

OPINION 6

LET STATECRAFT REPLACE
VICIOUS PROPAGANDA

WORLD 8

UNSC ADOPTS GAZA CEASEFIRE
RESOLUTION

MONEY 10

SENSEX, NIFTY SETTLE ALMOST
FLAT AMID VOLATILE TRADE

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TO JOIN MMA
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Capital sizzles, goes off the grid

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In what could be called as a triple whammy for the people of Delhi on Tuesday reeling under the scorching impact of an unprecedented heatwave and a severe water crisis, they faced a major power outage caused by a fire at the Mandola power grid in Uttar Pradesh, a critical supplier of electricity to the national Capital, providing approximately 1,500 megawatts of power.

As temperatures soared to 42 degrees Celsius, the power cut for varying lengths exacerbated the hardships of the residents of Delhi in various pockets, including the area housing Delhi LG Secretariat and Chief Minister's residence.

Amid IMD forecasts that heatwave conditions are likely to prevail for the next five days, Delhi Power Minister Atishi termed the incident as a matter of concern. She said, "There has been a major power cut in many parts of Delhi since 2:11 pm today. A power grid in Mandola, UP, which supplies 1,500 MW of electricity to Delhi, has caught fire. We are linking it to our other power sources." She said she has sought time to



Representational photo

meet the newly appointed Union Energy Minister (Manohar Lal Khattar) and the chairperson of PGCIL (Power Grid Corporation of India). The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader, criticising the Centre, said, "It is worrying that the national-level power infrastructure has come to a standstill today. The failure of the national grid in the country's Capital is quite worrying. There was no power cut even when Delhi's peak power demand reached 8,000 MW. This power cut happened due to the failure of the national infrastructure." In a post on social media X, Atishi said the fire at a sub-station of Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd

(PGCIL) in Mandola near Loni (Ghaziabad) in Uttar Pradesh had led to power outages in many parts of the national Capital. The power restoration process has begun and electricity is now gradually returning to different areas, Atishi said. "Delhi is the national Capital. If the power infrastructure in the country's Capital fails like this on behalf of the national grid, then it can have very serious consequences. Delhi has always tried to provide electricity 24x7. A few weeks ago, when the peak power demand reached 8,300 MW, Delhi fulfilled it without any blackout or major power failure.



We need answers: SC to Centre, NTA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to stay the counselling for admissions of students to the medical colleges over alleged paper leak and irregularities in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) undergraduate (UG) examination 2024. The apex court has also issued notice to the Centre and NTA and listed the matter for consideration on July 8, after the summer vacation which commenced on May 20 comes to an end. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Ahsanuddin Amanullah said the "sanctity has been affected" and "we need answers". However, the court refused to stay the counselling process for admission of those who have cleared the exam. "Let the counselling start. We

are not stopping the counselling," said Justice Nath as Senior Advocate Mathews J Nedumpara urged the court to stay the counselling. Besides the Centre and the NTA, which conducts NEET-UG, the bench also issued notices to the Bihar Government. There were allegations of malpractice in holding the exam in the State. "How much time do you want...Immediately on the reopening? Otherwise, the counselling will start," the bench said.

It tagged the plea filed by Shivangi Mishra and nine other MBBS aspirants with a pending petition and asked the NTA to file the response in the meantime. NEET-UG, 2024, was held on May 5 and results were declared on June 4. It was expected to be declared on June 14.

Nadda in Cabinet, hunt on for new BJP chief

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With the induction of Jagat Prakash Nadda in the Modi 3.0 Cabinet, speculation among party workers and leaders is about whom the party will fall back on as the next president. Nadda's tenure is ending by the end of this month. There is some possibility that the party could continue with Nadda for some time till the new party president is appointed.

Besides Nadda, the BJP also is set to kickstart soon the process of organisational changes with the launch of a fresh membership drive followed by an internal poll across States leading up to the election of a new party president. In the run-up to the Lok Sabha, speculations were doing the rounds that former Haryana Chief Minister Manoharlal Khattar, Madhya Pradesh BJP chief Vishnuvardhan Sharma, Gujarat BJP president Chandrakant Raghunath Paatil, former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Bhupendra Yadav. Leaders like Khattar, Chauhan, Pradhan and Yadav have been inducted in the Cabinet.

After that several names are doing the rounds which

Union Health Minister JP Nadda
Photo: Ranjan Dimri

include the party's general secretaries Vinod Tawde, Sunil Bansal, BL Santosh and Sharma. Tawde is from Maharashtra while Bansal is from Uttar Pradesh. Santosh is from Karnataka. Insiders said Vishnuvardhan Sharma is currently among the top contenders for the post. In 2014, when then party president Rajnath Singh became the Union Minister he passed on a baton to Amit Shah.

After Shah became the Union Minister in 2019, Nadda was appointed party president in June 2019. Nadda took over as BJP chief at a time when the party was witnessing vigorous challenges from a united Opposition in Assembly elections in several States amid signs that it needed to rework its electoral strategy.

Results a reality check, says RSS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In its first reaction to the BJP's below par performance in the high decibel just concluded general elections, the ruling party's ideologue, RSS, has apparently come out in defence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he was being criticised for winning less than majority LS seats and blamed on the kind of show which has forced Modi to be on toes given the coalition needs. In an obvious reference to the BJP's remarks mid way elections that the party does not need RSS to contest elections, RSS in an article noted that though the RSS is not a "field force" of the BJP, the party leaders and workers did not reach out to its 'swayamsevak' (volunteers) seeking their cooperation in electoral work. The LS poll results have come as a reality check for "overconfident" BJP workers and many of its leaders as they were happy in their "bubble" and enjoying the glow of Modi's aura but not listening to the voices on the streets.

VIP security system set for major overhaul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Depending upon the new threat perceptions by the central intelligence agencies, the Modi Government 3.0 is likely to undertake a significant overhaul in the VIP security setup in the coming months, leading to the transfer of security duties for over a dozen high-risk individuals from the National Security Guard (NSG) and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) to other paramilitary forces. This exercise will cover political figures, ex-Ministers, retired bureaucrats and some others. However, officials said on Tuesday that there was no such proposal for the time being.

The plan to interchange security duties of high-risk individuals has been in the making since 2012. It is expected that around 450 'black cat' commandos are expected to be freed once NSG is withdrawn from VIP security duties. The plan envisages "restructuring" the role of a security agency and using its manpower to raise and station strike teams of commandos in some high-risk areas and around some critical assets located in different parts of the country.

Top four Ministers of the Modi Government — Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Foreign Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman who were Ministers in the previous Modi 2.0 Government, will retain their 'Z' plus security.

Sources said, it has been decided to completely withdraw the 'black cat' commandos of the National

Security Guard (NSG) from VIP security duties. All its nine Z-plus category protectees will be handed over to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) VIP security unit. "The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) will review the current list of allottees, which may result in the modification, reduction, or enhancement of security cover for various political figures, former ministers, retired bureaucrats, and others," sources added. The CRPF and the CISF VIP security wings secure more than 200 persons at present.

In addition, some of the VIPs secured by the personnel of the border guarding force Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) may be transferred to the CRPF or the VIP security wing of the CISF, known as the Special Security Group (SSG). In 2012, it was first proposed to relieve the NSG from VIP security duties when the commanders of the elite group foresaw an event where simultaneous terror attacks could be witnessed at one time across multiple places. In such a situation, the commandos will have to be rushed into various directions.

Those protected by the close protection force of the National Security Guard (NSG) commandos include Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his predecessor and BSP supreme Mayawati, Union defence minister Rajnath Singh, veteran BJP leader and former deputy prime minister L K Advani, Union shipping minister Sarbananda Sonowal, BJP leader and ex Chhattisgarh CM Raman Singh.

BJP's Majhi new Odisha CM, will have 2 deputies



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR/AMRAVATI

BJP's tribal leader Mohan Charan Majhi will be the new Chief Minister of Odisha, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced here on Tuesday. KV Singh Deo and Pravatī Padma were made Deputy Chief Ministers of the State, he said.

The new Government will take oath at Janata Maidan on Wednesday which will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and some of his Cabinet members who are also scheduled to grace the oath ceremony of TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu's swearing in ceremony as Chief Minister in Andhra Pradesh. The TDP legislators, Janasena and BJP as part of NDA constituents elected Naidu as their leader in the Assembly. Along with Naidu as CM, some leaders from Janasena and BJP could swear-in on June 12.



Congress MPs Rahul Gandhi, Kishori Lal Sharma and party leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra during a public meeting in Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday

Priyanka would have crushed Modi: Rahul

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ RAEBARELI

Rahul Gandhi, in a fiery address at a thanksgiving rally in Raebareilly on Tuesday evening, targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming that Modi narrowly escaped defeat in Ayodhya. Rahul said if his sister, Priyanka Gandhi, had contested from Varanasi, Modi would have lost that seat as well. He said Priyanka might have won by a margin of over 2 to 3 lakh voters. "Modi and Shah were playing with the foundation of the nation, hence the nation united against them in this election. For the first time, I saw that the Prime Minister of the country is doing politics of violence, spreading hatred amongst the public, and extending benefits to three industrialists," said Rahul.

The rally saw the presence of KL Sharma, who defeated Union Minister Smriti Irani in Amethi. The venue for the rally was shifted from Amethi to

Raebareilly on Monday morning. Highlighting the BJP's loss in Ayodhya, Rahul remarked, "You all saw that they lost the Ayodhya seat. The temple was built in Ayodhya, but they did not invite any poor people to its inauguration. They even barred the President of India from attending. Not only in Ayodhya, but even in Varanasi, the Prime Minister somehow survived a near-certain defeat. If my sister Priyanka had contested there, Modi would have lost by a margin of 2 to 3 lakh votes," he asserted. Priyanka also addressed the rally, sharing her efforts in the election campaign. "When I came to Raebareilly, I asked everyone to utilise the remaining 300 hours and sleep for just 2 hours daily. Now, the results are before you. This is not just the victory of Rahul or KL Sharma but the victory of the people of Raebareilly and Amethi. We feel proud to continue serving you."

Frenzy builds up for Speaker's election



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the allocation of ministerial portfolios in the new BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government completed, the focus has now shifted to electing the Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha. After a pro-tem or temporary Speaker administers the oath to newly-elected MPs during a Special Session, the Speaker will be the presiding officer of the Lower House of Parliament.

The Special Session of Parliament is slated to commence on June 24 to elect the Lok Sabha Speaker. Sources said for the first two days new Members of Parliament will be taking their oaths followed by election of the Speaker. The session will go on till July 3. The Lok Sabha Speaker's post has become a prized catch as the NDA parties, both TDP and JD (U), are eyeing the chair. In the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, the BJP was only able to bag 240 seats, and fell short of the 272 mark. Former Lok Sabha Speaker

Sumitra Mahajan said the presiding officer of the Lower House should have experience in handling parliamentary work as well as ability to conduct proceedings smoothly by coordinating with both the ruling and Opposition benches. "The Lok Sabha Speaker's job is to smoothly run the House in coordination with the ruling party and the Opposition. In my opinion, the Lok Sabha Speaker should be a little experienced. S/he should have experience in handling parliamentary work. If such a person is found for the post, it will be a very good thing," she said. As the BJP lacks a majority in the new Lok Sabha, it will need to get its allies, especially the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Janata Dal (United), on board to decide on the Speaker's post. Congress led INDIA Bloc constituent, AAP, asked the TDP and JD(U) on Monday to ensure the Lok Sabha Speaker is from one of the two parties, and said this would be in their interests as well as that of the Constitution and democracy.

Animal laws need more teeth, say activists

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A case in Pune last year saw a dog being beaten brutally by a local resident, resulting in severe injuries to the animal. Despite the seriousness of the offense, the perpetrator was only fined Rs 50 under the current law. "In addition to the Pune case, there have been other instances such as the merciless killing of a stray dog in Mumbai and Jagatpuri, Delhi to name a few. These cases illustrate the severity of animal cruelty and the inadequacy of current penalties to serve as a deterrent where some people have been brutal to these innocent animals.

"But the lenient penalty does not reflect the gravity of the crime, effectively allowing offenders to get away with minimal consequences," rued Alokparna Sengupta, Managing Director of Humane Society International/India. Sengupta, along with other animal activists, has now written to the new Government to ensure passage of the long pending Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Amendment) Bill 2022 in the upcoming Monsoon session of Parliament. In 2022, over 180 parliamentarians had demanded such an



amendment. At least 50,000 emails and letters were sent last year by animal advocates and the general public to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to amend the 1960 Act. The draft Prevention of

Cruelty to Animals (Amendment) Bill, 2022 proposes substantial changes, including fines up to Rs 75,000, a significant jump from the current maximum of Rs 50, and imprisonment

for severe offenses. Such brutal cases call for strict legislative action, Gauri Maulekhi, trustee of People for Animals (PFA), said, as she pointed out, "Amending the PCA Act is imperative and long overdue. It is well known that violence against animals is a precursor to violence against other vulnerable members of our society, be it women, children, or our elders. "Strengthening this law protects animals and serves as a pivotal step towards cultivating empathy and respect, fostering a society where compassion thrives, and brutality finds no haven."

UGC nod to two admission cycles

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian universities and higher education institutions will now be allowed to offer admissions twice a year on lines of foreign universities with the University Grants Commission giving a go ahead to the plan, UGC chief Jagadesh Kumar said.

The two admission cycles will be July-August and January-February from the 2024-25 academic session. "If Indian universities can offer admission twice a year, it will benefit many students such as those who missed admission to a university in the July-August session due to a delay in the announcement



of board results, health issues, or personal reasons," Kumar told PTI. "Biannual university admissions will help students maintain motivation since they do not have to wait one full year to be admitted if they miss admission in the current cycle. With biannual admissions in place, industries can also do their campus recruitment twice a

year, improving employment opportunities for the graduates," he added. The UGC chief explained that biannual admissions will also enable the higher education institutes (HEIs) to plan their resource distribution, such as faculty, labs, classrooms and support services, more efficiently, resulting in a better functional flow within the university. "Universities worldwide already follow a biannual admission system. If Indian HEIs adopt the biannual admission cycle, our HEIs can enhance their international collaborations and student exchanges.

BCCL hosts Interactive Session with Steel Sector Consumers

PNS : RANCHI

Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited, successfully conducted an interactive session with its valued consumers from the steel sector at Hotel Le Meridien, New Delhi, on June 11, 2024. This event aimed to inform and discuss the latest developments in allowing ease of doing business for addressing the challenges with the steel industry. The linkages of coking coal to the Steel Sector consumers has been liberalised by allowing formation of consortium by the Steel plants with existing and/or upcoming new coking coal washeries and any other washery product consuming plant viz. CPP, Cement,



Textile, Paper etc. with flexibility of timeline. This is aimed at promoting import substitution and "Aatm Nirbhar Bharat". The session also highlighted BCCL's pivotal role as the largest producer of coking coal in India, contributing over 50% of the nation's total production. With a focus on supporting the country's growth and self-reliance in the steel sector, BCCL emphasized its commit-

ment to quality and sustainable practices. Key Highlights of the Event were discussions on import substitution, coal quality comparisons, and the upcoming Tranche-VII Steel (Coking) Linkage Auction, allowing consortium of companies to bid in Linkage auctions, providing greater flexibility and opportunities for collaboration among companies and flexibility in Timeline for setting-up of Coking coal

Washery. The event was graced by the presence of M. Nagaraju, Additional Secretary from the Ministry of Coal, P M Prasad, Chairman of Coal India Limited (CIL), Mukesh Chowdhary, Director Marketing, CIL and Samiran Dutta, CMD of BCCL, along with Rakesh Kumar Sahay, Director (Finance), S K Singh, DT(OP), S. Nagachari DTP&P and Hitesh Verma, GM (Marketing and Sales) from BCCL. Their participation underscored the importance of the session and the collaborative efforts within the coal and steel sectors.

The event also saw participation from representatives of all major steel companies across India, including key stakeholders from leading firms such as SAIL, RINL,

TATA Steel, JSW Steel, JSPL, Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel, JSW-Bhushan Power & Steel, Rashmi Metalliks, NMDC Steel, Sunflag Steel, Jai Balaji Industries etc. The Indian Steel Association, All India Induction Furnace Association, Federation of Indian Mineral Industries, Coal Consumers' Association etc. participated along with several entrepreneurs who are willing to set-up coking coal washeries to promote import substitution in the country. This diverse representation highlighted the broad interest and engagement in CIL/BCCL's initiatives.

M. Nagaraju and P M Prasad also emphasized the strategic importance of BCCL in the nation's coal sector and its critical role in achieving

energy security and self-reliance. Samiran Dutta, Chairman and Managing Director of BCCL, stated, "This interactive session underscores our commitment to fostering collaboration and innovation within the steel sector. Our efforts are aligned with the vision of 'Self-Reliant India', and we are dedicated to supporting our consumers with the highest quality coking coal." The event concluded with a Q&A session, allowing participants to engage directly with Director Marketing, CIL and BCCL team and share insights on future collaborations. The session was highly successful, and participants expressed optimism about the fruitful results that are expected to emerge in the coming days.

Attack on Bokaro Beautician, woman Injured

PNS : BOKARO

In a shocking incident in Bokaro's main market, City Centre, a group of six youths attacked and injured two women near Sector-04 police station. The beautician, Amita Kumari alias Amy Mishra, was seriously injured in the attack. She has filed a complaint at Sector-04 police station, naming three individuals and accusing two unidentified persons.

Amita Kumari, who runs the beauty parlour Studio Eleven in City Centre, detailed the incident in case number 70/24, dated 05.06.2024. She stated that on the night of June 4 at 10:20 PM, one of her female employees was heading home. Near Trimurti Jewellers in City Centre, Akhilesh Singh alias Dabhu Singh, who runs Habib Salon, along with Chandan, Alok, and two others verbally harassed her employee, reducing her to tears. The employee called Amita, who rushed to the scene, only to be attacked by Dabhu Singh wielding a bamboo stick.

Amita further stated that the attacker enjoys protection from certain political leaders, emboldening his actions. He has previously made vulgar comments towards her.

Amita has visible injuries on her left leg, and the police conducted a medical examination at Sadar Hospital.

INDIA'S JOURNEY TOWARDS NET ZERO: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE THE MODI 3.0 GOVT



BY DR. SRIJAN KISHORE

India, as one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters in the world, is facing a pivotal moment in its journey towards achieving net-zero emissions. With the latest statistics showing the alarming increase in global temperatures and the catastrophic impacts of climate change, it is imperative for India to take bold steps to reduce its carbon footprint and transition. According to a study by (Sikdar & Mukhopadhyay; 2016), India's greenhouse gas emissions have been steadily rising over the years, primarily driven by our reliance on coal for energy generation and rapidly growing population. To combat this pressing issue, the Indian government no doubt is prioritizing sustainable development and has set ambitious goals to fight climate change.

One of the key initiatives taken by the Indian government is the commitment to achieve 450 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030, including 175 gigawatts of renewable energy from sources such as solar, wind, and hydro power. In addition to this, we have made significant investments in electric vehicles and aim to have a substantial portion of the vehicle fleet running on clean energy by 2030. The corporate sector too plays a vital role in achieving our target of net zero. With their substantial carbon footprints, industries have a responsibility to adopt sustainable practices and invest in innovative technologies to reduce emissions. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs that focus on environmental sustainability and

contribute to India's net-zero goals needs serious efforts now. For instance, the steel industry, which is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, need to invest in research and development of innovative technologies that can reduce CO2 emissions in the manufacturing process. According to recent statistics, India's carbon dioxide emissions in 2020 amounted to approximately 2.6 billion metric tons, which is a noteworthy increase from previous consecutive years. It is clear that we have a long marathon from here.

MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH FOR POLICY FORMULATION

Achieving net-zero emissions requires a comprehensive and coordinated policy framework that engages multiple sectors of society. It is essential for the government to collaborate with industry experts, environmental organizations, and research institutions to formulate policies that addresses the unique challenges faced by each sector. By taking a multi-sectoral approach, we can ensure that our policies are effective, inclusive, and sustainable in the long run.

RENEWABLE ENERGY ADOPTION
To accelerate the transition process to renewable sources, the Government may introduce robust incentive programs like the 'PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana'. Subsidies, tax incentives, and other financial mechanisms can encourage the adoption of solar, wind, and hydro power. By making renewable energy more economically viable, India can significantly reduce its reliance on carbon-intensive energy sources.

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT
Stringent environmental regulations and their consistent enforcement are crucial for holding industries and businesses accountable for their carbon emissions. Provisions like Social and Environmental Impact assessment, clearances by the concerned agencies, etc need to go beyond compli-

ance. The agencies should look at the intend and "sincere" approaches. The government should prioritize the development and implementation of policies that set clear emission targets and provide strict penalties for non-compliance.

CARBON PRICING AND TRADING MECHANISMS

Implementing a robust carbon pricing mechanism can incentivize organizations to reduce their emissions. By assigning a price to carbon emissions, businesses are encouraged to invest in cleaner technologies and processes. Establishing carbon trading platforms can create a market-based incentive for industries to limit their emissions and invest in carbon offset projects. These mechanisms can effectively drive emission reductions across various industries and contribute to India's net-zero goals.

EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Engaging local communities and stakeholders in the decision-making process is vital for the successful implementation of net-zero policies. We need to focus on creating platforms for community participation, gathering feedback, and incorporating local knowledge in policy formulation. I also trust that if India constructs its own climate goals, indicators and targets similar to the SDGs, it can guide us to navigate the crisis situation. By empowering and involving diverse stakeholders, India can foster a sense of ownership and commitment to achieving net-zero emissions at the grassroots level. Incorporating these policy insights into India's journey towards net-zero emissions will require a combination of strategic planning, data-driven decision-making, and ongoing evaluation of policy outcomes.

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Changing trends in XLRI admissions: Rise in non-engineering students

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The new academic session 2024-26 at XLRI Jamshedpur began with an introduction session for 551 students, revealing a significant shift in admission trends. Historically, engineering graduates have dominated the two-year management courses at XLRI. However, this year marks a notable change, especially in the Human Resource Management (HRM) program, where for the first time, 50 percent of the students are from non-engineering backgrounds. This shift challenges the long-standing trend of engineering dominance in these courses.

In the Business Management (BM) program, 55 percent of the students come from engineering backgrounds, while 45 percent are from non-engineering fields. This diverse mix indicates a broadening academic profile among the incoming students.

The inaugural session for the new academic year took place in the Tata Auditorium of XLRI on Monday. The event was attended by the new students from various programs, including Business Management, Human Resource Management, and Fellow Programme in Management (FPM), along with their parents, faculty members, and non-teaching staff. The ceremony began with a lamp-lighting ritual led by XLRI Director Father S George SJ, Dean of Administration and Finance Father Donald D'Silva SJ, and Dean of Academics Prof. Sanjay Patro. Dean Patro delivered the welcome address, followed by a prayer from Father D'Silva. In his address, Director Father S George SJ encouraged the

students to embark on a transformative journey, emphasizing the pursuit of truth and knowledge. He urged them to ignite an inner light and strive for excellence, stating, "XLRI is a passion, and you have made the right choice by being part of this journey."

