



OPINION 6
INDIANS DYING ON THE
RUSSIAN FRONTLINE

WORLD 8
SUNAK MAKES APOLOGY
CALLS TO EX-MPS

MONEY 10
MARKETS SETTLE ON FLAT
NOTE IN MUTED TRADE

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol.13 Issue 186
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

RAIPUR, TUESDAY JULY 9, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

Established 1864

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



MENTOR YUVRAJ
MUST BE PROUD
NOW: ABHISHEK
12 SPORTS

THE ARC OF TERROR IS COMPLETE: FROM KASHMIR TO JAMMU, INDIA BLEEDS

FOUR ARMY JAWANS MARTYRED IN MERCILESS MURDER BY TERRORISTS

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

At least four Indian Army soldiers were martyred and five others were grievously injured in yet another provocative terror strike on an Army vehicle near Badnota village of Machhedi under the jurisdiction of Lohal Malhar block in Billawar tehsil of Kathua district on Monday. The area falls under the 9 Corps of the Indian Army.

The attack took place a month after a group of foreign terrorists targeted a pilgrim bus in which nine civilians were killed and 41 others were injured in the Reasi district on June 9. A similar attack was attempted on an Army post by another group of terrorists in the frontier Rajouri district early on Sunday morning. However, the same was repulsed by one of the alert troopers manning the periphery of the Army installation.

According to preliminary reports, a group of terrorists pitched atop a prominent hill feature targeted the Army vehicle by first hurling a grenade and later opening indiscriminate firing to inflict

maximum casualties.

The terrorists also took advantage of the foggy weather and poor road conditions before targeting the Army vehicle. During the heavy exchange of firing several soldiers were badly hit. The fate of terrorists could not be known immediately as the anti-terrorist operation was still going on in the thickly forested area.

Confirming the firing incident, a spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir police in a brief statement said, "Exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces going on in the Machhedi area of Kathua district. Two Army personnel were injured in the initial round of firing. A massive search operation has been launched". Meanwhile, additional troops have been rushed to the spot to plug the escape routes and neutralise the terrorists.

Senior police and Army officers were supervising the ongoing operation. The Army authorities have issued an advisory to the residents in the area to remain indoors and not to venture out to prevent injuries in the heavy



File photo: PTI

exchange of gunfire. A day after gunning down six terrorists in two back-to-back encounters in the South Kashmir district of Kulgam Brigadier Prithviraj Chauhan, Commander 1 sec RR, on Monday claimed the security forces have inflicted a big blow to the Pro-Pakistan

terrorist outfit Hizbul Mujahideen in the Valley. The killing of six terrorists in South Kashmir is a significant blow to Hizbul Mujahideen," he said. The security forces are also investigating the role of the locals in sheltering the terrorists inside their homes.

During the routine searches, the security forces stumbled upon a well-fortified concrete hideout concealed behind a wardrobe in a civilian residence situated in the Chinnigam Frisal area of Kulgam. The senior Army officer also paid tributes to the martyred

soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty during the twin encounters.

Briefing media persons, Brigadier Chauhan said after concluding the operation, we found and promptly destroyed an IED weighing approximately 6 kilogram, keeping collateral damage in mind.

Speaking on the Modergam encounter, Javed Ahmad Matoo, DIG South Kashmir, said two terrorists were killed in the second operation. "Adil, who had multiple FIRs against him in different police stations, was killed in one operation. The second encounter took place in the Chinnigam area based on specific information, resulting in the killing of four terrorists.

Among them was Yavar Bashir Dar, a Category 'A' terrorist. The others were identified as Tauheed Ahmed, Shakeel Ahmed Wani, and Zahir Ahmad Dar. A significant cache of arms and ammunition was recovered from the encounter site. Both locations had hideouts that the terrorists had been using for a considerable time, Matoo said.



Students at the Supreme Court of India in New Delhi, on Monday. The apex court has begun the hearing for a number of petitions regarding the alleged irregularities in the NEET UG 2024 exams

Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

NEET re-test if exam sanctity lost, says SC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Directing the National Testing Agency (NTA) for full disclosures on three major aspects of the NEET-UG paper leak case, the Supreme Court on Monday said the fact there was a paper leak in the NEET-UG exam cannot be denied and it has to be ascertained if the nature of the leak was widespread or isolated to decide on ordering a re-test.

Referring to legal position on ordering re-test, the bench said it will have to be "scrutinised whether the alleged breach has taken place at systemic level, whether the breach has affected integrity of the entire exam process and whether it is possible to segregate the beneficiaries of fraud from

the untainted students". "In a situation where breach affects the entirety of process and it is not possible to segregate the beneficiaries from others, it may be necessary to order a re-test," the bench said.

The court said if the sanctity of NEET-UG 2024 is "lost" and if the leak of its question paper has been propagated through social media, then a re-test has to be ordered. The bench said the extent of question paper leak and the beneficiaries across geographical boundaries have to be ascertained before the top court may order a re-test in the controversy-ridden exam which was taken up by 23.33 lakh students at 4,750 centres in 571 cities including in 14 cities overseas.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a guard of honour upon his arrival at the airport in Moscow on Monday

PTI

Modi embarks on Mission Moscow

AGENCIES/PNS ■ MOSCOW/NEW DELHI

In his first trip since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday began a two-day high-profile visit to Russia to hold summit talks with President Vladimir Putin with a focus on boosting bilateral ties in areas of energy, trade and defence.

Modi was received at the airport by Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov. The Russian First Deputy Minister also accompanied the Indian Prime Minister to his hotel from the airport in the same car, officials said. Manturov had received Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to Russia as

well. It is Modi's first trip to Russia since 2019, the first after the start of the Ukraine conflict in February 2022 and first in Modi's third term as the Prime Minister. Russian President Putin is set to host a private dinner for Modi tonight ahead of Tuesday's talks at the 22nd India-Russia summit in Moscow. "The PM is set to hold substantive discussions with Putin to take forward the special partnership between the two countries. He will also interact with the Indian community in Russia," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on social media. In his departure statement, Modi said India seeks to play a supportive role for a

peaceful and stable region. After concluding his engagements in Russia on July 9, Modi will leave for Austria in the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to that country in over 40 years. The focus of the Modi-Putin summit talks are expected to be on further boosting bilateral cooperation in trade, energy and defence. The Ukraine conflict is set to figure in the discussions. "The special and privileged strategic partnership between India and Russia has advanced over the past 10 years, including in the areas of energy, security, trade, investment, health, education, culture, tourism and people-to-people exchanges," Modi said in his departure statement.

Mumbai keeps its tryst with Monsoon

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The heavy downpour being witnessed in the metropolis and surrounding areas since the weekend — resulted in massive inundation in low-lying areas — threw suburban train services and air traffic out of gear, while the traffic on the Mumbai-Goa Highway remained badly affected for the second consecutive day on Monday.

Heavy rains continued to batter Mumbai and adjoining areas of Thane, Navi Mumbai, Kalyan, Palghar and neighbouring coastal Konkan region. Such was the high intensity of rains that during the six-hour period between 1 am and 7 am on Monday, several of the rain catchment areas like Powari received 300 mm of rainfall. The Powai Lake — one of the major water-supplying lakes of Mumbai — started overflowing during the day. Considered the lifelines of Mumbai, the suburban train services of Central Railway (CR) and Western Railway (WR) were badly hit as the railway track remained thick sheets of water, affecting the operation for the better part of the day. The BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) deployed pumps at several places to clear flood water in low-lying areas in the metropolis. More than 50 flights were cancelled, while 27 were



Passengers wait for trains at a waterlogged railway station during rain in Mumbai on Monday

PTI

diverted from the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai. "Heavy traffic congestion and slow vehicle movement are expected en route to Mumbai airport today due to weather conditions. Customers are advised to allow more time for their journey to the airport," airline Vistara said in an announcement made earlier in the day. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for coastal Ratnagiri district, while it has sounded an orange alert for Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and Sindhudurg district. Heavy to very heavy rains have been predicted in Mumbai, Thane and

adjoining coastal Konkan region. Meanwhile, the country's commercial capital has been reeling under very heavy rains since 1 am on Monday. "Mumbai has recorded over 300 mm rainfall at various places during the hour period from 1 am to 7 am today. Heavy rains resulted in severe inundation in low-lying areas. Since there was flooding on tracks at several places, suburban train services were badly affected," a senior BMC official said. Amid pouring rains, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde visited the State Disaster Control Room and BMC's Disaster Management office to make a

first-hand assessment of the situation. "Unlike in the past, it has rained a lot in less time which is more than the city's carrying capacity. As a result, there was a water-logging on railway tracks and roads. Traffic has now resumed on all roads. Senior officials are present at all water-logging-prone spots in the city. The State Disaster Management Authority, NDRF, BMC are on alert," Shinde said. "There is movement of vehicles on Eastern and Western express highways and all railway lines. NDRF teams have reached all three coastal districts in the state. Army, Navy and Air Force are also on alert," Shinde said.



Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren speaks during a Special Session of the State Legislative Assembly, held in Ranchi on Monday

Hemant Soren wins trust vote in Jharkhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI/NEW DELHI

The JMM-led Government in Jharkhand headed by Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Monday won the vote of confidence in the Assembly amid a walkout by Opposition members. A total of 45 MLAs, including nominated member Glen Joseph Galstaun, voted in favour of the confidence motion. The BJP and AJSU legislators walked out of the House as the headcount for voting started.

The BJP-led Opposition has 24 legislators of the saffron party and three of the AJSU Party. After winning the trust vote, Soren said, "Today, everyone again got to witness the unity and strength of the ruling alliance. I thank the Speaker and all the alliance MLAs."

A touch of spirituality mooted in DU syllabi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to expand its course curriculum and provide a wide range of choices to students, the Delhi University is scheduled to introduce Vedic Literature, Upanishad Parichaya, Dharma and Religion among the options at Delhi University's Centre for Hindu Studies which shall be offered to its students as minor electives.

Sources said the department has proposed to introduce six new elective papers for students, who wish to specialise in Hindu Studies and awaits their approval from the Academic Council of the university. A meeting of

the Academic Council of Delhi University is slated for July 12. These additions are based on the recommendations of the Governing Body of the Centre for Hindu Studies. The Bhagavad Gita for Humanity elective will acquaint students with foundational Indian spirituality as depicted in the Bhagavad Gita, and the Purana Parichaya paper will cover Hindu history, culture, geography, architecture and other knowledge systems. The Centre also plans to introduce two general electives for students who are not majoring in Hindu Studies but have chosen Commerce, Political Science



or Computer Science as their main subjects. These students will be offered papers on Hindu Jivana Drishti and Manovijnana to familiarise them with Hindu studies. In addition to the UGC-

approved syllabus, the Centre for Hindu Studies now plans to introduce more choices for students by offering papers on various aspects of Hinduism, said an official. These will also include papers on Bhagavad Gita for

Humanity, Hindu Thinkers and Purana Parichaya. The students who don't wish to study Commerce, Political Science or Computer Science as minor electives along with the major subject can avail these choices. "We have proposed these electives to make our course curriculum more comprehensive and aligned with students' needs. As a relatively new establishment, our effort is to make our programmes well-rounded," the official said. Under Introduction to Vedic Literature, students will learn about the literary works of prominent Vedic and Upanishadic commentators, from the Rigveda to Vedangas.

Sandeshkhali setback for Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

There was yet another judicial reverse suffered by the Mamata Banerjee Government with the Supreme Court on Monday asking the State counsel why the administration should want to shield an accused before dismissing the State plea to scrap the ongoing probe into the Sandeshkhali incident conducted by the Central Bureau of Investigation. The State Government had approached the Apex Court to get the CBI investigation ordered earlier by the Calcutta High Court quashed. "Why should the State be interested in protecting someone?" the Bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV

Viswanathan wondered before dismissing the State plea. The Calcutta High Court had on April 10 ordered a CBI investigation into the incidents of Sandeshkhali where villagers complained en masse of large-scale land grab and sexual exploitation of women allegedly at the behest of Trinamool Congress strongmen Sheikh Shahjahan, Uttam Sardar and others. All were presently in jail. Moving the Apex Court, the State Government had earlier said the High Court order directing CBI investigation into the case had demoralised the police administration. It also said it was the State police which had arrested

Shahjahan before handing it over to the CBI. However the opposite side contended that the State had not only tried to stall CBI investigation but also it had handed arrested the main accused after several weeks of the incident apparently because he was a powerful TMC leader. The CBI has been investigating three separate cases with Sandeshkhali appearing in all of them. While the agency is investigating the case of multi-crore public distribution system scam that has seen former State Minister and powerful TMC leader Jyotipriya Mallick going to jail.

LG orders temporary halt to teachers' transfer amid political row

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Acting on the orders of Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, the Delhi government on Monday directed that the transfer of 5,000 school teachers, who have been posted in the same school for more than 10 years, be kept in abeyance.

Saxena on Sunday asked Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to keep the transfer orders in abeyance as an interim measure after a delegation of Delhi BJP leaders and representatives of teachers met the LG in his office. Addressing a press conference here, Delhi Education minister Atishi, however, alleged a conspiracy by the BJP behind the transfer orders. "Our government in Delhi has transformed government schools in the last 10 years. The results of students studying here have set records," she said.

Atishi pointed out that the BJP orchestrated this move to sabotage the "Education Revolution" spearheaded by the Kejriwal government, which has transformed the city's schools over the past



Ranjani Dilmiri

decade." Despite this, the Kejriwal administration remains steadfast in its commitment to safeguarding educational progress and defending the rights of Delhi's citizens," Atishi charged. She also congratulated the people of Delhi on the orders being withdrawn. "Today Delhi's teachers and Delhiites have won. Teachers, students and their parents were worried after this transfer order. I had promised the teachers, students and parents that we will not let Delhi's education revolution go to waste. I am happy that today BJP had to withdraw this

order through its LG. Today, Delhi teachers and Delhiites have won," she added. In an official order, the education department said it had received several representations in the matter of the recent transfer orders issued by the Directorate of Education (DoE), pertaining to teachers who have continued for more than 10 years in the same school. "After going through the representations and listening to the delegations, the competent authority has decided to constitute an appropriate committee, comprising representatives of all stakeholders and experts,

so as to take a holistic, sympathetic and fair view in the matter," it said. "Therefore, till further orders, the transfer orders of teachers issued on 02.07.2024 are kept in abeyance. Postings of all such teachers are restored as on 01.07.2024," it said. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and MLA Dilip Pandey echoed similar views as Atishi and demanded action against officers who were behind the transfer orders. "Somewhere in this matter, errors were committed by officers. Despite directions from Education Minister Atishi, they were involved in issuing the orders. I would request Atishi to identify these officers and action should be taken against them," he said. A circular titled 'Online requests for transfer of teaching staff of the Directorate of Education' issued by the DoE on June 11 directed all teachers who have served for more than 10 years in one school to compulsorily apply for a transfer. Failing which they will be transferred to any school by the DoE, according to the circular.

BJP accuses AAP Ministers of damaging city's school education

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Monday accused the duo of former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Education Minister Atishi of badly damaging the school education system of the city.

"They have not recruited regular teachers nor guest teachers and have diverted teachers to non-teaching duties thereby leading to one of the worst teacher student ratios in Delhi government schools," Sachdeva alleged.

He said that the BJP never does politics over education and said, "BJP never wants to do politics on education department work but Minister Atishi has today forced us to put in public domain as to how the Kejriwal government has damaged the education system of Delhi."

The state BJP chief alleged that the national capital in 2024 has 995 normal schools as compared to 1015 in 2015 when Arvind Kejriwal government first came to power while stating that in these 10 years they have not hired any new regular or guest teachers.

"The other 32 schools for specialised education totally lack facilities are some of the worst schools. As per the Right to Education statistics Delhi government schools need around 62,000 teachers while there are only around 43,000 teachers along with around 13,000 guest teachers. There is a lack of around 6000 teachers in Delhi Government schools," he stated, adding that the government schools lack teachers yet the Kejriwal Government has diverted over 5000 teachers to non-teaching duties thus badly affecting teaching in schools. "Shockingly school teachers

are forced to do clerical duties, work as OSDs to senior officials. Despite a lack of 6,000 teachers, the Sisodia and Atishi duo have removed almost 5,000 teachers from teaching duties," he said.

Sachdeva said 205 teachers have been made School Mentors, 1,027 have been made School Coordinators, 1,027 have been made Teacher Development Coordinator while they now don't perform any teaching duty.

"70 teachers who have law qualification have been diverted to work on Education department's legal assistants while another 102 teachers are forced to work as OSDs to the Deputy and Assistant Directors of Education in the education department," Sachdeva said, claiming that the posts of around 5,200 clerks and accounts staff in Delhi government schools are vacant.

AAP-BJP blame game disturbing city's administration:

Congress president

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav on Monday alleged that the blame game between AAP government and BJP has disturbed the administration in the city. "It was indeed very surprising that Delhi Education Minister Atishi had no clue about the transfer of 5000 school teachers under her department, though the transfer orders have been stalled by the Lt. Governor when the matter became public," he said. Yadav added that the transfer drama was enacted to divert people's attention from the core issues affecting them, like water shortage, waterlogging, poor sanitation and widespread corruption due to the inaction and inefficiency of the Delhi Government.

HC orders constitution of panel to assess fire safety compliance in nursing homes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Stating that the safety of people, staff, and patients is of paramount importance, the Delhi High Court has directed the authorities to constitute a joint committee to inspect the city's several nursing homes regarding compliance with fire safety norms.

Justice Sanjeev Narula also requested a sub-committee constituted by the Delhi government in 2019 to review the status of nursing homes with respect to compliance with various laws, including fire prevention, to "promptly conclude" the deliberations and submit a final report to the court.

While dealing with a petition by an association of nursing homes, the court took into account the recent incidents of fire outbreaks in nursing homes and lapses in fire safe-

ty compliance, saying the immediate priority is to ensure that the basic fire safety equipment is installed in such premises to keep people safe.

"Respondents No. 2 (Directorate General of Health Services, Delhi government) and 3 (Delhi Fire Services) along with Respondent No. 4 - Delhi Development Authority, are directed to constitute a Joint Committee for the inspection of all the nursing houses that are members of Petitioner No. 1, within a period of two weeks from today. The Petitioners shall provide a list of all member-nursing homes to Respondent No. 2," said the court in its order passed on July 3.

"The safety of the public, particularly the staff and patients enrolled at the nursing homes, is of paramount importance. Consequently, the court's

immediate priority is to safeguard public safety and ensure that the basic fire safety equipment, as mandated by law, is installed at the premises of private nursing homes," it observed.

In the order, the court stated that after inspection, the committee shall formulate a "comprehensive report" concerning all non-compliances, except for structural defects, with fire safety norms by the nursing homes.

The court sought the report within four weeks from the date of inspection and clarified that the committee shall if required, issue notices to the defiant nursing homes with regards to the defaults and also suggest alternative remedial measures and also give a reasonable time period to ensure compliance.

The court added that the report of the government sub-committee must also contain



"alternative corrective measures" for infrastructural deficiencies in the nursing homes so that an effective mechanism can be established while safeguarding the public interest.

"Given the significance of the issue, especially the ramifications

of improper compliance with fire safety regulations, the court requests the sub-committee to promptly conclude their deliberations and submit a final report to the court," it said, asking the Delhi government counsel to apprise it of the consultations

on the next date of hearing. In its petition filed in 2022, the petitioner -- Delhi Medical Association -- challenged an August 2019 communication issued by the Directorate General of Health Services requesting Delhi Fire Service to undertake an audit of fire safety measures employed by all private hospitals and nursing homes in Delhi.

The petitioner said it represented the interests of private nursing homes in Delhi and argued that the mandate to obtain a fire safety certificate does not extend to the nursing homes that are being run on 'mixed-use' lands in residential areas.

It claimed that the authorities are erroneously considering such nursing homes as 'institutional buildings' and insisting on the requirement of a fire safety clearance before renewal of registration. The Delhi government coun-

sel, on the other hand, said under the applicable rules, institutional buildings with a height of more than 9 metres or comprising of a ground floor and two upper stories are likely to cause a risk of fire, and since nursing homes and hospitals are 'institutional occupancy buildings below the height of 15 metres', they must obtain a fire safety certificate.

The court noted that under the National Building Code of India, the premises of hospitals and nursing homes with less than 15 metres in height, must be equipped with fire extinguishers, first-aid hose reels, wet rise, yard hydrants, automatic sprinkler systems, manually operated electronic fire alarm, automatic detection and alarm system, underground static water tank and terrace tanks.

The petitioner stated that in compliance with legal oblig-

ations, the nursing homes forming a part of its association have provided for these amenities at their premises but their grievance pertained to the infrastructural prescriptions, such as the underground water tanks, and the broadening of the stairways and corridors.

Notwithstanding the petitioners' contentions concerning the challenges in implementing infrastructural alterations, in order to assess the prevailing provisions for fire safety, the court deems it apposite to order an inspection of the nursing homes that form part of Petitioner No. 1-association," the court opined.

"The recent incidents of fire outbreaks in nursing homes as highlighted by (Delhi government counsel) Mr. (Avishkar) Singhvi, have brought to the fore significant lapses in fire safety compliance," it said.

LG launches Public Amusement Portal NCRTC MD conducts inspection of RRTS corridor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday launched the 'Public Amusement Portal' at an event held at New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) Convention Centre making it significantly easier for entrepreneurs to undertake businesses and activities involving amusement, performances and entertainment.

Speaking on the occasion the Chief Guest Saxena said, "This digital transformation marks a significant leap forward in augmenting 'Ease-of-Doing-Business', as envisioned by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi." He shared the transformative strides that had been made in rationalising, demystifying and easing the regulation and licensing procedures and processes during the last two years. Saxena launched Unified Portal for Eating and Lodging



Establishments, which will enhance timings for bars and restaurants, open air dining and permission to establishments to operate on a 24x7 basis, amongst others.

The Licensing Unit of Delhi Police has developed the portal in collaboration with Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and National Informatics Centre (NIC). By integrating various regulatory

authorities such as Municipal Bodies, Delhi Fire Service, and Delhi Police onto a single platform, the portal ensures seamless coordination and real-time processing of applications.

Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar, Commissioner of Police Sanjay Arora, Special CP (Licensing) Virender Singh Chahal IPS, and MCD Commissioner Ashwani Kumar were also present at the event.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) Managing Director Shalabh Goyal conducted an inspection of the RRTS corridor from Meerut South Station to Sarai Kale Khan Station in Delhi. He was accompanied by the NCRTC Director and other officials during this visit.

The inspection began at Meerut South Station, where construction has been completed, and Namoo Bharat trains will soon commence operations. Goyal closely examined the station's operational preparations and reviewed the parking facilities. Meerut Metro will also start from this station, enhancing convenience for residents traveling from Meerut South to Modipuram. The station



features three platforms: two for Namoo Bharat trains and one for Meerut Metro.

