

THE ASIAN AGE

LONDON MONDAY 17 JUNE 2024



WORLD | 6

Latest UK polls point to 'electoral extinction' for PM Rishi Sunak's Conservatives

www.asianage.com



NATION | 4

IAF's Rafale jets participate in Red Flag drill in Alaska amid sub-zero temperature

DELHI AGE | 9

Saurabh Netravalkar kept his tech job while leading US to triumphs



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WINDOWS



Actress Alia Bhatt at the launch of her first children's picture book *Ed Finds A Home* in Mumbai on Sunday. — AFP

Nuclear fears, food issue focus at Swiss summit on Ukraine

Burgenstock: The international Ukraine peace summit was to focus Sunday on food security, avoiding a nuclear disaster and returning deported children from Russia as countries outlined building blocks towards ending the war. More than two years after Russia invaded, leaders and top officials from more than 90 states were spending the weekend at a Swiss mountainside resort for a landmark two-day summit. Eighty countries jointly called for the "territorial integrity" of Ukraine to be the basis for any peace agreement to end Russia's war, though some key developing nations at a Swiss conference did not join in. **Full report on Page 6**

Cleanest city Indore to now become green city

Bhopal: Indore in Madhya Pradesh, which won the tag of cleanest city of India consecutively for six years in the annual "swachhh" survey by the Centre, set a goal to become "green city" of the country with CM Mohan Yadav launching a mission to plant 51 lakh trees in it. **Full report on Page 4**

Police files fresh case, 1 arrested in Salman case

Mumbai: The Mumbai police registered a new case in connection with firing outside actor Salman Khan's residence and arrested a man from Rajasthan. A court remanded the accused, identified as Banwarilal Laturial Gujar (25), hailing from Bundi, in custody until June 18. **Full report on Page 4**

COUNTERPOINT



Let's introduce Stepfather's Day, Adoptive Father's Day, Foster Father's Day, Godfather's Day...



HM reviews J&K, Amarnath Yatra security ■ "Terrorism shrunk" Replicate 'zero terror' plan of J&K Valley in Jammu: Shah

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday directed the security agencies to replicate the successes achieved through the area domination and "zero terror" plan in Kashmir Valley in Jammu division. He also instructed the security stakeholders to ensure a safe and peaceful annual pilgrimage of the "Amarnath Yatra" beginning on June 29. Noting that the fight against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is in its decisive phase and the recent incidents show that terrorism has been forced to shrink from highly organised acts of violence to a mere proxy war, Mr Shah asked security agencies to replicate the successes achieved in Kashmir Valley in Jammu division. While chairing a high-level meeting in the national capital to review the prevailing security situation in the Jammu region in the wake of



Union home minister Amit Shah, J&K lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha and NSA Ajit Doval during a meeting to review the J&K security situation and the preparedness for the Amarnath Yatra in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

■ REITERATING THE zero-tolerance policy against terrorism under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi, Amit Shah said the government will leave no stone unturned to root out terrorism in J&K

recent terrorist attacks, the Union home minister asserted that the government "is determined to root out terrorism". According to official sources, Mr Shah directed

the security agencies to work in mission mode and ensure quick responses in a coordinated manner. He also stressed ensuring seamless coordination among security agencies, identifying vulnerable areas and addressing security concerns in those areas. Reiterating the government's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr Shah said the government will leave no

■ THE OFFICIALS said the Union minister was given a detailed briefing on the prevailing situation in J&K, where security forces are expected to intensify counter-terrorism operations in the coming days

stone unturned to root out terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

While appreciating the law enforcement and security agencies for the successful conduct of the Lok Sabha elections, which witnessed record voter turnout in Union territory, he said that the efforts of the Central government have yielded great positive results in the Kashmir Valley, with a significant reduction in terror-related incidents.

The officials said the Union minister was given a detailed briefing on the prevailing situation in Jammu and Kashmir, where security forces are expected to intensify counter-terrorism operations in the coming days. ■ Turn to Page 4

BJP to protest over fuel price hike in K'taka; Sidda defends

Hassan (Karnataka), June 16: The BJP will stage protests across Karnataka against the hike in petrol and diesel prices on June 17, the party's state unit president B.Y. Vijayendra said on Sunday. The Karnataka government on Saturday hiked sales tax on fuel which will make petrol and diesel costlier. Petrol prices have gone up by ₹3 per litre and diesel by ₹3.5 per litre. "We urge the chief minister to withdraw this decision immediately. Tomorrow we have organised protests across the state and we are not going to keep quiet till the hike is revoked," Mr Vijayendra said.

Meanwhile, Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah defended the hike fuel prices saying that it will ensure funding essential public services and development projects. "The government has increased VAT on petrol to 29.84 per cent and on diesel to 18.44 per cent. Even after this hike, our state's taxes on fuel remain lower than most South Indian states and similar economy-sized states like Maharashtra," the chief minister said. — PTI ■ More on Page 3

Can't scrutinise EVMs in India, says Rahul; backs Musk's claim

■ SP jumps in ■ Indian EVMs not hackable: Chandrasekhar

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said that EVMs in India are a "black box" that nobody is allowed to scrutinise, asserting that "serious concerns" are being raised about transparency in the country's electoral process. "Democracy ends up becoming a sham and prone to fraud when institutions lack accountability," Mr Gandhi said in a post on X and tagged a media report that claimed that a relative of Shiv



Rahul Gandhi

Sena's candidate, who won the polls from Mumbai's North-West seat by 48 votes, had a phone that unlocks an EVM.

The former Congress president also tagged the post on X by Elon Musk in which he talked about

eliminating EVMs. "We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high," Mr Musk said in his post.

However, former Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar countered Mr Musk's criticism of EVMs and said that the billionaire businessman's view may apply to the US and other countries where they use regular compute platforms to build "Internet-connected voting machines". "But the Indian EVMs

■ Turn to Page 4

Dilip vs Suvendu: Battle rages for Bengal BJP

Fireworks expected at party meeting today to review reasons for poll debacle

SANJAY BASAK NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Senior BJP leader Dilip Ghosh is emerging as the leading contender to assume the role of West Bengal BJP chief. Snapping at his heels is Mr Suvendu Adhikari, who is also the Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly.

This development follows the elevation of Dr Sukanta Majumder, the current state chief, to the Union council of minis-

ters. At this juncture, Dr Majumder continues to oversee West Bengal BJP affairs as the working president of the state unit. While tension continues to escalate among the state leaders, the West Bengal BJP will hold a crucial meeting to review the reasons for its debacle in the Lok Sabha polls on Monday.

Meanwhile, facing criticism over the BJP's electoral performance in the state, Mr Adhikari skipped a meeting of the



Dilip Ghosh



Suvendu Adhikari

core committee in Kolkata on Saturday. Mr Adhikari, who left for Cooch Behar, maintained that it was "more important to be with the victims of the post-poll violence than attending meetings". The BJP claims that party

functionaries in the state were being targeted by Trinamool Congress workers, particularly in the Cooch Behar region. "Nearly 270 BJP workers have taken shelter in our party offices," Mr Adhikari had claimed. He is, however, expected to attend the meeting on Monday to review the party's performance in the recently-concluded Lok Sabha polls.

Party insiders have identified a "weak" organisational structure as a

significant factor behind the BJP's recent electoral setback in West Bengal. Sources said the BJP struggled to establish its presence in a large number of polling booths in the state. Sources revealed that the BJP had failed to deploy "polling agents" and appoint "booth presidents" in 40 per cent of nearly 80,000 polling booths in the state.

As the race for West Bengal's BJP president heats up, a growing

■ Turn to Page 4

Israeli Army to 'pause' daytime fighting to allow aid enter Gaza

Jerusalem, June 16: Israel's military announced on Sunday that it would pause fighting throughout daytime hours along a route in southern Gaza to free up a backlog of humanitarian aid deliveries destined for desperate Palestinians enduring a humanitarian crisis sparked by the war, now in its ninth month. The "tactical pause" announced by the military, which applies to about 12 km of road in the Rafah area, falls far short of a complete ceasefire in

■ THE ARMY said the pause would begin at 8 am and remain in effect until 7 pm local time. It said the pauses would take place every day until further notice

the beleaguered territory that has been sought by the international community, including Israel's top ally, the United States. If it holds, the limited halt in fighting could help address some of the overwhelming needs of Palestinians that have

surged even more in recent weeks with Israel's incursion into Rafah.

The Army said the pause would begin at 8 am and remain in effect until 7 pm local time. It said the pauses would take place every day until further notice.

The pause is aimed at allowing aid trucks to reach the nearby Israel-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing, the main entry point for incoming aid, and travel safely to the Salah Adin highway, a main north-south road. — AP ■ More on Page 6



Devotees gather to take a holy dip in the Ganga river on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra at Har ki Pauri in Haridwar on Sunday. — PTI

Raut assures Opp. support to TDP in LS Speaker poll

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, JUNE 16

Offering the INDIA bloc's support to N. Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP if it fields its candidate in the Lok Sabha Speaker's election, Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed that if the Speaker is appointed from the BJP, the saffron party will break the government supporting parties like the Janata Dal (United), TDP and the LJP (Ram Vilas).

The Rajya Sabha MP said that the BJP has a history of betraying those who support them.

Mr Raul said that the NDA constituents, especially Mr Naidu, want the Speaker's post. "If the Speaker's post is not given to the other NDA parties, (PM) Narendra Modi and (Union home minister) Amit Shah will break the TDP, JD(U) and LJP. That is why the Speaker's post is very important," he said. ■ More on Page 3

Atishi: Conspiracy afoot to sabotage Delhi water supply

Seeks police patrolling for 15 days

AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Alleging that a conspiracy is being hatched to sabotage the main water pipeline amid the ongoing water crisis in the national capital, Delhi water minister Atishi on Sunday wrote to police commissioner Sanjay Arora, requesting the deployment of personnel for patrolling and protecting major pipelines for the next 15 days.

In her letter, the city minister said that on Saturday, the Delhi Jal Board's (DJB) ground patrolling team reported a major leakage in its south Delhi rising mains — the main water pipeline that carries raw water from the Sonia Vihar water treatment plant (WTP) to south Delhi.

"The leakage was near the DTL sub-station in Garhi Medhu. Our patrolling team found that several large 375-mm bolts and one 12-inch bolt had been cut from the pipeline, causing the leakage. The fact that several large bolts had been cut seems to indicate foul



Atishi

■ IN HER letter, the city minister said that on Saturday, the Delhi Jal Board's (DJB) ground patrolling team reported a major leakage in its south Delhi rising mains

play and sabotage," the letter read.

The DJB has deployed patrol teams for the main water distribution network that carries raw water to the WTPs and then from them to the main underground reservoirs in different parts of the city, Ms Atishi wrote in the letter, adding that the Delhi government has deployed teams under the supervision of ADMs to support patrol work.

Highlighting that at this juncture any foul play and sabotage will worsen the already acute water ■ Turn to Page 4

Ex-IAS officer's house, 2 trucks burnt near CM's home in Imphal

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, JUNE 16

Exposing the already fragile security scenario of trouble-torn Manipur, miscreants set an abandoned building near the high-security secretariat complex in Imphal and two trucks on fire in two separate incidents on Saturday.

Stating that the torched building was just a few hundred metres from the official bungalow of chief minister N. Biren Singh, security sources said that the abandoned house belonged to the former chief secretary of Goa and first IAS officer of Manipur late Thangkhopao Kipgen, who belonged to the Kuki community. The former IAS officer died on March 3, 2005 but his family is living in the house.

The Imphal West SP, in a statement, said that an abandoned house near "Kuki Inn, Old Lambulane... was set on fire. Immediately, teams of Imphal West police and fire tenders rushed to the spot and doused the fire... The first floor of the house is partially gutted." ■ More on Page 4



Candidates leave an exam centre after taking the UPSC Civil Services (Preliminary) exam in Gurgaon on Sunday. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

42-yr-old on run for 3 yrs arrested

New Delhi: A 42-year-old man, on the run for three murders including that of his wife over an extra-marital affair, has been arrested, the police said on Sunday. Nitin Verma had jumped his parole a year after his arrest in 2008, and had been absconding ever since, they said. "On April 19, 2008, information was received at Dwarka police station that two or three people had been murdered in street number 9, in Palam Village of Delhi," DCP Amit Goel said. When the police went to the house, they found the bodies of a man and two women, who were later found to have been killed with a sharp-edged weapon. The bodies lay soaked in blood with several wounds, Mr Goel said. There were no indications of any robbery. During the investigation, it was found that Nitin Verma murdered his pregnant wife and both his parents over an extramarital affair, he said. The officer said Verma faked an assault on him after the murders to mislead police.

Man hangs self from tree near Metro stn

New Delhi: A 48-year-old man allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from a tree near the Dwarka Metro station, the police said on Sunday. The deceased was identified as Ramesh, a resident of Bharat Vihar, they said. The police received a PCR call on Saturday reporting that a body was found hanging from a tree. Following this, a team rushed to the spot, the police said. "Crime team inspected and photographed the crime scene," a senior police officer said. During the initial investigation, the police found that Ramesh used to sell snacks around the area, he said. His body was sent for a post-mortem. Further investigation is underway, the police officer added.

Doctor booked for duping colleague

New Delhi: A doctor has alleged that she was duped and mistreated by another doctor under the pretext of helping her to organise an event at the India Habitat Centre (IHC). The victim Deepali Bhardwaj, alleged that the accused, Dr Harish Bhalla, had also illegally taken her picture, which was available on social media, and used it on the manipulated membership card of IHC belonging to his late wife, Kusum Bhalla. He did this to gain entry to the gym of the IHC. The victim alleged that Bhalla used her identity to get the membership of IHC. She said that Bhalla misused her identity in a fraudulent manner. Based on her complaint, an FIR of breach of trust has been lodged against Dr Bhalla.

OVER 2.4 LAKH BOOKED FOR WRONG PARKING

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

The Delhi traffic police has booked over 2.4 lakh violators for improper parking this year so far which is an increase of nearly 35 per cent as compared to the last year, officials said on Sunday. The traffic police has reported a significant surge in prosecutions related to improper parking violations in the current year, they said. The officials said this marked increase in enforcement is part of a broader initiative to improve traffic flow and ensure the safety of all road users within the city. Over the past several months, the Delhi traffic police has intensified its efforts to address the widespread issue of improper parking, which has been identified as a major contributor to traffic congestion and accidents. This crackdown has resulted in a noticeable increase in the number of challans issued for parking violations, they said. The police has deployed additional personnel to monitor instances of illegal parking more effectively. This measure has been instrumental in identifying and prosecuting offenders, leading to a more disciplined parking culture among motorists in the city, the officials said. "The statistics for the current year showed that police has booked 2,40,152 violators for improper parking, while the numbers were 1,77,800 in 2023," they said.

