



OPINION 6 INORDINATE DELAY IN NAMING NEW ARMY CHIEF

WORLD 9 NASA CALLS OFF SPACEWALK AFTER SPACESUIT WATER LEAK

MONEY 10 RUPEE SETTLES 3 PAISE HIGHER AT 83.44 AGAINST US DOLLAR

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A LOT OF CREDIT FOR MY WICKETS GOES TO BUMRAH: ARSHDEEP 12 SPORTS

Historic clash over Speaker post

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The ruling BJP-led NDA and Congress-led Opposition failed to reach a consensus on the candidature of Lok Sabha Speaker post with the sides pitching for their members making it a first ever contest for the crucial post in Parliament.



BJP MP Om Birla takes oath as a member of the House during the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha, in New Delhi, on Tuesday. Congress MP Kodikunnil Suresh (R) takes oath as a member of the House on Monday. PTI

The Opposition's last-minute decision to go for a rare contest came after senior BJP leaders did not agree to its precondition that the INDIA Bloc must be offered the post of Deputy Speaker in lieu of supporting Birla, who is the clear favourite in case of an election.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister said. He said the Government had contacted major Opposition parties over the last two days for consensus on the post of the Speaker. "We want the Speaker to be elected unanimously and unopposed, so we contacted and appealed to them. Today, we had a meeting with Congress leaders. We appealed to them for support for the Speaker. They said they will support but they want the post of Deputy Speaker," Rijiju said.

Rift surfaces, Mamata faults Congress move

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Mamata Banerjee is not happy with the Congress' "domineering ways," for which her 29-member strong Trinamool Congress may abstain from the Speaker's election, sources said. According to TMC sources, the Bengal Chief Minister is unhappy that the Congress leadership did not consult her on the Opposition candidate for the Speaker's post and "announced the name of K Suresh unilaterally."

Mamata, who spoke at length to senior leaders Sudip Bandopadhyay, Kalyan Banerjee, Abhishek Banerjee, Saugata Roy, and Derek O'Brien via video conferencing, will make the final decision on the issue, sources said, adding, "the TMC has its own opinion and reservations and will not like to be dictated on issues." Abhishek, who met with other senior leaders in Parliament after his talks with Mamata, said, "Unfortunately, we have not been consulted." Continued on Page 8

UP Cabinet approves old pension scheme

Staff who joined service before March 28, 2005 to benefit

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant decision, the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet on Tuesday approved a proposal to reintroduce the old pension scheme for state government employees and officers who joined service before March 28, 2005. This move is expected to benefit thousands of employees who were earlier covered under the old pension scheme. According to sources, the Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, cleared the proposal, which will now be sent to the Finance department for further processing. The decision is seen as a major victory for the state government employees who have been demanding the restoration of the old pension scheme for years. The old pension scheme was discontinued in 2005, and a new pension scheme was introduced, which was met with widespread protests from employees. The new scheme was seen as less beneficial compared to the old scheme, leading to demands for its restoration. With this decision, employees who joined service before March 28, 2005, will now have the option to opt for the old pension scheme. This move is expected to bring relief to thousands of employees who were facing uncertainty about their retirement benefits. CABINET NOD TO ORDINANCE TO CHECK PAPER LEAKS, UNFAIR PRACTICES: An ordinance to prevent

unfair practices and paper leaks in public examinations in Uttar Pradesh was also approved in a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday. The ordinance includes stringent penalties for violators, with punishments ranging from two years to life imprisonment and fines of up to Rs 1 crore. Notably, the Yogi government has previously implemented strict measures against paper leaks, and this ordinance is another significant step in that direction. Following the Council of Ministers meeting at Lok Bhawan, Finance and Parliamentary Minister Suresh Khanna provided details about the approved proposals. He said, "A total of 44 proposals were presented to the Cabinet and 43 of them were approved. Among the approved proposals was the Prevention of Unfair Means and Paper Leaks in Public Examinations Ordinance 2024."



According to the finance minister, this ordinance mandates severe penalties for those involved in paper leaks, including institutions and associated individuals, with punishments ranging from two years to life imprisonment and fines of up to Rs 1 crore. The ordinance covers the Public Service Commission, Uttar Pradesh Subordinate Services Selection Board, Uttar Pradesh Board, universities, authorities, or institutions nominated by them.

Continued on Page 8

Sensex hits new all-time high

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex breached the historic 78,000 level for the first time while Nifty settled at a new record high on Tuesday on buying in blue-chip bank stocks and Reliance Industries. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 712.44 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 78,053.52. During the day, the benchmark soared 823.63 points or 1 per cent to hit a fresh lifetime high of 78,164.71. The Sensex breached the 77,000 mark for the first time on June 10. Detailed report on Page 10

Panel moots outreach plan in NEET/NET row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Alleged irregularities in competitive examinations, like NEET and NET conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA), the recently formed Education Ministry's panel on competitive examination reforms has decided to reach out to parents and students to understand their concerns and challenges about the examination process. The decision was taken by

the seven-member panel headed by former ISRO chief R Radhakrishnan in its first meeting late on Monday evening. The committee has also been tasked with examining the existing security protocols related to the setting of the papers and other processes for different examinations and making recommendations to enhance the robustness of the system. According to sources present in the meeting, the committee took stock of the current situation and



Police personnel detain Samajwadi Party workers protesting over the alleged irregularities in NEET 2024 results, near party chief Akhilesh Yadav's residence, in Lucknow, on Tuesday. PTI

challenges faced by the (NTA). National Testing Agency "The panel was apprised of

the current processes and functioning of the agency. The panel also looked into the statistics provided by the NTA about the multiple exams conducted by it and the number of candidates appearing for each exam," a source said. The panel also looked into which exams are conducted in pen-and-paper mode and which are conducted as computer-based tests (CBT), and the nuances of both modes. "The first priority for us is to elicit from the students and parents in the country

their concerns and suggestions. We are going to engage with them as far as possible in person, or through electronic media. And in the next fortnight, we would like to consolidate this," Radhakrishnan briefed the media on Tuesday. "The next priority for us is to quickly build a robust system for starting the tests. We are also looking at the future, especially to develop in this country a robust system, a tamper-proof system," he said. Continued on Page 8

HC stays Kejriwal bail order

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a blow to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Delhi High Court on Tuesday stayed the trial court order granting him bail in the money-laundering case arising from the alleged excise scam, holding that the trial court failed to appreciate the material placed before it by the Enforcement Directorate and did not apply its mind while deciding the AAP leader's bail plea. The Court passed the order on a plea by the ED seeking stay of the trial court order passed on June 20 granting bail to Kejriwal. A vacation bench of Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain said the ED's contentions assailing the bail order required serious consideration. Kejriwal's plea challenging the Delhi High Court's stay order will come up for hearing on Wednesday in the Supreme Court. "The Vacation Judge while passing the Impugned Order did not appropriately appreciate the material/documents submitted on record and

Continued on Page 8

Modi's 100 smart cities plan incubator of new India

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Smart Cities Mission developed during the two tenures of Narendra Modi Government boasts of 'nurturing' over 100 smart cities across the country with ultra modern and sophisticated Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCC), mobility solutions and transportation based on artificial intelligence, installation of CCTV cameras, streetlights, and many more worth whopping ₹1,43,778 crore. Notably, Modi's three flagship programmes — the Smart Cities Mission, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana — Urban (PMAY-U) that transformed urban infrastructure and improved the quality of life for millions of

residents across India, completed nine year on Tuesday. Some of cities tagged as Smart Cities are Indore, New Delhi, Surat, Ahmedabad, Bhagalpur, Patna, Mumbai, Pakinada, Amaravati, Muzaffarpur, Bihar Sharif, Naya Raipur, Karnal, Shivamogga, Satna, Haldia, Ghaziabad, Aligarh, Saharanpur, Rampur, Bareilly among others. According to the Ministry of Urban Affairs' data, a total 7,160 projects worth ₹1,43,778 crore has been completed and another 854 projects worth ₹20,392 crore are in advanced stages of completion under the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) projects which completed nine year on Tuesday. The data shows the Centre has released ₹46,387 crore to 100 cities to develop as smart cities mission and 93 per cent of released funds have



Representational image

been utilised. The data shows 51 cities have successfully developed 200 projects with Public-Private Partnership (PPP) worth around ₹10,000 crore. The data shows all 100 smart cities have operationalised ICCC, leveraging Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, and data analytics to enhance city operations such as

transport management, water supply, and solid waste management. Under the public safety and security, over 76,000 CCTV surveillance cameras have been installed across 100 cities, bolstering city-wide crime monitoring efforts. More than 50 lakhs solar/LED streetlights have been installed under the project and over 89,000 kms of underground electricity cabling constructed. Besides, 9,754 number of WiFi hotspot locations created. Under the scheme, 12,300 kms roads have been developed as smart roads and 2500+ kms of cycle tracks was constructed, alongside the Intelligent Transport Management System (ITMS), to streamlined traffic operations and journey times in smart cities. Continued on Page 8

PM to visit Russia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Russia for a day on July 8 to hold wide ranging parleys with Russian President Vladimir Putin. It will be his first visit there in nearly five years, it was learnt here on Tuesday. Modi last visited Russia in 2019 when he attended an economic conclave in the Far East city of Vladivostok. Though there is no confirmation from the Indian side on Modi's possible visit, a Kremlin official in Moscow said active preparations are underway for the trip. "I can confirm that we are



File Photo

preparing for a visit by the PM of India. We cannot (say) the dates as yet, because the dates are announced by the parties in agreement," Yuri Ushakov, an assistant to the Russian President, said. Continued on Page 8

India behind Afghan fairytale feat in T20 WC

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

Afghanistan scripted history on Tuesday when it stormed into the semi-finals of T20 World Cup by beating Bangladesh in Kingstown, West Indies. While the team deserves kudos for this maiden feat, India's role in shaping cricket environment in strife-torn Afghanistan needs to be underlined. Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, former Australia all-rounder Tom Moody, almost all Indian Premier League (IPL) teams and former India cricketers Yuvraj Singh,



After scripting history on Tuesday by storming into the semi-finals of T20 World Cup, Afghanistan players celebrate. PTI photo

Harbhajan Singh, Suresh Raina and S Badrinath praised the team for being bigger than its circumstances. Afghan players, undoubtedly, have become darlings of

cricket loving patrons all over the world, but they may be thanking in their heart of hearts Shaheed Vijay Singh Sports Complex, Greater Noida. Also, the role of Indian coaches to unlock the Afghan talent and hone it to enable the Afghanis to compete at the highest level has to be acknowledged. This sports complex became the temporary home ground or nursery for Afghanistan team in 2015, and credit for this goes to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). It provided all facilities to Afghanistan to come up to the international

levels. Afghanistan shifted their base to Noida from Sharjah and even played international matches against Ireland in Greater Noida in 2017. Greater Noida was not only the 'home ground' for Afghan players, it had also 'hosted' a Twenty20 series against Bangladesh in Dehradun. Former India players Lachand Rajput, Manoj Prabhakar and Ajay Jadeja have coached the Afghanistan team in the past. In fact, Jadeja was their mentor till as recently as the ODI World Cup 2023. Continued on Page 8

Relocation turns tragic for 2 cubs

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The tragic death of two tiger cubs on Tuesday in Uttarakhand, which were moved from Corbett Tiger Reserve to Rajaji Tiger Reserve (RTR) along with their mother highlights the challenges of predator relocation, experts have warned as they pointed out that conflicts between the two top predators can arise when their territories overlap. The cubs, a male and a female, were killed by leopards in the Beriawada range of Rajaji. The mother tigress had given birth to four



Representational image

cubs in May, but now only two survive, said RTR Director Saket Badola. The translocated tigress had given birth to four cubs in the Chillaawli range on May 24, he informed. While stressing that normally leopards killing the tiger litters as happened in the RTR case should not be seen

in isolation, the experts have called for better management to protect young cubs, who are vulnerable to attacks by leopards and other predators like jackals, hyenas, and pythons. Cubs also face dangers from fires and other natural threats, added a former PCCF from the North Indian State on the condition of anonymity. He said ensuring the safety of translocated predators and their offspring is crucial. This requires careful planning and monitoring to prevent similar tragedies in the future. Continued on Page 8

Woman alleges gangrape by husband's kin

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman has alleged that she was gang-raped by male members of her husband's family...

The case was registered late Monday night, and the police detained the accused, identified as Salman...

In her complaint, the woman stated that she met a man who introduced himself as Maan some time ago...

"We initially had a court marriage. Later, it emerged that Maan was a Muslim. He had made compromising films of me and forced me to undergo a 'nikah' with him at his house..."

"They stopped giving us food and continued to beat us. Salman's mother also forced my daughters to engage in prostitution," she alleged...

Meanwhile, Hindu Mahasabha leader Shishir Chaturvedi, who is said to be behind the woman's petition to the commissioner of Lucknow police...

The issue came to light when the accused started beating the woman at their house, prompting some residents to sense foul play...

The victim, Baldev Prasad of Shanker Khara, told the police that his rivals Hari Shanker and his sons Sunil and Sujet were installing the submersible pump near his house...

Woman tortured by live-in partner poisons self to death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman ended her life allegedly due to the torture inflicted by her live-in partner, in the Bakshi-Ka-Talab police station area...

The woman's father informed the police that Rizwan had concealed his marital status and religion to persuade her into the relationship...

blindly. When she found out, she was deeply upset. Later, she also discovered that Rizwan had hidden his religion from her...

He recounted that his daughter consumed poison on June 22, and Rizwan admitted her to Balrampur Hospital. "Rizwan called us to inform about my daughter's deteriorating health..."

his daughter without any provocation. The police have sent the body for autopsy and initiated an investigation into the case.

His cousin Vimal from Sringeri Nagar identified him. The police have sent the body for autopsy, and investigations are ongoing.

12 IAS officers shifted

Lucknow (PNS/PTI): The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday transferred 12 IAS officers, including several district magistrates...

Special Secretary, Agriculture Production Commissioner, Ajay Kumar Dwivedi, has been made the district magistrate of Shrawasti while Additional State Project Director Madhusudan Hooghly has been made the district magistrate of Kaushambi...

the district magistrate of Kasganj. These are routine transfers, officials said. Meanwhile, in a major reshuffle in the Uttar Pradesh Police department, the state government replaced SPs of several districts...

According to the order issued, Satpal Antil was posted in Moradabad, Anurag Arya in Bareilly, Vipin Tada in Meerut, Rohit Singh in Saharanpur, and Sushil in STF, Lucknow. Apart from this, Aditya Langleh was given the command of police in Chandauli, Hemraj Meena in Azamgarh, and Anil Kumar in Pratapgahr.

Man found dead in grocery shop

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 49-year-old man was found dead inside his nephew's grocery shop in the Bakshi-Ka-Talab police station area on Tuesday...

According to reports, the man, identified as Lalji from Sarakpur Saraiya village, was sleeping inside the shop owned by his nephew Anil. The shop is located near a petrol station...

that Lalji worked at a nearby brick kiln and often rested at the shop. "He likely died from an electric shock due to inadvertent contact with a fan that had a current leak," the police suggested...

Meanwhile, a 45-year-old man working at a brick kiln was killed in a road accident in the Bakshi-Ka-Talab police station area around 1 pm on Tuesday...

lunch when a speeding car knocked him down near the dhaba. He died on the spot. Police said Ambika worked at a brick kiln in Saraiya village. A team reached the scene following the incident, and the victim was taken to a hospital, where he was declared dead...



Shias offering namaz at Masjid-e-Kulfa in the Kazmain area as part of Eid-e-Ghadeer celebrations on Tuesday

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE: This is to inform that I have changed my name from Kanceze Butool Rizvi to Kanceze e Butool Rizvi...

NOTICE: I have changed my name from Sheeri Tanveer to SHEERIN TANVEER W/o Khalid Irfan R/o 99/17, Beconganj, Kanpur...

NOTICE: I, NAVEEN KUMAR BHATIA, S/O LATE KANWAL KUMAR BHATIA, R/O 559 KHA/315, SHRI NAGAR, ALAMBAGH, LUCKNOW-5 HEREBY NOTIFIED MY FULL NAME IS NAVEEN KUMAR BHATIA, THAT IN THE SOME DOCUMENTS THE NAME AS NAVEEN KUMAR, BOTH NAME NAVEEN KUMAR BHATIA & NAVEEN KUMAR ARE ONE & SAME PERSON.

NOTICE: Kaif Rasheed Khan son of Rasheed Akhtar Khan resident of Pathan Tola, Bahadur Ganj, Pattigarh T. Bahadur Ganj, Ghazipur Uttar Pradesh-275201 in place of date of birth on high school marksheet (ISCE Board Number ID 8149109 and Roll Number TW 70196423) as 23/11/2009, 17/03/2008 and in the father's name instead of Rasheed Akhtar Khan, Rasheed Khan has been erroneously mentioned, the date of birth of the above should be changed to 23/11/2009 and father's name should be Rasheed Akhtar Khan.

NOTICE: I, Gaureshankar son of late vasudev residence of village- santa district - muraina - state - madhya pradesh, *(my son Hav Rajkumar Sharma No. 3002305 F* in his army record *(my name is Shakuntala Devi and Date of birth - 01-07-1963 is mention which is incorrect)* *(correct name-Gaureshankar and Date of birth - 01-01-1970)*

NOTICE: I have changed my name from Ahmad Khalid ALEEM Kidwai to KHALID KIDWAI S/o Nasim Kidwai R/o 88/197, Chamanganj, Kanpur. In future soon above name

NOTICE: I Rani W/o Afsar Hussain R/o 97/153 Talaq Mahal, Nadri Building, Kanpur have changed my name to Anjum Rani for all future purposes.

Traffic chaos continues in Charbagh

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

It's 11 in the morning at Charbagh railway station. The road in front of Ravindralaya is crowded with autorickshaws and e-rickshaws, which either block the entrance to the station, stand in the middle of the road, or queue up on the sides.

On both sides of the road, numerous food and garment vendors, registered with the Lucknow Nagar Nigam, are selling their wares, adding to the traffic chaos. Two traffic assistants, assigned by the Auto-Tempo Association, can be seen issuing slips to the autorickshaws and e-rickshaws, charging Rs 20 for parking their vehicles in the area. However, they make no effort

to ensure that the vehicles take their mandatory positions 50 metres away from the crossing. When asked why they were not organising the vehicles, a traffic assistant said, "We tell the auto and e-rickshaw drivers to stand at the designated positions, but as soon as a train arrives at the station, they turn back towards the main entrance, causing traffic snarls."

with the nagar nigam to provide a proper place for the autorickshaws and e-rickshaws to park systematically. "When traffic policemen are present, these vehicles stand in an organised manner, but as soon as they leave, the vehicles become disorganised. We need a designated area for them, and meetings have been held with the nagar nigam on this matter. We are hopeful for a solution," he said. Dixit noted that bus and railway stations would always have higher traffic burdens. "The problem persists because the road width remains the same, but the traffic flow is higher at these points. Efforts are being made to organise the traffic. The nagar nigam has given a contract for this, but the assigned person is not streamlining the autos and

tempos," he said. He admitted that they could not provide the required manpower at the spot. "At least 50 traffic personnel are needed to manage the area and smoothen the flow of e-rickshaws and autorickshaws. We face additional problems when we chase away these vehicles and are blamed for mistreating them. The best people to streamline these vehicles are those collecting the money," he added. Municipal Commissioner Inderjit Singh said they would conduct a joint drive with the police to take action against errant autorickshaws under the Motor Vehicles Act. "We have a meeting scheduled with the police on June 26. We are planning how to alleviate the congestion and will review the situation and take action accordingly," he added.

B'khand Expressway to be equipped with ATMS

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As part of its ongoing efforts to make expressways smart in line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision, the Uttar Pradesh government is gearing up to equip the Bundelkhand Expressway with the Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS). Notably, the Uttar Pradesh Expressway Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) has called for applications through Requests for Qualification (RFQs) and Requests for Proposal (RFPs) to carry out this project. In a determined effort to elevate Uttar Pradesh to a leading state, the Yogi government is prioritising investment processes to transform the state into a trillion-dollar economy. Concurrently, they are upgrading the state's expressways with cutting-edge facilities. With this, they are improving the convenience for travellers and enhancing the safety and monitoring of logistics movements in the state. According to the action plan prepared to make Bundelkhand Expressway ITMS-enabled, a Traffic Management Command Centre will be established there. This will strengthen the traffic monitoring and management process. The Traffic Management Control (TMC) unit will be equipped with a 360-terabyte recording server storage. Additionally, there will be 240-terabyte recording server storage for backup recordings. The TMC unit will feature a facility monitoring system

controller, graphic displays, internet and SMS servers, fiber channel hosts, and USB joystick-controlled PTZ cameras. It will also be equipped with a VMS licence for operation of 890 cameras, including emergency telephone helpline console, an Aadhaar-enabled biometric fingerprint scanner machine for staff, surge protection device, lightning protection unit, advanced driver advisory system and GPS tracker. To enable ATMS on the Bundelkhand Expressway, 150 VIDS-enabled cameras will be installed at 50 different locations. These specialised cameras will be solar-powered and can operate for up to 96 hours on a single charge. As part of the plan, PTZ cameras with CCTV controllers will be installed along the Bundelkhand Expressway. Motion detection surveillance cameras and vehicle speed detection systems will be installed on both sides of the Bundelkhand Expressway. This will allow for alerts to be issued for overspeeding vehicles, enabling the control room to track them immediately. Additionally, speed detection radars with a 90-meter range will be installed, and the process for their installation will be completed alongside the implementation of a digital transmission system.

