



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Cosmetic makeover

The new criminal laws have retained old laws with minor changes while others could impact civil liberties harshly

India has finally shed its colonial legacy in jurisprudence, embracing a new era with indigenous criminal laws. The big question being asked is whether it has truly moved beyond nomenclature or if it's merely a name change. The archaic Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Indian Evidence Act, and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) have been replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, respectively. This historic change, taking effect from July 1, 2024, has stirred considerable debate among legal experts, practitioners, and the broader public. While some provisions break from the past, others are just old wine in new bottles, adding a layer of confusion in the legal system. The IPC, established in 1860, and the Evidence Act, enacted in 1872, have long been the cornerstones of India's criminal justice system. Both were products of the British colonial administration and have been criticized for their outdated and colonial-era perspectives. The CrPC of 1973 also



formed a significant part of the legal framework governing criminal procedures in India.

The new legal laws Replacing the IPC, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita aims to update and Indianise the criminal code. There are some provisions that are definitely new while others are mere replicas of the old ones. One notable change is the adoption of the definition of terrorism from the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). This new definition encompasses a broad spectrum of activities intended to threaten the unity, integrity, and security of India. However, critics argue that this broader definition could lead to misuse and the criminalisation of legitimate dissent. Another stark

departure is Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam which replaces the Indian Evidence Act and seeks to modernise the rules of evidence in line with contemporary technological advancements. A significant change is the new stance on electronic evidence. Last but not the least, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, replacing the CrPC, introduces several changes aimed at streamlining criminal procedures. The new law redefines the use of handcuffs and expands the scope of police custody beyond the initial 15 days, a change that has sparked considerable concern regarding potential misuse and the risk of increased custodial violence. So far, the legal fraternity has been rather jittery about the new laws. Prominent legal luminaries, State Bar Councils, and Bar Associations have expressed apprehensions about the potential implications of these changes. Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has commented that the new laws could create a positive impact only if there are concurrent investments in infrastructure development and capacity building for forensic experts and investigating officers. The expanded powers of the police and the handling of electronic evidence are areas of particular concern, highlighting the need for careful implementation and oversight to ensure that the new laws do not lead to increased misuse of power or injustice.

PICTALK



Pilgrims wait in a queue to get themselves registered for the annual Amarnath Yatra, in Jammu

A new dawn in Tibetan diplomacy



PRAFULL GORADIA

A seven-member American delegation led by US House Representatives met with the Dalai Lama, indicating a shift in the US stance on Tibet

A seven-member American delegation led by Michael McCaul, and Nancy Pelosi, both leading lights of the US House of Representatives, recently met the Dalai Lama at Dharmashala, Himachal Pradesh; this is a particularly significant event. They delivered a clear message that the USA no longer accepts Tibet as a part of China; and the US Congress will be soon passing an Act to be made into a law, called the "Resolve Tibet-China Act". The delegation told the Tibetan spiritual leader that "things have changed now". This American message has unmistakably resisted in Chinese ears. This US delegation first called on His Holiness at Dharmashala, indicating they were calling on the Tibetan government-in-exile, calling on Prime Minister Narendra Modi only thereafter. The Government of India has not hesitated to welcome the delegation. Xi Jinping may have forgotten that Mao Zedong's regime had first claimed 'suzerainty' over Tibet. Before long, it asserted that Tibet was a Chinese province, before attempting to erase Tibet's culture, heritage and language. These events have their roots in what happened towards the end of World War II. By allowing Stalin's Red Army to enter Berlin first and occupy it, the US made the Russians believe that they were the prime victors of WWII. In 1949, the Soviet Communist regime, by hook or crook, acquired the atom bomb. This made them believe even more they were now a superpower. Eco-militarily though, the Soviet Union was no 'super' but only a Eurasian power, as it had historically been. Similarly, the US overestimated the Communist Chinese as well. Compared to Chiang Kai Shek and his Kuomintang (KMT) on the mainland, the Maoists were much more committed. That, however, was no reason to dump the KMT as well as Formosa, now Taiwan from the UN as an official member. In fact, India should have been the correct replacement, but the Nehru gov-



ernment was insistent on giving the right of way to Red China, believe it or not. The USA, or at least its State Department continued to believe for years that the Soviets and the Chinese were a single communist bloc. The extent of the animosity between the two was fully realized only after the Sino-Soviet clash along the Ussuri River in 1969. It was only thereafter that President Nixon decided to call on Chinese Premier Mao Zedong in 1972, which brought a great deal of prestige to Dr. Henry Kissinger. The ultimate beneficiary of this resumption of relations was China, when Deng Xiaoping introduced economic reforms, emphasizing manufacturing and exports. The surplus of trillions of dollars accumulated by China came largely through exports to America. The course of these events explains why the State Department of the USA until now ignored the treatment of the hapless Tibetans by successive Chinese regimes over the last seven decades, beginning in 1959. The question is: is this because of repeated provocations over Taiwan, or could there be some larger reason unknown to us? The intentions should become clearer with the unfolding of time. India's stand has also been important.



XI JINPING MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT MAO ZEDONG'S REGIME HAD FIRST CLAIMED 'SUZERAINTY' OVER TIBET. BEFORE LONG, IT ASSERTED THAT TIBET WAS A CHINESE PROVINCE, BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO ERASE TIBET'S CULTURE, HERITAGE AND LANGUAGE

Unfortunately, the Leftists and communists in the country had clamoured for the (then) newly formed Red Chinese regime, which had requested its recognition within a few days of its winning the civil war. Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel, on the other hand, was of the clear view that there was no hurry to recognize the new Chinese regime. In November 1949, Patel invited the American charge d'affaires Donovan to verify if there was an urgency in the recognition of Red China.

Knowing the Sardar through his long correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru on the subject of China, uppermost in his mind must have been the concern that the Sino-Indian border should be mutually recognized. But Jawaharlal Nehru was in a hurry and without consulting the Sardar, informed the Chinese of India's decision to recognize their regime in the December of that year itself.

While expressing its delight at Nehru's message, China also laid down a few preconditions. India would pass on to the new regime all properties and assets of China. Secondly, India would not recognize any members of the KMT. Thirdly, India should support the expulsion of Nationalist China from the UNO, as well as its replacement by the

communist regime. China's perfidious intentions can be gauged from the fact that its communist regime announced the 'liberation' of Tibet as the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) task just one day before the founding of the People's Republic of China. The Tibetans had expelled the Chinese Amban, although he had been a Kuomintang government appointee. The Chinese blamed India for it, abusing Nehru as "a lackey of British imperialism" and complicit in the British humiliation of China, which Mao sought to reverse. The People's Daily of China in an editorial denounced the concept of suzerainty as feudal and oppressive—the very thing China demanded over Tibet. It even called on the UNO to examine India's relationship with Bhutan. The reality, which the Nehru government chose to ignore despite even Ambassador K.M. Pannikar's warnings was that China was eyeing Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan too. But India's first prime minister, a votary of international peace and brotherhood was oblivious to this. The sufferers were from Tibet and India.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REFORMING JUSTICE

Madam — India is poised to undergo a transformative shift in its criminal justice system with the implementation of three groundbreaking laws starting July 1st, 2024. However, the primary concern lies in the readiness of our institutions to handle these changes, necessitating a nationwide audit. There has been no thorough assessment of the preparedness across various criminal justice institutions in different states. Additionally, the transition from old laws to new ones is likely to create significant confusion. It would be prudent to postpone the implementation of these laws until a comprehensive and independent audit of institutional readiness is conducted. Alternatively, a phased implementation to test the waters would be a more sensible approach.

