





## SHORT TAKES

## Ramvir Singh Bidhuri resigns from LoP post

**New Delhi:** Delhi BJP MLA and Leader of the Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Tuesday resigned from the membership of the Assembly in the wake of his election from the South Delhi Lok Sabha seat. Mr Bidhuri submitted his resignation letters of MLA from Badarpur and Leader of the Opposition to Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel. The notification for the new Lok Sabha was issued on June 6. According to the rules, one must resign from either the Assembly or the Lok Sabha seat within 14 days of this notification. "In accordance with this, Mr Bidhuri submitted his resignation to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly," said a statement from his office. Mr Bidhuri thanked Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel for his cooperation and expressed gratitude towards his fellow legislators for their support during his tenure as the Leader of the Opposition.

## Man kills his friend in Burari area, held

**New Delhi:** A 32-year-old man was killed and robbed of ₹5,500 by one of his friend in Burari area of north Delhi, the police on Tuesday said. The accused has been identified as Love (21), they said. "On June 11, at 7:18 pm, a PCR call was received at the Burari police station regarding a man lying in an injured condition. The injured was shifted to the BJRM Hospital by the staff where-in he was declared brought dead by the doctors," said deputy commissioner of police (north) Manoj Kumar Meena. The police initially suspected the case as an accidental death and registered an FIR, he added. "We recovered ₹2,500 and robbed mobile phone from the accused. Accused Love is a school cab driver," the DCP said.

## Minor fire breaks out at factory, no one hurt

**New Delhi:** A fire broke out at a garments factory in east Delhi's Gandhi Nagar area on Tuesday morning, officials said, adding that no casualty was reported. The fire department was informed at 9.55 am and six fire tenders were pressed into service to douse the blaze in the four-storey factory, an official of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) said. He said the fire was doused in two hours. Due to hanging wires and narrow lanes, the fire tenders faced a daunting task in reaching the spot. A video surfaced on social media in which workers were seen snapping off the entangled wires in the lanes to make way for the fire tenders. "As soon as I spotted the fire, I immediately informed the authorities. Fire tenders were delayed due to the narrow lanes here. I would request the government to send smaller fire tenders which could easily enter such lanes," a local resident said.

## ASHWANI KUMAR APPOINTED MCD COMMISSIONER

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

The Union home ministry has appointed senior IAS officer Ashwani Kumar as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) commissioner. He will succeed Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Gyanesh Bharti who was transferred to the Union women and child development ministry as additional secretary in March. Mr Kumar is a 1992-batch IAS officer of the Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territory (AGMUT) cadre. He is currently serving as the Delhi divisional commissioner and the additional chief secretary (home) in the Delhi government. He was the first special officer of the unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). "I am directed to say that with approval from the competent authority, it is decided to appoint Ashwani Kumar, IAS (AGMUT), 1992, as commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, with immediate effect," said a home ministry order to the Raj Niwas.



Ashwani Kumar

# Apex court asserts strictness on Neet-UG exam dispute Even 0.001% negligence must be addressed: SC

RAKESH K. SINGH  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

While hearing petitions raising grievances against the Neet-UG 2024, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said, "Even if there is 0.001 per cent negligence on the part of anyone, it should be thoroughly dealt with."

A vacation bench of Justices Vikram Nath and S.V.N. Bhatti told the counsel for the National Testing Agency (NTA), "Representing an agency that is responsible for conducting the examination, you must stand firm. If there is a mistake, yes this is a mistake and this is the action we are going to take. At least that inspires confidence in your performance."

The NTA conducts the pre-medical entrance for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH, and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country.

The apex court was hearing two petitions raising grievances, including on grace marks given to students in the entrance held on May 5.

The top court told the NTA's counsel, "We all know the labour which the children undergo, especially in preparing for these



AAP leaders Gopal Rai, Sanjay Singh and others during a protest against the Centre over alleged irregularities in Neet exam results in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

exams. Imagine a person who has played fraud on the system becomes a doctor, he is more deleterious to society."

Underscoring timely action by the authority, the apex court said the pleas would come up for hearing on July 8 along with other pending petitions, including those that have sought a direction to conduct the test again.

The bench directed the NTA and the Centre to file their responses on these fresh petitions within two weeks.

While hearing separate petitions raising griev-

ances relating to the Neet-UG 2024, the top court had last week sought responses from the Centre and the NTA on a plea for a CBI probe into allegations of question paper leak and other irregularities in the exam.

On June 13, the Centre and the NTA told the apex court that they had cancelled the grace marks given to 1,563 candidates who took the examination.

The test was held on May 5 across 4,750 centres and around 24 lakh candidates appeared for the entrance. The results were announced on June 4.

## AAP protests against Centre

**New Delhi, June 18:** The AAP leaders staged a protest at the Jantar Mantar here on Tuesday against the alleged irregularities in the Neet exam. The AAP leaders demanded the cancellation of the exam and a Supreme Court monitored probe over the alleged irregularities in the conduct of the test. The protesters burnt copies of the Neet paper and raised slogans against the Central government.

There have been allegations of question paper leaks in states like Bihar and other irregularities in the entrance test, which is the gateway for admission into medical and related courses.

The allegations have triggered protests in several cities and the filing of petitions in several courts.

As many as 67 students scored a perfect 720, with six from a centre in Faridabad figuring in the list, raising suspicions about irregularities. The grace marks allegedly contributed to 67 students sharing the top rank.

## Maliwal writes to INDIA bloc leaders, seeks time to discuss her assault case

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18



Swati Maliwal

Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on Tuesday sought time from INDIA bloc leaders to discuss the alleged assault against her by chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar.

In a letter to INDIA bloc leaders Rahul Gandhi and Sharad Pawar, the AAP MP complained she was subjected to "victim shaming and character assassination" for speaking up against the abuse.

"Instead of finding support, I was confronted with incessant attacks on my character and victim shaming orchestrated by

the leaders and volunteers of my own party," she wrote in the letter.

Delhi BJP came in support of Ms Maliwal saying "Arvind Kejriwal used to call her Rani Lakshmi Bai and other names but now she has been left alone by the entire party."

The former DCW chief said in her letter, "Over

the past one month, I have encountered first-hand pain and isolation a survivor faces when she fights for justice... I would like to seek your time to discuss this pertinent issue."

She posted the letters addressed to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and national president Sharad Pawar on X.

City BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva commented, "Swati Maliwal has now understood that AAP's talk of respecting women is hollow and that's why she has given up hope of justice from the party. She is now seeking support from the leaders of the INDIA alliance, who have

not spoken a word on this issue."

"I have worked on the ground for the last 18 years and have heard 1.7 lakh cases in the women's commission in nine years. Without fearing anyone and bowing down to anyone, I have made the women's commission stand in a very high position. But it is very sad that first I was beaten badly at the chief minister's house and then my character was defamed.

"Today, I have written a letter to all the big leaders of the INDIA alliance regarding this matter. I have asked for an appointment with everyone," she wrote alongside the post.

## 3 held for duping doctor of ₹2 lakh

**New Delhi, June 18:** The Delhi police has arrested three cyber-criminals from Haryana for allegedly duping the chief medical officer of the city's Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital of ₹2 lakh after promising high returns on share market investments, officials said on Tuesday.

The police identified them as Yajuvender Singh (38) of Gurgaon and Hissar residents Gaurav Jain (36) and Amit Garg (38).

The officer said the complainant was promised monthly returns of five to seven per cent.

— PTI

## Delhi sees highest-ever peak power demand of 8,647 MW

Influx of heatstroke patients in hosps as mercury rises

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

Persistent heatwave drove the national capital's peak power demand on Tuesday afternoon to 8,647 MW, the highest-ever for the city, discom officials said. The previous highest peak power demand in the national capital was 8,302 megawatts (MW) on May 29 this year. Delhi's peak power demand reached 8,000 MW for the first time on May 22, 2024, they said.

The extreme heatwave has pushed the city's power demand northwards, soaring to 8,647 MW at 3:22 pm on Tuesday, according to the state load dispatch Centre, Delhi.

Since May 22, Delhi's peak power demand has crossed 8,000 MW eight times so far, discom officials said.

According to them, the cooling load due to the increased use of air conditioners and other cooling appliances amid the relentless heatwave has led to a record rise in power demand in the national capital.

"It is estimated that air conditioning can contribute to 30-50 per cent of domestic and commercial power consumption," said a discom official.

Hot surface winds continued to sweep the city on Tuesday as Delhi recorded a maximum temperature



Children carry drinking water on a hot summer day as water crisis continues in Delhi on Tuesday. — ASIAN AGE

of 44°C, over five notches above the normal, the IMD said.

Delhi also recorded its highest minimum temperature of this season at 33.8 °C. Before the peak power demand records of 2024, Delhi's previous high reached 7,695 MW on June 29, 2022. Last year, Delhi's peak power demand was 7,438 MW.

The all-time high peak demand of 8,647 MW on Tuesday was more than 16 per cent higher than that in the 2023 summer.

Discom officials said the fact that Delhi's power distribution network has been able to sustain the prolonged high power demand shows its robustness.

A BSES spokesperson said the company's discoms BRPL and BYPL suc-

cessfully met the peak power demand in their areas on Tuesday. Around 2,100 MW of green power is playing an important role in meeting the summer demand, he said.

Meanwhile, Hospitals in Delhi-NCR are seeing an influx of patients with complaints of heatstroke and heat exhaustion as the mercury continues to soar in the national capital, with doctors advising the elderly and immuno-compromised patients to avoid stepping outdoors. Last month, Delhi health minister Saurabh Bharadwaj had announced that the Delhi government-run hospitals will reserve two beds each for heatstroke patients while five beds will be reserved at the LNJP Hospital.

## UAPA: Cops to file charges next week against Arundhati

**New Delhi, June 18:** Delhi police is likely to file a chargesheet next week in a case registered against author Arundhati Roy and a former professor in Kashmir under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for their alleged provocative speeches in 2010, official sources said on Tuesday. Ms Roy and former Central University of Kashmir professor Sheikh Showkat Hussain were booked for allegedly delivering inflammatory speeches at a conference organised under the banner of "Azadi The Only Way" at LTC Auditorium, Copernicus Marg on October 21, 2010.

The FIR was registered by Sushil Pandit, a social activist from Kashmir, following the orders of the court of metropolitan magistrate, New Delhi. The case was later transferred to the Delhi police crime branch for further investigations.

According to official sources, over a thousand-page chargesheet has been prepared by the crime branch in which Ms Roy and Mr Hussain on the basis of several videos and forensic evidence.

The police have cited over half a dozen eyewitness



Arundhati Roy

accounts, the sources said. The forensic reports on the videos, which surfaced on social media, have also been provided as part of the investigations, the sources added.

Delhi lieutenant-governor VK. Saxena had on Friday accorded sanction to prosecute them under Section 45 (1) of UAPA.

Last October, the L-G granted sanction to prosecute them under Section 196 of CrPC for the commission of offences punishable under different sections of the IPC: 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony), 153B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief). — PTI

## E-rickshaw driver held for sexually assaulting minor

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

An e-rickshaw driver, who allegedly sexually assaulted a minor girl when she boarded his e-rickshaw near Bara Hindu Rao area of north Delhi, has been arrested, the police on Tuesday said. The victim had boarded his e-rickshaw from ISBT Kashmere Gate, as she had to go Wazirabad, they said.

"On the intervening night of June 12 and 13, an information from a hospital was received regarding physical assault with a 17-year-old girl. The statement of the victim was recorded and as per her statement, medical examination of the victim was conducted," said DCP (north) Manoj Kumar Meena.

An FIR was registered and further investigation was taken up. As per the victim's statement, the search was started in order to arrest the accused, the police said.

"As there was no registration plate on the e-rickshaw, it was tough to trace the accused. The incident took place during night hours at around 2:30 am due to which it became more difficult to identify the e-rickshaw or the accused in the CCTV footage," said the DCP.

The accused disclosed that on the intervening night of June 12 and 13, the victim boarded his e-rickshaw to go to Wazirabad and he took her to the forest area near Jal Board Awaas, Bara Hindu Rao, and assaulted her sexually, he added.

## AIIMS docs save dying fetus with rare blood group flown from Japan

AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

In a rare feat, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, has saved the life of an anaemic foetus with an incompatible blood group with that of its mother by infusing the blood sourced from a blood bank in Japan after a worldwide search.

The instance of incompatibility in the blood group of the mother and the foetus is a rarest of rare conditions globally and the case was the first in India with the subject patient losing seven babies in a row due to the medical condition.