Risky reels trend for overnight fame keeps police on toes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The hobby of making reels showing risky acts or engaging in activities contemptuous of the law is rapidly gaining popularity among young men and women in the city. The motivation behind creating such reels is to gain overnight fame and monetise this popularity. Often, these reels involve dangerous stunts that put lives at risk. In some of these reels, young people brandish weapons, while in others, they blatantly break traffic rules. The trend has even captivated some police officers. Recently, a woman home guard posted a reel lip-syncing to a famous dialogue from a Bollywood blockbuster. This growing trend of posting

reels with blatant disregard for the law has become a significant challenge for the Lucknow police. They had to take swift action after these reels went viral, leading to social media being flooded with comments and criticism of the police for not reacting in time. Over the past several months, such reels and videos have kept the police occupied for hours, investigating and identifying the origin and location of these videos. Some incidents include a youth riding a motorcycle with a girl sitting backwards in Hazratganj, a girl making hilarious sounds while leaning out from the sunroof of a car on 1090 road, and several others that remain vivid in the public's memory.

According to the social media cell of the Lucknow police, the trend of making reels while brandishing weapons is on the rise among the city's youth. A similar video went viral on social media on Sunday. The police took notice and investigated the matter, discovering that the youth featured in the reel with weapons was from the Sarojininaragar area. The police arrested him on Monday. The accused was identified as Vikas Bharti of Gauri Vihar Colony in Sarojininaragar. In his confession, Vikas Bharti said that he committed the crime out of a desire for overnight fame and monetary gain. He said his friends had informed him that he could monetise his popularity based on the number of his followers.

Awadh bus station to have Control and Command Centre

Lucknow (PNS): The Awadh Bus Station at Kamta will soon feature a Control and Command Centre for the Lucknow region, according to Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) Ajit Kumar. This centre will oversee the surveillance of buses operating in the Lucknow region. Kumar noted that the recently renovated bus station at Kamta attracts 4,000 passengers daily and handles 450 buses. These buses run on various routes, including Gonda-Balrampur, Bahraich-Nanpara, Gonda-Utraula, Ayodhya-Gorakhpur-Deoria, Ayodhya-Azamgarh-Ballia, Azamgarh-Mau-Ballia, Unnao-Kanpur-Jhansi, and Delhi via the Agra Expressway.

DyCM Pathak recalls Emergency as betrayal of democracy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Tuesday commemorated the 50th anniversary of Emergency as Black Day and said it was a betrayal of democracy and an assault on the nation. BJP UP president Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary and Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak participated in the event organised by the city unit. Chaudhary emphasised the significance of exposing Congress's dictatorship and its disregard for the Constitution. He condemned the imposition of Emergency by then Prime

Minister Indira Gandhi, describing it as a dark chapter that tarnished India's vibrant democracy. Chaudhary criticised the then Congress government for holding the country and its democratic institutions hostage for 21 months, during which numerous atrocities were committed against the people, media, and opposition leaders. He accused the Congress of betraying its claim as the oldest political party by prioritising power over the welfare of the nation. Pathak echoed these sentiments, condemning the Emergency as the Congress's

gravest assault on democracy. He recounted the severe repression inflicted on citizens, including mass arrests and censorship of courts and press. Pathak praised the resilience of democracy advocates who stood up against that authoritarian regime and contributed significantly to the restoration of democratic values. Pathak also criticised the Congress for allegedly prioritising the interests of the Gandhi family over national interests, describing the Emergency as a dark chapter in Indian history that the people would never forget or forgive.

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Cabinet okays ₹650-cr proposal for Temple Museum in Ayodhya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Tourism Minister Jaiver Singh said that Tata Sons would construct a world-class Indian Temple Museum in Ayodhya with an investment of ₹750 crore from its CSR fund. The Cabinet approved the proposal for the museum. The Government of India has collaborated with Tata Sons on this initiative, earmarking Rs 650 crore for the museum and another ₹100 crore for ancillary development. A sum of ₹750 crore has been sanctioned for this project. Tata Sons will oversee the construction, with the Tourism department leasing the land at a nominal rate of INR 1 for a period of 90+90 years. In another decision, the Yogi government also approved extension of the Varanasi, Bareilly, and Moradabad development authorities with inclusion of several revenue villages. Khanna said that with the proposed extension, the Varanasi Development Authority would include 215 revenue villages. Similarly, 35 revenue villages have also been included in the



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath chairing the Cabinet meeting in Lucknow on Tuesday

Bareilly Development Authority and 71 revenue villages in the Moradabad Development Authority.

CHIEF MINISTER TOURISM FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME
The Cabinet also approved the Chief Minister Tourism Fellowship Programme, which aims to select researchers through the Tourism department. These researchers will promote tourism in the state and facilitate investment accel-

eration in this sector. Additionally, they will assist in resolving issues faced by investors. Jaiver Singh highlighted these researchers' pivotal role in supervising and monitoring Tourism department schemes, developing ecological sites comprehensively, evaluating both Central and state government schemes, and advancing plans for fairs and festivals. They will contribute significantly to creating a favourable

environment for investors and tourists while supporting the preservation efforts of the District Tourism and Culture Council, particularly under the Tourism Directorate. Initially, 25 researchers will be chosen for this programme. They will receive an honorarium totalling ₹40,000, with ₹30,000 allocated for remuneration and ₹10,000 for field visits. Additionally, they will be provided with tablets for their work.

Yogi flays Congress, allies for undermining Constitution

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Emergency imposed by the then Indira Gandhi's Congress government, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath criticised the grand old party and its allies, accusing them of continuing to undermine the Constitution. Speaking at a press conference held at his official residence, he remarked that although the Congress's faces might have changed over the past 50 years, its character and actions had remained unchanged since 1975. He vividly recalled the harsh measures taken during the Emergency, such as the Congress's audacious attempt to undermine the Constitution by amending its Preamble, the complete suspension of citizens' fundamental rights, and the judiciary's rights being held hostage. Adityanath under- stood that despite changes in leadership, the character of the Congress remained the same. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated, "50 years ago, on this day, late at night, a dark chapter was written when the then Congress government con-

spired to undermine democracy by strangling the Constitution of India." He added, "The government led by Indira Gandhi attempted to destroy India's democracy on the night of June 25, 1975. During this period, democracy was stifled by imprisoning opposition leaders such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Morarji Desai, Jai Prakash Narayan, and Lal Krishna Advani." He noted that the Congress's dictatorial attitude was evident not only in 1975 but also immediately after Independence. Within two years of adopting the Constitution, the Congress challenged the country's integrity by amending it and forcibly inserting Article 370, Yogi said. "Over the years, the Congress has consistently tried to weaken the pillars of democracy, by banning the media and using other indirect methods. The nation and the world witnessed the culmination of these actions on June 25, 1975," he added. Yogi also accused the current Congress leadership of hypocrisy. He claimed that

while they advocate for democracy, they undermine it by questioning India's electoral system and democracy when abroad. He accused them of denigrating India and its democratic processes internationally. He also alleged that they deflected their inefficiencies within India by blaming electronic voting machines (EVMs) and obstructing the election process. He asserted that the Congress, which attempted to dismantle the Constitution in 1975, continues to follow the same path today. According to him, the Congress-led governments' attitudes, working styles, and actions over the years exemplify this behaviour. Yogi also criticised the Congress's allies while pointing out that the current generation of leaders, whose predecessors endured imprisonment in 1975 to defend democracy, the Constitution, and civil rights, now align with the same Congress. He expressed surprise that these leaders are now complicit in efforts to steer the country back towards dicta-

torship and anti-democratic, anti-constitutional policies. "If you examine the working methods of the Congress's allies — whether in Bengal with the TMC, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, or other Congress-led governments, you will see that they are misleading the public and disrupting parliamentary proceedings under the guise of upholding the Constitution," he argued further. Yogi urged the Congress leaders to introspect and question whether they have genuinely adhered to the Constitution. He recounted that a senior Congress leader once tore a bill on the floor of Parliament, thus undermining democracy. Such actions, he argued, have continuously weakened democratic principles. He asserted that the people of India would never forgive the Congress for these transgressions, nor would they accept political parties that have directly or indirectly supported the Congress's authoritarian tendencies. He asked the Congress and its allies to apologise to the nation for repeatedly disregarding constitutional provisions.

UP govt to connect farm commodity startups with e-commerce platforms

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

For facilitating the marketing of agriculture commodities, the Uttar Pradesh government has drawn plans for connecting the agriculture commodity startups of the state with the Central government-promoted e-commerce platforms like ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) and e-NAM (National Agriculture Market). The state government has directed the Agriculture department to connect farmer producer organisations (FPOs) with ONDC and e-NAM through a dedicated farmer producer cell, which may be constituted soon. It aims to augment rural incomes and generate employment through this move. However, the startups are also free to get onboard any e-commerce or digital marketing platform. "The idea is to develop UP as the veritable food basket of India and ensure benefits of government schemes reach farmers," a state govern-

ment official said. The state intends to facilitate a transparent agriculture market, input licencing processes (fertilisers, seeds, pesticides), mandi licencing, GST licencing, FSSAI licencing, and onboarding with the ONDC and e-NAM portals for market linkage, he said. ONDC is a private non-profit company established by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) to develop open e-commerce and promote local commerce. National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a pan-India trading portal which networks agricultural produce market committee (APMC) mandis to create a unified national market. About 3,240 FPOs operate in UP under the Atmanirbhar Krishak Samanvit Vikas Yojana in UP, which is among the leading farm producers but has lower per hectare yield. Food processing facilities here are also sub-optimal. This translates to lower farm incomes, which the Yogi gov-

ernment is looking to address by promoting efficient farming and augmenting exports. Recently, UP Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi flagged off a 4-tonne consignment of the famous Malihabadi Dussehi mango for the USA. In 2023, Dussehi mango was exported to Russia. More consignments are expected to be exported in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, the UP government has partnered with industry stakeholders to promote food processing and introduce artificial intelligence (AI) in farming. The state also plans to host a global farmers' summit, 'Krishi Bharat', in November 2024 in association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Farmers' delegations from countries like the US, Germany, Brazil, Italy, Poland, France, Spain, Indonesia, and Kenya are expected to participate in the four-day event in Lucknow. In UP, paddy and rice accounts for 33 per cent of cropped area, followed by wheat, pulses, and oilseeds at 33 per cent.

Ganga E-way to become operational before Kumbh Mela

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The 594-km Ganga Expressway will become operational before the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj in 2025. Along the expressway industrial corridors, logistic hub and warehousing facilities will also be developed to help in expediting the development of rural areas. Industrial Development Minister Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi' said here on Tuesday that the completion of the expressway would facilitate the pilgrims coming to Prayagraj during the Kumbh Mela in January next year. He said the Ganga Expressway would be linked with the Yamuna Expressway at Noida and also with the Agra-Lucknow Expressway and Purvanchal Expressway. "The Ganga Expressway is the longest expressway of Uttar Pradesh and will immensely benefit the rural economy of the state by linking the rural areas with the market in big cities," he said. The minister said that along with the Ganga Expressway, industrial corridors, spread in total 150 hectares, are proposed to be developed in Meerut, Hapur, Bareilly, Moradabad, Hardoi, Lucknow, Kanpur, and Prayagraj. "Besides the industrial corridor, a logistic hub and warehouses will also be developed. The Ganga Expressway from the point of origin in Meerut will pass through a dozen districts, including Hapur, Bulandshahr, Amroha, Sambhal, Budoun, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Unnao Rae Bareilly, Pratnagarh and terminate in Prayagraj. An Uttar Pradesh Industrial Expressway Development Authority (UPIEDA) official said that the 594-km Ganga Expressway would drastically reduce the travel time between Meerut and Prayagraj to 6-8 hours from over 12 hours.

Cong, BJP have made Constitution casteist, communal: Mayawati

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress, alleging that these two parties have made this Constitution casteist, communal and capitalist to a large extent through several amendments. "There is no doubt that now the ruling party and the opposition, who are competing to show the copy of the constitution inside and outside the Parliament, seem to be two sides of the same coin," Mayawati told reporters. "The way these people are playing with the Constitution for their own political interests is absolutely not right. The ruling party and the opposition have made so many amendments that now this is no longer the egalitarian, secular



and Bahujan-friendly Constitution intended by Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar. Rather, it has become a casteist, communal and capitalist Constitution in most cases," Mayawati alleged. She said that in order to divert the attention of the public, the ruling party and the opposition are in collusion and pretending to forcibly save the Constitution, from which the people of the country must be

cautious. "It is well known that the Congress and BJP have secretly joined hands and did not allow the Mandal Commission report for the backward classes to be implemented during their regimes," she said. Remembering former Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Mayawati claimed that when the Mandal Commission recommendations were implemented in her government, the people of Congress and BJP had strongly opposed it from behind the scenes. "I am talking about internal collusion between the government and the opposition because in the states where the governments of these two parties are running, all those state governments have completely failed to remove poverty, inflation and unemployment," the BSP chief said. She also alleged that now the people of casteist mentality in the government and the opposition either want to end the reservation given to SC, ST and OBC in education and government jobs due to Baba Saheb or they do not want to give them full benefits by making it ineffective. "Therefore, the casteist, capitalist and communal politics being done by the government and the opposition in the name of saving the Constitution is not going to benefit these classes at all," she concluded.

Over 5,000 power feeders in UP soon for agricultural purposes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Committed to bolstering the income of farmers in the state, the Uttar Pradesh government is providing 10 hours of free electricity for agricultural work through 2,735 feeders, with plans to surpass 5,000 feeders soon. Notably, 14.21 lakh farmers having tubewells are currently benefitting from free electricity facility provided by the UP government. Farmers, considered the backbone of the economy, remain a top priority for Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who held a cabinet meeting in March this year, wherein a proposal for free electricity for irrigation and agricultural work via tube wells was approved. Furthermore, the state government allocated Rs 1,100 crore in the budget for free irri-

gation. Consequently, from April onwards, farmers have been receiving free irrigation facilities, marking a significant step in supporting the agricultural sector. In Uttar Pradesh, there are a total of 23,226 electricity feeders. It is proposed to separate over 5,433 of these feeders for agricultural purposes. Currently, 2,735 feeders have already been designated for agriculture, providing farmers with 10 hours of free electricity for irrigation and other farming activities. The remaining 20,491 feeders continue to supply electricity round the clock without separation. Notably, even during the scorching heat, 24-hour electricity supply was ensured in both rural and urban areas of UP. All 75 districts were provided with an equal electricity supply, keeping citizens fully

equipped with the necessary facilities. Additionally, besides ensuring regular electricity for the general public, the Yogi government is providing farmers with 10 hours of electricity for agricultural activities. Chairman of Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited Ashish Kumar Goel said that in line with the government's intention, 24-hour electricity supply has been ensured across the state despite the extreme heat. Following this, the scheme initiated by CM Yogi for the welfare of farmers is also being prioritised. Through continuous monitoring, farmers are being provided with 10 hours of free electricity for irrigation and other agricultural activities. The state government's target for agricultural feeders will be achieved within the stipulated time.

DTR closes for tourists ahead of monsoon

PTI ■ LAKHIMPUR KHERI

The Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (DTR), which comprises Dudhwa National Park, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Katarnighat Wildlife Sanctuary closed for tourists on Tuesday ahead of monsoon arrival. The tourist season in DTR will resume on November 15. Field Director, DTR, Lalit Verma told PTI that after the last batch of tourists completed their safari on Tuesday, a ceremonial closing ceremony was held during which they were given a warm farewell with flower petals. "The Dudhwa Tiger Reserve's entry gate was locked to mark the close of this year's tourist season," he said. Dudhwa Tiger Reserve opens for the public on November 15 every year and closes on June 15. However, this year, the Uttar Pradesh government allowed tourist activities in tiger reserves in the state till June 25 due to a delayed monsoon. Verma said DTR witnessed increased tourist footfall, both from India and abroad, this season. A total of 64,401 tourists visited Dudhwa National Park, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Katarnighat Wildlife Sanctuary this year, which is 54.01 per cent more than last year's figure of 41,815, he said. As many as 352 foreign tourists visited Dudhwa Tiger Reserve this season as against 137 last year, he added.

Five killed in separate incidents of lightning

PTI ■ SULTANPUR/ETAWAH

Five persons, including two women, were on Tuesday killed in separate incidents of lightning in Sultanpur and Amethi districts, police said. Shivam (19) and Sona Devi (54) died on Tuesday due to lightning in Nunhai Saifullaha village in Gosaiganj area here, they said. Additional DM, Sadar, Thakur Prasad, visited the spot to take stock of the situation and said that due compensation would be given to the victims' families. In Amethi, Prema Devi (65) died in a similar incident in Uttar village in Gauriganj area while she was working in her field. Mukesh Pasi (28) and Ranjit Kumar Singh (25) were killed in Subba Ka Purwa and Loripur villages in Jamo area. The bodies of the victims have been sent for post-mortem. Meanwhile, one of the three lion cubs born 25 days ago in the Etawah Lion Safari Park died on Tuesday, officials said. On June 1, lioness Neerja had given birth to three cubs, Deputy Director of the Lion Safari Park Dr VK Singh said. The lioness was not feeding her milk to one of her cubs, leaving it to the staff of the Safari to feed the cub, he said.

Woman dies in mishap

PTI ■ KAUSHAMBI

A 40-year-old woman died and her daughter sustained wounds on Tuesday when a bus they were on was hit by a truck in the Kokhray area here, police said. The woman, Alka, died on the spot, while her 12-year-old daughter, Sandhya, was rushed to a hospital in an injured state, police said. The incident took place near Pancham Hotel when the bus carrying 40 people was on its way to Kanpur from Sriganaganagar in Rajasthan. It was hit by a truck from behind, Kokhray Station House Officer (SHO) Indradev said. The truck driver, identified as Bharon, has been detained by the police, he said.

U.P. RAJKIYA NIRMAN NIGAM LTD.
TENDER NOTICE
On behalf of Managing Director, U.P. Rajkiya Nirman Nigam Ltd. General Manager (Lucknow Zone-2) invites online percentage rate bids in two bid system:-
NIT No- 1714/G.M(Lko. Zone-2)/Tender Critical Care /HC Unit-1/RNN/ 24, Date-21-06-2024, e-tender Construction of 50 Bedded Critical Care Hospital Block at Sitapur. Last date of submission of offers upto 02:00 PM on Dated-12-07-2024, all other details on- website: www.etender.up.nic.in and www.upnmn.upsc.gov.in

Campaign to ensure every girl completes education kicks off

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

CRY - Child Rights and You, a prominent child rights organisation in India, launched the 'Poori Padhai Desh Ki Bhalai' campaign, aiming to ensure every girl completes her education up to Class 12th. This seven-week nationwide initiative seeks to revolutionise public awareness and societal attitudes toward girls' education, addressing the millions of girls across India who remain out of school and unable to access secondary and higher secondary education. The campaign kicked off in various dis-

tricts of Uttar Pradesh and across CRY's intervention projects in 20 states. It includes mass awareness rallies, signature campaigns, and outreach programmes. Puja Marwaha, CEO of CRY, emphasised the critical importance of this initiative, saying: "Ensuring higher secondary education for girls is essential for their empowerment and the nation's development. Targeted interventions are needed to support girls beyond elementary education, including adequate public provisioning, financial incentives, improved infrastructure, community

engagement, and robust enforcement of laws against child marriage. Generating mass awareness and social resonance around girls' education is crucial." Soha Moitra, Regional Director at CRY, highlighted the urgency of this initiative, noting the landmark RTE Act of 2009 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to extend universal, free, and quality education up to age 18. Despite these advancements, the latest UDISE+ 2021-22 data shows that only 58.2% of girls are enrolled in higher secondary education, with one

in three girls out of school at the secondary level and one in eight dropping out before completing secondary education. CRY's fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh indicates that socio-economic challenges, cultural norms, gender discrimination, early marriages, inadequate school facilities, long travel distances, and safety concerns significantly hinder girls' educational journeys. These barriers contribute to higher dropout rates and increased vulnerability to child labor, underage marriage, teenage pregnancy, abuse, exploitation, and trafficking.

IDFC First Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)
CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792
Registered Office: - KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chelpet, Chennai- 600031.
Tel : +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax: +91 44 4564 4022

**APPENDIX IV [Rule 8(1)]
POSSESSION NOTICE
(For immovable property)**

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 21.02.2024 calling upon the borrower, co-borrowers and guarantors **1.AMARJEET SINGH, 2. JASPAL KAUR** to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs.1,29,32,034.88/- (Rupees One Crore Twenty Nine Lac Thirty Two Thousand Thirty Four And Eighty Eight Paise Only) as on 21.02.2024 within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Demand notice.

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub - section (4) of section 13 of act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules, 2002 on this 21th day of JUNE 2024.

The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of THE IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) for an amount of Rs.1,29,32,034.88/- (Rupees One Crore Twenty Nine Lac Thirty Two Thousand Thirty Four And Eighty Eight Paise Only) and interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub - Section (8) Of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of the Immovable properties.

ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF FREE HOLD PLOT NO. A-881/I, ADMEASURING 200 SQ. MTRS., SITUATED AT KANPUR ROAD SCHEME, LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH-226012, AND BOUNDED AS: EAST: PLOT NO. A-880/I WEST: PLOT NO. A-882/I NORTH: 9.0 MTR. WIDE ROAD SOUTH: PLOT NO. A-854/I

Date: 21-JUN-2024
Place: LUCKNOW
Loan Account No: 47293887 & 47293357

Authorised Officer
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)

Minister, DM visit martyr's house, extend financial aid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Uttar Pradesh Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Minister Rakesh Sachan along with District Magistrate Rakesh Kumar Singh visited the house of martyr Shailendra in Naugava Gautam village under Maharajpur police station area on Tuesday morning and handed over two cheques worth ₹50 lakh towards financial aid to his wife and mother. CRPF jawan Shailendra was killed in Naxals attack in Chhatisgarh on Sunday. He was caught in IED blast laid by the Naxals in Sukma (Chhatisgarh) and succumbed to its effects. At 7 am on Tuesday state cabinet minister Rakesh Sachan and District Magistrate Rakesh Kumar Singh reached martyr's village and handed over cheques of ₹35 lakh and ₹15 lakh respectively towards financial aid



extended by the government to his wife Komal and mother Bijma respectively. The minister also agreed to provide government job to the wife of the martyr on compassionate

ground. Meanwhile, large number of people reached the village to pay homage to the martyr. Earlier on Tuesday Additional District

(ADM/Finance & Revenue) Rajesh Kumar, SDM Narval Rishabh Verma and CRPF officer Om Prakash took stock of preparations for the last rites of the martyr.

Solar street lights saving over ₹1.15 lakh every month

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Street lights of Varanasi are becoming self-sufficient for electricity. Solar street lights installed on the roads are bringing the picture of Varanasi's development model in front of the world and due to which the old image of domestic and foreign tourists about this ancient city is changing. Along with this, the road being illuminated by solar energy is helping in preventing carbon

emission which is directly affecting environmental protection. This initiative of the government is saving both money and manpower. UP NEDA has installed street lights in Varanasi under the Solar Smart City Scheme. As many as 1,853 street lights in Varanasi are illuminating the roads for travellers on various paths. Senior Project Manager of UP NEDA SK Gupta said that under the Solar Smart City Scheme, solar street lights

have been installed on various routes in cities and rural areas. The roads are being illuminated by solar energy of 138.975 kilowatts due to which 16,560 units of electricity are being saved every month. Over ₹1.15 lakh is being saved every month due to solar street lights. Many roads like Sagra, Pindra, Harhua, Baragoon, Prayagraj Highway etc are being illuminated by solar energy. Gupta informed that the solar street light is automatic.

It turns on as soon as it gets dark and turns off automatically with the morning sun rays, due to which power and manpower are being saved. Solar street lights are good from the point of view of energy saving, environmental protection and safety. They are water proof and provide long service. While there is no hassle of wiring in this, there is also no problem of management. Rapid efforts are being made to make Kashi a solar city, he added.

Heat, humidity increase again in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The heat and humidity increased again here on Tuesday. Although the temperature has decreased by 6 to 7 °C, there is no relief from the heat. The maximum temperature on Tuesday was 40 degrees Celsius and the minimum temperature was recorded at 27 degrees Celsius. According to Professor HN Mishra, Meteorologist of Allahabad University, there is no possibility of rain till Wednesday. There may be a possibility of rain here on June 27. After this, there may be some relief from the heat. According to the forecast of the Meteorological Department, there may be good rainfall this year. Rain is also predicted this week.

According to the meteorologist of AU Dr NN Mishra, there is a possibility of abundant rainfall this year. Mishra said that Prayagraj and nearby districts may receive rain on June 27. There is a possibility of heavy rains from July 3 to August 15.

Newborn stabilisation unit starts at Gangapur CHC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Newborn Stabilisation Unit (NBSU) was started on Tuesday at Gangapur Community Health Centre (CHC) and First Referral Unit (FRU) under Pindra block in the district here on Tuesday. It was inaugurated by CMO Dr Sandeep Chaudhary. Now NBSU is being operated regularly at four medical units of the district, including CHCs Gangapur, Cholapur, and Arzailine and District Hospital Ramnagar. The CMO said that a four-bed NBSU has been started at CHC Gangapur. "If any problem is seen in the child after birth, then he/she will be immediately admitted to NBSU and all the tests and proper treatment will be done", he said, adding that the NBSU is playing a better role in reducing the infant mortality rate (IMR). The CMO also observed all the medical and health facilities being provided at the CHC and instructed the entire staff, including the superintendent, that there should not be any hindrance in the treatment of patients. "All types of



medicines and testing equipment should be available in adequate quantity. All the people coming to the CHC for treatment must get Aabha ID made", Dr Chaudhary said, appealing to the public that the mothers and children should stay in the hospitals and health centres for at least 48 hours after delivery so that in case of any health problem, the trained doctors and staff there can provide proper treatment and make them healthy. Deputy CMO and nodal officer Dr HC Maurya said that all the staff of NBSU is trained. "Oxygen concentrator, suction machine, laryngoscope, drip set, medicine, and other emergency facilities are available here

along with radiant warmer and phototherapy. Treatment of low weight children, premature (children born before time) or health problems occurring after birth is being done in NBSU", he said. The staff nurse will give information to mothers and relatives about the Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) method, which can protect the infant from hypothermia (cold fever). He said that radiant warmer helps in maintaining the normal body temperature of the infant. Phototherapy helps children suffering from jaundice. All treatments are completely safe. Technical support is being received from Nutrition International (NI) and UPTSU in this work.

Constable commits suicide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A constable committed suicide by shooting himself with his service revolver in Hasanganj Kotwali police station of Unnao on Tuesday morning. Her colleagues immediately took him to Hasanganj Community Health Centre (CHC) from where due to his serious condition, doctors referred the constable to Trauma Centre in Lucknow where he succumbed to his bullet injuries during treatment. Senior police officers have started a probe in the matter. Devansh Tewatia of Bulandshahr was recruited as constable in the UP police department in 2019. His first posting was in Unnao. From Police Lines, he was posted at

the Hasanganj police station and was there for the past five years. Devansh had met with a mishap three months ago and gone home for treatment of a leg injury. On recovering from injury, he had reported on duty 20 days ago and was assigned work at the Thana office. On Tuesday morning, hearing gunshot of a service revolver, a woman constable rushed to the spot and found that Devansh had shot himself on his right temple and was lying on the floor in a pool of blood. She raised an alarm when other cops also rushed to the spot who took Devansh to the CHC, Hasanganj, from where the doctors referred him to the Trauma Centre in Lucknow. On hearing about the incident, SP Siddharth Shanker

Meena reached the Hasanganj police station and took stock of the situation. He also quizzed the colleagues of Devansh. The reason behind suicide is being told that Devansh did not like the girl chosen by his family for his marriage. As the family members were pressurizing him to marry that girl and after an argument with his elder brother on Tuesday morning over the matter he ended his life.

MEMORANDUM: The leaders of Central Trade Unions' Federation led by its convener Ashok Singh submitted a memorandum to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The Federation comprises 11 trade unions, including INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC,

SEWA, AICTTU, LPE, UTUC and other sectoral associations. The INTUC working committee member and senior trade union leader Rajesh Kumar Shukla said the memorandum mainly drew attention of the union minister towards some issues which need to be considered while framing the Union Budget 2024-25. These issues were relating to resource mobilisation, income tax rebate for salaried class, social security fund, jobs creation, NPS, 8th Pay Commission, labour codes, privatisation of PSU, loot and plunder of public sector banks and public exchequer and privatisation of insurance sector, stopping move to privatise LIC and GIC, social sector, price rise, scheme workers, EPF and MSP.

Gauga: Priority is to conduct Mahakumbh in a better way

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

New Commissioner of Police (CP) Tarun Gauba while talking to journalists here on Tuesday said his priority is to conduct Mahakumbh 2025 in a better way. For this policemen will be trained so that they behave well with the devotees coming from the country and abroad and do their duty with a spirit of service. A list of policemen with a clean image will be made and they will be trained. He said planning is being done for the



security and traffic system of Mahakumbh. On the occasion the CP said campaign against mafia, criminals etc going on in

here will continue. Where and which gang needs more swift action will be reviewed, he said.

He said complainants who reach the police station should be treated well and people's problems should be resolved immediately. Monitoring will be done to ensure that there is no negligence in taking action against criminals. The CP made it clear that the police is now going to get involved in the preparations for Mahakumbh. Gauba discussed planning for crime control. He said the work of DCP (City) Deepak Bhukar, DCP (Ganga Nagar) Abhishek Bharti and DCP (Yamuna Nagar) Shraddha Pandey here is very

good. Our team is strong. The police force will work with team spirit in future too. Meanwhile SP workers met the newly appointed commissioner of police on Tuesday over the incident that took place in Mohiuddinpur of Sarai Mumarez. **PANIC:** The sudden disappearance of four minors in the city has created panic in four families here. The city's Airport, Dhoomanganj, Georgetown and Daraganj police have registered FIRs on the disappearance of the children. A search for them is on.

Illegal plotting demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Under the ongoing drive to remove illegal possession/encroachment, the enforcement squad of Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) demolished illegal plotting carried out on 15 bighas of land by Shailendra Yadav in Bingawa under San Peshchimpara police station area on Monday. The squad also bulldozed the illegal construction/encroachment on five bighas of urban ceiling land under the Kanpur Development Authority management carried out by Vijay



The KDA squad demolishing illegal plotting in Bingawa on Monday.

Tewari in the same locality. Meanwhile, Vice-Chairman Madan Singh Garbyal has directed the officers concerned to continue the drive against illegal plotting/possession carried out without the approved layout and initiate penal action against the encroachers in future also. The squad was led by the OSD (Land Bank/Enforcement Zone 3) Brijendra Upadhyaya. Teams of Land Bank and Enforcement departments along with local police force were also present during the drive.

MoU to set up Taj branded hotel in Kanpur



IHCL signs MoU with JKUDL on Tuesday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

India's largest hospitality company, IHCL, on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with JK Urbanscapes Developers Ltd. (JKUDL) for setting up of a Taj branded hotel in Kanpur. The hotel is a greenfield project. Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, IHCL, Puneet Chhatwal, said, "Kanpur's recent inclusion among India's smart cities, coupled with significant infrastructural advancements, is providing a fillip to the city's hospitality landscape. This signing signifies our strategic focus on expanding our portfolio in emerging markets with strong growth potential. We are

delighted to partner with JK Urbanscapes for this venture." The 150-key hotel is strategically located in the heart of the city. It will feature an all-day dining, a bar, two specialty restaurants, and J Wellness Circle spa. Additionally, the hotel will boast over 10,000 sq ft of banqueting space, providing versatile event spaces. Chairman, JK Urbanscapes Developers Limited, Abhishek Singhania, said, "We are excited to partner with IHCL to bring the iconic Taj brand to Kanpur. The hotel will serve as a symbol of the city's transformation reflective of its growing commercial significance in the state." With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have 26 hotels in Uttar Pradesh, including 13 under development.

CRS safety inspection tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

After the completion of work of doubling the track along with electrified lines between Kiriharapur and Belthara Road stations (14.17 km) under Bhatni-Aunrihar (116.95 km) rail section of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER), the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), Eastern Circle, Pranajeev Saxena will conduct safety inspection of this section along with Divisional Railway Manager

(DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava and officers of NER on June 27. During the safety inspection, speed test is also to be done with the electric locomotive at full speed on Kiriharapur-Belthara Road rail section. Prior to the proposed safety inspection by the CRS, Principal Chief Electrical Engineer (PCEE) of NER Sanjay Singhal will also conduct a safety inspection of the electrification works of Kiriharapur-Belthara Road rail

way section by running a tower wagon on Wednesday. The Railway administration has appealed to the people living around the Kiriharapur-Belthara Road and Govindpur Dugauli (Halt) railway station falling in the middle to maintain a safe distance from this rail section during the inspection and speed trial of CRS and PCEE inspection and do not allow children and animals to go near the railway track, as it can be dangerous.

'Diarrhoea Roko Abhiyan' from July 1

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The two-month long 'Diarrhoea Roko Abhiyan' will be run from July 1 in all the districts of the state, including Varanasi, to increase awareness about the use of ORS and zinc during diarrhoea among the childhood. The chances of diarrhoea increase among children, especially below the age of five years, during the rainy season. Due to this, children start falling ill due to lack of water in the body. This campaign will run for the entire month of July and August for management, treatment and counselling of diarrhoea. Giving this information, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that during the rainy season, the risk of viral, bacterial and parasitic infections increases due to water accumulation around. "In such a situation, children may suffer from diarrhoea. It is transmitted through contaminated food and water. In this season, germs grow more easily and rapidly. One of the reasons for this is also rotavirus",

he said, adding that diarrhoea increases the problem of dehydration in children. "If diarrhoea is caused by infection, then symptoms like nausea, vomiting, weight loss, fever and lack of appetite may appear in the child. Sometimes this problem can also be fatal due to lack of information, so do not ignore its symptoms. Parents need to take extra precautions during these months", the CMO said. Dr Chaudhary further said that this time the theme of the campaign was 'Prevention of diarrhoea, cleanliness and take care of yourself with ORS'. The campaign will focus on diarrhoea management, treatment and counselling in children under five years of age. ASHA workers will go door-to-door and teach the families of children suffering from diarrhoea how to make ORS solution. Along with the benefits of using it and zinc, they will also provide information about cleanliness. Children suffering from diarrhoea recover quickly with the use of ORS and zinc, he said. He directed all medical

superintendents and medical officers in charge to ensure that ORS and zinc are available in adequate quantities at the community level and appealed to all that if symptoms of diarrhoea are seen in children under five years of age, then immediately contact one's nearest health centres or ASHA workers. The nodal officer of the programme and Deputy CMO Dr HC Maurya said that under the campaign, children under five years of age will be covered primarily. Special attention will be given to children who are suffering from diarrhoea, are malnourished or underweight. Apart from this, attention will be given to vulnerable areas such as urban slums, remote areas, nomads, families of labourers engaged in construction work, families living at brick kilns etc. Attention will be given to the population living in places with lack of cleanliness. Action will be taken by making a special strategy in those areas of the district where diarrhoea outbreak has occurred or more cases have been found and affected by floods, he added.

Congress workers submit memo, demand restoration of Shivpur Talab

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A joint delegation of district and city units of Congress along with corporators submitted a memorandum to Additional Municipal Commissioner Savita Yadav here on Tuesday in protest against alleged illegal occupation of Shivpur Talab (pond) of mythological important situated on the Panchkosi Marg and demanded its restoration. They gave detailed information about the pond to Nagar

Nigam officer. They demanded that the illegal occupation of the religious pond should be removed as it is located at the fourth parao (stoppage) of Panchkosi Yatra. According to them, the pond has religious importance where Mata Jiutiya is worshipped and the famous Pyala Ka Mela is held there. They said that once pond was covered with hundreds of trees and there were many aquatic creatures in the pond. Siberian birds also used to come here when once as this pond used to

be full of water throughout the year, said former corporator Dr Jitendra Seth, who has been struggling for the pond for the last 22 years. The additional municipal commissioner assured the delegation of looking into the matter. The delegation mainly included district Congress president Rajeshwar Singh Patel, city chief Raghavendra Choubey, Gulshan Ansari, Prof Anil Upadhyay, Dr Umapati Upadhyay, Dr Jitendra Seth, Vinod Singh Kalu and corporator Ramzan Ali.

Road construction in Kaithi village opposed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A delegation of Congress party met ADM (City) on Tuesday expressing its opposition to the road being built in Kaithi village. The proposal to build a four-lane road for Markandeya Mahadev Dham situated in Kaithi was passed by the government to build it through the middle of Kaithi village. They said that if the said four-lane road is built through the middle of the village, Kaithi village will suffer a lot and the entire village will be destroyed apart from affecting the farmers and the poor. Led by district vice president of Congress (Legal Cell) Ashok Kumar Singh, the delegation met ADM (City) and submitted a memorandum putting forth its point. The Congress



leaders said that the four-lane road being built for Baba Markandeya Mahadev Dham should be immediately cancelled and the road should be built in the following manner so that the interests of farmers and the poor are affected as little as possible. They suggested that the previously constructed road of Kaithi village should be widened and a separate road should be built

along the canal so that traffic is not obstructed and by this, Kaithi village will be saved from being destroyed. Besides, they said that according to the government, building a road from outside the village will cost ₹24 crore while from inside the village ₹62.40 crore. They demanded that the government should pay attention to this project again in public interest, because this is a matter related to the future of the entire Kaithi village and hundreds of farmers and poor. The other Congress leaders were also present in the delegation were Virendra Kumar Pandit, Syed Afaq Hussain Shan, Kalpnath Sharma, Ashok Kumar, Lokesh Singh, Rajiv Ram, Gunjan Singh, Mohsin Khan, Shivanand, Rajesh Kumar, Guddu Pandey etc.

Modi, BJP leaders slam Cong on 1975 Emergency anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The ruling BJP and Opposition Congress continued to engage in a political slugfest over the imposition of Emergency in the country five decades ago by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said those who imposed the Emergency have no right to profess love for the Constitution.

"The mindset which led to the imposition of the Emergency is very much alive among the same party which imposed it. They hide their disdain for the Constitution through their tokenism but the people of India have seen through their antics and that is why they have rejected them time and again," Modi said on social media platforms.

Countering the PM, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on his part said Modi keeps scratching the past to hide his failures. "In the last 10 years, you made 140 crore Indians realise what 'undeclared emergency' is, which caused a deep trauma to democracy and the Constitution," Kharge said. Home Minister Amit Shah came out strongly against the grand old party and said the opposition party crushed the spirit of the Constitution several times for the sake of "maintaining a certain family in



power". On the 49th anniversary of the 1975 Emergency, Shah also hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, calling him the "yuvraj" of the party and saying it has forgotten that his grandmother Indira Gandhi had imposed the Emergency and his father and successor of Indira, Rajiv Gandhi said in Parliament on July 23, 1985, that "there is nothing wrong with an emergency".

While Congress hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his comments on the Emergency, and accused him of enforcing an "undeclared emergency" in the last 10 years. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the prime minister is raking up the past only to hide his failures. He also said that PM Modi talks of consensus and cooperation but does just the opposite.

"Mr. Rajiv Gandhi even said, 'If any Prime Minister of this

country who feels that an Emergency is necessary, under these circumstances and does not apply the Emergency, he is not fit to be the Prime Minister of this country'. This very act of taking pride in a dictatorial act shows that nothing else is dear to the Congress other than the family and power," Amit Shah wrote on social media and shared some news clippings of those days.

Censorship was imposed on the media, the Constitution was amended and even the judiciary was restrained, Shah said, paying tributes to those who waged a fight against the Emergency.

His party the BJP also launched a sharp attack on the Congress, with its president J P Nadda saying that those who claim to be the guardians of Indian democracy today had spared no efforts to suppress the voices raised in the defence of constitutional values.

Modernisation of Armed forces must in turbulent times: IAF Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari said on Tuesday the contemporary security landscape presents "multi-faceted challenges" from border disputes and terrorism to cyber threats and regional volatility, and India must invest in modernisation of its armed forces to navigate through these "turbulent times".

Delivering a keynote address at a seminar here, the IAF chief also said modern warfare is characterised by rapid technological advancements, asymmetric threats and the need for a comprehensive understanding of geopolitical, social and cultural contexts. His remarks come amid the backdrop of evolving geopolitics with conflicts being seen in some of the regions of the world.

The seminar was hosted by the Indian Air Force (IAF), College of Air Warfare (CAW) and Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) at the Air Force Auditorium at Subroto Park to mark the culmination of the third Warfare and Aerospace Strategy Programme (WASP). "This programme has enabled us to refine the definition of scholar warriors," the IAF chief said.

"This 'multi-faceted landscape' requires such military personnel who are not only adept at combat but also possess a deep



understanding of the broader implications of their actions, the air chief marshal said. Therefore, in my opinion, a scholar warrior is a military professional who combines intellectual acumen with combat prowess in today's "increasingly complex and dynamic security environment", Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari asserted.

To emphasise the point, the IAF chief also invoked the words of ancient Greek historian Thucydides, who said "The society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting by fools". He said India's strategic culture is shaped by historical experiences and the "ever-evolving geopolitical environment". It emphasises on strategic autonomy, caution and a "strong focus on territorial integrity", he added.

threats and regional volatility. To navigate through these turbulent times and secure our national interests, India must invest in modernisation of its armed forces, strengthen strategic partnerships, promote indigenous defence production and adopt an integrated approach to both internal and external security," Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari said. The event was also attended by various air warriors, retired senior officers of the IAF and scholars, among others.

The IAF chief underlined that India's strategic thinking can be traced back to the ancient texts like the Arthashastra written around the 4th century BC. It emphasised realpolitik and strategic pragmatism, "shades of which are visible today in every way we are dealing with contemporary issues". In his address, he said the colonial experience taught India to remain "ever cautious and adopt a sovereign entity-centric approach" towards foreign policy and defence.

