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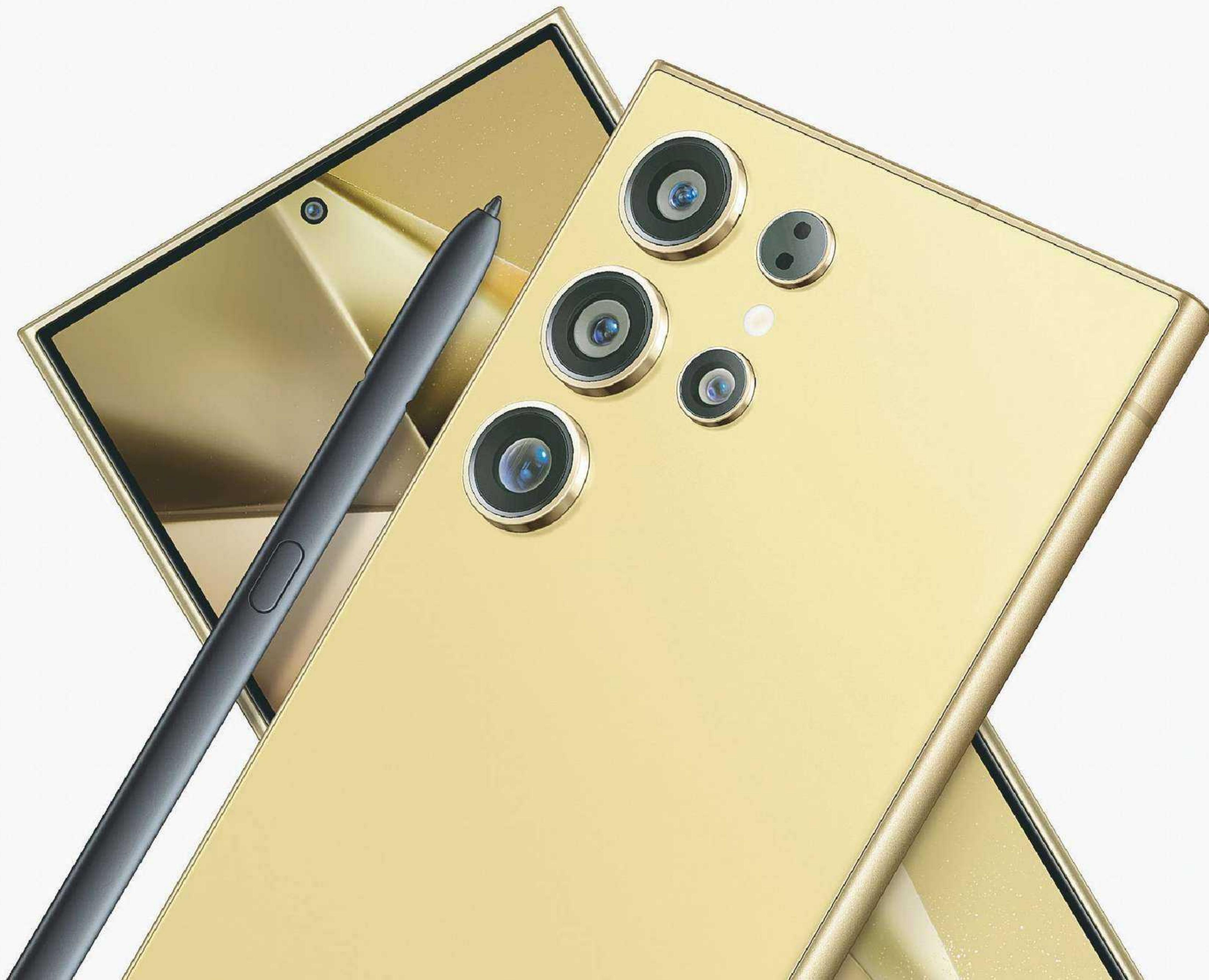
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Govt, Oppn all set to spar as 18th Lok Sabha opens today

Smriti Kak Ramachandran

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NEW DELHI: The 18th Lok Sabha will open on Monday morning as the inaugural special session of Parliament commences under a shadow with the government and the Opposition likely to clash over a string of issues, foremost among them the irregularities dogging some of India's premier examinations.

President Droupadi Murmu will administer the oath to Bharatiya Janata Party lawmaker Bhartruhari Mahtab as the pro-tem Speaker of the Lok Sabha, a development that is expected to spark a face-off between the government and the Opposition. Then, all newly elected members of the Lower House including Prime Minister Narendra Modi will take oath.

The two-day oath ceremony will be followed by the election to pick the Lok Sabha Speaker on June 26 and President Murmu's address to the joint sitting of both houses on June 27. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha will also be picked for the first time in a decade.



The President's Bodyguard rehearse at Vijay Chowk on Sunday ahead of President Droupadi Murmu's address to a joint sitting of Parliament on June 27. The Parliament session begins on Monday. ANI

ade. The session will conclude on July 3 and reassemble for the monsoon sitting on July 22.

The session is likely to set the stage for the recalibration of the balance of power between the government and the Opposition, which will try to corner the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on issues such as price rise, food inflation, deaths on account of an unprecedented heatwave and the recent instances of irregularities in the con-

duct of examinations that have made millions of students restive and cast a shadow on the efficacy of institutions mandated to conduct examinations.

On Friday, the CSIR-UGC continued on →6

IMD predicts a cloudy week, extreme heat may not return

HT Correspondent

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NEW DELHI: Parts of the Capital received light rainfall on Sunday, making for another wet day, but prevailing maximum humidity level of 73% ensured it was a sultry day despite the maximum temperature remaining below the 40°C mark, at 39.8°C, for a second day in a row.

The maximum temperature was a degree above normal, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). It was 39.4°C on Saturday and 40.4°C on Friday.

Despite the relatively lower maximum temperature, high humidity made it an uncomfortable day to be out in the open, with the heat index (HI) or "real feel" of temperature recorded at 53°C, the IMD said in its daily weather bulletin, forecasting no heatwave conditions in Delhi for the remainder of the month.

Delhi's wet-bulb temperature, another indicator of the comfort



Parts of Delhi-NCR received light rain on Sunday. PARVEEN KUMAR/HT

level outside, was recorded at 30°C on Sunday at 2.30pm, the highest so far this year. It was 28.4°C at the same time on Saturday and 26.6°C on Friday.

According to the IMD, Delhi is now likely to see drizzle to light rain till June 29, making for a wet end to the month, marked by

pre-monsoon showers, with no heatwave conditions expected.

"Parts of Delhi-NCR will see light rain now till the end of the month. This will keep maximum temperature in check, but the humidity will be high," an IMD official said.

→FULL REPORT ON P3

AMIT SHAH CHAIRS A MEETING ON FLOOD SITUATION IN EASTERN INDIA

NEW DELHI: At least 50 large lakes will have to be dug in India's northeast to divert the waters of the Brahmaputra to tackle recurring floods and boost agriculture, irrigation and tourism, Union minister Amit Shah directed on Sunday, also asking the India Meteorological Department and the Central Water Commission to complete re-calibrating all equipment used in forecasting floods at the earliest.

→P7

CENTRE PLANS INTERVENTIONS TO CURB HIGH FOOD PRICES

Zia Haq

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The central government is preparing to play a bigger role in regulating markets, both as a buyer and seller, to hold down high food prices that have hurt households, kept retail inflation above the central bank's target of 4% and prevented a cut in the benchmark interest rate.

→FULL REPORT ON P2

TRAIN MURDER SOLVED: WOMAN KILLED AFTER RAPE BID BY 60-YR-OLD

INDORE: A 60-year-old man was arrested in Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday for allegedly killing a woman after a failed rape attempt, dismembering her body and dumping the parts in two trains, police said. Accused Kamlesh Patel had lured her to his house when she was sitting at a railway station on June 6, spiked her food and tried to rape her, the official said. Patel murdered her when she raised an alarm, police said.

→P9

DELHI CAB DRIVER WAS MURDERED WHILE TRYING TO RESOLVE DISPUTE

Karn Pratap Singh

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NEW DELHI: The crime branch of Delhi Police arrested three people in connection with the May 30 murder of a cab driver and recovered two pistols and eight cartridges allegedly used in the crime apart from a and a motorcycle from Gokulpuri in northeast Delhi over the past week, police said. The three allegedly stabbed to death the cab driver who intervened when they were trying to settle a financial dispute with another man in Shastri Park. The wife of one of the accused was owed ₹17,000 by the man, and they were planning to abduct him to make him pay up, police said.

→P4

Another 13-yr-old boy apprehended for bomb threat email to airport

NEW DELHI: A 13-year-old boy was apprehended from Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand for allegedly sending an email to the Delhi airport falsely claiming that a bomb had been planted on a Dubai-bound flight on June 17, police said on Sunday.

The boy was apprehended and his custody was later handed over to his parents, deputy commissioner of police (IGI Airport) Usha Rangnani said.

He sent the mail "just for fun" after being influenced by the news of another teenager who made a hoax bomb threat a few days ago, the DCP said.

According to police, the boy said he created an email

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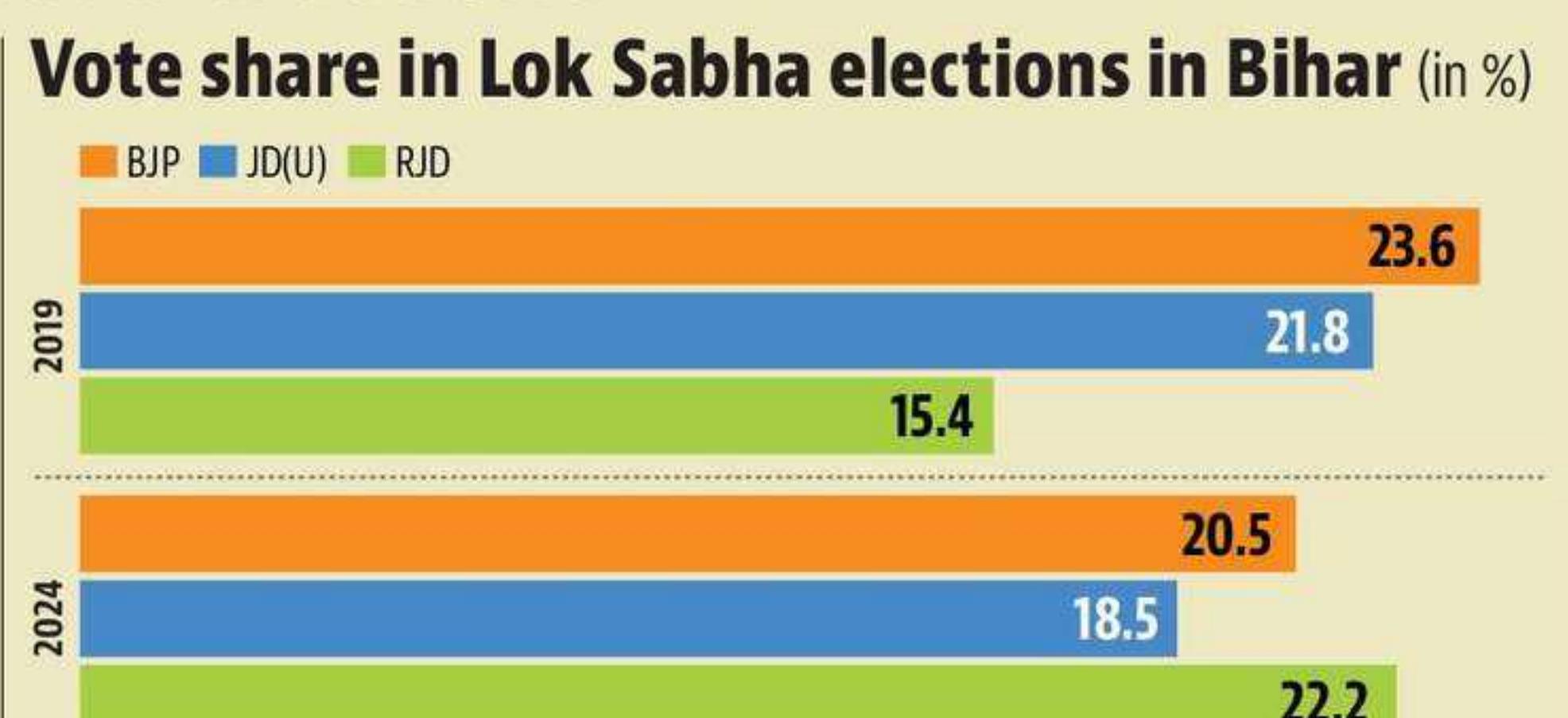
What do the 2024 results mean for the RJD in Bihar?

By Roshan Kishore and Nishant Ranjan

Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have been the epicentre of what is referred to as Mandal politics in India. These are also states which were pretty much swept by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in 2014 and 2019 elections. The BJP ceded a lot of ground to the Samajwadi Party (SP)-Congress alliance in 2024 in Uttar Pradesh, and the NDA tally came down from 64 to 36 between 2019 and 2024. However, the 2024 results did not bring a similar revival for the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)-led alliance in Bihar. To be sure, the RJD managed to win four parliamentary constituencies (PCs) this time, compared to zero in 2019. But the NDA, comprising the BJP and the Janata Dal (United), or JD(U), managed to win 30 of the 40 PCs in the state. What do the 2024 results mean for the RJD in Bihar? This question is especially relevant because Bihar will have its assembly polls next year. This two-part data series will try to answer this question in detail. The first part will analyse the results of the 2024 elections from the RJD's perspective. The second will look at historical data to analyse the RJD's current challenges in Bihar.

1 RJD is the party with the largest vote share in Bihar in these elections

The RJD's vote share of 22.2% in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is the largest among all parties in the state. This, when taken on face value, puts the RJD as the party with the largest popular support in the state. This was not the case in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when both the BJP and the JD(U) finished ahead of the RJD in terms of vote share. The RJD also had the highest vote share among all parties in the 2020 elections assembly elections. Do back-to-back highest vote share performances mean that the RJD is on a revival path in Bihar?



Data Source: TCDP-IED and ECI

2 Contested vote share numbers tell us a different story

While vote shares are the best measure of a party's popular support in a first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, they have to be treated with caution when alliances come into play. This is because if a party decides to enter into an alliance, or have a wider alliance than another party, it will contest more seats and therefore enjoy a natural advantage in terms of overall vote share. This is exactly what seems to have happened with the RJD in the 2024 elections. The party contested 23 PCs, which is the highest among the 11 parties which were a part of the NDA or INDIA blocks. The BJP and the JD(U), other two major parties in the state, contested 17 and 16 seats this time.

If one were to compare the contested vote share of parties in the 2024 elections – they adjust a party's popular support for the number of PCs contested – the RJD drops to seventh rank among the 11 parties that were a part of either the NDA or the INDIA alliance. The RJD is ranked higher ahead of only the Vikasheel Insan Party (VSP), the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Rashtriya Lok Manch (RLM), none of which could win a seat in the state. As is to be expected, contested vote shares have a near perfect correlation with seat share to vote share ratios of parties in Bihar, which measures a party's ability to convert votes into seats in an FPTP system.

Party-wise vote share, contested vote share and seat share to vote share ratio in 2024



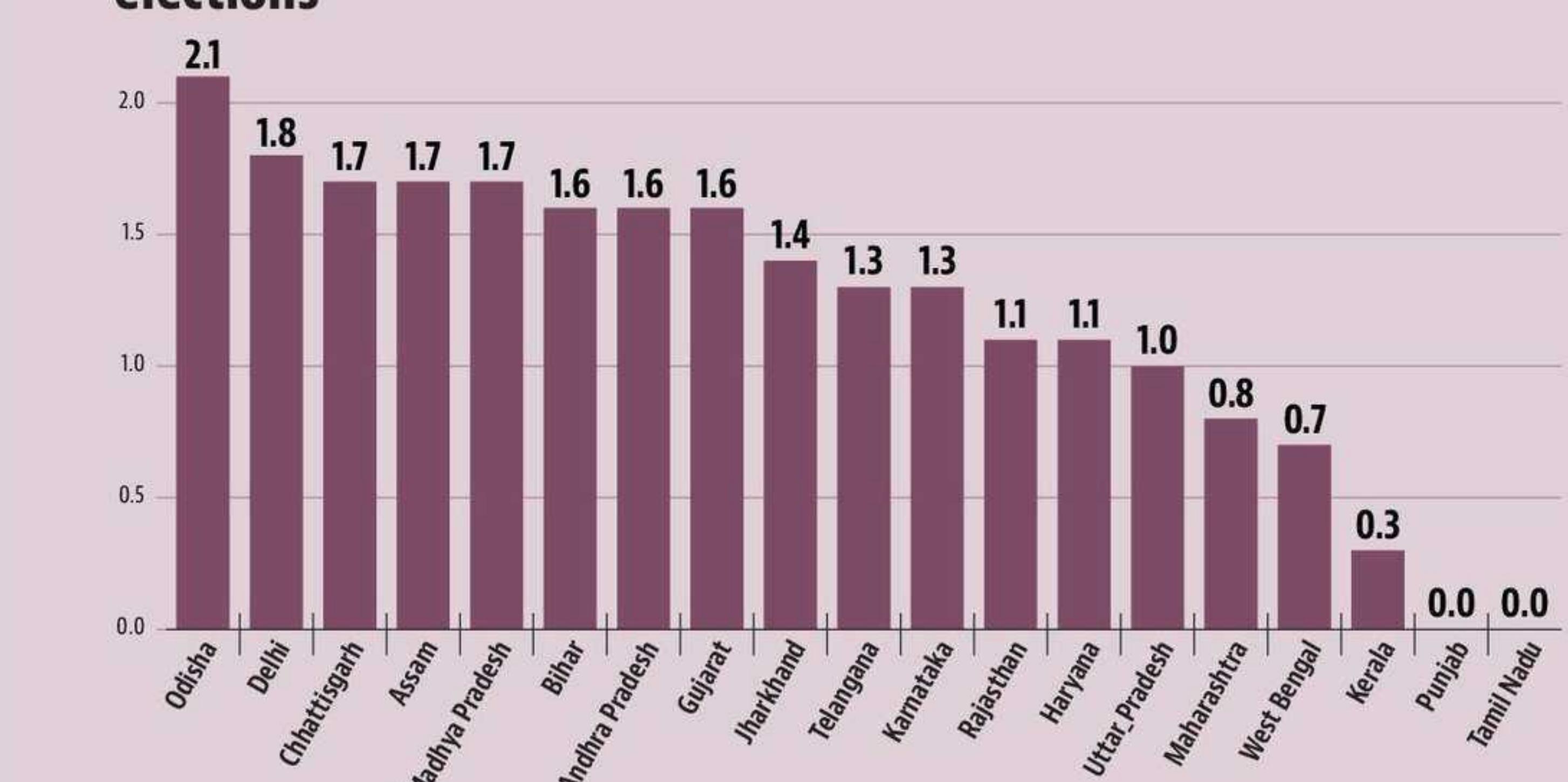
Data Source: TCDP-IED and ECI

3 Bihar was among the better performances of the NDA in converting votes into seats

A simple comparison of seat share to vote share ratio of the NDA in states/Union territories with at least seven parliamentary constituencies (PCs) makes this clear. These states account for 509 out of the 543 PCs in the country and 274 out of the 293 which the NDA has won in these elections. The NDA has a seat share and vote share of 75% and 47.2% in Bihar in these elections. This puts

its seat share to vote share ratio at 1.59. This is the sixth highest among these states which shows that Bihar was among the better performances of the NDA in terms of exploiting the FPTP system. Seen another way, this also shows that the RJD-led Opposition alliance had a strategic disadvantage vis-a-vis the NDA in Bihar.

Seat share to vote share ratio of NDA in 2024 Lok Sabha elections



Data Source: ECI

What can the RJD do to convert its popular support in Bihar, which is far from insignificant, into more seats in Bihar? Answering this question requires going back in Bihar's political history, which is what the second part of this series will do.

This is the first of a two-part series which looks at the RJD's political predicament in Bihar. The second part will look at past election results in Bihar to explain the RJD's challenges.



CBI teams rush to Guj, Bihar for NEET probe

Neeraj Chauhan and Fareeha Iftikhar

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Sunday filed a case to investigate a "larger conspiracy" in how the medical college screening test NEET-UG was conducted and dispatched special teams to Gujarat and Bihar, where close to two dozen people have been arrested over suspicion that they had a role in leaking questions or enabling cheating.

The developments came even as officials in the Union education ministry, speaking on the condition of anonymity, stressed that the problems were "localised" and "isolated" incidents, suggesting the government was not inclined to order a complete re-exam that was written by 2.4 million applicants.

"It is not fair to jeopardise careers of lakhs of candidates who cleared the exam rightfully," a senior official said, asking not to be named.

The position holds significance since the government and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are expected to face-off with the Opposition in Parliament in the week starting Monday, with the leaders from parties such as Congress and Trinamool Congress planning to raise the issues of several nationally crucial examinations now being botched up affecting an estimated 3.7 million students.

Sunday's action by the federal agency came a day after the government handed it the probe and following inputs from police in

continued on →6



Police personnel stand guard outside a retesting centre in Jhajjar, Haryana.

EAM JAISHANKAR REACHES UAE TO CEMENT MUTUAL COOPERATION

NEW DELHI: External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Sunday visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE), one of India's closest strategic partners in West Asia, to assess bilateral relations and chart out new areas for cooperation.

Jaishankar would hold talks with his counterpart Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan on a wide range of issues under the bilateral partnership, the external affairs ministry said in a statement. "This visit will provide an opportunity to review the entire spectrum of (the) comprehensive strategic partnership between India and UAE and regional and global developments," it said.

