

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI SUNDAY 30 JUNE 2024



NATION | 3

Karnataka dy CM warns of action amid Sidda-DKS shadow fight for CM chair



WORLD | 6

US media expect Biden to opt out from presidential race to save democracy



DELHI AGE | 16

Filmmaker Vashu Bhagnani owes over ₹65L to crew, claims cine workers' body

www.asianage.com

RNI No. 57290/94, Regd No: DL-SW-05/4189/15-17

Vol. 31 No. 135 | 16 PAGES | ₹5.00

WINDOWS



Dua Lipa performs during the Glastonbury Festival at Worthy Farm in Somerset, England, on Friday.

Modi likely to visit Austria after Russia in 2nd week of July

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Russia early in the second week of July for the bilateral annual summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin after which he will visit Austria. The visit to Austria will be PM Modi's second visit to Europe in two months, the first being his visit to Italy to attend the G-7 summit earlier this month. That was also his first foreign visit in his third term in office as Prime Minister. Mr Modi's proposed visit to the central European nation will be the first by an Indian Prime Minister in four decades.

EAM to visit Qatar today; focus on ties

New Delhi: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar will travel to Qatar on Sunday to hold talks with Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani with a focus on exploring ways to expand bilateral cooperation in areas of trade, investment and energy.

Toll rises to 11 in Delhi in 2 days of Monsoon

New Delhi: The national capital Saturday reported six rain-related deaths, taking to 11 the toll in the first two days since Monsoon hit the city, even as authorities said they have taken measures to prevent waterlogging in the coming days when heavy rains have been forecast.

COUNTERPOINT



Let's skip breakfast and raise money to buy a monthly plan... I am fully addicted to phone!

WEATHER

Max: 34°C
Min: 28°C
RH: 69%
Rain: 70%

Forecast: Thunderstorms

ASTROGUIDE

Krodhi: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Bahula Navami till 12.20 pm
Star: Revathi till 7.33 am
Varjyam: 2.37 am to 4.08 am
Durmuhurtam: 5.07 pm to 5.59 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
SUNSET TODAY 7.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.27 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 1.17 AM
MOONSET TODAY 1.53 PM

BJP to contest Haryana polls alone, will win 3rd term: Shah

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

Standing firm ahead of the Haryana elections due later this year despite losing five seats in the recently held Lok Sabha elections, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said that the BJP will fight the upcoming Assembly elections alone and exuded confidence that the party will come back to power with a full majority for its third consecutive term.

Mr Shah chaired the BJP's state executive meeting to discuss poll strategy on Saturday in Panchkula. Addressing the BJP leaders and workers, Mr Shah said the BJP will go solo in the upcoming Haryana Assembly elections under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leadership of chief minister Nayab Singh Saini. At the meeting, Mr Shah said that the BJP will have no tie-up for the state polls, which are due before October this year, as it does not need any crutches.

Besides preparing the outline for the Assembly elections, Mr Shah also infused fresh zeal and enthusiasm in the party workers. He also gave tips to the party workers and shared the roadmap and guidance for the impending polls.

Haryana's BJP incharge and Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan lashed out at the Congress and said they are confused and lack an agenda for the people and that's why during the two previous Assembly polls, people reposed their faith in the

Turn to Page 4



Captain Rohit Sharma and teammates celebrate after India defeat South Africa in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup final at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, on Saturday.

India come back from the dead, lift T20 Cup

Our team brings WC in style: PM hails Team Rohit

MOSES KONDETY
BRIDGETOWN
(BARBADOS), JUNE 29

Team India came back from the dead to stun South Africa by seven runs and emerge champions of the T20 World Cup at the Kensington Oval here on a Super Saturday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the team for bringing the cup "home in style". "Champions! Our team brings the T20 World Cup home in style! We are proud of the Indian Cricket Team," Mr Modi posted on X.

Brilliant bowling at the death from pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh and a breathtaking catch on the boundary by Suryakumar Yadav in the last over turned the game around for the champions after they were down and almost out after 15 overs — South Africa needed 30

It's time: Virat Kohli retires from T20s

Bridgetown: Virat Kohli, former Indian cricket team captain and player of the match in the T20 World Cup 2024 final, announced his retirement from the format right after India's historic win over South Africa in Barbados on Saturday. Kohli, who has been one of India's best-ever cricketers, said that it was time for the next generation to take over.

at run-a-ball with six wickets in hand and looked set to hunt down India's 176 for 7.

Bumrah conceded four runs in the 16th over and just two in the 18th, which also fetched the wicket of Marco Jansen, while Arshdeep gave away four in the penultimate over to tighten the screws. Then, with South Africa needing 16

More on Page 8

T-72 tank sinks near LAC ■ Shah, Rajnath, Opp. express grief 5 Armymen killed in J&K flash flood

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 29

Five Indian Army personnel, including a junior commissioned officer (JCO), were drowned to death after being swept away while crossing the gushing Shyok River in a T-72 tank in the Nyoma-Chushul area close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh early on Saturday.

Reports reaching Leh said that the mishap occurred near Mandir Morh, 148 km from Ladakh's main town, at 3 am and that the bodies of the soldiers have been recovered.

The deceased soldiers have been identified as Risaldar MRK Reddy, Havildar Subhan Khan, Daffadar Bhupendra Negi, Lance Daffadar Ekeidaung Teibam and



M.R.K. Reddy



Sadarbonia Nagaraju



Bhupendra Negi



Subhan Khan



Ekeidaung Teibam

Craftsman Sadarbonia Nagaraju.

The Army jawans were reportedly on a training mission and chose to

cross the river, which was in spate following heavy rains in the region, in a tank. The reports said that the tank, however,

sank in the impact of flash floods, and with it, all those on board were drowned to death.

Confirming the incident, the Army's Leh-based Fire & Fury Corps (14th Corps) said in a post on X, "On June 29, while de-inducting from a military training activity, an army tank got stuck in the Shyok River, near Saser Brangsa, Eastern Ladakh, due to a sudden increase in the water level. Rescue teams rushed to the location. However, due to high current and water levels, the rescue mission didn't succeed and the tank crew lost their lives."

It added: "The Indian Army regrets the loss of five brave personnel while being operationally deployed in Eastern Ladakh. Rescue operations are underway."

Turn to Page 4



Pilgrims enroute to the holy cave shrine of Amarnath from the Baltal base camp during the annual Amarnath Yatra in Ganderbal district on Saturday. The yatra began on Saturday as the first batch of pilgrims left the twin base camps in Baltal and Nunwan to start their journey to the 3,880-metre-high cave shrine in the south Kashmir Himalayas. Report on Page 4

PTI

Nitish confidant named party's working prez Key JD-U meet calls for spl status or package for Bihar

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

The Janata Dal (United), in its national executive held on Saturday here, appointed Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Kumar Jha as its working president and urged the Centre to consider either special category status or a special package for Bihar, underscoring the party's important role in the formation of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government.

The party's national executive meeting, chaired by its president and Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, flagged price rise and unemployment as "burning issues", as its political resolution expressed confidence that the National Democratic Alliance government will take more effective steps to handle them.

The resolution called for an extensive probe into paper leak cases to ensure stringent action against the guilty so as to maintain the credibility of central competitive examinations. The resolution added that there is also a need for Parliament to enact a strong law against leaks of examination papers.



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar leaves after JD(U)'s national executive meeting in New Delhi on Saturday.

Mr Jha is a close confidant of the Bihar chief minister and was instrumental in rejoining the JD(U) into the NDA fold. Mr Kumar's decision to appoint his confidant as the party's working president, a position not held by anyone, suggests his efforts to keep better coordination with the BJP and draw a helpful bargain as he enjoys good ties with the BP leadership.

A former minister in Bihar, Mr Jha was originally in the BJP and served as its link with Mr Kumar before crossing over to the JD(U). The party insiders said that the JD(U) chief expects Mr Jha to maintain

smooth relations with the BJP while working to get a positive response to his party's demands, including aid to Bihar.

The JD(U)'s decision to include a special package as an alternative to its historical push for "special category status" for Bihar marked a pragmatic climb down as the Modi government had cited the 14th

Finance Commission's report to rule out special category status for any more states.

After his appointment, Mr Jha said his party's purpose was to get Central assistance for Bihar to build on the

Turn to Page 4

Another blow to Kejriwal in Delhi excise scam case

Sent to judicial custody till July 12

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

A Delhi court on Saturday sent chief minister Arvind Kejriwal to judicial custody till July 12 in a corruption case related to the alleged excise scam, saying his name has surfaced as one of the "main conspirators" and as the investigation is still in progress, his further custodial interrogation will likely be required.

Mr Kejriwal was produced in court by the CBI after the end of his three-day custodial interrogation, following which the probe agency sought 14-day judicial custody while claiming that the AAP chief did not cooperate with the investigation and deliberately gave evasive replies.

The agency, in its remand plea, also expressed apprehension that he may influence witnesses and evidence already exposed before him during the custodial interrogation and also the potential witnesses who are yet to be examined.



Arvind Kejriwal

Mr Kejriwal, 55, was arrested by the CBI on June 26 from Tihar jail, where he was in judicial custody, in a money laundering case filed by the Enforcement Directorate. "Considering the fact that the conspiracy alleged against the accused (Mr Kejriwal) involves a large number of persons who were involved in the formulation and implementation of excise policy and also the persons who acted as facilitators in the use of ill-gotten money, I find that there exist sufficient grounds for remanding the accused to judicial custody," special judge Sunena Sharma said.

The investigation is

Turn to Page 4

NTA announces fresh dates for 3 crucial exams amid raging row

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

With the alleged irregularities in the conduct of competitive tests taking centerstage, the National Testing Agency (NTA) has released fresh dates for cancelled and postponed examinations. The testing agency has announced that the CSIR UGC-NET and UGC-NET will be held from July 25-27 and August 21-September 4 respectively.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) UGC-NET was postponed as a preemptive measure amid the row over alleged irregularities in the conduct of exams. The University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) was cancelled a day after being conducted on June 18 following inputs that the integrity of the exam was compromised.

The National Common Entrance Test (NCET) for admission to the four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), which was postponed on June 12, will now be conducted on July 10.

More on Page 3

Iran heads to presidential run-off on July 5 amid record low turnout Khamenei protege, sole moderate tied in polls

Dubai, June 29: A moderate lawmaker will face Iran supreme leader's protege in a run-off presidential election on July 5 after the country's interior ministry said on Saturday that no candidate secured enough votes in the first round of voting.

Friday's vote to replace Ebrahim Raisi after his death in a helicopter crash came down to a tight race between a low-profile lawmaker Massoud Pezeshkian, the sole moderate in a field of four candidates, and former Revolutionary Guards member Saeed Jalili.



Massoud Pezeshkian and Saeed Jalili

The interior ministry said neither secured the 50 per cent plus one vote of over 25 million ballots cast required to win outright, with Pezeshkian leading with over 10 million votes ahead of Jalili with over 9.4 million votes. Power in Iran ultimately lies with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei,

so the result will not herald any major policy shift on Iran's nuclear programme or its support for militia groups across the Middle East.

But the president runs the government day-to-day and can influence the tone of Iran's policy.

The clerical establishment hoped for a high turnout as it faces a legitimacy crisis fuelled by public discontent over economic hardship and curbs on political and social freedom. However, turnout in Friday's vote hit a historic low of about 40 per cent.

The election comes at a time of escalating regional tension due to the war between Israel and Iranian allies Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as increased Western pressure on Iran over its nuclear programme.

With Iran's supreme leader now 85, it is likely that the next President will be closely involved in the process of choosing a successor to Khamenei, who seeks a loyal President who can ensure a smooth succession to his own position, insiders and analysts say.

Reuters

IN BRIEF

Atishi defamation case hearing July 23

New Delhi: A Delhi court fixed July 23 for hearing on defamation case filed against AAP leader and minister Atishi by the BJP. The case was filed by Delhi BJP media head Praveen Shankar Kapoor against Atishi. Mr Kapoor was present in the court along with his counsel advocate Shoumendu Mukherji while the Delhi minister along with her counsel appeared through video conference even as another advocate appeared for her in the court room in person. Talking to the media after the hearing, Mr Kapoor said that she has hurt the sentiments of BJP workers and supporters by falsely alleging that BJP is offering inducements AAP MLAs to quit their party. He further said, it's good that Atishi appeared before the court and we expect her to appear in person on July 23 and apologise to amicably settle the matter.



Atishi

6 held in Gurgaon for running illegal casino

Gurgaon: The Gurgaon police arrested six people for allegedly running an illegal casino in the flat of a society here, officials said on Saturday. Acting on a tip-off, the police raided a flat near Bandhwari village on the Faridabad road on Friday night, they said. They found six people gambling on the casino table, officials said. The accused were identified as Dishant Jalan, Vishal Hisariya, Jai Behl, Viraj Oberoi, Shayandeep Ghosh, and Paras Ram, police said. The police also recovered 473 casino coins and 104 playing cards from their possession, they added. "We are questioning the accused and are trying to nab other associates of the accused", the police spokesperson said. — PTI

3 hurt as car driven by minor hits them

New Delhi: Three people were injured when they were hit by a car, which was being driven by a minor, in East Delhi's Geeta Colony area on Saturday morning, the police said. The incident occurred at Patparganj Road around 7.30 am. Three people were standing on the roadside when a Baleno going towards Krishna Nagar hit the trio before stopping. A 16-year-old boy was driving the car with his friend, also a teenager. They were caught by the passers-by and handed over to the police, a police officer said. The car is registered in the name of the minor's father, the officer said. The injured have been admitted to the hospital, the police said.

AAP BUSY SAVING CM, CITY AT GOD'S MERCY: CONGRESS

New Delhi: The Delhi Congress on Saturday took a dig at the ruling AAP and said, they are busy saving chief minister Arvind Kejriwal while the people are left at God's mercy. Delhi Congress chief, Devender Yadav said, it is strange that the AAP leaders and ministers, including Water minister Atishi, who sat on a sham "Jai Satyagraha" demanding additional water from Haryana without success last week, held a protest today seeking the release of Mr Kejriwal from CBI custody, but the AAP is least bothered about the plight of Delhiites, who suffered untold misery on Friday when the first monsoon downpour submerged the city. The AAP protest served no purpose in mitigating the misery of the people from water shortage, waterlogging and massive traffic jams. They were missing when Delhi went virtually down under water due to the fault of the agencies under the AAP and BJP governments in ensuring that the drains were desilted well ahead of the monsoon. He said, nine operation theatres of the AIIMS had to be closed, which affected dozens of surgeries scheduled months ago. Mr Yadav said that it was a cause for deep worry that most Central government hospitals were not working properly in Delhi, including the OPD at AIIMS, which exposes the BJP government's total neglect of Delhi.

