

IN BRIEF

Driver, aide held for stealing ₹48L cashew

New Delhi: A truck driver and his helper have been arrested here for allegedly stealing around 6,000 kilograms of cashew kernels worth ₹48 lakh, officials said on Tuesday. The accused have been identified as truck driver Mohammad Sabir (24) and his helper Mohammad Faizan (32), they said. The police said the complainant Alok Bhatia on July 7 reported that he had booked a lorry to pick up 6,000 kg of cashew kernels worth ₹48 lakh from a plant located at Lawrence Road which was supposed to be delivered to Haldiram Marketing Private Limited in Badarpur. "The goods were loaded into the truck, however, the driver and the cleaner did not reach the spot and even turned off their mobile phones," additional deputy commissioner of police Sandhya Swamy said. Based on Mr Bhatia's complaint, an FIR was registered and an investigation was taken up, Mr Swamy said. Analysing CCTV footage of the route taken by the accused, the police traced the duo and nabbed them from the Adarsh Nagar area, the additional DCP said.

Man kills friend after row in Gurgaon, held

Gurgaon: A 32-year-old man was killed allegedly by his friend with a cricket bat in the new Palam Vihar area, the police said on Tuesday. The police identified the deceased as Bhoop Singh, a native of Fatehabad district, they said. According to the complaint filed by Mr Singh's brother, the incident occurred Monday night when Singh and his friend Anish (24) were drinking together in a house nearby. The complainant and his wife heard some noise and reached the house to find Singh lying on the floor and Anish holding the cricket bat, the police said. Upon receiving the information, the police reached the spot and rushed Singh to the hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. Based on Singh's brother's complaint, an FIR was registered at the Bajghera police station, and Anish was arrested on Tuesday morning. — PTI

Bill scam: Discoms caution consumers

New Delhi: As the cases of cyber fraud incidents targeting electricity consumers have been reported in the capital city, power discoms have urged consumers to exercise caution and follow safety tips. Power discoms have said that they never ask consumers for their bank or credit/debit card details, CVV number or OTP. "They (fraudsters) send messages claiming overdue payments and urging people to click on dubious links or call unfamiliar numbers. These links often lead to malware-infected websites, while the phone calls connect you to imposters posing as official representatives," a discom official said.

BAGLESS DAYS IN SCHOOLS: CENTRE REVIEWS RULES

New Delhi: The Union education ministry on Tuesday reviewed the NCERT guidelines for the implementation of bagless days in schools. PSS Central Institute of Vocational Education (PSS-CIVE), a unit of the NCERT, had developed comprehensive guidelines for implementing bagless days and make learning in schools more joyful, experiential and stress-free for students. "Various suggestions were discussed during the meeting, including sensitising students about the local ecology, teaching them to test water purity, recognising local flora and fauna, and visiting local monuments. Based on this review, PSSCIVE will further fine-tune and finalise its guidelines," said an official. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 had recommended that all students in grades 6-8 participate in a 10-day bagless period. During this time, students will intern with local skill experts and engage in activities outside of traditional school settings. This initiative aims to help students develop an appreciation for the larger ecosystem in which their school is embedded, the policy had suggested.

■ 'Stump and stem of cut trees were being removed from place'

Panel visits Ridge, alleges cover up to hide tree felling

AVINASH PRABHAKAR
JHA
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The fact-finding committee of the Delhi government on Tuesday visited Satbari in southern Ridge area, where 1,100 trees were allegedly felled without proper permission and claimed that work is on to cover up the illegal tree felling. The committee comprises three city ministers — Saurabh Bharadwaj, Atishi, and Imran Hussain.

During the visit, minister Saurabh Bharadwaj claimed "the stump and stem of the cut trees were being removed from the place to keep a lid on the whole thing". He alleged that the DDA is conspiring to uproot them completely and put a layer of soil here. Highlighting that hundreds of trees have been cut in the name of widening the road, he said a completely new road has



The area at Saarc Chowk, Satbari Chhattarpur, in New Delhi on Tuesday.

been built from the middle of the 'Satbari' forest area to SAARC Chowk.

"Despite the Supreme Court's ban, the DDA is continuously working here. On one side of this road are farmhouses of big millionaires and on the other side there is a dense forest. But instead of taking the land of the farmhouses to widen the road, thousands of trees were cut from the Ridge area",

said the minister. He further said the land of the nearby farmhouses could have been acquired to build the road but, instead, trees in the forested area were cut down. He claimed that the farmhouses and their owners have greatly benefited from this and the possibility of a big scam in this is evident.

He said that it was necessary to get permission from the apex court before

cutting the trees, but in February, the DDA cut the trees without taking permission.

Meanwhile, Atishi said that it is even more worrying that the officers are hiding the facts. "The Supreme Court also made this remark and asked the officers what is being hidden. The Delhi government's fact-finding committee has also found that the officers are constantly making excuses, not submitting papers and not attending meetings. This clearly shows that they are being ordered from above and an attempt is being made to hide the facts", she said.

City minister further informed that the committee will present the report before the Supreme Court.

"We hope that whoever has done wrong, whoever has allowed illegal cutting of trees, strict action should be taken against them," she said.

BJP draws ambitious Delhi poll plan

All set to launch 2 campaigns across city to woo women, youngsters

SHASHI BHUSHAN
and BHASKAR HARI
SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

In an attempt to end its 26-year exile from power in the national capital, the Delhi BJP is all set to launch two massive campaigns to enrol around 2 lakh women and youngsters across the city.

While one campaign is aimed at enrolling youths, the other is focused on women. A decision in this regard has been taken in the Delhi BJP extended state executive meeting held on Sunday.

Sources said, "Two campaigns — One Booth, 10 Youths and Ek Booth, Panch Sakhi — with a

focus to enrol new youth and female members in the party, who are not politically associated with any party, has been planned in each polling booth in the city."

A party insider explained that 'one booth, 10 youth' is to induct over 1 lakh youngsters into the party through the campaign. The Delhi BJP Yuva Morcha will induct 10 new youths in each polling booth in the city.

Sources said that the 'One Booth, 10 Youth' campaign will be launched soon and over 1.3 lakh members will be inducted into the party in the next few months in the run-up to next year's Delhi Assembly polls.

"There are around 13,800

▶ A PARTY insider explained that 'one booth, 10 youth' is to induct over 1 lakh youngsters into the party through campaign. Delhi BJP Yuva Morcha will induct 10 new youths in each polling booth in the city.

polling booths in the national capital. Our youth wing workers will induct at least 10 new members at each polling booth," a Delhi BJP insider said.

Similarly, the Delhi BJP Mahila Morcha will induct over 65,000 females, with five females from every booth through the 'Ek Booth, Panch Sakhi' campaign.

Since 2015, women and youngsters have been voting for the AAP in the state elections. Through this move, the BJP is trying to woo the core vote bank of the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

The AAP, which has been sweeping the Assembly elections in Delhi since 2015, has put BJP on a sticky wicket.

Despite sweeping the Lok Sabha polls in 2014 and 2019, the BJP failed to get seats in double digits in the Assembly polls held in 2015 and 2020.

After winning all seven seats in Delhi for the third consecutive time, the BJP is now striving to emerge victorious in the 2025 Assembly polls.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

SC says no open court hearing of petitions

RAKESH K. SINGH
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to allow the open court hearing of pleas seeking review of the 2023 judgment that declined legal recognition to same-sex marriage.

A five-judge bench comprising the CJI and Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Hima Kohli, B.V. Nagarathna, and P.S. Narasimha is slated to consider in chambers the pleas seeking review of the judgment on July 10.

It was on October 17 last year that a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud had refused to accord legal sanction to same-sex marriage, holding that there was "no unqualified right" to marriage with the exception of those that are recognised by law.

The apex court, however, had made a strong pitch for the rights of queer people so they do not face discrimination in accessing goods and services that are available to others, safe houses known as 'Garima Greh' in all districts to provide shelter to members of the community facing harassment and violence, and dedicated hotline numbers which they could use in case of trouble.

On Tuesday, senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and N.K. Kaul mentioned the matter and urged the CJI to hear the review petitions in an open court.

To this, the CJI said these are the Constitution bench review matters which are listed in chambers.

According to the convention, the review pleas are considered in chambers by the judges.

HC junks PIL against Dalai Lama in kissing controversy

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The Delhi high court on Tuesday dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) over the alleged molestation of a boy by the Dalai Lama, observing that the Tibetan spiritual leader was "being playful" and had already apologised last year for the incident.

A video clip emerged last year which showed the Dalai Lama purportedly kissing a boy on his lips and asking him to "suck his tongue."

The incident had sparked outrage on social media.

Subsequently, his office put out a statement in April 2023 which said he "wishes to apologise to the boy and his family, as well as his many friends across the world, for the hurt his words may have caused," adding that he regretted the incident.

The petitioner, 'Confederation of NGOs,' urged the court to pass directions to the authorities to take cognisance of



Children play during rains in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PTI

Morning showers in Delhi clog roads, hit traffic badly

BJP demands all-party meet on monsoon preparedness

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

Heavy rain in parts of the national capital on Tuesday led to waterlogging in key areas and set traffic out of gear as commuters struggled to reach their destinations.

The public works department (PWD) said that until afternoon, it received 22 calls regarding waterlogging and around three to four complaints of uprooted trees.

The Spicejet airline said all departures and arrivals in Delhi and their consequential flights may get affected due to bad weather and asked passengers to keep a check on their flight status.

"Movement of traffic has been restricted at Azad Market underpass in the carriageway from Azad Market towards Shastri Nagar due to waterlogging," the Delhi traffic police said on X.

In another post, the police said the traffic movement was affected on the Windsor Palace roundabout in front of Ashoka Road from C-Hexagon due



Traffic jam at ITO after the heavy downpour in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

to damage to the sewerage pipeline.

"Traffic is affected on Rohtak Road in both the carriageways from Rajdhani Park towards Mundka and vice-versa due to waterlogging. Kindly plan your journey accordingly," the police said on their X handle.

The rain also hit traffic movement on M.B. Road in both the carriageways from Khanpur T-point towards Hamdard T-point and vice-versa, according to the police.

Commuters also took to X to share their ordeal. One of the commuters

said the traffic was massive on the Delhi-Meerut expressway near Sarai Kale Khan.

Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP demanded that the AAP government call an all-party meeting on monsoon preparedness and desilting of drains after some parts of the national capital faced waterlogging.

"The city government should call an all-party meeting within 24 hours on the cleaning of drains and monsoon preparedness or be ready to face a protest," Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said in a press conference.

Man rapes colleague in hotel; nabbed

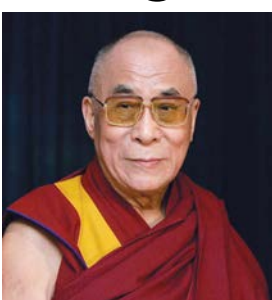
AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

A 24-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly raping his colleague last month in a hotel in the Nangloi area here, the police said on Tuesday. The accused, identified as Arun, a resident of the Baprola Vihar area in Delhi, worked as a supervisor of the victim, they added.

According to the police, a case of rape was registered at the Nangloi police station on June 9 by the woman.

She told the police that she worked at an office in Sector-7 in Rohini under the supervision of the accused.

The complainant alleged that the accused in June took her to a hotel in Nangloi where he raped her, deputy commissioner of police (outer) Jimmy Chiram said.



Dalai Lama

respondent (the Dalai Lama) ...If the video is seen in its overall perspective, it can be said that respondent no. 4 (the Dalai Lama) was trying to be playful and was trying to humour the child."

The court also took "judicial notice" of the Dalai Lama's already expressed apology to those who may have been offended by his actions.

The incident was reported on February 28, 2023, when the Dalai Lama met 120 college graduates and members of the M3M Foundation at the Tsiglagkhang temple in McLeodganj, Dharamsala. The boy was reportedly accompanied by his parents.

The petitioner's counsel stated that the petitioner had reached out to authorities such as the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) but did not receive a response.

The council also said this would "normalise kissing of children on the lips."

SC pulls up Centre govt for failing to fill PwD vacancies

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The Supreme Court has ordered the appointment of a 100 percent visually impaired candidate, who cleared the civil services examination (CSE) in 2009, within three months.

A bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka and Pankaj Mishal said there is a "gross default" on the part of the Union of India in promptly implementing the provisions of the PwD Act, 1995.

The apex court said: "Unfortunately, in this case, at all stages, the appellant has taken a stand which defeats the very object of enacting laws for the benefit of persons with disability. If the appellant had implemented the Persons With Disabilities (Equal

▶ SC MADE it clear that these directions have been issued as a one-time measure in exercise of jurisdiction of this Court under Article 142 of the Constitution

Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, in its true letter and spirit, respondent no.1 (visually impaired candidate) would not have been forced to run from pillar to post to get justice."

The top court directed that cases of respondent no.1 (Mr Srivastava) and 10 other candidates belonging to category VI, who were above him in the merit list of CSE-2008, shall be considered for appointment against the backlog vacancies of PwD candidates either in IRS (IT) or in

other service/branch. The top court said: "Necessary action of giving appointments shall be taken within a period of three months from today. The appointments will be made prospectively. The appointees will not be entitled to the arrears of salary and the benefit of seniority, etc. Only for the purposes of retirement benefits, their services shall be counted from the date on which the last candidate of the VI category in CSE-2008 was given an appointment."

The apex court made it clear that these directions have been issued as a one-time measure in the exercise of the jurisdiction of this Court under Article 142 of the Constitution of India, and the same shall not be treated as a precedent.