Noopur Baruah | Tezpur

A DEMOCRACY IN DISARRAY

Madam — The signs were clear for all to see. We eagerly awaited the end of the elections and patiently anticipated the results. Yet, once Parliament convened, it quickly became apparent that walk-outs and paralysis were the order of the day. The drama of democracy played out in full view, with heightened agitation across the country. On the anniversary of the Emergency, Parliament was divided, and the opposition was relentless in disrupting proceedings at every turn, reflecting the turbulence within our so-called democratic framework. Opposition leaders harshly criticized President Droupadi Murmu's address, dismissing it as a government-scripted speech riddled with falsehoods. They accused the government of imposing an undeclared emergency and challenged its claims of economic growth and investment. Leaders highlighted issues facing farmers, unemployed youth, and recent national events. The true nature of our parliamentarians has been laid bare,

India's T20 World Cup victory



India celebrated a momentous victory over South Africa in the T20 World Cup 2024 final, marking a glorious return to World Cup triumph after a 13-year hiatus since their last ICC trophy win in 2011. Under the astute leadership of Rohit Sharma, the team showcased exceptional prowess

and resilience, dominating the tournament with consecutive victories. This win was particularly poignant as it marked a grand farewell for two Indian cricket stalwarts, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, along with head coach Rahul Dravid, who had not previously won a World Cup trophy. Both Rohit and Virat announced their retirement from T20 internationals, making this victory an emotional and proud moment for all Indians. Rohit's tactical brilliance and Virat's consistent performances have been instrumental in India's crickering success over the years. Their departure signifies the end of an era. The Indian cricket team displayed outstanding skill and determination, ensuring that they lifted the ICC trophy and gave their beloved captain and star player a memorable send-off. This victory will be cherished as one of the most emotional and proud moments in Indian cricket history. Bishal Kumar Saha, Murshidabad

farewell to a coach whose wisdom has guided Team India to new heights. Dravid's tenure has been marked by unforgettable victories and moments of crickering genius, from nurturing young talent to instilling a culture of discipline and resilience. His legacy will continue to inspire future generations of cricketers, embodying the values that define our beloved sport. A World Cup win would be the perfect capstone to Rahul Dravid's remarkable journey. As we celebrate Rahul Dravid's contributions to Indian cricket, we also honor a figure whose integrity, dedication, and humility have left an indelible mark on the game. His departure marks the end of an era, but his legacy will continue to inspire and shape the future of Indian cricket for years to come. What a distinguished man and an outstanding cricketer!

Jayanthi S Maniam | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Unveiling the deception: Decoding food labels for healthier choices



KOMAL PATEL

It's vital to scrutinise food labels beyond their claims. Decoding the fine print ensures that what we eat aligns with our health goals

Decoding Food Labels As a dietician, I strive to provide the best possible tailored meal plans to my clients, so why would I not stop and flip food packages to scrutinize labels to ensure what goes on my plate and my family's? Albeit, every time I do that I stop to think about the actual intent of documenting the ingredients on the package and I feel deceived. The idea behind all this 'extra work' was to keep the consumer informed and help them make intelligent choices for themselves. But then



pher the truth. These tactics paint a picture of a healthy snack, obscuring the reality which can be quite different. So, does this mean we're doomed to fall victim to marketing tactics? Absolutely not! With a little knowledge, we can become empowered to decode food labels, making informed choices about what purchases we make. Here are a few key areas to focus on during your next grocery run and fill your shopping cart with what is right for you: As I said earlier, don't allow the food companies to trick you into buying their products just because they claim to be "natural", "low-fat" or "multi-grain". Low fat doesn't alone mean that literally. The term also implies added sugars and the use of unhealthy fillers. For the longest brown

rice has wooed Indian buyers, but this does not mean that brown rice syrup is any good and a healthy replacement for sugar! High fructose corn syrup, agave nectar, palm, etc are scattered through the list of ingredients keeping even the most discerning customer, from grasping the true sugar content. When you see "sugar-free" on the label, know that other forms like sugar alcohol or artificial sweeteners might be in play. The latest in line is, "natural sweeteners" or "fruit extract" which again is sugar; no less, no more. The biggest gamble lurks in the Serving Sizes. As a standardized directive laid down by the FDA, it is ideally meant to help consumers compare the same products from different brands, empowering them to make the best choice for themselves. But, most manufacturers shrink the serving size per package, compared to what an average consumer would typically eat. Consider finishing a whole bag of munchies in one go while the manufacturer suggests two servings per container. All ingredients are specified per serving and

you ended up twice what you thought was good for you! Ensure you keep a tab of serving size and calculate your portion and calorie/sugar intake accordingly. "Rich in protein", "Fiber-rich" etc are another set of crowd pullers that mostly tend to divert customer's attention from other not-so-healthy ingredients. Bearing these points in mind, your next trip to the supermarket will be a game-changer for your household. Don't get carried away by big claims made on the face of the package, TURN IT AROUND & be sure to read the numbers. Whether it is calories, saturated and trans fats, sodium or added sugars, learn the limits and decide for yourself what suits you best. Employ help from label-reading apps that can demystify tricky labels and provide additional information about ingredients. See-through those marketing gimmicks and bring to the table what is healthier and more wholesome for you and your family.

(The author is a dietician and Clinical Nutritionist Ambassador of FIT INDIA Movement of GOI; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE EVOLVING PATH TO SUCCESS WITH UPSKILLING

Success is more than just good intentions. It's a journey paved with education and skill



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

The saying "Where there's a will, there's a way" offers a reassuring belief that sheer determination can overcome any obstacle. However, navigating the complexities of real-world success involves more than just good intentions. It requires a foundation built on education, experience, and often, a blend of both. The path to achievement is multifaceted, demanding a strategic combination of willpower, continuous learning, and specialization. Enter the upskilling advocate. These individuals champion the importance of lifelong learning, asserting that the pursuit of new knowledge can unlock doors that even traditional qualifications cannot. The argument holds weight, especially in an era where technology evolves at breakneck speed. The ability to adapt to these changes is crucial. However, the journey of upskilling can sometimes feel like an endless treadmill—each completed course leads to another, creating a perpetual cycle of learning without a clear endpoint. On the other hand, we have the specialist.

Specialists possess targeted expertise, backed by rigorous education in a specific field. Their qualifications often serve as a shortcut past initial professional hurdles, providing a clear and direct path to success. Yet, this path can be fraught with its own challenges. As industries transform and new technologies emerge, specialization that once seemed advantageous may become obsolete. The clear road that once led to career success can abruptly end, leaving the specialist in need of new directions. So, who holds the advantage in this dynamic landscape? The truth, as with many aspects of life, is that the ideal path is a balanced



one. The most successful individuals often embody a blend of both approaches. They possess a solid foundation in a core discipline but are equally committed to continuous learning and adaptation. For instance, someone with a degree in marketing might pursue courses in digital analytics to stay relevant in an increasingly data-driven world. This duality—rooted in depth of knowledge but flexible in acquiring new skills—is what makes them particularly valuable. Employers who recognize the importance of this balance are making the smartest investments. They seek out candidates who not only have the expertise to excel in their current roles but also the agility to navigate the shifting landscape of the professional world.