■ Bodies of 3 labourers pulled out of wall collapsed in Vasant Vihar ■ 3 drown in waterlogged underpass at 2 places

Monsoon mayhem: 11 die in 2 days, IGI's T1 still shut

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

Terminal 1 of the IGI airport, which witnessed a canopy collapse leading to the death of one person on Friday, is still not operational for the public. It is learnt that the safety audit of the entire airport structure is going on and sources said there is still no clearance from the government to open the terminal for the public.

IndiGo and SpiceJet, the two airlines operating from T1, have shifted their flight operations to T2 and T3. "Flight operations from the Delhi Airport are normal and operating from Terminal 2 and 3 only. All flights from T1 have been shifted to T2 and T3," IndiGo said.

On Saturday, a canopy collapse from the pick-up and drop area was reported from Rajkot. This was the third incident in three days in a row after Jabalpur and Delhi. A water leak at the airport was also reported from Lucknow.

Meanwhile, the bodies of three labourers were pulled from under the rubble of a wall that collapsed at a construction site in the Vasant Vihar area on Saturday amid heavy rain. With this, the death toll in rain-related incidents in

▶ **INDIGO AND SPICEJET**, the two airlines operating from T1, have shifted their flight operations to T2 and T3

▶ **FLIGHTS BEING** operated from Terminals 2 and 3 only

Delhi has climbed to 11.

After a nearly 24-hour-long operation, the rescue agencies managed to pull out the bodies of the three labourers who were trapped under the massive rubble of a collapsed under-construction structure.

The three labourers—Santosh Yadav (19), Santosh (19), and Daya Ram (45)—were trapped in a mud slush caused due to heavy rains. "It was an under-construction site in Vasant Vihar where some labourers were sleeping and the ground caved in due to the heavy rainfall," an officer said.

Officials informed that initially divers were sent to enter the muddy area but that attempt did not work out. Parallely, teams of police, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), and civic agencies also reached the spot to assist in the rescue operation.

A massive operation was then initiated to fish out their bodies, starting from the early hours of Friday till Saturday morning. The bodies were then taken to Safdarjung Hospital. Cranes were used to clear the debris and water was pumped out of the foundation pit to recover the bodies. In another unfortunate incident, three people, including two boys, drowned in the waterlogged section at an underpass in two separate areas. The first incident occurred in Northwest Delhi's SP Badali near the Sirapur underpass near the metro, which was flooded with 2.5-3 feet of water on Saturday afternoon, a senior police officer said.

One of the boys is a resident of Sirapur, while the identity of the other one is yet to be ascertained, he said.

The second incident took place in the Okhla Industrial Area on Friday at 6 am, where a man was drowned in the waterlogged section of the underpass, another officer said.

The victim was identified as Digvijay Kumar Chaudhary, (60), a resident of Jaitpur. During the probe, it was found that Chaudhary was riding on a scooter when he got trapped.

According to the Met department, 8.9 mm of rainfall was recorded at Safdarjung, the city's primary weather station, and 12.6 mm at Lodhi Road between 2.30 pm and 5.30 pm on Saturday.

The India meteorological department (IMD) predicted moderate to heavy rain fall on Saturday, with an even heavier spell anticipated on Sunday and Monday.

For the next seven days, the capital will experience moderate to heavy rain and an 'orange alert' has been issued for the next three days, the IMD said in its seven-day forecast.

According to the IMD, moderate rain is defined as rainfall amounting to between 7.6 and 35.5 mm in



Children play at the India Gate amid rains in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

Moderate to heavy rain in Delhi likely for 7 next days

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

Delhi is likely to receive heavy rainfall for the next three days as the weather office issued an 'orange' alert in the national capital on Saturday, the weather office said.

According to the Met department, 8.9 mm of rainfall was recorded at Safdarjung, the city's primary weather station, and 12.6 mm at Lodhi Road between 2.30 pm and 5.30 pm on Saturday.

The India meteorological department (IMD) predicted moderate to heavy rain fall on Saturday, with an even heavier spell anticipated on Sunday and Monday.

For the next seven days, the capital will experience moderate to heavy rain and an 'orange alert' has been issued for the next three days, the IMD said in its seven-day forecast.

According to the IMD, moderate rain is defined as rainfall amounting to between 7.6 and 35.5 mm in



A man rides scooty amid rains in New Delhi.

— PTI

a day and heavy rain is defined as rainfall amounting to between 64.5 and 124.4 mm in a day.

The IMD issues four colour-coded warnings — 'green' (no action needed), 'yellow' (watch and stay updated), 'orange' (be prepared), and 'red' (take action).

The maximum temperature recorded on Saturday was 35.6°C, which is 1.6 notches below normal, according to the IMD. The

city recorded a minimum temperature of 28°C.

The relative humidity oscillated between 80 per cent and 97 per cent, according to an IMD bulletin.

The national capital recorded 228.1 mm of rainfall on Friday, the highest since 1936 for the month of June.

Noting that Delhi receives nearly 650 mm of rainfall in the entire monsoon season, weather experts suggested these could be extreme weather events.

L-G visits waterlogged areas, asks officials to desilt drains

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

A day after he issued instructions to officials to deal with the flooding in Delhi that occurred due to heavy rainfall and backflow from the choked drains, Delhi lieutenant-governor VK Saxena on Saturday inspected some of the most severely affected drains and areas that include Taimur Nagar, Barapulla Drain, ITPO, Tilak Bridge, Kushak Nallah, Golf Links and Bharti Nagar and directed

the concerned agencies to carry out the desilting of drains on a war-footing.

Mr Saxena directed the agencies to make the water drainage system fool-proof so as to avert the recurrence of such incidents in future. He also expressed displeasure that none of the major drains were desilted and cleaned in run up to the monsoon preparations and this essentially led to heavy waterlogging with several parts of the city getting inundated in chest-deep water.

Pragati Maidan tunnel still shut

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

The Pragati Maidan tunnel remained closed on Saturday after heavy rains in the national capital caused waterlogging in many parts of the city that led to major traffic snarls, officials said. It is likely to be opened by late Saturday night, according to PWD officials.

Water was drained out of the Minto bridge underpass and many other parts of the city after hours of effort by authorities.

2 dressed as delivery boys kill Gurgaon man

Gurgaon, June 29: A 25-year-old man was shot dead allegedly by two bike-borne assailants dressed as food and grocery delivery agents in a village here, the police said on Saturday. The entire incident was captured in a CCTV footage in which the assailants are seen running behind the deceased and shooting, they said, adding that an FIR has been lodged in the matter.

The incident took place at around 9 pm on Friday when Anuj, who worked as a bouncer, was in a market area in Gurgaon district's Ullawas village, a senior police officer said.

The bike-borne duo,

dressed in uniforms of Zomato and Blinkit, allegedly fired five bullets at Anuj and fled the spot, the officer said.

The victim was taken to a hospital where the doctors declared him brought dead, the police said.

Anuj was a resident of Kadarpur village and worked as a bouncer with a private liquor outlet. "The cause behind the murder is not clear yet but it might be a result of some old rivalry as three cases, including extortion, were previously registered against the deceased," said Siddhant Jain, DCP (South).

"Special police teams

▶ **THE BIKE-borne duo**, dressed in uniforms of Zomato and Blinkit, allegedly fired five bullets at Anuj and fled the spot, the police said

have been formed and raids are being conducted to nab the accused," Mr Jain said.

Ranbir Singh, father of the deceased, told the police his son was sitting in his car at HBR Chowk while Anuj's uncle was buying fruits.

In the meantime, two youths came riding a motorcycle and hit the car from behind. When Anuj was getting out of the car to

face the duo, they allegedly opened fire on him. As he began running away to save himself, the accused chased him and shot him, the complainant said.

Following the complaint, an FIR was registered against the unidentified accused under sections 302 (murder) and 34 (common intention) of the IPC and under the Arms Act at the Sector 65 police station on Saturday, the police said.

The body was handed over to the deceased's kin after postmortem.

"All evidence and CCTV footage related to the incident is being collected and the accused will be arrested soon," the DCP said. — PTI



AAP party workers during a protest in New Delhi on Saturday against the arrest of party convenor and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal.

— G.N. JHA

AAP protests near BJP's HQ, demands Kejriwal's release

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders and workers held a protest near the BJP headquarters on DDU Marg to demand the release of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is currently in CBI custody. Mr Kejriwal was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with the Delhi government's excise policy.

The protesters assembled at the AAP office close to the BJP headquarters on DDU Marg and raised slogans against the saffron party while demanding Mr Kejriwal's release. AAP national general

secretary (Organisation) Dr Sandeep Pathak informed that the party protested at BJP headquarters in 21 states across country

secretary (Organisation) Dr Sandeep Pathak informed that the party protested at BJP headquarters in 21 states across the country against the "illegal arrest of the chief minister" by the CBI.

"CM Arvind Kejriwal, who is doing the best work in the country, has been put in jail by the BJP's Central government in a false case. Now even the court has said that there is no evidence against him. He was about to come out of jail on

bail when the Central government got him arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation," said Mr Pathak.

"CM Arvind Kejriwal did such work in Delhi that no state government could do in the political history of India. Delhi is the first state in the country where people get free electricity and water 24 hours a day. The best government schools in the country have been built in Delhi. Mohalla clinics have been built in Delhi," said AAP Delhi state convenor Gopal Rai.

During the protest, several AAP workers were detained in different parts of the country.

Govt 3-member panel to probe cutting of trees in Ridge area

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

Delhi environment and forest minister Gopal Rai on Saturday said the government has formed a fact-finding committee of three ministers over the felling of 1,100 trees in the Ridge area allegedly without permission.

The committee comprising ministers Atishi, Saurabh Bharadwaj, and Imran Hussain will submit its report to the forest minister. The report will then be submitted to the

Supreme Court. The decision was taken in a meeting of the ministers held at the Secretariat in view of the non-submission of the status report on cutting of the trees at Satbari (Chhata-rpur) lying on the Ridge, Mr Rai said in a statement.

He charged that the 1,100 trees were cut by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) illegally and without due permission.

"The emails of DDA engineers reveal that the trees were cut on the verbal instructions of the

Delhi lieutenant-governor," Mr Rai claimed. He claimed that in a meeting with the forest department on June 26, officials told him that the DDA was issued notices in March on the matter but it did not respond.

The Delhi minister said he directed the forest department to submit a detailed report on the matter, but it was not done.

After a written communication to submit the report on June 28, the officers again did not comply, the minister said.

Delhi cops rescue abducted kids after 3 hrs, 100-km chase

Kidnapper gives slip to police; picked kids from Shakarpur area sweet shop pretending as parking staff

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

In a hot three-hour and 100-kilometre car chase resembling a Hollywood flick, the Delhi police rescued two siblings aged three and 11 years who were kidnapped from the Laxmi Nagar area after the accused demanded a ransom of ₹50 lakh from the parents of the siblings.

DCP (East) Apurva Gupta said that they received information regarding the kidnapping

of a boy (3) and a girl (11) in their own car on Friday at 11.30 pm.

The siblings' father informed the police that the children were sitting in the car, in front of Hira Sweets shop in Vikas Marg in the Shakarpur area. He and their mother went inside the shop to buy some sweets when a man, pretending to be a parking worker, came and sat inside their car, DCP Gupta said.

The accused told the children that their parents had asked him to park the

car in the parking lot but he sped away. He also threatened the girl by showing her a hammer and telling her to remain silent, the DCP said.

While driving, he called the couple from another mobile phone and demanded a ransom of ₹50 lakh, she said.

Upon receiving information, rescue teams were activated and two teams were formed to trace the accused and the children.

One team was led by the station house officer (SHO)

of Shakarpur police station along with the children's mother and another led by the SHO of Laxmi Nagar police station with their father, DCP Gupta said.

Based on technical surveillance, both teams started searching for the accused in two separate directions.

The teams of special staff and other neighbouring districts were also mobilised for the search of the kidnapped children, the officer said. DCP Gupta said that after

around a three-hour neck-to-neck chase by around 20 vehicles of police officers, the kidnapper abandoned the car with the kids near the Samaypur Badli area and escaped. In between, the accused drove the vehicle for over 100 kilometres on the streets of Delhi, the officer said.

The teams finally managed to rescue the children, who were safe and sound. They have been reunited with their parents, she added. The officer said the valu-

ables, including jewellery and mobile phones kept in the car, were also found intact as the kidnapper had no time to take anything when he found himself being chased by the police from all sides, the DCP said.

She said the other districts' police teams, especially Outer North district and Railway Protection Force (RPF), also helped immensely in this operation, and their prompt actions are appreciated. Teams have been formed to arrest the accused.

SHORT TAKES

Cabinet expansion soon: C'garh CM

Raipur: Chhattisgarh chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Saturday indicated that he would soon expand his ministry. Mr Sai's statement comes amid mounting speculations in the ruling BJP circles that he may go for expansion of his ministry in the first week of July. The chief minister who returned here on Saturday from his one-day-visit to Delhi told the waiting media persons at the Raipur airport that he would make an announcement of expansion of his ministry before it takes place. "The expansion of the ministry will be done soon. The ministry will be expanded at the right time. The announcement on expansion of the ministry will be made in advance", he said. Mr Sai's recent meeting with Chhattisgarh governor Biswabhusan Harichandan at Raj Bhavan here had sparked rumours about imminent expansion of his ministry.

Veteran Cong leader Srinivas passes away

Hyderabad: Former Andhra Pradesh (undivided) Congress president D. Srinivas died here on Saturday, his son and Nizamabad MP D. Arvind said. He was 76. Srinivas had been unwell for the past few days, family sources said. He was the PCC president during the 2004 and 2009 assembly and general elections. He was also a minister in former chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy's Cabinet. He left Congress and became a BRS Rajya Sabha member from 2016 to 2022 and later rejoined the grand old party. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, Union minister G. Kishan Reddy, Telangana ministers, and senior leaders of the Congress party expressed condolences over his demise. — PTI

Maha BJP to form panels for state polls

Mumbai: After drubbing in the Lok Sabha election, Maharashtra BJP has decided to constitute various committees to address the issues ahead of the Vidhan Sabha election. There will be a committee to counter the opposition's narratives. The party has also decided to finalise candidates early so that it does not face problems like Lok Sabha. The party on Saturday held its core committee meeting at state headquarter in South Mumbai. The meeting, which went on for around four hours, was attended by BJP's Maharashtra election in-charge and Union minister Bhupendra Yadav, Maharashtra election co-in-charge and Union minister Ashwini Vaishnav and Maharashtra deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis among other senior leaders.

