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INORDINATE DELAY IN
NAMING NEW ARMY CHIEF

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AFTER SPACESUIT WATER LEAK

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RUPEE SETTLES 3 PAISE HIGHER AT
83.44 AGAINST US DOLLAR

RAIPUR, WEDNESDAY JUNE 26, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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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. The NDA fielded its previous Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for the Speaker's post, while the Opposition forced an election by nominating Congress leader Kodikunnil Suresh as its candidate.

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 favourites in case of an election. The scheduled day for picking the Speaker is Wednesday and if an election occurs, it will be only the third time in Lok Sabha's history, official sources said.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju urged the Congress not to force a contest for the post of Lok Sabha Speaker as the presiding officer does not belong to any party.

"I appeal again that they should think about keeping in mind the dignity of the post of Speaker. We have the numbers but still, we are requesting that there should be no election for the post of Speaker because this post does not belong to any party," the



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

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.

Leaders of the INDIA Bloc met on Tuesday night to evolve a strategy for the Speaker's election even as the Congress said the ball is in the Government's court to bring about a consensus on the

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."

issue by offering the Opposition the Deputy Speaker's post according to convention.

Sources said earlier in the day a brief interaction involving Congress leader KC Venugopal and DMK's TR Bалу from the Opposition side and Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and JP Nadda, who is also the BJP president, at Singh's office in Parliament to evolve a consensus ended in acrimony as both sides stuck to their position.

Both Opposition leaders walked out, with Venugopal accusing the Government of not following the "convention" of an Opposition candidate for the Deputy Speaker's position and announcing the decision to field a candidate against Birla.

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.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

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 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 totally unjustified and it shows that the trial court has not applied its mind to the

material.

In the 34-page order on the ED's 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.

Sensex hits new all-time high

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex breached 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

Amid a raging row over 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

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.

Four of a family die in Delhi blaze

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A couple and their two sons suffocated to death in a tragic incident on Tuesday morning after a fire broke out at their home in Dwarka's Prem Nagar area. Meanwhile, a fire broke out in a storeroom in the old emergency building of the Safdarjung Hospital where a nurse was rescued from the third floor of the building after breaking a window.

The Delhi Fire Service Chief Atul Garg said the fire department was informed about the fire around 3.30 am and two fire tenders were sent to the spot. The deceased were identified as 48-year-old Heera Singh Kakkhar, his 40-year-old wife Neetu and their sons, 22-year-old Robin and 21-year-old Lakshay. Kakkhar was a photographer by profession and the house was owned by the family. According to the DFS official, the fire was caused by an inverter and it spread to an adjacent sofa on the first floor of the two-storey building, leading to the four victims inhaling smoke.

The Delhi Police has also conducted an inquiry into the case. DCP Dwarka Ankit Singh said the main iron gate was locked from inside. "The gate was broken. Incident took place on the first floor of the said house," he said.

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, Muzzafarpur, 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.

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.

India behind Afghan fairytale feat in T20 WC

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

Afghanistan scripted a 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

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 hone the Afghan talent and unlock it to enable the Afghans 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 Lalchand 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.

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 Chillawali 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.

Atishi hospitalised, ends hunger strike

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Water Minister Atishi on Tuesday ended her hunger strike after her health deteriorated and she was hospitalised in the wee hours. AAP MP Sanjay Singh announced this and said he will be writing to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide the national capital with its rightful share of water from Haryana. Singh said, "Since Atishi is admitted in the ICU, we must discontinue the 'anischtikalin anshan' (indefinite fast) for water. We will continue the agitation in other ways." He added that the party will write a letter to the Prime Minister to consider the water crisis issue in Delhi.

Atishi, was admitted to the emergency ICU at the Lok Nayak (LNJP) Hospital, and her condition is stable now. Giving an update on Atishi's health, the hospital's Medical Director Dr Suresh Kumar said her condition is stable but she is in ICU.

"She was advised hospitalisation last evening after her sugar levels declined and the presence of ketones was detected in her urine. She had declined hospitalisation. However, at midnight, as her condition deteriorated and she was drowsy, she was admitted. She is currently stable and in the ICU. Her blood



tests are being done," the senior doctor said, adding that she is being given water and is on intravenous therapy. The doctor stated that her sugar levels had declined to 36 mg/dL. Explaining the consequences of the sharp decline, Kumar said if a person's sugar level goes below 50 mg/dL, it can have serious consequences. "Brain cells need glucose and if glucose does not reach them, it causes drowsiness and unconsciousness. If not given

medical attention on time, a patient can go into a hypoglycemic coma. The fall in blood sugar levels can also lead to multiple organ failure. Hypoglycemia is a medical emergency for brain cells and other organs if not addressed in time," he added. The normal sugar levels in the blood should be between 70 mg/dL and 100 mg/dL. A post on 'X' from Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's official handle said the people of the city "will def-

initely give a reply to the injustice that the BJP government is doing" to the national capital. "Delhi's Water Minister Atishi ji was on an indefinite hunger strike so that the people of Delhi could get their rightful share of water. She has been admitted to the hospital after her health deteriorated last night. "Today, every Delhiite is worried about her health. The people of Delhi will definitely give a reply to the injustice that the BJP government is doing to

Delhi. We all wish Atishi good health. Every Delhiite is with her in this satyagraha. Posted by: Team Arvind Kejriwal," the post, made by his team, in Hindi read.

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva wished Atishi good health and happiness. However, he stated that 'she should stop misleading the public'. "We've been saying since June 21 that you can't do Satyagraha because you have no connection with the truth. The essence of Satyagraha is to fight for the truth. From Mahatma Gandhi and Lala Lajpat Rai to Vinoba Bhave and Anna Hazare, Satyagrahis fasted to reveal the truth, not to hide their administrative failures, as Atishi intended to do," he said.

Atishi had begun her hunger strike on June 21. AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said the minister ended her indefinite fast after she was hospitalised. At a press conference, Singh said Atishi's health deteriorated after being on fast for nearly five days and she was admitted to the LNJP Hospital around 3.45 am. The AAP leader said all MPs of the party will write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide Delhi with its rightful share of water from Haryana. The issue will also be raised by AAP and its political allies in Parliament, he added.

AAP to challenge HC stay on bail to Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP on Tuesday disagreed with the Delhi High Court order staying the bail granted to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the trial court and stated that they will challenge it in the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva lashed out at AAP leaders for their language, calling it a 'contempt of court'.

The trial court had granted bail to Kejriwal on June 20 in the money laundering case stemming from the alleged Delhi excise policy scam and ordered his release on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh. The high court stayed the trial court order on Tuesday.

Reacting to the development, the AAP said they will approach the apex court. "We disagree with the Delhi High Court order. We will challenge it in the Supreme Court," the party said. When asked about the high court order at a press conference, Delhi cabinet minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said the AAP's legal team will decide the future course of action.

"A high court bench stayed the order of the lower court without even the order getting uploaded. I did not have any



hope from the high court. I think the high court bench was prejudiced. We will approach the higher court. Our legal team will decide the strategy and the time when we approach the higher court," he said.

Further, AAP Spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar claimed that the 'entire liquor scam is fake and has been scripted in BJP office'. "When you ready the trial court order, they have addressed all the documents, except some irrelevant documents. They (trial court) have clearly stated that there is no evidence linking Arvind Kejriwal to this so-called liquor scam. The High Court ordered stay without even looking at the trial court order. We do not agree with this verdict; our legal team is looking into this and will take an advisable step," she claimed.

On the other hand, Delhi BJP

President Virendra Sachdeva on Tuesday welcomed the Delhi High Court's order to stay the bail granted to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the lower court, stating that the AAP chief is the main accused in the alleged excise policy linked money laundering scam. Sachdeva said that Kejriwal's involvement in the now scrapped liquor policy has also been established. He mentioned that the High Court itself had a hearing on April 9, during which it stated that Arvind Kejriwal's arrest is legally valid and the investigation agency has evidence for it.

"As the investigation progresses, it is becoming clear what role the leaders of the AAP played in the liquor scam," he said. The Delhi BJP chief added that it is Kejriwal's prerogative if he wishes to approach the Supreme Court, 'as the beauty of the country's law is that every criminal gets multiple opportunities to go to court'. While commenting on the language used by AAP leaders, he stated that it is a direct contempt of court. "One may disagree on a subject, but not respecting the court's decision is directly questioning democracy, as any decision by the court is made after considering all facts," Sachdeva said.

Temperature heat index in city soars above 50 degrees Celsius

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the national capital's maximum temperature dipping below 40 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, the feel like temperature or heat index in Delhi soared above 50 degrees Celsius making it uncomfortable for Delhiites due to muggy weather. The Safdarjung observatory, the national capital's primary weather station, recorded a

temperature of 39.7 degrees Celsius, 2.5 notches above normal. The minimum temperature settled at 28.6 degrees Celsius, one degree above the normal.

Delhi had been reeling from sweltering heat, recording nine heatwave days in June so far against none in 2023 and 2022. In 2021, the national capital recorded one heatwave day in June, according to India Meteorological Department

(IMD) data. The maximum temperature has fallen below 40 degrees Celsius following a western disturbance in north-western India.

