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PM expresses shock and sadness at the tragic demise of Former Japanese PM Abe Shinzo



Announces one-day national mourning on 09 July 2022 as a mark of deep respect for Abe Shinzo

The Prime Minister has expressed shock and sadness at the tragic demise of Former Japanese PM Abe Shinzo. PM Modi also emphasised his association and friendship with Abe and remarked on the immense contribution that he made to elevate India-Japan relations to the level of a Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Modi announced one day of national mourning on 9 July 2022 as a mark of deep respect for Abe Shinzo. The Prime Minister also shared a photograph from their last meeting in Tokyo.

In a series of tweets, the Prime Minister said;

"I am shocked and saddened beyond words at the tragic demise of one of my dearest friends, Shinzo Abe. He was a towering global statesman, an outstanding leader, and a remarkable administrator. He dedicated his life to make Japan and the world a better place." "My association with Mr. Abe goes back many years. I had got to know him during my tenure as Gujarat CM and our friendship continued after I became PM. His sharp insights on

Japan's former PM Shinzo Abe Dies after being shot during speech

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has died after he was shot earlier in the city of Nara on Friday, 8 July, officials said. After being shot, Abe (67) was not showing any vital signs. He was not breathing, and his heart stopped while being airlifted to the hospital for a gunshot wound, a fire official was quoted as saying. The fire department said that the former prime minister was in a state of cardiorespiratory arrest, a term often used in Japan before a death can be confirmed by a coroner. A man, identified as Yamagami Tetsuya (41), has been arrested for attempted murder and a gun has been confiscated.



economy and global affairs always made a deep impression on me."

"During my recent visit to Japan, I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Abe again and discuss many issues. He was witty and insightful as always. Little did I know that this would be our last meeting. My heartfelt condolences to his family and the Japanese people."

Deeply saddened by demise of Abe: Rahul Gandhi

Congress Leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday expressed condolences over the demise of former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, and lauded his role in strengthening the strategic relationship between India and Japan.



"Deeply saddened by the demise of former PM of Japan, Shinzo Abe. His role in strengthening the strategic relationship between India & Japan was commendable. He leaves behind a lasting legacy in the Indo-Pacific. My condolences to his family and to the people of Japan," Gandhi said on Twitter. The 67-year-old Abe died after being shot during a campaign speech in western Japan.

Delhi CM Kejriwal condoles death of former Japan PM Shinzo Abe



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal condoled the death of former prime minister of Japan Shinzo Abe on Friday, saying the world has lost a great leader. Abe, one of the most powerful and influential figures of Japan, died after being shot during a campaign speech in western part of the country, according to NHK public television. "Saddened to know about the demise of former PM of Japan Shinzo Abe. The world has lost a great leader. May the departed soul rest in peace. My prayers are with his family and friends," Kejriwal tweeted. Abe, 67, was shot from behind minutes after he started his speech in Nara.

RBI imposes penalties on Federal Bank, Bank of India



Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said it has imposed a penalty of Rs 5.72 crore on Federal Bank for deficiencies in regulatory compliance.

A penalty of Rs 70 lakh has also been imposed on Bank of India for non-compliance with certain provisions of Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and instructions on 'compliance function in banks' issued by RBI, it said in a statement.

About Federal Bank, RBI said the bank failed to ensure that no incentive (cash or non-cash) was paid to its staff engaged in insurance broking/corporate agency services by the insurance company, according to a

separate statement. RBI had carried out Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE) of the bank with reference to its financial position as on March 31, 2020.

In another statement, RBI said a fine of Rs 7.6 lakh has been imposed on Dhani Loans and Services Limited, Gurugram for non-compliance with KYC norms.

RBI said the penalties are based on the deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the two banks and Dhani Loans and Services with their customers.

Forex reserves fall USD 5.008 bln to USD 588.314 bln

The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by USD 5.008 billion to USD 588.314 billion in the week ended July 1, according to RBI data released on Friday. In the previous week ended June 24, the reserves had increased by USD 2.734 billion to USD 593.323 billion. During the reporting week ended July 1, the fall in the foreign exchange reserves was due to a dip in Foreign Currency Assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves, and also in the gold reserves.



FCA decreased by USD 4.471 billion to USD 524.745 billion in the week ended July 1, as per the Weekly Statistical Supplement, released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday. Expressed in dollar terms, FCA includes the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

The gold reserves fell by USD 504 million to USD 40.422 billion in the reporting week. In the reporting week ended July 1, the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dropped by USD 77 million to USD 18.133 billion, RBI said. The country's reserve position with the IMF rose by USD 44 million to USD 5.014 billion in the reporting week, the data showed. Earlier this week, RBI had announced a slew of measures to enhance forex inflows to boost the rupee which has been declining against the US dollar.

Markets in Kashmir witness sluggish sales ahead of Eid

Eid is only days away but the festive buzz is missing in markets across Kashmir and sales have been sluggish due to the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation, according to traders.

There has been a steep rise in prices of essential commodities. Due to this, people are not willing to spend much on non-essential items, traders said. "There isn't much economic activity owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has wreaked havoc on the economy and people," Gulzar Ahmad, who sells ready-made garments at Lal Chowk, said on Friday.

People's purchasing power has gone down due to the successive lockdowns in the wake of the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic. Inflation has also affected them. "Inflation has



touched new heights. The prices of all essential commodities have skyrocketed, which has burned a hole in the pockets of the common man. People aren't ready to spend much on non-essential items," the businessman said.

Javed Ahmad, who runs a crockery shop, said the markets are seeing lower footfall compared to the pre-Covid period and the sales are dismal.

The festive rush is also missing at bakeries and sweet shops. "Not many such shops have seen brisk sales. If a customer comes, he usually buys less," a bakery shop owner said. Shabir Ahmad, a local resident, said due to pay cuts and job losses in the private sector, people are not interested in shopping for Eid. However, the sales of sacrificial animals remained unaffected.

Amarnath cloudburst: ITBP says at least 15 dead, 40 still missing, 15,000 stranded pilgrims evacuated



The border guarding force has also expanded its route opening and protection parties from lower part of the holy cave up to Panjtarni, he said.

The flash flood near the holy cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir swept away scores of people, killing at least 13 and swamping tents and community kitchens on Friday evening. The yatra that began on June 30 has been suspended following the tragedy and a decision on its resumption will be taken after rescue operations get over, a senior administration official had said. "Most of the yatis, who were stranded near holy cave area due to the flash flood that

occurred last evening, have been shifted to Panjtarni. The evacuation continued till 3.38 am.

"No yatri is left on the track. About 15,000 people have been safely shifted till now," the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) spokesperson said.

Rescue ops near Amarnath cave shrine continue overnight

6 pilgrims were evacuated by Army's helicopters on Saturday as rescue operations continued through the night near the holy cave shrine of Amarnath after a flash flood triggered by a cloudburst swept away scores of people, killing at least 13, officials said. The cloudburst that

A cloudburst near the holy cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir swept away scores of people, killing at least 15 and swamping tents and community kitchens on Friday evening. At least 15,000 pilgrims have been shifted to the lower base camp, while more than 40 people are still missing. Who were stranded near the Amarnath holy cave in Jammu and Kashmir due to a flash flood triggered by a cloudburst, have been shifted to the lower base camp of Panjtarni, an ITBP spokesperson said on Saturday Morning.

occurred around 5.30 pm on Friday dumped copious rain and thick streams of sludge rolled down the mountain slopes into the valley. The gushing waters hit the base camp outside the shrine in south Kashmir, damaging 25 tents and three community kitchens where the pilgrims are served food, according to officials.

Car swept off bridge in Uttarakhand, 9 dead



Nine people, mostly tourists, drowned on Friday morning when their car was swept off a bridge by an overflowing Dhela river following heavy rains at Ramnagar here, police said. The accident occurred around 5:45 am when the car was returning to Punjab, SSP Pankaj Bhatt said from the spot. The bodies have been recovered. One person, 22-year-old Nazia, a resident of Corbett Colony, was rescued alive and sent to a hospital in Ramnagar, the SSP said. As the car had a Punjab registration number, officials initially presumed it was carrying tourists from that state only. Six of those killed were women and three men, the police said. They were identified as Ashia of Corbett Colony, Ramnagar, Kavita and Jahnuvi of Patiala, Sangeeta Tamang of New Delhi's East of Kailash, Pinky of Noida, Hina of Delhi's Bhajanpura, Amandeep Singh of Punjab's Bhawanigarh, and Pawan and Iqbal of Patiala.

Punjab CM Mann gets married to doctor from Kurukshetra

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann turned groom for his wedding with a doctor from Kurukshetra at his home on Thursday.

It was a private ceremony without the usual crowds, so much a part of the big, fat Indian wedding. Though few details were available, visuals on television and Twitter showed Mann and his bride dressed in red at the Anand Karaj ceremony.

Aam Aadmi Party colleague Raghav Chadha also shared some images on Twitter showing Mann, in his regular yellow turban and a gold coloured kurta-pyjama, with party chief Arvind Kejriwal and others. Mann (48), the first chief minister of the state to get married while in office, is tying the knot with Dr



Gurpreet Kaur from Pehowa in Kurukshetra in Haryana. This is Mann's second marriage. He separated from his first wife in 2015 - they have two children, daughter Seerat Kaur (21) and son Dilshan (17). Tight security

arrangements were in place at the chief minister's home in Sector 2. Gurpreet Kaur (30) shared a picture of herself on Twitter and wrote, "Din Shagna Da Chadya (the day of marriage has arrived)".

ITBP personnel shoots himself dead in J&K's Poonch

An ITBP officer on Friday shot himself dead with his service weapon on duty in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said.

Prem Chand, who was posted as Assistant Sub-Inspector of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), shot himself at Mini-secretariat in Poonch Town, they said.

He was rushed to hospital where he was declared brought dead, they said. Police has registered a case and started investigation, they said.

National Monuments Authority recommends 2 sites associated with Dr. Ambedkar to be declared as Monuments of National Importance

National Monuments Authority has recommended two sites associated with Dr Ambedkar, the Father of Indian Constitution and a great social reformer, to be declared as Monuments of National Importance.

NMA has recommended that Sankalp Bhumi Banyan

tree campus in Vadodara, where Dr. Ambedkar had taken a resolve to eradicate untouchability on 23rd September, 1917 be declared as Monument of National Importance. This place is more than hundred years old and a witness to the beginning of social respect revolution heralded

by Dr. Ambedkar. NMA has also recommended a place in Satara (Maharashtra) where Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar received his primary education in Pratap Rao Bhosle High School to be declared as monument of National importance.

The school register still shows with pride a child student Bhim Rao's signatures in Marathi. The school, now under Zila Parishad is in a dilapidated condition.

These recommendations have been placed before MoS Culture, Arjun Ram Meghwal by the National Monuments Authority.

ED to Question Jailed Delhi Minister Satyendar Jain's Wife

The Enforcement Directorate has called Poonam Jain, the wife of jailed Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain, for questioning next week.

Satyendar Jain was arrested by the central probe agency on May 30 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) over alleged hawala transactions with a Kolkata-based firm in 2015-16. A hawala system involves two parties transacting money with local agents on their behalf without the funds passing through formal banking channels.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed a case against Jain and his family in August 2017 for alleged money laundering of up to Rs1.62 crore.

The CBI alleged Mr Jain and his family set up four shell firms - companies with no real business - to launder Rs 11.78 crore in 2011-12 and Rs 4.63 crore in 2015-16. Enforcement Directorate started its probe based on the CBI's first information report, or FIR. In April, the ED had attached assets worth Rs4.81 crore of Jain's family and of the companies

"beneficially owned and controlled" by him as part of the probe.

He is accused of laundering money through four companies allegedly linked to him. The money was used to buy land, the Enforcement Directorate said.

Jain's lawyer has earlier said the companies were not controlled by him as he had a very small share. "Companies and shareholders are separate entities. The property of the company is not considered as the property of shareholders," he said.

Mumbai : Sanjay Raut meets Sharad Pawar



MUMBAI: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday met NCP president Sharad Pawar at the latter's residence here.

Raut, who has been the target of the rebel Shiv Sena legislators, did not speak to the media. The Sena rebels have accused the Rajya Sabha member of being closer to the NCP chief than the leaders of his own party. Both Pawar and Raut were instrumental in the forma-

tion of the erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government led by Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray. The two-and-a-half-year old dispensation comprising Sena, NCP and Congress collapsed on June 29 after Thackeray resigned as the chief minister following a rebellion within his party. Rebel Sena leader Eknath Shinde took oath as the state chief minister last Thursday.

Maharashtra CM Shinde asks for expediting of SMART project

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Thursday directed the state administration to fast-track the Maharashtra Agri Business and Rural Transformation (SMART) project. Shinde and his deputy Devendra Fadnis attended a meeting to review the project with World Bank officials, an official release said. The project envisages doubling of farmers' income with participation of 19 lakh farmers across 10,000 villages.

Dalai Lama to visit Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh

The Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama will visit the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh next week. He will be in Jammu on July 14, and

Ladakh on the following day. This will be the first visit by the Buddhist leader in over two years from his abode in Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh. The visit takes place even as the Buddhist leader's



birthday on Wednesday witnessed a major celebration in Dharamshala and Delhi and greetings by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The PM Modi tweeted: "Conveyed 87th birthday greetings to His Holiness the @DalaiLama

over phone earlier today. We pray for his long life and good health." The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Jai Ram Thakur was the chief guest at the celebration organized in Dharamshala, which hosts the headquarters of the Tibetan government in exile.

Proposals for Ideal Industrial Estate at Ambala, Film City at Pinjore finalized in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

Haryana Home & Health Minister Anil Vij in a meeting with HSIIDC Managing Director Vikas Gupta and Sunil Sharma as well as senior officers of industries department in the state took decision to develop Ideal Industrial Estate at Ambala especially for the entrepreneurs having tiny and micro industrial units in the area or are willing to set up fresh manufacturing units under Start up scheme introduced by Haryana state government recently. Vij said that there are hundreds of tiny manufacturing units producing scientific goods and spare parts for scientific instruments located in thickly populated areas in Science City Ambala but failed to expand their business due to lack of facilities, support,



technical know-how and in some cases shortage of funds in spite of entrepreneurship. Vij directed HSIIDC officers to complete this project on priority bases since prosperity of the area depends upon industry and also to meet employment opportunities for the youths. Vij said, Ideal Industrial Estate will have common facility

centre, a common tool room, an exhibition hall for the display of products manufactured by industrial units situated in the complex and all other facilities at a place including Padma scheme by the government for small scale industry including provision to get loan from bank. Vij said, there is a proposal to construct premises within Estate for allot-

ment to entrepreneurs unable to construct their own building on lease basis enabling them to start production without delay. He said, there will be provision to construct sale counters in the complex for display and sale of products manufactured by the units.

Chief Minister Haryana Manohar Lal Khatter on Friday invited large number of artists from Haryana and Punjab to discuss long pending proposal for developing Film Industry for which between 60-70 acre area has already been identified at a prime location at Pinjore in Panchkula district in the state and work will start immediately. He said, proposed Film City in the area will boost entertainment activities in Haryana and adjoining Punjab and Himachal states.

BJP stages walkout from Delhi Assembly, alleging closure of government schools



BJP MLAs staged a walkout from the Delhi Assembly on Monday following a furore over alleged closure of schools by the Kejriwal dispensation.

During special mention under Rule 280, the Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri raised the issue of closure of Delhi government schools in the assembly.

Even after Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's reply,

the BJP legislators continued their protest. Later, Speaker Ram Niwas Goel ordered the marshalled out of BJP MLA Mohan Singh Bisht from the assembly. The other BJP MLAs walked out in protest. Goel said he will not take up BJP MLAs Rule 280 notices since they walked out of the House. The MLAs subsequently returned to the House.

Earlier, Delhi BJP MLA and leader of opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alleged that a Sarvodaya school in Ludlow Castle had been shut. "The government said the school has been shut with the consensus of the parents and the management of the school. The school is being converted into the Delhi Sports University," he said. Bidhuri also said the school is named after Amir Chand, a martyr.