OUR ALLIANCE IS OUR COLLECTIVE FACE: SHARAD

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, JUNE 29

NCP founder Sharad Pawar on Saturday said the Maha Vikas Aghadi will face the Maharashtra Assembly elections under the "collective leadership". He ruled out projecting a particular face as the chief ministerial candidate. This is a major jolt for the Shiv Sena (UBT), which is insisting that Uddhav Thackeray should be declared chief ministerial candidate ahead of the election. Sharad Pawar-led NCP and Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) are part of the MVA that also includes the Congress. The Shiv Sena (UBT) has argued that since Mr Thackeray was the CM of the previous MVA government that collapsed after Eknath Shinde's revolt in June 2022, he should be projected as the CM face and it will benefit the alliance in the Assembly elections. Ruling out the projection of a CM face of the alliance, Mr Pawar said, "Our alliance's formula will be the collective leadership. An individual cannot become MVA's face." Earlier in the day, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said that there is a risk in facing the election without a CM face.



Sharad Pawar

Sidda, DKS shadow fight for K'taka CM chair

'Shut your mouths': Dy CM asks Cong leaders to refrain from comments on leadership issue in public

Bengaluru, June 29: Amid raging debate over the possibility of change in chief minister and demand for three more deputy chief ministers in Karnataka, state Congress president D.K. Shivakumar on Saturday asked partymen and leaders to refrain from issuing public statements on the issue and warned of disciplinary action. Mr Shivakumar, who is also the deputy chief minister urged partymen to "shut their mouth" in the interest of the party, as he also requested seers not to interfere in political matters.

Minister K.N. Rajanna, who is at the forefront of the issue of three deputy chief ministers, wondered what was wrong in asking for it, and said he won't heed the warnings.

There is growing demand within the state Cabinet to have three

more deputy chief ministers — from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities. Currently, Mr Shivakumar from the dominant Vokkaliga community is only the deputy chief minister in the Siddaramaiah Cabinet.

A Vokkaliga seer K u m a r a Chandrashekaranth Swamiji of Vishwa V o k k a l i g a Mahasamastana Math on Thursday had publicly urged chief minister Siddaramaiah to step down and make way for his deputy Shivakumar.

Following this a Veerashaiva-Lingayat seer — Srisaia Jagadguru Channa Siddharama Panditaradhya Swamiji on Friday said ministers from his community should be considered for the CM's post in case there is a leadership change,



Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah with Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi on Saturday.

while also pitching for them to be given priority in the event of creation of additional deputy CM posts.

"There is no discussion on any deputy chief minister nor there is any question about the chief minister. Swamiji (Vokkaliga

seer) out of affection towards me might have spoken about me. That's all. I request — I don't need anyone's recommendation. For the work we have done our party high command will decide," Mr Shivakumar said in response to a question

whether he had taken up with the party high command the demand for more deputy CMs during the Delhi visit.

Addressing reporters here, he said, "Kharge (AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge), chief minister Siddaramaiah and I, in the interest of the party, have decided how to function. So there is no need for any MLA or minister or Swamiji to speak. If they (seers) bless us it's enough..."

There is no need for any minister to comment on the CM or deputy CM issue in public or before the media, Mr Shivakumar said and warned that "if any MLA or anyone from the party raises it, the AICC or I will be forced to issue notice and take disciplinary action. Discipline is important in the party.

There is nothing without discipline."

Responding to a query, the deputy CM said, "in the interest of the party I'm telling everyone — if you shut your mouth it will be good for the party."

Asked about seers interfering in politics, he said, "no swamiji had spoken other than now... I request all of them with folded hands not to interfere in political matters."

A section within the Congress is of the opinion that the statement issued by the ministers seeking three more deputy CMs, was part of a plan by Mr Siddaramaiah's camp to keep Mr Shivakumar in check, amid talks that he might seek the CM post after two-and-half years of this government's tenure, and to counter his influence both in the government and party. — PTI

After Neet, Opp. to corner govt over Agniveer in Parl

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

After taking the government to the mat on the Neet issue, the Opposition is now expected to train its guns over the Agniveer scheme in Parliament next week. The controversial Agniveer scheme had become an electoral flash-point during the recently-concluded Lok Sabha polls, and the Opposition has been demanding the scrapping of the scheme.

The government is already facing the Neet heat: in Parliament and as well as outside it; and now the Opposition is planning to intensify its attack on the BJP-led NDA government over the Agniveer issue. The Congress 2024 LS manifesto had mentioned scrapping the scheme that was introduced by the Modi government in June 2022. Widespread protests by youths — prominently in Bihar and UP — had erupt-

New date for Neet-PG to be out in 2 days: Pradhan

New Delhi, June 29: The new schedule for Neet-PG will be announced by the National Board of Examinations (NBE) in the next two days, Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Saturday.

Neet-PG is among the exams cancelled last week as a pre-emptive measure amid a raging row over alleged irregularities in

competitive tests. "The date of Neet-PG will be announced by the NBE in one or two days," Mr Pradhan told reporters in Panchkula on the sidelines of Haryana BJP's extended state executive meeting. The comments by Mr Pradhan come a day after the NTA announced revised dates for three exams which were cancelled. — PTI

ed after the scheme was introduced. The BJP ally JD(U) had recently asked the government to review the scheme.

There is a view within the BJP circle that the Agniveer scheme impacted its poll prospects in the recently-concluded Lok Sabha polls, as the government and the ruling BJP

failed to convey to the youths the benefits of the scheme. The issue was raised during the recent NDA meeting by JD(U).

Amidst reports about deliberations, within the government, to review and modify the scheme, the Opposition has made it clear that it wants the scheme to be scrapped.

CSIR UGC-NET from July 25-27 & UGC-NET Aug. 21-Sept. 4 New dates for UGC-NET, other exams out

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

With the alleged irregularities in the conduct of competitive tests taking centerstage, the National Testing Agency (NTA) has released fresh dates for cancelled and postponed examinations.

The testing agency has announced that the CSIR UGC-NET and UGC-NET will be held from July 25-27 and August 21-September 4 respectively.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) UGC-NET was postponed as a pre-emptive measure amid the row over alleged irregularities in the conduct of exams.

The University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) was cancelled a day after being conducted on June 18, following inputs that the integrity of the exam was compromised. The National Common

on June 12, will now be conducted on July 10. The NCET is held for select Central and state universities or institutions, including IITs, NITs, RIEs, and government colleges.

In a shift from the earlier pattern, the exam was conducted in offline mode and on a single day this year. However, the rescheduled exam will be conducted according to the earlier pattern of Computer Based Test (CBT) spread across a fortnight.

ED attaches CPM's land & ₹73L in Kerala bank 'scam'

New Delhi/Kochi, June 29: The Enforcement Directorate alleged Saturday that the CPI(M) in Kerala was holding proceeds of money laundering, as it attached a land parcel and bank deposits worth ₹73 lakh of the political party in a probe linked to the Karuvannur Service Cooperative Bank "scam".

Assets worth ₹28.65 crore of various individuals and entities linked to the case have also been attached by the federal agency after a provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) was issued.

Official sources said the party may be named as an accused in the next supplementary chargesheet to be filed in this case. If so, it will be the second political party to be arraigned as accused in a money laundering investigation

includes eight movable properties, including a credit balance of ₹63.62 lakh in eight "undisclosed" bank accounts of the CPI(M) local area committees in Thrissur, it added.

The agency claimed that the CPI(M) received these funds from the beneficiaries as donations through the governing body and the party is "in possession of proceeds of crime" which has been invested in the purchase of immovable properties and credited to its five bank accounts in the Karuvannur Service Cooperative Bank Ltd.

The bank is promoted by the party. The CPI(M) rejected the ED charges, saying it would legally and politically fight any move by the agency to arraign it in the case linked to the alleged multi-crore Karuvannur bank scam. — PTI

after the Aam Aadmi Party. AAP has recently been named by the ED in the Delhi excise policy case. The CPI(M) vehemently denied the charges of wrongdoing and money laundering. The attached assets include 18 immovable properties, valued at ₹28.65 crore, consisting of lands and buildings in Kerala of the beneficiaries of the "scam", including an immovable property worth ₹10 lakh registered in the name of a district secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) for a party office, the ED said in a statement. The attachment also

BJP will be wiped out from J'khand in Assembly polls

Ranchi, June 29: Former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren on Saturday slammed the BJP for allegedly hatching a conspiracy against him and claimed that the saffron party will be wiped out from the state after the Assembly elections due later this year.

Addressing JMM workers at his residence, Mr Soren said there would be a "revolt against those who plotted the conspiracy" to confine him in jail and "people of Jharkhand would not spare the BJP".

"Time has come to put the last nail in BJP's coffin. In coming days, the BJP will be wiped out from Jharkhand," the JMM executive president said.

Mr Soren was released on Friday from the Birsamunda Jail after the state high court granted bail to him in a money laundering case, observing that he was prima facie not guilty, and there was no likelihood of the petitioner committing an offence on bail.

The JMM leader was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate



Hemant Soren

(ED) on January 31 in connection with its investigation into the money laundering case linked to the illegal possession of 8.36 acres of land.

Mr Soren alleged that the BJP has controlled all constitutional establishments but people taught them a lesson in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections.

"It has come to my knowledge that they are making plans to prepone Assembly elections... I dare them to conduct the elections any day they wish to...the BJP's dream of winning Assembly elections in Jharkhand will be 'Mungerilal ke haseen sapne'...the BJP is naming tribals as CMs in states but they are just rubber stamps," the JMM leader said. — PTI

EAM to visit Qatar today; focus on trade & energy

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

Four months after oil-rich country Qatar released eight former Indian naval personnel from captivity, external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar will pay an official visit to the Gulf nation on Sunday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also visited Qatar in February, soon after the release of the eight Indians.

In a statement, the MEA said, "During the visit, he (the EAM) will meet the Prime Minister and foreign minister of Qatar



S. Jaishankar

H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani. India and Qatar share historic and friendly relations that are marked by regular exchange of high-level visits. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited Qatar on 14-15

February 2024 and held discussions with Qatar's Emir H.H. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani," adding that the EAM's visit will enable both sides to review various aspects of bilateral relations, including political, trade, investment, energy, security, cultural and people-to-people as well as the regional and international issues of mutual interest.

It may be recalled that of the eight Indians, seven had returned to India, soon after the release of the eight men was ordered.

'Modi's conviction kick-started startup movement'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

India's G-20 sherpa Amitabh Kant said it is the conviction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of commitment and leadership with stress on data, good governance and outcomes that has brought about the shift in digitalisation at a massive scale and ensured the growth story of the start-up ecosystem.

Speaking at the launch of a book — *Power Within: The Leadership Legacy of*

Narendra Modi — authored by Dr R. Balasubramaniam, Mr Kant said it is Mr Modi's conviction of commitment and leadership with stress on data, good governance and outcomes that has brought about the shift in digitalisation at a massive scale and ensured the growth story of the start-up ecosystem.

Mr Kant, former CEO of Niti Aayog, recalled how Mr Modi directed him to

organise "100 digital melas" in 100 days to launch the mobile payments interface. He said, "In hindsight, had it not been the PM's conviction for securing outcomes, the UPI would not have achieved the scale of over 130 billion transactions."

Likewise, from just a little over 600 start-ups when the scheme was launched in 2016, such entities have now crossed over 1.25 lakh, he added.

NDPP sweeps Nagaland civic polls, wins all 3 municipal, town councils

Kohima, June 29: The ruling NDPP swept the civic body polls in Nagaland on Saturday, winning all three municipal councils and most of the town councils, officials said.

The polling for the 24 urban local bodies — three municipal councils and 21 town councils — spread across 10 districts was held on Wednesday. Nearly 82 per cent of the over 2.23 lakh voters exercised their franchise in the elections, they said.

The counting began at 8 am in 16 centres, and has been slow since the elections were held on ballot papers, they added.

NDPP won all three municipal councils —

Kohima, Mokokchung and Dimapur. Of the 21 town councils, it secured a majority in all, except Wokha, Bhandari and Phek, officials said.

In the Wokha town council, the NDPP won seven of the 15 seats, while the NCP won five and the BJP got three seats. 'The Naga Peoples' Front (NPF) secured a majority in both Bhandari and Phek town councils, they said.

In Bhandari town council, NPF won six of the nine wards, while Bharatiya Janata Party and JDU got one each, and an independent candidate also won. In Phek Town Council, NPF won seven of the nine seats. — PTI



IIM Prof B. Mahadevan (from left), Network18 chairman Adil Zainulbhai, Piramal Group chairman Ajay Piramal, author Dr R. Balasubramaniam, India's G-20 sherpa Amitabh Kant and Nasscom president Debjani Ghosh at the launch of *Power Within: The Leadership Legacy of Narendra Modi* in New Delhi on Saturday.

SHORT TAKES

Odisha celebrates emperor coronation

Bhubaneswar: Researchers, history and culture lovers on Saturday reminisced the heroic exploits of great Odia emperor Kapilendra Deva of Suryavamsi dynasty by observing his 589th coronation day at Cuttack. The event was commemorated at the Gopal Jiu temple of Panda Sahi, Jagatpur jointly by the Rediscover Lost Heritage, Aithiya Ra Ante Group, Silver City Cuttack Public Charitable Trust & Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Bhubaneswar Chapter. Speaking on the occasion, Deepak Kumar Nayak, a noted heritage researcher and founder member of RLH group said that Kapilendra Deva Rautaray, who is popularly known as Gajapati King and possessed the title of Birashree Gajapati Gaudeswara Navakoti Karnata Kalabargeshwara, was undoubtedly the greatest Odia emperor after Mahameghabahana Aira Kharavela.

8 Kerala students fall ill after gas leak

Kannur, Kerala: At least eight students of a nursing college were hospitalised on Saturday following a gas leak from a tanker lorry in Ramapuram in this district. The students of the college developed uneasiness and breathing difficulty and were rushed to Pariyaram Medical College and Pazhaya-ngadi taluk hospital. Their condition is stable, police said. Hydrochloric acid leaked from the tanker lorry on Friday evening when it was enroute to Ernakulam from neighbouring Karnataka. Though a fire force team from Payyannur and Pariyaram police rushed to the area and initiated further proceedings, the leak could not be contained completely, authorities said. The leak was detected in the rear side valve of the container and the vehicle was soon shifted to a safer place by the fire force. — PTI

4 killed in cracker factory blast in TN

Virudhunagar, TN: Four workers were killed and another person was injured on Saturday following an explosion at a firecracker manufacturing unit near here, police said. The workers were killed on the spot and the cause for the explosion and blaze is suspected to be mis-handling the chemical ingredients, the raw materials, that go into the making of firecrackers, a senior district police official said. Another person who was in the vicinity was hurt and buildings — rooms earmarked for specific tasks involved in manufacturing processes — have suffered damage, he added. Chief minister M.K. Stalin, expressing anguish and conveying his condolences to the kin of the deceased, announced a solatium of ₹3 lakh to each of the families of the 4 dead workers. Blast occurred on June 29. — PTI

TN amends law, life term, ₹10L fine for illicit liquor sale

Chennai, June 29: Days after the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy in the state that claimed over 60 lives, Tamil Nadu government on Saturday "amended a prohibition act" to substantially enhance the punishment, which included life imprisonment for bootleggers in case of fatalities following consumption of spurious liquor.