→P7

NEARLY HALF OF 1,563 ASPIRANTS GIVE RETEST A MISS

Fareeha Iftikhar

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NEW DELHI: Only 813 or 52% of the 1,563 candidates who were initially awarded grace marks in the NEET-UG before they were withdrawn last week appeared for a retest on Sunday, NTA said, as affected students, who did not opt for a re-examination, were allowed to retain their actual scores without the grace marks.

→P8

Retest was harder than original exam: Toppers

Leena Dhankhar

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GURUGRAM: The six students from the same Haryana centre, who scored full marks in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) earlier, took a retest on Sunday and said they found the exam more challenging than the previous iteration, with four of them who spoke to HT saying they were

unsure if they will be able to repeat their perfect scores.

The six were part of a group that had taken the test at Bahadurgarh's Hardayal Public School and their results — a perfect 720/720 — became controversial since all of them were at the same centre, raising fears of possible use of unfair means, and all had attempted a flaws question that earned them up to 140 extra points in grace marks.

→P8

MAYAWATI DECIDES TO REINSTATE HER NEPHEW ANAND AS SOLE SUCCESSOR

LUCKNOW: BSP chief Mayawati on Sunday reappointed her nephew Akash Anand as the party's national coordinator and reinstated him as her political heir, less than two months after she dropped the 28-year-old as her successor till he attained "full maturity".

In an official statement issued after the party's national-level meeting in Lucknow, the BSP said that Mayawati has decided to give Anand an opportunity to work with "full maturity".

"He will continue to hold all his posts in the party as before. That is, he will remain Mayawati's only successor along with being the party's national coordinator," the statement said.

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{ MY INDIA } AFTER DAYS OF FIRE

Orange alert for rain sounded in U'khand



An orange alert has been issued for heavy rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms in parts of Uttarakhand over the coming week, IMD's Dehradun centre said on Sunday. It also cautioned residents living close to water bodies in the hills of possible sudden rise in water levels in rivulets and streams due to heavy rain. "Light to moderate rain/thundershower is very likely to occur at many places on June 24 and at most places thereafter over Uttarakhand till June 30," Bikram Singh, director, IMD Dehradun Centre, said. An orange alert has been issued for heavy to intense rainfall (110 to 200 mm), accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds ranging from 40 to 50 kmph at isolated places in Nainital, Champawat, Pithoragarh and Bageshwar districts on June 24 to 26 and June 29, Singh said, adding that heavy rainfall is also predicted in the hills on June 27, 28 and 30. →PTI

Centre plans series of interventions to cool prices of food

Zia Haq

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NEW DELHI: The central government is preparing to play a bigger role in regulating markets, both as a buyer and seller, to hold down high food prices that have hurt households, kept retail inflation above the central bank's target of 4% and prevented a cut in the benchmark interest rate.

Many of the measures being planned are aimed at boosting supplies of everyday essentials, while expanding the government's procurement of commodities, an official said.

For instance, agriculture minister Shivaraj Singh Chouhan has urged state governments to get pulses farmers to enrol for the Centre's programme to buy 100% of tur (pigeon pea), urad (black gram) and masur (lentil) at support prices.

Food prices, which account for half of the consumer price basket, have been sticky in a handful of items like vegetables, cereals, pulses and onion. High food prices hurt poorer households more, who tend to spend more on what they eat as a proportion of their monthly budget.

Anticipating a scarcity, the consumer affairs ministry is scrambling to restock a 500,000-tonne onion reserve by buying the bulb from the open market so that it can sell to consumers at cheaper rates.

Onion output dropped 20% in 2023 due to irregular rainfall. A patchy monsoon last year crimped production of winter onions in 2024 by another 20% to 19 million tonnes, compared to 23.7 million tonnes in the previous year.

Winter onion is crucial because it supplies up to 75% of the country's annual supply.

"The pace of onion procurement so far is on course to achieve a target 500,000 tonnes for price stabilization," the official said, declining to be named. Till June 20, the government bought 70,987 tonnes of onions, which is roughly comparable with 74,071 tonnes procured during the corresponding period last year.

Vegetable supplies generally decline during the summer, but a drought last year and an ongoing heatwave in large parts of the country have significantly hit availability of greens like cabbage, okra, gourd and turnips.

Prices of pulses, the commonest source of protein for most Indians, have also been elevated, rising 17% in May. On June 21, the Centre imposed caps on the quantities of two varieties of pulses — tur and chana — that retail shops and traders can store, a measure known as stockholding limit to boost supplies and curb prices.

India imports up to 15% of its pulses annually; it spent nearly \$4 billion on imports in 2023-24 because domestic demand is increasing. The government is also considering sales of public stocks of wheat to contain prices after an interministerial committee headed by home minister Amit Shah reviewed the position of food inventories in state-owned granaries, the official said.

"Extreme weather has been the main reason for high food prices, which are unlikely to come down soon. Once inflation takes hold, it takes a long time to dissipate," said R Mani of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

Big battles ahead as Meta AI lands in India

Vishal Mathur

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NEW DELHI: Days after Google finally made artificial intelligence (AI) assistant Gemini available to users in India, it is Meta's turn to unlock Meta AI within WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Messenger. If you are curious about the timing of Google's and Meta's moves, it has all to do with acquiring active users, as Microsoft builds its Copilot integration across smartphones and newer Windows PCs, alongside Apple's upcoming Apple Intelligence suite for iPhone, iPad, and Mac users.

Meta AI's strengths include searching the web, text to image tools, getting contextual inputs such as organising projects or trip itineraries in group chats, creating stickers, learning more about a post on the feed, and providing suggestions or answers to queries.

"We're unlocking new features in Gemini Advanced such as new data analysis capabilities and file uploads, and also launching the ability to chat with Gemini in Google Messages, starting in English," says Amar Subramanya, who is Vice President, Engineering, Gemini Experiences at Google.

Localisation is important for AI assistants, for the audience



India is Meta's biggest market and makes for a logical port of call. →REUTERS

In India, Google's Gemini is proficient in English and 9 Indian languages. Meta AI, for now, only understands English. OpenAI's latest GPT-4o can work with 12 Indian languages.

For Meta, this is a work in progress, but they aren't revealing specifics. Cairns referred to the fact that Meta AI's Llama 3 model is updated every couple of weeks. This means adding languages, alongside fixing hallucinations, improving accuracy, and enhancing safety, may not take much time.

This should tie in well with a push for responsible AI. This week, OpenAI's chief technology officer Mira Murati wrote in a post, "Realizing the potential of AI is not guaranteed. This means putting strong safeguards in place, reducing harmful biases, and proactively dealing with potential negative effects."

In May, Google updated their

best practices for responsible use of open models such as Gemma. Earlier this month, Microsoft suffered an embarrassment of having to backpedal on an AI feature called Recall, designed to take screenshots of everything users do on newer generation Copilot+ PCs.

Preparing for an AI future, OpenAI's position of strength is unique. It provides an all-important model foundation for Microsoft's Copilot and holds an important role within Apple Intelligence's jigsaw for iOS18, iPadOS18, and macOS Sequoia.

A smarter Siri, and more apps, will rely on integration of their latest GPT-4o models.

Some of Apple Intelligence's capabilities will include rewriting emails and drafting responses such as RSVPs, changing the tone of text you've written, recording phone calls with transcriptions, fixing handwriting in notes, picking actionable pointers from web pages, and image generation, including with Genmojis as a language of conversation. Apple's foundation models are trained on the AXLearn framework, an open-source project released in 2023.

→PTI

{ A YEAR LATER } PURGES, CHECKS

Since Wagner mutiny, Putin has upped guard, reassured power

Associated Press

letters@hindustantimes.com

THE ATTEMPTED REBELLION WAS THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO PUTIN'S RULE IN NEARLY 25 YEARS

over Russia's southern military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don, reportedly hoping to capture Shoigu and Gerasimov.

Prigozhin ordered his forces to roll toward Moscow, saying it wasn't a military coup but a "march of justice" to unseat his foes. Putin called the rebellion a "betrayal" and "treason."

But Prigozhin abruptly aborted the march hours later in an amnesty deal brokered by Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko.

Some said Prigozhin apparently hoped to persuade Putin to take his side against the military brass — a grave miscalculation.

After Putin invaded Ukraine in 2022, Prigozhin's Wagner Group emerged as one of the most capable of Moscow's fighting forces.

But for months in 2023, Prigozhin complained about the military brass denying his forces the needed ammunition in Ukraine.

The defence ministry's order for Wagner to sign contracts with the regular military appeared to be the final trigger for Prigozhin's rebellion on June 23-24.

His mercenaries swiftly took

Russian authorities formed a Wagner successor, Africa Corps, using it to expand military cooperation with countries there.

However, "despite the spectacular demise of Prigozhin himself and the problems Wagner got itself into as a result of that, the model is attractive to a lot of people in Russia," said Sam Greene of the Center for European Policy Analysis.

Prigozhin's demise sent a chilling message to Russia's elites. Then, in elections in March, Putin won another six-year term. In a subsequent cabinet shakeup, he dismissed Prigozhin's archfoe, Shoigu, as defence minister, replacing him with Andrei Belousov, an economics expert.

Shoigu, who had personal ties with Putin, was given the high-profile post of secretary of Russia's Security Council.

If Shoigu's new job had been too junior, it would have been humiliating, and could have triggered such criticism of the outgoing minister as to highlight the army's weaknesses: something to be avoided in wartime," said Tatiana Stanovaya of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.

At the same time, Shoigu's entourage faced purges. A long-time associate and deputy, Timur Ivanov, and several other senior military officers were arrested on corruption charges, and other senior defence ministry officials lost their jobs.

{ WORLD } CLIMATE CRISIS

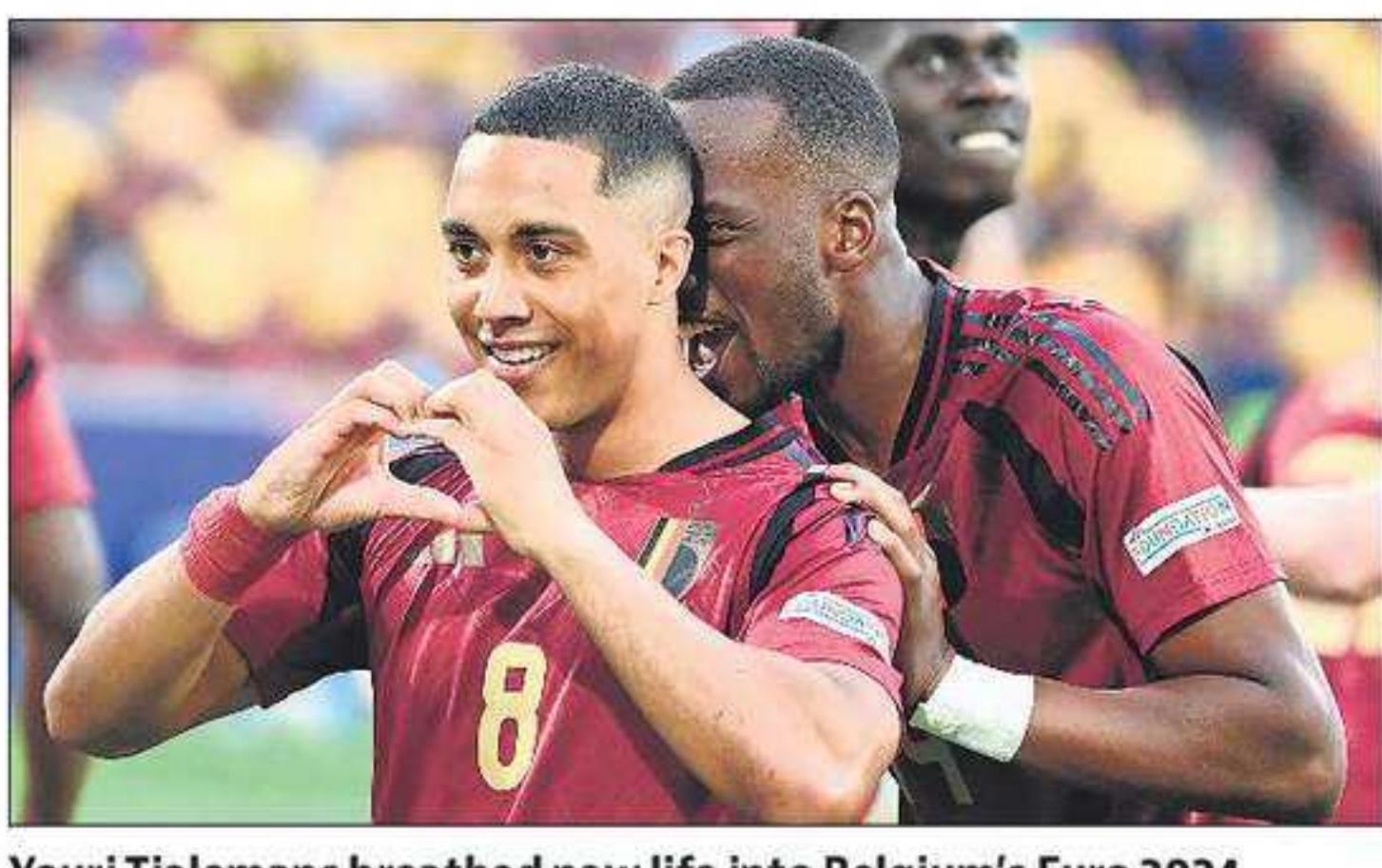
Extreme weather hits millions in US



Millions of Americans prepared to sweat through yet another scorching day, with the potential for rolling storms later Sunday to bring relief from the sweltering heat for at least some. Floodwaters inundated parts of the Midwest, including a town in Iowa evacuated after being submerged up to the rooftops. Across the country in California, daily highs in the state's Central Valley were expected to stay over 37°C into Monday. From the mid-Atlantic to Maine, across much of the Midwest and throughout inland California, public officials cautioned residents sweating through the heat and humidity. In Oklahoma, the heat index was expected to reach 41°C on Sunday. The National Weather Service (NWS) warned of the potential for rare tornadoes in the Northeast later on Sunday. →PTI

{ SPORT } EURO 2024

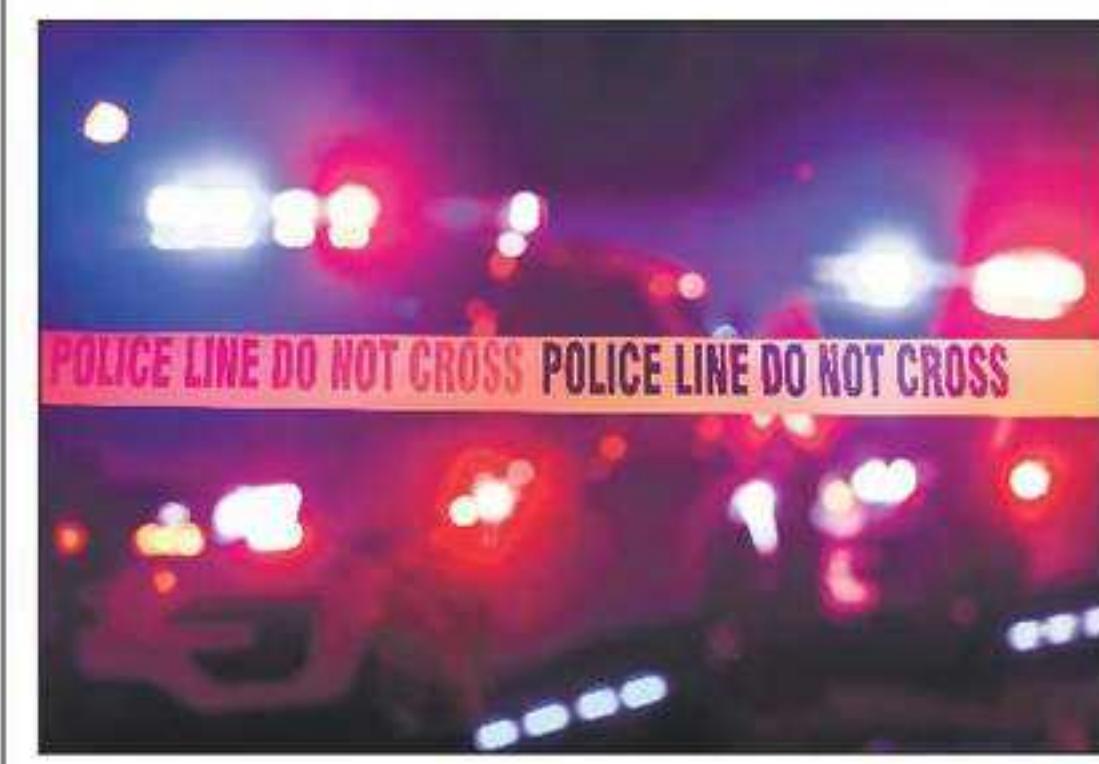
Belgium salvage campaign, stave off Romania in 2-0 win



Youri Tielemans breathed new life into Belgium's Euro 2024 campaign as the Aston Villa midfielder's goal after just 73 seconds inspired a vital 2-0 win against Romania, days after his team's stunning loss to Slovakia. Domenico Tedesco's side would have been on the brink of elimination if they had suffered a second successive Group E defeat. But Tielemans' second-minute strike in Cologne eased fears of yet another major tournament flop from star-studded Belgium. Kevin De Bruyne wrapped up the points in the closing stages to leave all four teams in the group level on three points. The stage is set for a dramatic final round of fixtures in the battle to reach the last 16. Belgium face Ukraine and Romania play Slovakia on June 26. With 45 runs separating the two nations in FIFA's rankings, third-placed Belgium's 1-0 loss to Slovakia on Monday was the biggest upset in European Championship history. →PTI

{ WORLD } IN RUSSIA

7 dead in shootings at synagogues, churches



Gunmen on Sunday attacked a synagogue and churches, killing a priest and six police officers in Russia's Caucasus region of Dagestan, the national counter-terrorism agency and police said. The attacks took place in Dagestan's largest city of Makhachkala and in the coastal city of Derbent. Russia's Investigative Committee said it had opened criminal probes over "acts of terror". Dagestan is a largely Muslim region of Russia bordering Georgia and Azerbaijan. In all, six police officers had been killed and another 12 wounded in the attacks, the spokeswoman for Dagestan's interior ministry, Gayana Gariyeva, told RIA Novosti. A 66-year-old priest was killed in Derbent, the press secretary of Dagestan's interior ministry, Gariyeva told the agency. →PTI

{ WORLD } TENSIONS WITH CHINA

Won't yield to foreign powers: Philippines



The President of the Philippines said on Sunday his country would not yield to "any foreign power" after Chinese forces injured Filipino navy personnel and damaged at least two military boats with machetes, axes and hammers in a clash in the disputed South China Sea (SCS), but added the Philippines would never instigate a war. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr flew with his top generals and defence chief to the western island province of Palawan, which faces the South China Sea, to meet and award medals to navy personnel who came under assault by the Chinese coast guard last Monday as they attempted to deliver food and other supplies to an outpost. Videos and pictures of the chaotic face-off made public by the military showed Chinese coast guard personnel hitting a Philippine navy boat with a wooden bar and seizing a bag while blaring sirens and using blinding strobe lights. →PTI

{ PUSHPAK MAKES SUCCESSFUL LANDING }

Isro breaks new ground with reusable launch vehicle

The Indian Space Research Organisation has achieved a 3rd straight success in the Reusable Launch Vehicle Landing Experiment by demonstrating the autonomous landing capability of the vehicle



WHAT THE MISSION ENTAILED

The mission simulated the approach and landing interface and high-speed landing conditions for a vehicle returning from space, reaffirming Isro's expertise in acquiring the most critical technologies required for the development of a Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV). RLV LEX-03 re-demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of the RLV under more challenging release conditions (cross range of 500m against 150m for LEX-02) and more severe wind conditions

THE WINGED VEHICLE



'Pushpak' was released from an Indian Air Force Chinook Helicopter at an altitude of 4.5km "from a release point 4.5km away from the runway. Pushpak autonomously executed cross-range correction manoeuvres, approached the runway and performed a precise horizontal landing at the runway centreline

Due to this vehicle's low lift-to-drag ratio aerodynamic configuration, the landing velocity exceeded 320 kmph, compared to 260 kmph for a commercial aircraft and 280 kmph for a typical fighter aircraft

After touchdown, the vehicle velocity was reduced to nearly 100 kmph using its brake parachute, after which the landing gear brakes were employed for deceleration and stop on the runway

KEY ACHIEVEMENT

Through this mission, the advanced guidance algorithm catering to longitudinal and lateral plane error corrections, which is essential for the future Orbital Re-entry Mission has been validated, the space agency noted

JOINT MISSION

The mission, led by Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), was a collaborative effort involving multiple Isro centres — Space Applications Centre (SAC), Isro Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC) and Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota.

MY DELHI

At 39.8°C, Delhi feels like 53°C as humidity soars

HT Correspondent

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NEW DELHI: Parts of the Capital received light rainfall on Sunday, making for another wet day, but prevailing maximum humidity level of 73% ensured it was a sultry day despite the maximum temperature remaining below the 40°C mark, at 39.8°C, for a second day in a row.

The maximum temperature was a degree above normal, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). It was 39.4°C on Saturday and 40.4°C on Friday.

Despite the relatively lower maximum temperature, high humidity made it an uncomfortable day to be out in the open, with the heat index (HI) or "real feel" of temperature recorded at 53°C, IMD said in its daily weather bulletin, forecasting no heatwave conditions in Delhi for the remainder of the month.

Delhi's wet-bulb temperature, another indicator of the comfort level outside, was recorded at 30°C on Sunday at 2.30pm, the highest so far this year. It was 28.4°C at the same time on Saturday and 26.6°C on Friday.