NETA'S NATTER

CONGRESS & AAP BACK TO WAR

After a brief armistice between the Congress and the AAP in the national capital for the just-concluded Lok Sabha polls, the two parties are back to their warring ways. The evanescent pact between the two parties broke ahead of the impending battle for the Delhi Assembly; water scarcity became the immediate excuse. The Delhi Congress cadre hit the streets and protested against the AAP, raising slogans like "Kharid Ke Paani Peeta Har Pariwar, Neend Me Soi Dilli Sarkar". In the wake of the



severe water crisis in the city-state, while some in Delhi Congress are demanding a special session of the Assembly to discuss the water scarcity issue, others want the imposition of the President's rule over the failure of the Arvind Kejriwal government. Mind you, the Congress insiders claim that this is just the beginning!

G-7: 'HI FRIENDS FROM #MELODI'

Hello from the Melodi team," a video Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni posted on X of herself with Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the G-7 summit in Italy, went immensely viral and triggered several memes as people showered love for the two leaders. The hearty laugh and the camaraderie visible in the video between Ms Meloni and Mr Modi indicated the strong commitment by the political leadership of both nations to further strengthen the already-close ties and bilateral strategic partnership that exist. It bodes well for both India and Italy.



BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj and other party workers demonstrate against the Delhi Jal Board in New Delhi on Sunday over the ongoing water crisis. — PTI

BJP vandalised DJB office, alleges Atishi

Slugfest continues as water woes intensify

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

In the wake of the severe water crisis, the war of words between the ruling AAP and the BJP intensified as the saffron party on Sunday upped the ante by hitting the streets in the national capital. The AAP meanwhile accused BJP workers of vandalising a Delhi Jal Board office in South Delhi. In a related development, a dispute over filling water from a common tap injured three persons in Dwarka.



Police personnel extinguish a fire during a protest by the BJP against the Delhi Jal Board in New Delhi. — PTI

The BJP, led by its state president Virendra Sachdeva, held a 'matka phod' protest at 14 major locations in Delhi against the Kejriwal government over water shortages. Delhi BJP MPs Manoj Tiwari, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Yogendra Chandolia, Kamaljeet Sehrawat and Bansuri Swaraj, along with MLAs, councilors, and office bearers participated in the protests held across the capital. The BJP also claimed that from Monday they will intensify it by staging demonstrations at 52 locations across the city. Launching a scathing attack on the AAP, Mr Sachdeva said that DJB was in profit of crores of rupees when Arvind

Kejriwal became the chief minister. "He was given charge of the DJB as chairman for over one year. It is strange that an audit report of more than one year is missing and the DJB is in a huge debt," he said. Mr Sachdeva alleged that all AAP ministers are stealing water and running a tanker mafia in Delhi. BJP MLA Ajay Mahawar, while addressing a protest at Burari, challenged Atishi to debate the water situation in the Assembly. City water minister Atishi, however, accused BJP workers of vandalising a DJB office in South Delhi and alleged that the saffron party is hatching a conspiracy against the residents. Her Cabinet colleague Saurabh Bharadwaj also echoed the same views. Ms Atishi accused the BJP of disrupting the water supply by intentionally breaking water pipelines. She also said DJB officials will file a police complaint in connection with the vandalism incident. "Will the Delhi police register an FIR? Will the Delhi lieutenant-governor take action?" she asked. Hitting back, Mr Sachdeva said, it's regrettable that instead of working to fix leakages in pipelines and check water theft the minister is trying to put blame of leakages on BJP. The locals are however reeling under the scarcity amid severe heat which at times result in minor clashes like the one in Dwarka.

NTA needs to improve: Pradhan

AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Amid the ongoing row over the Neet-UG 2024 results, Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday said that a lot of improvement is needed in the National Testing Agency (NTA). The Neet-UG exam has been embroiled in a controversy for allegations of the paper leak and use of unfair means in the examination. Speaking to the media in his constituency in Odisha on Sunday, Mr Pradhan said some issues of mismanagement have come to light at two places in connection with the Neet-UG exam. He said if the big officials of the NTA are found guilty, they will not be spared. A lot of improvement is required in the NTA. The government is concerned about this and no culprit will be

spared, Mr Pradhan said. Meanwhile, the Congress on Sunday said there are "serious questions" on the integrity of the National Testing Agency and the manner in which Neet is designed and administered. The party demanded that case should be investigated under the supervision of the Supreme Court and students should get justice at all costs. Highlighting that the Neet paper was leaked for 30 to 32 lakh rupees, Congress in a post on X said, "All these things have been confessed by the accused of paper leak, but the ministers of Modi government are not ready to accept that the paper has been leaked. 24 lakh children of the country were wronged, their dreams were crushed, for which only Modi government is responsible. But unfortunately running

NEET CONTROVERSY



Dharmendra Pradhan

away from responsibility has been an old habit of PM Modi and his ministers. Our demand is that this matter should be investigated under the supervision of the Supreme Court and students should get justice at all costs." In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "I was a member of Parliament's Standing Committee on Health and Family

Welfare between 2014 and 2019 and recall broad support for Neet. But there were MPs, especially from Tamil Nadu, who had raised concerns that Neet would privilege CBSE students and would disadvantage youth coming from non-CBSE schools." "I do think now that this CBSE issue needs proper analysis. Is Neet discriminatory? Are students from poorer backgrounds being denied opportunities? Other states like Maharashtra also have expressed grave doubts on Neet," he said. There are also serious questions on the integrity of the National Testing Agency itself and the manner in which Neet is designed and administered, he said. The NCERT itself has lost all professionalism in the last decade, Mr Ramesh claimed.

Property dealer shot dead in Usmanpur area

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

A 34-year-old property dealer was shot dead in the Usmanpur area of Northeast Delhi, the police on Sunday said. The family of the victim, Vicky, mounted a roadblock by placing his body on a road in protest against the killing. The blockade lasted for two hours. His younger brother, Sanjay, too was murdered on March 26, the police said. "Sanjay was shot dead. Three people were arrested in connection with the killing. His elder brother Vicky was shot dead Saturday night when he was returning home on his scooter," deputy commissioner of police Joy Tirkey said. The officer said a few people chased Vicky on a motorcycle in Usmanpur's Shanti mohalla area and fired three shots. "One round hit Vicky in the back of his head and led to his death. Three empty rounds were found on the spot," the DCP said, adding, the police suspect an old enmity behind the murder. A POLICE officer said a few people chased Vicky on a motorcycle in Usmanpur's Shanti mohalla area and fired three shots at him.



Relatives and police personnel outside an examination centre before the UPSC Civil Services (Preliminary) examination in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

4 labourers die, 18 injured in truck collision in Ghaziabad

Ghaziabad, June 16: Four people died and 18 were injured when the truck they were in was hit by another truck coming from behind near Muradnagar, a police officer said on Sunday. According to additional deputy commissioner of police, traffic, Ghaziabad, Veerendra Kumar, the incident happened at around 1.15 am Sunday when the trucks were passing the Peripheral Expressway under the Muradnagar police station area. The mini-truck, an Eicher Canter, was on its way from Sonipat in Haryana to Hardoi carrying some brick kiln workers. Some people got down to urinate and a truck coming from behind hit the canter in its side, causing it to overturn. "As a result, four per-

sons died, while 18 others were injured. There were 35 passengers in the canter," he said. The deceased have been identified as Mayadevi, 45, Irshad, 30, Najuman, 60, and Shamina, 20, all residents of Hardoi district, Mr Kumar told a news agency. The injured were rushed to the nearest community health centre from where they were referred to the Ghaziabad district hospital. Nine injured were sent to GTB Hospital in Delhi, Mr Kumar said. — PTI

sons died, while 18 others were injured. There were 35 passengers in the canter," he said. The deceased have been identified as Mayadevi, 45, Irshad, 30, Najuman, 60, and Shamina, 20, all residents of Hardoi district, Mr Kumar told a news agency. The injured were rushed to the nearest community health centre from where they were referred to the Ghaziabad district hospital. Nine injured were sent to GTB Hospital in Delhi, Mr Kumar said. — PTI

L-G to staff: Finish projects under rural schemes by Aug

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

In a review meeting held with agencies including DDA, MCD, I&FC Department, PWD, lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena has directed the officials to complete all awarded works of Dilli Gramodaya Abhiyan by August this year. He has directed the agencies to ensure strict monitoring of the projects, leaving no scope for any delay or compromise with the quality of works being done. The L-G was informed in the meeting that total 416 projects under Dilli Gramodaya Abhiyan will be executed at the cost of ₹418.11 crore, out of which a fund of ₹273.70 crore has already been released while the remaining amount of ₹144.41 crore is in the process of being disbursed by in a week's time. Of these 416 projects, majority are



V.K. Saxena

being executed by DDA and remaining by different agencies under DDA's supervision. During the meeting, the L-G reviewed the development works being undertaken in each district and directed the concerned district magistrates to personally monitor the progress and quality of works. The DMs will personally conduct field visits and review the progress of works periodically and the reports submitted by the concerned agencies should be counter checked. It has been directed that all under-going projects will be listed on the web portal for e-monitoring every fortnight.



Nitin Tyagi

Suspended ex-AAP MLA Nitin Tyagi jumps to BJP

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Former AAP MLA Nitin Tyagi joined BJP in the presence of city party president Virendra Sachdeva and Union minister Harsh Malhotra on Sunday at the party's state unit office along with his supporters. Mr Sachdeva said, "The entire world acknowledges India's military, economic, and cultural prowess, and its architect is our illustrious Prime Minister Narendra Modi... The Opposition in the country consists of those who are working together to hide their corruption and protect their plunder." Mr Malhotra, who is serving as the minister of state for transport said, "The AAP, which engages in politics of corruption and plunder, is losing its own people continuously and is heading towards political decline." After joining the BJP, former AAP MLA from Laxmi Nagar, Mr Tyagi said, "Anna Hazare's movement was for the welfare of society, but Arvind Kejriwal's current movement is for personal gain."

Noida woman claims centipede in ice-cream tub ordered online

Noida, June 16: A woman here has claimed she has found a centipede inside an ice-cream tub she ordered through an instant delivery app, said food safety officials, who have launched a probe into the matter. In a post on X on June 15, the woman, who identified herself as Deepa Devi, shared a picture showing the insect inside the ice-cream tub. "Finding an insect inside my Amul India ice cream was truly alarming. Quality control and food safety should never be compromised. FSSAI Publication have to take some legal action on such kind of incidents that are increasing in numbers day by day (sic)," she posted. The Noida food safety

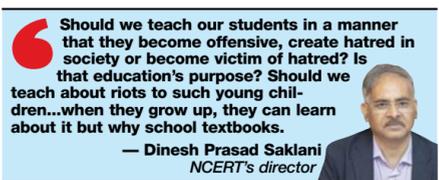
department has collected samples of the brand's ice-cream from the store of instant delivery company Blinkit's for testing, the officials said. "Sample has been taken and sent to the laboratory for testing. We are under process of registering the matter with regard violation of provisions of the Food Safety Act, 2006," chief food safety officer Akshay Goyal said. He said the food safety department took suo motu cognisance of the woman's social media post and reached out to her. The packaging date printed on the ice-cream tub was April 15, 2024, and the expiry date April 15, 2025, according to the official. — PTI

NCERT: No need to teach about riots

No attempts to saffronise curriculum, says Saklani after changes in books

New Delhi, June 17:

Rejecting accusations of saffronisation of school curriculum, NCERT's director has said that references to Gujarat riots and Babri masjid demolition were modified in school textbooks because teaching about riots "can create violent and depressed citizens." In an interaction with a news agency on Saturday, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) director Dinesh Prasad Saklani said the tweaks in textbooks are part of annual revision and should not be a subject of hue and cry. Asked about references to Gujarat riots or Babri masjid demolition being



Dinesh Prasad Saklani, NCERT's director

tweaked in NCERT textbooks, he said, "Why should we teach about riots in school textbooks? We want to create positive citizens not violent and depressed individuals." "Should we teach our students in a manner that they become offensive, create hatred in society or become victim of hatred? Is that education's purpose? Should we teach about riots

to such young children...when they grow up, they can learn about it but why school textbooks. Let them understand what happened and why it happened when they grow up. The hue and cry about the changes is irrelevant," he said. The comments by Mr Saklani come at a time when new textbooks have hit the market with several deletions and changes.

The revised Class 12 political science textbook does not mention the Babri masjid but refers to it as a "three-domed structure". It has pruned the Ayodhya section from four to two pages and deleted details from the earlier version. It instead focuses on the Supreme Court judgement that paved the way for the construction of a Ram temple at the site where the disputed structure once stood before it was torn down by Hindu activists in December 1992. The Supreme Court verdict was widely accepted in the country. The consecration of the Ram idol in the temple was performed on January 22 this year by the Prime Minister. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

'Post-poll violence': BNP team in Bengal

Kolkata: A four-member central team of the BJP, including senior leaders Ravi Shankar Prasad and Biplob Kumar Deb, arrived in Kolkata on Sunday evening to take stock of the situation after alleged violence against saffron party workers in West Bengal after the Lok Sabha elections. Mr Prasad claimed that the people of the state along with the BJP party workers were afraid and apprehensive over the alleged post-poll violence in the state. "Elections were held across the country, but violence has taken place only in West Bengal," he told reporters at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport upon their arrival to the city on a two-day visit. "If Mamataji believes in democracy, she has to reply to this," Mr Prasad, a former Union minister, said. Mr Deb, a ex-CM of Tripura, claimed that there has not been any political violence in the Northeast state since the BJP came to power there. — PTI

Parl affairs minister Rijiju meets Kharge

New Delhi: Parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday, a week ahead of the first session of the new Lok Sabha. Mr Rijiju met Mr Kharge at the Congress chief's 10 Rajaji Marg residence in what was said to be a courtesy call. The minister later shared a picture of the meeting in a post on X. "I had a pleasant courtesy meeting with Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Congress party president Shri Mallikarjun Kharge ji. He shared with me about many valuable experiences of his life. Together, we all will work for the nation," he said. Assuming charge of the ministry last week, Mr Rijiju had said there was no need for the government or the Opposition to pull each other down on the basis of numerical strength. — PTI

Majhi holds meet over Puri readiness

Bhubaneswar: Odisha chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday convened a crucial meeting with senior government officials for the smooth conduct of the upcoming Snana Purnima and Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath in Puri. Law minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, chief secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena, DGP Arun Sarangi, director of intelligence Soumendra Priyadarshi and other senior officials were present at the meeting held at the state guest house, acting as the temporary office of the new chief minister. Briefing reporters, Harichandan said the chief minister was briefed about the ongoing preparations for Snana Yatra and Rath Yatra by the chief secretary, DGP and director, intelligence. — PTI

THE TIME IS RIPE, MY ENTRY HAS BEGUN: SASIKALA

Chennai, June 16: V.K. Sasikala, confidante of late chief minister J. Jayalalithaa on Sunday dramatically said that it cannot be thought that the AIADMK is decimated in view of its recent electoral drubbing as her 'entry has begun' and vowed to usher in Amma's rule by winning the 2026 Assembly polls. She also asserted that she would question the government as the "Opposition party" when Edappadi K. Palaniswami did not ask the right questions, in his capacity as leader of opposition. After her unsuccessful attempts over a considerable period of time to regain control of the AIADMK led by Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Ms Sasikala, addressing her supporters here, said the time is ripe for entry again. "This is the time I have been telling you, there is no need for any concern," she said, apparently referring to her stand of "unifying" the party for which she also had toured several regions of the state. "For sure, people of Tamil Nadu are on our side... I am very strong... it cannot be thought that the AIADMK is finished and it is because, my entry (re-entry) has commenced," she said. — PTI



V.K. Sasikala

■ BJP will break JD-U, TDP & LJP-RV ■ INDIA bloc to back TDP's pick Speaker post must for NDA allies: Raut

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, JUNE 16

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed that if the Lok Sabha Speaker will not be appointed from the non-BJP constituents of NDA, Narendra Modi and Amit Shah would break JD (U), TDP, and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), which are alliance partners of the BJP.