SHORT TAKES

IIT-Jodhpur launches BTech studies in Hindi

New Delhi: IIT-Jodhpur on Tuesday announced it will offer BTech courses in Hindi from the new academic session to help students who face challenges due to limited English proficiency. IIT-BHU was the first Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) to introduce Hindi as the medium of instruction for BTech courses. "The senate in its recent meeting approved the proposal to teach courses in Hindi and English. The senate noted that IIT-Jodhpur, being at the forefront of technology, science, humanities, and management, is expected to impart education in the native language to help the students who face challenges in learning because of inadequacy in English proficiency," IIT-Jodhpur said in an official statement. "The institute will start with teaching BTech first-year courses in both English and Hindi. — PTI

Maha to rename 7 local train stations

Mumbai: Both Houses of the Maharashtra Legislature on Tuesday unanimously passed a proposal to request the Central government to rename seven local railway stations in Mumbai. As per the proposal, Marine Lines railway station will be called Mumbadevi, Charni Road will be named as Girgaon, while Cotton Green will be named as Kala Chowki. Other stations also include Dockyard Road (Majhgaon), Curry Road (Lalbagh), Sandhurst Road (Dongri) and King's Circle (Tirthankar Parshvanath). Meanwhile, senior Congress legislator Dr Nitin Raut demanded in the legislative Assembly to rename Dadar station as Chaityabhoomi. Maharashtra Cabinet minister Dada Bhuse moved the proposal in the Council earlier in the day.

Centre extends ban on Sikhs for Justice

New Delhi: The Union home ministry has extended the ban imposed on pro-Khalistan group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) for five years for its anti-India activities. In a notification issued on Tuesday, the home ministry said the SFJ was declared a banned organisation five years ago under the UAPA for its anti-national activities. The SFJ continues to involve in anti-national and subversive activities in Punjab and elsewhere and intended to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India, it said. The ministry said the SFJ is encouraging and aiding the activities for secession of a part of the Indian territory from the Union of India and supporting separatist groups fighting for this purpose in India and elsewhere by indulging in activities and articulations intended to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India. — PTI

TMC's GHOSH SAYS WB BJP PICK TRIED TO GIVE HIM BRIBE

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JULY 9

Ahead of the Assembly bypolls in four West Bengal seats, TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh accused Manikata BJP candidate Kalyan Choubey of attempting to influence him to sabotage the ruling party's prospects. Mr Ghosh alleged, "Mr Choubey called me at around 11:30 pm on July 7, requesting my help in the polls, despite knowing I'm the TMC convenor for the Manikata bypoll. He wanted me to undermine my party, aware of his party's likely defeat." Mr Ghosh further claimed that Mr Choubey, also the All India Football Federation president, offered him a significant post in sports at the state or national level, which he described as a bribe. Mr Ghosh played an audio recording of their conversation for the media and condemned the offer. Mr Choubey admitted to making the call but denied offering a bribe, stating, "I sought help, i.e., votes, from many people who know me, but I never offered any bribe." He also mentioned that Mr Ghosh had expressed interest in joining the BJP weeks ago.



Kunal Ghosh

■ 'Disappointment to see leader of the world's largest democracy hug world's most bloody criminal in Moscow'

Modi-Putin meet a blow to peace: Zelenskyy

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

Slamming the bonhomie between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a day when a Russian missile, Ukraine said, hit country's largest children's hospital, killing 37 people including children, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday termed it "a huge disappointment" and a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's bloodiest criminal in Moscow on such a day. Meanwhile, Ukraine on Tuesday said Indian diplomats were among envoys of over 30 countries and international organisations taken to the children's hospital at Okhmatdyt that was allegedly struck by Russian missiles. Meanwhile, the United States, too, is also closely watching PM Modi's visit to Moscow.

The Ukrainian President also said on X, "Ukraine today, 37 people were killed — three of whom were children —

After visit to Russia, PM leaves for Austria

Moscow: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday departed for Austria after a fruitful two-day visit to Russia during which the two countries discussed ways to further shore up bilateral cooperation in sectors such as energy, trade, manufacturing and fertilisers. — PTI

and 170 were injured, including 13 children, as a result of Russia's brutal missile strike. A Russian missile struck the largest children's hospital in Ukraine, targeting young cancer patients. Many were buried under the rubble."

The Ukrainian foreign ministry on Tuesday said, "On July 8, 2024 on the commission by Ukrainian foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba, the deputy minister Yevhen Perebyinis, together with 33 heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Ukraine, visited one of Ukraine's largest children's hospitals Okhmatdyt, which was heavily damaged by a Russian missile strike. The delegation of foreign ambassadors had the

opportunity to see the consequences of the barbaric Russian missile strike on a medical facility where civilians, including children, were being treated for cancer and other serious diseases. Yevhen Perebyinis called on representatives of diplomatic missions and international organisations to respond decisively to this horrific war crime and to make every effort to strengthen Ukraine's air defense. Minister of internal affairs Ihor Klymenko and Director of Okhmatdyt Volodymyr Zhovniir were present at the site to inform foreign diplomats about the consequences of Russian terror."

It added, "The delegation included heads and representatives of diplomatic missions from the EU, Nato, UNHCR, UNDP, Unicef, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Austria, Canada, France, Greece, India, Indonesia, Japan, Italy, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, North Macedonia, Poland, the Holy See, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Turkey, Vietnam, and the United Kingdom."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to pay homage at the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" in Moscow on Tuesday. External affairs minister S. Jaishankar is also seen. — PTI

Russia's top civilian award to Modi for 'fostering ties'

Moscow, July 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on Tuesday officially conferred the 'Order of St Andrew the Apostle' award by Russian President Vladimir Putin for his contribution to fostering bilateral ties between the two countries. In a special ceremony in St. Andrew Hall in the Kremlin, President Putin conferred the award on Prime Minister Modi. The award was announced in 2019.

Prime Minister Modi is the first Indian leader to be conferred with this award, which was established in 1698 by Tsar Peter the Great in honour of Saint Andrew, the first apostle of Jesus and patron saint of Russia.

While accepting the award, Mr Modi dedicated it to the people of India and to the traditional bonds of friendship between India and Russia. He further stated that the recognition illuminates the special and privileged



Russian President Vladimir Putin awards Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the 'Order of St Andrew the Apostle' award in Moscow on Tuesday. — PTI

strategic partnership between the two countries, said a statement issued by the ministry of external affairs.

"I am heartily grateful to you for conferring me with the highest civilian honour of Russia. This honour is not just mine, this is an honour of 140 crore Indians. This is an honour of the centuries-

old and deep friendship and mutual trust between India and Russia," Mr Modi said after receiving the award.

The PM said under President Putin's leadership, India-Russia relations have strengthened in all directions and have scaled new heights.

"The foundation of strategic ties between the two nations that you had laid has only further strengthened with the passing of time. Our mutual cooperation, based on people-to-people partnership, is becoming the hope and guarantee of a better future of our people," he added.

Later in a post on X, Mr Modi said, "Honoured to receive the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle. I dedicate it to the people of India."

Earlier, President Putin congratulated Mr Modi for the highest Russian award and wished him good health, success and all the best. — PTI

India to open consulates in Kazan, Yekaterinburg

Moscow, July 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday announced that India has decided to open two new consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg cities of Russia in a bid to further boost travel and trade with the country. India currently has two consulates in Russia at St Petersburg and Vladivostok.

The Prime Minister made the announcement of the opening of new consulates at Kazan and Yekaterinburg while addressing the Indian diaspora here during his two-day visit to Russia.

"I want to share some good news with you all. We

have decided to open new consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg. This will enhance travel and business trade," Mr Modi said. Yekaterinburg is Russia's fourth largest city which has emerged as an important economic centre. The city had hosted four Fifa World Cup matches in 2018 when the sporting event was held in Russia.

Located on the confluence of the Volga and Kazanka rivers, Kazan is a cultural and educational hub and an emerging economic centre in Russia. Russia will also host the BRICS Summit in October in Kazan. — PTI

Modi visits photo pavilion dedicated to India & Russia

Moscow, July 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said energy is an important pillar of cooperation between India and Russia and New Delhi is eager to further cement ties in this sector with Moscow as he visited the Rosatom Pavilion along with President Vladimir Putin here. Mr Modi witnessed a photo exhibition dedicated to India-Russia cooperation in the field of civil nuclear energy at the Rosatom Pavilion at VDNKh, inaugurated in November 2023. It is one of the largest exhibitions in the history of scientific and technological developments. — PTI

Jairam seeks action on Modi for remark on Hamid Ansari

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has sought breach of privilege proceedings against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Rajya Sabha for allegedly making "derogatory" remarks against former Chairman of the Rajya Sabha Hamid Ansari.

In his letter to Rajya Sabha Chairman Dhankhar, Ramesh also alleged that no Prime Minister has ever attacked a former speaker of Lok Sabha or chairman of Rajya Sabha in the manner in which Mr Modi has done.

"I wish to bring to your notice a serious incident of breach of privilege and contempt of the House on the part of the Prime Minister. On July 2, 2024, the PM while replying to the discussion on the motion of thanks on the President's address in Lok Sabha inter alia stated: 'No matter how many numbers they claim, when we came in 2014, our strength in the Rajya Sabha was very low, and the Chair's inclination was somewhat on the other side,'" the Congress leader said.

Notwithstanding the fact that the prime minister did not specifically took the name of Ansari, needless to state that these "derogatory remarks" were attributed to the former Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Mr Ramesh said in his letter to Mr Dhankhar, who is also the vice-president.

"The accusation attributed to Dr Hamid Ansari of 'leaning' towards the Opposition made by the PM is wholly unacceptable and grossly derogatory to say the least, apart from being completely false," he said.

After OBC CM, Brahmin face to lead Haryana BJP

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

Bracing up for the Haryana Assembly elections, the BJP on Tuesday appointed MLA Mohan Lal Badoli, a seasoned organisational leader associated with the RSS for over three decades, its Haryana unit president as it looks to strengthen its support base.

He replaced chief minister Nayab Saini, who continued to hold the charge following his elevation as head of the state government. Mr Badoli lost the 2024 Lok Sabha election from Sonipat to his Congress rival Satpal Brahmachari in a close contest.

In the 2019 Assembly polls, he took on the Congress in its stronghold of Rai and defeated



Mohan Lal Badoli

the party's candidate Jai Tirath and ended the Congress' winning streak in Rai by winning by a margin of 2,663 votes.

The new state BJP president was born to renowned Haryanvi poet Kali Ram Kaushik in 1963 in the village of Badoli in Sonipat district's Rai Tehsil.

A Brahmin by caste, his appointment underscores the party's efforts to consolidate its support base outside the Jat community,

most of whom are seen to be backing the Congress under former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda's leadership.

Jats are the largest caste in the northern state. Though there is no census along caste lines, they are estimated to be around 27 per cent of the state's population. Brahmins are also in sizable numbers and Mr Hooda has been wooing them as well.

With Mr Saini from the Other Backward Classes, his predecessor and current Union minister Manohar Lal Khattar hailing from the Punjabi community and the new BJP president from the Brahmin caste, the party hopes to enter the polls with a strong social coalition in its bid to repulse the challenge from the Congress.

Haryana: ED raids multiple places in 'VAT scam' case

New Delhi/Chandigarh: The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday conducted multiple searches in Haryana, including against three former state administrative service officers, as part of a money-laundering investigation linked to an alleged 'VAT scam', official sources said.

About 14 locations in the state are being raided, the sources said. Three retired Haryana state civil service officers — excise and taxation officer Ashok Sukhija and former deputy excise taxation commissioner Narendar Ranga and Gopi Chand Chaudhary — and some private persons are also being covered during the searches, they said.

Sukhija and Chaudhary were arrested by the state police last year as part of the investigation.

'Rising Muslim population': RSS-linked weekly calls for national population policy

New Delhi, July 9: An RSS-linked magazine has stressed the need to introduce a comprehensive national population control policy, pointing to a "demographic imbalance" emerging in certain areas of the country with a "significant Muslim population growth".

An editorial published in the latest edition of *Organiser Weekly* also flagged concerns over "regional imbalances" in terms of population and pitched for policy intervention, saying states from the west and south were doing "relatively better" in implementing population control measures but they "fear losing a few seats" in Parliament if the base population was changed after the Census.

Ban Muslims from selling puja items at temples: VHP to states

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

Citing incidents where Muslim shopkeepers allegedly spat in food, drinks, and other consumables before serving customers, the VHP on Tuesday urged all state governments to prevent Muslims from selling

puja items at Hindu pilgrimage sites by "concealing" their identities. The VHP asked the state to prevent such shops "so that the faith of Hindus is not hurt." The VHP further stated that Muslims running shops at religious sites and selling prasada and puja items is a matter of concern.

"Despite stabilising the population at the national level, it is not the same in all religions and regions. There is a significant Muslim population growth in certain areas, especially bordering districts," the editorial

"In a democracy, when numbers are critical regarding representation and demography decides the destiny, we must be even more cautious of this trend," the editorial said.

"Politicians like Rahul Gandhi can afford to insult Hindu sentiments now and then. (West Bengal chief minister) Mamata (Banerjee) can play the blatant Muslim card even to accept the atrocities on women by the Islamists, and Dravidian parties can take pride in abusing Sanatan Dharma only because of their confidence in the consolidation of the so-called minority vote bank developed with the population imbalance," it charged. — PTI

Rahul meets Kirti Chakra awardee's family in Rae Bareilly

Agniveer not appropriate for Army: Kin

Rae Bareilly/Lucknow, July 9: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday met Kirti Chakra recipient Capt. Anshuman Singh's mother, who later spoke against the Agnipath scheme and urged the government not to divide the Army into two categories. Her appeal comes amid Mr Gandhi raising questions on the Agnipath scheme and claiming that defence minister Rajnath Singh "lied" in Parliament about the issue of compensation to the families of martyred Agniveers.

"I request the government not to divide the Army into two categories," the late Capt.'s mother Manju Singh told reporters after Mr Gandhi met her at a guest-house in Rae Bareilly. The four-year job role is not appropriate as Agniveers who are let go would struggle to find another suitable career, she said while raising apprehension on the Army scheme launched in 2022 for short-term recruitment of jawans.