On Tuesday, the relative humidity oscillated between 51 per cent and 76 per cent, according to the IMD bulletin, making the day uncomfortable for the public despite the dip in the maximum temperatures across the city. The heat index was recorded at 50.8



degrees Celsius and the met department has forecasted 48 to 50 degrees for the next 48 hours.

The weather office defines heat index as a combination of air temperature and relative humidity. It measures how hot

it really feels when relative humidity is factored in with the actual air temperature. This is also sometimes referred to as apparent temperature and can be understood as the temperature the body perceives.

The other parts of the city recorded temperature below 40 degrees except Jafarpur which recorded 40 degrees Celsius as its maximum temperature. Najafgarh recorded 39.1 degrees Celsius, Aya nagar 39

degrees, Lodi road 39.6 degrees, Palam 39 degrees, Ridge 39.3 degrees, Pitampura 39.8 degrees, Pragati Maidan 38.4 degrees, Pusa 37.9 degrees, Rajghat 38.4 degrees and Salwan Public School at 38.6 degrees.

For Wednesday, the Met office has forecast generally cloudy skies with very light rain or thunderstorms, accompanied by gusty winds reaching speeds between 25 and 35 kilometres

per hour. The national capital will be on a 'yellow' alert during the next seven days.

The met department has also predicted temperatures to be below 40 degrees Celsius in the upcoming days till June 1 with rain and thunderstorms. The IMD has predicted 37 degrees on Wednesday, 36 degrees on Thursday and Friday, 35 degrees on Saturday and Sunday and 34 degrees on Monday.

Former Congress MLA alleges Delhi Govt corrupt, calls for CBI investigation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi leader and former Congress MLA Jai Kishan on Tuesday met the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and alleged that the Arvind Kejriwal government are indulged in corruption, loot, scams and exploitation of employees of the Delhi government.

At the meeting, Saxena assured that he will investigate these complaints and take appropriate action in the matter. While claiming that all the departments of the Delhi Government have proved to be unsuccessful and the Chief Minister himself being lodged in jail, he said, "In such a situation, President's rule should be imposed here and all the scams should be investigated by the CBI so that the truth can come out," he said.

In the complaint given to the Lieutenant Governor, Jai Kishan said that the scams in providing books, uniforms,



food, money in the primary schools of Delhi Government and MCD and the commission demanded from private schools should be investigated. "In all the hospitals of Delhi government, there is looting in the name of medicines and cleanliness and patients are mistreated and employees are exploited on contract basis," he alleged, adding that in the dispensaries and mohalla clinics of government and MCD, patients are asked to buy medicines from outside on time. "Even in the mid-day meal that children get in Anganwadi, there is fraud and quality is not taken care of," he said.

SC hopes Delhi HC decides on Satyendar's bail plea by next hearing

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that bail matters should not be adjourned unnecessarily, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said it hoped the Delhi High Court will decide the bail plea of jailed former AAP minister Satyendar Jain in a money laundering case at the next hearing. A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and SVN Bhatti made the observation while disposing of Jain's plea against the high court's decision of adjourning the hearing of his bail application for six weeks.

"It goes without saying that bail matters are not to be unnecessarily adjourned. Therefore, we hope and trust that the high court shall take its call on the next date of hearing," it said. The high court has listed Jain's bail plea for hearing on July 9. During the hearing, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Jain, said he has challenged the long adjournment order. Singhvi said a substantial question of law has arisen from the case as to whether an incomplete charge

sheet can be filed by the investigating agency to defeat an accused's right of default bail. He said a similar matter was under consideration of a three-judge bench of the apex court and urged the vacation bench that Jain's bail plea be tagged with it. Justice Misra told Singhvi that the bench is sitting in combination of two judges and therefore cannot decide the issue which is pending consideration of the three-judge bench.

"Let the issue be decided by the high court and then we will take it up. The high court will deal with the merits of the case taking into account the factual aspect," the bench said, adding that the impugned order before the court is just a one line adjournment order. It said that the three-judge bench of the top court is considering a point of law and it may not be appropriate for a two-judge bench to deal with it.

The bench ordered, "This petition is against an order of the Delhi High Court adjourning the hearing of the bail application to July 9. Mr. Singhvi sub-

mits that the question of law which would govern the decision of the High Court is engaging the attention of a 3-judge bench of this Court and therefore it is appropriate that this matter is tagged with that matter.

"We do not find any merit in the submission because the high court will decide the matter on its own merits and if the petitioner is aggrieved with the high court's order, he can challenge it." On May 28, the high court had sought the response of the Enforcement Directorate on Jain petition and asked it to file a status report on the investigation.

The court had also called for the nominal roll of Jain from prison and listed the matter for further hearing on July 9. Nominal rolls maintained in jails contain among other things the conduct of a prisoner. Jain is accused of having laundered money through four companies allegedly linked to him. He has challenged a trial court's May 15 order by which he was denied default bail in the case.

Protests in Mangolpuri over demolition of mosque's unauthorised parts

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Protests erupted in northwest Delhi's Mangolpuri area, where portions of a mosque were demolished due to alleged encroachment, amid heavy deployment of police and paramilitary forces.

The demolition drive, however, had to be halted after the situation escalated as a large mob gathered, forming a human chain to obstruct the entry of JCBs into the area, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), which carried out the drive, said in a statement.

Additionally, the presence of women protesters, who sat on the unauthorised structure, complicated the law and order situation in the area, it added. The demolition drive was undertaken by the civic body at a municipal park in Y Block of Mangolpuri against an illegally extended boundary wall of the mosque, the officials said. The MCD removed 20 metres of the unauthorised structure but the situation escalated after a large mob and women protesters gathered at the site objecting to the demolition, the



statement said. Despite the diligent efforts, the authorities were unable to safely disperse the crowd. In light of these developments, the police advised the MCD to temporarily halt the encroachment removal operation to maintain peace and order. A status report regarding this issue has been filed with the Delhi High Court," it said.

"The initiative was part of our (MCD's) ongoing efforts to address unauthorised religious encroachments and uphold the integrity of public spaces," the civic body said. According to police officials, there were some allegations

regarding stone pelting at a journalist during the demolition drive but no official complaint has been filed regarding the matter so far.

"We are waiting. If he (journalist) gives any complaint, we will further proceed with the matter," a senior police officer said. The local police and five companies of paramilitary personnel reached Mangolpuri's Y block in the morning to demolish illegal encroachment at the mosque.

As the demolition drive started at 6 am, locals gathered at the spot and started protesting, an officer said.

Maliwal takes jibe at Minister



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP Rajya Sabha MP and former Chairperson of Women on Tuesday took a jibe at Delhi Water Minister Atishi after she was hospitalised due to her deteriorating health condition and said 'satyagraha is done with a pure heart'. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Maliwal, who accused Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar of assaulting her at

AAP supremo's residence, stated, "Atishi, Gandhi had named the sacred method of fasting as Satyagraha. Satyagraha is always done with a true and pure heart." Attacking the senior AAP leader, she said that the minister speaks lies about others. "I fasted twice. Once for 10 days and once for 13 days. After my fast, a law was made in the country that child rapists should be given the death penalty.

"The path of struggle is very difficult. The strength to go on a hunger strike is gained only by struggling on the ground for many years. Not by speaking lies and dirty things about others the whole day. While wishing for her recovery, the MP said, "Well, I hope your health will improve soon and you will work for the people of Delhi." Atishi had to end her hunger strike on Tuesday after being admitted to the ICU as her blood sugar level fell to 36 mg/dL.

Man attempts extortion after watching YouTube videos; held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 25 year old man, influenced by videos related to a criminal gang on YouTube, was arrested by the police after he threatened to kill a person and demanded five lakhs as ransom.

According to the police on Tuesday, a case was registered at police station Ghazipur under section 387 (Putting person in fear of death or of grievous hurt, in order to commit extortion) and 507 (Criminal intimidation by an anonymous communication) of the IPC. The accused has been identified as Badal Kumar Pathak, alias Chhotu, who hails from Bihar's Munger and presently resides in Delhi's Kondli. The extortion call was received on Sunday by Mohan Dass, who is employed as a Manager with Alukka Gold Palace in Mayur Pankaj Plaza. The accused received a call



from an unknown person claiming to be a member of a criminal gang.

"At about 2:00 pm, a person wearing a navy blue T-shirt and blue lower was apprehended. Upon his cursory search, the mobile phone used in the commission of the crime was recovered. The accused, Badal, was influenced by videos related to a criminal gang on YouTube and made a plan to extort money from jewellery shops in the Mayur Vihar area," DCP East Apoorva Gupta

said. She added that he used one of his old keypad phones for this purpose and borrowed a SIM card from his friend to make the calls. "The accused called the owners of several jewellery shops in Mayur Vihar, threatening to kill them. Many of these jewellers are being traced, and several have not yet joined the investigation. The accused's connection with the criminal gang is under scrutiny, however nothing has been substantiated so far," the DCP added.