The AIIMS case was the eighth such instance reported across the globe. Emphasising that it is the first case of successful pregnancy outcome in alloimmunisation due to Rh 17 Ag in India and the

eighth case in the world, Dr Neema Malhotra, the HOD of Obs and Gynae, AIIMS, said, "The peculiar blood condition styled as Rh 17 Ag refers to the incompatibility between the red blood cells of the mother and the baby in the womb, which may lead to problems for the unborn child due to destruction of the red cells leading to anaemia, jaundice, heart failure, and even death of the baby."

Dr Vatsla Dadhwal, a professor at the department of gynaecology, said, "The most common known incompatibility is due to the RhD antigen and in severe cases of foetal anaemia RhD-blood is transfused to the baby inside the mother's womb through the umbilical cord. However, in this case, the mother was negative for the Rh 17 antigen which is very rare to find. Due to this, the

babies in her womb would suffer from incompatibility and develop anaemia and she had suffered seven pregnancy losses."

In her eighth pregnancy, she came to the AIIMS in the fifth month of pregnancy, when it was found that the baby was already anaemic and required blood to be given urgently. Although the blood group had been identified, the blood was not available in India, she said.

With the cooperation from the social service department of AIIMS and other NGOs, the gynaecology department brought one unit of blood from Japan.

Dr Anubhuti Rana said that with the available blood, the foetus received six blood transfusions inside the mother's womb and the state of hydrops (heart failure) reverted to normal.

**New Okhla Industrial Development Authority**  
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (U.P.)  
Website : [www.noidaauthorityonline.in](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.in)

**E-TENDER NOTICE**

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: [www.noidaauthorityonline.in](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.in) & <https://tender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

S. N.	Job Number	Name of the work	Amount (Rs.)	Publishing
1	24/SPE/PE (PH-I)/E-T/2023-24	Catching Work of unruly monkeys and releasing them in protected forest areas in various sectors and villages in Public Health Department Div-I	29.43 Lakh	3rd Time

The above tenders can be uploaded From dated **19/06/2024 to 25/06/2024 upto 5.00 PM**. Pre-Qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated **26/06/2024 at 11.00 AM**

**Sector-94, NOIDA**

**CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA**

**Dy. GM/Sr. Project Engineer (Public Health), NOIDA**

**NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION PLANNING BOARD**  
(A Statutory Body under Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Govt. of India)  
1st Floor, Core-4B, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003

**APPOINTMENTS**

Applications are invited from eligible Indian nationals for engagement as Consultant Grade-I (Admin.) - 01 post and Young Professional (GIS) - 02 posts in NCRPB on consolidated monthly fee. Details of the vacancies are available on Board's website <https://ncrpb.nic.in>

Last date for receipt of applications is 15 days from the date of publication of advertisement in the newspaper

Member Secretary

CBC-44103/12/0001/2425



SHORT TAKES

Majhi, former CM Patnaik take oath

**Bhubaneswar:** The special session of the Odisha Assembly began on Tuesday for administering oaths to the newly-elected MLAs. Chief minister Mohan Mahi first took oath as MLA following which the two deputy CMs — K.V. Singh Deo and Pravati Parida — were administered oath by the pro-tem Speaker Ranendra Pratap Swain. Former CM BJD president Naveen Patnaik, who won from the Hinjili seat, also took oath along with several other of his party MLAs. As per reports, all 147 MLAs are scheduled to be administered oath on June 18 and June 19. The Speaker election is scheduled for June 20. This time, the BJP has formed a government by defeating the BJD which ruled the state for 24 years. The saffron party won 78 of 147 seats. Its number in the Assembly has risen to 81 after three Independent MLAs extended support to the party.

US delegation in HP for meet with Dalai

**Dharamsala:** A US Congressional delegation led by House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Michael McCaul arrived in Himachal Pradesh's Dharamsala on Tuesday to meet Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. Apart from Mr McCaul, the delegation consisted of six more prominent US Congressional members namely former US Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Marianne Miller, Gregory Meeks, Nicole Malliotakis, Jim McGovern, and Ami Bera. The delegation is on a two-day visit and will meet the Dalai Lama on Wednesday morning, officials said. After arrival, Mr McCaul said, "We are excited to meet the Dalai Lama and to talk about many things, including the bill which passed by Cong-ress that says the US stands with the people of Tibet." — PTI

Kerala JD-S to form new political party

**Thiruvananthapuram:** In a major political development, the Kerala unit of JD(S) has decided to sever its ties with the H.D. Deve Gowda's parent party and form a new political entity. The decision to sever ties with the parent party and to form a new political outfit with a fresh name was taken at the state committee meeting held on Tuesday. Earlier the CPM, which heads the ruling LDF, had given an ultimatum to the JD(S) to decide on the issue at the earliest after H.D. Kumara-swamy became a minister in PM Narendra Modi's Cabinet. The Kerala unit's continuation in the LDF had become untenable following Mr Kumaraswamy's induction into the Union Cabinet. JD(S) state chief Mathew T. Thomas said that the process to register a new party with a fresh name has been set in motion.

DIDI'S SURPRISE VISIT TO BJP MP IRKS LEADERS

AGE CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, JUNE 18

In a surprise move, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday visited BJP Rajya Sabha MP Nagendra Roy, popularly known as "Ananta Maharaj" to his Rajbanshi community, at his residence in Cooch Behar and held a meeting with him. The Trinamul Congress supremo's sudden interaction with the influential Rajbanshi community leader at home after her party's victory at Cooch Behar seat in the Lok Sabha election in the northern district has left the BJP fuming. Ms Banerjee, who had rushed to Siliguri on Monday to visit the injured passengers of the Kanchenjunga Express train accident, travelled to Cooch Behar on Tuesday. She offered puja at Madan Mohan temple in the district town in the morning. Till then, her next destination was a secret. Later the CM, accompanied by her Cabinet colleague Aroop Biswas, went to the BJP MP's house. Mr Roy, who was waiting at the doorstep, welcomed Ms Banerjee with Uttariyo — an attire of his community.

■ ‘Driver overshot signals’ ■ Railways passed buck to deceased driver, says TMC

FIR against dead driver; toll at 11

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, JUNE 18

A day after a goods train rammed into Kanchanjunga Express in Darjeeling of West Bengal, an FIR was filed against the deceased driver of the goods train that had overshot the signal and rammed into the Kanchenjunga Express near Siliguri. Meanwhile, the death toll increased to 11 on Tuesday as a passenger succumbed to her injuries at hospital. The victim, Sneha Mondal, was a six-year-old girl from Malda in North Bengal. She was returning home with her parents on the Kanchenjunga Express from Agartala.

The case on several charges including 304(II) (act is done with knowledge that it is likely to cause death, but without any intention to cause death) of the IPC was initiated at New Jalpaiguri government railway police station.

It came in the wake of a complaint filed by an injured passenger of the ill-fated Sealdah-bound train on Monday.

Eastern Railway spokesperson Kaushik Mitra informed that a paper memo (T/A912) was issued to the drivers of both the trains to run at a speed of 10 km per hour since automatic signals were not functioning between Ranipatra and Chatterhat stations.

North Bengal development minister Udayan Guha has blamed the railways of passing the buck to the goods train driver, as he is no more, to cover up it's faults.



A train runs through the accident area on Tuesday following restoration of services a day after the collision between the Kanchenjunga Express and a goods train near Rangapani railway station in West Bengal.

— PTI

‘Centre invests over 1L crore in safety projects in 10 years’

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

Notwithstanding the trains collision on Monday, Indian Railways has recorded reduction in accidents with the Centre making substantial investments worth ₹1, 78,000 crores in safety-related projects from 2014-24, which is 2.5 times more than the corresponding investment of ₹70,273 crores in 2004-14 period.

"Safety of train operations is the topmost priority for Indian Railways. In the 10 years from 2014 to 2024, Indian Railways has made significant investments in safety. It has also taken up many structural and systemic improvements that have positive impact on safe opera-

tions," a senior official told this newspaper, adding the results are also visible in terms of reduction in accidents.

The official said that the average number of accidents has reduced by 60 per cent in 2014-24 (68 per year) compared with 2004-14 period (171 per year). Official figures show that there has been a steep decline in the number of consequential train accidents, from 473 in 2000-01 to 40 in 2022-23.

It is learnt that the railway ministry's continuous focus is on to further enhance safety measures. Track-related improvements, signalling-related improvements, locomotive and train-related improvements are part of this endeavour. Training

of loco-pilots, loco-inspectors, and stationmasters is also the ministry's top priority.

Officials said simulators, being introduced for better training Automatic Train Protection System (Kavach), was also developed and introduced during the 2014-24 period.

"Kavach" is a complex system involving six major subsystems: laying optical fibre cable along railway tracks; installing telecom towers along the tracks; installing telecom equipment on these towers and on trains; setting up data centres at stations and integrating them with signal system; installing equipment on tracks and installing equipment on locomotives and trains, the official said.

Why, despite the Balasore accident, not a single kilometre of the much-touted Kavach anti-collision system had been added since then, the Congress president asked.

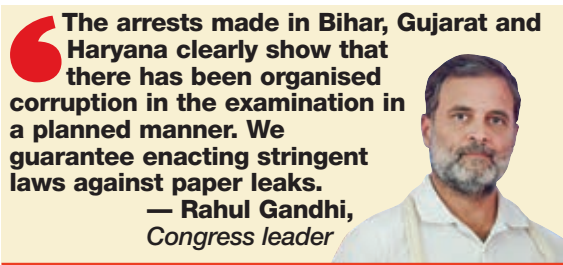
■ Rahul hits out at PM for keeping mum over Neet issue

‘BJP-ruled states hub of paper leaks’

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for maintaining "silence" on the Neet exam issue, asserting the Congress is committed to strongly raising the voice of the youth from the streets to the Parliament for ensuring strong policies against paper leaks.

The former Congress president said the arrests made in Bihar, Gujarat and Haryana clearly show that there has been organised corruption in the examination in a planned



manner. "The BJP-ruled states have become the 'epicentre' of paper leaks," Mr Gandhi said.

"Narendra Modi, as usual, is maintaining silence on the tampering with the future of more than 24 lakh students in the Neet examination," he

added. "The arrests made in Bihar, Gujarat and Haryana clearly show that there has been organised corruption in the examination in a planned manner and these BJP-ruled states have become the epicentre of paper leak," claimed Mr Gandhi.

He further added, "In our manifesto, we guaranteed the protection of the youth's future by enacting stringent laws against paper leaks. Fulfilling our responsibility as the Opposition, we are committed to strongly raising the voices of the youth across the country, from the streets to Parliament, and pressuring the government to develop such stringent policies."

The NEET-UG examination, conducted by the NTA, is the pathway for admissions into MBBS, BDS and Ayush and other courses in government and private institutions across the country.

Haryana MLA quits Cong, will join BJP with daughter soon

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

Congress leader and Haryana MLA Kiran Choudhry has resigned from the primary membership of the Congress. In a letter to the Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, she expressed her decision to quit the party. She will be joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) soon.

Her daughter and former Congress MP from Mahendragarh-Bhiwani Lok Sabha constituency Shruti Choudhry will also join the BJP, as she has also sent in her resignation.

Ms Choudhry was upset with the Congress after her daughter and former MP Shruti Choudhry was denied the ticket.

On Monday in Hisar, she said that she saw no future of the Congress in Haryana. "This is true that the Congress could have won more seats in the Lok Sabha, had the Congress in-charge Deepak Babaria ensured better ticket allocation," Ms Choudhry said, while interacting with media-persons.

Ms Choudhry has also been facing allegations of sabotage by the Congress Bhiwani-Mahendragarh MLA Rao Dan Singh.

■ ‘Incident has been blown out of proportion’

Viral video of worker washing Nana Patole’s feet triggers row

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, JUNE 18

Maharashtra Congress leader Nana Patole once again pulled himself to a controversy after video of a party worker washing his feet went viral. The issue sparked a political row, with the BJP accusing the Congress of a "feudal mindset" and demanded an apology from Mr Patole.

The incident occurred on Monday during Mr Patole's tour of Akola district, where he attended a program in Wadegaon and visited the palanquin procession of Saint Gajanan Maharaj. He apparently had walked through the mud and on



Nana Patole

Targeting Mr Patole, BJP Mumbai's official handle posted on X, "What is unfortunate is that the Congress is repeatedly insulting the workers who fight for their lives. It's a shame that Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole made a worker wash his feet because his feet were muddy. Is this the culture of Congress?" BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla

returning to his car, the party worker was seen pouring water on the former's feet and cleaning them with his hands.

called the Congress leader's action as "Nawabi feudal shehzada" mindset and demanded apologies from the party and Mr Patole himself. "Congress has a Nawabi Feudal Shehzada mindset. Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole gets his leg and feet washed by a party worker in Akola. They treat Janta and workers like Ghulam & themselves like Kings & Queens. Nana Patole must apologise & so must Congress," Mr Poonawalla said on X. However, Mr Patole said that the incident had been blown out of proportion, saying his feet got muddy after taking part in a palanquin procession.

