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 DELHI WATER CRISIS: WAZIRABAD POND NEARLY DEPLETED, AAP SEEKS CENTRAL ASSISTANCE	 UNION BUDGET 2024-25 LIKELY TO BE PRESENTED IN LATE JULY	 ALIA BHATT AMPS UP HER OOMPH QUOTIENT IN HER BIKINI TOP OUTFIT

Delhi excise ‘scam’: Arvind Kejriwal’s bail plea to be heard on June 19

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Friday fixed for June 19 the bail plea of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a money-laundering case related to the alleged excise scam.

Additional Sessions Judge Mukesh Kumar adjourned the matter after the ED sought time to file reply.

The judge, meanwhile, fixed for Saturday an application filed by Kejriwal seeking directions to allow his wife to join through video-conference the proceedings of the medical board constituted to determine Kejriwal’s health condition and treatment.

The judge directed the jail authorities concerned to file a reply in the matter.

“Application has been moved by the accused seeking directions to allow his wife to join medical board. Before passing



any order I deem it appropriate to call for reply from the jail superintendent concerned. The application be kept for tomorrow,” the judge said.

During the proceedings, the ED requested the court to adjourn the matter till June 25.

The judge, however, said he would consider the accused’s convenience for the next date of hearing, not the probe agency’s.

Delhi LG grants prosecution sanction against Arundhati Roy under UAPA: Officials

NEW DELHI: Delhi Lt Governor V K Saxena has accorded sanction to prosecute author Arundhati Roy and a former professor in Kashmir under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for allegedly making provocative speeches at an event here in 2010, Raj Niwas officials said on Friday.

The FIR against Roy and former Central University of Kashmir professor Sheikh Showkat Hussain was registered following the orders of the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate, New Delhi, they added.

There was no immediate reaction from Roy and Hussain.

The FIR in the matter was registered on a complaint made by Sushil Pandit, a social activist from Kashmir, on October 28, 2010.

“Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena has sanctioned the prosecution of Arundhati Roy and former



Professor of International Law in Central University of Kashmir, Dr. Sheikh Showkat Hussain, under section 45 (1) of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in the case,” a Raj Niwas official said on Friday.

Last October, the LG had granted sanction to prosecute them under section 196 of CrPC for commission of offences punishable under different sections of the Indian Penal Code: 153A

(promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony), 153B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief).

Roy and Hussain had allegedly made provocative speeches at a conference organised under

the banner of ‘Azadi - The Only Way’ on October 21, 2010 at LTG Auditorium, Copernicus Marg, here.

“The issues discussed and spoken about at the conference propagated the separation of Kashmir from India,” said the official.

Those who delivered speeches at the conference included Syed Ali Shah Geelani, SAR Geelani (anchor of the Conference and prime accused in the Parliament attack case), Arundhati Roy, Dr. Sheikh Showkat Hussain and Varavara Rao.

The complainant filed a complaint under Section 156(3) of CrPC before the Metropolitan Magistrate Court, New Delhi, who disposed the complaint on November 27, 2010 with the directions to register an FIR.

Accordingly, an FIR was registered and investigation was carried out, they said.

Swati Maliwal assault case: Delhi High Court seeks police stand on Kejriwal’s aide Bibhav Kumar’s bail plea



NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the city police’s stand on the bail plea of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s aide Bibhav Kumar in the case pertaining to the alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal.

A vacation bench of Justice Amit Sharma issued notice on the bail plea and asked the Delhi Police to file a status report. Kumar, presently in judicial custody, allegedly assaulted Maliwal on May 13 at Kejriwal’s official residence. He was arrested on May 18.

The Tis Hazari court had on June 7 refused to grant him bail, saying he was facing “grave and serious” charges and that there was an apprehension that he could influence witnesses. Kumar’s first bail plea was dismissed on May 27 by another sessions court which said there appeared to be no “pre-meditation” by Maliwal in lodging the FIR and that her allegations could not be “swiped away”.

An FIR was registered against Kumar on May 16 under various provisions of the IPC, including those related to criminal intimidation, assault or criminal force on a woman with the intent to disrobe, and attempt to commit culpable homicide. The matter would be heard next in the first week of July.

CII Projects Robust 8% GDP Growth for India in 2024-25



NEW DELHI: The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), India’s apex industry association, has forecasted a robust 8 per cent economic growth rate for the country in the fiscal year 2024-25. This projection is notably higher than the Reserve Bank of India’s growth estimate of 7.2 per cent for the current fiscal year. CII’s optimism stems from expectations that the newly re-elected Modi government will implement second-generation reforms on a mission mode, coupled with anticipated improvements in global trade growth rates over the next couple of years. Sanjiv Puri, the newly appointed CII President, expressed confidence in India’s economic prospects during his inaugural media interaction. “The government has placed the economy on a much stronger foundation through its policy interventions on ease of doing business,” Puri stated, citing robust high-frequency economic indicators at the start of the current year. The industry body anticipates positive developments across various fronts, including favorable monsoon conditions leading to better agricultural production, and an improved performance in the IT sector due to an expected uptick in global trade later this year. CII envisions all three sectors – agriculture, industry, and services – firing on all cylinders, contributing to the projected 8 per cent growth rate.

India fastest growing economy, to clock 6.7 per cent growth over 3 years: World Bank

NEW DELHI : India will remain the fastest-growing major economy recording a steady growth of 6.7 per cent in the next three years including the current financial year, said a World Bank report released on Tuesday.

In India, growth is estimated to have picked up to 8.2 per cent in fiscal year (FY) 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024) -- 1.9 percentage points higher than estimated in January, according to the World Bank’s latest Global Economic Prospects report.

It said global growth is projected to hold steady at 2.6 per cent in 2024 before edging up to an average of 2.7 per cent



in 2025-26. That is well below the 3.1 per cent average in the decade before Covid-19.

“The forecast implies that over the course of 2024-26 countries that collectively account for more than 80 per cent of the world’s population and global GDP would still be growing more slowly than they did in the decade before Covid-19,” it said.

Growth in the South Asia (SAR) region is projected to slow from 6.6 per cent in 2023 to 6.2 per cent in 2024, mainly due to a moderation of growth in India from a high base in recent years.

With steady growth in India, regional growth is forecast to stay at 6.2 per cent in 2025-26. Among the region’s other economies, growth is expected to remain robust in Bangladesh, though at a slower rate than in the past several years, and to strengthen in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

“India will remain the fastest-growing of the world’s largest economies, although its pace of expansion is expected to moder-

ate. After a high growth rate in FY2023/24, steady growth of 6.7 per cent per year, on average, is projected for the three fiscal years beginning in FY2024/25,” the report said.

This moderation is mainly due to a slowdown in investment from a high base.

“However, investment growth is still expected to be stronger than previously envisaged and remain robust over the forecast period, with strong public investment accompanied by private investment,” it said.

It said that private consumption growth is expected to benefit from a recovery of agricultural production and declining inflation.

Wayanad or Raebareli? Rahul Gandhi likely to decide on Monday



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is likely to end his dilemma on Monday over which Lok Sabha seat to retain -- Wayanad or Raebareli. Sources in the Congress said that he will make the decision known on Monday.

Gandhi won both the seats with a thumping majority.