The event also highlighted XLRI's commitment to maintaining a balanced gender ratio. Historically, XLRI has been a pioneer in women's management education in India. As a Jesuit institution with strong values, XLRI ensures respect, safety, and empowerment for all women on campus.

Student Demographics:
PGDM (BM): 236 students (31% female, 69% male, 55% engineering background),
PGDM (HRM): 180 students (59% female, 41% male, 50% engineering background),
PGDM (GM): 112 students (30% female, 70% male, 79% engineering background).

The session's inauguration highlighted the evolving demographic of XLRI's student body, showcasing a balanced mix of engineering and non-engineering backgrounds and emphasizing the institute's dedication to diversity and inclusivity in management education.

The academic inaugural event was then followed by an ice-breaking event where all the students had participated and several games/activities were conducted. This two-hour event was a complete refreshment and made all the students interact comfortably with each other.

The new students were then taken through a Special Orientation Programme drawn up by XLRI to update their knowledge before regular classes commenced.

State's first ever eSports League Championship by CyberPeace

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand is all set to welcome CyberPeace eSports League Championship into its soul as it prepares to host a high-stakes eSports Championship on the eve of World Social Media Day - June 30th 2024 at Level 7-CyberPeace Café near Reliance Trends, North Office Para. This thrilling competition will start with multiple rounds where top gamers will compete for a coveted spot in the final showdown to compete for the state level league and titles.

This represents an unprecedented opportunity for local talent to get recognised in the state and shine on an international stage in future.

This event offers an opportunity to start at the very beginning of competitive superiority, as esports is recognised in the Olympics and at the Asian Games. It also serves as evidence that gamers are the sports heroes of the digital age. Participants can also explore pathways in the booming esports industry, from innovative tech solutions to dynamic gaming startups. Beyond gameplay, esports enhances strategic thinking, team coordination, and real-time problem-solving skills, which are essential for any cybersecurity professional. Additionally, esports participation can pave the way for careers in cybersecurity, game development, and digital media.

The event will be organised on 30th June 2024 (Social Media Day) at Level 7-CyberPeace Café, 7th Floor, Akash Complex, near Reliance Trends, North Office Para, Shyamali Colony,



Doanda, Ranchi between 11am to 5pm.

The event hopes to bring about the best gamer of Jharkhand, and the competition will have a set of two age groups, Category-A: 11-17 years and Category-B: 18 years & above.

CyberPeace eSports League Championship has a minimal registration fee of Rs 999 + GST for participants. Limited Gaming consoles and computers will be given on a first cum first serve basis to players. Complementary Food and beverages will be a part of the package. The registration forms for this event will be out tomorrow on the official social media handles of CyberPeace Café.

For more inquiries, people may mail at cyberpeacecafe@gmail.com or call at 08987666565.

SAIL Chairman welcomes Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries

PNS : BOKARO

Amarendu Prakash, Chairman of the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), warmly welcomed H.D. Kumaraswamy as he assumed his new role as the Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries. This significant appointment marks a new chapter for the steel industry in India.

H.D. Kumaraswamy, a seasoned politician with a wealth of experience, is expected to bring innovative strategies and robust leadership to the ministry. His appointment has generated optimism among industry stakeholders, who anticipate progressive policies and initiatives under his tenure. Kumaraswamy's tenure



is anticipated to focus on sustainable growth, enhancing production capacities, and fostering innovation within the industry. His strategic vision is expected to align with the broader objectives of the Ministry of Steel and Heavy Industries, promoting efficiency and competitiveness on a global scale.

Principal of MMCH likely to be changed

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Will the principal of the Medinirai medical college in Daltonganj be replaced? Speculations are rife with regard to the change of the principal of the Medinirai medical college at Pokhraha Daltonganj in Palamu. It is because one associate professor Dr Dharmender Kumar of the department of eye here has been promoted to professor. A medical college has to have a professor as principal. With Dr Dharmender Kumar now a

notified professor the exit of the present principal looks imminent. Dr Kamender Prasad is the principal here who is associate professor in the department of pathology. He is a stop gap arrangement. Dr Dharmender Kumar told this correspondent that "I am the most senior one in the Medinirai medical college here in Daltonganj. However the final call is to be taken by the government in regard to the principal of this college. I can't comment any more." This medical college came into existence in 2019. It continues to have its

bad bouts. First it was banned from taking admission to the first year courses in the session 2020 -21 by the National Medical Commission citing huge shortage of faculties here. Again this year 2024 the National Medical Commission took 12 lakhs of rupees as fine imposed on it by the Commission for multiple reasons like shortage of faculty, irregular aadhar based biometric attendance system, lack of cadavers to the anatomy department, expired licence of the blood bank etc.

LoP Jharkhand meets Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

PNS : BOKARO

Amar Bowri, opposition leader Jharkhand, had the honour of meeting the country's Defense Minister, Rajnath Singh, in New Delhi yesterday. The meeting was also graced by the presence of the newly appointed Minister of State for Defence, Sanjay Seth.

Expressing his joy, Bowri emphasized the significance of Jharkhand receiving representation in the Defence Ministry. He remarked, "It is a matter of great pride and good fortune for our state that Jharkhand now has a voice in the Defence Ministry. This representation marks a significant milestone for our region and underscores the central government's recognition of Jharkhand's potential and contributions."

The meeting underscored the collaborative efforts expected between the central government and Jharkhand's leaders, aiming to enhance the state's development and contributions to national defense. Amar Bowri expressed his confidence in the leadership of Rajnath Singh and Sanjay Seth, anticipating progressive initiatives that will benefit the country.



Sikh Federation recognises young achievers

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The All India Sikh Students Federation held a ceremony at Gurudwara Sahib Bistupur this evening to honor top-performing students from the 10th and 12th classes. The event saw the attendance of two esteemed chief guests: Amarpreet Singh Kale, a well-known social worker, and Meena Vilkuh, Principal of Chinmaya Vidyalaya.

In a heartening speech, Meena Vilkuh described the honored students as "diamonds, but uncut," urging parents to polish their children's talents and realize their responsibilities in nurturing their education. Her words brought a new wave of enthusiasm among the students and their parents.

Amarpreet Singh Kale, in his address, highlighted the struggles and successes of various eminent personalities to motivate the students. He emphasized the importance of perseverance and hard work



in achieving success.

Satnam Singh Gambhir, East India President of the Federation and organizer of the event, reiterated the importance of recognizing and honoring young talents.

He assured that such initiatives would continue in the future.

The event included ceremonial honors for the chief guests. Meena Vilkuh was honored by Gurpreet Kaur Gambhir and Narendra Kaur Gambhir, while Amarpreet Singh Kale received accolades

from Federation head Satnam Singh Gambhir and Bistupur Gurudwara President Prakash Singh.

The ceremony was also attended by notable figures such as Sakhi Gurudwara President Nishan Singh, General Secretary Paramjeet Singh Kale, and others including Gurdeep Singh, Inderjit Singh Kapoor, Inderjit Singh Panesar, Inderpal Singh Bhatia, Manmit Luthra, Parvinder Bhatia, Manveer Singh, and Mohinderpal Singh.

Bokaro's RL Singh meets Steel Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy

PNS : BOKARO

In a cordial meeting held at the Delhi residence of H.D. Kumaraswamy, the Union Minister of Steel, BJP Bokaro leader Rohit Lal Singh extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes. During the meeting, Singh also invited Kumaraswamy to visit Bokaro soon, highlighting the region's significance in India's steel industry.

The meeting saw the presence of prominent figures, including Bharat Yadav, Suresh Dubey, and Laxman Nayak. Their participation underscored the importance of the engagement and the collective hope for future collaboration and development in Bokaro.

Rohit Lal Singh emphasized the vital role that Bokaro plays in the steel sector and discussed various opportunities for growth and investment.

Bokaro MLA greets MoS Sanjay Seth in Delhi

PNS : BOKARO

Attending the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was a moment of immense pride for Bokaro MLA and Chief Whip of the Opposition, Biranchi Narayan.

After the ceremony, Legislator Narayan met with several newly appointed ministers, extending his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes. His visit to the Ministry of Defence was particularly significant as he attended the assumption of office ceremony for Ranchi MP Sanjay Seth, who has been appointed as the Minister of State for Defence. Expressing his joy, Narayan remarked, "It is a matter of great pride for all of us that a dedicated BJP worker from Jharkhand has been given such an esteemed position. I am grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for entrusting this critical responsibility to Sanjay Seth. This honor enhances the respect and recognition for all BJP workers in Jharkhand."

Narayan expressed his gratitude to the central and state leadership for their support and recognition. Additionally, party members Vikas Kumar and Mahendra Rai also congratulated Sanjay Seth on his new role as the Minister of State for Defence, celebrating the appointment as a milestone for the region.



CM fiat to use modern technology, communication system to maintain law & order in State

Soren holds high-level review meeting on law & order, crime control in State

PNS : RANCHI

Better law and order in the state creates a better image of the state. This gives a new dimension to development. It also determines the condition and direction of the state. This is the reason why strengthening law and order is a special priority of the government. Better maintenance of law and order is possible with the cooperation of all of you," said Chief Minister Champai Soren while holding a high-level review meeting with the Deputy Commissioners and Senior Superintendents of Police/Superintendents of Police of the districts today in the presence of senior officials.

On this occasion, he gave



Chief Minister Champai Soren alongwith his Cabinet colleagues during a review meeting at Project building in Ranchi on Tuesday. PNS

many important instructions after a high-level review of law and order, crime and extremism control, action against illegal mining, drug and liquor smuggling and sale and matters related to forest,

excise and land revenue. The Chief Minister said that there is a lot of diversity in the state of Jharkhand. Somewhere there is forest and somewhere there are mines. In some areas there is

a predominance of industries, while in some places people are dependent on agriculture. Similarly, there is a lot of diversity in crime as per the circumstances here. The nature of crime is also chang-



Chief Minister Champai Soren holds a review meeting with senior officials at Project building in Ranchi on Tuesday. PNS

ing every day. In such a situation, the challenge of the police also increases. In such a situation, your working style and strong information system will prove to be very effective in controlling crime. He said that along with dealing with the present challenges of crime, strategies should also be made to deal with future challenges.

The Chief Minister said that today there are many such latest technologies, which can be used to understand and control crime. Police needs to always remain updated with such modern technology. Along with this, study the arrangements for law and order in other states, so that if needed according to the conditions of Jharkhand, it can be used. The Chief

Minister also emphasized on improving the traffic system. The Chief Minister said that law and order and crime control get strengthened only by better coordination between DC and SP in any district. He said that better coordination between DC and SP brings better results. This gives impetus to development. The Chief Minister expressed confidence that all the officers of the state will give better results in law and order and all other matters with their better working style. The Chief Minister assured that the government will fulfill whatever resources and needs are there to maintain law and order. The Chief Minister said that the image of the state has been affected due to illegal mining. The gov-

ernment is very serious about stopping illegal mining. All necessary steps should be taken to stop illegal mining and transportation of coal, sand, iron ore and stone.

State Chief Secretary L. Kiangte, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Avinash Kumar, Principal Secretary Home Department Vandana Dadel, DGP Ajay Kumar Singh, Secretary to the Chief Minister Arwa Rajkamal, concerned departmental secretaries, all divisional commissioners, all zonal IGS, DIGs, Deputy Commissioners of all districts, Senior Superintendents of Police, Superintendents of Police and other senior officials were present in this high-level meeting.

Severe heat wave in State, Schools to remain closed till June 15

MET issues Heat Wave alert, residents to take precautions

PNS RANCHI/JAMSHEDPUR

With the outbreak of severe heat conditions prevailing across most of the districts in the State, the School Education and Literacy Department has issued a new directive on June 11 stating all schools from KG to standard 12 to remain closed till June 15. The order has been issued by Nandkishore Lal, Joint Secretary Education Department.

As per the fresh set of instructions, classes in all categories of schools- government, non-government aided, unaided, minority and private institutions are to remain suspended from June 12 to June 15. After the said, date, schools can operate at their pre-determined time. The notice also stated that private schools will be operated under the RTI Act and management in accordance with the guidelines of the respective school. The order has been implemented with immediate effect. It is worth



Rural women use umbrellas to protect themselves from scorching sun on a hot afternoon near Ranchi on Tuesday. Pix by Vinay Murmu

noting that the Department had earlier directed the schools across Jharkhand to conduct classes from 7 am to 11:30 am for all classes from KG to class 12 till June 15. The Meteorological Department Ranchi has also issued a red alert depicting severe heat wave for June 12 and June 13 for Garwah, Palamu, East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum and Seraikela-Kharsawan. An orange warning stating severe heat wave has been issued for Latehar and

Chatra, Ranchi, Koderma, Giridih, Hazaribagh, Bokaro, Dhanbad, Lohardaga, Ramgarh, Gumla and Khunti will also experience heat wave conditions. "The temperature is likely to remain the same in the coming few days. Some places in east Jharkhand and adjoining areas might witness light rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm and lightning during the second half of the day on June 13 and June 14. With heat wave alerts being issued, residents are also

advised to stay indoors and to step out only if necessary. It is advised to stay hydrated and also take precautionary measures especially for the elderly and children to protect from the heat wave prevailing in most parts of Jharkhand," said Director MET Centre, Ranchi Abhishek Anand.

With the Meteorological Department predicting a severe heat wave for the next four days, Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal has issued a pressing appeal to the residents of East Singhbhum. The forecast indicates that temperatures are set to soar, creating potentially hazardous conditions for health and wellbeing. In response, Mittal has laid out a series of precautions aimed at minimizing the risks associated with extreme heat.

Mittal emphasized the importance of simple yet effective measures to combat the scorching heat. "During the peak heat hours, from 12 PM to 3 PM, it is crucial to avoid physical exertion. Staying indoors during this period can significantly

reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses."

Mittal also highlighted the need to protect vulnerable groups, particularly children, from the harsh sun. "Children are more susceptible to heat stroke. It is important to ensure they stay in shaded areas and are given plenty of fluids. If symptoms of heat-related illnesses persist despite home remedies, seek medical attention immediately. Recognising the symptoms early and taking prompt action can prevent these serious outcomes."

To support the community during this heat wave, the district health centers are well-stocked with ORS powder and other essential medicines. "These supplies are crucial for treating dehydration and other heat-related conditions," Mittal noted.

The District Magistrate's message is clear: the coming days will test the resilience of East Singhbhum's residents, but with the right precautions and community support, the challenges of the heat wave can be effectively managed.

BAU alumni selected for admission to PhD course in USA



PNS : RANCHI

Er. Amit Raj Topno has been admitted to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA for study leading to the Doctoral Degree in Biological Engineering (Ph.D.) with a specialization in Water Resources Planning and Management. He has been offered Graduate Research Assistantship in Biological Systems Engineering with annual stipend of \$28,000 beginning June 2024.

He was working as a Senior Research Fellow (SRF) since January 2023 in the All India Coordinated Research Project on Plastic Engineering in Agriculture Structure and Environment Management (PEASEM), Department of Agricultural Engineering, BAU, Ranchi under project investigator (PI) Dr Pramod Rai. He did his M. Tech. in Soil and Water Conservation Engineering from Department of Agricultural Engineering of BAU in 2022 under the guidance of Dr Mintu Job.

The faculty members of Department of Agricultural Engineering & CAE congratulated him for his great achievement. Er. DK Rusia, Associate Dean, College of Agricultural Engineering and Dr DK Shahi, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture wishes him great success for his future career. BAU Vice Chancellor Dr SC Dubey also congratulated him and said this will motivate other students of the University for focused and consistent hard work for achieving greater heights in their career.

State Congress committee officials meet Kharge

PNS : RANCHI

Under the leadership of the State Congress In-Charge, Ghulam Ahmed Mir, senior leaders including the State Congress President, Rajesh Thakur met All India Congress Committee President, Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday and apprised him of the current political situation in Jharkhand including the Lok Sabha elections.

In this sequence, Mir apprised Mallikarjun Kharge of the situation of each seat in the context of the Lok Sabha elections and discussed in detail. He said that compared to earlier, the party fought well in the elections but could not achieve the expected success. "We will do a detailed review of the reasons for victory and defeat and for this a review meeting has been called on June 12. In which the lost seats will be reviewed thoroughly from the bottom to the top level so that where we have made mistakes, the situations can be made favorable," he added.

"With the results of the Lok Sabha, the organization has become active for the preparation of assembly elections in Jharkhand. Every effort is being made to strengthen the organization in Jharkhand and the organization will remain fully fit till the upcoming elections," said Mir.

During the meeting, Thakur said that in this election, the public has led us and given us success and in future also we will struggle for better results. "The people of Jharkhand are completely with us and in these 5 years, the coalition government has tried to improve their standard of living by taking better decisions in the interest of the public despite adverse circumstances," he added.

"We keep reviewing our manifesto from time to time so that we can implement the decisions in public interest as per the promises made in our manifesto and keep monitoring it. He said that our government has fulfilled the announcements like Sarna Dharma Code, OBC reservation, employment, loan waiver of farmers, implementation of old pension system, but some bills have been kept pending at the central government level, our struggle continues regarding this and we will go among the public with new and serious issues of Jharkhand," said Thakur.

Among those who met, Pradeep Yadav MP, Kalicharan Munda, Sukhdev Bhagat, former State Congress president, Pradeep Kumar Balmuchu, MLA, Irfan Ansari, Bhushan Bada, Ashok Chaudhary, Sultan Ahmed Minority Congress president, Manzoor Ahmed Ansari were also present.

Sanjay Seth assumes charge as MoS defense

PNS : RANCHI

BJP MP from Ranchi Lok Sabha constituency Sanjay Seth assumed charge of the office of Minister of State, Ministry of Defence today. Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and other senior officials of the Ministry of Defence received Seth and accompanied him into his South Block office. On this occasion, Sanjay Seth thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving him this responsibility.

Sanjay Seth said he looked forward to serving under the guidance of Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, with whom he had earlier worked in various capacities. Sanjay Seth said he would strive towards fulfillment of several initiatives of the Ministry of Defence that are aimed at



Ranchi MP Sanjay Seth taking charge as Minister of State for Defence Minister, in New Delhi on Tuesday. PNS

strengthening the Nation's security. Prior to assuming charge, Sanjay Seth called on Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at his official residence in New Delhi.

Sanjay Seth is a second-time Member of Parliament from Ranchi Lok Sabha constituency. He was elected from

the same constituency in 2019, and was a member of Standing Committee on Information Technology. Sanjay Seth was also member, Committee on Welfare of Other Backward Classes. Sanjay Seth was Chairman, Jharkhand State Khadi and Village Industries Board from 2016-2019. Seth, who has been elected from Ranchi for the second consecutive term, said that Jharkhand has already contributed to the army in a big way. "There are strong footprints of the Army in Jharkhand with two army cantonments in Ranchi (Deepatoli and Namkum) and headquarters of the Punjab and the Sikh regiments in Ramgarh," he pointed out.

Seth pointed out that the Raghubar Das government had set up a defence university (Jharkhand Raksha Shakti

BJP unit hails Mohan Manjhi as Odisha new CM

BJP State President and former Chief Minister Babul Marandi has congratulated and wished the newly appointed Chief Minister of Odisha Government Mohan Manjhi and two Deputy Chief Ministers KV Singhdeo and Prabhati Parida. Marandi said that it is a matter of pride that a son of Santhal tribal society has been made the Chief Minister to serve the people on the holy land of Lord Jagannath. He also congrat-

ulated and wished the newly appointed two Deputy Chief Ministers KV Singhdeo and Prabhati Parida in the meeting of Odisha BJP Legislature Party. Marandi said that the newly elected state government of Odisha will live up to the hopes and expectations of the people of the state and will move forward at a fast pace on the path of development. He said that the double engine government will pave the way for double development.

University) in Ranchi. "The university aims to provide physical training besides education which would aid young boys and girls who aspire to join the (defence) forces. I am

told the university is not in good shape. I will try how the university fulfils its objective with which the BJP government had established it," he signed off.

CM asks officials to accelerate implementation of schemes

Holds review meeting on flagship schemes and programmes

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Champai Soren today held a high-level review meeting of flagship schemes, policies and programmes run by various departments. On this occasion, he took information about the progress of various schemes and gave many instructions to the officials. In this meeting held with the Deputy Commissioners of all the districts in the presence of Additional Chief Secretary / Principal Secretary / Secretary of the departments, he asked to speed up the schemes so that the people of the state can get full benefit of it.

The CM said that they have an important role in accelerating the pace of development. In such a situation, all the departments should take special care that the schemes are completed within the stipulated time frame. The CM said that it is



Chief Minister Champai Soren alongwith Health Minister Banna Gupta, Labour Minister Satyanand Bhokta during a review meeting at Project building in Ranchi on Tuesday. PNS

our top priority to reach the schemes of the government to the people sitting in the last row of the society.

Reviewing the Rural Development Department the CM said that under Birsra Harit Gram Yojana, there should be complete arrangement for planting of saplings along with its maintenance and conservation. Under Birsra Irrigation Well Promotion Scheme, complete the construction of one lakh wells by the first of

November this year. Under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana, the construction of incomplete and pending houses should be completed as soon as possible. Involve the Sakhi Mandals associated with JSLPS and the women associated with it in various schemes by mobilizing them.

For School Education and Literacy Department he instructed to start tribal language education in all government schools of the state

soon. Giving priority to local tribal languages, ensure that tribal language education is made available to students studying in schools. Tribal language- Appoint expert teachers of all tribal languages including Santali, Ho, Kurukh, Kharia, Mundari soon. Reviewing the Higher and Technical Education Department the CM said that the portal of Guruji Student Credit Card Scheme will be active from June 20. Under this scheme, students will be given education loan up to Rs 15 lakh. In such a situation, ensure its promotion so that maximum number of students can take advantage of this scheme. Along with this, more than nine thousand students have applied for education loan, complete the process of giving them education loan as soon as possible. Reviewing the Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department he said that under the PM-

ABHIM scheme, complete the construction of all health centers by November this year. OPD and investigation facilities should be available in the same building of all level government hospitals. All medicines should also be available here. Complete care should be taken of cleanliness in the hospital premises. Doctors and health workers should be present in the hospital regularly. Tree plantation should be done in the hospital premises. For the Labor Employment Training and Skill Development Department he asked to ensure that the laws made by the government to provide employment to the local youth of the state in various private industries and companies located in Jharkhand are followed at all costs. Run it as a campaign so that the maximum number of local and indigenous people can get employment in their own state. Complete the process

of setting up skill centers at the block level under the Birsra Yojana. Ensure that land is made available for building ESIC hospitals in Bokaro and Deoghar.

Reviewing the Department of Personnel, Administrative Reforms and Official Language the CM said that the government is committed to speed up the appointment process. In such a situation, JPSC and JSSC should complete the appointment process for various posts as soon as possible. Remove any discrepancy in issuing caste certificates. Make it simple. Ensure that caste certificates are given to the applicants on time. Applications related to caste certificates should not remain pending. On Agriculture Department he said that at present, loans of up to Rs 50,000 of farmers are being waived off, but now it has to be increased to Rs 2 lakh, so complete its policy process soon.