Court convicts man for power theft: TP-DDL

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A special court has convicted a Mangolpuri resident for indulging in power theft for domestic use, a Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) spokesperson said on Tuesday. The court of Additional Sessions Judge, Rohini, Jitendra Singh, convicted Dinesh Singh, a resident of Mangolpuri, for indulging in power theft for domestic usage under Section 135 of the Electricity Act, 2003, she said.

The quantum of sentence and civil liability in the case is yet to be determined, the spokesperson added. "The police during investigation found that the accused consumer was illegally tapping electricity by puncturing the Low Tension Aerial Bundled Cable. It also found that there was no meter or legitimate electricity connection at the site and a load of 7.718 KW was



found to be connected for domestic purposes," she said. After considering the facts and evidences found at the site, the accused Dinesh has been observed as guilty of the offence under section 135 of the Electricity Act, 2003. Quantum of sentence and civil liability is yet to be determined. Since April 2024, the Sessions Judge has also convicted four more people for power theft cases from areas like Village Prahadpur Bangar, Mangol Puri, Sultanpuri and JJ Colony Shakurpur.

CM briefs PM about Naxal menace, vision document

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Tuesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and apprised him about the Naxalite situation as well as the vision document being prepared in the state.

At their meeting, Sai informed Modi about the vision document, which aims at making the state developed by 2047.

It is being prepared by the state NITI Aayog. It will be unveiled on November 1, he said.

The Chief Minister also informed the Prime Minister about the anti-Maoist operations in the last six months.

Giving information about the Niyad Nellanar Yojana (Ideal Village Scheme), Sai said work was being



done to restore mutual trust between the administration and the villagers. Under this scheme, 23 camps have been opened, covering 90 villages and there are plans to start 29

more camps. Sai it had been decided to provide immediate approval for the construction of houses for 18,12,743 families in the state under the

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural). At present 1,06,777 houses are under construction.

He said Rs 3,667 crore has been given to farmers for 2014-15 and 2015-16.

At the same time, under the Krishak Unnati Yojana, the government has transferred Rs 13,287 crore to the bank accounts, benefiting over 24.73 lakh farmers.

The Mahtari Vandan Yojana has been started to promote economic self-reliance and empowerment of women.

Under this scheme, till now 70 lakh women have been given four months' financial assistance of Rs 2,618 crore.

An MOU has been signed with IRCTC to ferry over 20,000 people to Ayodhya every year, he said.

24 schools in Bijapur to be reopened after 20 yrs

STAFF REPORTER ■ BIJAPUR

School bells in Mudvendi and other villages of Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh will start ringing as 56 schools will open from the new academic session after a gap of 20 long years.

A total of 32 new schools as well as 24 schools in Mudvendi, Dumripalnar, Todka, Saonar, Korcholi and Kavaddgaon villages which were closed earlier will be opened from Wednesday.

Bijapur Collector Anurag Pandey on Tuesday said this was the impact of development work under Niyad Nellanar and the appeal to dropouts to return to education through the 'School Vende Varrat Pandum' in the Maoist-affected areas in



Bijapur district. The district officials made it possible through a door-to-door campaign among the villagers to bring back the children to school. The officials told the villagers about the importance of education to shape the future

of the children. Also, basic amenities such as road safety, constructing huts for schools besides recruiting educated unemployed youths as the Education Ambassador (Shikshadoot) was the reason behind the schools re-opening.

Avoid quacks after snakebite, says govt



STAFF REPORTER ■ BALRAMPUR

In the event a snake bites you this monsoon, avoid using medicines given out by quacks and instead seek proper medical aid, the Chhattisgarh government said on Tuesday.

Incidents of snakebite are more common during monsoon. Due to lack of awareness, people in rural areas tend to seek aid from self-proclaimed healers instead of health centres, resulting in poor treatment

and even death. Balrampur Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr. Basant Singh said incidents of snakebite increase as snakes come over ground in large numbers, even in residential areas, during heavy rains.

Victims must be taken to the nearest health centre without delay so that anti-venom can be administered, he said.

To prevent snakebites, people have been told not to sleep on the ground. People must sleep on a bed with a mosquito

Incidents of snakebite increase as snakes come over ground in large numbers, even in residential areas, during heavy rains.

to net tucked properly. Also, do not keep small animals in your bedroom, he said. These attract snakes.



BJP Lok Sabha members from Chhattisgarh led by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Tuesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Parliament premises in New Delhi.

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Union Bank of India

Regional Office, 3rd Floor, LIC Investment Building, Phase - III, Jivan Bima Marg, Pandri Raipur (C.G.) PIN- 492004

Appendix-IV A [See the proviso to rule 6(9)]

Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Properties

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Union Bank of India (secured creditor), will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on 12.07.2024 between 11.00 am to 5.00 pm for recovery of dues as mentioned hereunder to Union Bank of India from the below mentioned Borrower (s) & Guarantor (s). The Reserve Price and the Earnest Money Deposit are also mentioned hereunder:

S. No.	Name of the Borrower / Guarantor and Branch	Short description of the properties	Total dues (in Rs.)	Reserve Price EMD/Bid Increase amount (in Lacs)
01	Mr Deepak Kumar and Mrs Beena Supela Bhalai Branch	Flat No 305, Block E, Sai Villas and Apartment, Type I, 3rd Floor, Khasra No. 303/15,303/2,303/10, Mauza Jangiri, ward no. 24, Ph. No. 44/49, RNM Ahiwara, Tehsil Dhamnda District Durg CG, Area 0.720 hectare, built up area 350.02 sq. ft. Boundaries of Property: North: Flat No. 306, South: Block C, East: Flat No 303, West: Stairs.	₹ 14,95,027.13 + int. since 30.11.2022 + Legal & other charges	₹ 11.100 lacs ₹ 1.11 lacs ₹ 0.11 lacs
02	Mr D Shiv Kumar and Mrs Madhurima Supela Bhalai Branch	Flat No LIG-I/603, 6th Floor Kh No. 252, Khamariya, Bhalai, Dist-Durg CG, Built up area 590 sq.ft. Boundaries of Property: North: LIG 604 Block I, South: Lift and service area, East: LIG 602 and passage, West: Road side.	₹ 9,98,693.00 + int. since 30.07.2022 + Legal & other charges	₹ 6.50 lacs ₹ 0.65 lacs ₹ 0.065 lacs
03	Tikeshwar Pd.Chandrakar/Supela Bhalai Branch	Land admeasuring 2000 sq.ft. and single storied residential house situated thereon at Mouza - Umda, Kh.No. 858/11 (part of 858/1), P.C.No.01, RIC -Bhalai 03, Tehsil- Patan, Dist.-Durg (C.G.), in the name of Mr. Tikeshwar Prasad Chandrakar.	₹ 16,37,905.82 + Legal & other charges	₹ 27.00 lacs ₹ 2.70 lacs ₹ 0.27 lacs
04	M/S Sri Padmavathi Enterprises Prop. Smt Gunupuru Durgamma Jagdalpur EAB Branch	Plot With Boundary Plinth At Khasra No 382/2, Area 0.080 Hect (8712 Sq Ft) Halka No 9, Village-Karkapal, Tehsil-Jagdalpur, Dist-Bastar C.G.	₹ 18,55,039.50 + int. since 30.11.2022 + Legal & other charges	₹ 16.00 lacs ₹ 1.60 lacs ₹ 0.16 lacs
05	M/s Shree Nirvignam Prop: Mr. Manmohan Vishwakarma, Mr. Nidhish Khandelwal, Durg Branch.	Residential Land & Building at Kh No. 711/313, P.H No 18, Khata No 3199, B N 64, Kasardi, Tah-Durg, Dist-Durg of total Area 450 sq.ft.	₹ 10,56,238.00 + int. since 01.03.2021 + Legal & other charges	₹ 11.00 lacs ₹ 1.10 lacs ₹ 0.11 lacs
06	M/S Welcome bakery, Mr Amar Deep Jimnani, Mr Vatumal Jimnani/ Durg Branch	Extension of Commercial Land and Building- Kh No 61/139, PH No 17, admeasuring 2000 sq ft and KH No 61/180, PH No 17 admeasuring 1500 sq ft situated at PREM NAGAR, RAM NAGAR, SIKOLA, Ward No 14, Durg, Chhattisgarh-491001 of total area 3500 sq.ft.	₹ 5.45 Lac + int. since 01.02.2024 + Legal & other charges	₹ 50.00 lacs ₹ 5.00 lacs ₹ 0.50 lacs
07	M/s Shri Balaji Traders & Decorators through Proprietor - Mr R Jagdeshwar Reddy, Mr Paspuley Sai Krishna./ Charoda Branch	Prop-1: Open Plot at Kh no 816/11 Mouza- Gram Sirsakala, PH no 02 RIC Bhalai Charoda Ward no 37 Sirsa, Bhatapara ward, Tehsil-Patan, Dist-Durg CG Prop-2: Open Plot at Kh no 816/12 Mouza- Gram Sirsakala, PH no 02 RIC Bhalai Charoda Ward no 37 Sirsa Bhatapara ward Tehsil Patan Dist Durg CG	₹ 9,62,000.00 + int. since 19.04.2023 + Legal & other charges	₹ 5.00 lacs ₹ 0.50 lacs ₹ 0.050 lacs
08	M/s V K Construction, through Proprietor - Mr Vijayanand Singh, Smt Kanchan Singh./ Charoda Branch	Open Plot of about 1575 Sq. Ft. at Khasra No.177/10, Plot No. 26, Mouza Gram Sirsakala, P.H. No. 02, RIC Bhalai Charoda, Ward No.31, G Cabin Sirsakala Ward, Tehsil Patan, District Durg, Chhattisgarh.	₹ 5,03,000.00 + int. since 24.12.2022 + Legal & other charges	₹ 5.50 lacs ₹ 0.55 lacs ₹ 0.05 lacs