In Wayanad, he was the sitting Lok Sabha member which he contested and won in the recently concluded polls. He also won from Raebareli, considered to be the family’s traditional seat. It was last represented by his mother Sonia Gandhi, who did not contest the seat and became a Rajya Sabha member. Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday was in his constituency to thank his voters where he said that

he was in dilemma over which seat to retain and which to quit. He said whatever decision he makes, all will be happy. After this statement, speculation is rife that his sister, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, may be fielded from here.

At a public meeting in Kalletta on Wednesday, State Congress president and Kannur Lok Sabha member K. Sudhakaran said that Rahul Gandhi will vacate the Wayanad seat for the larger interest of the party.

However, Congress legislator and former State Minister A.P. Anilkumar, who represents the Wandoor Assembly seat in the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency, said all of them want Rahul Gandhi to retain the Wayanad seat.

PM Modi holds talks with Zelenskyy, Macron, Sunak on the sidelines of G7 Summit in Italy

BARI (ITALY) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, French President Emmanuel Macron and his British counterpart Rishi Sunak on the sidelines of G7 Summit in Italy’s Apulia region.

It is learnt that Ukrania’s Zelenskyy briefed Modi on various aspects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Modi had met Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the previous G7 summit in Hiroshima in May last year as well. India has been maintaining that the conflict in Ukraine must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.

Modi and French President Macron discussed ways to further strengthen the strategic partnership, including in areas of defence, nuclear and space, and exchanged views on key global and regional issues.

The two leaders met in the southern resort town of Italy. “Taking Strategic Partnership to new levels! PM @na-



rendramodi met President @EmmanuelMacron of France on the sidelines of the 50th G7 Summit in Apulia, Italy,” Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal posted on X.

“The two leaders discussed ways to further strengthen the partnership including in areas of defence, nuclear, space, education, climate action, digital public infrastructure, critical technologies, connectivity and culture. They also exchanged views on key global and regional

issues,” he wrote.

It is Prime Minister Modi’s first foreign trip after assuming office for a third time this month. The two leaders last met in January when the French President visited India to attend the 75th Republic Day of India.

PM Modi’s meeting with his British counterpart Sunak followed his talks with French President Macron. The two leaders greeted each other with a warm hug as they met on the sidelines of the 50th G7 Summit at the

luxury resort of Borgo Egnazia in Apulia.

Modi reaffirmed his commitment to further strengthen the India-UK strategic partnership in the third term of the NDA government and reviewed the progress made in the ongoing FTA negotiations.

“It was a delight to meet PM @RishiSunak in Italy. I reiterated my commitment to further strengthen the India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in the third term of the NDA Government,” Modi posted on X soon after their meeting.

“There is great scope to deepen ties in sectors like semiconductors, technology and trade. We also talked about further cementing ties in the defence sector,” Modi wrote.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs Randhir Jaiswal described the meeting between the two leaders as “fruitful.”

TRAI refutes claims of charging for multiple SIMs

NEW DELHI : The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) refuted the claims being circulated that the regulator will impose charges on customers for holding multiple SIM cards.

The telecom regulator said in a post on social media X (previously Twitter) that such claims are being circulated to



mislead people. “Such claims are unfounded and serve only to mislead the public,” the regulator said.

Kuwait fire tragedy: Plane carrying mortal remains of 45 Indians lands in Kerala

KOCHI: A special Air Force aircraft carrying the mortal remains of 45 Indians, who died in a devastating fire in Kuwait on June 12, landed here on Friday and will later fly to Delhi.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Union Minister of State Suresh Gopi, Leader of Opposition V.D. Satheesan and several state cabinet ministers were present at the airport.

State Minister of Law P. Rajeev said since the maximum number of deceased was from Kerala, the flight landed here first and then it will leave for Delhi, with the remaining bodies.

The victims include 23 from Kerala, seven from Tamil Nadu, three each from Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, two from Odisha, and one each



from Bihar, Punjab, Karnataka, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Haryana.

The mortal remains of the victims from Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu will be sent to their respective destinations.



The state government arranged for an inspection of the bodies that were received and an ambulance was also allotted to carry each of the bodies to their respective homes.

At the airport, the mortal remains were placed for a while

in a six-storey building in Kuwait’s Mangaf city on Wednesday, killing at least 49 people.

The embassy said that 176 Indian workers were in the housing facility, 45 of them died and 33 were hospitalised.

Reforms in GST, Custom Duty, MSMEs to Push India’s Growth: GTRI

NEW DELHI: The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), a prominent economic think tank, released a comprehensive policy agenda on Thursday, urging the implementation of strategic reforms across various sectors.

According to the GTRI, India stands at the cusp of a transformative era, necessitating comprehensive economic reforms.

The proposed agenda addresses a wide range of issues, from simplifying the customs duty structure and pioneering regulatory frameworks for emerging sectors like cryptocurrencies, to boosting the MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) sector through GST (Goods and Services Tax) reforms and fortifying the nation’s energy security. One of the key recommendations is the simplification of the convoluted customs duty structure, which currently affects



imports worth USD 680 billion. The current structure, which has not been reviewed in 20 years, features over 27 different duty rates and over 100 specific or mixed duty slabs.

Notably, 85 percent of customs duty revenue comes from less than 10 percent of tariff lines, while 60 percent of tariff lines contribute less than 3 percent of revenue. The GTRI suggests that with some adjustments, the average import tariff could be reduced from 18.1 percent to below 10 percent without impacting essential products.

This simplification would not only address global criticism, such as former US President Donald Trump’s portrayal of

India as the “tariff king,” but also contribute to the nation’s broader economic objectives. Furthermore, the think tank proposes increasing the GST exemption limit for a firm’s annual turnover from Rs 40 lakh to Rs 1.5 crore. This move is anticipated to be transformative for India’s MSME sector, promoting job creation and growth. Firms with less than Rs 1.5 crore turnover account for over 80 percent of GST registrations but contribute less than 7 percent of the tax collected.

Addressing concerns over India’s growing reliance on Chinese imports, particularly in sectors like electric vehicles (EVs) and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), the GTRI recommends avoiding incentives for low value-added EVs and instead focusing on developing domestic capacity for API production.

Delhi water crisis: Wazirabad Pond nearly depleted, AAP seeks Central assistance

NEW DELHI: The water level in Wazirabad Pond, a major source of Delhi's drinking water, has nearly been depleted, intensifying the water crisis in the national capital, Water Minister Atishi announced on Saturday.

The AAP government convened an emergency meeting on Saturday to address this alarming situation. In the meeting, Atishi stated that while water in Wazirabad Pond is almost gone, there is also a shortage in the Munak Canal. Delhi legislators have reached out to Union Water Resources Minister C.R. Patil for assistance.

Atishi highlighted that both



Wazirabad Pond and the Munak Canal are experiencing severe shortages, leading to a significant reduction in potable water production at the city's treatment plants. She mentioned that instead of 1, 005 mgd of water production in Delhi on June 14, only 932 mgd was produced, indicating a shortage of over 70 mgd of water in the national

capital.

Dozens of areas in Delhi are currently grappling with water shortage. The dwindling water supply has forced the government to dig emergency borewells and deploy tankers across the city to mitigate the crisis. Long queues and desperate residents waiting in the scorching heat for water tankers have become a common sight in the affected areas. In a letter to C.R. Patil, AAP MLA Dilip Pandey accused the Haryana government of politicising the issue and highlighted illegal mining near Burari on the Uttar Pradesh side, which has further complicated the situation.