"They (Agniveers) will be mentally and physically weak after four years after which they would be unable to pursue their studies... this is not good," she added.

Her son was posthumously conferred the Kirti

■ **CAPT. ANSHUMAN Singh** was posthumously conferred the Kirti Chakra, India's second-highest peacetime gallantry award, by President Droupadi Murmu on July 5 during an investiture ceremony. He died while rescuing people from a major fire in July last year.

Chakra, India's second-highest peacetime gallantry award, by President Droupadi Murmu on July 5 during an investiture ceremony.

Capt. Singh died while rescuing people from a major fire in July last year.

While he was returning to Delhi, Gandhi was asked about his meeting with the Army officer's mother. He said he will speak about the matter in Parliament.

Mr Gandhi had called the martyr's family, which resides in Lucknow, to meet them at the guest house.

After meeting the Congress leader, the late captain's mother told reporters that Mr Gandhi assured all possible support to their family.

"Mr Gandhi said that he requested the government to end the Agniveer scheme as it is not appropriate for the Army," she said. — PTI



Congress MP and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi interacts with a child during his visit at AIIMS in Rae Bareilly on Tuesday. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Vocational training to Maha prisoners soon

Mumbai: In a bid to bring the convicted prisoners into the mainstream of the society, Maharashtra home department is planning to impart vocational training and skills to the prisoners as a part of the correctional programme. In addition to this, the prison authorities will use tracking devices for prisoners that are on temporary release. The government will also set up welfare funds for prisoners. The state government is likely to table Maharashtra Prisons and Correctional Services (MPCS) Bill, 2024 in the ongoing monsoon session. A senior official said that the state Cabinet has given its approval to the MPCS bill, which has been sent to the Raj Bhavan for the governor's approval. If the bill is approved by the governor, it would be tabled before the state legislature this week.

3 Sikh BJP leaders get threats in Punjab

Chandigarh: Three BJP leaders from the Sikh community allegedly received threat letters delivered to the party's Punjab office in Chandigarh, one of them said. The letters were addressed to Parminder Singh Brar, Manjinder Singh Sirsa and Tajinder Singh Sran. Only the letter addressed to Mr Sran was opened but the two other letters appeared to be from the same source. Mr Sran said the letter to him was sent through registered post and received at the party office on July 1. — *PTI*

Hathras: SDM & 5 others shunted

■ **Continued from Page 1**
adequate and smooth arrangements by inviting an unexpected crowd. Nor were the conditions of permission given by the local administration for the programme followed," the SIT report said.
People associated with the organising committee have been found guilty of creating chaos, it said, adding that they engaged volunteers without proper police verification.
"The organising committee misbehaved with the police and even attempted to stop the local police from inspecting the event venue," it said.
The satsang karta or preacher (Surajpal alias Narayan Sakar Hari alias Bhole Baba) was allowed to meet the crowd without any security arrangements, it said, adding that no barricading or passage arrangements were made and when the accident occurred, the members of the organising committee fled from the spot.
The preliminary report was made after the statements of 125 people, including administrative and police officials, the general public and eyewitnesses, were recorded.
Besides, copies of news published in connection with the incident, on-site videography, photographs and video clips were taken into cognisance.

India's growth pace will push development globally: Modi

■ **Continued from Page 1**
temperature goes in the winter season in Russia...The India-Russia friendship has always been full of warmth. This relationship is built on the strong foundation of mutual trust and mutual respect."
The Prime Minister announced the decision to "open two new consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg" that "will make travel and business easier" between both nations.
In his address, Mr Modi said, "Exactly one month ago, on June 9, I took oath as the Prime Minister of India for the third time... I had vowed that in my third term, I will work with three times the strength. I will work at three times the speed."
He added: "It is also a coincidence that the number three is also present in many of the goals of the government. The goal of the government is to make India the third largest economy in the world in the third term. The goal of the government is to build 3-core houses for the poor... Create 3-core Lakhpati Didis in the third term..."
Referring to the achievements of the country, Mr said, "Today, India is the country that took Chandrayaan to the moon, where no other country could reach. Today, India is the country that is providing the most reliable model of digital transactions to the world... Today, India is the country that has the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world... When India organises successful events like the G-20 summit, the world says in one voice that India is changing. When India doubles the number of its airports in just 10 years, the world says that India is really changing..."
Taking a dig at the Opposition, Mr

Worli hit-and-run: Shiv Sena neta's son held after 3 days

12 arrested so far; accused's father on bail; driver remanded till July 11

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JULY 9

Three days after the tragic hit and run case, in which a woman died after being hit by a BMW car, allegedly driven by the son of a Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena leader, the Mumbai police finally arrested the main accused Mihir Shah on Tuesday.
Mihir (24) is the son of Rajesh Shah, a Shiv Sena leader from the Eknath Shinde camp. Rajesh Shah was arrested by the Worli police, but was released on bail on Monday.
After evading arrest for three days, Mihir Shah was arrested from Shahapur from the neighbouring Thane district, along with his mother and



Shiv Sena (Shinde) leader Rajesh Shah's family driver Rajshri Bidawat being produced before a court by Worli police in Mumbai on Tuesday.

two sisters. "We have apprehended Mihir and the process of getting him to Mumbai is underway," a police officer said.
A total of 12 people have been taken into custody so

far. After the accident, police had arrested Rajesh Shah and the vehicle driver Rajrishri Bidawat. While Rajesh Shah was released on bail on Monday, Mr Bidawat was produced

before a court on Tuesday and remanded in police custody till July 11.
The hit-and-run incident took place on July 7 near Atria Mall in Worli. The deceased woman was identified as Kaveri Nakhwa (45) — a resident of Worli Koliwada — who was heading back along with her husband Pradip Nakhaw (50) to sell fish after procuring it from Sassoon dock. The car hit the couple's scooter from behind following which the husband fell on the road but the deceased woman landed on the car's bonnet. The vehicle dragged her for over one and a half kilometres after she got stuck between the bumper and the tyre of the vehicle.

■ Security agencies to dismantle local network

‘Pak militants had local help & guidance in J&K’

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

Following the fifth terror attacks within a month in Jammu region, the security agencies have revealed that the local support, including guide to militants, have been provided by the handlers and that the militants had proper information regarding the movement of the Army convoy that was attacked on Monday in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua.
The sources in the security forces deployed in the Jammu region, said that these ultras are mostly foreign terrorists and they are getting the logistic supports from the local sleeper cells. They also said that apart from neutralizing these militants, the network of the over ground workers has to be dismantled at earliest.

▶ The agencies have decided to replicate the same strategy of Kashmir Valley to slap charges on the local workers under rigorous provision of terror acts

They also said anti-infiltration mechanism has to be strengthened.
The sources added that militants might be hiding in the nearby forest and the hilly terrain and this was not possible without the local ground support and also a guide who might have facilitated them a safe hideout.
Five Army Personnel, including a junior commissioned officer, were martyred and five were injured on Monday when heavily armed terrorists ambushed a patrolling party in the remote Machedi area in Kathua.

2 more held from Bihar in Neet case; 11 arrests in all

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/PATNA, JULY 9

The CBI has arrested two more persons, including a candidate, from Patna in connection with the alleged Neet-UG paper leak, taking the total number of arrests by the agency to 11.
Neet-UG aspirant Sunny, who hails from Nalanda, and father of another candidate Ranjit Kumar, who is from Gaya, have been arrested, the CBI sleuths said.
The CBI has, so far, arrested eight persons in Bihar Neet-UG paper leak case and one each, in connection with alleged manipulation, in Gujarat's Latur and Godhra, and one from Dehradun in connection with general conspiracy, they added.
The agency on Monday

▶ CBI HAS, so far, arrested eight persons in Bihar and one each in Gujarat's Latur and Godhra, and one from Dehradun

had arrested a person in connection with the alleged "manipulation" in the Neet-UG examination in Latur in Maharashtra, taking the total number of arrests by the agency to nine, the probe agency officials said.
The agency had earlier arrested principal and vice-principal of Oasis school in Bihar's Hazaribagh and two persons, who allegedly provided safe premises to Neet candidates where burnt question papers were recovered by Bihar police.
The Central agency, which is probing the alleged irregularities in

the medical entrance exam, has registered six FIRs. The FIR from Bihar pertains to leakage of paper, while the remaining from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra are linked to impersonation of candidates and cheating.
The CBI on Monday took into custody one Nanjunethappa G. in connection with the Latur case, which was earlier probed by the Maharashtra police. It is alleged that two government school teachers in Latur had demanded over ₹5 lakhs from Neet-UG aspirants to ensure their success in the examination, the officials said.
The agency's own FIR on a reference from the Union education ministry pertains to a "comprehensive investigation" into the alleged irregularities in the examination.

Special forces hunt terrorists involved in Kathua ambush

Anti-Pak slogans chanted in Jammu

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JULY 9

Army special forces and other fully-equipped security forces early Tuesday moved in a dense forest area of Jammu and Kashmir's frontier district Kathua to chase terrorists involved in previous day's ambush on an Army infantry combat vehicle that killed five soldiers and injured five others.
The ground forces are being supported by Army combat helicopters Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) surveillance. Within a couple of hours of the deadly attack outside Badnote village, 152 km away from the Kathua town, the Army had dropped the men of its Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) — commonly referred to as Para (SF) — in the Mandli sub-sector that falls in proximity to the place where the attack took place.
The Army, alongside the J&K police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), had earlier encircled the woods for a massive Cordon-and-Search-Operation (Caso) to take on the assailants who, after targeting the Army vehicle with grenades and assault rifles, had scamped towards the forest area to escape retaliation. The ground search teams are also using sniffer dogs and metal detectors to track down the terrorists, as quickly as possible, reports said.

▶ **SEARCH OPERATION** intensified with heavy deployment of special forces, J&K police's special operations group, teams of CRPF and other CAPFs, along with sniffer dogs and drones

A police official while speaking to this newspaper, on condition of anonymity, flagged that an intense chase in the woods is underway, and said, "We are hopeful that we will hunt them down soon".
J&K DGP Rashmi Ranjan Swain flew in the area to oversee the operation. He is being accompanied by additional director general of police (ADGP) Vijay Kumar and ADGP, Jammu range Anand Jain. Senior Army and CRPF officers, too, reached the area early Tuesday to review the ongoing operation.
The officials said the search operation that had started immediately after the deadly ambush was suspended late in the evening, owing to heavy rains. "The operation was resumed at the first light on Tuesday and intensified with the arrival of the special forces and highly trained members of the J&K police's counterinsurgency special operations group (SOG) and fully equipped teams of CRPF and other CAPFs, along with sniffer dogs, drones and combat helicopters," the officials said.

U'khand mourns their dead, calls for stern action

PRITHVIRAJ SINGH
DEHRADUN, JULY 9

Uttarakhand is peeved and in anguish on the martyrdom of its five soldiers in the terrorist attack in Jammu on Monday. Bodies of the martyrs were brought to their wailing villages on Tuesday as people demanded from the Centre to go all out against terrorists and destroy their hideouts.
Expressing their anger over the loss of five soldiers from the state, people in Uttarakhand have said that attaining martyr-

dom for the nation is pride for sons of India but it cannot be unending.
They said government cannot keep talking hollow of the action as it's come for concrete action on the ground.
"People in Uttarakhand are peeved and wailing for losing our five brave young soldiers. This government is on its third term. There has been enough talks on our part. We cant just keep losing our boys like this mere on talks of doing this and that. It's very painful. Time has come for concrete action on the ground. Although Israel has gone little far but we have to learn how they value the lives of their soldiers and people," said form IMA commandant retired Lt. Gen. Gambhir Singh Negi.
"People of Uttarakhand are wailing today seeing at the dead bodies of its boys. Even though attaining martyrdom battling for the nation is a matter of pride for soldiers but we must think over how long we can keep sacrificing our young boys," added retired Col. M.S. Rawat.

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Indian Army personnel during a counter-terror operation in Kathua district on Tuesday.

Modi asks Putin to end war in Ukraine

■ **Continued from Page 1**

between the two nations by 2030. In his remarks on bilateral ties, Mr Modi profusely thanked President Putin for Russia's support to India on the food and fertiliser security front and hailed the strength of the India-Russia partnership in an uncertain world marked by the Covid-19 pandemic and armed conflicts. He said Russian support had enabled India to protect its citizens from fuel price shocks and also ensured that Indian farmers get ample supplies of fertilisers for their crop output. Mr Modi also said the India-Russia pact on fuel supplies had played a role in stabilising the global fuel market. He also thanked the Russian President for supporting India's "Make in India" initiatives that would generate jobs for India's youth.
Talks on defence and security were also discussed, including the problem of difficulty in acquisition of Russian spare parts for the Indian armed forces, and it was decided that the supply of Russian spare parts would be expedited, the foreign secretary said. He added that the two sides had also discussed setting up joint ventures for manufacturing of at least the critical spare parts. The issue of nuclear supplies for India in the civil nuclear energy sector for the Kudankulam nuclear power plantswas also discussed.
Late on Monday evening, the two leaders had also held informal talks at a private dinner hosted by Mr Putin at his dacha in Novo-Ogaryovo near Moscow that lasted four to five hours. Before the private dinner, the two leaders rode a golf cart, with Mr Putin at the wheel, and also visited the horse stables, after which they had tea in a terrace. This reflected

the warmth and hospitality displayed by President Putin.
On the trade front, the joint statement issued late Tuesday evening said: "For eliminating the non-tariff/tariff barriers in trade, including protective measures and administrative barriers, the leaders appreciated the initial meeting in March to commence full negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement on goods between India and the Eurasian Economic Union... The sides agreed to continue cooperation on the sustainable supply of fertilisers to India on the basis of company-to-company long-term contracts within the framework of Joint India-Russia Committee on Fertilisers." The foreign secretary said the two countries had, apart from two joint statements (one was on economic cooperation in strategic areas), signed nine pacts in fields ranging from Indian investment in the Russian far east, environment, polar research to cartography, arbitration and trade promotion.
When asked at a media briefing later whether the deaths at the children's hospital in Ukraine had specifically come up for discussion, Mr Kwatra said the "deaths of innocents" (in this case) had indeed been discussed and that Mr Modi had "expressed his concern and regret (to President Putin) at the loss of lives, particularly of children". In his remarks on the conflict, Mr Modi appreciated the fact that President Putin had been extremely candid about the Russia-Ukraine conflict during the talks and said that India was ready for any cooperation that can help resolve the conflict. He added that peace initiatives are not possible as long as "guns and bombs go off".