Detail of encumbrance over the above properties, as known to the bank - Not known

Date & Time of E-Auction: 12.07.2024, at 11.00 Am to 5.00 PM

For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules visit <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>, www.unionbankofindia.co.in, for further detailed any enquiry please contact: For No. 01, 02 & 03- Shri Pradeep Barik- 7077103753, For No. 04- Shri Ram Kumar- 8077156740, For No. 5 & 6- Shri Amit Kumar- 9425253979, For No. 7 & 8- Shri Sunil Maurya- 9919175656.

This may also be treated as STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) & Rule 9(1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES 2002, to the borrower/s and guarantor/s.

Date: 25.06.2024, Authorised Officer, Union Bank of India

CM's jandarshan from tomorrow



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai will hold 'Jan Darshan' sessions from June 27 to address people's concerns. The meetings will take place every Thursday at Sai's residence office in Raipur. Sai will listen to their problems and resolve them appropriately. Suggestions and feedback on the reach of welfare schemes will also be invited.

Assly session from July 22



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The monsoon session of the Chhattisgarh Assembly will begin on July 22. It will end on July 26. A notification from the Assembly said the session would see financial issues apart from government work. The short session will have five sittings. The session is expected to be stormy as the Congress will try to make every possible effort to grill the BJP government on various issues.

Emergency imposed by Indira 'mocked' Constitution: Sao

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister on Tuesday called the imposition of Emergency in the country by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi mocked the Constitution.

"It showcased the greed for power and the murder of democracy by Indira Gandhi," he said.

He said this while addressing a BJP programme to mark the 49th anniversary of the 1975-77 Emergency rule.

The people of the country have not forgotten those 'dark days' and they know that the Congress can go to any extent to grab power, he said. The Congress talks about



protecting the Constitution when it has displayed utter disregard to it when the Emergency was imposed on the country and civil liberties were curtailed with scores of people jailed and the media gagged, he added.

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता, लोक निर्माण विभाग, बिलासपुर मंडल, बिलासपुर

ई-प्रोक्चोरमेंट निविदा सूचना
Portal: <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>

छत्तीसगढ़ शासन, लोक निर्माण विभाग, बिलासपुर मण्डल, बिलासपुर में निम्नलिखित कार्य नवीन ई-पंजीयन में पंजीकृत ठेकेदार हेतु सरल क्र. 1 से 3 हेतु दिनांक 08.07.2024 तक निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

क्र.	नि.आ.सू. क्र. / दिनांक	कार्य का नाम	लगत (लाख में)
1	1	जिला रायगढ़ अंतर्गत तहसील कार्यालय भवन धरमजयगढ़ के जीर्णोद्धार कार्य। द्वितीय आमंत्रण। रायगढ़ संभाग रायगढ़।	126.73
2	2	जिला खनिज संस्थान न्यास मद के अंतर्गत जिला अस्पताल पहुँच मार्ग जिला जाजगीर चापा में डामर नवीनीकरण का कार्य। द्वितीय आमंत्रण। चापा संभाग चापा।	33.20
3	3	जिला मुंगेली के खरवार बधमार अमलीडीही तक मार्ग ल. 1.40 कि.मी. में पुल पुलिया सहित निर्माण कार्य। द्वितीय आमंत्रण। मुंगेली संभाग मुंगेली।	176.26

निविदा में भाग लेने की प्रक्रिया एवं निविदा के संबंध में विस्तृत जानकारी विभाग के उपरोक्त वेबसाइट में देखे जा सकते हैं।

अधीक्षण अभियंता
लौ.नि.वि. बिलासपुर मण्डल, बिलासपुर

G-242500567/3

Drive against drugs in Chhattisgarh today

International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking today

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

To educate people about the dangers of drug addiction, authorities in Chhattisgarh will hold awareness drives on the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on Wednesday. An official communiqué said that effective control over the tendency to consume drugs and a favourable environment for de-addiction must be ensured in society. The goal is to raise awareness about the devastating consequences of drug use, like



physical and psychological harm, overdose deaths and societal problems. Various departments, including school education, higher education, health, sports and youth welfare, and women and child develop-

ment will organise programmes for de-addiction at all levels. Through artwork, seminars, rallies, competitions and street drama, awareness will be raised against drug abuse, particularly among youth.

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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.

"The contemporary security landscape presents multi-faceted challenges from border disputes and terrorism to cyber

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 Pudukkottai 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 hyper-spectral 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 Awas Ahmed Nadeem Alduri in the presence of Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and other senior civil and military officials of the ministry. SpacePixxel has been active-

ly working to build and launch high-resolution hyper-spectral 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 Bhupender 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 "quiltlines" 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.

Bomb threat delays Air India's London flight; suspect held

PTI ■ KOCHI

A London-bound Air India flight received a bomb threat on Tuesday but it turned out to be a hoax and a 29-year-old man suspected of making the threatening call has been apprehended here by authorities, an official said. Security personnel conducted extensive checks on the aircraft and found no danger, allowing the flight to proceed as planned, a Cochin International Airport spokesperson said in a statement here. According to him, a bomb threat call was received by the Air India call center in Mumbai early on Tuesday for flight AI 149, scheduled to fly from Cochin to London Gatwick. The alert was promptly communicated to Air India here and the Cochin International Airport Limited



(CIAL) at 1.22 AM. Following established protocols, a Bomb Threat Assessment Committee (BTAC) was immediately convened at CIAL. The threat was assessed and declared specific. Following this, thorough security checks were conducted by the Airport Security Group (ASG-CISF),

airline security personnel, and inline baggage screening systems. In accordance with the recommendations from the Cochin Airport BTAC, the aircraft was moved to an isolated aircraft parking point, and comprehensive security measures were undertaken. The aircraft was thoroughly

checked and subsequently cleared for flight. The check-in process for AI 149 was completed by 10:30 am. The flight left for its destination at 1.25 PM. It was originally scheduled to depart at 11.50 AM on Tuesday. Efforts were made to identify the caller who reported the threat to the Mumbai call center. Investigations revealed the call was made by Suhaib (29), a native of Kondotty in Malappuram district, who was scheduled to travel to London on the AI 149 flight. Suhaib, along with his wife and daughter, was intercepted by ASG at Cochin Airport's international departure terminal during check-in. "He has since been handed over to the police for further questioning and legal action," the spokesperson said in a statement.

Amarnath Yatra: High-end CCTVs installed to monitor traffic on J&K highway

PTI ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the beginning of the annual Amarnath Yatra, high-end CCTV cameras have been installed along the Jammu-Srinagar national highway to monitor both pilgrimage and regular vehicular traffic, officials said on Tuesday. The traffic department has installed 10 360-degree CCTV cameras from Udhampur to Banihal in Ramban district, while the police department has placed 60 cameras along the highway to monitor vehicular movement and identify suspicious individuals, they said. The 52-day pilgrimage to the 3,880-metre-high cave shrine in south Kashmir is set to start on June 29 and conclude on August 19, as announced by the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB). "We have installed 10 high-end CCTV cameras at various



key points from Udhampur to Banihal to monitor traffic," Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Traffic National Highway, Rohit Baskotra, told PTI. These cameras are positioned at locations, including the Jakhani area of Udhampur, Dalwas, Khoni Nallah, Mehar, Battery Cheshma, Nachlana, Banihal

Chowk, Tunnel-5, Shaligadi and Cutpoint, he said. A control room has been established in Ramban to oversee traffic movement around the clock, Baskotra said. "The control room monitors the highway 24/7, enhancing our efficiency in managing congestion, traffic jams, and

other issues," the SSP said. The cameras are strategically placed at points where traffic conditions are particularly problematic and accidents are frequent, he added. The traffic police have also issued an advisory for drivers on the highway during the Amarnath yatra, emphasising lane driving and warning of heavy fines for traffic violations. Contact numbers for technical support are also provided in case of vehicle breakdowns. "With the CCTV cameras, if a vehicle breaks down or a traffic jam occurs, it will be visible in the control room, allowing a police team to quickly respond," Baskotra said. Special preparations have been made by the traffic police of Ramban and Udhampur to ensure smooth traffic flow on the national highway, a significant challenge during the pilgrimage period, he said.