The state government amended the Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act, 1937, to enhance the punishment term and quantum of fine for offences like manufacture, possession and selling of illicit liquor that endangers lives.

The Tamil Nadu Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 2024 that shall come into force on date as notified by the government, aims to completely eradicate the menace of illicit liquor from the state.

The amendment substantially enhances the term of imprisonment and quantum of fine for various offences under sections 4,5,6,7 and 11 of the Act.

Accordingly, a maximum punishment of 10 years rigorous imprisonment (RI) and a penalty of up to ₹5 lakh has been proposed in the amendment.

In case of death due to consumption of illicit liquor, then the punishment for bootleggers will be RI for life with a fine not less than ₹10 lakh, it said.

The Kallakurichi hooch tragedy that happened about a fortnight ago, had left about 63 people dead, including women and a transgender.

The ruling DMK had drawn flak over the issue from its rival, as the main Opposition party, the AIADMK and the BJP, has been demanding a CBI probe into the issue.

The AIADMK members, earlier this week were suspended from the rest of the sessions of the Assembly, that concluded today, for allegedly trying to create ruckus over the issue in the House.

On Saturday, the Congress legislature party leader K. Selva-perunthagai, supporting the bill, suggested having a check and balance in the system.

— PTI

NDRF staff to get 40% risk and hardship allowance

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 29

The government has approved a 40 per cent hardship and risk allowance for National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel, keeping in mind the tough operations they undertake in the wake of natural and man-made calamities, Union home minister Amit Shah said on Saturday.

"The government has approved a 40 per cent risk and hardship allowance for NDRF personnel only yesterday. This has been a long pending demand... All the 16,000 personnel of the force will benefit from this," Mr Shah said.

The officials said this allowance would be granted over and above salaries. The forces, like the National Security Guard (NSG) and the special protection group, get a 25 per cent hardship allowance, given the special charter they have for their duties.

The home minister also announced that the Centre has formed a committee to work out a model to ensure mandatory participation of Central Armed Police Forces in national and international sporting events.



People wade through a waterlogged area at Dharm Path during rain in Ayodhya on Saturday. The Uttar Pradesh government has suspended six officials of civic agencies for gross negligence following road cave-ins and waterlogging at several sections of the newly-built Ram Path in Ayodhya.

Cong panel lands in MP to review LS debacle

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, JUNE 29:

A three-member AICC fact-finding panel, headed by former Maharashtra chief minister Prithviraj Chavan, on Saturday arrived here to review the party's debacle in the just-concluded Lok Sabha polls in Madhya Pradesh.

The committee is scheduled to hold a one-to-one meeting with the LS candidates of the party in Madhya Pradesh to ascertain the causes of their defeats in the polls. Other members of the committee are Congress MP from Odisha's Korapur Saptagiri Ulka and Jignesh Mevani.

The members are scheduled to hold discussions with the party's LS candidates as well as the Congress MLAs and district-level leaders over two days here to find out the reason for the wash out of the party in the LS polls in the state.

The Congress had fielded candidates in 28 out of total 29 LS seats in Madhya Pradesh, leaving Khajuraho to its electoral ally Samajwadi Party (SP).

The party's LS candidate in Indore, however, had withdrawn in the dying hours of withdrawal of nomination, depriving the Congress of fielding an alternative pick in the seat. Hence, the party had effectively fielded candidates in 27 out of 29 seats in the outgoing LS polls.

The BJP had swept the LS polls in the state by winning all the 29 seats.

The state Congress chief Jitu Patwari, however, sought to downplay the disastrous show by the party in the Lok Sabha polls in Madhya Pradesh.

Yatris reach Amarnath amid 'Bham Bham Boley' chants

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, JUNE 29

Kashmir hills were reverberated with chants "Har Har Mahadev" and "Bham Bham Boley" and other Vedic hymns, as the first batch of about two thousand pilgrims, including saffron-clad hermits or sadhus, who chose to trek via shorter Baltal route (14km), reached the Amarnath on Saturday evening to pay obeisance and had the darshan of fully-formed natural Shivling or ice-lingam of Lord Shiva inside the revered cave-shrine of Hindu worship.

With the 52-day-long annual pilgrimage, beginning officially on Saturday, most of the devotees, who are part of another batch of nearly three thousand pilgrims that had started the arduous journey through rugged mountains from Chandanwari (Pahalgam) base camp earlier during the day, have arrived at Sheshnag — the first halting place along the traditional three-day trek (34km), a report received here said.

Confirming that the first batch of the pilgrims has safely reached the cave-



Pilgrims enroute to the holy cave shrine of Amarnath from the Baltal base camp during the annual Amarnath yatra in Ganderbal district on Saturday.

shrine tucked away in the Kashmir Himalayas at a height of 3,888 metre, a government official here said, "They enthusiastic devotees are waiting to have the darshan of the Shivaling and pray at Lord Shiva's abode."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has greeted the pilgrims at the start of the annual yatra, saying the "darshan" of Lord Shiva is known to infuse immense energy in his followers.

"My heartfelt best wishes to all pilgrims on the commencement of the holy Amarnath Yatra. This yatra associated with the darshan of Baba Barfani infuses immense energy in the devotees of Lord Shiva. May all devotees prosper with his blessings. Jai Baba Barfani," the PM said in a post on "X" in Hindi.

The first officially escorted convoys of 231 cars and buses carrying 4,603 pilgrims had reached Baltal and Nunwan (Pahalgam) base camps from Jammu's Bhagwati Nagar late Friday afternoon.

The cavalcade was split in two convoys: one with 1,933 pilgrims bound for Baltal and the other with 2,670 pilgrims heading for Nunwan.

Union minister writes to Yogi, urges him to look into matter 'Bias against OBCs, SCs, STs in UP jobs'

Lucknow, June 29: Union minister and Apna Dal (Sonelal) president Anupriya Patel has written a letter to Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath over the rejection of OBC and SC/ST candidates for state government posts by declaring them "not found suitable".

In her letter dated June 27, Ms Patel said that she has been "constantly" contacted by candidates from the backward classes and scheduled caste/ scheduled tribe category over the issue.

"...In various competitive examinations conducted by the state, which have only an interview-based recruitment process, the candidates of these classes are often declared 'not found suitable' for the posts reserved for them and none of them are selected," she said.

She alleged that this process is "adopted many times for these posts in competitive examinations" and later the posts reserved for other OBC and SC/ST candidates are "declared unreserved."

However, an official of Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission refuted Ms Patel's allegations and said that in case of no recruitment on reserved posts for OBCs, those posts are "carried forward" i.e. these posts are returned to the department. He said that there is a provision in the rules that if eligible candidates are not found for the posts reserved for



Anupriya Patel

OBCs, then those posts should be returned to the concerned department.

Ms Patel's allegation that if there is no recruitment on reserved posts for OBCs, they are put in the unreserved category is not correct, he said.

She also alleged that even after passing the minimum eligibility criteria for these examinations based on merit, OBC and SC/ST candidates are declared "not found suitable". "It is beyond comprehension that these candidates are repeatedly declared not found suitable for appointment," she said. — PTI

Sonia Gandhi says poll results moral defeat for Modi

New Delhi, June 29: Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday said the Lok Sabha poll verdict has signalled a "personal, political and moral defeat" for Prime Minister Narendra Modi but "he is continuing as if nothing has changed". In an article in The Hindu, she claimed there is "not the slightest evidence that he (Modi) has come to terms with the electoral outcome or understand the verdict". She said that when the Prime Minister's "emissaries sought unanimity for the post of Speaker", the opposition INDIA bloc agreed to support the government.

"But in keeping with convention and tradition, it was only fair and to be expected that the post of deputy speaker would be given to a member from the ranks of the opposition," Ms Gandhi said. But this "perfectly reasonable request" was found unacceptable by the government, she said, adding the opposition alliance is committed to restoring balance and productivity in Parliament.

"On June 4, 2024, the verdict of our country's electorate was delivered clearly and resoundingly. It signalled a personal, political, and moral defeat for a prime minister who had awarded himself a divine status during the campaign," the Congress leader said.

"Yet, the Prime Minister continues as if nothing has changed. He preaches the value of consensus but continues to value confrontation," she said. She also described the mention of Emergency by the prime minister, the Lok Sabha Speaker and BJP leaders as an attempt to divert attention from the "assault on the Constitution". — PTI

Key JDU meet calls for special status

■ Continued From Page 1 foundation laid by the Mr Kumar-led government since 2005, except for a short period when Jitan Ram Manjhi was the chief minister.

"It does not matter what name such help is given. We will pursue it with the Central government and are hopeful for a positive outcome," he said.

Asserting that everything will remain cordial between the BJP and the JD(U), he said the two parties are natural allies.

Speaking on the upcoming Bihar assembly election in 2025, he said that the NDA will win more than 200 seats as the alliance had leads in 177 of the 243 Assembly segments in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections. The Lok Sabha poll results, in which the JD(U) won 12 seats in Bihar, showed people's approval for the JD(U)'s suprimo, Mr Jha said, taking a swipe at those who thought the chief minister's political career was on a downward spiral.

The JD(U)'s resolution said its responsibility and people's expectations had risen due to the party's participation in the Central government and the party has two ministers in the Modi government.

The resolution also called for more active and qualitative reforms in the fields of education, health care, agriculture, environment, social welfare, women's empowerment and

national security. Expressing concern over the recent Patna high court judgment striking down the Bihar government's decision to increase reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs to 65 per cent from 50 per cent, the JD(U) urged the Centre to put the state's law in the Constitution's 9th Schedule to rule out its judicial review.

The resolution praised Mr Kumar's political acumen and positive strategy, saying he played an important role in the running of the NDA government in Bihar and the formation of the Central government under Mr Modi's leadership.

It said people re-elected a government at the Centre that worked for national interests.

Another resolution passed at the national executive stressed the need for strengthening the party's organisation in states going to Assembly polls, while mentioning Jharkhand. It noted that the JD(U) candidates had contested and won elections in the state. The party sources also said that the JD(U) will remain in the NDA fold and contest the Jharkhand election as an NDA's ally. It will seriously work on its election strategy and put up candidates there, the resolution said.

The sources also said the JD(U) will nudge the BJP to leave a few seats for its candidates in Jharkhand.

Another blow to Delhi CM in Delhi excise scam case

■ Continued From Page 1 still in progress and may require custodial interrogation of the accused to confront him with more material likely to be collected during the course of the probe. Accordingly, accused (Mr Kejriwal) is remanded to judicial custody till July 12," the judge added. Noting the evidence before it, the court said that the probe revealed that accused Vijay Nair, a close associate of Mr

Kejriwal, was the media-in-charge of the AAP and he had contacted various liquor manufacturers and traders, demanding undue gratification for the incorporation of provisions favourable to them in the excise policy for 2021-22.

The court also noted that Mr Kejriwal's name surfaced as one of the "main conspirators of the criminal conspiracy" for various offences under the provisions of the Prevention of

Corruption Act and Indian Penal Code. "Four chargesheets in the case have already been filed against 17 accused persons, including the persons of the South group," the court noted.

It said that the investigating officer had pointed out in the case diary that Mr Kejriwal was not cooperative during his custodial interrogation, nor was he truthful in disclosing facts on many material aspects.

BJP to contest Haryana polls alone, will win 3rd term: Shah

■ Continued From Page 1 BJP. "We believe that the BJP will form the government for the third consecutive time in Haryana after the Assembly poll," he said. Referring to the state executive meeting, Mr Pradhan said a political resolution has been passed and gratitude has been expressed to the people of Haryana for giving a third term to Mr Modi. He also said an appeal has been made to the people to once again give the BJP the mandate in Haryana. Taking on his party's

political rivals, mainly the Congress, Mr Pradhan said they do not have any political agenda. These are groups of people who "spread lies" and "create doubts". After the meeting, the Haryana BJP posted on X that the Union home minister expressed gratitude to party workers and said the people of Haryana have made an important contribution in making Mr Modi PM for the third time.

Party's co-incharge Biplob Kumar Deb, Union minister Manohar Lal

Khattar, Rajya Sabha member Subhash Barala, Lok Sabha MPs Naveen Jindal and Dharambir Singh, Haryana Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta, former MP Kuldeep Bishnoi and MLA Kiran Chaudhary were among the attendees.

Senior BJP leaders O.P. Dhankar, Ram Bilas Sharma, ministers Mool Chand Sharma, J.P. Dalal, Kanwar Pal and Aseem Goel, MLAs, and former ministers, including Anil Vij and other leaders, were also present.

5 Armymen killed in J&K flash flood

■ Continued From Page 1 Defence minister Rajnath Singh, while expressing grief over the tragic deaths of five Army soldiers, said in a post on X, "Deeply saddened at the loss of lives of five of our brave Indian Army soldiers in an unfortunate

accident while getting the tank across a river in Ladakh. We will never forget the exemplary service of our gallant soldiers to the nation. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The nation stands firm with them during this hour of grief."

Union home minister Amit Shah, while expressing sadness over the deaths of the soldiers, wrote on X in Hindi, "I am saddened by the news of the accident during the military exercise in Ladakh. I express my condolences to the families of the brave soldiers who lost their lives in this accident. The whole country is with the families of the brave soldiers."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, too, have expressed sorrow at the deaths of the soldiers and sent their condolences to the bereaved families. "The news of the martyrdom of five Indian Army soldiers in an accident during a military exercise of a tank crossing a river in Ladakh is extremely sad," Mr Gandhi said.

The outgoing General Commanding Officer (GOC) of the Fire and Fury Corps Lt. Gen. Rashim Bahl expressed his condolences to the bereaved families and said that the Indian Army regrets the loss of five brave jawans while being operationally deployed in eastern Ladakh.

Meanwhile, in a post on X, the corps said, "GOC Fire and Fury Corps and aal ranks salute the bravehearts who made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty in #Ladakh on June 29 and offer deep condolences to the bereaved families in this hour of grief."

THE ASIAN AGE

30 JUNE 2024



Krishna Shastri Devulapalli
Off the beaten track

Let's mistreat some robots, what say?

At a party I attended a while ago, a friend of mine, self-admitted dotting dad, was having his daily phone conversation with his daughter, currently studying in the US. (Funded entirely by him, of course.)

'Yes, sweetie, no, sugar,' my friend went, giving the soon-to-be-laid-out dessert section a complex. Choochie pies, puppy dolls, babykins and honey boo boos were flying like missiles, as our Father of the Year took large sips of his Scotch.

Meanwhile, a small-made girl from the north-eastern part of our great land (shame on me for categorising her thus, I ought to have known which state she was from), of about twenty, twenty-two, stood by with a large platter of chicken something-or-the-other. Quietly, somewhat fearfully, worried she might drop the platter.