In his remarks, Mr Modi told the Russian President that India had been suffering from the scourge of terrorism for the past four to five decades, even as he conveyed his condolences to Russia over the recent terror attacks in Moscow and Dagestan.
On connectivity, the joint statement went: "The sides expressed readiness to actively work to expand logistics links with an emphasis on increasing the capacity of infrastructure, including for implementation of the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor and the International North-South Transport Corridor, as well as using the potential of the Northern Sea Route."
On Indian investment in the Russian far east region, the joint statement said: "The sides their readiness to intensify trade and investment cooperation in the Far East and the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. In this regard, the sides welcomed the signing of the programme of India-Russia cooperation in trade, economic and investment spheres in the Russian Far East for the period from 2024-2029, as well as of cooperation principles in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation."
On defence cooperation, it said: "Both sides agreed to encourage joint manufacturing in India of spare parts, components, aggregates and other products for maintenance of Russian-origin arms and defence equipment under the Make-in-India programme through the transfer of technology and setting up of joint ventures for meeting the needs of the Indian armed forces as well as subsequent exports to third countries."

UP nurses play with monkey, suspended

Bahraich, UP: Six nurses have been suspended after a video of them playing with a monkey while on duty at a government women's hospital here went viral on social media, officials said on Tuesday.
In the viral video, some nurses are seen playing with a baby monkey while sitting on hospital chairs and wearing aprons. Dr M.M. Tripathi, chief medical superintendent of Maharishi Balark Hospital run under Maharaja Suheldev Autonomous State Medical College in Bahraich, on Tuesday said the staff nurses were posted in the the hospital's gynaecology and obstetrics department.
Taking cognisance of the viral video, Sanjay Khatri, principal of the medical college, suspended all six of them, Anjali, Kiran Singh, Aanchal Shukla, Priya Richard, Poonam Pandey and Sandhya Singh, on July 5, Mr Tripathi said. A five-member committee of doctors is investigating the matter, the doctor added. — *PTI*

Woman naxal with ₹8 lakh bounty killed

Kanker: A 30-year-old woman Naxalite, carrying a reward of ₹8 lakh on her head, was killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district. The gunfight broke out in a forest near Binagunda village under Chhote Bethiya police station limits when security personnel were conducting an anti-Naxal operation. — *PTI*

THE ASIAN AGE

10 JULY 2024

Time running out: Let PM act to end Manipur strife

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi's request to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Manipur and listen to the victims of the year-old ethnic strife comes as a reminder to the country and its leadership that the sufferings of the people of the border state are a reality and that they need a closure.

The two ethnic communities, the Meiteis and the Kuki-Zo, started attacking each other on May 3, 2023, escalating the dispute over a high court order for the inclusion of the former in the list of Scheduled Tribes. The order was rescinded later, but the damage was done in a society that carried with it elements of strife over centuries. Protests against the HC order led to clashes in which more than 200 people were killed and thousands of institutions and homes were burnt. Reports suggest up to 60,000 people have been living in refugee camps for about a year now.

Today, these clashes have not ended and the rifts of the past continue to remain wide. The government still has no account of the arms and ammunition that were looted from police stations; they appear to have found their way into the hands of miscreants. This has created a situation where people are perforce organising themselves to defend their lives and prop-

erties, something a society based on the rule of law cannot stomach. But even more scary is the spread of violence to distant areas of the state. The violence in Jiribam district bordering Assam is the latest such instance in which people in their thousands left their homes and took refuge in the neighbouring state.

In short, Manipur has become a mess, lives of people there have become uncertain and the administration has become non-existent all due to the insensitivity of the state government and the neglect of the Union government. And the impact has started being felt in neighbouring states, too.

It is in this background that the Union government must assess the appeal made by the Congress leader, who made it after visiting relief camps. That he also met the governor should not be lost sight of either, considering the need for a bipartisan approach for the troubled state. The political leadership in Delhi must realise, at least now, that they cannot wish away real issues by issuing an omerta; these have to be addressed in detail. And the more they allow them to persist, the more complicated they are going to become and the more difficult to solve.

It defies logic when Prime Minister Modi is seen as an interlocutor between the warring Israel and Palestine, and Russia and Ukraine, when he has little connect with the communities that are at each other's throats for over a year back home. Mr Modi's advisers who go to town celebrating the global stature of the Indian Prime Minister are doing a disservice to him by allowing him to ignore the strife in the border state which continues to worsen.

Don't lower guard in Kashmir

Aspate of terror attacks, including in as many as four incidents in the space of just 48 hours in Jammu & Kashmir this week, points to increased militant activity. What has added another dimension to tense situations created by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists crossing the border to sow panic is the fact that six of the attackers killed in south Kashmir were of the homegrown Hizbul-ul-Mujahidin variety.

A string of attacks, spurred since the new government took over in New Delhi on June 9 with a bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi in the Jammu division also being targeted, shows clear signs of terror being whipped up by commands from Pakistan and the locals picking up the signals to advertise their discontent.

The holding of Lok Sabha elections in J&K to which a promising proportion of the voting public turned up after years and the fact that this has led to a positive view in New Delhi of holding polls to the J&K Assembly in time to satisfy the diktat of the Supreme Court may also have led to this stepping up of terror activity.

There is no letting down of the guard so far as tackling terrorism is concerned as it has shown signs of spreading to the Jammu division also. In the last year or so, indoctrinated local malcontents as well as terrorists of Pakistani origin are said to be increasingly using the complex terrain of Jammu, where they find less concentration of an Indian Army presence, to step up attacks.

The shift of focus of terrorists from Kashmir to Jammu as well as the nearness of the monsoon season when crossing over to India are said to become somewhat easier points to how the Indian Army may have to up its counterterrorism operations if the state is to prevail in its 25-year fight against terror.

The Army may have lost close to 50 personnel in the last three years while having eliminated terrorists many times that number. The ground reality ordains that there be no complacency which can be bred by belief in the statistics of declining terror attacks that the Centre likes to put out to make its point on how the abrogation of Article 370 has changed the atmosphere in J&K.

The reality is still the lobbed grenade or sniper fire aimed mostly at symbols of state power like the soldier taking lives, though civilians are beginning to take more hits, which betrays the desperation of these brain-washed militants.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

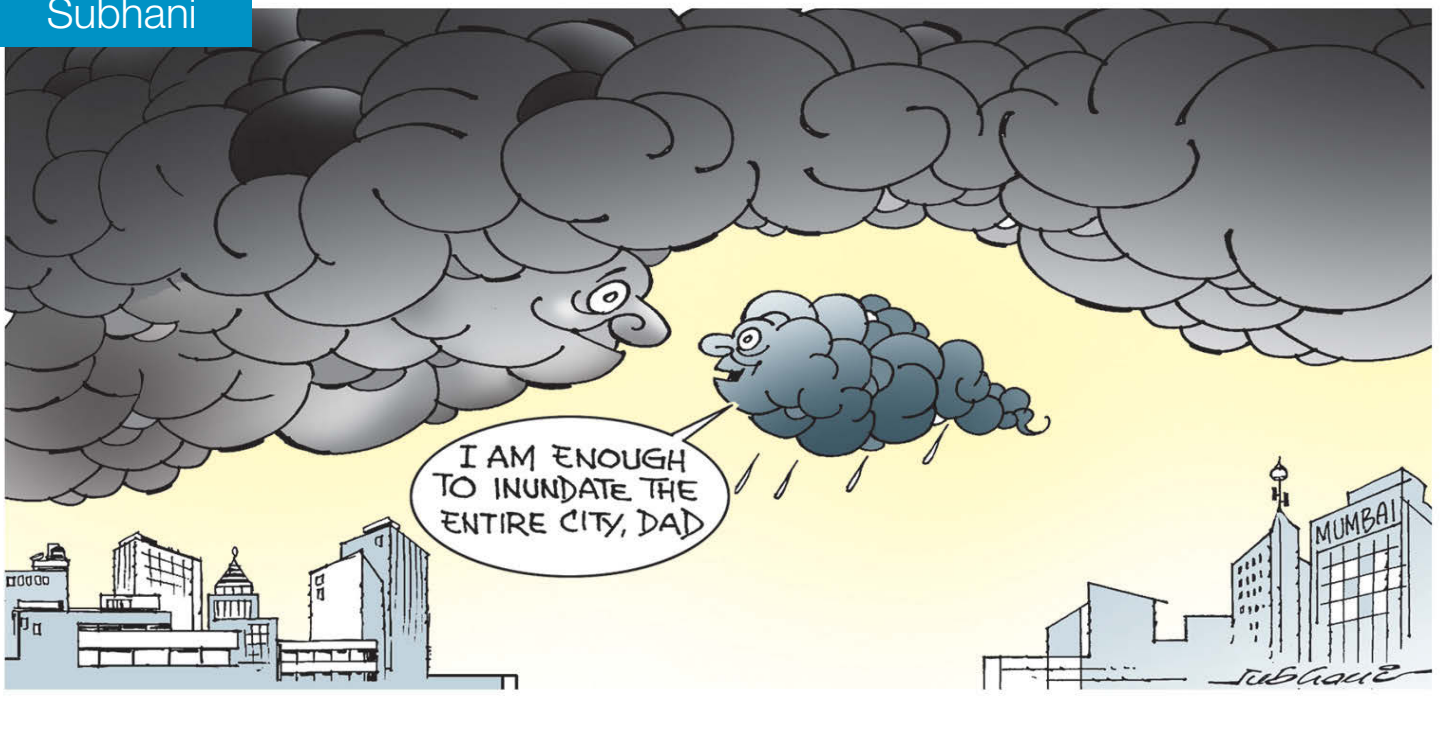
THE ASIAN AGE office is located at:
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.

London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.
RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



Delhi should not shy away from Dalai Lama contacts



Claude Arpi

At the time of India's Independence, the Dalai Lama's government in Lhasa had little experience in diplomacy; to give an example — the Tibetan Kashag (council of ministers) wrote to Mao Zedong threatening him that if it did not immediately return the areas occupied by some Chinese warlords in eastern Tibet, dire consequences would follow. A tiny David trying to bully a giant Goliath. The Great Helmsman was not bothered; he knew that the Land of Snows had no muscle to back up its threat, but the large monasteries around Lhasa were convinced that with the "truth" on their side, they could twist anyone's arm.

Soon the Western powers and India began to advise the Tibetan government not to "rock the boat"; and this became a leitmotiv.

On November 3, 1949, the Kashag sent a message to the US secretary of state, asking for support for Tibet's admission to the United Nations: "As Tibet being an independent state, we have no dangers from other [Western] foreign countries, but in view of the spread of Communism and their successes in China, there is now an imminent danger of Communist aggression towards Tibet." The Tibetan note added: "The entire world knows that Tibet and Communist China cannot have any common sympathy by reasons of religion and principles of life which are just the opposite."

As Lhasa's first objective was "to defend Tibet against impending threat of Communists," a similar appeal was sent to the Indian and British governments. However, as nobody was keen to "rock the boat", why did they try to unnecessarily infuriate the Chinese?

At the end of 1949, the British government in London reiterated that Tibet was an independent nation, though they kept it very discreet. It was however confirmed by a cable from the US ambassador in India, Loy Henderson, to Dean Acheson, the US secretary of state.

Henderson quoted a Hansard report (official record of UK parliamentary debates) of December 14, 1949, republishing a letter from Antony Eden, then Britain's foreign secretary, to Dr T.V. Soong, the Chinese foreign minister, of August 5, 1943, which noted that Tibet was a de facto independent nation. It had been agreed in the British Parliament, however, that on the ground, the boat should not be rocked.

RESOLVE TIBET ACT

These historical facts came back to mind when news from Washington flashed that the US Senate and House of Representatives had passed a "Resolve Tibet Act". This law states that the "claims made by officials of the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party of China that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times are historically inaccurate".

The Resolve Tibet Act also speaks of Beijing's current policies which "are systematically suppressing the ability of the Tibetan people to preserve their religion, culture, language, history, way of life, and environment".

Perhaps more meaningful is the following point: "US public diplomacy efforts should counter disinformation about Tibet from [Beijing], including disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama." It is not much different from the December 1949 resolution in the British Parliament.

One can only hope that the newly-elected MPs will spend significantly more time looking at what is happening on the other side of the Himalayas and will debate it in Parliament

US DELEGATION'S VISIT TO INDIA

But this time, former United States House Speaker Nancy Pelosi decided to "rock the boat". Along with other members of a US congressional delegation, she visited India and McLeodganj near Dharamsala, the seat of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile, where the US party had an audience with the Dalai Lama (and even attended a trance of the Nechung State Oracle).

In Dharamsala, Ms Pelosi really "rocked"; she targeted President Xi Jinping and praised the Dalai Lama's "enduring legacy". She said: "His Holiness the Dalai Lama, with his message of knowledge, tradition, compassion, purity of soul and love, will live a long time and his legacy will live forever. But you, the President of China, you'll be gone and nobody will give you credit for anything." Ms Pelosi added: "The Dalai Lama would not approve of my saying that when I criticise the Chinese government, he [would] say, let's pray for Nancy to rid her of her negative attitudes." The visit of Ms Pelosi also woke up the Indian government (and Dharamsala) from its slumber, which has unfortunately resulted in a large-scale emigration of Tibetans from India to the West.