Bihar Govt cancels ₹826-crore contracts awarded during Mahagathbandhan regime

PTI ■ PATNA

The NDA government in Bihar has cancelled 350 contracts worth Rs 826 crore, which were awarded during the previous 'Mahagathbandhan' dispensation in the state for supplying drinking water in rural areas, a minister said on Tuesday. The decision to cancel the contracts was taken after an inquiry by the Public Health Engineering Department revealed that there were "irregularities in the process of selecting contractors," he said. "During the previous grand alliance regime in the state, many contracts were awarded by the department. An inquiry by the department revealed that due process was not followed in awarding 350 contracts worth Rs 826 crore. These were related to the rural water supply, including the installation of hand pumps and mini water supply systems," PHED Minister Niraj Kumar Singh told PTI. The department has handed over the preliminary inquiry report to the competent authority in the state government for a thorough probe, he said. "I recently called a meeting of senior officials of the department after getting the report, and later the cancellation order was issued," he said, adding that strict action would be taken against those who would be found guilty. RJD leader Lalit Yadav was the PHE minister during the previous grand alliance government in the state. Altogether 1,160 contracts worth Rs 4,600 crore of the PHE department were awarded by the previous government in 17 months, Singh said. "We have so far cancelled 350 contracts, the remaining are being examined," he said.



The minister, however, refused to give details of the alleged irregularities detected by the department. "It is not appropriate time to divulge the details as the matter is being investigated by a competent authority," he said. According to documents available by PTI, Bunka district tops the list where a maximum of 106 contracts related to rural water supply systems have been cancelled, followed by Jamui (73), Lakhisarai (20), Aurangabad (18) and Ara (11). Commenting on the Bihar government's decision to cancel the contracts of the PHE department, RJD's state unit spokesperson Mrityunjay Tiwary, said, "Chief Minister and JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar and BJP leaders are scared of our leader Tejashwi Yadav. The previous 'Mahagathbandhan' government in the state had executed several people-friendly projects and taken major decisions like employment to 7-8 lakh youths and providing social security to the economically and socially weaker sections of the society." The NDA partners are also "scared" of the impact of the

welfare initiatives taken by the previous government, which benefitted lakhs of people in the state, he claimed. "RJD is not scared of any probe...let them (the NDA government) do whatever they want to," he added. The PHE department is responsible for ensuring the installation of hand pumps and mini water supply systems in small habitats and wards. It may be recalled that Nitish Kumar had snapped ties with the RJD and returned to the NDA in January this year. Soon after the formation of the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government in the state, an order was issued to review all the decisions taken by the departments headed by former deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav and then two ministers of RJD — Lalit Yadav and Ramanand Yadav. In a letter issued by the Cabinet Secretariat in February this year, officials of the health, road construction, urban development and rural works departments had been asked to review the decisions taken during the previous grand alliance government in the state.

Odisha Govt asks district collectors to remain alert for possible floods

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has asked all district collectors and municipal commissioners to remain fully prepared for probable flood situation in the monsoon season. In a letter to all collectors and municipal commissioners, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Satyabrata Sahu on Monday said IMD has forecasted that an intense spell of rainfall due to active monsoon would occur throughout the state from June 26. "As a result, there may be instances of flash floods, flood like situation, waterlogging



and landslides at different locations. Keeping this in mind, you are requested to take immediate action," Sahu told the collectors. He said the field-level functionaries should not leave

the headquarters and they should be deployed in strategic locations of flash flood or waterlogging and ready to meet any eventuality. As low-lying areas in urban pockets may have

waterlogging and roads may be submerged, the SRC directed the urban local bodies (ULBs) to keep the drains and storm water channels decongested and deploy adequate dewatering pumps. In case of very heavy rain, movement of vehicles on submerged roads should be regulated and people in low-lying areas may be shifted to safer locations temporarily, he advised. The SRC also asked for pre-positioning of water pumps with generators in low-lying areas susceptible to waterlogging. "Ensure supervision of weak and vulnerable points in river and canal embankments. Flood

fighting materials may be pre-positioned at such places. Drainage clearance must be ensured for free flow of rainwater," he directed. According to IMD Bhubaneswar Centre's bulletin, heavy rainfall is expected in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Kalahandi and Koraput on June 26. Some places of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Mayurbhanj, and Keonjhar districts would also experience thunderstorm and lightning on Wednesday, it said.

NCP (SP) urges EC to delist similar symbols for upcoming Maharashtra Assembly polls

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly elections, the Sharad Pawar-led NCP has requested the Election Commission of India to withdraw or exclude certain symbols which it claimed are "deceptively similar" to the "man playing turha" symbol officially allotted to it. The NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) argued that allocating phonetically similar symbols, such as "Trumpet/Tutari," to Independent candidates has put the party at a significant disadvantage and goes against the principle of creating a level playing field. It refuted that allocating the "Trumpet" symbol to Independent candidates was appropriate and cited instances in the recently-held Lok Sabha polls wherein similar symbols confused voters, affecting the party's



free and fair elections. Citing data from nine Lok Sabha constituencies in Maharashtra, the NCP (SP) emphasised how "deceptive" symbols had led to relatively unknown candidates gaining a significant number of votes. In the recent Parliamentary polls, the Sharad Pawar-led NCP bagged 8 of the ten seats it had contested as a Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) constituent in Maharashtra, which sends 48 members to Lok Sabha. The party cited the example of Independent nominee Sanjay Gade who contested from the Satar seat on the Trumpet symbol and garnered 37,062 votes, which led to the defeat of NCP (SP) candidate Shashikant Shinde by a narrow margin of 32,771 votes. Shinde bagged 5,38,363 votes against the winning candidate Udayanraje Bhosale of BJP who secured 5,71,134 votes.

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Kerala village pays last respects to brave soldier killed in Naxal attack

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Hundreds of people on Tuesday thronged a tiny hamlet near the Kerala capital to pay their last respects to a brave soldier who was killed after Naxalites blew up a truck in which he was travelling, in Chhattisgarh two days ago. The mortal remains of R Vishnu, attached to the Central Reserve Police Force's jungle warfare unit, CoBRA, were brought to his native village near Palode here in the early hours of on Tuesday. Mayor Arya Rajendran and other government officials received the body at the airport in the early hours and CRPF personnel paid their respects. As Vishnu's mortal remains were brought to the village in

a mourning procession, people, including the elderly, women and children, apart from his relatives and friends, waited with heavy hearts to pay their last respects to him. The soldier's newly-constructed house witnessed heartbreaking scenes as his little children, wife and parents were inconsolable seeing his lifeless body. Civil Supplies Minister G R Anil visited his home and paid his respects to the deceased soldier. Governor Arif Mohammad Khan placed a floral wreath on the mortal remains when it was kept for public homage at the school where he had studied, and consoled Vishnu's relatives there. Before the cremation, CRPF personnel accorded him full ceremonial honours.

Pune bar case: Two excise officials suspended; liquor, other materials seized

PTI ■ PUNE

The Maharashtra excise department has suspended two of its inspector-rank officers for alleged dereliction of duty in connection with a probe into violation of rules by a bar in Pune, a senior official said on Tuesday. The official also said they have seized 241 litres of foreign liquor and other materials valued at Rs 3 lakh from the Liquid Leisure Lounge or L3, located on the Fergusson College Road here, and suspended the bar license. Pubs in the state's second largest city have come into focus after a video, allegedly from L3, on Sunday showed some youth with a drug-like substance. A police probe into the viral video has led to the arrest of eight persons, including an event organiser, and suspension of four police personnel after the L3 bar was found operating beyond the



permissible time limit. Besides, the excise department has arrested six waiters of L3 for allegedly flouting norms related to serving of liquor and its stock. According to the police, the bar was operating till 5 am on Sunday and liquor was being sold beyond permissible time limit. Bars and pubs in Pune are allowed to remain open till 1.30 am. An official on Tuesday said 14 regular squads and three special squads of the excise personnel have been set up to check illegal manufacturing of alcohol, its transportation and sale in Pune district. "The state excise

commissioner has suspended an inspector and a sub-inspector rank officer of the department for dereliction of duty in the case related to the Liquid Leisure Lounge," Excise Superintendent, Pune division, Charansingh Rajput told PTI. The official said they have seized 241 litres of foreign liquor and other materials of Rs 3 lakh and suspended the bar license for allegedly making internal changes at a permit room in the establishment. Citing the viral video, the prosecution on Monday told a Pune court that it has emerged through social

media that the accused had given narcotic-like substances to its patrons in the establishment and they want to probe the issue further. Prima facie, it has been found the accused used social media to invite patrons to the establishment to consume narcotics substances, alcohol and smoke cigarettes, the prosecution said, adding the police want to conduct a probe further about these customers. The police want to trace the youth as well as a minor seen in the viral video, it said in the court. Samples have been collected from the toilet of L3 and sent for an examination to check the presence of narcotic substance, police told the court on Monday while seeking the custody of eight persons, including the bar owners and staffers. The police also said they want to send blood samples of the arrested persons for tests to find out if they had consumed drugs.