BJD leaders still sulk in silence over election fiasco

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 18

An uneasy calm prevails in the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) that lost power to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after a little over 24 years in power in Odisha.

The party, though won 51 of the 147 Assembly seats, falling short of just 23 seats to reach the majority mark, has not come out with any statements as yet, as to what dashed its hope of coming to power

for the record sixth term. Though a few top leaders of the party initially blamed "over-indulgence" of party president and ex-chief minister Naveen Patnaik's bureaucrat-turned-politician aide V.K. Pandian in the party affairs and his "excessive interference" in the government system, they have now kept mum, apparently waiting for Mr Naveen to declare as to what led to the party's poor performance. On June 4 when the

▶ **THOUGH THE BJD** had announced to form a committee to find out the reasons for the party's defeat, the body has not yet taken any shape

results started pouring in from counting centres and initial trends showed the BJD losing power, there was strong resentment among the leaders against Mr Pandian and party's organising secretary Pranab Prakash Das. All

Cong targets Centre, seeks resignation of Vaishnaw

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

The Congress on Tuesday demanded railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's resignation in the wake of the Kanchanjunga Express accident and said that he has no moral right to remain in the position.

Taking a swipe at Mr Vaishnaw for reaching the accident site riding pillion on a motorcycle, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge asked whether he is a rail minister or a "reel minister". He said whenever there is a train accident, Modi government's railway minister reaches the spot under the glare of cameras and behaves as if everything is fine. "Narendra Modiji, tell us who should be held accountable, the Railway Minister or you? Self-glorification will not undo the criminal negligence perpetrated by the Modi govt. on the Indian Railways! Accountability needs to be fixed at the top," Mr Kharge said.

Mr Kharge also posed seven-pointed questions to the Centre.

Why, despite the Balasore accident, not a single kilometre of the much-touted Kavach anti-collision system had been added since then, the Congress president asked.

NDA netas meet on Speaker, Prez address June 27

Maha core leaders flock to HQ, mull over strategy for state polls

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

Ahead of the commencement of the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha, NDA leaders, including Union ministers, on Tuesday held a meeting chaired by defence minister Rajnath Singh.

The meeting, likely to discuss the names of candidates for the Lok Sabha Speaker and deputy speaker, also held consultation on issues likely to be the part of the President's address to the joint sitting on June 27.

The election to the Speaker's post is to be held on June 26. The BJP is likely to keep the Speaker's post to itself, while the deputy speaker's post could be given to one of its allies.

The Opposition camp has demanded the deputy speaker's post, but is yet to finalise its course of action if not given by the government.

Among those who attended the meeting at Mr Singh's residence were Union ministers Manohar Lal Khattar, Bhupendra Yadav, Virendra Kumar, Piyush Goyal, Annapurna Devi, S. Jaishankar, JD(U)'s Lalan Singh and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan.

Meanwhile, a separate meeting of the Maharashtra BJP core group was held at the party headquarters later



Rajnath Singh

in the evening to discuss the party's strategy for the Assembly polls, due to be held in the state later this year.

Maharashtra deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, party state president Chandrashekhar Bawankule, Ashish Shelar, MP Ashok Chavan, minister Girish Mahajan and other leaders attended the meeting, which was presided over by Bharatiya Janata Party chief J.P. Nadda.

Union home minister Amit Shah and BJP general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh also attended the meeting. A meeting of the party's core group leaders from Jharkhand is also expected to take place. Assembly polls are scheduled in Jharkhand by the end of this year.

The JD(U) has said it would support the BJP nominee for the Speaker's post, while another key ally TDP has sought a consensus candidate for the coveted post.

Bypolls to 5 Legislative Council vacancies in 4 states on July 12

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

The bypolls to fill five Legislative Council vacancies in four states will be held on July 12, the Election Commission said on Tuesday. Polling to three of the five seats were necessitated due to the resignation of members of Legislative Council (MLCs) and to the remaining two due to disqualification.

Besides, the MLC polls for 11 seats in Maharashtra will also be held on the same date. The term of office of 11 members of the Maharashtra Legislative Council elect-

ed by the MLAs is due to expire on their retirement on July 27. These MLCs are: Dr Manisha Shyam Sundar Kayande, Vijay Vithal Girkar, Abdullah Khan A. Latif Khan Durrani, Nilay Madhukar Naik, Anil Dattatray Parab, Ramesh Narayan Patil, Ramrao Balajirao Patil, Dr Wajahat Mirza Athar Mirza, Pradnya Rajeev Satav, Mahadev Jagannath Jankar, and Jayant Prabhakar Patil.

In Karnataka, former chief minister Jagadish Shettar had resigned as an MLC in January, after he quit the BJP to join the Congress after being denied a ticket to contest

the election from the Dharwad Central Assembly seat he represented. He, later, rejoined the BJP ahead of the LS polls and won the parliamentary election.

In Uttar Pradesh, vacancy was created when Swami Prasad Maurya quit the Samajwadi Party and resigned from the House in February. One seat each in Bihar (Rambali Singh) and Andhra Pradesh (C. Ramachandraiah) fell vacant due to the disqualification of sitting members. Another seat in the Andhra Pradesh legislative council fell vacant in April.

C'garh to make cash payment for tendu in Naxal bastions

AGE CORRESPONDENT RAIPUR, JUNE 18

Chhattisgarh chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai has ordered the authorities concerned to make cash payment for tendu leaf collectors in Naxal-infested areas in Bastar in the state.

The Chhattisgarh government's decision to pay the tendu leaf collectors in Naxal-infested districts of Sukma, Bijapur and Narayanpur in cash for the procurement of their produce was made taking into account the significant distances between the villages and the bank branches in these areas, official sources said on Tuesday.

The local administration has been asked to set up camps in the "haat bazaars" (tribal markets) in these districts to pay the tendu leaf collectors in cash for procurement of their produce.

In other districts, the remuneration will be directly deposited in the bank accounts of the tendu leaf collectors, official sources said.

The entire cash payment process in the Naxal-infested districts will be overseen by the district collectors concerned, principal chief conservator of forest (PCCF) V. Srinivas Rao said.



SHORT TAKES

Curfew in Balasore after 2 groups fight

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha government on Tuesday clamped curfew in the Balasore area for an indefinite period following brewing of tension between two different communities. Besides, Internet services have been suspended in some sensitive areas to prevent any untoward situation. Shops, schools and other institutions have also been shut to bring peace in the region. The police has appealed to people to avoid coming out of their houses. Balasore SP Sagarika Nath said that the situation is under control. “Multiple FIRs have been registered over Monday’s incident; based on those FIRs, legal action will be taken. More than 40 platoons of police force have been deployed. As of now, 34 persons have been detained in connection with the incident,” she informed.

Doda terror attack: 3 picked up for grilling

**Jammu:** Security personnel have picked up three persons, including a couple, for questioning in connection with the movement of terrorists involved in the recent attacks in J&K’s Doda district. The authorities believe a group of three to four terrorists is present in the higher reaches of the district. On June 11 night, five soldiers from the Rashtriya Rifles and a special police officer were injured when terrorists attacked a joint checkpoint in the upper reaches of Chattergalla. On Wednesday evening, a policeman was injured when the terrorists opened fire on a search party in the Kota Top village in the Gandoh area of the district. The security personnel have detained three persons from the Jai area of Doda district. The three include a couple and a teenager, who are suspected of providing food to the terrorists and failing to report their movements, sources said. — PTI

Shah praises ITBP’s mission at 14,800 ft

**New Delhi:** Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday hailed the recovery of an American paraglider’s body by a team of the ITBP from 14,800 feet high in the mountains risking their own lives and said their dedication to humanity is commendable. In a post on X, Mr Shah said the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) mountain rescue team recently undertook a challenging search operation on the high mountain cliffs in Lahaul and Spiti in Himachal and recovered the body of a US citizen, who lost his life in an accident while paragliding. The remains of 31-year-old paraglider Trevor Bockstahler, missing near Kaza in Lahaul and Spiti, were brought down from 14,800 feet by the ITBP mountaineers on Monday after one of the most challenging rescue missions that spanned more than 48-hours.

NSAs Doval, Sullivan say critical tech vital to closer India-US ties

■ **Continued from Page 1** technology sectors including space, semiconductors, advanced telecommunications, artificial intelligence, quantum, biotechnology, and clean energy”. According to the US, both NSAs have “set the vision for the next chapter of our strategic technology partnership” and “underscored their commitment to orienting our cooperation around breakthrough achievements in priority critical and emerging technology areas, by focusing our efforts on co-production, co-development, and research and development (R&D) opportunities to ensure we stay at the leading edge of innovation and enhancing coordination with like-minded nations to deliver secure, reliable, and cost-competitive technology solutions for the American and Indian people and our partners around the world”. Addressing participants at an India-US iCET Roundtable with industry CEOs, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Mr Doval was quoted as saying: “The US and India have got to remain at the forefront of technology in case we need to protect and defend our value systems and it is part of a larger strategic interest... iCET has achieved

1,225 tourists evacuated from landslide-hit regions of Sikkim

**Gangtok, June 18:** In its second day of rescue operation, the Sikkim administration on Tuesday evacuated 1,225 tourists from Lachung and nearby areas of Mangan district, which was hit by a series of landslides and rain last week leaving at least six people dead, an official said. The evacuation of the remaining tourists, said to be a few hundreds, will be carried out on Wednesday if the weather permits as six helicopters are on standby at Bagdogra airport in neighbouring West Bengal, additional district magistrate (ADM) Vishnu Lama said. The administration had rescued 64 tourists on Monday and brought them safely to the district headquarters Mangan. “We have evacuated a total of 1,225 tourists from Lachung and surrounding regions and brought them to Mangan town by road



BRO personnel evacuate tourists stranded due to landslides in Sikkim’s Mangan district on Tuesday. — PTI

today,” Mr Lama said. Mangan district is known for popular tourist spots like Gurudongmar Lake and Yunthang Valley. With vehicles provided by the motor vehicle division of the transport department, the rescued people reached the state capital Gangtok from Mangan town and began their onward journey to their respective destinations, the ADM said. The district administration is ready to remain vigilant and prepared to cater to the needs of the remaining tourists and deal with any challenges, the official said. District magistrate Hem Kumar Chettri is himself supervising the evacuation of the tourists. — PTI

Newly-constructed bridge collapses in Bihar



A portion of a newly-constructed bridge over the Bakra river collapses in the Sikti block area of Araria, Bihar, on Tuesday. No casualty was reported. The bridge, constructed by the state government, was not opened to the public. — PTI

After MP, C’garh to replace Urdu & Parsi terms in police regulation

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY**  
RAIPUR, JUNE 18

After Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh is set to replace the Urdu, Arabic and Parsi terms being used in the state police regulation with Hindi words. Deputy chief minister in the Chhattisgarh government Vijay Sharma, who also holds the home portfolio, on Tuesday ordered the state home department to change the Urdu, Parsi and Arabic terms being used in state police regulation and replace them with Hindi words since they are now “out of circulation” and beyond the comprehension of the common people. Mr Sharma said that the “incomprehensible” Urdu



Vijay Sharma

and Parsi words used in the FIRs and investigation reports of criminal cases have often bothered the people, who find it difficult to understand them. Mr Sharma has directed the state home secretary to replace all the Urdu, Arabic and Parsi words with simple Hindi words so that common people could understand them. Last month, Pavan Srivastav, additional director general of police

IMD predicts heavy rainfall in Kerala districts till June 22

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 18

With the monsoon gaining strength in Kerala, the Indian meteorological department (IMD) has predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall in several districts till June 22. An orange alert has been sounded in Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargod districts. The IMD has also predicted rainfall accompanied by lightning in various districts. The revenue authorities have asked people residing in danger zones, including coastal areas, to remain cautious in the wake of the possibility of high tidal waves and rough seas.

Forces up vigil at sensitive sites along Amarnath Yatra

**Cops told to conduct regular verifications at hotels, lodges**

**AMRESH SRIVASTAVA**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18



Security personnel during a mock drill in Jammu on Tuesday, ahead of the Amarnath Yatra. — PTI

The security forces have increased patrolling and surveillance along potential infiltration routes and at vulnerable locations prone to night ambush as part of enhanced security arrangements in J&K ahead of the Amarnath Yatra, sources in the security setup said on Tuesday. The move comes two days after a high-level security review meeting by Union home minister Amit Shah. Sources added that security stakeholders in J&K have been asked to heighten alertness, reinforcement at borders, real-time intelligence sharing and round-the-clock vigilance on highways, especially ones leading to the Amarnath base camps. Apart from police per-

sonnel, it is expected that nearly 500 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces such as the CRPF, BSF and the CISF will be deployed for the annual pilgrimage and the mobilisation of troops has already begun from the neighbouring states. The police and the Central forces have intensified round-the-clock sec-

urity along highways and checkpoints. Quick reaction teams have been deputed at strategic locations. The J&K police has also been asked to keep vigils at hotels, lodges and guesthouses. It has also been told to conduct regular verifications and security checks at labour camps, especially in border areas, sources said.