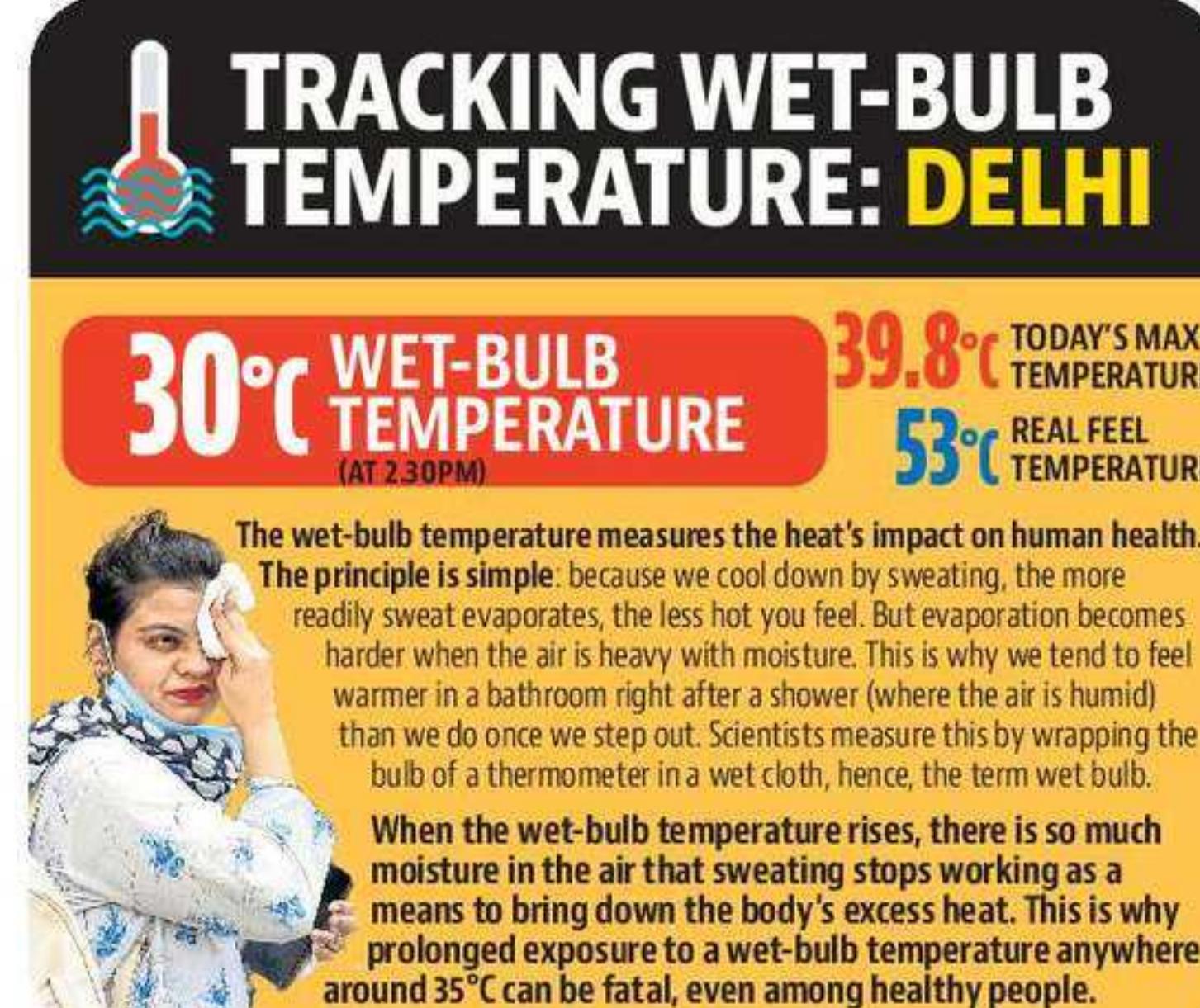
The higher the wet-bulb temperature, the more difficult it gets to stay outside and work. A wet-bulb temperature of 32°C or higher makes it difficult for even fit and acclimated people to work outdoors for long and at a wet-bulb temperature of 35°C—the maximum threshold—humans can no longer regulate body temperatures, leading to heatstrokes and potential collapse.

According to IMD, Delhi is now likely to see drizzle to light rain till June 29, making for a wet end to the month, marked by pre-monsoon showers, with no heatwave conditions expected. IMD classifies a heatwave day as one when the maximum is over 40°C and 4.5 degrees or more above normal.



Visitors at Kartavya Path on a hot, sultry Sunday afternoon.

ARVIND YADAV/HT PHOTO



Parts of Delhi-NCR will see light rain now till the end of the month. This will keep maximum temperature in check, but the humidity will be high," an IMD official said.

On Friday, Delhi's maximum temperature dipped below 40°C for the first time in 39 days. This was Delhi's longest streak of 40°C or higher days since 1951,

when a streak of 32 days was recorded.

According to IMD data, the Safdarjung weather station recorded 0.6mm of rainfall between 8.30am and 5.30pm. During this period, 6.9mm of rainfall was recorded at the Palam station, "trace" rain at Lodhi Road station, 0.8mm of rain at the Ridge station and

1.2mm at the Ayanagar station. Delhi's minimum was 29.6°C on Sunday, two degrees above normal. It was 28.6°C on Saturday. The minimum is likely to hover between 29°C and 31°C till the end of the month, while the maximum will oscillate between 39°C and 42°C, IMD said.

Delhi recorded three heatwave spells this summer, lasting a total of 27 days, where at least one weather station recorded a heatwave. Of these, Safdarjung, representative of Delhi's weather, recorded a heatwave on 14 days, which was the highest for Delhi in at least 13 years. The previous highest, of 13 heatwave days, at Safdarjung was recorded in 2022.

The first heatwave spell in Delhi lasted four days, from May 17 to May 20. From May 21, moist easterly winds led to a drop in temperature and heatwave conditions abating. A second spell—the harshest of the three so far—lasted for 12 days, between May 25 and June 5, with the maximum touching a high of 46.8°C on May 29. The third spell began on June 9 and lasted till June 20.

The rain seems to offer some respite. The number of new admissions due to heat-related illnesses has come down significantly in the past two days," said a senior administrative official.

Leopard attacks cattle in Sohna

Leena Dhankhar

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GURUGRAM: A leopard allegedly killed three cattle and attacked other domestic animals on Saturday near the outskirts of Ghamroj village in Sohna, triggering panic among villagers. The attack is the latest in a string of similar incidents around the Aravalli ranges, villagers said.

A few villagers spotted a leopard on the outskirts of the village reportedly for the third consecutive

night on Saturday, prompting them to demand night patrolling by forest department teams.

However, a search operation by a forest department team on Sunday found nothing after spending nearly five hours there. They found some pug marks but only near the leopard habitat.

Mukesh Kumar, a resident of Ghamroj village said that he was returning home at about 1am on Sunday, when he spotted a leopard entering the village. "The vil-

lagers are scared to step out at night. The leopard starts prowling only when there is shortage of water in the Aravallis. We have requested the forest and wildlife department to check if there is sufficient water for them," he said.

The residents of Bhondsi demanded that forest officials start patrolling the area at night.

"My cattle were killed on Friday night. We fear for our lives and have stopped going out after dark. Once we are sure that the leopard has returned to its habitat, life will get back to normal around here," said Ashok Kumar, a resident of Ghamroj village.

The department said they had received at least 10 calls from Bhondsi village over leopard sightings in the past one week.

Rajesh Chahal, inspector, wildlife department said the leopards may have entered the villages as the natural waterbodies in the Aravallis may have dried up.

Heat toll rises to 60 with two more deaths in 48 hours

HT Correspondent

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NEW DELHI: The toll due to the heatwave in Delhi this summer rose to 60 on Sunday, with public hospitals reporting two more deaths in the past 48 hours, officials aware of the matter said.

Illnesses due to extreme heat have been reported since April in the Capital, but deaths only began emerging in May, according to data shared by hospitals and the state government so far.

Safdarjung Hospital confirmed that two people had died of heat stress on Friday and Saturday.

The hospital admitted one more patient on Saturday, and the total number of people currently being treated for heatstroke at the hospital is 15. Of these, 10 are critically ill and on ventilator support. In total, 91 people were admitted since March, of which 67 were admitted since June 16. The hospital has reported 30 deaths so far this season, according to the data.

"The rain seems to offer some respite. The number of new admissions due to heat-related illnesses has come down significantly in the past two days," said a senior administrative official.

requesting anonymity.

The total number of heatstroke patients undergoing treatment at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital is 27, of which 15 are critically sick. There have been 75 cumulative hospital admissions and 21 deaths so far this season, the official added.

On Thursday, Delhi health minister Saurabh Bhardwaj said in the past 48 hours, 310 people were admitted to the government hospitals with heat-related illnesses, and 14 have lost their lives owing to complications.

A Union health ministry team visited AIIMS and three other Centre-run hospitals—RML, Safdarjung and Lady Hardinge hospitals—on Thursday to take stock of the preparedness for heatstroke patients and assess the number of deaths.

Atul Goel, director general of health services, Union health ministry, constituted the three-member team on the instructions of Union health minister JP Nadda.

Meanwhile, according to the Centre's database that HT accessed earlier, there have been at least 110 confirmed heatstroke deaths in the country in the past three months. The data pertained to deaths till June 18.

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Water supply improves a bit, MLAs meet LG Saxena

Paras Singh

paras@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Delhi's water supply improved marginally on Sunday, to 906 million gallons a day (mgd), from a seasonal low of 888mgd on Friday and 896mgd on Saturday, as water minister Atishi's indefinite hunger strike entered its third day amid the Capital still grappling with a water shortfall of around 94mgd on the day.

On Sunday, a delegation of senior AAP MPs and MLAs also met lieutenant governor VK Saxena seeking his intervention in getting raw water from Haryana for a one-week period, till the arrival of monsoon.

Delhi urban development minister Saurabh Bhardwaj said that the delegation had a positive discussion. "We told LG that there is a shortage of raw water coming from Haryana due to which millions of people in Delhi are facing problems. Rain has started in Shimla and Himachal. So much water will come in the next week that Haryana will not be able to stop it even if it wants to. Now it is just a matter of a week. We have requested LG to talk to the Haryana government. LG has assured that he will talk to the Haryana government," he said.

The LG secretariat, in a statement, said the meeting took place around 12.15pm.

"LG assured that he would take up the matter of release of water on humanitarian grounds with the CM of Haryana, as requested by the AAP delegation. In the meanwhile, a press release was issued by the AAP at around 3.30pm, again resorting to characteristic blame game. However, LG spoke to CM Haryana at around 4pm. The Haryana CM has assured that he would seriously look into the matter and try to help tide over the situation, to the farthest possible extent," LG's office said.

The statement added that share of LG observed that share of Yamuna water among Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and others fixed by the Upper Yamuna River Board was up for renewal in 2025. The LG also said that Delhi should reduce leakages, theft and augment its own water storage capacity.

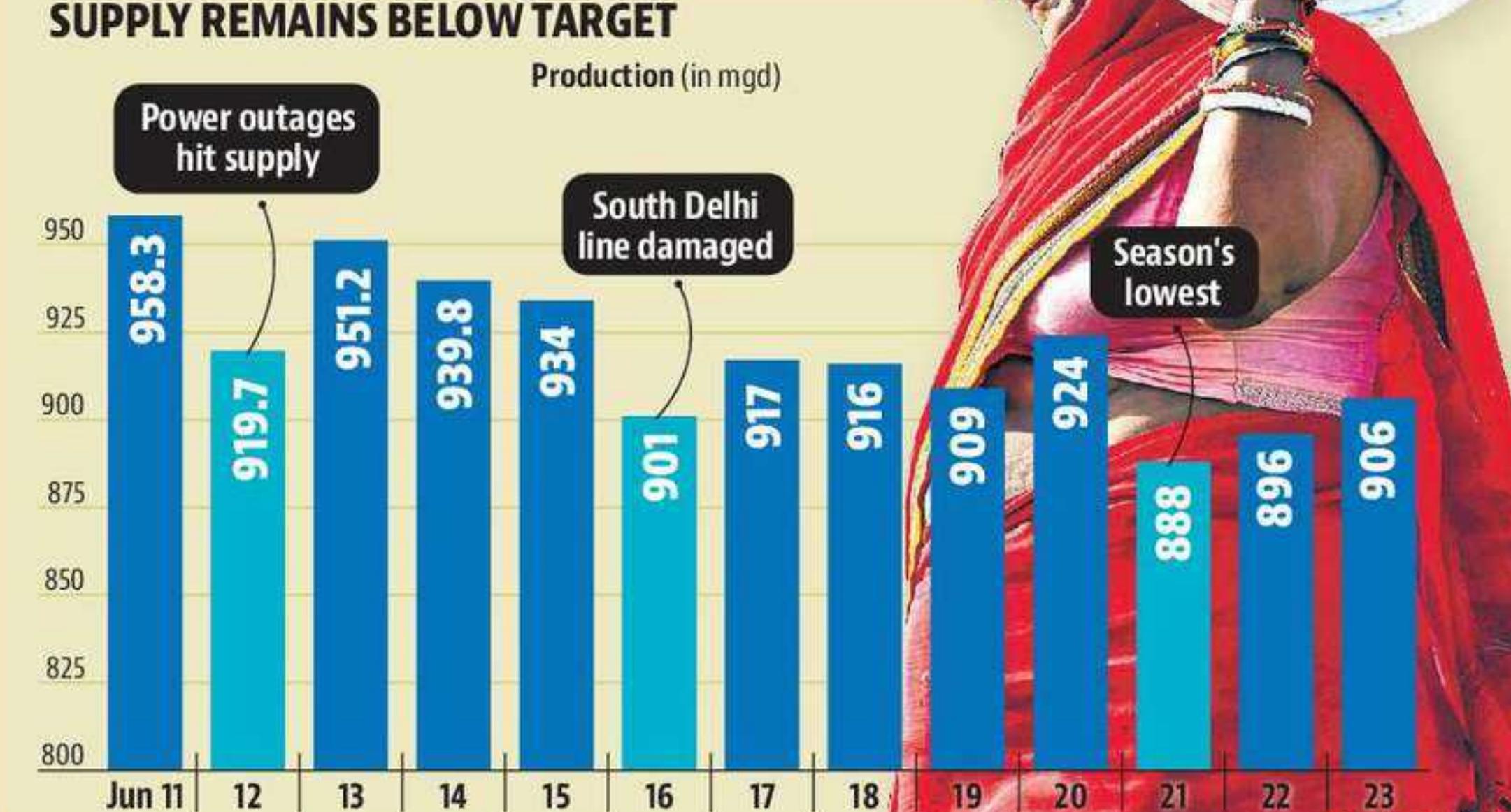
Water shortage persists

WATER SUPPLY STATUS: MARGINAL IMPROVEMENT



PLANTS IMPACTED: Wazirabad, Chandrawal, Okhla and Bawana, due to raw water shortage

SUPPLY REMAINS BELOW TARGET



After the meeting, Sanjay Singh said, "We told LG that Delhi is getting the same amount of water today as was allocated for it in 1994. Whereas in the 30 years since, Delhi's population has increased threefold. We told him that ₹500 crore was spent on eliminating the leakage of Munak canal and 12,000 kilometres of pipeline was laid in Delhi. The Delhi government has made a lot of efforts at its level. During this, LG has also given some suggestions, on which it was agreed to work together."

Delhi has been facing varying levels of water shortfall over the past month. Though the first spell clocked towards the end of May, the supply resumed to above 1,000mgd in early June. However, it started falling again from June 8, fluctuating between 900 and 950mgd. It dipped further, hitting the season's lowest level on June 21, when supply shrank to 888mgd. There was also only 901mgd

of supply on June 16, when the main south Delhi supply line was damaged, causing a shortage in tail-end areas, leading to lower supply pressures and curtailed supply timings.

While the matter was taken up at the Supreme Court level, under the Upper Yamuna River Board, Haryana maintained that water was being provided to Delhi based on the 1994 water-sharing agreement.

Delhi water minister Atishi, during her satyagraha, said: "Delhi supply is 1,005mgd water, of which 613mgd comes from Haryana. But over the past three weeks, Haryana has reduced the quantum of water for Delhi. We are only getting 513mgd water, leading to shortage of around 100mgd. This impacts around 2.8 million people. Haryana claims that they don't have water, but pictures show Hathinikund barrage is full of water. The gates leading towards Delhi have been shut."

Similarly, the largest water treatment plant in the city, at Haidarpur, supplied 218mgd water against a target of 241mgd. This facility supplies water to west and northwest Delhi. There was also only 901mgd

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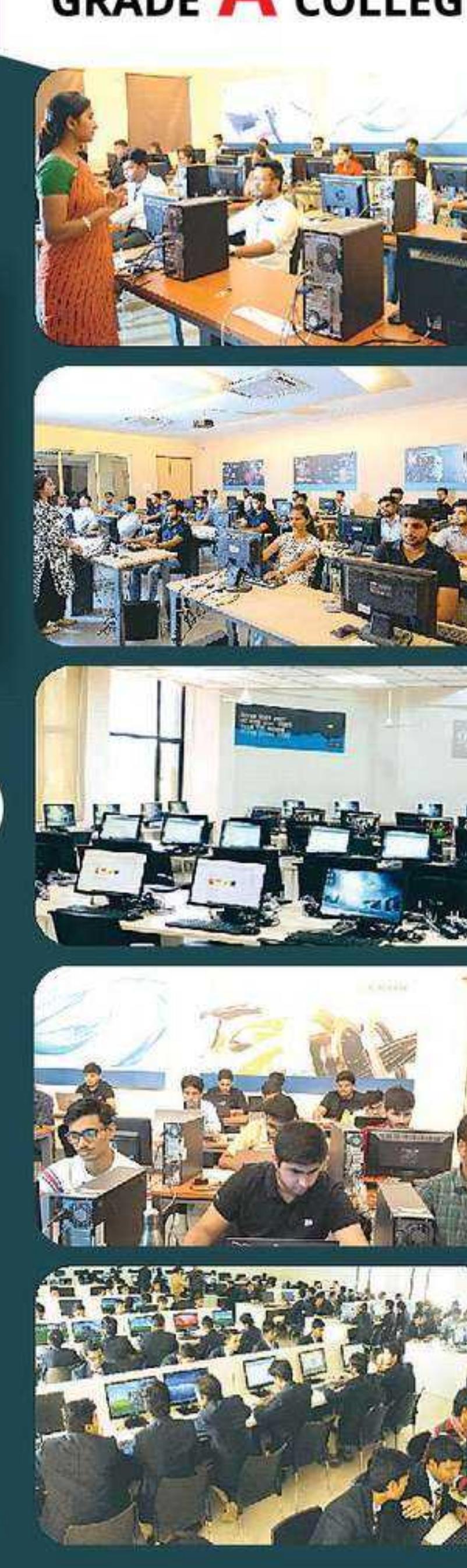
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Kejriwal moves SC against HC halt on release after bail in excise case

Utkarsh Anand

letters@hindustantimes.com



Arvind Kejriwal

NEW DELHI: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday filed an appeal in the Supreme Court, challenging the Delhi high court's order that halted his release from prison despite being granted regular bail by a trial court in the excise policy case.

The appeal highlights several procedural irregularities, seeking suspension of the high court's June 21 order so that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief could come out on bail. The high court order had come less than 24 hours after the trial court granted Kejriwal regular bail citing the lack of direct evidence against him and a potential bias in the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) approach during its probe into a money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in the 2021-22 excise policy case.

In its petition before the top court, Kejriwal's legal team pointed out three main procedural lapses in the high court's handling of the case. It said that the high court stayed the trial court's bail order without thoroughly reviewing the impugned order. The petition went on to add that additional solicitor general (ASG) SV Raju, who appeared for ED in the case, mentioned the matter directly

The plea added that Kejriwal cannot be denied the due process of law merely because he is a political figure and opposed to the present dispensation in power in the Centre.

Delhi CM embroiled in legal twists

On Friday, a vacation bench in the Delhi high court stayed the trial court's bail order, delivering a setback to the AAP and changing the legal landscape of the ongoing excise policy case. The vacation bench of justice Sudhir Kumar Jain extended the stay until the pronouncement of a final decision.

Justice Jain said: "I am reserving the order for two to three days. I have to go through the record. Until the pronouncement of the order on the stay application, the operation of the impugned trial court order shall be stayed. I will pronounce it by Tuesday (June 25)."

This legal twist came as a setback to the AAP, which had been buoyed by the previous day's favourable order and was hopeful of the imminent release of its leader, who has been in custody since March 21 following his arrest by ED, apart from a 21-day interim bail in May for Lok Sabha election campaigning.

It was also a key moment for the AAP, which will vie for a

third consecutive term in Delhi in the assembly polls scheduled in eight months. If released, Kejriwal – the face of the party and its tallest leader – will boost the party's campaign.

The case against the CM stems from allegations of irregularities in Delhi's now-scrapped excise policy of 2021-22, which the CBI was probing following a recommendation by Delhi's lieutenant governor in July 2022. Kejriwal was the third AAP leader arrested in this connection. Former deputy CM Manish Sisodia has been in jail since February 2023, and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh was granted bail by the top court in April this year after six months of custody.

The release order by the vacation trial court judge Niyay Bindu on Thursday evening came days after the general elections threw up surprisingly positive results for the Opposition but found the AAP winning no seat in Delhi and only three in Punjab.