Atmanirbharta (self-dependence) and Make in India are, therefore, an "offshoot of our strategic culture and a key towards preserving national security", he said. "Whether India has a strategic culture or not is a matter of opinion, however, realpolitik, statecraft and diplomacy have always been a part of our historical tapestry and have shaped contemporary geopolitics," the IAG chief added.

TN Govt, police chief get NHRC notices over hooch tragedy



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday said it has issued notices to the Tamil Nadu Government and police chief in connection with the hooch tragedy in Kallakurichi district and sought a report in a week. The death toll in the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy climbed to 58 on Monday. As many as 219 people have been admitted to various hospitals.

In a statement, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said it has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that several people lost their lives after "consuming spurious liquor" in Kallakurichi.

Reportedly, a large number of people including women are under treatment in hospitals and some of them are in critical condition. The content of

the news report, if true, raises a serious issue of violation of the right to life of the victims, it said.

States have the exclusive power to regulate the production, manufacture, possession, transport, purchase and sale of intoxicating liquors. Accordingly, notices have been issued to the chief secretary and the director general of police of Tamil Nadu, seeking a detailed report within one week, the statement said.

According to the latest reports, as on Monday, the death toll in the hooch tragedy surged to 58 while 111 persons are undergoing treatment at Kallakurichi Government Medical College hospital. At Puducherry 11 persons, in Salem district 30 persons, and in Villupuram district 4 persons are undergoing treatment at various government hospitals, as per the authorities from the hospitals.

Defence Ministry ties-up with private firm to build miniaturised satellite

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Defence will collaborate with a private firm working in the space sector for design and development of a "miniaturised satellite" capable of carrying multiple payloads up to 150 kg.

The collaboration will follow a contract inked with SpacePixxel Technologies. Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), the flagship initiative of the ministry, signed the landmark 350th contract here on Tuesday.

"The contract was inked with SpacePixxel Technologies Pvt Ltd for design and development of a miniaturised satellite capable of carrying electro-optical, infrared, synthetic aperture radar and hyperspectral payloads up to 150 kg," the defence ministry said in a statement.

The 150th iDEX contract was signed in December 2022, and within a span of 18



months, the 350th contract has been signed, it said. The contract was exchanged between Additional Secretary (Defence Production) and CEO, Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO), Anurag Bajpai, and founder and CEO of SpacePixxel Technologies Awais Ahmed Nadeem Alduri in the presence of Defence Secretary Girdhar Aramane and other senior civil and military officials of the ministry. SpacePixxel has been active-

ly working to build and launch high-resolution hyperspectral imaging satellites to provide detailed earth observation data, the statement said.

"This 350th iDEX contract enables innovation in space electronics, wherein many payloads earlier deployed on dedicated large satellites are now being miniaturised.

The modular small satellite will integrate multiple miniaturised payloads as per

requirement, providing advantages like faster and economical deployment, ease of manufacturing, scalability, adaptability and less environmental impact," it said. In his address, the defence secretary appreciated the unwavering commitment of new defence innovators for pushing the boundaries of technology and safeguarding the nation.

Emphasising the importance of combining indigenisation with innovation, he said domestic capabilities provide a foundation for fostering innovation by offering a platform for experimentation and development.

Innovation fuels indigenisation by driving the creation of new technologies and solutions that can be produced domestically, the defence secretary said, assuring all possible support to the innovators at every step.

The ministry said iDEX, the recipient of the Prime Minister Award for Public Policy in Innovation Category in 2021, has emerged as a "game-changer in the defence ecosystem". Established by the DIO under Department of Defence Production, iDEX has launched 11 editions of the Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC), and recently unveiled the Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI) scheme to promote innovations in critical and strategic defence technologies.

In a brief period, iDEX has successfully gained momentum, fostering a burgeoning community of start-ups within the defence sector. It is currently engaged with over 400 start-ups and MSMEs.

"Till now, procurement of 35 items, worth over Rs 2,000 crore, has been cleared. iDEX has facilitated the creation of numerous job opportunities and played a pivotal role in the development of the defence

Jairam points out gaps in Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Jairam Ramesh, former Union Environment Minister and Congress leader on Tuesday flagged issues in the elephant translocation laws, pointing out gaps in the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022. Criticising the vague terms allowing elephant transport "for any other purpose," which could lead to misuse, he stressed the need for stringent regulations to prevent exploitation and ensure proper elephant conservation.

In his letter written to Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav, he said, "The Captive Elephant (Transport or Transfer) Rules 2024 notified in March do not effectively prevent the wild capture and commercial trade of elephants." In his letter, Ramesh further

said the Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2022, allowed the non-commercial transfer of elephants for "any other purpose" but failed to clarify what this phrase means, leaving room for misuse. "This is no way to treat India's national heritage animal, declared thus in 2010," Ramesh wrote on X and urged Yadav to reconsider the Rules in light of these concerns and those raised by various animal welfare organisations.

Ramesh reminded Yadav that during his speech on the Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2022, he had objected to the non-commercial transfer of elephants "for any other purpose". He said this was contrary to the recommendation of the Standing Committee that examined the Bill in detail and that he had only supported the exception for "religious" pur-

poses. "You had assured the House that 'any other purpose' would be clarified in the Rules. Unfortunately, the Rules still do not clarify what 'any other purpose' means. This leaves wide gaps for misuse," Ramesh wrote.

The Congress leader pointed out that the current Rules do not effectively close the routes for both wild capture and commercial trade of captive elephants, especially from the Northeast to other parts of India.

He cited recent examples of commercial transactions involving elephants from Arunachal Pradesh to Kerala, Odisha, and Gujarat, and serious attempts to transfer wild-caught elephants to these states under the guise of being captive or as donations.

Ramesh said these issues are documented and well known to the officials.

Climate change will have wide-reaching consequences, warns Uttarakhand MLA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Climate change is causing a significant reduction in snowfall in the Himalayas and accelerating glacier melt, which will have wide-reaching consequences for cities such as Delhi that are already facing a water crisis, an Uttarakhand MLA warned on Tuesday.

At a press conference in New Delhi, the BJP's Tehri MLA Kishore Upadhyay cited studies predicting that the Himalayas could be devoid of snow in the next two to three decades.

He also said climate change-induced rapid glacier melt is affecting the strength and pattern of the Indian monsoon. Upadhyay has launched the Global Himalayan Organisation to raise awareness

about the critical state of the mountain range.

Avinash Mishra, former adviser to NITI Aayog and a member of the initiative, cited a report by the Indian Space Research Organisation and said more than 27 per cent of the identified glacial lakes in the Himalayas, 130 of which are located in India, have significantly expanded since 1984. "The burning of fossil fuels is accelerating glacier melt and the expansion of glacial lakes, increasing the risk of glacial lake outburst floods. The rise in forest fires is further warming the Himalayas," Mishra said.

He added that reduced snowfall in the Himalayas will have a severe impact on industries along the rivers originating from the mountains and on agriculture.

Mishra warned that the climate change-driven glacier melt will affect not only the Himalayas but also cities such as Delhi. "Even the president's house will not be safe."

"The rapid melting of glaciers and reduced river flow due to declining snowfall will have a wide and far-reaching impact, not only on Himalayan villages and cities but also on urban areas such as Delhi," BJP MLA Upadhyay said.

He also blamed deforestation in the plains for contributing to warming in the hills and the subsequent glacier melt. "In the past, the mountains would get six to seven feet of snowfall. Now, it has declined to just one to two feet. I am not blaming anyone but one reason for this is the large-scale deforestation and concretisation in the lower latitudes," Upadhyay said.

74 per cent Indians support wealth tax: Survey

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As G20 Finance Ministers prepare to consider a wealth tax on the super-rich next month amid climate change crisis impacting lives and livelihood, a survey has revealed that 68 per cent of people in these countries, including 74 per cent in India, support the idea to address global hunger and inequality. The proposal for a levy on the super-rich has been under discussion since 2013 with international support on the issue growing over the years.

The survey by the Earth4All initiative and Global Commons Alliance surveyed 22,000 citizens in the world's largest economies. Brazil, the current president of the G20, aims to build consensus on the taxation of wealth and is likely to push for a joint



declaration at a meeting of G20 finance ministers in July. Gabriel Zucman, a French economist and a key influencer behind Brazil's G20 proposal for progressive international taxation to promote tax justice, will release a report on Tuesday, outlining

how "a global minimum tax on the ultra-rich" could work and how much it could raise. According to Zucman, the super-rich pay significantly less tax than the ordinary people. The proposal aims to establish a new international standard: billionaires in every

country would be required to pay at least 2 per cent of their wealth in taxes annually.

Nationwide, support for a wealth tax on wealthy people is highest in Indonesia (86%), Turkey (78%), the UK (77%) and India (74%). Support is lowest in Saudi Arabia (54%), and Argentina (54%), but still over half the respondents surveyed. In the United States, France and Germany around two in three of those surveyed support a wealth tax on wealthy people (67%, 67% and 68% respectively).

Owen Gaffney, co-lead of Earth4All, said, "Indians want a giant leap on climate and nature -- 68 per cent demand dramatic reforms across all economic sectors within the next decade. This is a strong mandate for planetary stewardship that cannot be ignored." Seventy-four per cent of

Indians support taxing wealth. Tax on high incomes and corporations to fund climate initiatives alongside a 'polluter pays' approach with income redistribution are also strongly supported, he said. Seventy-one per cent of Indians endorse universal basic income, 74 per cent support policies that encourage healthy diets to cut emissions, and 76 per cent seek a better work-life balance. Sixty-eight per cent of Indians believe the world needs to take dramatic action in the next decade across all sectors of the economy -- electricity generation, transport, buildings, industry, and food.

Eighty-one per cent of the Indians surveyed support a shift to "wellbeing economies" that have a stronger focus on health and the environment than a narrow focus on economic growth.

Track, trace and eliminate illicit tobacco trade, control unrecorded alcohol: WHO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Noting that progress in combating illicit tobacco trade has been slow in the Southeast Asia Region, with appropriate policies and tools either not in place or not optimally implemented, the World Health Organization (WHO) on Tuesday called on member nations to take effective steps to track, trace and eliminate illicit trade of the products and control unrecorded alcohol.

"Effective control of illicit tobacco trade and unrecord-

ed alcohol is a challenging and daunting task but now is the time to prudently make our decisions and choose the best way forward," WHO Regional Director Saima Wazed urged in her opening remarks at a regional workshop in New Delhi to address the challenges of illicit tobacco trade and unrecorded alcohol. "As a first step, all our remaining member states should become parties to the WHO FCTC (Framework Convention on Tobacco Control) protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products," she said. India and Sri

Lanka from the WHO's Southeast Asia Region are parties to the WHO FCTC protocol so far.

The workshop is exploring integrating "quintines" for tobacco, alcohol and substance use, besides global best practices to monitor and combat illicit tobacco trade and unrecorded alcohol consumption.

Wazed also called on member countries to devote optimal resources to develop, implement and sustain effective track-and-trace mechanisms for tobacco products. Experience from many coun-



tries shows illicit trade can be successfully addressed, even when tobacco taxes and prices are raised, Wazed said.

"It is essential to compile existing and generate new regional evidence to enable policymakers to make better informed and more effective policy decisions to monitor and combat illicit tobacco trade and unrecorded alcohol," she added.

An estimated 25 per cent of global alcohol consumption is unrecorded. This is usually of a lower price and appeals to consumers from low socio-economic status and people

with underlying alcohol use disorders. It is often irregularly labelled and frequently contains unknown ethanol percentages and potentially toxic compounds.

It is a complex interplay of these factors that make unrecorded alcohol potentially more harmful than regulated alcohol, the regional director said.

Online sale of unrecorded alcohol, which circumvents alcohol availability regulations, is an emerging challenge, she said. In addition to the valuable lives lost, both tobacco and alcohol have sub-

stantial economic and societal costs.

Mukesh Kejriwal, an anti-tobacco activist echoed similar views, calling for stringent laws to curb smuggling of e-cigarettes which are being flooded by the unscrupulous tobacco lobbies despite being banned in the country. He cited a recent case where the air intelligence unit (AIU) of customs department at Trichy International Airport seized more than 1,200 e-cigarettes from two air passengers who arrived from Malaysia in May 2024. "This is just the tip of the iceberg," he said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A new leaf

The 18th Lok Sabha begins on a promising note amid Opposition challenges to the Government

The much-awaited inaugural session of 18th Lok Sabha started on June 24th. This marks a pivotal moment in India's democratic journey. With the NDA returning to power albeit with lesser seats would make it a much-balanced house than the 17th Lok Sabha in which NDA had brute majority. However, the political landscape has undergone significant shifts which will reflect in the functioning of the new Lok Sabha. Indeed, the priorities set in this session will shape India's trajectory for the next five years. The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha hit the controversy on its very first day. The leaders of the INDIA bloc staged a protest outside Parliament on Monday, coinciding with the oath-taking ceremony of newly elected Members of Parliament. Key figures, including Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, party leader Sonia Gandhi, and Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, held copies of the Constitution as they demonstrated against the BJP-led NDA government. The swearing-in process for other Union ministers and newly elected MPs was conducted by Pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab. Members of the Congress and the INDIA bloc, who are part of parliamentary panels, opted out of assisting with the oath-taking process for the newly elected MPs. They expressed their dissatisfaction over the appointment of BJP MP Bhartruhari Mahtab as pro-tem Speaker instead of their preferred candidate, eight-time Congress MP K Suresh. This is a first indication that the functioning of this Lok Sabha would not be smooth.



The 18th Lok Sabha's first session will continue until July 3. The election for the Lok Sabha Speaker is set for June 26, and President Murmu will address a joint session of both houses on June 27. Interestingly this session will see the appointment of a Leader of the Opposition for the first time in a decade. The session is expected to be contentious, with the opposition poised to challenge the BJP-led NDA on various issues, including the Speaker election on June 26, paper leaks in NEET-UG and UGC-NET exams, and disputes over the pro-tem Speaker's appointment. The opposition aims to address rising prices, food inflation, fatalities due to extreme heatwaves, and recent 'irregularities' in exam administrations. The 18th Lok Sabha is expected to prioritize measures to boost economic growth, tackle inflation, and create employment opportunities. The new session is also expected to focus on social justice, addressing issues related to inequality and ensuring that the benefits of economic growth reach all sections of society. Besides India's strategic interests and security concerns are expected to be prominent in the 18th Lok Sabha's deliberations in the wake of terrorist attacks in Jammu. Beefing up security and restoring law and order in various parts of the country should be taken up on priority. This session not only sets the legislative framework but also reflects the aspirations of a diverse and dynamic nation, eager to carve out a resilient and equitable path forward in a rapidly changing global landscape.

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PICTALK



An Indian cricket fan blows into a shell horn prior to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup cricket match AP/PTI

Lessons from the life of Lord Rama!

Our experiences, coupled with the wisdom imparted through stories told by our elders or discovered in books, often shape us in profound ways

Our experiences, and even the stories narrated by our elders or those read by us, impart a certain wisdom. Many of these get so deeply ingrained in our minds that often we develop characteristics unknown to our conscious self. My mother always kept a copy of Ramcharitmanas in her prayer corner. We would listen wide-eyed to her recitation of the chaupais (a quatrain verse of Indian poetry), my imagination running wild with the story of Lord Rama, and his victory over evil. It remained a story to me in my growing up years, till I joined my railway job. I was the head of my department in a division, sandwiched between two other divisions. My location required me to have smooth coordination with my neighbours. One day I complained to our mutual boss in the headquarters about the non-cooperation of my colleagues from the adjoining divisions, to be snubbed by him, "You are now a senior officer. You should handle these minor issues at your level." I was 29, with a working experience of only 5 years. It did not mat-



ter that I did not consider myself senior enough. It was the position that I held that imparted me the authority and consequently responsibility. The observation had gone home. I was a leader and had to act like one taking every-one with me to attain my goals. As a branch head, I was also responsible for allotting government accommodation to the staff under my control. It was a routine exercise following the waitlist; however, the branch head had the discretionary authority to make an out-of-turn allotment. A few days into my posting, I was approached by the widow of

one staff, supported by a few union leaders, for an out-of-turn allotment on compassionate grounds. I passed the orders. Then I started having doubts, knowing that I would now also be approached by the rival union for favour. I refused the approach several weeks later despite their polite requests to follow the precedence I had set. I learned that it was important to be fair while making decisions. One day a few union leaders came to me quite agitated. They complained about the disrespectful communication by one of my junior officers. The officer had used the Hindi tum (you), instead of the more respectable aap (you), when addressing a staff. I tried to assuage their hurt sentiments by pointing out the north Indian origins of the junior officer, where, in some regions, even the parents are addressed as tum. I learned to respect the local sentiments. I also learned the importance of nurturing relations. Armed with bookish knowledge, I was a novice in the practical professional life. The staff had been dealing with these issues far before I had

joined the engineering college and many even from before I was born. I had no hesitation to sit with them without any biases and learn. I took strength from the stories of Nishad, Shabri, Sugriva, and many others. It was only after I faced difficult situations in my professional life, I understood that the life of Lord Rama as a prince and then king was tough. He had to uphold integrity in his public life even at the cost of personal suffering. He also had to build and nurture new relationships without preconceived notions to fight for the good. I had learned important lessons from the stories narrated by my mother. Ramcharitmanas was not just a story, it was a way of life! Following the principles that He lived and fought for on this earth was the true devotion that I could offer. I did not need the sanctuary of a temple to pray!

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

Inordinate delay in naming new army chief

The Govt's decision to extend the tenure of Chief of Army Staff by 30 days, instead of announcing the new appointee has sparked controversy and conjecture



ASHOK K MEHTA

It is intriguing why the appointment of Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi was not announced on 26 May but on 11 June which would have obviated a 30-day extension to COAS Gen Manoj Pande and the unnecessary speculation that followed. Government would not have been deterred by Model Code of Conduct for election as it had already appointed VAdm Dinesh Tripathi as Chief of Naval Staff on 19 April. That a supersession was contemplated but not implemented as the '400 paar' goal, even 272 mark were missed probably led to discretion superseding valour. Further NDA allies had already flagged the Agniveer issue!

Strange are the ways of the government. Just six days before Pande's superannuation - bringing the appointment down to wire - it ordered an extension after he had been feted out by his successor on 21 May. The extension was quite baffling. Government officials like Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary and others (including Director ED) who run government for politicians get extensions as a matter of routine. In the case of ED's Sanjay Mishra, Supreme Court had to intervene to issue a deadline. But bureaucrats have made themselves indispensable like the repetition of NSA shows. The extension to COAS triggered extensive speculation: The last extension was given to COAS Gen Gopal Bewoor who succeeded Field Marshal Manekshaw. This extension ensured that Lt Gen PS Bhagat, a Victoria Cross winner was denied the post of COAS, opening the path for Lt Gen Tappy Raina, a Kashmiri, to get the coveted job. Incidentally, both Bewoor and Bhagat were Rimcollians (studied at RIMC Dehradun) and good friends. Appointments of CDS and COAS have got highly politicised but their stature diminishing - as their most conspicuous relegation in the seating plan during PM's oath taking ceremony demonstrated. No one but they are to blame. Equally unusual was Defence Minister Minister Rajnath Singh being welcomed back to MOD by CDS Gen Anil Chauhan holding



a bouquet. A soldier's salute is the highest tribute. A month's extension in the armed forces is a first, though in one case, extension was given for one day. The extension will affect the line of succession beyond the present contenders. VCOAS Lt Gen Dwivedi was the senior most followed by Lt Gen Ajai Singh GoC-in-C Southern Command. Both were batch-mates but the tyranny of order of merit while graduating from IMA dictates seniority. Both were to retire on 30 June. Next senior was Northern Army Commander. Lt Gen Suchindra Kumar followed by Lt Gen Raja Subramani of Central Command. Interestingly all the Generals named except the outgoing COAS who is an Engineer officer are Infanteers. Pande is the first Sapper officer to break the glass ceiling. On 1 July the new Army Commanders will be Lt Gens Raja Subramani VCOAS, Devu Sharma AARTRAC, Dhiraj Seth Southern, Sengupta South Western and Manjinder Singh Central. Traditionalists hold that extensions in the military are not par for the course as they disrupt the line of succession and officers should refuse to accept extension. It is the government's prerogative to choose a Service Chief by seniority, merit and deep selection

GOVERNMENTS MUST NOT BE SEEN BREACHING THE SACROSANCT SERVICE RULE BOOK OR INVENTING NEW RULES. INSTANCES OF SUPERSESSON ARE RARE: THE MOST RECENT BEING THE APPOINTMENT OF LATE GEN BIPIN RAWAT AS COAS WHO OVERTOOK TWO SENIOR GENERALS

superseding officers or even recalling the selected from retirement. But service rules should not be tweaked whimsically. In 2014 after BJP won the elections it tried to prevent the ruling UPA from appointing the senior most Gen Dalbir Suhag as COAS. The thing is, Governments must not be seen breaching the sacrosanct service rule book or inventing new rules. Instances of supersession are rare: the most recent being the appointment of late Gen Bipin Rawat as COAS who overtook two senior Generals. Supersessions have happened in the Navy and Air Force also. Admiral Robin Dhawan in 2014 and Admiral Karambir Singh in 2019 superseded their senior VADM's Shekhar Sinha and Bimal Verma. Superseded officers have generally resigned but some continued to serve. So why the one-month extension to Gen Pande. The government wanted to be back in power (as it was on 9 June) before taking any unusual step like deviating from seniority principle. Remember all three - Incumbent Pande, next senior Dwivedi followed by Singh - were all to retire on 30 June. If government had wanted to appoint senior most Lt Gen Dwivedi as COAS, his name could have been announced on 26 May as it had announced appointment of

VAdm Tripathi as CNS on 19 April while moral code of conduct was on. Instead, the government preoccupied with election extended service of Gen Pande giving itself more leeway in naming new COAS. Choices were A) appoint the senior most Dwivedi, B) retire both Dwivedi and Singh and appoint either Suchindra Kumar or Raja Subramani or And C) Supercede Dwivedi and appoint Singh by tweaking the rulebook (one day extension for Singh) or deep-select from other eligible Army Commanders. In the Air Force, service rules were tweaked by MoD in 1988. Air Chief Marshal Polly Mehra retired on 31 July. Air Marshal Nimmi Suri who was to retire on 31 July was given one day extension and appointed Air Chief Marshal and Chief of Air Staff, superseding Air Marshal MM Singh. In another case I believe the forenoon/afternoon tweak was applied which is being replicated now - retiring Gen Pande F/N and appointing Gen Dwivedi in A/N. The extension merely created a storm in a tea cup, the El Nino effect! (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COMBATING LONELINESS

Madam — The World Health Organization (WHO) declared loneliness a "global health threat" in November 2023 and should be commended for launching the WHO Commission on Social Connection to address this issue. Connecting with others has become easier in our modern era of smartphones and the internet. Here are a few practical suggestions to help older individuals combat loneliness: Each apartment complex or neighborhood should have a common room for social gatherings and reading, where people can read newspapers and magazines, chat, discuss general topics, and stay until family members return home from work. Employ a coordinator for the social room to attend to the needs of the elderly, such as running errands, engaging in conversations, and providing a cheerful atmosphere. A written understanding should be established that discussions in the common room remain private to prevent controversies. Allow lonely individuals from nearby homes to join. Provide cots for naps and encourage bringing lunch boxes. Encourage keeping pets. Promote hobbies such as gardening, puzzle-solving, and reading. Participate in social platforms. Create quiz groups on WhatsApp and other social platforms for daily quizzes, with participants taking turns to pose questions and answers. Make humor and laughter sessions mandatory in every apartment complex, educational institution, and workplace, at least for 10 minutes each morning and evening. The internet offers an endless supply of jokes that are considerate of others' feelings.