These employers understand that a blend of foundational knowledge and a willingness to upskill can create a workforce capable of responding to change with confidence and competence. The key takeaway? While willpower is essential, it must be channeled effectively. Start by building a strong educational foundation in a chosen field, then continually seek opportunities for growth and learning. This approach fosters a mindset of perpetual improvement, positioning individuals to thrive amid the uncertainties of the modern workplace. Yet, the journey doesn't end with acquiring new skills. The future of work demands the ability to unlearn outdated practices and embrace new paradigms. The most successful professionals will be those who approach each challenge with a growth mindset, eager to expand their knowledge and reshape their skills. They understand that change is the only constant and that adaptability is the ultimate competitive advantage. Rather than seeing your career as a ladder to climb, envision it as traversing a vast, ever-shifting landscape. The willingness to learn and grow continuously is key to unlocking a fulfilling and successful career in an ever-evolving world. So, abandon the notion of being a finished product and embrace the journey of lifelong learning. It's a marathon, not a sprint. With the right mindset, you'll be well-equipped not just to survive but to thrive in the ever-changing world of work. Are you ready for the adventure?

(The writer is an author and has penned three books; views are personal)

Focus shifts to prudent public wealth management



UTTAM GUPTA

The new Govt is overhauling India's disinvestment policy. It is supporting non-profit enterprises, and maintaining a strong presence of State-run firms in strategic sectors

The new National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is reviewing the existing disinvestment policy to shift its focus from selling central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) to prudent public wealth management (PWM), supporting not-for-profit enterprises, and ensuring strong presence of state-run firms in strategic sectors. A CPSU is an undertaking in which the Union government has majority share holding meaning it holds more than 50 percent of its shares. Disinvestment is fancy nomenclature for sale of these shares to private investors. When, disinvestment results in reduction of the government's shareholding in the CPSU to below 50 percent and concomitant transfer of ownership and management control to private entity, this is termed as 'strategic' disinvestment or privatization.

The extant policy on disinvestment was announced by the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech for FY 2021-22.

Under it, CPSUs were classified into two broad categories i.e. strategic and non-strategic. The strategic group covers atomic energy, space and defense; transport and telecommunications; power, petroleum, coal and other minerals; and banking, insurance and financial services. The non-strategic category includes all other sectors viz. industrial and consumer goods, hotel and tourist services, trading, and marketing and so on. The government's intent was to sell all undertakings in the strategic sector with the caveat that at least one (and a maximum of four) will be retained in the public sector.

As for undertakings in non-strategic sectors, it wanted to reduce its shareholding to below 50 percent in 'all' of them. Put simply, they would all be privatized. All loss-making undertakings in this category would be closed. Also tagged to this policy was government's intent to use the proceeds from disinvestment for meeting its fiscal deficit (excess of total revenue over total expenditure) or FD target. This part was a continuation from the past when the Modi - government started selling its shares in CPSUs in 2015-16 with particular focus on 'strategic' disinvestment.

In the backdrop of devastation caused by Covid-19 pandemic and debilitating effect on its finances during 2020-21 (in that year, FD had scaled to 9.2 percent of GDP), in the budget for 2021-22, Sitharaman had put even greater reliance on proceeds of disinvestment by setting an ambitious target of Rs 175,000 crore. During that year, the government had planned big ticket disinvestments such as Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), IDBI Bank, NMDC Steel and Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) and so on.

But, the process has remained stuck in the slow lane even as the targets of proceeds from sales were missed year-after-year. Only during two years viz. 2017-18 and 2018-19, it achieved the target. That was primarily because, in those years, it had conducted two big-ticket sales of its shares from one CPSU to another.

During 2017-18, the government sold



51.11 percent of its shareholding in Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) to the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) yielding Rs 37,000 crore. In the following year, it undertook the sale of its 52.63 percent stake in the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) to the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) yielding Rs 13,000 crore. But, those sales can't be termed as strategic as the purchaser being another CPSU namely ONGC/PFC, the Government continues to have effective ownership over the divested entity viz. HPCL/REC.

The results during 2021-22 and 2022-23 were particularly disappointing. During 2021-22, against a target of Rs 175,000 crore, the actual proceeds from disinvestment were a meager Rs 15,440 crore. During 2022-23, against a target of Rs 65,000 crore, the actual was nearly half at Rs 31,059 crore. For 2023-24, the FM had lowered the target to Rs 51,000 crore which during the course of the year was further revised downwards to Rs 30,000 crore. Even against this, the actual proceeds were a meager Rs 14,564 crore.

What does the interim Budget for 2024-25 say?

In a briefing following the presentation of the Budget by Sitharaman on February 1, 2024, Finance Secretary TV Somanathan had stated that the "government no longer views disinvestment from the perspective of balancing the budget". Can it be taken to mean that it has shed its age-old stance of using proceeds from share sale for reducing FD. The answer is 'No' as it has set a target of Rs 50,000 crore for 2024-25 under the head "miscellaneous capital receipts" which includes disinvestment proceeds besides receipts from asset monetization.

The very idea of garnering resources from the sale of government shares in CPSUs is inherently flawed. This is because unlike tax revenue, which can be projected with a degree of certainty based on the existing tax rate and a reasonable assessment of the growth in nominal GDP, the same cannot be said about proceeds from disinvestment. In this case, a lot depends on the market scenario and, in particular, the perception of investors about the company in which share-sale is contemplated.

In cases where the strategic sale is mooted, the Government faces a bigger challenge as apart from a favorable market, it needs bidders with deep pockets. The lengthy and cumbersome process of approval and bureaucratic red tape further undermines the chances of its kicking the ball rolling just around the time when the strategic investors are ready to put in their bids. The Niti Aayog identifies companies for disinvestment which are then considered by the Core Group of Secretaries on Divestment (CGD), a long-drawn process by itself, which takes it to the Alternative Mechanism (AM) - a group of ministers, including finance, road transport & highways, administrative reforms, etc., for approval. After AM's approval, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) moves a proposal for in-principal approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA). In view of above, the government shouldn't put any number to

receipts from share sale while preparing the budget as the end of the year, slippage is inevitable. Even so, the government's tax revenue is buoyant (for three years in a row since 2021-22, these have exceeded the target) and it is getting higher dividends from CPSUs as also higher dividends from the Reserve Bank of India (for its FY 2023-24, the RBI has made a huge dividend transfer of Rs 210,000 crore to the Centre for latter's use during 2024-25) and public sector banks (PSBs). These positive trends should be good enough for managing fiscal deficits; hence, no need to depend on 'miscellaneous capital receipts'.

What happens to strategic sale? From the emphasis on public wealth management (PWM), strong presence of state-run firms in strategic sectors, one gets sense that the government has completely abandoned the path of privatizing CPSUs in these sectors. As it is, under the 2021-22 policy, it had intended to retain at least one (and a maximum of four) undertakings in the strategic sector. Now, it seems it won't privatize even one. The government's decision to drop its plan for sale of BPCL which was on its agenda since 2019-20 is an indication of things to come.

Changing horses midstream won't be in the best interest of the country. Fundamentally, the State shouldn't be in the business of running enterprises. There always remains a risk of political interference and bureaucratic red tape which can seriously hamper the working of CPSUs. The government should continue the process of share sale and focus on de-bureaucratizing it.