Why did the American delegation visit Dharamsala just a few days before the Dalai Lama leaves for the United States for a knee surgery? Probably Washington was keen to bring India on board. And indeed, India got involved.

The next day the same delegation was received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. The Prime Minister tweeted:

"Had a very good exchange of views with friends from the US Congress in a delegation led by @RepMcCaul, Chairman of @HouseForeignGOP. Deeply value the strong bipartisan support in advancing India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership."

Though the "T" word was not mentioned, the meeting happened just one day after the rocket Ms Pelosi issued in Dharamsala. Will this trigger a change of policy vis-a-vis Tibet in Modi 3.0?

Recently, I studied the debates in the Indian Parliament to find statistics regarding the "T" word: how many times had "Tibet" been mentioned in the House. Looking at the transcripts of the Rajya Sabha debates between 2006 and 2023, I discovered with utter stupefaction that over the years, members of Parliament had used the "T" word less and less.

While between 2006 and 2012, in questions or statements, "Tibet" appears between 30 and 40 times in a year (it does not mean a debate on Tibet, just the word "Tibet" being used in relation with border or financial issues), it then begins to decline. It was used 19 and 15 times in 2014 and 2015, and thereafter less than 10 times, and merely four times in 2023.

Why this total disinterest of Indian parliamentarians for Tibet (while the Tibetan plateau remains vital for India's security, particularly in the northern sectors)? They were probably told not to "rock the boat".

This has to change. One can only hope that the newly-elected MPs will spend more time looking at what is happening on the other side of the Himalayas. The time has come for official contacts between the Indian government and the Dalai Lama, who turned 89 on July 6, to increase in frequency and intensity. This will be undoubtedly in India's interests.

Claude Arpi is Distinguished Fellow at the Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence (Delhi), and writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations

LETTERS

ENGAGE IRAN

Iran's political landscape is dominated by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but the election of Masoud Pezeshkian to a key "secular" role marks a notable shift. Pezeshkian, a former health minister with reformist views, seeks to improve relations with the West and ease civic restrictions, such as the hijab mandate. The US and G7 nations have criticised the election's fairness, but Pezeshkian's approval by the Guardian Council, after previously being rejected, indicates a larger strategy at play. As Khamenei, now 85, approaches the decision of naming a successor, it's essential to engage with Iran to stop it from moving closer to China and Russia.

Amarjeet Kumar
Hazaribagh

INSTABILITY GOOD

FRENCH VOTERS have given a fractured verdict in the legislative elections held on June 30 and July 7, resulting in a hung Parliament, less than three weeks before the Paris Olympics. Though the real surprise was that the New Popular Front came first in terms of votes secured in the second and final round of legislative elections. A large number of candidates belonging to the far left and centre right parties withdrew from the race so that they did not split the votes. An amazing coordinated effort to hold the far right even as France now enters an unstable period.

Abhijit Roy
Jamshedpur

A DYNAMIC LEADER

RAHUL GANDHI has established himself as a friend in need. He rushed to Hathras and met, hugged and consoled the family members of the victims who lost their lives in the stampede, urging "best possible" aid. Then he met a group of locomotive pilots at New Delhi Railway Station and highlighted their grievances of long working hours. Now, he went to Manipur for the third time since the ethnic violence between the Meiteis and the Kuki-Zos broke out on May 3 last year. Given his 4,000-kilometre long walk from Kanyakumari to Srinagar and his activities thereafter, he is arguably the most dynamic political leader in the world.

Sujit De
Kolkata

Anita Anand



Can election of a reformist leader lead to winds of change in Iran?

In Iran's just-concluded presidential election runoff, the two final candidates were the moderate Masoud Pezeshkian and the ultra-conservative Saeed Jalili. A total of six candidates had stood for election.

A week earlier two conservative candidates had dropped out. None of the four remaining candidates reached the 50 per cent needed for a win. Mr Pezeshkian and Mr Jalili, with the most votes, qualified for the July 6 runoff, where Mr Pezeshkian got 16.3 million votes, a clear three million more than Mr Jalili.

This is an important turn of events in Iran's leadership. Since 1979, when theocratic Islamists led by Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the monarchy of the Shah of Iran, the country has been under ultra-conservative rule. Women's rights and freedoms in and out of the home are severely restricted and, by law, they are forced to wear the head covering hijab.

Mr Pezeshkian, in his campaign, advocated limited social reforms and engagement with the West, including with the United States over the lifting of sanctions and Iran's nuclear programme. And more space for women's rights. In the presidential debate, he said he agreed with the mandatory dress code and that all women in his family wear the chador, the long, loose black cloak that covers the entire body from head to toe. But he also questioned the way women's dress codes are enforced in Iran, adding that he wouldn't tell anyone how to

dress. He said in Iran women are seen as second-class citizens, created only for the sake of the family, and this needed to change, and that women exist side by side with men in the economy, science and industry, and they should be returned to this position. This is obviously good.

While media coverage outside Iran has focused more on sanctions which affected the economy and Iran's nuclear programme during the campaigns, women too put their demands forward. The political and economic issues in Iran weigh heavily upon the citizenry and people are demoralised over the theocratic regime's control over their lives. Both civil society groups and the women's movement have increasingly become vocal on the need for change.

The women's movement has challenged the theocratic regime since it began. Women organised the first anti-theocracy demonstration on March 8, 1979, just weeks after the regime's foundation. Since then, Iranian feminists and women's rights activists have been organising and are well-positioned to lead the larger demands for democracy, justice, and freedom. Today, many are articulating the steps necessary to reach their goals for liberation.

The government naturally sees the women's movement as a threat. In the early 2000s, hardliners declared involvement in the women's movement as a threat to national security.

But women have persisted, despite the threats,

kidnappings, arrests and deaths.

Among the many campaigns started by women, in 2006 the One Million Signatures for the Repeal of Discriminatory Laws, also known as Change for Equality, was a campaign to collect one million signatures in support of changing discriminatory laws against women. The campaign looked to secure equal rights in marriage and inheritance, an end to polygamy, and stricter punishments for honour killings and other violence. Activists of the movement were attacked and jailed by the government. No surprise here. But women's protests and organising continued despite the crackdown.

Iranian women reached out to women in other Islamic countries and put before the international community what they call the "gendered apartheid" of women in their countries. These are laws that discriminated against them based on their sex, depriving them of their human rights.

In more recent times, the protests have become much more personal and individual. The number of women and girls violating the hijab laws have increased considerably. There are estimates that at least 20 per cent of Iranian women appear in public unveiled despite the State's threats of arrest and harassment.

University campuses, student and faculty organisations, labour unions, teachers' associations and arts communities are the focal points for activism and exchange. To prove solidarity and their frus-

tration with the State, the protesters have been non-violently organising nationwide strikes, sit-ins and boycotts. Many businesses, particularly restaurants and cafes, risk closure by continuing to serve "improperly" veiled women in defiance of State pressure. This public defiance is an interesting turn in the women's movement. How long can people be suppressed?

The Pezeshkian win is a good sign that it may be possible to open up a dialogue about Iran opening up to the West, talking with the United States over the nuclear programme and extending human rights to women. While analysts and sceptics point out that he may not be able to do much, given that absolute authority still resides with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, who is the highest power in the land, appointing the heads of the judiciary, military and media. He also confirms the election of the President.

But we may yet be surprised. If the election win is a sign to go by, there could be more positive surprises. In 2023, members of the Iranian feminist movement drafted and publicised an Iran Women's Bill of Rights outlining their demands for absolute gender equality and justice in 20 articles, to be included in the future constitution of Iran.

Could this become a reality?

The writer is a development and communications consultant

SHORT TAKES

ASSAULT CHARGE:
PNG LAWMAKER
TO STEP DOWN

Wellington, July 9: A minister in Papua New Guinea's government who has been charged over an alleged domestic assault in Australia will step down from his post as a court case against him unfolds, the country's Prime Minister said.

Police in the Australian state of New South Wales said that a 58-year-old man was arrested and charged after a domestic dispute in Sydney. Australian authorities did not name petroleum minister Jimmy Maladina as the accused, but his identity was widely reported by news outlets.

DISMEMBERING
OF PARTNER: MAN
HELD IN FRANCE

Bordeaux, July 9: French police have arrested a man suspected of killing and dismembering his partner and then asking an acquaintance to hide her body, prosecutors said.

The man was arrested in Paris on Monday.

The discovery was made on Saturday when police in Niort visited the flat of a 27-year-old mother of three known to be a victim of domestic abuse and who had gone missing a week earlier, a police source said.

A "man with a bag" turned up at the same time, and officers found it contained "a woman's body parts".

TAIWAN SOLDIER
LEAKS INFO TO
CHINA, INDICTED

Taipei, July 9: A Taiwanese sergeant has been indicted for allegedly photographing and leaking confidential defence information to China, prosecutors said on Tuesday.

The sergeant, surnamed Chen, worked at a navy training centre and was recruited by an unspecified number of people who "collected intelligence for mainland China" via messaging apps in 2022, said Taiwan High Prosecutors' Office.

"Between April 2022 and Feb. 2023, he photographed secret national defence information in (the counties of) Pingtung, Yilan and other places."

PORTUGAL EX-PM
COSTA'S PROBE
ONGOING, SAYS AG

Lisbon, July 9: A legal probe that led to the resignation of Portugal's former premier and soon-to-be EU Council leader is ongoing, the country's attorney general said on Monday.

Antonio Costa, 62, stepped down as premier last Nov. over a probe by the Portuguese public prosecutor's office into alleged illegalities in his government's handling of several large investment projects.

The prosecutors' case has largely fallen apart after judges at Lisbon's Court of Appeal and Portugal's ombudswoman said the probe was based on speculation, not evidence.

IN PHILIPPINES, 27
HURT AS PILE OF
FIREWORKS BLAST

Zamboanga, July 9: At least 27 people, including 19 police and other government personnel, were injured when a large pile of confiscated illegal fireworks exploded in a powerful blast in the southern Philippines, damaging houses, hotels and an international airport, officials said on Tuesday.

Two of the victims of Monday afternoon's explosion were in serious condition in a hospital in Zamboanga, where the mayor ordered a probe into why the planned controlled destruction of the fireworks by police ordnance experts turned into a massive blast.

GREECE RECORDS
HOTTEST JUNE IN
SIX DECADES

Athens, July 9: Greece recorded in 2024 its hottest June since 1960, a researcher said on Tuesday, as the Mediterranean nation braces for a season of heatwaves and wildfires.

The average temperature in Greece has increased by 2.5 degrees Celsius during the decades from 1960 to 2024, said Kostas Lagouvardos, research director at the National Observatory of Athens. "The month of June 2024 was characterised by long periods of elevated temperatures over several days, largely surpassing normal seasonal temperatures."

Ukraine targets substation, oil refinery, Army airfield in Russia

Kyiv trying to damage energy infra, Kremlin war chest by hurting oil revenue

Kyiv, July 9: Ukrainian drones targeted a military airfield, an oil refinery and substation in southern Russia, a defence source in Kyiv said on Tuesday, after Moscow reported an overnight aerial barrage.

Kyiv has stepped up cross border aerial attacks on Russia in recent months, attempting to damage energy infrastructure and the Kremlin's war chest by hurting oil revenues.

Russia has launched drone and missiles attacks that have crippled Ukrainian power plants and halved the country's generation capacity.

In an operation coordinated by Security Services of Ukraine and the country's military intelligence, drone spurred explosions at the Akhtyubinsk military airfield in Russia's Astrakhan region.

It also said there had been blasts at an electrical



A member of the Ukrainian community holds a sign reading 'Russia is terrorist' in front of St Stephens Cathedral against the Russian shelling of Ohmadyt Childrens Hospital in Kyiv, Ukraine, in Vienna. — AFP

substation in the Rostov region and an oil depot in the Volgograd region.

The source added that Ukrainian forces would

pursue more strikes on "Russian military facilities working for the war against Ukraine."

There was no response

in Moscow. The Russian defence ministry had said that its air defence systems had destroyed 38 Ukrainian drones. — AFP

Gazans flee Israeli assault, Hamas warns it could threaten truce bid

Iranian warship
Sahand goes down

Cairo, Gaza, July 9: Gaza City residents fled under Israeli fire as tanks thrust deeper into the heart of the city on Tuesday, the second day of a stepped-up military offensive that Palestinian militant group Hamas said could jeopardise ceasefire talks.

The armed wings of Hamas and its ally Islamic Jihad said its fighters battled Israeli forces in fierce clashes with machine guns, mortar fire and anti-tank missiles on Gaza City's front lines and had killed and wounded Israeli soldiers.

Israel's military did not comment on casualties but said its soldiers were engaged in close-quarter combat with militants and had taken more than 150 fighters out of action in the last week and destroyed booby-trapped buildings and explosives.

The fighting has unfolded as senior US officials were in the region to push for a ceasefire after Hamas made concessions last week. But the renewed campaign threatened talks at a crucial time and could

Dubai, July 9: The Iranian Navy frigate *Sahand* entirely sank in shallow waters on Tuesday in the port of Bandar Abbas, *Nournews* agency said, after it was briefly repositioned following its initial capsizing on Sunday.

"The *Sahand* warship, which was rebalanced on the water with great difficulty on Monday, has now sunk after the rope holding the ship broke," said *Nournews*, a news agency affiliated to the Supreme National Security Council.

bring negotiations "back to square one", Hamas quoted leader Ismail Haniyeh as saying.

Footage circulated on social media showed families packed onto donkey carts and in the backs of trucks piled with mattresses and other belongings

il. On Sunday, state media said the ship had capsized during repairs at a wharf due to water ingress and that efforts were being made to rebalance it.

