolute efforts of the law enforcement agencies in West Singhbhum.

Stress Management Workshop for NCC Cadets in Jamshedpur

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The suicide prevention centre, Jeevan, Jamshedpur, conducted a workshop titled "Empowering Oneself Emotionally by Understanding and Handling Stress Properly" for NCC cadets. The workshop was organised at the invitation of the 37 Jharkhand Battalion NCC/Army camp and held at NIT, Adityapur. Approximately 700 NCC cadets attended the session. The hour-long workshop aimed to provide cadets with essential tips on identifying and understanding stressors. During the session, cadets engaged in a happiness quiz and learned techniques to

quantify and manage their stress levels effectively.

The session was attended by several officers, all of whom highly appreciated the initiative. Cadets were encouraged to reach out to Jeevan for support if they ever felt overwhelmed by stress.

Jeevan extended an invitation to other organisations interested in hosting similar workshops in their respective areas. Additionally, Jeevan provides ongoing emotional support and assistance for individuals experiencing mental health issues. Their helpline is available every day from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, ensuring a confidential and non-judgmental



space for anyone seeking help. For assistance or to arrange a workshop, contact Jeevan at their helpline numbers: 9297777499 /

9297777500. This initiative underscores Jeevan's commitment to promoting mental health awareness and providing

crucial support to those in need, reinforcing the importance of emotional empowerment and stress management among the youth.

BJP leaders, supporters celebrate Modi's historic third term in Chas

PNS : BOKARO

Following the National Democratic Alliance's (NDA) victory, senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Narendra Modi was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India for the third consecutive time on Sunday. This marks a historic moment, as Modi has equaled a record by becoming the Prime Minister for three consecutive terms.

In celebration of this momentous occasion, BJP Chas Nagar North organized a live broadcast of the swearing-in ceremony via LED TV near the Singhvahini Temple on Chas Main Road. Party members and supporters rejoiced by distributing sweets and lighting fireworks,



extending their heartfelt congratulations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his cabinet colleagues.

Present at the event were several prominent BJP leaders, including District General Secretary Sanjay Tyagi, Nagar President Pannalal Kandu, Budheshwar Ghoshal, Banamali Dutta, Jhantu De, Ranjit Barnwal, Roshan

Singh, Dilip Pal, Pintu Pal, Bhola Mishra, Rajesh Rajwar, Senti Kandu, Murari Sharma, Ramesh Hajam, Rahul Kumar Barnwal, Mahesh Barnwal, Nandkishore, Rupesh Kumar, Sampoorna Rai, Hari Krishna, and Sonu Kumar, all of whom conveyed their best wishes and support for the Prime Minister and his new government.

DAV Public School Celebrates Alumni Achievements in Lok Sabha



PNS : BOKARO

DAV Public School is brimming with pride as eight of

its distinguished alumni have been elected to the Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's Parliament. This

remarkable achievement highlights the school's long-standing tradition of nurturing leaders and changemakers who go on to make significant contributions to the nation.

The school's community, including students, teachers, and parents, has united in celebration, recognizing the hard work, dedication, and perseverance of these former students. The alumni, who represent various political parties and constituencies, have credited their time at DAV Public School for laying the foundation of their values, education, and leadership skills. Principal DAV Bokaro Sector 4 S S K expressed immense pride and joy, stating, "Our alumni's success in the Lok Sabha is a testament to the quality of education and the holistic development provided at DAV Public School. We are honored to have played a part in shaping their journey." As these alumni take on their roles in the Lok Sabha, the DAV Public School community stands united in support, confident that they will continue to make the school and the nation proud.

Nilgai found dead in heatwave in Palamu

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Death of the animal in this heatwave is unstoppable in the Palamu region. More than 100 fruit bats died in Garhwa. 32 monkeys were found drowned in a well in Palamu.

And now a nilgai was found dead. Its death is without any mark of the external injury and that makes its death more enigmatic. Kumar Ashish, IFS, incharge DFO Medininagar said there is no denying the fact that animals are straying from habitat for water which is very scarce for them in this cruel summer. "Who knows the luckless bluebull was thirsty for hours and hours or for days?" quipped Ashish. The latest death of a nilgai has come as a shocker. It was found dead in a field of a farmer at village Teytarya under the Lesiganj block on Sunday. Incharge ranger Umesh Kumar Dubey has confirmed the death of the nilgai saying this incident took place on Sunday. Dr Dilip Kr Mahato block animal husbandry officer and Dr Sandeep Upadhyaya touring veterinary officer conducted the post mortem of the nilgai. Dr Mahato said the nilgai looked to have died a sudden death. There are many reasons behind sudden death. First is cardiac seizure. As it's a horrible heatwave sweeping Palamu, death by heatwave can't be ruled out said Dr Mahato. The nilgai was buried in situ position. A JCB machine dug up the grave of the nilgai. Viscera of its lungs, heart, kidney, spleen and liver has been preserved for forensic test in Ranchi. Incharge ranger Umesh Kumar Dubey said we have sent the viscera of the nilgai to the forensic lab for the animals in Ranchi.



A JCB machine in the background for burial of the nilgai while a vet doctor looks at the carcass photo by PNS

CDPO examination conducted peacefully in Lohardaga

VINOD PRASAD : LOHARDAGA

The regular appointment examination of Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) under the Department of Women, Child Development and Social Security, organized by Jharkhand Public Service Commission in Lohardaga, which was conducted under advertisement number 21/2023, was conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner without any misconduct. In this regard, DDC co-examination controller Dilip Singh Shekhawat informed through telephone that in the



general knowledge examination in total 23 centers of Lohardaga, a total of 1992 out of 4741 candidates appeared in the first shift and 2749 were absent, while in the second shift, 4741 candidates appeared. 1989 were present and 2752 were absent. In all the centres, the work has been done in a confidential manner

under the surveillance of CCTV, keeping the overall information confidential in front of the center superintendent and teachers. No untoward incident has occurred anywhere. The examination centers mainly include Government +2 Chunnail High School, Lohardaga, Government +2 Nadia Hindu High School, Lohardaga, Urs Line High School, Lohardaga, Manzoormati High School, Mahadev Ashram Senha, Sant Anna Girls High School, Patra Toli Lohardaga, Madhusudan Lal Aggarwal Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Lohardaga.

Jamshedpur, was named Player of the Tournament, while Sanchit Raj from Loyola Alumni Association received the Best Batsman trophy, and Anil Saroj from XLRI Jamshedpur was honored as the Best Bowler.

The tournament featured a format with two pools, each team playing two league matches. Semi-finals and finals determined the ultimate winner. The event emphasized fair play, with professional umpires officiating matches and strict adherence to rules. XLRI expresses gratitude to all participating teams, organizers, and supporters for their contributions to the success of the tournament, showcasing the values of sportsmanship and community engagement.

Loyola Alumni triumphs in XLRI's Cricket Tournament

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

XLRI Jamshedpur organised Fr. Quinn Enright Memorial Cricket Tournament 2024 - Cricket for a Cause, a remarkable event that witnessed Team Loyola Alumni emerging victorious after defeating XL Tigers in the finals. This tournament, held in memory of XLRI's esteemed Founding Director, Fr. Quinn Enright, S.J., was a testament to the institution's commitment to academic excellence and community service.

The event, part of XLRI's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, aimed to raise funds for charity while promoting inclusivity by inviting teams from diverse backgrounds to participate. Six teams competed in the tennis ball cricket

tournament held from June 1 to 9. The participating teams included XL Tigers (XLRI Faculty & Staff), Loyola Alumni Association, XL Hunters (XLRI FPM & EFPM Students), GMP Avengers (XLRI PGDM-GM Students), DTDC Warriors, and KFMS (XLRI Support Staff).

In a thrilling finale, XL Tigers faced off against Loyola Alumni Association. XL Tigers opted to bat first, scoring 128 runs for 10 wickets in 15 overs, with Prashant playing a crucial innings of 64 runs. However, Loyola Alumni Association chased down the target on the last ball, clinching victory and securing the winner's trophy.

Principal Fr. Vinod Fernandes of Loyola School Jamshedpur presented the trophies to the winners. Lalit Sejwal, an FPM Scholar from XLRI



Bokaro Steel Plant receives Kalinga environment excellence award

PNS : BOKARO

Bokaro, June 10: In a ceremony held in the conference room of the Administrative Director (Works) on June 10, Bokaro Steel Plant was awarded the prestigious Kalinga Environment Excellence Award in the category of "Environmental Excellence." The award was presented to the Director-in-charge of Bokaro Steel Plant B.K Tiwari by Rajan Prasad, (P & A / Works). The event was attended by senior executives and plant officials. The award ceremony took place on June 8, 2024, in Bhubaneswar, organized by the Institute of Quality.

Notably on May 15, 2024, before the members of the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Industries Department, Hyderabad, and the State Pollution Control Board, Odisha, Nitesh Ranjan, Assistant General Manager (Environment), made a presentation. All questions raised by the committee members were accurately addressed by N.P. Srivastava, General Manager (Environment).

The proactive initiatives of Bokaro Steel Plant in environmental conservation and adoption of sustainable practices in steel production significantly impressed the committee. Under the leadership of Director-in-charge B.K Tiwari, BSL has launched campaigns integrating circular economy, energy efficiency, and environmental protection across various sectors.

It is noteworthy that BSL has achieved a reduction of 12.07% in particulate matter emissions and a 77.3% decrease in specific effluent discharge over the past three fiscal years. Additionally, BSL achieved 100% utilization of solid waste during the financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24.



Annapurna Devi becomes Women and Child Development Minister

Sanjay Seth made Minister of State for Defence in Union Govt

PNS: RANCHI

The President of India today allocated portfolios among ministers of the Union Government, who took oath of office and secrecy with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 9.

Among the Union Ministers, Koderma MP Annapurna Devi has been made the Union Minister of Women and Child Development, while Ranchi MP Sanjay Seth has been given charge of Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence.

Among the 72 ministers of the new government, 30 have been made Cabinet Ministers, five with independent charge, and 36 have been made Ministers of State.

Both Annapurna Devi and

Sanjay Seth have won their seats for the second consecutive terms. Annapurna was Minister of State in the HRD Minister in the Modi 2.0 government, while Sanjay Seth was not given the ministerial berth.

Annapurna Devi Yadav, born on February 2, 1970, in Ajmeri, Bihar (now part of Jharkhand), has had a distinguished political career that spans over two decades, representing the Kodarma constituency as a member of the Legislative Assembly, initially as a member of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) before joining the BJP.

She began her political career as a Member of the Legislative Assembly from the Koderma constituency, a position she held from



1998 to 2014. Her tenure in the State assembly was marked by dedicated service to her constituency.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, she did not contest, but she made a strong comeback in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. She was elected as a Member of Parliament from the Koderma constituency, marking her entry into national politics.

While 64-year-old Sanjay Seth is considered a fiery leader of BJP. He is very active at the organizational level. Not only this, he is deeply involved in promoting socio-cultural activities. He always played an important role in the organizing committee like Kavi Sammelan, Dahi Handi

Competition, Sri Krishna Janmotsav.

He got the reward of being associated with social concerns in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. When the central leadership of BJP made him its candidate from Ranchi Lok Sabha seat, he did not disappoint the party and defeated former Union Minister Subodhkant Sahay by a huge margin. In 2024, he got a chance to represent Ranchi parliamentary constituency again.

Sanjay Seth has always been associated with the common people. He has always been working in the social and cultural scenario. He also kept getting the reward for this from undivided Jharkhand to the formation of Jharkhand state.

In 1999, Sanjay Seth was made the President of the Federation of Jharkhand Chamber of Commerce and Industries. Apart from this, he was also a member of the Local Board, State Bank of India, Patna, Bihar and Jharkhand. After this, after the formation of Jharkhand state in 2005, he remained a member of the Local Board, State Bank of India, Patna, Bihar and Jharkhand. Sanjay Seth became the chairman of Jharkhand State Khadi and Village Industries Board in 2016.

Sanjay Seth played an important role in the Namo campaign in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Sanjay Seth's social image got a new identity as a political face in 2019.

Marandi hails Modi's decision of release of PMKSN funds



PNS : RANCHI

BJP State President and former Chief Minister Babul Marandi expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said that the first decision of the Modi government for the third time has been dedicated to the welfare of villages, poor and farmers.

He said that the Prime Minister started his third term today by signing the file of Kisan Samman Nidhi. Also, as per his promise, he also decided to build three crore rural, urban toilets, LPG facilities and provide them with concrete houses.

He said that the Modi government has been dedicated to villages, poor and farmers since its first term. Kisan Samman Nidhi is a great support for farmers. Rs 6000 is sent to the farmers' account at the rate of Rs 2000 per

Pratul terms JMM/Cong govt as anti tribal, Moolvasi

BJP state spokesperson Pratul Shahdev today countered the press conference of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and said that Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the coalition government do not want the development of the tribal natives here under any circumstances. As per the promise, there should have been 22.5 lakh government jobs here in four and a half years. But this announcement proved to be a mere hoax. Students demanding their rights were beaten up. Women harassment reached record levels. Former Chief Minister Hemant Soren and current minister Alamgir Alam are both in jail on corruption charges. The law and order situation in the entire state

has collapsed.

Said that the priority of this government is only its own development. That is why all the leases were given only to the members of the Soren family and their close ones. The tribal natives are feeling cheated in this government. Pratul said that now this government is on its political death bed. They have not been able to fulfill even a single promise made in their manifesto. They deliberately stalled the Khatian based planning policy. The triple test required for OBC reservation has not started yet. There are reports of large scale corruption in Abua Awas too. This is a completely flop government.

installment three times a year.

He said that today for the third time, the 17th installment of the scheme has been released through the Modi government, in which an amount of Rs 20 thousand crore will be sent to the accounts of 9.30 crore farmers of the country through DBT. While the poor will also get concrete houses.

He said that lakhs of farmers and the poor of Jharkhand are also continuously benefiting from this welfare scheme.

He said that the NDA government under the leadership of Modi ji will connect the farmers and the poor to the mainstream of development by running various welfare schemes for the all-round development of farmers in its third term as well.

School timings changed till June 15 due to intense heat wave in State

21 districts record temp beyond 40 degrees Celsius

PNS : RANCHI

In view of the persisting heat wave conditions prevailing across the State, the School Education and Literacy Department has issued an order on June 9 to all schools in Jharkhand regarding the modification of timings.

As per the directive issued by Nandkishore Lal, Joint Secretary Education Department, till June 15 classes for KG to standard 12 will now be conducted from 7 am to 11:30 am. After this date the schools can operate as per their pre-determined time. The change in school timings will be applicable in all government, non-government aided, minority and private institutions.

According to the Meteorological Department, the temperature in 21 districts including Ranchi is beyond 40 degree Celsius and heat wave alert have been issued across the State.

From June 11 to June 14, the MET Centre, Ranchi has issued an orange alert depicting severe heat wave conditions for districts namely Garwah, Palamu, Chatra, Deoghar, Jamtara, Dumka and Godda. A yellow alert for heat wave in Koderma, Giridih, Hazaribagh, Bokaro, Dhanbad, Ramgarh, Lohardaga, Ranchi, Gumla, Khunti, East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum and Simdega has been issued.

As per the weather bulletin released on June 10 by the MET Observatory Centre-Ranchi, the maximum temperature in the State was recorded at Daltonganj at 45 degree Celsius which is 5.1 degrees above normal. Jamshedpur and Bokaro were recorded at 42 and 41.5 degree Celsius which is 4.3 and 1.3 degrees above



normal. Ranchi was observed at 40.3 degree Celsius which is 4.6 degrees above normal whereas Chaibasa was 3.8 above normal at 40.4 degree Celsius.

"A trough passing from north western parts of Bihar to Nagaland is likely to have slight effects on the weather in Jharkhand as well. Parts of southern Jharkhand are likely to witness light rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm and lightning on June 11. North east and south east Jharkhand may also witness light showers during the second half of the day on June 12. On June 13 and June 14 districts in north east, central and south Jharkhand are expected to experience light rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm and lightning," Director MET Centre, Ranchi Abhishek Anand

There is also a prediction of cloudy skies in various parts of the State June 13 onwards especially for the second half of the day. Gusty winds with speed of up to 30 to 40 km per hour may also occur.

As per the communiqué, from June 11 to June 14 the maximum temperature in Ranchi and its surrounding areas will be around 42 degree Celsius.

Police arrest four persons in kidnapping case

PNS : RANCHI

Plywood businessman Amit Gupta was kidnapped near Kishoreganj Chowk in Kotwali police station area. This incident happened late on Sunday night. As soon as the information about the incident was received, on the instructions of Ranchi SSP, Chandan K Sinha, the police team led by Kotwali DySP, Prakash Soye took action and recovered him safely within four hours. Police have also arrested all the kidnappers involved in this incident.

At the same time, the police have also caught the vehicle involved in this incident. The arrested accused include a girl and a boy.

Plywood businessman Amit Gupta was kidnapped by criminals late on Sunday night near Kishoreganj Chowk. When the criminals were forcibly making Amit Gupta sit in their car, a local person called the control room on dial 100 and informed the police about the matter. But before the police could reach, the criminals fled towards the ring road.

Seeing the seriousness of the matter, Ranchi SSP immediately started a vehicle checking campaign in the entire city. On the other hand, the team of many police stations including Kotwali DySP, Kotwali Police Station In Charge were busy in the search of the kidnappers. After being chased for about 20 kilometers, when the criminals felt that they would be caught now, they left their car and businessman Amit Gupta on the road of JSCA Stadium in Dhurva and started running away. But the police team chased them and caught them.

The four who have been arrested in the businessman's kidnapping case include Vishal, Kajal, Rajiv Singh and Amarnath Pandey.

JMM demands 2 more union ministers from Jharkhand in Centre



PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), on Monday, said that Jharkhand should have got at least one Cabinet Minister and one Minister of State. For implementing Sarna Dharma Code, caste census, 27 per cent reservation for backward classes, Jharkhand MPs should have got more share in Modi cabinet but they did not get it, the party said.

Addressing a press meet JMM General Secretary and Spokesperson, Supriyo Bhattacharya said that only Annapurna Devi got one cabinet, she is Santhal's daughter, she is Koderma's daughter-in-law, many congratulations for this but they did not get any Dalit MP from here who is connected to the soil of Jharkhand. "Many senior leaders have been elected from Jharkhand and become Lok Sabha MPs. BJP ignored all of them. Because all of them were people connected to Jharkhand. They were natives. Their ancestors were natives," he added.

Targeting the Modi Government, he said, they made such a person a Minister who did not raise even a single question in the Parliament in 5 years on the closed HEC.

Bhattacharya further said that they have given the charge of Minister of State to those MPs who have been opposing the policies of the Central Government which sucked the blood of thousands of workers. "It is a strange irony. You have given a cabinet ministry to your colleague who has only one member. But you have shown the finger to your supporting organization

here. Now these people will keep following them. In the assembly elections, such people will be seen pleading for tickets. Now how will they be able to tell the people of Jharkhand that our commitment is linked to the tribals and natives here. The MP of their supporting party is also a two-time MP. He is a son of the soil. He is a local. He is a native. But he was sidelined," he added.