An 8-km section from Modi Nagar North Station to Meerut South will soon be open to the public, allowing residents to reach Ghaziabad from Meerut South in minutes. Currently, trial runs for

this intensive inspection, he interacted with the station controllers, train operators, and other operational staff to understand their daily challenges. He experienced passenger-centric facilities such as push buttons, PSD, stretchers, and the train's high speed. He praised the cleanliness of the stations and urged officials to continuously improve cleanliness standards.

Currently, Namoo Bharat trains operate across eight stations in the 34 km section from Sahibabad to Modi Nagar North. With the upcoming commencement of services from Modi Nagar North to Meerut South, the operational section will extend to 42 km including 9 RRTS stations.

Goyal also inspected the ongoing construction works at New Ashok Nagar and Sarai Kale Khan elevated stations in the Delhi section. He

assessed the challenges faced by officials in the rapid construction work and motivated them, emphasizing strict adherence to safety and security norms.

The Delhi section of the RRTS corridor spans 14 km, with 9 km elevated and 5 km underground. The underground section includes the construction of Anand Vihar Station.

The viaduct construction in the Delhi section is complete, and the three underground stations are nearing completion. Efforts to integrate these stations with other transport modes are also underway. Goyal highlighted that the construction of the country's first RRTS will spur development in Delhi-NCR and provide a high-speed public transport system for residents, with NCRTC personnel playing a crucial role in this development.

City hoping to implement action plan to combat climate change

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Shaken by unprecedented heat waves and heavy rainfall, Delhi hopes to implement a new but much-delayed action plan to combat climate change this year. Official sources said the final draft was ready and awaiting approval from the city government's environment minister before being sent to the Union environment ministry. Delhi was heavily impacted by extreme weather this year.

The national Capital recorded 40 consecutive days of temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius since May 13, with Mungeshpur and Narela reaching 49.9 degrees in late May. The intense heat contributed to 60 deaths in the city. On the other hand, torrential rain on June 28 claimed 11 lives and caused significant property damage. India introduced the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in



2008, following which state governments were asked to develop their own State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) in alignment with national strategies. Delhi's previous climate action plan for the 2010-2020 period, finalised in 2019 after a seven-year stakeholder consultation, is now outdated. Work on a

new plan began in 2021, with the first draft completed in 2022. It took around two years to finalise the consultations and fine-tune the plan, sources told PTI. The state-level steering committee, chaired by the chief secretary, discussed the final draft in two meetings in May and June. "The new SAPCC draft

has been sent to the Delhi environment minister for approval. Once approved, it will be forwarded to the Union environment ministry. The environment department, the nodal agency for the plan, is optimistic about implementing the plan this year," a source said.

The previous plan focused on six key areas -- energy, transport, green cover, urban development, and projected changes in weather patterns. The new SAPCC incorporates an analysis of extreme weather events over the past decade and focuses on air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy, transport issues, air conditioning, heat islands and agriculture patterns, among others. The draft SAPCC projects a staggering loss of Rs 2.75 lakh crore by 2050 due to climate change impacts, with changes in precipitation and temperature patterns posing significant threats to vulnerable populations. The plan identifies "heat

waves/higher temperature and heavy precipitation events over fewer number of days" as major challenges. Extreme rain events have exposed Delhi's lack of disaster preparedness and highly vulnerable infrastructure year after year.

The city recorded 228.1 mm rainfall on June 27-28 -- more than three times the June average of 74.1 mm and the highest for the month since 1936. Last year, Delhi experienced 153 mm rain on July 8-9, the maximum 24-hour precipitation in July since 1982, leading to widespread flooding and temporary school closures.

The new SAPCC projects Delhi's average temperature to rise by 1.5 degrees Celsius in a moderate-emission scenario (RCP 4.5) and by 2.1 degrees in a high-emission scenario (RCP 8.5). A detailed district-specific vulnerability assessment identified South Delhi as the most vulnerable district and New Delhi as the least.

23-year-old arrested for stabbing friend to death over minor issue

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrested a 23-year-old man for stabbing his friend to death over a small altercation between them in Delhi's Shahbad Dairy.

According to the police on Monday, on June 30, at about 10:15 PM, 28-year-old Sunny got admitted by his relatives in Rohini's Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital and he was declared brought dead by the doctors. "The deceased was having stab injuries near private parts and on other parts of the body too," said DCP, Crime Branch Amit Goel, adding that a case under section 302 (Punishment for murder) was registered at Police station Shahbad Dairy. The accused was identified as Deepal, alias Deepu, who has studied up to 9th class and is unemployed. "He is



unmarried and has one brother and two sisters. After being a dropout from the school, he fell in bad company and got indulged in crime. He has been involved in a case as a juvenile also. Besides, he has previously been involved in a case of robbery after abducting a person of PS Shahbad Dairy," the DCP added. On the basis of technical surveillance and local input gathered, it came to know that the accused will come near Japanese Park in Rohini to

meet one of his friends, where the team laid a trap and the accused was nabbed.

During interrogation, the accused disclosed that one of his associates namely Ajay, alias Modi, had an old dispute with the deceased. "On the day of incident, he along with his associates namely Ajay, alias Modi, Guddu, Daddu, Chetan, Prakash, Roshan, Sagra and others were going together and somehow met with the deceased on the way. Verbal altercation started between them. In between, accused Ajay first slapped the deceased and then all the accused persons started beating him," he added. The DCP stated that all the accused caught hold of the deceased and the accused Ajay took out a knife and stabbed the deceased. After that all of them ran away from there.

ACB/EOW file fresh FIRs against two suspended IAS officers, Soumya

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Anti-Corruption Bureau/Economic Offences Wing (ACB/EOW) have registered fresh FIRs against two suspended IAS officers Ranu Sahu and Sameer Vishnoi and suspended Deputy Secretary Soumya Chaurasia in alleged disproportionate assets cases.

The cases were lodged against them under the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act 2018 and the Indian Judicial Code (IJC), ACB Additional Superintendent of Police Chandresh Thakur said.

As per the FIR, Sahu purchased immovable



property worth Rs 4 crore in her own name and in the name of family members between 2015 and 2022 while her total salary since joining

the service till 2022 was said to be Rs 92 lakh.

Similarly, Chaurasia, who was a part of the illegal syndicate of coal scam while

posted as Deputy Secretary in the Chief Minister's Secretariat in the Bhupesh Baghel government, purchased 29 immovable

properties worth Rs 9.20 crore in her and family's name between 2021 and 2022.

Vishnoi bought immovable property worth 5 crores in the name of his wife.

A 2010 batch IAS officer, Sahu has got interim bail on Monday till August 7 from the Supreme Court. On the other hand, Vishnoi and Chaurasia are in jail.

In January 2024, the ACB/EOW had named 70 persons including several Congress leaders and firms in a FIR registered under the Indian Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 on the basis of a report by the Enforcement Directorate.

Monsoon to intensify in C'garh

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Monsoon activity is going to intensify in Chhattisgarh from Tuesday, resulting in medium to heavy rainfall across the state.

According to the Meteorological Department, there is a possibility of heavy rains in some areas of North and South Chhattisgarh. The weather will remain the same the coming week.

However, there will be no significant change in the maximum and minimum temperatures.

Since Monday morning, there were clouds across the state including Raipur. This led to light rain. The weather remained cool.

According to the department, good rain is expected in July.

Weather expert HP Chandra said a monsoon trough is located at mid sea



level over Bikaner, Jaipur, Gwalior, Satna, Bagati and then southeastwards to the north east Bay of Bengal.

Also, an upper air cyclonic circulation is at a height of 0.9 km to 7.6 km above southwest

Uttar Pradesh. Due to this, light to moderate rain will occur in most parts of Chhattisgarh from Tuesday.

Heavy rain is also expected in north and south Chhattisgarh, he said.

Tribal Women embrace scaffolding farming

STAFF REPORTER ■ DANTEWADA

Women in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district are adapting 'scaffolding farming' in their vegetable gardens to boost production, an official communique said on Monday.

The key feature of rural settlements is sufficient space for vegetable gardens.

The National Rural Livelihood Mission 'Bihan' is working to convert vegetable gardens into multi-purpose gardens to empower women farmers.

A target has been set to implement this method in the gardens of about 1,000 women.

The scaffolding method is beneficial for cultivating vine-oriented vegetables, including bitter melon, ridge gourd and beans. The produce does not



spoil easily, is of higher quality and has a much shorter growth period.

The goal is to promote organic farming. The Horticulture Department will

provide all necessary support and guidance, the communique said.

Mega plantation drive 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' on July 11

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal, Chhattisgarh is going to organize a state-level 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' mega plantation drive on July 11.

Under this campaign, it is proposed to plant 80 crore trees across the country by September 2024 and 140 crore trees by March 2025.

The main function in Chhattisgarh will be held at the Biodiversity Park, Nava Raipur. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai will be the chief guest. Forest Minister Kedar Kashyap will preside over.

An official said the main objective of the plantation



drive is to maintain environmental balance by making the state greener.

The Forest Department will plant 3.85 crore saplings in forest and non-forest areas in the state.

jackfruit, custard apple, pomegranate, mulberry, plum, tendu and ganga imli are to be planted.

Additionally, minor forest produce and medicinal species like harra, baheda, amla, neem, putranjiva, kala siris, ritha and chitrak will also be planted. In urban areas, shade-providing species like banyan, peepal, moulshree, kadam, peltrophorum, gulmohar, karanj, ashok and arjuna will be planted. The campaign includes planting trees in schools, hostels, Anganwadi centers, police stations, hospitals, government premises, government and non-government land and vacant lands of industrial institutions.



A glimpse of the State Disaster Relief Force's flood rescue drills along the Shivnath river in Chhattisgarh's Bemetara district on Monday.

Police to quiz Congress MLA in arson case

STAFF REPORTER ■ BALODABAZAR

The Chhattisgarh Police on Monday served notice to Congress legislator Devendra Yadav for questioning in connection with the arson in Balodabazar city.

The Bhilai MLA has been asked to appear on Tuesday, Balodabazar-Bhatapara Superintendent of Police Vijay Agrawal said.

A mob set fire to a complex housing government offices and more than 150 vehicles in Balodabazar city during a demonstration on June 10.

So far 156 people, including Indian Youth Congress and NSUI leaders as well as members of an outfit named Bhim Regiment, have been arrested for the arson.

Suvarnaprashan camp immunises 1,342 children

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Government Ayurveda College in Raipur administered an immunity booster called Suvarnaprashan to a total of 1,342 children under the age of 16 at a camp held on Monday.

The students ran the camp under the guidance of AYUSH Department Director Iffat Ara and Principal Prof. Dr. G.R. Chaturvedi.

An official communique said the medicine is highly beneficial for the overall growth of children. It also protects them from respiratory diseases and boosts their concentration and memory.

Under the National Ayush Mission, the college holds



these camps on every Pushya Nakshatra date. A total of 9,389 children were given the medicine in the previous camps this year.

The future camps are scheduled for August 3 and 30, September 26, October 24, November 20 and December 18.

GOVT. GIRLS POLYTECHNIC
Byron Bazar, Raipur-492 001, C.G.
शासकीय कन्या पॉलीटेक्निक
बयन बाजार, रायपुर 492 001, छ.ग.
SCHEME FOR INTEGRATING PERSONS WITH DISABILITY (PWD)
नि:शक्तजन परियोजना
Web Site:- <http://ggpraipur.ac.in>
E Mail:- principal.ggpraipur@gmail.com
Phone: 0771-2423045
क्र. / शाकपौरा/पीडब्ल्यूडी / 2024 / 1209 रायपुर, दिनांक 04/07/2024

प्रवेश सूचना
दिव्यांगजन हेतु लघु अर्धिकांश दक्षता प्रशिक्षण में प्रवेश हेतु
शासकीय कन्या पॉलीटेक्निक, रायपुर में मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय नई दिल्ली द्वारा प्रवर्तित दिव्यांगजन परियोजना अन्तर्गत दिव्यांगजनों हेतु लघु अर्धिकांश दक्षता प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम के अंतर्गत 03/06 माह की अर्धिकांश के लिए दिव्यांगजनों के प्रकार प्रतिशत और उनके योग्यता एवं समर्थित कार्य क्षमता के आधार पर अस्थिर रोग बाधित व मूख बधिर दिव्यांगजन छात्र/छात्राओं के आवेदन पत्र आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं। यह प्रशिक्षण 03/06 माह की अर्धिकांश के लिए निम्नांकित व्यवसाय में प्रदान किया जावेगा। पूर्व में प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त कर चुके छात्र/छात्राओं पुनः आवेदन न करें।
(1) कम्प्यूटर आधार ऑफिस ऑटोमेशन, डैटोपी, नेटवर्किंग
(2) कटिंग एवं टेलरिंग
प्रशिक्षण नि:शुल्क होगा व स्वीकृत मद से छात्रवृत्ति व टूल्स, लेखन सामग्री इत्यादि हेतु राशि रुपये 1650.00 प्रति माह नियमानुसार प्रदान की जायेगी।
इच्छुक दिव्यांगजन छात्र/छात्रा इस संस्था में उपस्थित होकर निर्धारित प्रपत्र में अपना आवेदन-पत्र प्रस्तुत कर सकते हैं। आवेदन पत्र में निम्न प्रमाण-पत्र आवश्यक रूप से संलग्न करें।
1. पंचवर्षी/आठवीं/दसवीं अंकसूची
2. संबंधित मॉड्यूल बोर्ड द्वारा निर्धारित प्रपत्र में विकलांगता प्रमाण पत्र की फोटो प्रति।
3. सतीसमद का स्थानीय निवासी प्रमाण-पत्र।
4. जाति प्रमाण-पत्र (यदि प्रशिक्षणार्थी अज्ञात/अज्ञा/अस्थिर के हो तो)।
5. वर्तमान में लिखा गया फोटोग्राफ।
6. अस्थिर रोग बाधित उम्मीदवार हे तो विकलांगता को दर्शाने वाला फोटोग्राफ संलग्न करें।
नोट :- प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त करने के इच्छुक छात्र/छात्रा आवेदन-पत्र संस्था को नि:शुल्क प्राप्त कर दिनांक 31.07.2024 तक अपना आवेदन प्रस्तुत करें। अधिक जानकारी के लिए मो. नं.- 9425219531/9977123958 में संपर्क करें।
प्राचार्य एवं मुख्य समन्वयक
नि:शक्तजन परियोजना
शासकीय कन्या पॉलीटेक्निक,
रायपुर (छ.ग.)

G-242500927/3

South East Central Railway
Tender for Appointment of Passenger Halt Agent
No. 2024/C/Chg./PH/IR.
Dated: 05/07/2024. For appointment of Passenger Halt agent at Udyog Nagar, CBD & Fair Ground PHs on MNDH-NRMH-KDRI Section & Baikunth Ph on R-BSP Section and Bhainsbodd Passenger Halt on Durg - Dallaj Hara-Rowghat Section over South East Central Railway/Raipur Division for issuing unreserved tickets.
1. Last date & time for submission of application forms:- up to 15.00 Hrs. on 14/08/2024. 2. Opening of application box:- At 15.30 Hrs. on 14/08/2024.
Applications are to be dropped in sealed cover addressed to Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/ S.E.C. Railway, Raipur in the Application box kept for this purpose in the office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, DRM Office Complex, S.E.C. Railway, Near Waitair Level Crossing Gate, RVH. Colony, Raipur (CG). For further details, eligibility criteria & complete details for the above work please contact office of the Sr.DCM/SEC/Raipur or refer/download application document which is available on our website www.sec.in.dianrailways.gov.in
Divisional Commercial Manager (Commercial) S.E.C. Railway, Raipur.
PR/R/S/DCM Manager (Commercial) S.E.C. Railway, Raipur. AAA71
South East Central Railway @secrail

Man arrested for cheating Rs 36L



STAFF REPORTER ■ BILASPUR

Chhattisgarh Police on Monday arrested a 22-year-old man from Uttar Pradesh and brought him here for cheating a woman of Rs 36.73 lakhs on the pretext of conducting religious rituals in Bilaspur city.

Ashish Tripath of Prayagraj has been taken into custody, Bilaspur Additional Superintendent of Police (Urban) Umesh Kashyap said. Tripath told the police that he took money from the victim in installments by promising to perform the rituals for her better health. A court sent him to prison.

Cong protests against power tariff hike

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Congress on Monday staged demonstrations across Chhattisgarh to protest against the electricity tariff hike and alleged frequent power cuts in the state.

The Chhattisgarh State Electricity Regulatory Commission (CSERC) has hiked the power tariff by 8.35 per cent in all categories of consumers over the existing rate. The new tariffs were made effective from June 1.

Former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and Congress state unit chief Deepak Baj took part in the protest in Raipur.

Other party leaders agitated in district headquarters and development blocks of their regions, a party spokesperson here said. Congress leaders and workers marched holding lanterns at Rajiv Chowk here.

Hitting out at the ruling BJP, Baghel said domestic consumers, farmers, industrialists and businessmen were bearing the brunt of increased electricity tariffs and power cuts.

"Coal is being supplied to half



the country from Chhattisgarh. The state that supplies energy (coal for power plants) to the rest of the country is itself facing interruptions in power supply," he told reporters. Baghel said the power tariff in

Chhattisgarh was more than its neighbouring states. Talking to reporters, Baj said the previous Congress government had provided power at cheaper rates but the BJP hiked the tariff soon after taking power.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

Rahul visits Manipur for the third time

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Monday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying while it will be Rahul Gandhi's third visit to Manipur since violence broke out in May last year, the PM has neither found the time nor even had the inclination to visit the state for even a few hours.

"Today, the non-biological PM goes to Moscow while the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha heads for Assam and Manipur. Of course, the drum-beaters of the non-biological PM have claimed that he stopped the Russia-Ukraine war for some time. Presumably, this Moscow trip will lead to even more bizarre claims," he said.

Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi visited relief camps in Manipur's Jiribam and Churachandpur districts and interacted with the inmates.

People displaced by the ethnic violence in the northeastern state, which claimed over 200 lives since May last year, are staying in those relief camps. Rahul, accompanied by senior Congress leaders, visited Manipur for the first time



after the Congress won both Lok Sabha seats in the state. He first visited Manipur weeks after ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3 last year. He also began his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra from the state in January 2024.

From Jiribam, Rahul Gandhi came to Imphal airport via Silchar in Assam and reached by road a relief camp in Tuibong village in Churachandpur district.

There also he interacted with inmates. Ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki communities since May last year claimed more than 200 lives in

Manipur. The Congress leader also visited Assam and arrived at Kumbhirgram airport en route to strife-torn Manipur.

Rahul was received at the airport by Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Bhupen Borah and other senior state and district party leaders.

Borah submitted a memorandum to Rahul Gandhi urging him to take up the issue of the devastating flood with the Centre as a special case to get adequate relief and compensation for the severe losses incurred due to the deluge.

VP Dhankhar slams Chidambaram's comments on new criminal laws

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday said a member of Parliament shows concurrence by not participating in a debate on a bill, as he launched a fresh attack on former Union minister P Chidambaram over his comments on the three criminal justice laws.

This is for the second time since Saturday that Dhankhar has targeted Chidambaram over his remarks on the three criminal justice laws -- the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam -- which came into force on July 1.

Addressing a group of Rajya Sabha interns, Dhankhar, without naming Chidambaram, said, "He said nothing in the House (Rajya Sabha). He was a member of the committee (department-related standing committee on Home)."

If a member is part of the committee, makes his point of view before the committee, the committee by majority holds otherwise, that member has great opportunity to participate in the proceedings before the House and make his point



known and try to convince others by persuasion, logic and rationality, Dhankhar said.

"If you do not discharge your constitutional duty, if you do not participate in the debate, if you do not take your point further, you are in a sense not performing your duty.

And then if you say something outside, you suffer the handicap that you had valuable opportunity, constitutional platform, a rare opportunity that is available only to members of Parliament, you fail to avail the opportunity, in a sense you forfeit your right," the vice president said.

Dhankhar asserted that "you show your concurrence by non-participation, by observ-

ing silence". He said by not participating in the (House) proceedings and making remarks outside is not correct.

On Saturday, the vice president had lashed out at Chidambaram over his comment that the three new criminal laws were "drafted by part-timers", terming it as "inexcusable" and urged him to withdraw his "derogatory, defamatory and insulting" observation.

Dhankhar said he was "shocked beyond words" when in the morning he read Chidambaram's interview to a leading national daily where in he had said that "the new laws were drafted by part-timers".

SC asks Centre to frame model policy on menstrual leave for women

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Centre to frame a model policy on menstrual leave for women employees by holding consultations with states and other stakeholders.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said the issue related to policy and was not an issue for the courts to look into. Moreover, such a decision from a court on granting such leave to women may prove to be counterproductive and "detrimental" to the cause as employers may avoid employing them.

How will the leave encourage more women to be part of the workforce, the court asked the petitioner and said mandating such leave will lead to women "being shunned from the workforce". "...We do not want that," the bench said.

"This is actually a government policy aspect and not for the courts to look into," it said. "Petitioner says that a representation was submitted to the Centre in May 2023. Since the issues raise multifarious

objectives of state policy, there is no reason for this court to intervene in light of our previous order," it said.

The bench, however, permitted lawyer Rakesh Khanna, appearing for petitioner and lawyer Shailendra Tripathi, to move the secretary of the Ministry of Women and Child Development and Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati.

"We request the secretary to look into the matter at the policy level and take a decision after consulting all stakeholders and see if a model policy can be framed," it ordered.

The court made it clear that the consultation process of the Centre will not come in the way of states if they take any steps in this regard. The top court had earlier disposed of a plea seeking menstrual pain leave for women students and working women across the country.

It had then said that since the issue falls under the policy domain, a representation can be made to the Centre. The senior lawyer said that till date no decision has been taken by the Centre.

Namami Ganga: ₹ 211 cr splash to keep Maha Kumbh eco-friendly

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As Uttar Pradesh readies itself for Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj, the focus is on enhancing environmental sustainability ahead of an anticipated gathering of 50 crore participants from around the globe along the banks of the Ganga river.

In this context, the Namami Ganga Mission, a central flagship has drawn a Rs 211 crore massive plan towards initiatives aimed at preserving the purity of the Ganga river and ensuring cleanliness throughout this significant religious event slated from January 14 to February 26, 2025, in Prayagraj.

Three projects were cleared at the 55th meeting of the Executive Committee held under the chairmanship of Rajiv Kumar Mittal, Director General of National Clean Ganga Mission.

In the meeting, additionally, a project costing Rs 134.71 crore was sanctioned for interception and diversion, along with STP works in Deoband, Uttar Pradesh.