PVS Sreelekha | Secundarabad

OPPOSITION TAKES ON GOVT

Madam — The parliamentary session starting on June 24 promises to be significant, as it marks the first time in a decade that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will not govern alone. New mem-

Monetary compensation to housewives



Housewives are just as valuable as their employed male counterparts in families. From managing household chores to planning family events, housewives possess a range of skills that many working men cannot match. Years ago, the Supreme Court challenged the census for categorizing homemakers as 'non-workers' and called for laws to recognize their economic contribution. A woman's role as a mother, wife, and homemaker should itself be regarded as productive work, transcending mere monetary value. She brings emotional attachment and selfless service to the family. Society often views housewives solely as nurturers, failing to respect them as individuals independent of their familial roles. It took insightful minds and the efforts of many women to rebrand the term 'housewife' to the more respectful 'homemaker.' Unpaid household work by women must be recognized as productive labor, not just as tasks done for the family's welfare. The reality is that in most cases, women have little choice when it comes to housework. It's high time the contributions of homemakers are acknowledged through appropriate monetary compensation. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Sheikh Hasina's two-day visit to India highlighted the tight relationship between the two countries. The two countries signed ten agreements and memoranda of understanding, but the agreement struck on India's plan to send a technical team to conserve and manage the Teesta River garnered special notice. The distribution of Teesta River water has been viewed as a problematic issue between the two countries. Considering this, China began to express interest in the management and conservation of the Teesta River in 2020. All parties were aware of the sensitivity of the situation, given India's reservations about it. Looking at countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives, we can see that China's approach was not new. However, given India's good relations with Bangladesh, the issue over Teesta water sharing did not raise suspicions and animosity between the two countries. Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

WE ARE PLAYING THE SCRIPT OF LIFE

The world is a stage where we each have a unique, pre-scripted part to play



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

Recently a veteran actor from the Indian film industry was given the Highest Civilian Award for his contribution towards spreading cultural values across the Globe through his acting career. While he was given the award, everyone in the audience stood up to give him a standing ovation with so much love and respect to the legend, who brought so many characters to life on celluloid screen. We all have experienced this euphoria in theatres, while a heroic character makes an entry on screen, there are loud cheers, whistles, applause and more. And at the end of the film, the hero wins the audience's hearts and steals the show. Whether he plays a prince or a pauper, it does not matter as his fans through the theatres to catch a glimpse of him. The beauty of his performance lies in his ability to internalize the character to the extent that he and his role seem one to his fans. But even while doing it, he is very much conscious of the fact that he is merely an actor in a particular drama, his role is carved, his dialogues are scripted and the costumes are designed for that particular character. Hence, his greatness lies only in playing the role to the best of his capability. On his long journey to stardom, every actor often turns a spectator and critiques his own work so that he can improve upon his act. It is this element of detachment from the different roles he plays that allows him to progress, play multiple roles simultaneously with clarity and then return to his personal life at the end of the day.

Not many of us know that the world cycle is very much similar to this drama in which all of us are actors with unique parts. Everyone is the protagonist in his life and can become a hero who draws applause. However, today we hardly find anyone cheering for the other person. Because, there is great dissatisfaction either with each other's performance or the script. As a result the drama appears to have become a tragedy. There is widespread chaos with actors criticizing each other's performances instead of theirs. The reason for this trouble is that most of us act without the knowledge that the earth is a stage and we have all come here to play our individual roles. Secondly, each actor's role is unique and pre-scripted and hence trying to match it with anybody else's



is futile. Thirdly, the biggest law of the world drama is that it is ever beneficial for everyone. In the absence of this understanding or its consciousness, we get attached to our roles, forget to change our costumes and make-up and lose the flexibility to adapt to each part. Take a simple example of a person who plays a son, a husband, a father, a friend and several other roles at the same time. If he is in the consciousness of being a male, he could dominate his wife at home or look down upon his female staff at office. At work, he would stick to his role of being a boss so much so that he forgets to become their colleague. On the other hand, if he is conscious that he is an actor and must like a hero win everyone's hearts, then he would understand the requirements of his role and become active, accurate and attractive at whatever he does. Living the peaks and troughs of each character we play, we drain ourselves and are unable to muster enough strength to meet the demands of each role or take well the twists in the scenes, as a result of which there are emotional upheavals and sorrow becomes a regular visitor when the purpose of the drama is to help the actors experience joy and happiness. On the other hand, if we become detached to the roles we play and keep faith in the eternal law that the drama has been scripted for universal benefit, the feeling of loss and gain, comfort and pain would begin to dissolve and our mind would stop to question the developments in every scene. So, the moral of the story is that we should be detached and yet be involved in the part we are playing. That's the quality to be a superstar in this World Drama.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)

Water crisis in Delhi is entirely man-made



UTTAM GUPTA

The ruthless exploitation of natural endowments and that too when resources are being put to misuse is unconscionable

The gravity of water crisis facing Delhiites has forced the Delhi government to approach the Supreme Court (SC) seeking its intervention to direct neighboring states Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh (HP) to provide additional raw water supply to the national capital. Initially, the SC directed HP to release 137 cusecs of raw water which translates to 70 million gallons per day (MGD) of more water for the city. It also asked Haryana to make arrangements for ensuring its free flow to Delhi.

But, now with HP claiming that it can't release more than what it is already giving (70 MGD), the top court has directed 'the Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB) to convene a meeting with all parties and take a decision expeditiously'. The mandate of UYRB is to inter alia regulate the allocation of available water flows amongst the beneficiary States and also monitoring the return flows.

Is Delhi really short of water? According to Delhi's Economic Survey Report 2023, the overall water requirement of the city is 1,290 MGD, with an increase in the summer months. Against this, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) which has the mandate to manage the water supply in the city (including procurement of raw water from various sources, its processing in water treatment plants or WTPs and its distribution) had said on April 3, 2024 in a written statement that water production in the capital stood at around 990 MGD on average between March end and start of April. The DJB actually produced 1,002 MGD on June 7, 2024.

Further, the Economic Survey of Delhi, 2023-24, says, "As per Outcome Budget (Q2 of 2023-24) of DJB, the total distribution losses are at about 52.35 percent". Distribution losses is a sophisticated nomenclature for pilferage of water supplies by tanker mafia and industries. The pilferage is happening at all stages of the water supply chain viz. the WTPs, conveyance systems and distribution systems. This couldn't have happened without the connivance of the authorities.

Deduct 52 percent pilferage or 520 MGD from production of around 1000 MGD, the quantity available for consumption by households in Delhi would be 480 MGD. This is barely 37 percent of the demand estimated at 1290 MGD. It sounds bizarre! If, that were the case, nearly 2/3rd of Delhiites would have been without drinking water; a complete disaster. That hasn't happened even as we see people chasing water tankers in several parts of Delhi.

So, what are we missing? There is something fundamentally wrong with the way mandarins in the government estimate the requirement. Ideally, this should be done from the demand side which involves conducting household survey, collecting data on how much each unit needs, aggregating and so on. Instead, they look at the total supply in the past say 2023-24, presume that that much quantity was consumed and apply an incremental factor/percentage increase to arrive at the requirement for 2024-25.

In this process, they end up including even the pilfered quantity in the requirement. It means that 1290 MGD also includes 520 MGD of water plundered by dubious operators from the system



(assuming that 52 per cent pilferage has continued in the current year). Minus this, the requirement of households was 770 MGD. This being higher than the net availability of 480 MGD, Delhiites are feeling the stress.

Unambiguously, plunder of water by tanker mafia is at the root of Delhi's water woes (last year, Delhiites were spared as the HH demand being muted, the net supply after accounting for the greed of the tanker mafia was sufficient to meet it). But, for this, the entire production of 1000 MGD would have been available for HH consumption resulting in a surplus of 230 MGD (1000-770) forget any shortage that we are experiencing today.

A sustainable solution to Delhi water woes requires that the State government addresses pilferage on a war footing. Yet, its overwhelming focus has been on getting more raw water from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, HP etc. While, making the demand it is oblivious of the fact that all its nine WTPs are already operating above their installed capacities (yielding a total of around 1000 MGD which is around 47 MGD more than the combined capacity of all nine WTPs) and that the DJB won't be able to deliver more even if it gets more raw water from the neighboring states.

As for addition to the processing capacity, last year, the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had approved an action plan to increase water production by 131 MGD in the short-term and by 380 MGD in the long-term. It

involved construction of a new plant at Chandrawal, with a capacity of 105 MGD and completion of another plant at Dwarka, which has the potential to increase production by 50 MGD. That plan hasn't made much headway. While, work on Chandrawal plant is yet to start, even the Dwarka project which was to come up by March 2024 is running behind schedule.

Unable to manage water supplies from the rivers viz. Yamuna, Ravi-Beas, Ganga and so on, the Delhi government is now increasing its dependence on groundwater which currently contributes a little more than 10 percent - almost 100 percent increase over the level five years ago. According to the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), over 41 percent of Delhi's total area is overexploited even as it has been drawing more groundwater than it recharges. The total annual groundwater recharge decreased from 0.41 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2022 to 0.38 bcm in 2023, while the annual extractable groundwater resource available decreased from 0.37 bcm to 0.34 bcm.

This is not a healthy trend. The ruthless exploitation of natural endowments and that too when resources are being put to misuse (read: diversion of water meant for HH consumption to industrial use) is unconscionable. Apart from the huge imbalance between the demand and supply, the gross mismanagement and irregularities in running Delhi's water supply systems is also push-

ing DJB to the brink of financial bankruptcy. Pilferage of more than half of water supply means the Board doesn't get any revenue on that much quantity. Then, you have Kejriwal's free scheme that involves no payment for consumption up to 20,000 litres a month per household. Even for HHs who get the bills and haven't paid for years, the Chief Minister has been trying to get a one time settlement package cleared by the Lieutenant Governor which will tantamount to the State exchequer foregoing thousands of crore. Finally, there are reports of payments having been made by the households albeit to private entities (authorized to collect the money) but never reached the revenue department.

All this has led to a pathetic situation whereby DJB which until a decade back was making profit today has an accumulated debt of over Rs 70,000 crore. The Board is able to run its operations solely because it can borrow money from banks and other financial institutions (FIs) backed by sovereign State guarantee. Left to fend for itself, it would have collapsed long ago. One shudders to think of what this would entail for water supply to the capital city. The water crisis as also seriousness of problems on other infrastructure fronts such as electricity etc and overall governance issues in Delhi calls for some drastic action by the Centre.

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

A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION TO DELHI WATER WOES REQUIRES THAT THE STATE GOVERNMENT ADDRESSES PILFERAGE ON A WAR FOOTING. YET, ITS OVERWHELMING FOCUS HAS BEEN ON GETTING MORE RAW WATER FROM HARYANA, UTTAR PRADESH, HP ETC.

Navigating the complexities of drug abuse and illicit trafficking

With a strong emphasis on prevention, awareness, and eliminating stigma, the UN champions a holistic approach to tackling drug abuse

Annually observed on June 26, 'The International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking' was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1987 to combat drug abuse globally. The day serves to highlight the challenges posed by drug abuse and illicit trafficking, stressing the need for international cooperation. The 2024 campaign, "The evidence is clear: invest in prevention", focuses on raising awareness about the importance of providing help and treatment to individuals struggling with drug use. It advocates for a compassionate approach, emphasizing empathy and care over punitive measures. This shift, aims to promote understanding of the negative impacts of drugs on



RAJDEEP PATHAK

personal, social, and spiritual well-being. The campaign also calls for treating people who use drugs with respect and without judgment, aiming to change societal attitudes. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) underscores the significance of eliminating stigma and adopting a people-centered approach based on human rights and evidence-based practices to effectively

combat drug abuse globally. Besides, the primary objective is to address the multifaceted issues of drug abuse and trafficking by raising public awareness, promoting preventive measures, and advocating for robust policies and programs. Educating communities about the severe dangers and consequences of drug abuse and illicit trafficking is essential. Fostering international cooperation is crucial for a comprehensive approach, emphasizing global partnerships and collaboration among law enforcement agencies to dismantle drug trafficking networks. Addressing these objectives will create a more informed, prepared, and united front against the global drug crisis. Going by the 2024 theme -

"The evidence is clear: invest in prevention", the message of the Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres is pertinent in which he reiterated that drugs inflict profound suffering, deteriorating health and wellbeing, with overdoses claiming countless lives annually. To him, the rise of more lethal synthetic drugs and record-breaking illicit drug production fuels crime and violence globally, impacting the most vulnerable, especially youth. Those struggling with substance abuse face repeated victimization from the drugs, societal stigma, and harsh responses. To break this cycle, 'we must invest in evidence-based prevention programs that safeguard individuals and communities, disrupt illicit

economies, and prioritize rehabilitation, education, and harm reduction'. He cited the example of Portugal saying that prevention is effective. António Guterres said, "As this year's theme reminds us, breaking the cycle of suffering means starting at the beginning, before drugs take hold, by investing in prevention." But what does 'Drug Abuse' actually mean? Drug abuse can be defined as the improper or excessive consumption of illegal drugs or prescription medications for non-therapeutic purposes. Drug abuse severely impacts physical health, manifesting in serious conditions. Reports point that chronic cocaine or methamphetamine abuse leads to cardiovascular issues, including heart disease and

stroke. Smoking drugs like crack cocaine can cause lung cancer, while intravenous drug use increases HIV risk. Other risks, as medical reports point, include nasal damage from snorting, liver and kidney disease from prolonged substance use, and oral cancer from smokeless tobacco. Contaminants in illicit drugs are linked to leukemia, and severe weight loss is common among stimulant addicts. Besides, mental health issues include depression, anxiety, memory and learning problems, insomnia, violent behaviour, delusions, paranoia, confusion, extreme mood swings, and substance dependence. Some report also suggests that the relationships between drug-related crime, crimes that affect the environment,

and convergent crime are complex and evolving. Drug cultivation and trafficking and crimes that affect the environment are surging in the Amazon Basin. Also, the 'UNODC World Drug Report 2023' highlights social and economic inequalities driving drug problems and their environmental and human rights impacts and rising conflicts. Treatment coverage remains low, with only one in five affected receiving help, notably lacking in some regions. Recent data from the Government of India reveals alarming statistics: more than 10% of the population grapples with psychiatric disorders such as depression, neurosis, and psychosis. A substantial segment, comprising 15 individuals per 1000, engages in drug

use, while chronic alcohol addiction affects 25 per 1000 people. The availability of psychiatric and de-addiction beds starkly contrasts with demand, with only 20% of the required facilities accessible nationwide, leaving an alarming 80% shortfall in inpatient care capacity. Following a tailored treatment plan involving detoxification, counseling, and possibly medication is crucial. Lifestyle adjustments such as adopting healthy habits and avoiding triggers support recovery. The way out is, facing the problem, discussing and treating it with experts' guidance, but not being the escapist. (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

UPSC to check cheating with AI and biometrics

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the raging controversies involving alleged irregularities in NEET, NET examinations, the country's premier recruitment body Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has decided to use facial recognition and Artificial Intelligence-based CCTV surveillance system to prevent cheating and impersonation in its various tests. It has recently floated a tender to invite bids from experienced public sector undertakings to devise two tech solutions "Aadhaar based fingerprint authentication (else digital fingerprint capturing) and facial recognition of candidates and QR code scanning of e-admit cards" and "Live AI-based CCTV surveillance service" -- to be used during the examination process. The Union Public Service Commission, a Constitutional body, conducts 14 major examinations -- including the prestigious civil services examination to select officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS), and Indian Police Service (IPS) -- besides a number of recruitment tests, interviews



every year for induction to Group 'A' and Group 'B' posts of the central government. An estimated 26 lakh candidates are expected to appear in such recruitment, conducted at a maximum of 80 centres in Leh, Kargil, Srinagar, Imphal, Agartala, Aizawl and Gangtok, among other major cities. "The UPSC attaches great importance to the conduct of its examinations in a free, fair and impartial manner. In its endeavor to fulfill these objectives, the Commission intends to make use of the latest digital technology to match and cross-check the biometric details of the candidates and to monitor various activities of

the candidates during the examination to prevent cheating, fraud, unfair means and impersonation," read the tender document dated June 3, 2024. Accordingly, the Commission has desired to incorporate Aadhaar-based fingerprint authentication (else digital fingerprint capturing) and facial recognition of candidates, scanning of QR Code of e-admit cards and monitoring through live AI-based CCTV video surveillance, it said. The move is aimed at strengthening the examination process and eliminating the possibility of malpractices by the candidates.

The selected service provider will use the data provided by the UPSC for Aadhaar-based fingerprint authentication of candidates and facial recognition during the exam, according to the scope of work mentioned in the tender document. "Provision should be made for a real-time attendance monitoring system through secured web server. System should have provision for real time monitoring of the enrolment activity along with GPS coordinates against every enrolment and time stamp to ensure that enrolment is done during the stipulated shift," it said. The Commission said facial recognition should be performed in a completely stateless transaction of two images -- one provided during the online registration and the other captured on the day of the exam. The UPSC said it has decided to implement CCTV/video surveillance with recording and live broadcast systems to monitor various activities of the candidates and other persons deployed to conduct the Commission's examinations at the various centres/venues across the country under a secure environment.

Modi's 100 smart cities...

From Page 1

Besides, 1,884 emergency call boxes and 3,000 public address systems has been installed to improve traffic enforcement systems and public safety. Under the projects, more than 6,800 kms of water supply system being monitored through Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA), reducing the non-revenue water and leakages. To improve solid management system,

around 4,800 vehicles across 50+ smart cities have been RFID enabled for Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) to improve solid waste management in addition to innovative technologies deployed to improve Route Management, Collection and Daily Management. "Around 44,054 Dwelling Units constructed, and 6,312 number of rooms built in community housing projects like Rain Basera, Hostel (non-educational), night shelters," the ministry said. "Each of the 100 cities has developed a diverse set of projects, many of which are very unique and being implemented

for the first time, thus improving the city's capabilities and experience and achieving larger transformation goals at the city level. Over the past nine years, the mission has emerged as a beacon of urban transformation, enhancing the quality of life across 100 cities through 8,000+ multi-sectoral, innovative projects valued at approximately Rs 1.6 lakh crore," the ministry said in a statement. Similarly, under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U) as on date, 114 Lakh have been grounded for construction while more than 84 Lakh houses have already been completed and delivered to beneficiaries.

IRTE & LEA Associates offer jobs to GNDU



PNS ■ AMRITSAR

The Directorate of Placement & Career Enhancement of Guru Nanak Dev University organized Campus Placement drives by two companies for the Under Graduate and Post Graduate students of Guru Ram Dass School of Planning of the University.