SBPS Ranchi felicitates students



A special assembly was conducted in the school premises to felicitate the scholar students who have performed exceptionally in Class X board examinations. The students, who scored more than 90% and above in the board examination, were appreciated for their dedication and hard work. They were gifted plants to nurture their love for nature and to foster their efforts to meet the sustainable development goals. Principal, Paramjit Kaur, lauded the persistent efforts of the students and encouraged them to continue this streak in their academic excellence.

SERWWO holds workshop on waste management

Ranchi Division Branch of South Eastern Railway Women Welfare Organization organised a workshop on waste management. SERWWO Ranchi Division discussed the topic of waste management on the occasion of World Environment Day under the chairmanship of its President Mona Bindra. During this program, she explained the management of domestic waste in detail and gave information about the need and process of keeping wet and dry waste separately so that the project of waste management can be started in Railway Colony Hatia. Vice President Shobha Agarwal, SERWWO Secretary Rashmi Pippal, Deputy Secretary Lakshmi, Preeti Sahu, Mamta Sinha, Anu, Meenakshi, Anubha, Vandana, Swati, Sukumti, Neetu and other members were also present in this program.



Modi 3.0 Cabinet: New Government signals both change, continuity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several Ministers including Amit Shah, S Jaishankar, Manohar Lal, JP Nadda and Ashwini Vaishnav among others on Tuesday assumed charge of their respective Ministries. The new government signalled both change and continuity. A day after the much anticipated portfolios were announced and two days after Modi and 71 ministers were sworn in at a grand ceremony in Rashtrapati Bhavan, there were flowers and felicitations aplenty in the corridors of power.

In a seamless transition from the previous government to the present one, the four big front-line portfolios stay the same - Amit Shah for Home, S Jaishankar for External Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman for Finance and Rajnath Singh for Defence.

'Bharat First and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (The world is one family) will be the two guiding axioms of Indian foreign policy, Jaishankar said shortly after taking over.

On ties with China going forward, Jaishankar said some issues remained along the border with that country and efforts will be made to resolve them. "Our focus with regard to China will be on how to

resolve the remaining issues," he told reporters.

BJP president J P Nadda assumed charge of the Health as well as the Chemical and Fertilisers ministries.

Several ministers made initial statements as they took charge of their ministries.

Ashwini Vaishnav who continues to hold the key portfolios of Railways and Electronics and Information Technology, assumed charge as Information and Broadcasting minister in the presence of senior officials, including Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made service to the poorest of poor the motto of his life and the main aim of the government. He has taken measures for welfare of the farmers, youth and empowerment of women," Vaishnav told reporters.

Donning his MeitY hat as he resumed charge of the ministry, he said the government will push ahead with its tech-driven agenda of cementing India's global lead in semiconductor and electronics manufacturing and as a technology and digital hub.

Jitendra Singh, who took office as Union Minister of State (MoS) for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions at his North Block office, said



good governance reforms undertaken in the last decade will continue to increase citizen-centricity and ensure ease of living for every citizen. Modi is in charge of the ministry.

"Last 10 years have witnessed a series of revolutionary governance reforms happening under the guidance of PM Modi, which were basically inspired by the spirit of 'minimum government, maximum governance' and increasing citizen centricity to bring ease of

living for every citizen of the country," Singh told reporters.

Jyotiraditya Scindia, appointed Communications minister, said both the telecom sector and the India post division have key roles to play at the global as well as local stage.

The minister recalled his previous tenure as the Minister of State for Communications about one and half decades ago. "It is also a little bit like coming full circle for me. I worked as a junior minister in this

department many many years ago in 2007, 2008 and 2009. Therefore for me it is also a department with which I have had tremendous emotional ties," Scindia said.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, also given the responsibility of Minority Affairs, said he will make all efforts to take everyone along to ensure smooth functioning of Parliament. There was no need to pull each other down on the basis of numerical

strength, he added.

"We need not pull each other down on the basis of numerical strength. People use muscle power outside Parliament, but inside the House, we should use vocal power for good debate," he said after assuming charge in the presence of his predecessor Pralhad Joshi and Ministers of State Arjun Ram Meghwal and L Murugan. Annapurna Devi, the country's new Women and Child Development minister, said

she will work towards fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of a Viksit Bharat.

Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat echoed her and said his ministry will contribute towards the vision of making a Viksit Bharat.

Senior BJP leader from Karnataka Pralhad Joshi took over as minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and said his priority would be to implement the 100-day agenda of the government and further strengthen the food security system.

"I am thankful to the prime minister who has given me the responsibility of this important department which is linked to the common people, where we provide free foodgrains to 80 crore people," Joshi told reporters.

Rashtriya Swayam Sangh (RSS) pracharak, Haryana's former chief minister and now Union Power minister Manohar Lal met heads of public sector undertakings in the power sector and other top brass of his ministry to understand the dynamics of the sector.

Chants of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and "Vande Mataram" were heard from party supporters when the BJP's Gujarat unit chief Chandrakant Raghunath Patil took charge of the Jal Shakti ministry.

Before doing so, he took to social media to state that the conservation and enhancement of the country's water resources is a "sacred goal".

Promising continuity, new Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said the Modi government will continue to balance development with environmental protection and conservation.

Listing the major achievements of the Modi-led government, he said, "India met the quantitative and qualitative targets set under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) - the national climate plan to achieve Paris Agreement goals - nine years ahead of schedule."

All eyes were also on the allies of the BJP who were given ministerial berths. There were jubilant scenes when Chirag Paswan, the two-time MP from Bihar and chief of Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), took office as minister of Food Processing Industries after a small religious ceremony in the presence of his mother and other family members.

"There is huge potential in the food processing sector, and the 100-day plan will be ready after discussion with ministry officials," Paswan said, underscoring the sector's importance in directly benefiting farmers.

Shah assumes charge as HM for second consecutive term

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP leader Amit Shah on Tuesday here took charge as the Union Home Minister for the second consecutive term. Shah, who has been holding the portfolio since 2019, has returned to the Modi 3.0 government in the same capacity.

Before taking charge of the ministry, Shah visited the National Police Memorial in the city's Chanakyapuri area to pay homage to policemen who had laid down their lives while serving the nation. The 59-year old Shah was elected from Gandhinagar constituency in Gujarat in the Lok Sabha election. Shah has also retained his other portfolio in the Ministry of Cooperation.

In the fresh tenure as home minister, the immediate priority of Shah will be the implementation of the three newly enacted criminal laws -- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam 2023.

These laws, scheduled to come into effect from July 1, are set to replace the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, marking a significant shift towards a more



efficient and effective legal framework.

Aimed at reshaping the landscape of the country's criminal justice system, Shah brought the three laws last year aimed at modernising and replacing outdated British-era legislation.

As Union home minister in the second Modi government in 2019, Shah had played a pivotal role in shaping key policies, including the abrogation of Article 370 and the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

Known for his meticulous approach, Shah's tenure has been marked by proactive decision-making and a commitment to strengthening national security and justice systems,

exemplifying his enduring influence in Indian politics.

Shah has also been instrumental in quelling Maoist violence and restoring peace in the northeastern states through strategic peace accords.

Known as the second most influential figure in the country after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a person dedicated to the saffron ideology, Shah rose as the BJP's master organiser when its alliance secured 73 seats from Uttar Pradesh in 2014 under his leadership as the party's general secretary.

Recognised for his political acumen and strategic prowess, Shah has played a pivotal role in the phenomenal growth of the saffron party.

Oman, Qatar congratulate Modi on securing third term

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Oman and Qatar on Tuesday congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for securing third term.

Oman's Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq has spoken to Prime Minister Modi to congratulate him as he began his third term in office, the PMO said on Tuesday.

The Sultan emphasised the centuries-old ties of friendship between Oman and India and conveyed his best wishes for the progress and prosperity of the people of India, it added.

Modi thanked him for his warm wishes and spoke of his historic visit to India in December 2023 which led to deepening of bilateral cooperation in all areas.

The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further deepening and strengthening India-Oman partnership for the mutual benefit of both countries, it added. Modi also extended warm greetings to him and the people of Oman on the upcoming Eid Al Adha festival.

Modi spoke with Amir of



Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani on Tuesday during which the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to advance India-Qatar ties to unprecedented heights.

"Pleased to speak with my friend, the Amir of Qatar H.H. Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani. I thank him for his warm wishes and positive sentiments towards India," Modi said in a post on X. "We reaffirmed our commitment to advance India-Qatar ties to unprecedented heights," the prime minister said.

Several world leaders have extended their wishes to Prime Minister Modi after he took oath for a third term in office.

Modi to undertake first official trip to Italy after assuming office

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will undertake his first foreign official trip to Italy this week after assuming office. He will attend the annual summit of G-7 advanced economies there and meet several world leaders, it was learnt here on Tuesday.

The G7 summit, to be held in the luxury resort of Borgo Egnazia in Italy's Apulia region from June 13 to 15, is likely to be dominated by the raging war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza.

US President Joe Biden, his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau are among the top leaders attending the summit.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is also scheduled for a session on the Russian invasion of his country. Modi is likely to leave for Italy on June 13 and will return late on June 14, adding it will be his first trip abroad after taking charge as the prime minister for the third consecutive term.

He will be accompanied by a

high-level delegation that is likely to include External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra and National Security Advisor(NSA) Ajit Doval, sources said.

The prime minister is set to hold a number of bilateral meetings including with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. Modi had attended the previous G7 summit in Hiroshima in May last year. On the sidelines of the summit, he had held talks with Zelenskyy and a number of other leaders.

The G7 comprises the US, the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Canada and Japan. Italy is holding the current presidency of the G7 (Group of Seven) and is hosting the summit in that capacity.

A key focus of the Italian presidency has been to defend the rules-based international system. Russia's military action in Ukraine has undermined its principles and triggered growing instability, with multiple crises unfolding worldwide, according to Italy. The G7 will give equal importance to the conflict in the Middle East, with its consequences for the global agenda, it says.

Modi appeals to people to make yoga integral part of their lives

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Head of the International Day of Yoga on June 21, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called upon people to reiterate their commitment to making yoga an integral part of their lives and also encourage others to do the same.

In 10 days from now, the world will mark the 10th International Day of Yoga, celebrating a timeless practice that celebrates oneness and harmony, he said on X.

Yoga has transcended cultural and geographical boundaries, uniting millions around the globe in the pursuit of holistic well-being, the prime minister said.

Modi said, "As we approach this year's Yoga Day, it is essential to reiterate our commitment to making Yoga an integral part of our lives and also encouraging others to make it a part of theirs."

"Yoga offers a sanctuary of calm, enabling us to navigate life's challenges with calm and fortitude," the prime minister said and also shared a set of videos showing various forms of yoga and their benefits.

CBI to seek Interpol Red Notice against three accused in human trafficking network

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation(CBI) will seek Interpol Red Notice against three accused for their alleged involvement in the human trafficking network that pushed Indians into the Russia-Ukraine war zone in the garb of lucrative employment opportunities in Moscow, officials said Tuesday.

The central probe agency wants the custodial interrogation of alleged hawala operator Ramesh Kumar Palanisamy, Mohammad Moinuddin Chhipa, both understood to be in Russia, and Faisal Abdul Mutalib Khan, believed to be in the UAE, to unravel the conspiracy, they said.

An Interpol Red Notice is a request to law enforcement agencies of 196 member countries to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender or similar legal action.

The CBI seeks to extradite the three accused to face legal action and join the investigation.

The CBI had busted major human trafficking networks operating across the country in March which were allegedly pushing the Indian youths to the Russia-Ukraine war front in the garb of providing



them with lucrative foreign jobs.

The agency has booked 24x7 RAS Overseas Foundation, KG Marg, and its Director Suyash Mukut, O.S.D Bros Travels & Visa Services Pvt Ltd., Mumbai and its Director Rakesh Pandey, Adventure Visa Services Pvt Ltd., Chandigarh, Punjab and its Director Manjeet Singh, Baba Vlogs Overseas Recruitment Solutions Pvt Ltd., Dubai and its Director Faisal Abdul Mutalib Khan alias Baba in the FIR.

The modus operandi deciphered by the CBI shows that Baba Vlogs, Sufiyan, Dubai-based Faisal Abdul Mutalib Khan allegedly used

ports to Cosmo Travels Pvt. Ltd, which arranged tourist visas for them on the promise that it would be converted into a work visa.

These job seekers were asked to reach the Chennai Airport, where their passports were handed over to them. They were then given the contact numbers of Nijil Jobi Bensam and Ramesh Kumar Palanisamy, both based in Moscow. The duo received the candidates in Russia and kept them in a house there, according to the CBI findings. These victims were "deceptively" made to sign contracts for the Russian Army and handed over to them to be sent to the Russia-Ukraine War zone, the CBI has found.

In Russia, Moinuddin also started extorting money from the victims for not sending them to the war zone.

The agency has found 35 instances of youth being taken over to Russia lured through social media channels like YouTube, etc., and also through their local contacts and agents for highly paid jobs in Russia, they said.

"They were being trained in combat roles and provided with Russian army uniforms and batches. After that, these Indian nationals are being deployed at front bases in the War Zone against their wishes and put their lives in grave danger," the CBI FIR said.

Promotion of violence never acceptable in Canada: Envoy to India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Promotion of violence is never acceptable in Canada, Canadian envoy to India Cameron MacKay said on Tuesday, two days after display of a float depicting former prime minister Indira Gandhi's assassination at an event in Greater Toronto triggered fresh tensions in bilateral ties.

India has already taken up the issue with Canadian authorities.

"The Government of Canada is aware of further imagery displayed in Brampton on Sunday. Canada's position is clear: The promotion of violence is never acceptable in Canada," MacKay said on X.

The float glorifying Indira Gandhi's assassination was part of a parade that was taken out in Brampton to mark the 40th anniversary of Operation Bluestar.

Operation Bluestar was an India Army operation carried out in June 1984 to flush out militants including their leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale from the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

India has been asking Canada to come down hard on pro-Khalistani elements operating from Canadian soil. The ties between the two countries came under severe strain fol-



lowing Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd".

India has been maintaining that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistani elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity. There have been instances of pro-Khalistani elements threatening to harm Indian diplomats.

Days after Trudeau's allegations last year, India asked Ottawa to downsize its diplomatic presence in the country to ensure parity. Canada subsequently withdrew 41 diplomats and their family members from India.

Rahul targets Modi Government over dynastic politics

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday targeted the Modi government over dynastic politics and dubbed the NDA ministry a "parivar mandal" as he pointed out several ministers in the Modi 3.0 government who hail from political families.

"Those who call the tradition of struggle, service and sacrifice of generations as nepotism are distributing the will of power to their 'sarkari parivar' (government family)," Gandhi said in a social media post in Hindi.

"This difference between the words and actions is called Narendra Modi," he added.

In his post, Rahul Gandhi named H D Kumaraswamy, son of former prime minister H D Deve Gowda, Jyotiraditya Scindia, son of former Union minister Madhav Rao Scindia, Kiren Rijiju, son of first pro tem speaker of Arunachal Pradesh Rinchin Khuru, Raksha Khadse, daughter-in-law of former Maharashtra minister Eknath Khadse, Jayant Chaudhary, grandson of former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, Chirag Paswan, son of former Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan, and J P Nadda, son-in-law of former MP and Madhya Pradesh minister Jaysree Banerjee as part of



NDA's "Parivar mandal".

To the list, he added Ram Nath Thakur, son of former Bihar chief minister Karpoori Thakur, Ram Mohan Naidu, son of former Union minister Terren Naidu, Jitin Prasad, son of former MP Jitendra Prasad, Rao Inderjit Singh, son of former Haryana chief minister Rao Birendra Singh, Piyush Goyal, son of former Union minister Ved Prakash Goyal, Ravneet Singh Bittu, grandson of former Punjab chief minister Beant Singh, Anupriya Patel, daughter of Apna Dal founder Sonelal Patel, and Kirti Vardhan Singh, son of former Uttar Pradesh minister Maharaj Anand Singh.

Rahul Gandhi's post came in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi accusing the Congress of practising "dynastic politics" during the election campaign for the just-concluded Lok Sabha polls.

Chandrababu poised to take over as Andhra Pradesh CM

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu is set to take oath as the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday, marking his fourth term in that role. Naidu is scheduled to take oath at 11.27 am at Kesaraipalli IT Park near Gannavaram Airport on the outskirts of Vijayawada. On Tuesday, the Telugu Desam Legislature Party and NDA partners elected Naidu as their leader. Leaders of the NDA comprising TDP, BJP and Janasena would meet Governor S Abdul Nazeer and stake claim to form a government. There could be an invitation from the Governor to form the government by Tuesday evening. Along with Naidu, some more leaders are likely to swear-in, who could include TDP general secretary and Naidu's



son Nara Lokesh and Janasena leader N Manohar. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several other dignitaries are expected to attend the swearing-in ceremony. Reviewing the arrangements for the ceremony, Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad said the prime minister is expected to leave

off for Bhubaneswar at 12.45 pm. Naidu first became the chief minister in 1995 and went on to have another two terms. His first two terms as chief minister were at the helm of united Andhra Pradesh, beginning in 1995 and ending in 2004, nine years at a stretch while the third term came post-bifurcation of the state. In 2014, Naidu emerged as the first chief minister of bifurcated Andhra Pradesh and served it until 2019. He lost the 2019 polls to remain an opposition leader until 2024. Following a landslide victory in the 2024 elections, he is returning as the CM for the fourth term. The NDA comprising TDP, BJP and Janasena won a landslide victory in the recently concluded simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the southern state with a brute majority of 164 Assembly and 21 Lok Sabha seats.

Winning Vikravandi bypoll may turn out to be cakewalk for ruling DMK

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Though the opposition AIADMK has a strong presence and could turn out to be a tough contender in the Vikravandi assembly by-election scheduled for July 10, the BJP's ally, the PMK and ruling DMK's trusted ally, the VCK, could upset AIADMK's winning prospects. The Left parties, which are aligned with the DMK, too, have a noticeable presence in the constituency. Being alone in the electoral fray may not be advantageous to the AIADMK. It remains to be seen if the AIADMK will announce to take on the DMK or prefer to abstain in order to concentrate on the 2026 Assembly elections. The by-poll verdict has traditionally been in favour of the ruling dispensation. And winning this seat for the DMK may turn out to be a cakewalk. Vikravandi assembly constituency in neighbouring Villupuram district is the only constituency from the five southern states that would go



contest from here just as the Congress contested and won from Vilavancode assembly by-poll that was held along with the Lok Sabha elections," he said. Despite Congress leader S Vijayadharani switching loyalties to the BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the grand old party retained Vilavancode and proved that the seat is its bastion. Congress candidate Tharaha Cuthbert defeated BJP's V S Nanthini and won by a margin of 40,170 votes. Cuthbert secured 91,054 votes. The DMK won the 2021 assembly election, ending the decade of AIADMK rule, and sent the AIADMK and BJP packing home in the Lok Sabha elections. It is confident of winning Vikravandi hands down. The PMK is unlikely to give up the seat to its ally, the BJP, as this Vanniya dominated party has a strong presence in this district. Meanwhile, the Tamil nationalist party - NTK - has announced to contest the by-election.

Kannada film actor detained in murder case



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Leading Kannada film actor Darshan Thoogudeepa has been arrested in an alleged murder case, police sources said on Tuesday. The 47-year-old was picked up from a hotel in Mysuru in connection with the murder of a man, identified as Renuka Swamy, on June 9 coming under the Kamakshipalya police station limits here, the sources said. After the alleged killing, the body of Swamy, who worked with a pharmacy company and hailed from the district headquarters town of Chitradurga, was thrown into a stormwater drain in Kamakshipalya. It is alleged that the deceased had made some derogatory comments against a film actress in a social media post. Police came to know about the murder after some local residents alerted them. The body was sent for an autopsy and the forensic report confirmed that he was murdered, the sources said. Further investigation led to the arrest of some suspects, who spilled the beans, a police official said. Based on their statement, police detained Darshan, sources said. Investigations are into whether the actor was directly involved in the murder or was part of the conspiracy, the sources added. Police have provided tight security at Darshan's house at RR Nagar here

Why Manipur being given such treatment when it is integral part of India: Sule

PTI ■ PUNE

NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule on Tuesday expressed concerns about the violence in Manipur and wondered why the north-eastern state was being given such a treatment when it is an integral part of the country. Speaking to reporters here, the Baramati MP said a terror attack took place in Jammu even as Narendra Modi was sworn in as prime minister for a third term. "We have been questioning the government over the Manipur issue for months. A lot of discussions took place in the Parliament over the Manipur situation. Manipur is an integral part of the country. The people, women, children there are Indians," Sule said when asked about RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's remark that peace had eluded the north-eastern state even after one year. Bhagwat had on Monday said the situation in the strife-torn state must be considered a



priority. "In Manipur, the convoy of the Chief Minister was also attacked. It shows that somewhere something is going wrong. A word is not spoken about Manipur, though we sought a discussion on the issue. Leaders from the INDIA bloc travelled to the state, but we were stopped there. Manipur is an integral part of India, and why is it being meted out such treatment?" she said. Sule further said that as a re-

lected MP, raising the issue of unemployment will be her priority in the Parliament. She reiterated that the issue of companies leaving Rajiv Gandhi Infotech Park in Hinjawadi was worrying, and said that the Maratha Chambers of Commerce has requested NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar to convene a meeting and urge firms not to leave Maharashtra. "More than 6 lakh people are working at the IT park, and it is worrying if firms are leaving," the NCP (SP) leader said. Talking about the row over the medical entrance exam NEET-UG, 2024, Sule questioned why the Central government was outsourcing the conduct of the examination. The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought the response of the Centre and the National Testing Agency on a plea seeking fresh conduct of the medical entrance exam NEET-UG, 2024, on the grounds of alleged question paper leak and other malpractices.

LDF Govt claims no shortage of plus one seats in Malabar region

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government on Tuesday claimed in the state assembly that there was no crisis in plus one admission in the northern Malabar region, a contention refuted by the Congress-led UDF opposition which accused the Left administration of making inaccurate statements in the House. State General Education Minister V Sivankutty said that every year after plus one (class 11) admissions in the Malabar region, thousands of seats remain vacant there. He also claimed that despite every year, temporary additional batches are permitted in that region to ensure that students get their choice of streams. He made the submissions opposing the adjournment notice moved by the UDF to stop the House proceedings and discuss the issue of alleged shortage of seats for plus one admissions in the northern Malabar region.