"By closing the school, the government is disrespecting a martyr. I urge the government to not close the school," he said. Sisodia, who also holds the education portfolio, dismissed the allegations as baseless.

"This is a false allegation by Leader of Opposition. Kejriwal government believes in opening schools not closing them," he said.

Man booked for beating up dog with iron rod, attacking three others



A man in Delhi's Paschim Vihar was booked after he allegedly attacked a pet dog with an iron rod, while injuring two others who tried to protest against the attack, said the police, according to The Indian Express. The attack, which was caught on a CCTV camera, showed the man charging towards the dog which was barking at him. After striking down the dog with one blow on its head, the man hit the owner of the dog, identified as Rakshit, who tried to rescue the canine, with the rod. Seeing this, another person intervened and pulled the man away from the spot. A bloody scuffle ensued while neighbours rushed to the spot to stop the brawl.

According to the police, the accused Dharamvir Dahiya got enraged as a pet dog started barking at him, following which, he allegedly threw the dog away after lifting it by its tail. In the process, Dahiya allegedly got bit by the dog. Soon after, Dahiya followed the canine and hit it on its head with an iron rod. The police soon reached the spot, after getting a PCR call at 9:27 am on Sunday.

No major respite from muggy weather till Saturday

Delhi may get marginal relief from sultry weather on Thursday due to cloudy sky and light rain, the weather office said.

The Safdarjung Observatory, Delhi's primary weather station, recorded a minimum temperature of 30 degrees Celsius. The maximum temperature is likely to settle around 37 degrees Celsius.

Moderate rainfall on Saturday may bring the temperature down to 33 degrees Celsius, the Met office said.

Though the monsoon embraced the capital in an impressive manner on June 30, giving the first spell of heavy rainfall this season, scanty precipitation in the subsequent days have led to a gradual rise in maximum temperatures.

Safdarjung has recorded just 2.6 mm of rainfall in the last six days. It has gauged 144.3 mm of rainfall against a normal of 106.5 mm since June 1, when the monsoon season starts. Of this, 117.2 mm came in just 24 hours ending 8:30 am on July 1.

The weather department had earlier issued an orange alert for moderate rainfall on Wednesday which was later shifted to Thursday.

However, according to the latest predictions, Delhi will get only light rain during the day. Cloudy weather will bring the temperature down by a few notches, the Met office said.

Generally cloudy sky and light rain is predicted till July 13, it said.

22-year-old man stabs class 12 girl in Delhi

A class 12 girl was allegedly stabbed by a 22-year-old man following a quarrel between them in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar on Thursday, police said. The duo live nearby and have been friends for the last "two to three years", police said. The girl was on her way to school when she got into an argument with the accused following which he stabbed her with a knife, they said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Ghanshyam Bansal said the accused has been identified and would be nabbed soon. The reason behind the argument and the subsequent stabbing is not known yet as the girl is undergoing treatment at a hospital, he said.

62-yr-old priest beaten to death in Delhi

A 62-year-old priest was allegedly beaten to death by a man in northeast Delhi's Sonia Vihar area, police said on Thursday. Following the incident, the accused was assaulted by some locals and is currently in a hospital, they said. Police received information around 5.40 am on Wednesday regarding a priest, identified as Soni Ram, being beaten near Pusta in Sonia Vihar, an official said. When the police team reached the spot, they learnt that Ram, a resident of Sonia Vihar, had been shifted to JPC hospital while the accused -- Sonu Bhatt -- was assaulted by the public and taken to Trauma Centre, Civil Lines, the officer said.

Bodies of 3 youths retrieved from Yamuna in Delhi

The bodies of three youths, who had drowned in the Yamuna river in north Delhi's Burari, were retrieved on Friday morning, police said. Four people aged between 14 and 20 years had come from Loni to take bath in the river at Sonia Pushta on Thursday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (north) Sagar Singh Kalsi said. When they did not reach home in the evening, their families informed the police, he said. At the instance of one of their friends, a motorcycle and some clothes were found at the bank of the river. Search and rescue operation was started and so far three bodies have been retrieved, the DCP said, adding that the search is in progress.

Rajinder Nagar MLA takes oath of office

Newly-elected Rajinder Nagar MLA Durgesh Pathak took oath of office on the first day of the Delhi Assembly session here on Monday. Pathak, the AAP candidate, won the bypoll to the Rajinder Nagar Assembly seat after defeating BJP's Rajesh Bhatia. He was congratulated by Speaker Ram Niwas Goel after the oath taking. Goel also welcomed the supporters of Pathak, who had come to witness the Assembly proceedings. He asked them to maintain decorum and not to clap or raise slogans in the Assembly as it would disrupt the proceedings. The bypoll to the Rajinder Nagar seat was necessitated in the wake of AAP leader Raghav Chadha leaving the seat after being elected to the Rajya Sabha recently.

Delhi HC refuses to entertain PIL to direct govt to explore feasibility of confiscating black money

The Delhi High Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea seeking a direction to the Centre to ascertain the feasibility of confiscating 100 per cent black money and benami property and awarding life imprisonment to offenders in cases relating to disproportionate assets, money laundering, human and drug trafficking.

The high court noted that a similar plea was earlier filed by the same petitioner before the Supreme Court which had permitted him to make a representation to the Law Commission on the issue.

A bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad said after withdrawing the peti-



tion from the Supreme Court, it was not proper for the high court to hear it.

In case the Supreme Court had said that you go to the high court, we would have heard you. But there is specific order of the Supreme Court that you go to the Law Commission, the bench said.

When petitioner and advocate Ashwini Upadhyay urged the court to tag this petition with one of his earlier pleas,

the bench declined it saying, no, very sorry.

Thereafter, the petitioner sought to withdraw the petition saying he would approach the Supreme Court.

The writ petition is dismissed as withdrawn, the bench said.

The plea has sought to constitute an expert committee or direct the Law Commission to examine the stringent anti-corruption laws of developed countries relating to bribery, black money, benami property, tax evasion, disproportionate assets, money laundering, profiteering, hoarding, adulteration, human and drug trafficking and black marketing and prepare a comprehensive report within three months.

Man stabbed to death in road rage in east Delhi

In a case of road rage, a 20-year-old man died after he was allegedly stabbed with a pointed object outside a wine shop in east Delhi's Samaspur area, police said on Monday.

According to police, a quarrel took place on Sunday after the victim and his friend touched the accused's scooter near the wine shop.

The incident happened while they were returning after purchasing liquor, the person whom they had quarrelled with returned with an associate, and one of them struck the victim on his chest with the pointed object, fatally injuring him, the police said.

Delhi police registers case against controversial documentary Kaali'

The Delhi Police has registered a case in connection with the controversial poster of a documentary Kaali', officials said on Tuesday.

The Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operation (IFSO) unit of the Delhi Police has registered a case under Indian Penal Code sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony) and 295A (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs), a



senior police officer said. Under attack for a poster of her documentary Kaali showing the goddess smoking and holding a LGBTQ flag, filmmaker Leena Manimekalai on Monday said she will continue to use her voice fearlessly till she is alive.

Delhi HC will make efforts to make infra ready in 6 months for commercial courts

Delhi High Court was informed on Tuesday by its administrative side that all efforts will be made to ensure that infrastructure for starting 42 additional commercial courts here is ready in six months.

The counsel for the administrative side of the high court submitted that the building was under construction and once the court rooms are handed over to them, the vacant posts



of district judges (commercial) will be filled.

The submission was made in a pending petition seeking to direct the authorities to set up more commercial courts as noti-

fied by the Delhi government on April 13, 2021, to ensure speedy redressal of commercial cases instituted in the national capital.

While taking on record the statement made by the high court's counsel, a bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad disposed of the petition filed by advocate and social activist Amit Sahni and said that it will pass a detailed order later.

Mother Dairy cuts prices of soyabean, rice bran oils

Mother Dairy on Thursday said it has cut the prices of soyabean and rice bran oils by up to Rs 14 per litre, a day after the government directed edible oil firms to pass on the benefits of fall in global cooking oil prices to consumers.

Mother Dairy, which is one of the leading milk suppliers in Delhi-NCR, sells edible oils under the Dhara brand.

"Passing on the benefits of the government's intervention subsequently to the consumers, we have further reduced the MRP of Dhara Soyabean Oil and Dhara Ricebran Oil by up to Rs 14 per litre, which will be available in the market by next week," a company spokesperson told PTI.



After price cut, Dhara Refined Soyabean Oil (Poly Pack) will be available for Rs 180 per litre compared to current price of Rs 194 per litre.

In the case of Dhara Refined Ricebran Oil (Poly Pack), the price will come down to Rs 185 per litre from Rs 194 per litre.

It expects a reduction in MRP (Maximum Retail Price) of sunflower oil in the next 15-20 days.

On June 16, Mother Dairy had reduced prices of its cooking oils by up to Rs 15 per litre with softening of rates in global markets.

Very important for girls to be educated: Atishi

Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi on Wednesday said it is very important for girls to be educated, asserting that if women come forward in leadership roles, only then will the country move on the path of progress.

Speaking during an event at Bhagini Nivedita College, Atishi, who is an MLA from Kalkaji, advised the students to choose their careers wisely. She was the chief guest at the an-



nual prize distribution ceremony at the institute. She asked students to become role models for other girls who are looking up to the world for inspiration, an official statement said.

It is important that young-

sters should participate and contribute to the nation-building process, Atishi said. She said the decisions in a girl's life are often taken by other members of her family where she has not much to say. Girls should learn to make their own life decisions so that in difficult times, instead of blaming others for their circumstances, they can face them boldly with courage," she added.

One Term, One pension to combat budget deficit in Haryana



BY DR. HARVINDER KAUR

Teachers, the nation builders, doctors, the lifeline of the economy, bankers and all other workers who work in the public or private sector are not eligible for pension irrespective of their huge productive contribution to the economy, but on the other side, our lawmakers (M.P. and M.L.A.) are eligible for not only one pension but for multiple pensions. The financial security of the common men doesn't matter and this is the biggest loophole in our system. It is a big discrepancy and injustice. If councillors, MLAs, and MPs are elected even for a day, they become eligible for pension. On the other hand, the pension of government employees is very meagre. Spending of huge amounts on pension benefits to elected politicians and their families has initiated debates as recently, the newly-formed Aam Aadmi Party-led government in Punjab has implement-

ed 'one-term, one pension for the legislators.

March 3, 2022 reply to a Right to Information Act query has revealed that the centre spent a total of Rs 99 crore in 2020-21 on pensions to 2,679 former MPs, many of whom are film stars, industrialists and royals. A former MP is eligible to get a monthly pension of Rs 25,000. Additional allowances are added depending on his tenure as a Member of Parliament.

According to the current rules, if a former MP or MLA becomes a minister again, he is eligible for a pension as well as his salary as a minister. Also, if an MLA later becomes an MP, he gets the pension of both. After the death of the former member of the House, the spouse or dependents get half the pension.

The Haryana Government, as per the RTI reply, spends nearly Rs 29.5 crore annually on pensions for former MLAs and family pensions to spouses of deceased legislators. The Haryana government has to pay Rs

29.51 crores every year on the monthly and family pension of 275 former lawmakers and their family members in the state.

As per information provided by the officer-cum-superintendent of Haryana Vidhan Sabha in a reply to an application filed by a Panipat-based activist PP Kapoor under the Right to Information Act, 2005, many politicians in the state are withdrawing pensions for five to seven terms.

As per the list, Congress' senior leader and seven-times MLA Capt Ajay Singh Yadav is drawing the highest pension of Rs 2.38 lakh per month, followed by former chief minister Om Prakash Chautala's Rs 2.22 lakh. Even former chief minister late Bhajan Lal's widow, Jasma Devi is getting a family pension of Rs 99,619 besides the Rs 61,800 she is getting for being an ex-MLA.

Congress leader Randeep Surjewala is getting a monthly pension of Rs 1.68 lakh, his mother Vidya Surejewala, who is the wife of former Congress

lawmaker late Shamsher Surjewala, is also getting a family pension of Rs 87,975, and the RTI response stated.

Savitri Jindal, who is among the top richest women in the country and the mother of Indian billionaire industrialist and Congress leader Naveen Jindal, is getting a monthly pension of Rs 90,600 per month from the state assembly, revealed the information.

"The government is spending Rs 26.40 crores on the pension of 147 former MLAs and Rs 3.11 crore on the family pension of 128 lawmakers, while the current monthly pension for one term is fixed at Rs 51,800 besides a monthly allowance of Rs 10,000," the response revealed. While several former MLAs draw pensions of more than Rs 1.5 lakh. This is in a situation where there is no provision or concept of pension for private-sector employees.

The state government has given house building card advance of Rs 32 crores to 68 former and sitting lawmakers

between 2010 and 2021 and an advance of Rs 20.83 crores is due to January this year, it stated. This also included a pending recovery of Rs 9.96 crores given to the lawmakers from 2004 to 2021. Sitting BJP MP from Kurukshetra Nayab Saini had taken house building advance of Rs 60 lakh when he was an MLA in 2018, and Rs 47.20 lakh are due till January this year, it further stated.

Having a maximum number of legislators, the Chautala clan is the biggest beneficiary of the pensions. Besides, the Rs 2.22 lakh pension to OP Chautala, his elder son Ajay Chautala is also getting a pension of Rs 61,800. But in future, Chautala's younger son Abhay Chautala, Ajay Chautala's wife Naina Chautala and his grandson and deputy CM Dushyant Chautala will be new beneficiaries on the list of the pension scheme.

Similarly, the family of former CM late Bhajan Lal is also getting a total of Rs 4.14 lakh every month, besides Lal's younger son Kuldeep Bishnoi,

who is getting benefits of sitting MLA and pension benefits of being a former parliamentarian.

One minister of Haryana had taken a house building advance of Rs 36.50 lakh in 2013 and Rs 9.64 lakh is still due and former CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda had taken a car advance of Rs 20 lakh in 2016 of which, Rs 7.60 lakh is due. On the other hand state government had stopped the distribution of mustard oil under the public distribution scheme to 11.4 lakh poor families as prices of mustard oil had gone up, but there is no reduction in the pension being paid to the lawmakers. The enlightened citizens of Haryana are demanding the implementation of 'one-term, one pension in Haryana like Punjab.

Kamal Anand, a Punjab-based senior advocate and activist, said, "Most politicians call politics a service to people but why do they take such huge amounts and benefits for this service. No doubt the Punjab government's move of 'one-term, one pension is being

praised and now the lawmakers of other states should also set an example by deciding to stop monthly pension."

For both former MPs and former MLAs, even a day as a member of the House makes them eligible for the pension for the rest of their lives. Thereafter, their family members are eligible for some allowances. Also, many leaders who have served as both MPs and MLAs are eligible to draw pensions from both Houses. With the Covid-induced economic challenges and inflation ruining the poor and putting a dent in the savings of the middle class. Questions regarding the gap between the social security for politicians and that of the common man are becoming louder. The government is appealing to people to give up gas subsidies, but MLAs also elected as MPs are not ready to give up one pension. Railways have done away with concessions for senior citizens, but former MPs can travel free of cost in AC first class.

Fadnavis: Maharashtra cabinet expansion soon

A day after the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government won the trust vote in the Assembly, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the state cabinet expansion will be done soon.

Speaking to reporters at the Nagpur airport on Tuesday, Fadnavis expressed his determination towards the development of the state's Vidarbha region. "The cabinet expansion will be done soon," Fadnavis said. On his arrival to his hometown Nagpur following the formation of the new government in the state, BJP workers accorded a grand welcome to the deputy CM, who was accompanied by his wife Amruta Fadnavis.

From the airport, the BJP leader embarked on a 'jallosa yatra' (victory celebration) organised here by his supporters. Last month, Shinde



launched a rebellion against the Sena. Majority of MLAs sided with him, which led to the collapse of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government led by Uddhav Thackeray.