Woman brutally killed as bystanders record it

**No one steps in, stop assault in Maha**

**BHAGWAN PARAB**  
MUMBAI, JUNE 18

Maharashtra was shocked by the brutal murder of a 22-year-old woman, who was beaten to death by her boyfriend in Vasai in broad daylight on Tuesday morning. The incident was recorded by bystander’s cameras, but no one dared to intervene and stop the assault. Police have arrested the accused. The assault occurred in the middle of the road when the accused, Rohit Yadav, was seen chasing the victim Arti Yadav with the spanner and repeatedly hitting the girl on her head and chest after which she fell. After that, he rained more than a dozen blows on her with the spanner. A bystander was seen trying to stop Rohit, how-

ever, he pushed him away and threatened to hit him with the spanner. After the man backed off, there was no attempt to stop him. In the footage, people could be seen walking away or driving their motorcycles and moving ahead. But no one came to the girl’s help. After the girl lay motionless, the accused was heard screaming “kyun kiya, kyun kiya aisa mere sath? (why did you do this to me?)”. The motive behind the assault was reportedly a recent breakup after a five-year relationship. Senior police inspector Jairam Ranaware, who heads the Waliv police station, said. “Breaking off the relationship seems to be the cause (of the murder),” he added.

CDS releases joint doctrine for cyberspace operations

**PAWAN BALI**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 18

Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Anil Chauhan on Tuesday released the joint doctrine for cyberspace operations during the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) meeting. In addition to the traditional domains of warfare, including land, sea and air, cyberspace has emerged as a crucial and challenging domain in modern warfare. The joint doctrine is a keystone publication to

guide commanders in cyberspace operations in today’s complex military operating environment. The development of joint doctrines is an important aspect of jointness and integration, a step being actively pursued by the armed forces. The joint doctrine for cyberspace operations is a significant step to give impetus to the ongoing process. Unlike territorial limits in the traditional domains of land, sea and air, cyberspace is a global common and hence has shared sovereignty.

‘Historic, huge vote of trust’

■ **Continued from Page 1** noted that the recently concluded general election for the 18th Lok Sabha symbolised the vastness, capabilities, comprehensiveness and roots of India’s democracy and presented it to the world. Noting that more than 64-crore people voted in these elections, the Prime Minister said that an election of such scale does not take place anywhere else, witnessing such immense participation from the citizens. Recalling his recent visit to the G-7 summit in Italy, the Prime Minister pointed out that the number of voters in India is one-and-a-half times more than the number of voters in all G-7 nations put together and more than two-and-a-half times greater than the number of voters in all the member countries of the European Union. Mr Modi highlighted the high participation of women voters, totaling more than 31 crores, and said that it is the highest number of women voters in the world, referring to a single nation. “The power and beauty of India’s democracy not only attracts the entire world but also leaves an impact,” Mr Modi said. The Prime Minister also took the opportunity to thank the people of Varanasi for taking part in the festival of democracy and making it a

grand success. “The people of Varanasi have not only elected a member of Parliament but the Prime Minister itself,” he said. The Prime Minister also witnessed Ganga Aarti at Dasha-shwamedh Ghat and performed puja and darshan at Kashi Vishwanath Temple during his Varanasi visit. In his address, the PM reiterated the importance that he accords to farmers, nari shakti, youth and the poor as pillars of developed India. He said that the first decision of his new third term government after formation was about farmers and poor families. “These decisions regarding 3-crore additional households under the PM Awas Yojna or the instalment of PM Kisan Samman Nidhi will help crores of people,” he said. Calling the Krishi Sakhi initiative a strong step in the direction of creating 3-crore “Lakhpati Didis”, Mr Modi said that the initiative will ensure the dignity and assurance of a source of income for the beneficiary women. “PM Kisan Samman Nidhi has emerged as the world’s largest direct benefit transfer scheme,” the Prime Minister said, highlighting that more than ₹3.25-lakh crores have been transferred into the bank accounts of crores of farmers, ₹700 crores have

been transferred to the families in Varanasi alone. The Prime Minister lauded the use of technology in taking the benefits to the deserved beneficiaries and also credited the “Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra”, which enabled more than 1-crore farmers to register themselves under the PM KISAN scheme. He noted that rules and regulations have been simplified to increase accessibility. “Work related to farmers’ welfare takes place at a fast pace when intentions and beliefs are in the right place,” Mr Modi. Dwelling upon the role of the agri-ecosystem in making India the world’s third-largest economy in the 21st century, Mr Modi stressed the need for a global outlook and urgency for self-reliance in pulses and oilseeds. Noting the presence of women in large numbers, the Prime Minister underlined their importance and support in agriculture and mentioned expanding the scope of agriculture to boost their contributions and the Krishi Sakhi programme is a step in this direction similar to the “Drone Didi” programme. Highlighting the contribution of women as Asha workers and Bank Sakhis, the Prime Minister said that the nation will now witness their capabilities as Krishi Sakhis.

PM to lead Yoga Day in Srinagar

■ **Continued from Page 1**

York. “His (Mr Modi) leadership has significantly boosted yoga’s global popularity and recognition,” the minister said. Mr Jadhav pointed out that following a proposal by Mr Modi to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 11, 2014, it was unanimously resolved to observe June 21 every year as IDY. “It was an important diplomatic victory for India at the international level. This effort led to the global recognition of yoga,” he said. On Tuesday, Mr Jadhav launched a “Common Yoga Protocol Book in Braille” to support the visually impaired in learning and practicing yoga with convenience. He also launched the “Professor Ayushman” comic on Yoga. “This book will help children learn and practice yoga with interest and entertainment,” he said. As a special initiative, this year the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) is organising a unique initiative — “Yoga for Space” — to mark the IDY 2024. All Isro scientists and officials will perform yoga together as per the “common yoga protocol” guidelines. The team from the Gaganyaan project will also join the IDY global campaign by practicing yoga on the occasion. To promote technology and start-ups in the field of yoga, the Ayush ministry has organised the “Yoga Tech Challenge” on the MyGov portal and the MyBharat portal, which aims to identify and promote those start-ups or individuals who have developed yoga-related tools, software, and accessory products. Ayush ministry secretary Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha said that the IDY is not only a celebration but also a concerted effort to bring about a behavioural change so that people adopt yoga in their lives so that they can get the benefits of yoga.



THE ASIAN AGE

19 JUNE 2024

Negligence of safety rules led to WB train accident

Criminal negligence in following rules for safe operations led to a horrendous train accident in which 11 lives of crew and passengers were lost. The most basic SOPs in the event of failure of the automatic signalling system, especially as an express train and a goods train were running on the same track, were not followed leading to yet another crash that points to the inefficiency of the Indian railway system. The probe may not go very far in fixing accountability as the locomotive pilot of the goods train also died as well as the guard of the express train. This is another mishap which casts the entire system in poor light. It appears that safety is no concern when it comes to operating trains and talk of arming all trains with the 'Kavach' shield system, which has been available for decades, is just that — mere talk.

It was up to the Opposition to point out that not a single kilometre of the Kavach anti-collision system had been added since the Balasore accident in June 2023. The unfortunate ones were those travelling in the Kanchenjunga Express, slowed to a crawl by regulations governing train running after failure of signals by which trains are allowed to go through red lights too, but only with several precautions.

An NCRB report cites a ballpark figure of one lakh deaths from railway accidents in 2017-2021. Despite severe manpower shortage, particularly in the important area of locomotive pilots, three lakh vacancies remain to be filled.

It was after more than two hours after the signalling system failure that the crash near the New Jalpaiguri station took place, which goes to suggest that messages were either not transmitted to engine drivers to remind them of SOPs in such conditions or the drivers ignored it as it may have been in the case of the goods train.

In the modern age, communication is possible in real time, but that is only if safety is an absolute priority in the running of trains. The criticism of basic callousness in train operations, which the latest accident also exemplifies, is not unfounded.

The crash also reflects that not much has been learnt from one of the worst railway accidents in history with three trains crashing in Odisha when a signalling error and failure of the automated electronic interlocking system, which should ensure that trains do not crash head-on, led to an accident in which nearly 300 passengers died.

Again, it was up to the Opposition to point to an NCRB report putting out a ballpark figure of one lakh deaths from railway accidents between 2017 and 2021 and the fact that despite severe manpower shortage, particularly in the important area of locomotive pilots, too many posts have gone unfilled among the three lakh vacancies that are said to exist now. In short, Indian Railways has been going off the track and sadly for the dead it takes fatalities to point this out.

Priyanka enters the fray

A sense of déjà vu prevailed on all those who have watched Congress politics for the last few decades when the party decided to nominate its general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat which her brother and former party president Rahul Gandhi, who won the seat along with the family borough Rae Bareilly, will vacate after winning both.

Ms Vadra has been a presence in the Congress Party ever since her brother won the Lok Sabha election from Amethi in 2004. She took to active politics upon her nomination as AICC general secretary in 2019. The present nomination only shows that the Congress has grown confident now to field her in a constituency which still is a safe bet, given its past record and the current political realities. And she, too, may have felt the need for a larger and meaningful role to play in parliamentary politics. Her win will create a spectacle where all the eligible members of the Congress' first family will be in Parliament now.

Was Ms Vadra the only possible choice for the seat? The party which had disastrous runs in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections nearly touched the three-digit mark this time under the leadership of a president who does not come from the Gandhi family. It only goes to show that the party has no dearth of talent outside of it. Whether to employ it or not is a call it has to take.

Ms Vadra's candidature will refuel the BJP tirade against dynastic politics. It may, however, be remembered that the BJP's campaign against dynastic politics attracted not much traction as the Opposition, led by alliance partners whose leaders were steeped in dynastic traditions, performed remarkably better this time around.

Ms Vadra's main opponent will be fielded by the CPI, a partner in the INDIA alliance. It will be interesting to watch how the partners explain the contradiction as the by-election is sure to evoke national interest.

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Subhani



War crimes, genocide rise as world ignores ICJ, ICC



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

Two major wars are currently raging across the planet — the first for the past 28 months in mainland Europe between the white Christian nations of Russia and Ukraine, and the second for over eight months between historical enemies Israel, the Jewish state, and Palestinian terrorist group Hamas, widely believed to be supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The question that now arises is: are those engaged in these conflicts wilfully indulging in war crimes, even genocide in certain cases, in complete and utter disregard of international law?

What makes these conflicts unique is that every country disagrees with others on how these wars should end. The big boys of the West are also playing a grossly partisan role, following their own agenda, not bothering about the human tragedy of either Eastern Europe or the Levant. The West seems to be reveling that they aren't losing their diminishing demography.

The landmark verdicts of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) are being scorned, scoffed at and contemptuously ridiculed by a global superpower like the United States. This only shows the arrogance of power. All through the 20th and now the 21st century, the West has prided itself as the ultimate economic, political and military role model which follows the values of "democracy and rule of law" and abides by a "rules-based international order", which should be emulated by the rest of the world. All that seems to be forgotten now.

Even before the UN's top judicial arm, the ICJ, had ordered Israel to "immediately halt its military assault on the Gaza city of Rafah" on May 24, US President Joe Biden had

given the White House's verdict on May 20: "What's happening in Gaza isn't genocide. We reject that." However, EU foreign affairs chief Joseph Borrell urged Israel to "obey the UN court on Rafah". The worst, however, came from Lindsay Graham, US Republican Senator from South Carolina, who said "ICJ to go to hell" for ruling against Israel on Rafah, which the judges described as a "disastrous humanitarian situation".

The ICJ was not the only one to face the ferocity of the very nations that champion the cause of a "rules-based" world order. When the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court sought arrest warrants against Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his defence minister Yoav Gallant for "war crimes and crimes against humanity", the entire American political system burst into flames.

US Senators and Congressmen of both parties proposed sanctions on the ICC. However, earlier, when the same ICC issued an arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin, the US and Europe both welcomed it. Today, Europe appears divided over the ICC verdict against the Israeli leaders, while America is united in opposing it. The Labour Party in Britain, poised to come to power next month, backed the ICC and Germany said it would arrest or deport the Jewish state's leader. Spain too "requested South Africa to intervene in the Gaza genocide case against Israel".