J'khand govt mulls waiver of farm loan up to ₹2 lakhs

Jamshedpur/Seraikela (Jharkhand), June 16: Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren on Sunday said his government was contemplating to waive farm loan up to ₹2 lakh, building upon a previous waiver of ₹40,000, and raise the free electricity to 200 units. "We waived ₹40,000 farmers' loan in the past and are planning to increase it to ₹2 lakh. Similarly, the current base of 125 unit free electricity will be increased to 200 units," Mr Soren said, while addressing a

meeting at Gandhi Maidan in Jamshedpur to inaugurate and lay foundation of development projects.

Mr Soren emphasised the government's commitment to supporting unemployed youth by offering loans of ₹25 lakh with a 40 per cent subsidy to initiate businesses for sustainable livelihoods. "The chief minister assured that the recruitment process for 40,000 assistant teachers is underway, and that it will be completed by September." — PTI



Sanjay Raut

Modi and Amit Shah will break the TDP, Nitish Kumar-led JD (U) and Lok Janshakti Party. Which is why the Speaker's post is very important," he said. Accusing Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar of breaking

Shiv Sena by unconstitutional means, he said that Narvekar was working as a political agent of the BJP in Maharashtra Assembly. "Similar verdict can be delivered in Lok Sabha if the Speaker is belonging to the BJP. The BJP has a history of betraying those who support them," Mr Raut said while cautioning the JD (U) and TDP. While deciding the disqualification petitions filed against Shiv Sena and NCP legislators following the vertical splits in the two parties, Mr Narvekar has ruled that

the Eknath Shinde faction is the "real Shiv Sena" and the Ajit Pawar faction is the "real NCP". The Shiv Sena (UBT) leader also pointed out that the NDA government has been formed with the support of JD (U), TDP and LJP. "If the BJP gets the Lok Sabha Speaker's post, it would certainly break the JD (U), TDP and Chirag Paswan's party," Mr Raut said. He also said that the election of LS Speaker must be done in a transparent manner and the deputy speaker's post should be given to the opposition parties.

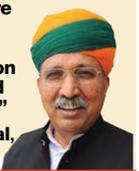


Rajasthan chief minister Bhajanlal Sharma and BJP MP Mahima Kumari during a mass marriage ceremony in Beawar on Sunday. — PTI

'Hopeful on UCC implementation' All consulted over new criminal laws coming into effect: Meghwal

Kolkata, June 16: Union law and justice minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Sunday expressed hope about implementation of the Uniform Civil Code, contending that some states have started to bring it into force. Mr Meghwal made the remark while speaking at the sidelines of a conference on 'India's progressive path in the administration of criminal justice system' here. "In the BJP's manifesto, we have mentioned about the UCC. There are states like Goa and Uttarakhand that have started implementing them. The coalition, which has been formed in the Centre, is a very strong government and there is nothing to worry about," Mr

"In the BJP's manifesto, we have mentioned about the UCC. There are states like Goa and Uttarakhand that have started implementing them. The coalition is a very strong government and there is nothing to worry about," — Arjun Ram Meghwal, Union law & justice minister



Meghwal said. Last week, soon after Mr Meghwal said that the UCC is still on the BJP's agenda, the JD(U), said that any such move must come through consensus. On the new criminal laws, Mr Meghwal said the three new laws will be introduced from July 1, dismissing Opposition allegations of not being consulted before the deci-

sion was made. He said the IPC, Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Evidence Act will be replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Act. He added that necessary training programmes and infrastructure development for implementing the laws are already

underway. "The three new laws will be implemented from July 1 for providing timely, speedy, and error-free justice," the minister said. He addressed allegations of inadequate consultation, saying, "Some people claim they were not consulted. This is untrue. The demand for change of colonial laws has been long-standing, and the process began long ago." The minister explained that although suggestions were sought from all states, only 18 states and six Union territories responded. "Even the Chief Justice of India, chief justices of 16 high courts, five law academies, and 22 law universities provided their suggestions," he said. — PTI

Fadnavis: BJP win in 4 MLC seats to create new narrative

Mumbai, June 16: The Maharashtra Legislative Council poll results will create a new narrative in the state after the BJP faced a setback in the Lok Sabha elections due to a false narrative, deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Sunday. He was referring to the Opposition's campaign in the general election that the Bharatiya Janata Party wanted 400 seats to change the Constitution and end quota for various segments of society. "The MLC polls are going to be held for four seats in Maharashtra. The NDA must outperform the Opposition and create a new narrative as we received a setback due to a false narrative in the Lok



Devendra Fadnavis

Sabha elections. Ours is a people-friendly government and we need to push this narrative further," he said at a rally in Thane. He was speaking in favour of BJP candidate for the Konkarni Constituency Niranjan Davkhare, who is pitted against the Congress' Ramesh Keer. "The false narrative of the Opposition parties disturbed our political arithmetic. The Opposition gained 43.9 per cent, while we received 43.6 per cent of votes, but they won 31 LS seats, and we could win only 17 (out of 48 seats in Maharashtra). The MLC

polling result will be announced on July 1, and we are confident of winning all the four seats," he asserted. He cautioned the party workers and emphasised the importance of management to ensure electors reach polling booths and cast votes. "We have registered nearly 2.25 lakh voters for this election, of which 99,000 are from Thane district alone. This means the party's Thane district functionaries will have a lot of work to do. If you add voters of Raigad district, the number jumps to 1.50 lakh voters. NDA functionaries will need to make extra efforts to ensure registered voters reach the polling booth on voting day," he said. — PTI

Ukraine and Russia need sincere peace efforts: Govt

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

India has called for "sincere and practical engagement" between Russia and Ukraine for resolving their conflict, following the Western-backed peace summit in Switzerland. India, represented by MEA's secretary (west) Pavan Kapoor, attended the summit but chose not to associate with any resulting communiqué or document.

New Delhi emphasised its participation aligned with its consistent approach of facilitating a peaceful resolution through dialogue and diplomacy, reiterating genuine engagement between the conflicting parties as essential. India's decision not to endorse the summit's outcomes reflects its stance that peace efforts must include Russia. This follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the G-7 summit in Italy, where Mr Modi reiterated India's commitment to a human-centric approach and encouraged dialogue and diplomacy. Despite not fully endorsing the summit's conclusions, India's attendance, albeit at an official level, underscores its desire to support a peaceful resolution. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, that started with Russia's military offensive in February 2022, has caused significant loss and destruction.

■ 'From martyr Anitha to countless students have tragically taken their own lives' Neet a 'scam', Centre must not defend it: Stalin

Chennai, June 16: Neet, "masquerading" as a measure of merit, is a "scam" and the Centre must stop defending the national test as it went against the interests of students and it is also against social justice and poor, Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin said on Sunday.

Mr Stalin, also the president of the ruling DMK said in a post on X. "The ongoing controversies around #NEET highlight its fundamentally inequitable nature. In a society where education has been denied for thousands of years, we should offer more opportunities for advancement of the oppressed. On the contrary, Neet hinders the opportunities of such students." He said, "Despite the Union education minister's defense of the National Testing Agency (NTA), recent events paint a different picture. The Gujarat police have registered an FIR over allega-

blank cheques. This conspiracy, implicating a school principal, a physics teacher, and several Neet coaching centres, underscores the urgent need for systemic change." Furthermore, the CM said, "From martyr Anitha to the countless students who have tragically taken their own lives, we have witnessed enough. Neet, an examination masquerading as a measure of merit, has repeatedly revealed itself as a pervasive scam affect-



M.K. Stalin

ing all levels of society. The Union government must stop defending this anti-student, anti-social justice, and anti-poor Neet system." S. Anitha, a Scheduled Caste Tamil girl, who knocked on the doors of the court to chase her dream to pursue a course in medicine ended her life in 2017. She is regarded as a crusader for justice by champions of social justice and mainstream political parties in Tamil Nadu. — PTI

■ Agitation will enter its 700th day on June 24 Will relocate to Andhra: TN villagers protest over airport

Chennai, June 16: Residents of Parandur and neighbouring villages in Kanchipuram district have announced their decision to relocate to Andhra Pradesh to draw the Tamil Nadu government's attention to their nearly 700-day-old protest against the greenfield airport proposed to be established near here. The Tamil Nadu government issued the notification for acquisition of land for the Parandur airport soon after the results of the Lok Sabha polls were declared. Chief minister M.K. Stalin had in August 2022 announced that a second airport for Chennai would come up at Parandur at an estimated outlay of ₹20,000 crore that can handle 10 crore passengers annually. The government's decision did not go down well

with the residents of 13 villages who immediately commenced their strike stating that the project would affect their livelihood as majority of their farm lands would be acquired for construction of the airport. However, the state government has assured that the villagers would be "adequately compensated". Nearly 15 protesters have planned to call on Chittoor district collector on June 24 and seek permission to move to

Relocated statues in Parl after talks with stakeholders: Birla Vice-prez launches Prerna Sthal

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Vice-president and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday inaugurated the newly-constructed Prerna Sthal at the Parliament House complex, where statues of important national figures including that of Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar have been relocated. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh, parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju and members of the LS and RS were also present. Addressing reporters at the event, Mr Birla said that statues of freedom fighters and national icons spread across the Parliament complex have been relocated to a new

enclosure following discussions with different stakeholders. The relocation of the statues, he said, was done as part of a landscaping and beautification exercise. Mr Birla said that statues of 15 leaders and great freedom fighters, who made important contributions to the history, culture and freedom struggle of the nation, are installed inside the complex. Noting that these statues were located at different places within the Parliament complex, he said that it was difficult for the visitors to see all the statues. He said the main objective of the construction of Prerna Sthal is that these statues within the Parliament complex should be installed in one place in the beautiful lawns.

Row in Maha over T. Raja's comment on Hindu Rashtra

MLA stoking riots in state, says Opp.

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, JUNE 16

Telangana BJP MLA T. Raja Singh's statement about Hindu Rashtra has caused an uproar in Maharashtra, with the Opposition accusing him of stoking riots in the state. The Ajit Pawar-led NCP, an ally of the saffron party, has also slammed the leader, saying he was not aware of the country's Constitution. Speaking at the Hindu Dharma Sabha at Bhiwandi, Mr Singh said, "I don't want to talk about politics. But if Hindus do not unite, Hindu Rashtra cannot be declared. Had the BJP won more than 400 seats in the recently-held Lok Sabha polls, India would have been declared a Hindu Rashtra." The BJP MLA also alleged that masjids and dargahs have been built on 100 forts in Maharashtra, and urged CM to remove them. "Why is there no law on love jihad, cow slaughter and conversion in Maharashtra?" he asked. "In Maharashtra, one lakh acres of land is owned by the Waqf Board. In India, the Waqf Board owns 10 lakh acres of land. The Waqf Board Act should be revoked and the land owned by the board should be used to build hospitals, playgrounds, colleges and houses for Hindus," he said.

SHORT TAKES

5 dead, 8 injured in 2 U'khand mishaps

Dehradun: Two cars fell in gorges in different areas of Uttarakhand's Pauri district, killing five people and injuring eight on Sunday, officials said. While one accident was reported from the Khirsu Chaubatta, the other occurred near Dudhrakhal in the Satpuli area, a day after 14 tourists were killed and 12 other injured after a tempo-traveller fell into a gorge in Rudraprayag district. Citing information received from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), the officials said, in Khirsu Chaubatta, four were killed after their car veered off the road and fell into a 200-metre-deep gorge. It is suspected that the driver lost control of the vehicle, officials said, citing information received from the SDRF. Personnel of the SDRF and police were sent to the site of the accident to rescue the victims. Three were hurt in the accident and they have been hospitalised, officials said. — PTI

Boat sinks in Ganga in Bihar, 6 missing

Patna: Six persons went missing after a boat capsized in the Ganga river in Barh sub-division of Patna district on Sunday, officials said. "The mishap took place at around 9.15 am near Umanath ganga ghat when the boat carrying 17 people, mostly belonging to a family, overturned midway. The boat overturned and sank in the middle of the Ganga river. While 11 people have been rescued so far...some of them managed to swim to safety and reach the shore of the river, six are still missing," Shubham Kumar, SDM (Barh) told reporters. On getting information, officials of district administration and police personnel reached the spot and started rescue operations with the help of locals to trace the whereabouts of the missing occupants of the ill-fated boat, said the SDM. — PTI

IIT aspirant hangs self in Kota room

Jaipur: A 17-year-old youth preparing for IIT-JEE competitive exam committed suicide by hanging himself at his room in Rajasthan's Kota city, police said on Sunday. Ayush Jaiswal, a resident of Bihar's Motihari, was staying at a paying guest house near Samrat Chowk of Mahaveer Nagar area to prepare for the competitive exam. His friends informed the paying guest house owner when he did not come out of his room till Saturday night, police said. "A boy preparing for competitive exam committed suicide on Saturday night. He was found hanging in his room. No suicide note has been recovered yet. The postmortem will be conducted after his family members arrive here," said Mahaveer Nagar SHO Mahendra Maru. He said that the paying guest owner told the police when the student did not open the door. — PTI

Building just few metres from CM Biren's official bungalow
Abandoned house, 2 trucks set on fire by miscreants in Imphal

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JUNE 16

In what has exposed the fluid security scenario of trouble-torn Manipur, miscreants set an abandoned building near the high-security secretariat complex in Imphal and two trucks — on fire in two separate incidents on Saturday. Informing that the building was just a few hundred metres from the official bungalow of chief minister N. Biren Singh, security sources said that the abandoned house belonged to the former chief secretary of Goa, and first IAS officer of Manipur late Thangkhopao Kipgen. Mr Kipgen died on March 3, 2005, and the house had been occupied by his family. Mr Kipgen belonged to the Kuki community.