Sanjay Singh tells Delhi MPs: Talk to Centre, Haryana Govt

NEW DELHI : Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Friday criticised the BJP and its seven newly-elected MPs in Delhi for failing to secure the city's rightful water supply.

Singh accused the BJP government in Haryana of withholding water as a political tactic against Delhiites during the scorching summer.

"The people of Delhi have elected all seven BJP MPs. Despite this, the BJP government of Haryana is punishing Delhiites," said Singh.

He urged the BJP MPs to appeal to the Haryana and



Central governments to address the water crisis and meet the Lieutenant-Governor, who he claimed were "missing".

"We want to tell the BJP government of Haryana that you can take out your enmity

with us, but why are you punishing the people of Delhi? There is nothing more virtuous than providing water," he added.

Singh also lambasted the Modi government of being responsible for irregularities in the NEET exam, calling it a "scam". Singh also addressed the internal strife within the BJP and the RSS.

UP CM Yogi Adityanath vows to continue crackdown on mafia, criminals

LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asserted that action against mafias and criminals will be intensified in the state.

"It is our responsibility to protect the interests of every poor, exploited, oppressed and deprived individual. Be it land mafia or any other mafia, action will be taken," the Chief Minister said here at a meeting with officials late on Thursday night.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, in the first law and order review meeting after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, instructed officials to communicate, coordinate and earn the trust of the people.

"Janta Darshan programmes should be initiated promptly at district, range, and zone levels," he emphasised, noting that in line with a zero-tolerance policy against corruption, stringent actions will target unethical transactions from the state secretariat down to the block level.



The Chief Minister reviewed the law and order situation through video conferencing with police commissioners, divisional commissioners, district magistrates, and superintendents of police of all districts.

He further told the officers that VIP culture should not be promoted, and that action should be taken over the use of hooters and pressure horns in government and private vehicles. He even stressed maintaining peace and harmony during the upcoming festivities. The officers should ensure that there is full respect for faith, but there should not be any encouragement to new traditions, he said.

Ganga Dussehra is on June 16, Bakrid on June 17, the Mangal festival of Jyeshtha month is on June 18, and the International Yoga Day will be observed on June 21. Moharram and Kanwar Yatra are in July.

The government and administration should be in active mode 24x7, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said.

During the upcoming Bakrid festivities, the Chief Minister said that 'namaaz' should not be offered on the road, and action will be taken if banned animals are slaughtered. "The spot for sacrifice on Bakrid should be marked in advance. There should be no sacrifice at other spots. The sacrifice should not be made at disputed or sensitive places. Officials should ensure that banned animals are not sacrificed. A systematic action plan for the disposal of waste after sacrifice should be launched in all districts," he added.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath instructed the officers to ensure that no incident which hurts the religious sentiments of people should take place in the state.

Akhilesh, Awadhesh Prasad resigns from UP Assembly seats



LUCKNOW: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday formally forwarded his resignation from the Karhal Assembly seat in Uttar Pradesh to Speaker Satish Mahana. Akhilesh Yadav, who won the recent Lok Sabha elections from UP's Kannauj, also held the Karhal assembly seat. In the Lok Sabha polls, Akhilesh secured his family's stronghold Kannauj by garnering 6, 42, 292 votes, surpassing the incumbent BJP MP Subrat Pathak by a margin exceeding 1 lakh votes. Samajwadi Party MLA Awadhesh Prasad also tendered his resignation from the Assembly after being elected as a Lok Sabha MP from Faizabad.

Four including bank officer booked in Rs 96 lakh students scholarship fraud

SATISH HANDA
Kaithal

Another case of fraud worth Rs 96 crore has been reported from Kaithal in which the Haryana Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) team after investigation exposed embezzlements in release of scholarship to the post-matric students belonging to scheduled caste and backward class families. A case has been registered by ACB against four persons including a senior officer of the State Bank of India

branch then posted at Kaithal Hukam Chand Gupta. The other three identified as Naveen Kumar resident of Assandh, Dharamveer resident of village Sirta and Rajesh Kumar resident of Kaithal all running common education guidance centres (EGC).

ACB investigation revealed that during year 2014-15 and 2015-16 fake admissions of nearly 2000 students belonging to schedule caste and backward classes (SC/BC) mostly in ANM and GNS courses in educational insti-



tutes in Punjab and a few in Haryana were falsely shown in order to avail Haryana government's scheme to release scholarship to such Post-matric students belonging to SC/BC categories. ACB investigations further revealed that amount between Rs 30000

and 35000 was released to each student by the government through Career Education Guidance Centres run by Naveen Kumar, Dharamveer and Rajesh Kumar who had charged amount between Rs 1000 and 3000 from each student towards consultation fee and arranging fake admission of the students in educational institutes allegedly with the assistance of bank officer opened such a large number of bank accounts without checking the documents properly.

ACB Inspector Mahinder

Singh said that investigation in the case revealed that 92 male and female students' admissions were faked shown thus suspecting a fraud for amount worth Rs 96 lakh. He said, it is surprising that the district welfare officer under what circumstances released such a huge amount worth lakhs of rupees towards scholarship to the students without verification of their documents and how fake admissions were given to the students by the educational institutes in Punjab and action in this regard is under process.

BJP chooses a tribal MLA Mohan Majhi as CM with two dy CMs

ARABINDA MOHAPATRA
Bhubaneswar

The BJP central leadership has sprung a surprise by picking tribal leader Mohan Majhi as the first chief minister of the party in Odisha. The name of Majhi, the MLA from Keonjhar Sadar, was announced after the end of the Bjp legislature party meeting here. The meeting was overseen by two central observers defense minister Rajnath Singh and Bhupendra Yadav.

Patnagarh MLA K V Singhdeo and first time MLA Pravati Parida have been made Deputy chief ministers. The party has, thus, sought to strike a balance by making a tribal the chief minister while giving the responsibility of one deputy chief minister to an experienced person lime Singhdeo and choosing a woman as well.

Several names were doing the rounds for the chief ministers post for the last few days with Singhdeo, Suresh Pujari and state party chief Manmohan Samal being front runners. The speculation about Dharmendra Pradhan had ended after he was



The party has also kept in view an important factor like providing equal representation to different regions of the state. While Majhi hails from tribal dominated Keonjhar district Singhdeo comes from western Odisha and Parida from the coastal belt.

included in the Modi cabinet.

The party has also kept in view an important factor like providing equal representation to different regions of the state. While Majhi hails from tribal dominated Keonjhar district Singhdeo comes from western Odisha and Parida from the coastal belt. The swearing-in ceremony will take place tomorrow at Janata Maidan with Prime Minister himself in atten-

dance. The Prime Minister is expected to hold a roadshow in Bhubaneswar.

The first Bjp government is being formed in the state following the defeat of Naveen Patnaik led Biju Janata Dal in the just concluded elections. This was party's first electoral defeat since 2000 and brought Patnaik < 24 year reign to an end. The BJP has invited Patnaik to the swearing-in ceremony.