On June 30, Shinde was sworn in as the chief minister of Maharashtra, while Fadnavis took oath as the deputy CM. After winning the trust vote on Monday, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had said he

will need some time before he and Fadnavis discuss the allocation of cabinet portfolios.

Let us breathe properly. It was quite hectic for us (referring to political activities over the last fortnight). I and Devendra Fadnavis will sit and discuss cabinet portfolios and their allocation. We will also get the allocation vetted from national leaders of the BJP, Shinde had said.

Eknath Shinde wins floor test in Maharashtra VS

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday won the floor test in the State Assembly. In the 288-member House, 164 MLAs voted for the motion of confidence, while 99 voted against it. Speaker Rahul Narvekar announced that the trust vote has been carried by a majority vote. After the death of a Shiv Sena MLA recently, the current strength of the Assembly is reduced to 287, thus the majority mark is 144. Shinde was sworn in as CM on June 30, a day after Uddhav Thackeray quit the post. BJP's Devendra Fadnavis was sworn in as the deputy CM.



Centre directs leading Edible Oil Associations to reduce prices by Rs. 15 with immediate effect

FW DESK

Department of Food and Public Distribution in a meeting on July 6th 2022 has directed leading Edible Oil Associations to ensure reduction in the MRP of edible oils by Rs. 15/- with immediate effect.

The Centre also advised that the Centre to distributors by the manufacturers and refiners also needs to be reduced immediately so that the price drop is not diluted in any way. It was also impressed upon that whenever a reduction in price to distributors is made by the manufacturers/refiners, the benefit should be passed on to the consumers by the industry and the Department may be kept informed on regular basis. Some companies which have not reduced their prices and their MRP is higher than other brands have also been advised to reduce their prices.

During the meeting it was discussed that the international prices of imported edible oils are on a downward trend which



is a very positive picture in the edible oil scenario and, therefore, the domestic edible oil industry needs to ensure that the prices in the domestic market also drop commensurately. And, this price drop has to be passed on expeditiously to consumers without in a laggard fashion. Other issues like price data collection, Control Order on edible oils and packaging of edible oils were also discussed in this meeting.

It may be recalled that in May 2022, the Department had convened a meeting with the leading edible oil associations and according to sources, the MRP of Fortune Refined Sunflower Oil 1 litre pack had been decreased to Rs. 210 from Rs. 220 and MRP of Soyabean (Fortune) and Kachi Ghani oil 1 litre pack from Rs.

205 to Rs. 195. The reduction in oil prices came in the wake of Central Government reducing the import duty on edible oils making them cheaper. The industry was advised to ensure that the complete benefit of the reduced duty is passed on to the consumers invariably.

The edible oil prices in the international market are witnessing a dramatic fall, however, the situation in the domestic market is slightly different as the fall in the prices are gradual. The Government of India stepped in and a meeting was convened by the Department of Food and Public Distribution with the leading industry representatives including SEAI, IVPA and SOPA to discuss reduction in the retail prices of cooking oils amid a fall in the global prices. The industry informed that the global prices of different edible oils have fallen by USD 300-450 per tones in the last one month, but it takes time to reflect in the retail markets and the retail prices are expected to come down in the coming days.

PM Modi speaks at first Arun Jaitley memorial lecture



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will speak at the first 'Arun Jaitley Memorial Lecture' here on Friday in which Tharman Shanmugaratnam, a senior minister of the Singapore government, will deliver the keynote address on 'Growth through Inclusivity, Inclusivity through Growth,' the PMO said.

The event will see a panel discussion involving OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann and Arvind Panagariya, a professor at the Columbia University. The PMO said the Ministry of Finance has organised the lecture in recognition of Jaitley's invaluable contribution to the nation. A leading BJP functionary, Jaitley was the finance minister in the first Modi government. He was also a close associate of the prime minister. He died in 2019 at the age of 66.

During the event, Modi will also interact with delegates participating in the Kautilya Economic Conclave (KEC), a three-day event being organised from July 8 to 10.

Active coronavirus cases in country rise to 1,22,335 (updated on Saturday Morning)



India saw a single day rise of 18,815 new coronavirus infections, taking the tally of COVID-19 cases to 4,35,85,554, while the active cases increased to 1,22,335, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Friday. The death toll has climbed to 5,25,343 with 38 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed. The active cases comprise 0.28 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 98.51 per cent, the health ministry said. An increase of 2,878 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours. The daily positivity rate was recorded at 4.96 per cent while the weekly positivity rate was 4.09 per cent, according to the health ministry.

PM Modi inaugurates midday meal kitchen in Varanasi

In his first visit to his Varanasi constituency after the BJP won the Uttar Pradesh assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated the Akshaya Patra midday meal kitchen here.

During his visit, Modi will launch and lay foundation stone for development projects worth Rs 1,774 crore focused on improving infrastructure and ease of living, officials said.

The kitchen at the LT College has a capacity of cooking midday meals for around 1 lakh students, they said.

Reacting to the launch, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said the kitchens



should be started at all 11 places proposed during the SP regime.

"At the time of SP's rule, the Akshaya Patra Yojana was started for providing nutritious and hot food to students. In the last five years, the BJP government kept it closed. But, now fearing the anger of students

and the youth, it is compelled to start this scheme," Yadav said in a tweet in Hindi.

Ailing Lalu taken to Delhi by air ambulance

RJD president Lalu Prasad on Wednesday was taken to Delhi in an air ambulance, a couple of days after falling critically ill.

The 74-year-old former Bihar chief minister was accompanied by a team of doctors and his eldest daughter Misa Bharti, a Rajya Sabha MP who is also an MBBS. His wife Rabri Devi and younger son Tejashwi Yadav had left a few hours earlier to oversee the arrangements in the national capital.

Prasad left for Delhi at around 8.15 PM, nearly 45 minutes behind schedule. The delay was attributed to the air ambulance not reaching here in time.

Crowds were seen at the Paras hospital, where Prasad had been admitted since Monday morning, besides both sides of



the road that led to the airport which was a 15-minute drive.

At the Jai Prakash Narayan Airport, slogans in praise of the messiah of the poor rent the air as the ambulance carrying Prasad sped past the crowds, waiting for their leader despite a drizzle.

Prasad, who turned 74 last month, has been suffering from multiple ailments including renal and cardiac problems besides diabetes. On Sunday last, he had a fall and fractured his shoulder after which the affected area was bandaged.

Jagan's mother quits YSR Congress to side with daughter

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's mother YS Vijayamma on Friday resigned as honorary president of YSR Congress party to stand by her daughter Sharmila, who is now heading the YSR Telangana party in the neighbouring state.

Announcing her decision to quit, she said she would always be close to Jagan Mohan Reddy. "As a mother, I will always be close to Jagan," Vijayamma maintained, announcing her decision to quit the YSRC, at the party plenary that began here on Friday.



"Sharmila is waging a lone battle in Telangana, to carry forward her father's ideals. I have to support her. I was in a dilemma whether I could be a member of two political parties (in two states). It is difficult for me to continue as honorary president

of YSRC, Vijayamma said. "I never imagined such a situation would ever arise. I don't know why it happened, but I feel it is a decision of God," she remarked. Vijayamma said she was stepping down as YSRC honorary president to avoid any unwanted controversy over her role. For some time now there have been reports that all is not well between Jagan Mohan Reddy and his sister over property related issues. The acrimony between the two had escalated in recent times and Vijayamma has been staying away from her son.

Centre grants IP category 1 license to KFON

The Centre has accorded approval to Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON), as certified Infrastructure Provider (IP) in the telecom industry, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Thursday.

The KFON project aims at providing connections to BPL families and government offices in the state to ensure universal internet access.

Vijayan said the ambitious project will bridge the digital divide and the operations would kickstart once it gets the Internet Service Provider (ISP) license from Department of Telecommunications.

"The Kerala Fibre Optic Network Limited has received Infrastructure Provider Category I Registration Certificate from @DoT_India. It will enable K-FON, Kerala's prestigious project to bridge the digital divide, to obtain an ISP license and kickstart operations in the near future," Vijayan tweeted.

In a statement issued, Vijayan said the Left government's KFON project is a declaration that the Internet

is a right of the people.

"The project, which provides free, low-cost and quality high-speed internet to as many people as possible, is a popular alternative of the Left government to the corporate forces in the telecom sector," Vijayan noted.

As per the official registration with the Department of Telecommunication, KFON will have the authority to acquire, prepare, maintain,

repair, rent, lease or sell fiber optic lines (dark fiber), duct space, towers, networks and other facilities.

He further said the state government launched the KFON project with a determination not to create an opportunity for exploitation by private cable networks and mobile service providers.

The KFON scheme is envisaged to provide free internet to BPL families and 30,000 government offices.

The previous Left government had in 2019 declared internet connection as a basic right and launched the Rs 1,548-crore KFON project.



NC set to fight multi-front battle in J-K says Farooq

Batting strongly for collectivism and better coordination at all levels in the party, National Conference president and former chief minister Farooq Abdullah on Friday said the party is set to fight a multi-front battle in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Srinagar MP also exhorted party functionaries to amplify their efforts to reach out to wider sections of society across Jammu and Kashmir.

"As far as the NC is concerned, it is set to fight a multi-front battle (in Jammu and Kashmir)," Abdullah said while interacting with a number of delegations at his residence here.

Elaborating on the multi-front battle, he said, "On one hand, we are fighting for collectivism and better coordination at all levels," he told the party functionaries.

Abdullah exhorted the party functionaries to amplify their efforts to reach out to wider sections of society across Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that for the NC to open its roots ever more than before, "it is imperative for our functionaries to value the party workers".

"Strengthening of the bottom-up model holds the key towards making the party stronger to take on the challenges in the future", he added.

"To achieve this goal, the party's moves have to be marked by collectivism and better coordination at all levels," he told the party functionaries.

Abdullah exhorted the party functionaries to amplify their efforts to reach out to wider sections of society across Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that for the NC to open its roots ever more than before, "it is imperative for our functionaries to value the party workers".

"Strengthening of the bottom-up model holds the key towards making the party stronger to take on the challenges in the future", he added.



Shah to table political resolution at BJP national executive

Laying out the party's stand on various key issues and setting the tone for its political activities in the coming days, Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah will table the all important political resolution at the party's national executive meeting here on Sunday.

With the executive meeting being held in the backdrop of the Nupur Sharma row and the killing of Udaipur tailor Kanahiya Lal, it is being keenly watched if the party makes any reference to these two incidents in its resolution, which will be seconded by two chief ministers.

In its condolence resolution on Saturday, the party



had paid tributes to Kanahiya Lal and Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala besides others.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Karnataka Chief Minister Basraj Bomai will second the resolution.

It is likely that in the political resolution, the Modi gov-

ernment's welfare measures, the BJP's victory in recent assembly polls and its preparation for upcoming assembly polls will be discussed.

This resolution may also send out a political message to the party's rank and file on various prevailing issues and also for the upcoming assembly polls.

Priyanka slams BJP over attacks on Dalits, tribals

Alleging that atrocities on Dalits and tribals have gone up in BJP-ruled states, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday asked why the ruling party remains "silent" on horrific attacks against them. She cited instances of a tribal woman being set on fire in Guna district of Madhya Pradesh over a property dispute and a Dalit youth killed in Lucknow district's Maal area allegedly after an explosion under the cot. A Dalit youth was blown up in Uttar Pradesh and a tribal woman was set ablaze in Madhya Pradesh, Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi. "Why has the BJP, which is using the names of Dalits-Adivasis for elections, keep silent about these horrific incidents of attacks on Dalits-Adivasis," the Congress general secretary asked.

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind Demands Arrest of Nupur Sharma, Not Apologies

NEW DELHI: While Supreme Court in an oral observation on Friday suggested that suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma, who made highly derogatory remarks against Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) provoking emotions across the country, should apologize to the nation, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), one of the biggest Islamic organizations in India, on Saturday demanded her arrest.

The comment was made at a press conference addressed jointly by Jamaat-e-Islami Hind president Syed Sadatullah Husaini and its vice-president Prof. Engineer Mohammad Salim at the JIH headquarters in New Delhi.

Responding to a question

from a journalist, Husaini said that if apology replaced punishment, then there is no need of courts and prisons in the country.

The JIH also demanded action against those politicians, TV channels and media houses who are fanning hatred in the country.

The two JIH leaders said that the Udaipur murder and a series of mob lynching incidents in different parts of the country - including beating to death of an elderly Hindu on the basis of a mistaken identity in Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh recently - were interlinked and politicians and media involved in spreading hate were responsible for it.

Husaini welcomed the observations of the Supreme



Court that politicians accused of blasphemous rhetoric were single-handedly responsible for this grave situation in the country and the media promoting such hate speeches in the name of TV debates was also

equally responsible. He said that it was unfortunate that even after causing such havoc, the accused spokesperson and TV anchors we still roaming free.

Husaini demanded enactment of a blasphemy law to pun-

ish those insulting the religious personalities of various faiths.

The two JIH leaders said that unfortunately, the political environment of our country was encouraging aggression and hatred and reducing empathy and tolerance and a section of the media was working hand in glove with such irresponsible political forces. They appealed to all peace and justice-loving citizens of the country to join hands and fight against hatred and violence.

They demanded legal action against those politicians and media houses who are spreading hatred.

In response to a question, Husaini said that there should be no two sets of laws in dealing with accused based on their

commission that probed the Gujarat 2002 anti-Muslim riots.

Prof. Salim said that Mohammed Zubair was arrested only because he shared the derogatory comments of Nupur Sharma on social media. This indicates the direction in which the country was headed to. He said this is an attack on India's democratic values and freedom of speech.

He said that bulldozing of houses of protesters demanding arrest of Nupur Sharma amounted to muzzling of democracy.

Prof. Salim disapproved of how the fall of the Maharashtra government was engineered by making a mockery of the anti-defection law and the mandate of the people.

Trade & current account deficits hurt rupee more

India's monthly merchandise trade deficit hit a fresh record of \$25.6 billion in June as per preliminary estimates released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry earlier this week. This is the third occasion in seven months and the second month in a row that the trade deficit has widened to all-time highs. In June, the value of outbound shipments grew 16.8%, marginally slower than the 20.6% growth recorded in May, to about \$38 billion — reflecting the third successive month of moderation. Worryingly, four of India's top 10 export items — engineering goods, cotton yarn, drugs and pharma and plastic products — contracted from a year ago. Petroleum exports were up 98% from June 2021, but about \$0.7 billion lower than May 2022. Even as exports growth slid, imports surged by over 51% to \$63.6 billion in June, crossing the \$60 billion mark for the fourth month in a row. Analysts expect the rupee to scale the 82 to a dollar mark by the October to December quarter before recovering and the current account deficit to more than double to around 3% of GDP this year from 1.2% in 2021-22. Robust forex reserves notwithstanding, the persistent outflows of foreign capital from the financial markets have triggered concerns about the balance of payments situation. Last week, the Government imposed a windfall tax on crude oil production that could help bridge concerns about the fiscal deficit. It also placed restrictions on petroleum products' exports and acknowledged that gold imports were hurting the current account by raising customs duties to 15% from 10.75%. This may end up hurting petroleum exports further while import duties may not dent India's unparalleled appetite for the yellow metal as much as hoped. Policy makers may have little room to manoeuvre out of this vicious cycle, but missteps must be avoided and domestic inefficiencies hurting exports reviewed urgently.