The Iranian-built stealth warship was first launched in 2018 and is equipped with a flight deck for helicopters, torpedo launchers, anti-aircraft and anti-ship guns, surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles and electronic warfare capabilities according to local media. — Reuters

making their way through the city's streets to flee areas under Israeli evacuation orders.

"Gaza City is being wiped out, this is what is happening. Israel is forcing us to leave homes under fire," Um Tamer, a mother of seven, said. — Reuters

RUSSIA UNDER
FIRE AT U.N. OVER
UKRAINE STRIKES

United Nations, July 9: Russia came under fire at the UN Security Council on Tuesday for conducting "systemic attacks" on Ukraine's medical facilities after a wave of deadly strikes across the country.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said 38 people across Ukraine were killed — including four children — and 190 wounded in the wave of nearly 40 missiles that targeted several towns, cities on Monday.

"Intentionally directing attacks against a protected hospital is a war crime and perpetrators must be held to account," Joyce Msuya, acting under-secretary for humanitarian affairs, told the emergency meeting. — AFP

MAERSK VESSEL
TARGETED IN
GULF OF ADEN

Dubai, July 9: Shipping giant Maersk said one of its vessels, the *Maersk Sentosa*, reported being targeted by a flying object in the north of the Gulf of Aden early on Tuesday.

Maersk told *Reuters* that no injuries to the crew or damage to the ship or cargo were reported.

A spokesperson for the company said the ship was one of its United States-flagged vessels sailing for the subsidiary Maersk Line Limited.

The captain of an unnamed merchant ship reported a blast close to the vessel some 180 nautical miles east of Yemen's Nishtun, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said.

Houthi have been launching drone and missile attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab Strait and Gulf of Aden since Nov. — Reuters

Investigation of
Le Pen's election
financing starts

Paris, July 9: French investigators are looking into far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen's '22 campaign finances for a poll she lost to President Emmanuel Macron, prosecutors said on Tuesday.

A probe was opened on July 2 to examine allegations of embezzlement, forgery, fraud, and that a candidate on an electoral campaign accepted a loan, the Paris prosecutor's office said, giving no further details. A national commission in charge of scrutinising campaign finances called the CNC-CFP had alerted the prosecutor's office last year.

Singer and model Carla Bruni-Sarkozy was being questioned by a French judge on Tuesday in connection with an investigation into the alleged Libyan financing of her husband Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 presidential campaign, which could lead to her being charged.

Four sources familiar with the case said Bruni was brought before a Paris investigating magistrate for financial crime.

Le Pen, then head of the far-right National Rally (RN) party, had invested around 11.5 million euros (\$12.4 million) in her third bid for the presidency in '22, the second time she faced Macron in the run-off and lost to him.

In December 2022, the CNCCFP had objected to expenses linked to put-

ting up and taking down campaigning material on twelve buses, describing it as "irregular". The RN leader had appealed but then dropped the case. In her earlier campaign against Macron in 2017, the commission had rejected 8,73,576 euros in spending, most of which was a loan from then Front National before it was renamed the RN and a micro-party of her father, far-right firebrand Jean-Marie Le Pen. She did not appeal.

Last month, the country's top court upheld a conviction against the RN for overcharging the state for the campaigning kits used by its candidates during the 2012 parliamentary polls.

A court is to judge Le Pen, who was re-elected to Parliament, along with 24 other people and the party from September 30 over alleged embezzlement of EU funds linked to the salaries of MEP assistants between 2004 and 2016. — AFP

Sunak announces
shadow Cabinet

London, July 9: Rishi Sunak, the interim UK Opposition Leader until his Conservative Party finalises the process to choose his successor, has named a shadow Cabinet who will take their place in the House of Commons as the new members of Parliament begin being sworn in on Tuesday.

The 44-year-old British Indian leader had to contend with some high-profile resignations and missing Tory MPs who lost their seats in the party's worst electoral defeat in last week's general electi-

on, which the Labour Party won with a landslide.

David Cameron, a former prime minister who was parachuted into the House of Lords by Sunak to become his foreign secretary last year, has resigned and the portfolio will now be shadowed by his former deputy Andrew Mitchell.

"It's been a huge honour to serve as foreign secretary, but clearly the Conservative Party in Opposition will need to shadow the new foreign secretary from the Commons," said Cameron. — PTI

Pak SC reserves Oppn's plea for seats

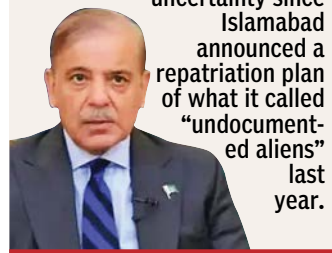
Islamabad, July 9: Pakistan's Supreme Court on Tuesday reserved its judgment in a key petition by the opposition Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) party about getting its due share in the reserved seats in Parliament and provincial assemblies. The appeal was filed after the Election Commission of Pakistan rejected the SIC's plea for awarding its share in the 70 reserved seats in the National Assembly and another 156 in the four provincial assemblies.

The SIC became prominent after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party-supported candidates joined the party after winning the elections as jailed ex-PM Imran Khan's PTI could not contest the polls and was not eligible to claim the seats reserved for women and minorities.

The seats were awarded to the winning parties based on proportional representation. The ECP had rejected the SIC plea for reserved seats as it had not contested the elections and got strength when PTI-backed independently elected candidates joined after

SHEHBAZ URGES WORLD TO
RECOGNISE BURDEN OF AF
REFUGEES' IN MEET WITH
UNHCR CHIEF

The head of the UN refugee agency Filippo Grandi on Tuesday met with Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif to discuss the situation of millions of Afghan refugees living in uncertainty since Islamabad announced a repatriation plan of what it called "undocumented aliens" last year.

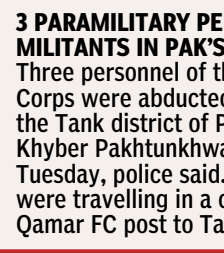


entation. The ECP had rejected the SIC plea for reserved seats as it had not contested the elections and got strength when PTI-backed independently elected candidates joined after

PAK FM TO VISIT CHINA THIS WEEK

PAK TO APPROACH CHINA TO RESTRUCTURE ITS \$15 BILLION ENERGY DEBT
Pakistan has decided to approach its all-weather ally China with a formal request to restructure its \$15 billion energy debt to help the cash-strapped country wriggle out of its financial woes. Planning minister Ahsan Iqbal and finance minister Muhammad Aurangzeb would visit China this week.

3 PARAMILITARY PERSONNEL ABDUCTED BY MILITANTS IN PAK'S KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
Three personnel of the paramilitary Frontier Corps were abducted by unknown militants in the Tank district of Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Tuesday, police said. The soldiers were travelling in a car from Sor Qamar FC post to Tank Bazar.



the elections.

Its appeal against the ECP decision in the Peshawar High Court was also turned down. Subsequently, the party challenged it in the Supreme Court. A

13-member bench headed by Chief Justice Faez Isa and comprising justices Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Munib Akhtar, Yahya Afridi, Aminuddin Khan, Jamal Mandokhail, Muham-

mad Ali Mazhar, Ayesha Malik, Athar Minallah, Syed Hasan Rizvi, Shahid Waheed, Irfan Saadat Khan and Naem Akhtar Afghan heard the case.

Chief Justice Isa announced at the conclusion of the proceedings that the panel decided to reserve the verdict for mutual consultation. He did not give any date for the announcement of the judgment, which is expected this week.

"We will see if a short judgment can be announced," the chief justice remarked while reserving the judgment. Earlier, the Supreme Court on May 6 in a major relief to the PTI, suspended the Peshawar High Court's decision about rejecting the SIC plea.

After the ruling, the ECP on May 14 suspended the victory notifications of 77 candidates who belonged to other parties and were declared successful on the reserved seats. — PTI



Alec Baldwin

BALDWIN'S
MANSLAUGHTER
TRIAL BEGINS

Santa Fe, July 9: Alec Baldwin's trial in the shooting of a cinematographer is set to begin with the selection of jurors who will be tasked with deciding whether the actor is guilty of involuntary manslaughter.

Getting chosen to serve in a trial of such a major star accused of such a major crime would be unusual even in Los Angeles or Baldwin's hometown of New York. But it will be essentially an unheard-of experience for those who are picked as jurors in Santa Fe, New Mexico, though the state has increasingly become a hub of Hollywood production.

Baldwin, 66, could get up to 18 months in prison if jurors unanimously decide he committed the felony when a revolver he was pointing at cinematographer Halya Hutchins went off, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza during a rehearsal for the Western film *Rust* in Oct. 2021 at Bonanza Creek Ranch, some 18 miles (29 km) from where the trial is being held.

Baldwin has said the gun fired accidentally after he followed instructions to point it toward Hutchins. — AP



Ariane 6 rocket moves to the launch pad at the Guiana Space Centre, French Guiana, on Tuesday. — AFP

FIRST | FLIGHT Historically, nearly half of the first new rocket launches have been failures

Europe's new Ariane 6 rocket set to blast off

Kourou, July 9: After four years of delays, Europe's new Ariane 6 rocket is set to blast off for the first time on Tuesday, carrying with it the continent's hopes of regaining independent access to space.

The inaugural flight of the European Space Agency's (ESA) most powerful rocket yet is scheduled to launch from Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana at 3pm local time (1800 GMT).

Since the last flight of the rocket's workhorse predecessor, Ariane 5, a year

ago, Europe has been unable to launch satellites or other missions into space without relying on rivals such as Elon Musk's US firm SpaceX.

So many will be nervously watching the launch, hoping it can bring an end to a difficult era for European space efforts.

Historically, nearly half of the first launches of new rockets have ended in failure. That includes Ariane 5, which exploded moments after liftoff in 1996 — but out of its 117 launches over nearly 20 years,

Teams on the ground would only be able to breathe their first sigh of relief when the first satellites have been released an hour and six minutes after liftoff.

— TONY DOS SANTOS
ESA's Kourou technical manager

only one other flight would fail.

Everyone at the Kourou launch site, which is surrounded by jungle on the South American coast, is hoping history does not

repeat for Ariane 6.

"There is an element of risk because it is a first flight, but we have tried to reduce this as much as possible, so we are confident," said Philippe Baptiste, head of France's CNES space agency.

Tony dos Santos, the ESA's Kourou technical manager, said that teams on the ground would only be able to "breathe our first sigh of relief when the first satellites have been released" an hour and six minutes after liftoff.

From dawn in Kourou,

the vast metal structure housing the rocket will be moved away, unsheathing the 56-metre (183 feet) behemoth. From 10am, its tanks will start to be filled with fuel.

From that point, any physical intervention would force the tanks to be emptied, requiring a 48-hour launch postponement, the ESA's launch base project manager Michel Rizzi said. Concealed in a nearby bunker, more than 200 experts in the launch centre will scrutinise the rocket until liftoff. — AFP

quick
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	80351.64	0.49
Nifty 50	24433.20	0.46
S&P 500*	5,572.85	0.00
Dollar (₹)	83.49	0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	106.94	0.09
Euro (₹)	90.37	0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	72,513.180	0.25
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	85.35	-0.47
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.989	0.002
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.292	0.023

* As of 8:30 PM IST

RBI's financial
inclusion index
rises to 64.2

Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) FI-Index, capturing the extent of financial inclusion across the country, rose to 64.2 in March, showing growth across all parameters. "The value of index for March 2024 stands at 64.2 compare to 60.1 in March 2023, with growth witnessed across all sub-indices," the RBI said. Improvement in FI-Index is contributed by usage dimension, reflecting deepening of financial inclusion, it added.



L&T wins order
to make parts
used in ships

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has bagged an order from Hindustan Shipyard Ltd (HSL) for part construction of two fleet support ships (FSS). Orders in the range of ₹1,000 cr to ₹2,500 cr range are classified as significant by L&T. "Precision engineering systems business vertical of L&T has won a prestigious order for part construction of two FSS from HSL, with Indian Navy being the end user of vessels," L&T said.

Michelin, DPITT
set to promote
entrepreneurship

French tyre major Michelin has tied up with the department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPITT) to launch an initiative to promote innovation and entrepreneurship. The AI Startup Challenge to be conducted from July to Sept., aims to select, mentor, and collaborate with leading AI start-ups in India. The top three start-ups will receive paid pilot projects from Michelin, with up to ₹5 lakh per project.



Inox Wind gets
order for 200MW
wind project

Inox Wind Ltd (IWL) has secured an order for a 200 MW wind energy project from a renewable C&I power producer. The project will be executed in Gujarat and Rajasthan, a company said. The order is for IWL's latest 3 MW (each) wind turbine generators and the scope comprises end-to-end turnkey execution, it said. IWL also provide post-commissioning multi-year operations and maintenance services.

BSE's m-cap hits new
high of ₹451.2 lakh cr

Adds ₹50L-cr in 3 mths after hitting ₹400L-cr on April 8

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JULY 9

With a surge in major market indices across the board buying market capitalisation of all BSE listed companies hit a new of over ₹451.27 lakh crore or \$5.41 trillion. BSE's market cap had crossed ₹400 lakh crore mark on April 8. The last ₹50 lakh crore was added in three months.

Meanwhile, Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) said total assets under management crossed ₹61.15 lakh crore as of June 30 on stock market rally and robust inflows.

Sensex Tuesday closed at a new high of 80,351.64 gaining 0.49 per cent or 391.26 points while the Nifty-50 closed at 24,433.20 points gaining 0.46 points or 112.65 points.

Market cap growth has also received a boost from new listings through IPOs.



● **LARGE CAP** stocks weight in total market capitalisation declined from 68 per cent in December 2017 to 63.6 per cent in January-June 2024 period, while contribution of mid-cap and small-cap companies has grown.