No chance given to oppose bail: ED

ED swiftly moved the high court on Friday morning. The agency argued that the trial court's order was passed without giving the agency an adequate opportunity to oppose the bail application and despite judicial acknowledgement of the offence of money

laundering. ED, arguing through ASG Raju, also criticised the trial court for refusing to stay the bail order temporarily to allow for an appeal to a higher court.

Vacation trial judge Niyay Bindu had ordered Kejriwal's release on Thursday, citing a lack of concrete evidence linking him to the case and raising the possibility of an investigating bias on ED's part. The order highlighted that only ₹40 crore of the alleged ₹100 crore was traced, with no clear timeline for the rest. The judge also noted ED's failure to explain how the proceeds of the crime were used in the 2022 Goa assembly elections by AAP, emphasising a significant portion of the alleged amount remained untraced two years later. Challenging this order, ED argued in the high court that the trial court's bail order was "perverse" and "lopsided".

The high court, however, noted the need to review the records before making a final decision on ED's plea for interim suspension of Kejriwal's bail. Until then, the high court stayed the bail order.

  Read:ED not acting without bias: CM's bail order by trial court

SIX MEN ARRESTED FOR CYBER FRAUD, IMPERSONATION OF GOVT OFFICIALS

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Six men were arrested from Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra for their alleged involvement in a scam, in which they posed as Customs and police officials and duped people of lakhs of rupees by telling them that their Aadhar cards were used in illegal activities. Delhi Police officers aware of the matter said on Sunday.

In total, 72 cases were registered against the accused on the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal, they added.

Police said ₹32,065,003 was found credited to the accounts of one of the accused. They were all working at the behest of Chinese nationals and had provided their bank accounts for transactions to earn commission, they added.

DCP (east) Apoorva Gupta identified the accused as Ansh Kumar, 24 and Samarth, 23, Parjal Kumar Sahni, 24, Satender Dhaker, 29, Vedant Prabhakar, 26, and Vishal Joshi, 25. DCP Gupta said that on April 30, they received a complaint from Deepanshu Vaid, a resident of Vasundhara Enclave, saying he received a call. "The caller claimed a parcel was booked using his Aadhaar and phone numbers, and contained documents and drugs. On the pretext of avoiding legal entanglement, the caller duped him of ₹2.49 lakh," Gupta said.

Rajouri murder suspect 'spotted' at railway station

Heemani Bhandari

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Nearly a week after a 26-year-old man was shot dead inside a Burger King outlet on the main road in Rajouri Garden, the Delhi Police on Sunday said it has formed several teams to look for the woman who allegedly "trapped" the victim Amit Joon to visit the restaurant, where he was shot around 40 times. The incident happened on June 18.

Joon's family said they were not aware of the woman's presence in his life and did not question him coming to Delhi from his residence in Chhochi village, Haryana, as he often came to the state on business visits. On June 18, three men, including the two who shot Joon, waited outside the eatery. The two who shot the victim were identified as Ashish and Vicky Rindhara.

CCVs revealed that after Joon came and sat across Anu, she took his phone. The three men entered, one of them pointed to Joon and left. The two others, Ashish and Vicky, placed the order, sat behind Joon, and began shooting. The woman left with Joon's phone.

Investigation revealed that Anu was associated with the Bhau gang, and was tasked to trap Joon. They said that on June 18, Joon first left home for Delhi around 6am but returned shortly after saying that he would leave in the evening.

Woman boarded Mumbai-bound train
While looking for her, investigators found a CCTV footage from Katra where Anu was seen taking a Mumbai-bound train on June 20 around 10am. She is suspected to have deboarded in Gujarat. "The Delhi Police is in touch with Katra and Gujarat police for any leads on the woman. In the footage, she was seen wearing a neon green t-shirt paired with black bottoms and covering her head with a scarf. She was carrying a sea green backpack and a blue trolley bag," an officer said.

Investigators said that Anu began speaking to Joon on June 11, befriended him, and met him at least twice in the following eight days. She asked to meet him at the restaurant on the evening of the incident.

Police said Anu fled her home in Rohini in January. Her family has filed a missing complaint. She came to Delhi and started living in a paying guest accommodation in Mukherjee Nagar. On June 18, she took the Metro from west Delhi to her PG accommodation, which she immediately vacated, saying there was a family emergency, police said.

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HT

Theft, vandalism taint public infra

Paras Singh

paras@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Barely a few metres from the newly constructed Parliament building — right outside the ministry of power on Rafi Marg — a series of six EV charging stations are lying unused, as EV charging guns on the modules are missing due to theft and thick copper cables chopped off by those looking to make a quick buck. "India's first public EV charging station plaza," as an inauguration plaque dated July 20, 2022, reads, is currently acting as a parking space with charging modules covered in dust and signage warning people "you are under CCTV surveillance".

But the EV charging station at Rafi Marg is not the only such public installation to have met such a fate. The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has installed around 100 EV charging stations, but charging guns of more than a third of these have been stolen. During a spot check, HT found a major EV charging station near Kali Mandir completely run over by vandals. The three charging stations are missing key components and the shed now serves as a shelter for the homeless, with personal goods and bags hanging from the charging ports.

Vandalism, theft and dysfunctional public street infrastructure are hampering the high-security zone of Lutyens' Delhi, and similar maintenance problems plague other installations, such as escalators in public spaces, even in heavy-footfall areas like Connaught Place, and water ATMs running dry during the ongoing intense heatwave.

NDMC vice-chairperson Satish Upadhyay bemoaned the "absence of civic sense and public responsibility", saying the NDMC faced theft and vandalism in escalators, charging stations, nozzles of fountains and flower pots installed ahead of the G20 Summit. Thefts extended to garbage bins and other street furniture too, he said.

EV charging stations
NDMC has over 100 EV charging stations and the civic body plans to expand the number of such



(Above) Non-functional EV charging stations at Gole Market have turned into a homeless shelter, with the charging points acting as placeholders for clothes; (right) A broken EV charging machine

ARVIND YADAV/HT PHOTOS



(Above) Escalators at the Shankar Market subway are defunct due to theft of key components, with an open section of the same turning into a dump yard; (left) A water ATM on Ashoka Road is shut during peak summer due to lack of a maintenance agency.

installations to 350. However, maintenance and security pose key problems.

The NDMC has filed complaints of missing charging guns in over 30 such sites.

Gopal Krishan, who heads the New Delhi RWA federation, said that copper is sold at ₹600 per kilogram. "People steal and sell these wires in scrap. They may get ₹400, but the damage caused to infrastructure is much more expensive," he said.

Connaught Place escalators

The problem of thefts and lack of maintenance is not uncommon even in the heart of the city at Connaught Place.

There are several pedestrian subways around the outer circle of Connaught Place and all the subways were completely revamped under the Smart City mission in 2017-18. However, most of the 22 escalators connecting places such as Super Bazar, Shankar Market, Statesman House, KG Marg, Bara-



kamba and Janpath were found non-functional.

In March, NDMC said that 11 of the 22 escalators were repaired. But during a spot check on June 17, HT found several parts of escalators missing in the sections near Shankar Market, Barakhamba Road and KG Marg.

Chirag Srivastava, 35, a tourist visiting Delhi from Bengaluru, said that he was surprised at the lack of maintenance in the central commercial hub of the Capital. "So many foreign tourists

visit Connaught Place but there is lack of cleanliness, non-functional escalators and even stench due to urination. It was a disappointment," Srivastava said.

An NDMC official said that more than 70 police complaints have been filed regarding the theft of escalator parts.

The spokesperson for Delhi Police did not respond to requests for comment.

New Delhi Traders Association (NDTA) secretary Vikram Badhwar said that 99% of the escalators in the area are non-

functional and complaints have no effect. "Public money is wasted. It also affects the market image when the maintenance is zero. We start with very high standards while implementing these schemes, but there is no long-term upkeep."

Badhwar said that traders at Connaught Place pay one of the highest property taxes, but get little in return. "These escalators and subways were revamped around the 2010 Commonwealth Games. They keep getting vandalised and mostly remain non-

operational."

Non-functional water ATMs in peak summer

Amid an intense heatwave and unprecedented temperature levels in Delhi, scores of water ATMs meant to dispense cold purified drinking water for pedestrians and passersby in markets and key junctions of New Delhi are either lying dysfunctional or gathering dust.

NDMC installed 75 water ATMs in various parts of the Lutyens Delhi but most have fallen into disrepair, either suffering from damaged parts or becoming completely non-operational.

Ashok Randhawa, who heads the Sarojini Nagar Mini Market Traders Association, said that the NDMC installed four water ATMs in Sarojini Nagar Market three years ago, but all of them were in poor shape.

During a spot check, HT found that the water ATMs located near Gurudwara Bangla

Sahib, Shankar Market, Pant Marg, Gol Dak Khana and Mandir Marg were found to be out of order. Many units were locked and others had an accumulation of leaves and debris.

Water ATMs face the twin problems of vandalism and a lack of a maintenance agency.

PK Datta, retired professor from JNU, with specialisation in historical and contemporary identity formations in modern India and Indian political and social thought, said: "Civic sense needs to be cultivated by the public authorities, especially in a megapolis like Delhi where there is very rapid pace of migration and urbanisation. Civic sense is not something that will fall from the heavens. For people who are not familiar with the urban street infrastructure in megapolises, civic authorities have to actively work to engage them."

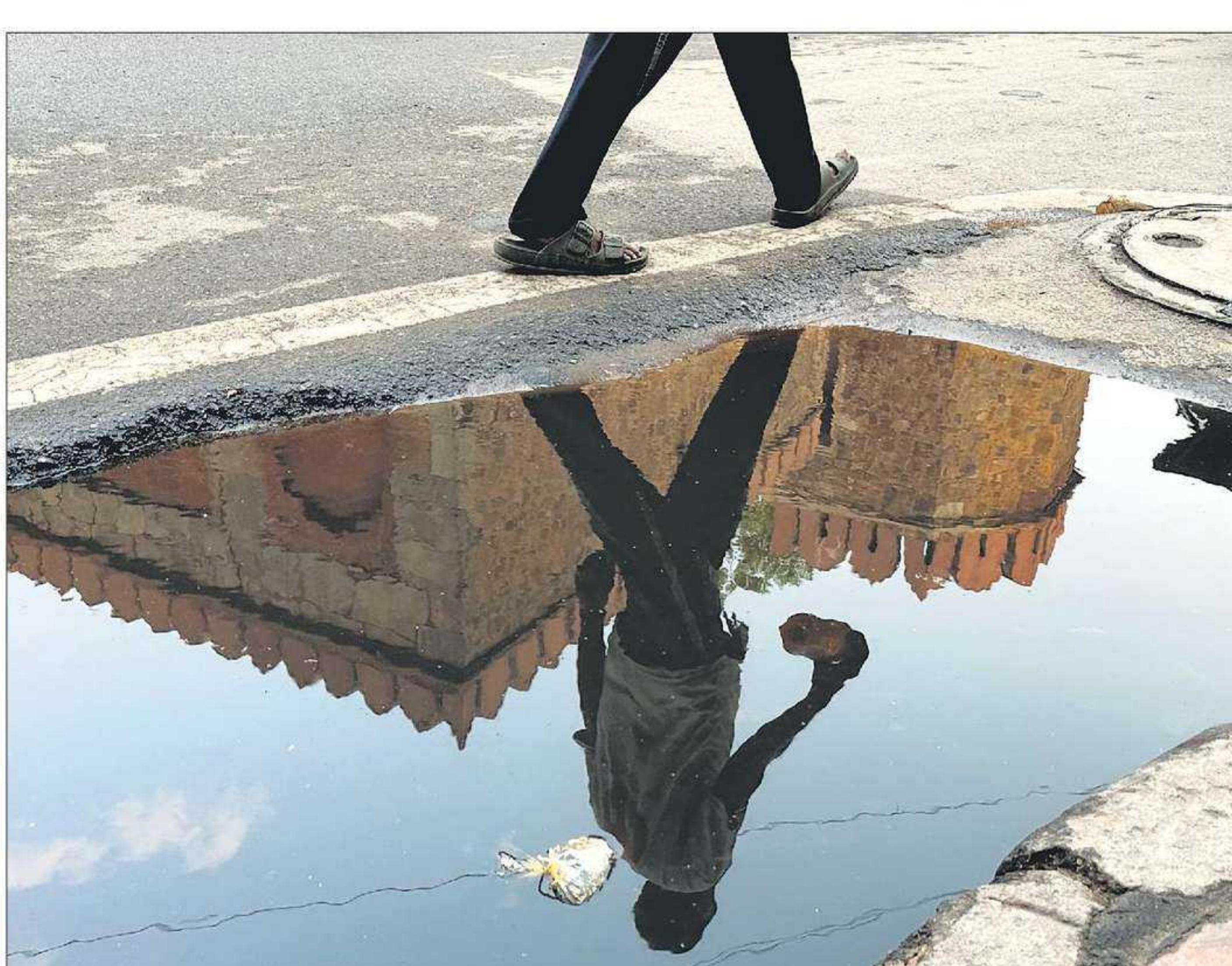
Upadhyay said that NDMC is making attempts to rectify the situation at multiple sites.

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Season's first rain puddle

A walk along three monuments

PUBLIC INTEREST The season's first rain puddle has momentarily transformed into a receptacle for Delhi's history. The dirty water is reflecting the centuries-old Dilli Gate, one of the 14 gateways punctuating the 5.5-mile-long wall of the Walled City of Shahjahanabad. Most of those stone darwazas succumbed to a violent past, along with much of the wall. But you may visit three of the four surviving gateways over a single afternoon. Stringed along Fasli Road, they lie close to each other, their interiors easily discerned from afar. All three are flanked by luscious peepal trees.

An arched edifice composed of turrets, niches, battlements, benches and yards, Ajmeri Gate signposted the way to the sufi town of Ajmer. Today it lies trapped between the New Delhi railway station; the GB Road red light and the Hauz Qazi market. Homeless citizens exploit the wide border wall for afternoon siesta. In the long-ago times, dacoits in the wilds that existed right outside the city walls would sometimes end up killing the travellers, dumping the bodies into the canal that used to

come out of Ajmeri Gate. It is possible to climb Turkman Gate, but the access to the staircase is through the police post tucked behind the gateway, next to the sufi dargah that gives its name to the darwaza. Originally, every gateway of the Walled City wall had a police post. The gates would be closed in the evening after the maghreb prayers, and the armed "nigeban" would guard the various levels of the darwaza all through the night holding their ballan (batons), swords and mashal (torches).

Similar to the two gateways, Dilli Gate (see photo) nevertheless looks more beautiful. The dramatic staircase is haloed with the spirit of Elsinore, the famous castle of Shakespeare's greatest play. The mind's eye can easily visualise a gloomy Hamlet standing atop the staircase waiting for his father's ghost to appear.

The gateway is employed as a landing point by pigeons; sometimes they sit motionless for very many minutes, as if they were sculpted stones. Forced to function like a traffic island, the darwaza marks the starting point of a traffic-heavy road that stretches out to the Red Fort, and further beyond to Kashmere Gate, the Walled City's fourth and final surviving gateway.



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18TH LOK SABHA

NET examination, conducted for Junior Research Fellowship (JRF), lectureship (LS) and assistant professor posts in college and universities was cancelled by the National Testing Agency (NTA). A day later, the National Board of Examinations (NBE) deferred the National Eligibility Entrance Test, Postgraduate (NEET-PG) exam a day before it was scheduled.

For weeks, protests have swept across India as thousands of students hit the streets amid allegations of question paper leaks, inflated marking and arbitrary allowance of grace marks, even as opposition parties called for a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the allegations. The Supreme Court is set to hear a raft of petitions on the issue on July 8.

Leaders of the Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the Trinamool Congress that are part of the INDIA bloc have already indicated that they will be raising the issue that has affected a total of 3.7 million students.

In a post on X on Sunday, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said, "In the NEET Scam, the buck stops at the doorstep of the top echelons of the Modi Govt. Shuffling the bureaucrats is no solution to the endemic problem in the Education system rotted by the BJP. NTA was projected to be an autonomous body, but in reality, was made to serve the devi-

ous interests of the BJP/RSS."

Differences have also cropped up between the government and the Opposition on the selection of the pro-tem speaker, after the appointment of seven-term lawmaker Bhartruhari Mahtab who has switched sides from the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju's clarification that the government has stuck to the rules of appointing the longest-serving member with consecutive terms, has failed to cut ice with the Opposition that backs eight-term Congress MP K Suresh.

Rijiju on Friday said Mahtab has had seven uninterrupted terms as Lok Sabha member, making him eligible for the post, while Suresh lost elections in 1998 and 2004.

Three Opposition leaders, TR Baalu of the DMK, K Suresh of the Congress and Sudip Bandopadhyay of the Trinamool Congress, who are in the panel to assist the pro-tem Speaker, have indicated that they may not perform their duties as a mark of protest.

The Lok Sabha proceedings will begin with the oath-taking ceremony by Modi, the Leader of the House, followed by the panel of chairpersons appointed by the President to assist the pro-tem Speaker.

As per functionaries aware of the details, the election to pick the Lok Sabha Speaker will be held on Wednesday, fol-

lowed by Modi introducing his council of ministers to the House.

In 2021, the Opposition had prevented the PM from introducing the ministers inducted after a reshuffle. On the first day of Parliament's monsoon session, the Opposition began raising slogans on the rising prices of fuel and prevented the customary introduction of the ministers. This was not the first time such an event unfolded in Parliament. In 2004, then PM Manmohan Singh was not allowed to introduce the ministers in his Cabinet in Parliament after the BJP protested the inclusion of Mohammed Taslimuddin and Lalit Prasad in the council of ministers.

Anticipating the Opposition's aggressive stance, the government is prepared with its strategy, said a party leader. "We have reached out to them (Opposition). Last week minister Rijiju met the Congress President (Kharge) and expressed hope that the two sides will work together..." said the leader, speaking on condition of anonymity.

On Sunday the minister met TMC leader Sudip Bandopadhyay. In a post on 'X' he said, "Met Sudip Bandopadhyay Ji leader of All India Trinamool Congress Parliamentary Party. Sudip da has long standing Parliamentary career and he is known for his calm and dignified conduct in the Parliament. 18th Lok Sabha will hugely benefit from his experiences."

The BJP, which won 240 of the Lok Sabha's 543 seats during the general elections, had to fall back on its allies to form the government. This was in contrast to the party's performance in 2014 and 2019 polls, when it stormed to power with 272 and 303 MPs respectively. However, its alliance partners were accommodated in the Union council of ministers.

Owing to a resurgent opposition that had grown in strength the BJP is expected to face challenges in the passage of bills that will be tabled in the course of the 18th Lok Sabha. The party is also unlikely to get support from parties such as the BJD and the YSRCP that were not part of the NDA but supported the government in the previous terms, helping in the passage of crucial bills such as outlawing triple talaq and the abrogation of Article 370.

Although allies such as the Janata Dal United, the Telugu Desam Party and 12 others that comprise the NDA have assured the BJP of unconditional support, there is a lingering worry within the party over their response to the issue of irregularities in conducting examinations.

"There is pressure on the party in Bihar, but all discussions and decisions will be taken as partners," said a JD(U) leader, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The allies are also expected to raise issues pertaining to their respective states and con-

stituencies. Both the JD(U) and TDP have 28 lawmakers between them and played a key role in helping the BJP form government at the centre for the third time. The two parties have been upfront about their demands for financial assistance for their respective states.

TDP chief and Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu has instructed his MPs to focus on raising issues pertinent to the state, including securing funds for the capital city of Amaravati and the Polavaram project.

Bihar lawmakers too will raise the issue of financial aid and infrastructure support for development projects and job creation, said the JD-U leader quoted above.

ISRAELI MILITARY

He was later transferred to the Palestinian Red Crescent for treatment, it said.

"The conduct of the forces in the video of the incident does not conform to the values of the IDF (military)," the statement said.

"The incident will be investigated and dealt with accordingly."

Francesca Albanese, the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights situation in the Palestinian territories, suggested the troops were using Abbadi to shield themselves from gunfire.

"Human Shielding in action," Albanese wrote on social media platform X, sharing footage of the incident.

At the hospital, Abbadi said

he was hit and wounded as he stepped out of his uncle's house in Jabriyat. "I tried to withdraw and get inside the house, but they started shooting," hitting him in the hand. Abbadi said from his hospital bed.

He said he fell to the ground in an area behind the military jeep and was hit once more, with a bullet penetrating his leg.

According to Abbadi, rescuers or medics were unable to reach him for more than two hours as he lay on the ground.

"I started crawling" trying to escape as fighting continued around him, he said, before the Israeli troops noticed him.

"When they (the soldiers) arrived they stomped on my head and hit my face, my injured leg and hand," Abbadi recalled.

"They were laughing and playing while they hit me."

The soldiers lifted him and threw him on the ground before tying him to the bonnet of the jeep, he said.

Bahaa Abu Hammad, the doctor treating Abbadi at Ibn Sina hospital, said that "he has burns on his back from neck to lower back" from being tied to the military jeep in the scorching summer heat.

Jenin has long been a strong hold for Palestinian militant groups, and the Israeli army routinely carries out raids in the city and an adjacent refugee camp.

Violence in the West Bank, which had already surged before the Israel-Hamas war broke out on October 7, has only escalated since.

At least 553 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli troops or settlers since the Gaza war broke out, according to Palestinian officials.

Attacks by Palestinians have killed at least 14 Israelis in the West Bank over the same period, according to a tally of Israeli official figures.

The Gaza Strip has been gripped by more than eight months of war since Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on Israel, which resulted in the deaths of 1,944 people, mostly civilians.

Militants took 251 hostages, 116 of whom remain in Gaza, including 41 the army says are dead.

Israel's military offensive on Gaza has since killed at least 37,598 people, also mostly civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

SUKMA BLAST

driver) were killed in the blast," a statement issued by the police said.