Furthermore, Rs 27.02 crore was allocated to enhance the capacity of the STP located in Barikala, Lucknow.

Notably, Rs 152.37 crore has been allocated for sanitation-related infrastructure for Mahakumbh 2025 in Prayagraj. This project includes the construction of 54,400 toilets and urinals, along with a primary solid waste collection system. The objective is to provide adequate facilities for the con-



venience of pilgrims attending Mahakumbh by constructing temporary sanitation facilities and ensuring cleanliness and improved river water quality during the event, said an official from the Mission.

Additionally, Rs 55.57 crore has been approved to intercept and treat sewage from 22 drains in Prayagraj during Mahakumbh. The main aim of this project is to stop and completely treat the sewage from these drains, thereby ensuring the continuity and purity of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers during the festival. During the meeting, a

project worth Rs 134.71 crore was approved for interception and diversion and STP works in Deoband, Uttar Pradesh. The project aims to enhance sewage infrastructure by constructing and implementing measures to prevent and divert sewage and pollution of local water bodies.

Additionally, Rs 27.02 crore has been approved to increase the capacity of the 1 MLD STP at Barikala in Lucknow to 3.5 MLD. This upgrade is intended to strengthen the existing sewage treatment infrastructure to handle the increasing

flow of sewage more effectively. A senior official said, "Given the massive influx of pilgrims, the event requires extensive infrastructure to manage accommodations, sanitation, healthcare, security, and transportation.

Temporary tent cities (Kumbh Nagars) are set up to accommodate millions of pilgrims. "Ensuring cleanliness and sanitation is crucial during the Maha Kumbh.

Large-scale projects are undertaken to build temporary toilets, urinals, and solid waste management systems to main-

tain hygiene and prevent pollution of the rivers.

The sanctioned project aims to ensure cleanliness and contamination free water to the visitors and pilgrims," he added. Since the inception of the Namami Gange Programme in financial year 2014-15 till 2022-23, the Government has released Rs 14329 crore to the scheme for the implementation of the project aimed to implement a comprehensive set of interventions for pollution abatement measures to tackle different sources of pollution.

Justice UU Lalit to head panel on appointment of VCs in West Bengal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday appointed former Chief Justice of India UU Lalit to head a search-cum-selection committee to oversee the appointments of vice-chancellors for state-run universities in West Bengal.

The ruling TMC dispensation has a running feud with West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose, who is also the chancellor of state-run universities, over how the state's universities should be run.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan directed that the committee be constituted within two weeks after noting that both the state and the office of the governor agreed on the formation of the panel.

Besides Justice Lalit, the committee will comprise five members, who will prepare a panel of three names in an alphabetical order for appointment of vice-chancellors in each university.

The time period prescribed for completing the entire process is three months, the apex court said.

The apex court said the committee's recommendations, endorsed by the chairperson, will be presented to the chief minister.

"If the CM finds any candidate unsuitable, the supporting material and remarks will be forwarded to the chancellor (governor) within two weeks," the bench said.



The committee's remuneration will be borne by the state and former CJI Lalit will receive Rs three lakh per effective meeting of the committee.

The West Bengal Assembly had passed an amendment bill raising the number of members in the search committee set up for appointing vice-chancellors in state-run universities from three to five. The BJP had opposed the West Bengal University Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023 alleging that the new search committee would further enhance the ruling party's control over the appointment of vice-chancellors.

The top court was hearing an appeal of the West Bengal government against the June 28, 2023 order of the Calcutta High Court, which said there was no illegality in the orders issued by the West Bengal governor appointing interim vice-chancellors (VCs) in 11

state-run universities in his capacity as the ex-officio chancellor of these institutions.

In October last year, the top court had stayed the emoluments of the newly appointed interim vice-chancellors and asked the governor to sit with the chief minister "over a cup of coffee" to resolve the deadlock over appointment of VCs. The apex court had said there was a need for reconciliation between the governor and the chief minister "in the interest of educational institutions and the future careers of lakhs of students".

Sanat Kumar Ghosh, a petitioner who moved the high court, and the West Bengal government claimed the orders appointing VCs to state-run universities were illegal as the governor had not consulted the higher education department before making the appointments.

SC to review bail of Soumya Vishwanathan murder convicts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to examine the pleas filed by Delhi Police challenging the high court's order granting bail to four convicts, who were sentenced to life imprisonment in the murder case of TV journalist Soumya Vishwanathan.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma issued notice on the four pleas filed by Delhi Police and tagged them with the pending petition of Vishwanathan's mother against the bail granted to the four convicts. At the outset, Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for Delhi Police informed the court that since a notice has already been issued by the apex court, all the pleas be tagged. The bench issued notice and tagged the pleas with the pending matter.

The high court had on February 12 suspended the sentence of Ravi Kapoor, Amit Shukla, Baljeet Singh Malik and Ajay Kumar till the pendency of their appeals challenging their conviction and sentence and enlarged them on bail. The high court had noted that



the convicts have been in custody for over 14 years. On April 22, the apex court had agreed to examine the plea filed by Vishwanathan's mother against the bail granted to the four convicts. It had issued notices to Delhi Police and the four convicts on Madhavi Vishwanathan's petition.

Vishwanathan, who worked with a leading English news channel, was shot dead in the early hours of September 30, 2008 on Nelson Mandela Marg in south Delhi while she was returning home from work in her car.

A special court had on November 25 last year awarded two life terms to Kapoor, Shukla, Malik and Kumar

under section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and section 3(1)(i) (committing organised crime resulting in the death of any person) of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). The court had made it clear that the sentences will run "consecutively". The fifth convict, Ajay Sethi, was handed down three years of simple imprisonment under section 411 (dishonestly receiving stolen property) of the IPC.

He was sentenced to the period already undergone in custody during the trial. While sentencing Kapoor, Shukla, Malik and Kumar to double life imprisonment, the trial court had also imposed a fine of Rs 1.25 lakh on each of them. It had imposed a fine of Rs 7.25 lakh on Sethi.

Out of the four convicts, Kapoor, Shukla and Malik were also convicted for killing IT professional Jigisha Ghosh. According to the prosecution, the trio later confessed to police they were also behind Vishwanathan's murder, and the weapon used for killing her was recovered from their possession.

Farmer leader Tikait demands Dharmik Fund after Hathras tragedy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait on Monday said if the NDA government wants to make India a Hindu nation, it should set up a "religious fund" for giving compensation after Hathras-like tragedies.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson made the jibe when he visited Hathras and demanded Rs 50 lakh compensation to the victims of the Hathras stampede that killed 121 people on July 2. Talking to reporters, he said there is no responsibility of anyone in "accidents" like these and urged the authorities to learn from the incident in order to prevent future tragedies.

Advocating governmental responsibility, Tikait said, "If the government wants to make it a Hindu nation, then it should also create a 'Dharmik Fund' (religious fund) for disbursing compensations in such accidents. If not the government, then who will compensate for such acts?"

Responding to queries about the political implications of the gathering, Tikait alleged that the religious programmes are



the government's agenda. He alluded to broader political strategies, and said, "For the next 'Yudh' (religious war), the government has already said Mathura is our agenda. This area (Hathras) falls in the 'paridhi' (range) of Mathura. Such programmes will be held."

Asked about the timing and context of the event, Tikait remarked, "The agenda was started 20 years ago, much before 2014," and highlighted the longstanding nature of

religious and political movements in the region.

He said India is based on "krishi" (agriculture) and "rishi" (saints).

"Any fiddling with either will lead to 'andolan' (protests)," he said.

Tikait, who had played a leading role in the year-long farmer protest against the three farm laws which were later withdrawn, referred to recent government initiatives and said,

"If in Ayodhya, the govern-

ment is running free trains, then how would anyone stop such events here?" he added.

Tikait stressed the need for compensation and preventive measures in the wake of the stampede after the 'satsang' of self-styled godman Surajpal, who is also known as Narayan Sakar Hari and Bhole Baba, at Fulrai village in Hathras' Sikandra Rau area.

"The victims should get a compensation of Rs 50 lakh, like it was done in the Lakhimpur Kheri case. Give them the compensation and it will help victims," he said.

In the Lakhimpur Kheri incident, some farmers were mowed down allegedly by a car linked to the then Union minister Ajay Mishta Teni in October 2021. Tikait criticised the use of provocative language used in the Hathras stampede.

He dismissed the efficacy of lodging cases or conducting a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe, suggesting instead that such inquiries merely serve to acknowledge the possibility of accidents at crowded events.

Prior to Tikait's visit, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha

Rahul Gandhi also met with victims' families and called for a hike in compensation awarded to them.

The Centre and the UP government have announced Rs 2 lakh each for the dead and Rs 50,000 for those injured in the July 2 stampede.

So far nine people, including the chief organiser and fundraiser of the July 2 event, Devprakash Madhukar, have been arrested as part of the police investigation into the case which does not mention the name of preacher Surajpal as an accused.

Separately, a judicial commission headed by a retired high court judge and a special investigation team led by an additional director general of police are carrying out their inquiries into the episode.

Government agencies, including police, have so far blamed the organisers for mismanagement at the event, noting that the size of the crowd exceeded to over 2.50 lakh from the permitted 80,000, even though the lawyer of the "godman" on Saturday claimed "some poisonous substance" sprayed by "some unidentified men" triggered the stampede.

UDF attacks Kerala Govt over delay in Jal Jeevan Mission implementation

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The opposition Congress-led United Democratic Front on Monday criticised the Left government in Kerala over its alleged apathy with regard to implementing the Jal Jeevan mission in the state.

UDF MLA Anoop Jacob, part of the Kerala Congress (Jacob) group, sought a notice for adjournment motion in the Assembly and said the Jal Jeevan Mission, which was introduced to provide clean drinking water to rural communities, was being stalled in the state.

"Even now, people are lining up in many places for clean drinking water. Even though the government claims that new connections were given, at least six lakh water pipe connections have just air coming through them," Jacob alleged. He also said the transparency of the project was also affected.

"The maintenance contractors of the water authority are also suffering. The department has yet to pay them for the past 19 months. At least 33 projects under the mission have been completely stopped. A majority of roads in the state are dug up and damaged in the name of this mission, and people are suffering," Jacob said.

However, Water Resources Minister Roshy Augustine dismissed the charges and



said the Jal Jeevan Mission was a huge project that was happening simultaneously across the state.

"A project worth Rs 44,000 crore is happening to provide clean drinking water to the people of the state. The project is not happening in just one panchayat or one constituency. At least 1,04,400 km of roads under panchayats and the PWD are being excavated for this purpose," Augustine said. He further said, as of now, all houses in 92 panchayats have access to clean drinking water, while 100 more panchayats will join this list by December this year.

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan rejected the claims of the minister and said the project

which began in 2019, was supposed to be completed within five years—in 2024.

"Of this project, which is worth over Rs 44,000 crore, only around Rs 9,730 crore has been spent till now. The government has not utilised the funds. The project is stalling...," Satheesan said. He also said out of the Rs 9,730 crore, the Centre has given almost half of the amount.

Countering the arguments of the opposition, Augustine said when the mission started, there were only 17 lakh water connections, but in the last three years, 19 lakh more connections were given.

Augustine dismissed the opposition's claim that only 38.86 per cent of the project

was completed. "When we started, only 23.5 per cent houses had a water connection, which has now gone up to 54.5 per cent," the minister said.

Satheesan ridiculed this statement and said giving connections to 54 per cent of the houses was not enough. He said water supply through these connections should be ensured.

"When you have not identified the water sources to provide water connections, when you have not set up any purification system for drinking water connections, what's the point of claiming a high number of water connections," Satheesan asked.

In connection with the roads being dug up by the Water Authority in the name of Jal Jeevan Mission and failing to restore them, Augustine said out of the over one lakh km of roads, as much as 51,000 km has been restored until now.

"It is a massive project that is happening across the state, not just something that is happening at a particular place. We are coordinating with various departments, including the LSGD, PWD and the KSEB among others," the Minister said. Based on the reply given by the Minister, Speaker A N Shamsheer refused to allow notice for an adjournment motion, following which the opposition staged a walkout.

AIADMK chief tells DMK regime to give free hand to police

PTI ■ SALEM

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Monday said law and order could be handled well only by giving full freedom to the police department and slammed Chief Minister M K Stalin over the issue.

Just after the state government replaced Chennai police commissioner Sandeep Rai Rathore with senior officer A Arun, Palaniswami, the leader of opposition said that merely by transferring an official, law and order maintenance cannot become efficient. The high profile transfer comes days after the murder of BSP state unit chief K Armstrong.

Speaking to reporters here, Palaniswami said that only by making sure proper governance, law and order could be guarded. It is the Chief Minister who holds the portfolio of police department and had he led the department efficiently, law and order could have been maintained well.

However, he is a 'puppet Chief Minister, an inept CM,' and there is no complete freedom for police officials and hence they could not properly maintain law and order, the former Chief Minister alleged.

"After the DMK assumed power, the police department



is unable to function independently." The leader of opposition alleged that such a scenario was the reason for prevalence of drugs and for the incidence of crime including murders, dacoity and robbery. "Not a single day passes without a murder." He reiterated that there is no safety for anyone including leaders in the state.

Only by giving a free hand to the police department, law and order could be maintained well and rowdy elements shall be reined in. On the killing of BSP leader Armstrong and allegations that those who really perpetrated the crime have not been arrested, Palaniswami said the accused had surrendered and they were not arrested. It is the responsibility of the government to clear air, he added.

Incessant rain lashes Goa; 5 killed in wall collapses



PTI ■ PANAJI

At least five persons have lost their lives in wall collapse incidents over two days in Goa which received heavy rains on the third consecutive day on Monday, inundating several low-lying areas.

A 70-year-old woman and her 51-year-old son were killed on Monday after a wall of their house collapsed on them in Mandur village near Panaji, police said.

"Maria Rodrigues and her son Alfred lost their life after a backside wall of their house collapsed on them in Mandur village near Panaji in the afternoon. Their bodies were extricated by villagers," a senior police official told PTI. On Sunday, three labourers were killed after a wall collapsed on them at Kundaim Industrial Estate in North Goa, according to police.

Goa has been witnessing heavy rains since Saturday, with the state education department declaring a

holiday for all schools till Class 12 on Monday.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an orange alert, forecasting moderate to heavy showers with strong surface winds, gusting to 40 to 50 km per hour, likely at many places in North and South Goa districts.

In 24 hours ending 8.30 am, Panaji recorded the highest rainfall of 360 mm, while Quepem received the lowest 175 mm.

Several areas in Canacona taluka in South Goa have been inundated since Sunday night. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has appealed to people to stay indoors and avoid visiting flood-prone areas.

He said the disaster management authority is active, and collectors of both districts were monitoring the situation round the clock.

According to the water resources department, the state's largest reservoir, Selaulim Dam, reached full capacity on Sunday night.

Landslides snap surface communication in Arunachal

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Surface communication in several districts in Arunachal Pradesh was disrupted by landslides triggered by rains, officials said on Monday.

Landslides buried a person in Shi-Yomi district on Friday, according to a report of the state disaster management department. So far four people have died in the state since April due to natural calamities.

The Tezu-Hayuliang road remains blocked at Mompani area in Lohit and Anjaw districts, while landslides blocked the Dari-Chambang and the Palin-Taraklengdi via Langdang village PMGSY road in Kra Daadi district, they said.

NH 513 also remained blocked at Geying in East Siang district, a report said.

Over 72,900 people and 257 villages have so far been affected by floods and landslides in Arunachal since April this year.

Floods and landslides also caused extensive damage to



roads, bridges, culverts, power lines, electric poles, transformers and water supply systems.

According to the report, 160 roads, 76 power lines, 30 electric poles, three transformers, nine bridges, 11 culverts, and 147 water supply systems have been damaged so far.

Besides, 627 kutcha and 51 pucca houses and 155 huts have been damaged, it said. The state capital Itanagar has been reeling under a severe water crisis for the last couple of days due to damage in pipelines. Though the restoration process is on, it will take several days, officials said.

Damin, Parsi Parlo and

Panyasang administrative circles under Kurung Kumey district are reportedly cut off from the rest of the state, following incessant rain this week that triggered major flashfloods and landslides.

Multiple blockades occurred on the road towards Damin via Parsi Parlo, reports said. A massive landslide occurred at Karsingsa block point along the vital NH-415 connecting Itanagar with Banderdewa, forcing the Capital Itanagar administration to close the road for commuters' safety.

After a thorough inspection of the site by Deputy Commissioner Shweta Nagarkoti Mehta, it has been decided to close the road and divert all traffic via Gumto.

Assam flood: 131 wild animals dead, 97 rescued in Kaziranga

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

At least 131 wild animals have died so far in floods in the Kaziranga National Park while 96 others have been rescued, an official said on Monday.

The dead animals include six rhinos, 117 hog deer, including 98 by drowning, two by vehicle hits and 17 during treatment, two sambar, a rhesus macaque and an otter due to drowning in the park.

A total of 25 animals have died during treatment and these include 17 hog deer, one each of swamp deer, Rhesus Macaque and an otter pup. The forest officials rescued 85 hog deer, two each of rhino, sambar and scops owl and one each of swamp deer, Indian hare, Rhesus Macaque, otter, elephant and a jungle cat. Currently, 25 animals are under medical care while 52 others have been released after treatment, the official said.

The park is experiencing the worst-ever deluge in recent years with the previous large-scale devastation occurring in 2017 when over 350 wildlife died in the flood waters and in vehicle hits while migrating



through animal corridors to the highlands. The NH-715 is a corridor for the animals to cross over to the hills of Karbi Anglong. Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the floods in the state have affected humans and animals alike and 'Team Assam is working round the clock to aid everyone'.

"Recently, while passing through Kaziranga, I noticed this stranded rhino calf and instructed its immediate rescue," Sarma posted on 'X'.

Out of the total 233 camps in the Eastern Assam Wildlife Division, 69 are still inundated till Friday evening as against 68 the previous day, the official said.

In the Eastern or Agorotoli range, 14 of the 34 camps have been inundated while 22 of the 58 camps are in central range, 20 out of the 39 in Western or Bagori range and 4 each in Burapahar range, Bokakhat and Nagaon along with one in Biswanath Wildlife Division are under flood waters.

Altogether four camps have

been vacated by the forest personnel so far with two each in central range and Bokakhat. Forest department employees including security personnel stay in camps inside the national park to conduct patrolling for the protection of flora and fauna. Meanwhile, prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) to restrict the movement of vehicular traffic on NH-37 (New NH-715) and its speed to between 20 to 40 km/hour is in force.

TN CM orders setting up of panel to suggest State amendments in criminal laws



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Taking the first step to effect Tamil Nadu-specific amendments to the new criminal laws, Chief Minister M K Stalin on Monday ordered setting up of a one-man committee, to be led by a retired High Court judge, to study the three laws and make recommendations to the state government over making amendments.

After chairing a high-level consultative meeting at the Secretariat here to deliberate on state amendments to the Central laws, Stalin directed officials to set up a one-man panel to be led by retired judge of the Madras High Court, Justice M Sathyannarayanan.

"This committee will clearly examine the new laws, hold consultations with stakeholders including advocates at the state-level and submit a report (on state-level amendments) within one month to the state government," an official release here said.

Advocate-General P S Raman, state public prosecutor Hasan Mohamed Jinnah, Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan, Chief Secretary Shiv Das Meena, Director General of Police Shankar Jiwaj, top officials and Rajya Sabha MPs, P Wilson and NR Elango (both senior advocates) took part in the meeting.

The government recalled Stalin writing to Union Home Minister Amit Shah on June 17, 2024 on 'issues' in the new laws and urging the Centre to defer enforcing the three laws. It was pointed out by the Chief Minister that there were 'flaws' in some basic sections. Also, the views of the state governments were not fully obtained by the Union government in this regard, the Chief Minister had conveyed to the Centre, the government said.

Overloaded bus overturns near Haryana's Pinjore, 50 injured

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

An overloaded Haryana Roadways mini bus overturned near Pinjore on Monday, leaving 50 passengers injured, most of them school children, officials said.

The bus veered off the road near a turn when it was passing through a hilly patch near Pinjore in Panchkula district, a police official from Kalka said.

Panchkula Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg told PTI that after the accident about 50 passengers, most of them children, were brought to hospitals in Panchkula and Pinjore. Most of them escaped with minor injuries, he said, adding that during the screening, it was found that most of the children were in a state of shock.

"About 23-24 children who were brought are fine. They will be discharged soon. I think only five to seven or maybe even less will remain hospitalised which includes two children," the DC said and added that two-three children have suffered fractures.



suffered serious injury and had been referred to PGIMER at Chandigarh, he said. Some accounts said the woman was on the road when the accident occurred. The conductor of the bus was among the injured.

Haryana Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta, who is BJP MLA from Panchkula, told reporters at the Panchkula Civil Hospital, that the driver and conductor of the bus have been suspended.

"The bus was overloaded and we have been told that the vehicle's speed was slightly in excess. As it approached a turn, it overturned," Gupta said. "Our first priority was to

rescue and give best treatment to the injured," he added.

When asked if the mini bus was packed beyond capacity, Garg said preliminary reports suggest that the vehicle had a capacity of 40-50, but more people were travelling in it.

"Some children have said the speed of the bus was slightly in excess...A detailed probe is being conducted into the cause of the accident," he said.

Earlier speaking to reporters at the Panchkula civil hospital, Garg said the mini bus of Haryana Roadways overturned near a turn. "The reasons behind the accident are under investigation. Our main

focus at the moment was on rescue. The matter of relief is that all children are stable, no one has a threatening injury or critical injury," Garg said. In addition to 30 children who were brought to Panchkula Civil Hospital, four adults were also brought there and one of them is a 60-year-old woman, who suffered crush injury on her arm and was referred to PGIMER.

Garg said another injured person has been shifted to ICU.

A passenger on the bus, Jaipal, told reporters in Panchkula that the bus was overcrowded. "Suddenly, the bus started shaking near a turn and turned turtle," Jaipal said.

Haryana Roadways General Manager of the Panchkula Depot, Ashok Kaushik told PTI that an inquiry will be held into the incident.

On the speaker's assertion that the bus was overloaded and speeding, Kaushik said, "A detailed investigation will be conducted into all aspects".

Gupta said from Tuesday an additional bus will ply on the route for the convenience of the public.

Dengue warrants no medical emergency in Karnataka: Minister

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Monday said the situation now doesn't call for declaring dengue as a "medical emergency" in the state, as he rejected the suggestion made by the opposition BJP.

He said, amid a spike in dengue cases, officials have been issued directions to take all preventive measures. Leader of Opposition in Assembly R Ashoka, eminent cardiologist and Bangalore Rural BJP MP Dr C N Manjunath had urged that the Congress government declare dengue as a "medical emergency", and called for more efforts to control its spread.