In the last 6.5 years, large cap stocks weight in total market capitalisation declined from 68 per cent in Dec. 2017 to 63.6 per cent in Jan.-June 2024 period, while contribution of mid-cap and small-cap companies has grown, said a study by Geojit Financial Services. Domestic institutions were net buyers of equities worth ₹1,416.46 crore while foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by ₹314.46 crore. Top sectoral gainers

included BSE Auto (2.17 per cent), consumer durables (2.01 per cent), FMCG (1.06 per cent), realty (1.23 per cent) and healthcare (1 per cent). "Currently, consumption sectors like FMCG and auto are leading the gains, buoyed by progress in the monsoon and kharif sowing," said Vinod Nair, head-research, Geojit Financial Services. "We expect markets to trade with a positive bias. Pharma sector is likely to remain in focus over next

few days," said Siddhartha Khemka, head, retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Meanwhile, AMFI said net inflows into equity-oriented funds crossed ₹40,608 crore in June compared to ₹34,697 crore in May.

Thematic funds category received largest inflows of ₹22,351.6 crore, followed by multi-cap fund (₹4,708.5 crore) and flexi cap fund (₹3,058.8 crore).

Hybrid schemes saw inflows of ₹8,854.74 crore. Other ETFs saw net inflow of ₹9134.06 crore while Gold ETFs saw inflows of ₹726.16 crore. Debt-oriented schemes saw outflow of over ₹1.07 lakh crore on corporate withdrawals.

"This growth is a validation of investors choosing mutual funds as a reliable investment vehicle for wealth creation," Anand Vardarajan, CBO, Tata Asset Management, said.

ONGC plans ₹2L-cr renewables spend

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, JULY 9



State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) on Tuesday said that it would invest about ₹2 lakh crore in setting up renewable energy sites and green hydrogen plants and cutting gas flaring to zero by 2038 in its carbon emission target.

The company also listed clean energy projects even as it looks to boost its hydrocarbon output to

meet India's energy needs. "ONGC will invest ₹97,000 crore by 2030 in setting up 5 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity green hydrogen, biogas, pump storage plant and offshore wind project. Another ₹65,500 cr

will be invested by 2035, mostly in a green hydrogen plant, and the remaining ₹38,000 crore by 2038, primarily in setting up 1-GW of offshore wind projects," the company said.

These projects, it said, will help the firm offset 9 million tonnes of carbon emissions it is directly (Scope-1 emissions) or indirectly (Scope-2 emissions) responsible for.

"ONGC will invest ₹5,000 crore to cut gas flaring to zero by 2030 through technological intervention. It

will also spend ₹30,000 crore in setting up 5-GW solar parks. It will add 1-GW of solar and onshore wind capacity by 2035 and 2038 at a cost of ₹5,000 crore each," it said.

ONGC will invest ₹40,000 crore by 2030 and an equal amount by 2035 to set up two 1,80,000 tonnes per annum green hydrogen and/or 1 million tonnes of green ammonia projects.

It is also looking at investing ₹20,000 crore for setting up 3 GW of pump storage plants.

Insurance cos eye robust
quarter on favourable base

FC BANKING BUREAU
MUMBAI, JULY 9

Life insurance companies are likely to report a strong quarter on the back of the favourable base of Q1FY24, post the bumper sales of non-par savings products in the March quarter.

However, increased unit-linked policies and some pressure on group term pricing would keep the profitability in check, said analysts.

On the other hand, non-life insurance sector is expected to report strong premium growth on motor, health, and com-

mercial lines of business. General insurers could see improvement in combined ratio, the measure of profitability and financial health of an insurance company. Life insurers will reset non-linked product offerings by adjusting maturi-

ty benefits to policyholders and commissions to distributors, to reflect the Surrender Regulations.

"For non-life insurance companies, claims ratio is likely to improve on multiple claims control and fraud prevention measures. Profitability of general insurance companies is expected to see decent-to-robust growth," said Avinash Singh and Mahesh Shah of Emkay Global.

Life insurers recorded a 22.9 per cent increase in new business premium collection in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.

Paramount to produce more films

Los Angeles, July 9: Independent producer David Ellison delivered a promise to a Hollywood community rocked by strikes, layoffs and cutbacks: film and TV giant Paramount Global will be increasing production once his Skydance Media takes over.

"We definitely want to make more pictures,"

Ellison, said. "There'll be an increase in television production. For the creative community it means more content and more storytelling."

That will come as a relief to the film and TV industry, which has suffered thousands of job losses as studios like Paramount, Walt Disney and Warner Bros.

Ellison, who is poised to become Paramount's chief executive officer, vows to increase the studio's slate of films for theaters, saying he'll build on Skydance's history of collaboration on movie franchises. "This deal will unify all of the key intellectual property held by both companies," he added. — *Bloomberg*

After IT, Hyd
turns hub for
BFSI activities

FC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 9



● **THE IMPACT** of BFSI's expansion is evident in Hyderabad's office leasing activity. In H1 2024, the BFSI sector emerged as one of the top three occupiers of office space, capturing an impressive 30 per cent market share.

Hyderabad is witnessing a surge in its appeal beyond the realm of the technology sector. While the city has always been a prominent IT hub, the first half of 2024 (H1 2024) has seen a remarkable influx of major banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) organisations establishing a presence in the city. This trend signifies a new shift, solidifying Hyderabad's position as a well-rounded business hub, according to government sources.

Surge in big names

Renowned names like Cigna Healthcare, Lloyds Bank, Swiss Re, MetLife, DTCand Ameripriseare just a few prominent examples. This influx reflects the growing confidence in Hyderabad's robust infrastructure, skilled workforce, overall business environment and a stable political environment.

BFSI key in office space

The impact of BFSI's expansion is evident in Hyderabad's office leasing activity. In H1 2024, the BFSI sector emerged as one of the top three occupiers of office space, capturing an impressive 30 per cent market share.

This substantial share not only highlights the sector's growth but also speaks volumes about the supportive ecosystem Hyderabad fosters.

Haven for start-ups, giants

The presence of established BFSI players is a clear indicator of the

strong foundation Hyderabad offers.

This robust ecosystem is not just beneficial for large corporations but also creates a fertile ground for burgeoning startups within the BFSI sector. With a supportive infrastructure and access to talent, Hyderabad is proving itself to be a breeding ground for innovation across the financial spectrum.

Hyderabad's journey as a BFSI hub is just beginning. The city's strategic location, coupled with its commitment to fostering a thriving business environment, is likely to attract even more major players in the coming quarters.

This influx will further strengthen Hyderabad's position as a comprehensive business destination catering to diverse industries.

Warehouse biz to
grow 13% in FY25

Mumbai, July 9: Industrial and warehouse logistics park (IWLP) supply is estimated to grow 13-14 per cent year-on-year at around 424 million square feet (msf) this fiscal in the eight primary markets, driven by strong demand, an ICRA report said on Tuesday.

It said the absorption is likely to be 47 msf in FY25 as compared to 37 msf in the previous fiscal.

The sector continues to witness a sustained demand from third-party logistics (3PL) and manufacturing sectors, which together accounted for around 65 per cent of the total leased area as of March 2024 while the share of e-commerce stood at 15 per cent.

The growth projections are based on a sample set of ICRA's rated-portfolio that includes 58 entities across 17 cities having total leasable area of around 34 msf.

It also said that among the eight primary markets, around 42 of the warehousing stock as of March was contributed by Mumbai and Delhi-NCR while the overall occupancy remained healthy at around 90 per cent.

The vacancy in the eight

India, China,
US help global
trade turn
positive in Q1

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JULY 9

India, China and the US drove the global trade growth, which turned positive in the first quarter of 2024 with the value of trade in goods increasing by around 1 per cent quarter-over-quarter and services by about 1.5 per cent, finds the UN's trade body.

According to UNCTAD, the trade growth was primarily driven by increased exports from China 9 per cent, India 7 per cent and the US 3 per cent. Europe's exports showed no growth and Africa's exports decline by 5 per cent.

In the first quarter of 2024, global trade continued its modest and gradual increase that began in the second half of 2023. Both merchandise and services showed positive Q-o-Q global trade growth in Q1 2024, with expectations of increases in Q2 2024.

This points towards a return to growth in global trade of goods in 2024, while also indicating the robust upward trend in trade in services.

Merchandise exports from India were up 7 per cent and imports into India were down 1 per cent. Similarly, services exports from India were up 3 per cent and imports were down 2 per cent.

UNCTAD also predicted a stronger positive trend for Q2 2024.



primary markets stood at 10 per cent in FY24 and is likely to remain at a similar level in FY25, the report said.

Moreover, conferring the infrastructure status to the logistics and warehousing sector, rapid expansion of new-age sectors like e-commerce and allied services, growing needs of consumption market, and the government's focus on making India a manufacturing hub have resulted in a steep uptick in warehousing demand.

"Over the last five years, the Grade A warehouse stock in the eight primary markets has grown at a CAGR of 21 per cent to 183 million sq ft in FY24 and is estimated to increase further by 19-20 per cent YoY in FY2025," said Tushar Bharambe, assistant vice president and sector head for Corporate Ratings at ICRA. — *PTI*

GMR to sponsor
Seattle Orcas

FC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JULY 9

Infra major GMR Group became the principal sponsor of the Seattle Orcas for the upcoming major league cricket (MLC) season, a release said.

The Seattle Orcas, a prominent American professional Twenty20 cricket team, has garnered attention since its announcement as one of the inaugural franchises of MLC in 2023.

With a successful track record that began with the Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League

(IPL) and expanded to include the Pro Kabaddi League's UP Yoddhas, GMR Sports, a subsidiary of GMR Group, continues to play a role in developing sporting talent and infrastructure.

As part of the sponsorship agreement, the GMR logo will adorn the arm of the Seattle Orcas' jerseys throughout the season.

"We are excited to extend our presence into the vibrant sports community of Seattle through our partnership with the Seattle Orcas," said Grandhi Kiran Kumar, corporate chairman of GMR Group.

FITNESS | TRACK

New watches measure heart rate with 30% greater accuracy

Sumsung to offer insights into metabolism

Paris, July 9: Samsung Electronics will unveil a new health-tracking feature that Apple's watches don't yet have in the latest effort to steal a lead on the US electronics leader.

Set for a grand unveiling in Paris on Wednesday, its new Galaxy Watch models will track the wearer's advanced glycation end products (AGEs) index, which may provide an indicator of metabolic health and biological age.

An Ultra edition, designed to go up against the \$799 Apple Watch Ultra 2, is also expected to debut alongside new fold-



● **BOTH APPLE** and Samsung have worked for years on developing sensors to continuously track blood sugar, which would be a breakthrough that benefits millions of diabetics.

able handsets and a Galaxy Ring health tracker.

"Samsung's ecosystem portfolio is core to attracting brand switchers in the premium segment," Canalis analyst Jack Leatham wrote ahead of the Galaxy

Unpacked event. "Bringing AI-powered health and fitness features to wearables will be important to differentiate from other ecosystem vendors and smartwatch specialists." The company's expected

to refresh its flip and larger foldable models on Wednesday.

Samsung's focus in Paris underscores how device manufacturers are exploring health monitoring features as a way to attract and retain customers.

Both Apple and Samsung have worked for years on developing sensors to continuously track blood sugar, which would be a breakthrough that benefits millions of diabetics.

AGEs readers "have existed in larger hardware and we've now miniaturised that and made it possible to measure that

through the watch for the very first time," said Hon Pak, Samsung's mobile digital health chief.

The technology is seen as a reasonable stopgap on the path to developing noninvasive continuous glucose monitoring. "We believe that consumers need something now."

To do the more sophisticated measurement, Samsung engineers added more colours of LEDs.

The new watches also measure heart rate during intensive workouts with 30 per cent greater accuracy, Samsung said ahead of its event. — *Bloomberg*

SHORT TAKES

Warner might play CT next year

Sydney: David Warner has declared his international career a “closed chapter” but at the same time, the Australian batting great won’t mind padding up in the Champions Trophy next year should he be selected, something that has been described as an “emergency option” by his ODI captain Pat Cummins. Warner retired from ODIs after Australia’s World Cup-winning run in November last year, while his last Test was against Pakistan in January. His final T20I came against India on June 24 at the shortest format’s recently-concluded global showpiece.

“Chapter closed!! It’s been an unbelievable experience to play at the highest level for such a long period. Australia was my team. The majority of my career was at the international level. It’s been an honour to be able to do this. 100+ games in all formats is my highlight,” Warner wrote in an Instagram post on Monday. “I will continue to play franchise cricket for a while, and I am also open to playing for Australia in the Champions trophy if selected,” he added. — *PTI*

Gukesh focuses on faster format

Zagreb, Croatia: World Championship challenger D. Gukesh will look to improve his billing in the faster version as Vidit Gujrathi joins him for the Superunited rapid and blitz chess tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour. Set to meet Chinese Ding Liren in Singapore from November 20th to decide the next world champion, Gukesh has repeatedly proved his superior ability in the Classical format. But when it comes to faster version, the Indian is yet to find his place amongst the world elite. The fact remains that in case of a tied result in the World Championship, there will be games under faster time control of rapid and blitz chess to determine the winner and Gukesh would like to set the record straight like American Fabiano Caruana just did a few days back in Bucharest when he won the tiebreaker by a mile winning his games against Gukesh, R. Praggnanandhaa and Alireza Firouzja of France. Gujrathi, who has got a wildcard, will be the other Indian in the fray in the \$175000 prize money tournament that will have nine rounds under rapid and 18 under blitz chess rules. — *PTI*

Nagal moves to second round

Braunschweig, Germany: India’s top ranked tennis player Sumit Nagal moved to the second round with a facile win over Brazil’s Felipe Meligeni Alves in the Braunschweig ATP challenger here on Tuesday. The Olympic-bound Nagal, seeded second, cruised to a 6-1, 6-4 win over Alves in the clay event. The world number 73 will take on Argentina’s Pedro Cachin in the round of 16 on Wednesday. The tournament will serve as preparation for the Paris Olympics, which begins later this month at the Roland Garros Stadium. Last week, Nagal had made a first round exit from Wimbledon, losing to higher-ranked Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia. Nagal is enjoying a dream season as he had also qualified for the main draw of the Australian Open earlier this year. He had stunned 31st-seeded Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan in the opening round to become the first Indian male tennis player to beat a seeded player in 35 years in a Slam. He had also qualified for the main draw of the Indian Wells Masters and Monte-Carlo Masters, the ATP 1000 events. — *PTI*

Tennis ace Kvitova gives birth to son

Prague, Czech Republic: Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova said Monday she had given birth to a son, almost exactly 10 years after winning her second title on the grass at the All England club. The 34-year-old Czech announced her pregnancy on New Year’s Day, saying she was putting her career on hold. On Monday, she posted a photo on Facebook of her hand touching the baby boy’s hand with a caption saying “Petř, 7.7.2024”. Kvitova, who married her coach Jiri Vanek in July 2023, won Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014, alongside 31 WTA singles titles. This year’s edition of the third Grand Slam of the year is into its second week. — *AFP*

BOLD & BLUES

Stronger India ready to make statement against Zimbabwe

Harare, July 9: India will find it tough to choose between Yashasvi Jaiswal’s seemingly effortless flamboyance and Abhishek Sharma’s uber-cool aggression at the top when they rejig their combination to make space for World Cup-winning squad members in the third T20 International against Zimbabwe here on Wednesday.