The names of the deceased jawans were Vismu R (35), who was a resident of Kerala, and Shailendra Kumar (29), a resident of Uttar Pradesh, a senior official said. Another senior police official said that the IED blast caused a crater about six metres deep on the road.

"It was a command-initiated IED that was triggered by the Maoists from around 150 metres away. The two companies of CoBRA were on ROP when ration was being transported by the security forces to the Teklagudam camp. Near Timmapur village, the Maoists planted the IED and triggered it, due to which the truck blew away. The driver and the assistant driver — both CoBRA jawans — died in the incident," said Kiran Chavan, superintendent of police, Sukma.

Inspector general of police, Bastar range, Sunderaj P also said that most probably the command IED was operated by a couple of Maoist cadres hiding in the forest nearby.

"Only one driver and another jawan were there in the vehicle, which was carrying store materials for the camp. The remaining jawans were on foot patrol," said the IG.

According to records available with the Chhattisgarh police, a total of 12 security personnel have been killed by Maoists in 2024 till now. On the other hand, 131 Maoists have been killed so far this year in separate encounters with security forces in the state.

Chhattisgarh chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai in a statement on X said, "There is sad news of the death of two CoBRA jawans in an IED blast carried out by Maoists in Tekalgudam of Sukma district. I pray to God for peace of the souls and to give strength to their families. Maoists are frustrated with the ongoing anti-Naxal operations in Bastar, hence they are doing such cowardly acts. The martyrdom of the jawans will not go in vain and we will not sit quiet until Maoism is eradicated from the state."

He further said the ministry has also asked to investigate the "role of public servants, if any, connected with the conduct of the examination" as well as the "entire gamut of events and the larger conspiracy".

Accordingly, the CBI spokesperson said, the agency has "registered a criminal case and initiated an investigation".

The agency is already investigating the leak of the UGC-NET 2024 question paper, which was cancelled a day after being held on Thursday after the government received inputs showing the questions had been leaked on the darkweb.

Facing flak over discrepancies in the competitive exams, the Centre shunted out NTA chief, Subodh Kumar Singh, and replaced him with Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Pradeep Singh Kharola.

Education minister Dharmendra Pradhan also said on Saturday that top leadership of NTA was under the scanner, and named a seven-member committee to comprehensively review the structure, processes and working of the NTA.

Several petitioners have approached the Supreme Court with various requests relating to the exam, including a plea to scrap it entirely or halt the counselling process — by which students are allotted seats in different colleges — that is scheduled to begin on July 6. The court refused to pass any interim orders and is due to hear the matter again on July 8.

On Sunday, protests from students continued in various states — with protesters split on demanding a re-exam while others sought the results stand.

According to officials, the federal agency has formed "special teams" to investigate the irregularities "on top priority" and rushed them to Bihar and Gujarat to ascertain details of probes being carried out by the police there.

The Bihar Police has been investigating a NEET-UG paper leak matter since last month and has arrested 17 people, including those suspected to have obtained the paper, hired "solvers" and helped an unknown number of candidates memorise the answers before the exam.

In Gujarat, police arrested half a dozen individuals, including the head of a coaching centre, in connection with alleged cheating at an examination centre for NEET-UG in Godhra.

Some detentions made by Maharashtra Police too are being watched and CBI may send a team there as well, if required, said officials.

While handing over the probe to CBI on Saturday late evening, Union education ministry said it was doing so for the transparency on the conduct of the examination process. The federal agency has invoked sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 420 (cheating) in its first information report (FIR).

The allegations in the FIR state that the NEET (UG) 2024 examination was conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including 14 cities abroad, with over 23 lakh candidates appearing for the examination.

The ministry of education, the spokesperson said, requested the CBI to conduct a "comprehensive investigation into the entire gamut of alleged irregularities, including conspiracy, cheating, impersonation, breach of trust, and destruction of evidence by candidates, institutes, and mid-levels, including attempted irregularities."

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Tribute to the Great Warrior Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Ji on his Martyrdom Day

June 24, 2024

“बंदा सिंह बहादुर एक महान योद्धा थे। उनका जीवन हम सभी के लिए प्रेरणा है। मैं बाबा बंदा सिंह बहादुर को उनकी बहादुरी और बलिदान के लिए नमन करता हूँ।”

- नरेन्द्र मोदी

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THE WOMAN FROM BENGAL WORKED AS A DOMESTIC HELP IN LAJPAT NAGAR AREA

site CISF Gate Number 1 on the Mahipalpur bypass road.

A police team rushed to the spot and found the woman to be unresponsive. She was taken to Safdarjung Hospital, where she was declared brought dead on arrival, added Meena.

During investigation, the woman was identified as Meera Chhetri, 44. She worked as a domestic help in the LaJPAT Nagar area. Her husband, Rajesh Chhetri, and other family members were informed about her death. An autopsy was conducted and the report is awaited,” said DCP Meena.

Further legal action would be taken as per the autopsy report, the DCP added.



48% of 1,563 students who got grace marks skip NEET retest

Fareeha Iftikhar

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NEW DELHI: Only 813 or 52% of the 1,563 candidates who were initially awarded grace marks in the National Eligibility Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) before they were withdrawn last week appeared for a retest on Sunday, the National Testing Agency (NTA) said, as affected students, who did not opt for a re-examination, were allowed to retain their actual scores without the grace marks.

While none of the two candidates from Chandigarh appeared for the exam, 219 out of 602 sat for the retest in Chhattisgarh, one (sole eligible candidate) in Gujarat, 287 out of 494 in Haryana and 234 out of 464 in Meghalaya.

The data was provided by NTA in a statement after the exam was conducted across seven centres in the five states and Union territory.

The retest for the 1,563 students was held days after the Centre scrapped the grace marks awarded to them taking the first step in dispelling the chaos engulfing India's premier medical entrance examination that threatens to jeopardise the futures of hundreds of thousands of children amid allegations of paper leaks. The grace marks were awarded to the candidates account of loss of time during the May 5 exam.

On June 13, the Centre told the Supreme Court that it proposed to withdraw the scorecards issued to 1,563 students and allow them to either appear for a fresh exam or retain their actual scores without the grace marks.

The chaos over the crucial medical exam has sparked sweeping protests across India as thousands of students have hit the streets against this year's examination process and opposition parties have called for scrapping of the examination and a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the allegations of paper leak.

However, a senior official in the Union education ministry, who did not wish to be identified, on Sunday said that incidents of malpractices are "localised" or "isolated" and it is not fair to jeopardise careers of lakhs of candidates who cleared the exam rightfully.

Last week, Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan rejected the allegations of paper leak and reiterated the government's commitment to safeguard the interest of students.

On Saturday, the Centre removed NTA director general Subodh Kumar Singh and appointed IAS officer Pradeep Singh Kharola. A seven-member committee formed to probe the case will hold its first meet on Monday.

Meanwhile, NTA debarred 17 students, who appeared for the medical exam on May 5 in Bihar, over suspicion of malpractices, following a report from the state police's Economic Offences Unit.



Students protest against NEET-UG retest in Rajkot on Sunday.

OPPN TARGETS PM OVER EXAM CHAOS, SEEKS APOLOGY FOR ASPIRANTS

HT Correspondent

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NEW DELHI: Opposition parties on Sunday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the conduct of the National Eligibility Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) and cancellation of other competitive examinations, saying lakhs of students deserve an "apology" from him and "justice" from the Union government.

The Opposition, which has been demanding Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over the controversy around alleged paper leaks, also said a rejig in the National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts the competitive exams, is "no solution to the endemic problem in the education system rotted by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)".

On Saturday, the Centre removed NTA director general Subodh Kumar Singh and appointed IAS officer Pradeep Singh Kharola for the role.

In a post on X on Sunday, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said: "In the NEET Scam, the buck stops at the doorstep of the top echelons of the Modi Govt. Shuffling the bureaucrats is no solution to the endemic problem in the Education system rotted by the BJP."

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi also took to X and said that under the BJP rule, the entire education system has been handed over to the mafia and the corrupt.

Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin said the cancellation of NEET-PG examination and the UGC-NET were not one-off events "but the final nails in the coffin of an incompetent and broken system of centralised selection".

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said the youngsters of the country deserve an apology from Modi and "justice" from the government.

While there was no immediate reaction from the Bharatiya Janata Party on the latest remarks, the Centre had earlier accused the Opposition of "spreading lies on a sensitive issue without knowing the facts".

Shuffling the bureaucrats is no solution to the endemic problem
MALLIKARJUN KHARGE,
Congress chief

{ BIHAR } FOUR ARRESTED

CBI officers probing paper leak attacked

Mukesh Kumar Mishra

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PATNA: A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team probing the Union Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) paper leak case was allegedly attacked by residents in a village in Bihar's Nawada district, police said on Sunday, adding four people were arrested following a complaint from the federal agency.

The incident occurred on Saturday evening when a four-member team of CBI from New Delhi led by an inspector-rank officer had gone to Kasiyajid village under Rajauli police station to investigate the UGC-NET paper leak case. As soon as the team reached the village, local residents heckled the CBI sleuths and vandalised their vehicles, suspecting them to be "fake" officers, a police officer said.

"A CBI team reached Nawada on Saturday evening to investigate the UGC-NET paper leak case. Without informing the local police, they reached the village where they were attacked by villagers who mistook them for fake officers," Rajesh Kumar, station house officer (SHO), Rajauli police

LOCAL RESIDENTS HECKLED THE CBI SLEUTHS OVER SUSPICION THAT THEY WERE 'FAKE' OFFICERS, POLICE SAID ON SUNDAY

station, said. "As we came to know about the incident, police reached the spot and pacified people."

Based on a complaint from the federal agency, local police arrested four people and registered a first information report (FIR) on charges of causing disruption in government work and assault, among others, Kumar said. In a statement on Sunday evening, Nawada superintendent of police (SP) Ambrish Rahul said: "The CBI team came without any information. We got a message around 4.30 pm (on Saturday) that a CBI team has been surrounded by local villagers and there has been exchange of blows. A local police team reached there in 8-10 minutes and took control of situation..."

Another police officer said the

CBI team had come to Nawada tracking some suspects based on the location of cell phone numbers allegedly involved in the UGC-NET paper leak case.

"The investigation on the basis of mobile numbers is going on. People involved in the case will be arrested," the officer said, requesting anonymity. Police remained tight-lipped about the suspects the CBI team had come looking for in Nawada.

CBI registered an FIR into UGC-NET paper leak case on Thursday against unidentified people on the recommendation of the Union education ministry.

The UGC-NET, which determines the eligibility for the award of junior research fellowship and admission to Ph.D. in Indian universities and colleges, was conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on June 18 across the country. Around 900,000 students had appeared for the prestigious national exam held twice every year. The very next day, however, the education ministry cancelled the exam saying the integrity of the exam might have been compromised, citing reports from cybercrime agencies.

'Perfect scorers' say new exam tougher, unsure of topping it

Leena Dhankhar

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GURUGRAM: The six students from the same Haryana centre, who scored full marks in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) earlier, took a retest on Sunday and said they found the exam more challenging than the previous iteration, with four of them who spoke to HT saying they were unsure if they will be able to repeat their perfect scores.

The six were part of a group that took the test at Bahadurgarh's Hardayal Public School and their results, a perfect 720/720, became controversial since all of them were at the same centre - raising fears of the possible use of unfair means - and all had attempted a flawed question that earned them up to 140 extra points in grace marks.

Sunday's retest was held for all 1,563, who were awarded those grace marks following a direction from the Supreme Court.

One of the students, a resident of Jhajjar, who was among the six, expressed frustration over the exam's increased difficulty. "The exam was tougher compared to previous years. The chemistry section was particularly challenging, and I could not finish it, leaving two questions unanswered, which will impact my overall percentage," he said. He now expects his score to drop to around 650.

He described the situation as "one of those nightmares" while achieving a perfect score and securing a direct medical seat could potentially lead to a lower ranking due to the exam's difficulty.

Another top scorer, also from Jhajjar, was uncertain about achieving a perfect score again as well. "I have performed well, but am not completely confident about scoring full marks. One of the major reasons was the tension and pressure that affected my performance and confidence," he said. She added that she would be content with an overall score of 700.

A third top performer from Jhajjar said that he found the physics and biology questions particularly challenging.

Despite this, he remained optimistic about his performance. "I am not sure about my score yet, but I feel I did better than last time. Even without grace marks, I hope to be close to it," he said.

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ONE OF THE TOP SCORERS

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{ OUR TAKE }

Friends in the neighbourhood

Greater integration with region will help India counter the Chinese overtures in South Asia

The first two major bilateral engagements of the new government in New Delhi — hosting

Bangladesh Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina for the first incoming bilateral visit and sending external affairs minister S Jaishankar to Sri Lanka — were a signal that the Neighbourhood First policy remains a priority for India at a time when contestation with China across the region is on the rise. Both engagements were also meant to signal a theme of continuity following the formation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government.

Bangladesh remains India's most significant partner in the neighbourhood, and a raft of initiatives to bolster physical, energy, and financial connectivity have laid the foundation for closer integration of the economies of the two countries. Hasina's visit led to further steps in this direction, including the launch of new rail and bus services and an e-visa facility for Bangladeshi nationals coming to India for medical treatment. However, the most important development was India's decision to formally signal its interest in the \$1-billion project to restore and develop the Teesta basin in Bangladesh.

China has had its eye on this mammoth project for years, and the Indian initiative will allow Hasina to deflect the pressure she is likely to face from Beijing when she visits China in the near future. In Sri Lanka, Jaishankar and President Ranil Wickremesinghe jointly launched a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) that was established for the Sri Lankan Navy in Colombo with an Indian grant. This will strengthen maritime security cooperation between the two sides months after Sri Lanka acknowledged the concerns of India and the US and blocked visits by Chinese surveillance vessels through a year-long moratorium on port calls by foreign research ships.

The relationship between India and China remains fraught, and Beijing has signalled through several steps that it is in no hurry to resolve the military standoff on the Line of Actual Control, which is into its fifth year. China's aggressive behaviour across the region, especially in the context of several border disputes, makes it imperative for India to speed up efforts to build closer relations within its neighbourhood and beyond, especially through steps that enhance maritime security cooperation and foster greater integration with regional economies. Such measures, as the leaders of the Quad nations have pointed out more than once, will increase the range of options available to democratic countries and greatly reduce the possibility of coercion being used as a tool of statecraft.

Illicit liquor economy points to social crisis

The tragedy of over 50 people dying after consuming illicit liquor in Kallakurichi in Tamil Nadu has turned the spotlight on alcohol consumption in the state. Excise revenue is a major contributor to state finances, and the government controls wholesale and retail vending of alcohol through state-run (TASMAC) utilities. This dependence on alcohol to fund state expenses has been criticised by civil society members and the Opposition in light of the deaths.

The easy solution prescribed by many to curtail illicit liquor deaths is prohibition. But does it really work? Prohibition ends up criminalising the production and distribution of liquor, and invariably facilitates a black economy that enables rent-seeking by criminals and their political patrons. Tamil Nadu has experimented with prohibition from 1937 onwards, only to realise that the moral claim that it is a pro-poor measure is false. It has found, instead, that it is the poor who suffer the most under prohibition.

In Kallakurichi, the bulk of producers and consumers were from the lowest strata of the society. Illicit brewing flourished because it contributed to the political economy. The consumers were mostly wage labourers, including conservancy workers with no surplus income or avenue for leisure, and could not afford the Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL) sold in TASMAC shops. Better regulation through policing may help to stop the production and sale of illicit brew. However, the problem needs to be understood as a social crisis, and measures ranging from de-addiction and temperance interventions to the availability of cheaper but safe local brews need to be discussed. Moral outrage and an over-regulating State are unlikely to resolve this problem.

Sowing the seeds of farm-growth revival

Centre should focus on expanding land under irrigation, pushing greater adoption of horticulture by farmers, and raising agri-R&D spending in the country

The provisional estimate of the real gross value added for the agriculture sector in FY24 is just 1.4%. This has been attributed to the erratic monsoon last year, on account of the El Nino effect.

Against this backdrop, the appointment of Shivraj Singh Chauhan as the new minister for agriculture has been widely welcomed. The reason is that the agriculture Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Madhya Pradesh (MP), during his tenure as chief minister from 2005-06 to 2022-23, witnessed an average annual growth rate of 7% against the all-India showing of 3.8%. Since agriculture is mainly a state subject, the new agriculture minister will have to take the states along if much-needed reforms in the sector are to materialise. The agriculture sector needs to grow consistently at an annual 4%.

The ministry he presides over does not include the department of animal husbandry and dairying and department of fisheries. So, the fastest growing and most promising sectors of the farm economy are not in his

domain. However, he has the experience to influence the running of these two departments, too.

As per the Situation Assessment of Agricultural Households and Land and Holdings of Households in Rural India, 2019, agri-households earned only 37% of their income from cultivation, while 15% came from livestock activities and 40% from wages and salaries. Thus, the real challenge before Chauhan will be increasing income from cultivation. Even though the monsoon has been deficient by 18% till June 20, the good news for him is that the monsoon this year is predicted to be normal. So, his first year in office may bring good tidings. There are three areas where his experience in MP may prove useful.

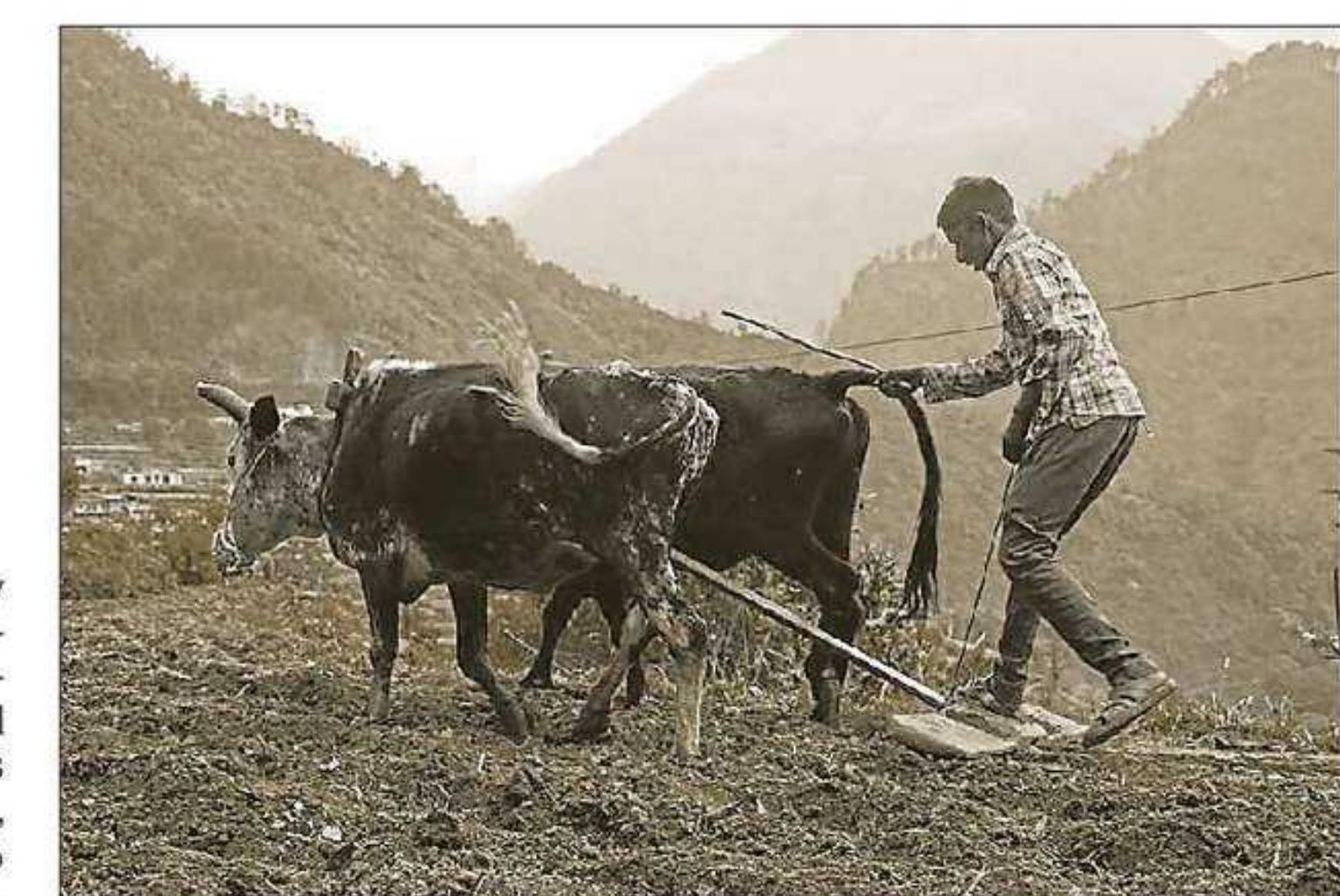
There are numerous recommendations made by expert committees, including the Ashok Dalwai Committee, on doubling farmer income. Here are three important areas that Chauhan can focus on.

The first is to bring more area under irrigation. In 2015-16, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) to expand the cultivable area under assured irrigation and use water more efficiently by following sustainable water conservation practices, among other goals. By

December 2023, out of the 99 priority projects identified under PMKSY-Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme in 2016, only 54 projects had been completed. Another 21 projects recorded progress of more than 90%, while 13 others recorded 80-90% progress. Chauhan has direct experience in pushing irrigation projects in his home state. It would be a significant contribution to Indian agriculture if he could work with the states and complete the unfinished projects. An independent evaluation of all 99 projects may also help in ascertaining whether the command area in the completed projects has actually received water. This is necessary as the benefits to agriculture come only when irrigation water reaches the farms. For this, the completion of canal works is critical. Micro-irrigation has remained confined to Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. Chauhan must enhance its use in central and north Indian states as well. This would not only help in the prudent management of precious water resources that result in productivity gains.