THE ABANDONED house belonged to the former chief secretary of Goa and first IAS officer of Manipur late Thangkhopao Kipgen

The Imphal West superintendent of police in a statement said that an abandoned house near "Kuki Inn, Old Lambulane... was gutted by fire. Immediately, teams of Imphal west police and fire trucks rushed to the spot and doused the fire... The first floor of the house was partially gutted." "The exact cause of the fire is not known," the police said in the statement, adding a case has been filed to look into the "facts and circumstances" including short-circuit. "... Efforts are on to arrest

THE EXACT cause of the fire is not known and a case has been filed to look into the 'facts and circumstances', the police said

culpits, if any," the police said in the statement. The building that caught fire is in the same complex as the main office of the Kuki Inpi, a civil society group of the Kuki tribes that has been supporting the call by another Churachandpur-based Kuki group called the Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) for a "separate administration" carved out of Manipur. The incident also came close on the heels of fresh violence igniting in Manipur's Jiribam district, bordering Assam,

between the valley-dominant Meitei community and the hill-dominant Hmar tribes. In the second incident, an irate mob set on fire two trucks of Bharatiya Infra Project limited at Tronglaobi in Bishnupur district, bordering Kuki-Zo-dominant Churachandpur district. Security sources said that the incident occurred around 3.30 pm, when four trucks of the private company were heading towards Singhat in Churachandpur carrying construction materials. Police said that two of the four trucks were set on fire. A team from the Moirang police station rescued the remaining trucks, which were later escorted to Imphal, police added.

'G-20 stands with India's concerns for Global South'

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Current G-20 Chair Brazil stands with India in voicing the concerns of the Global South. Brazilian ambassador to India Kenneth H. da Nobrega has said that trade ties with India are expected to strengthen enormously in the years to come. Speaking at a recent function in the capital to mark the ninth-anniversary celebrations of the C.D. Foundation, an NGO, the ambassador said Brazil has been working with India for the past several decades including in organisations like the G-20 and Brics, adding that both nations are looking at the rapid growth in bilateral ties especially in the economic sphere. Delivering his address at the function, the Brazilian envoy said that in the past nine months, there have been a whopping 21 Brazilian business and trade missions to India and that many Indian trade missions have also visited Brazil. Mr Nobrega said that despite the fact that there is a large Indian diaspora (due to historical reasons) in several countries in the Caribbean and Latin American region like Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil does not have a large Indian diaspora but asserted that nevertheless, shared linkages between India and Brazil remain strong.



Devotees take a dip in the Ganga river on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra in Patna on Sunday. — PTI

Plantation of 51L saplings to cost ₹25 crore
Cleanest city Indore set to turn green, CM to launch tree drive

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 16

Indore in Madhya Pradesh, which won the tag of the cleanest city consecutively for six years in the annual "swachh" survey, set a goal to become the "green city" of the country with chief minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday launching a mission to plant 51 lakh trees in it. Unveiling the plantation project in Indore, Mr Yadav hailed it as a novel idea to check climate change and announced that Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) and the state forest department would allocate ₹10 crore each for the project. "Swachh Indore is now heading for green Indore



Mohan Yadav

around 10 lakh saplings have so far been arranged. While 5.5 lakh saplings would be arranged from the nursery of the state forest department, IMC has committed to provide 1.5 lakh saplings for the project. Around ten lakh saplings would be arranged by Indore zilla parishad. The remaining ₹30 lakh saplings would be procured from the districts of Jhabua, Khargone and Khandwa at ₹15 per piece. "The private nurseries will also be approached if there would be any shortage of saplings", Indore smart city development CEO Mr Divyank Singh said. State urban development minister Kailash Vijayvargiya is the brain behind the project.

Battle rages for West Bengal BJP

Continued from Page 1
faction within the state unit is rooting for Mr Ghosh's return to the post. Mr Ghosh was credited with a remarkable surge in the BJP's fortunes in West Bengal during his tenure as state party president. It was noted that during Mr Ghosh's tenure as state chief, the BJP's vote share had soared from a modest 10 per cent to an impressive 39 per cent and the BJP transformed its legislative presence, increasing from a mere three members of the Legislative Assembly to a formidable 77 MLAs in the 2021 Assembly elections. In the 2019 general election, with Mr Ghosh at the helm, the BJP captured 18 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal. Those rallying behind Mr Ghosh went on to claim that the BJP's "structural coherence and electoral strategy" have "weakened" since Mr Ghosh stepped down. Besides Mr Adhikari, the other name floating was of Jyotirmoy Singh Mahato, who won by a slender margin from Purulia Lok Sabha berth. However, a large section of party leaders indicated that he might "not be effective" as a state unit

president. With the Assembly elections due in 2026, the BJP's Minority Morcha in the state is getting ready to make an all-out attempt to reach out to the Muslims, who comprise nearly 30 per cent of the state's population. Speaking in this newspaper, state Minority Morcha chief Charles Nandi felt that there was a major "communication gap" between the BJP and Muslims in the state. For Mr Nandi, this particular gap "needs to be bridged". Reminded of the Islamophobic rhetoric by top BJP leaders during the election campaign, Mr Nandi maintained that the BJP was "not against the minority community". Speaking of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pet slogan "Sabka saath, sabka vikas", Mr Nandi also spoke of stepping up the "Modi-mitra" campaign, which the morcha had initiated ahead of the general election. However, with trends indicating that over 90 per cent of Muslim voters in West Bengal leaning towards the Trinamul Congress, Mr Nandi is now planning to target the intelligentsia of this particular community.

'Conspiracy afoot to sabotage water supply'

Continued from Page 1
shortage being faced by the people, Ms Atishi requested Mr Arora for the deployment of police patrols to protect the city's major pipelines for the next 15 days and prevent "miscreants or people with ulterior motives" from tampering with water pipelines. "Our maintenance team worked for 6 hours and repaired the leakage, but this meant that we had to stop pumping water for 6 hours and 20 MGD of water was not pumped during this time. As a consequence, a further 25 per cent of the water short-

age will be experienced," the minister said. "Due to the shortage of water being received in the Yamuna, water production has fallen by around 70 MGD. Many parts of Delhi are experiencing a water shortage. In this situation, every drop of water becomes precious," the letter said. Earlier in the day, a delegation of the AAP MLAs also visited the residence of Union Jal Shakti minister C.R. Paatil over water crisis issues and submitted a letter urging him to facilitate relief by ensuring Haryana supplies water to Delhi.

'Can't scrutinise EVMs in India'

Continued from Page 1
are custom designed, secure and isolated from any network or media — no connectivity, no Bluetooth, no wifi and no internet. There is no way in. Factory-programmed controllers that cannot be reprogrammed," Mr Chandrasekhar said in a post on X, adding, "Electronic voting machines can be architected and built right as India has done. We would be happy to run a tutorial, Elon." In a post on X in Hindi, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said, "Technology is meant to solve problems, but if it becomes the cause of prob-

lems, then its use should be stopped." Targeting the BJP over the issue, Mr Yadav said, "Today, when fears of EVM tampering are being expressed in many elections around the world and the world's renowned technology experts are openly writing about the danger of EVM tampering, then what is the reason behind the insistence on using EVM? The BJP should clarify this." The Opposition have been raising concerns over EVMs for some time now and are demanding a 100 per cent count of the VVPAT slips, which was not allowed.

'Replicate zero terror plan of J&K Valley in Jammu'

Continued from Page 1
The operations against terrorists will be carried out in line with the Prime Minister's directive to deploy the "full spectrum of counter-terror capabilities" after a spate of terror incidents, including an attack on a bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi district of the Jammu region. Mr Shah also chaired a meeting to review the preparations for the annual Amarnath pilgrimage, which is scheduled to begin on June 29, the officials said, adding that during the deliberation, the Union home minister was given a thorough briefing on the measures taken to ensure a safe and peaceful yatra. National security adviser Ajit Doval, lieutenant-governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, Army Chief Gen. Manoj Pandey, Army Chief-designate Lt. Gen. Upendra Dwivedi, Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla, director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka, CRPF director-general Anish Dayal Singh, BSF director-general Nitin Agarwal, Jammu and Kashmir director-general

of police R.R. Swain and other top security officials attended the meeting. Earlier on Friday, Mr Shah was briefed about the security situation in J&K, the deployment of forces along the International Border and the Line of Control, infiltration attempts, the status of ongoing anti-terror operations and the strength of terrorists operating in the UT, sources said. Terrorists struck at four places in Reasi, Kathua and Doda districts of Jammu and Kashmir within four days last week, killing nine pilgrims and a CRPF jawan and leaving seven security personnel and several others injured. Two suspected Pakistani terrorists were also killed in an encounter with security forces in Kathua district. The Prime Minister spoke to the Union home minister on June 13 and discussed the deployment of security forces and counter-terror operations. He had also spoken to the J&K L-G and took stock of the situation in the Union territory.

IAF's Rafale jets take part in Red Flag drill in Alaska

India to host multinational air exercise Tarang Shakti in Aug

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

Indian Air Force's Rafale fighter jets participated in an intense multinational air exercise in near sub-freezing temperatures in Alaska (USA) with the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF), Royal Air Force (RAF) of the United Kingdom, Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf), German Luftwaffe, and the US Air Force (USAF). This comes when India will also host its first-ever multinational air exercise, Tarang Shakti-2024, likely to be held around August this year, will see participation from the US, the UK, France and Germany among others. IAF contingent participated in the Exercise Red Flag 2024, conducted at the Eielson Air Force

THE IAF crew members were actively involved in mission planning and also assumed the role of mission leaders for designated missions during the exercise

Base, Alaska, from June 4 to 14. This was the second edition of the exercise Red Flag 2024, which is an advanced aerial combat training exercise, held four times a year by the US Air Force. IAF Rafale aircraft operated alongside F-16 and F-15s of the RSAF and USAF and the USAF A-10 aircraft. The missions included beyond visual range (BVR) combat exercises as a part of large force engagements (LFE), in offensive counter-air and air defence roles. The IAF crew members were

actively involved in mission planning and also assumed the role of mission leaders for designated missions during the exercise. An Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent participated with the Rafale aircraft and personnel comprising aircrew, technicians, engineers, controllers and subject matter experts. The transatlantic ferry of Rafale fighter aircraft was enabled by the IL-78 air-to-air refuellers (AAR), while the transportation of personnel and equipment was undertaken by the C-17 Globemaster aircraft. The contingent landed at Eielson, USAF base in Alaska on 29 May. This was the first time the IAF Rafale aircraft participated in exercise Red Flag.

Salman home firing: Police files new case

1 more held from Raj for intimidation

Mumbai, June 16: The Mumbai police registered a new case in connection with firing outside actor Salman Khan's residence in April and arrested a 25-year-old man from Rajasthan on charges of criminal intimidation, an official said on Sunday.



The accused, identified as Banwarilal Laturial Gujar (25) hailing from Bundi in Rajasthan, was brought to Mumbai, where a court remanded him in police custody till June 18, the crime branch official said. Gurjar had allegedly uploaded a video on his YouTube channel in which he said "Lawrence Bishnoi, Goldy Brar and other gang members are with me and I am going to kill Salman Khan as he has not apologised as yet", the official said. The accused made the video on a highway in Rajasthan and uploaded it on his channel. Considering the seriousness of the case, a team was sent to Rajasthan for investigation and it apprehended the accused, the official said, adding the case has been registered at a cyber police station in Mumbai. "We are checking if accused Gujar having any previous criminal background. He has been arrested under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code, including 506(2) (punishment for criminal intimidation), and provisions of the Information Technology (IT) Act. Further investigation is underway," the official said. Two motorbike-borne men fired multiple rounds outside Salman Khan's residence in Bandra area here in the early hours of April 14. — PTI

Game zone fire: 2 civic staff held for tampering of docus

Rajkot, June 16: Two employees of the Rajkot Municipal Corporation (RMC) have been arrested for allegedly making certain changes in documents pertaining to a game zone after a fire there last month claimed 27 lives, police said on Sunday. With this, 12, including six government staff, have so been held in connection with the May 25 incident at the TRP game zone in Gujarat's Rajkot city, they said. The city crime branch

on Saturday arrested RMC's assistant town planning officer Rajesh Makwana and assistant engineer Jaideep Chaudhary for their alleged involvement in making changes in an official register after the fire incident, deputy commissioner of police, crime, Parthrajsinh Gohil said. "They made certain changes in government papers related to the TRP game zone after fire incident. They also forged documents," he said. — PTI



People enjoy at Mumbai's Juhu Beach on Sunday. — PTI

'India set to be 6th nation to have deep sea mission'

New Delhi, June 16: Union earth sciences minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said India is set to become the sixth country to have its own deep-sea mission. Chairing a meeting to discuss the ministry's 100-day action plan, Mr Singh expressed pride and happiness on the progress of the deep-sea mission and India being among the very few nations to achieve this feat. He asked institutes to focus on achieving a resilient blue economy to empower people dependent on the ocean and its energy for livelihood. Mr Singh said the deep-sea mission is not limited to mineral exploration but development of ocean sci-

ences and exploration of flora and fauna and conservation of marine biodiversity. He lauded the National Institute of Ocean Technology's efforts for the development of Matsyayaan 6000, which can dive 6,000 metres deep into the ocean. Taking stock of the progress, he directed officials to complete the first stage of the vessel's harbour trial by September and finish the subsequent ones by 2026. Mr Singh appreciated the ministry for working in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation to develop a "titanium hull" for the vessel that can bear extreme pressure. — PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

17 JUNE 2024

A lot of gains for India and Ukraine at G-7 Italy meet

There is a lot to be said for continuity as Prime Minister Narendra Modi may have gleaned from his meeting with the leaders of the rich G-7 nations and the Pope. Familiarity seems to have spurred even more of the bonhomie that India's leader has built up and sustained with the leaders of the free world as was seen in the happy images rolling out of the luxury resort of Borgo Egnazia in Italy where a set of the world's most influential leaders met and deliberated.

India was only one of the partner countries of the summit — Senegal, South Africa and Argentina were others — and there was a host of invitees from other countries too. This was, however, another conclave at which the Prime Minister could bask in key interactions with leaders signifying how much the world needs the now economically powerful India as a partner and ally.