Kaithal businessman attacked, case of 'insulting religious beliefs' investigated by SIT

Haryana Police has announced Rs 10,000 award for the arrest of accused

PARVESH HANDA
Kaithal

Police on Tuesday registered a case against two unknown suspects based on allegations by a Sikh businessman that he was called a 'Khalistani' and attacked on Monday night by two bike-borne assailants suspected under the influence of liquor. The charges of insulting religious beliefs and criminal intimidation were invoked in the first information report registered on the complaint of Sukhwinder Singh who owns a furniture showroom in Kaithal city. The victim bleeding heavily alleged that he was thrashed and called a 'Khalistani' by motorcycle-borne youths when he was heading home on his scooter. SP Kaithal Upasana expressed deep concern over the unfortunate incident and a five member SIT led by Gurvinder Singh DSP was constituted to probe matter and arrest the accused. A reward for amount Rs 10,000 was announced for the arrest of the accused. Police obtained footage of a CCTV camera on which two youths were seen travelling on a motorcycle.



Odisha : Defeat Brings Atanu Down to the Earth



majority of fishermen have been demanding adequate compensation from the government for restricting fishing activities in the sea for several months to protect Olive Ridley turtles. This has been a major bone of contention between them and the government for last several years.

Since this has been affecting their livelihood the fishermen have often come into conflict with the authorities by defying the ban. This has even led to forest guards opening fire on them but the issue remains unresolved. The fishing community had reportedly appealed to the minister to take up the

issue with the government several times but he refused to listen.

Similarly he paid no attention to the people's demand for building bridges over rivers and creeks in the constituency at strategic points. As a result people still cross these water bodies either in country boats or motorised boats locally called 'bhutbuthis'. But these are highly risky rides as the boats can capsize in the water in bad weather. There have been accidents in the past and experts agree that there is a dire need for bridges. This demand, however, remains unfulfilled.

The biggest factor that went against Atanu, however, was his arrogance. Having become a minister several times since he first entered politics in 2000 he is said to have become so arrogant that he refused to help even old friends who had been loyal to him. His embarrassing defeat this time is a lesson for him.

SC refuses to halt demolition of Pracheen Shiv Mandir near Yamuna floodplains

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday refused to halt the demolition of a Pracheen Shiv Mandir situated at Geeta Colony close to the Yamuna floodplains.

A vacation bench of Justices Sanjay Kumar and Augustine George Masih upheld the May 29 judgment of the Delhi High Court refusing to quash the demolition order.

A bench of Justice Dharmesh Sharma of the high court granted Prachin Shiv Mandir Avam Akhada Samiti 15 days time to remove the idols and other religious objects in the temple and ordered the petitioner society and its members to not cause any impediment or obstacles in the demolition process.

"There could be no iota of doubt that Lord Shiva would be happier if the Yamuna riverbed and the floodplains areas are cleared of all encroachments and unauthorised construction," the high court had said.

It added that the petitioner



society has miserably failed to place on record any documents with regard to its title, right, or interest in the subject land in question, and there is no proof on record of the temple in question having any historical significance.

In its plea, the management society asserted that no formal notice or order was given and instead, the devotees were verbally apprised that their Pracheen Mandir would be demolished.

Two tankers seized for stealing water from Munak canal in Delhi



NEW DELHI: Two tankers were seized for allegedly stealing water from the Munak canal here, police said on Friday.

This comes a day after police began patrolling the Munak canal area to check the activities of the tanker mafia as the water crisis in Delhi worsened.

"We have seized two water tankers for stealing water from the canal. One tanker was seized from 'kacchi sadar' near an agricultural field and the other from D-Block, DSIIDC. We have registered two cases under the Environment Protection Act at the Bawana and

NIA police stations," a senior police officer said. The officer said 56 police personnel are guarding the canal in shifts.

According to officials, police teams have set up pickets and are patrolling the 15-km stretch of the canal on the Haryana borders.

The canal enters Delhi from Bawana and reaches the Haiderpur treatment plant.

Teams from the Bawana, Narela Industrial Area, Shahbad Dairy and Samaypur Badli police stations have been tasked with patrolling the canal and the nearby areas.

J&K security meet: Deploy full spectrum of counter-terror capabilities, PM directs officials



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday directed the officials to deploy a full spectrum of counter-terror capabilities after chairing a review meeting on the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, in the wake of

security-related situation in the Union Territory. Prime Minister was apprised of the counter-terror measures undertaken by the security forces. He was also briefed about the Army's strategies and operations for neutralising the terrorists. PM Modi directed the officials to deploy and utilise the full spectrum of counter-terror capabilities. Besides the review meeting, PM Modi also spoke to Home Minister Amit Shah and discussed the deployment of security forces and how the forces were executing counter-terror operations. Prime Minister also spoke to Jammu and Kashmir LG Manoj Sinha and took stock of the ground situation.

Remove 'Modi Pariwar' tag from your profile, ordered PM to Workers: is under pressure of RSS?



MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA
New Delhi

'I am bigger than the team' - he has been enjoying this dream the most. And today that image is falling fast! Born in 1980, the Bharatiya Janata Party was a party of collective leadership. In the last 10 years, his identity has changed in the Modi Janata Party. Keeping the NDA under wraps, the government was also named 'Modi government'. 'Party or government promises', that too were 'Modi's guarantee'. It was not said that 'BJP can do it'. The slogan was created, 'Modi hai to mumkin hai'. However, a single election result has ended this tyranny of Narendra Modi. The Prime Minister himself, on the first day of his new government, gave instructions to the party member and its followers that no one should associate the phrase 'Modi's family' with their name, that part should be removed. Modi's message, this love from all over the country gave him strength during the election. After that, he said, the countrymen have given the majority to the NDA. That phrase will be dropped, but we will be part of the same family and move forward with the goal of improving the country by maintaining this bond. What is significant in this case? 'Us' or 'We'. "I" aside! Why? The answer is only one - the pressure of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). For last 10 years, he made the BJP his own party,

raising questions about the declining fate of the RSS. But took this opportunity, the Sangh raised its voice to corner Modi, the result of which is this change. Before the polls, there was a craze across the country among BJP leaders, activists, ministers and supporters to write 'Modi's family' next to their names. The reason is only one, Modi always attacks and insults opponents with familyism, why is he not responsible for his own family? The opposition raised this question, and then the trend started. After the disastrous result in the election, now Modi himself asked to remove it! And in that one message, it is more clear, RSS is not sitting with closed eyes. On Monday, Sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat said, 'To be a volunteer, one must be humble, arrogance is forbidden. There is no room for egoism here.' This 'advice' of Bhagwat is not an isolated incident. In the recent issue of the Sangh's mouthpiece 'Organizer', the BJP leadership has been lambasted. It clearly states, "This is what happens with overconfidence, arrogance and lack of touch with the grassroots. You can't win an election just by giving big slogans, posters and selfies. You have to work on the ground. In this election, did Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh workers asked for any help? No, it did not asked for. BJP has assumed that RSS is probably BJP's field worker. It has been forgotten that the Sangh is no one's worker".