For Punjab and Haryana, diversification from paddy to other less water-consuming crops has been under discussion for decades. If the new agriculture minister can convince the finance minister to support Punjab and Haryana's crop diversification plans so that the area under non-basmati paddy is strategically reduced, it would be a landmark contribution to the country's agriculture sector. Business as usual in Punjab and Haryana may be highly detrimental to the future of India's food security.

The second area of importance is horticulture. Since the launch of the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) in 2005, India's horticulture production has gone up from 170.8 million tonnes (mt) to 352.23 mt. Madhya Pradesh has been a beneficiary of and contributor to the horticulture revolution in India. To illustrate, in 2004-05, it produced 0.535 mt of onion which rose to 5.1 mt by 2022-23. The state is the second-largest producer of onion after Maharashtra. Due to a crash in prices, MP experimented with a price deficiency payment scheme in 2018, which didn't prove successful. The biggest challenge in horticulture is the high fluctuation in prices and supply-chain losses. If these can be addressed, the consumption of fruits and vegetables can go up, and India's exports in these agri-commodities can be more reliable. Farmers, too, can earn more



The new agriculture minister must convince the finance minister to support states' crop diversification plans
(HT PHOTO)

than they do from cereals. The need for a robust cold chain network for perishables is well understood. However, private investment in creating pre-cooling facilities is not adequate. This must be sufficiently incentivised.

The third area that Chauhan must make a priority is the threat from the climate crisis, which can lead to lower yields in several crops. To address this challenge, investment in research and development (R&D) to generate climate-resistant varieties must be drastically raised, and farmers must be made aware of the need to shift to these varieties. India spends just about 0.6% of agri-GDP on research. Investment in agri R&D under the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) system boosted the country's capacity in rice, sugar, grapes, pomegranates and onion. If self-reliance and food security are to be achieved for 1.6 billion Indians, higher investment in R&D, both by the government and the private sector, is a must.

Siraj Hussain is a former Union agriculture secretary, and Shweta Saini is an economist. The views expressed are personal



Siraj
Hussain



Shweta
Saini

A behaviour code to run a House without discord

The new Parliament, meeting today, will see a coalition government headed by the same team that wielded untrammelled powers during the past two terms because of having a formidable majority in the Lok Sabha. That situation has changed. A political party that does not have a majority of its own will face serious challenges from the Opposition and, in exceptional situations, from its own allies. At times, there may be a snap vote in the House, which can take the treasury benches by surprise.

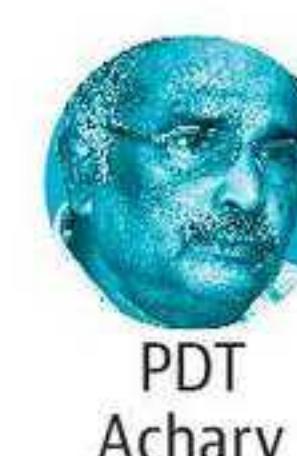
The Opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) who have been returned may harbour unpleasant memories: Mass suspensions, privilege cases, expulsions, and the denial of opportunities were common threads in the last House. With a formidable number on their side, the Opposition in the 18th Lok Sabha is likely to pose a major challenge to the government and, in particular, the Speaker. Once, Mavalankar sent Nehru a slip of paper saying he would like to meet Nehru in his office. Instead, Nehru rushed to the Speaker's chamber and told him that the Speaker, being the highest authority in Parliament, should never visit the PM. Nehru would meet the Speaker in his chamber whenever the latter sought his presence. This was his way of establishing good parliamentary traditions.

The smooth running of Parliament, at any time, is more likely if the House elects a wise Speaker and the government appoints a seasoned parliamentary affairs minister. While the Speaker has to ensure the timely completion of government business in the House, he is also supposed to protect the interests of the Opposition. A wise Speaker will conduct the House to the satisfaction of both sides of the House. The members of the Opposition benches should be able to leave the House feeling that the Speaker was fair to them.

The parliamentary affairs minister is the bridge between the government and the Opposition. In this context, old timers may remember K Raghuramaiah, the parliamentary affairs minister under PM Indira Gandhi (1969-76). Although she had a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, Raghuramaiah would always be seen in the Opposition benches coaxing and cajoling the MPs to gain their support for running the House smoothly. Stalwarts such as AK Gopalan, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Hiren Mukerjee, Shyamandani Mishra, Indrajit Gupta, Piloo Modi, Madhu Dandate, and Madhu Limaye adorned the Opposition benches in those days. These great and often difficult men used to be brought around by a tactful Raghuramaiah.

Dialogue between the government and the Opposition is essential for the smooth running of the House. Such dialogue smoothens the wrinkles in the relationship between the two sides. To listen to others and to try and convince them is the surest way to promote the democratic culture. Parliament is the most powerful platform where this exercise is conducted. From the rough and tumble of India's electoral politics, the people's representatives need to move into the realm of mutual respect.

Vajpayee, an outstanding parliamentarian for all times, used to say "vicharan ka sangharsh" (clash of ideas) is the essence of parliamentary democracy. All members of the House should keep this thought as the 18th Lok Sabha begins work.



PDT
Acharya

PDT Acharya is a former secretary general, Lok Sabha. The views expressed are personal

vine in debates whenever necessary, thereby creating a very healthy tradition. He sometimes supplemented the replies given by the ministers when he felt the House should be given more information and sometimes corrected the ministers when he felt the correct angle of the issue was not being highlighted by them. He attended Parliament when important issues were discussed and, in fact, he requested the Speaker to give more time to the Opposition because he believed his party members only praised him and it was the Opposition that told him what was happening on the ground.

An interesting incident involving the first Speaker of the Lok Sabha, GV Mavalankar, is part of the institutional memory of the Lok Sabha and is discussed as a measure of the highest esteem in which Nehru held the office of the Speaker. Once, Mavalankar sent Nehru a slip of paper saying he would like to meet Nehru in his office. Instead, Nehru rushed to the Speaker's chamber and told him that the Speaker, being the highest authority in Parliament, should never visit the PM. Nehru would meet the Speaker in his chamber whenever the latter sought his presence. This was his way of establishing good parliamentary traditions.

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{ JOSEP BORRELL FONTELLES }
FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



In the West Bank an economic collapse is looming & violence intensifying. Blatant disregard for @CIJ ICJ rulings & UNSCR 2735 continues



(After Saturday's attack on Gaza by Israel)



{ STRAIGHTFORWARD }

Shashi Shekhar



Ganga needs a joint effort to regain its old strength

A few days ago, I was at the Ganga Dussehra. As I stood there, chanting lines from Pandit Jagannath Shastri's *Ganga Lahri*, an incident returned to memory. I was on board an Assam-bound Rajdhani Express crossing the bridge connecting Garhmukteshwar and Gajraula. When the coach I was in reached the middle of the bridge, I offered prayers to Ma Ganga.

When I was done with the prayers, my co-passengers, a White couple, wanted to know what I was doing. I told them the river was the Ganga and that I had been offering my prayers to it. The man seemed taken aback. "Ganges, the great Ganges," he asked in amazement, while his companion made a statement that I will not repeat here for it pained me and may hurt the religious sentiments of others, too.

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For ages, the Ganga for us has been a source of life, and salvation. When I see a river anywhere in the world, it reminds me of the rivers that run through Prayagraj, Kashi, and Mirzapur, where I spent my childhood. I see the Ganga as a metaphor of the purity of childhood.

However, the river is no longer considered pure and pious in scientific terms.

According to studies on pollution in the Ganga conducted by BD Joshi, a professor at the Indian Academy of Environment Science in Haridwar, the river's current Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) level is 7 mg/l, which is extremely unhealthy. Also, solid waste content in the river when it reaches the foothills, was found to be 1,460 mg/l, which exceeds the threshold. The rise in solid waste has reduced the Ganga's transparency to 5%. Another study found that plastic trash in the river rose 25% between May and June 2024. From Rishikesh to Haridwar, fish numbers have dropped to 80%, and the number of species fell dramatically from 89 to 66. Crocodile populations have also fallen.

People typically blame the growing number of tourists and pilgrims for the Ganga's woes, but there are other causes for this, too. These should be thoroughly debated in Parliament so that the government can develop an action plan.

At locations such as Kaushambi, just before Prayagraj, people can now cross the Ganga on

foot. This is happening even after the Yamuna, with all its waters, has been subsumed into the Ganga. Only 7,000 cusecs of water from the Ganga and the Yamuna together currently flow forward. Though several other rivers join the Ganga downstream, its water flows are dismal.

This is why I dread the fate of Kashi, where I spent my childhood playing on the Assi Ghat. Mounds of sand have started appearing between Dashaswamedh and Sakka ghats. If the heatwaves continue, the situation could worsen. One reason behind this state of the Ganga is that it has not been dredged for quite some time.

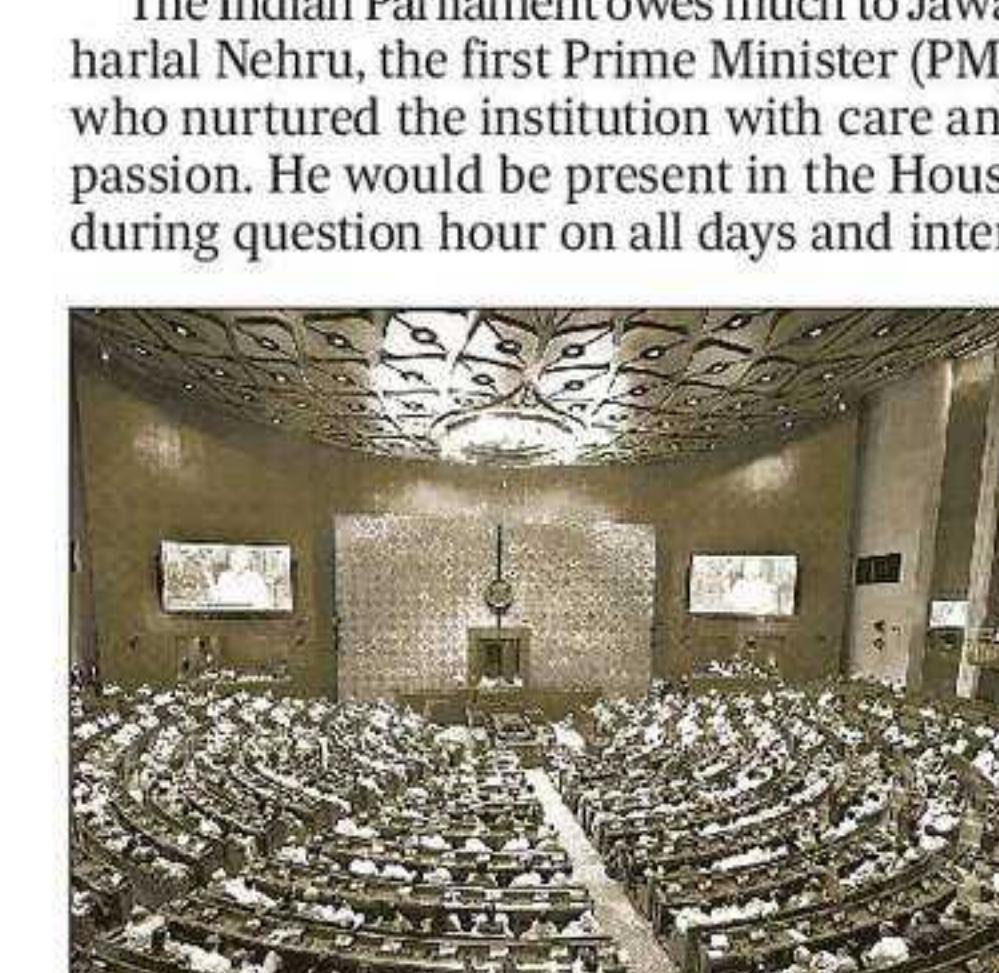
This river requires regular, phased dredging from Haridwar to Ganga Sagar.

A lot of money has been spent to clean the Ganga at Varanasi, but what are the conditions today? Only 70-75 million litre per day (MLD) of the 467 MLD of sewage released by the city enters the Ganga untreated. But the Varuna river, the tributary from which Varanasi derives its name, brings with it 67 MLD of sewage discharge into it into the Ganga.

According to research conducted by a team from the Kashi Hindu University, all fish in the Ganga between Prayagraj and Buxar have been affected by pollution. Furthermore, vegetables and grains grown in the doab area (and between two rivers) irrigated by its waters are also contaminated. Hundreds of people, including myself, used to cross a pontoon bridge to reach Ramlagarh, which used to be a good market to buy fresh vegetables and watermelons cultivated on the banks of the Ganga.

A lot can be written on this topic, and much has already been documented. About 40 years ago, I wrote a cover story on the Ganga for a famous magazine, and even then, the figures were similarly appalling. Nature has been sounding the alarm for a long time, urging us to wake up. The fertile land of North India is unimaginable without the Ganga, the Yamuna, and their tributaries. Yet, despite changes in government, the situation has continued to deteriorate. The Ganga will be protected not by slogans, but by the collective efforts of society and the political system.

Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief, Hindustan. The views expressed are personal



Voters have made it clear to the political class that some lines must not be crossed

EDITOR: KUNAL PRAKHAN

WORLD

Philippines says it won't back down amid row with China

Chinese coast guard injured Philippines' navy personnel and damaged at least two military boats with machetes, axes and hammers in a clash in the disputed South China Sea last week

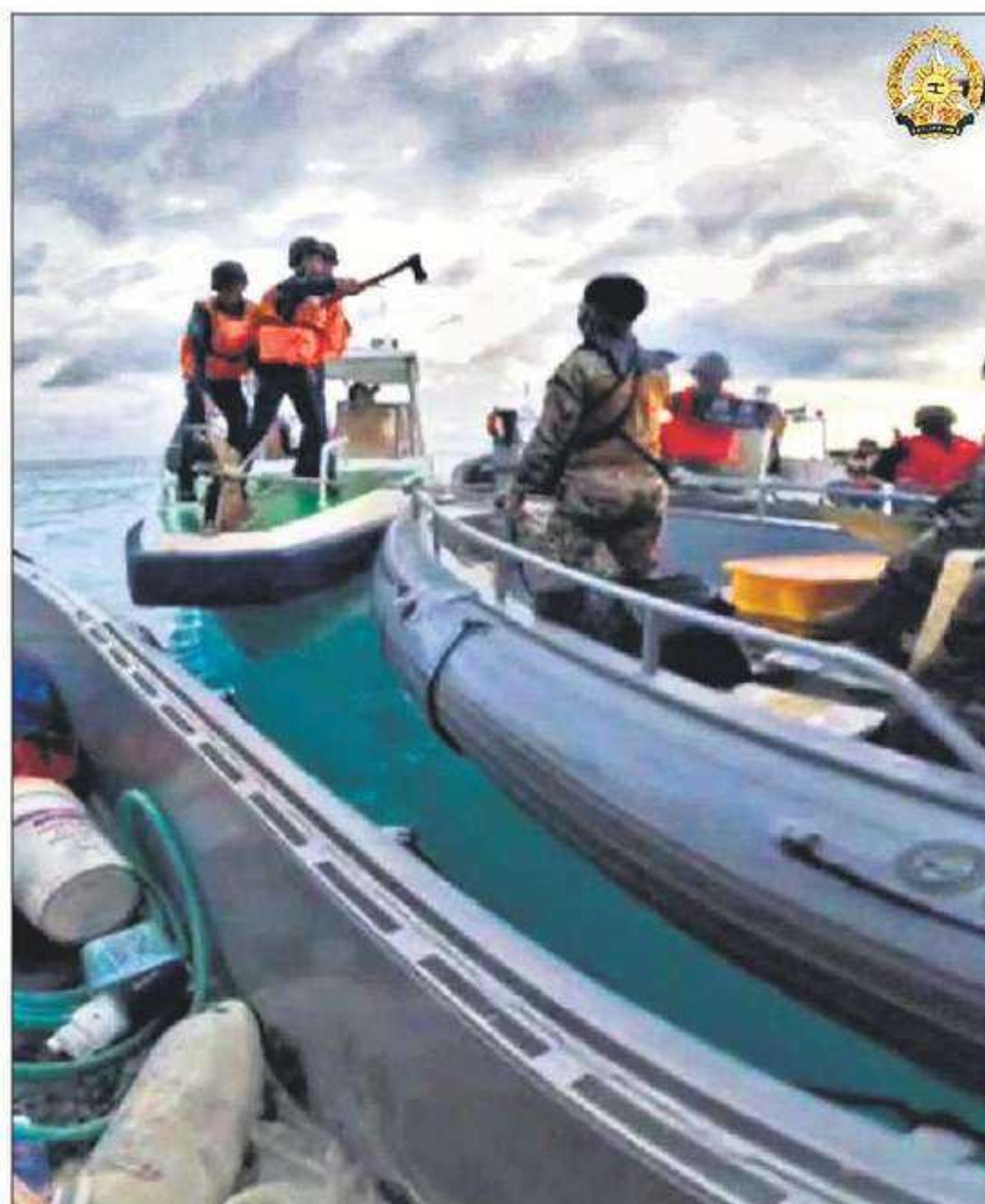
Agencies

letters@hindustantimes.com

MANILA, PHILIPPINES: The president of the Philippines said on Sunday his country would not yield to "any foreign power" after Chinese forces injured Filipino navy personnel and damaged at least two military boats with machetes, axes and hammers in a clash in the disputed South China Sea (SCS), but added the Philippines would never instigate a war.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. flew with his top generals and defence chief to the western island province of Palawan, which faces the South China Sea, to meet and award medals to navy personnel who came under assault by the Chinese coast guard last Monday as they attempted to deliver food and other supplies to an outpost on the hotly contested Second Thomas Shoal.

Videos and pictures of the chaotic face-off made public by the military showed Chinese coast guard personnel hitting a Philippine navy boat with a



Chinese Coast Guards hold an axe as they approach Philippine troops on a resupply mission in the Second Thomas Shoal at the disputed South China Sea on June 17. AP

wooden bar and seizing a bag while blaring sirens and using blinding strobe lights. The Chinese government said that its coast guard had to take action after Filipino forces defied warnings not to stray into what China calls its own offshore territory, a claim long rejected by rival claimant governments and international arbitrators.

The violent confrontation

sparked condemnation and alarm from the US, the European Union, Japan, Australia and other Western and Asian nations, while China and the Philippines blamed each other for instigating it.

Marco's key advisers said on Friday that his administration has no plan to invoke the country's mutual defence treaty with the United States.



Ferdinand Marcos Jr. REUTERS

We stand firm. Our calm and peaceful disposition should not be mistaken for acquiescence.

FERDINAND MARCOS JR., Philippines president

the Chinese, some of whom pointed knives at them, said Philippine military chief Gen Romeo Brawner Jr.

Marcos said, "History itself can tell that we have never, never in the history of the Philippines yielded to any foreign power."

Chinese officials in Manila and Beijing did not immediately comment on Marcos's remarks.

Marcos praised about 80 officers and personnel involved in Monday's supply mission, including one who lost his right thumb during the high seas confrontation, saying they "exercised the greatest restraint amid intense provocation."

He issued an appeal: "Continue to fulfil your duty of defending the nation with integrity and respect as you have done so far."

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual shipborne commerce, including parts claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague said China's claims had no legal basis, a decision Beijing has rejected.

Washington has repeatedly warned that it is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces are attacked, including in the South China Sea.

Indonesian forces have also opened fire on Chinese fishing boats in past confrontations in waters off the Natuna islands on the fringes of the South China Sea.



People protest against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government and call for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip, in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Saturday. AP

US arms delay row to be resolved soon: Israeli PM

Agencies

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JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday a row with the United States over weapons delays relating to the Gaza war would be resolved soon, amid simmering tensions between the allies.

"About four months ago, there was a dramatic drop in the supply of armaments arriving from the US to Israel. We got all sorts of explanations, but... the basic situation didn't change," he told a Cabinet meeting.

Washington has repeatedly warned that it is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces are attacked, including in the South China Sea.

Indonesian forces have also opened fire on Chinese fishing boats in past confrontations in waters off the Natuna islands on the fringes of the South China Sea.

Israeli strike kills eight at Gaza aid centre

Eight Palestinians were killed on Sunday in an Israeli airstrike on a training college near Gaza City being used to distribute aid, Palestinian witnesses said, as Israeli tanks pushed further into the southern city of Rafah.

The strike hit part of an industrial college run by the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA now providing aid to displaced families, the witnesses said. UNRWA and the Israeli military did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

"About four months ago, there was a dramatic drop in the supply of armaments arriving from the US to Israel. We got all sorts of explanations, but... the basic situation didn't change," he told a Cabinet meeting.

"Washington has repeatedly warned that it is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces are attacked, including in the South China Sea.

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DRONE ATTACK DAMAGES MERCHANT SHIP IN RED SEA

Agence France-Presse

letters@hindustantimes.com

DUBAI: A drone attack damaged a merchant ship in the Red Sea near Yemen early Sunday morning, though no injuries were reported, according to a British maritime security agency.

Vessels in and around the Red Sea, which is vital to world trade, have come under repeated attack for months by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. The rebels say they are acting in support of Palestinians during the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

The attack occurred about 120 kilometres west of the Yemeni port city of Hodeida, said the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), which is run by the Britain's Royal Navy. "The Master of a merchant vessel reports being hit by uncued aerial system (UAS), resulting in damage to the vessel. All crew members are reported safe, and the vessel is proceeding to its next port of call," said a bulletin from the agency.