In view of the submission made by the minister, Speaker A N Shamseer denied permission for the adjournment. As it was denied, the opposition staged a walkout from the House in protest. Leader of Opposition in the state assembly V D Sathesaran said that if thousands of seats were lying vacant in the Malabar region, then why did the state government permit a 30 per cent marginal increase in class strength? Sathesaran further said that due to the marginal increase, it would be difficult for teachers to teach the 65-75 students in each class. Deputy Leader of Opposition PK Kunhalikutty said that despite the marginal increase there is a shortage of seats. Kunhalikutty also claimed that there appears to be a lack of attention or neglect towards the Malabar region on the issue. UDF MLA N Samsudheen, one of the opposition members who moved the adjournment notice, said that the figures cited by the minister in the House were incorrect when compared to the data available on the government's website. He said there was an acute shortage of seats in plus one in all six districts of the Malabar region with the highest in Malappuram. He said that giving temporary

additional batches or permitting a marginal increase in strength of classes was not a solution. "The only solution would be to give permanent batches," he said. The UDF MLA also suggested that the seats for students should be ensured at the taluk level as otherwise children will have to travel over a hundred kilometers within a district to attend school. Samsudheen also said that the government increased the number of bars in the state by over 1,000 during eight years of its administration, but no permanent additional batches were permitted during the same period. Refuting the opposition allegations, Sivankutty said he cited the correct figures. He also said that Kunhalikutty had met with Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan regarding the seat shortage. "The CM assured that if there was a seat shortage after three rounds of seat allocation were over, then steps would be taken to address it," the minister said.

Periyar fish death due to low oxygen in water; no chemical waste discharged in river: Kerala CM

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday said in the assembly that the recent mass death of fish in the Periyar river resulted due to less dissolved oxygen in the water and there was no discharge of chemical waste from factories into the river. The chief minister made the submission in response to a query by opposition UDF MLA T J Vinod with regard to action taken against those who allegedly discharged chemical waste into the river resulting in the death of the fish. Vijayan said that the State Pollution Control Board (PCB) conducted an inspection of the river following the incident and the water samples tested showed dissolved oxygen to be below the levels required for fish to survive. "According to the preliminary investigation, when the shutter of the Pothalam regulator-cum-bridge was opened following heavy rains, a large amount of oxygen-poor water flowed into the river from the upstream side of the regulator," the CM said. The initial probe also did not find any discharge of chemical waste into the river from the factories on the shores of the Periyar, he said. The CM further said that the PCB will submit its detailed findings only after getting the report of the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) on the issue. Regarding the loss suffered by fish farmers, Vijayan said that preliminary data indicates that it was to the tune of Rs



13.56 crore. Once recommendations are received regarding the compensation to be given to the fish farmers, they will be examined and appropriate action will be taken, he said in the House. Fish were found dead in large numbers in fish farms across panchayats adjoining Periyar such as Varapuzha, Kadamakkudy, and Cheranallor in Ernakulam district on May 21. Subsequently, the state government had held a meeting and worked out long and short term measures to prevent a recurrence of the incident. The short term preventive measures included formulating protocols for opening the Pothalam regulator-cum-bridge on Periyar river and installation of biofilters on industrial units on the river's banks. The long term measures were with regard to protecting and reclaiming the Periyar as well as other rivers in the state and included taking steps to set up a river-related authority, state Industries Minister P Rajeev said last month.

Five newly elected BJP MLAs take oath in Gujarat

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Five MLAs of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who won in the recent bypolls in Gujarat, took oath of office in Gandhinagar on Tuesday. The newly-elected legislators, including four Congress turncoats, were administered oath by assembly Speaker Shankar Chaudhary in his office in the presence of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, an official release stated. In the assembly elections held in December 2022, the BJP retained power by winning a record 156 out of 182 seats, and now, with five more MLAs in its fold, the party's strength has risen to 161. MLAs Arjun Modhwadia, CJ Chavda, Arvind Ladani, Chiragkumar Patel and Dharmendrasinh Vaghela took the oath. Vaghela was an independent MLA from



Vaghodia seat, while the remaining four had won on Congress ticket in the 2022 assembly polls by defeating their closest BJP rivals. They resigned as legislators between December 2023 and March 2024 and

subsequently, joined the BJP, necessitating the by-election in the Porbandar, Vijapur, Manavadar and Khambhat assembly constituencies. The BJP fielded those who joined the party from their respective seats in the by-election held on May 7. Modhwadia won from Porbandar by a margin of more than 1.16 lakh votes. He polled 1.33 lakh votes against 16,355 received by Congress' Raju Odedara. Modhwadia had won the 2022 assembly elections from Porbandar as a Congress candidate, defeating BJP's Babu Bokharia. Chavda won from Vijapur, defeating Congress' Dinesh Patel by more than 56,000 votes, while Ladani retained Manavadar with a margin of more than 31,000 votes against Congress rival Haribhai Kansagara.

Chhattisgarh Deputy CM Vijay Sharma visits violence hit Balodabazar

PTI ■ BALODABAZAR

Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma along with two cabinet colleagues on Tuesday visited Chhattisgarh's Balodabazar city, a day after a mob set fire to a government office and scores of vehicles during a protest called by the Satnami community against the alleged vandalism of a religious structure. Sharma, who holds the Home portfolio, directed that stern action should be taken against those who indulged in the arson, an official said. More than two dozen cars, around 70 two-wheelers and a government building were torched at the district office premises after the protest turned violent on Monday. Several police personnel were also injured in stone-pelting. Unidentified persons vandalized 'jaitkham' or 'victory pillar', a sacred symbol worshipped by the



Satnami community, near the holy Amar Gufa at Giroudpuri Dham in the district on the intervening night of May 15 and 16. Police subsequently arrested three persons in connection with the incident. To protest against the incident, the community called for a demonstration at Dussehra Maidan here on Monday, and also a 'gherao' at the collector's office. As the protest led to arson and stone-pelting, the Balodabazar-Bhatapara district administration imposed

section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, prohibiting assembly of four or more people in Balodabazar city till June 16. To take stock of the situation, Deputy CM Sharma, Revenue Minister Tank Ram Verma and Food Minister Dayaldas Baghel visited the district office in the wee hours of Tuesday. Talking to reporters, Sharma expressed grief over the incident and instructed the officials to take strict action against those who took part in the arson. Many of the damaged vehicles belonged to poor people who had come for work at the government office. Government property was also damaged and documents in the record room were burnt, the deputy CM said. He also noted that earlier, after leaders of the Satnami community demanded a high-level inquiry, being dissatisfied with the police probe into the

Women in Karnataka avail free rides in Govt buses in one year, says Minister

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Women in Karnataka have availed themselves of 227 crore free rides in government non-luxury buses under the 'Shakti' guarantee in the last one year, costing the state exchequer Rs 5,526.64 crore, Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy said on Tuesday. The Congress government, led by Siddaramaiah, launched the 'Shakti' scheme -- one of the five guarantees which the party had promised before the Assembly elections -- on June 11 last year. These promises are said to have yielded rich electoral dividends to the Congress, helping it dethrone the Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government. As the government celebrates one year of 'Shakti' guarantee implementation, Reddy said in a statement that 226.95 women travelled free of cost in the government buses. Most such rides were accounted for by the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation buses (BMTCC-71.45 crore), followed by Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC-69.5 crore). North West Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC) and Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) posted 52.12 crore and 33.47 crore free rides, respectively. KSRTC incurred an expenditure of Rs 2,111.14 crore, NWKRTC Rs 1,352.68 crore, KKRTC Rs 1,125.81 crore and BMTCC Rs 937.01 crore, the statement said.



Reddy said several measures have been taken to improve the public transport system such as approval for the induction of 5,800 new buses. In addition, 2,438 new buses have been inducted across the four transport corporations in recent times. According to the minister, the state inducted new buses with brand name 'Pallakki', 'Ashwamedha Classic', 'Kalyana Ratha' and 'Amogha Varsha'. Approval has been accorded for recruitment of 9,000 posts in the department. In this regard, appointment orders have been issued to recruit 1,844 driver-cum-conductors and technical assistants, Reddy said. "Recruitment for 6,500 posts (KSRTC- 2,500 driver-cum-conductors, BMTCC-2,000 conductors, NWKRTC-1,000 drivers and 1,000 conductors) is under process and will be completed soon," the minister said. The government has also enhanced accident relief compensation from Rs three lakh to Rs 10 lakh to dependents in case of death of any passenger in an accident while travelling in bus operated by state-run corporations, he added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The road ahead

The depleted BJP's decision to retain key Ministries is a double-edged sword

There are a number of ways to look at the depleted-in-strength BJP decision to hold onto important Ministries within the Union Government, despite pressure from coalition partners like the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Janata Dal United (JDU) for a larger share of the pie. For its part, the BJP has sought to guarantee itself centralisation of power over significant policy choices by holding onto important ministries. This will obviously support upholding a constant course for policy and governance, besides facilitating the quick execution of its agenda and cutting down on red tape. Sitting in significant Ministries enables the party to present its accomplishments and capacity for governance to the public, which is essential for retaining and growing its support base. On the flip sides, disagreements within the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) may arise from coalition partners feeling excluded. Relationship tension could result from this being seen as a lack of respect or trust by powerful regional parties like the TDP and JDU. The partners may utilise their ability to bargain to obtain greater sway, which could spark arguments or even inspire threats of abandoning the relationship. This might cause the partnership to become unstable, particularly since the BJP does not have the numbers to prop a Government on its own. On the other hand, it also means that the coalition will not be able to take use of the variety of perspectives and knowledge that its partners can offer. Policies as a result may be less sensitive to local quirks or inclusive. Sometimes, having all the authority in one place results in lack of accountability.

Sharing Ministries within a coalition can encourage a more balanced Government and serve as a check on decisions made by one person. In the long run, political instability could result from coalition partners feeling consistently ignored. In maintaining control, the BJP must make sure that its coalition partners are respected and feel included. However, the BJP's chances in States where these allies have sizeable support bases may suffer if coalition members leave over discontent. This might be harmful in elections that are hotly contested. Even if they do not hold important Ministries, the BJP is still able to include coalition partners in significant decision-making processes. This may lessen feelings of isolation. Keeping a stable alliance and addressing coalition partners' concerns can be achieved by regular consultations and talks. Providing them with strategic ministries or other types of political recompense might assist maintain coalition members' commitment and satisfaction. Maintaining important Ministries, therefore, is a two-edged sword for the BJP. It can guarantee policy continuity and improve governance efficiency, but it also runs the danger of upsetting coalition partners, which could result in political instability. The outcome will mostly depend on how the BJP humours its alliances and strikes a balance between inclusiveness and shared authority and centralised control.



PICTALK



Competitors at the annual dragon boat race in Hong Kong

Let statecraft replace vicious propaganda



SIDHARTH MISHRA

The BJP poll machinery's aggressive narrative proved to be counterproductive; it's now time to change the nature of dialogue from confrontation to consensus

The seamless swearing in of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the third term, given the fractured mandate handed out by voters in the Lok Sabha elections in 2024, must have come as big relief for those who invest in the Indian market. The investor could be a small-time shareholder or a rich corporate professional. The economic reforms launched by Dr Manmohan Singh, the Finance Minister in the Narasimha Rao Government in 1991, have tumbled on through the regimes of another five Prime Ministers, who followed Rao, including Manmohan Singh himself. The importance of the continuity of these reforms can be gauged from the fact that in the past three decades, it has lifted more than 50 crore Indians out of mortifying poverty.

From the economic point of view, the Narendra Modi Government's biggest shortcoming during its second term, which had a very strong mandate, was its inability to carry out farm reforms. It faltered in communicating to the farmers the benefits of the new agriculture laws and the profits it could accrue to the farm hands. The negative narrative perpetuated by the communication machinery of the Modi regime, which was largely taken over by the IT Cell of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), proved to be an impediment not just in the implementation of the farm legislations but also failed to immerse the spirit of Hindu pride in the months following the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. An aggressive narrative, borrowed from the cantankerous television debates and not necessarily backed by facts, on the social media platforms prove to be counterproductive. With the rise of the fact-checking tools, the decisions to let Jawaharlal's Nehru's love stories and propaganda of similar genre overshadow the Narendra Modi Government's achievements proved to be one of the biggest deflating factors in the BJP's campaign of 2024, with the



party falling way short of the halfway mark. The communication battle on the farm laws, instead of focusing on the merits of the reforms, became a fight between the Hindustanis and Khalistanis. The attempt to paint those opposed to the reforms as espousing the agenda of Balkanisation was ill thought of, and the BJP has paid a heavy price for it electorally not just in Punjab but across the farmlands of the country.

Several other initiatives which could have welded people strongly in the support of the Modi 2.0, got undone by the showing of the brute power of large numbers, not as much on the ground, as in the narratives floated by the establishment's publicity arm. The whole attitude to run down the 'Argumentative Indian', an expression borrowed from the title of the bestseller by Amartya Sen, as anti-national in the event of s/he not agreeing with the Government only helped firm up the anti-Government stand than making them fall



FROM THE ECONOMIC POINT OF VIEW, THE NARENDRA MODI GOVERNMENT'S BIGGEST SHORTCOMING DURING ITS SECOND TERM, WHICH HAD A VERY STRONG MANDATE, WAS ITS INABILITY TO CARRY OUT FARM REFORMS

in the Government's line. The biggest question which must be haunting the BJP leadership is that when the residents of Uttar Pradesh took an "overwhelming" part in the celebration of the consecration of the Ram Temple, why did it not endorse the party as enthusiastically when it came to the electoral battle? Once again, the propaganda machinery only helped turn a happy moment into an instant of loyalty test. It was seen that handing out an invitation to the Opposition leaders to a 'quasi-political' function was to get them to refuse and get branded as 'anti-Hindu'. No communication expert would ever prepare a model which would spend time in their hour of glory on the rivals. The narrative so floated in the end created a situation where the 'homecoming' for Ram Lalla got overtaken by 'Ayodhya-coming' of the Opposition leaders. Today, the BJP Government is perched on the support of Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party and Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United).

Both the leaders did not come to Ayodhya but have come to the support of Narendra Modi 3.0. In the past, they have even called the Ramjanambhoomi Movement as a 'political project' of the BJP. The latest narrative of the open denouncement of the voters of Uttar Pradesh by the BJP's extended family will certainly not find traction with either Kumar or Naidu. The castes and communities who did not vote for the BJP voted for Kumar and Naidu in their respective States. The call of the hour is to change the nature of the dialogue from confrontation to consensus, not only among the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners but among all the stakeholders of India, that is Bharat. The demand of the situation is to push the economic and strategic agenda as statecraft than a tool to demonise and belittling those opposed to the Government. (The writer is an author and president of the Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Surge in numberplate violations



Apropos the news story 'Traffic Police Books 16,800 People for Defective Number Plates This Year', published on June 10, this is my response. As a regular reader of the newspaper, the recent spike in penalties for defective number plates in Delhi is quite striking. The Delhi Traffic Police have booked over 16,800 people this year, a stag-

gering 286 per cent increase from last year. This sharp rise underscores the intensified efforts by the authorities to enhance road safety. Defective number plates are more than a minor infraction; they pose significant risks, from impeding law enforcement to contributing to traffic violations. The focus on high-traffic areas and the detailed breakdown of top violator zones, like Mayur Vihar and Nand Nagri, highlights the strategic approach taken by the police. It's commendable that alongside enforcement, there are awareness campaigns aimed at educating vehicle owners about the importance of compliant number plates. This holistic approach not only aims to correct current issues but also to prevent future violations, ultimately contributing to a safer and more orderly city.

Saanvi Jain | Jamshedpur

Rules, 2005, highlight the government's dedication to enabling consumers to establish and maintain dedicated transmission lines, enhancing energy efficiency. The Green Energy Open Access Rules of 2022 aim to simplify approval procedures, fostering transparency and consistency nationwide. Judicial interventions are vital for ensuring proper interpretation and enforcement of laws. These efforts signify significant advancement in India's renewable energy drive towards a greener, more sustainable future.

Reyansh Tiwari | Tirupati

ATTITUDE SHAPES HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Madam — Apropos the news story "Factors that influence our attitudes," published on June 10, this is my response. Reading about the Mahabharata and its timeless narratives offers profound insights into human nature. The epic, attributed to sage Veda Vyasa and transcribed by Lord Ganesha, vividly portrays the complexities of human attitudes. It showcases a spectrum of emotions and standpoints that drive actions, often influenced by exter-

nal factors. Duryodhana, a prominent character, exemplifies how arrogance and anger, fueled by his uncle Shakuni and others, lead to destructive behaviour. This mirrors historical atrocities like the Nazi genocide, highlighting the dangers of prejudice and hatred. Conversely, the story of the Zen Master and the Thief underscores the transformative power of compassion. The Master's forgiveness and understanding helped the wayward student reform, illustrating that empathy can foster positive change. Human attitudes, shaped by social interactions and experiences, can lead to either constructive or destructive outcomes. This continuous learning process underscores the importance of compassion and understanding in shaping a better society. Harold S Geneen aptly encapsulates this, emphasising that leadership is reflected in attitudes and actions, not just words.

Aarush Kapoor | Vijayawada

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

India's green energy rise, including 'Green Coal'

Green coal projects reduce pollution, groundwater contamination, promote sustainability, carbon neutrality and spur economic growth

The Reserve Bank of India's latest report reflects a surge in global optimism regarding India's economic prospects, particularly in the energy sector. This year alone, green energy projects valued at approximately Rs 700 billion are set to commence, marking a significant investment milestone. By 2025-26, further project investments are anticipated to reach Rs 765.2 billion, supported by progressive policies promoting sustainable energy. India's power sector has now achieved full electrification and is integrated into a unified national grid, providing rural areas with 20 hours of electricity daily and urban areas with 23.5 hours. Additionally, India has ascended to become the world's third-largest producer of renewable energy, underscoring its commitment to sustainable development.

A key innovation on the horizon is green coal, which is poised to revolutionize energy production in India. Green coal offers significant potential as a sustainable alternative to traditional coal, seamlessly integrating into existing



thermal power plants. For instance, a 1,000 MW power plant consuming around five million tonnes of coal annually could see a significant reduction in carbon emissions by replacing just 10 per cent of its fossil fuel with green coal, equating to half a million tonnes of sustainable fuel. It is estimated that using 1 kg of green coal instead of fossil coal can reduce CO2 emissions by approximately 2 kg per kg of coal replaced. India's largest state-run power generation company is making substantial strides in the green energy sector, including green coal initiatives. An Initial Public Offering (IPO) for NTPC Green, a subsidiary focused on green energy, is expected by the end of the year. NTPC, a major player in India's power sector, had previously planned to produce green coal, also known as torrefied charcoal, from municipal waste. This project, executed by its subsidiary NTPC

Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Ltd and awarded to Macawber Beekay, boasts a plant with a capacity to process 600 tonnes of waste daily, producing 200 tonnes of green coal from municipal solid waste (MSW). The success of NTPC's Varanasi Harit Koyla Pariyojna, managed by Macawber Beekay Private Limited (MBL), Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while inaugurating the Varanasi Harit Koyla Pariyojna, praised the project as a testament to the government's dedication to environmental sustainability. The green coal project is a cornerstone of the "Make in India" initiative and represents significant progress towards the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" mission. MBL has successfully produced green coal for NTPC Ltd, one of India's largest coal consumers in the power sector. After demonstrating the technology in Varanasi, the CPSU has entrusted MBL with additional projects, including the establishment of the world's largest waste-to-green coal plant in Greater Noida. Indian companies have

increasingly diversified into green energy solutions, with MBL leading the way in transforming municipal solid waste into eco-friendly green coal. The inauguration of the world's first commercial green coal plant by Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the company's innovative capabilities. The technology not only converts waste into a viable alternative to fossil fuels but also addresses critical waste disposal challenges. The waste-to-energy process involves the meticulous collection and treatment of MSW, followed by moisture removal and the segregation of non-combustible materials. The refined waste is then processed to produce high-calorific charcoal powder that exceeds the energy value of traditional coal. This method reduces carbon emissions, promotes carbon neutrality, and provides economic benefits by lowering the costs associated with traditional coal usage and mitigating the health risks linked to mining and waste accumulation. (The writer is Chairman & Managing Director, Macawber Beekay; views are personal)



AJAY KUMAR GUPTA

SUNLIGHT'S INFLUENCE ON LIFE

Madam — Apropos the news story "Sunshine on shoulders, a spring in my step!" published on June 11, this is my response. Summers have been harsh this year. I do not recall Delhi temperatures shooting to 50 degrees plus in the 26 years since we shifted to the national capital. Advisories have been issued by the state governments to avoid venturing out in the afternoons. However, a month down the line, we would forget the harrowing days and long for a glimpse of the sun as monsoon clouds darken the skies. The sun's impact on our lives is undeniable. Reflecting on a hazy morning in east India and contrasting vacations in England highlight how sunlight influences our mood and activities. Sunshine's warmth and brightness are universally cherished, sparking joy in parks and bringing health benefits like the essential 'sunshine vitamin.' Despite modern conveniences, nothing rivals the sun's antibacterial properties for drying clothes. Beyond practical benefits, the sun inspires language and culture, as seen in phrases celebrating people as 'sunshine.' However, this fleeting sunlight also reminds us of the urgent need to combat pollution. By prioritising a cleaner environment, we can ensure future generations enjoy the sun's life-giving rays.

Siya Bhatia | Mangalore

OPEN ACCESS TO GREEN ENERGY

Madam — Apropos the news story "India's green power policies come of age," published on June 7, this is my response. As a daily reader of the newspaper, it's encouraging to see the strides being made towards green energy in India. The MNRE's Surya-Ghar initiative and other regulatory reforms highlight a significant shift towards renewable energy (RE) accessibility. The Surya-Ghar scheme aims to provide affordable electricity through rooftop solar installations, potentially benefiting millions of households by 2027. This is a commendable step towards sustainable energy for all. The recent amendments to the Electricity

FIRST COLUMN

BLUEPRINT FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

Every segment of society should work to fulfil the expectations of other segments



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

We all dream of a better world where there is peace, happiness and harmony, don't we? No one would like degradation of the environment, loss of human lives due to wars and murders, corrosion of human spirit by crime and corruption, dehumanisation through poverty and troublesome social, economic and political conditions, embroiled with high tension and turmoil that drain human energy and make life miserable. On the contrary, all would like life to be characterised by harmony and health, well being and wealth and heavenly happiness and purity.

But the question is, what are those values and how can such a socio-political-economic system be established which has those values and which will enhance human experience and enable men and women to have such lifestyle as can make such a society viable? If we conduct a survey among various groups of people, we will find that their opinion would most probably crystallise around 10 or 15 major points. They would say that a better world is one in which the following exist only in milder forms or to a lesser degree than we have in the present-day world.

These major problems or causes of sufferings are wars, violence and cruelty in any form --- poverty, unemployment and social, economic and political injustice, environmental pollution and ecological imbalance, corruption, crime, indiscipline and obscenity, disease, infirmity and high mortality rate, slavery, lack of freedom or deprivation of human rights, hunger, malnutrition or starvation, wrong attitudes towards the other sex and abuse of children, addictions, intoxications, tensions and lack of happiness, hatred, suspicion, fear, cut-throat competition,



rivalry and absence or lack of love and co-operation at various levels of society.