Our friend, still in the throes of long-distance filial love, selected a couple of minutely examined pieces and put them on his plate. The girl took this as a cue to leave. Friend snapped his fingers and pointed at his plate. Because, you see, if he spoke to the young waitress, it would mean breaking his conversation for a second. And he couldn't do that, could he? What would his Princess Rasagulla Poopins in distant California think if he wasn't giving her his complete attention? But he needed a third piece of chicken, too, obviously. For his opening gambit, snack-wise, was always three pieces. His wife knew it. I knew it. Everyone knew it. It was written in stone. And it was as good a time as any to let the waitress know what to do when she brought the next platter.

The young woman took the piece our friend had magisterially pointed at with his fork and served it to him. Her hand trembled. Friend nodded his head to say he was done. For now. He would be beckoning her soon enough with raised hand or finger snap obviously, when his next requisition needed to be dealt with on a war footing.

'Well,' my friend said, a minute later, his conversation with Butter Bonbon done, his mouth full of poultry. 'What's the news, man?'

The irony of his darling daughter being the exact same age as the young waitress seemed to have whooshed past him like an outswinger. I stuck my hand out and shook his.

'What?' he said. 'I think we're officially ready for the robots, man,' I said. 'You do say the strangest of things, you know,' he said, laughing.

Personally, as a nation, I think we'll adapt only too easily to robots. Because certain humans don't exist for us at all except for their utility value. We consider their feelings about as much as we consider the feelings of, say, microwaves, hairdryers or bottle openers. The one issue with robots I do foresee, though, is that mistreating them — that quintessentially Indian need of needs — may not give us the same amount of pleasure as mistreating a warm-blooded human seems to. But I'm sure our tech guys will figure out a way to make robots feel pain and humiliation soon enough.

The recent conviction of the Hinduja by Swiss authorities for the treatment they meted out to their domestic help, sadly, didn't shock (or even surprise) me one bit. Because it's just one more example of how most of us view those who help us with our daily lives. For every headline-making Hinduja or Khobragade, there's the friend who makes his driver stay up Saturday nights as he bar-hops, the neighbour who makes the caregiver of her octogenarian father bring her own tiffin carrier, the colleague whose nanny waits in the lobby as the family dines at an exclusive restaurant or the sibling who has his 'gofer' take off his shoes when he returns from work. We are, after all, the nation that individually abandoned our domestic help during lockdown by abruptly cutting off their salaries, and betrayed our guest workforce collectively as we watched them walk hundreds of kilometres, back to the homes they had left behind.

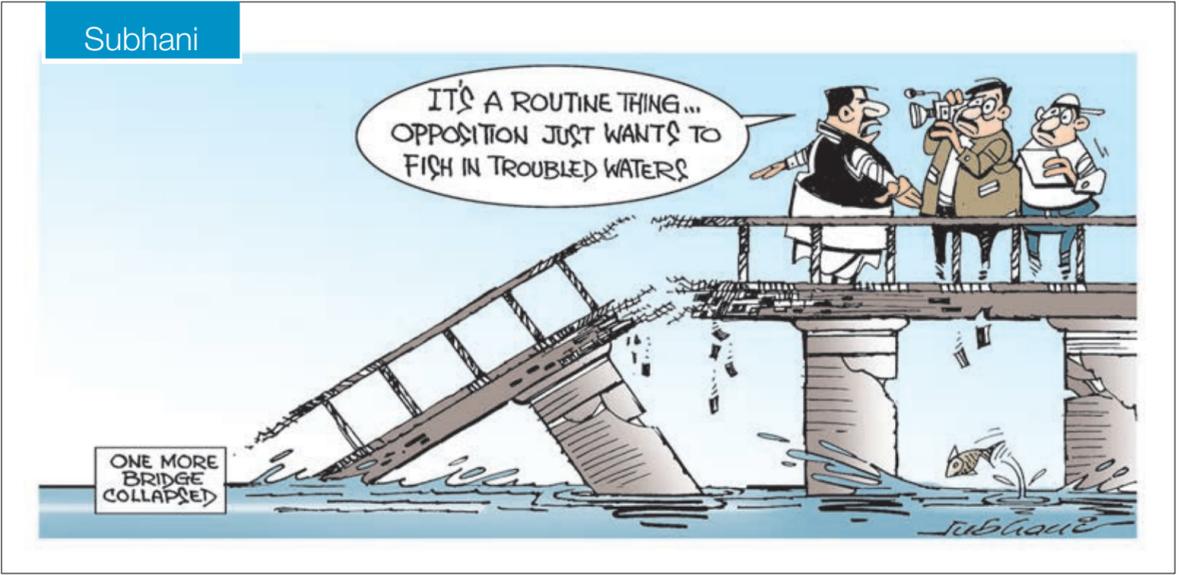
On a slightly upbeat note, for nearly ten years, we've been the grateful beneficiaries of this kind, patient and forever-jovial woman who cooks for us. A couple of days ago, her daughter came by to assist us with some proofing/indexing work on a book we are putting together. (I hasten to add that we can't take any credit for young woman's current position as a freelance editor. Her path to a better life was the result of her mother's resilience and foresight long before she met us, and the education that was put in place by our earlier leaders, who we are being told did nothing for us.)

You would think this was justice, right? It is a step in the right direction perhaps. But justice it isn't.

Justice is when my kid works for her kid. Or better still, if I'm employed by her. Soon. Tomorrow.

As for poetic justice, that would be the father of the young waitress, now the CEO of an international hotel chain, being served hors d'oeuvre by my friend's daughter, currently laid off from the job Daddy's connections got her.

Krishna Shastri Devulapalli is a humour writer, novelist, columnist and screenwriter



Balance of power is key to leash China, Russia, Israel



Manish Tewari
State of the Union

Even though its economy is slowing down now, the legacy buoyancy that translated into hefty military spending is now being leveraged by China to reclaim its mythical status as the Middle Kingdom...

fact that security and primacy of the nation state justifies the employment of every imperative howsoever iniquitous considered essential to defend it.

Paradoxically, you do not have the balance of power paradigm at play in the Israel-Hamas conflict for no nation state of any consequence in the greater Middle East has even attempted to weigh in on the side of Hamas, leaving aside Iran and Syria that both support the Hamas and Hezbollah. However, that hardly qualifies as any substantive balancing of power in the purely classical sense of the term.

Coming to the Chinese power play on the Line of Actual Control qua India and its belligerence in the larger Indo-Pacific region, both ruthless realpolitik and *raison d'etat* are at play insofar as China is concerned. Fuelled by three-and-a-half decades of unprecedented economic growth, China has established a power differential across the board qua its neighbors.

Even though its economy is slowing down now, the legacy buoyancy that translated into hefty military spending is now being leveraged by China to reclaim its mythical status as the Middle Kingdom that, in its estimation, was disrupted by the century of humiliation in 1839-1949.

Apposite to that, the principle of balance of power is also operating in the Indo-Pacific, with the QUAD, AUKUS, ASEAN Regional Forum and various other groupings and quasi-alliances being energised to ensure that the Chinese influence, malefic that it is, does not become toxic to the extent that it leads to an eminently avoidable conflict.

As the adage goes, the more things change the more they remain the same. Situations may change, times may move on, but grundnorm concepts endure.

The writer is a lawyer, MP and former Union minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

History tells us that geo-strategic transitions are never easy. They are always accompanied by uncertainty, fear, insecurity and bloodshed — not necessarily in that order. However, what every transition brings with itself are certain conceptual constructs that then underpin the strategic landscape over the next decade or even centuries that usher in an era of sustainable tranquility that is usually accompanied by prosperity, the forward march of the human race and above all stability and a modicum of happiness.

If one takes a deep dive into history, the Thirty Year War that commenced in 1618 between the Roman Catholics and Protestants devastated much of Central Europe. Out of the ashes of that destruction that attained quietus with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, a new principle emerged that underpinned European statecraft for a century or more. It is called *raison d'etat*. Coined by a prince of the church Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu, First Minister of France from 1624-1642, it was practised by most European powers for an epoch thereafter.

Raison d'etat was premised on the fact that security and primacy of a nation state warranted the deployment of all means essential to preserve, protect and promote it. It envisaged that supreme national interest must eschew all archaic notions of universal morality.

Raison d'etat, therefore, was predicated on a convoluted hypothesis that every nation state while pursuing its own selfish and narrow interests would in some manner underwrite the collective safety and progress of all the others.

However, by the 18th century, Great Britain had articulated the concept of balance of power that then dominated European diplomacy for the next two hundred years. It had its genesis in the British desire to prevent any one single European power from dominating the European continent. In pursuit of maintaining an equilibrium it required Great Britain to throw its weight behind the vulnerable or the more feeble side in any conflict.

The concept of balance of power was utilised by Prince Von Metternich of Austria and other European statespersons to construct the concert of Europe at the Congress of Vienna in September 1814. It ensured that no war at all took place among the Great Powers for 40 years and after the Crimean War of 1854 there was no general war for another 60, thereby ensuring a century of relative peace that helped Europe to materially, culturally and imperially flourish.

Unfortunately, a subsequent German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck disassembled the Concert of Europe and recast European high statecraft into a ruthless pursuit of power politics a-la "realpolitik".

The reason I have chosen to enunciate these three principles, namely, *raison d'etat*, balance of power and realpolitik, is because many centuries after they were conceptualised and applied by statespersons of that era, they still continue to operate, albeit under different nomenclatures, as the world faces perhaps its biggest challenge to collective peace after the Second World War in the form of active conflicts across three continents.

In the case of the Russia-Ukraine conflict or the Russian aggression on Ukraine, both the classical concepts of *raison d'etat* and balance of power are at play. A concerned or even overly

distrustful Russia at the ostensibly eastward expansion of Nato decided to put its narrow national interest above everything else, thereby violating the sovereignty of Ukraine. While that fulfills the first part of the *raison d'etat* postulate, as far as the second leg of that hypothesis is concerned, i.e., it should underwrite the collective safety of others, if it would lead to the reordering of the security architecture of Europe, thereby bringing back sustainable peace in Europe, remains to be seen. The jury would be out on that for quite a while.

Conversely, in this very conflict, you also have the template of the balance of power at play. Nato has weighed in squarely on Ukraine's side as have other democratic nations around the world. Given that Ukraine is the weaker power, the balance of power in Europe has to be maintained. The desire to maintain this European equilibrium has in fact impelled both Finland and Sweden to become members of Nato. Something both refrained from doing after the devastating Second World War.

In the Israel-Hamas conflict, you see the first postulate of the *raison d'etat* squarely at play with Israel deploying elevated levels of violence to neutralise the Hamas threat even if it involves the bombing of hospitals and the wanton killing of innocent men, women and children.

This, by no means, should be construed as any justification of the horrific terror attack by Hamas on innocent Israeli civilians or the taking of hostages, the argument simply being that the Israeli response, disproportionate in every sense of the word, is predicated upon the

LETTERS
LAUNCH A STIR

A consecutive third-term ruling government must promptly address issues related to the public and the nation. The entire country is witnessing the uproar of students regarding the 2024 Neet exam. For many days, students have been protesting for their legitimate rights, which are vital for the future of lakhs of parents and patients. The whole demographic is waiting impatiently for an inquiry. In this situation, only the Opposition is actively addressing the issue, repeatedly raising it in Parliament. The government is not giving it the attention it deserves. A nationwide stir needs to be launched.

Jakir Hussain
Kanpur

JOKES UNDESERVED

THE NEWLY ELECTED Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi should think twice before uttering anything inside the august house or bring in his antics like winking and hugging and behave as a mature leader. The post had been lying vacant for the last ten years as no party had a tenth of the strength of the House, which required it to claim the post. By virtue of having been made the LoP, Rahul Gandhi must definitely give up his previous style of functioning in the House, as he has to take up serious issues on behalf of the party, in tandem with the government.

C.K.S. Maniam
Trichy

EXPOSED BY RAIN

THE SHODDY WORK done on a number of infrastructure projects have been badly exposed by the first monsoon showers. Airport roofs leak and collapse causing damage. In one such incident a taxi driver was reported killed and some others injured. Is anybody going to be held responsible for the death and injuries? Tunnels are flooded, roads develop potholes and the road to the recently inaugurated Ram temple is in a bad shape. To make matters worse bridges keep falling down in Bihar with amazing regularity. All claims of having world class infrastructure have been badly shown up to be empty boasts designed to hoodwink the people of the nation.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai



M.P. Nathanael

A proven force is better than taking new inductees to secure Parliament

The "unprecedented misbehaviour" of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel with Rajya Sabha MP M. Mohammed Abdulla on June 18 has led to his lodging a complaint with vice-president Jagdeep Thakur, the Chairman of the Upper House. He was questioned by the CISF personnel about his "purpose of visit" to Parliament. The "incident has deeply affected me," the MP said.

Last month, another DMK MP, Tiruchi Siva, was asked to show his ID thrice inside Parliament. Reports of misbehaviour by CISF personnel have been reported in the past, but no severe action seems to have been taken against those responsible, to be a deterrent to others.

On June 6, CISF constable Kulwinder Kaur slapped actor-MP Kangana Ranaut at Chandigarh airport before she was to board a flight for Delhi. Kulwinder nurtured a grouse against the actor for her unpalatable comments on the farmers' agitation from November 2021 to December 2022 on the Delhi Haryana and Delhi-UP borders. The actor had said women agitators had been paid Rs 100-200 each for participation. Kulwinder Kaur's mother and brother

were among the agitators, with the latter spearheading the agitation as secretary of Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Samiti.

In August 2020, a CISF officer had the temerity to ask DMK MP Kanimozhi at Chennai airport how she could claim to be an Indian when she couldn't speak in Hindi. Though Ms Kanimozhi walked away and showed maturity by not engaging in a fracas with the CISF man, she took to Twitter to express her annoyance, which drew media attention. Hindi imposition on South Indians became the subject of a media debate.

On December 12 last, Sharmila Rajasekaran, an engineer, was mocked at by a CISF lady officer for not knowing Hindi at Dabolim airport. At the security check, she was asked to pick up a tray, but she didn't understand Hindi. To this, the CISF officer asked her if Tamil Nadu was in India, and if so, she should learn Hindi as it was the national language. Ms Sharmila corrected her, saying that it was official language. She googled to prove her point. In her complaint to the CISF head at the airport, she said the way she "was treated was inhuman and culturally insensitive". Condemning the incident, Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K.

Stalin said that non-Hindi speaking air passengers often face such harassment by CISF personnel. The extent of insensitivity of CISF personnel can be gauged from another incident at Kolkata airport in January this year, when Arushi Singh, a wheelchair-bound passenger, was asked thrice to stand and walk two steps despite her explaining about the disability from birth. Following the breach of security in the Parliament building on December 13 last year, when two men jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the visitors' gallery and lobbed smoke canisters they managed to smuggle in, by placing them in cavities of shoes, a thorough survey was done on the security of Parliament by a team led by CRPF director-general Anish Dayal Singh.