Whatever may be the compulsions of a reduced mandate in the Lok Sabha polls and its effect on the Modi 3.0 government, it is clear India's image is intact abroad and useful too as in the G-7 emphasising on the India-Europe Corridor, formally known as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) when announced on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in New Delhi last year, and deciding to act on the need to improve strategic ties amid West Asia tensions. The Prime Minister's warm meeting with Pope Francis was another positive takeaway from the G-7 summit even as Mr Modi's prominent central place in the G-7 "family photo" and his joy at an affable meeting with the host, Ms Giorgia Meloni, Prime Minister of Italy, was not to be missed. Given the greater inclusiveness and diversity of his NDA government and his own overtures to the Christian community in Kerala before the polls, the outreach to the head of the Catholic Church and an invitation to visit India portends well though it is the pontiff's health that might determine if he can make the trip.

The two-day summit was so crammed with meetings and hectic bilateral activity that PM Modi could only get to shake hands with the US President Joe Biden as well as greet the Canadian PM Justin Trudeau. There may be pressing issues with the US and Canada on purported extraterritorial killings by India, but they may be taken up at lower official levels rather than in face-to-face meetings among leaders.

The other visiting leader who had substantial takeaways from the summit in Italy was Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy whose forces have lost considerable ground in the east to Russian invasion. Mr Zelenskyy also signed a 10-year bilateral security deal with the US by which Washington and Kyiv will work to build and maintain Ukraine's defence and deterrence capability as well as support its economic security. Of course, Russia's President Vladimir Putin views this move by which the interest on Russia's frozen assets would help pay the interest on the G-7 \$50 bn loan to Ukraine as "theft".

Mr Zelenskyy also signed a 10-year bilateral security deal with the US by which Washington and Kyiv will work to build and maintain Ukraine's defence and deterrence capability as well as support its economic security. Of course, Russia's President Vladimir Putin views this move by which the interest on Russia's frozen assets would help pay the interest on the G-7 \$50 bn loan to Ukraine as "theft".

Show of unity by Opp. in Maha

One of the key states that stopped the BJP from getting a simple majority in the Lok Sabha elections is Maharashtra where the unity of purpose paid for the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA), the Opposition alliance of three major parties. The MVA has now decided to fight the Assembly elections, due for later this year, in a similar way. The move could make it difficult for Mahayuti, the ruling alliance, to return to power, if the voting pattern of the Lok Sabha elections offers an indication.

Two of the major constituents of the MVA — the Shiv Sena of Uddhav Thackeray and the NCP of Sharad Pawar — each had a score to settle with the BJP which, they believe, engineered splits in their parties to form the state government, led by Eknath Shinde. To add insult to their injuries, the Election Commission had recognised the rebels as the real party though their legacies lay with those in the Opposition. The results of the Lok Sabha elections, however, offered the parties a sense of legitimacy. The combined Opposition won 31 of the 48 seats leaving only 17 to the NDA. While the Congress bagged 14 seats including that of a rebel who returned to the party fold, Mr Thackeray's Sena won nine seats and Mr Pawar's party eight against seven and one, respectively, by the two other factions.

Now that the Opposition has learned that it pays to take on the mighty enemy united, the alliance partners have decided that the three parties and their potential allies will share seats mainly on the winnability factor with "no big brother" among them. On the other side of the divide, the NDA in the state, led by the BJP, will have to go the extra mile if it wants to keep the flock together, as reports of the rebels returning to their parent parties have already started appearing. The negotiating skills of the parties in the two fronts will be put to test in coming days which will play a substantial role in deciding who wins the Assembly race.

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Time to steer Delhi-Dhaka ties out of troubled waters



Debatri Dhar

Animal Instincts

Last month a video of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the leader of the Awami League party, went viral, in which she was seen questioning the "boycott Indian products" social media campaign that was launched by the country's main Opposition, the BNP. In the video, the Prime Minister was scathingly reminding male members of the Opposition about their wives' Indian saris. "Why are they not taking away their wives' saris and setting them on fire?" she asked at a party meeting, leading to an Opposition leader's reply that his wife had a quilt made out of hers. Analysts have pointed to how the sari has since become a political football.

India-Bangladesh bilateral ties span defence, trade and investments, water and energy, and go back a long way. The 1947 Partition of India, which led to the creation of West and East Pakistan, would soon witness allegations of cultural discrimination and human rights abuses inflicted on the Bengali population by West Pakistan. In 1970, the Bengali Awami League won a decisive majority in Pakistan's general election. Refusing a democratic transfer of power, the Pakistan Army launched a brutal crackdown. In March 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman issued a call to the Bangladeshi nationalist movement; in retaliation, the Pakistani Army launched Operation Searchlight, leading to the killing of an estimated 300,000 to 3,000,000 Bengali civilians. The operation led to a large refugee influx into India, with the numbers swelling to 10 million. A reprehensible aspect of the war were camps for the systematic rape and forced impregnation of Bengali women. Thousands of these "birangonas", or warrior women, caught in the big battles between men, later gave testimony about their months-

long sexualised torture, even as many were abandoned by their community.

Like the people and products of various countries, such as the "Indian sari", nations themselves too sometimes become political footballs. This was the challenge the birth of Bangladesh faced, becoming as it had a football not so much between India and Pakistan, but between two greater powers, the United States and the People's Republic of China. New Delhi made repeated attempts to reach out to Washington for help, especially since the refugee influx, while welcome on moral grounds, was becoming economically unsustainable for India, given the latter's already extremely high population and density per capita. However, Washington chose to support Islamabad and to deny the Bengali genocide, terming it as an exaggeration, if not a lie. A key reason for this was that Pakistan was America's only channel to China, as Henry Kissinger noted in his White House papers. At that time, then US President Richard Nixon and Kissinger, who would later be his secretary of state, were trying to build relations with Beijing to negate the Soviet influence by taking advantage of the Sino-Soviet conflict. The Nixon administration even sent the Seventh Fleet led by the nuclear-powered aircraft-carrier USS Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal to aid Pakistan against India.

Ultimately, India negotiated a friendship treaty with Soviet Union and, following a December attack by Pakistan, provided military support to the Mukti Bahini. Under the instructions of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and the strategic leadership of Army chief Gen. (later Field-Marshal) Sam Manekshaw, the Indian Army helped bring about a quick victory, leading to Pakistan's surrender on December 16, 1971. Recently, US ambassador

Beijing has proposed financing large development projects on the Teesta, which have drawn criticism from environmentalists... New Delhi must find a durable water-sharing solution

to India Eric Garcetti acknowledged that America's "tilt" towards Pakistan and China in the 1970s had led to "India thinking of America as not a trustworthy partner". Taking a principled stand, New Delhi repatriated, without retaliation, nearly one lakh Pakistani prisoners of war under the 1972 Shimla Agreement. Later described by Bangladesh's Constitution as father of the nation, Sk Mujibur Rahman, "Bangabandhu", also became a friend to India. After his assassination in 1975, his daughter has continued that friendship.

Now back in power for a third term, Sheikh Hasina alleged American interference in Bangladesh's general election, claiming the US wants a regime change, arguably to bring in the conservative BNP. Meanwhile, many are aware that the Bangladeshi anti-India hashtags are similar to the "India Out" ones in the Maldives backed by China (no arguments here), a bulk of these hashtags originating from the social media handles of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the US and other Western nations. Given these impending geopolitical realities, outstanding bilateral issues with Dhaka need to be diplomatically addressed on a priority basis.

A critical one pertains to the Teesta water-sharing, as the agreement has been stalled since 2011. The Teesta flows out from India's Sikkim, and through West Bengal, before entering Bangladesh. It's the fourth largest river system shared with Bangladesh after the Ganga, Brahmaputra and Meghna. During the drafting of the 1947 Boundary Commission Report demarcating the boundary between India and then-East Pakistan, the Muslim League had asked for

Darjeeling and other districts in Teesta's catchment area, the bulk of which was given to India.

Despite subsequent efforts under the India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission and the Ganga Water Treaty, and visits by successive Indian Prime Ministers, the water issues are yet to be resolved.

Beijing has proposed financing large development projects on the Teesta, which have drawn criticism from environmentalists. Some hydropower is needed in this context, so New Delhi must remain proactively engaged in Bangladesh's sustainable development, and to find a durable water-sharing solution. Since releasing more water to Bangladesh can adversely impact irrigation in some poorer districts in West Bengal, chief minister Mamata Banerjee should be invited to the consultative process, for the Centre and the state to collaborate in the interest of the nation. The renewal of the Ganga Water Treaty should also be on the agenda.

In accordance with its "neighbourhood first" policy, New Delhi was right to invite the Bangladesh Prime Minister to the G-20 summit hosted by India last year and, more recently, to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third-term swearing-in ceremony. Bangladesh will no doubt evaluate China's debt-and-encirclement traps. Geopolitical equations do change, so India on its part must hold on strongly to this friendly nation, whose national anthem 'Amar Sonar Bangla' was composed by none other than our own Rabindranath Tagore, who also composed India's national anthem. Meanwhile, I am visiting Kolkata, preparing for a lecture and enjoying wearing saris, including Benarasi and Dhakai. Footballs, even political ones, can sometimes have a mind of their own, and the timeless sari that has always beckoned with its beauty is not fading out of sight anytime soon.

Dr Debatri Dhar is an author, educator, academic, consultant, and founder of the Hummingbird Global Leaders Forum. She is a women's studies and global studies expert.

LETTERS DON'T FORGIVE 'EM

For now the MVA constituents, Shiv Sena and the NCP have declared there is going to be no ghar wapsi for those who had left them. The victory of the INDIA group in Maharashtra must have made those who had been lured by the BJP not a little uneasy and there have been constant news reports that many wanted to come back. Though for the present the doors of the Thackeray and Sharad Pawar groups appear to be closed, in politics, one can never say never. Nitish Kumar is the prime example. A principled stand on the issue will go a long way in restoring public confidence in the integrity of the political class.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

WESTERN BLINDNESS

A NUMBER of countries' leaders gathered in Switzerland for the peace summit addressing the Ukraine and Russia conflict. Countries announced consignments and humanitarian aid for Ukraine. Meanwhile, the Palestine and Israel conflict, ongoing since October 7, 2023, has left a trail of destruction. Homes, habitats, and shelters have been dismantled. People are facing poor accommodation, a lack of medical services, a crisis of nourishment, and drought. These issues are as evident as the nose on one's face. Yet, the world remains as silent as a grave. Why is this happening?

Jakir Hussain
Kanpur

IMEC VS BRI

THE G7 SUMMIT has committed to supporting the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a project aimed at developing infrastructure like ports, railways, roads, sea routes, and pipelines to enhance trade between India, the Arabian Peninsula, the Mediterranean region, and Europe. Geopolitically, IMEC is seen as a counterweight to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aiming to curb China's growing influence in the Eurasian region.

Amarjeet Kumar
Hazariabagh

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Kajal Chatterjee (June 16). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Devi Kar



Encourage kids to think, raise questions: Vital for democracy

India's recent Lok Sabha elections unfolded very dramatically and though we couldn't quite trust the print media and TV channels, we were vastly engaged as well as entertained by the social media. I was in New York during this entire period and was drawn by the political story that was simmering there around Donald Trump's trial over the "hush money cases". It was like an addictive mini serial and finally the former US President was declared guilty on all 34 counts for which he had been charged. This is the first time in history that a felon would be a candidate for the White House.

Another arena of theatre was the issue of the Gaza war, while Americans were supplying potent weapons to Israel. I read about the unrest in different US campuses and the fiery speeches of valedictorians being shouted down at graduation ceremonies. Next, I saw a prominent opinion piece titled "Harvard Should Say Less, Maybe All Schools Should" (written by Noah Feldman and Alison Feldman, professors of law and philosophy at Harvard).

Now there is a big controversy around this as colleges and universities jealously guard their right to speak freely, to dissent and to speak or write publicly against their school's as well as the nation's policy. Till recently, any criticism of the Indian central government's policy was deemed "seditious" and "anti-national", but the very definition of democracy implies discussion, differences of opinion,

argument and activism. Notwithstanding the earlier protests, Harvard has decided that in the absence of a formal policy governing the issue of an official statement, university leaders "can and should speak out publicly to promote and protect the core function of the university, which is to create an environment suitable for pursuing truth through research, scholarship and teaching". However, it is not their business to side with Israel or Ukraine or Russia or to show sympathy for Gaza. Universities understand the need to exist meaningfully in a polarised world.

So far as our schools in India are concerned, the media never publishes the discussions and arguments that take place in schools, and I am sure such conversations are not discouraged in the schools that want their students to think for themselves. The pursuit of truth is the central pillar of education and a school should not limit its teachings to the prescribed course material.

I am afraid that when it comes to social science subjects such as history, civics, sociology or even political science, students are usually taught only facts that are relevant to the topics prescribed in their syllabus and the comments are restricted to those mentioned in the prescribed course books. If at all there is any discussion of different views, students tend to present what they hear at home. If there are different viewpoints in class, the teachers prefer to appear neutral. They explain things diplo-

matically, keeping different sides happy. I have not yet heard of school teachers trying to present their own political views forcefully nor school students arguing powerfully with their teachers. The total absence of discussion of significant or disputed policies is a big flaw in our approach to teaching and learning. If, broadly speaking, education is taken as the pursuit of truth, discussion and differences of opinion must be accommodated, otherwise we end up nurturing students who have passively received knowledge that has been established and conveyed by others and they have not been encouraged to process knowledge independently.

Thus, it is important for people, young and old, to keep questioning, reflecting and pursuing the truth for themselves. While thinking about this, I sometimes, come to the conclusion that the most important virtue one can have is courage — courage to stand up to people, courage to say something different, courage to not join the herd and courage (and basic common sense) to not be brainwashed by people in authority.

In the school context, it is perhaps important to include an important caveat. We have to make sure that these discussions and arguments take place in an environment that is conducive to thinking and learning. Perhaps it is the worry that classrooms would be transformed into battlegrounds, that factions would emerge and the ultimately harmony would be destroyed that makes schools extra cau-

tious about allowing political discussions in school. However, if the whole exercise is taken as part of the education system and teachers are adept at managing conflict as well as facilitating discussions, the school would become a rich learning ground where children don't receive information passively or accept the beliefs of the adults around them unquestioningly.

Nation building in a democracy starts with the development of responsible citizens and the building blocks are discussion, argument, consensus and the acceptance of differences. If these practices are not adopted in school, we will not have a mature nation where civilised arguments take place in Parliament, political opponents are not looked upon as enemies, personal attacks are not made and hate speeches are not resorted to.

We should be proud of our democracy and proud of our ordinary citizens who are, in many cases, given attention only before elections. However, it is imperative that young people should be educated to become responsible citizens not only by observing Independence Day and Republic Day or supporting the Indian team in sports competitions but many of them should want to participate in the actual governance of the country. India needs able and upright political leaders.

The writer is a veteran school educator based in Kolkata

SHORT TAKES

POPE APPEALS FOR HALT TO CONGO VIOLENCE

Vatican City, June 16: Pope Francis on Sunday deplored a surge of violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the victims of which he said included many Christians who had been killed for their faith. "Painful news continues to arrive of clashes and massacres in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo," the 87-year-old said at the end of Sunday Angelus prayer. "I appeal to the national authorities and global communities to do everything possible to stop the violence and safeguard the lives of civilians."