Post this survey, if we conduct another kind of survey, asking every segment of society about what efforts or improvements they expect from the other segments so that we may have a better world order, a fair enough consensus on the following lines would emerge. People would say that they want: Scientists to have an orientation of spirituality, religious leaders to have scientific temper, doctors to treat not only the body but also the mind or the soul, education to have spiritual and moral development also among its aims, women to be given proper social status and man's attitude and outlook towards them to be more spiritualised. The youth and the children should be given more love and they should give more regard and service to the elders. The society should have a balance of love and law and it should be based on the principles of justice, fair play and equality of opportunity.

Now these and such other aims can be fulfilled if every segment of society works for the fulfillment of what other segments expect of it. Each individual also has to contribute of his or her talent or time to work towards raising awareness of the people so as to realise the above goals. For this global task, global cooperation is required. Hence, a new kind of bank to which each individual or institution can offer its contributions so as to build a better world is the need of the hour.

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views personal.)

The Garhwal Regiment's glorious military heritage



ASHOK K MEHTA

Lansdowne, steeped in military tradition since the establishment of the first Garhwal Battalion in 1887, tells a tale of valour and colonial legacy

The still air in June over the Bhawani Dutt Joshi Parade Ground carved out of Kaludanda (renamed Lansdowne after the then Viceroy) converts into an air pocket when the fourth batch of 251 Agniveers call out Jai Badri Vishal Ki Jai, the feared Garhwal regiment war cry. The raising of the first Garhwal Battalion was ordered in 1887 by C-in-C, later Viceroy, Lord Roberts. The British may owe India USD 49 Trillion as reparation but their payback was impressive: instruments of governance, strategic culture and infrastructure, including 5000 to 6000 feet high ridge-top cantonments, today's hill stations like Lansdowne whose Mall Road became the exclusive white's only- promenade, restricting locals to the windswept "Thandi-sadak" on the reverse slope.

Dotted with pine, oak and rhododendrons, the ridge lights up with the majesty of Nanda Devi towering among the distant Himalayas. The sprawling Bungalow No 6 amongst a hundred such, constructed in 1906 was home to Colonel Mainwaring commandant of 3/9 Royal Garhwal Rifles and was bought by MES for a princely Rs 10,053!

It was after Nepal's second invasion that Garhwal capitulated and through legendary Jung Bahadur Rana's progeny married into Garhwal's Sah ruling family. Scattered but indistinguishable descendants of erstwhile Nepalese can be found in Pathankot village as are remnants of 2/3 Gorkha Rifles also raised here which have an umbilical cord with the Garhwal Regiment. Originally Garhwalis and Kumaonis joined 5 Gorkha Rifles (Frontier Force) whose first Colonel was Bobs Bahadur, Victoria Cross winner, Lord Roberts who gave Veer Garhwali a separate identity.

The nom de plume of the Garhwali soldier is valour: in World War I and Waziristan, it won three Victoria Crosses (Rfn Gabbar Singh Negi -posthumously; Naik Darwan Singh Negi and Lt David Kenny) and innumerable battle and theatre honours and gallantry awards till 1947 that would fill this page. After independence, the Regiment bagged one Ashoka Chakra, four MVC, 18 KC, 51 SC, 52 VrC, and 375 Sena Medals. The Regiment has 22 Infantry battalions, three Rashtriya Rifle battalions and two Territorial Army battalions. To commemorate its unique achievements in operations, the Regiment was conferred the Royal title: Royal Rassi (Lanyard) in 1921 and to honour its braves and martyrs, an iconic bronze statue was built in 1923 which was unveiled by C-in-C, Lord Rawlinson. Designed by makers of Victoria Memorial Calcutta, Martin and Co, the statue on green granite is the most unique and defiant image in the world of unknown soldiers, the Veer Garhwali. Added later was the epic shloka from Mahabharat. Lord Krishna to Arjun: 'Lament not the death of a warrior; for one killed in battle is honoured in heaven'. It was a silver replica of this Unknown Soldier that PM Modi presented to the PM of France in 2015 to commemorate the centenary of WWI.

The Darwan Singh War Museum is the grand repository of the history and achievements in war and peace of the Regiment. But the creme d la creme of Lansdowne is the Garhwali Officers Mess which is India's most spectacular, filled with collector's items. Officers and ladies



THE STATUE ON GREEN GRANITE IS THE MOST UNIQUE AND DEFIANT IMAGE IN THE WORLD — OF UNKNOWN SOLDIER, THE VEER GARHWALI

of the battalion who arrived in 1887 chose this ridge-top locale and declared it their mess which sprouted only in 1892. Its red slanting roof and miniature Victorian-style colonnades are draped with ivy and creepers.

In the middle of the lawn is the still functional Sun Dial measuring time by the position of the sun. Carved below is: "The shadow of my finger cast divides the future from the past; Before it stands the unborn hour in darkness and beyond thy power: Behind its unreturning line the vanished hour no longer thine: One hour alone is in thy hand, the now of which the shadow stands." Nearby is the ubiquitous Unknown Soldier, covered with bushwork. The Officer's Mess initially had three large rooms: the main hall, dining room and billiards room. Add-ons were the Card room, the Generals gallery, the indispensable bar and two libraries on either flank. Rooms are resplendent in silver trophies and walls covered by big and small game heads and skins that will draw ire from RSPCA. The Visitors' Book table is eye-popping and studded with memorabilia. The broken China-glass floor is laid out in a design that radiates towards four Maltese Crosses, the original crest of the

Regiment. Crocodile skin sofa sets glisten as no one sits on them. To insert the John Roberts and Co. made billiards table, the entire roof had to be uprooted while the piano from Chappells, Bond Street London (more famous for sartorial products) rests rhythmically in a corner. The glistening mahogany dining table adorning the dining hall is credited to makers C Lazarus also of Calcutta. Every room has a fireplace with brass railings and customised settings The Card room contains the letter by Field Marshal Bill Slim written in 1967 eulogizing the gallant Garhwali: "I have commanded Battalions of every Regiment of Indian Army but I never had a better one than 3 Garhwal-and that's something from a dyed in the wool Gurkha as me to say. But it is true". The bar has charming water-colour sketches made by a local Gorkha lad, a long-gone Gopal Chhetri that cheer your drinks. The quaint downtown market survives on a small but happy populace determined not to let Lansdowne be renamed either Jaswant Garh (after MVC awardee Jaswant Singh Rawat of 1962 war) or even Bipin Nagar (after late CDS Gen Bipin Rawat whose Shaun village is 30 km away). Soldiers and civilians are agnostic

about shedding colonial legacy and wish to retain Lansdowne. Locals say the state government is monumentally corrupt: so ex-servicemen and politicians don't mix. Still, two Generals made it good. Bhuwan Khanduri who became Chief Minister and TPS (Topsy) Rawat many times minister while highly decorated Ajay Kothiyal KC, SC, VSM and a double Everest lost his deposit during the last state elections. Subedar Major Shailendra Mohan Bhist located at Garhwal Regiment's Kotdwar detachment is look-alike brother of Ajay Bhist more famous as Yogi Adityanath! The clock has moved a full circle: Garhwali bhullas (brothers) are now again joining the depleting Gorkha Regiments and learning to speak Nepali. The Garhwal regimental legacy is protected by its three symbols: Lord Badrinath, the regimental deity, the iconic Unknown Soldier and the Royal Rassi. They help instil gumption and guile while invoking Jai Badri Vishal Ki Jai.

(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)

Organic renaissance: India's rapid shift towards chemical-free farming

As consumer awareness of health and sustainability surges, India is witnessing an unprecedented rise in the organic food market

There was a time in the country when everything produced was organic, the farmers used natural manures like cow dung and compost fertilisers in their fields. The yield was low but it was healthy, tasteful and above all sustainable practice. Then came chemical fertilisers which no doubt increased the yield manifold but also led to several side effects. It is not sustainable and lacks the taste of organic products and above all not as healthy as it should be. Besides the farmers are also paying the price in terms of their health and overuse of Urea and other chemicals ruining the soil quality and depleting the water table. In this scenario, organic farming is the way to go. Now with



AJEET GODARA

newfound awareness people in large numbers are turning to organic products and getting healthy chemical-free products on their plates, India's organic product market has witnessed an unprecedented surge over the last decade, driven by growing consumer awareness about health, sustainability, and environmental impacts.

As urban populations increasingly seek out healthier lifestyle options, the demand for organic food products has soared. This trend is not just limited to a niche segment; it has permeated mainstream consumer preferences, pushing organic products to the forefront of the food industry. The organic food market in India, valued at \$1,582.2 million in 2023, is expected to

grow exponentially to \$8,918.5 million by 2032, showcasing an impressive growth rate of 21.19% per annum. This meteoric rise is indicative of a larger green wave sweeping across the country, where consumers are increasingly inclined towards sustainable and eco-friendly products. Consumers today are more inclined to buy products that are sustainable and environmentally friendly. This aligns with the broader trend towards sustainable and ethical consumption, making organic foods an appealing choice for consumers.

Today organic companies have impressive portfolio of hundreds of SKUs, including staples like pulses, millet, wheat, mustard, barley, rice,



and oils. The products of organic companies are available not only through its website but also on major e-commerce platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Bigbasket, making them accessible to a broad consumer base.

The brands have also expanded their product range into seed verticals, encompassing

wheat, barley, mustard, and other grains. By doing so, organic companies aim to ensure that their organic farming practices start from the very beginning of the agricultural process. What is interesting is that Organic companies are committed to sustainable farming practices and farmer welfare. They provide specialised

training programs to farmers to enhance crop management skills and boost yields. The farmers must be safeguarded from any potential contaminants in their food supply so that the end users get a real organic product. There is definitely a need to maintaining high-quality standards in organic farming else the consumer trust is broken and the industry as a whole suffers. With online registration and certification processes in place most of the fraudulent practices in the segment have been wiped off. But the field is not without challenges. However, the transition from chemical to organic is not simple. It is a painstaking process but rewards are gratifying. Transforming agricultural land into organic farm-

ing takes around three years. And in places where chemical fertiliser use is rampant, it could go beyond three years. Besides, fraudsters often damage their reputations. Often prices are jacked up unrealistically.

The growth of organic products in India is a testament to the changing consumer landscape and increasing awareness about health and sustainability. Still, the market share of organic products is just one per cent but the growth is exponential. This sector is growing at the rate of 20 per cent which shows the growing demand for organic food and people's interest in them.

(The writer is cofounder of Natureland Organics; views are personal)

UNSC adopts Gaza ceasefire resolution

AP ■ JERUSALEM

The UN Security Council on Monday overwhelmingly approved its first resolution endorsing a cease-fire plan aimed at ending the eight-month war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. The US-sponsored resolution welcomes a cease-fire proposal announced by President Joe Biden that the United States says Israel has accepted. It calls on the militant Palestinian group Hamas to accept the three-phase plan. The resolution - which was approved with 14 of the 15 Security Council members voting in favour and Russia abstaining - calls on Israel and Hamas "to fully implement its terms without delay and without condition".

Whether Israel and Hamas agree to go forward with the plan remains in question, but the resolution's strong support in the UN's most powerful body puts added pressure on both parties to approve the proposal.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Israel on Monday, where he urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to accept the plan for postwar Gaza as he pushed for more international pressure on Hamas to agree to the cease-fire proposal. Netanyahu has been sceptical of the deal, saying that Israel is still committed to destroying Hamas. Hamas said it welcomed the adoption of the resolution and was ready to work with mediators in indirect negotiations with Israel to implement it. The statement was among the strongest from Hamas to date, but it stressed the group would continue its struggle against Israeli occupation and work on setting up a "fully sovereign" Palestinian state. "Efforts are continuing to study and clarify some matters to ensure implementation by the Israeli side," Hamas spokesperson Jihad Taha said Tuesday. He said Israel was "stalling and procrastinating and creating obstacles in order to con-

tinue the aggression." A senior Israeli diplomat did not directly mention the resolution, telling the council Israel's position is unwavering. "We will continue until all of the hostages are returned and until Hamas' military and governing capabilities are dismantled." "This also means that Israel will not engage in meaningless and endless negotiations, which can be exploited by Hamas as a means to stall for time," Minister Counsellor Reut Shapir Ben Naftaly said. US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield reiterated, however, that Israel has accepted the cease-fire deal, which is supported by countries around the world. The resolution's adoption, she said, "sent a clear message to Hamas to accept the cease-fire deal on the table." "The fighting could stop today, if Hamas would do the same," Thomas-Greenfield told the council. "I repeat, this fighting could stop today." US deputy ambassador

Robert Wood told reporters earlier on Monday that the United States sees the deal as "the best, most realistic opportunity to bring at least a temporary halt to this war." Earlier Monday, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad leaders met in Qatar to discuss the proposed cease-fire deal and said later that any deal must lead to a permanent cease-fire, a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, reconstruction and "a serious exchange deal" between hostages in Gaza and Palestinians held in Israeli jails. Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said Moscow abstained because details of the three-phase plan haven't been disclosed and "we have a whole host of questions". "Hamas is called upon to accept this so-called deal, but still there is no clear clarity regarding official agreement from Israel," Nebenzia said. "Given the many statements from Israel on the extension of the war until Hamas is completely defeated ... what specifically

has Israel agreed to?" Algeria's UN Ambassador Amar Bendjama, the Arab representative on the council, said that while the text isn't perfect, "it offers a glimmer of hope to the Palestinians, as the alternative is (the) continuing killing and suffering of the Palestinian people." "We voted for this text to give diplomacy a chance to reach an agreement that will end the aggression against the Palestinian people that has lasted far too long," Bendjama said. The war was sparked by Hamas' surprise Oct 7 attack in southern Israel in which militants killed about 1,200 people, mainly Israeli civilians, and took about 250 others hostage. About 120 hostages remain, with 43 pronounced dead. Israel's military offensive has killed more than 36,700 Palestinians and wounded more than 83,000 others, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. It has also destroyed about 80% of Gaza's buildings, according to the UN.

French opposition parties seek alliances ahead of snap polls

AP ■ PARIS

Empowered by a stunning triumph at the European elections, France's far-right National Rally on Tuesday hit the national campaign trail running with its star leader, Jordan Bardella, promising supporters "the largest possible majority" at the upcoming parliamentary elections. Opposition parties on the left and the right have been scrambling to form alliances and field candidates in the snap national elections called by President Emmanuel Macron after his party suffered a crushing defeat by the far right in the European Union vote on Sunday. While sharp differences between parties on both sides of the political spectrum remain, prominent figures calling for a united front in both camps appear to have one thing in common: They don't want to cooperate with Macron. Despite their divisions, left-wing parties agreed late Monday to form a new alliance that includes the Greens, the Socialists, the

Communists and the far-left France Unbowed of Jean-Luc Melançon. Leaders have not agreed on who will head the new coalition nor on its program. In light of the European polls, politicians on the left are focused on closing ranks to prevent a win for the National Rally that could result in the French far right leading a government for the first time since World War II. For now they have also vowed not to join forces with Macron's centrists. In a joint statement, the alliance called on all forces on the left, including the influential labor unions, to unite behind a "new popular front" to form an "alternative to Emmanuel Macron and to fight against the racist project of the far right". The National Rally leader Marine Le Pen is working to consolidate power on the right ahead of the two-round elections that will take place on June 30 and July 7. Le Pen's niece, Marion Marechal, who won a seat in the European Parliament on Sunday as a member of the rival

Reconquer! party of Eric Zemmour, on Monday visited National Rally headquarters in Paris to negotiate a far-right alliance at the upcoming elections. Le Pen also met with members of the conservative Republicans party to discuss a united front. Some conservative lawmakers have supported some of Macron's bills in the National Assembly since the president lost a majority in the lower house of the French parliament following the 2022 general election. "We have a historic chance to allow the national camp to put France back on track," Le Pen said in an interview with the French public broadcaster on Monday evening. She said the National Rally and the conservatives could agree on several policy goals, including an economic recovery plan, boosting purchasing power and curbing immigration. Bardella, Le Pen's 28-year-old protege and the face of the far right's European triumph, also urged French conservatives to ride the wave of popularity with the National Rally.

Blinken meets Netanyahu in Israel

AP ■ JERUSALEM

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Monday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his latest trip to the Middle East, where America's top diplomat urged approval of a cease-fire proposal that faced new uncertainty following Israel's hostage rescue operation that killed many Palestinians and turmoil in Netanyahu's government. With no firm public response yet from Hamas or Israel to the proposal they received 10 days ago, Blinken started his eighth visit to the region since the conflict began in October by meeting with President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi of Egypt, a key mediator with the militant Hamas group. He then flew to Israel for talks with Netanyahu and other Israeli officials. Blinken once again called on Hamas to accept the plan, which he said has wide international support. "If you want a cease-fire, press Hamas to say yes," he told reporters before leaving Cairo on the trip that also will take him to Jordan and Qatar.



Blinken said Israel has accepted the proposal, though Netanyahu has expressed skepticism. "I know that there are those who are pessimistic about the prospects," Blinken said, putting the onus on Hamas. "That's understandable. Hamas continues to show extraordinary cynicism in its actions, a disinterest not only in the well-being and security of Israelis but also Palestinians." While President Joe Biden, Blinken and other US officials have praised the rescue of four Israeli hostages on Saturday, the

operation resulted in the deaths of 274 Palestinian civilians and may complicate the cease-fire push by emboldening Israel and hardening Hamas' resolve to carry on fighting in the war that started with its October 7 attack in Israel. Blinken said the plan is the "single best way" to get to a cease-fire, release the remaining hostages and improve regional security. In his talks with el-Sissi, Blinken also discussed plans for post-conflict governance and reconstruction in Gaza. "It's imperative that there be a

plan, and that has to involve security, it has to involve governance, it has to involve reconstruction," Blinken said. Netanyahu and his government have resisted calls for any "day after" plan that would bar Israel from having some form of security presence in the territory. Blinken said he would urge Israel to come up with alternatives that would be acceptable. "It would be very good if Israel put forward its own ideas on this, and I'll be talking to the government about that," he said. "But one way or another, we've got to have these plans, we've got to have them in place, we've got to be ready to go if we want to take advantage of a cease-fire." The three-phase plan calls for the release of more hostages and a temporary pause in hostilities that will last as long as it takes to negotiate the second phase, which aims to bring the release of all hostages, a "full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza" and "a permanent end to hostilities," according to an American-drafted resolution put before the UN Security Council. The third phase calls for reconstruction in Gaza.

'Israeli and Palestinian armed forces accused of war crimes'

Geneva (AP): The UN human rights office is citing possible war crimes by Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups in connection with a deadly raid by Israeli forces that freed four hostages over the weekend.

Office spokesman Jeremy Laurence expressed concerns about possible violations of rules of proportionality, distinction and precaution by the Israeli forces in Saturday's raid at the urban Nuseirat refugee camp. Palestinian health officials say at least 274 Palestinians, including dozens of women and children, were killed in the operation. Laurence said Palestinian armed groups who are holding hostages in densely populated areas are putting the lives of nearby civilians and the hostages at "added risks" from the hostilities.

Suspect in custody for stabbing four US college instructors

Beijing (AP): Chinese police have detained a suspect in a stabbing attack on four instructors from Iowa's Cornell College who were teaching at a Chinese university in the northeast city of Jilin, officials said Tuesday. Jilin city police said a 55-year-old man surnamed Cui was walking in a public park on Monday when he bumped into a foreigner. He stabbed the foreigner and three other foreigners who were with him, and also stabbed a Chinese person who approached in an attempt to intervene, police said.

The instructors from Cornell College were teaching at Beihua University, officials at the US school said. The injured were rushed to a hospital for treatment and none was in critical condition, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a daily briefing Tuesday. He said police believe the attack in Jilin city's Beishan Park was an isolated incident, based on a preliminary assessment, and the investigation is ongoing. Cornell College President Jonathan Brand said in a statement that the instructors were attacked while at the park with a faculty member from Beihua, which is in an outlying part of Jilin, an industrial city about 1,000 km (600 miles) northeast of Beijing. Monday was a public holiday in China. The State Department said in a statement it was aware of reports of a stabbing and was monitoring the situation. The attack happened as both Beijing and Washington are seeking to

expand people-to-people exchanges to help bolster relations amid tensions over trade and such international issues as Taiwan, the South China Sea and the war in Ukraine. An Iowa state lawmaker posted a statement on Instagram saying his brother, David Zabner, had been wounded during a stabbing attack in Jilin. Rep Adam Zabner described his brother as a doctoral student at Tufts University who was in China under the Cornell-Beihua relationship. "I spoke to David a few minutes ago, he is recovering from his injuries and doing well," Adam Zabner wrote, adding that his brother was grateful for the care he received at a hospital. News of the incident was suppressed in China, where the government maintains control on information about anything considered sensitive. News media outlets had not reported it. Some social media accounts posted foreign media reports about the attack, but a hashtag about it was blocked on a popular portal and photos and video of the incident were quickly taken down. Cornell spokesperson Jen Visser said in an email that the college was still gathering information about what happened. Visser said the private college in Mount Vernon, Iowa, partners with Beihua University. A college news release from 2018, when the program started, says Beihua provides funding for Cornell professors to travel to China to teach a portion of courses in computer science, mathematics and physics over a two-week period.

'Migrant boat sinks off coast of Yemen, leaving at least 49 dead, 140 missing'

Cairo (AP): A boat carrying migrants sank off the coast of Yemen, leaving at least 49 dead and 140 missing, the UN's International Organization for Migration said Tuesday. The boat was carrying some 260 Somalis and Ethiopians from the northern coast of Somalia on the 320-kilometer journey across the Gulf of Aden when it sank Monday off Yemen's southern coast, the IOM said in a statement. It said search efforts were continuing and so far 71 had been rescued. Among the dead were 31 women and six children, it said. Yemen is a major route for migrants from the East Africa and the Horn of Africa trying to reach Gulf countries for work.

ICC prosecutor seeks evidence of atrocities in Sudan

The Hague (Netherlands) (AP): The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor appealed on Tuesday for information and evidence of atrocities in Sudan, saying his ongoing investigation "seems to disclose an organised, systematic and a profound attack on human dignity". ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan released a video statement in the aftermath of an attack Sunday by the notorious Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group that forced the closure of a main hospital in the western Darfur region. The group fired shots and looted the hospital in al-Fasher, aid group Doctors Without Borders reported. The attack came as the RSF, which has been fighting the Sudanese army for a year, intensified its offensive seeking to wrest control of the city, the military's last stronghold in the sprawling Darfur region. Two weeks of fighting last month in and around al-Fasher has killed more than 120 peo-

ple. "The terrible events in West Darfur, including El-Geneina, in 2023 are among our key investigative priorities," Khan said. "In addition, I am extremely concerned about allegations of widespread international crimes being committed in al-Fasher and its surrounding areas as I speak." A long-running conflict Sudan's conflict began in April last year when soaring tensions between the leaders of the military and the RSF erupted into fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere in the country. The war has killed more than 14,000 people and wounded thousands more, while pushing its population to the brink of famine. The UN food agency warned the warring parties last month that there is a serious risk of widespread starvation and death in Darfur and elsewhere in Sudan if they don't allow humanitarian aid into the region. "The war also created the world's

largest displacement crisis as more than 10 million people have been forced to flee their homes, including over 2 million people who crossed into neighbouring countries, the UN migration agency told The Associated Press Monday. Khan said he is urgently investigating in Sudan. "The evidence my office has collected to date seems to show credible, repeated, expanding, continuous allegations of attacks against the civilian population, in particular, attacks directed against camps for internally displaced persons," he said. "It seems to show the widespread, prevalent use of rape and other forms of sexual violence. It seems to disclose consistently the shelling of civilian areas, the looting of properties and attacks against hospitals," he added, stressing that he was "particularly concerned by the ethnically motivated nature of these attacks against the Masalit and other communities".