The JMM General Secretary further said, whatever they used to say before the elections, Ghuspaithia-intruder, they themselves have proved it. He said, still now their first task should be the revival of HEC, guarantee of Sarna Dharma Code, 27 per cent reservation for backward classes and amendment in 44 sections of labour law. "I came to know that when the MPs here started taking oath, there was darkness in their office in Ranchi. Some people were hired. Symbolic celebrations took place in Ratu Road and Lalpur. No BJP leader was present in this," he added.

Bhattacharya further said, out of the 240 BJP members who have won, only 115 MPs are native party members. "Also, there are 125 MPs who have come to BJP from other parties. That is why enthusiasm is not visible in BJP today. The BJP which used to talk about Modi's government, Modi's guarantee, today it has to say my leader, Chandrababu Naidu, my leader Nitish Kumar, my leader Chirag Paswan, my leader Eknath Shinde. Keeping in mind the state's interest, Jharkhand should have got at least one more Cabinet Minister, one more State Minister," he added.



DGP Ajay Kumar Sing holds a meeting with senior officials at Police HQ in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

Kalpana Soren takes oath as member of State Assembly

'Will continue working for party and the people of the State'

PNS : RANCHI

The voice of Kalpana Murmu Soren, wife of former Chief Minister Hemant Soren and newly elected member from Gandey Assembly, will now be heard in the House. She took the membership of the Assembly on Monday evening. Kalpana was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Assembly Speaker Rabinranath Mahato.

During this, Chief Minister Champai Soren, Minister Banna Gupta, Satyanand Bhokta, JMM's Rajya Sabha MP Dr. Sarfaraz Ahmed, former MLA Mamta Devi and many others were present. On this occasion, CM Champai Soren said that there was a by-election along with the Lok Sabha elections. Five MPs and one MLA have won from INDI alliance. There are expectations from every representative in the House. The more the number increases, the more strength will be gained. Kalpana Soren's victory will strengthen the party.

Health Minister Banna Gupta said that there has been a huge victory in the Lok Sabha. Kalpana Soren is in the role of a strong Lakshmbai and Savitri of the alliance. The big leaders of the alliance will take a decision about her. Labor Planning and Industry



Newly elected MLA from Gandey Assembly, Kalpana Murmu Soren greets Chief Minister Champai Soren during her oath taking ceremony in the Speaker's chamber of the Jharkhand Assembly in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

Minister Satyanand Bhokta has congratulated Kalpana Soren. He has said that she will do better work.

On this occasion, Kalpana Soren said that the responsibility has increased a lot. Time is short but we will complete the responsibility and the work that is left. The state government is doing a good job. After the Lok Sabha elections, three to four months are left for the assembly elections. The people of the state have given their affection and love. Hemant Soren's thinking has to be conveyed to the voters of Jharkhand. Everyone will work together strongly.

Kalpana Soren has become MLA by winning the Gandey by-election.

She has defeated BJP candidate Dilip Verma by 26 thousand votes. Kalpana has been elected MLA from the Gandey seat, on that seat Dr. Sarfaraz Ahmed of JMM was elected in the Jharkhand assembly elections held in the year 2019. After the summons to Hemant Soren, Sarfaraz resigned from the membership of the Legislative Assembly on 31 December 2023. This seat has been vacant since then. After which Kalpana Soren entered the electoral fray on this seat.

5 extremists, including PLFI Area Commander held



SSP Chandan Sinha along with senior officials during a press conference in Ranchi on Monday. Pix by Ratan Lal

PNS : RANCHI

Five extremists including the PLFI area commander who got the disputed land captured at gunpoint in Ranchi have been arrested.

Based on the secret information received by Ranchi SSP, Chandan Kumar Sinha, the police team took action and arrested five militants including the area commander of the PLFI militant organization near the Lalgutwa Overbridge in Nagdi police

station area. The arrested militants include area commander Rohit Baraik, Neeraj Paik, Anmol Baraik, Rohit Singh and Kali Toppo. Two country-made pistols, Rs 1.50 lakh, a Thar and a Scorpio vehicle along with many other items have been recovered from them. The SSP gave this information in a press conference on Monday evening.

The SSP had received information that the PLFI militants had come to Nagdi police station area to carry

out a major extortion incident for extortion. The SSP received the information, after which a police team was formed. The police team took action and arrested all the five militants.

Area commander Rohit Baraik does land business in many police station areas of Ranchi. They capture the land with the help of their other associates and take money from the land dealer and get the disputed land captured at gunpoint.

SBPS STUDENTS QUALIFY JEE ADVANCED 2024



cess. She appreciated the efforts of the parents and the teachers and gave her best wishes for their bright future.

Sarla Birla Public School students performed exceptionally well in JEE Advanced 2024. As per the information received up till now, Dhairya Pandey, Apurbo Roy, Raunak Kumar, Aaryamaan Kumar and Devanksh Sarkar added to the school's glory. Principal Paramjit Kaur asserted that hard work and determination amount to success.

Bypolls for 13 Assembly seats in 7 States on July 10

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Monday announced bypolls to 13 assembly constituencies across seven states, including four in West Bengal, on July 10. The bypolls are to be held against vacancies created either due to deaths or resignation of incumbent members.

The assembly seats going for bypolls are Rupauli (Bihar), Raiganj, Ranaghat Dakshin, Bagda and Maniktala (all West Bengal), Vikravandi (Tamil Nadu), Amarwara (Madhya Pradesh), Badrinath and Manglaur (Uttarakhand), Jalandhar West (Punjab) and Dehra. Hamirpur and Nalagarh (Himachal Pradesh).

The notification for the elections will be issued on June 14, the last date for filing of nomination papers is June 21, the poll papers will be scrutinised on June 24 and the last date for withdrawal of nomination papers is June 26. The bypolls will be held on July 10 and the counting of votes will be on July 13. The Election Commission said the bypolls have to be completed before July 15. The bypoll to the Jalandhar West assembly constituency was necessitated by the resignation of Sheetal Angural. Angural was AAP's Jalandhar West (SC) lawmaker. He resigned from the assembly on March 28, a day after he and then-Jalandhar MP Sushil Rinku switched over to the BJP



from AAP. During the 2022 assembly polls, Angural defeated Rinku, who was the Congress candidate, from the Jalandhar West constituency. The Amarwara assembly seat in MP was won by Kamlesh Shah on a Congress ticket in the November 2023 elections when he defeated BJP nominee Monika Manmohan Shah Batti by a margin of 25,086 votes. The byelection was necessitated after Kamlesh Shah, a three-time Congress MLA from Amarwara, resigned on March 29 this year and joined the ruling BJP soon after. Shah subsequently resigned from the state assembly. Historically, since 1972, the BJP has won the Amarwara (ST) seat, twice—in 1990 and 2008—while the Congress bagged it nine times. The Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP), a tribal outfit, secured this constituency once in 2003. Bypolls for three assembly seats in Himachal Pradesh represented by three

Independent lawmakers who resigned from the assembly and joined the BJP. The three Independent MLAs -- Ashish Sharma (Hamirpur), Hoshiyar Singh (Dehra) and KL Thakur (Nalagarh) -- resigned from the assembly on March 22 and joined the BJP the following day. The by-election to the Rupauli assembly seat, a part of the Purnea Lok Sabha constituency in Bihar, was necessitated following the resignation of sitting JD(U) MLA Bima Bharti, who recently switched over to the RJD and contested the Lok Sabha polls as its candidate from the Purnea seat. The Badrinath seat in Uttarakhand fell vacant after Congress MLA Rajendra Bhandari resigned from the House in March and joined the BJP. The bypoll to the Manglaur seat was necessitated by the death of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MLA Sarwat Karim Ansari last October.

Sonia meets Bangladesh PM



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi met with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina here on Monday and held discussions on a wide range of issues. Sonia Gandhi was accompanied by her son and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, besides her daughter and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. "CPP Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi, and General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra called on the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina Wazed this afternoon in New Delhi," the Congress said in a social media post.

"We discussed a wide range of topics to further strengthen the natural bond that India

and Bangladesh share, based on trust, cooperation, and a commitment to mutual growth," Rahul Gandhi said in a post on his WhatsApp channel. He also shared a video of the meeting with Hasina. The Congress also shared the video, besides pictures of the meeting and said they discussed a wide range of topics to strengthen the India-Bangladesh bond. The photos showed Hasina greeting Sonia Gandhi with a hug. The Gandhi family shares a close bond with Sheikh Hasina's family. Sonia Gandhi, Rahul and Priyanka also met with the visiting Bangladesh delegation accompanying the prime minister.

Hasina arrived in Delhi on Saturday to attend Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony on June 9.

IAF Chief to attend graduation ceremony at AFA



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari will attend the graduation ceremony at the Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal, in Hyderabad on June 15, officials said here on Monday.

This will mark the successful completion of pre-commissioning training of flight cadets of the flying and ground duty branches of the Indian Air Force (IAF), the defence ministry said in a statement.

"The Combined Graduation Parade (CGP) of the 213 Officers' Course at the Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal, Hyderabad, will be held on 15 June, 2024, with traditional military splendour, to mark the successful completion of pre-commissioning training of flight cadets of the Flying and Ground Duty branches of the Indian Air Force (IAF)," it said.

Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari would be the Reviewing Officer of the parade, the statement said. During the function, he will confer the President's Commission to the graduating trainees.

President Murmu meets Maldivian counterpart, Nepal PM at Rashtrapati Bhavan



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday met her Maldivian counterpart Mohamed Muizzu and Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

During the meeting with Prachanda, Murmu said Nepal is a priority partner under India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and conveyed the country's commitment to "further strengthen our unique ties". Both leaders discussed ways to take forward the developmental initiatives across various sectors in Nepal, which are benefiting the people of both countries, a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said. Welcoming President Muizzu, Murmu conveyed her greetings to the new government and the people of the Maldives and

expressed confidence that the island nation will continue on the path of prosperity and development under his leadership. "Both leaders noted the longstanding and multifaceted ties between two countries and highlighted important pillars of our wide-ranging bilateral cooperation including people-to-people linkages, capacity building cooperation, economic and trade relations and development cooperation," the statement said. The President expressed hope that India-Maldives relations will continue to strengthen in the years to come, it added. Both Prachanda and Muizzu were among seven leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union Council of Ministers here on Sunday.

Modi did no favours to farmers by releasing fund due to them: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi did no special favour to farmers by releasing the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi fund, which was due to them a month ago but delayed by the poll code, the Congress said on Monday. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the release of the 17th instalment of funds, which Modi is touting as the first decision of his new government, is the legitimate entitlement due to farmers, according to the policy of his government.

If he is genuinely concerned about farmers, the prime minister should grant legal status to minimum support price (MSP) for their produce, announce a farm loan waiver and provide guaranteed insurance payment directly into their bank accounts, he said. Taking charge as prime minister in his third term, Modi on Monday signed his first file authorising the release of the 17th instalment of the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi fund, amounting to nearly Rs 20,000 crore that will benefit around 9.3 crore farmers. After signing on to the release of the fund, Modi said, "Ours is a government fully committed to 'kisan kalyan (farmers' welfare)'.

Jaishankar holds meetings with leaders of neighbouring countries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister S Jaishankar on Monday held separate bilateral meetings with Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe. Jaishankar also called on Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth, Bhutan PM Tshering Tobgay and Seychelles Vice President Ahmed Afif.

The seven leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region were in Delhi to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union Council of Ministers on Sunday. "Delighted to call on President Dr Mohamed Muizzu of Maldives today in New Delhi. Look forward to India and Maldives working together closely," Jaishankar said on X. Jaishankar was the external affairs minister in Modi's previous Cabinet. He took oath as a Union minister on Sunday. It was Muizzu's first visit to India after he became the island nation's president on November 17 last year. The ties between India and the



Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office. Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. The Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians earlier this month. After his meeting with Hasina, Jaishankar said, "Honoured to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh today. The India-Bangladesh Maitri continues to advance."

On his meeting with Wickremesinghe, Jaishankar said, "Appreciate President Ranil Wickremesinghe of Sri Lanka for receiving me this morning in New Delhi. Recognized the steady progress in India-Sri Lanka relations."

"Great to meet PM Tshering Tobgay of Bhutan. Spoke about our unique and multifaceted friendship," Jaishankar said on the meeting with Tobgay. He said the meeting with Mauritius Prime Minister Jugnauth, reflected the special bond between the two countries.

On the meeting with the Nepalese prime minister, Jaishankar said: "So glad to call on PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' of Nepal. Discussed the growing various facets of India-Nepal cooperation."

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, his Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay and Vice-President of Seychelles Ahmed Afif also attended Modi's swearing-in ceremony.

Celebrities congratulate Modi on securing third term as PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Film stars Chiranjeevi, Sidharth Malhotra, Varun Dhawan, Kamal Haasan and Paresh Rawal on Monday congratulated Narendra Modi for taking oath as the prime minister for the third consecutive term.

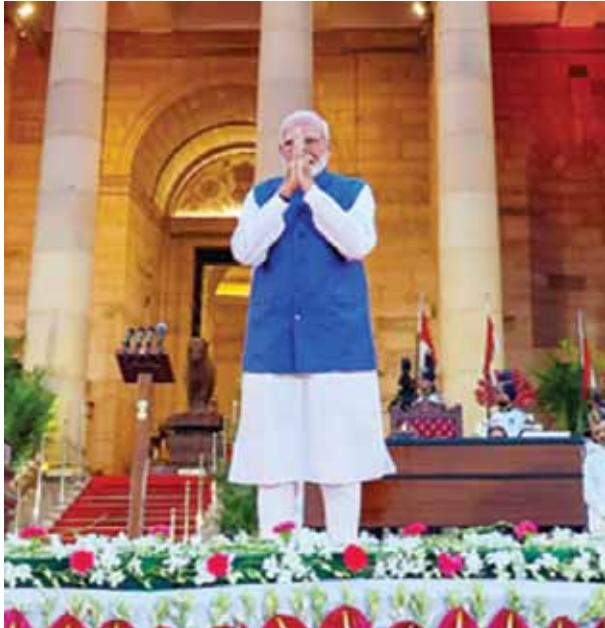
Modi, 73, was sworn in as the PM for the third time in a row at a grand ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday evening here. He became only the second prime minister after Jawaharlal Nehru to secure a third consecutive term.

Modi, 73, was sworn in as the PM for the third time in a row at a grand ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday evening here. He became only the second prime minister after Jawaharlal Nehru to secure a third consecutive term. "Heartly Congratulations to Shri @narendramodi ji on being sworn in as the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India for a historic third term! I wish you and all the wonderful ministers in your cabinet all the strength to take our country forward on the path of pros-

perity and glory," he wrote. His son and "RRR" star Ram Charan also congratulated Modi.

"Congratulations to India's beloved Prime Minister @narendramodi ji and #NDAGovernment commencing your historic third term. Looking forward to a more prosperous India under your reign. Jai Hind #Narendramodi #PMOath #ModiCabinet," Charan said. "PM @narendramodi, congratulations for a historic 3rd term. Jai Hind," wrote Malhotra on his Instagram Stories. His "Student of the Year" co-star Varun Dhawan tagged Modi on X and said: "May you guide our country to greater heights. Hari Om." Haasan, founder of political party Makkal Needhi Maiam in Tamil Nadu, urged the prime minister to work together to create a "more inclusive India".

"Nations that harness their greatest strength - their people - shall accomplish the greatest glories. Congratulations to the Hon.



Prime Minister of India, Shri @narendramodi ji, on your third term.

"In the spirit of national interest, unity, and patriotic duty, let the elected representatives of the 18th Lok Sabha work together to fulfil the dream of

a stronger, brighter, and more inclusive India. Jai Hind!" he wrote in an X post. Rawal, former BJP MP from Ahmedabad East Lok Sabha seat, said Indian citizens look forward to more terms under the Modi government.

"The people of India extend their heartfelt best wishes to our respected leader Shri @narendramodi ji on this historic occasion of him becoming the Prime Minister for the third time. Remember one thing that the people love you a lot, so they will not just count till three, they will keep counting further. Jai Ho. Jaikar Ho."

"Congratulations to Shri Narendra Modiji on your remarkable third term as our Prime Minister. India's future certainly looks bright with your leadership at the helm," wrote Malayalam superstar Mohanlal on X. He also congratulated actor and BJP's sole MP from Kerala Suresh Gopi (Thrissur) and Kerala BJP General Secretary George Kurian on being sworn in as Union Ministers of State.

"I extend my congratulations to Thirru. @narendramodi Avl on being sworn in as @PMOIndia for the third consecutive term," said Tamil cinema star Vijay, according to his political party Tamilaga

Vettri Kazhagam's official X page. In an X post, Suneil Shetty wished Modi "continued strength and wisdom in your leadership".

The prime minister's swearing-in ceremony was attended by a host of film celebrities, including Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Rajinikanth, BJP MP-elect from Mandi Kangana Ranaut, Anil Kapoor, Anupam Kher, Raveena Tandon, Vikrant Massey, Anuradha Paudwal, Rajkumar Hirani, Mahaveer Jain, and Kailash Kher. After the ceremony, Kher shared the video of Modi taking oath on his official X page. "An oath that makes Indians feel empowered and secure! Jai Hind! #PrimeMinister #India," the actor captioned the clip.