Terrorists launch 3rd attack in 3 days on Jammu and Kashmir Army base

FW DESK

Terrorists attacked an army base in the Chattargala area of Doda late last night, marking the third such incident in the region over the past three days, according to police reports early this morning. A joint checkpoint manned by the Army and Police in Chattargala was targeted in the assault. "The Army and Police joint checkpoint has engaged terrorists in the Chattargala area of Doda. Firefight is going on," a police spokesperson said. Initial reports indicate that two soldiers were injured during the early exchange of gunfire. The condition of the injured sol-



diers has not been disclosed. This attack follows a deadly assault in Kathua district just hours earlier, where terrorists opened fire, killing one person and injuring two others. Three days ago, terrorists attacked a bus carrying pilgrims, causing it to crash into a gorge and resulting in the tragic deaths of nine passengers.

Sonia Gandhi unanimously re-elected CPP Chairperson

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

Former Congress President Sonia Gandhi was today unanimously re-elected the Chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party at a meeting of the party MPs from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. In her address after being re-elected as the CPP Chairperson, she thanked the Congress MPs and assured she will do her best. Expressing confidence and satisfaction over the revival of the party, she pointed out, "many wrote our obituaries". Hitting out at Prime Minister Modi, she said, he had suffered a political and moral defeat as he had sought the mandate solely in his name to the exclusion of both his party and its allies. "In reality, he has lost the mandate he sought and there-



by lost the right to leadership as well", she observed, while adding, "yet, far from taking responsibility for failure, he intends to get himself sworn in again tomorrow". Congratulating the newly elected parliamentarians she told them, "you have fought a tough election under the most challenging of circumstances. You have surmounted many obstacles and campaigned so very effectively".

Ms Gandhi told them that their success had given the Congress a much greater presence in the Lok Sabha and a more effective voice in its proceedings, both of which will help give greater strength to the party's participation. "Our numbers in Parliament have increased significantly", she said, while adding, "not only is the Indian National Congress a large contingent in the Lok Sabha but we are bolstered by the strength of our INDIA partners, some of whom have themselves come back impressively". She told them that as members of the CPP, they have a special obligation to be "watchful, vigilant and proactive in holding him (the PM) and his new NDA government accountable". "No longer can and should Parliament be bulldozed like it

has been for a decade now. No longer will the writ of the ruling establishment be permitted to disrupt Parliament, whimsically mistreat members or push through legislation without due and proper consideration and debate", she said, adding, "no longer can and should Parliamentary Committees be ignored or by-passed like they have been since 2014. No longer will Parliament be muzzled and stifled as it has been over the past ten years". Ms Gandhi said, the Indian National Congress has once again demonstrated its resilience. "It was up against a mighty and malevolent machine that was doing its utmost to destroy us", she observed, while pointing out, "it tried to cripple us financially. It carried out a campaign against us and our leaders that was full of lies and defamation".

Uttar Pradesh has changed the direction of India's politics says Rahul

KAVITA SHARMA
Raebareli

Newly Elected MP, and Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi today thanked and congratulated the people of Uttar Pradesh for changing the course and direction of politics in the country. Addressing a largely attended thanksgiving public meeting in Raebareli, Gandhi said, people of Uttar Pradesh had conveyed a strong message that they were against the politics of hatred and violence and also against the attempts of the BJP to replace the Constitution. The former Congress president also congratulated the people for making the Prime Minister Narendra Modi affirm his faith in the country's Constitution, which otherwise, he was trying to replace. Referring to Modi's picture bowing before the Constitution, he said, credit for



this change goes to the people of Uttar Pradesh. Gandhi observed that this election had conveyed multiple messages. He said they made it clear that they were against the politics of hatred and violence, which was being openly preached by Prime Minister Modi and union Home Minister Amit Shah. He pointed out, the BJP was even defeated from Ayodhya. He said, the BJP did not even let the President Droupadi Murmu enter the Ram Temple because she was an Adivasi. He said, nor was any poor, any farmer, any Dalit or

any OBC seen in the temple as it was only people like Ambani, Adani, film and cricket stars who were there at the inauguration. Gandhi also said that people were fed up with unemployment and rising prices. Besides, he added, it was for the first time a government was working only for a few billionaires like Ambanis and Adanis and people sent a clear message that they did not like such kind of politics. Gandhi cautioned the Congressmen including the MPs, MLAs, leaders and workers that they must not fall prey to arrogance. He said, their job had

not ended with the resounding victories but had actually just begun. He told the workers and leaders that wherever the BJP will try to spread hatred and violence, the Congress workers and leaders have to preach and spread love and harmony. Asserting that the people of Uttar Pradesh had conveyed a straight and strong message, he said, if Priyanka Gandhi had contested from Varanasi, the Prime Minister of the country would have lost by about three lakh votes. The senior Congress leader had special praise for the workers of the Samajwadi Party and other INDIA bloc partners. He said, it was for the first time that the alliance partners had worked together with full commitment and dedication towards each other and that is the reason it performed extraordinarily well everywhere in the country whether in Uttar Pradesh or in Tamil Nadu.

Massive hunt for bus attackers in Jammu and Kashmir



FW DESK

A large-scale search operation is underway to capture the terrorists responsible for the attack on a passenger bus in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district, which left nine people dead and 41 injured, officials said. Teams from the National Investigation Agency (NIA), State Investigation Agency (SIA), and the Forensic Department have visited the scene of the attack to begin their investigation. On Sunday, terrorists fired upon a 53-seater bus carrying pilgrims from Shiv Khori temple to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine near Teryath village in the Poni area. The bus subsequently fell into a deep gorge due to the gunfire. Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj

Sinha visited the injured passengers at GMC and Narayana hospitals on Monday. He said that the terrorist attack was part of a malicious plan to create chaos in the Jammu region, a plan that will be thwarted. The Director General of Police (DGP), along with senior officers, including Army personnel, is scheduled to visit the site to gather firsthand information about the incident. The Hurriyat Conference condemned the terrorist attack on the bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi district, expressing grief over the incident. "The Hurriyat Conference has and will always condemn all forms of violence against humanity. The loss of precious human lives is deeply disturbing," the grouping said.

Pandian retires from active politics

ARABINDA MOHAPATRA
Bhubaneswar

Bureaucrat-turned politician and caretaker chief minister Naveen Patnaik's Man Friday VK Pandian on Sunday announced his retirement from active politics. In a self-made video Pandian, who has been squarely blamed for Biju Janata Dal's defeat in the elections, said that his only intent in joining politics was to help Patnaik and it was his shortcomings that he was not able to effectively counter some of the political narratives at the right time. "I come from a very humble family and a small village. My dream since childhood has been to join IAS and serve the people. Lord Jagannath made it happen. Because of my family from Kendrapada, I came to Odisha. Since the day I set foot on the soil of Odisha, I have received immense love and affection from the people of Odisha. From Dharamgarh to Rourkela to Mayurbhanj to Ganjam, I have tried to work very hard for the people. 12 years ago, I joined the CM's office," he said. "It was an honour to be working for Shri Naveen Patnaik; the experience and the learning I had from him are for a lifetime. His grace, leadership, ethics, and, above all, his love for the people of



Odisha always inspired me. His expectation of me was to implement his vision for Odisha and we successfully crossed many milestones in health, education, poverty reduction, sports, investments, women's empowerment, infrastructure, and also in temple and heritage projects," Pandian added while giving details of the work he has done for the state under Patnaik's guidance. "Working for the youth, school, and college children gave me great satisfaction. My own childhood memories of studying in a convent school helped me to implement the honorable CM's visions for school transformation under 5T. During COVID-19, we traveled to almost all 30 districts to ensure that the health infrastructure was ready to serve the people. At this time, we faced two super cyclones and we worked hard to save every precious life. I left the IAS taking voluntary retirement and joined the BJD to assist my mentor Shi Naveen Patnaik," he said.