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



IN CASES WHERE THE STRATEGIC SALE IS MOOTED, THE GOVT FACES A BIGGER CHALLENGE AS APART FROM A FAVOURABLE MARKET, IT NEEDS BIDDERS WITH DEEP POCKETS

Surviving the scorch: Strategies for managing heat waves in India

The summer of 2024 has seen record-breaking temperatures. It is imperative for policymakers to understand the underlying causes and implement effective measures

The country is in the midst of intense heat waves causing severe hardship in the entire North, Central and Western India for more than a month. India may have recorded the hottest-ever temperature in 2024. On 29th May 2024 Delhi recorded 52.3 Degrees Celsius temperature at a weather station in Mungeshpur a suburb of Delhi though later on it was proved that it was slightly on the higher side. Even cooler places like Dehradun have noticed the highest temperature of the last 53 years this year. More than 30 crore people in India are prone to high risk due to lack of means to escape heat waves. The people are feeling severe shortages of power and water and many grids are collapsing due to overload lead-



V K BAHUGUNA

ing to prolonged outages. Several people have died due to heat waves across the country. According to official sources, 150 people have died due to heat waves and around 30,000 people suffered heat stroke from March to mid-June 2024. The people from Delhi and other adjoining areas are rushing to hill stations of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and other hills to escape the heat torture

and in the process causing heavy traffic jams and throwing in disarray the civic amenities in several towns and cities. The River width of Ganga in Varanasi has reduced by 35% and similar reports are forthcoming of the narrowing of other streams and rivers. The experts have been warning the government and the society at large about the changing weather trends of the country. Now the question for the policymakers, professionals and administrators is to assess the causes of such an unprecedented rise in temperature and how to mop up resources to deal with it. If the mandarins in power in the centre and state do not change the way to deal with it efficiently and effectively many disasters will be ruining the stabil-

ity and cohesiveness in the society. One thing all must learn is the fact that high temperatures are the results of the combined effects of global warming, increasing urbanisation/concretization leading to changing weather patterns. As far as Delhi and nearby areas are concerned the dry and warm westerly winds from Rajasthan and Haryana are the causes of the heat wave. Now these winds continue during the night and do not allow the night temperature to fall and this is further accentuated when these westerly winds lead to cloud formation in the sky which prevents cooling the temperature. To find the solution our planners and civic administrators in cities must meet the challenges of the

'urban heat island effect'. In nature trees and other vegetation in the landscape along with green roofs help in reducing the urban heat island effects by releasing moisture through transpiration, and by shading reflecting the sun radiation back into the atmosphere. Therefore, the massive dense urbanisation, buildings, roads and pavements absorb and retain the heat and hence the urban heat island effect with disastrous consequences. On the other hand, the effects of heat waves in rural areas are different; there is less or minimal heat island effect but the heat effects mostly relate to health issues like severe dehydration, heat stroke, heat exhaustion and gastro-intestinal diseases exacerbated by the long power cuts and water

shortage. India is not the only country affected by heat waves. Europe is also suffering from heat waves since April 2024. The temperature is above 30 degrees Celsius in south Europe, particularly in Spain. This year in Europe the highest temperature was noticed in Zeneca and Bosnia at 33.3 degree Celsius on 14th April 2024. The European country's architecture is such that they cannot cope up well with continuous heat waves. The objective of this article is to stress that in India the Central and State governments should jointly devise a policy to effectively deal with summer weather. The first thing to be done is to declare the temperature beyond a certain limit as a nat-

ural disaster/climate emergency and put in place standard operating procedures to deal with it for the different cities and rural areas. In rural areas, the government must ensure a supply of potable water and electricity as well as a mobile dispensary to provide quick health care services. In each village lakes and ponds should be created compulsorily so that people including farmers and cattle get water. It needs short-term planning risk assessment and early warning systems based on the India Meteorological Department forecast. One of the fundamental requirements is the need to remould the district administration by creating an integrated and holistic approach so that climate-resilient develop-

ment is ensured and preparations are made in advance to deal with any emergent situation. However, real change in the entire civic administration is essential in urban areas. The town and country planning needs complete overhauling as also revisit the power-centric civic bodies. The drainages are in shamble and must be protected so that the next emergency in rainy weather does not derail the life and property. Will the Urban Development Ministry set up a task national force to recommend action? *(The author is the former Director-General of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education and Chancellor of FRI University; views are personal)*

Flogging of couple: BJP seeks resignation of Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The BJP on Monday demanded the resignation of Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who is also the State's Police Minister for failing to control the "deteriorating law and order situation" which according to the saffron outfit was evident from the public flogging of a couple at Chopra in Islampur block of North Dinajpur district on charges of extra-marital relationship.



Terming the viral video of the incident as "horrific" BJP national president JP Nadra wrote on the social media that the incident reminded of the "brutalities that exist only in theocracies. To make matters worse, the TMC cadre and MLAs are justifying the act. Be it Sandeshkhali, Uttar Dinajpur or many other places, Didi's West Bengal is UNSAFE for women."

endorsed by the TMC leadership... which should be condemned and the Government should be made accountable for this," Bengal BJP president and Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar said. The TMC leadership however refuted the BKP charges saying it was an isolated incident and was common in many parts of the country including the BJP-ruled States.

Raesi locals see sinister pattern behind terror attacks

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Reasi district, which is fast re-emerging as one of the 'hot spots' of Jammu and Kashmir with a successful trial run of rail services via the world's highest railway arch bridge over river Chenab, is becoming the cynosure of all eyes.



plot in exchange for a paltry sum of Rs 6000. To register their protest the residents in the Reasi district Monday observed a complete shutdown and demanded a high-level probe to expose the evil designs of those spreading a fresh reign of terror in the otherwise peaceful area.

intervening night of Sunday and Monday. The total number of those taken into custody for questioning in the case stands at 15, a police officer said. He said the SIT is working on various clues to crack the case and requesting people to maintain law and order.

Police and paramilitary forces were deployed in strength in the sensitive areas as a precautionary measure to maintain law and order. Deputy Commissioner of Reasi Vishesh Paul Mahajan visited the protest site and tried to pacify the protesters, assuring that stern action would be taken against the culprits.

Manipur CM denies report on resignation

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Monday described a report on his resignation as unfounded and asked the media not to spread rumours. Singh also claimed that it is an attempt by political rivals who want to take advantage of the prevailing situation in the state which has been in the grip of violence since May last year.



opposition," he said. The chief minister said that his government communicates regularly with the PMO and the Union Home Ministry on the Manipur situation.

He asked media outlets to come to Manipur and take stock of the actual situation to help bring peace to the state. Ethnic conflict between Imphal valley-based Meiteis and hill-based Kukis has led to the deaths of over 200 people since May 3, 2023, and rendered thousands of people homeless.

Army ready to face all challenges: Gen Dwivedi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army is ready and capable to face all current and future security challenges facing India, new Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi said on Monday amid the lingering border row with China in eastern Ladakh.



changing rapidly and technology is evolving at a very fast pace," he said. "The Indian Army faces unique operational challenges and to remain prepared for such threats and distinctive requirements, it is crucial that we continuously equip our soldiers with state-of-the-art weapons and technology and continue to evolve our war-fighting strategies," he added.

reliant) in defence. "To achieve this, we will encourage indigenous initiatives and induct maximum war systems and equipment that are manufactured in our country," he said.

the Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and other stakeholders," he said. "This will ensure that India's interests are secured and we become a major pillar of nation building to achieve the vision of 'Viksit Bharat-2047,'" Gen Dwivedi said.

Indian Army rest on the legacy of valour and sacrifice of our soldiers. On this occasion, I pay my solemn tributes to the bravehearts who made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty," he added.

FMCG: Patanjali Foods' Home and Personal Care acquisition to boost its portfolio

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Board of Patanjali Foods Ltd has approved the proposal of Patanjali Ayurved Limited's ("PAL") to acquire its Home and Personal Care ("HPC") Business, accelerating the Company's transition into a leading FMCG company.