NEW CALEDONIA AIRPORT TO REOPEN TODAY

Noumea, June 16: New Caledonia's main international airport will reopen from Monday after being shut last month during a spate of deadly unrest, the high commission in the French Pacific territory said, adding a curfew would also be reduced. The commission said that it had "decided to reopen the airport during the day" and to "push back to 8:00 pm the start of the curfew as of Monday". The measures had been introduced after violence broke out on May 13 over a controversial voting reform.

AF TALIBAN GOVT WILL ATTEND U.N. TALKS IN DOHA

Kabul, June 16: Taliban authorities will attend the third round of United Nations-hosted talks on Afghanistan in the Qatari capital, a government spokesman said on Sunday, after snubbing an invitation to the previous round. The Taliban government's participation in the meet of foreign special envoys to Afghanistan had been in doubt after it was not included in the first round and then refused an invitation to February's second round. "A delegation of the Islamic Emirate will participate in the coming Doha conference."

CHINA PREMIER TO OZ: PUT ASIDE DIFFERENCES

Melbourne, June 16: Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to Australia on Sunday focused on positive aspects of the bilateral relationship, including shared giant pandas and a rebounding wine trade, as he promised a new breeding pair of the rare bears and urged both countries to put aside their differences. China's most powerful leader after President Xi Jinping arrived on Saturday in Adelaide, which has produced most of the Australian wine entering China since crippling tariffs were lifted in March that had effectively ended a \$790 million a year trade since 2020.

2 KILLED, MANY WOUNDED IN TEXAS SHOOTING

Texas, June 16: A shooting in a Texas park left two people dead and several wounded on Saturday, authorities said. The victims were shot shortly before 11 pm Saturday during a Juneteenth celebration at Old Settlers Park in Round Rock, about 30.5 km north of Austin. An altercation began between two groups during a concert at the event and someone started shooting. Round Rock police chief Allen Banks said during a news conference at the scene. The two victims who were pronounced dead at the scene were not involved in the altercation, Allen said.

CHINA'S SOUTH FLOODED, VERY HOT ELSEWHERE

Hong Kong, June 16: China's National Meteorological Centre on Sunday issued an alert for high temperatures as multiple regions across the country experience sweltering heat, while many southern provinces issued severe flood warnings due to heavy rains. The intensity of high temperatures is expected to decrease in north China and regions between the Yellow River and the Huaihe River, the centre said. The centre forecast maximum temperatures of 37-39 degrees Celsius (99-102 degrees Fahrenheit) in parts of Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Henan on Sunday.

Nuke fears, food security in focus at Ukraine peace meet

Zelensky says Putin not ready for peace, calls for full Russian withdrawal

Burgenstock, June 16: The international Ukraine peace summit focused on Sunday on food security, avoiding a nuclear disaster and returning deported children from Russia as countries outlined building blocks towards ending the war.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday that Russia was not ready for a "just peace", insisting Kyiv was open to immediate talks if Moscow pulls its troops out of the country.

The Ukrainian leader was speaking at the end of a major diplomatic summit in Switzerland.

"Russia and their leadership are not ready for a just peace, this is a fact," Zelensky told reporters.

More than two years after Russia invaded, leaders and top officials from more than 90 countries were spending the weekend at a Swiss mountain-side resort for a landmark two-day meet dedicated to resolving the largest European conflict since World War II.

After world leaders stood together to offer their support on Saturday, Zelensky voiced hope of garnering global agreement around a proposal to end the war that he could eventually present to Moscow. "We must decide together what a just peace means for the world and how it can be achieved in a lasting way," he told assembled



Ukrainian servicemen and LGBTQ community activists carry a banner bearing the photographs of fallen Ukrainian servicemen as they take part in the "Kyiv Pride 2024" in Kyiv, on Sunday.

leaders at the luxury Burgenstock retreat overlooking Lake Lucerne.

The summit, snubbed by Russia and its ally China, comes as Ukraine is struggling on the battlefield, where it is outmanned and outgunned.

On Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin demanded Kyiv's effective surrender as a basis for peace talks.

Putin's call for Ukraine to withdraw from the south and east of the country were widely dismissed at the summit. — AFP

NORWAY'S \$103MN TO 'POWER' UKRAINE

Oslo, June 16: Norway said on Sunday that it would provide \$103 million to Ukraine to help repair its energy infrastructure and secure the country's electricity supply before next winter.

"Russia is carrying out massive, systematic attacks to paralyse the power grid, but Ukrainians are working day and night to maintain essential electricity supplies for the population," Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said. — AFP

According to new estimates, more than 50 per cent of Ukraine's power production capacity has been destroyed, the government said.

"We are in close dialogue with Ukraine on how it can use these funds most effectively. The Ukrainians themselves have the best insight into what is needed," Store said, adding that it was important to begin infrastructure repairs before the onset of winter. — AFP

RUSSIAN FORCES KILL I.S.-LINKED HOSTAGE TAKERS

Moscow, June 16: Russian special forces freed two prison guards and shot dead six inmates linked to the Islamic State militant group who had taken them hostage at a detention centre in the city of Rostov on Sunday, Russian media said.

State media said that some of the men had been convicted of terrorism offences and were accused of affiliation with the Islamic State militant group, which claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a Moscow concert hall in March.

The six hostage takers, one of whom wore a headband with the flag used by the Islamic State that bears an Arabic inscription, knocked out window bars and climbed down several floors by rope before taking the guards hostage with a knife and fire axe.

In video published by the 112 Telegram channel, one was shown brandishing a knife beside one of the bound guards in Rostov-on-Don.

In negotiations with the authorities, they demanded free passage out of the prison.

But Russian special forces decided to storm the prison. — Reuters

Bibi denounces military plans Israel to 'pause' day fighting so Gaza can get aid

Jerusalem, Dubai, Cairo, June 16: The Israeli military said on Sunday it would hold daily tactical pauses in military activity along a main road in southern Gaza to allow more aid to flow into the enclave, where international aid organisations have warned of a growing humanitarian crisis. But Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu criticised plans announced by the military to hold daily tactical pauses in fighting to facilitate aid delivery into the Palestinian enclave.

"When the Prime Minister heard the reports of an 11-hour humanitarian pause in the morning, he turned to his military secretary and made it clear that this was unacceptable to him," an Israeli official said.

National security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who leads one of the national-religious parties in Netanyahu's ruling coalition, denounced the idea of a tactical pause, saying whoever decided it was a "fool" who should lose their job. The spat was the latest in a series of clashes between members of the coalition and the military over the conduct of the war, now in its ninth month.

It came a week after centrist former general Benny Gantz quit the government, accusing Netanyahu of having no effective strategy in Gaza.

The divisions were laid bare last week in a parliamentary vote on a law on conscripting ultra-Orthodox Jews into the military, with defence minister Yoav Gallant voting against it in defiance of party orders, saying it was insufficient for the needs of the military.

Meanwhile, the US military unleashed a wave of

● THE US Naval Forces Central Command said on Sunday that it had rescued the crew from the Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier *M/V Tutor* that was attacked by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi on June 12 in the Red Sea.

attacks targeting radar sites operated by Yemen's Houthi rebels after one merchant sailor went missing and the vessel he was on caught fire in the latest Houthi strike on shipping in the crucial Red Sea corridor.

The attacks come as the US Navy faces the most intense combat it has seen since World War II in trying to counter the Houthi campaign — attacks the rebels say are meant to halt the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

However, the Iranian-backed rebel assaults often see the Houthi target ships and sailors who have nothing to do with the war while traffic remains halved through a corridor vital for cargo and energy shipments between Asia, Europe and the Mideast.

US strikes destroyed seven radars within Houthi-controlled territory, the military's Central Command said.

The US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) said on Sunday that it had rescued the crew from the Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier *M/V Tutor* that was attacked by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi on June 12 in the Red Sea.

Sailors assigned to the Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group airlifted the crew out on Saturday, NAVCENT said, adding one sailor remained missing. — Agencies

COGNITIVE TEST: TRUMP FLUBS ON DOCTOR'S NAME

Detroit, June 16: Donald Trump is so proud of a cognitive assessment he took while president that he boasted about it in a speech on Saturday, while attacking what he claims is US President Joe Biden's lack of mental acuity.

The only problem: He then immediately got confused on the name of the doctor who oversaw the test.

Trump extolled his powers of mental recall in a speech to hard-right allies in Detroit, challenging Biden to take the same cognitive exam he says he underwent in 2018 with then White House physician Ronny Jackson. However, he immediately flubbed the name of the former official, who is now one of his loyal supporters in Congress. "Doc Ronny Johnson," said Trump, who turned 78 on Friday. "Does everyone know Ronny Johnson, congressman from Texas?" he continued. "He said I was the healthiest president." — AFP

False hype by PML-N, says JUI

Islamabad, June 16: Pakistan's leading right-wing Islamic leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman's party has alleged that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was spreading false propaganda against its ideology and central leadership because of its supreme Nawaz Sharif's electoral defeat in the February 8 elections, a media report said on Sunday.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) leader Mufti Kifayatullah said the victory of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) nominee Shahzada Muhammad Gushtasap Khan in the NA-15 Manshera-cum-Torghar constituency by defeating ex-premier Nawaz Sharif was the result of the party's political strategy, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Shahzada Gushtasap Khan, who fought as an Independent after the Pakistan Election Commission deprived former prime minister Imran Khan's party of its election symbol of a cricket bat, polled 1,05,249 votes while Nawaz Sharif got 80,382 votes. Kifayatullah said Khan had contested the Feb. 8

TTP MILITANT COMMANDER KILLED

A PETITION has been filed in Pakistan's Supreme Court against the dismissal of a plea seeking former prime minister Imran Khan's disqualification for concealing his alleged daughter Tyrian White while submitting his nomination papers for the 2018 general elections. The Islamabad High Court last month had dismissed the petition.

He hoped that the next deal with IMF for a bailout package would be the last in Pakistan's history.

elections from NA-15 on the orders of his party chief. Kifayatullah further said that his party's ideology was different from the PML-N's. He said his party is committed to the cause of sharia in the country

PRIME MINISTER Shehbaz Sharif has pledged to end Pakistan's dependency on foreign aid and IMF bailouts and surpass neighbouring nations in economic activity, as he outlined a series of bold reforms to reduce the cash-strapped government's expenses and revive the economy.

He hoped that the next deal with IMF for a bailout package would be the last in Pakistan's history.

A TOP militant commander of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan was killed on Sunday in an encounter with security forces in Pakistan's restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. Waliullah was killed by the Counter-Terrorism Department of Bannu in an intelligence-based operation in the Lakki Marwat district.

He hoped that the next deal with IMF for a bailout package would be the last in Pakistan's history.



People want Imran be in jail for 5 years for Pak's progress: Minister Pakistan's federal planning and development minister Ahsan Iqbal has claimed that the people in the country believe keeping PTI founder Imran Khan imprisoned for five years till 2029 is necessary for economic stability. He said that the former prime minister's release could lead to renewed protests and unrest.

mission to avenge Nawaz's electoral defeat.

The PML-N was never popular in the NA-15 constituency stretched over to the rural parts of Mansehra and neighbouring Torghar district. — PTI

through a peaceful political struggle.

The JUI-F leader claimed that the PML-N was using retired Captain Mohammad Safdar, son-in-law of Nawaz Sharif, to challenge his party's ideology and

mission to avenge Nawaz's electoral defeat.

The PML-N was never popular in the NA-15 constituency stretched over to the rural parts of Mansehra and neighbouring Torghar district. — PTI

India land connect study on, says Ranil

Colombo, June 16: Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Sunday that the feasibility study on a proposal to establish land connectivity with India is in its final stages.

Wickremesinghe, who was travelling in the district of Mannar, said that the preliminary work of the feasibility study was over and the final phase would be completed soon.

This proposal and the prospect of a power grid connection between the two nations are likely to be discussed during the visit of external affairs minister S. Jaishankar to Lanka this week.

Wickremesinghe said a commercial venture to sell the excess renewable energy to India would also be discussed during the minister's visit.

On Saturday, the Lankan foreign ministry here announced that Jaishankar would arrive in Colombo on June 20.

However, there was no official announcement on Jaishankar's visit from India's ministry of external affairs.

If confirmed, this could be Jaishankar's first offi-

● FISHERIES MINISTER Douglas Devananda has been quoted as saying in the local media that Sri Lanka would raise the contentious issue of illegal fishing in Sri Lankan waters by Indians.

cial stand-alone visit abroad after he was appointed India's EAM in the new government early this month.

Officials here confirmed that all Indian projects in Sri Lanka, including the Adani group's wind power project in Mannar and the creation of an industrial zone in the eastern port district of Trincomalee, would be discussed during the visit.

Fisheries minister Douglas Devananda has been quoted as saying in the local media that Sri Lanka would raise the contentious issue of illegal fishing in Sri Lankan waters by Indians, including bottom trawling. The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries. — PTI

Euro axe-wielder shot, hurt

Berlin, June 16: German police said on Sunday they shot and wounded a man who was threatening them with an axe and a Molotov cocktail in the northern city of Hamburg, hours before it hosted a match in the European Championship soccer tournament.

Police officers opened fire after the man refused to put down the axe and a Molotov cocktail, hitting him in the leg, police spo-

kesman Thilo Marxsen said. The man was hospitalised with his injuries, Marxsen said. No one else was hurt.

The incident occurred in the St. Pauli area of the northern port city, which was thronged with fans before Sunday's Group D match between the Netherlands and Poland.

Marxsen said that there was no initial indication that it was related to the Euro 2024 game.

German authorities have put police on high alert during the tournament, which began on Friday and runs through July 14, for fear of possible fan violence and extremist attacks.

On Friday, police fatally shot an Afghan man after he killed a compatriot and later wounded three people watching the televised game between Germany and Scotland in a town in eastern Germany. — AP

HAJ RITUAL Pilgrims struggle in the sun as those exhausted stretch out Pilgrims 'stone the devil' on Id-ul-Zuha

Mina, June 16: Pilgrims performed on Sunday the last major ritual of the hajj, the "stoning of the devil", in western Saudi Arabia, as Muslims the world over celebrated the Id-ul-Zuha holiday.

Beginning at dawn, the 1.8 million Muslims undertaking the pilgrimage this year threw seven stones at each of three concrete walls symbolising the devil in the Mina valley, located outside Mecca, the holiest city in Islam.

The ritual commemorates Abraham's stoning of

the devil at the three spots where it is said Satan tried to dissuade him from obeying God's order to sacrifice his son.

The stoning ritual has been witness to multiple stampedes over the years, most recently in 2015 when up to 2,300 worshippers were killed.