"Best wishes, Prime Minister @narendramodi Ji, on your swearing-in. May your tenure be marked by progress, strength, and unwavering commitment to the nation's prosperity. Bharat Mata ki Jai!" Kapoor wrote on the microblogging site.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IN MODI 3.0		
SL. NO.	NAME	MINISTRY
		Prime Minister and also in-charge of: Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; Department of Atomic Energy; Department of Space; All important policy issues; and All other portfolios not allocated to any Minister.
CABINET MINISTERS		
1.	Rajnath Singh	Minister of Defence.
2.	Amit Shah	Minister of Home Affairs; and Minister of Cooperation.
3.	Nitin Jairam Gadkari	Minister of Road Transport and Highways.
4.	Jagat Prakash Nadda	Minister of Health and Family Welfare; and Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
5.	Shivraj Singh Chouhan	Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; and Minister of Rural Development.
6.	Nirmala Sitharaman	Minister of Finance; and Minister of Corporate Affairs.
7.	Dr. S Jaishankar	Minister of External Affairs.
8.	Shri Manohar Lal	Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs; and Minister of Power.
9.	H. D. Kumaraswamy	Minister of Heavy Industries; and Minister of Steel.
10.	Pyush Goyal	Minister of Commerce and Industry.
11.	Dharmendra Pradhan	Minister of Education.
12.	Jitan Ram Manjhi	Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
13.	Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh	Minister of Panchayati Raj; and Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
14.	Sarbananda Sonowal	Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
15.	Dr. Virendra Kumar	Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment.
16.	KR Naidu	Minister of Civil Aviation.
17.	Prahalad Joshi	Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution; and Minister of New and Renewable Energy.
18.	Jual Oram	Minister of Tribal Affairs.
19.	Giriraj Singh	Minister of Textiles.
20.	Ashwini Vaishnav	Minister of Railways; Minister of Information and Broadcasting; and Minister of Electronics and Information Technology.
21.	Jyotiraditya M. Scindia	Minister of Communications; and Minister of Development of North Eastern Region.
22.	Bhupender Yadav	Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
23.	Ganendra S Shekhawat	Minister of Culture; and Minister of Tourism.
24.	Anpurna Devi	Minister of Women and Child Development.
25.	Shri Kiren Rijiju	Minister of Parliamentary Affairs; and Minister of Minority Affairs.
26.	Hardeep Singh Puri	Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
27.	Mansukh Mandaviya	Minister of Labour and Employment; and Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports.
28.	G. Kishan Reddy	Minister of Coal; and Minister of Mines.
29.	Chirag Paswan	Minister of Food Processing Industries.
30.	C R Patil	Minister of Jal Shakti.
MINISTERS OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE)		
1.	Rao Inderjit Singh	Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation; Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Planning; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Culture.
2.	Jitendra Singh	Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Science and Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Earth Sciences; Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office; Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; Minister of State in the Department of Atomic Energy; and Minister of State in the Department of Space.
3.	Arjun Ram Meghwal	Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Law and Justice; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.
4.	Jadhav P Ganpatrao	Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Ayush; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
5.	Jayant Chaudhary	Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Education.
MINISTERS OF STATE		
1.	Jitin Prasada	Minister of State in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
2.	Shripad Yesso Naik	Minister of State in the Ministry of Power; and Minister of State in the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
3.	Pankaj Chaudhary	Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance.
4.	Krishan Pal	Minister of State in the Ministry of Cooperation.
5.	Ramdas Athawale	Minister of State in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
6.	Ram Nath Thakur	Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
7.	Nityanand Rai	Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs.
8.	Anupriya Patel	Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
9.	V Somanna	Minister of State in the Ministry of Jal Shakti; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways.
10.	CS Pemmasani	Minister of State in the Ministry of Rural Development; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Communications.
11.	SP Singh Baghel	Minister of State in the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
12.	SS Karandlaje	Minister of State in the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
13.	Kirtivardhan Singh	Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change; and Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs.
14.	BL Verma	Minister of State in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
15.	Shantanu Thakur	Minister of State in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
16.	Suresh Gopi	Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Tourism.
17.	L. Murugan	Minister of State in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.
18.	Ajay Tamta	Minister of State in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
19.	Bandi Sanjay Kumar	Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs.
20.	Kamlesh Paswan	Minister of State in the Ministry of Rural Development.
21.	Bhagirath Choudhary	Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
22.	Satish Chandra Dubey	Minister of State in the Ministry of Coal; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Mines.
23.	Sanjay Seth	Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence.
24.	Ravneet Singh	Minister of State in the Ministry of Food Processing Industries; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Railways.
25.	Durgadas Uikey	Minister of State in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
26.	Raksha Nikhil Khadse	Minister of State in the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
27.	Sukanta Majumdar	Minister of State in the Ministry of Education; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region.
28.	Savitri Thakur	Minister of State in the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
29.	Tokhan Sahu	Minister of State in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
30.	RB Choudhary	Minister of State in the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
31.	Bhupathi RS Varma	Minister of State in the Ministry of Heavy Industries; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Steel.
32.	Harsh Malhotra	Minister of State in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
33.	NJ Bambhaniya	Minister of State in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
34.	Muridhar Mohol	Minister of State in the Ministry of Cooperation; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
35.	George Kurian	Minister of State in the Ministry of Minority Affairs; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
36.	Pabitra Margherita	Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Textiles.

With coffers running dry, Chandrababu as CM faces huge task to deliver super six promise

PTI ■ AMARAVATI (ANDHRA PRADESH)

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu who is set to take the reins of power in Andhra Pradesh shortly will have the daunting task of making bleak coffers ring to fulfill the “Super Six” that his party promised during the run-up to the recently concluded Assembly polls. Naidu is scheduled to be sworn in as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh on June 12. As a precursor to his journey of financial challenges, Naidu needs over Rs 4,500 crore to disburse social pensions to about 65 lakh beneficiaries by July 1. As part of his “Super Six”, Naidu promised to hike the monthly pension to Rs 4,000 from the existing Rs 3,000 along with a backlog of Rs 3,000 (Rs 1,000 for April, May and June) from July. All together it would cost the exchequer Rs 4,500 crore in July, besides salaries to employees and pensioners which is pegged at another Rs 6,000 crore.



The new TDP government will have to mop up over Rs 10,000 crore to fulfill the financial requirements for July, a retired senior bureaucrat said. According to him, the state government has a committed expenditure of nearly Rs 1.30 lakh crore annually to meet

the requirements of salaries, pensions, loan repayments and interests. According to the Reserve Bank website, the Andhra government offered to sell securities worth Rs 2,000 crore on June 11 through auction. The state needs Rs 2,600 crore

every month to meet the social pension alone. Similarly, as part of the manifesto, the Telugu Desam Party promised free travel to women in government-run buses. An official of Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation said the APSRTC earns about Rs 450 to Rs 500 crore through ticket revenue monthly and women passengers are expected to be in the range of 35-40 per cent. He, however, said there was no study on women travellers done so far in the state. According to him, the Telangana RTC which implements a similar scheme estimated that women constitute nearly 50 per cent of the total commuters. Towards the free travel scheme, the new government will have to reimburse nearly Rs 2,000 crore annually to the APSRTC. Under “Super Six,” the TDP also promised Rs 15,000 to every school-going child per annum. The outgoing YRS Congress Party government had earmarked Rs 6,500 crore

towards a similar scheme called “Amma Vodi.” With Naidu removing the cap on the number of beneficiaries, the amount may go up substantially. The party also promised three free cooking gas cylinders to every household per year and Rs 20,000 annual financial assistance to every farmer, among others. According to the government budget document 2023-24, the state has Rs 4.83 lakh crore public debt (33.3 per cent of GSDP), besides Rs 1.39 lakh crore government guarantees and Rs 26,296 crore of loans from the Centre. The total Revenue Receipts in the Budget (vote-on-account) for 2024-25 are estimated at Rs 2,05,352.19 crore while the expenditure was pegged at Rs 2,30,110.41 crore. While launching the YSRCP manifesto during the run-up to the recently concluded Assembly polls, the outgoing Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy alleged it will cost an exorbitant Rs 1.21 lakh crore per annum to fulfil the TDP’s poll promises.

People from Manipur taking refuge in Assam after fresh violence

PTI ■ SILCHAR (ASSAM)

People affected by fresh incidents of violence in Manipur have started arriving in Assam’s Cachar district in search of safety, the local MLA said on Monday. Security along the inter-state border has been tightened, a police officer said. Two police outposts, a forest beat office and at least 70 houses were torched in Jiribam by suspected militants on Saturday, leading to fresh tension in the neighbouring state which has been witnessing ethnic violence since May last year. Residents of the bordering areas claimed that about 600 people have taken shelter in various parts of Lakhipur in Cachar district, entering the state by crossing the Jiri river over the last four days. They are taking shelter in villages at Jirighat and Lakhipur, though no government relief camp has been opened for them, they said. “The people who have come from Manipur are being allowed to stay here safely.



The local administration is taking all steps to ensure no spread of any violence here,” Lakhipur MLA Kaushik Rai told PTI. Cachar Superintendent of Police Nomal Mahatto said that police and other security forces have been deployed in the border areas. “There are no reports of any untoward incident in Cachar so far. Police patrolling in Jirighat on the border as well as along the national highway and nearby villages is being conducted,” he told PTI. The SP added that the situation on the Assam side is completely under control and the police are keeping a strict

vigil following the violence in Jiribam. Jiribam, which has a diverse ethnic composition of Meiteis, Muslims, Nagas, Kukis and non-Manipuris, had so far remained unaffected by the ethnic strife that has been raging in the northeastern state since May last year. The MLA said that most of the people who have entered Cachar are Kukis and Hmars. The ethnic conflict between Imphal valley-based Meiteis and hill-based Kukis began in May last year and led to the deaths of over 200 people, besides rendering thousands of people homeless.

Naxal problem now confined to only five Jharkhand districts: DGP

PTI ■ RANCHI

Coordinated and concerted offensives against Naxalites in Jharkhand have restricted their activities to only five of the 24 districts, with Chaibasa being the most affected, DGP Ajay Kumar Singh said on Monday. Continuous operations are underway to minimise the threat posed by the rebels, and their impact is evident in the state, Singh added. He made these remarks while speaking to reporters after a review meeting on key issues including law and order, the Naxal menace, and crime control. The DGP expressed confidence that the success of anti-Naxal operations would soon lead to a significant reduction in incidents. Police have detailed information about Naxalites’ movements and hideouts, and operations have been intensified accordingly, he added. Over 400 Naxalites were arrested last year, he said. Singh also mentioned that



special campaigns are ongoing to curb drug trafficking and actions have been taken against peddlers under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, resulting in substantial opium recoveries. The Jharkhand High Court recently criticised the state government for its failure to effectively tackle drug trafficking. Other issues discussed at the meeting included the recent Lok Sabha elections, crime

control, law and order issues, and the registration and disposal of cases under the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. “The Lok Sabha elections were incident-free. Discussions also covered the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled for later this year,” Singh added. The meeting was attended by SPs from various districts, DIGs, IGs, and other senior officials.

Congress to face consequences in Maharashtra polls for opposing interests of Marathas: Jarange

PTI ■ JALNA (MAHARASHTRA)

Quota activist Manoj Jarange on Monday claimed the Congress was speaking against the interests of the Maratha community and would face consequences in the Maharashtra assembly polls due later this year. Newly-elected Jalna Congress MP Kalyan Kale met Jarange at Antarwali Sarathi village, where the activist continued his indefinite fast for the third day, and said he supports the agitation for Maratha quota. The Congress MP also acknowledged the influence of the Maratha reservation movement in his victory in the recent Lok Sabha polls. Notably, Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar had opposed reservation to the Maratha community from the share of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Asked about Wadettiwar’s comments, Jarange told reporters, “The Congress took votes from the Maratha people in the recent Lok Sabha elections and now they are speaking against our interests. They will face the consequences in the Vidhan



Sabha elections.” In the recently held Lok Sabha polls, the Congress won 13 out of 17 seats it contested in the state as part of the opposition alliance. After meeting Jarange, Kale said, “Wadettiwar should not talk like this. I do not endorse his statement.” “Because of Jarange, I have been elected from the Jalna Lok Sabha constituency,” he added. In February this year, the Maharashtra legislature unanimously passed a bill

providing 10 per cent reservation for the Marathas in education and government jobs under a separate category. Jarange on Monday reiterated his demand for implementation of the draft notification that recognises Kunbis as “sage soyare” (blood relatives) of Maratha community members and sought a law to identify Kunbis as Marathas. Kunbi, an agrarian group, falls under the OBC category, and Jarange has been demanding

that Kunbi certificates be issued to all Marathas, thus making them eligible for quota benefits. Jarange on Monday also demanded implementation of the Hyderabad Gazette for the Kunbi records of Marathas. e said 57 lakh documents have been received proving that Marathas and Kunbis are the same. He also demanded withdrawal of cases against protesters seeking Maratha quota. Before this, the activist held the agitation over the quota issue between February 10 and 26. Political analysts believe unrest among the Maratha community members as well as farmers, and lack of major development projects in the Marathwada region contributed to the defeat of BJP-led Mahayuti candidates in the general elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party lost all four seats it contested in the region, including Jalna and Beed, where Union minister Raosaheb Danve and former state minister Pankaja Munde suffered defeats, respectively.

Telangana Govt to soon form farmers, education panels

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday announced that his government would soon constitute panels to deal with issues relating to education and farmers. Speaking at an event here, he said the minorities and women’s commissions receive complaints and makes recommendations and directives to the governments to address problems (of minorities and women). “Our government has specially identified two areas. One is education and the other is farming. Our government has decided to appoint a mechanism to continuously work towards addressing your problems through an education commission,” Reddy said. The proposed farmers commission would address the grievances of ryots with regard to spurious seeds, fertilizers and others and make recommendations for their welfare.

Bengaluru court sends Revanna to 14 days judicial custody

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A court here on Monday sent former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of rape and sexual abuse against several women, to 14 days judicial custody. He was produced before the 42nd Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) court as his Special Investigation Team (SIT) custody ended today. The court on May 31 remanded him to SIT custody till June 6, and later extended it till June 10. While in their custody, the SIT conducted a detailed investigation, including gathering evidence and interviewing witnesses, and questioned Revanna extensively about the allegations. The court, taking into consideration the gravity of the allegations and the evidence presented by the SIT, decided to remand him to judicial custody for 14 days, till June 24. The 33-year-old grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former PM H D Deve Gowda had failed in his bid to retain the Hassan parliamentary constituency in the recent polls. SIT officials arrested Revanna soon after he landed at Bengaluru’s Kempegowda International Airport from Germany on May 31. He had left for Germany on April 27, a day after Hassan went to the polls. A ‘Blue



Corner Notice’ seeking information on his whereabouts had earlier been issued by the Interpol, following a request by the SIT via the Central Bureau of Investigation. A Special Court for Elected Representatives issued an arrest warrant against Revanna on May 18, following an application moved by the SIT. He was arrested in a case registered against him in Holenarasipura in Hassan district on April 28. He was accused of sexually harassing a 47-year-old former maid. He is listed as accused number two, while his father and MLA, H D Revanna, is the primary accused. Prajwal Revanna has been booked in three cases of sexual assault. There are also charges of rape against him. The cases of sexual abuse came to light after pen-drives containing explicit videos allegedly involving Prajwal Revanna were reportedly circulated in Hassan, ahead of Lok Sabha polls there on April 26. JD(S) suspended

Karnataka Congress leader takes dig at NDA for not inducting from State any BCs/Dalit MP in Cabinet

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister and senior Congress leader G Parameshwara on Monday took a dig at the NDA government for not inducting any MP from backward classes and Dalit communities from the state into the union council of Ministers. He said it was evident that these communities have been “neglected” in the government formation exercise. “It looks like they (BJP/NDA) don’t want backward classes and Dalit communities. There are several people from such communities who have got elected in the state from that party,” Parameshwara told reporters here. “They could have considered them, but it is left to their discretion. But it is evident that these communities have been neglected,” the former president of the party’s state unit said.

Five Members of Parliament from Karnataka were part of the council of Ministers of the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sworn in on Sunday. Nirmala Sitharaman (representing Rajya Sabha) and Pralhad Joshi of the BJP and JD(S) H D Kumaraswamy were sworn in as Cabinet Ministers, while BJP’s Shobha Karandlaje was inducted as Minister of State along with V Somanna. While Sitharaman and Joshi are Brahmins, Kumaraswamy and Karandlaje are from the dominant Vokkaliga community. Somanna hails from another dominant community in the state — Lingayats. The NDA got 19 out of 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka, with BJP winning 17 and JD(S) two. The ruling Congress in the state has won nine seats. Congratulating the five MPs who have become Ministers, Parameshwara said there are several State issues pending for

resolution before the Central government, like GST share and irrigation projects requiring its nod. “I’m confident that as the representatives of the state they will take them up on priority and try to resolve them,” he said, adding that in case they fail, it is a set back to them and their party. “We will wait and watch....If our issues are not resolved, naturally we will have to blame them.” On whether there were discussions in the ruling Congress in the state about appointing more Deputy CMs on the basis of communities, Parameshwara said: “There is no such thing, no such discussions have happened. Just because someone speaks it cannot be a party issue.” Whatever the party leadership decides is final, he said, adding, if they feel there is a need for such a move, they will decide. D K Shivakumar from the Vokkaliga community is the only Deputy CM in the Siddaramaiah-led Cabinet now.

Village in Beed grapples with poor road infrastructure, transportation

PTI ■ LATUR

For residents of Tat Borgaon in Beed, stepping out for work or to school every day means walking 3 km to the nearest bus stop, as services of the Maharashtra State Roads Transport (MSRTC) have not reached the village. With a population of 1,500, Tat Borgaon falls under the Ambajogai tehsil and borders Latur, Beed, and Dharashiv districts. According to villagers, the Zilla Parishad school in the village is equipped to teach students up to Class 4, and after that, children have to walk at least 3 km to schools in other villages to continue their studies. Talking to PTI, college lecturer Dr Pandurang Shitole, a native of the village, said, “Lack of a motorable road was one of the major issues. But now, under the leadership of Sarpanch

Vitthal Shitole, road construction is underway. Villagers have been waiting for bus services for many years.” Residents claim that local politicians came to the village for poll campaigns over the years, but the issues of road infrastructure and transportation remain unaddressed. Shubhangi Kaldate, a pharmacy student, said, “I have to walk 3 km daily to catch a bus to my college in Latur. This journey is arduous.” Meanwhile, a spokesperson of the MSRTC said the corporation operates buses up to Aapegaon, a few kilometres away from the village, as the road ahead is not motorable. The transport body has not received any demand for bus service from the village, he said. The MSRTC will send a traffic inspector to survey the road to the village before deciding to start the service, the official said.

LS polls: BSP’s vote share rose in Madhya Pradesh

PTI ■ BHOPAL

The Bahujan Samaj Party failed to win a seat in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls but its vote share increased marginally in Madhya Pradesh, with its candidates getting more than one lakh votes in several constituencies. While the Mayawati-led BSP had garnered 2.38 per cent votes in Madhya Pradesh in the 2019 polls, it rose to 3.28 per cent in 2024, data from the Election Commission showed.

Despite drubbing in LS polls, Mann says AAP won 3 seats, vote share also increased

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Despite his party facing a drubbing in the Lok Sabha polls, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday said the AAP won three of the total 13 seats and its vote share also increased as compared to the 2019 general elections. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the Congress dealt a blow to the ruling AAP and the opposition BJP and SAD, winning seven of the 13 Lok Sabha seats in the high-stakes polls in Punjab even as two independents registered a surprise victory. The AAP could manage to win only three seats -- Anandpur Sahib, Hoshiarpur and Sangrur -- as against the target of winning all 13 Lok Sabha constituencies in the just-concluded general elections. Replying to a question on the AAP’s performance in the Lok Sabha elections, Mann said that his party had won only one seat in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and its vote share was just 7.50 per cent. “This time, we won three seats. We wrested the Sangrur seat, which is our stronghold,” Mann told reporters in Mohali after offering prayers at a gurdwara on the occasion of the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev. He said the AAP’s vote share also increased to 26 per cent in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Mann said while the Congress got 35.50 lakh votes, the AAP polled 35.20 lakh votes in the



elections. Commenting on the rival parties’ performance, the chief minister said the Congress party’s vote share declined from 40 per cent in 2019 to 26 per cent this time. The BJP, which drew a blank, lost its stronghold Hoshiarpur, he said. Mann said many of the candidates of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) lost their security deposits. The AAP leader said his party is reviewing the poll outcome and added that wherever there were shortcomings, they will be removed. Responding to a question, Mann slammed the BJP for its slogan of ‘400 paar’, saying the saffron party fell short of the majority mark. “Now they (BJP) do not call the Modi government. They have started saying the NDA government. They have realised that they fell short of the majority mark. Now the dictatorship, which they earlier did, will not work now,” he said. Mann further said big faces in the BJP like Smriti Irani and Arjun Munda lost the elections.