The arrival of Jaiswal, Sanju Samson and Shivam Dube, all of whom were part of the main team during the title-winning run last month, gives the Indian team a formidable look in the most important game of the series as visitors look to press home the advantage after the booster shot of a series-levelling 100-run victory in the second match.

Abhishek, the left-handed opener, did enough to live up to his pre-series hype with a 46-half century in only his second game and did look the part opening the innings.

However, Jaiswal, with a handsome strike rate of 161 plus in 17 T20I matches, including a hundred and four half-centuries, does have the first claim to be skipper Shubman Gill’s opening partner by virtue of being the reserve opener of the first-choice T20 team.

Although rare but it is not uncommon for batters to be dropped in the very next match after a milestone innings.

Case in point were Manoj Tiwary, immediately after his maiden ODI hundred against the West Indies in 2011, and Karun Nair after his triple hundred in a Test match against England in 2016.

But skipper Gill is unlikely to let that happen with his best friend since their U-14 days and someone who scored his first international ton with a willow borrowed from the former.

So, it could well be a case of one of the two southpaws batting at one drop. Sanju Samson, who normally bats at No. 3 for Rajasthan Royals, might come in at No.5, while Ruturaj Gaikwad, who batted at No.3, will probably drop down a place to No.4.

As far as the changes in the playing eleven are concerned, Jaiswal is likely to replace B. Sai Sudharsan, who was selected only for the first two games.

Samson will come in place of Dhruv Jurel, who had a good outing behind the stumps.

Dube, the only player who was a part of T20 World Cup playing XI, is likely to walk in to replace Riyan Parag.

— *PTI*



India look to grab lead against Zimbabwe in their third T20 match at the Harare Sports Club on Wednesday. The five-match series is poised at 1-1.

— *AP*

VASTRAKAR STARS AS INDIA LEVEL SERIES

Chennai, July 9: Pacer Pooja Vastrakar ran riot with a career-best bowling show of 4/13 before Smriti Mandhana shone with the bat with an unbeaten half century, as India thrashed South Africa by 10 wickets in the third and final women’s T20 International to level the series 1-1 here on Tuesday.

Left-arm spinner Radha Yadav also chipped in with a fine performance of 3/6 from her three over to help India shoot South Africa out for a mere 84 in 17.1 overs after opting to bowl.

India easily chased down the small target of 85 with 55 balls to spare and without losing any wicket with opening batters Mandhana and Shafali Verma remaining not out on 54 and 27 respectively.

Mandhana hit the winning runs — a six off Nadine de Klerk — as India reached 88 for no loss in 10.5 overs. This was India’s biggest victory over South Africa in this format, both in terms of wickets (10) and balls to spare (55).

— *PTI*
Brief score: South Africa Women: 84 all out in 17.1 overs (Tazmim Brits 20; Pooja Vastrakar 4/13); lost to India women: 88 for 0 in 10.5 overs (Smriti Mandhana 54 not out; Chloe Tryon 0/8).

BUMRAH, SMRITI NAMED PLAYERS OF THE MONTH

Dubai, July 9: Hero of India’s victorious T20 World Cup campaign, Jasprit Bumrah added another feather to his hat when he was on Tuesday named the ‘ICC Men’s Player of the Month for June’.

It was double delight for India as women’s team vice-captain Smriti Mandhana was also named the ‘Women’s Player of the Month’ by the global body. Mandhana won her first ICC Women’s Player of the Month after playing a starring role in India’s sweep over South Africa in the ODI series last month.

Bumrah came out on top in the men’s vote from compatriot Rohit Sharma and Rahmanullah Gurbaz of Afghanistan, while Mandhana won the women’s award by overcoming England’s Maia Bouchier and Sri Lanka’s Vishmi Gunaratne. — *PTI*

Gambhir is new head coach of men’s team

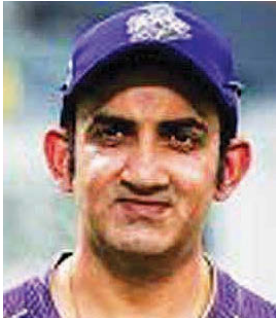
New Delhi, July 9: World Cup-winning former opener Gautam Gambhir was on Tuesday named head coach of the Indian cricket team by the BCCI, which hoped that he would bring “tenacity and leadership” to the position that was held with “remarkable success” by Rahul Dravid until recently.

The 42-year-old left-hander, who played a key role in India’s 2011 ODI World Cup triumph, was the front-runner to replace Dravid whose tenure ended with the country’s triumph in the T20 World Cup in Barbados last month.

Gambhir’s first assignment as India coach will be of tour Sri Lanka for three T20Is and as many ODIs starting July 27.

“The Board would like to thank former Head Coach, Mr Rahul Dravid for his brilliant run with the team. Team India now embarks on a journey under a new coach — Mr Gautam Gambhir,” said BCCI President Roger Binny.

The Board stated that the Cricket Advisory



Gautam Gambhir

Committee comprising Ashok Malhotra, Jatin Paranjpe and Sulakshana Naik on Tuesday unanimously recommended Gambhir.

“His appointment as Head Coach marks a new chapter for Indian cricket. His experience, dedication, and vision for the game make him the ideal candidate to guide our team forward.”

“We are confident that under his leadership, Team India will continue to excel and make the nation proud,” Binny. The sentiment was echoed by Bard secretary Jay Shah.

“The baton now passes on to Mr Gautam Gambhir who will don the

role of Head Coach from the forthcoming series in Sri Lanka,” he said.

Shah said he expects Gambhir to inspire and lead the team to new heights.

“His vision for the future of Indian cricket aligns perfectly with our goals, and we are excited about the journey ahead,” he added.

As a player, Gambhir led Kolkata Knight Riders to IPL titles in 2012 and 2014. He then proved his coaching credentials as the mentor of the KKR team that won the IPL title in 2024.

“It is an absolute honour to serve my tricolour, my people, my country,” said Gambhir.

“I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Rahul Dravid and his team of support staff for their exemplary run with the team. I am honoured and excited to take on the role of Head Coach for Team India.”

“I have always taken pride while donning the Indian jersey during my playing days and it is going to be no different when I take up this new role.” — *PTI*

Euro final beckons for English, Dutch

Dortmund (Germany), July 9: England have a first ever major tournament final on foreign soil in their sights in Wednesday’s Euro 2024 semifinal when they face a Netherlands side hitting their stride in Dortmund.

The Three Lions are aiming to match their run to the Euro 2020 final, when they lost in heartbreaking fashion on penalties to Italy at Wembley.

England’s only ever major tournament triumph also came on home soil at the 1966 World Cup.

Gareth Southgate’s men are out to end 58 years of hurt and have shown remarkable resilience, if not the quality expected of one of the pre-tournament favourites, in Germany.

Twice England have stared down a humiliating early exit to fight back against Slovakia and Switzerland to reach the last four.

Individual moments of brilliance from Jude Bellingham and Bukayo Saka have kept them alive with late equalisers before beating Slovakia in extra-



England’s Jude Bellingham (second from left) practices with Harry Kane (third from left) during a training session in Blankenhain, Germany, on Tuesday.

— *AP*

time and Switzerland on penalties.

Those were flickers of the individual talent at Southgate’s disposal and the England boss has defiantly defended his record, even though his side had failed to hit top gear at the tournament so far.

Under Southgate, England are now in a third semi-final in four major tournaments — matching the three semifinals they had reached in their history prior to his appointment eight years ago.

That has not sheltered the 53-year-old from criti-

cism. Southgate was pelted with beer cups after a 0-0 draw against Slovenia in the group stages and has faced a backlash for his perceived negative tactics with a richly-talented squad. A change of formation for the 1-1 draw against Switzerland did

result in a marginally improved display from the dramatic win over a Slovakia side ranked 45th in the world.

Southgate is expected to stick by that 3-4-2-1 system with Marc Guehi returning from suspension to replace Ezri Konsa.

The England boss has bristled at suggestions his side ended up on the kind side of the draw, away from France, Spain, Germany and Portugal.

Yet, the Dutch can count themselves even more fortunate for their path to the final after finishing third in Group ‘D’ behind France and Austria.

Ronald Koeman’s men produced their best display of the tournament in sweeping aside Romania 3-0 in the last 16 before battling back from a goal down to beat Turkey 2-1 in front of a hostile crowd in Berlin. Coming up against a raft of Premier League stars will hold little fear for the Netherlands, who boast their own impressive crop of talent playing their trade in England’s top flight. — *AFP*

WIMBLEDON | QUARTERFINALS

Medvedev stuns top seed Sinner

London, July 9: Top-seeded Jannik Sinner was treated by a trainer and left the court during the third set, seemingly surged in the fourth and then faltered again in the fifth, eventually losing to Daniil Medvedev 6-7 (7), 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), 2-6, 6-3 in the Wimbledon quarterfinals on Tuesday.

It was not immediately clear what was wrong with Sinner, who had his heart rate checked while sitting on the sideline before heading to the locker room. The 22-year-old from Italy returned after about 10 minutes and resumed playing, but lost the first game back at love.

After getting broken by 2021 U.S. Open champion Medvedev to fall behind 2-1 in the third, Sinner requested medical attention and leaned back in his chair at Centre Court.

He rested his head in a hand at one point while speaking with the trainer before they headed toward the locker room.

During a later changeover, Sinner draped a towel over his head. While he did regain his usual verve, particularly on his booming forehand, and pushed the match to a fifth set — the 36th this fortnight and the most at any Grand Slam tournament in the Open era, which dates to 1968 — Sinner could not get over the line.

VEKIC ECLIPSES SUN TO REACH SEMI

Donna Vekic shrugged off a service meltdown on Tuesday to reach the semifinals and end the

THE RESULTS

■ **Men’s quarterfinals:** Daniil Medvedev (RUS x5) bt Jannik Sinner (ITA x1) 6-7 (7/9), 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), 2-6, 6-3.

■ **Women’s quarterfinals:** Donna Vekic (CRO) bt Lulu Sun (NZL) 5-7, 6-4, 6-1.

fairytale run of New Zealand qualifier Lulu Sun.

The Croatian, ranked 37th in the world, came back from a set down under the roof on Court No. 1 to win 5-7, 6-4, 6-1 and reach the last four at a Grand Slam for the first time.

She will meet Italian seventh seed Jasmine Paolini or US 19th seed Emma Navarro for a place in Saturday’s final.

Sun, ranked 123rd in the world, drew first blood, breaking in the 11th game and serving out for the first set.

Vekic battled her way back into the contest, but her serve fell apart as she served for the second set at 5-3, producing five double faults.

The Croatian immediately regrouped and broke Vekic in the next game to take the set 6-4.

From then on it was one-way traffic as the 28-year-old made it 16 points in a row, racing into a 5-0 lead and wrapping up the match in a little over two hours. Sun, who came through the qualifying competition to reach the Wimbledon main draw, was aiming to become just the second woman from New Zealand to reach a Grand Slam semifinal. — *Agencies*



Donna Vekic of Croatia reacts after defeating Lulu Sun of New Zealand in their quarterfinal match at the Wimbledon championships in London on Tuesday. — *AP*

DJOKOVIC BLASTS FANS’ ‘DISRESPECT’ AFTER WIN

London, July 9: Novak Djokovic accused Wimbledon fans of “disrespect” in a withering on-court tirade after reaching a 60th Grand Slam quarterfinal and 15th at the All England Club on Monday.

World number two Djokovic, the seven-time champion at Wimbledon and chasing a record-setting 25th major, defeated 15th-ranked Holger Rune 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

Djokovic then launched an angry outburst at a section of Centre Court fans who constantly chanted “Rune” throughout the match and which the Serb took to be booing. “To all the fans that have had respect and stayed here tonight, I thank you from the bottom of my heart and I appreciate it,” said an angry Djokovic.

“And to all those people that have chosen to disrespect the player — in this case me — have a gooooooooood night,” he added, mocking his tormentors’ exaggerated “Ruuuuuune”. When told by the TV interviewer that some fans were shouting “Rune” rather than “boo” Djokovic hit back. “They were (booing). They were. I am not accepting it. No, no, no. I know they were cheering for Rune but that’s an excuse to also boo,” he said. “Listen, I have been on the tour for more than 20 years. I know all the tricks, I know how it works. I focus on the respectful people that pay for the ticket, and love tennis and appreciate the players.”

“I have played in much more hostile environments, trust me — you guys can’t touch me.” — *AFP*