The first placement drive was conducted by Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE), Faridabad. About 22 students appeared for interviews and finally 4 students were offered jobs by the company at a salary package of Rs. 4.80 Lakhs per annum. IRTE came specially for recruitment for its academic & research activities for road safety, traffic engineering and traffic management. It is going to start a new program MBA in Traffic Management, for which the students have been selected as teaching faculties. In another placement drive conducted by LEA Associates South Asia Pvt. Ltd. for the students of Guru Ram Dass School of Planning, by this 10 students have been shortlisted for the positions of Urban Planner and Transport Planner selected by the company at a salary package of Rs. 4.8 Lakhs per annum.

Relocation...

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"When territories overlap, it increases the risk of confrontations as each species may perceive the other as a competitor or threat. In this case, the presence of leopards in the same area led to the fatal attacks on the tiger cubs as they were found to be vulnerable victims."

As per the reports from the NTCA, the number of leopards and tigers have risen in the past few years, but this also burdens the authorities to enhance the number of prey so as to cut down the competition between the two carnivorous predators for ungulates.

PM to...

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"But we are actively preparing. I will emphasise once again, this visit will take place," he told reporters, replying to a question. Sources said here the Indian prime minister's day-long visit is being planned around July 8, adding there is no finality on the date yet and various options are being explored.

If Modi travels to Russia, then he and President Putin are set to hold the India-Russia annual summit after a gap of three years.

The annual summit between the prime minister of India and the president of Russia is the highest institutional dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between the two countries. So far, 21 annual summits have taken place alternatively in India and Russia.

Panel moots outreach...

From Page 1

He added a system with zero error and a system that will lessen the difficulties and stress for the students with adequate flexibility built into it. During its meeting, the committee is also believed to have discussed cybersecurity issues and challenges posed by the darknet, where the UGC-NET exam question paper was first leaked forcing the Education Ministry to cancel it the day after it was conducted.

According to ministry officials, the reforms suggested by the panel are likely to be implemented by the next exam cycle. "It is a mammoth task and has to be done with complete preparation to ensure there are no loopholes but it is also the most important priority of the ministry right now. The panel will submit its report within two months and we will draw

an action plan to implement the reforms by the next exam cycle," an official said on condition of anonymity. In the line of fire over the alleged irregularities in medical entrance examination NEET, and PhD entrance test NET, the Centre had on Saturday notified the panel to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations through the NTA. While NEET is under scanner over several irregularities, including alleged leaks, UGC-NET was cancelled as the ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam was compromised. Two other exams -- CSIR-UGC NET and NEET PG -- were cancelled as a pre-emptive step. The panel will make recommendations on reforms in the mechanism of the examination process, improvement in data security protocols and the structure and functioning of the NTA.

HC stays Kejriwal...

From Page 1

pleas taken by ED and the averments/grounds as raised in the petition under section 439(2) of the code require serious consideration while dealing with said petition. Accordingly, the present application is allowed and the operation of the Impugned Order is stayed. It is made clear that nothing in this order shall be taken as any opinion or observation on the merits of the petition under section 439 (2) of the Code," the vacation judge said in the order. Justice Jain said voluminous material cannot be considered is totally unjustified and it shows that the trial court has not applied its mind to the material. In the 34-page order on the EDs application seeking a stay

on the operation of the bail order, Justice Jain asserted that every court is under an obligation to give sufficient opportunity to the parties to present their respective case and, in the instant case as well, the ED ought to have been given adequate opportunity to advance arguments on Kejriwal's bail application. Reacting to this, the AAP said it disagrees with the Delhi High Court order staying the bail granted to Kejriwal by the trial court and will challenge it in the Supreme Court. "They will approach the apex court," the AAP said. Justice Jain said the trial judge not only did not discuss and consider the arguments made by the anti-money laundering agency, including those advanced in the written

submissions, it also did not discuss and record its view with respect to the "twin condition" requirement under section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) while granting bail. Under section 45 of PMLA, an accused can be granted bail subject to the "twin conditions" that the court is prima facie satisfied that he is not guilty of such offence and the prosecutor has been given an opportunity to oppose the application for bail. The issue regarding Kejriwal's vicarious liability as the head of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) also did not find any place in the bail order, the court added. "The perusal of the Impugned Order is reflecting that the Vacation Judge has passed the Impugned Order without going through and appreciating the entire material brought on record by the rival parties

Former JKHCBA president Mian Qayoom arrested in Babar Qadri case

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The State Investigation Agency (SIA) of Jammu and Kashmir police Tuesday arrested the former President of the Jammu Kashmir High Court Bar Association (JKHCBA) Mian Qayoom in connection with the targeted killing of Advocate Babar Qadri. The investigating agency, which is learned to have collected some credible evidence, is expected to question the former Bar President further to crack the case. Barely three days before he was attacked Qadri, had claimed a threat to his life in a social media post. The lawyer, Babar Qadri, who was a regular participant in TV news debates was shot dead on September 24, 2020, by two gunmen who came as clients to his Srinagar house. A case was registered under FIR No 62/2020 U/S 302 IPC 7/27 IAA 13/16/18/20/39 UA



PA at the police station Lalbazar Srinagar, which was later transferred to the jurisdiction of SIA Kashmir in August 2023. The residence of Miaz Qayoom and other lawyers were also raided by the Jammu and Kashmir police to collect evidence in the case. According to a post on X, dated August 24, 2022, "Srinagar police conducting searches at the residence of Adv Miyam Qayoom, Adv Manzoor Dar and Adv Muzaffar Mohd in connection with further investigation of the murder of

Adv Babar Qadri, FIR No 62/2020 of PS Lal Bazar". Qayoom, known for his close association with pro-Pakistan separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, was also detained by the police before the Abrogation of Article 370. He remained under custody for almost one year and was released in July 2020. The police had also alleged the involvement of Saqib Manzoor, a Lashkar-e-Taiba commander, in Qadri's killing. Manzoor was killed during a police encounter in Srinagar alongside another militant commander in August 2021. Soon after taking over the investigation in the case in 2023, SIA announced a cash reward of Rs 10 lakh for individuals who can furnish information that assists in the apprehension of those responsible for the murder of the late Babar Qadri, a senior Advocate of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court.

Indian Railways accelerates electrification efforts

PNS ■ NEWS DELHI

Indian Railways is swiftly moving towards becoming the world's largest "Green Railways" by accelerating electrification efforts. Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has electrified 2583 RKM (Route Kilometres), covering 61.00 per cent of its 4260 RKM network.

Notably, 1399.34 RKM across the eight North-eastern states have been electrified, with significant progress in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura. This initiative, led by IRCON, RITES, and NFR/Construction, aims to improve train mobility, strengthen the Rail network, and reduce pollution and dependency on imported oil, promoting sustainable and efficient transportation.

Bombay HC orders release of minor in Pune Porsche hit-and-run case

PNS ■ MUMBAI



In a major development in the Pune Porsche hit-and-run case, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday ordered the release of a 17-year-old minor accused in the Porsche hit-and-run case from there and gave his custody to his paternal aunt. More than a month after the Pune Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) remanded him to observation home, a HC division bench of Justices Bharti Dangle and Justice Manjusha Deshpande declared the JJB's remand orders of May 22, June 5 and June 12 as "illegal and without jurisdiction" allowing a habeas corpus writ petition filed by the paternal aunt of the minor accused Pooja G. Jain, the HC bench directed that the JJB-ordered counselling sessions with a psychologist should continue post the minor's release. At a hearing held last week, the HC bench had questioned as to how the JJB could have remanded the minor accused in the Pune Porsche mishap

case to an observation home when he had already been released on bail. Apart from observing that the remand and its subsequent extension "completely nullified the effect of bail", the high court had also questioned the source of power to remand a juvenile to an observation home once bail has already been granted. Earlier, the petitioner Pooja Jain's lawyer, Senior Advocate Abad Ponda said that once a juvenile has been granted bail he should not have been remanded to an observation home, and said that the bail was operative till date since the boy had not been re-arrested on any additional charges nor was the bail given to him cancelled by a higher court.

UP Cabinet approves ...

From Page 1

It applies to all recruitment examinations, regularisation or promotion exams, and entrance exams for degrees, diplomas, or certificates. The ordinance also criminalises the distribution of fake question papers and the creation of fake employment websites. "If an examination is compromised, the financial burden will be recovered from the solver gang, and the institutes involved and service providers in question will be permanently blacklisted. The Act also includes provisions for property attachment in case of a crime. All offences under this ordinance are classified as cognisable, non-bailable, and triable by the sessions court and are non-compoundable. Stringent conditions for bail have also been established," Khanna elaborated. He added, "In the absence of an assembly session, an ordinance has been proposed in place of a bill. The Council of Ministers will approve the proposal, after which the ordinance process will be completed and implemented."

Rift surfaces, Mamata...

From Page 1

He said the decision was unilateral and our leader will take a decision on this. Abhishek Banerjee is the general secretary of the TMC and is considered the party's second in command. His statement came soon after senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi announced that there had been a unanimous decision on the Speaker's name and that all the parties jointly decided to field Suresh for the post. Sudip Bandyopadhyay too said that his party was not consulted on the issue. "I came to know all about it on the television ... even Derek O'Brien asked me whether there was any discussion because he too did not know about it ... it is for the Congress to explain this," he said remaining non-committal on whether his party would take part in the elections or not.

Another senior leader considered very close to the Bengal Chief Minister said in Kolkata that she was not in favour of putting up a Speaker's candidate at all. "The TMC is not used to domineering ways ... and will definitely give a thought over the issue ... but our party is not happy with the name of the Speaker candidate was decided without our leader (Mamata Banerjee) being kept in the loop ... if you consider

TMC to be an important constituent of the INDIA alliance then it has to be given its due honour," he said.

Meanwhile, in a new development sources in the Pradesh Congress said that their national leadership indeed had called up the TMC top brass to discuss the issue. "The calls went unanswered," a PCC spokesperson said without however sharing his source of information. He added, "Congress knows the importance of all the alliance partners and will take all care to keep the adhesive intact." The leader also said that "on one hand the TMC is saying that it has not been consulted on the other it is saying that it was not for putting up a Speaker candidate ... the two things cannot happen at the same time."

Though the Left leadership would not comment on the issue a senior leader quoted party Rajya Sabha MP Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya saying, "Mamata Banerjee is an unreliable stick to lean on will desert the INDIA ship to soothe her own interests ... she will abstain because to take care of the ED and CBI in the corruption cases against TMC leaders' names ... but in doing so she will once again be exposed as she had been in earlier occasions ... she bailed out the earlier BJP Government by taking this path of abstaining."

Historic clash...

From Page 1

Union ministers Piyush Goyal of the BJP and Lalan Singh of the JD(U) accused the opposition of resorting to pressure politics and putting forth preconditions despite senior ministers' assurance

that its demand will be considered when the time to pick the Deputy Speaker comes. "There can be no pressure politics," Union minister and JD(U) leader Lalan Singh told reporters, while Goyal said democracy cannot be run on preconditions.

With the NDA having 293 MPs in its kitty and the INDIA bloc 233, numbers clearly favour Birla in Lok Sabha, which currently has 542 members after Rahul Gandhi

resigned from one of the two seats he was elected from. At least three independent members also support the opposition. BJP sources claimed that the Congress has been the main aggressor on the issue and some other INDIA bloc members are not very keen on a contest. If Birla, the BJP MP from Kota, is elected, it will be fifth time that a Speaker would serve beyond the tenure of one Lok Sabha. Though Congress

leader Balram Jakhar is the only presiding officer to have served two complete terms extending seventh and eighth Lok Sabha. A third-term MP, Birla is also a three-term former Rajasthan MLA and has risen through the ranks in the BJP. Suresh, his rival for the Speaker's post, is an eighth-term MP from Kerala and hails from a Dalit community. Sources said if a division of votes takes place in Lok Sabha on Wednesday, then paper

slips will be used as the electronic system is not operational yet in the new Lok Sabha where members are still in the process of being allocated their seats. Seasoned BJP leader Rajnath Singh had taken the lead in reaching out to opposition parties over the issue as Birla emerged as the NDA's consensus choice and met its senior leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Suresh said it is not about

winning or losing, but about a convention that Speaker will be of ruling party and deputy speaker from the opposition. "Last two Lok Sabhas, they denied us deputy speaker's post because they said you are not recognised as the opposition. Now we are recognised as the opposition, (and) deputy speaker post is our right. But they are not ready to give us," he told reporters. Sources said more than 10 sets of nominations (called notices

for motion) were filed in support of Birla's candidature, including from Prime Minister Modi, Union ministers Shah, Singh and Nadda, and members of BJP allies like TDP, JD(U), JD(S) and LJP (R). Three sets of nominations were filed in support of Suresh. Congress has issued a three-line whip to its MPs asking them to be present in Lok Sabha at 11 AM on Wednesday during the election for the Speaker's post.

Israeli SC says ultra-Orthodox men must serve in military

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled unanimously that the military must begin drafting ultra-Orthodox men for military service, a decision that could lead to the collapse of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition as Israel continues to wage war in Gaza. The court ruled that in the absence of a law that distinguishes between Jewish seminary students and other draftees, Israel's compulsory military service system applies to the ultra-Orthodox like any other citizens. Under longstanding arrangements, ultra-Orthodox men have been exempt from the draft, which is compulsory for most Jewish men and women. These exemptions have long been a source of anger among

the secular public, a divide that has widened during the eight-month-old war, as the military has called up tens of thousands of soldiers and says it needs all the manpower it can get. Over 600 soldiers have been killed. Politically powerful ultra-Orthodox parties, key partners in Netanyahu's governing coalition, oppose any change in the current system. If the exemptions are ended, they could bolt the coalition, causing the government to collapse and leading to new elections. During arguments, government lawyers told the court that forcing ultra-Orthodox men to enlist would "tear Israeli society apart." The court decision comes at a sensitive time, as the war in Gaza drags on into its ninth month and the number of

dead soldiers continues to mount. The court found that the state was carrying out "invalid selective enforcement, which represents a serious violation of the rule of law, and the principle according to which all individuals are equal before the law." It did not say how many ultra-Orthodox should be drafted. The court also ruled that state subsidies for seminaries were exempted ultra-Orthodox men study should remain suspended. The court temporarily froze the seminary budgets earlier this year. In a post on the social media platform X, cabinet minister Yitzhak Goldknopf, who heads one of the ultra-Orthodox parties in the coalition, called the ruling "very unfortunate and disappointing."

He did not say whether his party would bolt the government. "The state of Israel was established in order to be a home for the Jewish people whose Torah is the bedrock of its existence. The Holy Torah will prevail," he wrote. The ultra-Orthodox see their full-time religious study as their part in protecting the state of Israel. Many fear that greater contact with secular society through the military will distance adherents from strict observance of the faith. Ultra-Orthodox men attend special seminaries that focus on religious studies, with little attention on secular topics like math, English or science. Critics have said they are ill-prepared to serve in the military or enter the secular work force.

Sunak withdraws party support from 2 over betting scandal

PTI ■ LONDON

Adding to the turmoil for an embattled Rishi Sunak, the British Prime Minister on Tuesday decided to withdraw his party's backing from two of his Conservative colleagues embroiled in a betting scandal over the date of the general election. The move comes just over a week before the July 4 polls after days of the row dominating the campaign headlines, with the Opposition demanding the suspension of those accused. A Conservative Party spokesperson confirmed that Tory candidates Craig Williams and Laura Saunders will no longer have the party's backing to contest as MPs from Montgomeryshire and Glynwdr in Wales and Bristol North West in England

respectively. "As a result of ongoing internal enquiries, we have concluded that we can no longer support Craig Williams or Laura Saunders as parliamentary candidates at the forthcoming general election," a Conservative Party spokesperson said. "We have checked with the Gambling Commission that this decision does not compromise the investigation that they are conducting, which is rightly independent and ongoing," the spokesperson said. Sunak had come under intense pressure to take action following the revelations over the past couple of weeks, including from some members of his own party. Saunders is the wife of the Tory director of campaigns, Tony Lee, and Williams a

close parliamentary aide to the Prime Minister. Sunak had previously admitted being "incredibly angry" when the revelations that members of his close circle were embroiled in betting on the election date but insisted he did not want to interfere with the Gambling Commission's independent probe. However, that position has now changed implying some evidence of impropriety. While betting is legal in the UK, any bets placed with the advantage of insider information could fall within the purview of illegality. When Sunak stepped out onto the steps of 10 Downing Street amid pouring rain on May 22 to announce July 4 as the date of the general election, he took the country by surprise with a summer election as opposed to the wide-

ly speculated September-October timeline. The date was therefore considered a very closely guarded secret, with only a handful of close party aides expected to have been in the know. Under Section 42 of the UK's Gambling Act 2005, it is an offence to cheat at gambling or to do anything that allows someone else to cheat. It could come with a jail term attached if it leads to a prosecution. The Gambling Commission has only admitted "investigating the possibility of offences concerning the date of the election" and declined to provide any details on the "ongoing investigation." "We are not confirming or denying the identity of any individuals involved in this investigation," a spokesperson said.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange freed from UK prison

AP ■ BANGKOK



A plane carrying Julian Assange landed Tuesday in Bangkok for refuelling, as the WikiLeaks founder was on his way to enter a plea deal with the US government that will free him and resolve the legal case that spanned years and continents over the publication of a trove of classified documents. A chartered flight from London that Assange's wife, Stella, confirmed was carrying her husband landed at Don Mueang International Airport. Officials there told The Associated Press the plane was scheduled to continue on to Saipan, the capital of the Northern Mariana Islands, a US commonwealth in the Pacific, where Assange is expected to appear in court on Wednesday. He's expected to plead guilty to an Espionage Act charge of conspiring to unlawfully obtain and disseminate classified national

defence information, according to the US Justice Department in a letter filed in court. Assange is expected to return to his home country of Australia after his plea and sentencing. The hearing is taking place in Saipan because of Assange's opposition to travelling to the continental US and the court's proximity to Australia, prosecutors said. The guilty plea, which must be approved by a judge, brings an abrupt conclusion to a criminal case of international intrigue and to the US govern-

ment's years-long pursuit of a publisher whose hugely popular secret-sharing website made him a cause celebre among many press freedom advocates who said he acted as a journalist to expose US military wrongdoing. Investigators, in contrast, have repeatedly asserted that his actions broke laws meant to protect sensitive information and put the country's national security at risk. Stella Assange told the BBC from Australia that it had been "touch and go" over the past 72 hours whether the deal would go ahead but she felt "elated" at the news. A lawyer who married the WikiLeaks founder in prison in 2022, she said details of the agreement would be made public once the judge had signed off on it. "He will be a free man once it is signed off by a judge," she said, adding that she still didn't think it was real. She told Britain's PA news agency that the flight was cost-

and remained utterly committed in the fight for his freedom." Albanese told Parliament that an Australian envoy had flown with Assange from London. "Regardless of the views that people have about Mr. Assange's activities, the case has dragged on for too long," Albanese said. "There's nothing to be gained by his continuing incarceration and we want him brought home to Australia." The deal ensures that Assange will admit guilt while also sparing him from additional prison time. He had spent years hiding in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London after Swedish authorities sought his arrest on rape allegations before being locked up in the United Kingdom. Assange is expected to be sentenced to the five years he has already spent in the British prison while fighting extradition to the US to face charges, a process that has played out in a series of hearings in London.

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Last month, he won the right to appeal an extradition order after his lawyers argued that the US government provided "blatantly inadequate" assurances that he would have the same free speech protections as an American citizen if extradited from Britain. Assange has been heralded by many around the world as a hero who brought to light military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan. Among the files published by WikiLeaks was a video of a 2007 Apache helicopter attack by American forces in Baghdad that killed 11 people, including two Reuters journalists. But his reputation was also tarnished by rape allegations, which he has denied. The Justice Department's indictment unsealed in 2019 accused Assange of encouraging and helping US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks published in 2010.

Prosecutors had accused Assange of damaging national security by publishing documents that harmed the US and its allies and aided its adversaries. The case was lambasted by press advocates and Assange supporters. Federal prosecutors defended it as targeting conduct that went beyond that of a journalist gathering information, amounting to an attempt to solicit, steal and indiscriminately publish classified government documents. The plea agreement comes months after President Joe Biden said he was considering a request from Australia to drop the US push to prosecute Assange. The White House was not involved in the decision to resolve Assange's case, according to a White House official who was not authorized to speak publicly about the case and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Aus leaders welcome expected plea that could bring Assange home

Melbourne (AP): Australian leaders cautiously welcomed an expected plea agreement that could set free Julian Assange, who was pursued for years over WikiLeaks' publication of a trove of classified documents. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Tuesday there was nothing to be gained by keeping the Australian incarcerated. A plane thought to be carrying Assange landed Tuesday in Bangkok as he heads to the Northern Mariana Islands, a US commonwealth in the Pacific midway between Australia and Japan, where he is expected to appear in a US federal court Wednesday local time. He is expected to plead guilty to an Espionage Act charge of conspiring to unlawfully obtain and disseminate classified national defense information, the US Justice Department said in a letter filed in court. Assange is expected to return to Australia if a judge accepts the plea agreement. Public support for Assange has grown in Australia during the seven years he has spent avoiding extradition to the United States by hiding in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London and later during his five years in Belmarsh Prison. Albanese has been lobbying since his government was elected in 2022 for the United States to end its prosecution of Assange, and his plight was seen as a test of the prime minister's leverage with President Joe Biden. Albanese had been a senior minister in a center-left Labor Party government that in 2010 staunchly backed US criticisms of WikiLeaks' classified information dumps. But Assange has breached no Australian law. Albanese told Parliament that Australian High Commissioner to the UK Stephen Smith had flown with Assange from London. "The government is certainly aware that Australian citizen Mr Julian Assange has legal proceedings scheduled in the United States.