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—KEN POIROT

THE FINANCIAL WORLD

RNI NO. DELENG/2011/38860

PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY SWINDER BAJWA ON BEHALF OF FW MEDIA

PRINTED AT JAGJIT PUBLISHING CO. PVT LTD D-12, INDUSTRIAL AREA, PHASE-1, MOHALI, PUNJAB 160059

PRINTER & PUBLISHER SWINDER BAJWA OWNER : FW MEDIA

PUBLISHED AT: BUILDING NO-23, NEHRU PLACE NEW DELHI 110019; PHONE: 9888040061

EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY

(*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)



SANJAY KUMAR EXPLAINS WHY VOTERS ARE SPLIT ON WHAT KIND OF REPRESENTATIVES THEY PREFER VOTING FOR

Defection a non-issue for voters



The reason why a poor record on honesty and frequent switching of candidates from one political party to another (defection) hardly concerns Indian voters is simply that a very large section of the electorate chooses the party and not the candidate during elections. If merits and demerits of candidates had any bearing on voting considerations of Indian voters, many defectors and candidates with questionable records would not have made it to the Indian Parliament or the Assemblies of different States.

In some instances, there may be well-founded reasons for an elected MLA or MP to defect from one party to another. But the reason why many legislators and parliamentarians defect to other parties for purely personal gains is that they know voters will not punish them for their actions and will support them if they contest election on the ticket of any "popular" political party. Similarly, many of them also know that it is the party's ticket and the popularity of its leader that helps them win the election. What they are careful about is to keep themselves accessible to people and help them in getting their work done. When some voters decide to choose the candidate rather than the party during elections, the ability to get work done remains the biggest asset for the candidate, no matter how.

The findings from the National Elections Studies conducted by Lokniti-CSDS indicate, during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, 58% voters mentioned voting for the party while 33% said they voted for the candidate. The proportion of voters who voted for the party declined slightly to 52% during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections while 37% voters preferred voting for the candidate. There is a slight increase in candidate-centred voting amongst Indian voters during the last few years, but the evidence over the

years for Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections suggests that a large majority of Indian voters vote for the party and not for the candidate. This party-centred approach is prevalent amongst both uneducated as well as educated voters, amongst urban and rural voters and amongst voters with various degrees of media exposure. It is this strong trend of party-centred voting which neutralises any displeasure, if at all, that voters may have about their chosen representatives defecting and contesting again on a different party ticket.

There are numerous examples, of defectors being re-elected, on a party ticket against which they had contested the previous election. Twenty-two sitting legislators of the Congress party, some of them Ministers in the Kamal Nath government, defected to the BJP in Madhya Pradesh in March 2020, of whom 19 were re-elected again to the House as BJP legislators. Another instance that is fresh in our minds is that of Mahesh Iranagouda Kumathalli, who became the MLA of Athani Assembly constituency in Karnataka in 2018 on a Congress ticket, but crossed over to the BJP and got re-elected to the House.

How could one forget Suvendu Adhikari's defection from Trinamool Congress to the BJP, and his subsequent re-election to the West Bengal Assembly, defeating the sitting Chief Minister and heavy weight Mamata Banerjee. These are just few examples from the long list of defectors getting re-elected soon after their defections and occupying prime positions. Let us not forget, Vishwajit Rane, who resigned as Congress MLA of Valpoi, Goa, and the Minister of Health, Agriculture & Craftsmen Training on March 16, 2017, joined the BJP on April 7, 2017 and became part of Parrikar government with health portfolio. While this has been the dominant trend, the 2022 Assembly elections in Goa came as an exception when nine of the 12 defectors lost the Assembly election, some very badly. Nevertheless, it is the broad trend which seems to encourage MLAs and MPs to change parties without any valid reasons except for personal gains.

We can broadly predict when the four seasons — winter, spring, summer and monsoon — set in, but one cannot predict when and where defections are likely to take place. Defection is not new to Indian

politics, and has been around for a long time. Voters have seen it as a routine exercise in Indian politics, and do not consider it an evil practice. There have been several attempts by various governments at different points of time to strengthen laws to curb this menace in politics. It was first introduced in the 4th Lok Sabha in 1967 by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, but the Act finally came into being in 1984 during Rajiv Gandhi government's tenure. Important amendments to Anti-Defection law introduced in 2003 by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government to strengthen the legislation failed to bring about the desired results. The political drama that recently unfolded in Maharashtra involving 37 Shiv Sena legislators is another example of how Anti-Defection law is being misused by contesting groups/sides and dissident legislators for personal and political gains.

Evidence from the National Election study indicates that the views of Indian voters are divided on what kind of representatives they would prefer to vote for. Many of them do not express strong reservations against candidates with tainted backgrounds or those involved in corrupt practices. While many are happy to vote for an honest but inaccessible candidate (48%), there are others (24%), who are happy to vote for a candidate who is corrupt but accessible.

Similarly, 36% voters are ready to vote for a candidate with criminal background, but gets works done, while 35% are ready to vote for an honest candidate, but can't get work done. I think we are close to answering why defection and corruption do not matter much to Indian voters.

Sanjay Kumar is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi and a political analyst. The views expressed are personal



MILIND KUMAR SHARMA BELIEVES IT IS CRUCIAL TO TAKE LOCAL CONDITIONS AND MARKET DEMANDS INTO ACCOUNT

Problem with our university vision

It has now become an annual ritual in India to discuss the international rankings of higher education institutions (HEI) only when global ranking systems such as the coveted QS World University Rankings are announced. The QS World University Rankings rank HEIs on the following components: academic reputation (40%), employer reputation (10%), faculty student ratio (20%), citations per faculty (20%), international faculty ratio (5%) and international student ratio (5%). The international research network and employment outcomes were 0% for this edition.

While it is heartening to see that the number of Indian institutes among the top 1,000 globally has risen to 27 from 22 last year, and that the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, has moved up 31 places to emerge as the highest ranked Indian institute in the 2023 edition, there is no serious debate on the abysmal performance of Indian universities barring the Institutes of Eminence (IOE). IOEs occupy a special place as they are granted more academic and administrative autonomy, and public IOEs get additional funding. Therefore, their dominance in the top 500 in the QS World University Rankings comes as no surprise.

Among the other HEIs too, there is great inequality. As per the All-India Survey on Higher Education (2019-20), 184 of the 1,043 HEIs in the country are centrally funded institutions. The Indian government generously allocates financial resources to these institutions. However, the financial support provided by State governments to State HEIs is far from adequate even though the number of under-graduate students is largest in State public universities (13,97,527) followed by State open universities (9,22,944) of the total students'



enrollment. State-sponsored HEIs barely manage to pay salaries and pensions.

While the number of universities increased by almost 30.5% in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16, academic and administrative infrastructure has not been strengthened commensurate to this growth. The lackadaisical attitude we see in filling up faculty positions has further worsened the quality of teaching and research in HEIs. In fact, quality education and the world class research output that policymakers expect from State public universities remain elusive as these HEIs have never had financial and other resources to attain academic and professional growth.

On the other hand, the institutions that are generously funded by the Centre perform better than their State-sponsored counterparts on all academic performance indicators — faculty strength, modernised laboratories, building infrastructure, digitised libraries, sponsored research project grants, computing facilities, etc. Therefore, that the State-funded HEIs would not perform well in these rankings was a forgone conclusion. It is a consequence of the unequal and unfair system in the Indian higher

education system, where State-sponsored HEIs are provided step-motherly treatment and positioned poorly vis-à-vis centrally funded institutions. No ranking system seems to rationally rank institutions after examining their administrative challenges, infrastructural constraints and financial predicaments; they only pay attention to performance metrics based on academic strengths and other achievements. For India to perform better on these rankings, we need to pay more attention to the State HEIs.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has envisaged all HEIs to become multidisciplinary institutions by 2040. The aim is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education, including vocational education, from 26.3% in 2018 to 50% by 2035. The NEP also aims to ensure that by 2030, there is at least one large multidisciplinary HEI in or near every district. This means that single-stream specialised institutions will eventually be phased out.

However, the fact that prominent multidisciplinary universities such as Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, the University of Hyderabad, and Jamia Millia Islamia have slipped in the QS World University Rankings should compel national think tanks to revisit the NEP's proposal in this regard. A close study of the QS World University Rankings reveals that single-stream specialised HEIs such as the Indian Institutes of Technology and IISc have performed better than their multidisciplinary counterparts. Eight IITs (Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Roorkee, Guwahati and Indore) are placed among the top 500 globally, in addition to IISc, Bangalore. IIT-Indore ranked highest among the second-generation IITs by securing the 396th position and IIT-BHU made its maiden presence in the 651-700 band.

A plan in the NEP for multidisciplinary education and research universities is also being contemplated in order to achieve the highest global standards in quality education. While everyone is demanding multidisciplinary education, the performance of the specialised HEIs in the QS World Rankings bears testimony to their superiority over multidisciplinary/multi-faculty institutions. The idea of converting a specialised institution into a multi-faculty university does not seem to augur well for an economy driven by specialist professionals. It would be perplexing if the IITs decided to offer courses in physical education and medicine or the National Law Universities ran undergraduate degree programmes in mechanical engineering.

It is crucial to emphasise here that nobody is averse to the idea of multidisciplinary/multi-faculty education if there is a 15% to 20% flexibility in the total academic strength. But converting all HEIs into multidisciplinary institutions is not an idea that holds water given the unique conditions and demands in India. No study or data support the idea of transforming specialised institutions into multidisciplinary/multi-faculty universities either. Such an idea may have worked in the West where HEIs invest substantial resources in multidisciplinary research through private and public research grants and funding. But a 'one size fits all' approach may not be of help to India. The need of the hour is to build and develop our higher education system while taking into account Indian conditions and market demands.

Milind Kumar Sharma is professor at Department of Production & Industrial Engineering, MBM University, Jodhpur, erstwhile, MBM Engineering College, Jodhpur. Views are personal

BOOKS: REVIEW

Book sets the record straight about India's Parsi community

At a time when there are debates about uniform civil code versus religious personal laws, a book analyses who is a Parsi.

Author Prochy N Mehta says the tales "we have heard for generations, and what has been handed down to us as history of the Parsi community in India, have often been rather fictitious". The perception, for example, that the Parsis have always been an affluent community, is a modern-day myth devoid of any true value, she argues.

The story of the arrival of the Parsis in India, the most important chapter in that history, is itself shrouded in mystery, she says.

In "Who is a Parsi", Mehta attempts to "set that record straight and lift the veil from the glorious

history of our people".

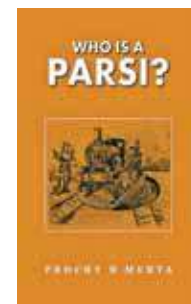
She says she wishes to "handhold the reader in this journey through the lanes and bylanes of our history — from the time of the writing of the poem 'Quissa-i-Sanjan' in 1599, when Parsi recorded history actually begins, to the 20th century".

The author also adds, "As you must be knowing children of Parsi intermarried women face discrimination. In this book I try to show that there is no legal, religious, social or age-old custom on which it is based." The book, published by Niyogi Books, documents through letters, newspaper articles, and court transcripts from cases, the views of prominent Parsis like Dadabhoy Navroji, Ratan D Tata, Ratan J Tata, Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit, Sir Jehangir Ca-

'As you must be knowing children of Parsi intermarried women face discrimination. In this book I try to show that there is no legal, religious, social or age-old custom on which it is based'

wasjee Jehangir, Rustomji Byramji Jeejeebhoy, Homi J. Bhabha, K R Cama, and many others who stood up and fought for what they believed in — that Parsi and Zoroastrian meant the same thing.

The author also depicts the dichotomy of the community in the 20th century, between the ortho-



Who is a Parsi? By Prochy N Mehta Niyogi Books 488 pages; Rs 795

dox and the reformist groups and explains the anomaly of how the reformists who followed the original Mazdayasna or Parsi religion, constituted the real orthodoxy.

There was a reform movement led by the high priests of the community and the most influential members of society for a return to the pristine purity of the original Zoroastrian religion.

The book also tells how the Parsis found shelter and a peaceful environment to grow and prosper as a community in India and contributed significantly to the society. In the foreword to the book, vet-

eran Supreme Court advocate Fali S Nariman writes, "A proud boast of Parsis is that they belong to the world's most ancient monotheistic religion. As a matter of historical fact, they do.

"But presently — with the steep decline in birth-rate, the entire community is in jeopardy; it is believed, by many, that Parsi personal law is largely responsible for this plight: which is precisely the theme around which this well-researched and liberally-illustrated book has been written." Mehta has won 71 medals at international athletic meets including 52 gold medals. She is the Asian record holder in 400 metres and triple jump in the women's 40+ age group. She is the first female president of the Calcutta Parsee Club. Her father, the late Rusi B Gimi was a pioneer in outdoor advertising in India. His company Selvel, started in 1945, is now synonymous with Out of Home (OOH) advertising.

Hindustan Power Exchange commences operations

HPX TO BE POWERED BY SAME TECHNOLOGY THAT MAKES BSE THE FASTEST EXCHANGE GLOBALLY

MUMBAI: Hindustan Power Exchange Ltd. (HPX), promoted by PTC India Ltd, Bombay Stock Exchange, and ICICI Bank, today commenced operations after receiving all necessary approvals from Central Electricity Regulatory Commission. Backed by the latest technology and a series of innovative features, the exchange promises to offer speed, transparency, and better price discovery in the execution of trades. The exchange will initially offer trading in Contingency contracts, Green Contingency contracts, and Renewable Energy Certificates. It will steadily increase its product portfolio and provide a wide range of contracts to address the demand of different segments of the electricity market.



are leaders in their respective areas of operations.”

“Almost 90% of India’s electricity is traded via bilateral contracts lasting for 20 years or more between power generation companies and state utilities. These contracts do not provide the flexibility to sector participants to take advantage of market conditions at different times. Power Exchanges provide the market participants a platform with multiple avenues for buying-selling of power and hence

manage their power portfolios efficiently. The introduction of HPX will give a definite push to the development and progress of spot trading in electricity,” he added.

Samir Patil, CBO, BSE said, “Hindustan Power Exchange (HPX) has been envisaged to promote market efficiency through advanced technology and to maximize value for the power market. The cutting-edge technology solutions, efficient price mechanism and the quality of service offered at HPX, would act as the differentiator in the Indian Power Market. With the technology set to be one of the key point-of-difference in the Indian Power Market, BSE looks forward in carving its footprint in the sector, thereby paving the way for a technology-led efficient power market through HPX.”

Spokesperson for PTC India Ltd. said, “Hindustan Power Exchange is indeed going to be an institution that will offer a conducive and com-

petitive marketplace for electricity trade in India. HPX is entirely focused to cater a range of market products to the participants in pursuant to their specific requirements. HPX recognizes the competition and the need to bring other innovative products for industrial as well as distribution sector consumers. It also aims to assure a robust trading mechanism for buyers and sellers where they obtain an efficient and transparent electricity price.”

The Indian power sector is at the cusp of a massive energy transition where the share of renewable energy is steadily rising in India’s power generation mix. Further, more variable power output from wind and solar plants is set to push short-term trading of energy, thereby giving more options to both buyers and sellers. HPX will play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between demand and supply and providing trading at an optimized cost.

Akasa Air unveils first look of its crew uniform

Akasa Air on Monday unveiled the first look of its crew uniform as the startup carrier prepares for take-off in the coming weeks.

The airline, backed by ace stock market investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, is likely to start services by the end of this month.

It had taken delivery of its first Boeing 737 max aircraft in India on June 21 and plans to conduct proving flights this week, following which it will get the Air Operator Permit for launching commercial operations. In a statement on Monday, Akasa Air said the uniform fit focuses on providing the best possible stretch to ensure their comfort over their busy flight schedules.

The company said it is the first Indian airline to have introduced custom trousers and jackets, with their fabric specially made for Akasa Air (using recycled polyester fabric which is made from pet bottle plastic salvaged from marine waste) and comfortable sneakers for its airline in-flight crew keeping in mind ergonomics, aesthetics and comfort.

“We have designed a uniform in which our team feels



both proud and comfortable as they direct their energy to ensure a warm, friendly, and efficient flying experience for all our passengers,” Belson Coutinho, Co-founder and Chief Marketing & Experience Officer of Akasa Air, said.

According to the company, given the mobile lifestyle of crew members and long hours spent standing, Vanilla Moon designed sneakers that are light, and contain extra cushioning from heel to toe to ensure better support. The sneakers’ sole is carved from recycled rubber and manufactured without any use of plastic, it said.