Airport canopy fall...

From Page 1

As per an update provided by the ministry on Monday, the war rooms to help passengers have been activated and close coordination between DIAL and airlines is being facilitated. "All SpiceJet flights to/from Delhi from 1st July till 7th July, 24 will operate from Terminal 3, Delhi Airport. Necessary information has been communicated to all the passengers on their registered contact details (SMS/Email)," the airline said in a post on X on Sunday.

Rahul...

From Page 1

The former Congress chief also slammed the government over farmers' issues, saying it did not want to give a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

BJP asks Rahul to apologise for Hindu...

From Page 1

BJP's partner in NDA, LJP leader and Union minister Chirag Paswan also slammed the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha saying the Congress leader started opposing the devotees of Lord Shiva in his attempt to oppose the government.

Hand symbol replica of presiding deity of Kerala's Hemambika Temple: Congress

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI



The Congress led by Indira Gandhi selected The Hand as the symbol of the Congress (I) in 1978 after the party was split following its debacle in the 1977 Lok Sabha election.

time of split of the party, the 'cow and calf' constituted the symbol of the party. The Hand symbol proved the astrologers right as Indira Gandhi and the Congress (I) decimated the Janata Party which had been disintegrated into many Dals by the time.

NEET toppers' tally...

From Page 1

Sixty-seven students scored a perfect 720, an unprecedented number in the NTA's history, with six from a single centre in Haryana, raising suspicions of irregularities and the role of grace marks.

other related courses in government and private institutions. The allegations of irregularities, including paper leaks, have led to protests and litigation, with various quarters demanding a complete re-examination.

Indicative of repressive State: TMC on three new laws

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has once again condemned the BJP Government for "imposing three anti-people" laws --- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), 2023, and The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 --- which were implemented from Monday --- "in order to perpetrate a repressive State."



she asserted. "Ethically, I believe that it would be in the fitness of things to place these significant legislative changes before the newly elected Parliament for fresh deliberation and scrutiny."

before drafting such draconian laws." Earlier the Chief Minister had written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting him to postpone the implementation of the new laws that replaced the Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Evidence Act.

Sensex, Nifty hit fresh record

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rose by 443 points to close at a new record high while Nifty settled above the 24,100 mark on Monday on buying in banking and IT shares in line with gains in Asian and European markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex settled higher by 443.46 points or 0.56 per cent at an all-time high of 79,476.19. During the day, the barometer soared 528.27 points or 0.66 per cent to 79,561.

The broader Nifty rose by 131.35 points or 0.55 per cent to close at a fresh lifetime high of 24,141.95. Intra-day, the index hit a high of 24,164, just 10 points short of its lifetime high of 24,174 hit on Friday.

Among Sensex shares, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Consultancy Services, JSW Steel, Infosys, HDFC Bank,



Tata Motors and ICICI Bank were the biggest gainers. NTPC, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, Sun Pharma, IndusInd Bank and Axis Bank were among the

laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled higher. European markets were trading with gains. US markets ended lower on

Friday. "The domestic market sustained its upward momentum, with a reduction in US PCE inflation raising hopes for a rate cut by the US Fed in September. This optimism contributed to the strong performance of IT stocks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.51 per cent to USD 85.43 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 23.09 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark declined 210.45 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 79,032.73 on Friday. During the day, it jumped 428.4 points or 0.54 per cent to hit a fresh record trading peak of 79,671.58. The Nifty went lower by 33.90 points or 0.14 per cent to 24,010.60. During the day, it climbed 129.5 points or 0.53 per cent to hit a new lifetime high of 24,174.

GST reduced tax rates on household goods, brought happiness, relief to every home: FinMin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Goods and Services Tax (GST), which completed 7 years of implementation on Monday, has brought happiness and relief to every home through reduced taxes on household appliances and mobile phones, the finance ministry said on Monday. GST, which subsumed about 17 local tax and cesses, was rolled out on July 1, 2017. The theme of the 7th GST Day is Sashakt Vyapar Samagra Vikas (empowered trade overall growth). "With reduced tax rates on household goods after GST implementation, 7 years of GST has brought happiness and relief to every home through lower GST on household appliances and mobile phones," the ministry said in a post on X. The GST taxpayer base has increased to 1.46 crore in April 2024 from 1.05 crore as



of April 2018. "We have witnessed a quantum jump in taxpayers base along with improved compliance," Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) Chairman Sanjay Kumar Agarwal said. Giving comparative charts of pre- and post-GST tax rates of household goods, the ministry said GST has enhanced the ease of living with every household saving on expenditure on food items and items of mass

consumption after GST implementation. The rate of food items like unpacked wheat, rice, curd, and lassi, which were taxed at 2.5-4 per cent before GST implementation, is at nil after the GST rollout. Household goods like cosmetics, wrist watches, sanitary plastic ware, doors and windows, furniture and mattresses are taxed at a lower rate of 18 per cent in the GST regime, lower than 28 per cent in the erstwhile excise and

VAT regime. The ministry said mobile phones, TVs up to 32 inches, refrigerators, washing machines electrical appliances (other than air conditioners), geysers and fans which attracted 31.3 per cent taxes in the pre-GST era, are now in the 18 per cent tax slab in GST regime. It further said the compliance burden was reduced for small taxpayers, and the GST Council has recommended to waive off annual return filing requirement for taxpayers with aggregate annual turnover of up to Rs 2 crore in fiscal 2023-24. The quarterly return filing and monthly payment of taxes (QRMP) scheme has reduced the number of returns filed in a year from 24 to 8, for more than 44 lakh small taxpayers. IFF (Invoice furnishing Facility) ensured seamless passage of ITC (Input Tax Credit), the ministry added.

TVS Mobility arm acquires Italy-based automotive components supplier



PTI ■ MUMBAI

TVS Mobility group on Monday said its subsidiary SI Air Springs has acquired Italy-based automotive components supplier Roberto Nuti Group, which will help it broaden the product range and strengthen its position in the global market.

The pact between the two partners includes the 100 per cent purchase of Roberto Nuti Group by TVS Mobility indirectly, through its wholly-owned Indian subsidiary, SI Air Springs Private Limited and investments appropriate to the full re-launch of the company, TVS Mobility group said in a statement. It also said that both companies will continue to operate normally during the integration period.

TVS Mobility has a well-established presence in Europe with some of the other businesses that are part of the group such as TVS Supply Chain Solutions and TVS Srichakra Ltd.

Following this collaboration, the Bologna (Italy)-based group will now operate on a more international scale, benefiting from the market and product leadership of TVS Mobility, it said. "This acquisition marks a

significant step in our global expansion strategy, allowing us to combine our distinctive skills in air spring business with the Nuti Group's suspension systems expertise," said P Srinivasavaradhan, Director of SI Air Springs. SI Air Springs, which operates from Madurai in Tamil Nadu provides air spring solutions to major commercial vehicles, Bus OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers), trailer manufacturers Tier 1 suspension System suppliers and Indian Railways. On the other hand, Roberto Nuti Group produces and distributes shock absorbers and air springs for the aftermarket mainly for industrial and commercial vehicles. "We are excited about the international growth potential this agreement brings us and we are confident that partnering with SI Air Springs will allow us to take advantage of their capabilities. "Both companies will continue to operate normally during the integration period, and we are committed to ensuring a smooth transition for all our stakeholders," said Luca Randighieri, General Manager at the Nuti Group.