Canada's Liberals suffer major upset in Toronto special election

Toronto (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal party has suffered a major upset in a special election for a Toronto district it has held for three decades, raising doubts about Trudeau's leadership ahead of next year's general election. Elections Canada reported the opposition Conservative candidate winning the Toronto-St. Paul's district by almost 600 votes, 42.1% over the Liberal candidate's 40.5% with all 192 polling stations reporting. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation declared Conservative Don Stewart the winner early Tuesday. The Liberals had held Toronto-St. Paul's since 1993. It is one of 338 seats in Canada's House of Commons. Losing in Canada's largest city, a traditional Liberal stronghold, does not bode well for Trudeau ahead of the election expected in the fall of 2025.

Prosecutor in classified documents case clashes with judge over request to restrict Trump's speech

AP ■ FORT PIERCE

A federal prosecutor in the classified documents case of Donald Trump clashed with the judge Monday as the judge was questioning a request to bar the former president from threatening comments about law enforcement agents involved in the investigation. Special counsel Jack Smith's team is seeking to make as a condition of Trump's freedom pending trial a prohibition on remarks that could endanger agents participating in the case. Prosecutors say those restrictions are necessary after Trump falsely claimed last month that the FBI was prepared to kill him when it searched his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, for classified documents two years ago. But prosecutor David Harbach, a member of Smith's team, encountered immediate pushback from U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, a Trump appointee, whose handling of the case has generated intense

scrutiny. The judge questioned Harbach about how she could fashion an order that did not run afoul of Trump's First Amendment rights and whether prosecutors could prove a direct link between Trump's comments and actions that might then follow. "There still needs to be a correlation between the alleged, dangerous comments and the risk" to public safety, she said. At one point, as Harbach tried despite frequent interruptions from Cannon to rattle off the multiple rationales that he said existed for speech restrictions on Trump, the visibly exasperated prosecutor noted acidly that "I've got one reason out so far." The comment drew a rebuke from Cannon, who said, "Mr. Harbach, I don't appreciate your tone." She said that if he could not behave in a more professional manner, one of his colleagues could take over. Harbach completed his arguments and later apologized to

the judge, saying he hadn't meant to be unprofessional. Defense lawyer Todd Blanche disputed the idea that Trump's comments posed an imminent threat to anyone in law enforcement and said prosecutors' request would have a "chilling" effect. Trump is the presumptive Republican presidential nominee and is set to debate President Joe Biden on Thursday. Trump was not required to be present for the hearing and was not in attendance. Trump's often-incendiary rhetoric has carried legal consequences in other cases. The New York judge presiding over Trump's hush money trial, in which he was convicted of 34 felony counts last week, fined him a total of \$10,000 for violating a gag order that barred him from verbal attacks on witnesses and jurors. A federal judge in Washington handling his election subversion case imposed a similar gag order last year that an appeals court later upheld.

It was not immediately clear when Cannon might rule. The arguments were part of a three-day hearing that began Friday to deal with several of the many unresolved legal issues that have piled up in a case that had been set for trial last month but has been snarled by delays and a plodding pace. Cannon indefinitely postponed the trial, and it's all but guaranteed that it will not take place before the November presidential election. Trump faces dozens of felony charges accusing him of illegally hoarding top-secret records at Mar-a-Lago and obstructing the FBI's efforts to get them back. Given the breadth of evidence that prosecutors have put forward, many legal experts have regarded the case as the most straightforward of the four prosecutions against Trump, who has pleaded not guilty. But Cannon has been slow to rule on numerous motions and has proved willing to entertain defense requests that prosecutors say

Part of Kenya parliament set on fire amid protest

Nairobi (Kenya) (AP): Thousands of Kenyan anti-tax protesters have entered parliament, and part of the building is on fire. Legislators are evacuating. Police earlier Tuesday fired live ammunition at the protesters in the capital, Nairobi, as thousands continued to rally and demand that legislators vote against new taxes proposed in a controversial finance bill. Two people died in protests last week but there were no immediate reports of any fresh casualties Tuesday. Medics set up emergency response temporary shelters in different cities with supplies donated by Kenyans. The third round of protests took place as lawmakers vote on the finance bill that would introduce new taxes, including an eco-levy that would raise the price of goods like sanitary towels and diapers. A proposal to tax bread was removed after public outcry but demonstrators are still calling on Parliament not to pass the bill.

The Kenya Human Rights Commission on Tuesday shared a video of officers shooting at protesters and said they would be held to account. The commission wrote on X addressing President William Ruto: "The world is watching your descent into tyranny! Your regime's actions is an assault on democracy. All those involved in the shooting - actively or passively - must be held to account." The Kenya Law Society President Faith Odhiambo on Tuesday said 50 Kenyans, including her personal assistant, had been "abducted" by people believed to be police officers. She said there were instances of extrajudicial killings, police abductions, torture and people kept incommunicado for several days. Some of those missing included those who were vocal in the ongoing demonstrations and were taken away from their homes, workplaces and public spaces in the run-up to the Tuesday protests, according to civil society groups.

Chang'e-6 probe brings back first-ever samples from Moon's far side

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's Chang'e-6 lunar probe module returned to Earth on Tuesday, completing its historic mission to collect the first-ever samples from the Moon's unexplored far side, in a major step forward for the country's ambitious space programme. The return capsule landed precisely in the designated area in Siziwang Banner, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 2:07 pm (Beijing Time), operating normally, and "the mission is a complete success," China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced. Chinese President Xi Jinping extended congratulations on the complete success of the Chang'e-6 mission, said state-run Xinhua news agency. China's probe was the first to reach and collect samples from the far side of the moon.

The development came after India in August 2023 became the first country to land near the little-explored lunar South Pole region when its Chandrayaan-3's lander, carrying the Pragyaan rover, successfully landed there. China is the only country to have landed on the far side of the Moon, having done so before in 2019. The far side - which faces away from Earth - is technically challenging to reach due to its distance, giant craters and few flat surfaces. In his congratulatory message, Xi noted that Chang'e-6, for the first time in human history, collected samples from the moon's far side and returned to Earth, marking another landmark achievement in China's endeavour to build a strong country in space as well as in science and technology. He called for meticulous

research on the lunar samples, the continued implementation of the country's major space projects, including deep space exploration, and the enhancement of international exchanges and cooperation. He also urged efforts to make new contributions to revealing the mysteries of the universe, to promoting the well-being of humanity, and to building a great country and advancing national rejuvenation on all fronts through Chinese modernisation. The re-entry module will be airlifted to Beijing for opening, and the lunar samples will be transferred to a team of scientists for subsequent storage, analysis and study, said the CNSA. The Chang'e-6 probe is expected to have returned to Earth with up to two kilograms of moon dust and rocks from the lunar far side, which will be analysed by

Chinese researchers before being opened for access by international scientists, it said. The Chang'e lunar exploration probe is named after the Chinese mythical moon goddess. Consisting of an orbiter, a returner, a lander and an ascender, Chang'e-6 was launched on May 3 this year. Supported by the Queqiao-2 relay satellite, placed earlier, the lander-ascender combination landed at the designated landing area in the South Pole-Aitken (SPA) Basin on the far side of the moon on June 2 and carried out sampling work. On June 4, the ascender took off from the moon with samples and entered the lunar orbit while on June 6, it completed rendezvous and docking with the orbiter-returner combination and transferred samples to the returner.

NASA calls off spacewalk after spacesuit water leak

Washington (AP): NASA on Monday canceled a spacewalk at the International Space Station after water leaked from an astronaut's spacesuit. Astronauts Tracy Dyson and Mike Barratt opened the hatch to the space station's airlock when Dyson reported water leaking from her spacesuit's cooling system. The leak occurred when Dyson switched her spacesuit to battery power. The astronauts hadn't floated outside yet. "There's literally water everywhere here now," Barratt said. The duo were not in danger, according to NASA. The astronauts were supposed to remove a faulty communications box and collect microbe samples from outside the orbiting laboratory.

King Charles III welcomes visiting Japanese emperor and empress

AP ■ LONDON



King Charles III welcomed the Japanese emperor and empress for a state visit that began on Tuesday, offering the best in pomp and circumstance as the UK seeks to bolster its role as the most influential European nation in the Indo-Pacific region. Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako are to attend a banquet hosted by the king, lay a wreath at Westminster Abbey and tour one of Britain's premier biomedical research institutes. But the emperor began this week's trip by visiting a site that has special meaning: The Thames Barrier. The retractable flood control gates on the River Thames seemed a natural destination for a royal long interested in the waterway that runs through the heart of London. Naruhito studied 18th-centu-

ry commerce on the river as a graduate student at the University of Oxford some 40 years ago. He chronicled the interest in his memoir "The Thames and I" together with his fondness for Britain and its people. The future emperor got a chance to experience life outside the palace walls, including doing his own ironing, going to the bank and taking part in pub crawls. Tuesday's ceremonial welcome seemed warm. Charles and Naruhito, who have known each other for years, settled into the back of a carriage and chatted like old chums. Both countries look to each other as a source of stability and mutual reassurance at a time of potentially destabilizing global political change.

Sensex breaches 78,000-level for first time

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex breached the historic 78,000 level for the first time while Nifty settled at a new record high on Tuesday on buying in blue-chip bank stocks and Reliance Industries. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 712.44 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 78,053.52. During the day, the benchmark soared 823.63 points or 1 per cent to hit a fresh lifetime high of 78,164.71. The Sensex breached the 77,000 mark for the first time on June 10. The Nifty went up by 183.45 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at a fresh record high of 23,721.30. During the day, it climbed 216.3 points or 0.91 per cent to hit an intraday lifetime high of 23,754.15. Among the 30 Sensex companies, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Tech Mahindra, Larsen &



Toubro, Bajaj Finserv, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries and Infosys were the biggest gainers. Power Grid, Asian Paints, Tata Steel, Nestle, Maruti and JSW Steel were among the laggards. "A rally in the banking stocks pushed Nifty to hit another record - 34th time this year though a host of

other sectors ended in the negative," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.26 per cent while the smallcap index dipped 0.03 per cent. "A positive news from the market perspective is the current account turning

surplus in Q4 FY24. This will take away the pressure on the rupee and pave the way for FII inflows when clarity emerges on the Fed rate cuts," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services. India recorded a current account surplus of USD 5.7 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP in the March quarter, the Reserve Bank of India said on Monday. This is the first time in ten quarters that the crucial metric of the country's external strength has turned into surplus mode. Among indices, bankex jumped 1.87 per cent, financial services climbed 1.45 per cent, IT by 0.53 per cent, capital goods by 0.28 per cent and teck by 0.43 per cent. Realty declined 1.82 per cent. Power (1.05 per cent), utilities (0.95 per cent), metal (0.84 per cent) and telecommunication (0.28 per cent) also dropped. "The markets edged higher

signaling a resumption of the uptrend after a brief pause. Nifty traded within a range during the first half, but selective buying in heavyweight stocks, particularly from the banking sector, spurred a sharp surge," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. "We believe the current buoyancy in banking, coupled with notable strength in IT, will dictate the trend, while other sectors may contribute on a rotational basis," Mishra added. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled higher while Shanghai ended lower. European markets were trading in the negative territory. US markets ended on a mixed note on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.44 per cent to USD 85.63 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 653.97 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

Rupee settles 3 paise higher at 83.44 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 3 paise against the US dollar on Tuesday, tracking a firm trend in domestic equities amid stable global crude oil prices. However, a strengthening American currency in the overseas market weighed on the local unit and restricted the up move, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.46 and hit the intraday high of 83.41 and a low of 83.48 against the greenback during the session. It finally settled at 83.44 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 3 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee appreciated 10 paise to settle at 83.47 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias as positive domestic markets and a soft US dollar may support



the rupee. However, a rise in crude oil prices and geopolitical tensions may cap a sharp upside. "Investors may remain cautious ahead of core PCE data from the US this week. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 83.65," 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 0.03 per cent higher at 105.50. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were trading

0.48 per cent lower at USD 85.60 per barrel. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 712.44 points, or 0.92 per cent, to close at a new peak of 78,053.52. The broader NSE Nifty settled 183.45 points, or 0.78 per cent, higher at a record 23,721.30. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Monday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 653.97 crore, according to exchange data. On the domestic macroeconomic front, S&P Global Ratings on Monday retained India's GDP growth forecast for the current financial year at 6.8 per cent and said high interest rates and lower fiscal spur would temper demand. Moreover, India recorded a current account surplus of USD 5.7 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP in the March quarter, the Reserve Bank of India said on Monday.

Industry pitches for tax reduction, rationalisation of duty structure in Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to boost the economy, representatives of various industries on Tuesday urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to reduce the incidence of indirect taxes and rationalise duty structure wherever required. In a pre-budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, FIEO president Ashwani Kumar made a case for an extension of the Interest Equalisation Scheme for the next five years. "We request the scheme which is valid till 30th June, 2024 may be extended for a period of 5 years. Looking into the rise in interest rates consequent to the increase in Repo rate from 4.4 per cent to 6.5 per cent in the last 2 years, the subvention rates may be restored back from 3 per cent to 5 per cent for manufacturers in MSMEs," Kumar said. Kumar also urged for the establishment of an Indian shipping line of global repute to reduce foreign shipping line dependency and save foreign exchange. Emerging from the nearly two-hour meeting, Ajay



Sardana, President & Head of Petchem-Industry Affairs, at Reliance Industries, said there is a need for a review of tariffs on imported goods from China related to the petrochem industry. "China has created a lot of overcapacity. They are putting a lot of products in India at a very cheaper price and a lot of dumping is happening. So, what we

requested is a review of the tariffs regime so that the domestic capacity can be increased," Sardana said. Shree Cement Chairman HM Bangur said the government should spend more on capital expenditure so that the cement industry benefits. "We sought faster and simultaneous environmental clearances and no hindrance in capex," he added.

Representing the services sector, Nasscom Vice President and Head of Public Policy Ashish Aggarwal said, "From the Budget perspective, we are looking for easing the transfer pricing regime as a lot of our industry is not able to benefit from transfer pricing provision." Nasscom also made a case for enhancing the scope of the safe harbour regime by increasing the threshold limit from Rs 200 crore in international transactions to Rs 2,000 crore so that global capability centres can take benefit from the safe harbour, he said. "We also suggested for strengthening of advance pricing agreement mechanism for promoting ease of doing business," he added. Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry Vice President Sandeep Engineer said, "We represented small and medium industries. The 45-day payment window is positive but have sought some relaxation in the time cycles." He also made a case for changing the definition of MSME and rationalisation of taxes for Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) and high net-worth individuals.

Leather, footwear exporters seek PLI scheme in Budget to boost jobs, manufacturing, shipments

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leather and footwear exporters body CLE on Tuesday sought an extension of the Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the sector with a view to boost job creation, domestic manufacturing and shipments. In a pre-budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Council for Leather Exports Chairman Rajendra Kumar Jalan also urged the government to provide import duty exemption on wet blue, crust and finished leather. "Implementation of PLI will lead to structural transformation of the industry and will make the country a major manufacturing hub," Jalan said. He added that the PLI will provide a major fillip to the domestic and overseas investments in not only capacity modernisation and expansion of existing units but also in start-ups, thereby leading to expansion of the overall production base. "The benefits of PLI will include an incremental investment of Rs 6,000 crore



and an additional employment generation of about 2 million labour workforce, both directly and indirectly," he said. He added that the import of wet blue, crust and finished leathers during 2022-23 was USD 450.73 million, but the export of value-added products was USD 5.26 billion, which is more than 10 times the value of import. "Hence, it is requested that the 10 per cent import duty now being levied on wet blue, crust and finished leathers may kindly be removed to increase the price

competitiveness of the value-added products segment," Jalan urged. Jalan also requested the government to allow the export of all value-added leathers including crust leathers without any export duty. "This will lead to a quantum jump in the export of value-added leathers by at least USD 1 billion in the next 2-3 years," he said. Presently, there is a 40 per cent export duty on raw and pickled hides, crust and wet blue leather and 30 per cent on raw buffalo hides.

Stanley Lifestyles IPO subscribed over 96 times

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The initial public offer of luxury furniture brand Stanley Lifestyles got subscribed a whopping 96.25 times on the last day of subscription on Tuesday. The Rs 537 crore initial share-sale received bids for 98,56,97,520 shares against 1,02,41,507 shares on offer, according to NSE data. The portion for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) fetched 222.10 times subscription while the quota for non-institutional investors got subscribed 118.65 times. The quota for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) attracted 18.13 times subscription. The Initial Public Offer (IPO) has a fresh issue of up to Rs 200 crore and an offer for sale of up to 91,33,454 equity shares. The initial share-sale has a price range of Rs 351-369 per share. The IPO of Stanley Lifestyles got subscribed 1.43 times on the first day of subscription on Friday.

Telcos eye four spectrum bands

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operators showed interest in four spectrum bands -- 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz, and 2,500 MHz -- as the auction entered the fourth round around 3pm on Tuesday, sources said. Spectrum auction for over 10,500 Mhz mobile services worth over Rs 96,238 crore started at 10 am, an official statement said. "There was activity in four spectrum rounds initially -- 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz, and 2,500 MHz band. Spectrum auction entered the

fourth round around 3pm," a source told PTI. It is the 10th spectrum auction since the process for sale of radiowaves started through an online bidding process in 2010. The last spectrum auction was held in August 2022, which, for the first time, included radio waves for 5G services. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has initiated the spectrum auction and notice inviting applications was issued on March 8. "The Ministry of

Communications announced that the following spectrum bands will go up for bidding in the upcoming auction -- 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz, 2,300 MHz, 2,500 MHz, 3,300 MHz and 26 GHz. "Total quantum of spectrum being auctioned is 10,522.35 MHz in various bands valuing Rs 96,238.45 crores at reserve prices," the statement said. The 3,300 Mhz band and 26 Mhz band are seen as suitable bands for 5G services. Reliance Jio has deposited the highest earnest money of Rs 3,000 crore for the auction,

which provides the company with the potential to bid for maximum radio waves. According to pre-qualified bidder details released by the Department of Telecommunications, Bharti Airtel has submitted the earnest money deposit (EMD) of Rs 1,050 crore and Vodafone Idea (VIL) of Rs 300 crore. Telecom industry body Cellular Operators' Association of India Director General SP Kochhar said the 5G auctions will catalyze the rapid rollout of 5G services across the country, leading to

enhanced coverage and vastly improved connectivity. "By bridging the digital divide, the 5G spectrum auctions will ensure that even the most remote areas of our country gain access to high-speed internet, thereby fostering greater economic opportunities and social advancement. "The auctions also symbolize our commitment to 'Viksit Bharat' and we are confident that the outcomes of these auctions will lay a strong foundation for a prosperous and digitally empowered India," Kochhar said.

Tata Motors partners Bajaj Finance for commercial vehicle finance

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors on Tuesday said it has partnered with Bajaj Finance Ltd for offering financing solutions across its entire commercial vehicle portfolio. The company has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bajaj Finance Ltd, part of Bajaj Finserv Ltd, for the same and customers will benefit from the latter's wide reach, competitive interest rates, flexi loan and

digitally-enabled loan processing, Tata Motors said in a statement. "We are confident that their (Bajaj Finance) inaugural venture into commercial vehicle financing will allow them to tap the immense potential that the transportation sector brings in, and this partnership will benefit entrepreneurs across the country," Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles Vice President & Business Head - Trucks, Rajesh Kaul said.

With Bajaj Finance's wide network in rural and urban areas, customers will have easy access to financing solutions as per their requirements, he added. Bajaj Finance Deputy Managing Director Anup Saha said, "... We aim to make the process of purchasing a commercial vehicle accessible and hassle-free. We are confident that the partnership will empower more commercial vehicle owners with financing solutions."

Bank holds blood donation camp in G'gram



Gurugram: As part of its ongoing commitment to community welfare and to commemorate its 117th foundation day on Monday Punjab and Sind Bank Zonal Office Gurugram hosted a series of impactful initiatives starting from plantation drive on June 19, blood donation camp on June 20 and donation of water coolers to schools and hospitals on June 21. Darpan Agarwal, Zonal Manager Zone Gurugram expressed the enthusiasm for these initiatives, emphasising their importance in fostering a positive impact and strengthening community bonds. PNS

Tenth spectrum auction for radiowaves worth ₹96,238 crore begins

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Auction for Rs 96,238 crore worth spectrum began on Tuesday that is expected to see firms like Airtel and Reliance Jio bidding to acquire airwaves that will help augment their 5G services. It is the 10th spectrum auction since the process for sale of radiowaves started through an online bidding process in 2010. "The government begins the auction of Spectrum for Telecom Services today at 10:00 AM," an official statement said on Tuesday. The last spectrum auction was held in August 2022, which, for the first time, included radio waves for 5G services. "To augment existing telecom services and maintain continuity of services, the



government will hold the spectrum auction on Tuesday, 25 June 2024. This is in line with the government's commitment to facilitate affordable, state-of-art high quality telecom services to all the citizens," the statement said. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has initiated the spectrum Auction and notice inviting applications (NIA) was issued

on March 8. "The Ministry of Communications announced that the following spectrum bands will go up for bidding in the upcoming auction - 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz, 3300 MHz and 26 GHz. Total quantum of spectrum being auctioned is 10,522.35 MHz in various bands valuing Rs 96,238.45 crores at reserve prices," the statement said.