Congress will respond appropriately to Ministers pushing for 3 more DCMs in Karnataka: Shivakumar

PTI ■ MANGALURU

Seemingly expressing his displeasure against ministers demanding three more deputy chief minister posts in Karnataka, state Congress President D K Shivakumar on Tuesday said the party would respond to them appropriately. Currently, Shivakumar from the Vokkaliga community is the only DCM in the Siddaramaiah-led cabinet. Some of the ministers in the cabinet have been pitching for DCM posts to be given to leaders from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities. "You people (media) put in news if someone says something. Why should I say no to people who are happy (by appearing in news)... Let anyone make any demand, the party will respond to them appropriately. Simple," Shivakumar told reporters here in response to a question. Asked whether there is a plan in the party to

have more deputy chief ministers, he said, "You please meet Mallikarjun Kharge (AICC president) and our in-charge general secretary or ask the chief minister." A section within the Congress is said to be of the opinion that the statement by ministers seeking three more DCM posts was part of a plan by Siddaramaiah's camp to keep Shivakumar in check, amid talks that he might seek the CM post after two-and-a-half years of this government's tenure, and to counter his influence both in the government and the party. The ministers — Co-Operation Minister K N Rajanna, Housing Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan, Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi and few others — who have pitched for three more DCMs are considered close to Siddaramaiah. The Congress had decided that Shivakumar will be "the only" deputy CM amid stiff

competition between him and Siddaramaiah for the chief minister's post after the assembly election results in May last year. It was also said to be a "commitment" made by the Congress leadership to Shivakumar while convincing him to give up his claim for the CM post and to take up the role of deputy chief minister. Asked whether he or his brother and former MP D K Suresh would contest in the assembly bypolls from Channapatna, Shivakumar, who has recently been making repeated visits to the segment, did not want to give any direct response but indicated that he may contest. "My brother is not interested, as people have decided to give Suresh a rest (through defeat in Lok Sabha polls), but there is a desire to work for the party, as people there (Channapatna) have trusted us and given us (Congress) about 85,000 votes (in Lok Sabha polls). We have to save them," he said.

SP demands cancellation of NEET exam

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The youth wing of the Samajwadi Party (SP) on Tuesday organised a protest march here over alleged malpractices in the conduct of medical entrance exam NEET-UG, demanding cancellation of the exam and resignation of the education minister. Starting from the party headquarters, the slogan-shouting agitators climbed the barricades placed by the police on Vikramaditya Marg to stop them. The police used 'lathis' to disperse the protesters, who were later taken into custody and removed from the protest venue. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and his party have been vociferously raising the issue of the alleged question paper leak in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)-UG as well as the police recruitment exam under the BJP government in the state.



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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

Inordinate delay in naming new army chief



ASHOK K MEHTA

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

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 - as 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 seniormost 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 SUPERSESSION 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 seniormost 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 seniormost 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 seniormost Dwivedi. B) retire both Dwivedi and Singh and appoint either Suchindra Kumar or Raja Subramani or And C) Supersede 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 | Secunderabad

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

bers of Parliament will take the oath of secrecy, overseen by temporary speaker Bhartruhari Mehtab. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), including the BJP's 240 members, now totals 294 members, highlighting a shift in the political landscape.

The Congress party, with 100 seats, alongside its allies totaling 234 seats, will have a strengthened position, allowing it to assume the role of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha for the first time in ten years. This change amplifies the opposition's ability to hold the government accountable on issues like inflation, unemployment, and the ongoing violence in Manipur. This 18th Lok Sabha stands out for its strong opposition, and how the ruling party navigates this dynamic will be closely observed in the coming days.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

INDO-BANGLADESH TIES GET A BOOST

Madam — This has with reference to your editorial "Friend in need" published on June 24. Bangladesh Prime Minister

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

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 everyone 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 pre-conceived 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



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 others' 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, aimed 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 crimes 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)

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 where 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 disappoint-

ing." 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 Gwynwr 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



defense 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 traveling 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 yearslong 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-

ing Assange USD 500,000 and they would start a fundraising campaign to help pay for it. Kristinn Hrafnsson, editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks, said the deal for Assange came about after the growing involvement of Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. "This is the result of a long, long process which has been going on for some time. It has been a tough battle, but the focus now is on Julian being reunited with his family," Hrafnsson told the PA news agency. "The most important thing is that Julian is free and he is finally able to enjoy the big blue sky." In a statement posted on the social media platform X, WikiLeaks said Assange boarded a plane and departed Monday after leaving the British prison where he has spent the last five years. WikiLeaks applauded the announcement of the deal, saying it was grateful for "all who stood by us, fought for us,

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 continued 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.

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 way 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 acerbically 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-inflammatory 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 are 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 program. 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.

Ukraine, Moldova all set to launch EU membership talks

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Ukraine is set to officially launch membership talks with the European Union on Tuesday in what President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has described as a dream come true for his country's citizens more than two years into a war with Russia.

Deputy prime minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration Olga Stefanishyna will lead Ukraine's delegation at an intergovernmental conference in Luxembourg marking the official opening of talks to align the country's laws and standards with those of the 27-nation bloc.

A few hours later, Moldova, which applied to join the EU after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and was granted candidate status four months later, will take part in a separate intergovernmental conference to officially launch its own accession process.

Ukraine, too, sought candidate status in the days after Russia invaded. By June 2022, EU

leaders had quickly made it official. But things have moved more slowly since then and membership, if it comes, might be years away.

Turkey's accession talks have lasted almost two decades without result.

Still, starting the talks process is sending another strong signal of solidarity with Ukraine beyond the billions in financial support the EU has provided. It's also a show of support for Moldova, which has faced its own challenges with Russia.

"Generations of our people are realizing their European dream. Ukraine is returning to Europe," Zelenskyy said in an online post after EU member states agreed on Friday to open the talks.

Tuesday's intergovernmental conference marks the launch of talks but the negotiations themselves are unlikely to begin for a few months.

Candidate countries must bring their laws and standards into line with those of the EU in 35 policy areas, known as chapters, ranging from the free movement of goods through

fisheries, taxation, energy and the environment to judicial rights and security.

Unanimous agreement must be given by all 27 member countries to open or close chapters, providing ample opportunity for EU nations to demand more work or to delay proceedings.

Hungary, which takes over the EU's rotating presidency from Belgium in July, has routinely put the brakes on EU and NATO support for Ukraine.

"We are still at the beginning of the screening process. It's very difficult to say at what stage Ukraine is in. From what I see here, as we speak, they are very far from meeting the accession criteria," Hungarian Minister for European Affairs Janos Bokai said as he arrived at the venue.

Bordering EU members Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, Ukraine would overtake France to become the largest member of the bloc if it joined, shifting its center of gravity further eastward. As a top grain producer its entry would have a huge impact on

EU agriculture policy.

Together with Moldova, Ukraine stands in a long line of EU hopefuls — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey — with yearslong membership aspirations and which have felt left behind by Kyiv's rapid progress.

Spanish State Secretary for European Affairs Fernando Sampedro Marcos praised both countries for their preparatory work, saying they have made "a tremendous effort in very difficult circumstances in the last months."

"Of course, this requires reforms and it's a merit-based process," he noted, and paid tribute to the countries of the Western Balkans which also want to join. "We will not leave them behind."

Ukraine wants to join by 2030, but it must carry out dozens of institutional and legal reforms first. That daunting list is led by steps to combat corruption and includes broad reforms to public administration and judiciary.

Death toll from attack in Russia's Dagestan reaches 21

Moscow (AP): The death toll in the attack by Islamic militants in Russia's southern region of Dagestan has risen to 21 after a wounded police officer has died in a hospital, officials said on Tuesday.

Sunday's attack, in which militants attacked Christian and Jewish houses of worship and fired at police in the cities of Derbent and Makhachkala in the predominantly Muslim region in the North Caucasus, was the deadliest in Russia since March, when gunmen opened fire at a concert in suburban Moscow, killing 145 people.

An affiliate of the Islamic State group in Afghanistan, which claimed responsibility for March's raid, was quick to praise the attack in Dagestan, saying it was conducted by "brothers in the Caucasus who showed that they are still strong."

The Investigative Committee, Russia's top state criminal investigation agency, said all five attackers were killed.

Mavsum Ragimov, head of the Derbent region, said Tuesday that a police sergeant died of his wounds in a hospital, bringing the total number of victims to 21, 16 of them police.

Medical authorities in Dagestan said Monday at least 46 people were injured, 13 of them police.

Among the dead was the Rev. Nikolai Kotelnikov, a 66-year-old Russian Orthodox priest at a church in Derbent. The attack came as the Orthodox faithful celebrated Pentecost, also known as Trinity Sunday.

In the early 2000s, Dagestan saw near-daily attacks on police and other authorities that were blamed on militant extremists.

After the emergence of the Islamic State group, many residents of the region joined it in Syria and Iraq.