FirstCry's parent firm Brainbees Solutions gets Sebi's go ahead to float IPO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Brainbees Solutions Ltd, the parent firm of online e-commerce platform FirstCry, has received Sebi's approval to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO), an update with the markets regulator showed on Monday. Part from this, three more companies -- SaaS platform Unicommerce eSolutions, Maharashtra-based Gala Precision Engineering and Interarch Building Products -- obtained the regulator's nod to float the initial share sale. These companies -- who filed their preliminary IPO papers with Sebi between

January and May 2024 -- obtained the regulator's observations during June 25-28, according to the update. In Sebi's parlance, obtaining its observations means its approval to float the public issue. According to the fresh draft red herring prospectus (DRHP), Pune-based Brainbees Solutions' proposed IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares, aggregating up to Rs 1,816 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 5.44 crore equity shares by existing shareholders. Under the OFS, SVF Frog, a Cayman Islands-registered entity of Softbank, will sell 2.03 crore equity shares of



Brainbees Solutions Ltd, and automaker Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) will offload 28.06 lakh shares of the company. Currently, Softbank holds a

25.55 per cent stake in Brainbees Solutions, and M&M owns a 10.98 per cent stake in the multi-brand retailing platform. Apart from Softbank and

M&M, other entities selling shares in the OFS are PI Opportunities Fund, TPG, NewQuest Asia Investments, Apricot Investments, Valiant Mauritius, TIMF Holdings, Think India Opportunities Fund and Schroders Capital. Brainbees Solutions re-filed preliminary papers with Sebi in May after the company was directed by the regulator to re-file the draft papers, citing insufficient disclosure of key performance indicators (KPIs), market sources had said. The company's key performance indicators include its number of orders, average order value and annual transacting customers.

Unicommerce's issue is entirely an offer for sale (OFS) aggregating up to 2.98 crore equity shares by the selling shareholders. Under the OFS, SB Investment Holdings (UK) Ltd, an affiliate of Japan's SoftBank, will offload 1.61 crore shares, promoter AceVector Limited (formerly known as Snapdeal Limited) will sell up to 1.14 crore shares, and B2 Capital Partners will be selling up to 22 lakh shares. Since the IPO is completely an OFS, the entire proceeds will go to the selling shareholders. Shares of these four companies will be listed on the BSE and NSE.

Rupee falls 11 paise to 83.45 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 11 paise to settle at 83.45 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, tracking rising crude oil prices in international markets. However, a firm trend in domestic equity markets, positive manufacturing PMI data and a weak US dollar against major currencies overseas capped the sharp fall, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.39 and moved between the high of 83.38 and the low of 83.47 against the greenback during the session. The unit finally settled at 83.45 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 11 paise from its previous closing level. On Friday, the rupee settled 11 paise higher at 83.34 against the US dollar. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee depreciated on a surge in US treasury yields and rising crude oil prices. Oil prices were hovering at nearly two-month high levels while the US bond yields above 4 per cent pressurised Asian



currencies. However, positive domestic markets and a rise in manufacturing PMI supported the rupee. Choudhary further said the rupee is likely to trade with a slight positive bias on gains in domestic markets and expectations of fresh foreign inflows. "Traders may take cues from ISM manufacturing PMI and construction spending data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.10 to Rs 83.70," he added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 105.24, lower by 0.28 per cent. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.41 per cent to USD 85.35 per

barrel. In the domestic equity market, The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 443.46 points, or 0.56 per cent, to close at 79,476.19 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 131.35 points, or 0.55 per cent, higher at 24,141.95 points. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) increased from 57.5 in May to 58.3 in June, indicating a sharper improvement in business conditions. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 23.09 crore, according to exchange data. India's forex reserves jumped by USD 816 million to USD 653.711 billion in the week ended June 21, the RBI said on Friday. In the previous week, the overall reserves had dropped by USD 2.922 billion to USD 652.895 billion. The central government's fiscal deficit was 3 per cent of the annual estimates at May-end 2024-25, the first two months of the financial year during which model code of conduct was in place due to Lok Sabha elections.

ATF price hiked 1.2%, commercial LPG cut by ₹30

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jet fuel or ATF price on Monday was hiked by 1.2 per cent while that of commercial LPG used by hotels and restaurants cut by Rs 30 per 19-kg cylinder in line with international oil price trends. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was hiked by Rs 1,179.37 per kilolitre, or 1.2 per cent, to Rs 96,148.38 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase followed a steep 6.5 per cent (Rs 6,673.87 per kl) reduction effected on June 1. The ATF rate in Mumbai was increased to Rs 89,908.30 per kl from Rs 88,834.27. Prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes. Alongside, oil firms cut the price of commercial LPG by Rs 30 to Rs 1,646 per 19-kg cylinder. This is the fourth straight monthly reduction in rates. The price was last cut by Rs 69 per cylinder on June 1. Prior to that, rates were on



May 1 reduced by Rs 19 per cylinder, and by Rs 30.5 on April 1. Rate of cooking gas used in domestic households, however, remained unchanged at Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder. State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) revise prices of ATF and cooking gas on 1st of every month based on the average price of benchmark international fuel and foreign exchange rate. Prices of petrol and diesel continue to remain frozen. Rates had been cut by Rs 2 per litre in mid-March. Petrol costs Rs 94.72 a litre in Delhi while diesel is priced at Rs 87.62.

Gold flat at ₹72,350 per 10g, silver rises by ₹200

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices traded flat at Rs 72,350 per 10 grams while silver gained Rs 200 per kg in the local market on Monday, according to HDFC Securities. Silver prices rose by Rs 200 to Rs 93,300 per kg from the previous close of Rs 90,100 per kg. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading flat at Rs 72,350 per 10 grams, unchanged from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,327 per ounce, slightly up USD 1 from the previous close. Gold struggled to find direction on Monday and moved in a narrow range above the USD 2,320 level during the European trading session, Gandhi said. "...Traders appear cautious about making aggressive directional bets given uncertainties about the US Federal Reserve's interest rate-cutting plan, resulting in sluggish range-bound price activity," he added.

Digi Yatra policy should spell out all rules on passenger info deletion, suggests study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The policy for Digi Yatra -- a digital platform to verify air travellers using biometric data -- needs to spell out all the rules related to deletion of passenger information from the database once the travel is complete, according to a study instituted by NITI Aayog. There have been privacy concerns in various quarters about Digi Yatra user data. Based on Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), Digi Yatra provides for contactless and seamless movement of passengers at various checkpoints at airports. As per the policy for Digi Yatra, facial biometrics are deleted from the local airport's database 24 hours after the departure of the

passenger's flight. "However, the rules related to deletion of other information collected from the passengers, as well as any facial biometrics that are stored in other registries, must be clearly set out in the policy," the study said. Digi Yatra envisages an identity management ecosystem for Indian airports, which can enhance the capabilities of Indian civil aviation infrastructure, digitise manual processes at airports, improve security standards and lower the cost of operations of airports. "While the Digi Yatra Policy states that it is completely voluntary in nature, if the use of Digi Yatra is made mandatory in any way then the same must comply with the principles laid down in



K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (case) relating to the legality, necessity, and proportionality of the policy," the study said.