FIRST COLUMN

A TREASURE TROVE OF TIMELESS WISDOM

The Puranas, with their vast and varied content, are living texts



SWAMI CHARNASHRIT

The Puranas are a vast genre of ancient Indian literature that holds a significant place in the cultural, religious, and philosophical tapestry of India. These texts are not merely historical or mythological accounts; they are rich repositories of wisdom, encompassing a wide array of subjects that continue to resonate with and inspire people across generations.

Origin and Structure of the Puranas

The term "Purana" is derived from the Sanskrit word "pura," meaning "ancient" or "old." Traditionally, the Puranas are attributed to Vyasa, the sage who is also credited with compiling the Mahabharata and the Vedas. There are eighteen major Puranas, known as the Mahapuranas, and an equal number of secondary Puranas, known as Upapuranas. Each Purana varies in length and content but generally follows a similar structural format comprising five main topics: the creation of the universe (Sarga), the secondary creation (Pratisarga), genealogies of gods, sages, and kings (Vamsa), the reigns of Manus (Manvantara), and the history of dynasties (Vamsa Charitra).

Cosmology and Metaphysics

The Puranas offer a profound exploration of cosmology and metaphysics, detailing intricate theories about the creation, sustenance, and destruction of the universe. The concept of cyclical time, as opposed to linear time, is a central theme, with the universe undergoing endless cycles of creation and dissolution. This perspective provides a holistic view of existence, emphasizing the impermanence of the material world and the eternal nature of the soul.

Ethical and Moral Teachings

At their core, the Puranas are repositories of ethical and moral teachings. They emphasize the principles of Dharma (righteousness), Artha (prosperity), Kama (pleasure), and Moksha (liberation). Through various narratives and parables, the Puranas highlight the importance of living a virtuous life, the consequences of actions (karma), and the ultimate goal of attaining liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

Theistic Devotion

The Puranas are rich in devotional content, promoting Bhakti (devotion) towards various deities such as Vishnu, Shiva, and the Goddess. They provide detailed descriptions of the forms, attributes, and stories of these deities, fostering a personal and emotional connection between the devotee and the divine. This devotional aspect underscores the idea that sincere love and devotion can lead to spiritual enlightenment and liberation.

Social and Cultural Insights

The Puranas play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting the cultural and religious traditions of ancient India. They serve as encyclopaedic texts, containing information on rituals, festivals, pilgrimages, and social customs. By doing so, they have helped maintain continuity in cultural practices and have provided a sense of identity and continuity to generations.

The Arts and Sciences

The Puranas are remarkable for their integration of art and science. They include discussions on astronomy, astrology, medicine, architecture, and even the performing arts. For instance, the Vishnu Purana and the Bhagavata Purana provide elaborate accounts of cosmology, while the Agni Purana offers insights into various scientific disciplines, reflecting the comprehensive knowledge system of ancient India.

(The writer is a spiritual guide, views are personal)

The long and short of Modi's welfarism



UTTAM GUPTA

The Govt is doing a good job of supplying food, fuel and fertiliser at subsidised cost but the largesse recipients are unlikely to make space for other deserving people

An overarching policy instrument Prime Minister Narendra Modi uses in relentless pursuit of a welfare State is his unflinching commitment to ensuring adequate supply of three essential items, namely fertilisers, food and fuel, to the target beneficiaries/consumers at 'throwaway' price or even for free.

In fact, he tells them about his intentions in this regard well in advance. Look at these facts: Urea is a widely used fertiliser that supplies primary nutrient nitrogen or 'N' and constitutes nearly half of India's total fertiliser consumption. To make it affordable to farmers, the Union Government controls its maximum retail price (MRP) at a low level unrelated to the cost of production/import and distribution, which is much higher. The excess cost over MRP is reimbursed to the manufacturer/importer as subsidy which varies from unit to unit, depending on its cost.

During its first term, under a comprehensive New Urea Policy 2015 announced on May 13, 2015, the Modi Government had frozen the urea MRP of ₹268 per 50 kg bag for a period four years till 2019-20. Even thereafter, the price remained unchanged at ₹242 per 45 kg bag (currently, urea is sold in 45 kg bag; so on pro rata basis, the price is the same as earlier). This price is nearly one-tenth of the cost of making it available leading to huge subsidy payout. On June 28, 2023, Modi announced its continued availability to the farmers at this price for three years, up to FY 2025-26.

As for food, the National Food Security Act (NFSA) enacted by the erstwhile UPA Government in 2013 had provided for giving wheat, rice and coarse cereals to eligible beneficiaries at a throwaway price of ₹3/2/1 per kg respectively. The excess of minimum support price (MSP) paid to farmers plus handling and distribution costs over this price (read ₹3/2/1 per kg) was reimbursed to the State handling agencies such as the Food Corporation of India (FCI) as subsidy.

Even as the NFSA had frozen the price to be paid by beneficiaries for three years, ie till 2016, the then Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, Ram Vilas Paswan, announced that the price won't be increased for three years. In 2020, due to the Corona pandemic, under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), the Government also started giving 5 kg of rice or wheat per person per month for 'free' to all the 820 million beneficiaries under the NFSA.

Meanwhile, the pandemic-induced PMGKAY was withdrawn from January 1, 2023. However, from the same date, the Government started giving regular supplies under the NFSA for 'free' (instead of ₹3/2/1 per kg charged earlier). This modified scheme was renamed as PMGKAY. Later in the year, in November 2023, addressing a poll rally in Chhattisgarh, Modi announced extension of the PMGKAY for another five years, ie till 2028.

In case of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), ever since 2015, the Government remains committed to making it available for household consumption at a low price although unlike in fertilisers and food, Modi hasn't announced as to 'for how long'. At present, over 100 million poor households who have been provided free gas connection under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) are eligible to receive subsidy at the rate of ₹300 per cylinder (14.2 kg) for 12 fills per annum.



WE COULD END UP WITH A SCENARIO WHERE CRORES OF PEOPLE DON'T NEED TO EARN THEIR LIVING AND SIMPLY WAIT FOR THE STATE FREEBIES TO TAKE CARE OF ALL THEIR NEEDS

If the welfare scheme beneficiaries are assured that they will continue to receive the benefits perpetually, all the more when these concern essential items such as fertilisers, food, fuel and that too with zero or near-zero price tag, they couldn't have asked for more. They can use the money thus saved for spending on other things, say education, health etc that can help them enhance their productive capacity and improve the quality of living. But, this may not happen in all cases. What if they fritter away the savings on unproductive stuff?

A bigger risk has to do with complacency that this could give rise to amongst the recipients of the benefits. When the Government arranges their basic needs for free (in Delhi, the State Government gives electricity and water free), it could trigger a feeling as to 'why should they work at all?' We could end up with a scenario where crores of people don't need to earn their living and simply wait for the State freebies to take care of all their needs.

Such an approach also comes in the way of extending the benefit of welfare schemes to other deserving persons who are currently not included in beneficiaries list. For instance, the current list of PMGKAY beneficiaries being based on the Census of 2011, over 100 million persons who became eligible post-2011 don't have access to

free food. Giving them access without deleting equivalent number from existing list will require more allocation for food subsidy. If fund constraints don't permit hike in the budget, those 100 million will continue to be denied access.

Under the current system of giving fertiliser subsidy, farmers are prone to excessive use of urea leading to imbalance in fertiliser use, drop in crop yield, deterioration of soil health and adverse impact on the environment. Even as there is a dire need to reduce imbalance by curbing excess use of urea, its availability at throwaway price won't let that happen.

For this very reason, there is rampant leakage/diversion of urea for industrial uses. Further, because manufacturers and importers get full reimbursement of the excess of cost over the MRP as subsidy on 'actual' basis, there is no incentive to reduce cost and improve efficiency in operations. The existing system of giving food subsidy also suffers from leakages, misuse and inefficiency in operations.

When Modi says the supply of fertilisers and food for free or at throwaway prices will continue perpetually, dubious operators too get to continue with their illicit gains. To address these anomalies, the Government needs to drastically restructure its welfare schemes. First, there should be an exit clause

for a beneficiary under the scheme. The clause can be triggered when she crosses the poverty threshold. For instance, 250 million persons who have come out of poverty shouldn't be eligible for free food under PMGKAY.

Two, our political brass should do away with the 'free' tag to any item even if it is food. While no one can deny the need for some subsidy to make it 'affordable' to the poor, insisting that the commodity be given for free or at small fraction of the cost (as in case of urea) is a risky idea. It is an invitation to all kinds of wrongs such as fictitious claims, diversions, inflated cost and so on. Three, instead of delivering a commodity at a low price, the Government should deposit the subsidy in the account of the beneficiary. The latter can buy her needs from the market where prices are determined in a competitive manner, thereby ensuring that the gains of efficiency improvements and cost reduction accrue to all consumers. In this scenario, there won't be any scope for misuse or diversion.

Four, a plethora of subsidies under different heads can be merged and given as a single lump sum amount as income support. This can save a lot of administrative work and associated costs involved in running multiple schemes.

(The writer is a policy analyst, views are personal)

Canada in covert talks with India over Nijjar's killing

India and Canada share a complex relationship, shaped by historical ties, diaspora influence and geopolitical interests

In the intricate dance of international diplomacy, Canada's intelligence chief, David Vigneault, embarked on clandestine visits to India earlier this year, delving into the shadowy realms of the Khalistani activist's controversial demise. These covert exchanges, veiled in secrecy, unfold against the backdrop of heightened tensions between the two nations, as a parliamentary report unveils India's ranking as the second most significant foreign threat to Canadian democracy, closely trailing behind China. With Prime Minister Trudeau's pledge to confront foreign interference head-on, Canada grapples with safeguarding its democratic integrity amidst the swirling currents of global power struggles.



SANTOSH MATHIEW

India and Canada share a complex relationship, shaped by historical ties, diaspora influence, and geopolitical interests. The Indian diaspora in Canada, particularly the Sikh community, has played a significant role in shaping Canadian society and politics. However, issues related to Sikh separatism and human rights in India have often been contentious points in bilateral discussions. Nijjar's assassi-

nation has brought these issues to the forefront once again, reigniting debates about the treatment of minorities in India and the extent of Canada's involvement in addressing these concerns. The Indian diaspora in Canada is significant and steadily growing. It's estimated that there are over 2 million people of Indian origin in Canada, making the Indian community one of the largest and most influential ethnic groups in the country. Over the years, the Indian diaspora has made significant contributions to various sectors of Canadian society, including business, politics, academia, and culture. This demographic's influence is a testament to the deep-rooted connections between the two nations.



has led to increased scrutiny of Indo-Canadian relations. The alleged involvement of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and a close aide of Ajit Doval in covert operations underscores the complex interplay between intelligence, diplomacy, and geopolitics. As India seeks to assert itself on the world stage, it must navigate these challenges with

caution, ensuring that its actions are guided by principles of transparency, accountability, and respect for international law. For Canada, the incident has highlighted the delicate balancing act it must perform in managing its diverse population while upholding democratic values. The Canadian government's response has been measured, focusing on ensuring justice for Nijjar while maintaining diplomatic channels with India. This approach is crucial for preserving the multifaceted relationship that exists between the two countries. While differences may exist on certain issues, there are also areas of common interest where cooperation can flourish. Moreover, the tragic loss of Jaswinder Singh Nijjar serves

as a reminder of the importance of upholding democratic values and protecting the rights of all individuals, regardless of their beliefs or backgrounds. This commitment to justice will not only honour Nijjar's legacy but also reinforce the values that both nations espouse. Moving forward, Indo-Canadian relations will likely face challenges as both countries navigate the aftermath of this incident. However, with mutual respect, dialogue, and a commitment to shared values, there is hope that they can emerge stronger and more resilient than before.

In conclusion, the assassination of Jaswinder Singh Nijjar has cast a spotlight on the intricacies of Indo-Canadian relations, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. It is a pivotal moment for both nations to reflect on their shared history, reaffirm their commitment to justice, and work towards a future marked by cooperation and mutual respect. The road ahead may be fraught with difficulties, but with a concerted effort, India and Canada can continue to build a relationship that is both robust and resilient, benefiting not only their citizens but also contributing to global peace and stability. Indo-Canadian relations are like a symphony, where each note, no matter how different, contributes to the harmony of the whole. Let us play our parts with respect, understanding, and a commitment to peace.

(The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)

Far-right election surge shakes EU, prompting Macron’s snap polls

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Far-right parties rattled the traditional powers in the European Union with major gains in parliamentary seats, dealing an especially humiliating defeat to French President Emmanuel Macron, who called snap legislative elections. Some ballots in the vote for the European Parliament were still being counted Monday, but the outcome showed the 27-nation bloc’s parliament membership has clearly shifted to the right. Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni more than doubled her party’s seats in the assembly. And despite being hounded by a scandal involving candidates, the Alternative for Germany extreme right party still rallied enough seats to sweep past the slumping Social Democrats of Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Sensing a threat from the far right, the Christian Democrats of EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had



French President Emmanuel Macron appears on television screen at the French far-right National Rally party election night headquarters, Sunday,

already shifted further to the right on migration and climate ahead of the elections — and were rewarded by remaining by far the biggest group in the 720-seat European Parliament and de facto brokers of the ever-

expanding powers of the legislature. But the surge by nationalist and populist parties across Europe will make it much harder for the assembly to approve legislation on issues ranging from

climate change to agriculture policy for the next five years. Undoubtedly however, the star on a stunning electoral night was the National Rally party of Marine Le Pen, which dominated the French polls to such an extent that Macron immediately dissolved the national parliament and called for new elections to start later this month. It was a massive political risk since his party could suffer more losses, hobbling the rest of his presidential term that ends in 2027. Le Pen was delighted to accept the challenge. “We’re ready to turn the country around, ready to defend the interests of the French, ready to put an end to mass immigration,” she said, echoing the rallying cry of so many far-right leaders in other countries who were celebrating substantial wins. Her National Rally won over 30% or about twice as much as Macron’s pro-European centrist Renew party that is projected to reach less than 15%.

European election dents German leader’s authority, boosts conservatives, far right

AP ■ BERLIN

Dismal results for Germany’s governing parties in the European Parliament election have dented Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s authority and could prompt even more of the infighting that just cost the government dearly. A clear win for Germany’s mainstream conservative opposition boosts its confidence as the country begins to look ahead to a national election expected in the fall of 2025, but raises questions about why it isn’t benefiting more from the unpopularity of Scholz’s government. And a second-place finish for the far-right Alternative for Germany, despite scandals and setbacks, underlines its enduring appeal to many unsettled voters and its strength in the formerly commu-

nist east — where it emerged as the strongest party and hopes to win three state elections in September. The defeat of the three parties in Scholz’s unpopular coalition “really wasn’t surprising, but the level they’ve dropped to is quite shocking for a governing coalition,” said Andrea Rommele, a political science professor at the Hertie School in Berlin. Scholz’s Social Democrats, the environmentalist Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats secured less than a third of the vote. Scholz’s party polled only 13.9 per cent, its worst post-World War II showing in a nationwide vote, while the Greens crashed to 11.9 per cent from a peak of 20.5 per cent five years ago. All were significantly below their performance in Germany’s 2021 national election.

Scholz’s coalition government set out to modernize Germany but has gained a reputation for constant discord and poor communication as the economy struggles to generate growth. The coalition partners argued through the campaign about how to put together a 2025 budget while adhering to Germany’s tight self-imposed rules on running up debt. That problem already forced a hasty, court-mandated reshuffle of the 2024 budget, complete with subsidy cuts that prompted protests by farmers. “The sense in Germany at the moment is that the current government is not getting things done,” Römmele said. “I do think they are getting things done, not all of them but quite a number of them, but they have to communicate that properly ... and they have to stop having these inter-

nal coalition fights.” Chances of that don’t look good. The Social Democrats’ co-leader, Lars Klingbeil, said Sunday night that “our people want to see us fight” for its priorities. The party’s general secretary, Kevin Kühnert, told Phoenix television that, with the Cabinet due to present a draft budget within weeks, “it isn’t plausible that everything will get quieter tomorrow if all just put themselves together.” Opposition leader Friedrich Merz celebrated his Union bloc’s win and described the outcome as “a serious defeat for the chancellor, who was on posters across the country.” Fellow conservatives suggested that Scholz should call a parliamentary confidence vote or that new elections might be needed — suggestions the governing parties dismissed.

Indian-origin man killed in Canada; targeted killing suspected

Ottawa (PTI): A 28-year-old Indian-origin man was shot dead in a suspected “targeted killing” in Canada’s British Columbia province, according to the police, who have arrested and charged four people with first-degree murder in connection with the case. The victim, identified as Yuvraj Goyal, was found dead by the police when they were responding to the call of a shooting in Surrey on Friday morning, the homicide unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said in a statement. Goyal worked at a car dealership in Surrey, Global News reported, quoting his sister, Charu Singha. She said the family had no idea why he was killed and that they had no indication that he had any ties to organised crime. Goyal’s brother-in-law, Bawandeap, said the victim was on the phone with his mother, who lives in India, just before he was shot.

“He came back from his gym, (his) daily routine, and he stepped out of his car, and he was shot,” Bawandeap said. Police arrested four suspects — 23-year-old Manvir Basram of Surrey, 20-year-old Sahib Basra of Surrey, 23-year-old Harkirat Jhutti of Surrey, and 20-year-old Keilon Francois of Ontario — shortly after the shooting. They have been charged with first-degree murder, CBC News quoted the police as saying. In a statement released on Saturday, the homicide unit said authorities were alerted to a vehicle fire shortly after the shooting. On Saturday, the four were charged with first-degree murder, the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team said. Police said that while initial evidence suggests it was a “targeted shooting, investigators are working to determine the reason that Mr Goyal, a 28-year-old community member with no history of police contact, was killed.” The homicide unit also urged anyone with information or people driving in the area with dash-camera footage to contact the police.

UN food agency pauses aid work at Gaza pier over security concerns

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The director of the UN World Food Program said Sunday the programme has “paused” its distribution of humanitarian aid from an American-built pier off Gaza, saying she was “concerned about the safety of our people” after what had been one of the deadliest days of the war there. Saturday saw both an Israeli military assault that freed four hostages but left 274 Palestinians and one Israeli commando dead, and, Cindy McCain said, two of WFP’s warehouses in Gaza had been “rocketed” and a staffer injured. Sunday’s UN announcement of the pause appears the latest setback for the US sea route, set up to try to bring more aid to Gaza’s starving people. The US Agency for International Development described the pause as a step to allow for a security review by the humanitarian community in Gaza. USAID works with the World Food Program and their humanitarian partners in Gaza to distribute food and other aid com-



Smoke rises from the Palestinians Al Fara'a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank following an Israeli military raid, Monday, June 10, 2024. Israel's military killed a 15-year-old Palestinian in an overnight raid on Al Fara'a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, according to Palestinian health officials. The military said Monday that it had begun what it described as a "counterterrorism" raid into the camp. It said soldiers killed one militant and injured two more with live fire and said the heavy exchanges of gunfire were ongoing.

ing from the US-operated pier. Completed in mid-May, the US pier was operational for only about a week before being knocked offline by storm damage for two weeks. After repairs,

it returned to operation again Saturday, bringing in 1.1 million pounds (492 metric tons) of food and other aid, before McCain said her agency was pausing its humanitarian work there.