While Parliament's security falls within the domain of responsibilities of The Lok Sabha Speaker, the Union home ministry replaced the Delhi police, CRPF and even the Parliament Security Staff (PSS) with the CISF. This despite the fact that the CRPF and the PSS acquitted themselves exceedingly well.

A daring attack on Parliament House on December 13, 2001, by five heavily-armed terrorists was effectively warded

off by alert personnel of the CRPF and who prevented them from entering the main building. They were all shot dead by CRPF personnel, who were manning various gates. While taking on the terrorists, Lady Constable Kamlesh Kumari was fatally hit by bullets. For her derring-do, she was awarded the highest peacetime gallantry award, the Ashok Chakra. Five other CRPF personnel were awarded the Shaurya Chakra. The citadel of democracy was saved from what could have been a catastrophic event if even one of the terrorists had sneaked into the main Parliament building.

Six terrorists who made a daring attempt to enter Srinagar airport, then guarded by the CRPF, on January 16, 2001 were neutralised before they could enter the airport. Four CRPF personnel including a lady constable were martyred in the fierce encounter just outside the airport. For their valour, five were honoured with gallantry medals.

The CRPF has proved its mettle in securing high-risk buildings untempered times since its raising in July 1939. The withdrawal of the CRPF from Parliament is not a step in the right direction. It will be much better to deploy a tried-

and-tested force than to induct a force which hasn't had the exposure or experience to handle daring attacks on important high-security buildings. With the CISF taking over the duties of the Parliament Security Service, uncertainty looms large on the latter's future. With their long experience of dealing with MPs and other staff, PSS personnel are better placed to recognise everyone and must continue with the duties they were performing. They can be either taken on deputation with the option for permanent absorption in the CISF or deployed to work in tandem with the CISF as they had been with the Delhi police. They could be permanently posted in the Parliament security set-up till retirement by making an exception to the transfer policy of the CISF, which necessitates the replacement of personnel by new inductees periodically.

The security of Parliament can't be compromised in any way and the best of security manpower and apparatus must be deployed. A tried and tested force is always better than any new inductions.

The writer is a retired IPS officer who had served as IGP in the CRPF

SHORT TAKES

5 I.S. BOMBS FOUND HIDDEN IN IRAQ MOSQUE

Mosul, June 29: A United Nations agency said it has discovered five bombs in a wall of Mosul's iconic Al-Nuri mosque, planted years ago by Islamic State group jihadists, during restoration work.

Five "large-scale explosive devices, designed to trigger a massive destruction of the site," were found in the southern wall of the prayer hall by the Unesco team at the site. Mosul's Al-Nuri mosque and the adjacent leaning minaret, which dates from the 12th century, were destroyed during the battle to retake the city from IS.

LANDSLIDES IN NEPAL VILLAGES KILL NINE PEOPLE

Kathmandu, June 29: Landslides triggered by heavy rainfall on Saturday killed at least nine people, including an entire family, while they were sleeping in Nepal's mountainous districts, officials said.

The landslides buried houses in three separate areas in the country's mountainous region, about 250 km (156 miles) west of the capital, Kathmandu, according to Nepal's National Disaster Rescue and Reduction Management Authority. Five members of the same family were killed when their house was swallowed by a landslide while they were asleep.

PAY OUTLETS FOR NEWS, OZ PM TELLS META

Canberra, June 29: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called social media companies arrogant and irresponsible, as the government's battle to have Meta Platforms Inc. continue to pay local media organisations for content escalated.

Meta's regional policy director Mia Garlick told a parliamentary committee on Friday that "all options were on the table," when asked whether the company would ban news on its platforms if the Australian government determined it fell under the news media bargaining code.

RWANDA-BACKED M23 REBELS SEIZE TOWN IN CONGO

Kanyabayonga, June 29: Rwandan-backed M23 rebels have seized a strategic town in the Democratic Republic of Congo's volatile east, a local official told AFP on Saturday.

"Kanyabayonga has been in the hands of the M23 since Friday evening," the administrative official said under condition of anonymity.

Kanyabayonga lies on the northern front of the conflict in North Kivu province. The province has been rocked by violence since 2021 when the M23 (March 23 Movement) resumed its armed campaign in the region.

MAURITANIANS VOTE: PREZ SEEKS RE-ELECTION

Nouakchott, June 29: Mauritanians voted on Saturday in a presidential election that incumbent Mohamed Ould Ghazouani is widely expected to win with a pledge to boost investment in the country.

Ghazouani, 67, has promised investor-friendly policies to spur a commodities boom in the country of 5 million people, many of whom live in poverty despite its fossil fuel and minerals wealth.

"The last word belongs to the Mauritanian voters. I commit myself to respecting their choice," Ghazouani said after voting in the capital.

INDONESIAN VOLCANO ERUPTS TWICE IN A DAY

Jakarta, June 29: Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki in Eastern Indonesia erupted twice on Saturday, sending thick, dark clouds into the air.

The first eruption took place at 11.04 am local time and lasted nearly 11 minutes. The second was at 2.41 pm and lasted a little over 10 minutes, spewing volcanic material 900 metres above the crater.

"Residents, visitors around Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki are prohibited from conducting any activity within the three-kilometre radius from the centre of eruption."

Teenager shot and killed by police in upstate New York

Utica (US), June 29: An officer in upstate New York shot and killed a teen fleeing while pointing a replica gun, police said on Saturday.

The shooting happened Friday night after officers in Utica stopped two youths at around 10.18 pm. One of them fled and pointed what appeared to be a handgun at the officers, according to a statement by the Utica police department.

One of the officers fired a single shot at the teen, who was taken to Wynn Hospital, where he died from his injuries.

Officers later recovered a replica Glock 17 Gen 5 handgun with a detachable magazine from the scene, the statement said. "Photos of the weapon will be disseminated, the statement said. A department spokesperson didn't respond to phone and email messages seeking more information about the weapon, which police characterised as a pellet gun during a news conference early Saturday.

Police have not released the identities of the officer or the youth who was 13 years old and of Asian descent, according to the

statement. "Our thoughts are with the family of the deceased juvenile, as well as our officers involved in this incident," the statement said.

Police said over the next several days they will be releasing a report providing a comprehensive overview of the events as well as the full body camera footage from the involved officers.

The department said it is also aware of a video circulating on social media of the incident but warned that it does not portray the incident in its entirety. State law requires the state attorney general's office to lead the investigation into the shooting, the department said. Police will also be conducting its own internal investigation.

Spokespersons for state Attorney General Letitia James' office didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

"We again offer our condolences to the family of the deceased juvenile during this very difficult time, as well as the many lives that this has now permanently changed within our community," the department said. — AP

Visit 'without worry': China to Taiwanese

Beijing, June 29: China has urged Taiwanese to visit the mainland "without the slightest worry", condemning the island authorities' decision to raise their travel alert level after Beijing threats targeting independence advocates. Last week, Beijing published judicial guidelines on criminal punishments for supporters of Taiwanese independence, including the death penalty for "particularly serious" cases involving "diehard" advocates.

Taiwan's government on Thursday urged the public to avoid "unnecessary travel" to mainland China and Hong Kong. It also raised its travel warning for China.

Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for a Chinese body in charge of Taiwan affairs, said that the new judicial directives "are aimed at a small number of 'Taiwan independence' supporters. — AFP

CHINA TIGHTENS MANAGEMENT OF RARE EARTHS

Beijing, June 29: China tightened the management of its rare earths industry with the approval of the first comprehensive regulation governing the mining, metal smelting and circulation of the mineral. Rare earths belong to the country and no organisation or individual are allowed to claim them, the State Council said. — Bloomberg

affairs, said that the new judicial directives "are aimed at a small number of 'Taiwan independence' supporters. — AFP

People's pyramid



Members of "Castellers" try to complete their human tower during an exhibition, in Pamplona, northern Spain, on Saturday. — AP

STUCK IN SPACE Engineers troubleshoot problems on Boeing's space capsule

No return date yet for Nasa astronauts

Washington, Jun 29: Two Nasa astronauts will stay longer at the International Space Station as engineers troubleshoot problems on Boeing's new space capsule that cropped up on the trip there.

Nasa on Friday did not set a return date until testing on the ground was complete and said the astronauts were safe. "We're not in any rush to come home," said Nasa's commercial crew programme manager Steve Stich.

Veteran Nasa test pilots Barry Wilmore and Sunita

Williams blasted off aboard Boeing's Starliner capsule for the orbiting laboratory on June 5. It was the first astronaut launch for Boeing after years of delays and setbacks.

The test flight was expected to last a week or so, enough time for Wilmore and Williams to check out the capsule while docked at the station. But problems with the capsule's propulsion system, used to manoeuvre the spacecraft, prompted Nasa and Boeing to delay the flight home several times while they

Majority of US media expect Biden to withdraw from race

NYT, WSJ, FT ask him to step aside; Harris, Obama defend his performance

Washington, June 29: A day after Joe Biden's dismal showing at the first presidential debate against Donald Trump, leading US media outlets have commented that the incumbent US President should leave the race for the White House for the future of American democracy and prevent a second round of his Republican rival.

The *New York Times* has become the first US newspaper to call on Biden to drop out of the race, but other publications including the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times* and the *Atlantic* have published op-eds by their leading columnists calling on Biden to step aside.

Shortly after the debate, senior Democrats, including the vice-president, Kamala Harris, acknowledged Biden's "slow start" but emphasised his "strong finish", while others privately suggested he should step aside.

The former US president Barack Obama defended Biden in a social media



President Joe Biden (R) hugs Elton John at the grand opening ceremony for the Stonewall National Monument Visitor Centre, on Friday. — AP

post on Friday. "Bad debate nights happen," he said. "But this election is still a choice between someone who has fought for ordinary folks his entire life and someone who only cares about himself."

Biden, seeking a second term in the White House, stumbled and fumbled during the televised presidential debate with his predecessor Trump on Thursday night in Atlanta, setting off alarm bells among

top Democrats about whether the 81-year-old president can stay atop the grueling months ahead of the elections on November 5.

The 78-year-old Trump, who is the presumptive Republican Party candi-

BIDEN CONCEDES MISSTEPS, VOWS TO PRESS ON

Washington, June 29: President Joe Biden said he is committed to winning the November election, brushing aside mounting calls from prominent Democrats to step aside following his disastrous debate against Republican Donald Trump.

Biden, 81, on Friday acknowledged limitations caused by his age and his spitting performance the day prior against Trump. But he declared he was up to the task of serving another four years in the White House. — Bloomberg

date for the election, clashed right from the start with Biden and by the end of the 90 minutes debate, gave enough fodder for serious editorials and opinions as well as memes on social media. — Agencies

PANAMA PAPERS: COURT ACQUITS 28 DEFENDANTS

Panama City, June 29: A Panamanian court on Friday acquitted 28 people charged with money laundering in connection with the now-defunct law firm Mossack Fonseca, the epicentre of the "Panama Papers" international tax evasion scandal.

Among those acquitted were the firm's founders, Jurgen Mossack and Ramon Fonseca, the latter of whom passed away in May in a Panamanian hospital. During the trial, which was held in Panama City in April, the prosecution asked for 12 years in prison for the duo, the maximum sentence for money laundering.

However, Judge Baloisa Marquinez acquitted the pair and 26 others after finding that evidence taken from the law firm's servers had not been gathered in line with due process, raising doubts about its "authenticity and integrity," a court statement said.

The judge also ruled that "the rest of the evidence was not sufficient and conclusive to determine the criminal responsibility of the defendants," the court statement said. — AFP

Ukrainian drone strike kills 5

Kyiv, June 29: A Ukrainian drone strike killed at least five people in Russia's Kursk region, local officials said, while rescuers in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro dug through rubble after a Russian attack ripped through a nine-storey residential building, leaving one dead.

Two children were among the victims of the Ukrainian attack in the village of Gorodishche on the Russian-Ukrainian border, Gov. Alexey Smirnov said on social media.

Russia on Saturday claimed another village in eastern Ukraine as it pushes towards the city of Toretsk in a fresh local offensive in the embattled Donetsk region.

Toretsk lies north-west of the city of Gorlivka, which has been under separatist control since 2014.

In Dnipro, at least one person died and 12 were injured, including a 7-month-old girl, after a Russian strike destroyed the top four floors of the apartment bloc on Friday evening, regional head Serhii Lysak said.

The attacks came as Russia continues to stretch out Ukrainian forces in several areas along the 1,000-km (600-mile) front. Moscow has stepped up airstrikes in a bid to drain Ukraine's resources, often

DETAINEEES IN BELARUS EXCHANGED

U.S. AIR DEFENCE MISSILES FOR KYIV IN AID PACKAGE

The Biden administration will provide Ukraine with \$150 million worth of weapons and ammunition, including HAWK air defence interceptors and 155 millimetre artillery munitions, two US officials said. The US began shipping HAWK interceptor missiles to Ukraine in 2022 as an upgrade to the shoulder-launched Stinger air defence missile systems.

RUSSIA PROTESTS JAPAN, NATO DRILLS

Russia protested to Japan on Friday about Tokyo's plans to hold joint military exercises with Nato on the island of Hokkaido and accused Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of placing his country "on a path to dangerous escalation".

ZELENSKY: 10 CIVILIANS RELEASED FROM CAPTIVITY

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that 10 people, all civilians, were handed back to Ukraine as part of an exchange of detainees after several years of captivity in Russia and its ally Belarus.

BELARUS BOLSTERS AIR DEFENCE FORCES

Belarus has deployed additional air defence forces to its border with Ukraine to protect "critical infrastructure facilities" due to increased Ukrainian drone activity in the area, a Belarusian military commander said on Saturday.



targeting energy facilities and other vital infrastructure.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the country had lost about 80% of its thermal power and one-third of its hydroelectric power in Russian strikes.

Discussing the attack in Dnipro, Zelenskyy said it was a reminder to Ukraine's allies that the country needed more air defence systems. The Ukrainian air force said on Saturday that it had downed 10 Russian drones overnight. — Agencies

ARMS CONTROL BREACH: U.S., ALLIES FLAY N. KOREA FOR SALES TO RUSSIA

United Nations, June 29: Washington and its allies challenged North Korea at the United Nations on Friday over claims Pyongyang is breaching arms control measures by supplying weapons to Russia to use in its war in Ukraine.

Washington's deputy envoy to the UN Robert Wood hit out at what he said were "unlawful arms

transfers from the DPRK (North Korea) to Russia" as the two sides forge ever closer ties.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms, those unlawful transfers, which have significantly contributed to Russia's ability to conduct its war against Ukraine," Wood said ahead of a UN Security Council meeting on the issue. — Reuters

Far right scents power as France ready to vote

Paris, June 29: A divided France braced on Saturday for high-stakes parliamentary elections that could see the anti-immigrant and euro-sceptic party of Marine Le Pen sweep to power in a historic first.