In this toxic environment, an explosive report on May 25 in London's *Daily Telegraph* stood out: "Real reason why Biden considering sanctions against ICC", and it said: "Biden's position on ICC underscores holowness of his rhetoric on America's role in world". It said that all through his

Influential US legislators have spelt out that the US is fiercely opposed to ICC manoeuvring 'not only for outrage against Israel but to protect, in future, our own interests'

presidency, Mr Biden had "emphasised the importance of a rules-based order", had condemned "Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine" to justify extensive US support of Kyiv, and yet "when it comes to Israel, Biden seems to take offence at an institution trying to uphold that order".

Influential US legislators have spelt out that the US is fiercely opposed to ICC manoeuvring "not only for outrage against Israel but to protect, in future, our own interests". US politicians "know very well that they have more to lose than any other country over an emboldened ICC willing to challenge American actions". As "self-appointed world police, the US has regularly violated sovereignty of other countries", the newspaper said.

America's two-faced policy in the Levant now appears to be running out of steam, with the presidential elections looming back in the US amidst internal turbulence on the "Gaza genocide", where it's 1,500 (Israelis killed) versus 40,000 (Palestinians dead). Understandably US secretary of state Blinken is intensively lobbying Middle East leaders to pressure Hamas to accept the Gaza ceasefire.

The UN's efforts to make international law enforceable through the ICJ and ICC on war crimes and genocide has become the butt of jokes. Why can't the warmongers of the West refresh their memory to apply the anti-war instruments to halt the manslaughter of the 21st century? So many agreements have been signed to ensure the peace, but when push comes to shove, virtually all agreements, treaties, protocols and conventions

fall flat as nations follow the principle of "might is right". Implied as a basic precept of international law is the concept of collective security and collective wisdom, despite its frequent breaches. Of all factors of international relations and conflict, however, "war crimes" and "international crimes" emerge as the most vexatious. Introduced 1906, the terms are defined as "cruelty that violates international laws governing the conduct of international armed conflicts". The prohibition against the "killing of hostages, abuse of civilians in occupied territories and devastation that isn't justified by military necessity" have been on the books for over a century but seems to be quickly forgotten amidst mindless butchery of "anything that moves" by fanatical fighters among the belligerents.

To tackle all these came into being the "15-member permanent tribunal of the ICJ, the principal judicial organ of the UN" in 1945, followed by another "court established by statute of the ICC (effective 2002), with jurisdiction over genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression". The apparatus exists with all the paraphernalia, yet nothing happens except mass murder because that is the shortest and quickest way to prosperity, money, profits and road to neo-imperialism through the work of arms merchants and their clients masquerading as political leaders of the strong and mighty.

And that never ends. Just pick the wisdom of greats of the past to ponder over today's mutilated, rotten corpses on the streets. British philosopher Isaiah Berlin referred to the 20th century "as the most terrible century in Western history", and William Golding, the 1983 Nobel laureate for literature, felt that "this has been the violent century in human history". The intellectual giants were right then on both counts but will fail to have any impact today as no one appears to be listening.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College, New Delhi. Views expressed are personal.

LETTERS

RAILWAY VACANCIES

Indian Railways have been playing with our lives by not filling up vacant posts. Railway officials said that a preliminary probe indicated the loco pilot of the goods train disregarded the signal, which led to the Kanchenjunga Express accident. But was it exhaustion that led the locomotive pilot to overshoot the signal? An RTI reply says that of 1,27,644 sanctioned posts of loco pilots and assistant loco pilots, 18,766 — nearly 15 per cent — were vacant as of March 1 this year. Two things surprisingly coexist — a rise in unemployment and a fall in railway recruitment. It is a scandalous irony in a country that is rich in demographic assets.

Sujit De Kolkata

DYNASTY WELCOME?

EVEN HIS WORST detractors must grudgingly concede that Rahul Gandhi did manage to rise like a phoenix from both Rae Bareilly in UP and distant Wayanad in Kerala. That too with huge leads in his wins. In choosing to retain the UP seat, he reckons that a very welcome tail wind, that the Opposition alliance could generate in UP, would gather more thrust for his party down the line. The vacant Wayanad seat could well be contested by his sibling. In which case focus would revert to the much decried dynastic bent, long prevalent in every party, though the Congress was being exclusively singled out. But after a decade of a near-authoritarian dispensation, perhaps dynasty in itself could regain greater acceptability.

R. Narayanan Navi Mumbai

NCERT EXCUSE SILLY

THE DEFENCE of the NCERT for deleting all references to the Gujarat and Babri Masjid riots is really shocking. Students should know the truth; however depressing it may be. If one goes by the same logic of the NCERT, children should also learn nothing about the atrocities committed by foreign invaders. Perhaps the entire episode of Nazi Germany and how Hitler was responsible for the death of millions of Jews should never be taught in schools.

Anthony Henriques Mumbai

Maleeha Lodhi

View from Pakistan



Leaders lack will to initiate policy, build team to save nation from crisis

Pakistan today is at an inflection point. It faces unparalleled challenges in an environment of political polarisation, economic fragility and institutional decay. All of these are converging to reinforce each other and create an overall challenge more formidable than any single crisis. This at a time when national self-confidence is at a new low. An Ipsos survey in May found 82 per cent of people felt the country was heading in the wrong direction.

True, Pakistan has weathered many storms in the past and rebounded from crisis. But present-day challenges are fundamentally different as they are the cumulative consequence of decades of misgovernance and squandered opportunities. Solving these problems can no longer be postponed. In fact, the country is already paying the price of postponed reforms, especially economic reforms, to deal with structural issues. All these challenges have to be addressed.

The polycrisis today has resulted from and reflects the persisting gap between challenge and response, between rule and governance and between power and purpose. Successive governments have simply muddled through without a plan or strategy to deal with long-standing problems. The overarching missing element over the years has been leadership. Wielding power doesn't make for leadership. Nor is a manager a leader; managers uphold the status quo while leaders are

agents of change.

What then is leadership? What are those essential qualities in a political leader that can enable him or her to shape the environment, unite people and lead a country to transformation and change? It is above all a vision that can inspire the people. A vision is what makes for transformational leadership. Leadership is also strength of character, commitment to ethical practices and setting an exemplary standard of integrity. It is about building institutions and learning from the past, not living in it.

Leadership involves fashioning a strategy to execute a vision, and then staying on course to achieve that. Visionary leaders set a clear direction, confidently embark on that path, are willing to take risks and are unafraid of the opposition they inevitably face from vested interests and entrenched elites. Muhammad Ali Jinnah's leadership embodied these qualities. But most of the country's leaders who came after the Quaid were both uninspired and uninspiring.

Effective leadership not only requires setting out a vision about the future but also a strategy to implement it. Evaluated against this criterion, it is apparent many of the country's leaders' have fallen short. Politics here has long been about power, privilege, patronage and vanquishing opponents rather than offering a coherent programme of policy actions. Slogans there have been

aplenty but platitudes have substituted for policy and rhetoric for solutions.

Leadership in government also means executing a strategy by placing the right people in the right positions. Only by assembling a competent team can a vision be translated into reality. Pakistan's experience over the years shows that factors other than merit and competence were given more importance. A personalised approach to team-building took precedence over considerations of expertise or competence. The premium was on proximity to the 'boss' and other 'connections'.

A third ingredient of leadership is the ability to motivate and inspire people to support the government's policy goals. This involves connecting to citizens, understanding what they want and winning their confidence. It also means communicating effectively. The answer to the question whether the country's leaders are able to do this is obvious. The paradox that defines the country today is that leaders are elected to public office but without the vision or means to enthuse and unite the country.

Looking at the experience of countries that have faced economic crisis but used it as an opportunity to bounce back stronger and more resilient, the distinguishing factor that made this possible was the quality of leadership. Success depended on leaders who ran a competent government that was committed to structural reforms and had the moti-

vation, political will and credibility to take measures that were painful in the near-term but yielded rich and enduring dividends in the long run.

Countries that achieved such an economic turnaround, for example in Southeast Asia and South America, all deployed capable teams of professionals who assisted their governments to craft and implement reforms. This enabled the country to navigate through the crisis towards sustained recovery and growth. In every successful case of a country that took the path to a better economic future, the quality of professionals who shaped and oversaw the reform process was significant. But again, it was the leadership that chose the right team and then guided and inspired them to deliver.

In his thoughtful book, *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy*, the late Henry Kissinger wrote that "without leadership institutions drift and nations court growing irrelevance and ultimately, disaster". Leaders who Kissinger deemed to have provided strategic leadership were all bold, courageous, decisive and had a powerful vision and strong sense of reality. They did not hesitate to court controversy or take on entrenched interests. That he regarded as "the price of making history". Do we in Pakistan have leaders who can forge history and extricate the country from its polycrisis?

— By arrangement with Dawn



## SHORT TAKES

## THAI EX-PM TO FACE TRIAL FOR INSULTING ROYALS

**Bangkok, June 18:** Thai prosecutors on Tuesday formally indicted influential former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra under the kingdom's strict royal insult laws over comments he made nearly a decade ago.

The case against the 74-year-old billionaire, twice elected premier and ousted in a 2006 military putsch, is one of four before the courts that could unleash fresh political instability in the coup-prone kingdom.

## QUAKE KILLS 4, 120 INJURED IN NORTHEAST IRAN

**Tehran, June 18:** At least four people were killed and 120 injured on Tuesday in a 4.9 magnitude earthquake that hit Iran's northeastern city of Kashmar, state media reported.

The quake struck at 1:24 pm (0954 GMT), Kashmar's governor, Hajatollah Shariatmadari, who gave the casualty toll, said on state television.

35 people were hospitalised, he said, adding the quake damaged mostly dilapidated buildings in urban and rural areas of the city. The United States Geological Survey said the earthquake hit at a depth of 10 kilometres (six miles).

## PAK COPS ARREST 6 FOR CHOPPING OFF CAMEL'S LEG

**Karachi, June 18:** A cruel landlord and five of his servants in Pakistan's Sindh province have been arrested for chopping off the leg of a camel after it trespassed on his field seeking fodder, an incident that has attracted the attention of top political leaders, who are now arranging a prosthetic leg for the animal from Dubai.

Rustum Shar and five of his servants were arrested after he proudly posted a video, holding the mutilated leg of the camel, after cutting off the animal's right leg in Mund Jamrao village of Sanghar district last weekend.

## MACRON CALLS FOR LIFTING OF BARRICADES

**Paris, June 18:** President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday called on residents of the French Pacific territory of New Caledonia to dismantle barricades after weeks of unrest, adding the situation remained "unacceptable."

In a public appeal, Macron called for "the firm and definitive lifting of all blockades" and "the condemnation of violence." New Caledonia, which is located between Australia and Fiji, has been ruled from Paris since the 19th century.

Riots broke out in mid-May after anger over voting reform spilled into weeks of deadly protests.

## BOTULISM: 3 HELD AFTER SEVERAL HOSPITALISED

**Moscow, June 18:** Russian authorities on Tuesday detained three people in connection with a suspected botulism outbreak, a move that comes after dozens of people in four different regions have been hospitalised with symptoms of the rare and dangerous disease.

Officials link the outbreak to ready-to-eat salads made by a popular delivery service. Russia's Investigative Committee, said on Tuesday, that authorities detained two top managers of the delivery service and a head of a company.

## ROLEX EATEN BY COW TURNS UP 50 YEARS LATER

**London, June 18:** Thanks to a metal detectorist, a 95-year-old British farmer's prized Rolex watch, which he believed was eaten by a cow, has been reunited with the timepiece half a century later.

James Steele said he lost the watch in the early 1970s when he "suddenly realised" its bracelet had broken.

"The cow could have eaten it with a mouthful of grass, the vet said," the BBC quoted Steele from Shropshire as saying. Now, a metal detectorist has given back the watch to the owner of Treflach Hall in Morda, Oswestry, after finding it on his land.

## Israeli forces deepen Rafah invasion, 17 killed in camps

Residents report heavy bombardments from tanks, planes in several areas

**Cairo, June 18:** Israeli airstrikes on Tuesday killed at least 17 Palestinians in two of the Gaza Strip's historic refugee camps and Israeli tanks pushed deeper into the enclave's southern city of Rafah, residents and medics said.

Residents reported heavy bombardments from tanks and planes in several areas of Rafah, where more than a million people had taken refuge before May. Most of the population has fled northwards since then as Israeli forces invaded the city.

"Rafah is being bombed without any intervention from the world, the occupation (Israel) is acting freely here," a Rafah resident and father of six told Reuters via a chat app.