The violence in Dagestan has abated in recent years, but in a sign that extremist sentiments still run high in the region, mobs rioted at an airport there in October, targeting a flight from Israel. More than 20 people were hurt — none of them Israelis — when hundreds of men, some carrying banners with antisemitic slogans, rushed onto the tarmac, chased passengers and threw stones at police.



Christian F Nunes, president of National Organization for Women speaks as abortion rights activists and Women's March leaders protest as part of a national day of strike actions outside the Supreme Court in Washington on Monday. AP/PTI

Russia keeps up frontline pressure before Ukraine receives a boost from Western military aid

AP ■ DONETSK REGION

Relentless Russian attacks on Ukrainian positions defending the strategically important eastern city of Chasiv Yar are disrupting troop rotations and the delivery of some supplies, soldiers in the area say.

The Kremlin's army is seeking to press its advantages in troop numbers and weaponry before Ukrainian forces are bulked up by promised new Western military aid that is already trickling to the front line, analysts say.

It has been hitting civilian targets just as hard, using powerful glide bombs that obliterate buildings and leave huge craters. Its monthslong campaign to cripple Ukraine's electricity supply aims to sap public morale and deny energy to Ukraine's burgeoning arms industry.

Attacks on such civilian targets brought arrest warrants from the International Criminal

Court on Tuesday for former Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and military chief of staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov for alleged war crimes. Judges said there is evidence they "intentionally caused great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health" of Ukrainian civilians.

For Ukrainian soldiers defending the eastern Donetsk region, the Russian ground assaults and aerial barrages allow little respite after more than two years of war.

"We work, you could say, without rest," said a platoon commander who, in line with his brigade's rules, identified himself only by his first name, Oleksandr.

"So no two days are alike. You always need to be ready to work day and night," he told The Associated Press on Monday.

His platoon is part of Ukraine's 43rd Artillery Brigade. It dashes to positions and without

delay fires a Soviet-era Pion self-propelled howitzer at Russian positions before it can be targeted itself.

Holding Chasiv Yar is crucial. The town, highly sought-after due to its strategic location and elevated position but now largely in ruins, lies to the west of neighbouring Bakhmut, which was captured by Russia last year after a 10-month battle.

Ukraine is racing to stabilize parts of the about 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line after badly needed military assistance was approved by the United States in April. A six-month delay in US aid threw Ukraine's military onto the defensive. Members of the artillery brigade in Chasiv Yar reported that supplies of American ammunition have started to arrive. The US is expected to announce Tuesday it is sending an additional USD 150 million in critically needed munitions to Ukraine, and

Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala said Tuesday that the first shipment of ammunition under a Czech initiative has been delivered to Ukraine.

The Czechs are looking to acquire from countries outside the European Union at least 800,000 artillery shells that Ukraine badly needs. The war has drained stockpiles in Europe, the United States and Russia.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said it will take time for the effects of the new Western weaponry to be felt on the front line.

Meantime, it said, "Russian forces are attempting to make tactical and operationally significant gains" before it arrives.

Elsewhere, the Kremlin's forces kept up their barrages of civilian infrastructure with three aerial strikes in the northeastern Kharkiv region Tuesday, local officials said, though nobody was injured.

Pak: New counter-terror op won't be large-scale military campaign

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Amidst criticism over a newly announced counterterrorism operation without consulting Parliament, the Pakistan government has said that it would not be a kinetic large-scale military campaign, nor would it entail the mass displacement of the people.

"Operation Azm-i-Istehkam," announced by the government on Saturday, is the latest in a series of counter-terrorism operations launched by the Pakistan Army since the mid-2000s. The announcement came after the Central Apex Committee of National Action Plan meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The Opposition parties, including the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazl and Awami National Party have refused to support the new counterterrorism operation. They demanded that Parliament be taken into confidence before any offensive against militancy was launched.

Prime Minister Sharif on Tuesday clarified that the planned counterterrorism campaign "Vision Azm-i-Istehkam" would entail intensifying ongoing intelligence-based operations (IBOs) rather than a "new and organised" military offensive, Dawn newspaper reported. The clarification comes after the PM's Office (PMO) late Monday night said that "Operation Azm-i-Istehkam" would not be a kinetic large-scale military operation, nor would it entail the mass displacement of the local population.

"The prime minister took the cabinet members into confidence regarding the misunderstandings and speculation regarding 'Vision Azm-i-Istehkam,'" state-run PTV News quoted the PMO as saying during a meeting of the federal cabinet. The statement quoted Sharif as saying that the new operation is an overall national vision of a multifaceted cooperation of various security agencies and the entire state system.

"For this purpose, already ongoing IBOs will be intensified rather than [launching] a new and organised armed operation," he added.

The PMO said that "previous kinetic operations were conducted to physically dislodge terrorists from their known locations which [became] no-go areas and compromised the writ of the state. These operations required mass displacement of the local population and systematic clearance of affected areas."

"As there are no such areas in the country anymore and terrorists' ability to carry out large-scale organised operations inside Pakistan had been 'decisively degraded by earlier kinetic operations... no large-scale military operation is being contemplated where displacement of population will be required,'" the statement said.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has assured opposition parties that their reservations regarding the newly announced counterterrorism campaign would be addressed.

Hong Kong court inches closer to sentencing democracy activists

AP ■ HONG KONG

A Hong Kong court began mitigation hearings for prominent pro-democracy activists who were convicted under a national security law and now face up to life in prison. The activists were among 47 democracy advocates who were charged with conspiracy to commit subversion in 2021 for their involvement in an unofficial primary, in the biggest case brought under the Beijing-imposed national security law.

They were accused of attempting to paralyze Hong Kong's government and topple the city's leader by securing a legislative majority and using it to block city budgets.

Forty-five of the defendants either pled guilty or were convicted by a three-judge panel whose membership was approved by the government. The judges said their plans to effect change through the election would have undermined the government's authority and created a constitutional crisis, in a verdict that critics said raised doubt about judicial independence.

The first batch of defendants to plead for lenient sentences contains legal scholar Benny Tai and activists Au Nok-hin, Andrew Chiu, Ben Chung and Gordon Ng. The mitigation hearings are expected to continue until early August.

Barrister Stewart Wong, representing Tai, told the judges that his client should be jailed for two years. He's expected to continue laying out his argument Tuesday on.

Hours before the hearing began, dozens of people were queuing up outside the court building tightly guarded by police. Some of them, including retiree William Wong, arrived at about 6 p.m. on Monday despite summer heat.

Wong said he voted in the primary and shared the defendants' hopes for democracy. "It's a normal election. Why do people have to be jailed for this? I can't accept this," he said.

Tai, a former law professor at the University of Hong Kong, nodded and smiled at people sitting in the public gallery after he walked into the courtroom. Wearing a black blazer, he appeared to be relaxed during the hearing.

Tai is best known as a co-founder of the city's 2014 Occupy Movement, during which demonstrators occupied streets for 79 days and brought traffic in some areas to a standstill, demanding direct elections for the city's leader.

The judges wrote in their verdict last month that Tai had laid out plans to block city budgets by acquiring a legislative majority, calling it a "constitutional weapon of mass destruction." They said Tai's aim was to use the plans to "undermine, destroy or overthrow the existing political system and structure" of Hong Kong. Tai, Au, Chiu and Chung were among 31 activists who pled guilty. They have a better chance of receiving shorter prison terms.

The law authorizes a range of sentences depending on the seriousness of the offense and the defendant's role in it, going from under three years for the least serious to 10 years to life for people convicted of "grave" offenses. The convictions have drawn concern from foreign governments. The United States has said it plans to impose new visa restrictions on both Chinese and Hong Kong officials responsible for implementing the security law.

A British judge also said the verdict "is symptomatic of a growing malaise in the Hong Kong judiciary," days after resigning from a post on the city's top court.

Pak court reserves verdict on suspension of Imran, wife's sentence in 'iddat' case

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani court on Tuesday reserved its verdict on petitions requesting suspension of sentences handed out to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the 'iddat' case, a judgment that was widely criticised by civil society and women activists.

Khan, 71, and Bushra, 49, were sentenced to seven years in prison each on February 3 by a trial court for contracting their marriage during iddat, a mandatory period for a woman in Islam to wait before a second marriage after the death of her husband or divorce.

Islamabad district and ses-

sions court on Saturday, while resuming the hearing for pleas seeking suspension of sentences, asked the counsel for Bushra Bibi's ex-husband, Khawar Fareed Maneka, to conclude his arguments by June 25 as the court would then take up the main appeals against their convictions, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Khan and his wife had challenged the conviction before district and sessions judge Shahrukh Arjumand, who recused himself at a time when the hearing had been concluded and the court was supposed to announce the verdict, the report said.

Subsequently, the case was transferred to Additional District and Sessions Judge

Mohammad Afzal Majoka. However, the counsel for Bushra Bibi had filed a petition before the Islamabad High Court seeking her release on bail and suspension of her sentence.