“We are delighted to share this shoe design -- which is sustainably produced, functional, comfortable, gender-neutral and contemporary,”

Deepika Mehra, Founder of Vanilla Moon, said. Designed by Delhi-based fashion designer Rajesh Pratap Singh, the jacket draws inspiration from the Indian bandhgala and is forward-looking in a modern version of the garment.

“These uniforms are a perfect amalgamation of style and sustainability and reflect Akasa Air’s core values. From concept to the final outcome, it has been an exciting journey for me to work on these designs and present one of the most unique, sustainable and functional uniforms of our times,” Singh said.

Last November, Akasa Air announced ordering 72 737 Max’ aircraft from Boeing. The order includes two variants from the 737 MAX family -- 737-8 and 737-8-200.

Britannia shareholders reject Rs 5,000 cr investment proposal

Britannia Industries’ shareholders have voted against a resolution to authorise the board to make investments, give loans and provide guarantees of up to Rs 5,000 crore in the AGM concluded last week.

The special resolution for approval to increase limits for making investments, loans, Special guarantees and security was “not Passed with requisite majority,” said a regulatory filing from Britannia Industries on June 29, 2022.

The Companies Act mandates that a special resolution needs to be passed by a super majority, which refers to at least 75 per cent of the members voting in favour of it.

It received only 73.35 per cent of the total 19.60 crore votes polled, while 26.64 per cent of votes were against the proposal. In the AGM, 71.13 per cent of public institutions and 70.86 per cent non-Public institutions voted against the proposal for making investments, loans, Special guarantees and security of up to Rs 5,000 crore. However, it received 100 per cent support from the promoter and promoter group.

The two other special resolutions -- approval of remuneration to its Chairman Nusli N Wadia and the re-appointment



of Keki Elavia as an Independent Director -- were passed.

However, 59.31 per cent of public institutions and 59.90 per cent of Public non-institutions voted against the proposal to hike the remuneration to the Britannia Chairman.

It was passed with 76.94 per cent of the total votes polled with the help of promoters and some other investors. Remuneration of Rs 7.33 crore to Wadia was in excess of 50 per cent of the total annual remuneration payable to all non-executive directors for 2021-22. Shareholders also passed three ordinary resolutions with the requisite majority, including appointing a director in place of Ness N Wadia, who retires by rotation.

Fidel Softech IPO Receives Good Investor Response

Fidel Softech Limited, a Pune-based LangTech company went public on the NSE SME Exchange on June 10. The IPO was oversubscribed by 102 times and was very well received by the investors.

Fidel Softech Ltd. works in the areas of Localization & IT Consulting services and in operations since 2004. It helps clients deliver their technology solutions with local language UI/UX. Its localization services include translations as well as localization of software, websites, multi-lingual data creation for training AI engines, transcription & annotation, video subtitling, natural language processing, testing and automation.

On company’s recent IPO success, Fidel Softech’s CEO, Sunil Kulkarni, thanked all investors, clients, team members, past alumni, supporters & well-wishers. He added, “This was a culmination of our team efforts & support from our clients/partners for over 18+ years. Fidel is the first ‘LangTech’ company from India to go public. It is also one of the first IT & consulting services SME to go public with a focus since inception on Japan-India geography. This is the 70th Anniversary year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Japan & hence very special



for us. Localization is globally a 26 billion USD market and India is well poised to contribute to it.

Further, by focusing on language centric technical consulting services & digital financial literacy solutions, Fidel supports the govt vision of bridging the digital divide. By bringing Technology-Languages-Consulting together, Fidel offers a one-stop solution to its clients.

Prachi Kulkarni, Managing Director, said that this is a step to increase the pace of growth, open new markets, attract talent & develop new competencies. She mentioned that this also was a step to further strengthen security, environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG). Fidel is equal opportunity firm and the team has a 50% diversity ratio almost since its inception.”

MandarInamdar (CFO) mentioned that this fund raise is to scale the growth and that Fidel is

equally focussed on social impact. New job opportunities will be created with an emphasis on tier 2 and 3 cities in India to leverage the local language as well as technology skills. Adequate training in technologies & languages including Japanese will also be provided.

Sushrut Potdar, Chief Technology Officer, is confident about taking Language Technology expertise to new landscape. He said, with the proliferation of smartphones, lowering of data packs and growing aspirations, clients are going Global (Global+Local) and hence want to deliver products & services in local language UI / UX using innovative technical solutions. We support these client initiatives and ensure state of the art technology, video-audio solutions, data analytics, multi-lingual SEO and support 100+ languages including all Indian languages.

Income Tax Department conducts searches on Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Distributors in Haryana and Delhi-NCR

Income Tax Department carried out search and seizure operations on 29.06.2022 on a group engaged in the business of manufacturing and distribution of Pharmaceutical medicines and Real Estate Development. The search action covered 25 premises in Delhi-NCR and Haryana.

A large number of incriminating documents in the form of loose sheets and digital data have been found and seized. These documents reveal that the group was involved in huge unaccounted sales of pharmaceutical medicines in cash. Large amount of purchases, payments of wages and other expenses were also found to have been made in cash.

This modus-operandi of unaccounted cash sales of pharmaceutical medicines, including cash receipts through hawala for sale of medicines to Afghanistan, has been admitted by a key person involved in such transactions. The preliminary analysis of the seized data indicates that such hawala cash receipts amount to Rs. 25 crore approximately. In the case of one pharmaceutical concern dealing in Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients



(API), surplus stock valued at Rs. 94 crore has been found.

It is also found that the cash generated through unaccounted cash sales has been invested in purchase of immovable properties, and in expansion of manufacturing facilities of Pharmaceutical medicines. The real estate entities of the group are found to be engaged in out-of-books sale and purchase of properties in cash. The group has also been booking bogus Long Term/ Short Term Capital Losses in the securities market to offset the capital gains earned on such property transactions. The amount of such bogus losses is estimated to be around Rs. 20 crore. The search action has also revealed that the group has also floated benami entities to purchase immovable properties in the State of Himachal Pradesh.

So far, unaccounted cash of Rs. 4.2 crore and jewellery/ bullion worth Rs. 4 crore have been seized.

Govt directs steel industry to draw time-bound action plan to lower CO2 emissions

In line with the government’s COP26 commitments, the Ministry of Steel has asked the stakeholders to develop a time-bound action plan to lower emissions in the steel industry.

According to a ministry document, the iron and steel industry globally accounts for around 8 per cent of total carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions on an annual basis, whereas in India, it contributes 12 per cent to the total CO2 emissions. Thus, the Indian steel industry needs to reduce its emissions substantially in view of the commitments made at the COP26 climate change conference.

India will meet a target of net zero emissions by 2070, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the COP26 global climate summit in November 2021. In a meeting held recently, Steel Minister Ram Chandra Prasad Singh “urged the stakeholders to develop a time-bound action plan and make concerted efforts for lowering the emissions from the steel industry in line with the commitments made by the Government in COP26”.

Discussions were also held on the present scenario, the way forward for promoting the transition towards green steel, various strategies and technologies that can be adopted by the steel industry to produce green steel, and technology readiness levels, among others.

Air travel booms but airlines in trouble

BY NARVIJAY YADAV

During the Covid pandemic, air travel was not possible for a full 2 years, due to which the aviation industry came to a standstill and people had to sit in their homes as no activity was taking place anywhere. Air traffic came to a halt all over the world and due to this airline companies fired several lakhs of their employees. But now that the pandemic is over, and the fear of Coronavirus is also not there, people have started roaming around. As a result, the pressure on the airlines has increased tremendously. Huge crowds have started gathering at the airports. Many people might be thinking that lack of facilities and long queues happen only in India, but they are wrong as the situation is not good in the USA and European countries. Rather, the situation there is worse than in India because the airlines there had laid off employees on a large scale during the Corona period. One figure shows that 23 lakh employees were laid off from the airline industry during the last two years.

However, now the staff shortage is so high that it is becoming difficult to handle the rush of passengers at the airports. Hundreds of flights have to be canceled or passengers are made to wait for hours. There are long queues at the security gates themselves. According to the industry, air travel has grown



by more than 400 percent. On the other hand, pilots, flight attendant security personnel, drivers running airport buses, etc. are falling short. It is not possible to increase the workforce overnight, as it is a lengthy process, which may take several weeks. The way the number of air passengers has increased in the US and European countries has broken the record of the last 40 years.

It is said that happiness is a matter of choice. Being happy is a decision that anyone can take at any time, which is the best policy also. The state of happiness keeps problems smaller, mood lighter, and mental stress at bay. The people of Ukraine understand this formula very well. The whole country has been troubled by the attacks of the Russian armed forces for more than two months now. Yet a comedy club in a western Ukrainian city has been entertaining people through its laughter shows almost every night, where jokes are told about the enemy army. There is no particular co-

median, anybody comes on the stage and shares a joke. One of its objectives is to reduce the tension of the local people by laughing about the enemy and reducing the troubles caused by the on-going war. It also makes them motivated for further fighting. A survey has found that the South Indians are at the forefront of telling jokes in the office. In this matter, the people of Italy are no less if compared with others in the world. A recent LinkedIn survey has revealed that three-quarters of professionals in India consider jokes to be good in the workplace, although many find them unprofessional. Still, most people feel that laughing at the workplace increases productivity, lightens the mind, and keeps the mind stress-free.

The number of adults in India is more than 100 crores, while more than 50 crore people use WhatsApp on their smartphones. That is, almost half the population of the country uses WhatsApp. True too, because WhatsApp has made life very easy. WhatsApp is used for most

interactions because it is fast and easy to send photos and videos in a fraction of a second. However, many people misuse this facility and use it to increase obscenity and crime. For this reason, in view of the country’s IT law, two crores 28 lakh WhatsApp accounts had to be banned in the last year. If we talk about last month, ie May 2022, then WhatsApp blocked 19 lakh 10 thousand accounts.

The WhatsApp report states that the maximum number of accounts was banned in July 2021. The number of such accounts was 30 lakh 27 thousand. WhatsApp bans accounts if someone shares obscene, defamatory, threatening, intimidating, hate speech, or objectionable content against local laws and is reported by another user. Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram are owned by the same company - Meta. In the first quarter of 2022, Facebook took action against 2 crores 17 lakh people for posting violent and inciting content and removed 1 billion 88 crores of fake information from the platform. Similarly, 18 lakh posts promoting substance abuse were removed from Instagram as well.

WhatsApp and other social media platforms are there for our convenience to facilitate mutual conversation and communication. These mediums should not be misused. Forwarding or sharing fake information through

them is a crime, which is not in the interest of the country. These days you must have noted that there is continuous action on social media on anti-national or defamatory posts, tweets, etc. and the guilty are being booked. If you have a smartphone in your hand and you have an account on social media, it does not mean that you can write anything and sleep quietly. Think twenty times before writing anything wrong on social media and do not post anything which is illegal or which causes harm to any individual or society. The same caution that is taken in speaking face to face, should also be taken on social media.

Former Punjab Chief Minister and a probable contender for the post of Vice President of India, Captain Amarinder Singh has recently returned from a London hospital after undergoing his spinal surgery, on the other hand, former captain of the Indian Cricket team, Mahendra Singh Dhoni is getting treatment in the jungles of Jharkhand. He is getting his knees treated by a vaidya, who charges a small fee of Rs 40 only. Dhoni has been taking vaidya’s medicine for the past one month, which is prepared from a local herb. It’s a matter of choice, to get treated in the Indian jungle or in a foreign hospital.

The writer is a senior journalist & columnist. Views are personal

NFT support on Facebook will be a game-changer the day it allows users to barter & bid on it: Tapan Sangal

FW DESK
New Delhi

Meta, which was formerly known as Facebook, has launched digital collectibles support on Facebook with select creators after launching NFT support on Instagram. It has introduced a new tab called ‘digital collectibles’, under which the creator can display his/her NFTs. However, creators will not be allowed to cross-post on Facebook and Instagram, nor will they be able to turn digital collectible posts into ads. There are no fees associated with posting or sharing a digital collectible. Needless to add, the news has created a buzz in the NFT - cryptocurrency world.



Tapan Sangal, founder and chief evangelist of P2E Pro, welcomes the news of NFT finding a place on Facebook. He says, “If Meta has launched support for NFTs on Facebook, it will lead to a surge in interest in the world of NFTs and cryptocurrency. After all, social networking sites like FB and Instagram are like a mini universe by itself.

Bajaj Auto begins Rs 2,500 cr share buyback

Bajaj Auto on Monday said it has commenced its Rs 2,500 share buyback programme. In a regulatory filing, the Pune-based company said the buyback initiative has begun with effect from July 4.

The company’s board, at its meeting held on June 27, had approved the proposal for buyback of the fully paid-up equity shares of the company with a face value of Rs 10 each from existing shareholders, except promoters and promoter group, from the open market. The buyback will be carried out at a price not exceeding Rs 4,600 per equity share and for an aggregate amount of up to Rs 2,500 crore, representing 9.61 per cent of the aggregate of the total paid-up share capital of the company, it had stated. Shares of the company were trading 0.43 per cent up at Rs 3,639.30 apiece on the BSE.

Tata Steel Long Products Limited takes over NINL

Neelachal Ispat Nigam Limited (NINL) is a Joint Venture of 4 CPSEs, namely MMTC (shareholding of 49.78%), NMDC (10.10%), BHEL (0.68%), MECON (0.68%) and 2 Odisha Government PSUs, namely OMC (20.47%) and IPICOL (12.00%).

MNINL Strategic Disinvestment transaction has been completed today with the transfer of 93.71% shares of the Joint Venture Partners (4 CPSEs and 2 Odisha Govt. PSUs) to the Strategic Buyer, M/s Tata Steel Long Products Limited. The Enterprise Value paid by the Strategic Buyer is Rs. 12,100 Crores. This payment has been utilized as per the SPA for settlement of dues of employees, operational creditors, secured financial creditors and sellers (operational and financial dues) and for equity of selling shareholders as per SPA.

Following approval of the highest price bid of M/s Tata Steel Long Products Limited on 31st January, 2022, the Letter of Award (LOA) was issued to the winning bidder on 2nd February, 2022. The Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) was signed on 10th March, 2022.



Share markets maintain momentum for 3rd day, log weekly gains

The Sensex and Nifty marched higher for the third session on the trot on Friday as investors continued to accumulate banking, infrastructure and FMCG stocks despite unabated selling by foreign funds.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex advanced 303.38 points or 0.56 per cent to settle at 54,481.84. The broader NSE Nifty went higher by 87.70 points or 0.54 % to 16,220.60.

Larsen & Toubro was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 4.72 % , followed by Power Grid, NTPC, ICIICI Bank, Axis Bank, Dr Reddy's, Bharti Airtel and Nestle India.

In contrast, Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank, Maruti Suzuki, TCS, Wipro and Asian Paints were among the laggards, shedding up to 1.62 per cent.

"The present rally is driven partly by expectations that given the steady decline in commodity prices, inflation will start showing a declining trend enabling central banks to go a bit slow on hiking rates, and partly by short covering," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.



On a weekly basis, the Sensex advanced 1,573.91 points or 2.97 per cent, while the Nifty climbed 468.55 points or 2.97 per cent.

"The higher probability of a global slowdown caused by high inflation and higher rates has been talked about more in the last couple of weeks. But the recent fall in the prices in commodities, especially oil, and the expectation that central banks may go slow on the interest rate hike, have brought back some confidence in the mind of the investors."

"The rise in the equity markets witnessed in the last few

trading sessions of this week was based on this outlook of probable moderation in inflation, and therefore of rates. However, the actual inflation numbers will be released in the US and India in the coming week, and this would be crucial in deciding the trajectory of the markets," said Joseph Thomas, Head of Research, Emkay Wealth Management.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge went higher by 0.28 per cent and midcap index climbed 0.20 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, capital goods jumped 2.23 %,

followed by power (1.71 per cent), utilities (1.58 per cent), industrials (1.51 per cent), bank (0.66 per cent) and FMCG (0.54 per cent).