The verdict pertains to the constitutional right to privacy. The study recommended that there must be frequent

cybersecurity audits and vulnerability testing of the Digi Yatra platform to ensure that reliability, usability, information security in the

ecosystem is a subject of continuous engagement and is adaptive to the rapidly evolving threats that exist in this sphere. In addition to cybersecurity audits, it is imperative to establish a mechanism for performing algorithmic audits by independent and accredited auditors, prior to system deployment at periodic intervals, it added. According to the study, the Digi Yatra SOP must specify timelines and purposes for retention of different types of data within the Digi Yatra Central Ecosystem, beyond which personal data is deleted. "Internal SOPs for handling personal and sensitive personal data must be identified," it said. The study also noted that there must be a provision for

the ongoing monitoring of the performance of the entire system. It also suggested that the use of facial recognition data and other relevant subject data for providing value-added services should only be activated through an opt-in rather than an opt-out method of consent with an ability to revoke consent at any time. Digi Yatra proposes use of FRT to authenticate a passenger's travel credentials, which allows other checkpoints at an airport to be operated in an automated form with minimal human involvement. The use of FRT prima facie has the potential to streamline operations at airports and provide tangible benefits to the civil aviation ecosystem.

Amid persisting concerns over user data privacy, the Digi Yatra Foundation, in April, said the Digi Yatra Central Ecosystem (DYCE) never stores any of the ID credentials data, which has Personally Identifiable Information (PII) anywhere in any central repository. The foundation is the nodal agency for the app. In India, as part of its efforts to improve travel experience, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has initiated the Digi Yatra programme using the FRT, and facial verification technology (FVT) to be used at different process points. FRT refers to an AI system that allows identification or verification of a person based on certain images or video data interfacing with the underlying algorithm.



NEERAJ CHOPRA OPTS OUT OF PARIS DIAMOND LEAGUE: REPORT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic and world champion javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra has opted out of this Sunday's Paris Diamond League, citing the adductor niggle that has been troubling him for the past couple of months, according to a report. Speaking to ESPN, Chopra said he is focussing on training and strengthening his blocking leg.

Chopra, who topped the field in last month's Paavo Nurmi Games in Turku, Finland, with a throw of 85.97m, said he has become wiser over the years and no longer puts himself at risk to fulfill commitments like he used to do before his Olympic gold. "Back then, if I had an entry in

gets pulled. We're working on that to see how we can reduce the impact on the groin and control the pressure on it," he said, explaining the issue for which he will consult "different doctors" after the Paris Games. "I could have competed in more events for sure and that was the plan. But I have realised that my health is paramount, that comes first. Even if I feel the slightest discomfort or like I am pushing myself too much in training, I've learnt to pause for a bit," he added.

The block phase is a crucial maneuver as it is the point at which the pace generated by the run-up is transferred to the hip and then to the throwing arm before the javelin is sent flying. Chopra, who topped the field in last month's Paavo Nurmi Games in Turku, Finland, with a throw of 85.97m, said he has become wiser over the years and no longer puts himself at risk to fulfill commitments like he used to do before his Olympic gold. "Back then, if I had an entry in

Praggnanandhaa misses against Wesley So on another day of draws



PTI ■ BUCHAREST (ROMANIA)

Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa yet again squandered promising position to settle for a draw against American Wesley So in the fifth round of Superbet Classic tournament as none of the five boards produced any decisive result, here. The lead positions remained unchanged with Fabiano Caruana of United States still ahead on 3.5 points, enjoying a half point lead over world championship challenger D Gukesh and Praggnanandhaa. French duo of Alireza Firouzja and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia and Wesley share the third spot on 2.5 points each, a half point ahead of Anish Giri of Holland and Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan. Local hopeful Deac Bogdan-Daniel is still at the bottom with 1.5 points. Gukesh also enjoyed some advantage that slipped away against Abdusattorov while Vachier-Lagrave played solidly to hold Caruana. Bogdan-Daniel drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi in the 10-

player double round-robin event, offering USD 350000 as prize money. Praggnanandhaa is usually spot-on when it comes to accurate calculation or tactics but somehow here he has been missing on advantageous positions and also some winning moves. Having missed out on a technically winning endgame against Gukesh, Wesley So found himself lucky as the Indian missed a not-so-difficult manoeuvre that he would find in seconds on another day. Inspired by the presence of Garry Kasparov in the playing hall, Praggnanandhaa chose the Kings' Indian defense as black, faced the Fianchetto variation and did not have many troubles in maintaining the balance. Wesley became a little ambitious towards the final stages of the middle game and this is where Praggnanandhaa could have penetrated his king side decisively. Wesley survived with the skin of his teeth. Gukesh also had a chance

against Nodirbek through a tactical stroke that would have ensured consistent pressure and a long-term advantage. The game was drawn without much ado once Gukesh missed out on the opportunity. Caruana showed his opening expertise to hold Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in a Ruy Lopez open. The American went for a little known variation as black and it was clear that his home-work ran deep. Vachier-Lagrave decided not to take his chances for too long and drew wide repetition in just 28 moves. Monday is the only rest day in the tournament and the sixth round will be played on Tuesday. Results round 3: D Gukesh (Ind, 3) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 2.5); Wesley So (Usa, 2.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 3); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 2.5) drew with Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 3.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 2) drew with Firouzja Alireza (Fra, 2.5); Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rou, 1.5) drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (FID, 2.5).



Canada Open: Fourth seed Lakshya Sen hopes to regain form as defending champion

PTI ■ CALGARY (CANADA)

With fond memories of his past, defending champion Lakshya Sen will look to end his title drought when he begins his campaign at the Canada Open badminton tournament here on Tuesday. The world No 14 Sen is the only Indian competing in the BWF World Tour Super 500 meet who will compete in the Paris Olympics. The reigning Commonwealth Games gold medalist's form has slipped since his Canada Open triumph around this time last year as he is yet to win a title since then. Sen will look to find his rhythm back as he gears up for the Paris Olympics, which begins in less than a month's time. With a No 4 seeding, Sen finds himself in the bottom half of the draw which also features the Japanese duo of Kodai Naraoka (WR 6) and Koki Watanabe (WR 20). The former world championship bronze medalist Sen will start off against a qualifier and may head into a potential quarterfinal clash with Hong Kong's WR 23 NG Ka Long Angus. There are three other Indians in the men's singles main draw. Priyanshu Rajawat will face eighth seed Rasmus Gemke of Denmark. Rajawat recently had a notable last-eight finish in the US Open Super 300 event, wherein he lost to Lei Lax Xi. Kiran George will take on Yushi Tanaka of Japan, while Ayush Shetty is the fourth Indian in the draw, starting his campaign against the sixth seed Watanabe (6). On a high after her semifinal finish in the US Open last week, Malvika Bansod will face Julie Dawall Jakobsen of Denmark in her opening women's singles fixture. Malvika is also in the bottom half of the draw which has WR 14 Nozomi Okuhara as the second seed. But her immediate next challenge may be against WR 21 Line Hojmark Kjærfeldt of Denmark. The Danish player has got a fourth seed and could be Malvika's last-16 challenger. If she is able to overcome the pre-quarters hurdle, Malvika may face fifth seed Sung Shuo Yun, who is WR 24.