The UN agency gave no further details, including how long the pause would last. WFP spokespeople did not respond to requests for further details. Asked about the pier operation during an appearance on CBS’s “Face the Nation” McCain said: “Right now we’re paused.” “I’m concerned about the safety of our people after the incident yesterday,” McCain said, without elaboration. “We also, two of our warehouses, the warehouse complex were rocketed yesterday.” “We’ve stepped back for the moment,” she said, and want “to make sure that we’re on safe terms and on safe ground before we’ll restart. But the rest of the country is operational. We’re doing ... everything we can in the north and the south.” USAID said in a statement to The Associated Press that it was working with other US government officials and with humanitarian groups in Gaza “to ensure that aid can safely and effectively resume movement following completion of the security review that the humanitarian community is currently undertaking.”

Hunter Biden’s gun trial enters its final stretch

AP ■ WILMINGTON

The criminal trial of President Joe Biden’s son heads into its final stretch Monday as the defense tries to chip away at prosecutors’ case laying bare some of the darkest moments of Hunter Biden’s drug-fuelled past. Hunter Biden’s lawyers could call at least one more witness when the case resumes in Delaware’s federal court — the first of two trials he’s facing in the midst of his father’s re-election campaign. It’s unclear whether prosecutors will call any rebuttal witnesses before the case goes to closing arguments, and then to the jury. Hunter Biden is charged with three felonies stemming from the October 2018 purchase of a gun he had for about 11 days. Prosecutors say he lied on a mandatory gun-purchase form by saying he was not illegally using or addicted to drugs. Hunter Biden has pleaded not

guilty and has accused the Justice Department of bending to political pressure from former President Donald Trump and other Republicans to bring the case and separate tax charges after a deal with prosecutors fell apart last year. Hunter Biden has said he has been sober since 2019, but his attorneys have said he did not consider himself an “addict” when he filled out the form. The case has put spotlight on a turbulent time in Hunter Biden’s life after his brother Beau’s 2015 death. First Lady Jill Biden has watched it unfold from the front row of the courtroom. President Biden was away in France much of last week, and heads to Europe again this week for the Group of Seven leaders meeting in Italy. Hunter Biden’s struggles with a substance addiction before getting sober more than five years ago are well documented. But defence lawyers argue there’s no evidence Hunter

Biden was actually using drugs in the 11 days that he possessed the gun. He had completed a rehab programme weeks earlier. Jurors have heard emotional and tawdry testimony from Hunter Biden’s former romantic partners and read personal text messages. They’ve seen photos of Hunter Biden holding a crack pipe and partly clothed, and video from his phone of crack cocaine weighed on a scale. His ex-wife and two onetime girlfriends testified for prosecutors about his habitual crack use and their failed efforts to help him get clean. One woman, who met Hunter Biden in 2017 at a strip club where she worked, described him smoking crack every 20 minutes or so while she stayed with him at a hotel. Hunter Biden hasn’t taken the witness stand and it’s unclear if he will. But jurors have heard him describe at length his descent into addiction through audio excerpts played

in court of his 2021 memoir “Beautiful Things.” The book, written after he got sober, covers the period he had the gun but doesn’t mention it specifically. A key witness for prosecutors is Beau’s widow, Hallie, who had a brief troubled relationship with Hunter after his brother died of brain cancer. She found the unloaded gun in Hunter’s truck on October 23, 2018, panicked and tossed it into a garbage can at a grocery store in Wilmington, where a man inadvertently fished it out of the trash. “I didn’t want him to hurt himself, and I didn’t want my kids to find it and hurt themselves,” Hallie Biden told jurors. From the time Hunter returned to Delaware from a 2018 trip to California until she threw his gun away, she did not see him using drugs, Hallie told jurors. That time period included the day he bought the weapon. But jurors also saw text messages Hunter sent to Hallie in October 2018 saying

he was waiting for a dealer and smoking crack. The first message was sent the day after he bought the gun. The second was sent the following day. The defence has suggested Hunter Biden had been trying to turn his life around at the time of the gun purchase, having completed a detoxification and rehabilitation program at the end of August 2018. “There is no evidence of contemporaneous drug use and a gun possession,” defense lawyer Abbe Lowell wrote in court papers filed Friday. “It was only after the gun was thrown away and the ensuing stress ... that the government was able to then find the same type of evidence of his use (e.g., photos, use of drug lingo) that he relapsed with drugs.” Hunter Biden’s daughter Naomi took the stand for the defence Friday, telling jurors about visiting her father while he was at a California rehab centre weeks before he bought the gun.

Islamic State militants kill dozens in Congo

Goma (Congo) (AP): Militants allied with the Islamic State group in eastern Congo have killed at least 41 people in several villages in North Kivu province, the national government said Monday, as residents openly wondered why security forces weren’t protecting them. The statement said Friday’s attacks were carried out by Allied Democratic Forces militants in the villages of Masala, Mahihi and Keme. Local civil society members asserted that the true toll was higher, with as many as 80 killed. Richard Kirimba, a civil society official in the area that was attacked, said the militants appeared to be expanding their operations and that local mines were drawing them in. “There’s no state authority in this area, and in many villages there are no police, no soldiers, no national intelligence agency,” he told The Associated Press.

“The population is worried because the enemy is roaming around the neighbourhood,” said Kambale Vunyatsi Kiongozi, who represents some civil society groups. Residents have long called on the Congolese army to protect the local population. The government statement said Congo’s government has launched an operation to pursue the militants responsible and has killed a number of them and freed hostages in the process, without providing figures. Eastern Congo has struggled with armed violence for decades as more than 120 groups fight for power, land and valuable mineral resources, while others try to defend their communities. Some armed groups have been accused of mass killings. The violence has displaced nearly 7 million people, many beyond the reach of aid.

Gen Z turning away from military service in Aus

Tasmania: The Australian Defence Force is facing an acute recruitment crisis. Only 80 per cent of the 69,000 personnel needed to meet future challenges have signed up. The government recently announced recruitment will be opened up to some foreign citizens to try to fill this gap. Not only is the Australian military failing to achieve planned growth, it is actually shrinking, as Defence Chief General Angus Campbell told a Senate inquiry in February. There are two fundamental reasons for the current recruitment impasse. One is economic – low unemployment and a perception of better opportunities, work conditions and future prospects in the private sector. The other reason is cultural: a declining willingness of Gen Z to identify with – and fight to defend – their nation.

Either way, the key to the recruitment crisis lies in understanding the motivations of this generation, the main pool of potential recruits today. We recently interviewed 19 serving Australian soldiers from a range of demographics (two were Gen Z) and across military branches in a study funded by the Australian Defence Force. We wanted to find out what makes Gen Z recruits tick, and what the force might do to persuade more of them to serve their country. Researchers study every new generation as a guide to the future, from the baby boomers to Generation X (like the authors of this article), and millennials. None is more distinctive than generation Z, or Zoomers – people born roughly between 1997 and 2008. They are the first generation to grow up with smartphones and social media. In his current bestseller, The Anxious Generation, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt outlines the cataclysmal effect: he claims a large increase in depression and anxiety in young people is

the direct effect of unsupervised social media use during adolescence. Zoomers’ mental health is a barrier to service, as US Marine Corps Lieutenant Matthew Weiss spells out in his book on Gen Z military recruitment. A military career can be detrimental to psychological wellbeing, as Australia’s Royal Commission into Veteran Suicide has demonstrated. The force’s rigorous mental health entry standards may have reinforced this perception. The soldiers we spoke to said mental health is an issue for recruitment. On one hand, they agreed that service is mentally challenging, and that younger soldiers are more psychologically vulnerable. On the other hand, interviewees said the force’s mental health support has been improving. This is a step in the right direction – it may well be that media coverage of veterans’ mental health issues worries Zoomers considering enlistment. Weiss argues

private sector jobs (and money) afford much more online currency than military service. The respondents in our interviews agreed younger recruits were very savvy about pay and conditions. But there may be another motivator: as shadow Defence Minister Andrew Hastie recently told the ABC: “People who join the Defence Force don’t just do it for economic reasons, they do it because they love their country.” This means if love of country falls from generation to generation, military recruitment falls too. Weiss suggests in the United States, low patriotism partly explains Gen Z’s reluctance to enlist. Our interviewees said traditional nationalism played only a modest role for enlisting for young people. They thought a lesser sense of obligation and service is one reason. Another is the fact that the black-and-white picture of “my

country right or wrong” has been muddled following media coverage of alleged Australian war crimes in Afghanistan. The evidence confirms waning national pride among young Australians. We analysed publicly available data from the World Values Survey, a wide-ranging poll of people’s values around the globe conducted since 1981. It shows in 1981, 70.3 per cent of Australians were “very proud” of their nationality. This fell to 60.8 per cent in 2018, the first year to feature Gen Z members in the survey. That year, only 41.6 per cent of twentysomethings (including some millennials) were very proud Australians – the lowest proportion of any Australian age group in any year since the survey began. All else being equal, older adults tend to be more nationalistic, as surveys in different periods and countries show. But the nationalism gap between old and young has opened up further with Gen Z.

Aus PM urges activists to ‘turn heat down’ after US Consulate vandalised

Sydney (AP) Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urged activists on both sides of the Israel-Palestinian debate to “turn the heat down” after the US Consulate in Sydney was vandalized on Monday. Surveillance video showed a person wearing a dark hoodie using a small sledgehammer to smash nine holes in the reinforced glass windows of the building in North Sydney after 3 am, a police statement said. Two inverted red triangles, seen by some as a symbol of Palestinian resistance but by others as supporting Hamas, were also painted on the front of the building. Albanese urged people to have “respectful political debate and discourse.” “People are traumatized by what is going on in the Middle East, particularly those with relatives in

either Israel or in the Palestinian Occupied Territories,” Albanese told reporters. “And I just say, again, reiterate my call to turn the heat down and measures such as painting the US consulate do nothing to advance the cause of those who have committed what is, of course, a crime to damage property,” Albanese added. The consulate was closed on Monday because of a public holiday in New South Wales state but would reopen on Tuesday, a consulate statement said. New South Wales Premier Chris Minns said an overwhelming majority of Australians did not approve of such vandalism. “We can make our point in this country without resorting to violence or malicious behavior,” Minns said.

Bulgaria’s centre-right party sweeps in national polls

Sofia (AP): Bulgaria’s centre-right GERB party led by former Prime Minister Boyko Borissov has received most votes in the country’s parliamentary election but will need at least two partners to form a governing coalition. The country’s sixth vote for the National Assembly in three years was held Sunday parallel with European Parliament elections. Both votes were marked by apathy that kept turnout at a record low of about 30 per cent. The results produced one more deeply fragmented parliament, which does not offer many options for restoring political stability in the European Union’s poorest member country. Many observers suggest that the most likely scenario is another snap parliamentary election later this year.

South Korea says North installing own loudspeakers along border

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's military on Monday said it's detecting signs that North Korea is installing its own loudspeakers along their heavily armed border, a day after the South blared anti-Pyongyang propaganda broadcasts over its speakers for the first time in years as the rivals engage in a Cold War-style psychological warfare. The South's resumption of its loudspeaker broadcasts on Sunday was in retaliation for the North sending over 1,000 balloons filled with trash and manure over the last couple of weeks. North Korea has described its balloon campaign as a response to South Korean civilian groups using balloons to fly anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets across the border. Pyongyang has long condemned such activities as it's extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of leader Kim Jong Un's authoritarian rule. The tit-for-tat over speakers and balloons has deepened tensions between the Koreas as talks over the North's nuclear ambitions remain stalled. In their latest nuclear planning talks in Seoul, US and South Korean officials reviewed an undisclosed guideline map-



ping out their nuclear deterrence strategies to counter growing North Korean threats. They also discussed strengthening the allies' combined military training involving strategic US assets, the participants said in a news conference. Cho Chang-rae, South Korea's deputy defense minister for policy, and Vipin Narang, acting US assistant secretary of defense for space policy, refused specific comment when asked to assess the threat posed by North Korea's balloon activities. Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff didn't immediately comment on the number of suspected North Korean speakers or where along the border they were spotted being installed. It said the speakers were still silent as

of Monday afternoon. South Korea on Sunday activated its loudspeakers for an initial broadcast into North Korea, which reportedly included news, criticism about North Korea's government and South Korean pop music. Hours later on Sunday, Kim's powerful sister warned that the South created a "prelude to a very dangerous situation." She said South Korea would witness an unspecified "new response" from the North if it continues with the broadcasts and fails to stop civilian activists from flying anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets across the border. "I sternly warn Seoul to immediately case its dangerous activities that would further provoke a crisis of confrontation," Kim Yo Jong said through state

media. Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Kim's comments represented a heightened verbal threat from North Korea but he did not provide a specific assessment on the actions the North might take. Lee said the South was conducting broadcasts in sites where soldiers have sufficient protection and are equipped to swiftly hit back if attacked. "(We) don't think that they could provoke us that easily," Lee said during a briefing Monday. The Joint Chiefs of Staff didn't specify the border area where Sunday's broadcast took place or what was played over the speakers. It said that any additional broadcasts are "entirely dependent on North Korea's behaviour." The South withdrew loudspeakers from border areas in 2018, during a brief period of engagement with the North under Seoul's previous liberal government. In deciding to restart the loudspeaker broadcasts, South Korea's presidential office berated Pyongyang for attempting to cause anxiety and disruption" in the South and stressed that North Korea would be "solely responsible" for any future escalation of tensions.

Pak PM vows to 'eliminate terrorism'

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday pledged to "relentlessly eliminate terrorism" from the country after seven soldiers, including a Captain, were killed in a terrorist attack in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province a day earlier.

The incident occurred when the convoy of security personnel heading towards Kachi Qamar, Sarband District of the Lakki Marwat District, came under attack by the terrorists.

The terrorists blasted an improvised explosive device (IED) initially and later opened fire on the convoy. "Deeply saddened by the martyrdom of Pak Army personnel, including a Captain in a targeted attack in Lakki Marwat District," Sharif said in a post on X.

"The sacrifices of our brave soldiers and citizens is a debt on us that we must repay by relentlessly eliminating terrorism from our nation," he said, condoling the deaths.

Shehbaz, Nawaz wish Modi on taking oath as PM

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his elder brother and the ruling party supremo Nawaz Sharif on Monday wished Narendra Modi for taking oath as the prime minister for the third consecutive term. In his message posted on X, Nawaz, the former prime minister and chief of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), said that Modi's success in recent elections reflects the confidence of the people in his leadership and asked him to seize the opportunity to shape the destiny of the two billion people of South Asia. Modi was sworn in as prime minister on Sunday for a record-equaling third term, heading a 72-member Union Council of Ministers in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. Shehbaz, the only prime minister from India's neighbourhood



who wasn't invited to the swearing-in ceremony in New Delhi, took to X to wish his counterpart on his return from China, Pakistan's all-weather ally. "Felicitations to @narendramodi on taking oath as the Prime Minister of India," he said in a post. "My warm felicitations to Modi Ji (@narendramodi) on assuming office for the third time. Your party's success in recent elections reflects the confidence of the people in your leadership. Let us replace hate with hope and seize the opportunity to shape the destiny of the two billion people of South Asia," Nawaz said.

Top leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region, including Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Sunday graced the historic swearing-in ceremony. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, his Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay and Vice-President of Seychelles Ahmed Afif also attended the glittering ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Newly chosen Haitian PM discharged from hospital after spending a night

Port Au Prince, Haiti (AP): Haiti's newly selected Prime Minister Garry Conille was discharged from a hospital on Sunday after spending a night in treatment for an undisclosed condition.

In a video published on YouTube, Conille said he is now feeling well and is "ready" to continue to help steer the country out of its current security crisis by forming a government that will also prioritize issues like health care.

"The whole time I was at the hospital, I was thinking of something," Conille said in Sunday's video. "People that

need to go to the general hospital can't get there" due to security problems. "People who need health care" can't afford it. Conille arrived in Haiti on June 1 after a transitional council selected him as the nation's new prime minister. He had been working outside the country as UNICEF's regional director for Latin America. Gang violence is still surging in parts of Haiti's capital and beyond as Conille takes over the helm of the troubled Caribbean country awaiting the UN backed deployment of a police force from Kenya and other countries.

Missile attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels strike 2 ships in Gulf of Aden: US military

AP ■ MANAMA (BAHRAIN)

Missile attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels struck two ships in the Gulf of Aden, authorities said on Sunday, the latest assaults on shipping in the region. One anti-ship ballistic cruise missile hit the Antigua- and Barbuda-flagged cargo ship Norderney forward station late Saturday, starting a fire that those on board put out, the US military's Central Command said. It added that a second anti-ship cruise missile also hit the Norderney. The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations

centre similarly reported the attack and fire in the same area off Aden, saying "damage control is underway." Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed the attack in a prerecorded video message Sunday, saying the vessel had been targeted with both missiles and drones. Tracking data analysed by The Associated Press showed the Norderney was still in the Gulf of Aden on Sunday afternoon. In a second attack, a Houthi ballistic missile hit the Tavvishi, a Liberian-flagged, Swiss-owned-and-operated container ship in the Gulf of Aden, Central Command. Saree claimed the

US, Poland launching group to help Ukraine counter Kremlin disinformation

Warsaw (AP): The United States announced on Monday that it is setting up an operation in the Polish capital to help neighbouring Ukraine counter Russian disinformation. The US State Department's Global Engagement Centre, which works to highlight disinformation by what it considers hostile states, said in a statement that the US and Poland have jointly launched a Ukraine Communications Group "to support Ukraine against Russia's aggression in the information space". Increasingly, Polish officials say Poland is also a target of sabotage and other disruptive measures by the Russian secret services. Poland is a member of NATO along the military alliance's eastern front. It has been a hub for Western weapons sent to Ukraine. It has also been a place of refuge for a significant number of Ukrainians who have fled Russia's full-scale invasion that began in February 2022. The State Department said the new group would bring together allies to "coordinate messaging, promote accurate reporting of Russia's full-scale invasion, amplify Ukrainian voices and expose Kremlin information manipulation". It asserted that the Kremlin "repeatedly uses lies and manipulation to peddle false pretexts for its unjustifiable invasion, obfuscate its war aims and attempt to fracture worldwide solidarity with the Ukrainian people".