"We have held separate meetings with CEOs of Zilla Panchayats from all districts and the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). Instructions have been given to spray medicines at places where mosquitoes germinate and spread more awareness among the public," Rao said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said as there are many active dengue cases in the state, the number of tests being conducted have been



increased and arrangements have been made for treatment. Also, there are a couple of Zika virus positive cases.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on Sunday in the backdrop of advice from opposition leaders and others to declare dengue as a medical emergency, the Minister said.

"But the situation is not such, to declare it a medical emergency, because all the facilities are there, like beds, medicines. The TAC was of the opinion that the situation was not so grave," he said.

As per health department data, Karnataka has till last evening recorded 7,165 dengue positive cases since

January this year, with areas coming under the city civic body, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) accounting for the largest at 1,988.

On Sunday, the state reported 159 fresh dengue infection cases, including 80 in BBMP areas.

To a question about any discussion at the TAC meeting regarding reserving beds for dengue patients, Rao said dengue infection doesn't spread from person to person, unlike COVID, but still hospitals have been advised to keep beds.

"These cases can be handled at general wards, as there will be no need for any isolation...There is a need to spread awareness among people as to at which stage of fever they need to go to hospitals, and it will be done," he said, adding that there is need to be cautious for another two-three months as rains are likely to continue.

Asked about reports that some private hospitals were still charging more for dengue testing, despite the government capping the rates, he said: "If anyone complains we will take action, I will also ask our officials to check."



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

Macron makes it

From the UK to Iran and now France, progressive voices and inclusive thinking is making a comeback

France has just about managed to keep the ultra-right at bay. ultra rightwingers have lost to the liberals in the snap poll ordered by French President Emmanuel Macron. France has a rich history of liberalism and social progressivism, yet in recent years, the country has seen a rise in far-right nationalism. However recent elections and political movements indicate a resurgence of progressive values. A left-wing alliance secured the most seats in the French parliament after tactical voting in Sunday's second-round election thwarted Marine Le Pen's far-right party. But the victory of the Left is not decisive. France now faces political uncertainty, as no party achieved an absolute majority in the National Assembly. President Emmanuel Macron's gamble seems to have worked as he had ordered a snap poll and decided to go to elections despite his waning popularity. He has championed a centrist approach that blends liberal economic policies with progressive social reforms. His administration has focused on addressing climate change, promoting gender equality, and fostering a more inclusive society. His surprise win, despite predictions to the contrary, suggests that people across the globe are moving towards liberal values and giving them prominence over reactionary forces.

This shift could have far-reaching implications for the European Union and beyond. However, to take a pragmatic approach, France has just about managed to defeat the far right who went on a rampage after the elections did not go in their favour as was widely expected. In the time to come, the challenges for President Macron may multiply as no one has secured a simple majority in the lower house of 577 seats. So now France enters the uncharted waters of coalition politics. The new government would be anything but stable and may give right-wingers a chance to discredit it. President Macron would face several significant challenges. Politically, he would need to navigate a fragmented landscape with diverse parties, address low public trust, and manage frequent protests. Economically, tackling inequality, unemployment, and high public debt while balancing social spending demands would be critical. Right now, France is struggling to pull back its economy from crisis. So far annual growth has been 0.7 per cent in 2024 after a significant slowdown in the second half of 2023 but may gain momentum in 2025 (1.3 per cent). Socially, issues like immigration integration, pension reforms, and the housing crisis would require careful attention. Finally, Macron would have to address sensitive cultural issues, including secularism, religious freedom, and debates around national identity and multiculturalism. To effectively tackle the far right, President Macron would have to focus on reducing socioeconomic disparities to address the economic grievances that fuel extremism.

Emmanuel Macron

PICTALK



The chariots of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra prepared for annual Rath Yatra festival, in Puri

Indians dying on the Russian frontline

The presence of Indian nationals on the Russian side of the Ukraine conflict raises broader questions about the ethics of foreign combatant recruitment.



BHOPINDER SINGH

The issue of Indians fighting along with the Russian forces in the Ukraine War is particularly piquant, given India's historic relations with the Soviet Union earlier and Russia now. The fact that many had claimed to have been 'forced' to fight had forced the Indian Government to intervene. It is a claim that hasn't been conclusively confirmed as the Indian Embassy was aware of many Indians having signed up for support jobs in the Russian Army. Pending confirmation that their terms of service had been unfairly and involuntarily extended to fight on the frontline, the Indian authorities had formally sought their discharge. It further advised Indians to "exercise caution" and "stay away from this conflict" – diplomatese for dissuading Indians from joining any Russian Army, in any capacity, given the situation. But as it routinely happens e.g., as it happened with advisories to Indian students to leave Ukraine before the full-fledged assault, some heeded the call and some didn't, till the situation became desperate and inextricable for them. The Russians have been particularly keen to swell their ranks with foreigners given the heavy loss of lives in the bloody stalemate and the accompanying sense of fatigue and despondency amongst its combatants.

The inclusion of private militias like the 'Wagner Army' is under that impulse. But the inclusion of individual foreigners is a formalized initiative that can be traced back to Law 29 March 1998 'On Military Obligation and Military Service' – which has since then been made increasingly attractive and lenient to attract new intake. Talks of individuals from Central Asian Countries (for the Soviet Union), Cuba, Afghanistan, Nepal, Syria, Somalia etc., have been doing the rounds. For these foreign inductees, besides the relatively lucrative salary (\$2000-\$3000), the additional lure of Russian citizenship is dangled. Estimated to be numbering in thousands, BBC reported that as of last year's end, 254 foreigners had been killed in the conflict. How many of them had enlisted



for support jobs and how many were forcibly taken for active combat, remains a matter of conjecture.

The tact of enlisting 'mercenaries' is an old and convenient practice, as besides the relatively low levels of accountability, they also come with the plausible option of deniability. Under the International Criminal Court and the International Humanitarian Law, the status of 'mercenary' does not constitute a specific crime. But they are not entitled to the status of 'prisoner of war' and its necessities. The idea is to discourage mercenaries as material greed-based and amoral entities as opposed to soldiers of the nation who are driven by a sense of national purpose, patriotism, and professional excellence. To qualify as 'mercenaries', six criteria need to be fulfilled. Firstly, the person is specially recruited internally/abroad. Secondly, the belligerent participants in conflict. Thirdly, he/she is motivated by private gain, as promised by one side in the conflict. Fourthly, they are not national, resident or interested party in the said conflict. Fifthly, they do not belong to the militaries of either side. Sixthly and lastly, they have not been sent by a non-interested state on any official duty as a member of their military. Therefore, it could be pre-



THE RUSSIANS HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY KEEN TO SWELL THEIR RANKS WITH FOREIGNERS GIVEN THE HEAVY LOSS OF LIVES IN THE BLOODY STALEMATE AND THE ACCOMPANYING SENSE OF FATIGUE AND DESPONDENCY AMONGST ITS COMBATANTS

sumed some Indians who are unfortunately caught in a form of combat that they probably had not imagined whilst signing up, and may still qualify as 'mercenary'.

Such a scenario does not reflect well on the nation as it is suggestive of limited job opportunities domestically and therefore suggests societal desperation which is understandable for broken nations like Somalia or Syria, but not India. Sadly, portents of 'cannon fodder' or even 'human trafficking' are rife, but given the opaqueness that surrounds the Russian reality, nothing can be confirmed. Such times birth human trafficking networks that paint a very different picture to recruit the gullible when the truth is starkly different.

There have been gut-wrenching pleas from some Indians beseeching the Indian authorities to secure their release, with some losing their lives, soon after that. The Indian External Affairs Minister is believed to have reiterated his concern to his Russian counterpart during a recent bilateral in Astana, Kazakhstan. To the query, if S Jaishankar had taken up the issue of stranded Indians, he assured, "Very clearly and strongly... several Indians have been pressed into service with the Russian Army. Only when they come back will we know the full cir-

cumstances. But whatever the circumstances are, to us it is unacceptable that Indian citizens find themselves in the army of another country in a warzone. I told him that we seek their cooperation and that they are our friend and partners. We have to find a way so that these people can return to India as quickly and effectively as possible." Thankfully, despite the ostensibly pro-Ukraine position taken by Delhi, it has maintained a parallel and strong relation with Russia, replete with non-linear moves as part of its 'strategic independence'. However, while the government had initiated the needful from Russian authorities, there is a reciprocal expectation of Indians abroad to heed advisories, and not wait for situations to deteriorate.

No right-thinking country would encourage its citizens to partake in conflicts given the diversity of complex geopolitical and societal ramifications, amongst which guaranteeing their safety would be paramount.

For Russians, foreign recruitment makes practical sense – for Indians to be availing the same, reflects poorly.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Implications of Iran's election



The untimely demise of Iran's conservative President Ebrahim Raisi has necessitated an election amidst regional tensions,

exacerbated by the Gaza conflict and disputes over Iran's nuclear program. India anticipates evolving bilateral ties under reformist President-elect Pezeshkian. Despite historical ties spanning language, culture, and commerce, both nations face a crucial juncture. With shared roots and significant strategic interests, India and Iran navigate a relationship poised for new dynamics.

The future of Iran under liberal leadership holds promise for significant domestic and international shifts. Potential reforms could ease tensions, particularly regarding Iran's nuclear program, fostering better relations with the West. Internally, liberal policies may encourage socio-economic progress and cultural openness, reshaping Iran's global image and regional dynamics. Dimple Wadhawan Kanpur

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

nerable government.

The common man eagerly anticipates budgetary relief through increased exemption limits, revised tax slabs, and measures to alleviate everyday financial burdens. Expectations include provisions for healthcare subsidies, travel benefits for senior citizens, and incentives supporting livelihood stability, reflecting hopes for tangible improvements in quality of life.

AG Rajmohan | Anantpur

KEIR STARMER'S VISION FOR CHANGE

Madam — Apropos, "Now we get to work, Starmer to cabinet," The Pioneer, July 7. The British election results that led to Labour leader Keir Starmer's entry into 10 Downing Street mark a pivotal moment in the country's politics, promising to steer the nation through the turbulent aftermath of 14 years of Conservative governance. The enormity of Labour's victory cannot be overstated. Achieving a massive majority in Parliament, Labour has been given a clear mandate to implement change. His

acknowledgment of the public's lack of trust in politics is a refreshing departure from the often defensive posture of recent administrations. His promise to heal this mistrust through actions rather than words is a step in the right direction.

The British public has grown cynical after enduring repeated scandals, including the infamous Downing Street parties during the Covid-19 lockdowns, which eroded confidence in government integrity. Economically, Mr Starmer inherits a nation grappling with significant challenges.

The tax burden is at its highest since the post-World War II era, and public services, particularly the National Health Service, are under immense strain. His government's ability to deliver on ambitious promises, such as green spending initiatives and public service improvements, will be a key measure of success.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

HOPE FOR INDIA'S FUTURE

Madam — Observing Rahul Gandhi's political trajectory reveals his focused objectives: welfare for the poor, social justice, MSME development, and job creation. Once dismissed with derisive labels, he now stands as a pivotal opposition figure and a national benefactor. In Parliament, he champions crucial issues like poverty rights, constitutional protection, and unemployment, spotlighting concerns from the Agniveer scheme to NEET. We trust he will persist in combating corruption for India's bright future.

Rahul Gandhi's tenure as Leader of the Opposition has been marked by a transformation from skepticism to significance. Initially dismissed, he has emerged as a pivotal voice, advocating for the marginalized and pressing critical issues in Parliament. His agenda emphasizes welfare for the poor, social justice, MSME development, and job creation. Gandhi's relentless pursuit of transparency and accountability has kept the government accountable on issues ranging from poverty alleviation to constitutional protection. His proactive stance on national challenges like unemployment and inflation underscores his commitment to India's future, positioning him as a proactive and influential leader in the opposition ranks.

Masood Ahmad | Barabanki

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE BUDGET

Madam — Amidst anticipation of the upcoming budget session, national attention is fixated on its contents. India Inc. hopes to retain production incentives, while salary earners seek raised exemption limits and improved tax slabs. The common man yearns for relief from economic hardships, and farmers seek guaranteed minimum returns. Senior citizens anticipate travel benefits and healthcare subsidies. Supporters are poised, their lists ready, crucial for the government's survival. The budget's essence lies in who gains and by how much from this vul-

Paving the way for India's own Green Silicon Valley

Climate change offers an opportunity to create an international market for green products, capital and goods through cooperation and collaboration

Growth, Employment and Climate Change, the trifecta of modern economic challenges, have rekindled the interest of policymakers in bringing back the craft of industrial policymaking right at the centre of the discussion table. Ominous estimates highlight climate change as a critical factor negatively impacting growth and employment, whereby ~18% of GDP and labour productivity equivalent to 72 million jobs might be lost, therefore the argument by Nicholas Stern and Joseph E. Stiglitz that "the only long-run growth trajectory is a green trajectory" echoes loudly for adaptation by industrial policymakers globally. Fashionably rechristened as Green Industrial Policy, the craft embeds within itself a series of government intervention measures (supply and demand focussed subsidies, regulations, incentives and standards) that aim at achieving economic development while simultaneously cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Globally leading nations have com-



combined different elements of the Green Industrial Policy craft for building national competitive advantage towards catalysing economic growth, increasing skilled employment and climate action: **Japan:** Introduced five policy tools of Grant funding, Tax incentive, Guidance policy on transition finance, Regulatory reforms and international collaboration, targeting over 18 trillion yen for fourteen green growth sectors such as wind power, nuclear power, mobility & battery etc. **The US:** manufacturing, strengthening national security through supply chain resilience and accelerating the energy transition by supply and demand side spending and tax cuts of ~\$400 billion that aims to create ~1.5 million jobs.

India has made some formidable moves towards a green future by focusing on domestic market formation and localization of components. Its Long Term-Low Emission Development Strategy submitted at COP27 articulates seven transitions to low-carbon development such as electricity systems, transport systems, sustainable urbanization etc. The production-linked incentive schemes in renewable energy equipment space and technology-focused national missions on hydrogen and energy storage are steps in the right direction that can be aptly followed by a broader green industrialisation policy for India.

The broader green industrialisation policy by catalysing investments in manufacturing of decarbonisation technologies which are foundational in the short run can trigger the Schumpeterian process of innovation and discovery in the medium term towards high-carbon growth and employment. In this regard, the thrust on clean energy

entrepreneurship through industrial policy and a green R & D policy can foster breakthrough innovations and patents that can create and monetise new solutions. Japan and Korea have acknowledged this potential of startups as open innovation resources and introduced industrial policy support that encourages them to partner with larger conglomerates to propel the innovativeness of the economy at large and compete with their European, Chinese and American competitors. Green startups with their agility and Conglomerates with their market power and experience can aspire to create our own green Silicon Valley. Climate change offers an opportunity to create an international market for green products, capital and goods through international cooperation and collaboration. These initiatives can catalyse a virtuous cycle of growth, employment and carbon neutrality. (The writer is a Chevening Scholar and an International Development expert; views are personal)



SAIRAM SUBRAMANIAN



FIRST COLUMN

CULTIVATING GRATITUDE

Embracing life's challenges with a grateful heart leads to a profound awakening



RAVI VALLURI

Almighty divinity, through the prowess of nature, and the resplendent and ever-mutating cosmos is eternally showering bounties on humans. However, the human mind is not wakeful or grateful to accept this materiality. A question of attitude is primarily and predominantly our attitude which reinforces gratitude within our personalities. The word gratitude strikes its roots in the word the Latin word gratis, meaning to be thankful. It is always sagacious to recite a short prayer before a meal. Language is no trammel. Annadata Sukhi Bhava. By remembrance of these lines (Sanskrit), we express our gratefulness and indebtedness to the agrarian community and the cook for producing and preparing the meal respectively. Body: a divine instrument Nature has gifted us with something incomparable and priceless, the human body. We have been provided with a supercomputer of a brain. Prowess of the breath Next humans are blissfully unmindful of the power of our breath. It can be likened to a cell phone which nature has provided to connect us with divinity. Breath is perhaps the most potent form of effervescence and pizzazz of our personalities. Humans are insensible to the fact that ninety per cent of toxins get expatriated from our bodies through the potency of breath. If we delve deep into the ancient practices like pranayama or the unique rhythmic technique of Sudarshan Kriya (imparted in various bouquets of courses of the Art of Living) the primacy of breath is under-



stood by us. An inestimable nun Aeon's ago lived an exalted and celebrated Zen nun. There were far and few like her. It was believed that few women could attain the venerable state like this pious lady. Once she had undertaken an arduous pilgrimage and arrived at a village as the sun sank in the horizon. In all humility, she begged for lodgings for the night. However, the villagers slammed their doors and were unwilling to accommodate her in the village. They were opposed to the tenets of the Zen school of thought. They thought it to be exceedingly revolutionary. Thus, the clichéd and conformist individuals were unwilling to accept the nun into their fold even for a night. The traditionalists banished her from the village and she was compelled to wage the battle against inclement weather out in the cold. At the stroke of midnight, she woke up abruptly, unearthed the cherry tree which fed her ravenous body with sweet fruits, talking to the full moon which lightened up the sky. Immediately she was engulfed with waves of emotions and suffused with love and affection for all those who had exiled and expatriated her from the village. She experienced the quintessential silence of an awakened one. She was extremely grateful to the villagers who had not accommodated her, to the cherry tree that fed her, the meditative silence that encompassed her body, all of which had wily nicely contributed to her awakening, an almost celestial spectacle. "Thus, a stock individual, a savant, a sage or a nun becomes a Buddha the moment he/she accepts all that life brings with its variegated, paradoxical situations. The one who accepts these situations which gratitude and gratefulness, without admonishing anyone or carping verily becomes an awakened one." - The Buddha. "Good men and bad men differ radically. Bad men never appreciate kindness shown them, but wise men appreciate and are grateful. Wise men try to express their appreciation and gratitude by some return of kindness, not only to their benefactor, but to everyone else," said Gautama Buddha.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living)

The cost of freebies and the legal quagmire



UTTAM GUPTA

Despite a Supreme Court ruling highlighting the impact of freebies on election fairness, political parties continue to leverage public funds for electoral gain



In the Maharashtra Budget for 2024-25 presented by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, the BJP-led MahaYuti has announced financial assistance of Rs 1,500 per month for eligible women between 21 to 60 years of age, a stipend up to Rs.10,000 per month for youth in industrial and non-industrial sectors, electricity bill waiver for farmers etc. Unambiguously, these are freebies - an acronym for something given by the State free of charge - aimed at garnering votes during the State assembly elections later this year. In a July 2013 order in S Subramaniam Balaji vs Government of Tamil Nadu & Ors, the Supreme Court (SC) had said that the distribution of freebies of any kind influences all people; that "It shakes the root of free and fair elections to a large degree". Yet, it had held that promises in the election manifesto cannot be construed as "corrupt practice" under the Representation of People Act (RPA), or any other prevailing law and, hence, distribution of freebies can't be stopped when the ruling party uses public funds for this purpose through the passage of Appropriation Acts in the state assembly. In the same order, it directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) "to frame guidelines that could govern the contents of the election manifesto of all the recognized political parties as when it had acted while framing guidelines for general conduct of the candidates, meetings, processions, polling day, etc". Further "this can also be included in the model code of conduct - under a separate head for guidelines for election manifesto - for guidance of political parties and candidates". The ECI never came out with any such guidelines. Emboldened by ECI inaction, the political parties who in the past, were placing freebies in a corner of their manifestos, have started catapulting them to the centre stage. Now, freebies hold the key to winning elections. In February 2020, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led by Arvind Kejriwal mesmerized Delhi, voters, by promising free or heavily subsidized electricity and free water, free bus rides for women, free Wi-Fi, and so on. In 2022 in Punjab, AAP promised free electrici-



NOW, FREEBIES HOLD THE KEY TO WINNING ELECTIONS. IN FEBRUARY 2020, THE AAM AADMI PARTY (AAP) LED BY ARVIND KEJRIWAL MESMERISED DELHI, VOTERS, BY PROMISING FREE OR HEAVILY SUBSIDISED ELECTRICITY AND FREE WATER, FREE BUS RIDES FOR WOMEN, FREE WI-FI, AND SO ON

ty to each household for consumption up to 300 units per month, waiver of all outstanding power bills, Rs 1000 per month to every woman aged 18 or above etc. The party won the state with a thumping majority. In Uttar Pradesh also in 2022, BJP promised 20 million smartphones for poor students, two free LPG cylinders every year, Rs 100,000/- for the marriage of girls from poor families, and so on. Meanwhile, the matter came up before the SC through a public interest litigation (PIL). On January 25, 2022, it observed "This is no doubt a serious issue. Budget for freebies is going above the regular budget". It also reiterated that "this disturbs the level playing field". On August 3, 2022, it gave a sense that it is for Parliament, besides the ECI, to take the initiative to enact a law on curbing freebies. It also sought suggestions on the composition of a committee that could go into the issue "dispassionately" and make recommendations. But, the above decisions haven't been acted upon. Although, on its part, the ECI had sent out questionnaires asking parties to give 'specifics' of what they intend to promise voters, financial impact and how this will be funded, there hasn't been any follow-up. Meanwhile, the freebies continue to proliferate. In Karnataka elections in May 2023, the grand old party (GOP) promised five guarantees viz. Gruha Jyoti, Gruha Lakshmi, Sakhi programme, Yuva Nidhi, and Anna Bhagya. The trend continued during elections in Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Telangana held in November/December 2023. While, in Rajasthan, Congress promised Rs 10,000 every year to the female head of the family under the Gruha Lakshmi Yojana, in MP, BJP increased the grant to Rs 1,250 per month under Ladli