Mbappé says he feels like he is in a virtual reality game wearing his mask at Euro 2024



AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)

Kylian Mbappé felt like he was in a virtual reality game when playing in a mask to protect his broken nose at the European Championship. The France star was smiling while telling the story Sunday on the eve of facing Belgium in the round of 16. But clearly he does not enjoy playing his role as the masked man of Euro 2024 - "an absolute horror," he said. "I had the impression in the first game that I was playing in 3D," Mbappé told reporters,

putting his hands to the sides of his head and mimicking wearing a VR headset. "I saw people but I had the feeling it was not me that was playing," he said of his comeback in a 1-1 draw against Poland on Tuesday. Mbappé's nose was broken in an accidental collision with an Austria defender's shoulder during a 1-0 win for France in its opening game on June 17. Without its captain and key goalscoring threat, France drew 0-0 with the Netherlands and on his masked return he played tentatively though

scored with a penalty in a second straight draw. "It's really difficult. It limits the vision, the sweat stays blocked so you have to keep lifting it to flow out," Mbappé said. "As soon as I can take it off, I will. It's annoying, it's annoying, it's annoying." "Now, I don't have a choice, I can't play without. So I have to stay thank you to the mask," he said. Those two draws dropped France to second place in Group D - won by Austria - and sent Les Bleus into the top half of the draw that few expected. Belgium also unexpectedly landed in the top half, by finishing runner-up in a group to Romania after a 0-0 draw with Ukraine as boos rained down from its fans. It set up a rematch of a semifinal at the 2018 World Cup that France won 1-0 six years ago en route to Mbappé's star role in the final. The winner on Monday in Duesseldorf will find a difficult path to the final. Portugal, which plays Slovenia on Monday, is potentially waiting in the quarterfinals, then Germany and Spain are possible semifinal opponents. "The teams that are considered to be the big nations on paper, we're doing everything we can to stay in it," France coach Didier Deschamps said. "But actually it's something that's quite intense, highly, highly intense." Deschamps acknowledged his team has not been scoring, but he at least has his biggest threat back.

Portugal sure to respect Slovenia in Euro 2024 round of 16 with fresh memory of upset losses

AP ■ FRANKFURT

Portugal coach Roberto Martinez knows to respect the underdog, having already seen his team lose to Slovenia when the round of 16 opponents at the European Championship met in a friendly in March. Portugal lost by the same 2-0 score to Georgia in a Euro 2024 group game, and Martinez was asked Sunday about the underdog trend at the same time that Slovakia was frustrating England with a lead that lasted until the last seconds. "All the teams here have a lot of personality. They believe that they can win," Martinez said ahead of Portugal facing Slovenia again on Monday. "The same applies to Slovenia. They are very well organized,



competitive, and believe in what they're doing," he said in translated comments. Portugal, the European champion in 2016 and still with the veteran presence of Cristiano Ronaldo and Pepe, is a big favourite. Slovenia is playing its first elimination game in the knockout rounds at a major tournament, its fourth in 32

years as an independent soccer nation. "It's a historical moment for Slovenian football," Martinez said, praising his counterpart Matjaž Kek. "We admire what their coach is doing because their national team plays like a club." "They attack very quickly. (Andraž) Šporar and (Benjamin) Šeško have a very

strong bond, and they kept a clean sheet against England." That 0-0 against England was a third straight draw for Slovenia, one of six teams still unbeaten at Euro 2024. Kek joined in the mutual respect, calling Martinez "a gentleman, he always behaves like that." The game is likely to follow a pattern. Portugal leads the tournament in most time possessing the ball and Slovenia has the least, with UEFA assessing their scores as 64.3 per cent and 36.7 per cent. "They don't need a lot of possession to be dangerous," Martinez said. Portugal midfielder Bruno Fernandes expects patience to be key to beating goalkeeper Jan Oblak, who he described as one of the world's best.

Spain beat Georgia 4-1 to reach Euro 2024 quarterfinals, next plays host Germany

AP ■ COLOGNE (GERMANY)

Spain recovered from conceding an early own-goal to beat Georgia 4-1 for a spot in the Euro 2024 quarterfinals, ending one of the tournament's most compelling underdog stories. Goals from midfielders Rodri and Fabian Ruiz brought Spain back into the game after Robin Le Normand's own-goal in the 18th minute had given Georgia a shock lead. Nico Williams and Dani Olmo took the game out of Georgia's reach with two more goals late in the game as heavy rain fell.

Spain will play host nation Germany in the quarterfinals on Friday in Stuttgart. The loss ends Georgia's first ever major tournament campaign, which included a 2-0 upset win over Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal. Despite the lopsided score, Georgia goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili had another standout game with nine saves to prevent a rout. Spain had beaten Georgia 7-1 in qualifying last year, but this game was a close contest until the last 20 minutes and testament to Georgia's rapid improvement under coach Willy Sagnol.



Playing its fourth game of Euro 2024, Spain had yet to concede a goal all tournament. That soon changed when Otar Kakabadze surged down the right flank for Georgia and crossed low. Le Normand chested the ball past his own goalkeeper, with the defender apparently distracted by Khvicha Kvaratskhelia arriving behind him to meet the cross. Spain took its time to get back into the game, but Rodri -- back from a one-game suspension -- leveled the score in the 39th with a low shot from just outside the box.

Bellingham's stunning goal rescues England in 2-1 win over Slovakia, advance to Euro 2024 quarters

AP ■ GELSENKIRCHEN (GERMANY)

Jude Bellingham needed to produce something special to keep England at Euro 2024. And he did. England was seconds away from slumping to one of the biggest upsets in the history of the European Championship when trailing 1-0 to Slovakia deep into stoppage time in the round of 16 on Sunday. But Bellingham's spectacular overhead kick in the fifth of six added minutes at Veltins Arena sent the game into extra time, and Harry Kane sealed a 2-1 win that keeps alive England's hopes of a first major trophy since 1966.

"I think it was 30 or 20 seconds until we were out of the European Championship," Bellingham said. "It's hard to deny that it was one of the most important moments of my career so far." He's had a few. The midfielder, who turned 21 on Saturday, has just completed a stunning debut season at Real Madrid, winning the Champions League and the Spanish title. At such a young age, he is one of England's most important players at Euro 2024 and delivered a moment of magic when all hope seemed lost. "His world is different to pretty much every other 21-year-old in the world... What

he can provide are these moments where he grabs things by the scruff of the neck and his character and his personality creates moments that can change in a big game," England manager Gareth Southgate said. England - one of the pre-tournament favorites and runner-up at the last Euros - trailed 1-0 to 45th-ranked Slovakia after Ivan Schranz's 25th-minute goal. With the clock running down, Bellingham's time came. Kyle Walker launched a long throw from the right. Marc Guehi leapt to flick the ball on. Bellingham was in the box and had to readjust his body



to execute a perfect overhead kick, sending the ball into the bottom corner to leave Slovakia goalkeeper Martin Dubravka stuck on his line as he watched it nestle into the back of the net. Some England fans had already left the stadium. Those inside erupted. "I had a funny feeling the game wasn't dead and I know that sounds ridiculous. We were pushing and probing," Southgate said. Bellingham's goal was England's first shot on target in the match. It didn't have to wait long for its second as Kane headed home to score his seventh goal in his last seven knockout

games at major tournaments. It was also a record-extending 65th for his country. England will play Switzerland in the quarterfinals in Duesseldorf on Saturday. But for so long it looked like being a humbling exit for Southgate's team - bringing back memories of its elimination at the hands of Iceland at Euro 2016. "It's knockout football and anything is possible," Southgate said. England had faced fierce criticism for its performances in the group stage and boos rang around the stadium in the first half as frustration grew among its fans following Schranz's strike.

It needed to improve in the second half. Phil Foden had a goal ruled out by VAR. Kane headed wide from close range and Declan Rice hit the post in the 81st. Slovakia had already produced a shock by beating No.3-ranked Belgium in the group stage and it looked like doing it again against the No. 5-ranked team in the world. That was until Bellingham struck. "They scored a goal from a player who is valued at 100 million euros. This was a team worth 1.5 billion (euros). You concede just half a meter and you will get punished," Slovakia coach Francesco Calzona said.