Ukraine's air force may keep some F-16 warplanes abroad

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine may keep some of the F-16 fighter jets it's set to receive from its Western allies at foreign bases to protect them from Russian strikes, a senior Ukrainian military officer said on Monday. Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway have committed to providing Ukraine with over 60 US-made F-16 fighter jets to help it fend off Russian attacks. Ukrainian pilots are currently undergoing training to fly the warplanes ahead of the deliveries expected to start later this year. Serhii Holubtsov, head of aviation within Ukraine's air force, said that "a certain number of aircraft will be stored at secure air bases outside of Ukraine so that they are not targeted here." Holubtsov told the US government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that those F-16s could be used to replace damaged aircraft as they undergo repairs as well as for training Ukrainian pilots abroad. "This way, we can always have a certain number of aircraft in the operational fleet that corresponds to the number of pilots we have," he said. "If there are more pilots, there will be more aircraft in Ukraine." Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned that Moscow could consider launching strikes at facilities in NATO countries if they host the warplanes used in Ukraine. "If they are stationed at air bases outside the Ukrainian borders and used in

combat, we will have to see how and where to strike the assets used in combat against us," Putin said last year. "It poses a serious danger of NATO being further drawn into the conflict." In March, the Russian leader again warned Ukraine's Western allies against providing air bases from where the F-16s could launch sorties against the Kremlin's forces. Those bases would become a "legitimate target," he said. "F-16s are capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and we will also need to take that into account while organising our combat operations," Putin stated. The F-16s require a high standard of runways and reinforced hangars to protect them from attacks on the ground. It's not clear how many Ukrainian air bases can meet those requirements, and Russia would be certain to quickly target a few that could accommodate them once the jets arrive. Holubtsov noted that the F-16s will help protect front-line and border regions from Russian glide bombs that have inflicted significant damage to both troops and residential areas, including Kharkiv. Glide bombs are heavy Soviet-era bombs fitted with precision guidance systems and launched from aircraft flying out of range of air defences. "I think we will succeed, first of all, in pushing back the aircraft that drop glide bombs farther from the contact line," he said. "If we manage to push them back at least another 30-50 km

(19-31 miles), this can already be considered a turning point and an achievement, if not of superiority, then of parity in the airspace." Ukraine's Western allies are trying to bolster military support for Kyiv as Russian troops have launched attacks along the more than 1,000-km (620-mile) front-line, taking advantage of a lengthy delay in US military aid. Ukraine is currently fighting to hold back a Russian push near its second-largest city of Kharkiv, less than 30 km (less than 20 miles) from the border. The US and other NATO allies have responded to the latest Russian offensive by allowing Ukraine to use weapons they deliver to Kyiv to carry out limited attacks inside Russia. The decision could potentially impede Moscow's ability to concentrate its troops for a bigger offensive near Kharkiv and in other border areas. Last week, Putin responded by warning that Moscow "reserves the right" to arm adversaries of the West worldwide. "If they supply (weapons) to the combat zone and call for using these weapons against our territory, why don't we have the right to do the same?" Putin said. He didn't specify where such arms might be sent. The US has said that Russia has turned to North Korea and Iran to beef up its stock of relatively simple weapons, but Moscow could dip into its stock of high-tech missiles to share with adversaries of the West if Putin decides to fulfill his threat.

90 countries to attend Swiss-hosted Ukraine peace summit that Russia is snubbing

AP ■ BERN (SWITZERLAND)

Nearly 90 countries and organisations, half from Europe, have confirmed attending the Swiss-hosted Ukraine peace summit over the weekend despite Russia's refusal to participate in the conference, Switzerland's president said on Monday. Viola Amherd told reporters in the Swiss capital that the summit, on Saturday and Sunday, will aim to chart a path toward possible peace nearly 28 months after Russian forces invaded Ukraine and the war grinding on. "This is not propaganda," said Amherd. "This is about the basis of humanitarian aid provided by Switzerland...and to initiate a dialogue." The Swiss president added that most participants — about half of which will be

represented at the level of head of state or government — are country leaders, but "a handful" are from organisations like the United Nations. Some, including French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, are expected to attend the summit at the Buergenstock resort overlooking Lake Lucerne. About 160 invitations have been sent out and Amherd said it was not a "disappointment" for the Swiss government that fewer than 100 have so far announced participation in the first phase of the peace process. Swiss authorities said the final list of participants was expected by Friday, but key developing countries like Turkey, South Africa and Brazil haven't indicated whether they would attend. India they said, will

take part but it isn't clear at which level. Brazil and China said they wouldn't take part unless both sides — including Russia — were at the table, according to Swiss officials. Beijing has been one of the top supporters of Russian President Vladimir Putin since the war started. Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis also addressed reporters, saying Switzerland has repeatedly acknowledged that there cannot be a peace process without Russia. "The question is not whether Russia will be on board, the question is when." He also said Switzerland is in frequent contact with authorities in Moscow about the conference. Ukraine has helped coordinate the summit, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to

attend. Cassis said Swiss officials had to balance considerations that Ukraine might not have attended if Russia was represented. Swiss officials say the conference aims to set a course toward "lasting peace" in Ukraine, to reach a "common understanding" toward getting there, and draw up the "roadmap" on how to get both sides involved in talks. Nuclear security, humanitarian aid and food security are also on the summit's agenda. As many as 4,000 military personnel will be deployed to provide security and support air transportation, surveillance and roll out security fencing and steel wire for the event, officials said, adding that an increase in cyberattacks in the run-up to the summit was noted, but didn't provide details.

Japan economy shrinking, although slightly less than previously thought

AP ■ TOKYO

The Japanese economy shrank at an annual rate of 1.8 per cent in the first quarter of this year, slightly better than the initial estimate at a 2.0 per cent contraction, according to revised government data on Monday. The revision was due to private sector investments, at minus 0.4 per cent, up from the previous minus 0.5 per cent. Seasonally adjusted real gross domestic product, or GDP, a measure of the value of a nation's products and services, remained in negative territory,

as exports and consumption declined from the previous quarter. Quarter-to-quarter, the economy slipped 0.5 per cent in the January-March period, according to the Cabinet Office, unchanged from last month's results. The annual rate measures what would have happened if the quarterly rate lasted a year. Wage growth has been slow, and prices on imports have risen amid a decline in the Japanese yen against the US dollar. The dollar is trading at nearly 157 yen lately, up from about 140 yen a year ago.

Apple poised for late start in AI race with big ambitions

AP ■ NEW YORK

Apple's annual World Wide Developers Conference on Monday is expected to herald the company's move into generative artificial intelligence, marking its late arrival to a technological frontier that's expected to be as revolutionary as the invention of the iPhone. The widely anticipated display of AI to be embedded in the iPhone and other Apple products will be the marquee moment at an event that traditionally previews the next version of software that powers the company's hardware lineup. And Apple's next generation of software is expected to be packed with an array of AI features likely to make its often-bumbling virtual assistant Siri smarter, and make photos, music, texting — and possibly even creating emojis on the fly

— a more productive and entertaining experience. True to its secretive nature, Apple hasn't provided any advance details about Monday's event being held at the company's Cupertino, California, headquarters. But CEO Tim Cook has dropped strong hints during the first few months of this that Apple is poised to reveal its grand plans to enter a space that has been fuelling an industry boom during the past 18 months. AI mania is the main reason that Nvidia, the dominant maker of the chips underlying the technology, has seen its market value rocket from about USD 300 billion at the end of 2022 to about USD 3 trillion. The meteoric ride allowed Nvidia to briefly surpass Apple last week as the second most valuable company in the US Microsoft earlier this

year also eclipsed the iPhone maker on the strength of its so-far successful push into AI. But analysts have been having increasingly worried that Apple may be falling too far behind in the rapidly changing AI space, a concern that has been compounded by an uncharacteristically extended slump in the company's sales. Both Google and Samsung already have released smartphone models touting AI features as their main attractions. That's why analysts such as Dan Ives of Wedbush Securities view Monday's conference as a potential springboard that catapults Apple into another robust phase of growth. Ives believes infusing more AI into the iPhone, iPad and Mac computer will translate into an additional USD 450 billion to USD 600 billion in market

value for Apple. Monday's conference "represents the most important event for Apple in over a decade as the pressure to bring a generative AI stack of technology for developers and consumers is front and centre," Ives wrote in a research note. Apple definitely could use the boost that AI may be able to provide, particularly for its 13-year-old assistant Siri, which Forrester Research Dipanjan Chatterjee now calls an "oddly unhelpful helper." Meanwhile, OpenAI's ChatGPT is getting increasingly conversational — so much so that it recently sparked accusations of intentionally copying a piece of AI software voiced by Scarlett Johansson — and Google last month previewed an AI "agent" dubbed Astra that can seemingly see and remember things. Besides using AI to spruce up

Siri, Apple may also team up with OpenAI to bring some elements of ChatGPT to the iPhone, according to a wide range of unconfirmed reports leading up to Monday's conference. This will be the second straight year that Apple has created a stir at its developers conference by using it to usher in its entrance into a trendy form of technology that other companies already had been making inroads. Last year, Apple provided an early look at its mixed-reality headset, the Vision Pro, which wasn't released until early this year carrying a USD 3,500 price tag that has been a major impediment to gaining much traction. Nevertheless, Apple's push into mixed reality, tweaked with a twist that it bills as "spatial computing," has raised hopes that what is currently a niche technology

will turn into a huge market. Part of the optimism stems from Apple's history of releasing technology later than others and then using sleek designs and services combined with slick marketing campaigns to overcome its tardy start to unleash new trends. "Apple's early reticence toward AI was entirely on brand," Forrester's Chatterjee wrote in a preview of the developers conference. "The company has always been famously obsessed with what its offerings did for its customers rather than how it did it." Bringing more AI into the iPhone, in particular, will likely raise privacy issues — a topic where Apple has gone to great lengths to assure its loyal customer base that it can be trusted not to peer too deeply into their personal lives.

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NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
Prayagraj Power Generation Company Limited invites expression of interest (EOI) from eligible vendors for **Fire Service for PPGCL Plant and Associates areas** of 3x660 MW Thermal Power Plant at Prayagraj Power Generation Company Limited, Bara, Dist. Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India.
Details of pre-qualification requirements, bid security, purchasing of tender document etc. may be downloaded using the URL- <https://www.ppgcl.co.in/tenders.php> Eligible vendors willing to participate may submit their expression of interest along with the tender fee for issue of bid document latest by **16th June 2024**.

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
No. E-499218/3 Dated 10th June 2024
The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, invites bids from registered appropriate class of contractor for 47 building works in different schools as per the detailed notice inviting tender which can be downloaded from the website <https://www.assamtenders.gov.in>.
The last date of submission of tender is 02-07-2024 upto 2:00 PM.
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Sensex, Nifty breach record levels but settle lower amid profit booking

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Monday after hitting their all-time high levels in early trade amid selling in blue-chip IT stocks and HDFC Bank. After breaching the 77,000-mark during the early trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex came under selling pressure at the fag-end of the session and ended 203.28 points or 0.27 per cent lower at 76,490.08. During the day, the benchmark jumped 385.68 points or 0.50 per cent to hit a new record of 77,079.04. Halting its three-day rally, the NSE Nifty dipped 30.95 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 23,259.20. Intra-day, it climbed 121.75 points or 0.52 per cent to hit the lifetime peak of 23,411.90. Narendra Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister on Sunday for a record-equalling third term, heading a 72-member Union Council of Ministers that put emphasis on continuity, youth and experience, while also rewarding partners in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. Among the 30 Sensex companies, Tech Mahindra,



Infosys, Wipro, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank, HCL Technologies and Tata Consultancy Services were among the major laggards. UltraTech Cement, Power Grid, Nestle, NTPC, Tata Steel and Axis Bank were among the biggest gainers. “Volatility returned to markets, as Sensex slipped from its new high and fell sharply towards the close amid profit-taking in IT, metals and oil & gas stocks. Lacklustre sentiment also prevailed due

to weak global cues after recent data from the US indicated that rate cut may not happen soon,” said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.04 per cent and midcap index jumped 0.56 per cent. Among the indices, services rallied 1.61 per cent, realty jumped 1.34 per cent, commodities (1.28 per cent), utilities (1.11 per cent), healthcare (0.77 per cent) and industrials (0.49 per cent).

IT, auto, metal and teck were the laggards. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 4,391.02 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. “The Indian market currently lacks fresh catalysts following the formation of the new government at the centre, suggesting that some consolidation may occur in the near term. Institutional flows indicate a mixed trend, with FIIs gradually covering their shorts and DIIs booking profits after the market reached historic highs,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. In Asian markets, Tokyo settled in the green while Seoul ended lower. Markets in China and Hong Kong were closed for holidays. European markets were trading in the negative territory. US markets ended lower on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.18 per cent to USD 79.76 a barrel. The BSE benchmark ended at 76,693.36, up 1,618.85 points or 2.16 per cent, on Friday. The Nifty settled with a jump of 468.75 points or 2.05 per cent at 23,290.15.

Equity mutual fund inflow swells to ₹34,697 crore in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equity mutual funds witnessed a staggering growth with inflow reaching a record high of Rs 34,697 crore in May, marking a 83 per cent surge from the preceding month, propelled by contributions from thematic funds and intermittent corrections that provided buying opportunity to investors. This also marks the 39th consecutive month of net inflows in equity funds, data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) showed on Monday. Moreover, monthly contributions from Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) rose to Rs 20,904 crore in May, from Rs 20,371 crore in April, marking the second consecutive month of inflows exceeding Rs 20,000 crore. Overall, the mutual fund industry has witnessed an inflow of Rs 1.1 lakh crore in the month under review as compared to Rs 2.4 lakh crore in April. The inflow was due to investment in equity as well as debt schemes. With these inflows, the industry's net assets under management rose to Rs 58.91 lakh crore in May-end from



Rs 57.26 lakh crore in April-end. As per the data, equity-oriented schemes witnessed an inflow of Rs 34,697 crore in May, way higher than Rs 18,917 crore in April. Except for the focused and equity-linked saving schemes (ELSS) categories, all the other categories witnessed good net inflows. Sector/thematic funds continue to attract investor attention with the highest net inflows of Rs 19,213 crores during the month. This was largely owing to the new fund offering (NFO) of the HDFC Manufacturing Fund, which collected around Rs 9,563 crore. “Intermittent corrections provided investors some buying opportunity in a market which has largely witnessed a secular uptrend for a long time now.

Moreover, the expectation of the NDA-led government coming back to power also propelled buying from investors, as they would have expected the markets to rally further if the NDA government is indeed formed,” Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said. Manish Mehta, National Head — Sales, Marketing & Digital Business at Kotak Mahindra AMC, said that record inflows were aided by NFO listings and investors taking advantage of volatility to add equity schemes to their investments through SIPs as well as lumpsum. “The record inflow in May came despite high volatility from FPI selling and general elections. Investors remained steadfast in their pursuit of

returns on the back of the Indian growth narrative, buoyed by confidence in the incumbent government securing a record third consecutive term, Gopal Kavalireddi, Vice President of Research at FYERS, said. Apart from equities, debt category schemes experienced net inflows of Rs 42,495 crore on preference for safety which drove the flow in the segment. Liquid funds recorded inflows of Rs 25,873.38 crore. “Given the uncertainty surrounding the interest rate cycle, most of the flows have flowed into categories having a duration profile of less than a year such as ultrashort and money market. Significant flows have also been received by overnight and liquid fund categories, but that is largely corporates and institution driven and usually of very short tenure,” Srivastava said. The categories which witnessed net outflows are short duration, medium duration, dynamic bond, credit risk, gilt fund and floater fund. Besides, hybrid category schemes attracted Rs 17,991 crore and index funds and other ETFs collectively garnered Rs 15,180 crore.

Rupee falls 10 paise to close at 83.50 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee settled for the day lower by 10 paise at 83.50 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, following a rising American currency in overseas markets and a sluggish trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said the downside in the rupee was restricted by easing political uncertainties as Narendra Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister on Sunday for a record-equalling third term. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.48 and settled

for the day lower by 10 paise at 83.50 (provisional) against the American currency. On Friday, the rupee appreciated 13 paise to 83.40 against the US dollar. “We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on strong US Dollar amid rising expectations of a delay in interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve due to tight job market,” said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. However, softening crude oil prices and optimism over a stable government may support the rupee at lower



levels. Traders may take cues from inflation data from India and the US. Investors may also watch out for the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting this week. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 83.80. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 105.27, higher by 0.37 per cent. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.21 per cent to USD 79.79 per barrel. Modi will be heading a 72-

member Union Council of Ministers putting emphasis on continuity, youth and experience, while also rewarding partners in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. Along with Modi, senior BJP leaders including Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar, all ministers in the Modi 2.0 cabinet, took oath as cabinet ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 203.28 points, or 0.27 per cent, to close at 76,490.08 points. The

broader NSE Nifty settled 30.95 points or 0.13 per cent lower at 23,259.20 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Friday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 4,391.02 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, India's forex reserves jumped USD 4.837 billion to a new all-time high of USD 651.51 billion for the week ended May 31, the RBI said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped USD 2.027 billion to USD 646.673 billion.

Higher property prices, changes in law to boost debt recovery from stressed realty projects: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Recovery of debt from stressed residential realty projects is set to increase in the current financial year due to higher property prices as well as changes in rules, a report said on Monday. The bad loan recovery rate is estimated to touch 16-18 per cent at the end of FY25 from 11 per cent as on March 31, 2024, domestic rating agency Crisil said in a report. “This will be driven by improved viability of stressed projects due to healthy demand and price appreciation seen in residential real estate and greater investor and promoter interest in reviving such projects,” the agency said. It added that recent amendments to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) regulations for real estate



projects should also strengthen resolution of stressed real estate assets in the medium term. The agency said it analysed the performance of its portfolio comprising security receipts of Rs 9,000 crore from 70 stressed realty projects with a saleable area of 66 million square feet while arriving at the estimates. It said residential realty demand is set to increase by 10-12 per cent courtesy a healthy economic growth and

buoyant demand across housing segments in top-six cities. Additionally, it said low unsold inventories across major micro markets will also help ARCs (asset reconstruction companies) turn around stressed real estate projects faster with support from promoters or external investors. A bulk three-fourths of the projects it analysed turned non-performing assets (NPA) between 2019 and 2022, and were impacted by falling sales and slower collections during the Covid-19 pandemic. The remaining are pre-2019 NPA projects that faced liquidity issues due to weak demand, it said. Crisil's senior director Mohit Makhiya said 33 million square feet of unsold inventory is likely to be sold at appreciated market prices because of a significant

increase in prices over the last two fiscals and healthy demand for residential real estate. “The emergence of distressed asset credit funds is expected to improve the accessibility of last-mile funding for project completion, supporting faster restructuring of debt by promoters with ARCs,” he added. The agency further said the amendments in insolvency rule made in February this year enable resolution of individual projects by delinking them from the entire corporate entity involving multiple projects and group inter-linkages. Speaking of the necessity of the amendments, it said only 8 per cent of the admitted cases have been resolved under IBC and debt worth Rs 40,000 crore was stuck across 100 ongoing realty cases for more than two years.