The candidates ended their frantic three-week campaigns at midnight on Friday, with political activity banned until the first round of voting to be held on Sunday. On Saturday, voting begins in France's overseas territories that span the globe, with residents of the tiny archipel-

CLASHES, ARRESTS MARK START OF GERMAN FAR-RIGHT AFD CONGRESS

Essen, June 29: Clashes between hooded demonstrators and police on Saturday marked the start of a party congress of Germany's far-right AfD, weeks after it scored record EU

poll results. 1,000 police were deployed in Essen as around 600 delegates began a two-day meeting with authorities expecting up to 80,000 people to join demonstrations. — AFP

ago of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, located off the coast of Canada, casting their ballots from 1000 GMT.

They will be followed by France's islands in the Caribbean and the South American territory of French Guiana. — AFP

7 drones destroyed by the US in Yemen

Washington, Dubai, June 29: American forces destroyed seven drones and a control station vehicle in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen over the past 24 hours, the US military said on Friday.

The Houthi militant group on Friday claimed responsibility for attacking a Liberia-flagged vessel in the Red Sea that a maritime agency said had survived five missiles, while also saying they targeted three other vessels — *Waler* oil tanker and *Johannes Maersk* container ship in the Mediterranean Sea and the *Ioannis* bulk carrier in the Red Sea.

Yahya Saree, the Houthi military spokesperson, said in a televised statement that the group launched ballistic missiles at the *Delonix*, an oil tanker, and that it took a "direct hit". However, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) monitor said earlier in the day that the ship, which was targeted 150 nautical miles (172 miles) northwest of the Yemeni port of Hodeidah, reported no damage and was heading northward.

The US strikes were carried out because the drones and the vehicle "presented an imminent threat to US coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region," the US Central Command said on social

COP 'ATTACKER' KILLED BEFORE ISRAELI EMBASSY

Belgrade, June 29: An attacker who fired a crossbow at a police officer guarding the Israeli embassy in Belgrade was shot and killed on Saturday in what interior minister Ivica Dacic called a terrorist attack against Serbia.

The policeman is in a life-threatening condition and is undergoing surgery, Serbian news agency *Tanjug* quoted Dacic as saying. No embassy employee was wounded, the Israeli foreign ministry said. Dacic said the police officer who was attacked was hit in the neck with an arrow and fired several shots at the attacker, killing him.

"This is a terrorist attack against Serbia," he said in the statement.

He said that several people believed to have been linked to the incident had been arrested. — Reuters

media platform X. The Iran-backed Huthis have been targeting vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since November 2023 in attacks they say are in solidarity with Palestinians during the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. — Agencies



INDIAN TOP 10

NON-FICTION

- WHAT WENT WRONG WITH CAPITALISM**
Ruchir Sharma, Penguin, ₹999
- GUJARAT UNDER MODI**
Christophe Jaffrelot, Westland, ₹899
- AGE OF REVOLUTION**
Fareed Zakaria, Penguin, ₹1,299
- THE ROAD TO FREEDOM**
Joseph E. Stiglitz, Penguin, ₹799
- TWILIGHT PRISONERS**
Siddhartha Deb, Westland, ₹599
- MANIFEST DIVE DEEPER**
Roxie Nafousi, Penguin, ₹599
- IMPERIAL GAMES IN TIBET**
Dilip Sinha, Pan Macmillan, ₹599
- BAHRISONS: CHRONICLE OF A BOOKSHOP**
Anuj Bahri, India Research Press, ₹350
- INDIA'S FORGOTTEN COUNTRY**
Bela Bhatia, Penguin, ₹1,299
- NEHRU'S FIRST RECRUITS**
Kallol Bhattacharjee, HarperCollins, ₹699

FICTION

- KAIRO**
Jenny Erpenbeck, Granta, ₹599
- CAMINO GHOSTS**
John Grisham, Hachette, ₹699
- FUNNY STORY**
Emily Henry, Penguin, ₹799
- A FIRESTORM IN PARADISE**
Rana Safvi, Penguin, ₹699
- BLUE SISTER**
Coco Mellors, HarperCollins, ₹499
- BUTTER**
Asako Yuzuki, HarperCollins, ₹599
- MY BELOVED LIFE**
Amitava Kumar, Aleph, ₹799
- RADHA THE PRINCESS OF BARSANA**
Nilima Dalmia, Westland, ₹699
- THE BOOK OF EVERLASTING THINGS**
Aanchal Malhotra, HarperCollins, ₹599
- TABLE FOR TWO**
Amor Towles, Penguin, ₹799

Bahrisons, New Delhi

How MEA was knocked together



K.C. Singh

review

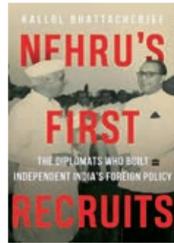
Kallol Bhattacharjee's book, *Nehru's First Recruits*, explores how Indian diplomats were recruited immediately after independence in 1947. So far this information has been orally transmitted or recounted piecemeal in individual memoirs. The writer has interviewed some of the dozens of Indian Foreign Service like M.K. Rasgotra (1948 batch) and K. Natwar Singh (1953 batch). He has also spoken to family members of some who are no more. As a colony, India did not need diplomatic representation abroad until the Second World War. Whereas, for internal administration, Indians had begun to be recruited to the elite Indian Civil Service (ICS), precursor to the Indian Administrative Service. The demand, however, for Indian diplomats was immediate once India

began functioning as an independent nation. This was achieved by hybrid and selective recruitment. Some ICS officers were seconded to the ministry of external affairs (MEA), which remained under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru until his death in 1964. Below them were placed members of erstwhile ruling families, journalists, All India Radio staffers, associates of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose with deep knowledge of East Asia and Myanmar, etc. From 1948, when two recruitment examinations were held, direct entrants began joining the Indian Foreign Service (IFS). Shri M.K. Rasgotra of that batch, foreign secretary in early 1980s, is the oldest surviving member of the service. The writer explains the troika of Girija Shankar Bajpai, K.P.S. Menon and S. Dutt as the original leaders in MEA of the evolving diplomatic

corps. He also describes the role of the second tier of recruits, below the IFS. Many grew into important roles in Indian missions, even as heads of mission. The case of Harivansh Rai Bachchan, renowned Hindi poet and father of Amitabh Bachchan, is unique. He was recruited as officer-in-charge of the ministry's rather neglected Hindi section. PM Nehru interviewed the new recruits afresh, after clearing the UPSC examination. He would also summon officers upto the deputy secretary level, imparting the IFS a unique status. Consequently, until the early-1980s getting into the IFS remained highly competitive. The book thus fills a vital gap in narrating the journey of the early generation of Indian diplomats. But some of the writer's information is contestable. Spokesmen of the ministry have not always briefed the media once a week. This writer as JS(XP) in 1998-99 did the briefing

daily, especially after India's nuclear tests. Similarly the assumption is doubtful that K. Natwar Singh got his brother-in-law and Punjab CM Capt. Amarinder Singh to quit Congress because BJP wanted farmers' agitation scuppered. Congress forcing him to resign caused his rebellion. Brajesh Mishra's (IFS: 1951) career is well graphed, till his elevation as India's first National Security Adviser. But his shift towards BJP is not fully explored. Re-elected Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi took exception to his proximity to the Janata Party regime of Prime Minister Morarji Desai and his minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, compelling him to join the United Nations. However, the book's range and recounting of many little-known diplomatic episodes make it an interesting and educative read.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. Twitter: @ambksingh.



By KALLOL BHATTACHARJEE
HarperCollins India
pp. 368; ₹699

Apocalypse when, asks this brief history of superbugs



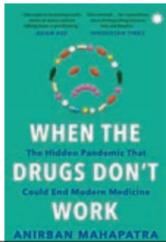
Sucheta Dasgupta

review

The awareness of this problem arrived in India in 2010. A paper published in an international medical journal reported research on an antibiotic resistance conferring gene, New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase-1 or NDM-1, having named it after capital New Delhi where the scientists identified its origin, leading to questions, accusations and a Parliament debate. The NDM-1 gene was part of a mobile genetic element that can move from one bacterial species to another, from *Klebsiella pneumoniae* to *E. coli*, rendering both species XDR (extremely drug resistant) from their status of MDR (multiple drug resist-

ant). The transportation mechanism was plasmids, but there were other mechanisms, too, namely, phages and transposons. Yet the challenges didn't end there. Soon, it was found that the NDM-1 gene had made its way into other bacterial species, like *Shigella boydii* and *Vibrio cholera*. What's more, the city's water resources were teeming with superbugs, bacteria carrying this resistant gene, among them the Deadly Six which are resistant to 18 antibiotics, including Colistin, the latest. But so was hospital intensive care. Today, up to one half of the patients in Indian ICUs may develop sepsis, a response to infections typically caused by bacteria affecting at least 11 million Indians every year, leading to death. The root of the problem lies in the fact that sale of antibiotics is unregulated in India, so people self-prescribe antibiotics, often even for viral infections and allergies where they are, by definition, ineffective. Meanwhile, well-intentioned doctors, too, tend to err on the side of caution and over-prescribe cheaper, broad spectrum antibiotics. It results in the indiscriminate killing of good bacteria, raising the evolutionary pressure on harmful as well as resistant bacteria to multiply while also turning the patient defenceless against the assault of other infections.

A growing area of concern is also the spread of antibiotic resistance through poultry and livestock which are fattened on a diet of antibiotics. Rise in temperatures, overpopulation and air pollution as well as poverty aid and abet a rapid rise in disease-producing bacteria, creating a harrowing cycle. With travel and commerce ubiquitous, the world is now sitting on the lip of a new, much deadlier, hidden pandemic when all the bullets in the doctor's arsenal will cease to work finally and, no new ones having been discovered since 1987, the human race will come close to extinguishing itself. What's more than shocking is that this apocalypse is only just about a decade away! A microbiologist by training, the brilliant Anirban Mahapatra goes on to outline some solution ideas in the form of vaccines, phages and AI diagnostics but, clearly, it will take governments and regulatory bodies to come together to devise ways that incentivise their use and lead us away from this catastrophe. A must-read, and not only for science buffs!



WHEN THE DRUGS DON'T WORK
By ANIRBAN MAHAPATRA
Juggernaut
pp. 288; ₹599

WORLD

BOLIVIAN COUP LEADERS SENT TO CUSTODY

La Paz, June 29: Three suspected leaders of a failed coup against Bolivian President Luis Arce were remanded in custody on Friday for six months, the country's top prosecutor said. Former Army chief Juan Jose Zuniga, former head of Navy Juan Arnez and Alejandro Irahola, former head of the Army's mechanised brigade, will be held in a high-security prison not far from La Paz. "This pre-trial detention ordered by the judge will undoubtedly set a precedent, and is a good signal."

ARMED FORCES DAY: PORTRAIT OF CHARLES UNVEILED

London, June 29: A new photographic portrait of King Charles wearing military uniform was released on Saturday to mark Britain's Armed Forces Day. The photograph shows the King wearing his Field Marshal No. 1 Full Ceremonial Frock Coat with medals, sword and decorations. The King, Commander-in-Chief of the armed services, returned to public-facing engagements early last month after being diagnosed with cancer in February. The release of the photograph coincided with a video message to members of the armed services from Queen Camilla.

MONGOLIA RULING PARTY WINS PARED MAJORITY

Ulaanbaatar, June 29: Mongolia's ruling party emerged from this week's polls with its parliamentary majority significantly diminished on Saturday, local media said, after a campaign dominated by graft fears and the state of the economy. Prime Minister Luvsanmairin Oyun-Erdene declared victory early on Saturday morning in the previous day's polls, in which millions of Mongolians turned out to elect 126 members of the State Great Khural, the country's unicameral Parliament.

Refrain intel bodies from interfering in judicial matters, Pak court to PMO

Pak court asks PMO to refrain intelligence agencies from interfering in any judicial matters

Lahore, June 29: A top Pakistani court on Saturday directed the Prime Minister's Office to issue directives to the country's powerful intelligence agencies, including Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), from approaching any judge or member of their staff to obtain favourable verdicts. The intelligence agencies especially ISI, Military Intelligence (MI) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) have been accused by several judges of pressuring them through different means to get desired verdicts, especially in the cases of the ex-prime minister and founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan, his party leaders and supporters. Almost all — six of eight judges of the Islamabad High Court — and a couple of judges of the anti-terrorism courts in Punjab have written to the chief justice of Pakistan and chief justice of the Lahore High Court (LHC), respectively, drawing their attention towards the intelligence agencies' open interference in judicial matters forcing them to get desired verdicts.



Members of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan hold placards as they take part in a protest against ongoing power outage in Karachi, on Saturday.

Some of them had complained that their family members were picked up (by intelligence agencies) to put pressure on them (judges). The Lahore High Court Justice Shahid Karim on Saturday issued written directions to the Prime Minister's Office on the complaint of an ATC judge in the Sargodha district of Punjab against harassment by the personnel of ISI. "The prime minister is responsible and answerable for the actions of intelligence agencies as they come under his command."

Washington, Islamabad, June 29: Pakistan's ambassador to the US has urged the US to provide small arms and modern equipment to his country to ensure the success of Operation 'Azam-e-Istehkam', Islamabad's newly approved counter-terrorism initiative. The decision to launch the 'Azam-e-Istehkam' operation was taken on June 22 at the apex committee meeting of the National Action Plan, a strategy approved in 2014 to eliminate militancy from the country. The federal government recently approved the

PAK SEEKS SMALL ARMS FROM U.S. FOR COUNTER-TERROR INITIATIVE

reinvigorated national counter-terrorism drive. Pakistan has launched 'Azam-e-Istehkam' to oppose and dismantle terrorist networks. For that, we need sophisticated small arms and communication equipment, ambassador Masood Khan was quoted as saying. He made these remarks while addressing US policymakers, scholars, intelligentsia, and corporate leaders at a Washington think tank. Khan elaborated that 'Azam-e-Istehkam' comprises three components: Doctrinal, societal, and operational. — PTI

4 labourers abducted, say police

Peshawar, June 29: At least 4 labourers were abducted by some unknown gunmen in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Saturday, a senior police officer said. The incident happened in the province's Tank district when the labourers were working on the rectification of an electric tower. "Some unknown armed gunmen initially abducted 13 labourers from the restive district in northwest Pakistan on Saturday. But, they released 9 and took 4 with them later on," district police officer Abdus Salam Khalid said. He said that they are making hectic efforts to secure the release of the four. — PTI

LANKA INFLATION CLIMBS AS FOOD PRICES INCREASE

Colombo, June 29: Crisis-hit Sri Lanka's annual inflation almost doubled to 1.7 per cent in June, up from 0.9 per cent the previous month, as food prices began rising again, official data showed on Saturday.