Talking Points Narvijay Yadav



The Bharatiya Janata Party's defeat in Ayodhya sent shockwaves through political circles, prompting an urgent analysis of the underlying factors. Among the key contributors to this unexpected setback were six major lapses on the part of the party.

The unraveling of the Bharatiya Janata Party's significant defeat in Uttar Pradesh reveals a multifaceted narrative. Particularly striking was the party's loss in Ayodhya, the site where a monumental Ram temple had been erected after years of fervent dedication. Initially confounding, the reasons behind this setback are gradually emerging, shedding light on the complex dynamics at play. In the aftermath, the BJP has commenced a thorough examination of the defeat, diligently seeking out potential factors and individuals perceived as disloyal. Personally witnessing the pulse of Ayodhya mere days before the polls, I found myself immersed in its essence, from the tranquil banks of the Saryu River to the majestic presence of the Ram temple. Notably, the district administration orchestrated a commendable campaign to galvanize voter participation, setting noteworthy precedents under the leadership of the District Magistrate, whom I felicitated with a record certificate.

During my visit, interactions with the local populace unveiled a palpable discontent towards the BJP, simmering beneath the surface for quite some time. The electorate, harboring pent-up frustrations, awaited the opportune moment to voice their grievances, culminating in a resounding verdict that left observers astounded. Six primary factors have emerged as crucial in understanding the BJP's defeat in Ayodhya. Foremost among them is the deep-seated resentment among those whose homes were demolished to make way for the wide, picturesque roads that now charm tourists. Despite compensation or alternative housing arrangements, the lingering sadness among these individuals is palpable, compounded by grievances over incomplete compensation packages and the encroachment of external traders into their community. The second-factor centers on the overwhelming disillusionment with Lallu Singh, who had been representing this seat for the last two terms. Local senti-

Six Key Factors Behind BJP's Defeat in Ayodhya



ment was firmly against his reelection, with widespread anticipation of his inevitable defeat. However, despite mounting complaints from party workers, the leadership failed to heed the warning signs, mistakenly believing that the construction of the Ram temple, airport, and infrastructure projects would secure victory. Despite the ubiquitous presence of BJP flags, the ground reality painted a starkly different picture, with support for other parties gaining momentum. The third catalyst was a controversial statement by Lallu Singh, suggesting that the constitution could be amended with a landslide victory of 400 seats. This assertion was seized upon by the Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav, who skillfully turned it into a rallying cry, making constitutional integrity a focal point of the election discourse. Ultimately, this proved

detrimental to Lallu's campaign, resulting in a resounding victory for the Samajwadi Party's Avdhesh Prasad, with a margin of 54,500 votes. The fourth factor contributing to the BJP's defeat was the propagation of unrealistic promises by Rahul, including Congress' Guarantee to provide every woman with an annual payment of one lakh rupees and guaranteeing unemployed youths a monthly income and jobs. While falsehoods may lack substance, the relentless dissemination of these claims by the Samajwadi Party and Congress led to widespread confusion, particularly among rural voters who were more susceptible to such messaging. Additionally, these parties capitalized on fears regarding reservations for minorities, and backward castes, a narrative that the BJP struggled to coun-

ter promptly and effectively. The fifth element was internal discord and sabotage within the ranks of the BJP leadership, reflecting a lack of cohesion and effective management at the grassroots level. This disunity left the party vulnerable and ill-prepared to confront the strategic maneuvers employed by their adversaries. A sixth and pivotal factor was the pervasive issue of unemployment in the state, exacerbated by the recurring incidents of competitive exam paper leaks. This systemic problem significantly impacted the youth demographic in Uttar Pradesh, providing opposition parties with fertile ground to exploit and garner support. Consequently, not only in Ayodhya but across Uttar Pradesh, disenfranchised and disillusioned voters, particularly those lacking formal education, were swayed by alternative candidates perceived as alternatives to the BJP. Reports from the Center for the Study of Developing Societies corroborate this trend, highlighting a shift in voting patterns, with the BJP gaining traction in urban areas while Congress is getting support from rural regions. The writer is a senior journalist and columnist. Views are personal. Twitter @narvijayyadav

NDA partners should promote inclusive policies and oppose any actions that divide society: JIH President, Syed Sadatullah Husaini



KAVITA SHARMA

The President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Syed Sadatullah Husaini has advised the NDA partners to promote inclusive policies and oppose any actions that divide society. Addressing the regular monthly press conference at the JIH headquarters, Syed Sadatullah Husaini spoke on a range of issues and answered questions by the media regarding the recently held Lok Sabha elections. Regarding the election results, the JIH President said, "We consider the election results a resounding mandate against hate and divisive politics. Jamaat-e-Islami Hind congratulates the people of India for their enthusiastic and active participation in the electoral process. Talking about political parties and the ruling dispensation, Sadatullah Husaini said, "We urge all political parties to learn from this mandate and move away from the politics of hate, communal and caste divides, stereotyping, labeling, and stig-

matization. It is imperative to abandon extreme capitalist policy formulations and instead focus on building a society where everyone feels valued and respected, irrespective of religious and caste considerations. We strongly urge the new government to end the misuse of state machinery and constitutional bodies against political or ideological opponents. Such practices undermine the principles of democracy and erode public trust in our institutions." Advising the opposition parties and the NDA partners, the JIH President emphasized, "The responsibility of NDA partners in the ruling party has increased manifold. People expect them to be vigilant, fair, and responsible. Succumbing to pressure from the ruling dispensation and compromising on core values and principles would be a serious betrayal of the people of India who voted for them to play a crucial role. We urge these partners to actively promote policies that foster unity, respect, and inclusiveness, and to stand firm against any actions that may divide our society.

PM Modi to address farmers in Varanasi on June 18



VARANASI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Varanasi on June 18 where he will address a farmers' conference. BJP Kashi region president Dilip Patel said that this will be the first visit of Prime Minister Modi to Varanasi after the formation of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA government for the third time at the Centre. Kashi region BJP media in-charge Navratan Rathi said that the Kashi region BJP is working to select a venue for the farmers' conference which may be held in Rohania or Sevapuri Assembly constituency. Varanasi BJP office-bearers' meeting was held at the party office in Gulab Bagh to discuss the plan for the preparations regarding the visit of the Prime Minister. Patel added that after addressing the Kisan Sammelan, Prime Minister Modi will offer prayers to Baba Kashi Vishwanath and attend Ganga Aarti at the Dashashwamedh Ghat.