Behna Yojana; the amount to be hiked to Rs 3,000 per month. Additionally, in MP, under Ladli Lakshmi Yojana, the BJP promised girls Rs 200,000/- till they get married. In Chhattisgarh, it promised Rs 12,000 per year to married women under the 'Mahtari Vandan Scheme'. In Telangana, the GOP beat all promising 10 grams of gold besides Rs 100,000/- cash to women getting married. In the run-up to the general elections, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on December 23, 2023 supply of free foodgrain under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) to over 800 million persons, Congress gave ten guarantees in its manifesto "Nyay Patra" released in April, 2024. Meanwhile, in Delhi, Kejriwal promised Rs 1000 per month to all women above the age of 18 years under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana (MMSY). For State elections later this year, parties are readying to give another round of big doles. As mentioned earlier, the BJP-led MahaYuti has already announced a bountiful package for Maharashtra. For others viz. Haryana, and Jharkhand, parties will follow suit. The SC assertion on January 25, 2022 "Budget for freebies is going above the regular budget" is confirmed by facts on ground zero. Whereas, in Delhi, these cost the exchequer around Rs 12,500 crore annually, in Punjab the impact is close to Rs 20,000 crore. In Karnataka, at over Rs 60,000 crore, the cost of five guarantees exceeds the existing fiscal deficit. Redeeming the guarantees promised in GOP's "Nyay Patra" could cost the Central Government a mammoth around Rs 46,00,000 crore. In Maharashtra, Rs 1,500 per month to eligible women alone

would cost Rs 46,000 crore a year. When the top court says freebies are bad, why doesn't it ban them? A big deterrent is none other than the SC order of July 2013 which says "... it can't be construed as corrupt practice..." Within the meaning of section 123(1)(A) of the RPA, 1951, the expression 'bribery' has been defined to mean any gift, offer or promise by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent of any gratification with the object of inducing an elector as a reward to his candidature. The irony is, that when a candidate uses his own pocket money to bribe the voter, it is treated as corrupt practice, but when the party on whose symbol he is seeking election bribes voters using 'public money', the top court doesn't treat it that way. The Union Government's standards of financial propriety lay down inter alia that "no authority shall exercise its powers of sanctioning expenditure to pass an order which will be directly or indirectly, to its advantage; and the expenditure from public moneys should not be incurred for the benefit of a particular person or a section of the people unless a claim for the amount could be enforced in a court of law or the expenditure is in pursuance of a recognized policy or custom". The reckless spending of the taxpayer's money on freebies is neither a recognized policy/custom nor it is sanctioned in a court of law. It is a blatant financial irregularity that amounts to bribing voters using public money solely to gain electoral advantage. The SC should change its stance to recognize this and force the Parliament to enact a law if it feels existing laws don't provide for it. *(The writer is a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)*

Transforming healthcare with digital technologies

The health-tech sector is poised for exponential growth, reshaping the future of healthcare for all its citizens

Digital technologies are anticipated to offer swift and personalized clinical services to each patient through their handheld devices. New Age Technologies (NATs), including Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), mobile technologies, cloud computing, Big Data, and 5G, are becoming essential tools in the realm of "Smart Health." Smart Health refers to an interconnected healthcare system that utilizes NATs for clinical analysis, treatment, medical setups, and hospital management. Examples of Smart Healthcare systems include surgical robots, RFID-based supply chains, and integrated health management platforms or Health-stacks. These Smart



CHARRU MALHOTRA

Healthcare systems provide real-time connectivity to doctors, reduce treatment costs, and offer predictive, personalized information to patients. For example, IoT-based wearable smart devices can track patients' progress, help manage medical emergencies, and promptly notify healthcare providers. India's National Health Policy 2017 aims to achieve "Universal Health Coverage for all citizens," grad-

ually transitioning from fragmented healthcare systems to a holistic approach using digital technologies. The Ayushman Bharat scheme, launched in September 2018, is a notable nationwide public health insurance program that provides health coverage of up to 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization through the 'Abha-ID' for each patient. Additionally, the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM), launched on August 15, 2020, aims to create an integrated healthcare system linking practitioners and patients digitally, allowing real-time access to health records. Driven by these national initiatives, along with the rise of health startups, increased

healthcare spending, and growing demand for high-quality healthcare services, the health-tech sector in India is experiencing significant growth. According to recent reports, the health-tech industry in India is expected to reach \$6.5 billion by 2024 and \$78.4 billion by 2033, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 28.67% during this period. India has already implemented initiatives such as the National Health Portal and the Health Management Information System (HMIS), with several state-level initiatives as well. Programs like the CoWIN Vaccine Platform, the Aarogya Setu contact tracing app, and the eSanjeevani National Telemedicine Service Platform



deserve special mention. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, private equity firms are increasingly investing in health tech companies. The health startup ecosystem in India primarily consists of six segments: telemedicine, pharmacy, fitness, wellness, IT healthcare, and home healthcare. Leading telemedicine startups such as Practo, 1mg, mFine, iCliniq, Digi-Doctor, and myUpchar are reporting impressive increases in tele-consultations.

These systems provide information on health indicators, identify individuals, verify them, and connect their health records with informed consent. However, the adoption of these technologies presents significant technical, legal, and socio-economic challenges. There is a lack of a cohesive and robust legal and regulatory framework, particularly in the health-tech domain. Security in smart healthcare is crucial, as it is an ecosystem susceptible to attacks or infiltration by individuals or hackers. The privacy of patients' sensitive health data requires an extra layer of protection beyond what is currently available through India's Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act. Data interoperability and dig-

ital connectivity are essential for the seamless exchange of health data. The emerging 5G communication network in India can address this gap, but technological constraints hinder the widespread adoption of in-home health monitoring services. Healthcare specialists also face challenges such as limited access to and adaptability to digital technologies. These issues are further compounded by inadequate logistics support, a shortage of skilled manpower, and a tech-resistant attitude among various stakeholders. Drawing inspiration from the globally recognized Unified Payment Interface (UPI), a digital public infrastructure (DPI) for healthcare should be made accessible to all. Our anganwadi workers, in partic-

ular, should be supported by additional tech-savvy personnel. Capacity building for our healthcare providers and ensuring their access to digital devices and connectivity should be prioritized through common service centers (CSCs) and Public Health Centers (PHCs). Additionally, it is time for India to expand the scope of its Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, by including special provisions for handling the sensitive health data of patients. With these efforts, every Indian will not only have easy access to but also trust the "Digital Doctor in their pocket." *(The writer is a professor at Indian Institute of Public Administration, New-Delhi; views are personal)*

Xi urges global powers to facilitate direct Russia-Ukraine talks

AP ■ TAIPEI

Chinese President Xi Jinping called on world powers to help Russia and Ukraine resume direct dialogue during a meeting on Monday with Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Orban made a surprise visit to China after similar trips last week to Russia and Ukraine to discuss prospects for a peaceful settlement of more than the two-year war. Hungary assumed the rotating presidency of the European Union this month and Orban has since embarked on a peace mission, which, however, lacks the endorsement of other European leaders.

"China is a key power in creating the conditions for peace



in the Russia-Ukraine war," Orban wrote on the social media platform X. "This is why I came to meet with President Xi in Beijing, just two months after his official visit to Budapest." Orban is widely seen as having the warmest relations with Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin among European leaders. His visit to

Moscow last week drew condemnation from Kyiv and EU officials, who insisted Orban was not acting on behalf of the whole European bloc. Their rebuke failed to deter Orban from extending a similar visit to Beijing, which he called "Peace mission 3.0" in a picture posted on X.

During his meeting with Xi, Orban described China as a stabilising force amid global turbulence and praised its "constructive and important" peace initiatives. China has been promoting its own six-point peace plan, which it issued with Brazil in May. Beijing says it is neutral in the conflict, though in practice it supports Moscow through frequent state visits, growing trade and joint military drills. While hosting Orban, Xi called on Russia and Ukraine

to cease fire and on other major powers to create an environment conducive to talks. Only when all major powers project "positive energy rather than negative energy" can a cease-fire occur, Xi said, according to CCTV.

Orban hosted the Chinese leader in Hungary only two months ago as part of a three-country European tour that also included stops in France and Serbia, which unlike the other two is not a member of the EU or NATO.

During the trip, China upgraded its ties with Hungary to an "all-weather, comprehensive strategic partnership", one of its highest designations for foreign relations that in addition to Hungary applies only to Belarus, Pakistan and Venezuela. Hungary under Orban has

built substantial political and economic ties with China. The European nation hosts a number of Chinese electric vehicle battery facilities, and in December it announced that Chinese EV manufacturing giant BYD will open its first European EV production factory in the south of the country.

The Hungarian prime minister broadly opposes Western military aid to Ukraine and has blocked, delayed or watered down EU efforts to assist Kyiv and impose sanctions on Moscow over its invasion. Orban has long argued for a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine but without outlining what that might mean for the country's territorial integrity or future security. That posture has frustrated Hungary's EU and NATO

allies, who have denounced Russia's invasion as a breach of international law and a threat to the security of Eastern Europe.

Standing alongside Orban last week in Moscow, Putin declared that Russia wouldn't accept any cease-fire or temporary break in hostilities that would allow Ukraine "to recoup losses, regroup and reararm".

Putin repeated his demand that Ukraine withdraw its troops from the four regions that Moscow claims to have annexed in 2022 as a condition for any prospective peace talks. Ukraine and its Western allies have rejected that demand, suggesting it is akin to asking Kyiv to withdraw from its own territory.

China meanwhile has spread its influence in Central Asia

and Eastern Europe in recent years beyond its "no limits" partnership with Moscow. Over the weekend, China held "anti-terror" military drills with Belarus — a key ally of Russia — near the border with Poland. The drills came after last week Belarus joined a regional security organisation led by China and Russia.

Orban will next head to Washington, D.C., where NATO leaders are holding a summit to discuss ways to assure Ukraine of the alliance's continued support.

"Next stop: Washington," Orban posted on his social media account Monday. It was not clear whether he would meet separately with President Joe Biden, or Donald Trump, whose presidential candidacy Orban openly supports.

French vote divides among left, center, and far-right, risking political deadlock

AP ■ PARIS

French voters divided their legislature among left, center and far right, with no single political faction getting even close to the majority needed for form a government. The risk of paralysis loomed Monday for the European Union's second-largest economy.

President Emmanuel Macron gambled that his decision to call snap elections would give France a "moment of clarification," but the outcome showed the opposite, less than three weeks before the start of the Paris Olympics thrusts the country on the international stage. France's main share index opened with a dip in response to the vote.

According to the second-round results tallied early Monday, a leftist coalition surged to take the most seats in parliament. Macron's centrists have the second-largest faction and the unpopular president will have to form alliances to run the government. Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally, which

Leaders express relief mixed with concern about French election result

Berlin (AP): Leaders across Europe reacted with relief but also some concern to the results of the snap election in France which leave a key EU country facing the prospect of a hung parliament and political paralysis. Relief, because the far-right National Rally did not come out as the strongest party, as many pro-European leaders had feared — but also concern, because no political grouping has a majority in the National Assembly. The government in Germany, which

together with France has long been viewed as the engine of European integration, expressed relief on Monday that the nationalist far right had not topped the polls. "For now, a certain relief prevails that things that we feared have not materialised," Steffen Hebestreit, a spokesperson for German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, told reporters in Berlin. "Only time will tell what happens with this election result and France will decide."

led in the first round of voting, came in third after political maneuvering to keep its candidates from power.

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said he would present his resignation Monday, but could stay on through the Olympics or longer if needed. Newly elected and returning lawmakers

were expected to arrive at the National Assembly to begin negotiations in earnest. Macron himself will leave later in the week for a NATO summit in Washington. Political deadlock could rattle markets and have far-ranging implications for the war in Ukraine, global diplomacy and

Europe's economic stability. According to official results released early Monday, all three main blocs fell far short of the 289 seats needed to control the 577-seat National Assembly, the more powerful of France's two legislative chambers. The results showed just over 140 seats for the New Popular Front leftist coalition, which placed first, ahead of Macron's centrist alliance, with more than 160 seats. Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally and its allies were restricted to third place, although their more than 140 seats were still way ahead of the party's previous best showing of 89 seats in 2022.

Macron has three years remaining on his presidential term. In announcing his resignation, Attal made clearer than ever his disapproval of Macron's shock decision to call the election, saying "I didn't choose this dissolution" of the outgoing National Assembly, where the president's centrist alliance used to be single biggest group, albeit without an absolute majority.

NATO summit hosted by Biden to show strong support for Ukraine

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The NATO summit, being hosted by US President Joe Biden here this week, is likely to show a strong demonstration of America and its allies' support for Ukraine and make significant new announcements to increase military, political and financial support for the war-torn European country, according to administration officials.

The three-day NATO summit to be held here from July 9 to 11 will be the first to include Sweden as a member of the alliance. Sweden officially joined the alliance in March.

The historic summit would also mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), which is now a strong military alliance of 32 countries.

"It has been truly indispensable to Euro-Atlantic security, deterring threats to the United States and our allies," a senior administration official told reporters ahead of the summit.

On Sunday, President Biden also spoke about the upcoming NATO summit in Washington, DC.



"I'm about to host the NATO nations in Washington. We put them together," Biden said. "The world's looking to us. Not a joke. The world is looking to America not to carry their burden, but to lead their hopes."

Being held in the American capital, soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, the NATO summit, officials said "will send a strong signal to Putin that if he thinks he can outlast the coalition of

countries supporting Ukraine, he is dead wrong."

"We are also going to send an important message to the rest of the world, including through our partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, as we stand together united and in support of democratic values," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Washington summit will kick off on Tuesday, with Biden welcoming NATO leaders, and along with the First Lady, hosting a 75th anniversary commemoration event at the Mellon Auditorium, which is the site of the original signing of the North Atlantic Treaty that established the NATO on April 4, 1949. It is also the site of the 1999 50th anniversary commemorative event hosted by the then president Bill Clinton.

NATO was created to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.

On July 10, the president will welcome Sweden as the newest member of the alliance at a meeting of NATO's 32 allies. Later in the evening, they would host the NATO leaders for a dinner at the White

House. On July 11, NATO will hold a meeting with the European Union (EU) and NATO's Indo-Pacific partners — Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand — to deepen their cooperation. Officials also said there will be a strong language regarding China.

"We are bringing together some of our closest non-NATO partners to have a discussion around issues like resilience and cyber disinformation, technology and the like. In terms of deterrence and defence, of course, NATO is focused on the Euro-Atlantic area, and that is where its capabilities are being deployed," an official said.

"But the United States has a range of partnerships with countries around the world, which you might call variable geometry, with different partners including in the Indo-Pacific. This particular grouping of the IP4, as we call them in NATO lingo — Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea — these are some of our closest partners that we work within the region," the official added.

Sunak makes apology calls to ex-MPs

London (PTI): Former British prime minister Rishi Sunak spent the weekend calling the Conservative Party candidates who lost their seats in the general election last week to apologise for the party's worst performance at the ballot box, with just 121 seats in the House of Commons.

Several former members of Parliament told "The Daily Telegraph" about the "very sympathetic call" they received from the British Indian MP, who won his own seat of Richmond and Northallerton in Yorkshire and then became Leader of the Opposition until the Tories elect his successor.

The 44-year-old had apologised to his party colleagues and the nation in his farewell speech at 10 Downing Street on Friday, when he also announced his resignation as Tory leader after the Labour Party won a landslide victory with 411 MPs in a 650-seat Commons.

UK's PM Starmer seeks to improve on 'botched' trade deal with EU

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is seeking to reset relations at home and abroad. During a visit on Sunday to Edinburgh, that he billed as an "immediate reset" with the regional governments of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, Starmer said he would also seek to improve the UK's "botched" trade deal with the European Union (EU).

"I do think that we can get a much better deal than the botched deal that (former prime minister) Boris Johnson saddled the UK with," he said in reference to the pact negotiated after Brexit.

Starmer said there were many discussions ahead to strengthen trading, research and defence ties with the EU. But he said those talks had begun as his top diplomat made his first visit abroad to Germany, Poland and Sweden.



From left, Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn, Northern Ireland's First Minister Michelle O'Neill, deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly and Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer pose for a photo, at Stormont Caste, during the Prime Minister's tour of the UK following Labour's victory in the 2024 general election, in Belfast, Monday.

With two of Starmer's ministers in Europe ahead of a NATO meeting, the premier made a point of visiting the leaders of the regional govern-

ments in the UK following his party's landslide victory last week.

Starmer, who said he has a "mandate to do politics differently", met with Scottish First Minister John Swinney in an effort to "turn disagreement into cooperation".

"We will serve every single person in Scotland," Starmer told a group of enthusiastic supporters. "Performance, self-interest — they are the politics of the past. The politics of this Labour government of 2024 is about public service, restoring standards of making sure that we always, always have in our mind's eye the people who elected us into government."

While each of the devolved nations in the UK elects members to the House of Commons in London, they also have their own regional parliaments.

Starmer's Labour Party trounced Swinney's Scottish National Party for seats in Parliament. But the SNP, which has pushed for Scottish independence, still holds a majority at Holyrood, the Scottish Parliament.

'It's time for party drama to end'

Washington (AP): President Joe Biden, in a letter to congressional Democrats, continued to stand firm against calls for him to drop his candidacy and called for an "end" to the intra-party drama that has torn apart Democrats about whether he should stay in the race.

Biden wrote in the two-page letter Monday that "the question of how to move forward has been well-aired for over a week now. And it's time for it to end."

He stressed that the party has "one job", which is to defeat presumptive GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump in November.

"We have 42 days to the Democratic Convention and 119 days to the general election," Biden said in the letter. "Any weakening of resolve or lack of clarity about the task ahead only helps Trump and hurts us. It's time to come together, move forward as a unified party, and defeat Donald Trump."

The letter was sent from the campaign to Democratic lawmakers as they return to Washington following the July

4 recess. Deeply torn over President Joe Biden's candidacy, Democratic lawmakers return to Washington at a pivotal moment as they decide whether to work to revive his campaign or edge out the party leader, a make-or-break time for his reelection and their own political futures.

Anxiety is running high as top-ranking Democratic lawmakers are joining calls for Biden to step aside after his dismal public debate performance and defiant response to the uproar.

At the same time, some of the president's most staunch supporters are redoubling the fight for Biden's presidency, insisting there is no one better to beat Republican Donald Trump in what many see as among the most important elections of a lifetime.

As lawmakers weigh whether Biden should stay or go, there appear to be no easy answers in sight.

It's a tenuous and highly volatile juncture for the president's party. Democrats who have worked alongside Biden for

years — if not decades — and cherished his life's work on policy priorities are now entertaining uncomfortable questions about his political future. And it's unfolding as Biden hosts world leaders for the NATO summit this week in Washington.

Time is not on their side, almost a month from the Democratic National Convention and just a week before Republicans gather in Milwaukee to renominate Trump as their presidential pick.

Many Democrats are arguing the attention needs to be focused instead on the former president's felony conviction in the hush money case and pending federal charges in his effort to overturn the 2020 election. It's what Biden himself might call an inflection point.

As he defiantly says he will only step aside if the Lord almighty comes and tells him to, Democrats in the House and Senate are deciding how hard they want to fight the president to change course, or if they want to change course at all.

South Korea to cancel plan to suspend licenses of striking doctors

Seoul (AP): South Korea said Monday it'll withdraw its earlier plan to suspend licenses of striking doctors as part of its efforts to resolve the country's months-long medical impasse.

It wasn't immediately known whether and how many of thousands of the striking doctors would return to work in the wake of the government's announcement. Also, the plan could invite criticism that it hurts the principle of fairness over the government's dealing with other previous labour strikes as well as doctors who already returned to work.

Health Minister Cho KyooHong said Monday the government has decided not to suspend their licenses of the strikers, regardless of whether they return to their hospitals or not.

He said the government's decision is meant to address a shortage of doctors treating



emergency and serious patients and restore a training system to add more professional doctors. More than 13,000 junior doctors, who are medical interns and residents, walked off the job in February in protest of the government's plan to sharply boost school admissions. Their walkouts have significantly burdened operations of university

hospitals where they had worked while training. A Seoul court in May ruled in support of the government's plan. The government later withdrew its plan to suspend licenses of doctor who returned to their hospitals but didn't do so on others who remained off the job. Officials have said they want to add up to 10,000 doc-

tors by 2035 to cope with the country's fast-aging population and a shortage of physicians in rural areas and in low-paying yet essential specialties like pediatrics and emergency departments. Doctors say schools aren't ready to handle an abrupt increase in students and that it would ultimately undermine the country's medical services. But critics argue that physicians, one of the best-paid jobs in South Korea, are mainly worried that having more doctors would lower their incomes. The striking doctors are a fraction of all doctors in South Korea, estimated to number between 115,000 and 140,000. But in some major hospitals, they represented about 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the doctors, assisting fully qualified doctors and department chiefs during surgeries and other treatments while training.

Beryl makes landfall in Texas

AP ■ MATAGORDA

Beryl made landfall on the Texas coast near Matagorda early Monday with a dangerous storm surge and strong winds, knocking out power to more than half a million homes and businesses.

The storm's centre hit land as a Category 1 hurricane around 4 am Central Standard Time about 85 miles southwest of Houston with top sustained winds of 80 mph (128.7 kph) while moving north at 12 mph (19.3 kph), the National Weather Service reported.

High waters quickly began closing roads around Houston, which was again under flood warnings after heavy storms in recent months washed out neighbourhoods and knocked out power across the nation's fourth-largest city.

More than 750,000 customers were without power, many of them around Houston, before daybreak Monday, according to CenterPoint Energy in

Houston. More than 1,000 flights have been canceled at Houston's two airports, according to tracking data from FlightAware.

Beryl dumped soaking rains across Houston after coming ashore and was expected to bring damaging winds into East Texas, near Louisiana, as the storm pushed north after making landfall.

"Beryl's moving inland but this is not the end of the story yet," said Jack Beven, senior hurricane specialist at the National Hurricane Center. Beryl strengthened and became a hurricane again late Sunday. The storm had weakened after leaving a path of deadly destruction through parts of Mexico and the Caribbean.

A hurricane warning remains in effect for the Texas coast from Mesquite Bay north to Port Bolivar, the center said. Beryl is expected to weaken to a tropical storm Monday and a tropical depression Tuesday,

the weather service said, forecasting a turn to the northeast and increase in speed Monday night and Tuesday.

The storm's center is expected to move over eastern Texas on Monday and then through the lower Mississippi Valley into the Ohio Valley on Tuesday and Wednesday, the weather service said.

People on the Texas coast boarded up windows and left beach towns under an evacuation order. As the storm neared the coast Sunday, Texas officials warned of power outages and flooding but also expressed worry that not enough residents and beach vacationers in Beryl's path had heeded warnings to leave.

"One of the things that kind of trigger our concern a little bit, we've looked at all of the roads leaving the coast and the maps are still green," said Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who is serving as the state's acting governor while Gov. Greg Abbott is travelling overseas. "So we

don't see many people leaving."

Tropical storm winds extended 115 miles (185 kilometers) from the center and the hurricane center warned residents to be prepared for possible flash flooding in parts of middle, upper and eastern Texas as well as Arkansas as the storm gradually turns to the north and then northeast later Monday.

Along the Texas coast, many residents and business owners took the typical storm precautions but also expressed uncertainty about the storm's intensity.

In Port Lavaca, Jimmy May fastened plywood over the windows of his electrical supply company and said he wasn't concerned about the possible storm surge. He recalled his business had escaped flooding in a previous hurricane that brought a 20-foot (6-meter) storm surge. "In town, you know, if you're in the low-lying areas, obviously, you need to get out of there," he said.