Israeli tanks were operating inside Tel Al-Sultan, Al-Izba, and Zurub areas in Rafah's west, as well as Shaboura at the heart of the city. They also continued to occupy the eastern neighborhoods and outskirts as well as the border with Egypt and the vital Rafah border crossing.

"There are Israeli forces in most areas, there is heavy resistance too and they are making them pay dearly but the occupation is not ethical and they are destroying the city and the refugee camp," the resident said.

Palestinian health officials said one man was killed in the morning by Israeli fire on the eastern side of Rafah. Medics said they believed many others had been killed in the past days and weeks but rescue teams could not reach

## WAR CABINET AND ITS SIDE-EFFECTS

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU DISBANDED HIS WAR CABINET, ZA MOVE THAT CONSOLIDATES HIS INFLUENCE OVER THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR AND LIKELY DIMINISHES THE ODDS OF A CEASE-FIRE IN THE GAZA STRIP ANYTIME SOON.



Smoke plumes billow during ongoing battles in the Sultan neighbourhood in the northwest of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday. — AFP

## HOW WILL ISRAEL'S WARTIME POLICIES LIKELY BE CHANGED?

● The disbanding of the war Cabinet only further distances Netanyahu from centrist politicians more open to a cease-fire deal with Hamas.

● Months of cease-fire talks have failed to find common ground between Hamas and Israeli leaders.

● The move also gives Netanyahu leeway to draw out the war to stay in power.

● Netanyahu will now rely on the members of his security Cabinet, some of whom oppose cease-fire deals and have voiced support for reoccupying Gaza.



**CRITICS** Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu's critics accuse him of delaying because an end to the war would mean an investigation into the government's failures on October 7 and raise the likelihood of new elections when the PM popularity is low.

them. The Israeli military said it was continuing "precise, intelligence-based activity" in Rafah, killing many Palestinian gunmen over the past day in close-range combat and seized weapons. The air force struck dozens of targets across the Gaza Strip in the past day, it added.

In the central Gaza Strip, two separate Israeli air strikes on two houses killed

17 Palestinians in Al-Nuseirat and Al-Bureij, two designated refugee camps that are home to families and descendants of people who fled to Gaza in the 1948 war around the creation of Israel, medics said.

"Every more hour of delay, Israel kills more people, we want a cease-fire now," said Khalil, 45, a teacher from Gaza, now displaced with his family

in Deir Al-Balah city in the central Gaza Strip.

"Enough of our blood, I say it to Israel, America, and our leaders too. The war must stop," he told Reuters via a chat app.

The Israeli military statement did not comment directly on the 17 deaths but said forces continued to operate against militant factions in central Gaza areas. — Reuters

## U.S.: OBLIGATED TO DEFEND PHILIPPINES

**Manila, Philippines, June 18:** The United States renewed a warning on Tuesday that its obligated to defend its close treaty ally a day after Filipino navy personnel were injured and their supply boats damaged in one of the most serious confrontations between the Philippines and China in a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, officials said.

China and the Philippines blamed each other for instigating Monday's hostilities in the Second Thomas Shoal, which has been occupied by a small Filipino navy contingent aboard a grounded warship that's been closely watched by Chinese coast guard, navy and suspected militia ships in a yearslong territorial standoff. There is fear the disputes, long regarded as an Asian flashpoint, could escalate and pit the United States and China in a larger conflict.

U.S. deputy secretary of state Kurt Campbell discussed China's actions with Philippine counterpart, Maria Theresa Lazaro, in a telephone call. Both agreed that China's dangerous actions threatened regional peace and stability, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said. — AP

## Putin pledges to support North Korea against US

**Seoul, Moscow, June 18:** Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed on Tuesday to deepen trade and security ties with North Korea and to support it against the United States, as he headed to the reclusive nuclear-armed country for the first time in 24 years.

The U.S. and its Asian allies are trying to work out just how far Russia will go in support of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, whose country is the only one to have conducted nuclear weapon tests in the 21st century.

In a signal that Russia, a veto-wielding member of the United Nations Security Council, is reassessing its entire approach to North Korea, Putin praised Pyongyang for resisting what he said was U.S. economic pressure, blackmail and threats.

In an article published by North Korean state media, Putin praised "Comrade" Kim, and promised to "jointly resist illegitimate unilateral restrictions", to develop trade and strengthen security across Eurasia.

Washington, refusing to implement previously reached agreements, continuously puts forward new, increasingly stringent and obviously unacceptable demands," Putin said in the article, printed on the front page of North

## DIPLOMACY MUST TO STOP CLASHES, SAYS U.S. ENVOY

**Beirut, June 18:** US envoy Amos Hochstein Tuesday called for the "urgent" de-escalation of cross-border exchanges of fire between Lebanon's Hezbollah and Israeli forces raging since the start of the Gaza war.

"The conflict... between Israel and Hezbollah has gone on for long enough," the presidential envoy said on a visit to Beirut.

"It's in everyone's interest to resolve it quickly and diplomatically — that is both achievable and it is urgent." The powerful Iran-backed armed group, an ally of the Palestinian militant movement Hamas, stepped up attacks on northern Israel last week after an Israeli strike killed one of its senior commanders.

As the US envoy visited, Hezbollah announced its first attack in several days, saying fighters targeted an Israeli tank with an "attack drone".

Israeli strikes have continued in south Lebanon's border area, including one on Monday that killed a fighter from the Shiite Muslim movement.

Hochstein met with Lebanese parliament speaker Nabih Berri, a key Hezbollah ally, a day after holding talks in Jerusalem with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. — AFP



A file photo of US President Joe Biden and Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg during a meet in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington. — AFP

## 23 Nato allies hit defence targets

**Washington, June 18:** A record 23 of Nato's 32 member nations are hitting the Western military alliances defense spending target this year, Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, as Russia's war in Ukraine has raised the threat of expanding conflict in Europe.

The estimated figure is a nearly fourfold increase from 2021, when only six nations were meeting the goal. That was before Russian President Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Europeans are doing more for their collective security than just a few years ago, Stoltenberg said in a speech at the Wilson Center research group.

After the speech, Stoltenberg met at the White House with President Joe Biden. The U.S. president said the alliance has become larger, stronger and more united than its ever been during Stoltenberg's tenure.

Biden spoke affectionately of Stoltenberg, calling him pal and saying he wished that Stoltenberg, who has been Nato's secretary general since 2014,

could serve another term when the current one expires in October.

Together, we've deterred further Russian aggression in Europe, Biden said. We've strengthened Natos eastern flank, making it clear that we'll defend every single inch of Nato territory.

Stoltenberg noted that allies were buying more military equipment from the U.S. So Nato is good for U.S. security, but Nato is also good for U.S. jobs," he said.

Nato members agreed last year to spend at least two per cent of their gross domestic product on defense. The surge in spending reflects the worries about the war in Ukraine. Poland, at more than four per cent, and tiny Estonia both lead the United States this year in the percentage of their GDP they spend on defense. Both countries border Russia.

Defense spending across European allies and Canada was up nearly 18 per cent this year alone, the biggest increase in decades, according to Nato's estimated figures released Monday. — AP



A handout photo by the South Korean Defence ministry shows North Korean troops. — AFP

## SEOUL FIRES SHOTS AS NORTH TROOPS CROSS BORDER BRIEFLY

**Seoul, June 18:** Dozens of North Korean soldiers briefly crossed the heavily fortified border with the South on Tuesday and retreated after warning shots were fired, Seoul's military said, adding landmine explosions had injured Pyongyang's troops in the area.

It is the second such incident involving North Korean troops in two weeks, with Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff saying they believed the Tuesday crossing — like a previous one on June 9 — was accidental.

The two Koreas remain technically at war as the 1950-1953 conflict ended in an armistice not a peace treaty, with the demilitarised zone and line of control dividing the peninsula one of the most heavily mined places in the world.

"Dozens of North Korean troops crossed the Military Demarcation Line today... (and) retreated northwards after warning shots" were fired, a JCS official said. Seoul's military also said Tuesday that several North Korean soldiers had been injured when a landmine exploded near the border, without revealing the date.

The North Koreans were working on creating "barren land" and laying mines along the border, an official from the JCS said, but ended up "suffering multiple casualties from repeated landmine explosion incidents during their work". Even so, the North's military "appears to be recklessly pressing ahead with the operations," the official said.

This year, North Korea has been working to remove streetlights from roads and dig up railway tracks that connected the two countries when ties were better, they added. — AFP

## Court declines Trump's appeal

**New York, June 18:** New York's top court declined on Tuesday to hear Donald Trump's gag order appeal, leaving the restrictions in place following his felony conviction last month.

The Court of Appeals found that the order does not raise "substantial" constitutional issues that would warrant an immediate intervention.

The decision is the latest legal setback for the Republican former president, who has repeatedly railed against the gag order, which prevents him from commenting on witnesses, jurors and others who were involved in the hush money case. But it could be short lived.

The trial judge, Juan M. Merchan, is expected to rule soon on a defense

● **DECISION IS** the latest legal setback for Donald Trump, who has repeatedly railed against the gag order.

request to lift the gag order. Trump's attorneys filed a notice of appeal with the state's high court on May 15, during the former president's landmark criminal trial.

They argued that the gag order restricted Trump's "core political speech on matters of central importance at the height of his Presidential campaign." But the Court of Appeals disagreed.

In a decision list posted on Tuesday, the court said it would not automatically hear the case, writing that "no substantial constitutional question is directly involved." — AP

## ELECTION | POLICIES

Move contrasts with Republican rival Trump's plan for mass deportations

## Biden to ease immigration for spouses of citizens

**Washington, June 18:** President Joe Biden announced one of the biggest legalisation efforts in recent history on Tuesday offering a path to citizenship to hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the US illegally who are married to US citizens. The election year move contrasts sharply with his Republican rival Donald Trump's plan for mass deportations.

The programme will be open to an estimated 500,000 spouses who have lived in the US for at least 10 years as of June 17, the White House and US Department of Homeland Security said in statements on Tuesday. Some 50,000 children under age 21 with a US-citizen parent also will

be eligible. "These actions will promote family unity and strengthen our economy," the White House said in a statement.

Biden, a Democrat seeking a second term in November's presidential election, took office vowing to reverse many restrictive immigration policies of his predecessor Trump, who is also looking to return to the White House. But faced with record levels of migrant arrests at the US-Mexico border, Biden has toughened his approach in recent months.

Earlier this month, Biden barred most migrants crossing the US-Mexico border from requesting asylum, a policy that mirrored a similar Trump-era

asylum ban and drew criticism from immigration advocates and some Democrats.

Biden's planned legalisation programme for spouses of U.S. citizens could reinforce his campaign message that he supports a more humane immigration system and show how he differs from Trump, who has long had a hard-line stance on both legal and illegal immigration.

The programme will allow the spouses and children to apply for permanent residence without leaving the US, removing a potentially lengthy process. If they are granted green cards, they could eventually apply for U.S. citizenship. — Reuters

## THE 'POLITICS' OF MEMES

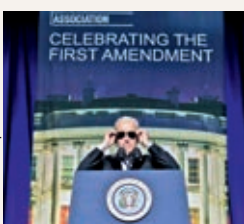
MEMES CAN BE AN EDGIER, FASTER WAY TO GET A POLITICAL POINT ACROSS THAN A BLOCK OF TEXT OR A LENGTHY VIDEO. BUT, ONLINE MISFIRES HAVE HURT CANDIDATES AND CREATED MAJOR CONTROVERSIES.

● With the rise of internet culture, digital memes have skyrocketed in popularity.

● How do the two candidates approach memes?

**Biden:** His campaign has created its own stockpile of photos and videos for distribution on official Biden-related accounts.

● Advisers are also looking to partner with third-party creators in the coming months, with the hopes of reaching the followings of users who already seem aligned with a pro-Biden message.



**Trump:** A prolific user of social media even before he ran for president, he has long embraced memes and shared them, as have his very-online political aides and some of his adult children.

● His oldest son, Donald Trump Jr., shares them frequently and refers to himself on Instagram as a Meme Wars General.

● The campaign did not offer any details about its digital team or its use of memes.



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	77301.14	0.40
Nifty 50	23557.90	0.39
S&P 500*	5,483.46	0.19
Dollar (₹)	83.41	0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	105.80	0.03
Euro (₹)	89.41	-0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	71,500*50	0.07
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	84.77	0.62
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.981	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.291	0.012

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Larsen & Toubro bags orders in Hyd, Mumbai

Larsen and Toubro (L&T) said its buildings and factories vertical has secured multiple significant orders from clients in Hyderabad and Mumbai. The company did not disclose the order value. However, according to its project classification, significant orders value in the range of ₹1,000 crore to ₹2,500 crore. It is engaged in engineering, procurement and construction projects, hi-tech manufacturing, and services.