The 3300 Mhz band and 26 Mhz band are seen as suitable bands for 5G services. Reliance Jio has deposited the highest earnest money of Rs 3,000 crore for the spectrum auction, which provides the company with the potential to bid for maximum radio waves. According to pre-qualified bidder details released by the Department of Telecommunications, Bharti Airtel has submitted the earnest money deposit (EMD) of Rs 1,050 crore and Vodafone Idea (VIL) of Rs 300 crore. Telecom industry body Cellular Operators' Association of India Director General SP Kochhar said the 5G auctions will catalyze the rapid rollout of 5G services across the country, leading to enhanced coverage and vastly

improved connectivity. According to telecom expert Parag Kar, Reliance Jio can bid for 37.36 per cent of the total spectrum value based on EMD, Bharti 13.07 per cent and Vodafone Idea 3.73 per cent. As per Kar's analysis, Jio may be keen on bidding for 800 Mhz band only, which may lead to an estimated cash flow of Rs 18,000 crore. "Bharti's targeted approach in the upcoming auction is aimed at consolidating and enhancing its spectrum efficiency. The total outflow for Bharti will be Rs 11,512 crore at the Reserve Price," Kar said in his blog. Debt-ridden Vodafone Idea (VIL) is likely to focus on strategic acquisitions, particularly in the 26 GHz band, to bring down its spectrum usage charge.

Gold rises ₹70, silver plunges ₹400

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose Rs 70 to Rs 72,550 per 10 grams in the local market on Tuesday in line with firm global trends, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,480 per 10 grams on Monday. However, silver prices plunged by Rs 400 to Rs 91,500 per kg. In the previous session, it had settled at Rs 91,900 per kg. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 72,550 per 10 grams, slightly up by Rs 70 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,324 per ounce, up USD 6 from the previous close.

Gold traded in a narrow range on Tuesday under gloomy market sentiment, Gandhi said. "...Traders' focus is turning to macroeconomic data due at the end of this week, including US GDP and the Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of consumer inflation, which could offer clues on when the central bank will pivot to monetary policy easing," he added. However, silver was down at USD 29.40 per ounce. It had ended at USD 29.47 per ounce in the previous session. According to Praveen Singh, Associate VP, Fundamental Currencies and Commodities at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the yellow metal is expected to range trade ahead of the US GDP and Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) inflation data.



Chennaiyin FC sign goalkeeper Nawaz for upcoming ISL season

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennaiyin FC on Tuesday signed young Manipuri goalkeeper Mohammad Nawaz on a two-year contract ahead of the upcoming Indian Super League season. A product of AIFF Elite Academy, Nawaz was previously part of Mumbai City FC and FC Goa. He has earned a reputation as one of the most talented

goalkeepers in Indian football with his remarkable performances. "Nawaz's arrival marks an exciting addition to Chennaiyin squad alongside other goalkeepers Samik Mitra and Prateek Kumar Singh. The 24-year-old brings youthful energy and exceptional potential, and is expected to make a significant impact in the upcoming season," the club said in a release.

Nawaz began his professional career at the age of 18 with FC Goa's reserve side in the I-League second division, where his excellent performance earned him a place in the main team. He was a vital cog in the FC Goa's Super Cup and ISL League Shield-winning campaigns in 2019 and 2020 respectively. Later, he moved to Mumbai City FC in 2021, with whom he won the League Shield in

2023 as well as the ISL title earlier this year. He has also represented India at the U-17 level. Nawaz has played 83 matches so far in his professional career, keeping 23 clean sheets. In 65 ISL games, he has recorded 15 clean sheets and 150 saves. Known for his quick reflexes, composure under pressure and impressive shot-stopping abilities, Nawaz has also saved three penalties in the ISL.

Brazil held to 0-0 draw by Costa Rica in a stunner to open Copa America group play

AP ■ INGLEWOOD (US)

Brazil was held to a 0-0 draw by Costa Rica, with the international powerhouse inauspiciously failing to break through in its Copa America opener. Although Brazil controlled play and outshot Costa Rica 18-2, the Seleção was held scoreless by a defense led by goalkeeper Patrick Sequeira, who made three saves while recording the team's fourth consecutive clean sheet. Brazil had an apparent goal by Marquinhos disallowed in the first half after a lengthy VAR check, but the team known for decades of sublime offensive play never got closer to a score - and never got a break on several questionable refereeing calls - in front of a lively crowd of 67,158 dominated by their yellow-clad fans at SoFi Stadium. The result left Colombia on top of Group D after its 2-1 victory over Paraguay. Brazil has won the Copa America nine times, but its current transitional squad led by Real Madrid stars Vinicius Junior and Rodrigo got off to a discouraging start. Brazil coach Dorival Junior said the result wasn't thoroughly poor, noting his team's wide advantages in possession and chances. "I believe that in context, it was a well-played game," Dorival said through an interpreter. "We passed the ball well and



we created good opportunities. We weren't happy with the finishes, I agree. But in general, I think we presented very positive things. Nowadays it will be like this. We have to find ways and solutions to score. We're always working on it, every moment." The draw was a monumental achievement for Costa Rica, an undermanned CONCACAF team with the youngest roster in the tournament but a reputation for overachievement and sturdy defending led by Sequeira, who plays for Ibiza in Spain's third division. Costa Rica head coach Gustavo Alfaro, the Argentine veteran leading his first major tournament since his hiring last November, was pleased by his team's tenacity. "I hope (opponents) start looking at us with respect," Alfaro said through an interpreter. "Everyone thought we were dead before the movie started. We are going to play all

the games as if they were the final." Los Ticos had lost nine straight meetings with Brazil, but Alfaro's young group capably handled a night that could have left them starstruck. "All this is a nice reward for these kids," Alfaro said. "When Vini greeted them, it meant a lot to them. He is someone who plays at the highest level, and for us who are starting out, it was a very big test." Brazil controlled from the start with 75% possession in the first half, but couldn't break through. Vinicius was taken down in the box in the 22nd minute by a big hit from Haxzel Quirós, but got no whistle. In the 30th minute, Rodrigo went low to head on Raphinha's free kick to Marquinhos, who banged it home at the far post. A 3 1/2-minute VAR review followed, and Mexican referee César Ramos eventually agreed with the assistant's decision to wave

it off for offside by a minuscule margin. In the 39th minute, a kick by Lucas Paqueta appeared to go off the hand of Juan Pablo Vargas in the penalty area, but Ramos made no call. Paqueta ripped a shot off the post in the 63rd minute. Costa Rica then survived when Quirós nearly headed the ball into his own net before Sequeira smothered it. Sequeira then made a diving save in the 79th minute when Guilherme Arana ripped a shot on net. Costa Rica survived a few more moments of chaos beginning in the 86th minute, with Rodrigo failing to capitalize on a pair of scoring chances and not getting a foul call against Jeyland Mitchell in the box. Bruno Guimarães then had a clean look at the net in the first minute of injury time, but pushed it just wide. Dorival said he wants to see more "dirty movement" in Brazil's next match. "We need to make life easier for whoever has the ball at their feet," the coach said. Brazil's national team is in a transitional period - particularly without Neymar, who hasn't played since tearing a knee ligament in a match for Brazil last October. Neymar spoke to team Sunday before watching the match at SoFi Stadium, where he got massive cheers in the second half when his worried face appeared on the scoreboard.



Much changed Spain beats Albania 1-0

AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)

Spain changed almost its entire lineup and still kept up its victorious start to the European Championship with a 1-0 win over Albania, which was eliminated. With his team already assured of winning Group B, coach Luis de la Fuente changed 10 of his starters and Spain won all three group games at a Euros for the first time since 2008, when it went on to win the tournament. A 13th-minute goal from Ferran Torres and goalkeeper David Raya's stoppage-time save from Armando Broja ensured Spain completed the group stage without conceding a goal. "Every player is ready to play in this first 11 and that's key. Anyone can decide a game for you and players coming off the bench are very important as well," Torres, who made his first start of Euro 2024, said through a translator. "I will try to make things difficult for my coach so that he will have to play me." Torres scored with a deflection off the post from Dani Olmo's pass, and put his fingers to his ears in his goal celebration. He said the gesture meant he was listening to the fans, not blocking anything out. "I don't have anything to prove out there," Torres added. Italy was the second qualifier from Group B after drawing with Croatia 1-1. Albania needed at least a draw to have any hope of qualifying for the knockout stages for the first time, even as one of the best third-place teams. The loss meant it placed last. Albania's failure to beat Spain meant England,

France and the Netherlands were all assured of qualifying for the knockout stages, regardless of what happens in their last group games. All of those teams were on four points from two games and would qualify at least as one of the best third-placed teams. Spain got the job done, but this 1-0 win was far less convincing than the victory by the same margin over Italy in its last game. Defender Aymeric Laporte was the only player to start both. For much of the first half, Spain seemed on course for a big win, but Olmo and Mikel Merino in particular missed good chances. Albania didn't record a shot until the 45th minute. Albania finally started to put pressure on Spain midway through the second half. Forward Broja came off the bench and forced a good save from Raya. De la Fuente responded by sending on forwards Alvaro Morata and Lamine Yamal off the bench as Spain started to waste time. Broja tested Raya again in stoppage time as Spain held on. "We left it all on the pitch. I have no regrets for my players," Albania coach Sylvinho said. Albania was without forward Mirlind Daku, who was suspended by UEFA on Sunday after joining supporters' nationalist chants with a megaphone following the 2-2 draw with Croatia on Wednesday. Albania's soccer federation was fined over incidents at both of its first two games. It looks set to face yet more charges after fans lit flares at the Spain game and a supporter ran onto the field. Spain will play its last-16 game on Sunday in Cologne against a third-place team.

Varga has surgery for facial fractures

AP ■ MUNICH

Hungary forward Barnabás Varga is expected to be released from hospital on Wednesday after undergoing surgery on facial fractures he sustained in a collision with Scotland's goalkeeper at the European Championship. The match on Sunday was halted for nearly 10 minutes so Varga could get treatment after colliding with Angus Gunn midway through the second half. The 29-year-old Varga was carried off on a stretcher and taken to a Stuttgart hospital. He had surgery on Monday. "Barnabás Varga underwent a successful operation at Klinikum Stuttgart on Monday afternoon," the Hungarian soccer federation wrote on X. "According to the information of the institution's doctors



specializing in facial injuries, the intervention was uncomplicated, so the Ferencváros striker can leave the hospital on Wednesday."

Hungary won 1-0 with a dramatic stoppage-time goal from substitute Kevin Csoboth to leave it with a chance of advancing at Euro

2024, though Varga will play no further part. Several of Varga's teammates appeared to be in tears as the forward received treatment

on the field. They held up blankets to shield Varga as he was tended to by medical staff. The Hungary players frantically signaled to medical staff after the incident and several have since spoken out about how long it took for Varga to receive treatment. Varga also sustained a concussion. "I think, yes, it took so long. I can understand, everybody understands the protocol, and what they have to wait, but the life is more important than the football, then the health is more important," Csoboth said on Monday. "We wanted to push them to go (on the field), it doesn't matter what will happen, and that's the problem. We did not agree with them, why they did not go (on the field) immediately?" Hungary captain Dominik Szoboszlai rushed to run

with the stretcher because he was concerned with how long it was taking to bring it onto the field. UEFA insists "there was no delay in the treatment of and assistance to" Varga. "We would like to clarify that the intervention of the team doctor happened within 15 seconds of the incident, followed immediately by the second stadium doctor, to conduct a first assessment of the injury and provide appropriate treatment, as per customary medical procedures," European soccer's governing body said in a statement. "The qualified pitchside emergency team were waiting pitchside, according to their protocol, and arrived with the stretcher as soon as their intervention was requested by the medics to evacuate the player for his immediate transfer to hospital.

Italy advances at Euro 2024



AP ■ LEIPZIG (GERMANY)

Italy substitute Mattia Zaccagni scored in the last minute of stoppage time for Italy to advance to the knockout stage of the European Championship after drawing Croatia 1-1. Luka Modric's second-half strike looked like sending Croatia through as the Group B runner-up, but Zaccagni swept a brilliant shot inside the far post in the eighth minute of added time to cap a furious finale from the defending champions. Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic was unhappy so much time was added after a battling performance from his side. "You can't have eight minutes of added time after that game, it's nonsense," Dalic said. "There weren't so many breaks in play, or so many fouls to justify that. I don't want to cause a fuss but I think Croatia needs to be

acknowledged and respected. We played for almost three hours." Italy needed a point to progress, while Croatia realistically needed a win to stay in the tournament. The Croatians have two points from their three games and were at the mercy of other results to see if it's enough to scrape through as one of the best third-place finishers. Dalic made no mention of waiting. He already believes his side is out. Italy will face Switzerland in the round of 16 on Saturday in Berlin's Olympiastadion, where the final is on July 14. "We were a bit soft at times in the game, we didn't produce our best football," Italy coach Luciano Spalletti said. "When you can afford to draw the game, that's how it goes, you know a draw is enough, you are a bit more timid."

But Spalletti bristled at a question asking if he was concerned about his team trailing going into stoppage time. "Worries and concerns are part and parcel of this job," the Italy coach said. "We did what we needed to do." Modric scored 33 seconds after having a penalty saved by Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma to become the oldest goal-scorer ever at the tournament. Modric, at 38 years, 289 days on Monday, broke the record held by Ivica Vastic, who was 38 years, 257 days, when he scored for Austria against Poland at Euro 2008. After Modric's penalty miss, Croatia immediately attacked again and Donnarumma had to save a shot by Ante Budimir. Modric pounced on the rebound in the 55th minute. The goal sent showers of beer into the sky as ecstatic Croatian fans jettisoned the cups they were holding in the celebrations. Alessandro Bastoni headed just over in response as the Italians suddenly found themselves in need of a goal. Defeat could have seen the defending champion knocked out depending on results in other games. Modric turned his skills to defense until he went off to standing ovations in the 80th. "He wasn't tired," said Dalic, who added he wanted to give his star a rest. But Italy maintained its pressure and it finally paid off at the last possible moment with Zaccagni's curling shot.

Equestrian: Agarwalla to represent India in Paris Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asian Games medallist Anush Agarwalla will represent the country in the dressage event of the Paris Olympics after pipping close contender Shruti Vora on better average, the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) said on Tuesday. Agarwalla, who bagged gold in team dressage and bronze in individual dressage events at the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games, was picked ahead of Vora after a careful evaluation of the recent performances of the two contenders. It will be India's first ever entry at the dressage event of the Olympics as largely riders in past editions competed in eventing categories only. Agarwalla (with his horse Sir Caramello Old) has been consistent since the qualification period began last year and achieved Minimum Eligibility Requirement four times, while veteran Vora earned the required two MERs this month. When an average was taken out of the contenders in the assessment, Agarwalla emerged winner. He had an average score of 67.695 per cent which was better than Vora's 67.163 per cent. "As per the criteria set by EFI, a rider-horse combination is required to achieve a minimum of 67 per cent twice between January 1, 2023 and June 24, 2024 to be eligible for the Paris Games



qualification," the federation said in a release. "According to EFI selection criteria, if more than one athlete is eligible then the athlete with the highest average in Grand Prix out of the best four events in the past one year shall be chosen to participate." Vora (with horse Magnanimous) had earned her second MER of the year with her second-place finish at the Brno Grand Prix in Czech Republic, where she scored 68.174 in the dressage event, there by becoming eligible for Olympic qualification. Vora had earned her first MER early this month when she became the first Indian rider to win a three-star Grand Prix event Dressage World Cup, held in Lipica, Slovenia with 67.761. Her other two GP

performances had scores of 66.543 per cent and 66.174 per cent which were below MER level. Agarwalla achieved MERs four times -- 67.936 per cent (Wiesbaden, May 2024), 68.261 per cent (December 2023 in Mechelen), 67.152 per cent (December 2023 in Frankfurt), and 67.804 per cent (October 2023 in Wroclaw). The decision was taken unanimously by the EFI's executive council. Fouaad Mirza had represented India at the 2020 Tokyo Games. Before him, Intiaz Anees competed in 2000 Sydney Games, while Indrajit Lamba competed in 1996 Atlanta Games. Jitendra Singh Ahluwalia, Hussain Singh, Mohammed Khan and Darya Singh had all competed at the 1980 Moscow Games.

A lot of credit for my wickets goes to Bumrah: Arshdeep

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

The pinpoint accuracy of Jasprit Bumrah allows other bowlers in the Indian team to go for wickets even in extreme pressure situations, said pacer Arshdeep Singh.

in and over," Arshdeep said after the 24-run win over Australia in Saint Lucia on Monday. "So, batsmen are coming hard against me and when they are trying, I just have to try and bowl my best ball and there are a lot of chances of getting wickets there because on the other hand they see the runs are not coming and the asking rate is going high.



spinner. Whenever he gets a chance, he delivers and he's always been in the wickets and today as well he was bowling from the tough end and even against the wind, he managed to bowl at around 6 an over and took crucial wickets.

semifinals, Arshdeep added: "Right now, I'm not expecting anything out of that game, just we'll have a little celebration after this game and a long travel day ahead. And then we'll see what conditions there are and how we can do our best there."



We let down all our fans, I apologise on behalf of team: Shanto

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN

Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto has apologised to the cricket-loving fans of his nation for their shambolic performance in the T20 World Cup and blamed his batting unit for the disappointing run that ended with a defeat against a gritty Afghanistan here.

Rishad (Hossain) has bowled very well in almost all matches in a big tournament like this. There were a lot of positives, but as a batting unit, we let down the fans and the people of our country.

Fifties and hundreds do not matter, I want to bat with tempo: Rohit

PTI ■ GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA)

He fell short of a potentially record-shattering hundred, but milestones "don't matter" to India skipper Rohit Sharma, whose sole aim while batting is to "put bowlers under pressure" by hitting them all over the field.

"It was a good wicket, and you want to try and back yourself to play those kinds of shots. I've been trying to do that for a few years now, and I'm glad it came off today. The fifties and hundreds don't matter, I wanted to bat with the same tempo and carry on.



to play more strokes on the off side to negate the impact. "I thought right from over number one, there was a strong breeze blowing across. They (Australia) changed their plan, bowling against the breeze, so I realised I had to open up the off side as well," he said.

and open up all sides of the field. When you keep an open mind and not just think of one shot, you can access all areas of the field," said the India skipper after the match.

how we were getting through those overs and getting the wickets at the same time. Rohit also said he knew wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav would be at his potent best in the West Indies after encountering seamer-friendly conditions in the US. Kuldeep repaid his faith with excellent figures of 2/24 in his four overs on Monday.

same thing. It'll be nice (to play) England in the (semifinal). Nothing changes for us, we want to focus on what we can do as a team, and take the game on."

Warner makes low-key exit from cricket after Afghans beat Bangladesh

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN

Australia batting great David Warner's 15-year-long international career, dotted with glorious achievements and controversies in equal measure, has come to an anticlimactic end after Afghanistan beat Bangladesh, eliminating the former champions from the T20 World Cup at the Super Eight phase.

match, thus made a low-key exit from international cricket with Australia's 24-run loss to India on June 24 at Gros Islet being his last match.



scorer and seventh-most prolific batter in the world in T20 format with 3,277 runs from 110 matches, at an average of 33.43 and strike rate of 142.47. He scored one hundred and 28 fifties in the shortest format.

fifties between 2011 and 2024. He also scored 6,932 runs from 161 ODI matches at an average of 45.30 with the help of 22 centuries and 33 half centuries.

Test cricket at very low point in West Indies: Sarwan

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

Ramnaresh Sarwan, one of the most prolific batters to have played for the West Indies, is leading a comfortable life after retirement but when one talks him to him about the health of Test cricket in the region, he paints a grim picture, fearful of a talent exodus to the USA.

very low point to be honest. Among the games that we are playing again in the Caribbean, I don't think it's sufficient to develop our players but I also think there is this major threat of T20 cricket where a lot of people are showing interest in the shortest format," he said.

Afghanistan's run to semifinals will inspire youth back home, says Rashid

PTI ■ KINGSTOWN

Skipper Rashid Khan believes that Afghanistan's maiden T20 World Cup semifinal qualification, following spectacular wins over New Zealand and Australia along the way, is a momentous feat that will inspire the youth of the strife-torn nation.

"And we have done it under 19 level, but this level we haven't done that. Even Super Eight was first time for us and then in semis," he added.



everyone took the responsibility of getting into the game and performing best for the team," said Rashid.

have honed their skills by playing their trade in T20 leagues around the world. But when they come together to play for their country, it's hard to find a more passionate bunch.

demeanour. The result is a side high on self belief. "To me, there is no good team and bad team. Every team is equal to each other. As long as on a day, we took the right decision the right time, and that's where the difference comes when you're a loser. So other than that, skill-wise, everyone is equal, I think," Rashid said.

performed in the whole competition was something pleasing to see." "They have played great cricket against all the sides they have played. And that's how T20 is all about. You need to have that kind of self-belief that we are capable of beating any side as long as we do the right thing in the right time and we're making sure we keep the thing simple."

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