Israel and the powerful Iran-backed Hezbollah, a Hamas ally, had already been exchanging near-daily cross-border fire since the Gaza war erupted on October 7.

Hezbollah's announcement of the latest cross-border attacks came hours after it published a video excerpt purporting to show locations in Israel along with their coordinates.

On Thursday, the prime minister said Israel needed American ammunition to fight a "war for its existence" as it battles Hamas militants in Gaza and trades fire with Lebanese Hezbollah on its northern border.

On Saturday, another armed group, Jamaa Islamiya, announced the death of one of its commanders, Ayman Ghoteim, saying he was killed in a "Zionist raid" in Khiara, in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa area near Syria.

Later on Sunday, UKMTO said it received a distress call from a second vessel, this one off Yemen's southeastern coast, that had "suffered flooding that cannot be contained", without specifying what caused the incident.



Saudi says 1,301 deaths during Haj this year

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia said on Sunday that 1,301 pilgrims died during the Haj pilgrimage which unfolded during intense heat. "Regrettably, the number of fatalities reached 1,301, with 83% being unauthorized to perform Haj and having walked long distances under direct sunlight, without adequate shelter or comfort," the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

French far-right party forges ahead of Macron: Poll

PARIS: France's National Rally continued to cement its lead in opinion polls a week before the country's snap parliamentary election, largely at the expense of President Emmanuel Macron's centrist bloc. Support for Marine Le Pen's far-right party was pegged at 36% in a survey by Elabe published on Sunday in *La Tribune Dimanche*. BLOOMBERG

Apple and Meta discuss AI partnership: Report

Reuters

letters@hindustantimes.com

WASHINGTON: Facebook parent Meta Platforms has discussed integrating its generative AI model into Apple's recently announced AI system for iPhones, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported on Sunday.

Al startup Anthropic has been in discussions with Apple to bring its generative AI to Apple Intelligence, WSJ reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

The iPhone maker announced long-awaited AI strategy this month, saying it would integrate new Apple Intelligence technology across its suite of apps, including Siri, and bring Microsoft-backed OpenAI chatbot ChatGPT to its devices.



Passengers queue outside Terminal 1 after an overnight power cut led to disruptions and cancellations at Manchester Airport in Britain, on Sunday. REUTERS

Flights delayed, cancelled at Britain's Manchester airport after power cut

LONDON: Flights at the UK's third-busiest airport were being delayed or cancelled on Sunday after a major power cut, the airport operator said. The Manchester Airports Group, which also operates London Stansted and the East Midlands airports, said Manchester Airport had been "affected by a major power cut in the area earlier this morning".

Power has now been restored at the international airport in the north of England, but passengers due to travel from Terminals One and Two were told "not to come to the airport" as all flights were cancelled "until further notice".

Passengers for Terminal Three were told to come to the airport as normal, but were warned they "could be affected by delays".

The airport operator said that while passengers already

help AI companies to obtain a wider distribution of their products. The size of potential financial windfall is unclear, but the talks involved AI companies selling premium subscriptions to their services through Apple Intelligence, the report said.

AI search startup Perplexity has also been in discussions with Apple about bringing its generative AI technology to Apple Intelligence, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The iPhone maker announced long-awaited AI strategy this month, saying it would integrate new Apple Intelligence technology across its suite of apps, including Siri, and bring Microsoft-backed OpenAI chatbot ChatGPT to its devices.

Flooding wreaks havoc in Iowa



A drone view shows a flooded area following heavy rainfall in Rock Valley, Iowa state, US, on Saturday. Floodwaters forced thousands of people out of their homes in parts of Iowa, the result of weeks of rain, while much of the United States longed for relief on Saturday from yet another round of extraordinary heat. In neighbouring South Dakota state, Governor Kristi Noem declared an emergency after the southeastern part of the state received heavy rainfall. REUTERS

23 arrested for involvement in tourist's lynching in Pakistan

Press Trust of India

letters@hindustantimes.com

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan police have arrested at least 23 people for alleged involvement in the lynching of a tourist in the picturesque town of Swat for allegedly desecrating the Quran, media reports said on Sunday.

Muhammad Ismail, a 40-year-old resident of Sialkot in Punjab province, was gunned down by an enraged mob which

dragged him through the town and later hanged him in full public view in Madyan tehsil of Swat district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Thursday.

The mob had also set the Madyan police station ablaze.

Ismail was accused of having burnt the pages of Islam's holy book. Five police personnel and 11 locals were injured in the incident, police said.

Police arrested 23 people for alleged involvement in Ismail's

lynching and the arson attack on the Madyan police station, Geo News reported.

Those arrested were shifted to an undisclosed location while efforts were underway to arrest others involved in the incident, police said.

Members of the mob had been identified, and "efforts for their arrest are underway", the report said, quoting Swat District Police Officer (DPO) Syed Zaman Shah.

"Responsibility for the delib-

US is 'responsible' for deadly Ukrainian attack on Crimea, says Russia

Reuters

letters@hindustantimes.com

MOSCOW: Russia said on Sunday that the United States was responsible for a Ukrainian attack on the Russian-annexed Crimean peninsula with five US-supplied missiles that killed at least five people including three children and injured 124.

The Russian Defence Ministry said four of the US-delivered Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) missiles, equipped with cluster warheads, were shot down by air defence systems and the ammunition of a fifth had detonated in mid-air.

The ministry said US specialists had set the missiles' flight coordinates on the basis of information from US spy satellites, meaning Washington was directly responsible.

"Under crooked Joe Biden the City of Brotherly Love is being ravaged by bloodshed and crime," Trump said in an arena in a historically Black neighbourhood, addressing an audience more diverse than a typical rally, but still largely white. "Under the Trump administration we are going to bring law and order and safety back to our streets."

Trump, who has falsely claimed that systematic cheating cost him Pennsylvania in 2020, told the crowd, "Philadelphia was one of the most egregious places anywhere" for voter fraud. "We are not going to let it happen again."

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Adani plans \$3 billion for pumped storage venture

Maharashtra, AP, TN, Telangana in sights; 5GW capacity likely in first five years

Anirudh Laskar

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MUMBAI: The Adani Group plans to invest ₹25,000-27,500 crore (about \$3 billion) to set up its first pumped storage hydro-power (PSH) facility, according to two people aware of the conglomerate's plans. PSH produces electricity by moving water between two reservoirs at different elevations.

Under the plan, Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) will set up PSH capacity of 5GW in the next five years. "We will eventually increase this to 25GW, which will take the group's total green-energy capability to 70GW," one of the people cited above said on the condition of anonymity.

To start with, the group will



The group's target of 45GW clean energy has been raised to 50GW by 2030 following the PSH move.

NTPC, and JSW.

Adani Group has so far focused on solar and wind energy generation in its clean energy business. As of now, the group's target of 45GW clean energy has been raised to 50GW by 2030 following the PSH move. It already has 1GW clean energy under operation, in addition to 15.25GW thermal power plants in seven states.

An email sent to Adani Group's spokesperson remained unanswered.

"Financial closure for commissioning 3.5GW of PSH capacity has already been done," said the first person. The two people added that the 5GW target will be funded by issuing new shares and raising debt, and that the group has already begun basic construction work for the first 500MW PSH project in Andhra Pradesh, which will be commissioned in FY27.

Typically, infrastructure assets are funded with debt and equity in the ratio of 70:30.

in the country's fast-growing clean-energy industry, where top business groups such as Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries, Tata Group, Vedanta Group and JSW Group are pumping in billions of dollars in renewable energy projects, including solar, wind, PSH, and green hydrogen.

In PSH itself, several other companies are already in the fray including Tata Power,

set up PSH generation facilities in four states—Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

"This will require an investment of ₹25,000-27,500 crore, based on the current costs. Some of the required reservoirs and separate elevation facilities have already been put in place," said the second person.

The development comes as the Adanis look to gain an edge

in the PSH generation industry.

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How to correctly declare assets in Schedule AL

Taxpayers with net income over ₹50 lakh have to declare all their assets and the loans taken to acquire them (liabilities) in Schedule AL of ITR forms. Schedule AL was introduced in 2016 after the wealth tax was discontinued.

Compiled by Shipra Singh
shipra.singh@livemint.com

In FY23-24, Supriya* invested	Included in	In FY2022-23 she...	Included in
₹1.5 lakh in EPF	Shares and securities	Bought car worth ₹20 lakh with loan of ₹5 lakh. Loan as on 31 March 2024 was ₹4 lakh	Vehicles; loan in liabilities
₹2 lakh in cryptos	Shares and securities	Bought stocks for ₹2 lakh	Shares and securities
₹80 lakh in apartment with loan of ₹30 lakh	Immovable asset; loan in liabilities	Invested ₹6 lakh in MFs	Shares and securities
₹6 lakh in MFs	Shares and securities	Invested ₹1.5 lakh in EPF	Shares and securities

Schedule AL Assets and Liabilities at the end of the year (Other than those included in Part A BS) (applicable in a case where total income exceeds ₹50 lakh)

A	Do you own any immovable asset?	Yes						
Details of immovable asset								
Sl. No (1)	Description (2)	Address (3)						
	Flatdoor-block no.	Name of premises /building /village	Area /locality	Town /city /district	State	Pin code	Amount (cost) in ₹ (4)	
1	Apartment	House 341	One apartments	Sector 1	Gurgaon	12-Haryana	100000	80,00,000
B	Details of movable asset							
Sl. No (1)	Description (2)	Amount (cost) in ₹ (3)						
(i)	Jewellery, bullion etc.							
(ii)	Archaeological collections, drawings, painting, sculpture or any work of art							
(iii)	Vehicles, yachts, boats and aircrafts	20,00,000						
C	Financial asset							
(a)	Bank (including all deposits)	100,000						
(b)	Shares and securities	19,00,000						
	EPF, Crypto delcared under securities							
(c)	Insurance policies							
(d)	Loans and advances given							
(e)	Cash in hand							
C	Liabilities in relation to Assets at (A + B)							
	Loan amount decreases year on year	34,00,000						

Things to note in Schedule AL

1) All assets are valued at cost

2) Inherited assets are valued at original owner's cost

3) PPF/EPF/NPS balances under securities

4) Show outstanding balances on loans

*Supriya is a hypothetical case

Graphic: Pranay Bhardwaj/Mint

International airlines line up for a slice of India's skies

Anu Sharma

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NEW DELHI: India's booming aviation market continues to draw interest from global airlines, as they aim to serve smaller cities in the world's fifth-largest economy where growing prosperity is fuelling demand for air travel.

The cumulative order for more than 1,600 aircraft by IndiGo, Air India and Akasa since 2023 is expected to further expand India's international footprint, and domestic carriers have often highlighted the role of tier-2 and tier-3 markets in this growth trajectory. Now, global air carriers are also lining up to tap the potential in smaller cities.

Last week, UAE's Etihad launched four weekly flights to Jaipur. And Saudi carrier Riyadh



International traffic at Indian airports increased 22% year-on-year to 69.64 million passengers in FY24.

Air, which is set to launch in 2025, has also firm up plans to begin flights to India by 2026. So far, the airline has ordered 39 Boeing 787-9 aircraft, with an option for 33 more.

"India is in our top three target markets of the world; it is a massive opportunity. We see potential and opportunity in the secondary cities. We have also

seen affluence increasing—people have more money to travel. The future is very clear," Jonathan Pollard, chief commercial officer of London Gatwick Airport told Mint.

The airport, which currently serves 24 Air India flights a week, has also begun talks with India's largest airline IndiGo, which placed an order for 30

wide-body aircraft in May. "We are aware of IndiGo's wide-body order. Naturally we will be making a case to IndiGo and others who have the capacity to fly to London. The team has also engaged extensively with Air India to understand what capacity may be available for flights to Gatwick," he added.

India's international aviation market has received a major boost lately, thanks to aggressive expansion efforts by carriers such as IndiGo, Air India and Vistara since covid-related restrictions were eased in March 2022.

According to data from the Airports Authority of India, the number of international airports in the country rose from 35 in March 2019 to 40 by March 2024. International traffic at Indian airports increased 22% year-on-year to 69.64 million

passengers in FY24 while domestic traffic grew nearly 14% to 306.8 million.

Adam Boukadida, Riyadh Air's chief financial officer, said, "India is an important market for us. We will use both wide-body and narrow-body aircraft for this market. For us, partnering with Indian carriers will also be important for depth of network, so we will be partnering with Indian airlines to connect more cities. We hope to connect India within 12 months of our launch so it should happen during 2026."

Chai Eamsiri, chief executive of Thai Airways International, said, "In terms of the number of cities we service, India is our biggest market. We already fly to all the major cities and have a plan to operate in secondary cities. We have to wait for the new narrow-body aircraft for that."

Unlisted local units of six MNCs under RoC radar

Gireesh Chandra Prasad

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NEW DELHI: After LinkedIn and Samsung, Indian authorities may expand their ownership checks to the local arms of more multinational corporations (MNCs). According to two people aware of the matter, about six unlisted Indian units of MNCs are under the radar of Registrars of Companies (RoCs), who are scanning company disclosures and publicly available shareholding information of group companies.

Earlier this month, the RoC in Uttar Pradesh held in separate orders that Samsung SDI India Pvt. Ltd and Samsung Display Co. Noida Ltd failed to identify Lee Jae-Yong, executive chairman of South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd, as a "significant beneficial owner (SBO)." Last month, the RoC for Delhi and Haryana imposed penalties of over ₹27 lakh on LinkedIn Technology Information Pvt. Ltd set up in India. Microsoft Corp. chief executive Satya Nadella, LinkedIn CEO Ryan Roslansky and seven other individuals for alleged violation of SBO report-

ing norms.

One of the persons cited above said India is adding about 150,000 new businesses every year, including companies and limited liability partnerships (LLPs), and would soon be reaching the level of some of the developed countries in Europe. "In such a scenario, unless the quality of enforcement is good, it can cause problems in future," the person said on the condition of anonymity.

Regulatory action against alleged non-disclosure of beneficial owners is part of a larger effort to enhance the quality of enquiries by RoCs, who have been proactive in the last few years in removing defunct com-

panies from the official registry and in detecting shell companies. "It is a fact that bigger companies create complex structures. Not all of them are for wrongful purpose and in many cases, it may be for efficiency in taxation or in organizing business. Be that as it may, who is controlling the business should not be hidden. It is the duty of the company to identify and report its beneficial owners," said the person quoted above.

"Companies have to come clean on who is owning them. It is like an internal know your customer (KYC) for them," the person said.

Emails sent to the ministry of corporate affairs and to the RoCs on 18 June and to Samsung and LinkedIn on Friday seeking comments for the story remained unanswered at the time of publishing.

A second person, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that the emphasis on enforcement of provisions on significant beneficial ownership comes in the context of a country review by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global standard-setter in the fight against money laundering.

In the same period, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) changed their net bets on index futures from 355,379 bearish contracts to a cumulative 37,991 bullish contracts. Whenever such flips have happened in the past, markets have tended to pull back or dip. A pullback is a dip of 5-10% from a peak, while a correction indicates a 10-20% fall from the peak.

For instance, on 18 September last year, when Nifty was trading at 20133.3, retail/HNI was net short ₹44,214 contracts (adjusted for change in Nifty contract size to 25 shares from 50 as on 26 April this year) and FII was net long 117,990 contracts. From there, the Nifty tanked 1000 points to close at 19133.25 on 2 November.

By that date, retail/HNI had flipped to a bullish 292,822 contracts and FIIs to a bearish 351,396 contracts, after which Nifty rallied 2100 points over just 34 sessions to 2125.05 on 21 December. While the flip has happened again this time, brokers expect a smaller and shorter pullback of around 2-3% from Nifty's latest closing of 2350, as markets tend to run up a week or two ahead of a Union Budget.

"While a pre-budget rally is anticipated, it might be preceded by an immediate, shallow fall of 2-3% to 23,000-22,800," said Dhiraj Relli, MD and CEO of HDFC Securities.

DERIVATIVES MARKET FLASHES SIGNALS OF A FALL THIS WEEK

Ram Sahgal

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MUMBAI: Signals from the derivatives market are pointing at a stock market decline this week, before a likely pre-budget rally gets underway in July.

This comes as retail and high net worth investors (HNIs) shift their stance to bearish while foreign investors turn bullish. Such flipping often results in market dips or pullbacks in the short term.

Retail/HNI, designated 'Client' by NSE, who were cumulatively net bullish index futures (Nifty and Bank Nifty) by 33,364 contracts on 4 June, the day of the election results, flipped these to turn net bearish by 57,613 contracts over 12 sessions ending 21 June.

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Govt plans ₹25k cr green bonds

PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE WILL FINANCE SUSTAINABLE INFRA PROJECTS

sustainable bonds in the market," said the first person mentioned above, requesting anonymity.

The centre is likely to raise about ₹25,000 crore-₹30,000 crore from green bonds as a part of the borrowing calendar for FY25.

Proceeds from the sale will finance sustainable infrastructure projects.

This is seen as evidence of the government's commitment to scaling up green finance initiatives.

The borrowings made through green bond instruments during the ongoing fiscal (FY25) will be higher than last year, as there is a demand for

green bonds—fixed-income investments used to fund projects with a positive environmental impact—have found interest among investors to align their

proceeds with their values and contribute to positive change.

During FY23, the government raised about ₹1



Hungry Belgium revive campaign



Belgium's Kevin De Bruyne (L) celebrates with Yannick Carrasco after scoring against Romania. AP

Goals by Tielemans and De Bruyne get the Red Devils campaign back on track after loss against Slovakia

Ashish Magotra

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NEW DELHI: The buzz going into the Belgium versus Romania fixture was about the manner in which the Red Devils would respond after their 0-1 defeat against Slovakia in their opening Group E fixture on Matchday 1 at Euro 2024. Would the remnants of a golden generation find inspiration with their tournament on the line against a young, talented Romanian side?

All those doubts were quickly set to rest when Youri Tielemans — one of four players brought in for this game — finished off a move he started in midfield after just 73 seconds in Cologne on Saturday. It was the third-fastest goal in the history of Euro.

The early goal changed the complexion of the goal because it took the pressure off Belgium, and secondly, it meant Romania, a side that was brilliant on the counter against Ukraine in their first game, were forced to go

TODAY'S MATCHES
GROUP B
Albania vs Spain
Time: 12.30AM (Tuesday)
Venue: Dusseldorf
GROUP B
Croatia vs Italy
Time: 12.30am (Tuesday)
Venue: Leipzig
RESULT
Belgium 2
(Tielemans 2', De Bruyne 80')
Romania 0

looking for a goal. Tactically, it became a very different contest.

Constant attack

Belgium didn't rest on their goal either — pushed by captain Kevin De Bruyne, they kept going forward; kept creating chances. It was crucial they did because Romania had shown enough in their first game to suggest that they had the equaliser in them.

On the day, it turned out they didn't and Belgium added another goal through De Bruyne in the second half. It was just reward for the better team.

Koen Casteels had to make

some good saves in the Belgium goal with Radu Drăgușin and Dennis Man testing him, but Romanian goalkeeper Niță had a far busier night.

A lot of that work came courtesy of Jeremy Doku, who was once again a menace for the opposition. His bag of tricks and pace allow him to get into dangerous areas and the only thing lacking at this point is the finishing touch.

The game also showed how important it is for De Bruyne to get involved for Belgium. When the game is flowing through him, the Red Devils become a different side.

"After the first game, I wasn't concerned," said De Bruyne later. "I don't think we played badly per se. Obviously, we made some mistakes but we created chances, even if we couldn't find the back of the net. We played well during the game [tonight] and I think we deserved the win, so I'm happy. What's important is that we're creating chances and those situations."

What Belgium have done over the first two games is create chances, and as long as you create chances, you will have a chance to score goals, as long as you have a chance to score, you have a chance to win. In the end, that is what football boils down to.

Some might argue that Belgium should have got even more goals but the performances will give Domenico Tedesco's team a lot of confidence going forward. It will reaffirm the faith they have in their talent and show that a hungry Belgium are a different proposition.

"They're a team with lots of quality, they have speed, they have explosiveness, power," said Romania coach Edward Iordănescu.

"They are a complete team. They are candidates to win the title. We never gave up, we fought very hard. In the second half, we were better. With a bit of luck we could have got a point. We had chances to equalise."

Lukaku continued to miss chances galore and he even had one goal ruled out by VAR (by the smallest of margins) but that is par for the course. Maybe, just maybe, he is saving all the goals for the second half of the tournament.

All four teams in Group E now sit on three points and it is, at this stage, impossible to predict which teams will go through. Belgium, on current form, should beat Ukraine while the Romania vs Slovakia match is tough to call. For neutral fans, with everything to play for going into the last round of matches, it simply doesn't get better.