Amazon Fresh present in 130 Indian cities

Amazon India on Tuesday said it has expanded its full-basket grocery service, Amazon Fresh, to over 130 cities like Ambala, Aurangabad, Hoshiarpur, Dharwad, Una, and Suri, among others. The service includes a wet and dry groceries such as fruits, vegetables, chilled products, beauty, baby, personal care, and pet products. It offers customers a simplified shopping experience through its app-in-app on Amazon.in.

Alyve Health raises \$5.5 mn in Series A funding

Health tech platform Alyve Health on Tuesday said it has raised \$5.5 million (over ₹45 crore) in a Series A funding round led by Axilor Ventures. The new funds will be utilised for growth initiatives areas like platform enhancement, talent acquisition, expansion of operations, amplification of services, and member engagement, said Alyve Health co-founder and CEO Shashank Avadhani.

NBCC secures ₹70-cr contract from Grid-India

State-owned NBCC Ltd has bagged a ₹70 crore project from Grid Controller of India for executing interior works in a new corporate office in the national capital. Earlier, Grid-India, which is responsible for national load dispatch, had purchased the new office of around 61,000 sqft from NBCC at ₹270 crore and has now entrusted NBCC for furnishing it as well. NBCC is into project management consultancy.

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Road, renewables, realty to attract ₹15L-cr in 2 years

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 18

Investments in renewables, roads and realty may rise 38 per cent over two fiscals to ₹15 lakh crore in FY25 and FY26.

India's need for creation of sustainable infrastructure by adding more green power to the energy mix, improving physical connectivity through a denser road network, as well as rising demand for residential and commercial real estate will ride this surge in investments.

In FY23 and FY24, the investments in these three sectors were close to ₹11 lakh crore and Crisil expects this to go up to ₹15 lakh crore in this fiscal and the next.

The underlying demand drivers in these three sectors remain strong, with regular policy interventions fuelling investor interest, said Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director and chief ratings officer, Crisil Ratings.

For renewables, the key growth driver is demand for sustainable energy transition. The government target is driving up auctions, which has created a strong pipeline. India saw auctions of 35 GW in fiscal 2024, the highest ever in a single fiscal, resulting in a strong pipeline of 75 GW. This will drive implementation of 50 GW capacity over the next two fiscals.

In the roads sector, the need for improved physical connectivity has driven healthy awarding over the past few fiscal years, except the last one. Strong order books of road devel-



● IN THE ROADS sector, the need for improved physical connectivity has driven healthy awarding over the past few fiscal years. Strong order books of road developers will support 11 per cent growth in highway construction.

opers, at 2.5 times of revenue, will support 11 per cent growth in highway construction, which is seen at 12,500 km per year over the next two fiscal years.

Private sector confidence has been boosted through the hybrid annuity model (HAM) and improvement in concession agreements, with more-equitable risk sharing between developers and concessionaires, the agency said.

As for real estate, net leasing of commercial office space will see demand growth of 8-10 per cent this fiscal and the next.

The primary drivers of the same will be global capability centres eyeing India's large talent pool and competitive rentals, as well as healthy demand from domestic sectors. Demand growth for residential real estate will sustain at 8-12 per cent this fiscal and the next.

DIGITAL LENDING GROWTH UP 49% TO ₹1.46 LAKH CR

Mumbai, June 18: Amid wide ranging concerns about digital lending, an industry body on Tuesday said its 37 member entities witnessed a 49 per cent surge in disbursements at ₹1.46 lakh crore in financial year 2023-24.

According to Fintech Association for Consumer Empowerment (FACE), the number of loans disbursed grew by 35 per cent to over 10 crore borrowings in FY24.

"The digital lending sector is driving ahead with a focus on customer-centricity, compliance, risk management and sustainable business models," FACE's chief executive Sugandh Saxena said.

In March quarter, firms disbursed 2.69 crore loans worth ₹40,322 cr at an average of ₹13,418. — PTI

Central banks to buy gold in FY25 despite price rise

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 18

Despite the sharp rise in gold prices, the central banks will continue to add gold to their reserves in FY25. Meanwhile, jewellery consumption in FY25 is expected to shrink in volume terms.

The demand for gold from central banks is expected to remain robust in FY25. As per the data from a survey done by the World Gold Council, more than eight in ten central bank reserve managers are expected to increase their gold holdings in the next 12 months. This view of gold from reserve managers persists despite two successive years of record central bank purchasing and the gold price hitting new all-time highs in 2024.



According to the report, reserve managers indicate that they find that gold will help mitigate risks and prepare for further political and economic uncertainty, globally.

Although 71 per cent still view gold's legacy as a reason to hold it, gold's long-term value is considered a reason by 88 per cent, performance during crisis by 82 per cent, and its role as an effective portfolio diversifier by 76 per cent.

Meanwhile, Icrs expects jewellery consumption

growth in volume terms to contract in FY2025 after a muted volume growth of 2 per cent and 4 per cent in FY2023 and FY2024. In value terms, jewellery consumption may moderate to 6-8 per cent in FY2025 against an 18 per cent expansion in FY2024.

This will be due to the sharp rise in gold prices in recent months and the consequent impact on consumer sentiments of postponing non-essential purchases. Consumers are expected to remain watchful of the price movements and adjust to the new price levels over two or three quarters.

The current gold prices are higher by 19 per cent over the FY2024 average and remain exposed to global macroeconomic environment.

India largest market for Nestle's Maggi

New Delhi, June 18: India has become the largest market for Nestle globally for its instant noodles brand Maggi and the second largest for chocolate wafer brand KitKat, according to the annual report of its local subsidiary.

"Penetration, premiumisation and innovation,

combined with disciplined resource allocation, have been key in driving business," said the annual report.

Nestle sold over six billion servings of Maggi in India during FY24, making India the largest Nestle market for Maggi worldwide, it said.

In confectionery, Nestle

India said it sold 4.200 million fingers of KitKat. "KitKat has emerged as the star performer, by delivering strong growth and making Nestle India the second largest market for the brand globally," it said.

Nestle is setting up its tenth Indian factory in Odisha. "The company is

poised to invest approximately ₹7,500 crore between 2020 and 2025 to develop new capabilities and expand existing ones," said its chairman and managing director Suresh Narayanan in the report. It has launched over 140 products in the past eight years. — PTI

DIGITAL | HELP

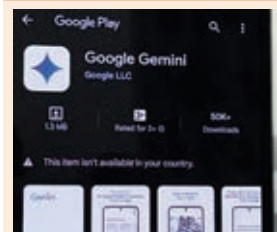
Company says user files are private and are not used to train the model

Google's offers Gemini AI for Android users

New Delhi, June 18: Google on Tuesday said its AI assistant Gemini is now available as an app for Android smartphone users in India with support for English, Hindi and eight other Indian languages.

For iPhone users, access to Gemini will be rolled out through the Google app over the next few weeks, according to a blog post by Amar Subramanya, vice president, engineering, Gemini Experiences.

"Gemini, your AI assistant from Google, has had an exciting first year in



● FROM STUDENTS to developers and many other curious minds, people in India are embracing Gemini's capabilities to enhance their productivity, learning, and creativity in everyday life.

Additionally, users of Gemini Advanced in India will now be able to access features of Gemini 1.5 Pro, the latest AI model that will allow users to upload multiple large documents and emails for quick summaries, feed-

back, and insights.

"As always, privacy is a priority. Gemini keeps your files private to you, and they're not used to train our models," Subramanya added.

Google said the Gemini feature will also be added in Google Messages on select devices.

The generative AI platform faced controversies earlier this year. Google had then said it worked quickly to address the issue and conceded that the chatbot "may not always be reliable" in responding to certain prompts related to current



● SECTORAL TREND remained mixed as realty, banks, IT, consumer durables, capital goods and power stocks were gainers. Laggards included healthcare, metal, oil and gas, FMCG.

fresh momentum. In the immediate term, the gain may extend to levels around 23,700 and 23,800," Hrishikesh Yedve, technical analyst, Asit C Mehta Investment Intermediates said.

The broader market outperformed with BSE Mid-cap index up 0.43 per cent and BSE Small-cap index up 0.96 per cent.

Sectoral trend remained mixed as realty, banks, IT, consumer durables, capital goods and power stocks were major gainers while the laggards included healthcare, metal, oil and gas, FMCG and auto stocks.

India's top three banks powered benchmark higher with good gains led by ICICI (1.56 per cent),

HDFC (0.71 per cent), and SBI (0.52 per cent)

"Key benchmark indices continued their record breaking spree as renewed FII buying interest coupled with moderating domestic inflation has raised hopes of a rate cut this year. Investors are hoping for more rains shortly. That would boost consumption and prop up growth in the remaining quarters this fiscal," said Prashanth Tapse, senior VP (research), Mehta Equities.

"The index has been registering new highs, calling for caution on the index position and focusing on a specific sector," said Aditya Gaggar, director, Progressive Shares.

Fitch raises India's GDP forecast to 7.2% in FY25

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JUNE 18

Global rating agency Fitch Ratings upped India's growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7.2 per cent, up from 7 per cent projected in March due to a recovery in consumer spending and increased investment.

The rating agency's growth and inflation forecast are in line with the central bank's estimates.

For FY26 and FY27, Fitch projected growth rates of 6.5 per cent and 6.2 per cent, respectively.

In its global economic outlook report, Fitch said, "We expect the Indian economy to expand by a



strong 7.2 per cent in FY25, an upward revision of 0.2 percentage points from the March global economic outlook."

It noted that high frequency indicators of domestic activity were showing resilience. The South-West monsoon is expected to be above normal, which augurs well for agriculture and rural

demand. Coupled with sustained momentum in manufacturing and services activity, this should enable a revival in private consumption.

RBI earlier this month projected a 7.2 per cent growth for the current fiscal year, supported by improving rural demand and moderating inflation.

The rating agency said that the investment will continue to rise and consumer spending is expected to recover.

An 'above normal' monsoon is expected to mitigate risks of food price spikes. Fitch projects that headline inflation in India will decrease to 4.5 per cent by the end of 2024

Housing rent growth moderates in June qtr

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 18

With more supply hitting the top seven markets, overheated housing rents are stabilising, finds Anarock.

However, absorption levels will sustain and help ward-off any oversupply risk, says India Ratings.

The average residential rental prices across key markets in these cities saw a 2-4 per cent quarterly rise in the ongoing Q2 2024 over the preceding quarter. Q1 2024 saw rents in these markets rise by between 4-9 per cent quarterly against Q4 2023.

"In India, the second quarter of most years typically sees rents increase more than in other quarters due to the commencement of the new academic

year and the employment of new staff. This year, declining rental value growth coincides with substantial new housing supply entering these markets," said Santhosh Kumar, vice chairman, Anarock Group.

Average rents for a standard 1,000 sqft 2 BHK in Bengaluru's Whitefield rose by 4 per cent in Q2 2024 to date.

In Q1 2024, the quarterly jump against Q4 2023 was 8 per cent. Average rents in Noida's Sector 150 rose by a mere 4 per cent in the current quarter.

Mumbai's Chembur and Mulund saw 2 per cent rise against 4 per cent in first quarter.

Hyderabad's Hitec City and Gachibowli saw 3 per cent rise over 5 per cent in first quarter.

Upskilling key as job needs will change, says LinkedIn

New Delhi, June 18: Notwithstanding the fact that a significant percentage of professionals in India say that their company is doing enough to cultivate a culture of learning, nine in ten professionals find it hard to prioritise learning due to work and family commitments, said a report by LinkedIn.

They face barriers such as feeling burnt out or family responsibilities that are getting in the way of their learning.

To overcome barriers to upskilling, professionals are resorting to 'loud learning', the act of being vocal and intentional about learning ambitions in the workplace.

LinkedIn research shows that 79 per cent of professionals in India believe that engaging in 'loud learning' can support their career growth.

Some of the benefits include providing opportunities for mentorship and guidance from experienced professionals (28 per cent), opening doors to new career opportunities or advancement (27 per cent) and facilitating



knowledge and insights sharing amongst peers (26 per cent).

"According to LinkedIn data, skills needed for a job in India are expected to change by 64 per cent by 2030, so it is vital for professionals to be super-focused on learning," said Nirajita Banerjee, LinkedIn career expert and senior managing editor.

It is also introducing AI-powered premium tools to help professionals accelerate their learning.