Gold remains flat at ₹71,800/10 grams; silver rises ₹200

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices remained flat at Rs 71,800 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday. According to Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, gold traded flat on Monday, after Comex spot gold declined as much as 3.45 per cent on Friday, the most since August 2021. However, silver prices rose Rs 200 to Rs 92,100 per kg. In the previous session, it had closed at Rs 91,900 per kg. “In the Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading flat at Rs 71,800 per 10 grams, unchanged from the previous close,” Gandhi said. In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at



USD 2,293 per ounce, down USD 1 from the previous close. However, silver was quoted higher at USD 29.50 per ounce. It had ended at USD 29.15 per ounce in the previous session. “Gold prices traded within a narrow range, after a minor gap-down opening. This movement was mainly influenced by the strengthening US dollar, following strong nonfarm payrolls data,” Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

AI Express union flags concerns over charge sheet to cabin crew

PTI ■ MUMBAI

An Air India Express staff union has claimed the airline has issued charge sheets against 200 cabin crew members for reporting sick last month when the carrier faced significant disruptions. The Air India Express Employees Union (AIXEU) has termed the airline's move as unfortunate and unfair labour practice. In a letter to Air India Express chief Aloke Singh on Sunday, the union also warned the Tata Group-run airline's management that such actions could be detrimental to the interests of the company and its passengers. There was no comment from Air India Express. According to Union sources, the charge-sheet was issued to around 200 cabin crew members on June 5, with a deadline of 72 hours to file a response. Around 200 cabin crew members of Air India Express went on strike on May 7, to protest against the alleged mismanagement in the airline, resulting in cancellation of hundreds of flights. Consequently, the airline management terminated the services of 25 cabin crew members and warned the others to join work or else face the same action. Three days later, the strike was called off after a conciliation meeting between the representatives of cabin crew members and the airline management at the Office of the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) in Delhi on May 9. “The charge-sheet was issued by the Chief of HR to many of the cabin crew members regarding their sick reports. It is very unfortunate and constitutes unfair labour practice to reopen the case and issue charge-sheets for



matters that have already been settled through conciliation. “The termination orders of the 25 cabin crew members were also withdrawn during conciliation based on the settlement agreement,” the Union, which is affiliated to the RSS, said in the letter. Requesting the management to refrain from reopening settled issues, AIXEU president K K Vijayakumar said in the letter, “Such actions could be detrimental to the interests of the enterprise and its passengers. Instead, I urge you to seek opportunities for cooperation to strengthen our industrial relations.” Stating that the entire issue was discussed between the Central Labour Commissioner (CLC) on May 9 and was amicably settled between the management and the union, it added, “Pursuing the charge-sheet and initiating punitive action against employees would only lead to unpleasant situations and worsen the already affected industrial relations.” “It was clearly stated in the last hearing held on May 28 in front of the CLC that no punitive action would be initiated against the employees in this regard,” the Union said. “Additionally, since the issue was settled on May 9, I believe that the employees were available for duty the following day.

Ras Al Khaimah eyes 20 per cent increase in tourists footfalls from India

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Ras Al Khaimah, one of the seven emirates in the UAE, is eyeing over 20 per cent growth in tourist arrivals from India with targeted marketing campaigns and addition of new hotels, the emirate's Tourism Development Authority CEO Raki Phillips has said. “In 2023, we saw a significant increase in visitors from India, up 20 per cent compared with the 2022 numbers. This represents a strong recovery and growth compared to 2019. For 2024, we expect year-on-year growth exceeding 20 per cent, driven by targeted marketing campaigns and the introduction of new hotels and attractions that resonate with Indian travellers,” Phillips told PTI in an

interview through email. In 2023, he said, Ras Al Khaimah welcomed the highest numbers of overnight arrivals of 1.22 million visitors, surpassing the previous record of 1.13 million visitors in 2022. “This growth reflects our strategic efforts in enhancing our tourism offerings and promoting the Emirate globally. For 2024, we anticipate continued growth, projecting a 10 per cent increase in the number of arrivals as we introduce new hotels and experiences that cater to a diverse range of travellers,” he added. India is the fifth largest source market of Ras Al Khaimah after Russia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Kazakhstan, he said, adding that this steady growth of Indian tourists underscores



the growing appeal of Ras Al Khaimah as a preferred destination for Indian travellers. When asked about how much Indian tourists spend on an average, Phillips said, “while I cannot provide exact figures due to varying factors, however, I can confidently say that Indian tourists are among the top contributors to our tourism economy in the UAE.”

Indian travellers spend an average of USD 1,200 per trip to GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries, according to the latest data from Euromonitor International, he added. Further, Phillips said, the majority of Indian tourists visiting Ras Al Khaimah are families, adventure enthusiasts, and wellness seekers. However, there is a growing trend of young

couples and honeymooners choosing Ras Al Khaimah for its unique blend of adventure, luxury, and tranquillity, he stated. “In 2024, we aim to attract a diverse range of segments from India, including family vacationers, adventure enthusiasts, and luxury travellers. We are also focusing on promoting meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) tourism. Weddings are also an important segment for us, and we have seen a growing interest in destination weddings. Our Emirate offers a range of breathtaking wedding venues, from beachfront resorts to desert oases, and we work closely with our partners in India,” he added. Phillips said, the robust air connectivity between the

UAE and India will also help boost tourism from India with numerous direct flights which take just over three hours. “Ras Al Khaimah benefits from its proximity to Dubai International Airport, one of the busiest and most well-connected airports globally, located just 45 minutes away,” he added. To keep the current momentum of tourist footfalls from India, he said, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority is participating in roadshows, media events, fam trips, and exclusive events with leading wedding planners. “We have been forging strategic partnerships and implementing targeted marketing campaigns to enhance our tourism offerings,” Phillips added.

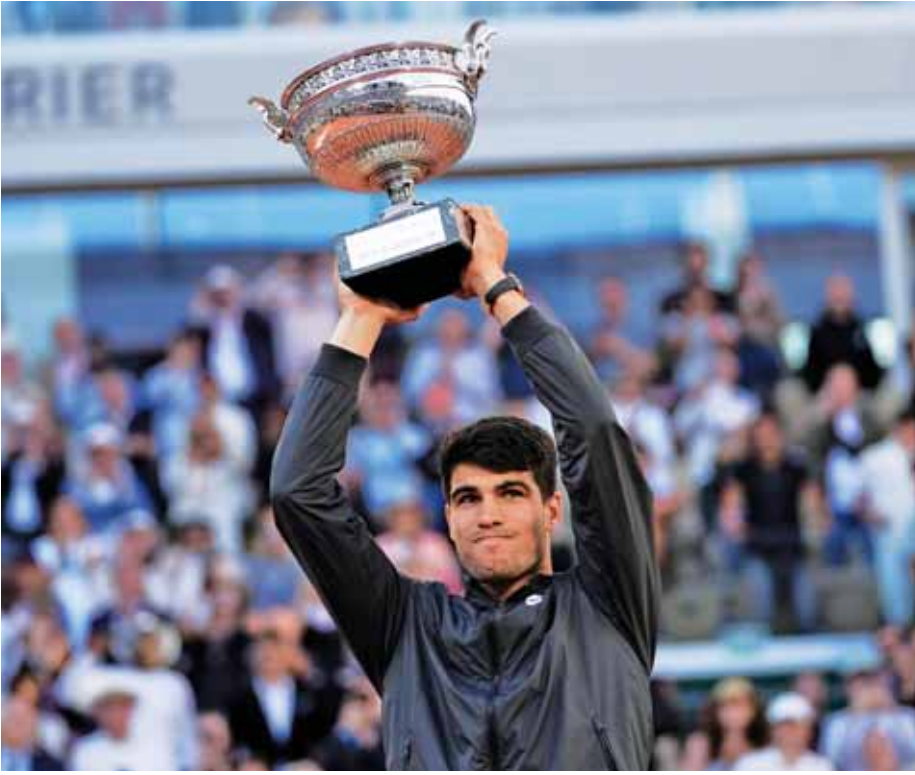
Carlos Alcaraz Wimbledon title defense starts July 1

AP ■ PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz plans to continue his tradition of celebrating Grand Slam titles with tattoos by getting ink of the date he won his first French Open championship and a drawing of the Eiffel Tower. That art to help remember Sunday's 6-3, 2-6, 5-7, 6-1, 6-2 comeback against Alexander Zverev in the final at Roland Garros will go near Alcaraz's left ankle. His right ankle already bears the date of his 2023 Wimbledon triumph and an image of a strawberry; his left arm carries the date of his first major trophy, which arrived at the 2022 US Open. At the rate he's going, the 21-year-old from Spain might run out of skin. Alcaraz, though, noted Sunday that he assured his mother he would not keep printing the dates of every Slam victory for the rest of his career on his body. Instead, he'll keep it to just

dates of the first title from each of the four most important events in tennis - which means all that remains is the Australian Open, and who would doubt that he eventually will add that one, too? As it is, Alcaraz is the youngest man to collect a Slam title on clay, grass and hard courts, much as he was the youngest, at 19, to reach No. 1 in the ATP rankings. "My game suits ... Every surface," he explained, "because I practice it." He first learned the sport on clay. He finds himself most comfortable on hard courts - he sought to excel there because that's what is used at most tournaments - and his always-look-to-attack style is a perfect fit for grass, as his win over seven-time Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic in last year's final at the All England Club proved. Alcaraz's title defense there begins July 1. Of course, he said, he works on his defence. And, his drop shots and volleys are valuable

tools, as Zverev and so many others see. But Alcaraz's underlying principle is this: "My main goal is being aggressive, as much as I can." In the semi-finals in Paris, he wore down Jannik Sinner - who replaced the injured Djokovic at No. 1 in the rankings on Monday, ahead of No. 2 Alcaraz - and came back from a two-sets-to-one deficit by grabbing eight of the last 11 games in a four-hour, nine-minute match. In the final, Alcaraz wore down the fourth-ranked Zverev, again erasing a 2-1 deficit in sets, this time by rolling through 12 of the last 15 games in a four-hour, 19-minute match. "We're both physically strong, but he's a beast. He's an animal, for sure. The intensity he plays tennis at is different to other people," Zverev said. "He can do so many different things." Alcaraz dealt with cramps against both Sinner and Zverev and said the real key he has



found is in the mind. "If you're not strong in your head and you don't show mental strength," Alcaraz said, "you won't win Grand Slams." Greatness has been predicted of him for quite some time and, so far, he has met the outsized expectations. The standards he's setting only serve to increase the volume of the praise - and the projections of what might be possible. As he answered questions in English and Spanish on Sunday night, Alcaraz was asked in both languages how many of these trophies he could keep winning. A reporter mentioned Djokovic's men's-record 24 Grand Slam titles (which, if you're keeping track, is 21 more than where Alcaraz's total stands). Another brought up that number, as well as the 14 French Open championships won by his countryman and, to use Alcaraz's word, "idol," Rafael Nadal (just, oh, 13 ahead of Alcaraz).

Alcaraz laughed and called those two accomplishments otherworldly. When someone wanted to know whether equaling Djokovic is something he dreams about and is achievable, Alcaraz smiled that wide smile of his. "I don't know," he said. "I hope so." Then, Alcaraz related a conversation he had Saturday with his coach, 2003 French Open champion Juan Carlos Ferrero, about how "difficult" it is to win one Slam - and how "unbelievable" it is that Djokovic has won 24. "Right now, I can't think about it. I just want to keep going, and let's see how many Grand Slams I'm going to (own) at the end of my career. Hopefully, reach the 24," Alcaraz said before reaching his left hand toward the silver Coupe des Mousquetaires he had just earned and adding, "but right now, I'm going to enjoy my third one and let's see in the future."



Prannoy to spearhead Indian challenge in Australia Open badminton

PTI ■ SYDNEY

HS Prannoy will look to regain his lost form when he spearheads India's challenge at the Australian Open badminton tournament starting here on Tuesday. Prannoy, seeded fifth here, didn't have best of results in the last two tournaments. He was stunned by compatriot Meiraba Luwang Maisina in the men's singles opening round of Thailand Open last month. If that was not enough, world No. 10 Prannoy lost to world No. 11 Kenta Nishimoto 13-21 21-14 15-21 in a 45-minute Round of 16 match in Singapore Open. And the Indian will be desperate to turn things around in the BWF Super 500 event here as he opens his campaign against Ygor Coelho of Brazil. Sameer Verma will play Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo of Indonesia in the opening round, while Ravi faces a tough opponent in eighth seed Loh Kean Yew of Singapore. Other Indians to feature in the men's singles are Mithun Manjunath, who will take on Indonesia's Alwi Farhan, Kiran George who is up against Canada's Xiaodong Sheng, S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian who is pitted

against top seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia. In women's singles, eighth seed Aakarshi Kashyap will lead the Indian charge. She will play Ukraine's Polina Buhrova in the opening round. Ashmita Chaliha will play Peru's Ines Lucia Castillo, Anupama Upadhyaya will lock horns with Malaysia's Wong Ling Ching, Samiya Imad Farooqui has a tough opponent in top seed Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, while Keyura Mopati and Malvika Bansod will feature in an all-Indian contest. No Indian features in the men's doubles, while Panda sisters, Rutuparna and Swetaparna, seeded seventh, and the pair of Harshita Rout and Sruti Swain will lead India's charge in the women's doubles. There are three Indian pairs in the mixed doubles. Eighth seed B Sumeeth Reddy and Sikki Reddy will play Malaysian duo of Wong Tien Ci and Lim Chiew Sien in their opener, while Tarun Kona and Sri Krishna Priya Kudaravalli will be up against another Malaysian combination of Hoo Pang Ron and Cheng Su Yin. The third Indian mixed doubles pair of Ayush Raj Gupta and Sruti Swain will play against Australian duo of Jordan Yang and Sydney Tjonaadi in the opener.

PTI ■ DOHA

The influential Sunil Chhetri's absence will be a difficult void to fill as the Indian football team enters a testing transition phase with a crucial FIFA World Cup qualifying match against heavyweights Qatar here on Tuesday. The 39-year-old Chhetri called time on his glorious international career by playing in last week's fixture against Kuwait in Kolkata, which ended in a goal-less draw as the team failed to give him a fitting farewell. Chhetri ended with 94 goals in 151 matches, having led the country with aplomb for more than a decade. The Indian team will be led by the 32-year-old first-choice goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, who has so far appeared in 72 internationals and is the most experienced player in the 23-member squad after Chhetri's retirement. An acid test awaits India as they run into two-time Asian champions Qatar at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium, knowing well that a defeat will end their campaign and dash all hopes of securing a maiden entry into the third round of the

Chhetri less India enter testing transition phase with crucial WC qualifier against Qatar

World Cup Qualifiers. India remain in the second spot with five points and a goal difference of -3. Afghanistan, who also played out a 0-0 draw with Qatar in their last outing in Hofuf, Saudi Arabia, are in third spot with a goal difference of -10, the stalemate making the job much more difficult for Igor Stimac's wards. Qatar, who have already qualified for the third round as group-toppers, have named a largely youthful squad, with 21 out of their 29 players below the age of 24. "We have watched the Afghanistan versus Qatar game and will work on the attacking transition, with a hope to start scoring goals from the chances we create," said Stimac on arriving here. India had their first practice in Doha on Sunday evening and are having the official training session on Monday at the match venue. For the Blue Tigers, a result is a must. If they lose against Qatar, they will be eliminated



from the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers third round. They will then be doing battle in the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers third round matches for a place at the 2027 tournament in Saudi Arabia. However, if India beat Qatar, they will be in pole position to make the World Cup Qualifiers third round and a

direct spot at the Asian Cup thanks to their much-superior goal difference over Afghanistan. If India draw against Qatar, they will qualify for the third round only if the match between Kuwait and Afghanistan, which will kick off in Kuwait City two hours after India's match, also ends

in a draw. In that scenario, India will finish second in the group with six points, the same as Afghanistan, but with a better goal difference. Kuwait are at the bottom of the table with four points but with need to be creative with their passing and intelligent with movement off the ball.

for the second and final berth from Group A. For over a decade, one question that has dogged Indian football is, "Who, after Sunil Chhetri?" The team is yet to find a lethal striker to succeed him. Rahim Ali struggled as a substitute in the previous match and lacked clinical finishing skills. The likes of Manvir Singh, Vikram Partap Singh and David Lalhlansanga comprise India's forward line but they are yet to make a statement upfront. The fancied Qatar side will look to exploit wherever the India team is found wanting, making it extremely important for defenders Anwar Ali, Mehtab Singh, Nikhil Poojary and Rahul Bheke to be on their toes at all times. In the midfield, the likes of Sahal Abdul Samad, Anirudh Thapa, Brandon Fernandes, Liston Colaco and Lallianzuala Chhangte will need to be creative with their passing and intelligent with movement off the ball.

Nagal attains 77th place in ATP rankings; set to represent India in Paris

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's Sumit Nagal climbed 18 places to 77th in the latest ATP rankings issued on Monday, all but sealing a spot in the Paris Olympics men's singles draw. Nagal has 713 ATP points. The improvement in his rankings was due to Nagal bagging the men's singles crown at the Heilbronn Neckarcup 2024 Challenger event in Germany on Sunday, beating Switzerland's Alexander Ritschard in a three-set thriller. The Indian won 6-1 6(5)-7 6-3 in the final that lasted two hours and 22 minutes. Rankings, as on Monday, will be the basis for deciding entries for the Games. As per the established criteria, the top 56 players, both in men's and women's rankings, will attain automatic qualification for the Olympics but no



more than four per country can make the cut for the Games, a rule which allows lower ranked players to sneak into the draw. Nagal looks good to secure the last available ranking-enabled spot in the draw. The last time India had a player in the Olympics main draw was the 2012 Games when Somdev Devvarman made it

thanks to a wildcard. "Elated to win the title in Heilbronn this week. It was an important week for me, and I'm proud to have produced my best tennis when it mattered the most," Nagal posted on X after his final win. "If I win a match like this, I can be proud because the fight was insane. Ranking is secondary, first goal is to play good tennis," he said at the end of his match. The 26-year-old Nagal would be the sole Indian in the men's singles event in Paris. This was the sixth ATP Challenger title for Nagal and the second of the year after the Chennai Open crown on home soil earlier this year. Nagal, who is currently the best-ranked Indian singles player, has won four ATP Challenger titles since 2023 and the win in Heilbronn was his fourth title on clay tennis courts.