GROUP A					
TEAM	P	W	D	L	GD Pts
GERMANY	2	2	0	0	6
SWITZERLAND	2	1	1	0	2
SCOTLAND	2	0	1	1	-4
HUNGARY	2	0	0	2	-4

GROUP B					
TEAM	P	W	D	L	GD Pts
SPAIN	2	2	0	0	4
ITALY	2	1	0	1	0
ALBANIA	2	0	1	1	-1
CROATIA	2	0	1	1	-3

GROUP C					
TEAM	P	W	D	L	GD Pts
ENGLAND	2	1	1	0	1
DENMARK	2	0	2	0	2
SLOVENIA	2	0	2	0	0
SERBIA	2	0	1	1	-1

GROUP D					
TEAM	P	W	D	L	GD Pts
NETHERLANDS	2	1	1	0	1
FRANCE	2	1	1	0	1
AUSTRIA	2	1	0	1	1
POLAND	2	0	0	2	-3

GROUP E					
TEAM	P	W	D	L	GD Pts
ROMANIA	2	1	0	1	1
BELGIUM	2	1	0	1	1
SLOVAKIA	2	1	0	1	0
UKRAINE	2	1	0	1	-2

GROUP F					
TEAM	P	W	D	L	GD Pts
PORTUGAL	2	2	0	0	4
TURKEY	2	1	0	1	-1
CZECH	2	0	1	1	-1
GEORGIA	2	0	1	1	-2

KICKING AROUND

UEFA INCREASES FIELD SECURITY

FRANKFURT: Security will be increased field-side to stop fans getting to players at the after the problem peaked when at least six fans tried to get selfies with Cristiano Ronaldo. UEFA said Sunday "additional safety measures will be deployed" in the 10 stadiums in Germany, though no details were revealed of the updated plan to stop intruders. Four fans pursuing Ronaldo got on the field Saturday during Portugal's 3-0 win over Turkey and more tried after the game ended in Dortmund. Though the field invaders seemed to want just a photo, the tournament security plan also aims to protect players from harm.

MORE ROYALTY FOR FOOTBALL'S ROYALS

COLOGNE: Euro 2024 is becoming a very royal affair after the king and queen of Belgium became the latest royals to attend the event in Germany. King Philippe and Queen Mathilde were in the crowd for Belgium's game against Romania. They were joined by Prince Emmanuel and Prince Gabriel. On Thursday, it was the future king of England, Prince William, and Denmark's King Frederik X who were in attendance and shook hands ahead of their respective nations' 1-1 draw in Frankfurt. On the same day, King Felipe VI of Spain watched his national team beat Italy 1-0.

KANE CALM IN THE FACE OF CRITICISM

BLANKENHAIN: England captain Harry Kane said there was no need to panic over the team's slow start as he rounded on critics back home. "We are calm. We have been here before. We've got a lot of experience, so it's not a time to panic," Kane told reporters on Sunday. "I think always in these tournaments, these early stages, is almost like a boxer in the first couple of rounds, or a golfer in the first round of a major — don't play yourself out of tournament. That's kind of where we're at."

YOUNG GUNS FIRE ON BIG STAGE

LAMINE YAMAL (Spain)

CLUB: BARCELONA | AGE: 16 | POSITION: FORWARD

Minutes played 157 | Top speed 31.6 kph | Passing accuracy 81.5%

At 16 years and 339 days, the Barcelona winger became the youngest player to play in the Euros when he was named in the Spain XI to face Croatia in their opening match. He bettered the record of Poland's Kacper Kozłowski, who set the mark in the 2021 edition at 17 years and 264 days. In this Euro, Yamal with magic in his boots has troubled defenders on the right wing along with Nico Williams on the left.

"Lamine Yamal will mark an era," Gerard Pique, former Barca defender

JAMAL MUSIALA (Germany)

CLUB: BAYERN MUNICH | AGE: 21 | FORWARD

Minutes played 146 | Top speed 33.2 kph | Passing accuracy 93.5%

Jamal Musiala is running riot at Euro 2024. The 21-year-old attacking midfielder has two goals in two games for Germany and is dazzling with every touch on the pitch.

"Musiala is virtually impossible to get off the ball and he can beat an opponent from a standing start," former Germany captain Philipp Lahm wrote about him. "When the opposing teams have parked the bus and lined up their players in front of goal, he is able to find solutions."

He is Germany's most exciting young talent without a doubt.

ARDA GULER (Turkey)

CLUB: REAL MADRID | AGE: 19 | MIDFIELDER

Minutes played 99 | Top speed 29.5 kph | Passing accuracy 91.5%

The Real Madrid teenager could give club coach Carlo Ancelotti a selection headache if he continues to light up Euro 2024 for Turkey. "He is becoming a great player before our eyes," former Turkey and Barcelona winger Arda Turan told AS when quizzed on Arda Guler's meteoric rise to prominence in May. Guler inspired Turkey to victory against Georgia.

NICO WILLIAMS (Spain)

CLUB: ATHLETIC BILBAO | AGE: 21 | FORWARD

Minutes played 145 | Top speed 34.7 kph | Passing accuracy 87.5%

It was Williams' second-half cross, flicked on by Alvaro Morata, which Italy defender Calafiori turned into his own net as Spain made it to the round of 16 with a game to spare. "Luis de la Fuente gives me more freedom to take people on; with Luis Enrique it was more about combinations," he says. "A dribble is like playing back in the park when you're a kid." And take on he did, repeatedly. Ask Italy's Giovanni Di Lorenzo.

JUDE BELLINGHAM (England)

CLUB: REAL MADRID | AGE: 20 | FORWARD

Minutes played 176 | Top speed 33.5 kph | Passing accuracy 91%

England failed to beat Denmark, but their opening game against Serbia saw Bellingham score the match-winning goal. "Jude is very special. I don't think I have ever seen a player like this before. His talent is very special, and his mentality is even more so. This is very special and rare. He can play in many positions, and score. He defends and passes. He does everything," former Bayern Munich and Manchester United star Owen Hargreaves said.

Croatia's golden generation faces early exit against Italy

Agencies

sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

LEIPZIG: Group B was dubbed

Euro 2024's 'Group of Death' but while Spain soared through with a game to spare, heavyweights Italy and Croatia meet on Monday fighting to stay in the competition.

Both sides were outclassed by Spain, and while reigning champions Italy edged Albania 2-1, Croatia could only draw 2-2 with them. It gives Italy the upper hand ahead of their clash in Leipzig, with Croatia's golden generation at risk of a disappointingly early exit if they fail to win.

</div

Chance for India to deal a finishing blow to Australia

Unlike recent games between these two teams at ICC events, this match won't be about the trophy

Ashish Magota

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NEW DELHI: No one was quite expecting this game to become one that could knock Australia out of the T20 World Cup. The International Cricket Council has tried hard to ensure through trick and treat that the top teams usually find their way into the semis at least, but such is the nature of sport that an upset can never be predicted or denied.

Afghanistan's epic win against Australia on Sunday morning (India time) has ensured that India run into their fierce rivals with a chance to land the finishing blow and knock them out of the World Cup.

Whenever India and Australia have met in ICC tournaments of late, the stakes have been high. A brilliant run for Rohit Sharma's men in the ODI World Cup last year came to end in the final with Travis Head going bonkers. A lengthy ICC Test Championship campaign also ended in the final against the same opposition with Head once again making the big play.

But this match isn't going to be about the trophy. Rather it is going to be about survival. To keep things simple, Australia need to beat India to ensure they make the semi-final. A defeat will mean their future might depend on a slice of luck.

India's openers Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli haven't clicked into top gear yet. They have had a few cameos but nothing of the kind that has helped their side blow the opposition away. And there's nothing like a match against Australia to help them switch on and find their focus. The rest of the batting has come along well — Suryakumar Yadav has had a good knock, Rishabh Pant has played a few crucial innings, Hardik Pandya has had his moments and Shivam Dube, at long last, seemed to find his six-hitting range against Bangladesh.

On the bowling front, Arshdeep Singh has been brilliant with the new ball while the genius of Jasprit Bumrah has meant that teams just not been able to take him on. Those that have tried have failed quite miserably. With the matches shifting to the Caribbean, the left-arm wrist spin of Kuldeep Yadav is becoming a force to reckon as well, and as such there are few



QUALIFICATION SCENARIOS IN GROUP 1

INDIA
Beat Australia and they will be through to the semis as the top team in Group 1 with three wins. If India lose, they will hope that Afghanistan also lose to Bangladesh for their safe entry into semis

AUSTRALIA
They have to beat India and hope that Afghanistan lose to Bangladesh to advance. In case they lose, a three-way tie on two points is possible provided Afghanistan also lose

AFGHANISTAN
They need to beat Bangladesh while hoping that Australia lose to India. If they win and Australia also win, three teams will have four points each, bringing NRR into play

BANGLADESH
Chances are bleak. They have to beat Afghanistan and hope Australia lose to India by a big margin

GROUP 2 MATCH
West Indies vs South Africa
Time: 6AM (IST)
Venue: North Sound

gaps in the line-up for the opposition to exploit.

Some might argue that the Indian batters haven't quite found their best form but such is the nature of the format that the team management would rather have lots of batters spending time in the middle than just a few at the top of the order. With most having had a decent knock, India seemed primed to take on whatever challenge the opposition can throw at them. "First things first, recover," said Australia skipper

Mitch Marsh when asked about how they will get ready for India in St Lucia. "We have a lot of belief in our group. We are a very good cricket team. Yes, tonight we had an off night but I guess there's also a positive in the fact that in 36 hours we go again. It's a big game, it will be against India and it's a must-win game. If you look back at the short history of this team, I know for a fact that it brings out the best in our guys, so the boys will certainly be up and about for it."

Then again, there is nothing like a challenge to fully rouse this Australian team — the tougher the odds, the more likely they are to turn up. They made a lot of uncharacteristic errors against Afghanistan. The fielding was poor, and less said about the batting the better. So, the need to tighten their game with be pretty obvious.

A lot though might depend on the nature of the pitch that the match will be played on. If there is enough for the spinners then expect India to hold the upper hand. But if it is the kind of slow-paced wicket that makes playing shots difficult, it might be anybody's game. Cutters might play a big role and Australia's plen-

ora of all-rounders might make things very interesting. We have seen some big scores at Gros Islet this tournament but the last game between South Africa and England went down to the wire.

At the same time, this is what the second phase of a World Cup should feel like. Rather than the Super 8 stage, you want teams to warm-up in the first stage and put their tournament on the line in the second. India have avoided that by playing consistently good cricket while Australia have shown that ICC still have managed to plug all the holes.

So, for now we can sit back and enjoy a virtual knockout that seems to have come before its time.

advance. They took only 9.4 overs. There was a Chris Jordan over that produced four wickets, including a hat-trick, and an over where Jos Buttler smashed Harmet Singh for five consecutive sixes.

A little over halfway through USA's innings England had got their wickets by serving a complete bouquet of variations suited for the tacky surface on a hot Sunday morning at the Kensington Oval. Sam Curran got his 50th T20I wicket with a back-of-the-hand slower ball. Adil Rashid spun a web with his googlies.

India ease to win, sweep series 3-0

Shalini Gupta

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CHANDIGARH: The only disappointing moment for the M Chinnaswamy Stadium fans came in the 31st over when the prolific Smriti Mandhana, on the verge of a third century in a row, fell for 90 in the final women's ODI against South Africa in Bengaluru on Sunday.

The India vice-captain, in sublime form this series, was out to Khaika Mlaba's bowling, finishing with a superb series aggregate 343 runs at an average of 114.34. All eyes will be on the 27-year-old when she takes guard in the one-off Test in Chennai from June 28. It will be followed by three T20Is.

India completed a six-wicket win, restricting South Africa to 215/8 and chasing down the target in 40.4 overs by reaching 220/4.

Mandhana, who scored 117 and 136 in the first two games, resumed from where she left off, producing another flawless innings studded with 11 fours.

Chasing 325 in the last match, South Africa scored 321, but the visitors were restricted to a modest total after electing to bat first, skipper Laura Wolvaardt (61 off 57b) and Tazmin Brits (38 off 66) doing the bulk of the scoring in a 102-run opening partnership. Wolvaardt was the first to go with Arundhati Reddy taking an impressive catch off her bowling. Last match's centurion Marizanne Kapp (7) was

caught and bowled by spinner Shreyas Patil, who had come in place of leg-spinner Asha Sobhana. Nadine de Klerk (26) and Mieke de Ridder (26) played little cameos to lift the team past the 200-run mark. For India, Deepti Sharma and Arundhati Reddy scalped two wickets each.

After a halt due to wet conditions, India's chase was led by Mandhana and Shafali Verma (25).

While Verma struggled to score quickly, Mandhana's prowess and form gave SA bowlers a tough time again. Tumi Sekhukhune removed Verma for 25 in the 12th over, while the left-handed opener dominated the bowling until her dismissal in the 31st over.

Brief scores: South Africa 215/8 in 50 overs (L Wolvaardt 61; D Sharma 2/27). India 220/4 in 40.4 overs (S Mandhana 90). India won by 6 wickets.

{ NO AGENDA }

Sanjay Manjrekar



At the T20 World Cup, India's batting displays have been modern, dynamic

It felt as though the Indian selectors played it safe with their selections for the T20 World Cup squad. In picking Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, it was a clear message that they were not yet ready to commit to the youth; they still wanted some experience around for an ICC event.

Having said that, the way India have batted so far conveys that even though selections have taken a more traditional and cautious route, the brand of cricket on show is going to be modern and dynamic.

In the game against Bangladesh, I watched with great fascination how fans in our studio reacted when India lost both Rohit and Virat early. Their faces reflected doom and gloom.

Having watched T20 cricket evolve rapidly over the last few years, I urged them to have a look at India's run rate, not at wickets lost, and who it was that got out.

India were going at nine runs an over despite losing Rohit and Virat by the ninth over on a 150+ score pitch.

India were going fine; they still had plenty of batting left — six batters, to be specific, with 11 overs to go.

The brand of cricket India are playing in this WC is one we



Virat Kohli may not have made the big scores, but he has looked to bat aggressively right through this T20 World Cup.

have never seen before, and something we are trying to come to terms with.

To Virat's credit, for someone who doesn't like getting out (a trait that can be a weakness in T20 cricket), he has also committed himself to taking risks regularly and seems okay, as of now, with getting out while taking those risks.

India have got great batting depth this time. Perhaps it was a conscious decision from the selectors and team management while picking the squad, in that batting must run very deep, with bowlers who can bat and vice versa, an approach that England has had for many years, but in the wrong format — Tests.

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ment of paranoid imagination), rather than focusing on what transpires.

Rohit and Virat are still obvious icons in this team and for its fans, but India, as we have seen in this WC, have moved on. It is now a team of 11, not just one or two. Come the semis, when the challenge gets stiffer and India play with the realisation that they will be knocked out of the tournament if they lose, Rohit and Virat must continue to embrace this attitude.

Concern over seam bowling quality
The last thing India want is a repeat of the semis of the last T20 WC when both Rohit and Virat took it upon themselves to be the ones to lead India's fight against a strong England side, which backed fire.

If India are to win the WC, these two must continue to facilitate rather than lead. I also have one minor concern regarding India's seam quality (barring the genius of Bumrah, of course); I am not so sure about Arshdeep against a strong team on a pressure stage. This aside, India seem to have all bases covered.

For now, it's about more of the same in the knockout games.

NADA suspends Bajrang again

NEW DELHI: The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) on Sunday suspended Bajrang Punia for a second time, three weeks after its Anti-Disciplinary Doping (ADDP) panel had revoked his suspension on the grounds that NADA had not issued a "notice of charge" to the wrestler.

Verstappen wins Spanish GP
BARCELONA: Red Bull's three-time world champion Max Verstappen won the Spanish Grand Prix on Sunday from McLaren's pole-sitter Lando Norris to extend his lead in the world championship.

Lewis Hamilton completed the podium for the Mercedes' seventh-time former champion's first podium of the season.

Recurve archers win two bronze

ANTALYA: Dhiraj Bommalavare secured two bronze — one individual and another in recurve mixed team event with Bhajan Kaur — as India ended with four medals in the Archery World Cup Stage 3 here on Sunday.

Afghans stun Aussies, leave group wide open

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MUMBAI: Until Glenn Maxwell was at the crease, the Afghanistan players couldn't help but feel a sense of déjà vu.

The last time Australia faced Afghanistan, at the 2023 ICC World Cup played at the Wankhede Stadium, a cramping Maxwell had pulled off a miraculous win from 9/7 in pursuit of 293. His epic double hundred had put Australia back on track for another world title and left Afghanistan on the brink of elimination.

On Saturday night, the Australia batter was threatening to repeat his heroics in the T20 World Cup Super Eight match played at the Arnos Vale Ground, Kingstown, St Vincent.

The script was similar. None of the other Australia batters could get going but Maxwell again was making it look like he was batting on a different surface. At the end of the 14th over, he had taken the total to 105/5, bringing the equation down to 44 runs from 36 balls, himself batting on 59 of 39 balls. Afghanistan were in need of a moment of brilliance. It came from Noor Ahmad in fielding as he pulled off a fine, dipping catch at backward point as Maxwell sliced at a length ball off Gulbadin Naib. The main threat gone; Afghanistan bowlers cut through the rest of the batting line-up with ease to script their first-ever victory over Australia in a World Cup match.

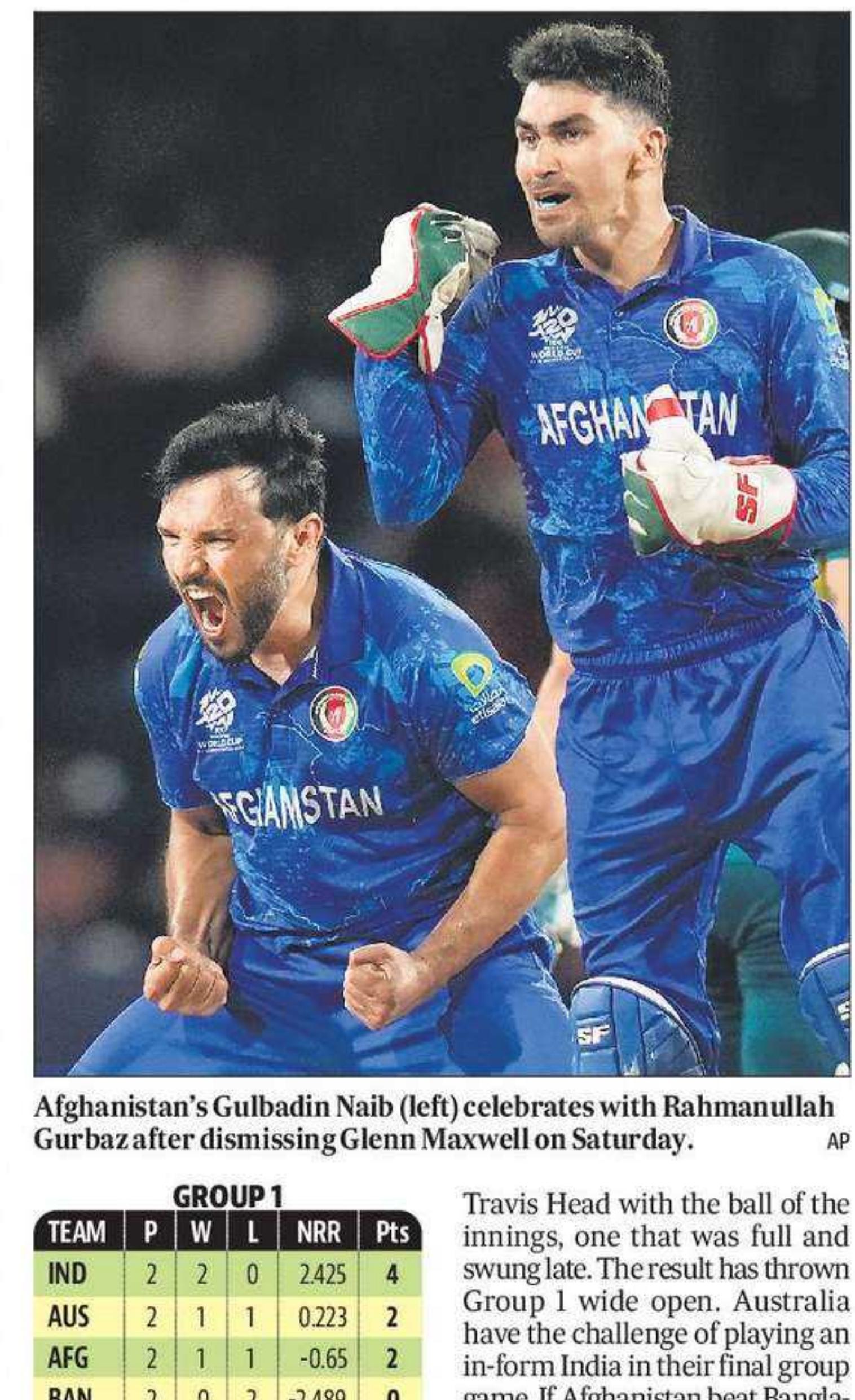
It was a superb all-round game display from Afghanistan. Put into bat, the Asian team were on the money from ball one.

Their openers Rahamanullah Gurbaz (60/49 balls) and Ibrahim Zadran (51/48b) rattled the bowlers with their confident play. In a superb opening act, the two put on 118 runs, the highest-ever opening partnership against Australia in T20 World Cups. On a turning pitch, a total of 148 was always going to test Australia. Their worst fears came true as they were bowled out for 127 in 19.2 overs to crash to a 21-run defeat. Afghanistan's win overshadowed Pat Cummins's second consecutive hat-trick.

Pace bowler Gulbadin Naib was the star of the show as he picked up four wickets, including a hat-trick, and an over where Jos Buttler smashed Harmet Singh for five consecutive sixes.

Somehow during USA's batting struggles Jordan got a hat-trick. Three times in a row, the batters missed and Jordan hit — Ali Khan, Nostrush Kenjige and Saifullah Netrovalkar were his victims. Buttler (83* 38b, 6x4, 7x6) and Phil Salt (25*) gave USA bowlers a hiding as their unbroken 117-run partnership saw England through.

Brief scores: Afghanistan 148 (R Gurbaz 60; P Cummins 3/28). Australia 127 in 19.2 overs (G Maxwell 59; G Naib 21). Afghanistan won by 21 runs.



Afghanistan's Gulbadin Naib (left) celebrates with Rahamanullah Gurbaz after dismissing Glenn Maxwell on Saturday.