LinkedIn Learning's new AI-powered coaching can help guide professionals' course experience by allowing learners to ask for summaries of content or clarifying questions and providing real-time insights directly. — PTI



## CRICKET

ICC MEN'S  
T20 WORLD CUPPAGE  
8

## SHORT SINGLES

## Kane uncertain about his future

New Zealand will require some time to regroup after their shock early exit from the T20 World Cup, said skipper Kane Williamson, who was non-committal regarding his return for the 2026 edition of the marquee event. An all-format player who is considered one of the greats of modern day cricket, Williamson has been the BlackCaps batting mainstay for over a decade.

New Zealand reached three finals with Williamson in the side — the 2015 and 2019 ODI World Cups, the 2021 T20 World Cup and the inaugural World Test Championship final, which they won. Williamson led the BlackCaps in three of those four tournaments.

“When asked if he’d return for the 2026 edition, Williamson said: “Oh, I don’t know.”

They finished outside of the semifinals for the first time in 10 years. Pace spearhead Trent Boult has already confirmed that the ongoing T20 World Cup was his last.

## Ferguson creates record as NZ win

Pacer Lockie Ferguson picked up a record three wickets in four overs without conceding a run as New Zealand registered a seven-wicket win over Papua New Guinea in their inconsequential Group ‘C’ match of the T20 World Cup in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago, on Monday. Led by Ferguson’s (3/0) brilliant spell, the New Zealand bowlers bundled Papua New Guinea for 78 after opting to field first.

PNG struggled throughout their innings and kept losing wickets at regular intervals.

Charles Amini was PNG’s top-scorer with 17, while there were two wickets apiece for New Zealand bowlers Trent Boult, Tim Southee and Ish Sodhi.

In reply, New Zealand completed the chase with 46 balls to spare. Opener Devon Conway made 35 off 32 balls.

**Brief scores:** Papua New Guinea 78 in 19.4 overs (Lockie Ferguson 3/0, Tim Southee 2/11, Trent Boult 2/14) lost to New Zealand: 79/3 in 12.2 overs (Devon Conway 35; Kabua Morea 2/4).

## Pak’s Rauf gets into altercation

Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf found himself in the eye of a storm after a video of his verbal altercation with a group of men surfaced online, prompting him to say that he will “not hesitate to respond” when his family is dragged. The incident took place after Pakistan’s group stage exit from the T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies.

In the video clip that went viral on social media, Haris was seen walking with his wife when he bumped into a group of people. Although it was not clear what the conversation between the cricketer and the people was about, they were allegedly taunting him for the team’s disastrous outing in the showpiece.

Rauf wrote on X: “I decided to not bring this on social media, but now that the video is out, I feel it is necessary to address the situation.

“As public figures, we are open to receiving all kinds of feedback from the public. They are entitled to support or criticize us. Nevertheless, when it comes to my parent and my family, I will not hesitate to respond accordingly.”

## ON THE MONEY

## Blues gear up for business end of tournament

MOSES KONDETY  
BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS),  
JUNE 18

Team India hit the ground running and got into the groove soon after they landed here, in preparation for the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup.

It was an optional practice session on Tuesday but all players barring Rishabh Pant turned up at the Kensington Oval, unlike in the US during the group stage when only a few would go through the drills at training spells that were not mandatory.

That the team was in full strength sends a strong message when it comes to getting ready for the business end of the tournament that means the world to everyone, especially the Blues. Batting biggies Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Suryakumar Yadav unpacked the shots at the nets while bowlers and side-arm specialists bent their backs delivering those thunderbolts.

However, a brief spell of rain interrupted the net session before the players were back on for batting practice. Much will depend on openers Rohit and Kohli. The seasoned duo would be trusted to get the team off to a flier, with the wickets getting better here in the Caribbean. Kohli should shake off the low scores and get into the zone. Batting coach Vikram Rathour sees a blessing in disguise and feels the run drought will make him hungrier, which is good for the team going into the crucial stage that will decide the semifinalists.

With Afghanistan first up, India would be wary of a couple of players who have the experience of playing in the recent IPL and being in the thick of things. Having made the

● It was an optional practice session but all players except Rishabh Pant turned up at the Kensington Oval and went through the drills.

second stage at the expense of New Zealand, the morale of the Afghans would undoubtedly be high.

Their players are also leading the batting as well as bowling charts at the tournament.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz is the top batter with 167 runs from four innings at an average of 41.75 while left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi has 12 wickets against his name at an average of 6.66.

A third, Naveen-ul-Haq, had the best bowling economy of two-and-a-half runs per over before the last group game. Then there is the dangerous Rashid Khan who is as much a star in India for

his baffling spin and power hitting down the order. Reason why India got down to brass tacks in Bridgetown.

Two more intense sessions are lined up before the opening game as India look for a headstart in the key phase of the competition that will pick up pace as the race for the World Cup gets hotter.

A best of three games — against the Afghans, Bangladeshis and Australians — will take Rohit Sharma & Co. into the Last Four, from where they should be at touching distance.

For now, it’s a bridge too far, but the Blues are eager to cross it over the Caribbean sea.



Players of the Indian team practice at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Tuesday, ahead of their T20 World Cup Super Eight match against Afghanistan to be played on Thursday. — ASIAN AGE

## Little hectic but we’re ready: Rohit

Bridgetown (Barbados), June 18: India captain Rohit Sharma conceded that the T20 World Cup’s Super 8 stage is going to be a “little hectic” but his players are prepared for the grind as there is “real keenness” among them to do “something special”. India will open their Super 8 campaign against Afghanistan on June 20, followed by games against Bangladesh (June 22, Antigua) and Australia (June 24, St Lucia).

“Once we play our first game, we are going to play the next two in a span of 3 or 4 days,” Rohit said in a video uploaded by the BCCI.

“It is going to be a little hectic but we are used to all of this. We travel and play a lot so that is never going to be an excuse,” the 37-year-old added.



India captain Rohit Sharma (left) interacts with head coach Rahul Dravid. — AP

The Indian team had an extended practice session on Monday with senior players like Virat Kohli and Rohit spending more-than-usual time in the nets.

“There is real keenness

in the group to go and do something special. That’s a good way to start the second stage. It clearly shows that everyone wants to make a difference and we take our skill sessions quite seriously,” he said.

“There is something to achieve in every skill session that you do,” Rohit said on the mood inside the dressing room after an undefeated run in the group league stage.

The Indian team endured hostile batting conditions during the US leg due to the drop-in pitches used by the organisers.

Rohit said the ongoing Caribbean leg brings with it a sense of familiarity and his team would look to make the most of it.

“We have seen a lot of games here, we have played a lot of games here. So everyone understands what one needs to do to get the result in our favour. Everyone is looking forward and are quite excited as well at the same time,” Rohit said.

— PTI

## Windies unbeaten run continues with Af win

Gros Islet (St Lucia), June 18: Nicholas Pooran displayed his incredible six-hitting prowess as West Indies geared up for the Super 8 with a dominating 104-run win over Afghanistan in their final Group ‘C’ match of the T20 World Cup here.

With both teams assured of a Super 8 berth, it was the two-time champions who displayed their batting might, amassing a formidable 218 for five, with Pooran going on a six-hitting spree during his 53-ball 98. It was the highest total for the West Indies in T20 World Cups.

In reply, Afghanistan succumbed to scoreboard pressure, managing just 114 in 16.2 overs.

## BRIEF SCORES

West Indies 218/5 in 20 overs (Nicholas Pooran 98; Gulbadin Naib 2/14) beat Afghanistan 114 in 16.2 overs (Ibrahim Zadran 38; Obed McCoy 3/14, Akeal Hosein 2/21).

“We knew here will be one of the better wickets of the competition. After Guyana and Trinidad, the batters wanted to come here and get runs. (Pooran) I think it is on the back of hard work. He has had a very good 12 months. Good to see him score runs not only in franchise cricket but also for WI,” West Indies skip-

per Rovman Powell said after the match.

Afghanistan had bundled out their opponents for sub-100 totals in their first three games but skipper Rashid Khan’s decision to bowl first here backfired as Pooran put on a ruthless display, hitting as many as 8 maximums and 6 fours during his stay.

Opener Johnson Charles (43), Shai Hope (25) and Powell (26) also contributed with the bat as WI posted the highest total of this edition of T20 World Cup.

Gulbadin Naib (2/14) was the top bowler for Afghanistan, claiming two wickets in his 2 overs. — PTI

## SUPER 8 | CLASH



South Africa batter David Miller (right) and Heinrich Klaassen run between the wickets to score. — AP

## Focus on Proteas batters in opener

North Sound (Antigua), June 18: South Africa will have no room for error as their world-class batters will be keen to flex their muscles against a spirited USA in their opening Super Eight match of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday.

The Proteas have remained unbeaten in the tournament so far with their bowlers doing the heavy lifting in all four games.

Playing three games on the challenging New York tracks, and one in Kingstown, South Africa have not crossed the 120-run mark even once.

Although their batting performance is not a reflection of the team which possesses some big hitters like Quinton de Kock, Henrich Klassen, Tristan Stubbs and David Miller.

But still the top order of De Kock, Reeze Hendricks and captain Aiden Markram might feel the pressure to perform.

South Africa survived by a run against Nepal in their previous game and with the likes of defending champions England and hosts West Indies also in Group 2, the Proteas can ill afford to let up



against USA. They would like to start the Super Eight on a winning note.

Ahead of the World Cup, South Africa’s biggest concern was the woeful form of Anrich Nortje, but the star pacer has turned it around with some scintillating display in the group stage and is currently the joint second leading wicket-taker with nine scalps.

Co-host USA, who are an eclectic mix of eight Indians, two Pakistanis, a West Indian, one New Zealander, a South African and a Dutch, are in the midst of a dream run having qualified for the Super Eights in their debut appearance. — PTI

## Gambhir interviewed by CAC, set to be named India’s coach

New Delhi, June 18: Former India opener Gautam Gambhir and W. V. Raman were on Tuesday interviewed by the BCCI’s Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) for the national team’s head coach’s position. The interviews took place over a zoom call with Gambhir, Raman and CAC head Ashok Malhotra attending it virtually. “Yes, Gambhir appeared for the interview with the CAC. One round of discussions happened today. There is another round expected tomorrow,” a BCCI source said.

“Raman was interviewed after Gambhir. It was also on zoom. He also gave his presentation on his vision and road map on Indian cricket. The interview went for around 40 minutes. There were some initial questions by the committee before they looked at the presentation,” the source informed.

Gambhir is believed to be the only candidate who is in contention and the announcement of his name is a mere formality, which could happen in the next 48 hours.

The specifics of his interaction with CAC chairman Malhotra and his colleagues Jatin Paranjpe and Sulakshana Naik were not immediately known. Both Paranjpe and Naik are based in Mumbai.

The discussion, it is believed, was focussed on the road map he has in mind for the next three years, which will feature three ICC tournaments across formats.

There is an Apex Council meeting on Tuesday evening and it is understood that BCCI secretary Jay Shah will apprise the members of the coach selection process before the final announcement is made.

The CAC is also interviewing a few interested candidates for the North Zone selector’s position. The 42-year-old Gambhir recently guided Kolkata Knight Riders to the IPL trophy as the team’s mentor. — PTI

## Mbappe breaks nose as France win opener

Düsseldorf (Germany), June 18: Kylian Mbappe came off late on with a broken nose as France edged Austria 1-0 in their opening game at Euro 2024 on Monday, after Slovakia inflicted a surprise 1-0 defeat on Belgium and Romania beat Ukraine.

France, the runners-up at the 2022 World Cup, are one of the standout contenders for European Championship glory in Germany, but they did not entirely convince against a hard-running Austria side and needed a Maximilian Woeber own goal to claim the victory.

Defender Woeber diverted Mbappe’s cutback into his own net seven minutes before half-time in Duesseldorf to decide the Group D game and leave France level on three points at the top of the section with the Netherlands.



Kylian Mbappe of France receives a treatment after suffering an injury during a Group ‘D’ match against Austria at the Euro 2024 tournament in Duesseldorf, Germany, on Monday. France won 1-0. — AP

Mbappe may have made the goal, but it was otherwise a difficult night for the new Real Madrid sign-

ing. He was denied twice by Austrian goalkeeper Patrick Pentz in the first

half and failed to hit the target from a glorious chance when sent clean through 10 minutes after

the restart. Mbappe then had to come off in the 90th minute after being left with a bloody nose in an accidental collision with Austrian defender Kevin Danso.

SLOVAKIA STUN  
BELGIUM

Belgium may no longer rank among the leading contenders but they were not expected to start with a defeat against Slovakia in Frankfurt, where Ivan Schranz of Slavia Prague scored the only goal.

Schranz struck in the seventh minute, firing home the rebound after Belgian goalkeeper Koen Casteels had saved from Juraj Kucka.

It was an especially frustrating day for Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku, who missed a host of chances and had a late equaliser controversially disallowed by VAR. — AFP