Metal, basic materials and telecom were the laggards.

Global equities were mixed as investors awaited key jobs data from the US, which will offer clues on the Federal Reserve's rate hike trajectory.

In Asia, markets in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul ended higher, while Shanghai settled marginally lower.

Bourses in Europe were trading lower in mid-session deals. The US markets had ended higher on Thursday.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.12 per cent to USD 104.5 per barrel.

The rupee declined by 10 paise to close at 79.23 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking the strength of the American currency in the overseas market.

Foreign institutional investors remained net sellers on Thursday, offloading shares worth Rs 925.22 crore, as per exchange data.

Passenger vehicle retail sales up 40 pc in June as chip supply improves



Passenger vehicle retail sales in the country rose 40 per cent in June indicating an improvement in semiconductor supplies even as demand, especially for SUVs, remained robust, auto dealer body FADA said on Tuesday.

According to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), passenger vehicle (PV) registrations rose to 2,60,683 units last month, as compared to 1,85,998 units in June 2021, registering an increase of 40 per cent.

"The PV segment continued to see robust growth. An increase in dispatches clearly shows that semiconductor availability is now getting easier," FADA President Vinke

Gulati said in a statement. Due to chip shortage, however, waiting periods, especially in compact SUV and SUV segments, continue to remain high, he added.

Despite long waiting periods, new vehicle launches are witnessing robust bookings thus reflecting a healthy demand pipeline, Gulati said.

Two-wheeler retail sales last month rose 20 per cent to 11,19,096 units, as compared to 9,30,825 units in the year-ago period, FADA data showed.

Gulati noted that poor market sentiment especially in rural India, high cost of ownership, inflationary pressure and June generally being a lean month due to rains kept the

two-wheeler sales at low speed. Commercial vehicle retail sales also witnessed an 89 per cent year-on-year increase last month at 67,696 units.

Three-wheeler registrations surged last month to 46,040 units, as against 14,735 units in June last year.

Besides, tractor retail sales also increased by 10 per cent at 57,340 units last month, as compared to 52,289 units in June 2021.

Overall retail sales increased by 27 per cent at 15,50,855 units in June, as against 12,19,657 units in the year-ago period. Gulati, however, noted that when compared to June 2019, a pre-COVID month, overall sales last month were still down by 9 per cent.

On business outlook, he stated that with the prices of almost all essential items having moved northwards, it has put a pressure on the common man's household budget.

Additionally, the high fuel prices have had a spillover effect on transportation and made it expensive, Gulati said.

This will have a negative effect on entry level PV as well as two-wheeler segments which are generally dominated by first time buyers, he added.

TCS Q1 net profit rises 5.2 % to Rs 9478 cr



India's largest IT services firm Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Friday reported a 5.2 % year-on-year rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 9,478 crore for the first quarter ended June 30.

The consolidated revenue from operations increased 16.2 per cent year-on-year to Rs 52,758 crore in the first quarter of FY23.

TCS has declared an interim dividend of Rs 8 per equity share of Re 1 each.

TCS Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Rajesh Gopinathan said: We are starting the new fiscal year on a strong note, with all-round growth and strong deal wins across all our segments."

"Pipeline velocity and deal closures continue to be strong, but we remain vigilant, given the macro-level uncertainties. Our new organisation structure has settled in nicely, getting us closer to our clients and making us nimble in a dynamic environment."

HDFC Bank records 21.5% loan growth in Q1

Private sector HDFC Bank on Monday said the bank has registered a 21.5 per cent rise in loans to Rs 13,95,000 crore in the first quarter this fiscal.

The credit book was Rs 11,47,700 crore as of June 30 last year. Gross transfers through inter-bank participation certificates and bills rediscounted, the bank's advances grew by around 22.5 per cent over June 30, 2021, HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing.

The bank's deposits aggregated to approximately Rs 16,05,000 crore as of June 30, 2022, a growth of around 19.3 per cent over Rs 13,45,800 crore as of June 30, 2021, it added.

During the quarter ended June 30, 2022, the bank purchased loans aggregating Rs 9,533 crore through the direct assignment route under the



home loan arrangement with parent Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) Ltd, it said. On April 4, India's largest private lender HDFC Bank agreed to take over the biggest domestic mortgage lender in a deal valued at about USD 40 billion, creating a financial services titan.

The proposed entity will have a combined asset base of around Rs 18 lakh crore. The merger is expected to be completed by the second or third quarter of FY24, subject to regulatory approvals.

Taxes on fuel being subsumed into GST will have to be navigated through the GST council and will take time, says Tarun Bajaj

NEW DELHI: Fuel constitutes a large part of revenue generation for both the center and states so there is some apprehension but in due course it will come into the GST fold, said Tarun Bajaj, Secretary, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India at an ASSOCHAM Event on GST - Journey of 5 years and road ahead.

"I don't think one can expect everything will move into GST on day one. As a policy maker, I believe in navigating the process well to achieve the objectives."

For something new as big as GST some hiccups are bound to be there. There already has been a huge difference in the thinking, not only among administrators but amongst the industry and people and clearly the acceptability of GST has



increased in the past year.

There has been a great deal of formalization that has happened on account of GST. This has a positive impact on other things as well, such as Income tax, because large or even medium scale industries will only do business with someone who is a part of the GST chain because of availability of ITC.

What has happened in GST has also helped increasing income tax revenue which has

gone up, and last year despite the challenges, revenues went up 49%. The revenue on GST also grew by 30% last year," the Secretary said.

"Policymakers are not fixated on achieving a particular rate for GST, more importantly this is the time for retrospection on how these rate structures have panned out, undertake recalibration of rates where needed, remedy the inverted duty structure etc.

Sale of national flag exempt from GST



Sale of the Indian national flag, irrespective of whether machine made or of polyester, is exempt from the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the finance ministry said on Friday.

Hand-woven, hand-spun national flags made of cotton, silk, wool or Khadi are already exempt from GST.

In an office memorandum, the Revenue Department clarified that polyester or machine-made tricolour too would be exempt from the levy following amendments to the 'Flag Code of India, 2002' in December last year. "It has been clarified that the sale of the Indian National Flag, adhering to the Flag Code 2002 and its subsequent amendments, is exempt from GST," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's office tweeted.

The clarification from the finance ministry comes in the backdrop of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' initiative under the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' - celebrating 75 years of India's independence. It envisages inspiring Indians everywhere to hoist the national flag at their home. The idea behind the initiative is to invoke the feeling of patriotism in the hearts of the people and promote awareness about our national flag.

PNB receives the National MSME Award from Prime Minister Narendra Modi



KULBIR SINGH KALSI New Delhi

Punjab National Bank, nation's leading public sector bank, won the third prize at "National MSME Awards 2022" organized under the Entrepreneur-India programme by the Union Ministry of MSME in New Delhi. This award was presented by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, for PNB's contribution towards the promotion and development of the MSME sector and was received by Atul Kumar Goel, MD & CEO of PNB, at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi.

Upon accepting the prestigious accolade on behalf of PNB, Atul Kumar Goel, MD & CEO, expressed, «It is a grand honor for PNB to be conferred this award by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, at one of India's most distinguished award functions. I am grateful

to the Union Ministry of MSME for creating a platform that has consistently encouraged the growth of MSMEs by acknowledging Entrepreneurship (Manufacturing & Services), Product Quality, Innovation, and much more. I would like to extend a special thanks to all the entrepreneurs for trusting in us in their journey to success. I would also dedicate this award to each and every employee of our Bank who made it possible. This recognition is a testament to PNB's continued commitment towards the growth of MSMEs across the country by providing customer-centric products and services.»

The National MSME Awards are awarded in several categories for the outstanding work done by the state governments/UTs, Aspirational Districts, institutions or individuals for the development and promotion of MSME across the country.

NTPC docks 21.7 pc growth in power generation in June quarter

State-run power giant NTPC Ltd on Monday said it has registered a 21.7 per cent growth in electricity generation at 104.4 billion units (BU) in the April-June quarter of this financial year.

NTPC group of companies recorded a generation of 104.4 BU in the April to June quarter of 2022, registering an increase of 21.7 per cent from 85.8 BU generated in the corresponding quarter last year, a company statement said.

In June, 2022, power gen-



eration was 34.8 BU, higher by 29.3 per cent compared to 26.9 BU in June 2021, indicating an improved performance and an increase in demand for power in the current year, it added.

NTPC Talcher Kaniha (3000 MW) in Orissa is the top performing thermal power plant with 94.2 per cent Plant Load Factor (PLF or capacity utilisation) between April to June 2022. Overall Plant Load Factor of NTPC Coal stations was 80 per cent from April to June 2022 vis-a-vis 69 per cent in the same period last year, a testimony to the high levels of operational excellence and the expertise of NTPC in Operation and Maintenance of the power plants, it said.

IDBI Bank's gold loan biz crosses Rs 10,000-crore milestone

IDBI Bank on Tuesday said its gold loan portfolio has crossed a Rs 10,000 crore milestone.

"IDBI Bank's gold loan book has achieved a prestigious milestone and has crossed Rs 10,000 crore landmark. In the last two years, the bank's gold loan book has doubled from Rs 5,000 crore to Rs 10,000 crore," it said in a release.



The LIC-controlled bank said its loan processing system is fully automated and this has helped in the growth of the gold loan book. Customers complete the transactions generally in 10-15 minutes, it added.

Alarming Debt -GDP Ratio of States and Politics of Freebies

About 20 states of our economy are under alarming debt burden and Punjab is number one followed by Rajasthan, Kerala, Jharkhand, Bengal and Haryana. The bread basket and rice bowl of India was the richest state in the country for decades before it began falling behind several states, more notably its neighbours. Other than Delhi and Goa, Punjab was the most affluent state, after the Green Revolution for decades. Unfortunately, Punjab state finances have been fragile for the past several years. The latest RBI State Finances Report shows that Punjab is India's most indebted state with a debt to gross state domestic product ratio is more than 60% per cent and interest payment amount of more than 20 per cent of the state's revenue receipts, the highest in the country. Many states that were significantly poorer than Punjab until the early 2000s - Haryana, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala quickly overtook it by achieving major economic growth. Not only did Punjab fall behind these states, but the gap widened greatly with time, such that today, an average Haryanvi is 1.5 times richer than an average Punjabi. Previous Akali-BJP and Congress governments

plunged Punjab into debt. With a population of 3 crores, today every individual in Punjab has a debt of Rs 1 lakh. Every child who is born in Punjab already has a debt of 1 lakh rupees on them right after their birth according to AAP leader Raghav Chadha. The debt burden of Punjab is alarming and it is certainly a point to worry. In 2018-19, the total outstanding debt of the state was Rs 211,917 crore, which within three years escalated to Rs 273,703 crore in 2021-22 and is further estimated to swell up to Rs 315,748 crore in 2023-24. In 2019-20, 82 percent of the state's own tax and non-tax revenue, put together, accounted for debt servicing only.

Capital expenditure which is a must to boost any economy in Punjab forms only 3 percent to 7 percent of total expenditure. The economy of any state cannot progress without capital expenditure which creates assets and generates opportunities for higher growth in the welfare world. Capital expenditure leads to higher resource mobilization through increased tax revenue.

It should, therefore, be a cause of concern for Punjab that the ratio of capital expenditure to aggregate expenditure has been far below the General Category States (GCS)



average during the period 2014-15 and 2018-19. The GCS average of capital expenditure to aggregate expenditure increased from 14.02 per cent in 2014-15 to 14.28 per cent in 2018-19. However, this ratio declined in Punjab from the already low level of 6.24 per cent in 2014-15 to 3.05 per cent in 2018-19.

The industrial sector in Punjab has been one of the most neglected which was in 2019-20 only 5.4 per cent of total development expenditure was spent in the industry and mineral sector and in the village and small industries only 0.27 per cent of total development expenditure. Between 2016-17 to 2018-19, expenditure in the industry and mineral sector has been abysmally low between 0.24 per cent to 1.92 per cent. Neighbouring

state Haryana on number three in ease of doing business but Punjab is ranked at 19th spot in the country in the ease of business index, which is an indication that a lot needs to be done. Ease of business is the key to accelerate and attracting more investment. Businessmen and traders of Punjab are leaving and investing in other states and there is continuous migration of industries and brain drain from Punjab. Small farmers are selling their land for the migration of their children to foreign countries.

Given the multiple challenges faced by the Punjab economy, as analyzed above, it is strongly desirable that increasing outstanding debt and debt servicing burden be controlled at this stage only before it is too late and to avoid the conditions like Sri Lanka.

The first step in this direction can be paying due attention to the industry sector, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), which have great potential to generate employment. The second step can be to minimize the non-development expenditure and increase the development capital expenditure.

Punjab Budget 2021-22 data shows that in 2019-20 about 76 per cent of total administrative services expenditure was consumed by police only and the remaining 24 per cent was consumed by Secretariat General Services, District Administration, Treasury & Accounts, Public Works and other. There seems to be a case of rationalizing this side of expenditure. Food-processing industries have reasonably good potential in the state. Like Vita, more plants can be opened in Punjab.

If the state government did not have so much debt, then this money would have been used for the welfare of the public and on social infrastructures like schools, hospitals, bridges and roads. But the public's tax money is being spent on repaying the debt of Rs 3 lakh crore.

Another cause of concern is the politics of freebies. If any government allocates more Budget for freebies then the

government have to raise funds by selling (disinvestment in public assets) its assets such as a public sector enterprise or a government-owned bank for more debt. Expenditures like free education and free health can be considered productive investments as they will prepare healthy and skilled workers for the economy in near future. This increasing phenomenon of freebies, over the last 74 years has actually turned the nation into debt. The crucial point is that until and unless there will be no law or ban on debt for freebies then there will be nothing to redistribute but poverty. Fast economic growth is the necessary condition for reducing debt although it may not be a single factor, besides it, the government have to reduce its extravagant expenditures. The manifestos of the political parties should prioritize faster and balanced economic growth by promoting a growth model based on employment opportunities in all sectors instead of free lunch.



DR. HARVINDER KAUR, S.D. College, Ambala Views are personal

Rupee falls 10 paise to 79.23 against US dollar

The rupee declined by 10 paise to close at 79.23 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking the strength of the American currency in the overseas market.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 79.20 and finally ended at 79.23, down 10 paise over its previous close of 79.13.

"Gains for the currency were short-lived even after RBI announced forex related measures. Pound held on to its gains after Boris Johnson said he was quitting as prime minister following a rush of ministerial resignations and calls for him to go," said Gaurang Somaiya, Forex & Bullion Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Focus will be on the non-farm payrolls data and better-than-expected numbers could keep the dollar supported at lower levels, Somaiya said, adding, "We expect the USD-INR to trade sideways but with a positive bias and quote in the range of 79.05 and 79.80."

The RBI on Wednesday raised overseas borrowing limits for companies and liberalised norms for foreign investments in government bonds as it announced a slew of measures to boost foreign exchange inflows



in efforts to curb the fall of the rupee. The central bank had also said it has been closely monitoring the liquidity conditions in the forex market and has stepped in as needed in all its segments to alleviate dollar tightness with the objective of ensuring orderly market functioning.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.39 per cent to 107.54. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.05 per cent to USD 104.70 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 303.38 points or 0.56 per cent up at 54,481.84, while the broader NSE Nifty jumped 87.70 points or 0.54 per cent to 16,220.60. Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market on Thursday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 925.22 crore, as per stock exchange data.

EAM Jaishankar & Chinese Finance Minister Wang Yi meet in Bali

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi held a one-hour meeting in the Indonesian city of Bali on Thursday, focusing on the lingering border row in eastern Ladakh, the issue of return of Indian students to China and resumption of direct flights between the two countries.

The talks took place on the sidelines of a meeting of the foreign ministers of the G20 countries. Jaishankar tweeted that the talks focused on "specific outstanding issues" pertaining to the border situation, in an oblique reference to the over two-year-old military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

"Began my day in Bali by meeting FM Wang Yi of China. Discussion lasted one hour.