UK Conservatives attempt mood shift with election promises ahead of polls

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Rishi Sunak doesn't know whether he'll still be Britain's prime minister the day after next month's election. There's nothing unusual about that. What is unusual is that he's been forced to deny rumours he could quit even before polling day, amid alarm inside the governing Conservative Party over Sunak's lackluster campaign. Sunak gets a chance — maybe one of his last — to change the narrative on Tuesday when he releases the Conservatives' manifesto, a handbook of policies that forms each UK party's blueprint for power. Despite gloomy polls and bruising headlines, Sunak insists the election is not a "foregone conclusion" and says resigning has not crossed his mind. "People are going to say what they're going to say," he told reporters on Monday. "The reality is I'm not going to stop going, I'm not going to stop fighting for people's votes, I'm not



going to stop fighting for the future of our country." The Conservative manifesto is likely to include promised cuts to personal taxes, a chance for Sunak to repeat his claim that a government led by Labour's Keir Starmer would raise taxes while a Conservative one would lower them. The Labour Party points out that the tax burden has risen to its highest level in decades during 14 years of Tory

rule. On July 4 British voters will elect lawmakers to fill all 650 seats in the House of Commons, and the leader of the party that can command a majority — either alone or in coalition — will become prime minister. Sunak's surprise decision to call a summer election — several months earlier than most people expected, even those in his own party — was intended partly to catch the opposition unpre-

pared. But it's the Conservatives who have seemed off-balance from the moment Sunak stood outside 10 Downing St. in the rain on May 22 to announce the start of the campaign. The Conservatives were already on the defensive after jettisoning two prime ministers without an election in quick succession in 2022: first Boris Johnson, felled by scandals, then Liz Truss, who rocked the economy with drastic tax-slashing plans and lasted just seven weeks in office. The party's prospects worsened last week when populist firebrand Nigel Farage announced that he would run for Parliament at the helm of the right-wing party Reform UK, vowing to be a "bloody nuisance" to the established parties. While Reform, with its anti-establishment and anti-immigration rhetoric, is aiming to attract disaffected voters from both Conservatives and Labour, it's likely to take more votes from Sunak's party.

NZ renews search for father who vanished into forest with children

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Zealand authorities offered a reward and immunity from prosecution on Tuesday to anyone who can help their search for three children who have been missing since their father vanished with them from a remote rural community more than two years ago. The December 2021 disappearance of Tom Phillips and his children — now aged 8, 9 and 10 — has confounded investigators. They are not believed to ever have travelled far from the remote rural settlement where they lived, but there have been no credible sightings of the family for months. Police officers converged on the township, Marokopa, population 69, to seek fresh leads in a case that has fascinated the country of 5 million people. Phillips is accused of

committing an armed bank robbery while on the run in May 2023. He allegedly shot at a member of the public and fled on a motorbike with a passenger who investigators believe was one of his children. Phillips no longer has legal custody rights for his children, Acting Detective Inspector Andrew Saunders said at a news conference in the city of Hamilton, south of Auckland, on Tuesday. "These are not the actions of a good father," said Saunders. The children have not had access to formal education or healthcare since they went missing, he added, and police have concerns "for the welfare of the children who have been living in isolation for the past two and a half years, with no connection to others". Saunders said that a reward of 80,000 New Zealand dollars

(USD 49,000) — large by New Zealand standards — and an offer of immunity from prosecution is targeted at people who already know the family's whereabouts. The authorities have long said they believe that Phillips has had help concealing his family. The reward, approved by New Zealand's Commissioner of Police, expires in two weeks, Saunders said. "We don't want them waiting months and months to decide," he said. "Come forward and tell us where the children are." It is not the first time Phillips prompted national news headlines after disappearing with his children. The family went missing in September 2021, provoking a 3-week land and sea search after Phillips' truck was found abandoned on a wild beach near where he lived.

Malawi's vice president, 9 others die in plane crash

Blantyre (Malawi) (AP): Malawi's vice president and nine others were killed in a plane crash, the country's president said Tuesday. The wreckage of the military plane carrying Vice President Saulos Chilima was located in a mountainous area in the north of the country after a search that lasted more than a day. There were no survivors of the crash, Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera said in a live address on state television. Hundreds of soldiers, police officers and forest rangers had been searching for the plane that also carried a former first lady after it went missing Monday morning while making the 45-minute flight from the southern African nation's capital, Lilongwe, to the city of Mzuzu, around 370 kilometers (230 miles) to the north. Air traffic controllers told the plane not to attempt a landing at Mzuzu's airport because of

bad weather and poor visibility and asked it to turn back to Lilongwe, Chakwera said. Air traffic control then lost contact with the aircraft and it disappeared from radar, he said. Seven passengers and three military crew members were on board. The president described the aircraft as a small, propeller driven plane operated by the Malawian armed forces. The tail number he provided shows it is a Dornier 228-type twin propeller plane that was delivered to the Malawian army in 1988, according to the ch-aviation website that tracks aircraft information. Around 600 personnel were involved in the search in a vast forest plantation in the Viphya Mountains near Mzuzu, authorities said. Chilima was serving his second term as vice president. He was also in the role from 2014-2019 under former President Peter Mutharika.

Chinese premier to visit NZ, Australia and Malaysia

Melbourne (AP): Chinese Premier Li Qiang will visit New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia starting Thursday, officials said. Li will visit the three countries from June 13 to 20, a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said Tuesday. Australia earlier announced that Li would land in the Australian city of Adelaide on June 15 and leave Perth on June 18. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Li are to hold an annual leaders' meeting at Parliament House in the Australian capital, Canberra, during the visit. The New Zealand and Malaysian governments have yet to announce Li's itinerary in their countries. Li's visit to Australia and New Zealand will be the first by a Chinese premier, the second most powerful official in

China's leadership, in seven years. A Chinese premier hasn't visited Malaysia since 2015. Li's Australian trip follows a visit by Albanese to Beijing last November, when leaders agreed to resume key bilateral dialogues and further several areas of cooperation. China imposed a series of official and unofficial trade barriers that cost Australian exporters up to 20 billion Australian dollars (USD 13 billion) a year after Australia's previous government urged an international inquiry into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of those barriers have been removed since Albanese's government was elected in 2022. Albanese said he would push for barriers to Australian lobster to be lifted and for imprisoned Australian democracy

blogger Yang Hengjuno to be freed. "Premier Li Qiang's visit to Australia is an important opportunity to engage directly on key issues for both our nations," Albanese said. "Australia continues to pursue a stable and direct relationship with China, with dialogue at its core," he said. New Zealand officials say their discussions with Li will focus on their aim to double the value of the nation's exports to China in a decade. New Zealand has traditionally sought to balance its trade relationship with China with the interests of its Western allies in the Five Eyes intelligence sharing partnership, who have more assertively decried China's growing influence in the region. Malaysia has similarly resisted taking sides in the US-China rivalry.

Zelenskyy appeals for help with Ukraine's energy network

AP ■ BERLIN

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appealed for short-term help in repairing his country's electricity network and long-term investment in its energy system as a conference to gather support for Ukraine's recovery from the destruction wreaked by Russia's war opened on Tuesday.

Starting a week of intense diplomacy that will also see him travel to the Group of Seven summit of Ukraine's leading Western allies in Italy and a global peace summit in Switzerland, Zelenskyy also renewed his calls for more help in repelling missile attacks by Russian forces.

The two-day Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin follows up on a similar gathering in London a year ago.

The German hosts say it is bringing together 2,000 people from national and local politics, business and other areas, arguing that the task of supporting Ukraine's recovery is too big for governments alone.

Among other immediate problems, sustained Russian attacks on Ukraine's power grid in recent weeks have forced energy companies to institute nationwide rolling blackouts. Zelenskyy told the conference that, in the coming month, Ukraine needs equipment for heating and electricity plants that are currently out of action. "This will allow us to respond to the situation here and now," he said.

According to the president, nine gigawatts of electricity generating capacity have been destroyed — including 80 per cent of thermal power and one-third of hydroelectric power — while the peak consumption in Ukraine last winter was 18 gigawatts. Energy, he said, continues to be "one of (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's main targets."

Looking beyond Ukraine's immediate problems, Zelenskyy said foreign invest-



ments in energy would be mutually beneficial. "Ukraine has all the natural foundations for modern energy, but without your financing and investments, we won't be able to realize this," he said. "This is not about grants, but about high-yield investments for your companies, about a large market for your equipment, about loan programs for your institutions," all of which could create tens of thousands of new jobs, he added.

That message was echoed by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who said the World Bank has estimated that rebuilding and modernizing Ukraine will require investments of nearly USD 500 billion over the next 10 years.

"The reconstruction of Ukraine is and also must be a business case," Scholz told participants. He said that is illustrated by Ukraine having

exported excess electricity to the European Union since 2022 — "that makes clear what goes for the reconstruction of Ukraine as a whole: it benefits all concerned."

Scholz, whose country has become Ukraine's second-biggest weapons supplier after the United States, appealed anew to other allies to help strengthen Ukraine's air defense, "because the best reconstruction is that which doesn't have to take place."

Since Russia launched a spring offensive around Kharkiv, Zelenskyy has insisted Ukraine urgently needs seven more US-made Patriot air defence systems. The Berlin conference also focuses on support for reforms that Ukraine has embarked on in its bid to join the EU. On Monday, the head of the State Agency for Restoration of Ukraine, Mustafa Nayyem, announced his resignation on Facebook.

He cited "systemic obstacles that prevent me from exercising my powers effectively" and accused the government of bogging his agency down in red tape. Ukraine hasn't had a minister dedicated to reconstruction since Oleksandr Kubrakov was dismissed in May. Nayyem complained that Ukraine's prime minister barred him from attending the Berlin conference.

Zelenskyy, making his third visit to Berlin since Russia's full-scale invasion started in February 2022, is also expected to make a speech to the German parliament, or Bundestag. He made a video address to lawmakers a few weeks after the war started.

The Ukrainian president last visited in mid-February, when he signed a bilateral security agreement with Scholz, one of a string of such accords that allies have reached with Kyiv to signal their long-term backing.

Russia, Belarus launch second stage of drills to train troops

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia and its ally Belarus on Tuesday launched a second stage of drills intended to train their troops in tactical nuclear weapons, part of the Kremlin's efforts to discourage the West from ramping up support for Ukraine.

In announcing the nuclear maneuvers last month, the Russian Defense Ministry said they were in response to "provocative statements and threats of certain Western officials regarding the Russian Federation."

The Kremlin has expressed outrage after French President Emmanuel Macron said he doesn't exclude deploying troops to Ukraine, and the US and some other NATO allies allowed Kyiv to use the weapons supplied by them for striking targets on the Russian territory.

Speaking to reporters Tuesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov noted that "such drills and maintaining combat readi-

ness" are important in view of the "hostile decisions and actions" by the US and its allies in Europe and their "daily provocations".

During the second stage of the drills that began Tuesday, Russian and Belarusian troops will undergo joint training in non-strategic nuclear weapons used in combat, the Defence Ministry said. It noted that the exercise is aimed at maintaining readiness of personnel and equipment to ensure "sovereignty and territorial integrity" of the alliance of Russia and Belarus.

The first stage of the exercise last month envisaged a preparation for nuclear missions and deployment for launches, according to the Defence Ministry. The Russian military had trained separately during the initial stage of the maneuvers before joint drills with Belarusian forces. Last year, Russia moved some of its tactical nuclear weapons into neighbouring Belarus, which also borders Ukraine and

NATO members Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko has relied on close ties with Russia and provided his country as a staging ground for the war in Ukraine.

Tactical nuclear weapons include air bombs, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery munitions and are meant for use on a battlefield. Usually they are less powerful than the strategic weapons — massive warheads that arm intercontinental ballistic missiles and are intended to obliterate entire cities.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has noted, however, that even Russia's battlefield nuclear weapons are much more powerful than the two atomic bombs the US dropped on Japan at the end of World War II.

Last week, Putin declared that the West is wrong to proceed from the assumption that Russia will never use its atomic arsenal.

US envoy calls for Japan's help to replenish missile inventory, repair warships

AP ■ TOKYO

The United States needs Japan's help to quickly replenish missile inventory and repair warships as conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine continue and Washington seeks to keep its deterrence credible in the Indo-Pacific, the US ambassador to Japan said.

"It is clear that the United States military industrial base cannot meet all the strategic challenges that we have and obligations we have," Ambassador Rahm Emanuel said on Monday. He spoke as Japan and the US held their first talks to accelerate military industrial cooperation, two months after an April agreement between Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and US President Joe Biden.

This week's talks in Tokyo are between US Under Secretary of Defence for Acquisition and Sustainment William LaPlante and his Japanese counterpart, Masaki Fukasawa, head of the Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency.

They agreed to establish working groups for missile co-production and for maintenance and repair of US Navy ships and Air Force aircraft in the region, the Japanese Defence Ministry said in a statement.

There will be also a group to discuss a stronger supply chain. On Tuesday, the two countries held the first meeting of the Japanese shipyard repair working group, which will help US shipbuilders focus on new ships while allowing ships to be repaired in Japan for greater efficiency and deterrence.

Fukasawa, in his opening remark at the meeting, said he hoped regional repair of US Naval ships will help strengthen the Japanese defence industry, whose customers are largely limited to Japan's Defence Ministry and Self-Defence Force. Recent changes to defence policies are seen to be creating new business opportunities, however.

US lifts ban on sending weapons to controversial Ukrainian army unit

AP ■ KYIV

The US has lifted a ban on providing American weapons and training to a controversial Ukrainian military unit that was key to the defense of the major port city of Mariupol, the State Department said on Tuesday.

The Azov Brigade is among Ukraine's most effective and popular fighting units — but has been dogged by its origins as a volunteer battalion that drew fighters from far-right circles and criticism for some of its tactics. The US had banned the regiment from using American weapons, citing the neo-Nazi ideology of some of its founders. The current members of the Azov Brigade, which has been absorbed into Ukraine's National Guard as the 12th

Special Forces Brigade, reject accusations of extremism and any ties with far-right movements. But the Kremlin has seized on the regiment's origins in its efforts to cast Russia's invasion as a battle against Nazi influence in Ukraine. US law prohibits providing equipment and training to foreign military units or individuals suspected of committing gross human rights violations. The State Department said in a statement that it found "no evidence" of such violations. "This is a new page in our unit's history," the Azov Brigade wrote in a statement on Instagram. "Azov is becoming even more powerful, even more professional and even more dangerous for occupiers."

"Obtaining western weapons and training from the United

States will not only increase the combat ability of Azov, but most importantly, contribute to the preservation of the lives and the health of personnel," the statement said.

Up until the State Department's decision, Azov was prohibited from sending fighters to Western military exercises or accessing weapons bought with American funds. Lifting the ban will likely bolster the brigade's fighting capacity at a difficult time during the war against Russia's invasion. Ukraine suffers from persistent ammunition and personnel shortages. Years before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Human Rights Watch raised concerns about Azov, writing that credible allegations of egregious abuses had been made against its fighters.

S Korean troops fired warning shots after North soldiers crossed land border

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean soldiers fired warning shots after North Korean troops briefly violated the tense border earlier this week, South Korea's military said on Tuesday, as the rivals are embroiled in Cold War-style campaigns like balloon launches and propaganda broadcasts.

Bloodshed and violent confrontations have occasionally occurred at the Korea's heavily fortified border, called the Demilitarized Zone. While Sunday's incident happened amid simmering tensions between the two Koreas, observers say it won't likely develop into another source of animosity as South Korea believes the North Koreans didn't deliberately commit the border intrusion and North Korea also didn't return fire. At 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, some North Korean soldiers who were engaged in unspecified work on the northern side of the border crossed the military demarcation line that bisects the two countries, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Those North Korean soldiers carrying construction tools — some of them armed — immediately returned to their territory after South Korea's military

fired warning shots and issued warning broadcasts, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. It said North Korea had not conducted any other suspicious activities. South Korea's military has assessed that the North Korean soldiers didn't appear to have intentionally crossed the border because the site is a wooded area and MDL signs there weren't clearly visible, Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesperson Lee Sung Joon told reporters.

Lee gave no further details. But South Korean media reports said that about 20-30 North Korean soldiers had entered South Korean territory about 50 metres (165 feet) after they likely lost their way. The reports said most of the North Korean soldiers were carrying pickaxes and other construction tools. The 248-kilometer (155-mile)-long, 4-kilometer (2.5-mile)-wide DMZ is the world's most heavily armed border. An estimated 2 million mines are peppered inside and near the border, which is also guarded by barbed wire fences, tank traps and combat troops on both sides. It's a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

On Sunday, South Korea resumed anti-Pyongyang pro-

paganda broadcasts from its border loudspeakers in response to the North's recent launches of balloons carrying manure and rubbish across the border. South Korea said North Korea has installed its own border loudspeakers in response but hasn't turned them on yet. North Korea has said its balloon campaign was in response to South Korean activists' launches of their own balloons to drop propaganda leaflets critical of leader Kim Jong Un's authoritarian rule. USB sticks with K-pop songs and South Korean drama shows, and other items in North Korea.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of its political system as most of its 26 million people have no official access to foreign news. On Sunday night, Kim's sister and senior official, Kim Yo Jong, warned of "a new response" if South Korea continued its loudspeaker broadcasts and refused to stop civilian leafletting campaigns.

The tit-for-tat over speakers and balloons — both Cold War-style psychological warfare — have deepened tensions between the Koreas as talks over the North's nuclear ambitions have remained stalled for years.

Chinese dissident naval officer enters Taiwan by speedboat

AP ■ BEIJING/TAIPEI

A Chinese ex-navy captain, caught Taiwan's navy off-guard by driving his speedboat directly to a pier outside the capital Taipei on Sunday. The intrusion by a mainland Chinese man amid high-security measures in the midst of recurring tensions with China came in for strong criticism from Taiwan's top politicians. China views Taiwan as a rebel province that must be reunified with the mainland, even by force.

The man, identified as Ruan, 60, was spotted 11 km off the coast of Tamsui in New Taipei. After entering the Tamsui River, which leads to downtown Taipei, the boat hit a ferry at the pier, according to the coastguard, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Tuesday.

Ruan, who claimed to be a former Chinese navy captain, said he left Ningde port in China's coastal city of Fuzhou a day earlier. However, Taiwan's coastguard said no food or drink was found on the boat and the man did not appear to have a tan.

'Pak media forced into silence over last 2 years'

PTI ■ LAHORE

Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan on Tuesday claimed the media has been forced into silence by the state and journalists who dissent have faced suppression over the last two years in the country. Khan has been lodged at the high-security Adiala Jail at Rawalpindi since his arrest 10 months ago for his involvement in multiple cases, some of which have resulted in conviction. "In Pakistan, the media has always been vulnerable to control by the state while journalists have been targeted for their critical approaches. Over the last two years in Pakistan, the media has been forced into silence, and journalists who dissent face suppression," Khan, 71, said on his X account. The former prime minister's post comes days after the Punjab government — headed by Maryam Nawaz, daughter of Khan's arch-rival and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif — recently introduced the 'Punjab Defamation Act 2024', a controversial legislation about defamation which imposes massive curbs on press freedom in the name of fake news.

Independent media is one of

the most important pillars of the state. It acts as a watchdog and compels the government to correct its course, the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party said. "My government tried to change this environment by bringing in the Protection of Journalists and Media Law but it has been sidelined since the engineered VoNC," he said.

VoNC he referred to was the vote of no-confidence in April 2022 that threw out his government over an alleged leak of a diplomatic cable.

On Tuesday, the PTI founder cited examples of some journalists who were either murdered or forced to leave the country for their criticism of the Pakistan Army for its role in politics. "Arshad Sharif was driven into exile by grave threats and was murdered in cold blood in Kenya. Dr Moeed Pirzada, Sabir Shakir, and Wajahat Saed Khan have been compelled to leave the country. "Imran Riaz Khan was abduct-

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Rev James Lawson Jr has died at 95

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

The Rev. James Lawson Jr., an apostle of nonviolent protest who schooled activists to withstand brutal reactions from white authorities as the Civil Rights Movement gained traction, has died, his family said Monday. He was 95.

His family said Lawson died on Sunday after a short illness in Los Angeles, where he spent decades working as a pastor, labor movement organizer and university professor. Lawson was a close adviser to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr, who called him "the leading theorist and strategist of nonviolence in the world". Lawson met King in 1957, after spending three years in India soaking up knowledge

about Mohandas K Gandhi's independence movement. King would travel to India himself two years later, but at the time, he had only read about Gandhi in books.

The two Black pastors — both 28 years old — quickly bonded over their enthusiasm for the Indian leader's ideas, and King urged Lawson to put them into action in the American South.

Lawson soon led workshops in church basements in Nashville, Tennessee, that prepared John Lewis, Diane Nash, Bernard Lafayette, Marion Barry, the Freedom Riders and many others to peacefully withstand vicious responses to their challenges of racist laws and policies. Lawson's lessons led Nashville

to become the first major city in the South to desegregate its downtown, on May 10, 1960, after hundreds of well-organized students staged lunch-counter sit-ins and boycotts of discriminatory businesses. Lawson's particular contribution was to introduce Gandhian principles to people more familiar with biblical teachings, showing how direct action could expose the immorality and fragility of racist white power structures.

Gandhi said "that we persons have the power to resist the racism in our own lives and souls", Lawson told the AP. "We have the power to make choices and to say no to that wrong. That's also Jesus." Years later, in 1968, it was

Lawson who organized the sanitation workers strike that fatefully drew King to Memphis. Lawson said he was at first paralyzed and forever saddened by King's assassination. "I thought I would not live beyond 40, myself," Lawson said. "The imminence of death was a part of the discipline we lived with, but no one as much as King."

Still, Lawson made it his life's mission to preach the power of nonviolent direct action. "I'm still anxious and frustrated," Lawson said as he marked the 50th anniversary of King's death with a march in Memphis. "The task is unfinished."

James Morris Lawson Jr., was born on Sept. 22, 1928, the

son and grandson of ministers, and grew up in Massillon, Ohio, where he became ordained himself as a high school senior. He told The Tennessean that his commitment to nonviolence began in elementary school, when he told his mother that he had slapped a boy who had used a racial slur against him. "What good did that do, Jimmy?" his mother asked. That simple question forever changed his life, Lawson said. He became a pacifist, refusing to serve when drafted for the Korean War, and spent a year in prison as a conscientious objector. The Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist group, sponsored his trip to India after he finished a sociology degree.