Roads were packed, with some pilgrims struggling under the morning sun. Some sat on the side of the road to rest and drink water, while others stretched out on the ground, apparently exhausted. — AFP



Muslim pilgrims perform the symbolic stoning of the devil ritual as part of the Hajj pilgrimage in Mina, near Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca, on Sunday. — AFP

14 JORDANIANS DIE IN SAUDI, A FEW DUE TO HEAT

Cairo, June 16: Fourteen Jordanians have been reported dead during the annual Muslim Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, some of them dying on account of heat stroke while, 17 other Jordanians were reported missing, the Jordanian foreign ministry said in a statement on Sunday. — Reuters

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	76,992.77 0.24
Nifty 50	23,465.60 0.29
S&P 500*	5,431.60 -0.04
Dollar (₹)	83.56 0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	106.17 0.58
Euro (₹)	89.30 1.04
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	71,955.10 0.01
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	82.88 0.16
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.991 0.005
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.221 -0.019

* As of 8:30 PM IST

RBI gets award from London's Central Banking

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Sunday said it has been awarded the Risk Manager of the Year Award 2024 by the London-based publishing house Central Banking. The apex bank was awarded the best risk manager for improving its risk culture and awareness, RBI said in a post on X. The award was received by executive director Manoranjan Mishra on behalf of the RBI, it said.



Foreign investors pour in ₹11,730 cr on positive cues

Foreign investors made a strong comeback with a net inflow of ₹11,730 crore (\$1.4 bn) in the week ending June 14, driven by positive signals from domestic and global markets. The net inflow was in stark contrast to the net outflow of ₹14,794 crore (\$1.77 bn) witnessed in the preceding week from June 3-7, data showed. With the latest flow, net outflow stood at ₹3,064 crore in the month so far till June 14.

IIFL Q4 net falls 6% after RBI bars gold loans

IIFL Finance reported a 6 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to ₹431 crore for the March quarter as the RBI barred the financial services firm from undertaking gold loan business. The company had earned a net profit of ₹458 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Its consolidated total income during Jan.-March rose to ₹2,922 crore as compared with ₹2,276 crore in the year-ago period, IIFL Finance said.



Coal imports rise 13.2% in April to 26.1 million tonne

India's coal imports rose by 13.2 per cent to 26.1 million tonne (MT) in April 2024 as buyers took fresh positions amid early onset of summer. The country had imported 23.05 MT of coal in the year-ago period, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company junction services Ltd. Of the total import in April, non-coking coal import stood at 17.40 MT against 15.15 MT in the year-ago month.

Investors flock to MFs seeing higher returns

Outlook remains strong, adds 81 L investors in April, May

New Delhi, June 16: The mutual fund industry has added over 81 lakh investors' accounts in the first two months of the current fiscal (FY25).

Additionally, changing perceptions about fixed deposits, which no longer offer competitive returns compared to mutual funds, and the rise in income levels and accessibility to financial markets have also contributed to the rise in new investors, Trivish D, chief operating officer of stock trading platform Tradejini, said.

Going ahead, the outlook for mutual fund folios remains strong, supported by the ongoing bull run in stock market, solid risk management practices, continuous investor education, and consistent marketing efforts, he added.

Moreover, the industry



● **AS INDIA'S** per capita income grows, investors will look to save money in asset classes, which have the potential to beat inflation and create wealth.

will continue to see decent growth as savers increasingly look for alternative avenues to create wealth for their long-term goals, experts said.

"As India's per capita income grows, investors will look to save money in asset classes, which have the potential to beat inflation and create wealth. As the penetration of mutual funds increases, this will translate into a higher folio base at the industry level," Abhishek Tiwari,

CBO, PGIM India Mutual Fund, said.

According to the latest data with the association of mutual funds in India (AMFI), mutual fund folios of industry stood at 18.6 crore in May-end, a surge of 4.6 per cent from 17.78 crore registered at the end of March.

In May, the industry saw an addition of 45 lakh folios compared to 36.11 lakh folios added in April. In 2023, the average monthly addition of folios

was 22.3 lakh, making latest figure more than double this average.

Of the total 81 lakh folios, equity-oriented mutual fund schemes experienced an addition of 61.25 lakh units during the period under review. This has taken the number of such folios to a new high of 12.89 crore, representing 69 per cent of the total.

Investors flocked to equity funds due to the rally seen in the last few years. Also, Hybrid funds added 3.31 lakh folios in the period under review, taking the total count to 1.35 crore. On the other hand, folios in debt schemes dropped by 72,940 to a total of 70.92 lakh.

Some mutual funds have also outperformed market indices, drawing investors in search of higher returns. —PTI

Start early, play longer to earn better: Report

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 16

Over the years, the systematic investment plan (SIP), a feature offered by Mutual Funds, has become a household name. Its popularity among investors can be seen from monthly investment in mutual funds through SIP route rising from ₹3,189 crore in May 2016 to ₹20,904 crore in May 2024.

A study, conducted by WhiteOak Capital Mutual Fund addressed some of

the commonly asked questions around SIP investment.

It said that the volatility reduces as investors increase their investment horizon.

The 'cost of delay' of starting a SIP late can be huge over the long term. "The biggest risk is not the market, but missing out on compounding over time," the study said.

It also said that waiting for the right time to invest can lead to missed opportunities. Not investing at all is likely to be more sig-

● **LARGE CAP** stock is generally less volatile than a small and mid-cap stock. However, small and mid-cap segments may offer many opportunities for potential higher growth in the long run.

nificant loss than entering an unfavorable market.

Even the worst market timing may help grow wealth over the long-term. It is the time in the market, not timing the mar-

ket, that is more crucial.

"An average large cap stock is generally less volatile than a small and mid-cap stock. However, the small and mid-cap segments may offer many opportunities for potential higher growth in the long run. The mid-cap segment is a good investment option for investors seeking to invest via the long-term SIP route, it said. Starting a SIP early and running it for the long term is more important than what frequency one selects," the study said.

Builders rivet focus on launch of luxury units

New Delhi, June 16: The sales of affordable houses, priced up to ₹60 lakh each, declined 4 per cent in eight major cities to 61,121 units during January-March this year on lower supply and higher demand for luxury apartments, according to PropEquity.

The top eight cities are -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Pune and Ahmedabad.

Real estate data analytic firm PropEquity data showed that sales of homes, costing up to ₹60 lakh each stood at 6,3787 units in the January-March period of the last calendar year.

A lower supply of affordable homes is one of the key factors for this marginal fall in sales.

As per the PropEquity data, the fresh supply of homes, up to ₹60 lakh each, declined to 33,420 units during Jan.-March 2024 across these top eight cities from 53,818 units in the year-ago period.

Builders are focusing more on launching luxury apartments to encash a



surge in demand for premium residential properties. Profit margins are also high in luxury projects.

As per the data, housing sales in this price category declined to 2,35,340 units in the 2023 calendar year from 2,51,198 units in the preceding year.

In 2019, sales of homes, each priced up to ₹60 lakh, stood at 2,26,414 units.

During the 2020 calendar year, which saw an outbreak of the Covid pandemic, sales in this price category fell to 1,88,233 units.

However, sales bounced back in 2021 and 2022 to 2,17,274 units and 2,51,198 units, respectively.

Sales declined again in 2023 to 2,35,340 units compared to the preceding year. —PTI

HMIL FILES DRAFT PAPERS WITH SEBI FOR INITIAL OFFER

New Delhi, June 16: Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL), the Indian arm of South Korean automaker Hyundai, has filed preliminary papers with Sebi to launch an initial public offering (IPO).

The company's IPO, if it goes through, would be the largest in India, surpassing LIC's share-sale of ₹21,000 crore.

The proposed IPO is entirely an offer for sale (OFS) of 14,21,94,700 equity shares by Hyundai Motor, with no fresh issue component, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP).

In February this year, sources had confirmed that the parent, Hyundai Motor Company is looking to raise at least \$3 billion (around ₹25,000 crore) through an IPO.

It may dilute 15-20 per cent stake in HMIL to raise funds, the sources added. In its draft papers, HMIL said it expects that the listing of the equity shares "will enhance our visibility and brand image and provide liquidity and a public market for the shares". —PTI

Mahindra to make batteries locally

New Delhi, June 16: Mahindra Group is looking for partnerships with global players for local production of battery cells in order to cater to expected increase in demand for electric vehicles in the future, according to a top company executive.

Mahindra Group managing director and CEO Anish Shah said the company is looking at a 2030

● **GROUP IS** looking for partnerships with global players for local production of battery cells in order to cater to expected increase in demand for electric vehicles in the future.

timeframe for the possible listing of its electric vehicle arm Mahindra Electric Automobile Ltd (MEAL).

"One area that we continue to look at more closely is cell manufacturing and that is something where there are various considerations. If we feel it's essential for us, we will look at a partnership for cell manufacturing," he stated.

He further said: "We will look at a global technology partner, and potentially at private equity partners as

well because we will not put the entire capital." The initiative, if it materialises, would enable local production of battery cells in India, Shah said.

"The only reason for us to do it is to indigenise in India. Therefore, if we go down that path, it will be in India," he said when asked if the production facility would come up in the country. —PTI

Tata Nexon sales hit 7L mark

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JUNE 16

Tata Motors celebrates 7 lakh units' sales milestone in 7 years of its best selling compact SUV Tata Nexon.

The Mumbai-based company has announced benefits of up to ₹1 lakh to mark the occasion.

Tata Nexon was first launched in September 2017 and was India's first 5-star safety rated car at Global NCAP.

Buyers who have booked a Tata Nexon and are awaiting delivery and those bookings afresh or wanting to upgrade their



existing Nexon to the updated version can avail of this offer.

Tata Motors said the first one lakh cars were sold in 25 months following the launch and by April 2023, over 5 lakh Nexons were on Indian roads. The SUV has sold over 3 lakh units in the last two years alone (2022

and 2023). In 2018, the Tata Nexon became the first Indian car to receive a 5-star GNCAP safety rating, setting a new benchmark for the Indian automobiles.

The Nexon.ev also received the prestigious 5-star rating from Bharat-NCAP this month.

Nexon comes at a starting price of ₹7.99 lakh and goes up to ₹17.65 lakh for the top variant.

"The Nexon has set new standards in design, safety, comfort and driving pleasure," said Vivek Srivatsa, chief commercial officer at Tata Passenger Electric Mobility.



ESSAR GROUP TO SET UP HYDROGEN UNIT IN JAMNAGAR

New Delhi, June 16: Essar Group plans to invest ₹30,000 crore over the next four years in setting up a green hydrogen plant at Jamnagar in Gujarat as the metals-to-infrastructure conglomerate eyes clean energy as a key pillar for its new phase of growth.

The conglomerate is looking to decarbonise its oil refinery in the UK, construct a green steel plant in Saudi Arabia, and build an LNG and electric ecosystem to decarbonise long-haul heavy trucks, Prashant Ruia, director of Essar Capital, which manages the group's portfolio of investments, said.

It is also considering an entry into mining of critical minerals, mainly used in electric vehicle batteries, solar panels and wind-turbine magnets. Essar Future Energy plans to develop 1 gigawatt of hydrogen capacity along with associated green molecules capacity of 1 million tonne per annum in Jamnagar over the next four years, he said.

Essar will use 4.5 GW of renewable energy by a sister concern Essar Renewables to split water molecules to produce hydrogen and oxygen. —PTI

BIG ACTION M&As see resurgence in deal value, volume this year

Market to be buoyant for small cos

New Delhi, June 16: PwC India anticipates an upswing in the India markets, especially in small to mid-size merger and acquisition (M&A) transactions and growth fundings driven by increasing investors' confidence.

The 2023 witnessed the emergence of a nuanced M&A landscape, with investors showing interests in diverse strategies and larger-scale ventures, even amid an overall decrease in PE investment, said Sanjeev Krishan, chairperson, PwC India.



● **SECTORS LIKE** e-commerce, healthcare and biotechnology, renewable energy, EVs and EV infra, infrastructure, banking, financial services and insurance, IT services show exciting prospects.

marked a resurgence in deal value and volume.

According to a PwC report, top 10 deals of 2023 included JV buyouts, strategic investments, PE buyouts, and stock mergers, and contributed to 21 per cent of the total deal value.

"On a sectoral basis, traditional sectors including retail and consumer and healthcare and pharmaceuticals are in the lead.

We anticipate an upswing in the India markets, especially in small to mid-size M&A transactions and growth fundings," he said.

The optimism around M&A, he said, is based on three key factors - the improving financial markets indicate an increase in investor and CEO confidence; deal-making has reached an inflection point with pent-up buyer demand and a build-up in

seller assets; and accelerating global megatrends have created a need for firms to reinvent their business models, which can be accelerated through M&A.

According to Krishan, sectors like e-commerce, healthcare and biotechnology, renewable energy, EVs and EV infra, infrastructure, banking, financial services and insurance, IT services show exciting prospects.

"Going forward, we could expect a shift towards growth funding and a possible venture capital revival. We could also see an increase in controlling stake deals, and a rise in portfolio exits through capital markets and IPOs," Krishan said. —PTI

Paytm may offload events ticketing biz

Mumbai, June 16: Paytm is in talks with Zomato to sell its movie and events ticketing business, according to people familiar with the matter, as the beleaguered fintech firm carves a revival strategy amid weakening sales.

The discussions between Paytm, officially known as One97 Communications, and online food delivery firm Zomato are in advanced stages, though there are other suitors for the business, the people said. Talks are ongoing and no final decision has been made, the people said.

Paytm last month reported its first sales decline on record, and vowed to trim non-core assets. It also warned of job cuts, reflecting the fall-

out from regulatory action on Paytm Payments Bank that curtailed much of the fintech's business and forced it to forge new partnerships with lenders. Paytm does not disclose standalone numbers for its movie and events ticketing business. It reported annual sales of ₹1,740 crore in fiscal year 2024 in its marketing services business, which includes movie and events.

The sale will allow Paytm to sharpen its focus on travel, deals and cash backs - businesses that are important to broaden its merchant base and grow its own sales. The purchase could help Zomato to expand its digital business into a new high-growth area. —Bloomberg

CRICKHIT



ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

SHORT SINGLES

Bangladesh look to seal Super 8 spot

Bangladesh will look to iron out their flaws and seal the second Super Eight spot from Group 'D' when they take on a tricky Nepal in the T20 World Cup in Kingstown, St Vincent and the Grenadines, on Monday.

With four points, Bangladesh are all set to progress further in the tournament from the last group in the competition but a spirited Nepal will pose a strong threat.

Even though they have not yet won a game and are out of race for the next round, Nepal's confidence will be sky high after they nearly pulled off a win against South Africa and will be keen on fulfilling their dream of beating a Test-playing nation before signing off.