Focused on specific outstanding issues in our bilateral relationship pertaining to the border situation," the external affairs minister said.

India has been pressing for quick disengagement of troops

from all the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh to ensure de-escalation of the situation, asserting that peace and tranquillity along the border are pre-requisite for progress in overall ties.

"Also spoke about other matters including students and flights," Jaishankar said.

Thousands of Indian students were unable to return to China for over two years due to Beijing's COVID-19 restrictions. India has been taking up the issue with China several times.

There have been discussions between the two sides on the resumption of direct flights but there has been no forward movement on the issue. The flight services were suspended due to the pandemic. It was the first meeting between the two foreign ministers since Wang visited India on March 24 and 25. In May, India and China held diplomatic talks on the border row and agreed to hold the next round of the Senior Commanders' meeting at an early date to achieve complete

disengagement from all friction points in eastern Ladakh. However, both sides are yet to decide on the military talks.

The border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake area.

The face-off escalated after the Galwan Valley clashes on June 15 that year. Both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year in the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area. Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the LAC in the sensitive sector.

Deeply shocked: Jaishankar on attack Shinzo Abe



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday expressed shock over the attack on former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during a political campaign event and prayed for his recovery.

Abe was rushed to a hospital after he was shot at the event in the southern Japanese city of Nara. Japanese media reports said Abe's condition is grave.

"Deeply shocked by the news about former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe. Join so many

of his friends and admirers in India in praying for him and his family," Jaishankar tweeted.

Abe was prime minister of Japan from 2006 to 2007 and then again for a second stint from 2012 to 2020.

India-Japan ties witnessed a major upswing during Abe's second term in the top office. He has been a strong proponent of closer strategic partnership between India and Japan.

Boris Johnson Resigns after String of Resignations

Boris Johnson resigned as leader of Britain's Conservative party, paving the way for the selection of a new prime minister after dozens of ministers quit his scandal-hit government.

"It is clearly the will of the parliamentary Conservative party that there should be a new leader of that party, and therefore a new prime minister," Johnson said outside 10 Downing Street. Johnson, 58, announced that he would step down after a slew of resignations from his top team in protest at his leadership but would stay on as prime minister until a replacement is found.

The timetable for a Tory leadership race will be announced next week, he said, after three tumultuous years in office defined by Brexit, the Covid pandemic and non-stop controversy over his reputation for mendacity.



Several dead in Copenhagen mall shooting, suspect arrested



A gunman opened fire inside a busy shopping mall in the Danish capital on Sunday, killing several people and wounding several others, police said.

A 22-year-old Danish man was arrested after the shooting. Copenhagen police inspector Soren Thomassen told reporters, adding there was no indication that anyone else was involved, though police were still investigating.

He said it was too early to speculate on the motive for the shooting, which happened in the late afternoon at Field's, one of the biggest shopping malls in Scandinavia, located on the outskirts of the Danish capital. We have several dead and several injured, Thomassen said, though he gave no specific casualty count. He said the suspect was an ethnic Dane, a phrase typically used to mean someone is white.

Danish broadcaster TV2 published a grainy photo of the alleged gunman, a man wearing knee-length shorts and a tank top and holding what appeared to be a rifle in his right hand.

Images from the scene showed people running out of the mall, and TV2 posted a photo of a man being put on a stretcher. Witnesses said people were crying and hid in shops. After the shooting, an enormous contingent of heavily-armed police officers patrolled the area, with several fire department vehicles also parked outside the mall. Copenhagen Mayor Sophie H Andersen tweeted: Terrible reports of shooting in Fields. We do not yet know for sure how many were injured or dead, but it is very serious.

Laurits Hermansen told Danish broadcaster DR that he was in a clothing store at the shopping centre with his family when he heard three, four bangs. Really loud bangs. It sounded like the shots were being fired just next to the store.

The shopping centre is on the outskirts of Copenhagen just across from a subway station for a line that connects the city centre with the international airport. A major highway also runs adjacent to the mall.

'India committed to taking care of its armed forces' veterans'

India is committed to taking care of its armed forces' veterans in the same way as they have taken care of the security of the country, India's Ambassador to the US Tarunjit Singh Sandhu has said as he felicitated the ex-servicemen living in America, including those who fought in the Kargil war.

Recognising the services of Indian armed forces' veterans, the Indian Embassy here organised Varishtha Yoddha, an event to honour these ex-servicemen. More than 140 people, including some distinguished veterans who had fought in various wars and their families, attended the event here on Sunday, a day ahead of the Independence Day of the United States.

"As India marks 75 years of Independence, privileged to host & felicitate Veterans of Indian Armed Forces in the US & families today. Their devotion & dedication shaped India's Defence & Security and is now shaping the India-US partnership," Sandhu tweeted.

Addressing the event, Sandhu said: Friends, you have served and sacrificed for mother India, with the utmost sense of duty and selflessness. You and your family members as a part of the 4 million-strong Indian community are instrumental in strengthening India-US ties across a diversity of sectors, Sandhu said. We remain committed to taking care of our veterans in the same way as they have taken care of the security of our country, he said.

Sandhu said it was a matter of pride, privilege and honour for him to be a part of the special gathering. While no recognition and award can do justice to your contributions, today's event in a small way expresses our respect and gratitude and tells you that we are here for you, he said in his admiration for the veterans.

"There are people in this room, who have fought for India in 1948, 1962, 1965 or 1971, 1985, the Kargil war in 1999 and in numerous other operations," he said.

Today's Varishtha Yoddha event is our humble effort to recognise the sacrifice and service of our veterans and honour them for their patriotism, dedication and willingness to serve and sacrifice all for the nation." Sandhu said Indian veterans, wherever they go, carry the highest standards of duty, discipline and professionalism for which Indian armed forces are known.

Our veterans living in the USA remain the flag-bearers of the traditions of our armed forces and continue to inspire the Indian community, he said.

After successfully launching its new gen products in India, Mahindra is now planning to expand its range in international markets. Mahindra has its subsidiaries in countries like Australia and South Africa, where it has been trying to improve its market share. Interestingly, now its South African website showcases both, XUV700 and Scorpio N in the vehicle gallery. The update seems to be in-line with the official announcements made during the official Indian launch of Scorpio N.

Mahindra's officials had confirmed that they intend to launch Scorpio N in India, South Africa and Nepal almost simultaneously. Later, they intend to expand their offerings to other international markets too. Mahindra's Australian website too now has listings of XUV700 and Scorpio N, however there is a clear call out that these models will launch in 2023.

Ahead of new XUV700 and Scorpio N official launch in Nepal and South Africa, Mahindra has unveiled their two new SUVs in the two countries. Launch is expected to take place in the coming months. In its international portfolio, Mahindra's key products include XUV500, XUV300 Scorpio, Scorpio Pick-Up, Bolero Pick-Up and KUV100. All of the above models have received decent response in Mahindra's target countries. Mahindra has been mindful of choosing countries which have a body styling preference which matches to its product range.

Currently, almost all of its international sales happens via export units from India. Even post the introduction of models like Scorpio N and XUV700, we don't think that Mahindra will get sizable sales numbers in international markets which can possibly make a business case to open an all new plant in any of its international markets.

In India, Mahindra plans to continue to sell the previous Scorpio as Scorpio Classic. The model is manufactured at Mahindra's Nasik based facility. The all new Scorpio N is going to be manufactured at Mahindra's Chakan facility, which also houses production lines for models like XUV700, KUV100, Bolero Neo amongst others. As of now, Mahindra's Indian Team is working towards making the Scorpio N a huge success, as SUV's bookings are about to commence in upcoming weeks. While Mahindra has announced pricing of its MT 2WD variants, pricing details of Scorpio N's AWD and AT trims are still under wraps.



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Mahindra XUV700 Debuts In Nepal, South Africa, India waiting touches June 2024

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Russian forces tried Monday to press their offensive deeper into eastern Ukraine after taking control of a key stronghold.

The Ukrainian military confirmed that its forces had withdrawn from the city of Lysychansk, the last bulwark of Ukrainian resistance in the Luhansk province, one of the two regions that make up the country's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas. The Russians also control about half of Donetsk, the second province of Donbas.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian military said the Russian forces were currently focusing their efforts on pushing toward the line of Siversk, Fedorivka and Bakhmut in the Donetsk region.

The Russian army also has intensified the shelling of key Ukrainian strongholds of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk deeper in the Donetsk region.

On Sunday, six people, including a 9-year-old girl, were killed in the Russian shelling of



Sloviansk and another 19 people were wounded, according to local authorities. Kramatorsk also came under fire on Sunday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has made capturing the entire Donbas a key goal in his war in Ukraine, now in its fifth month. Moscow-backed separatists in Donbas have battled Ukrainian forces since 2014 when they declared independence from Kyiv after the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimea. Russia formally rec-

ognized the self-proclaimed republics days before its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

Putin's defense minister reported to him Sunday that the Russian army and its separatist allies now hold all of the Luhansk region after taking full control of Lysychansk.

In his nightly video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acknowledged the withdrawal, but vowed that Ukrainian forces will fight their way back.

Russia tries to press its offensive into Ukraine's east

If the command of our army withdraws people from certain points of the front where the enemy has the greatest fire superiority, in particular this applies to Lysychansk, it means only one thing: We will return thanks to our tactics, thanks to the increase in the supply of modern weapons, Zelenskyy said.

Since failing to take Kyiv and other areas in Ukraine's north-east early in the war, Russia has focused on Donbas, unleashing fierce shelling and engaging in house-to-house combat that devastated cities in the region.

As Moscow pushed its offensive across Ukraine's east, areas in western Russia came under attack Sunday in a revival of sporadic apparent Ukrainian strikes across the border. The governor of the Belgorod region in Western Russia said fragments of an intercepted Ukrainian missile killed four people Sunday. In the Russian city of Kursk, two Ukrainian drones were shot down, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

A meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security, chaired by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, was held at the Parliament House. In addition to the provincial chief ministers, the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, the prime minister of Pak-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and the military leadership attended. The meeting was briefed on national security issues and recent talks with the banned TTP, according to a statement by the PM office.

"With the support of the Afghan government and led by civilian and military officials, the Pakistani government is negotiating with the banned TTP within the framework of the Constitution of Pakistan to strengthen regional and internal peace," according to the statement.

The meeting stated that the final results would be implemented after the completion of the procedure within the limits of the Constitution and the approval of the federal government. "The Parliamentary Committee on National Security formally approved the process of negotiations and approved the formation of a 'Parliamentary Oversight Committee' which would be responsible for overseeing the process within constitutional limits," the statement read. The meeting acknowledged the importance of Grand National Reconciliation and declared the meeting was the first step towards it.

The meeting was held after the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had raised objections over talks with the TTP, which was involved in the killing of Benazir Bhutto.

A Pakistan parliamentary panel on Tuesday formally endorsed the talks with the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to end the violence in the country, linking the final outcome of the dialogue with the approval of the government.

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Outages disrupt services at Japan's No. 2 telecoms carrier

Many users of Japan's No. 2 mobile carrier KDDI Corp were still having trouble making calls Monday after a massive outage throughout the weekend that affected nearly 40 million people, disrupting deliveries, weather reports and other services across the country.

The company said data transmission had largely been restored by Monday morning, but service restrictions were still causing many users to have trouble with making phone calls and sending short messages.

The outage started in the early hours of Saturday during a scheduled maintenance work at a facility in western Tokyo.

It disabled text messaging, phone calls and other services for more than 39 million users of KDDI's mobile services. Parcel deliveries also were disrupted.

Over the weekend, the Meteorological Agency was unable to send weather data at hundreds of stations, dozens of cash machines were disabled in central Japan, and Tokyo and other municipalities had trouble reaching COVID-19 patients



subject to health monitoring at home.

The major outage came just ahead of a July 10 parliamentary election and was seen as embarrassment for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government, which has been promoting digitization of the world's No. 3 economy.

The government was quick to address public concern over the problem.

It is extremely regrettable that mobile phone service, which is a crucial infrastructure for social and economic activity, has been unusable for such a long time," Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiji Kihara told reporters on Monday.

After successfully launching its new gen products in India, Mahindra is now planning to expand its range in international markets.

Mahindra has its subsidiaries in countries like Australia and South Africa, where it has been trying to improve its market share. Interestingly, now its South African website showcases both, XUV700 and Scorpio N in the vehicle gallery. The update seems to be in-line with the official announcements made during the official Indian launch of Scorpio N.

Mahindra's officials had confirmed that they intend to launch Scorpio N in India, South Africa and Nepal almost simultaneously. Later, they intend to expand their offerings to other international markets too. Mahindra's Australian website too now has listings of XUV700 and Scorpio N, however there is a clear call out that these models will launch in 2023.

Ahead of new XUV700 and Scorpio N official launch in Nepal and South Africa, Mahindra has unveiled their two new SUVs in the two countries. Launch is expected to take place in the coming



months. In its international portfolio, Mahindra's key products include XUV500, XUV300 Scorpio, Scorpio Pick-Up, Bolero Pick-Up and KUV100. All of the above models have received decent response in Mahindra's target countries. Mahindra has been mindful of choosing countries which have a body styling preference which matches to its product range.

Currently, almost all of its international sales happens via export units from India. Even post the introduction of models like Scorpio N and XUV700, we don't think that Mahindra will get sizable sales numbers in international markets which can possibly make a business case to open an all new plant in any of

its international markets.

In India, Mahindra plans to continue to sell the previous Scorpio as Scorpio Classic. The model is manufactured at Mahindra's Nasik based facility. The all new Scorpio N is going to be manufactured at Mahindra's Chakan facility, which also houses production lines for models like XUV700, KUV100, Bolero Neo amongst others. As of now, Mahindra's Indian Team is working towards making the Scorpio N a huge success, as SUV's bookings are about to commence in upcoming weeks. While Mahindra has announced pricing of its MT 2WD variants, pricing details of Scorpio N's AWD and AT trims are still under wraps.

The meeting stated that the final results would be implemented after the completion of the procedure within the limits of the Constitution and the approval of the federal government. "The Parliamentary Committee on National Security formally approved the process of negotiations and approved the formation of a 'Parliamentary Oversight Committee' which would be responsible for overseeing the process within constitutional limits," the statement read. The meeting acknowledged the importance of Grand National Reconciliation and declared the meeting was the first step towards it.

The meeting was held after the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had raised objections over talks with the TTP, which was involved in the killing of Benazir Bhutto.

More Sri Lankans arrive in TN After 3 feet of rain, 32,000 in Sydney area may need to flee

Beleaguered Sri Lankans fleeing the crisis-hit island republic and arriving in the country continued on Tuesday as eight persons, including children, belonging to two families, landed here, unable to manage the "unlivable" conditions back home.

Prior to this, 105 persons have arrived in the country through the sea route here, with Sri Lanka being in the grip of a crippling economic crisis that has resulted in exorbitant prices of essential commodities. On Tuesday, local fishermen spotted the eight members stranded at Arichalmunai, after having travelled there by boat from Sri Lanka, officials said, following which they informed the Marine Police. Police rescued them and brought them to Dhanushkodi for further enquiry after which they will be sent to the Mandapam refugee camp, they said.

The 8 persons belong to Jaffna in Sri Lanka. One of the Lankans who arrived here today, Lavendran, said that his home country was undergoing an "unlivable" phase with issues including unemployment and skyrocketing prices of essential commodities making life difficult. He said the two families coughed up a huge sum to travel by boat from Jaffna to here.

More than 30,000 residents of Sydney and its surrounds have been told to evacuate or prepare to abandon their homes on Monday as Australia's largest city braces for what could be its worst flooding in 18 months.

Parts of the city of 5 million people are facing a fourth flooding emergency in a year and a half after torrential rain since Friday caused dams to overflow and waterways to break their banks.