Research bodies need dedicated leadership

The recent portfolio allocations for the newly sworn-in Ministers of the 18th Lok Sabha reveal a continuation of roles from the previous regime, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) retaining major portfolios such as Home and Telecommunications. Meanwhile, coalition allies share the remaining positions. Among the notable appointments is Jitendra Singh, Minister of State with independent charge over the Departments of Space (DoS) and Atomic Energy (DAE), the Ministries of Earth Sciences (MoES), Science and Technology (MST), and Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions. Each of these portfolios is substantial. The DoS is navigating the complexities of private sector involvement in national space initiatives and developing human spaceflight missions. The MoES is embarking on seabed exploration for mineral resources and addressing climate adaptation and mitigation. The MST is steering India's top research departments amid global advancements in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, multi-omics, and advanced energy storage solutions. The DAE is pushing forward with nuclear power expansion, aiming to start phase two of its reactor program and commission one facility annually. Given the vast technical scope and societal implications, these portfolios deserve more than a shared Minister of State. These fields also face persistent challenges. Fellowship and grant disbursements for young researchers are notoriously delayed. Facilities for interdisciplinary research remain localized and uncooperative, hindering collaboration. Cutting-edge research is stymied by inconsistent regulations, weak intellectual property rights protection, and limited translational research, often confined to certain sectors. Additionally, India's gross domestic expenditure on research and development as a fraction of GDP has been declining since 2008-09. While increased funding is necessary, it must be accompanied by capacity building to effectively utilize these resources, which has been sporadic at best. India urgently needs dedicated Ministers, ideally of Cabinet rank, for each major research body to address these longstanding issues and ensure their needs are met. This approach is crucial for achieving meaningful progress, particularly under the challenging conditions of a coalition government.

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HARBANS MUKHIA SAYS INDIA'S ANCIENT CIVILIZATION REJECTS HATE; POLL RESULTS PROVE IT

The ideology of social peace



a distance from Mr. Advani's rath yatra and the resultant events of December 6. The formation of the first BJP government in 1998 was not due to the Ram Mandir movement but more the result of infighting within the various constituents of the then ruling coalition. But learning a lesson from it and keeping Lord Ram out of politics would have required a rethink of the communal perspective, which is central to the Sangh Parivar. In 2014, there had to be camouflaging of the communal agenda using the more general slogan of vikas (development).

The Ayodhya result

In the 2024 general election, the defeat of the BJP in Ayodhya itself demonstrates the dysfunctional link between electoral politics and the invocation of Lord Ram. It was no ordinary defeat, for the BJP candidate lost by over 50,000 votes. The BJP's Lallu Singh was a veteran, taking on a Dalit rival, Awadhesh Prasad. And this happened after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Sangh Parivar's investment in the construction of the Ram temple and its location in politics. The 2024 general election result shows that the Indian voter has expressed a repugnance for the politics of hatred, of divide and rule, and the politics of the Prime Minister himself, whose electoral rhetoric this time was indecorous. Where was the grace reflected in person, behaviour and

language that one saw in the speeches of Prime Ministers like Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee? Will Mr. Modi, or the BJP as a party, or the RSS learn a lesson from Lord Ram? The people of India have made their preferred choices clear. It is very unlikely to happen. After the Supreme Court of India's famous judgment of 2019 on the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute, which, among other things, had forcefully upheld the view that no temple, much less a Ram temple lay demolished under the debris of the masjid (a view advanced by several professional historians and archaeologists) and that the demolition of the masjid was a criminal act for which the guilty should be tried in a court of law, one still hears echoes of "undoing the injustice of 500 years" doing the rounds. Never mind what the historians and the Supreme Court have said. In placing constraints on the politics of hatred, which is the hallmark of the Modi government, India's millennia-old civilisation has asserted itself. In doing so, salience is due to the civilisation of our medieval centuries that has given us the legacy of numerous saint-poets, the Bhakti saints, who brought calm to the strained religious divide of rival gods by conceptualising one universal god where their rivalry gets submerged. For, in the midst of considerable bloodshed on the battlefields, between political and denominational factions extending over five and a half centuries, the first genuine communal riot between common people of different faiths — of which we have recorded evidence — happened in 1714, seven years after Aurangzeb's death. Clearly, the ideology of social peace was working.

Harbans Mukhia taught history at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Views are personal.



ANWAR SADAT EXPLAINS WHY THE OPINION OF ITLOS MARKS A MILESTONE IN CLIMATE LITIGATION

A push for more climate action



International climate change litigation reached a milestone on May 21, 2024 when the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) delivered an advisory opinion (the Opinion) sought by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) concerning the specific obligations of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on climate change mitigation. The COSIS is an association of small island states set up in 2021. The ITLOS advisory opinion generates more attention in the context of the advisory proceedings to be decided by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the near future on the "Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change". The ITLOS took a radical step by accepting the request of COSIS with the aim of identifying the obligations of states that are not parties to the COSIS Agreement. That is when the request touches principally upon the obligations of states that are not party to the agreement authorising the request. The Tribunal, in its Opinion, laid down very clearly that under Article 194(1) of the UNCLOS, "the Parties have specific obligations to take all necessary measures to prevent, reduce and control marine pollution from anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)". The Opinion has also removed doubts whether the release of carbon dioxide by man, directly or indirectly, into the marine environment qualifies to be in the category of substance or energy having potential deleterious effects on the marine environment within the meaning of Article 1(1)(4) of the UNCLOS. The ITLOS clarification on carbon as pollutant bolsters the position taken by the scientific community that the sur-

face ocean absorbs around a quarter of the CO2 emitted into the atmosphere, at increasingly rapid rates, resulting in the progressive acidification of sea water. Other greenhouse gases (GHGs) do not have this effect. In addition, the sea also absorbs over 90% of the excess heat ('energy') generated by global warming, resulting in higher ocean temperatures and, ultimately, in sea-level rise. Understanding its legal importance The principle of prevention or no harm rule which governs state behaviour towards regulation of shared natural resources (between two or more states) so as to avoid transboundary harm of a significant nature in another state has its two main limitations when the rule is sought to be applied to regulate climate crisis: its anchoring in a bilateral frame, and, the principle is not helped due to obstacles relating to attribution and standing in establishing a breach of obligation to climate change. The Opinion, by siding with the principle

for climate change (which is a collective interest as compared to bilateral ones), adds a new chapter. The necessary measures are to be decided in the light of the best available science and the relevant international rules and standards contained in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Climate Change Agreement 2015, and also 1.5° Celsius rather than 2° C as the global average temperature goal. The Opinion describes the obligation relating to the taking of necessary measures as due diligence obligation but the standard of it in the eyes of the Opinion is stringent one given the high risks of serious and irreversible harm to the marine environment from such emissions. But the Parties' obligations in terms of taking all necessary measures to reduce anthropogenic GHG emissions within Article 194 (1) are very general in nature. This can be interpreted to mean that neither the release of all pollution (GHGs) must be prevented nor that anthropogenic GHG emissions must cease immediately or even eventually. Measures that gradually reduce marine pollution by lowering GHG emissions over a period of time would be sufficient. Still, the identification of a general obligation by the ITLOS underlines one thing — that states do not have unfettered discretion in addressing climate change. Mere identification of general obligation will be of symbolic value and is inadequate. Christina Voigt, an expert on environ-

mental law, says as "most states are already implementing some action on climate change mitigation, the crux of the matter is not the existence of an obligation to mitigate climate change, but rather its content, in particular the standard of conduct applicable in relation to this obligation". The example to substantiate this point is the decision of the Netherlands Supreme Court, in Urgenda Foundation vs The Netherlands, where the court held that to comply with a general mitigation obligation inferred from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in light of the standard of due care, the Netherlands had to reduce GHG emissions to 25% below 1990 levels by 2020 (as opposed to the government's insufficient existing pledge of 17%). The court identified this target largely by relying on scientific estimates and the least cost method of achieving the 2° C temperature goal in the Paris Agreement. The Opinion has not been able to identify the methodology concretely that can be used to assess a state's requisite level of mitigation action — as in the Urgenda judgment. Moreover, the necessary measures to be taken, as per the Opinion, are to be subject to the means available to the states and their capabilities, which means that the principle of equity cannot be ignored in deciding the requisite level of mitigation action, if any. Though advisory opinion lacks legal force, it does not necessarily affect its political pull as authoritative judicial pronouncements.