Kyiv children's hospital among buildings bombarded; dozens killed

AP ■ KYIV

A major Russian missile attack across Ukraine on Monday killed at least 31 people and injured 154, officials said, with one striking a large children's hospital in the capital of Kyiv, where emergency crews searched the rubble for victims.

The daytime barrage targeted five Ukrainian cities with more than 40 missiles of different types, hitting apartment buildings and public infrastructure, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a social media post. Ukraine's air force said it intercepted 30 missiles. Strikes in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's birthplace in central Ukraine, killed 10 people and injured 47 in what the head of city administration, Oleksandr Vilkul, said was a massive missile attack. Seven people were killed in Kyiv, authorities said.

"It is very important that the world should not be silent about it now and that everyone should see what Russia is and what it is doing," Zelenskyy said on social media.

Western leaders who have backed Ukraine will hold a three-day NATO summit in Washington beginning Tuesday. They will look at how they can reassure Kyiv of the alliance's unwavering support and offer Ukrainians hope that their country can come through Europe's biggest conflict since World War II.

At the Okhmatdyt children's hospital in Kyiv, rescuers searched for victims under the rubble of a partially collapsed, two-story wing of the facility. Mayor Vitali Klitschko said at least 16 people, seven of them children, were injured. On the hospital's main 10-story building, windows and doors were blown out and walls were blackened. Blood spattered the floor in one room. The intensive care unit, operating theatres and oncology departments all were damaged, officials said.

Rescuers searched for children and medical workers in the rubble. Volunteers formed a line, passing bricks and other debris to each other. Smoke still rose from the building, and volunteers and emergency

crews worked in protective masks. The attack forced the evacuation of the hospital and its temporary closure. Some mothers carried their children away on their backs, while others waited in the courtyard with their children as calls to doctors' phones rang unanswered. A few hours after the initial strike, another air raid siren sent many of them hurrying to the hospital's shelter. Led by a flashlight through the shelter's dark corridors, mothers carried their bandaged children in their arms and medical workers carried them on gurneys. Volunteers handed out candy to try to calm the children. Marina Ploskonos said her 4-year-old son had spinal surgery on Friday.

"My child is terrified," she said. "This shouldn't be happening, it's a children's hospital," she said, bursting into tears.

Ukraine's Security Service said it found wreckage from a Russian Kh-101 cruise missile at the site and had opened proceedings on war crime charges. The Kh-101 is an air-launched



Emergency services work at the site of Okhmatdyt children's hospital hit by Russian missiles, in Kyiv, Ukraine AP/PTI

missile that flies low to avoid detection by radar. Ukraine said it shot down 11 of 13 Kh-101 missiles launched on Monday.

Czech President Petr Pavel said the hospital attack was "inexcusable" and that he expected to see at the NATO summit a consensus that

Russia was "the biggest threat for which we must be thoroughly prepared." The German government also condemned the attacks. A for-

eign office spokesperson called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to "put an immediate end to this war of aggression against so many innocent people." Russia's Defence Ministry said the strikes targeted Ukrainian defence plants and military air bases and were successful. It denied aiming at any civilian facilities and claimed without evidence that pictures from Kyiv indicated the damage was caused by a Ukrainian air defence missile.

Since early in the war that is well into its third year, Russian officials have regularly claimed that Moscow's forces never attack civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, despite what officials in Kyiv say as well as Associated Press reporting. Elsewhere in Kyiv, where seven of the city's 10 districts were hit in the heaviest Russian bombardment of the capital in almost four months, the strikes killed seven people and injured 25, officials said.

About three hours after the first strikes, more missiles hit Kyiv and partially destroyed a private medical centre. Four people were killed there,

Ukraine's Emergency Service said. In the capital's Shevchenkivskiy district, a three-story section of a residential building was destroyed. Emergency crews searched for casualties, and AP reporters saw them remove three bodies. The powerful blast wave scorched nearby buildings, shattered windows and flung a dog into a neighbouring yard, resident Halina Sichivka said. "Now we don't have anything in our apartment, no windows, no doors, nothing. Nothing at all," the 28-year-old said.

The Kinzhal hypersonic missiles used in the attack are among the most advanced Russian weapons, Ukraine's air force said, flying at 10 times the speed of sound and making it hard to intercept. City buildings shook from the blasts. Three electricity substations were damaged or destroyed in two districts of Kyiv, energy company DTEK said. The head of Ukraine's presidential office, Andrii Yermak, said the attack occurred at a time when many people were in the streets.

Japan, Philippines sign defence agreement

AP ■ MANILA

Japan and the Philippines signed a key defence pact on Monday allowing the deployment of Japanese forces for joint drills in the Southeast Asian nation that came under brutal Japanese occupation in World War II but is now building an alliance with Tokyo as both face an increasingly assertive China.

The Reciprocal Access Agreement, which similarly allows Filipino forces to enter Japan for joint combat training, was signed by Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa in a Manila ceremony witnessed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. It would take effect after ratification by the countries' legislatures, Philippine and Japanese officials said.

Kamikawa called the signing "a groundbreaking achievement" that should further boost defence cooperation between the countries.

The Japanese and Philippine officials "expressed serious

concern over the dangerous and escalatory actions by China" in Second Thomas Shoal, the scene of a recent confrontation between Chinese and Philippine forces in the South China Sea. The busy sea passage is a key global trade route which has been claimed virtually in its entirety by China but also contested in part by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

They underscored in a joint statement the need "for the international community to speak out on the importance of maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law" in the disputed waters. In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said "the Asia-Pacific region does not need military blocs, let alone small groupings that instigate bloc confrontations or a new Cold War" and reminded Japan of its atrocities during World War II in Southeast Asian countries including the Philippines.

"Japan should seriously reflect

on its history of aggression and act cautiously in the field of military security," the spokesperson said.

The defense pact with the Philippines, which includes live-fire drills, is the first to be forged by Japan in Asia. Japan signed similar accords with Australia in 2022 and with Britain in 2023.

Under Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Japan has taken steps to boost its security and defensive firepower, including a counterstrike capability that breaks from the country's post-war principle of focusing only on self-defence. It's doubling defence spending in a five-year period to 2027 to bolster its military power and make Japan the world's third-biggest military spender after the United States and China.

Many of Japan's Asian neighbours, including the Philippines, came under Japanese aggression until its defeat in World War II, and Tokyo's efforts to strengthen its military role and spending could be a sensitive issue. Japan and the Philippines,

however, have steadily deepened defence and security ties. Kishida's moves dovetail with Marcos' effort to forge security alliances to bolster the Philippine military's limited ability to defend its territorial interests in the South China Sea. The United States has also been strengthening an arc of military alliances in the Indo-Pacific to better counter China, including in any future confrontation over Taiwan, and reassure its Asian allies. Japan and the Philippines are treaty allies of the US and their leaders held three-way talks in April at the White House, where President Joe Biden renewed Washington's "ironclad" commitment to defend Japan and the Philippines.

Japan has had a longstanding territorial dispute with China over islands in the East China Sea. Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy ships, meanwhile, have been involved in a series of tense confrontations in the South China Sea since last year.

In the worst confrontation so far, Chinese coast guard per-

sonnel armed with knives, spears and an ax aboard motorboats repeatedly rammed and destroyed two Philippine navy supply vessels on June 17 in a chaotic faceoff at disputed Second Thomas Shoal that injured several Filipino sailors. Chinese coast guard personnel seized seven navy rifles.

The Japanese and Philippine officials said China's actions at the shoal "obstructed freedom of navigation and disrupted supply lines, thus, increasing tensions".

Kihara said in a news conference that Japan "has firmly opposed the dangerous and coercive use of maritime security agencies and maritime militia vessels".

The Philippines strongly protested the Chinese coast guard's actions and demanded USD 1 million for the damage and the return of the rifles. China accused the Philippines of instigating the violence, saying the Filipino sailors strayed into what it called Chinese territorial waters despite warnings.

New offshoot of banned JuD resume political activities

PTI ■ LAHORE

After a break of some five months, the political offshoot of banned Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) of the Mumbai terror attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed has resumed its political activities in Pakistan by holding a demonstration here in Punjab province.

The Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML), believed to be the new face of the banned groups of Saeed, held a demonstration against inflation and increase in electricity and gas prices against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government in Lahore on Friday. The protest was addressed by Tabiah Qayyum and Muzammil Iqbal Hashmi who were added to the US' list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists in 2018.

Interestingly, the government of Maryam Nawaz in Punjab has imposed a ban on the assembly of four or more people under Section 144 to maintain peace and order in Lahore to stop former prime minister

Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) from holding any protest for the release of their jailed leader (Khan). The PMML, believed to be a new face of the banned groups of incarcerated Hafiz Saeed, had taken part in the February 2024 general elections.

Some of the candidates nominated by this organisation from different cities of Pakistan are those who are either relatives of Saeed or have been associated with banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) or Milli Muslim League (MML) in the past.

The protest against inflation last Friday was the first "open political activity" held by the PMML after last February elections. "We will continue holding protests across the country to put pressure on the government to take measures to control mehangai (inflation)," Tabiah Qayyum said during his address.

He said the PML-N government instead of taking austerity measures had put all the

burden on the masses by imposing huge taxes. Qayyum said that on the next stage the PMML might stage a sit-in against the government if it failed to give relief to the masses. As the PMML is the 'new political face' of the JuD, a spokesman of the party denied any affiliation with Saeed's organisations.

Saeed, the mastermind of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, has been sentenced for multiple years by Pakistan's anti-terrorism courts in several cases of financing terrorism and has been imprisoned in Lahore. He was on December 10, 2008, included in the list of 'global terrorists' by the UN.

Pakistan also listed LeT, JuD and its affiliated parties and institutions, including Khair Naas International Trust, Falah Inasaniyat Foundation, Al-Anfal Trust, Khamtab Khalq Institution, Al-Dawwat Al-Arshad, Al-Hamad Trust, Al-Madinah Foundation and Mu'adz bin Jabal Educational Trust, in the list of banned organisations.

Indonesia landslide triggered by heavy rain leaves 12 dead

AP ■ JAKARTA

A landslide triggered by torrential rains crashed onto an unauthorised gold mining operation on Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing at least 12 people, officials said on Monday. Dozens others were reported missing.

More than 100 villagers were digging for grains of gold on Sunday in the remote Bone Bolango district in Gorontalo province when tons of mud plunged down the surrounding hills and buried their makeshift camps, said Heriyanto, head of the Search and Rescue Office.

He said 44 people managed to escape from landslide, some of them pulled out alive by rescuers, including six injured, and recovered 12 bodies, including three women and a 4-year-old boy. Some 48 others are missing, he said.

"Relief efforts for the dead and missing were hampered by



heavy rain and blocked roads covered with thick mud and debris," said rescue official Affuddin Ilahude.

Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said torrential rains that have pounded the area since Saturday also broke an embankment, causing floods of up to 3 metres (10 feet) in five villages in Bone Bolango. Nearly 300 houses were affected and more than 1,000 people have fled for safety.

Informal mining operations are common in Indonesia, providing a tenuous livelihood to thousands who labour in conditions with a high risk of serious injury or death. Landslides, flooding and collapses of tunnels are just some of the hazards facing miners. Much of gold ore processing involves highly toxic mercury and cyanide and workers frequently use little or no protection. The country's last major mining-related accident occurred in April 2022 when a landslide crashed onto an illegal traditional gold mine in North Sumatra's Mandailing Natal district, killing 12 women who were looking for gold.

In February 2019, a makeshift wooden structure in an illegal gold mine in North Sulawesi province collapsed due to shifting soil and the large number of mining holes. More than 40 people were buried and died.

Pak will continue to seek IMF bailouts if it fails to boost tax revenue: Finance minister

Islamabad (PTI):

Pakistan Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has warned that the cash-strapped country will continue to seek IMF bailouts if it fails to boost tax revenue, according to a media report on Monday. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader in an interview with the UK-based Financial Times newspaper said that he was "relatively confident" of reaching a staff-level agreement with the Washington-based global lender this month for an estimated loan of USD 6-8 billion. Aurangzeb, however, said, "It will not be our last fund programme if we don't bring our tax revenues up."

Last month, the federal government passed the tax-laden Rs 18,877 billion budget for the fiscal year 2024-25, amidst protests from the Opposition which labelled it as an International Monetary Fund-driven document that was harmful to the

public.

Weeks after slashing the fuel prices ahead of the Eid ul Adha festival, the cash-strapped Pakistan government on July 1 sharply hiked their prices for the next fortnight as it began the new fiscal year.

The tax rises will mostly fall on salaried workers, who comprise a relatively small part of Pakistan's mostly informal economy, as well as some retail and export businesses, Geo News reported. The budget also threatened punitive measures for tax avoiders, including restrictions on mobile phones, gas and electricity access and the ability to fly abroad. "We do not have five years for our programme," Aurangzeb warned in the wake of a budget that seeks to reset the country's ailing economy.

Army to be deployed across Pakistan during Muharram

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government on Monday decided to deploy the Army across the country to maintain law and order during Muharram, amidst fear of attacks by militant groups on Shiite rallies. Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, began on Monday.

Shiite Muslims take out rallies during the first ten days of the month to commemorate the martyrdom of Hussein Ibne Ali, the grandson of the Prophet of Islam.

The Ministry of Interior decided to deploy regular army troops following requests by the provinces.

According to a notification issued by the ministry, the details

of troop deployment, which will be enforced indefinitely, will be finalised with the authorities of the provinces concerned, including Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Islamabad.

"The date of de-requisitioning of said deployment will be decided subsequently after mutual consultation among all stakeholders," the notification stated.

According to Islamic traditions, Hussein was killed along with at least 72 family members on the 10th of Muharram in the Karbala area of modern-day Iraq in 680 A.D. by the forces of Muslim ruler Yazid Ibne Muawia, who considered him a threat to his rule.

The Muslims generally observe his martyrdom as a symbol of

resistance to tyranny, and the Shiite Muslims take out rallies culminating in huge processions on the 9th and 10th day of the month. The Sunni Muslims have a historic theological rivalry with the Shiite, and extremist Sunni groups brand them as heretics, and target them through bombings, with Pakistan witnessing numerous such attacks in the past.

The government often deploys regular army troops to help civil law enforcement agencies keep peace during Muharram. To disrupt communication among the militants, governments in Pakistan undertook other security measures during Muharram, including suspension of internet, cell phone and social media services.

Boeing accepts plea deal to avoid criminal trial over 737 Max crashes

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Boeing will plead guilty to a criminal fraud charge stemming from two crashes of 737 Max jetliners that killed 346 people after the government determined the company violated an agreement that had protected it from prosecution for more than three years, the Justice Department said on Sunday night.

Federal prosecutors gave Boeing the choice this week of entering a guilty plea and paying a fine as part of its sentence or facing a trial on the felony criminal charge of conspiracy to defraud the United States. Prosecutors accused the American aerospace giant of deceiving regulators who approved the airplane and pilot-training requirements

for it. The plea deal, which still must receive the approval of a federal judge to take effect, calls for Boeing to pay an additional USD 243.6 million fine. That was the same amount it paid under the 2021 settlement that the Justice Department said the company breached.

An independent monitor would be named to oversee Boeing's safety and quality procedures for three years. The deal also requires Boeing to invest at least USD 455 million in its compliance and safety programs. The plea deal covers only wrongdoing by Boeing before the crashes, which killed all 346 passengers and crew members aboard two new Max jets. It does not give Boeing immunity for other incidents, including a panel that blew off a Max jet-

liner during an Alaska Airlines flight in January, a Justice Department official said. The deal also does not cover any current or former Boeing officials, only the corporation. In a statement, Boeing confirmed it had reached the deal with the Justice Department but had no further comment.

In a court filing Sunday night, the Justice Department said it expected to file the written plea agreement with the court by July 19. Lawyers for some of the relatives of those who died in the two crashes have said they will ask the judge to reject the agreement.

"This sweetheart deal fails to recognise that because of Boeing's conspiracy, 346 people died. Through crafty lawyering between Boeing and DOJ, the deadly consequences

of Boeing's crime are being hidden," said Paul Cassell, a lawyer for some of the families. Federal prosecutors alleged Boeing committed conspiracy to defraud the government by misleading regulators about a flight-control system that was implicated in the crashes, which took place in Indonesia in October 2018 and in Ethiopia less five months later. As part of the January 2021 settlement, the Justice Department said it would not prosecute Boeing on the charge if the company complied with certain conditions for three years. Prosecutors last month alleged Boeing had breached the terms of that agreement.

The company's guilty plea will be entered in US District Court in Texas.

ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ, ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ
ਸਿਰਫ ਕੇਂਦਰ

ਸਿਰਫ ਕੇਂਦਰ ਦੀਆਂ ਨਕਲਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ-ਵੇਰਤ ਕੇਂਦਰ/Non E-Waste ਸਮਾਨ ਦੀ ਨਿਲਾਮੀ ਕਰੀਬੀ ਰਾਹੀਂ 15-07-2024 (ਸੋਮਵਾਰ) ਨੂੰ ਸਵੇਰੇ 11:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਿਰਫ ਕੇਂਦਰ, ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਕੈਂਪਸ, ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਵਿਖੇ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ। ਨਿਲਾਮੀ ਰੱਖਣ ਵਾਲੀਆਂ ਪਾਰਟੀਆਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਕੰਮ ਵਾਲੇ ਦਿਨ ਸਮਾਨ ਦਾ ਨਿਰੀਖਣ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਨਿਲਾਮੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ ਖੇਤਰਕਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਨਿਲਾਮੀ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਪੇਸ਼ਕੀ ਵਜੋਂ 5000/- ਰੁਪਏ ਜਮ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਰਵਾਉਣੇ ਪੈਣਗੇ।

NA/12/23949/2023/35395 Dated CHD :- 7/8/2024

verka
THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022, EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66
Notice Inviting e Tender
www.verka.coop

Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
For Verka Chandigarh Dairy	Annual Rate Contract
Hiring of services for outsourcing activities/ contractor for packaging UHT milk & milk products / beverages at Verka Milk Plant, Ind. Area, Phase-1, Chandigarh.	

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

NA/12/23971/2023/35420 Dated CHD :- 7/8/2024 Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH PUNJAB TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
Dabwali Road, Bathinda.
(Established by Govt. of Punjab vide Punjab Act No. 5 of 2015)

No.E-TENDER/MRSPTU/DPR/PURCHASE/2024/523 Dated: 05-07-2024
E-TENDER NOTICE

E-tender is invited for Purchase of FT-IR Spectrophotometer, UV-Visible Spectrophotometer, Water Purification System and Rotary Vacuum Evaporator.
For details visit: www.mrsptu.ac.in. Corrigendum, if any, will be issued on University website only.
Time & Schedule: Start Date: 10-7-2024 (11:00 AM), Last Date of Submission: 21-7-2024 (03:00 PM)

na/12/23966/2023/35415 Dated CHD :- 7/5/2024 Registrar

verka
Inviting e Auction for the purchase of following items through NCDFI Portal.
The Punjab State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Ltd, Chandigarh procuring Trace Minerals for Cattle Feed Plants Khanna & GKB on annual basis (i.e. MFP Molecule, Formaldehyde Solution (with drum), Ferrus Sulphate/ Iron Sulphate, Zinc Sulphate, Manganese Sulphate, Calcium Chloride, Sodium Thiocyanate, Copper Sulphate, Magnesium Chloride, Sodium Butyrate, Chocolate Feed Flavour with Sweetner, Cattle Feed Grade free flowing Powder, HMTBa based chelates, Saccharohyces, Potassium Iodide, Potassium Carbonate, Choline) through e-Auctions at NCDFI e-Market across Punjab on 13.07.2024. Interested suppliers/vendors are invited to register and participate in above said e-auction through www.ncdfimarket.com portal.

For registration:
Contact: +91 9998019608; +91 9978601585
Help Desk: +91-2692-288388
E Mail: contracts_pack@ncdfimarket.com, virender.choudhary@neml.in, divakar.juneja@neml.in.

NA/12/23975/2023/35425 Dated CHD :- 7/8/2024

Time to push disinvestment of public sector banks: SBI report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government should go ahead with disinvestment of public sector banks (PSBs) as they are in good condition, SBI said in its research report on Monday. The report also pitched for the consolidation of existing government-owned banks.

"As banks are in good condition, the government should take stance on disinvestment of PSBs," the report titled 'Prelude to Union Budget 2024-25' said.

With regard to the privatisation of IDBI Bank, it said the government and Life Insurance Corporation of India are selling an almost 61 per cent stake in the lender. "They invited bids from buyers in October 2022. In January 2023, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) received several expressions of interest for the



IDBI Bank stake on offer. We expect the government to clarify this in the Budget," it said. Presently, the government owns over 45 per cent stake in IDBI Bank, and LIC has a 49.24 per cent shareholding.

The report also recommended that the government should tweak the tax on deposit interest and make flat tax treatment across the maturity ladder in line with mutual fund and equity markets.

"Household net financial savings has declined to 5.3 per

cent of GDP in FY23 and is expected to be 5.4 per cent in FY24. If we make deposit rate attractive in line with MFs, then this could push up household financial savings and CASA," it said.

As this amount will be in the hands of depositors, the report said, it could unleash additional spending and thereby, more GST revenue to the government.

"Increase in bank deposits will bring not only stability in core deposit base and financial

system but also financial stability in household savings as the banking system is better regulated and having a superior trust as compared to other alternatives with high volatility/risk," it said.

Deposits are taxed on an accrual basis and other asset classes only on redemption and there is also a need to remove this treatment, it added.

The report by the Economic Research Department, State Bank of India (SBI), expressed expectation that the government will look into the concerns over the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) that must be improved and expediting cases under the IBC should be a key change.

Recoveries through IBC in FY24 were 32 per cent, and financial creditors lost 68 per cent of their claims. The time taken to reach a resolution is 863 days instead of the stated 330 days, it said.

Markets settle on flat note in muted trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stock market benchmark Sindices Sensex and Nifty ended flat on Monday in a lacklustre trade as investors opted to book profits after the recent record rally in equities. Weak cues from Asian markets also added to the muted trend in domestic equities.

After beginning the trade on a weak note, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 36.22 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 79,960.38. During the day, it went lower by 264.77 points or 0.33 per cent to 79,731.83. The NSE Nifty dipped 3.30 points or 0.01 per cent to 24,320.55.

Among the Sensex pack, Titan, Adani Ports, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, UltraTech Cement, Asian Paints,

Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finserv were the biggest laggards.

ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Nestle, HCL Technologies and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower.

European markets were trading in the positive territory. US markets ended with gains on Friday.

In a volatile session on Friday, the broader NSE Nifty continued its record-breaking run and inched up 21.70 points or 0.09 per cent to close at its lifetime high of 24,323.85. The BSE benchmark, however, dropped 53.07 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 79,996.60.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.97 per cent to USD 85.70 a barrel.