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India reports sixth strongest hiring outlook globally in September quarter, says survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India ranks sixth globally for its employment outlook for September quarter 2024, with 30 per cent of businesses planning to increase their staff over the next three months, according to a global survey by workforce solutions company ManpowerGroup. India's Net Employment Outlook (NEO), calculated by subtracting employers planning reductions versus those planning to hire, stood at 30 per cent. It weakened from the previous quarter and the same time last year by 6 per cent, as employers are cautious in their hiring intent for the next three months. India ranks sixth globally for its employment outlook, 8 points above the global average. The survey was conducted in 42 countries. Globally, Costa Rica reported the strongest hiring expectation for July-September at 35 per cent, followed by Switzerland (34 per cent), Guatemala (32 per cent), Mexico (32 per cent) and South Africa (31 per cent). On the other hand, Argentina and Romania reported the weakest NEO at 3 per cent. In the Asia Pacific region, the country has the strongest outlook, India (30 per cent) and China (28 per cent) continue to report the strongest outlook in the



region. Most cautious outlooks were reported by employers in Hong Kong (8 per cent) and Japan (12 per cent). In the latest edition of the ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey, 3,150 employers in India were asked about their third quarter hiring intentions. "The global slowdown has been impacting the IT sector in India for quite a while. Added to the circumstances, is the political uncertainty looming over the country due to general elections during data collection of this survey. Clearly, employers are being cautious in their short-term resource planning," said ManpowerGroup's India and

Hiring sentiments across all sectors however declined when compared to the same period last year. Going by the industry size, large organizations (with 1,000-4,999 employees) indicate strongest optimism in hiring with NEO of 42 per cent followed by small (50-249 employees) and medium (250-999 employees) organizations (34 per cent) and large enterprises (30 per cent). Sector-wise, the financials and real estate sector and healthcare and life sciences continue to dominate the market with strongest hiring intentions. The weakest outlook is indicated in communication services and transport, logistics and automotive, the survey said. More than 62 per cent of employers have adopted AI including generative conversational AI with 80 per cent of the senior leadership team optimistic about the positive impact of AI on overall business, as opposed to 68 per cent of frontline and factory workers. Contrary to common belief, almost 68 per cent of employers plan to increase headcount due to adoption of AI and Machine Learning over the next 2 years led by the communication services sector, Financial and Real Estate, Industrials & Materials and Information Technology.

Middle East Managing Director Sandeep Gulati. The real estate sector, however, has seen an increased investor interest with a capital inflow to the tune of USD 1.1 billion led by the residential sector. "We hope the gap between the demand of specific skills and supply is bridged with strategic long term talent planning in corporates in India. Hire, train and deploy is a strategy that can make a difference to mitigate this problem," Gulati said. Overall, the hiring intentions in North India stood at 36 per cent, followed by West (31 per cent), South (30 per cent), and East (21 per cent).

Sebi to hire 49 officers; invites applications

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets watchdog Sebi on Tuesday initiated the process to hire 49 officers in different departments this year, a move that will help in faster and more effective execution of its regulatory role. This came after the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) invited applications in March for the 97 senior-level posts. The link for submitting the application online was originally scheduled to open on April 13. However, it was decided to postpone the same due to the schedule of the General Elections. Now, in a fresh notice on Tuesday, Sebi has invited applications for 49 posts of Officer Grade A (Assistant Manager) for General, legal, information technology, engineering electrical, research and official language streams. The link for submitting the application online will be open till June 30. The regulator is looking to fill 34 positions in the General stream, 10 in information technology, two in the legal team and one each in engineering (electrical), research and official language departments. Selection will be carried out in three phases beginning July 27. Sebi has been beefing up its headcount over the last few



years. In July 2022, the regulator invited applications for 25 senior-level executives in the information technology department. In January 2021, the markets regulator invited applications for the recruitment of 120 Officer Grade A (Assistant Manager) in different streams. In March 2020, the regulator invited applications for 147 senior-level officials and around 1.4 lakh people applied for these positions. Formed by the government in 1988, Sebi was given statutory powers following the passage of the Sebi Act in 1992 after the Harshad Mehta scam that hit the Indian markets. As per

its preamble, Sebi is mandated to protect the interests of investors in securities as well as promote and regulate the securities markets. It regulates business in stock exchanges and other securities markets, registers and regulates various market intermediaries, including brokers, merchant bankers, registrars, portfolio managers and investment advisers, as well as foreign portfolio investors, credit rating agencies, mutual funds and venture capital funds. Besides, Sebi is mandated to check fraudulent and unfair trade practices, insider trading and other manipulative activities.

Tyre exports at ₹23,073 crore in FY24



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The total tyre exports from India during 2023-24 stood at Rs 23,073 crore, matching previous year's figure on the back of a sharp recovery in the second half of the fiscal, the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA) said on Tuesday. In the first half of the year, tyre exports were severely impacted by falling demand in view of slowdown in advanced economies, geopolitical uncertainties and inflationary pressures, the industry body said in a statement. "Tyre exports from India made a sharp recovery in the second half of FY2023-24 and went up by 12 per cent in value terms against the year-ago period," ATMA said citing data released by Ministry of Commerce. The total tyre exports from India during FY2023-24 stood at Rs 23,073 crore matching previous year's figure, it added.

Domestic passenger vehicle sales up 4 per cent in May: SIAM



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automakers dispatched over 3.47 lakh passenger vehicles to dealers in domestic market in May, recording an year-on-year growth of 4 per cent over same month last year, industry body SIAM said on Tuesday. The overall passenger vehicle (PV) dispatches from companies to dealers stood at 3,47,492 units last month, as compared to 3,34,537 units in May 2023. The dispatches were the highest ever for the month of May so far, driven by robust offtake of utility vehicles. Maruti Suzuki sold 1,44,002 units last month, as against 1,43,708 units in May 2023. Hyundai Motor India dispatched 49,151 units in May, as compared to 48,601 units in May 2023. Mahindra & Mahindra sold 43,218 units last month, as against 32,886 units in the year-ago period. All the segments -- passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, two-wheelers and three-wheelers have posted growth in May, as compared to the same month last year, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM)

President Vinod Aggarwal said in a statement. "Passenger vehicles have only witnessed a moderate growth, primarily owing to a high base effect of the previous year," he noted. Two-wheeler sales rose 10 per cent to 16,20,084 units last month, as compared to 14,71,550 units in the year-ago period. Three-wheeler dispatches rose 15 per cent to 55,763 units in May, as against 48,610 units in May 2023. "With expectations of above normal monsoon and continued emphasis on economic development by the new government, as it pursues its goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047, the auto industry is optimistic of steady growth in 2024-25 as well," Aggarwal stated. Elaborating further, SIAM Director General Rajesh Menon said PV dispatches last month were the highest ever in May so far. Two-wheelers saw a growth of 10 per cent last month but still remains lower than 2017-18 levels of May, he said. "Domestic sales of three-wheelers in May 2024 grew by 14.7 per cent compared to May 2023, posting the highest-ever sales in May," Menon said.

Sensex, Nifty settle almost flat amid volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended almost flat on Tuesday after a record-breaking rally as investors preferred to remain on the sidelines awaiting further triggers. After trading in the positive territory for the most part of the session, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 33.49 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 76,456.59 due to fag-end selling. During the day, it jumped 370.45 points or 0.48 per cent to 76,860.53. In a volatile trade, the NSE Nifty ended marginally up by 5.65 points or 0.02 per cent to 23,264.85. Sensex and Nifty hit their all-time high levels in the early trade on Monday. "After a notable rebound, the domestic market has stabilised, awaiting further triggers. With the resolution of uncertainties in government formation, attention has shifted back to

global and domestic indicators. Concerns have risen regarding potential US rate cuts following last week's strong US job data, leading to an increase in US bond yields. "However, FIIs have been net buyers lately. Investors are now gearing up for this week's policy decisions from the US Fed and the BoJ, as well as key inflation data from the US and India, seeking insights into the trajectory of rate cuts," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Among the 30 Sensex companies, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Asian Paints, Reliance Industries, ITC, Sun Pharma, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and JSW Steel were the major laggards. On the other hand, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, Maruti, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra and UltraTech Cement were among the gainers. In the broader market, the



BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.95 per cent, and midcap index rallied 0.74 per cent. Among sectoral indices, telecommunication rallied 1.93 per cent, oil and gas climbed 1.84 per cent, realty soared 1.04 per cent, energy jumped 1 per cent, auto (0.89 per cent) and consumer

discretionary (0.60 per cent). In contrast, metal, FMCG and consumer durables were the laggards. "The markets remained range-bound and ended unchanged, continuing the Monday's trend. After a flat start, the Nifty gradually climbed higher, but profit-

taking in the latter half erased all gains, eventually settling at 23,264.85," said Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd. In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled higher, while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading lower. US markets ended in positive territory on Monday. "Global equities were mixed on Tuesday in a busy week that will bring some important reports on US inflation along with a policy meeting of the Federal Reserve. "The UK unemployment rate unexpectedly climbed to its highest level (4.4 per cent in February-April vs 4.3 per cent in the previous period) in two and a half years. European assets extended Monday's losses as nervousness over political upheaval in France continued," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities, said. Signalling continuity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on

Monday retained Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar in charge of the four high-profile ministries - Home, Defence, Finance and External Affairs - respectively, in his new government. The four ministers in charge of these portfolios make up the crucial Cabinet Committee on Security headed by the prime minister. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.32 per cent to USD 81.37 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,572.38 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. After breaching the 77,000 mark during early trade on Monday, the BSE benchmark Sensex came under selling pressure at the fag-end of the session and ended 203.28 points or 0.27 per cent lower at 76,490.08. Halting its three-day rally, the NSE Nifty dipped 30.95 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 23,259.10

Micro loans grew 27 per cent in March quarter, stress levels inch up: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The micro loans portfolio of various lenders grew by 27 per cent year-on-year for the March 2024 quarter, a report said on Tuesday. After remaining stable or improving over the last many quarters, the stress levels in terms of loan default inched up marginally during the quarter, the report by credit information company Crif High Mark said. At a time when the regulator is flagging concerns on unsecured loans, the data pointed out that personal loan

outstandings of microfinance borrowers witnessed the second fastest growth among other retail assets with a portfolio growth of over 38 per cent. The gross loan portfolio grew 28 per cent to Rs 4.42 lakh crore in December, the report said, adding that the growth was 8.5 per cent as compared to the preceding December quarter figure. The top 10 states account for 83.5 per cent of the Gross Loan Portfolio (GLP), it said, adding that West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh posted the fastest growth

during the January-March period. However, the proportion of loan assets overdue for the duration between 31 days and 180 days grew to 2.1 per cent in March from the 2 per cent level in December 2023, the report said. Tirunelveli district was the worst performer nationally on asset quality, followed by Coimbatore and Madurai, making Tamil Nadu home to the three top districts where microlenders are facing maximum stress. Tamil Nadu also topped nationally on the average

balances per account front, with an outstanding of Rs 62,200 per borrower. The report said borrowers with a higher number of active loans have higher delinquency and added that over 12 per cent of the borrowers have four or more active loans. Karnataka leads the states where borrowers have the maximum active loans. It said 14.2 per cent of the MFI borrowers have an active retail loan, which is marginally lower than the 14.9 per cent in the year-ago period.

Survey highlights need for streamlined FDI to propel India as global defence manufacturing hub

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Nexgen Exhibitions, organisers of the renowned International Police Expo, one of Asia's premier homeland security and defence expos, have released the findings of a comprehensive survey aimed at streamlining Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and bolstering Defence Research & Development (R&D) and manufacturing capabilities. This initiative aims to propel India towards its ambitious \$5 billion defence exports target by 2024-25.

significant step toward boosting domestic defence manufacturing. Currently, India exports defence equipment to over 75 countries, demonstrating its growing footprint in the global defence market. The homeland security sector is crucial for maintaining internal stability and protecting national interests. Integrating advanced technologies and data analytics is paramount for effective threat detection, surveillance, and response. By leveraging AI and machine learning, security agencies can predict and mitigate risks more efficiently. Moreover, developing a robust disaster management mechanism ensures preparedness and swift response to emergencies, enhancing public safety and national resilience.

The survey, conducted across 15 cities in India, saw participation from over 130 national and international arms, ammunition, and security equipment manufacturers, exporters, and start-ups. The key highlights underscored the need for streamlined FDI inflows, elevated technology integration with AI and other futuristic technologies, and a robust skill development ecosystem to create a large pool of industry-ready professionals. By enhancing R&D and manufacturing capabilities, India's homeland security and defence sector is poised to emerge as a global manufacturing hub. Additionally, increasing procurement categories is a

MSME loans will be focal point for growth over next 5 years: SBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

SBI, the country's largest lender, on Tuesday said small business lending will be the "focal point" for growth and profit for the next five years. The state-owned lender launched a product christened "SME (small and medium enterprises) Digital Business Loans", under which loans will be sanctioned in 45 minutes. "MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) advances have been identified as the focal point for the bank's growth and

profitability over the next five years," an official statement said. The bank is aiming to broaden credit accessibility for small businesses in the coming months by extending availability across all partner customer service point touchpoints and via QR codes at outdoor touchpoints in the coming months, the statement said. For the year ended on March 31, 2024, the bank's overall SME book grew by over 20 per cent to Rs 4.33 lakh crore and gross non performing assets in the book came down to 3.75 per cent from a peak

of 9.43 per cent in FY20. The newly launched product was termed as "a significant leap forward" in digitalisation by offering SMEs a digital loan journey with an end-to-end sanction turnaround time of up to 45 minutes. "By leveraging the rich data footprint of MSME units in the ecosystem, we aim to provide the fastest and most intuitive lending process, further solidifying our position as the leading MSME lender in the country," the bank's chairman Dinesh Khara said. The newly launched

proposition eliminates the need for traditional credit underwriting and lengthy appraisal processes, the bank statement said, adding that it offers simplicity, speed, and accessibility in MSME lending. The new platform relies on data footprints from sources such as ITR, GST returns, and bank statements, the statement said, adding, the bank has developed a data-driven credit assessment engine capable of providing sanction decisions within 10 seconds after submitting the required details.

IAS officer gets additional charge of Director General of ESIC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Additional Secretary and Director General, Labour Welfare in the Union Labour Ministry, Kamal Kishore Soan, a senior IAS officer from Jharkhand Cadre (Batch :1998) has been given the additional charge of Director General of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). With his extensive experience across multiple departments in the state of Jharkhand, he brings a wealth of knowledge and a proven track record in governance and management



to his new position. His background in areas such as land revenue management, district administration, agriculture, health, finance, and social justice underscores his versatility and capability to lead effectively in diverse fields, according to a statement here.

RIFLE, PISTOL TEAM FOR OLYMPICS ANNOUNCED; BHAKER PICKED IN TWO INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Women's pistol ace Manu Bhaker was the only one to be picked in two individual events after her excellent run of form in selection trials as the national shooting federation on Tuesday announced a 15-member Indian rifle and pistol team for the Paris Olympics.
The team was finalised during a selection meeting held virtually. The squad has eight rifle shooters and seven in pistol discipline. The selectors decided to give precedence to trial results, shutting the door on the likes of world champion Rudranksh Patil, who has been pleading to be considered despite underwhelming scores in his pet 10m air rifle event as he had won the quota.
In shooting, quotas are won by countries and not individual athletes. All the team members, along with the coaches and

support staff, are currently in a camp in Volmerange-Les-Mines, France, mainly aimed at "acclimatisation and hard-training" before they come back home for a two-week break.
The shotgun squad will be announced after the ISSF World Cup in Lonato, Italy, competitions in which start from Wednesday and go on till June 18.
The Paris Games will be held from July 26 to August 11. Indian shooters managed to secure a record 21 of the 24 possible quotas, including a full allocation of eight each in rifle and pistol events. This is India's best-ever quota haul in shooting at any edition of the Olympics, eclipsing the 15 from Tokyo Games.
This means the athlete who clinched the quota can be replaced by another, leading up to the Games on the basis of scores in the selection trials conducted by the national federation. Sharing his thoughts, National Rifle Association of

India's (NRAI) senior vice president Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo, said, "The selection committee met and deliberated at length. After deliberating at length, we feel we have selected the best team on current form as per merit and sticking to the policy."
"We are confident that everything has been put in place for the team to deliver. Given our depth in rifle and pistol, some very good shooters are not part of the squad. However, they will have a chance to make a comeback. We wish the squad all the very best."
Deo is right as the performance of the shooters in the trials underlined India's depth and bench strength in rifle and pistol shooting but that is no guarantee for a rich haul at the Olympics.
For proof, one can go back to the Tokyo and Rio Games, where India fielded 12 and 15-member teams and returned empty-handed on both occasions.



On behalf of the federation, Deo thanked the Government of India, the Sports Ministry, and the Sports Authority of India, who have "guided and supported us in every step of the preparations."
Besides all 16 possible shots at a medal, in eight individual rifle and pistol events, India will also have a record five starts across the four individual shotgun events. Additionally, India will also field five mixed teams, two each in rifle and pistol and one in shotgun.
K Sultan Singh, secretary general at NRAI, said, "The team is in good form and battle ready, consisting of as many as four Olympians and other senior shooters as well as a lot of extremely promising, confident and matured young talent."
"They have been training very systematically for a long time under the guidance and support of the entire training squad of the HPD (High-Performance Director), foreign coaches,

national coaches, the sports science team, the physios etc. Who have been steadfastly and minutely working towards one goal and that is to have a successful podium finish."
The NRAI will also be looking to exchange the spare quota place which has freed up because of Bhaker making it to two events, appropriately as per ISSF (International Shooting Sport Federation) rules.
Indian rifle and pistol team for Paris Olympics:
Rifle: Sandeep Singh, Arjun Babuta (10m Air Rifle M), Elavenil Valarivan, Ramita (10m Air Rifle W), Sift Kaur Samra, Anjum Moudgil (50m Rifle 3 Positions W), Aishwary Tomar, Swapnil Kusale (50m Rifle 3 Positions M)
Pistol: Sarabjot Singh, Arjun Cheema (10m Air Pistol M), Manu Bhaker, Rhythm Sangwan (10m Air Pistol W), Anish Bhanwal Vijayveer Sidhu (25m RFP M), Manu Bhaker, Esha Singh (25m Pistol W).



India to host Junior Hockey World Cup in 2025

PTI ■ LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND)
India will host next year's Men's Junior Hockey World Cup, marking the event's return to the country after nine years, the Executive Board of the International Hockey Federation announced on Tuesday.
The tournament will be held in December and it will be the first time ever that a Hockey Junior World Cup will include as many as 24 teams.
This was announced by FIH President Tayyab Ikram who said: "Giving more opportunities to play to a larger and more diverse number of National Associations is one of the key pillars of our empowerment and engagement strategy."
"We saw at the FIH Hockey5s World Cup in Oman this year how more diversity brings a huge added value to our events."
"Therefore, I'm very happy that we've increased the number of participating teams for the FIH Hockey Junior World Cups and I look forward to seeing these 24 young teams, representing the future of our sport, next year!" he added.
The last edition of the tournament was held in Kuala Lumpur in 2023 with Germany emerging winners with a 2-1 win over France.

Spain and India took the third and fourth places respectively. India have, in the past, hosted the tournament three times in 2013 (New Delhi), 2016 (Lucknow) and 2021 (Bhubaneswar). India were the winners of the 2016 edition as well.
"At this stage, I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to Hockey India for their commitment to organise yet another fantastic event," Ikram added.
Extending his gratitude, president of Hockey India Dilip Tirkey said: "This prestigious tournament highlights India's growing importance in international hockey and shows our dedication to developing the sport for future generations."
"We're excited to share India's rich hockey history and provide a stage for young talent to showcase their skills."
Secretary general of Hockey India Bholu Nath Singh termed this a significant step for HI.
"We appreciate the FIH's trust in us. This event offers a fantastic chance to bring hockey to even greater heights, inspiring a whole new generation of players and fans in India and globally."
"We're committed to making this tournament a memorable experience that celebrates everything hockey is about," he added.

Poland's Kaczmarek wins 400m European title in 48.98

AP ■ ROME
American standout Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone is leading the way as expected in the 400 meters with the Paris Olympics less than 50 days away.
Jamaica's Nickisha Pryce and Poland's Natalia Kaczmarek are not far behind, though. Kaczmarek clocked 48.98 seconds at the European athletics championships on Monday to mark the third straight day that a woman has cracked the 49-second barrier. Pryce got it started with a 48.89 for Arkansas at the NCAA championships on Saturday. Then McLaughlin-Levrone responded with a 48.75 in New York on Sunday.



In Rome, Kaczmarek surged past Ireland's Rhasidat Adeleke in the final meters to smash Irena Szewinska's 48-year-old Polish national record of 49.28 and set the fastest time by a European this century. "Coming to the start, I was dreaming about the Polish record but this 48.98 was

something more than my imagination," said Kaczmarek, the silver medalist at the worlds last year. Adeleke, who helped Ireland to gold in the 4x400 mixed relay, took silver in 49.07. Lieke Klaver of the Netherlands claimed bronze in 50.08. In the men's 400, Alexander

Doom of Belgium also came from behind to win in a championship record 44.15 ahead of Charles Dobson of Britain (44.38) and Liamarvin Bonevacia of the Netherlands (44.88). There was an upset in the hammer throw when Sara Fantini of host Italy beat three-time defending Olympic champion Anita Wlodarczyk for gold. Then Timothe Mumenthaler of Switzerland silenced the home crowd when he edged Filippo Tortu - the anchorman from Italy's 4x100 gold at the Tokyo Olympics - to win the 200 in 20.28. "It was a lost opportunity," Tortu said. "The gold was within reach. I just didn't run well. It's very upsetting and I can't celebrate this silver."

Sangram Singh set to be first Indian male wrestler to join MMA



PTI ■ MUMBAI
Former Commonwealth heavyweight champion Sangram Singh is set to become the first Indian male wrestler to join mixed martial arts. Sangram will be the second Indian overall after Puja Tomar to compete as a MMA fighter for which he has requisite skills

being a wrestler, stated a release on Tuesday. "Wrestling has given me so much including the love from the people of my country and I hope that they will continue to do the same in my new endeavour," Sangram said. "MMA is the future, its growing popularity in the last few years speaks for itself. India has one of the highest viewerships for the sport and I hope that the fans of the sport can support me in the same manner," he added.
The 38-year-old Sangram recently made his return to wrestling after six-year gap at the Dubai Pro Wrestling Championship, in which he defeated Pakistan's Muhammad Saeed in a largely one-sided affair.