The latest information we have is that there's a very good chance that the flooding will be worse than any of the other three floods that those areas had in the last 18 months, Emergency Management Minister Murray Watt told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

The current flooding might affect areas that managed to stay dry during the previous floods, Watt added.

New South Wales state Premier Dominic Perrottet said 32,000 people were impacted by evacuation orders and warnings.

You'd probably expect to see that number increase over the course of the week, Perrottet said.

Emergency services had made 116 flood rescues in recent days, 83 of them since 9 p.m. Sunday, he said. Hundreds more requests for help were made by Monday morning.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology manager Jane Golding said some areas between Newcastle, north of Sydney,



and Wollongong, south of Sydney had received more than a meter (39 inches) of rain in the previous 24 hours. Some have received more than 1.5 meters (59 inches).

The system that has been generating this weather does show signs that it will ease to-

and the Nepean River in Sydney's west.

The water is flowing really quickly, Golding said. It's dangerous out on the rivers and we do have some more rain to fall which means the flash-flood risk is not over yet.

State Emergency Services Commissioner Carlene York said strong winds had toppled trees, damaging rooves and blocking roads. She advised against unnecessary travel.

Theresa Fedeli, mayor of the Camden municipality on the Nepean River southwest of Sydney, said the repeated flooding was taking a toll on members of her community.

It's just devastating. They just keep on saying devastating, not again,' Fedeli said. I just keep on saying ...

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We've got to be strong, we will get through this. But you know deep down it's really hitting home hard to a lot of people," she added.

Perrottet said government and communities needed to adapt to major flooding becoming more common across Australia's most populous state.

We're seeing these flood events more regularly, there's no doubt about that, Perrottet said.

"To see what we're seeing right across Sydney, there's no doubt these events are becoming more common. And governments need to adjust and make sure that we respond to the changing environment that we find ourselves in, he added.

Have made a conscious effort to improve strike rotation: Shafali



Young Indian opener Shafali Verma, who is known for her big-hitting prowess, says she is making a conscious effort to improve her strike rotation to become a better cricketer.

The 18-year-old slammed a run-a-ball 71 not out, her career-best score in ODIs, in an unbroken 174-run partnership with Smriti Mandhana (94 not out) as India decimated the hosts by 10 wickets here on Monday to take a unassailable 2-0 lead in the three match series.

The 18-year-old has not been able to maintain consistency in her performances, especially in the 50-over format.

"Having seen my past matches, I thought I lacked in taking singles, so I've worked on it. I'm trying to be better as I feel taking singles is very important to build your innings in ODIs," Shafali said on the eve of the third and final ODI of the series. "If it's a good ball, it's about taking singles and rotating the strike. If you keep rotating strike, scoring

boundaries become easy. I'm also working a lot on my fitness."

In the preceding T20 series, Shafali failed to convert her starts and got out for 31, 17 and 5 in the three matches. But in the ODIs, she scored her first half-century in the format since the one against South Africa in the World Cup in March.

With a modest target in sight, the duo focused on taking singles and twos as they kept piling misery on the Lankan attack.

49 of her 71 runs came in sin-

gles and twos as she along with her senior teammate slowly built the partnership before chasing it down in 25.4 overs.

"She's (Smriti) supporting me well on and off the field, telling me my mistakes and where I can improve. We enjoy talking to each other, we hope to keep it going, and form more such partnerships." India now have Harmanpreet Kaur leading the side in all formats after the Mithali Raj's retirement. Shafali said the new skipper constantly backs youngsters.

"Harry Di (Harmanpreet) supports youngsters a lot. We have a lot of youngsters in the team. She has developed a culture where we keep our communications going, keep talking to each other. Yes, there's a good team culture now," Shafali was also seen bowling slow off-breaks in the series and said it was her skipper's idea.

"I always bowled in the nets and recently got a chance to bowl in domestic cricket and got confidence from there. Harry Di also supported me, it was her idea and she told me to keep practising at the nets. I'm trying to work more on it," she signed off.

Aerosmith's Steven Tyler leaves rehab, wants to be 'back on stage'



Iconic rock band Aerosmith's frontman Steven Tyler has come out of rehabilitation facility and is doing "extremely well".

Tyler had entered a treatment facility in May after he relapsed following 10 years of sobriety.

"He's doing extremely well and looking forward to being back on stage," the vocalist's representative said in a statement released on Twitter.

The singer checked out of the facility earlier this week and stayed longer than the required 30 days.

Aerosmith had to cancel their Las Vegas residency in May due to Tyler's relapse.

"Thank you for your understanding and for your support for Steven during this time... We are truly sorry to inform our fans and friends that we must cancel our first set of Las Vegas residency dates this June and July while he focuses on his well-being," the band had said in a statement released on Twitter.

Tyler first opened up in 2019 about the time his band had to send him to rehab to get rid of a habit in 1988.

POTPOURRI

Hungry for medals, Nikhat hopes boxers win 4 gold at CWG

NEW DELHI: Newly-crowned world champion Nikhat Zareen is hungry to win more medals for the country and expects a record haul of four golds from the Indian boxing contingent at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games starting July 28.

Indian pugilists' best-ever CWG show has been at the 2018 edition at Gold Coast where six-time world champion Mary Kom became the first woman boxer from the country to emerge champion, as they returned with a record haul of three gold, three silver and three bronze medals.



At Birmingham, the new boxing sensation from Telangana would make its much-anticipated CWG debut and she hoped for "at least eight medals" from the 12-member Indian boxing team. "I expect at least eight medals, of which I will take four gold from the boxers. Let's see what happens," the 26-year-old, who won the 52kg flyweight gold at the World Championships in Turkey in May, said in a virtual media interaction arranged by the Sports Authority of India.

"We're all experienced boxers. We have World Championship medallists and Olympians. I hope every one gets gold! I still have the same hunger to win a medal for the country, I'm still hungry. It's difficult to predict a medal before the draw is out, as sometimes you're handed a tough draw and get eliminated in the first round." At Birmingham, India will have a boxing contingent of eight men's and four women's participants.

Quentin Tarantino, wife Daniella welcome second child



Filmmaker Quentin Tarantino and his wife, model Daniella, have become parents to a baby girl. The couple, who also share two-year-old son Leo, welcomed their second child on Saturday.

"Daniella and Quentin Tarantino are happy to announce that Daniella gave birth to their baby girl on July 2, 2022, a little sister to Leo, their first child," they said in a statement issued to People magazine. Tarantino, 59, and Daniella, 38, had announced in February that they are expecting their second child. The duo started dating after meeting in 2009 when the director was promoting his film "Inglorious Basterds". They got engaged in June 2017 and married in November 2018. Their son Leo was born in February 2020.

James Cameron says he may pass the baton to trustworthy director for final 'Avatar' films

Celebrated filmmaker James Cameron may not be directing the fourth and the fifth installment of his popular sci-fi franchise "Avatar".

In an interview with Empire, the director said he is developing other projects and would like to focus on them after the third or the fourth film in the movie series. The filmmaker is currently awaiting the December premiere of second installment "Avatar: The Way Of Water".

"The 'Avatar' films themselves are kind of all-consuming. I've got some other things I'm developing as well that are exciting. I think eventually over time -- I don't know if that's after three or after four -- I'll want to pass the baton to a director that I trust to take over, so I can go do some other stuff that I'm also interested in.

Or maybe not. I don't know," Cameron said.

The filmmaker said the movie franchise gave him the canvas to talk about subjects which are important to him in real life -- family, sustainability and climate.

Everything I need to say about family, about sustainability, about climate, about the natural world, the themes that are important to me in real life and in my cinematic life, I can say on this canvas."

"Avatar: The Way Of Water" is set over a decade after the events of the first film, which released in 2009. It focuses on the Sully family (Jake, Neytiri, and their kids), the trouble that follows them, the lengths they go to keep each other safe, the battles they fight to stay alive, and the tragedies they endure.

Noted filmmaker Tarun Majumdar dies



Director Tarun Majumdar, who is known for making movies based on compelling tales highlighting the life of middle-class families, died in a Kolkata hospital on Monday, family sources said.

He was 92. Majumdar has been undergoing treatment at the state-run SSKM hospital with old age ailments for the past few days.

Notable among his works are Balika Badhu (1976), Kuheli (1971), Shriman Prithviraj (1972) and Dardar Kirti (1980).

Drugs case: Bombay HC grants bail to ex-flatmate of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput

The Bombay High Court on Monday granted bail to Siddharth Pithani, the former flatmate of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, arrested in a drugs case related to the actor's death.

Rajput's former girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty, who is already out on bail, is also an accused in the case. A single bench of Justice Bharati Dangre granted bail to



Pithani on a bond of Rs 50,000. Pithani was arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)

in May 2021 from Hyderabad. He is currently in judicial custody. He had been booked under section 27 (A) (financing illicit traffic and harboring offenders) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, among other charges.

Pithani had sought bail, claiming he was framed in a false case. He had claimed in his plea that

he was never found in possession of any drugs, and nothing which could suggest he was involved in drug trafficking was recovered from him.

Rajput allegedly committed suicide in his Mumbai residence in June 2020. Later, the NCB began a probe, based on some WhatsApp chats, into an alleged drug supply racket in the film industry.

French actor Judith Chemla details domestic abuse ordeal, shares photos from past incident



French actor Judith Chemla has opened up about the domestic abuse she suffered at the hands of a former partner. The 34-year-old actor took to Instagram late Sunday night and posted photos of her swollen face from a domestic abuse incident that happened last year.

"A year ago my face was injured, blue, purple under my eye, I saw myself deformed. A year ago I looked at my face in the mirror and I knew that I could no longer hide my face. My daughter's father. Those who are able to do that must be out of harm's way. But how? I am not ashamed of this photo," Chemla wrote. According to Deadline, film director Yohan Manca, with whom Chemla was previously in a relationship and has a daughter with him, was given an eight-month suspended prison sentence for domestic violence against the actor. In her post, Chemla revealed that she has filed more than one complaint against her abuser. "I have so much evidence that he continues to try and harm me. What must I take for him to leave me alone? Really go to jail? He will still play the victim with my daughter and she will suffer from not seeing her father. That I keep this to myself?"

'Aarya' season three in development

Actor Sushmita Sen-led crime drama series "Aarya" is set to return for third season, creator Ram Madhvani announced on Monday.

The International Emmy-nominated show is an official adaptation of the hit Dutch series "Penozo". Madhvani shared the announcement on his Instagram page.

"Aarya season 3 in development. Creator @madhvaniram, @sushmitasen47, @disneyplushotstar & @endemolshineind collaborate once again to escalate the excitement," the post read.

The first season of the se-



ries revolved around a happily married woman Aarya (Sen), whose world turns upside down when her husband, pharma baron Tej Sareen

(Chandrachur Singh), is shot and a threat looms over her family due to Tej's possible involvement in an illegal drug racket.

NZ women and men to get equal pay in landmark agreement

In a first in world cricket, New Zealand men and women will receive the same match fees across formats and competitions, according to a ground-breaking five-year deal between the sports governing body in the country and the players' association.

"I want to thank and congratulate the players and the Major Associations for their part in reaching such a significant agreement," NZC chief executive David White said in a statement. "This is the most important agreement in our sport, as it binds NZC, the Major Associations, and our players at the hip, and sets the foundation to fund, grow and develop cricket. "It's been a collaborative yet



very robust negotiation. Importantly, it represents a significant step forward as we continue to grow our investment in women's cricket."

According to the landmark agreement struck between NZC, the six major associations, and the New Zealand Cricket Players Association, White Ferns and domestic women's players will

receive the same match fees as the men across all their formats and competitions. "Translated, this means the highest-ranked WHITE FERN would be able to receive a maximum of NZD 163,246 a year (up from NZD 83,432), the ninth-ranked, NZD 148,946 (NZD 66,266), and the 17th-ranked NZD 142,346 (NZD 62,833)," the statement said.

Actor Sreejith Ravi held in POCSO case



Popular Malayalam actor Sreejith Ravi was arrested in a POCSO case for allegedly flashing at two children here, police said.

The police registered a case based on the complaint of their parents that an unidentified person, who came in a black colour car, had behaved indecently towards the two minors in a nearby park on July 4.

During the investigation, police examined CCTV visuals of the area and managed to find the car and finally came to know that it was owned by Ravi.

"The complainant children identified the accused. The FIR was registered and he was taken to court," a police officer said here.

Various sections of the POCSO Act including Section 11 (1) and 12 have been slapped against the 46-year old actor.

Indian Budo Kai Do team takes part in WBKF Intl Jiu Jitsu Kyuitsu & Archery Seminar in UK



Indian Budo Kai Do teams are participating in the ongoing WBKF International Jiu Jitsu & Kyuitsu and Archery Seminar, which is being held at ARK John Keats Academy, Bell Lane, Enfield London UK, from July 4 to 14, 2022.

London Coach Hanshi Garry Maas, UK Ambassador, World Budo and Kobudo Federation is guiding the participants.

The Indian Budo Kai Do players including Ekamveer Singh, Karanveer Singh, Rajesh Kumar,

Suman Lata Sharma, Manpreet Singh, Navpreet Singh, Gurbinder kaur, Lovepreet Singh, Paramdeep Singh, Simranjit Singh, Harmanjeet Singh and Jaskaran Singh are taking part in the seminar under the leadership of Coach R P Sharma, and Team Captain Harpreet Kaur.

Sr. Sharanjeet Singh (President of Budo Kai Do Mixed Martial Arts Federation of India) and Mr. Ankur Gupta vice Chairman, Dr Yog Raj Sharma Chairman, National Tournament Board and Bollywood star Rana Jung Bahadur congratulated the players.

Pant surges to career-best number five, Kohli drops out of top-10 in ICC Test ranking

India's star wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant blazed his way into a career-best fifth position in the latest ICC Test rankings announced on Wednesday, even as the out-of-form Virat Kohli dropped out of top-10 for the first time in six years.

Pant's meteoric rise in the rankings comes after his heroics in the recently-held COVID-delayed fifth Test between India and England in which he scored 146 and 57 across two innings. It is worth mentioning that Pant scored two tons and three half centuries in his last six Test innings.

However, former India skipper Kohli dropped four places to 13th in the batting rankings, thanks to a prolonged lean run. Interestingly, it is for the first time



in six years that Kohli has found himself out of top 10 in the Test rankings. Current Indian captain Rohit Sharma, who missed the Edgbaston Test after testing positive for COVID-19, also dropped one place in the rankings.

England batter Joe Root, who reigned supreme at Edgbaston with a sublime 142 in England's second innings, consolidated his position at the top of the rankings with 923 points, with Australians Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith taking the second and third positions respectively.

I'm everything that is not 'commercial': Nagesh Kukunoor

Director Nagesh Kukunoor says it doesn't bother him that his wide range of filmography has often been bracketed as "art house" or "offbeat" cinema as he is comfortable about following his instincts.

Kukunoor made his directorial debut in 1998 with "Hyderabad Blues" and has since helmed critically-acclaimed films such as "Rockford", "3 Deewarein", "Dor", "Iqbal" and "Dhanak".

In the age of streaming services, monikers that used to be attached to movies falling outside the mainstream domain have become "irrelevant", he said. "I have been called so many things. There's parallel cinema, offbeat cinema. At one point of time, there was the multiplex cinema, also the independent cinema and then lastly, art-house cinema. But now these labels don't really matter, especially with the (rise



of) streaming platforms. I'm everything that is not 'commercial

or mainstream," Kukunoor told in a virtual interview.

The 55-year-old filmmaker said earlier directors would use such terms to showcase their movies to exhibitors in order to get a decent theatrical release.

"You had to give some kind of moniker to your films because you had to go to a distributor to get it to the theatres. And people would look at my film and say this movie does not have any

songs, it is art cinema... "These things have never actively bothered me. The kind of films I make, I know it can't explode and find an audience that'll make Rs 200 crore. So, I'm very comfortable playing in my corner," Kukunoor added.

When he started working on his first movie "Hyderabad Blues", the filmmaker said he had no idea about the craft of filmmaking.

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