Rupee falls 1 paisa to 83.50 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared initial gains to settle 1 paisa lower at 83.50 against the US dollar on Monday, as muted domestic equities weighed on investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.45 and hit the intraday high of 83.44 and a low of 83.50 against the American currency during the session.

It finally settled at 83.50 against the dollar, registering a loss of one paisa over the previous close.

On Friday, the rupee settled at 83.49 against the US dollar.

Forex traders said the rupee gained on a weak dollar and decline in crude oil prices. However, weak domestic markets put pressure on the domestic unit.

"The US Dollar declined on disappointing non-farm payrolls report on Friday, which raised expectations that US Federal Reserve may cut

interest rates in its September Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting," said Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 104.90, higher by 0.03 per cent. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.88 per cent to USD 85.78 per barrel.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on the weak tone in the US Dollar and FII inflows. However, a correction in the domestic markets and political uncertainty in France as the election results indicate a hung parliament may cap the sharp upside," Choudhary added.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended the day 36.22 points, or 0.05 per cent, lower at 79,960.38 points.

Mercedes-Benz India posts record half-yearly sales at 9,262 units



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz on Monday reported a 9 per cent growth in sales at 9,262 units in India in the first half of 2024, its highest ever half-yearly sales in the country, riding on strong demand across categories and availability of volume models.

The company had posted sales of 8,528 units in the January-June period of 2023, which was its previous highest half-yearly sales, Mercedes-Benz India said in a statement.

It plans to launch six new products in the second half (H2) of 2024.

SUV penetration was at 55 per cent in H1 2024, while the TEV (top-end vehicle) segment priced above Rs 1.5 crore comprised 25 per cent of total sales, it added.

The SUV segment saw robust performance from the GLA, GLE, GLE and GLS models, while the sedan portfolio comprising the A-Class, C-

Class, outgoing LWB E-Class and S-Class topped customer preference for luxury sedans, it added.

The BEV (battery electric vehicle) portfolio grew by 60 per cent in H1 24, comprising 5 per cent of total sales volumes, Mercedes-Benz India said.

"New and updated products, elevated customer experience at retail and ease of ownership, combined with positive customer sentiments boosted our best-ever H1 sales performance," Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director & CEO Santosh Iyer said.

The company further said availability of volume models also played a part in delivering record sales in the first half of this year.

On the outlook for the rest of the year, Iyer said, "We have new products coming up for the upcoming festive season. So we feel we should be able to close the year with a double-digit growth as projected earlier."

Tata Consumer Products to accelerate growth of core businesses

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Leading FMCG company Tata Consumer Products Limited (TCPL) will continue to invest in its brands and accelerate the growth momentum of the core businesses, tea, coffee and salt, the company's annual report said.

In the annual report for 2023-24, TCPL said that to strengthen and accelerate core businesses, contribution of modern trade to total sales within the country was 14 per cent driven by the growth of

new businesses.

During 2023-24, the company continued to undertake focused brand-building efforts and launched several products. TCPL said that central to the company's growth strategy was on focusing on the core businesses of tea, coffee and salt.

TCPL (formerly Tata Tea) said the company strengthened the tea and coffee businesses and also created new vectors of growth. The company was also successful in driving profitable growth in the key international markets of UK, USA and



Canada.

The company's focus on innovation lay in its belief that it is a strong strategic pillar and plays a significant role in meeting future ambitions, both on top line (revenue) and bottom line (profit).

TCPL said in the report, "We aspire to be a leading player in the FMCG industry by expanding our play in the existing categories and venturing into new spaces", adding that the company has taken both organic and inorganic routes to capitalise on industry trends and tap new

consumers and markets.

The company clocked a revenue of more than Rs 15,000 crore during the last fiscal. TCPL acquired Capital Foods and Organic India to address the needs of the diverse consumer spectrum.

In the last four years, TCPL's compounded annual growth rate of the tea business in India was nine per cent while revenue from coffee grew 29 per cent year-on-year.

The CAGR of salt during the last four years was 17 per cent, while that of packaged foods in India was 31 per cent.

Event on integration of AI in digital skills development a hit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Powered Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) Masterclass, held last week, showcased remarkable global participation, with notable engagement from South African countries.

Interestingly, a few from Pakistan and China also took part under India's flagship skilling platform SIDH.

This significant event on July 4, focusing on the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in digital skills development, witnessed substantial turnout from various continents, reflecting growing international interest in AI and digital education.

Organised by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, and UNESCO, the masterclass brought together



global experts and enthusiasts.

It was attended by key dignitaries including Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Dr Haja Ramatulai Wuri — Minister of Technical and Higher Education, Sierra Leone; Ruben Sargsyan, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Armenia; Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship; Ved Mani Tiwari, CEO, NSDC and MD and others.

NBCC to execute incubation centre at NIT Patna

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

NBCC (India) Limited has been entrusted with the execution of construction and development of Incubation Centre at NIT Patna (Bihta Campus). The estimated cost for the same is approximately Rs 36 Crore.

The Incubation Centre, spanning in an area of 6,500 sqm, shall be a state-of-the-art facility. The facility is designed as basement + ground + 4 floors structure, accommodating various essential amenities and advanced infrastructure.

As per the scope of work, NBCC shall be responsible for the conceptual planning, detailed architectural & structural design, drafting, including the supervision of construction for buildings, electrical systems, furniture, IT networking, and more.

Two-wheeler sales volume growth to continue this fiscal: CareEdge Ratings

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The two-wheeler industry is expected to sustain a steady volume growth this fiscal driven by improved domestic sales and good traction in executive and premium segment motorcycles, a report said on Monday.

According to CareEdge Ratings, post-Covid, sales volume of two-wheelers had consistently declined during FY20, FY21 and FY22 before starting to recover from FY23, with sales momentum continuing in FY24 as well.

"CareEdge Ratings anticipates two-wheeler sales volume growth to continue in FY25 and it would be more driven by improved domestic sales, higher EV sales, launch of CNG powered two-wheelers and good traction in executive and premium segment motorcycles," said



Hardik Shah, Director at CareEdge Ratings.

The growth in the two-wheeler segment in FY25 is also expected to be aided by the likely interest rate cuts in the second half of FY25, strong demand for new model launches coupled with recovery in exports from its low base and favourable monsoon which is likely to

improve rural consumer sentiment and income levels, said Arti Roy, Associate Director at CareEdge Ratings.

In FY23, the Indian two-wheeler industry recorded sales of 19.51 million units, an 8 per cent growth compared to the previous fiscal year's 18.01 million units.

In FY24, the industry continued its upward trajectory, achieving 9.8 per cent growth with a total sales volume of 21.43 million units. However, this was still short of the peak sales volume recorded in FY19, when annual sales volume had reached 24.46 million units, it said.

During FY24, the domestic two-wheeler industry witnessed total sales volume of 17.97 million units, reflecting a growth rate of 13 per cent, while the exports volume experienced a decline of 5 per cent.

High prices of vegetables causing pain to consumers

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Retail prices for vegetables, eggs, and poultry meat remain high in Kolkata markets, causing suffering for the common man.

Tomato prices have soared to Rs 80-100 per kg from Rs 45-50 a month ago, while Brinjal is selling for Rs 110-140 per kg, a jump of nearly 150 per cent from early June, greengrocers in several markets in the city said.

Prices of several other vegetables such as bitter melon, green chilli and bottle gourd have also increased by an average of 50 per cent. Egg and poultry meat prices have risen by 20-30 per cent in local markets.

"Now tomatoes in Bengal are coming from other states. There is a short supply of tomatoes from Bangalore and Himachal Pradesh due to heat waves and heavy rain. The production was hit due to heat waves and disruptions in logistics due to heavy rain," a source in West Bengal Vendors Association told PTI.

Agriculture Minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay



said that people are facing price pain since the Centre reduced support for farmers in fertilisers and transport subsidies, while climatic conditions have also aggravated the situation.

"The West Bengal government continues to support our farmers who are facing a rise in input costs. On the other hand, the Centre is reducing various subsidies. Hence, both farmers and commoners are suffering," said Chattopadhyay, also a Trinamool Congress leader.

He said that the state government has a retail distribution network, 'Sufal

Bangla,' the outlets of which sell vegetables and food articles at reasonable prices.

"In Sufal Bangla, tomatoes are priced at Rs 65 per kg against a minimum of Rs 80 in the retail market. Bitter melon is sold at Rs 72 per kg, and brinjal at Rs 102 per kg, which are 10-20 per cent cheaper. We are planning to increase the number of outlets from 484 now," Chattopadhyay said.

"Over the last three weeks, the prices of vegetables, eggs, and poultry have surged. Tomato prices have doubled, and onion prices are also inching higher. Inflation in essential items continues to cause us

pain in one way or another," Manashi Sanyal, a homemaker, said.

Food inflation likely intensified in June from the 8.7 per cent rate observed in April and May. According to Crisil's food plate cost tracker, the cost of a home-cooked vegetarian meal increased by 10 per cent year-on-year, reaching a six-month high, while the cost of non-vegetarian meals hit a seven-month peak.

The RBI has consistently expressed concerns over rising food prices. Retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index moderated to a one-year low of 4.75 per cent in May. However, inflation in the food basket was 8.69 per cent, marginally down from 8.70 per cent in April.

However, fresh harvests from southern states are set to hit markets soon, which should ease prices within days, the consumer affairs ministry officials expect, adding that summer sowing of key vegetables is expanding robustly on the back of good rains.

Gold rises ₹100; silver rallies ₹870 amid strong global cues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose Rs 100 to Rs 73,410 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday in line with strong global trend, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal closed at Rs 73,310 per 10 grams in the previous session.

Silver prices also rallied Rs 870 to Rs 94,270 per kg. It had settled at Rs 93,400 per kg in the previous session.

"In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are quoted at Rs 73,410 per 10 grams, up by Rs 100 from the Friday's afternoon price.

"Gold prices at Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) traded lower amid risk-averse sentiment and profit booking after surging in the week gone by," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was USD 2,373 per ounce, up USD 10 per ounce from the previous close.

Budget FY25 should focus on tax relief to boost consumption: India Inc

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Budget FY25 should focus on offering relief to taxpayers, especially in the lower income brackets, to stimulate consumption, industry players suggested.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the full Budget for fiscal 2024-25 on July 23 which will be the first major policy document of the new government.

The industry also urged the finance minister to lower corporate tax, phase out tax exemptions, and broaden tax base to boost economic growth.

"Rationalise and simplify the tax system to improve compliance and promote investment. Consider measures such as reducing corporate tax rates, phasing out tax exemptions, and broadening the tax base to make the tax regime more efficient and equitable," ASSOCHAM said.

Rating agency ICRA said the government is likely to set a fiscal deficit target at 4.9-5 per cent for FY25, as against 5.1 per cent estimated in the Interim Budget on February 1,

without compromising the capital expenditure target of Rs 11.1 lakh crore.

"While favourable developments on the revenue front portend positively for the fiscal dynamics in FY2025, ICRA believes that fiscal consolidation will turn quite challenging beyond the current fiscal," the rating agency said.

Mayank Gupta, co-founder and COO of Zopper Insurtech said the Budget is expected to focus on policies to promote economic growth and offer relief especially for the lower income brackets to stimulate consumption.

"From the point of view of insurance, we suggest amending section 80C of the Income Tax Act to permit a greater limit on insurance premium payments, thereby encouraging more individuals to buy insurance products. Additionally, there should also be an allowance of deduction for term life insurance under the new tax regime," he said.

Anish Mashruwala, partner, JSA Advocates and Solicitors said NBFC sector is expecting some ease of doing business considering the multitude of

regulatory compliances.

"Of course a balance needs to be struck in terms of oversight and hopefully this is something that the government ably considers," Mashruwala said.

Rumki Majumdar, economist, Deloitte India suggested that the government must expand the scope of PLI schemes, especially for sectors that can create more jobs, such as textiles, handicraft and leather.

The schemes must continue in sectors that have seen success, such as electronics, auto and semiconductors, Majumdar added.

On expectations from the finance minister, Vishal Goel, managing director, RX Promellant said the life sciences sector has immense potential and has been drawing global players to not only leverage the strength in contract manufacturing but also establishing global capability centres (GCCs).

"We are optimistic that the upcoming budget announcement will prioritise the life sciences sector, enhancing investment flows and fuelling innovation and success in India," Goel said.

High-scoring Spain faces Mbappé's France with spot in Euro 2024 final on line

AP ■ MUNICH

Spain and France meet in the semifinals of the European Championship on Tuesday. The match pits one of the highest-scoring teams at the tournament against one of the lowest as France's star forward Kylian Mbappé has struggled to get to grips with his mask. Kickoff is at 9 p.M. Local time (1900 GMT) in Munich. Here's what to know about the match:

Match facts: The winner will play England or the Netherlands in the final on Sunday in Berlin. Their semifinal is on Wednesday.

■ Spain and France's quarterfinals both went to extra time. Substitute Mikel Merino's game-winning goal in the last minute of extra time handed Spain a 2-1 victory over host nation Germany, while France needed penalties to see off Portugal after the match ended goalless.

■ No France player has scored from open play at Euro 2024. The French have only scored through two own goals and a penalty from Mbappé. Spain has netted 11 times.

■ Mbappé, who will be facing several of his new Real Madrid

teammates, will again be wearing a protective mask after sustaining a broken nose in France's group opener against Austria.

■ Spain, which is chasing a record fourth European Championship title, has been perfect in Germany. It was the only team to win all its group stage matches, while France could only muster draws against Poland and the Netherlands after a narrow win over Austria.

Team news: Spain paid the price for its dramatic win over Germany and a number of players will miss the semifinal - and in some cases the final should La Roja get there - because of suspension or injury.

■ Midfielder Pedri had to come off in the eighth minute against Germany with a knee injury following a hefty challenge from Toni Kroos and has been ruled out of the rest of Euro 2024. He will again be replaced by Dani Olmo - who came on for the 21-year-old and went on to score the opener as well as set up Merino's winner.

■ Dani Carvajal was sent off late in extra time for a second yellow card and will be



suspended against France, as will fellow defender Robin le Normand after picking up another booking. Veteran Jesús Navas is likely to be tasked with marking Mbappé.

■ France coach Didier Deschamps has no injury problems as Marcus Thuram returned to training on Sunday, alleviating concerns he could miss the semifinal after taking a blow to his thigh at the end of the match against Portugal.

By the numbers: Spain and France have only conceded three goals between them. The only time France goalkeeper Mike Maignan had to pick the ball out of his net was Poland's retaken penalty in the group stage, while Spain conceded against Georgia and Germany.

■ The teams have met 36 times, with Spain winning 16 to France's 13 - including five of the past eight.

■ This is Spain's sixth European Championship semifinal. It has only once failed to advance to the trophy match, losing on penalties to eventual champion Italy at Euro 2020.

■ France has reached the final in three of last four major tournaments, losing 1-0 after extra time to Portugal at Euro 2016 and to Argentina on penalties in the 2022 World Cup, but beating Croatia to claim its second world title in 2018.

What they're saying "We're in the semifinals and it's something we shouldn't take for granted, even if we may be used to it recently. Now we go to win it." - France coach Didier Deschamps.

"Very few people gave us a chance and staying under the radar helped us start the tournament with confidence. Spain is a team to respect. I knew we had a great team and that's how it turned out." - Spain defender Marc Cucurella.

"It's natural for him. He has this gift of carrying the team, the group. He gives ideas, advice to the players. He was born for that. He was born to pull the group up." - France striker Randal Kolo Muani on Mbappé's captaincy.

"My players are insatiable. There's always room for improvement, of course, but we can't question their pride, quality and commitment."



India eyeing first win against Myanmar in international women's friendlies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will aim for a first win against Myanmar when they renew their rivalry against the higher-ranked neighbours in two away women's football friendlies beginning at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon, Myanmar on Tuesday.

The 67th ranked Indians are winless in all five of their meetings with Myanmar (WR 54), losing four and drawing once.

But it's been five years since they faced Myanmar with the last one being a 3-3 in the AFC Women's Olympic Qualifiers in Mandalay in 2019.

Sandhiya Ranganathan, Sanju and Nongmaithem Ratanbala Devi, all of them part of the current squad as well, scored in that fixture.

Prior to that, India suffered defeats on each of the four occasions at the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers (2013), AFC Women's Olympic Qualifiers (2015, 2018) and the Gold Cup (2019).

"We've played against them before, so we have an idea about them. Myanmar are strong and physically tough. Their mobility and speed is also good," Indian captain Loitongbam Ashalata Devi said in an AIFF release.

However, it's been more than five years since India last faced Myanmar, and the captain believes these two games will mark a fresh start in this rivalry.

"Myanmar's game style has changed a lot since we last played them. In the Asian Games, we watched them play. They have brought in a lot of youngsters, who can generate

more energy on the pitch. Our team has the perfect mixture of senior and young players.

"I believe we can perform better and the Myanmar tour could be a successful one," said the 31-year-old Indian skipper. This will be India's second consecutive FIFA women's international match window facing a higher-ranked opponent.

India had previously faced 48th-ranked Uzbekistan in Tashkent on May 31 and June 4, losing 0-3 and drawing 0-0, respectively.

"Competing against better and higher-ranked opponents is always an advantage. It leaves us with the opportunity to learn more and change strategies according to different situations as we did against Uzbekistan. I'm sure we'll learn a lot from the Myanmar games too," Ashalata said.

Myanmar have been out of action since the Asian Games in China last September. They were knocked out of the group stage after losing to Korea Republic (0-3) and Philippines (0-3), and their only win came against Hong Kong (1-0).

Before that, Myanmar finished runners-up to Vietnam in the Southeast Asian Games. Head coach Langam Chaoba Devi feels India can match them.

"We closely observed Myanmar's style of play when they faced Korea Republic and Philippines," said Chaoba.

"Physically they are similar to us, with little difference in height and strength. However, they are technically very sound. But again, as I've said, we can surely match them," added the coach.

Majhi announces ₹15 lakh for two sportspersons from Odisha who will represent India in Olympics

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday announced an incentive of Rs 15 lakh each for hockey player Amit Rohidas and ace javelin thrower Kishore Jena who will be representing India in the Paris Olympics.

The CM expressed hope that the incentive will inspire the two sportspersons from Odisha to excel and bring glory to the country, an official statement said. Majhi said Jena and Rohidas have made their native places as well as the entire state proud by qualifying

for the Paris Olympics. The effort, willpower, hard work, dedication and perseverance displayed by the two sportspersons will inspire young and budding talents in the state, he said.

"There is no dearth of sports talents in Odisha and the state government is committed to providing the required infrastructure, financial support and all other facilities at the grassroots level for the all-round development of such talents in every corner of the state," he added.

The Indian men's hockey team won a Bronze in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Never give up, fight till last moment: Sreejesh's learning from Rohit's men

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Playing in his fourth and probably last Olympics, veteran India hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh has learnt a valuable lesson from the T20 World Cup-winning cricket team -- 'never give up and celebrate early and this is something which will be embedded in his mind in the Paris Olympics.

The Indian cricket team rose from the ashes in the final of the T20 World Cup, snatching a seven-run victory over South Africa from the jaws of defeat to end an 11-year ICC title drought.

India's last major ICC title was the Champions Trophy in 2013 under Mahendra Singh Dhoni's leadership.

"I did watch the final. The biggest learning from this World Cup is that don't celebrate before the last ball. South Africa was almost winning till the 15th over but the Indian team did not give up hope and snatched the win from the jaws of defeat," Sreejesh, who has 328 India caps, told PTI Bhasha.

"That's what not only us (hockey team) but every Olympic-bound athlete can learn from our cricket team is that never give up, just wait and fight till the last moment, you will achieve it. I will remember this in the Olympics," he said.

Regarded as the 'The Wall of Indian hockey', Sreejesh still remembers that one advice he got from "The Wall of Indian cricket", Rahul Dravid.

"I met Dravid bhai long back. He told us about the importance of patience and waiting for your moment. That's what I did. I did not become one of the best goalkeepers in the world overnight. I waited for my opportunities. I have also learnt to remain humble from him," he said.

Sreejesh started playing hockey

to get grace marks in the board exams but went on to win an Olympic medal -- bronze in Tokyo -- and also became the only goalkeeper from the country to feature in four Olympics.

"It's a great honour, a proud moment but comes with a lot of responsibilities. You need to guide the youngsters, you need to keep the team together and help to achieve the common goal of winning a medal at the Olympics," said the former FIH player of the year.

"It's a dream journey. I just started playing this game for grace marks in board exams. I never thought that I would play hockey, wear an Indian jersey and participate in the Olympics. I just knew the legendary Dhanraj Pillay, who played 4 Olympics, 4 World Cups, Champions Trophy, Asian Games and today I am the first

goalkeeper going to play my fourth Olympics. It's hard to believe."

Sreejesh was the hero of India's win over Germany in the bronze medal play-off match in Tokyo and he is very well aware



of the expectations from him in Paris.

"Expectations come with achievements and we don't have to take it negatively. I believe that it will give us the boost to perform even better in

Paris. I want to tell the youngsters in the team that expectations and criticism will be there but on the field you are the boss.

Stick to your basics, execute your plans and enjoy the game," he said.

India are placed in a tough Pool B in the Olympics along side Argentina, Australia, Belgium, New Zealand and Ireland.

He also acts as a mentor for the youngsters of the team and loves to throw challenges to get the best out of them.

"Mentoring is very important as you are the one who played this game, failed, succeeded and when you tell these things to the kids, they understand. I always challenge forwards, make fun of them if they don't score. They accept this and try to do better," he said.

"The Olympics are too much pressure. It's like a pressure cooker. You are closely followed by the media, there will be social media, coaches, people give you many ideas and these things distract you. I just tell them to play as a team without hearing these noises."

India are placed in a tough Pool B in the Olympics along side Argentina, Australia, Belgium, New Zealand and Ireland.

HDFC BANK
We understand your world

Registered Office: HDFC Bank House, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai - 400 013 and having one of its office as Retail Portfolio Management at HDFC Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, I-Think Techno Campus, Kanjurmarg (East), Mumbai - 400042.

SALE INTIMATION AND PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE OF SECURITIES PLEDGED TO HDFC BANK LTD.

The below mentioned Borrowers of HDFC Bank Ltd. (the "Bank") are hereby notified regarding the sale of securities pledged to the Bank, for availing credit facilities in the nature of Loan/Overdraft/Against Securities.