Di Maria scores, Messi returns in Argentina's Copa America warmup victory over Ecuador

AP ■ CHICAGO

Angel Di Maria scored as Lionel Messi returned to the international stage for the first time in six months, helping Argentina to a 1-0 victory over Ecuador in a Copa America warmup match. Messi was sidelined for the first half before replacing Di Maria in the 56th minute on Sunday night. A right hamstring injury kept the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner and Inter Miami star from participating in Argentina's previous two Copa America warmup matches against El Salvador and Costa Rica in March. "Sometimes there is no need to risk it, not only with Leo. It is about taking care of them so that they arrive in optimal conditions," Argentina head coach Lionel Scaloni said of his decision to sit Messi for the first half. With Messi watching from the bench, Di Maria sent a reverse pass from Christian Romero into the net to open the scoring in the 40th minute. "It helps to play against a rival like that, especially because Ecuador plays at a high level, they make it difficult for anyone," Scaloni said. "And we needed to get together, compete, add minutes and feel the sensation of putting on the shirt before a Cup that is going to be difficult." It was Di Maria's second consec-

utive goal in an international match. He also scored against Costa Rica on March 26. With the 31st goal of his Argentina career, the 36-year-old midfielder is tied with Gonzalo Higuain for the fifth-most goals in the country's history and sits just four scores behind Diego Maradona at No. 4 on the leaderboard. Argentina - the reigning World Cup and Copa America champion - hasn't fallen in its last seven meetings with Ecuador, a streak dating back to 2019. "The goal is to continue competing, and these guys have competing in their blood," Scaloni said. "Sometimes it turns out well and other times it doesn't turn out well. But you have to keep playing. There are always things to play for. Now the Copa America, then the qualifiers. ... Our goal is always to compete at our best." UP NEXT Argentina: Lionel Scaloni's squad will wrap up its pre-Copa America slate in Washington D.C. On Friday with a warmup match against Guatemala before opening its group stage of the tournament against Canada on June 20. Ecuador: A pair of international friendly matches remain against Bolivia on Wednesday and Honduras on June 16 before opening the Copa America schedule against Venezuela on June 22.

AP ■ MONTREAL

Max Verstappen won the Canadian Grand Prix for the third straight year for the Red Bull star's 60th Formula 1 victory and sixth in nine races this season. Verstappen started second in the rain alongside pole-sitter George Russell and dominated late again at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve on Ile Notre-Dame on Sunday. The 26-year-old Dutchman has a staggering 50 victories in the last 75 F1 races. Verstappen finished 3.879 seconds ahead of McLaren's Lando Norris in the 70-lap race on the 2.71-mile (4.36-kilometer) road course. Last year, Verstappen started from the pole and led every lap. The race Sunday started with a soaking wet track before the sun emerged 10 minutes in, but rain showers returned periodically throughout the afternoon. "It's a lot of fun to drive these kinds of races now and then," Verstappen said. "You don't want it all the time because that's too stressful. But I had a lot of fun out there today." Norris lost a 10-second lead when Logan Sargeant brought put the safety car on Lap 26.

Max Verstappen wins 3rd straight Canadian Grand Prix for 60th Formula 1 victory

"We should have won the race today and we didn't so, frustrating," Norris said. "We had the pace. We should have won today. It's as simple as that." Mercedes took the third and fourth spots, with Russell third and seven-time Montreal winner Lewis Hamilton fourth. Oscar Piastri was fifth for McLaren, followed by Aston Martin drivers Fernando Alonso and Lance Stroll, the lone Canadian in the race. "It was a tough track with the condition, so I'm really satisfied to score points," Stroll said. "Lots of points, the sixth and seventh positions are really good for the team." Verstappen increased his season lead to 56 points over second-place Charles Leclerc of Ferrari. "As a team, we made the right calls today," said Verstappen, coming off a sixth-place finish in Monaco.



"It's great to have three wins in a row here. I hope I can add more in the future." On Lap 46, Norris stayed out while Verstappen and Russell pitted. Verstappen regained the lead three laps later when

he squeezed past Norris as the McLaren driver came out of the pit lane. Verstappen hung onto the top spot the rest of the way. Verstappen managed to avoid hitting a groundhog on Lap

31. "He was almost dead," Verstappen said. "I started to get to the last chicane and I thought it was debris initially. So I started to close in and then I'm like, Oh

my God, that's an animal.' Last year, a bird flew into my car, so I didn't want to have a groundhog stuck in my car as well." Verstappen joined Hamilton and Michael Schumacher as the only drivers to three-peat in Montreal. The three-time season champion is third on the career victory list behind Hamilton (103) and Michael Schumacher (91). Ferrari had a terrible weekend. Leclerc retired on Lap 43 after gambling with his tire strategy and falling far behind, and Carlos Sainz exited later when he spun out. "Just a very weak, disappointing weekend for the whole team," Sainz said. "We never seemed to find pace." Organisers said 350,000 spectators made the trip to the track over the event's three days. Verstappen started second Sunday on a tiebreaker after having the same lap time as Russell in qualifying Saturday.

Demoralised Pakistan eye big win against Canada to keep T20 WC hopes alive

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Shocked by the USA and scarred by India, Pakistan have little to play for and everything to lose when they meet Canada in their penultimate group league encounter of the T20 World Cup here on Tuesday. If the Super Over loss against the co-hosts in their opening Group A match was not enough, Pakistan slumped to six-run loss at the hands of arch-rivals India in a low-scoring match here on Sunday. Pakistan's Super Eight qualification chance now hinges on winning big against Canada and Ireland, besides hoping that the Americans lose big to India and Ireland. Even in that scenario, both the teams will end on four points each and it will boil down to which team has a better net run rate. Hence Pakistan can only pray for divine intervention in best case scenario. USA after two wins enjoy a healthy run-rate of +0.626 and just a victory against Ireland would suffice while Pakistan with a dismal NRR of -0.150 would not only need to win but also by comprehensive margins. In the two matches so far, the 2009 champions never really looked the formidable side it was once known to be. There seems to be no clarity in Babar Azam's leadership. The two factions in the team -- one led by the skipper with his close friends Mohammed Rizwan and Shadab Khan while other including, recently



sacked Shaheen Shah Afridi is also making matters worse. Not a single department clicked for Pakistan in the two matches so far and they will need a more cohesive effort in the remaining matches to give themselves an outside chance. While Babar and Shahadab Khan scored 40 odd runs against USA to post 159 for 7, Pakistan failed to defend the target, losing the match in Super Over. And then while chasing an underwhelming 120-run target, none of the Pakistani batters could up the ante as they consumed 59 dot balls to be restricted 113 for 7. Pakistan's major concern going forward is the underwhelming

performance of their batters as the likes of Fakhar Zaman, Imad Wasim, Shadab Khan and Iftikhar Ahmed played loose shots to make life difficult for them against India. While Mohammed Rizwan took 44 balls to score his 31 runs, Wasim consumed 23 balls for his 15. The only bright sport for Pakistan on Sunday was the performance of their bowlers with Naseem Shah (3/21) and Mohammad Amir (2/23) leading from the front. But premier fast bowler Shaheen needs to take more responsibility upfront in the remaining two games to give Pakistan an outside chance. He has hardly been able to get

swing in conducive conditions. Going forward Pakistan will have to do some soul searching if they want to revive their faltering campaign. Canada, on the other hand, are placed third in Group A with one win out of two games. After the seven-wicket loss to USA, Canada bounced back in style to beat Ireland by 12 runs in their next match. In Navneet Dhaliwal, Canada have a veteran top-order batter who was a part of that 2019 victory over Ireland, and a lot will be riding on him. Canada will also take heart from the defeat against the USA because they had posted an imposing 194, albeit in a losing cause.

Pakistan lost the plot after 15 overs, players under pressure: Kirsten

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Perplexed by Pakistan's sudden disintegration in the T20 World Cup match against India here, the team's recently-appointed head coach Gary Kirsten said his batters "lost the plot" after 15 overs and are under pressure after failing to perform at their best. Pakistan are on the verge of being eliminated from the tournament after consecutive losses to debutants USA and arch-foes India. The loss to Rohit Sharma's on Sunday was a classic case of implosion with the side going from 80/4 in the 15th over to ending at 113/7 while chasing a modest 120. Kirsten emphasised the significance of strike rotation, particularly on challenging surfaces like the one here. He said his team failed to follow the strategy. "I think certainly on a pitch like that, it is really, really important to be able to rotate the strike. So, I agree with you that sometimes it's fun to watch a game like this where it's not only about hitting boundaries," Kirsten said in the post-match press conference. "But you also have to be able to use 120 balls really well. As I said, we did for 15 overs and then we lost the plot...We're losing too many wickets. "As a batting unit, you can't lose as many wickets as we are losing. Players have got to take responsibility when that opportunity comes," he added. Pakistan were guilty of consuming 59 dot balls during the chase. Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah did the most damage with figures of 3/14 in his four overs.



The side's next game will be at the same venue against Canada on Tuesday. It will be a virtual do-or-die encounter for the runners-up of the last edition. "These guys are all international players and they're aware that when they're not performing at their best that there's going to be pressure put on them. That's understandable," Kirsten, who has coached the 2011 ODI World Cup-winning Indian team, said. "...But a lot of these guys have played a lot of T20 cricket around the world over many, many years and it's really up to them to decide how they're going to take their games forward," the South African stated. Asked if the team lacks the ability to handle pressure, Kirsten stressed upon the importance of continual growth and adaptation in the fast-paced world of international cricket. "I'm having a look into the environment and looking at what the issues are. I look at these players, I've watched them play many, many years on TV and kind of getting to

know them, they're fantastic guys," Kirsten, who was appointed just a few weeks before the World Cup, said. "I mean, there's a lot of very disappointed guys in the change room now. I think for me the most important thing for every international player is that you continue growing..." he explained. "The game is changing pretty much every year. So, if you're not up to it and you're not improving, you're going to get found out somewhere." On what exactly was the team's strategy while chasing, Kirsten said the focus was on capitalising on loose deliveries and rotating the strike. However, he expressed disappointment over the team's loss of momentum during the crucial phase of the innings. "...I thought we did that brilliantly for 15 overs. We kept it at a run a ball, and then we lost wickets and then we stopped scoring ones and then we were looking for boundaries and once you've got to that point, it was always going to be hard. "So, the message was to do

what we executed on for 15 overs," the coach said. Amid the disappointment of defeat, Kirsten found solace in the team's bowling performance, especially in the death overs. "(It) got better and better and we've tracked their stats over the last 15 odd games, and they've been an incredible bowling unit from overs 10 to 20. I think our record between overs 10 to 20 as a bowling unit is up there with the best," he said. "We've got four fantastic seamers and Imad Wasim I thought bowled really well today as well. So, we've got some nice options on the ball with the team and I think we're going to be a difficult team to bat against if we bowl like that," he added. Kirsten diverged from the criticism aimed at the drop-in pitches of the Nassau stadium, refraining from joining the bandwagon of discontent. Despite witnessing a series of low-scoring matches, he remained diplomatic about Sunday's wicket and the chatter surrounding its uneven bounce, which has been dubbed dangerous in several quarters. "I think it wasn't dangerous, I mean the odd one rose up, but not many. Generally it kept a little bit lower, it was difficult to score from both batting sides and also a fairly slow outfield so it was never going to be a big total," said Kirsten. "I would have said 140 would have been a really good score on that pitch, so India didn't get that and so I thought we had the game," added the South African.

Year ago people asked if I am finished, now they say I am at my best: Bumrah

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Jasprit Bumrah couldn't help but laugh at how the narrative about him has changed in a year's time -- from being someone whose career is finished to the one who is at the peak of his prowess. In 2022, Bumrah underwent surgery for a lower back stress fracture and missed the T20 World Cup in Australia. Just before his comeback in a home bilateral series, he developed a strain and was out for more than 10 months. As a result, people became sceptical of his ability to handle the workload of three formats. But Indian cricket's rare gem sealed the lips of 'Doubting Thomases' with 67 wickets across three formats in the last one year, including a match-winning 3/14 against Pakistan in the low-scoring T20 World Cup thriller on Sunday. "See a year ago, the same people were saying that I might

not play again and my career is over and then now the question changed," he said taking a shot at all those who doubted his ability to fight back. India restricted Pakistan to 113/7 after posting a mere 119 here thanks largely to Bumrah's stupendous performance. He understands the fickle nature of criticism and knows that despite being a cliched phrase, controlling the controllables works best for him. "For me, I am not looking at whether I am bowling at the best of my ability. I try to solve the problem that is there in front of me. I know it's a cliched answer...But I was trying to focus on what is the best option over here on a wicket like this," the 30-year-old revealed. "How do I make shot-making difficult? What are the best options for me? So that way, I try to stay in the present and focus on what I have to do." **NO BAGGAGE OF IPL:**

Outside noise and pressure can gobble one up in a high-stakes game. But it's something that Bumrah successfully avoids by creating his own bubble. "Because if I look at the outside noise, if I look at people and pressure and emotion takes over, then things don't really work for me," the 30-year-old explained. The IPL-17, that concluded last month saw an unprecedented 1260 sixes being hit on tracks that resembled roadways. The 'Impact Player' rule also hurt top quality bowlers who were often dispatched to the stands with disdain. "When it's bat vs bat, I switch off the TV. I have been a fan of bowling since childhood. When there is a challenge between bat and ball, that is the game I like," Bumrah said. But the Indian bowling unit that has come for the T20 World Cup hasn't shown any scars of the IPL. "Obviously, the IPL that we



played was not very bowler-friendly but we are very happy that we didn't come here with that baggage and when we are getting help here, we were trying to use it.

"I have played a lot of cricket in my young years. - when the bat and ball challenge is good it is more interesting to watch the match." **ROHIT, BUMRAH AND**

THE 'MI TEMPLATE': Bumrah, the bowler, has played most of his franchise cricket under Rohit Sharma's captaincy. The captain-strike bowler combination was

central to Mumbai Indians' five title wins and Bumrah saidn he knew how to control low-scoring games. "So, once we started, we were very clear the message in the huddle was that now that is over, what is next? What are the things that are in our control? So, we will try to focus on that and not to create panic because yes, there will be boundaries here and there. "People might play good shots, but we'll have to try and be composed and try to hold our shape. So that was the biggest positive, not at any stage did I feel that the panic had spread in the team and we were looking too far ahead. So that's

a really positive sign for us." **MAGIC DELIVERIES OFTEN DON'T WORK:** Low-scoring matches often force bowlers to try effort deliveries like yorkers or bouncers but Bumrah doesn't want anyone to overdo that stuff. "If we go for magic deliveries and try to be too desperate, run-making becomes easy and they know the target. So, we had to be very mindful of not overdoing it," he said. "Whenever there is help, you can get excited. You can try pole hunting -- bowl bouncers, out-swingers, in-swingers. But you don't have to do that. I have learned that.

New Zealand looked rusty and disorganised: Ian smith

PTI ■ PROVIDENCE (GUYANA)

Former New Zealand cricketer Ian Smith has questioned the readiness of his country's team in the T20 World Cup, saying it looked rusty and completely disorganised in the humiliating defeat against Afghanistan. New Zealand suffered an embarrassing 84-run loss to Afghanistan in their tournament opener here on Friday. They were dismissed for 75 in their chase of 159, with Rashid Khan and Fazalhaq Farooqi grabbing four wickets each. The Kiwis are placed fifth and last in Group C and will next play the West Indies in Trinidad on Wednesday with the negative net run rate making their task of qualifying for the knockouts an uphill task. "They've got to beat the West Indies, and hope that they (West Indies) get beaten by Afghanistan, because New Zealand's run rate situation is so poor - we're going to be very behind the eight ball when it comes to that," Smith, who has played 63 Tests and 98 ODIs, told Sen Radio on Monday. "I just don't know they're



going to get up to speed from the flat performance they had the other day (against Afghanistan). What kind of team are they going to pick? Are they going to make any changes? The people they bring in haven't played any cricket either," he added. New Zealand had made it to the semifinals of the 2022 T20 World Cup after topping the group stage, riding on fine performances from Devon Conway, Kane Williamson and Daryl Mitchell, among others.

But with Conway returning to the side after a long injury layoff and Finn Allen not quite hitting his straps, things are not looking great for the Kiwis, known for their work ethics and competitive spirit. Besides, they have entered the World Cup having not played a single official warmup match. "He (Conway) looked decidedly rusty, in fact very average, he looked down on practice with the gloves on. And he's been out of form with the bat for a little while,"

Smith said of the top-order batter who missed the entire IPL 2024 due to injury. "Apart from the fact that he's had injuries, Conway played no cricket in the IPL even though he was contracted, and still they maintained they didn't need to have anything like a specialist wicketkeeper in this tournament." With Finn Allen going for a first-ball duck and Conway mustering just eight runs, the Kiwis didn't get the desired start in the chase against Afghanistan.

"They missed opportunities to put pressure on Afghanistan early on, one partnership was all they needed to win the game. It was probably one of the worst performances I've seen, when you consider all aspects of the game, from a Blackcaps side that I can recall," Smith said. "It was underdone, it was rusty, it was disorganised -- they were so far not ready it was not funny." "Finn Allen has got a bit to prove, I've been saying this for a while -- they basically ended the career for Martin Gupthill to make way for Allen. They couldn't pick him in the 50-over World Cup because he wasn't consistent enough at that point, and I don't see much difference between then and now," Smith added. Smith also lamented the poor Kiwi fielding, saying it was quite unlike the side that puts its heart and soul into every aspect of the game. "One thing New Zealand has always done over the years is field well as a unit. We've been able to answer (to that) pressure with some really good fielding performances, we aren't doing it at the moment. "Here again, we start with a

poor performance, and I kept going back to Kane Williamson (in the post-match interview) and he said 'we lost it in the first ten overs' because that set the tone," Smith said. "The only way you get those things sorted is to play cricket."

AFFIDAVIT

I, Muniya Devi wife of Bhikhari Oraon, resident of village Parhi Basar Toli, P.O. Butti, P.S. Senha, District Lohardaga, Jharkhand- 835302. That my husband (Bhikhari Oraon) is in Army Service and his Service No. 4281097W HAV/UINFSOL my name has been written as Munya Kumari as a nominee. That my correct name Muniya Devi as per my Aadhar Card (3828 0530 6336) my name is written as Muniya Devi. That my husband (Bhikhari Oraon) is in Army Service and his Service No. 4281097W HAV/UINFSOL my name has been written as Munya Kumari as a nominee. That my correct name Muniya Devi as per my Aadhar Card be recorded in service record of my husband and previous name title Kumari be deleted. Vide Affidavit serial no. 144351, dated - 20 April 2024.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Muniya Devi wife of Bhikhari Oraon, resident of village Parhi Basar Toli, P.O. Butti, P.S. Senha, District Lohardaga, Jharkhand. That my husband (Bhikhari Oraon.) is in Army Service and his Service No. 4281097W HAV/UINFSOL. That I have obtained Aadhar No. 4705 6007 8414 of my son Aryan Oraon in which his name written as Aryan Oraon and his date of birth is 12.12.2012 which is correct. That in service book of my husband my son's date of birth is written as 06.06.29013 which is wrong. That my correct date of birth of my son Aryan Oraon is 12.12.2012. Vide Affidavit serial no. 144353, dated - 20 April 2024.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Muniya Devi wife of Bhikhari Oraon, resident of village Parhi Basar Toli, P.O. Butti, P.S. Senha, District Lohardaga, Jharkhand. That my husband (Bhikhari Oraon.) is in Army Service and his Service No. 4281097W HAV/UINFSOL. That I have obtained Aadhar No. 2407 1773 5946 of my son Akshay Oraon and his date of birth is written as 18.12.2009 which is correct. That in service book of my husband my son's date of birth is written as 10.08.2007 and his name spelling is written as Akshaya Oraon which-is wrong. That correct name spelling of my son is Akshay Oraon and correct date of birth is 18.12.2009. Vide Affidavit serial no. 149323, dated - 21 May 2024.