The Census and Statistics department data came days after Sri Lanka secured a deal with its bilateral creditors to restructure \$10 billion in debt, a key condition to maintain an IMF bailout programme. Food inflation returned, with prices rising 1.04 per cent in the year to June, having been flat a month earlier, it said.

At the height of Sri Lanka's economic crisis when it defaulted on its foreign debt in 2022, inflation had risen to nearly 70 per cent. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka expressed hope on Saturday that it would be able to maintain overall inflation below 5.0 per cent for 2024.

The country is due to hold a presidential election this year, and opposition parties have vowed to renegotiate the terms of the IMF bailout, which has led to painful austerity measures. The IMF has said it is willing to listen to alternative proposals from rival political parties, but stressed that the benchmarks set in the bailout had to be adhered to. — AFP

SPECIAL | MEANING The future emperor Naruhito got his first chance to live outside the palace walls Japanese emperor reconnects with the River Thames

London, June 29: Before Emperor Naruhito of Japan hopped into a horse-drawn carriage with King Charles III, laid a wreath at Westminster Abbey or toured one of Britain's premier biomedical research institutes, he kicked off his trip to the UK by visiting a site that has special meaning for him: The Thames Barrier. While the massive flood control gates on the River Thames don't top most

lists of must-see tourist sights, the stopover underscored the emperor's fascination with the watery heart of London. That interest was born 40 years ago when Naruhito studied 18th-century commerce on the river as a graduate student at the University of Oxford. But those two years, chronicled in his memoir "The Thames and I," also forged a special fondness for Britain and its people. The future emperor got his first chance to live outside the palace walls, marveling at the kindness of strangers who rushed to help when he dropped his purse, scattering coins across a shop floor, and experiencing traditions like the great British pub crawl. "It would be impossible in Japan to go to a place where hardly anyone would know who I was," Naruhito wrote.

● THAT INTEREST was born 40 years ago when Naruhito studied 18th-century commerce on the river as a graduate student at the University of Oxford. But those two years, chronicled in his memoir "The Thames and I."

Naruhito and the Empress Masako, who studied at Oxford a few years after her husband, wrapped up a weeklong trip to Britain on Friday. Their itinerary combined the glitter and ceremony of a state visit with four days of less formal events that gave the royal couple an opportunity to revisit their personal connections to Britain. The visit came at a time when the UK is seeking to

bolster ties with Japan as it aims to be the most influential European nation in the Indo-Pacific region, said John Nilsson-Wright, the head of the Japan and Korea programme at the Centre for Geopolitics at the University of Cambridge. In October 2020, Britain touted an economic partnership with Japan as the first major international trade agreement it had struck since leaving the

European Union earlier that year. "The UK-Japan relationship is hugely important. ... It's based on shared common experience. It's based also on the affinity between our two peoples," Nilsson-Wright said. "Britain and Japan can act as a source of stability and, hopefully, mutual reassurance at a time when political change is so potentially destabilising."

— AP

CRICKET

ICC MEN'S
T20 WORLD CUPPAGE
8

SHORT SINGLES

Kohli announces
T20I retirement

Star batter Virat Kohli on Saturday announced his retirement from T20 Internationals after guiding India to their second T20 World Cup win in Barbados.

Kohli anchored the innings with a match-winning 59-ball 76 with two sixes and six fours to lift India from a precarious 34 for three inside the powerplay, to a formidable 176 for seven, cornerstone of India's 7-run victory over South Africa.

Kohli said after collecting the Man of the Match award that it was his last T20I match for India.

"This was my last T20 World Cup, this is exactly what we wanted to achieve," Kohli told the broadcast after India's win in a global tournament after 11 years.

"One day you feel like you can't get a run and this happens. God is great. (It is) just the occasion, now or never kind of situation. This was my last T20 game playing for India. We wanted to lift that cup," he said.

"Yes I have, this was an open secret (retirement). Not something that I wasn't going to announce even if we had lost. Time for the next generation to take the T20 game forward? Kohli confirmed when asked if he was making the official announcement about him calling it a day.

"It's been a long wait for us, waiting to win an ICC tournament. You look at someone like Rohit (Sharma), he's played 9 T20 World Cups and this is my sixth.

"He deserves it. It's been difficult to hold things (emotions) back and I think it's going to sink in later. It's an amazing day and I'm thankful," Kohli added.

T20 WC big hit,
reveals survey

A player survey has revealed that the T20 World Cup is closing the gap in the race to become the "most important" ICC event to players around the world, marking a shift from the dominance of the ODI World Cup.

According to a survey conducted by the World Cricketers Association (WCA), formerly FICA, an overwhelming 85 per cent of players viewed the 50-over World Cup as the most important in 2019, compared to 15 per cent for the T20 World Cup.

In 2024 however, those figures have changed with 50 per cent of the players considering the ODI showpiece as the most important and 35 per cent favouring its T20 equivalent.

The ongoing edition of the T20 World Cup, jointly hosted by the USA and West Indies, will conclude with the title clash between India and South Africa in Barbados on Saturday.

As per the survey done by the re-branded body, for players under 26, the inclination towards the T20 World Cup rose significantly, with 41 per cent preferring it over the 50-over World Cup at 49 per cent in 2024.

Overall, there has been a sharp increase in the popularity of the T20 format. Compared to 2019 when 82 per cent of players picked Test cricket as the most important format, it's only 48 per cent right now. As many as 30 per cent of the players picked T20 as the most important format.



India players celebrate their win against South Africa in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup final at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, on Saturday. India won by seven runs. — AP

CUP OF JOY!

India come back from the dead to emerge champions

MOSES KONDETY
BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS), JUNE 29

Team India came back from the dead to stun South Africa by seven runs and emerge champions of the T20 World Cup at the Kensington Oval here on a Super Saturday.

Brilliant bowling at the death from pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh and a breathtaking catch on the boundary by Suryakumar Yadav in the last over turned the game around for the champions after they were down and almost out after 15 overs — South Africa needed 30 at run-a-ball with six wickets in hand and looked set to hunt down India's 176 for 7.

Bumrah conceded four runs in the 16th over and just two in the 18th which also fetched the wicket of Marco Jansen while Arshdeep gave away four in the penultimate over to tighten the

screws. Then, with South Africa needing 16 runs off the last over bowled by Hardik Pandya, SKY turned a certain six into a controlled catch to get rid of the dangerous David Miller (21) and put the opposition on the mat. They could not get up and eventually limped to 169 for 8.

Heinrich Klaasen had taken the game away with his 27-ball 52 before India pulled it back. Quinton de Kock (39) and Tristan Stubbs (31) were the other run-getters for South Africa, who will continue to carry the 'Chokers' tag that has been around their necks for a long time.

Earlier, India posted the highest total in a T20 World Cup final thanks to a steady 76 by opener Virat Kohli, a valuable 47 from Axar Patel and their innings-stabilising 72-run partnership for the fourth wicket after the team had slipped to 34 for 3 in the fifth over.

SCOREBOARD

India: Rohit Sharma c Klaasen b Maharaj 9, Virat Kohli c Rabada b Jansen 76, Rishabh Pant c de Kock b Maharaj 0, Suryakumar Yadav c Klaasen b Rabada 3, Axar Patel run out (de Kock) 47, Shivam Dube c Miller b Nortje 27, Hardik Pandya not out 5, Ravindra Jadeja c Maharaj b Nortje 2. Extras (w-6, nb-1) 7. **Total (for 7 wickets in 20 overs) 176.**
Fall of wickets: 1-23, 2-23, 3-34, 4-106, 5-163, 6-174, 7-176.
Bowling: Marco Jansen 4-0-49-1, Keshav Maharaj 3-0-23-2, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-36-1, Aiden Markram 2-0-16-0, Anrich Nortje 4-0-26-2, Tabraiz Shamsi 3-0-26-0.

South Africa: Reeza Hendricks b Bumrah 4, Quinton de Kock c Kuldeep Yadav b Arshdeep Singh 39, Aiden Markram c Pant b Arshdeep Singh 4, Tristan Stubbs b Patel 31, Heinrich Klaasen c Pant b Pandya 52, David Miller c Yadav b Pandya 21, Marco Jansen b Bumrah 2, Keshav Maharaj not out 2, Kagiso Rabada c Yadav b Pandya 4, Anrich Nortje not out 1. Extras (b-1, lb-4, nb-1, w-3) 9. **Total (for 8 wickets in 20 overs) 169.**
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-12, 3-70, 4-106, 5-151, 6-156, 7-161, 8-168.
Bowling: Arshdeep Singh 4-0-20-2, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-18-2, Axar Patel 4-0-49-1, Kuldeep Yadav 4-0-45-0, Hardik Pandya 3-0-20-3, Ravindra Jadeja 1-0-12-0.

They began well though. Kohli drove on either side of the wicket to pick three boundaries in the first over bowled by left-arm pacer Jansen as the Blues took 15 off the opening

over. From the other end, Rohit cut and reverse swept Keshav Maharaj for successive boundaries but was out, caught brilliantly by Klaasen at square leg

as he tried to sweep the left-arm spinner. India 23 for 1. Two balls later, Rishabh Pant fell for a duck, top edging Keshav Maharaj to de Kock behind the stumps. Another brilliant catch by Klaasen, running to his left at fine leg, saw the departure of Suryakumar Yadav (3) and put India in trouble.

At the end of Powerplay, India were 45 for 3, their slowest since the Super Eight stage in the tournament.

India's 50 came up in the eighth over, in 43 balls and included seven fours. Soon, Axar Patel lifted Markram into the stands for the first six of the game. Next over, he carted Maharaj out of the ground.

Axar also brought up India's 100, with a six over long-on off pacer Kagiso Rabada on the first ball of an eventful 14th over, in which he got run out courtesy a direct hit at the non-striker's end by wicket-keeper de Kock. Axar's 31-ball innings

was decorated with four sixes and a boundary.

Next man Shivam Dube did not let the wicket affect him, launching Jansen into the stands. He then stung Shamsi to the midwicket boundary. The left-hander contributed a quick 27 to the total and was involved in a 57-run stand for the fifth wicket with Kohli.

Kohli got to his half-century in 48 balls with just four boundaries. Soon, he upped the tempo, hitting Rabada for a six and a four in the 18th over. The former captain was out in the penultimate over while trying to hit Jansen out of the ground, only for Rabada to pull off the catch on the boundary.

Dube followed his long-standing partner with two balls left in the innings, caught by David Miller off pacer Anrich Nortje, who was the best South African bowler on show with 2 for 26 from his four overs. It was not enough.

England seek spark against
Slovakia to take advantage

Gelsenkirchen (Germany), June 29: England manager Gareth Southgate has pinned expectation for the festering unease among his side's travelling support but demand on the Three Lions to deliver at Euro 2024 has only risen after landing in the soft side of the draw.

Southgate's men begin what they hope will be a road to Berlin for the final on July 14 against Slovakia in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday.

A rematch of the Euro 2020 final with Italy or Switzerland would then await in the quarters, while Austria, Turkey, the Netherlands or Romania are potential semifinal opponents.

There has been little in England's performances in Germany so far to justify

their hype as pre-tournament favourites.

But with Germany, France, Spain and Portugal all on the other side of the draw, the pressure has intensified on a richly-talented squad to finally start performing as a team.

"If people are being negative, it's only because they expect a lot from you, which is a positive thing," said Newcastle winger Anthony Gordon, who could be one of the changes Southgate turns to.

"If we want that to stop, we just need to perform and give people what they want to see."

Despite topping Group 'C', England have managed only two goals in their opening three games.

The quartet of Phil Foden, Jude Bellingham, Bukayo

Saka and Harry Kane combined for 114 goals in club football in the 2023/24 campaign.

But together they have been a disjointed attacking unit that Southgate is under huge pressure to shake up in Gelsenkirchen.

Foden has rejoined the squad after flying back home to attend the birth of his third child.

However, his lack of time on the training field this week may mean the Premier League's player of the year is the fall guy to try and balance the attack.

England's lack of width on the left has been exposed by Southgate having no natural left-back available due to Luke Shaw's injury and Foden's tendency to drift inside.

India post record-breaking total

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, JUNE 29

In an absorbing day of Test cricket, South Africa displayed remarkable resilience to post 236 for four in 72 overs on day two of the one-off Test against India at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium.

Despite the daunting challenge posed by a red-soil surface offering significant assistance to spinners, the Proteas stitched crucial partnerships to stay alive in the contest. South Africa trail by 367 runs with two days to go.

India had earlier continued their dominance with the bat, becoming the first team to breach the 600-run mark in women's Test cricket as they declared their first innings at an imposing 603 for six in the morning.

This milestone surpassed Australia's previous record of 575 for 9 declared against South Africa earlier this year. Middle-order batter Marizanne Kapp, unbeaten on a gritty 69 off 125



India's Sneha Rana (right) celebrates the wicket of South Africa batter Anneke Bosch on the second day of a one-off Test in Chennai on Saturday. — PTI

balls, was the cornerstone of South Africa's fight-back. The 34-year-old forged a vital 93-run partnership for the third wicket with Sune Luus, whose dogged resistance shone through her knock of 65 off 164 balls. Luus's determination was eventually undone by off-spinner

Deepti Sharma, who trapped her in front of the stumps.

The Indian spin attack, led by Sneha Rana, posed a constant threat. Rana was the most successful bowler of the day, dismissing both South African openers, Laura Wolvaardt and Anneke Bosch, before

removing Delmi Tucker for a duck. The uneven bounce and challenging pitch conditions made life difficult for the South African batters, but they displayed great intent and fought tooth and nail.

India's desperation for a breakthrough was evident as they employed as many as seven bowlers, including skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana. Despite a couple of missed chances, the Indian bowlers kept probing.

Acknowledging the challenge posed by the conditions, Kapp said their approach was straightforward yet effective. "The conditions are something you cannot train for back home in South Africa. The plan was very simple: to cover the stumps when it was straight and defend solidly and then capitalise on the freebies," she said.

Brief scores (Day 2): South Africa 236/4 in 72 overs (Marizanne Kapp 69 not out, Sune Luus 65; Sneha Rana 3/61) vs India 603/6 declared.

MALVIKA SHOCKS
KRISTY TO ENTER
US OPEN SEMIS

Fort Worth (US), June 29: India's Malvika Bansod stunned Scotland's Kristy Gilmour in a thrilling three-game match to advance to the women's singles semifinals of the US Open Super 300 badminton tournament here.

The 22-year-old from Nagpur, ranked 49th, registered a 10-21, 21-15, 21-10 win over Kristy, a 2014 Commonwealth Games silver medallist.

In men's singles, Priyanshu Rajawat produced a good show but couldn't get past fourth seed Lei Lan Xi of China, losing 21-15, 11-21, 18-21 in a quarter-final match that lasted just over an hour.

Second seed Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand lost 17-21, 21-17, 19-21 to Japanese sixth seed Rui Hirokami and Yuna Kato to also end their campaign in the last eight round.

— PTI