Due to persistent default by the Borrowers in making repayment of the outstanding dues as per agreed loan terms, the below loan accounts are in delinquent status. The Bank has issued multiple notices to these Borrowers, including the final sale notice on the below-mentioned date whereby, Bank had invoked the pledge and provided 7 days' time to the Borrower to repay the entire outstanding dues in the below accounts, failing which, Bank would be at liberty to sell the pledged securities without issuing further notice in this regard. The Borrowers have neglected and failed to make due repayments, therefore, Bank in exercise of its rights under the loan agreement as a pledgee has decided to sell / dispose of the Securities on or after 16th July, 2024 for recovering the dues owed by the Borrowers to the Bank. The Borrowers are, also, notified that, if at any time, the value of the pledged securities falls further due to volatility in the stock market to create further deficiency in the margin requirement then Bank shall at its discretion sell the pledged security within one (1) calendar day, without any further notice in this regard. The Borrower(s) shall remain liable to the Bank for repayment of any remaining outstanding amount, post adjustment of the proceeds from sale of pledged securities.

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 5 th July, 2024	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXX5233	BAL KRISHNA YADAV	56,809.20	04 July 2024
2	XXXX3232	GOPI VIJAY	16,953.66	19 June 2024
3	XXXX2275	GOPAL CHANDRA MUKHERJEE	1,22,208.18	26 June 2024

Date: 08.07.2024
Place: Chhattisgarh
Sd/-
HDFC BANK LTD.

AU SMALL FINANCE BANK
A SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL BANK

AU SMALL FINANCE BANK LIMITED
A SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL BANK

Regd. Office: 19-A, Dhuleswar Garden, Ajmer Road, Jaipur - 302001 (CIN:L36911RJ1996PLC011381)

Demand Notice Under Section 13(2) of Securitisation Act of 2002

As the loan account became NPA therefore the Authorized officer under section 13(2) of "The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002" had issued 60 days demand notice to the Borrowers/Co-borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors (collectively referred as "Borrowers") as given in the table. According to the notice if the borrowers do not deposit the entire amount within 60 days, the amount will be recovered from auction of the mortgage properties/secured assets as given below. Therefore you the borrowers are informed to deposit the entire loan amount along with future interest and expenses within 60 days from the date of demand notice, otherwise under the provisions of 13(4) and 14 of the said Act, the Authorized officer is free to take possession for sale of the mortgage properties/secured assets as given below.

Borrowers to note that after receipt of this notice, in terms of Section 13(13) of the Act, 2002, you are prohibited and restrained from transferring any of the secured assets by way of sale, lease or otherwise, without prior written consent of the secured creditor.

Borrowers attention are attracted towards Section 13(8) r/w Rule 3(5) of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Act that the borrowers shall be entitled to redeem their secured asset upon the payment of the complete outstanding dues as mentioned below before the publication of auction notice, which thereafter shall cease to exist.

Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower / Mortgagor / Guarantor / Loan A/C No.	Date and Amount of Demand / Notice Under Sec. 13(2)	Description of Mortgaged Property
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060114186510, Gajananand Sahu (Borrower), Smt.Yashoda Bai Sahu (Co-Borrower), Hemant Kumar Sahu (Guarantor)	12-Jun-24 ₹ 2,95,290/- Rs. Two Lac Ninety-Five Thousand Two Hundred Ninety Only As On 11-Jun-24	Property Situated At Kh No- 213 (Part), Ph No- 14, Vill- Kochera, Tehsil- Gurur, Dist- Balod, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 1265.92 Square Feet
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060720675614, Veera Restaurant Through its Proprietor Jagmeet Singh(Borrower), Javleet Singh Singhotra (Co-Borrower) Jagmeet Singh Singhotra (Co-Borrower) Hardev Singh Singhotra (Co-Borrower)	12-Jun-24 ₹ 18,80,838/- Rs. Eighteen Lac Eighty Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty-Eight Only As On 11-Jun-24	Property Situated At Plot No 24 -Part Of 144, Mouja- Pandari Tarai, Te-& Dist- Raipur Chhattisgarh. Admeasuring 1375 Sqyds
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060120721462, Lekhran Sahu (Borrower), Smt.Bhanmati Sahu (Co-Borrower)	13-Jun-24 ₹ 14,53,744/- Rs. Four Lac Thirteen Thousand Seven Hundred Forty-Four Only As On 11-Jun-24	(Property 1) Property Situated At- Part Of Kh No 2811/55 New (2811/28 Old, P H No 23, Amera, Dist- Baloda Bazar, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 40 Sq. Mtr (Property 2) Property Situated At- Part Of Kh No. 2811/54 New (2811/28 Old, P H No 23, Amera, Baloda Bazar, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 80 Sq.Mtr
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060124026751, Uttam Kumar Sahu (Borrower), Ghasiya Sahu (Co-Borrower)	12-Jun-24 ₹ 15,16,382/- Rs. Fifteen Lac Sixteen Thousand Three Hundred Eighty-Two Only As On 11-Jun-24	Property Situated At Gram Panchayat Ph No 11, Sr 433/2, Vill -Parasada, Th- Saranghar , Dist -Raigarh, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring .040 Hectare
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060827333870, Uttam Kumar Sahu (Borrower), Smt.Madhu Sahu (Co-Borrower) Ghasiya Sahu (Co-Borrower)	12-Jun-24 ₹ 4,13,706/- Rs. Four Lac Thirteen Thousand Seven Hundred Six Only As On 11-Jun-24	Property Situated At- Gram Panchayat-Khasra No 433/2, P H No 811, Ric Hardi Tehsil-Saranghar, Dist- Raigarh, Chhattisgarh-496001 Admeasuring 0.04.Hectare
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060830752692, Uttam Kumar Sahu (Borrower), Smt.Madhu Sahu (Co-Borrower), Ghasiya Sahu (Co-Borrower)	12-Jun-24 ₹ 6,15,879/- Rs. Six Lac Fifteen Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy-Nine Only As On 11-Jun-24	Property Situated At- Gram Panchayat-Khasra No 433/2, P H No 811, Ric Hardi Tehsil -Saranghar, Dist-Raigarh, Chhattisgarh-496001 Admeasuring 0.04 Hectare
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060126769938, Jhanak Ram Patel (Borrower), Mallikram Patel (Co-Borrower) Nayanmoti Patel (Co-Borrower)	12-Jun-24 ₹ 10,56,890/- Rs. Ten Lac Fifty-Six Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety Only As On 11-Jun-24	Property Situated At Kh .No. 137/9 Village-Jamnidin , Tehsil -Basna , Dist- Mahasamund Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 0.03 Hectare
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060128624788, Gurycharan Singh Juneja (Borrower), Vicky Singh Juneja (Co-Borrower), Harbhajan Kaur Juneja (Co-Borrower)	13-Jun-24 ₹ 20,38,187/- Rs. Twenty Lac Thirty-Eight Thousand One Hundred Eighty-Seven Only As On 11-Jun-24	Property Situated At- Plot No 1398-10, Nazul Mohalla New Mahamaya Road, Barejipara, Vill- Ambikapur, Dist- Surguja, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 291.2 Sqyd
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060728835245, Mangal Dewangan (Borrower), Priyatam Dewangan (Co-Borrower) Smt. Shantibai Dewangan (Co-Borrower)	12-Jun-24 ₹ 8,11,720/- Rs. Eight Lac Eleven Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty Only As On 11-Jun-24	Property Situated At- And Municipal Corporation-Khasra No 196/24 And Old Khasra No 196/1, Phno 105, Changorabhata, Kagan Karkhana, Dist- Raipur, Chhattisgarh-492001 Admeasuring 1120 Sqft

Date: 08/07/2024
Place: Chhattisgarh
Authorised Officer
AU Small Finance Bank Limited

NATA2024
NATIONAL APTITUDE TEST IN ARCHITECTURE

Council of Architecture
(A Statutory Authority of Government of India under the Architects Act, 1972)

Ref.CA/498/2024/MSAR (Regulations)

IMPORTANT PUBLIC NOTICE
CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY FOR ADMISSION TO B.ARCH. COURSE

The Council, with the approval of the Central Government, has amended the Regulation 4(1) of the Council of Architecture (Minimum Standards of Architectural Education) Regulations, 2020 and amended the eligibility for admission to Architecture course as under:

1. "(1) No candidate shall be admitted to architecture course unless she/he has passed 10+2 or equivalent examination with Physics and Mathematics as compulsory subjects along with either Chemistry or Biology or Technical Vocational subject or Computer Science or Information Technology or Informatics Practices or Engineering Graphics or Business Studies with at least 45% marks in aggregate or passed 10+3 Diploma Examination with Mathematics as compulsory subject with at least 45% marks in aggregate."

Relaxation in percentage of marks obtained in the qualifying examination for admission shall be as per the reservation policy of Central Government or the respective State Governments.

Accordingly, all stakeholders i.e. students, parents, architectural institutions and concerned competent authorities are advised to follow the above eligibility criteria for admission to First Year of 5-year B.Arch. Degree Course from academic session 2024-25 onwards. For further details please visit NATA website www.nata.in.

New Delhi
July 09, 2024

R. K. Oberoi
Registrar

https://www.facebook.com/COAofficial
@coasocial256
@CouncilofArch1
@council_of_architecture_india
WWW.NATA.IN

INDIA EYE IMPROVED BOWLING SHOW IN FINAL WOMEN'S T20I AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Desperate to level the three-match series after the second game was washed out, India would hope weather doesn't play spoilsport, besides eyeing a much-improved bowling effort in the final women's T20I against South Africa here on Tuesday.

India are trailing the three-match series 0-1 after losing the opener by 12 runs. Their problems compounded after the second game here on Sunday was washed out midway due to persistent drizzle.

And with 30 to 40 per cent of rain forecast for Tuesday, the Indians are left on the mercy of weather gods.

In both the matches, the Indian bowlers cut a sorry figure as South Africa amassed 189 for 9 and 177 for 6 respectively.

Barring Pooja Vastrakar, who picked up two wickets each in both the games, and spinner Deepti Sharma, most of the Indian bowlers failed to shine against the Proteas women.

Renuka Singh leaked runs in

the first game and was subsequently replaced by Sajeevan Sajana in the second T20I but the latter also didn't her cause.

Shreyanka Patil and Radha Yadav picked up a wicket each on Sunday but continued to leak runs.

India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur would want her bowlers to pull up their socks with the series at stake.

On the batting front, it has been a decent show by the Indians in the first game. The likes of Jemimah Rodrigues (53 not out), Smriti Mandhana (46), Harmanpreet (35), Shafali Verma (18) and Daylan Hemalatha (14) all making double digit scores.

Uma Chetry, who made her T20I debut on Sunday, is likely to persisted with as Harmanpreet and the team management would like to see her exploits with the bat.

South Africa, on the other hand, has been rock solid with the bat with Tazmin Brits, who hit consecutive half-centuries, leading the charge.

Besides Brits, skipper Laura Wolvaardt, Marizanne Kapp



and Anneke Bosch have contributed with the bat as well for the visitors.

South Africa's only concern is Chloe Tryon, who has scored identical 12 runs in the two games.

And with the upcoming T20 World Cup in Bangladesh in mind, Tryon will be desperate to prove her detractors wrong.

TEAMS (FROM):
India Women: Harmanpreet Kaur(c), Smriti Mandhana(vc), Uma Chetry(wk), Richa Ghosh(wk), Dayalan Hemalatha, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Amanjot Kaur, Shreyanka Patil, Sajeevan Sajana, Deepti Sharma, Asha Sobhana, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, Shabnam Shakil, Pooja Vastrakar and Radha Yadav.
South Africa Women: Laura Wolvaardt(c), Tazmin Brits, Mieke de Ridder(wk), Sinalo Jafta(wk), Anneke Bosch, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Marizanne Kapp, Sune Luus, Chloe Tryon, Ayabonga Khaka, Masabata Klaas, Eliz-Mari Marx, Nonkululeko Mlaba and Tumi Sekhukhune.



Mentor Yuvraj was very happy when I got out for duck, he must be proud now: Abhishek Sharma

PTI ■ HARARE

India opener Abhishek Sharma has revealed that his mentor Yuvraj Singh was delighted when he got out for a duck on his T20I debut against Zimbabwe here as the swashbuckling former all-rounder, for reasons best known to him, felt it was a "good start".

Making his India debut, Abhishek was out on duck as the Men in Blue lost the first T20I against hosts Zimbabwe by 13 runs on Saturday. But the 23-year-old came back strongly to set the stage ablaze with a blistering maiden century (a 47-ball 100) to fashion India's 100-run win in the second game a day later.

"I spoke to him yesterday (Saturday) also, and I don't know why he was very happy when I got out on zero. He said that's a good start but he must be very happy and proud just like my family," Abhishek said in a video posted by BCCI.

He credited the hero of India's 2011 World Cup triumph for not only helping him hone his skills on the cricket field but also supporting him in his life away from the field.

"It's all because of him as well, the hard work he has put in (shaping) me. (For) two-three years, he has worked really hard not only on my cricket but off the field (life) as well." After Sunday's game, Abhishek called Yuvraj, who couldn't be happier for the youngster.

"Well done very proud, you

deserve it. Many more (such innings) to come this is just the start," Yuvraj said.

Since there was no rest day in between the first two games, the visitors didn't get a lot of time to think about the opening loss and that worked in India's favour as they levelled the five-match series 1-1.

"We lost yesterday but I felt, today is my day and I should take the match to the end, the positive was that we didn't have much time to think about the next game," he pointed out.

Abhishek combined with Rituraj Gaikwad (77 not out off 47 ball) for a match-winning 137-run stand for the second wicket. "I was in a flow, and just wanted to express myself. I spoke to Ritu as well, he said the same thing that 'don't think much about the balls and hit what you think you can'," he said.

He once again thanked India skipper on the tour and his Punjab teammate Shubman Gill for lending him his bat.

"Special thanks to Shubman who timely gave me his bat, this was a much-needed innings for me and the team.

"This has been going on from U-14 times. Whenever I play with his bat I have done well, today also, the same happened. "I played with his bat only, which I got after a lot of difficulty, he doesn't give it easily. That is like my last option when I feel I have to play with his bat for a comeback," he quipped.

Have been living a dream for past few days, filled with gratitude: Bumrah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Monday said he has been "living a dream" for the past few days as he expressed gratitude for the stupendous reception that he and the rest of his teammates got for winning the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean.

The 30-year-old, who picked up 15 wickets in the mega-event that concluded on June 29 in Barbados, was a key figure in India's second overall and first in 17 years world trophy in the shortest format. He was adjudged Player of the Tournament for his performance.

"I am so thankful for the last few



days. I've been living a dream and it has filled me with happiness and gratitude," Bumrah posted on X, along with a video of him enjoying the rapturous homecoming that included a breakfast meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a victory parade attended by lakhs of fans in Mumbai.

The 42-second clip featured the audio of Virat Kohli's speech during the felicitation function after the parade last Thursday where the champion batter had lauded Bumrah's contribution.

The fast bowler had combined with all-rounder Hardik Pandya to turn it around wonderfully for India in the final.

The two were brought in for their second spell in the match at a time

when South Africa needed 30 off 30 balls. They wreaked havoc to ensure that the Proteas eventually fell short by seven runs.

Kohli had called Bumrah a "once in a generation" player during the speech at the Wankhede Stadium, prompting the assembled crowd to chant the bowler's name in appreciation.

"What I would like everyone to do is to applaud a guy who brought us back into games again, and again, and again. It was phenomenal. He is a once in a generation bowler. I am so glad he plays for us," Kohli, who retired from T20 Internationals at the end of the World Cup, had said.

Bumrah was welcomed with flower petals after arriving at his Ahmedabad home recently.



Jayasuriya named Sri Lanka's interim coach ahead of limited-overs series against India

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Former captain Sanath Jayasuriya was on Monday named the interim head coach of Sri Lanka's cricket team ahead of this month's white-ball home series against India with the country's board saying that he is "well-positioned" to guide the side till a "permanent solution" is found in the next few months.

The Indian team will be touring Sri Lanka for three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs, starting July 27.

Jayasuriya, who has also served as a chief selector in the past, will continue in the post till Sri Lanka's Test tour to England in August-September, comprising three games.

"Sri Lanka Cricket wishes to announce the appointment of Mr. Sanath Jayasuriya as the 'Interim Head Coach' of the national team. He will function in the position until the completion of Sri Lanka's tour of England in September 2024," the SLC said in a statement.

The 55-year-old, a swashbuckling opener in his prime, was named for the interim post after Englishman Chris Silverwood resigned last week as Sri Lanka head coach.

Silverwood stepped down in the wake of the country's disastrous T20 World Cup campaign, during which it was ousted from the league stage itself.

One of the most attacking batters of his time, Jayasuriya had recently been a consultant for the team during this year's T20 World Cup in the USA and Caribbean.

"Jayasuriya is currently serving as the full-time 'Cricket Consultant' of Sri Lanka Cricket. His new appointment comes into immediate effect."

"Sanath with his wealth of international cricketing experience is well positioned to guide the national team, until we find a permanent solution," said SLC CEO Ashley De Silva.

Jayasuriya featured in 110 Tests between 1991 and 2007, scoring 6973 runs at an average of 40.07, with the help of 14 centuries and 31 fifties.

In the 445 ODIs he played, the left-hander struck 13,430 runs at an average of 32.36, with 28 hundreds and 68 half centuries.

He was a key member of the Sri Lankan team that won 1996 ODI World Cup. He also served as Member of Parliament from 2010-15.

Maldives' tourism body invites T20 world champ Indian team to celebrate trophy there

PTI ■ MALE

The recently-crowned T20 world champion Indian cricket team has been invited to celebrate its triumph in Maldives by the country's tourism association and its marketing and public relations corporation.

The Rohit Sharma-led Indian team won the trophy in Barbados after beating South Africa by seven runs in the final on June 29.

"Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC/ Visit Maldives) in collaboration with the Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI) have jointly extended a special and open invitation to the Indian National Cricket Team," the two bodies said in a joint statement.

Ibrahim Shiuree, the CEO and Managing Director of MMPRC, and Ahmed Nazeer, Secretary General of MATI, said they look forward to



hosting the team, which returned to India on Thursday last week.

It was welcomed by frenzied fans in both Delhi and Mumbai, which also played host to a victory parade featuring lakhs of supporters.

"We would be honoured to host you and ensure that your stay is filled with memorable moments, relaxation, and bespoke experiences," Shiuree and Nazeer said in the joint statement.

They said the invitation also highlights the strong and long-standing cultural and sporting ties between the Maldives and India.

"It would be an immense honour for the Maldives to welcome the Indian Cricket Team and share in the joy of their triumph," Shiuree further said.

"We eagerly await the opportunity to host them, offering the perfect setting for them to create lasting memories of their victory celebration," he added.

The team is currently on a break. Its next international assignment is a six-match limited-overs series against Sri Lanka beginning July 27. The series comprises three ODIs and as many T20 Internationals.

Cricketers Ashwin buys team in Global Chess League

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has become a co-owner of the American Gambits, a new team which will feature in the second edition of the Global Chess League, a joint venture between Tech Mahindra and the International Chess Federation.

The League on Monday unveiled the six franchises for the second edition to be played in London from October 3 to 12.

American Gambits, owned by prominent business leaders Prachura PP, Venkat K Narayana and Ashwin, will replace Chingari Gulf Titans.

"We're thrilled to introduce the American Gambits to the chess world. With a blend of strategic brilliance and unwavering determination, our team aims to redefine the game. As co-owner, I'm excited to witness their journey and contribute to their success," Ashwin was

quoted as saying in a media release.

The five other franchise -- Alpine SG Pipers, PBG Alaskan Knights, Ganges Grandmasters, defending champions Triveni Continental Kings and Mumbai Masters will return for a second season.

Sameer Pathak, CEO, Global Chess League, said, "We are thrilled to welcome the teams for the second season of the Global Chess League. We have found the right partners to strengthen the league's global reach and look forward to bringing an exciting season of chess to fans worldwide."

"The teams made season one a huge success and we believe that their impact and popularity will continue to expand in the world of chess."

The players will compete in a unique joint team format consisting of six players, including two top women chess players and a prodigy player per team.

Adding to the excitement and anticipation among fans, this innovative format will be aired on major OTT and broadcast platforms worldwide.

In the tournament, each team will play a total of 10 matches in a double round-robin format, with the winner of each match being decided in a best-of-six board scoring system.

Each team will play 10 matches across black and white pieces. The sides will play five matches, with all six players in each team initially playing with the white or black pieces against their opponents, followed by a reverse round in which the entire team will play five matches with the reversed colour pieces against the same opponent.

The winning team for every match will be determined by the points aggregated from wins and draws across all six games played in the match. The top two sides will advance to the final round.

Chetry is a truly hard-working cricketer: Indian women's fielding coach Bali

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Indian women's cricket team fielding coach Munish Bali lauded Uma Chetry for her fielding skills, and said the young wicket-keeper is a "truly hard-working cricketer".

Chetry, 21, made her T20 International debut against South Africa in the abandoned second game of the three-match series here on Sunday, and inflicted a stumping off Deepti Sharma's bowling to get rid of a well-settled Tazmin Brits.

This was after Chetry had earlier missed a similar chance against Brits as she collected the ball ahead of the stumps.

But Bali backed the youngster and recalled how she had bravely fielded at the short-leg during the Test match against South Africa last week.

"I was happy when she was handed her debut cap. During the Test, she fielded for around 70-80 overs -- she is a brave girl," he said during the post-match press conference.

"Standing at the short-leg is not easy. She got hit by the ball, but she stood there in pain. She has great attitude and is a truly hard-

working cricketer. I was so happy for her to have stumped Brits." Rain washed out the second T20I between India and South Africa with the tourists setting the hosts a target of 178 to level the series.

Despite some slip-ups on the field, Bali was overall content with the team's effort. "It's difficult to grip the ball when it's drizzling. But still, we fielded very well.

We are working on it (fielding) and it's in progress as we keep getting better slowly. "No one drops catches intentionally. The players have been practising hard during our (training) sessions, giving their best. At times, things click, and sometimes, it doesn't. Errors happen during matches. So, we keep telling them to keep giving their best and results will follow," he said.

Bali also praised the bowling effort of spinner Deepti Sharma, who returned with figures



of 2 for 20.

"She (Deepti) is an experienced bowler. Having played all three formats, she knows where her strength lies, and she keeps backing herself. Also, her experience of bowling at the death is immense, which makes her a truly good bowler."

I TRY TO BE PRESENT IN THE GAME AND DO THE BEST I CAN: ANNEKE BOSCH: Meanwhile, South Africa all-rounder Anneke Bosch is not bothered about her selection for the T20 World Cup in Bangladesh in October. "... But, you still cannot be sure if you will get a chance or not and it's never guaranteed," said Bosch, who scored a 32-ball 40 on and shared a 38-run stand with Brits on Sunday. "So, it helps, but I don't focus on that too much. I try to be present in the game and try to do the best I can at that moment. Whatever is meant to be, it will be."