Poland strikers Lewandowski, Swiderski injured in last Euros warmup

AP ■ WARSAW (POLAND)
Strikers Robert Lewandowski and Karol Swiderski were in doubt for the European Championship after they were injured as Poland beat Turkey 2-1 in a warmup on Monday.
Lewandowski set up Swiderski for the opening goal in the 12th minute. But in his celebrations, Swiderski hurt his ankle and had to be replaced. Captain Lewandowski, Poland's all-time leading goal-scorer, lasted until the 32nd when he hurt his right leg and was substituted.
The double blow was a nightmare for Poland. Arkadiusz Milik was to be up front with Lewandowski for the Euros until he damaged his left knee on Friday in the friendly against Ukraine. Milik returned to Juventus and had successful knee surgery on Monday. Lewandowski and Swiderski have only until Sunday to recover when Poland opens its Euros campaign against the Netherlands in Hamburg.
Turkey threatened the equalizer in the second half. Arda Güler and Orkun Kökçü were saved but goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny was helpless when halftime substitute Baris Alper Yilmaz's shot from the edge of box deflected in. After Turkey's Kerem Akturkoglu hit the crossbar from long range, Poland won in the 90th thanks to a beauty by Nicola Zalewski, who weaved past two defenders to the box and scored his maiden international goal.



Turkey faces Georgia in its opener on Tuesday week in Dortmund, while Poland will be sweating on its strikers. There was nothing wrong with the Dutch attack. They have warmed up with consecutive 4-0 wins. Iceland was put to the sword in Rotterdam, with Virgil van Dijk and

Wout Weghorst scoring, just as they did against Canada last Thursday at De Kuip. Xavi Simons' first goal for the Netherlands was teed up by Denzel Dumfries' header in the first half, then Nathan Ake's nod set up Van Dijk. Substitute Donyell Malen scored thanks

to Memphis Depay, but Depay was denied moments later when VAR ruled out his goal because of an earlier handball. However, VAR overturned another on-field decision to allow Weghorst's goal in added time.
The Czech Republic struggled to subdue North Macedonia 2-1, needing two second-half penalties in Hradec Králové.
After Malta was ravaged 7-1 last Friday, the Czechs made nine changes to give their likely Euro lineup a run before facing Portugal in a week in Leipzig. But nobody scored until the 60th when Patrik Schick converted a penalty for a foul on Tomas Soucek.
Just five minutes later, North Macedonia was level after Isnik Alimi headed in a rebound of Aleksandar Trajkovski's shot off the right post. The Czechs needed all seven minutes of added time to find the winner, from a spot kick by Antonin Barak. They suffered a setback on Sunday when midfielder Michal Sadilek, who captained the team against Malta, withdrew from the Euro 2024 squad after injuring his shin from falling off a bike on a day off.

Indore to host diving and water polo trials for National Junior Championships

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI
Adhoc Committee, Delhi Swimming Association (Regd.) as appointed by the Swimming Federation of India will conduct trials on Saturday, 15 June 2024 at 10.00 am onwards at the Dr. SPM Sports Complex Swimming Pool, New Delhi, to select Delhi Water polo & Diving Teams of Junior Boys & Girls. These selected Teams will participate in the ensuing 40th Sub Junior & 50th Junior National Swimming Championship (Water-polo & Diving Events) - 2024 which will be held in Indore (MadhyaPradesh) from 7th to 11th July 2024 as informed by its Chairman Mr. Balraj Sharma. All interested players who wish to participate in these selection trials are required to reach the venue at the specified time with valid SFI UID Card renewed up to 31.03.2025.

Euro 2024 will not feature Europe's top striker: Who else is missing?

PTI ■ LONDON
Goalkeepers and defenders: Gxhale.
The most feared striker in Europe won't be playing at the European Championship. That's because Erling Haaland's Norway didn't qualify.
Haaland's goal-scoring statistics with both club and country are staggering: 90 goals in 98 matches across all competitions in two seasons with Manchester City, and 30 in 32 matches for Norway since his national team debut in 2019. But Halaand produced "only" five goals in six qualifying matches for Norway, which finished third in Group A behind Spain and Scotland and didn't even reach the playoffs.
Norway's absence also means that Arsenal and Norway captain Martin Odegaard won't be at the tournament in Germany. Norway won only three of eight qualifiers and finished six points behind group runner-up Scotland. A look at some other top players who won't be at Euro 2024, which starts Friday:
THIBAUT COURTOIS Thibaut Courtois was healthy enough to

make two key saves during the first half of the Champions League final and help Real Madrid to another title.
But the Belgium goalkeeper announced in December that he would miss the Euros and has not backpedaled on his decision despite returning to full fitness for Madrid after a long-term knee injury. There's also this: There are ongoing tensions between Courtois and Belgium coach Domenico Tedesco. Courtois questioned Tedesco's "reality" after the coach accused him of abandoning his teammates and faking an injury before a qualifier last year.
Without the Madrid 'keeper, Tedesco's choices in goal are: Matz Sels (Nottingham Forest), Koen Casteels (Wolfsburg) and Thomas Kaminski (Luton).
KARIM BENZEMA Benzema retired from France's national team the day after "Les Bleus" lost the 2022 World Cup final without the striker.
Then last year he left Real Madrid for Saudi Arabian club Al-Ittihad and now, at age 36, his days at the top seem finished.
Benzema was awarded the Ballon d'Or as the world's top player in



2022 but then missed the World Cup in Qatar that year after tearing a left thigh muscle in pre-tournament training. He also didn't play in France's victorious 2018 World Cup campaign because he was still exiled from the national team for his alleged role in a sex-tape scandal

with teammate Mathieu Valbuena. France coach Didier Deschamps has plenty of options up front without Benzema, led by captain Kylian Mbappé. France's other forwards include Bradley Barcola, Kingsley Coman, Ousmane Dembélé, Olivier Giroud, Randal Kolo Muani and Marcus Thuram.

Two more former France starters missing are midfielder Paul Pogba, who is serving a doping ban, and defender Lucas Hernandez, who recently underwent surgery after rupturing his left ACL.
MARCUS RASHFORD The Manchester United striker paid the price for a disappointing season at

the club level and failed to make the cut for England coach Gareth Southgate's initial 33-man selection. Rashford managed just eight goals for a United team that suffered its lowest-ever Premier League finish - eighth.
The omission comes only two seasons after Rashford had a career-best campaign, scoring 34 goals for club and country.
Jack Grealish, Harry Maguire and Jordan Henderson - who all played in the final when England lost to Italy in a penalty shootout in 2021 - were also left out by Southgate. "These are difficult calls, you are talking about players who are very good players, who have been an important part of what we have done," Southgate said. "With Marcus, I feel players in the same area of the pitch have had better seasons, it's as simple as that."
MATS HUMMELS Reaching the Champions League final wasn't enough for Mats Hummels to make the squad for host Germany. Hummels made a strong case for inclusion with his inspirational performances in Borussia Dortmund's run in Europe. But Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann said there were "1,000 components"

to the decision not to include the veteran defender. Nagelsmann sees Real Madrid's Antonio Rüdiger and Bayer Leverkusen's Jonathan Tah as his preferred central defensive pairing - and anyone else would need to be content with a backup role.
Dortmund defender Nico Schlotterbeck is evidently content to take the reserve role and did make the squad.
Bayern Munich midfielder Leon Goretzka was also left out, despite a strong finish to the Bundesliga season.
SANDRO TONALI Newcastle midfielder Sandro Tonali is serving a 10-month ban for betting on teams he played for - ruling him out of consideration for defending champion Italy. It leaves coach Luciano Spalletti without his top choice at playmaker but opens space for the likes of Jorgeinho and Lorenzo Pellegrini. Tonali had seemed poised to inherit the role that once belonged to Andrea Pirlo by setting the pace and directing the attack for Italy's squad. Several other Italy players are out injured: Domenico Berardi, Nicolò Zaniolo, Francesco Acerbi and Giorgio Scalvini

INDIA VS MINI INDIA: ROHIT & CO EYE BETTER BATTING SHOW AGAINST USA

PTI ■ NEW YORK
India's batting prima donnas would want to unchain themselves from the vagaries of a much-maligned drop-in track and chance their arms freely against an impressive-but-inexperienced USA in their group league game of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday. India, who are classified as A1 (irrespective of points), need just one more win to ensure their Super Eight berth and despite the two-paced nature of the Nassau County track, they wouldn't like a repeat of the match against Pakistan where they lost their last seven wickets for 28 runs. Against USA, the approach could be a high-risk one like Pakistan but perhaps with higher dividends. Their dreams of wearing the India blues remained unfulfilled but when a sprightly bunch of Indian Americans take the field against their country of birth, the likes of Saurabh

Netravalkars and Harmeet Singhs would once again like to be the proverbial David against the Goliaths of the game. Even though the track has significantly bridged the gap between teams, the USA, which is an eclectic mix of eight Indians, two Pakistanis, a West Indian, one New Zealander, a South African and a Dutch might just find the gulf with India too much to bridge. Neither have they grabbed air time on American channels nor the famous broadsheets have been devoting any newsprint on them even after the Super Over win over Pakistan but Wednesday could just be the day when the country of their choice takes note of their performance. Monank Patel, Harmeet, Netravalkar, Jessy Singh and Noshush Kenjige all have their little Indian story to tell and if the opposition has Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah and Rishabh Pant in its ranks, it would be a touch more endearing. It's not everyday that one gets a

chance to bowl at Kohli and Sharma and face Bumrah even if it's far from being a sweet experience. But it's experience nevertheless and that too of a lifetime. For India, it will be their last match in the 'Big Apple' extension and the one where they wouldn't mind batting first. If India bowl first, there could be a high chance that USA might not be able to touch the three-figure mark against Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and Ravindra Jadeja. There will be some beautiful and emotional sub-plots as well if Netravalkar gets a chance to bowl to his former Mumbai teammate Suryakumar Yadav with whom he played in Mumbai U-15, Ranji and Vijay Hazare Trophy. "It will be an emotional moment to play against India and especially Surya as we go back a long way," Netravalkar told PTI recently. For the two left-arm spinners Harmeet and Kenjige, the challenge of trying to keep



Rishabh Pant quiet will be of altogether different level. Both Harmeet and Kenjige will try to maintain dart-like accuracy but that could well be dismantled by Pant, who is sure to use his feet. For Ali Khan, his extra pace and the bounce that he extracts from even benign surfaces would certainly provoke Rohit to use his pull shot frequently.

There would be Nitish Kumar, who could be cheeky with his short selection and prove to be a thorn in India's flesh. **SHIVAM DUBE AND AN EXTRA SPINNER:** In the first game, India's weakest link was Shivam Dube. The Chennai Super Kings' most valued 'Impact Player' is finding it tough on two-paced tracks where the ball is gripping and coming late onto the bat. But unlike tactician-par-excellence Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who could bench him during CSK's bowling in the IPL, national skipper Rohit Sharma doesn't have such luxury and needs to hide him in areas of the field where the ball is expected to travel less. Dube is a monstrous hitter of spinners on good flat decks and his military medium seam-up stuff does give the Indian skipper cushion to manoeuvre with the bowling combination. But in a format like T20, the team management, which asked for Dube at the expense of Rinku Singh, would want

him to come good. Else, there is Yashviji Jaiswal in the 15, who is a way more rounded batter than the big-bodied Mumbai. Two wrist spinners, Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav, should be given some game time or else they might just enter the Super Eights a bit undercooked in the Caribbean where the pitches will be more spin-friendly. **SQUADS:** **India:** Rohit Sharma (c), Hardik Pandya, Yashviji Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd. Siraj. **United States:** Monank Patel (c), Aaron Jones, Andries Gous, Corey Anderson, Ali Khan, Harmeet Singh, Jessy Singh, Milind Kumar, Nisarg Patel, Nitish Kumar, Noshush Kenjige, Saurabh Nathralvkar, Shadley Van Schalkwyk, Steven Taylor, Shayan Jahangi

Australia face Namibia with an eye on Super Eight; SL in must win situation against Nepal

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)
Living up to two favourites tag with two consecutive wins, a confident Australia will aim to secure a Super Eight berth when they face lower-ranked Namibia in their Group B T20 World Cup clash here on Wednesday. Australia fired in unison to become the first team in this edition of the tournament to score 200-plus runs in a one-sided 36-run win over arch-rivals England in their last group league match. It was their second win from as many matches, having started off with a 39-run triumph over Oman. Beating Namibia will be enough for them to make the cut before they take on Scotland in their concluding Group B league fixture. Scotland lead the table with five points and along with Australia, are firmly ahead in the race to make the Super Eight at the expense of defending champions England who have one point from two matches. Their opening game against Scotland was a washout. Australia defeated Namibia by seven wickets after restricting their opponents to 119/9 in their only T20 meeting, albeit in a warm-up game two weeks back. Playing his last World Cup for Australia, David Warner has been in splendid form with one half century and it was his 16-ball 39 that set the tone for their 2017 against England. Warner incidentally scored a fifty in the warm-up against Namibia as well. He has 97 runs in the tournament at a fine strike rate of 141.79. Warner's opening partner Travis Head has also been at his explosive best and the duo will look to give the team a fiery start. Namibia will expect their veteran all-rounder David Wiese to step up after he starred in their Super-Over



win against Oman. The globe-trotting all-rounder has the experience of facing Australia four times in T20s during his stint with South Africa. Left-arm spinner Bernard Scholtz, who has been tidy conceding just one four and one six in his eight overs, will also look to make an impact. **TEAMS (FROM)** **Australia:** Mitchell Marsh (c), Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Matthew Wade, David Warner and Adam Zampa. **Namibia:** Gerhard Erasmus (c), Zane Green, Michael Van Lingen, Dylan Leicher, Ruben Trimpelmann, Jack Brassell, Ben Shikongo, Tangeni Lungameni, Niko Davin, JJ Smit, Jan Frylinck, JP Kotze, David Wiese, Bernard Scholtz, Malan Kruger and PD Bliognaut. **Match starts:** 6am IST. **SL IN MUST WIN CLASH VS NEPAL** Former champion Sri Lanka's campaign has gone terrifically haywire after defeats to South Africa and they are now faced with a do-or-die clash against

I am truly sorry: Akmal apologises for inappropriate comments against Arshdeep

PTI ■ LAHORE
A day after being called out for making disrespectful comments against India pacer Arshdeep Singh, former Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Kamran Akmal apologised for his "inappropriate" remarks while analysing the recent T20 World Cup clash between the two sides in New York. In a viral video, Akmal was seen making fun of Arshdeep's Sikh religion, prompting a furious response from ace Indian cricketer-turned-commentator Harbhajan. "I deeply regret my recent comments and sincerely apologise to Harbhajan Singh and the Sikh community. My words were inappropriate and disrespectful. I have the utmost respect for Sikhs all over the world and never intended to hurt anyone. I am truly sorry. #Respect #Apology," Akmal



wrote on X, tagging Harbhajan. Akmal's remarks came during the tense penultimate over of the clash, when Pakistan needed 17 runs in the last over in their chase of 120. Left-arm pacer Arshdeep performed the task to perfection, sealing a six-run win over the arch-rivals. Akmal, while

analysing the match on ARY News, made the controversial comments on Arshdeep before he came in to bowl. "Kuch bhi ho sakta hai... Dekhe last over karna Arshdeep Singh ne hai. Waise uska rhythm nahi laga. 12 baj gaye hai (Anything can happen. The last over will be bowled by Arshdeep Singh; he hasn't looked in a great rhythm. And it is already 12)," he said. In the video reposted by Harbhajan, Akmal was also seen laughing with other panellists on the show. The Indian off-spinner lashed out at Akmal. "...You should know the history of sikhs before u open ur filthy mouth. We Sikhs saved ur mothers and sisters when they were abducted by invaders, the time invariably was 12 o'clock. Shame on you guys.. Have some Gratitude." The win at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York put India at the top of Group A with four points from two wins.

Chennaiyin FC rope in Colombian star Wilmar Jordan Gil

PTI ■ CHENNAI
Chennaiyin FC have signed Colombian striker Wilmar Jordan Gil ahead of the 2024-25 season, the Indian Super League club announced on Tuesday. The Colombian striker brings a wealth of experience and skill to the club, having been part of ISL for two seasons. Wilmar made his ISL debut with NorthEast United FC in 2022. He then continued his impressive journey with ISL debutants Punjab FC the following season, scoring eight goals in 15 appearances. Joining Chennaiyin on a one-year deal, Jordan's arrival marks the club's fifth signing for the 2024-25 season and their third foreign acquisition, following Elsinho Dias and Chima Chukwu. The club had earlier announced an extension for captain Ryan Edwards.

including domestic leagues and international competitions. He began his senior career with Monagas in Venezuela, where he made 35 appearances and emerged as the top scorer with 20 goals. "I am very happy to be part of this great club and team, and very grateful for this great opportunity they have given me. With a lot of work, humility, and sacrifice, we can fulfill all the objectives we set for ourselves and win the title," Wilmar said. In 2011, he joined Gyeongnam FC in South Korea before heading to Bulgarian side Litex Lovech in 2013, where he once again topped the scoring charts with 20 goals. He has also had stints with Chinese Super League club Tianjin Teda, U.A.E. Side Emirates Club on loan, Portuguese club Chaves, and Colombian side Atletico Huila.



"Wilmar has had a fantastic career and scored goals everywhere he has been. Scoring 24 goals in 33 appearances between NorthEast and Punjab is a great ratio for a striker. We are delighted to add that kind of firepower to our attack," coach Owen Coyle said. Throughout his career, Wilmar has excelled on various stages,

TEAMS (FROM): **Nepal:** Rohit Paudel (c), Aasif Sheikh, Anil Kumar Sah, Kushal Bhurtel, Kushal Malla, Dipendra Singh Airee, Lalit Rajbanshi, Karan KC, Gulshan Jha, Sompal Kami, Pratis GC, Sundeeep Jora, Abinash Bohara, Sagar Dhakal and Kamal Singh Airee **Sri Lanka:** Wanindu Hasaranga (c), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis, Pathum Nissanka, Kamindu Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Dhananjaya De Silva, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunieth Wellalage, Dushmanth

It was not a good call for us: Hridoy on Bangladesh losing 4 leg byes due to DRS rule

PTI ■ NEW YORK
The on-field umpire's decision to adjudge veteran batter Mahmudullah Riyad LBW, which was subsequently overturned in a review, was a bad call that cost Bangladesh the match against South Africa, their young batter Towhid Hridoy has said. Bangladesh ended at 109/7 while chasing a target of 114 against South Africa. A contentious ICC rule saw them lose four leg bye runs when Mahmudullah was given out leg before by on-field umpire Sam Nogajski off an Ottneil Baartman delivery. The ball had crossed the boundary ropes but it was deemed dead as Mahmudullah opted for

DRS and got the decision overturned. As per ICC rules, no extra runs (leg-byes or byes) can be given if on-field umpire gives a batter out LBW even if the decision is overturned by the third umpire. However, leg-bye runs can be awarded if the on-field umpire's decision of not out stays after a review. "Actually, to be honest, that wasn't a good call. It was a tight match. So, I think in my point of view, umpire gave out, but it's bit hard for us because those four runs would have changed the match scenario."

If you showcase this to world, it is not great selling product: Klaassen on New York pitch

PTI ■ NEW YORK
If the ICC wants to market T20 cricket in the USA, the pitch and outfield at the Nassau County Cricket Ground isn't a "great selling product", South Africa's flamboyant batter Heinrich Klaassen said joining the chorus of criticism against the venue. The new drop-in pitch at the ground located in the Long Islands has been dual-paced with uneven bounce, making batting very difficult. India and South Africa have been able to defend totals as low as 119 and 113 respectively on back-to-back days on this track. "Obviously, if you have to showcase it to the world and sell it, I don't think it's a great selling product, but for cricket, it's tight competition. It brings the other teams and the higher teams very close to each other," Klaassen, who scored 46 off 44 balls in team's four-run win said at the post-match

press conference. The power-hitter said that all premier batters across teams would love to just get out of New York while the bowlers would love to stay put forever. The ICC has already acknowledged that the pitches here have not played as consistently as was desired. "I think all the batters are keen to get out of this place, to be fair. The bowlers would love to stay here but - no we've done our job that was the goal to win three out of three here. Obviously, it was a little bit harder than what we thought," he said. "For us, it's very nerve-wracking, because every game becomes a really big game. There's no easy games for us especially in our group. So, it's still good entertaining cricket. Everyone is on the edge of their seats and any team can beat any team on the down this on this field." Klaassen was a part of the inaugural edition of Major League Cricket last



year and when asked if he has enjoyed this ICC project of trying to market cricket in a new city with a temporary stadium, his answer was a mixed one. "Yes and No," he said before

elaborately explaining his take. "I played in Dallas and in North Carolina where I think there's a little bit more cricket there. The wickets (pitches) are better so it's easier to sell cricket in that aspect," he said. "It's fantastic what they've done with the stadium here and I think as the wicket matures, but obviously I think they're taking it out in two - three days' time so that doesn't help," Klaassen explained. "The more the wicket matures, the better these conditions will get and I think it will be a better showcase for the people. This wicket is I think, four months old, so there's a lot of maturity that needs to go into the wicket that will produce bigger scores." Klaassen was an integral part of a very successful Sunrisers Hyderabad batting unit which redefined Powerplay in this year's IPL with the help of an Impact Player and flat batting decks. The towering batter

said that one month is ancient history now. "Yeah, it's a big change you see scores there - well it was a month and a half ago we were part of a score that's 270-260 so it's well off, but it's part of the game." "It doesn't look like the Caribbean wickets are too much better. So, we have to play smart cricket and use our cricket brain a little bit more." He feels that once the Super Eight starts in the West Indies, the par-score will be 160 plus. "Out of us all, the thing on stats that are out of 18 games, it's only been one score above 200. So normally in the Caribbean, it's about 160 as par. If you get to 160-170, you're in a good shot and you have to bowl well. "So, I reckon that's normally the good scores there, or power scores. Depending where you play, the wickets are very different around the Caribbean."

AFFIDAVIT
I, No 4289032X Nk Sunil Oraon father of Archana Oraon of presently residing at VIII : Rocho, Post: Salgi, Dist : Lohardaga, State : Jharkhand have changed my daughter name from Archana Oraon to Archana Oraon vide affidavit No 25491 dated- 29.05.2024 before Notary Public, Lohardaga, Jharkhand.

AFFIDAVIT
I, Khadiya Bhagat son of Banwari Bhagat, resident of village Chipo Gar Toli, P.S. Lohardaga, District Lohardaga, Jharkhand. I am Army man and my Army No. is 15783870M. I have recorded my wife name in my service book as Anju Kumari which is wrong. That correct name of my wife is Anju Kumari Khakha as per her issued Aadhar Card No. 3200 0141 8151. I have changed my wife name from Anju Kumari to Anju Kumari Khakha. Vide affidavit serial no. 109153, dated- 22 December 2023.

GUJARAT WATER SUPPLY & SEWERAGE BOARD.
SECTOR-10/A, GANDHINAGAR
BRIEF SHORT NOTICE INVITING ON LINE TENDER FOR REQUIREMENT OF M.S. PIPE FOR THE YEAR 2024 (Tender ID 59272) (2nd Attempt)
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