Separately, the Islamabad High Court had ordered the sessions court to decide in 10 days on pleas by the PTI founder and his wife. The judgment was widely criticised by civil society and women activists for being a "blow to women's right to dignity and privacy." There were protests by activists in Islamabad against the verdict and a demonstration in Karachi against the "state's intrusion into people's private lives" had also denounced it,

the Dawn reported. Judge Majoka reserved the verdict after hearing the arguments from both sides. The verdict will be announced on June 27 at 3 pm, the report said.

On Monday, the 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician moved the Supreme Court, seeking an expedited hearing of his appeal against his disqualification by the election commission in the Toshakhana corruption case. In December last year, the PTI founder challenged in the Lahore High Court the Election Commission of Pakistan's ruling of disqualifying him for five years for not declaring Toshakhana gifts in his statement of assets and liabilities.

Knife attack at school bus stop in China wounds 3

Beijing (AP): A suspect has been detained in China after a knife attack at a school bus stop that injured three people, including a Japanese woman and her child, a spokesperson for the Japanese Embassy confirmed on Tuesday.

A man stabbed the woman and her child at a bus stop for a Japanese school, and then seriously injured a Chinese woman on the bus who tried to block him when he tried to get on, the spokesperson said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of embassy policy. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the man was arrested at the scene after the Monday afternoon attack in Suzhou, a tech centre and historic canal city outside Shanghai. "It is a regrettable incident," she said. "China

will continue to take effective measures to earnestly protect the safety of all foreigners in China." The motive for the attack was unclear, the Japanese Embassy spokesperson said. An investigation is ongoing.

The Chinese woman was being treated at a hospital, Mao said. The injuries to the Japanese mother and child were not serious. In an email sent to Japanese nationals living in China, the Japanese Embassy warned them to take precautions as stabbing incidents have occurred in various parts of China in public places including parks, schools and subways. Earlier this month, a Chinese man stabbed four US university instructors at a public park in Jilin in the northeast, as well as a Chinese person who tried to intervene.

US, allies clash with Tehran, Moscow over Iranian N-programme

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The United States and its key European allies clashed with Iran and Russia over Tehran's expanding nuclear programme, with the US vowing "to use all means necessary to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran" in a UN Security Council meeting on Monday.

The US, France, Britain and Germany accused Iran of escalating its nuclear activities far beyond limits it agreed to in a 2015 deal aimed at preventing Tehran from developing nuclear weapons, and of failing to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Iran and Russia accused the US and its allies of continuing to apply economic sanctions that were supposed to be lifted under the deal, and insisted that Tehran's nuclear programme remains under constant oversight by the IAEA.

The clashes came at a semi-annual meeting on implementation of the nuclear deal between Iran and six

major countries — the US, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany — known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Under the accord, Tehran agreed to limit enrichment of uranium to levels necessary for the peaceful use of nuclear power in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

Then-President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the deal in 2018. Trump said he would negotiate a stronger deal, but that didn't happen.

The council meeting followed an IAEA report in late May that Iran has more than 142 kilograms (313 pounds) of uranium enriched up to 60 per cent purity, a technical step away from weapons-grade level of 90 per cent. The IAEA said this was an increase of over 20 kilograms (45 pounds) from February.

The IAEA also reported on June 13 that its inspectors verified that Iran has started up new cascades of advanced centrifuges more quickly than planned and installed more.

US deputy ambassador Robert Wood

told the council that the IAEA reports "show that Iran is determined to expand its nuclear programme in ways that have no credible civilian purpose."

Wood said the US is prepared to use all means to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran, but said it remains "fully committed to resolving international concerns surrounding Iran's nuclear programme through diplomacy."

The three Western countries that remain in the JCPOA — France, Germany and the United Kingdom — issued a joint statement after the council meeting also leaving the door open for diplomatic efforts "that ensure Iran never develops a nuclear weapon." They said Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium is now 30 times the JCPOA limit, and stressed that Iran committed not to install or operate any centrifuges for enrichment under the JCPOA.

Their joint statement also noted that "Iranian officials have issued statements about its capacity to assemble a nuclear weapon."

Iran's UN Ambassador Amir Saeed Iravani blamed "the unilateral and unlawful US withdrawal from the JCPOA" and the failure of the three European parties to the deal "to honour their commitments," saying it is "crystal clear" they are responsible for the current non-functioning of the agreement.

In the face of US and European sanctions, he said, Iran has the right to halt its commitments under the JCPOA.

Iravani reiterated Iran's rejection of nuclear weapons, and insisted its nuclear activities including enrichment are "for peaceful purposes" and are subject to "robust verification and monitoring" by the IAEA.

The Iranian ambassador strongly endorsed the JCPOA, calling it a "hard-won diplomatic achievement" that "effectively averted an undue crisis."

"It remains the best option, has no alternative, and its revival is indeed in the interest of all of its participants," he said. "Our remedial measures are reversible if all sanctions are

lifted fully and verifiably." But France, Germany and the UK said some of Iran's nuclear advances are irreversible.

Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said US promises "to abandon the policy of maximum pressure on Tehran and to return to the nuclear deal remained empty words." He accused some other JCPOA parties, which he didn't name, of "doing everything possible to continuously rock the boat, jettisoning opportunities for the implementation of the nuclear deal."

Nebenzia urged the European parties to the agreement and the United States to return to the negotiating table in Vienna and "demonstrate their commitment to the objective of restoration of the nuclear deal."

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, the coordinator of the JCPOA, said the compromise text he put forward two years ago for the US to return to the JCPOA and for Iran to resume full implementation of the agreement remains on the table.

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

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, bank 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

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 rates 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 Jan 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," Jan 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," Jan 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 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.

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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



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.

Brazil held to 0-0 draw by Costa Rica in a stunner to open Copa America 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 Júnior and Rodrigo got off to a discouraging start. Brazil coach Dorival Júnior 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 Haxzell 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 Paquetá appeared to go off the hand of Juan Pablo Vargas in the penalty area, but Ramos made no call. Paquetá 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.

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

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 stand 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 Wrocław). The decision was taken unanimously by the EFI's executive council. Fouaad Mirza had represented India at the 2020 Tokyo Games. Before him, Imtiaz Anees competed in 2002 Sydney Games, while Indrajit Lamba competed in 1996 Atlanta Games. Jitendrajit 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...

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. "He is a really important player in our team and we are looking forward to take all from him and we hope he takes a lot of wickets," said Arshdeep...

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.

After India beat Australia on Sunday, both Afghanistan and Bangladesh had realistic chance of making the semifinals but it was the Rashid Khan-led team that defended a below par 115 to make the last-four stage. Bangladesh needed to knock off the target in 12.1 overs but there were all out for 105 in rain-marred Super Eight contest.

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.

the 37-year-old said his focus was only on maintaining the "tempo" of the match. India will take on England in the second semifinal on June 27. "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.



said he had to tweak his batting style to take the wind out of the 2021 champions' sails. Rohit played some delectable strokes on the off side after his opening partner Virat Kohli departed for a duck. With wind a perpetual hindrance, Rohit said he had to play more strokes on the off side to negate the impact.

bowling against the breeze, so I realised I had to open up the off side as well," he said. "You've got to factor in the breeze and understand that the bowlers are smart as well 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.

the US. Kuldeep repaid his faith with excellent figures of 2/24 in his four overs on Monday. "Kuldeep, we understand the strengths he has, but you have to use it when you need it. The pitches in New York were seamer-friendly, but we knew he would play a big role later." The skipper added that he would like India to continue playing the same way in the knockouts as well.

want to focus on what we can do as a team, and take the game on." MARSH RUES MISSED CHANCES Australian skipper Mitchell Marsh, who was guilty of grassing a sitter and also failed to build on his good start with the bat, conceded that India were better on the day.

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 anti-climactic end after Afghanistan beat Bangladesh, eliminating the former champions from the T20 World Cup at the Super Eight phase.



the match, edging Arshdeep Singh as Suryakumar Yadav took a low catch. He walked off the pitch with his head down, not knowing whether that was his last game. Warner's retirement has been gradual. He played his final ODI match in the World Cup final win over India in November 2023 and his last Test against Pakistan in January.

hundred and 28 fifties in the shortest format. From 112 Tests, he has scored 8,786 runs at an average of 44.59 with 26 hundreds and 37 fifties between 2011 and 2024. He also scored 6,932 runs from 161 ODI matches at an average of 45.30 with the help of 22 centuries and 33 half centuries.

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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.



of jubilant fans back home celebrating Afghanistan's historic achievement started doing the rounds on social media. With the feat, Afghanistan have showed how much they have progressed in the white ball formats. At last year's ODI World Cup, they upset defending champions England and former winners Sri Lanka and Pakistan. They are

continuing their giant slaying run at the T20 World Cup having beaten heavyweights New Zealand and Australia. "The cricket we have played in the whole tournament so far - I think we deserve to be in the semis. The way everyone took the responsibility of getting into the game and performing best for the team," said Rashid. "So, I don't know how I can describe my feeling but it's a massive achievement for us as a team and as a nation to be in the semis and now looking forward to the semis."

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