The equation for Bangladesh, however, could change if they lose to Nepal by a big margin and the Netherlands manage to do the same against a struggling Sri Lanka? an unlikely scenario indeed but this tournament has thrown its share of surprises.

SRI LANKA WANT TO SIGN OFF ON A HIGH

Wary of the Dutch firepower and current form, the 2014 champions Sri Lanka, who are placed fifth in Group D, will take on the third-placed Netherlands in Gros Islet, St Lucia.

Already out of reckoning for the Super Eight round, Sri Lanka's pride will be at stake given they have had a tournament to forget, marred with multiple issues on and off the field.

For the Scott Edwards-led Netherlands team, there will be a great deal of motivation to bring out their best and hope for a big win as well as luck to favour them.

Netherlands have notched wins in two out of three games in this tournament yet they find themselves nearly eliminated in a tight Group D, from which South Africa have already sailed through.

Pakistan register a consolation win

Former champions Pakistan beat Ireland by three wickets to register a consolation win over Ireland in their inconsequential T20 World Cup match in Lauderhill, USA, on Sunday.

Pakistan and Ireland have already been eliminated from the tournament with India and debutants USA progressing to the Super Eight from Group A.

Left-arm pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Mohammad Amir wreaked havoc with the new ball, helping Pakistan restrict Ireland to 106 for nine.

Shaheen finally came to the party, albeit in a lost cause, returning with impressive figures of 3/22, while Amir scalped two wickets for 11 runs as Pakistan bowlers ignited fire on a damp pitch after electing to bowl.

Imad Wasim (3/8) bowled brilliantly while Haris Rauf (1/17) also accounted for a batter.

Gareth Delany (31 off 19) and Mark Adair (15 off 19) shared crucial 32-run stand for the seventh wicket to keep Ireland in the game.

Pakistan made a heavy weather of the chase as they were reduced to 57 for 5 in 9.3 overs before skipper Babar Azam (32 not out) and Abbas Afridi (17) did the repair job.

Barry McCarthy (3/15) was the pick of Ireland bowlers.

Brief scores: Ireland 106/9 in 20 overs (Gareth Delany 31, Shaheen Shah Afridi 3/22, Imad Wasim 3/8, Mohammad Amir 2/11) lost to Pakistan 117/7 in 18.5 overs (Babar Azam 32 not out; Barry McCarthy 3/15).

AUSSIE TREAT

Australia sink brave Scots as England advance

Gros-Islet (Saint Lucia), June 16: Australia saw off a determined challenge from Scotland to claim a five-wicket victory in a decisive final Group 'B' match of the T20 World Cup for both teams at the Darren Sammy Stadium in St Lucia on Saturday.

Replying to the Scots' 180 for five, their highest total in a T20 World Cup match, half-centuries from Travis Head (68 off 49 balls, five fours, four sixes) and Marcus Stoinis (59 off 29 balls, nine fours, two sixes) paced them to the target and a 100 percent winning record in the group with two balls to spare.

Tim David's unbeaten 24 off 14 balls finished the job to lift Australia to 186 for five.

But he required a generous slice of luck when dropped at deep mid-wicket before finishing off the match with a huge six in the same direction off the next ball from seamer Brad Wheal.

That result also eliminated Scotland and allowed title-holders England, winners earlier in the day over Namibia in a rain-affected match in Antigua, to qualify for the Super Eights phase of the competition alongside their arch-rivals by virtue of a better net run-rate than the Scots.

"The plan was the usual: get yourself in, play shots along the ground and then take it from there," said Man-of-the-Match Stoinis in explaining the strategy through his innings and the 80-run fourth-wicket partnership with Head. "I was just trying to keep him there, keep him batting and it turned the game, even though he got out in the end."

Earlier, Brandon McMullen led the Scottish effort with a top score of 60 off 34 balls (two fours, six sixes) after they were put in.

His ultra-aggression, and support from opener George Munsey (35) in an 89-run second-wicket partnership, pushed the scoring rate up to ten runs per over. However Australia were able to regain a measure of containment when McMullen fell to leg-spinner Adam Zampa in the 12th over.

Despite a battling unbeaten 42 from skipper Richie Berrington, only 69 runs came off the last 52 balls of the innings when Scotland would have been looking to put up a total in excess of 200.

— AFP



Australia's Marcus Stoinis plays a shot on way to his 59 against Scotland during their T20 World Cup match at the Darren Sammy National Cricket Stadium in Gros Islet, St Lucia, on Saturday. Australia won by five wickets. — AP

England win rain-affected match against Namibia

Antigua and Barbuda, June 16: Reigning champions England maintained their bid to reach the second round of the T20 World Cup with a 41-run victory in a must-win group game against Namibia in Antigua on Saturday.

Anything other than an England win would have seen Jos Buttler's men knocked out and they were left fearing an early exit when rain delayed the scheduled start by three hours.

England, in a match

eventually reduced from 11 to 10 overs per side by a fresh shower, collapsed to 13/2 after losing the toss.

But a stand of 56 between the Yorkshire duo of Harry Brook (47 not out off 20 balls) and Jonny Bairstow (31) helped take them to a total of 122/5.

Namibia were left with a target of 126 under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method for rain-interrupted matches.

But they were never up with the required run-rate against England's new-

ball duo of Reece Topley (0/6 in two overs) and Jofra Archer (1/15), with the non-Test nation finishing on 84-3.

Victory took England level on points with Scotland in Group 'B' but with a superior net run-rate.

Brief scores: England 122/5 in 10 overs (Harry Brook 47 not out, Jonny Bairstow 31; Ruben Trimpelmann 2/31) beat Namibia 84/3 in 10 overs (Michael van Lingen 33, David Wiese 27; Jofra Archer 1/15, Chris Jordan 1/19) — via DLS method.

SCOREBOARD

Scotland: George Munsey c Ellis b Maxwell 35, Michael Jones b Agar 2, Brandon McMullen c Starc b Zampa 60, Richie Berrington not out 42, Matthew Cross c Agar b Maxwell 18, Michael Leask c Starc b Ellis 5, Chris Greaves not out 9. Extras (w-7, lb-2) 9. Total (for 5 wickets in 20 overs) 180. Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-92, 3-111, 4-136, 5-152.

Bowling: Ashton Agar 4-0-39-1, Mitchell Starc 4-0-31-0, Nathan Ellis 4-0-34-1, Glenn Maxwell 4-0-44-2, Adam Zampa 4-0-30-1.

Australia: Travis Head c Jones b Sharif 68, David Warner c Berrington b Wheal 1, Mitchell Marsh c sub (Teal) b Sharif 8, Glenn Maxwell b Watt 11, Marcus Stoinis b Watt 59, Tim David not out 24, Matthew Wade not out 4. Extras (w-5, lb-6) 11. Total (for 5 wickets in 19.4 overs) 186. Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-34, 3-60, 4-140, 5-155.

Bowling: Michael Leask 4-0-39-0, Brad Wheal 3.4-1-28-1, Mark Watt 4-0-34-2, Chris Sole 3-0-33-0, Safyaan Sharif 4-0-42-2, Chris Greaves 1-0-4-0.

POINTS TABLE

GROUP A						
TEAMS	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
INDIA	4	3	0	1	7	+1.137
USA	4	2	1	1	5	+0.127
PAKISTAN	4	2	2	0	4	+0.294
CANADA	4	1	2	1	3	-0.493
IRELAND	4	0	3	1	1	-1.293

GROUP B						
TEAMS	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
AUSTRALIA	4	4	0	0	8	+2.791
ENGLAND	4	2	1	1	5	+3.611
SCOTLAND	4	2	1	1	5	+1.255
NAMIBIA	4	1	3	0	2	-2.585
OMAN	4	0	4	0	0	-3.062

GROUP C						
TEAMS	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
AFGHANISTAN	3	3	0	0	6	+4.230
WEST INDIES	3	3	0	0	6	+2.596
NEW ZEALAND	3	1	2	0	2	-0.241
UGANDA	4	1	3	0	2	-4.510
PNG	3	0	3	0	0	-0.886

GROUP D						
TEAMS	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
SOUTH AFRICA	4	4	0	0	8	+0.470
BANGLADESH	3	2	1	0	4	+0.478
NETHERLANDS	3	1	2	0	2	-0.408
NEPAL	3	0	2	1	1	-0.293
SRI LANKA	3	0	2	1	1	-0.777

Low scores make Kohli hungry, says bat coach

MOSES KONDETY LAUDERHILL (FLORIDA, USA), JUNE 16

Virat Kohli has scores of 1, 4 and 0 in the three matches India has played at the T20 World Cup so far. Batting coach Vikram Rathour sees a positive in the dasher's downturn though. "No concern at all," he says, adding "He has been batting superbly from the tournament (IPL) that he came from. Couple of dismissals here doesn't change anything, he is batting really well."

Rathour feels early exits will spur the Superstar, who continues to be the all-time leading scorer in T20 World Cups with 1,146 runs in 28 innings at an average of 67.4. "Actually, it's good that he is a little hungrier, he is really keen to do well and is switched on. It's a good space to be in as a batsman, I think," he said.

India open their Super Eight stage with a game against Afghanistan on Thursday in Barbados as the cricket caravan moves to the West Indies. It should be a different ball game in the Caribbean, given the quality of pitches there. The New York wicket — where India played all their games with the match against Canada here in Lauderhill abandoned — was certain-



Players of Canada pose for photographs with Virat Kohli (third from right) after their T20 World Cup match was called off due to wet outfield on Saturday. — AP

ly not up to international standard.

Rathour sees a Kohli turnaround coming. "Looking forward to some good games and watch some good innings from him," he said. "Team India would have loved some match time. We were really looking forward to playing a game and expecting better batting conditions than what we got in New York... it's disappointing, but that's something that we can't control. As a team you don't want to lose the momentum that you've gained," the former Indian opener said of the washed out match against Canada.

Covers, or lack of them, at the Central Broward Regional Park Stadium

here were a concern. Overnight rain had rendered patches in the outfield wet as the entire ground could not be protected. Rathour preferred to play safe. "This question should be asked to the ICC people. I don't know why they didn't have enough covers," he said.

As the American leg of cricket's showpiece comes to an end, India have sent a couple of extras Shubhan Gill and Avesh Khan home. Rathour says that was the script: "Some reserve players are being released. This was the plan from the beginning — when we come to the US, four players will come together, after that two will be released and two will travel with us to West Indies."

WOMEN'S | CRICKET

Smriti, spinners hand India massive victory

Bengaluru, June 16: Smriti Mandhana's resolute hundred and a disciplined bowling effort, led by spinners Deepti Sharma and Asha Sobhana, piloted India to a huge 143-run win over South Africa in the first women's ODI here on Sunday.

India now lead the three-match series 1-0, and the second game will be played here on June 19.

Mandhana's sixth ODI century (117, 127 balls, 12x4s, 1x6) formed the fulcrum of India's competitive 265 for eight on a sluggish Chinnaswamy pitch.

Then the Indian bowlers worked their magic around the South African batters to bowl out the visitors for 122 as debutante leg-spinner Asha (4/21) led the show with a frugal spell and was well-supported by offie Deepti (2/10).

Pacer Renuka Singh (1/30) gave India the perfect start, dismissing the in-form South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt in the first over itself.

Wolvaardt had no answer for an excellent nip-backer from Renuka that clipped the top of her off-stump.

The Indians soon fetched the wickets of Tazmine Brits and Anneke Bosch as the tourists slumped to 33 for three.

The experienced Marizane Kapp (24, 39 balls), who hammered Renuka for successive four and six, tried to revive the innings with Sune Luus who fought well with a 33.

— PTI

Brief scores: India 265/8 (Smriti Mandhana 117, Ayabonga Khaka 3/47) beat South Africa 122 in 37.4 overs (Sune Luus 33, Asha Sobhana 4/21).

Italy begin title defence with win

Dortmund (Germany), June 16: Italy recovered from conceding the fastest goal in European Championship history to begin their title defence with a 2-1 win over Albania on Saturday, after Spain made a dream start to their campaign by beating Croatia 3-0.

Albania went ahead after just 23 seconds against Italy in the Group 'B' opener in Dortmund as Nedim Bajrami scored to the delight of their huge support.

Bajrami's strike destroyed the previous record for the quickest goal at the Euros, of 67 seconds by Dmitri Kirichenko for Russia against Greece in 2004.

However, Italy kept their calm and equalised when Alessandro Bastoni headed in at the back post on 11 minutes, before Nicolo Barella's glorious effort



Italy's Nicolo Barella (left) celebrates after scoring against Albania during their Euro 2024 Group 'B' match in Dortmund, Germany, on Saturday. — AP

put them ahead just past the quarter-hour mark. That proved to be enough for the Euro 2020 winners, with Davide

Frattesi coming closest to adding another for the Italians as he hit the post before half-time. "It was a negative situa-

tion but we did really well to turn it around," said Italy's Federico Chiesa, who played in the final three years ago when they came back to beat England on penalties despite conceding inside two minutes.

Italy, whose line-up at kick-off featured only five players who started that final against England, now move on to a heavy-weight showdown with Spain on Thursday in Gelsenkirchen.

Spain, the three-time European champions, made a dream start to their campaign as they tore apart a disappointing Croatia at the Olympiastadion in Berlin. Alvaro Morata broke the deadlock before the half-hour mark and Fabian Ruiz soon made it 2-0, with Dani Carvajal getting the third goal just prior to the interval. — AFP

ANKITA GETS AN INDIVIDUAL OLYMPIC QUOTA IN ARCHERY

Antalya (Turkey), June 16: Ankita Bhakat outplayed Gabrielle Monica Bidaure of Philippines to enter the quarterfinals of the Final Olympic Qualifier here on Sunday, and the effort also helped her seal an individual quota for next month's Paris Games.

Ninth seed Ankita cruised to a 6-0 (26-23, 28-22, 28-23) win over her 40th seeded rival in the pre-quarterfinals.

India thus have secured individual quotas in both men's and women's sections. Dhiraj Bommadevara had secured the men's individual quota from the Asian qualifying leg earlier. In the earlier rounds, Ankita had defeated Shelley Hilton 6-4 (24-26, 25-25, 28-20, 25-25, 27-25)

and Mikaella Moshe 7-3 (28-25, 25-27, 27-27, 28-25, 26-25), both from Israel, to make it to the last-16.

Third seed Bhajan, who got a bye into the round of 32, overcame Urantungalag Bishindee of Mongolia 6-2 (29-27, 28-26, 26-29, 27-24) is also in the fray for a podium finish and will take on Urška Cavc of Slovenia in her pre-quarters.

The individual quotas are allotted to the top-eight nations. Each country gets one individual quota.

DEEPIKA FALTERS

Earlier premier Indian archer Deepika Kumari, who qualified as second seed, suffered an embarrassing opening round defeat to little known Yaylagul Ramazanova of Azerbaijan. — PTI