Anwar Sadat teaches International Environmental Law at the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

New book decodes Indian polls; offers masterclass on coalitions

When one thinks of coalition politics in India, Eswaran Sridharan's name is often the first to come to mind. His book, Elections, Parties, and Coalitions in India: Theory and Recent History, compiles a series of his articles that have profoundly shaped the understanding of Indian politics since 1989. This collection covers themes such as party system transformation, the rise and fall of political parties, political finance, and various aspects of coalition politics. Although these articles have been previously published in academic journals and edited volumes, their consolidation in one book makes Sridharan's scholarship more accessible to a broader audience. Sridharan's work stands out for its blend of theoretical rigor and

empirical analysis, embracing the 'soft-rational choice' tradition. This approach assumes that while human actions are goal-oriented, they are not solely driven by the maximization of individual benefits. Political parties, therefore, are motivated by more than just election victories; they are also guided by policy preferences, goals, and values. Sridharan's analysis is deeply rooted in the institutional school of thought, which has enriched the understanding of coalition behavior in India and enhanced comparative political studies. Most traditional coalition theories derive from political systems that are unitary rather than federal, use proportional representation instead of the first-past-the-post system, and operate in consensual rather than majoritarian parliamentary settings.

Sridharan highlights the limitations of these conventional theories when applied to India's unique political landscape. Among the key findings of Sridharan's work is the impact of the first-past-the-post system on coalition politics. Unlike proportional representation systems where post-electoral alliances are common, first-past-the-post incentivizes pre-electoral coalitions to avoid vote wastage. Additionally, a small vote swing in this system can disproportionately affect seat shares, making third-placed parties or candidates pivotal players if they strategize effectively. Sridharan also explores the federal dimensions of coalition politics in India. He notes that the division of power between multiple levels of government makes state-level power attractive, leading to the



Elections, Parties, and Coalitions in India: Theory and Recent History By Eswaran Sridharan Permanent Black; 372 pages; Rs 1,095.

formation of single-state parties and resulting in two-party or bipolar state-party systems. This dynamic, combined with the country's cultural and linguistic diversity, contributes to a multi-party system at the national level. One of the book's significant contributions is its analysis of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) alliance strategy. By forming strategic alliances and leveraging its position in different regions, the BJP was able to expand its geographical footprint and overcome the weaknesses that led to the fall of its government in 1996. This 'bridging alliance' strategy enabled the BJP to increase its numbers, build a support base, and

challenge the Congress party, the other main polity-wide party. As a result, territorial compatibility and alliances have become crucial components of India's coalition politics. Sridharan's work also sheds light on the formation and survival of minority governments in India. He argues that minority governments can survive in executive-dominated majoritarian systems under certain conditions: ideological division among the opposition, parliamentary rules that favor survival, payoffs collected at different federal levels, and state-level party competition that creates a "lock-in" effect. Regarding the Congress party's future, Sridharan suggests that it faces significant challenges in recovering its position as an umbrella party. The party must balance growth and equity in response to social and economic transformations. However, positioning itself as a 'pro-poor party' could be self-limiting in a country where a large portion of the electorate identifies as middle class.

India’s \$220 Bn Chemical Industry Hamstrung by Compliance Burden

NEW DELHI: India’s USD 220 billion chemical industry, a major employment generator and export earner, is being severely hindered by an excessive regulatory compliance burden, particularly for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), according to industry experts.

Each unit in the sector is required to meet an estimated 635 compliance requirements per month spanning areas like factories, health, explosives, hazardous materials and food safety regulations.

Navigating this complex web of rules is proving extremely challenging for most MSMEs due to a lack of training and skilled manpower. “Even understanding the compliance needs is difficult for most MSMEs,” said Rishi Agrawal, CEO of compliance solutions firm TeamLease RegTech. “Lack of training and skilled manpower makes it more challenging.”



Exacerbating the problem is the frequent revision of regulatory norms by authorities, with 200 compliance changes made in just the last week, 700 in the prior month, and around 1,963 in the current quarter, Agrawal noted.

While larger players can leverage dedicated in-house teams, MSMEs face immense difficulty staying compliant. “It may be relatively easy for big players...but for MSMEs, it re-

ally is a big challenge,” Agrawal stated.

Industry representatives are calling for reforms to streamline the compliance process. Jaimin Vasa, chairman of the Gujarat Chemical Association, advocated for “industry-specific generalised licensing, instead of different ones for regulations under the Factories Act and for health, explosives, hazardous materials, food etc.”

Variations in compliance across states have added another layer of complexity for companies operating in multiple locations. Vasa urged the government to “help the units comply by making the application process simple and clearances faster.”

Agrawal identified rent-seeking behaviour around licenses and registrations as a major impediment that could potentially be addressed through digitalisation and a controlled environment fostering private entrepreneurship.

The Indian chemical industry accounts for 11 per cent of national exports and is projected to grow to USD 1 trillion by 2040. It has risen from 142nd to 63rd rank in the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business index between 2014-2019. However, regulatory overhaul may be crucial for unleashing the sector’s full potential.

Tesla stockholders approve Musk’s \$56 billion pay package



SAN FRANCISCO: Tesla stockholders have overwhelmingly approved the \$56 billion pay package (now valued at \$44.9 billion) for the company’s CEO Elon Musk, along with reincorporating the electric vehicle company in the US state of Texas, moving it from Delaware.

The Tesla board won approval for Musk’s 2018 pay package with 73 per cent of the vote, according to the company.

The company last valued Musk’s package at \$44.9 billion (in April) as Tesla’s stock has nosedived by nearly 25 per cent this year.

“Tesla stockholders overwhelmingly approved the ratification of the 2018 CEO Performance Award and the re-domestication of the company to Texas,” the electric car maker said in a statement.

The stockholders gave their consent to a Tesla proposal to ratify the 100 per cent performance-based stock option award to Musk that was approved by the stockholders in 2018.

India Poised to Sign FTA with Oman in Early Days of Modi’s Third Term

NEW DELHI: The government of India is expected to finalise a long-awaited free trade agreement (FTA) with the Sultanate of Oman in the opening 100 days of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s third consecutive term, according to officials familiar with the negotiations.

The proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) had been under discussion during Modi’s previous tenure but was delayed due to the enforcement of the model code of conduct ahead of India’s recent general election.

However, senior officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, have indicated the deal is now nearing completion and awaits formal political approval from both nations. “The India-Oman FTA is almost finalised, awaiting [formal] political nod from both sides,” one official stated. Another confirmed that



draft documents have been prepared, terming it a work in progress. Modi himself signalled the imminent signing of the trade pact in a social media post on Tuesday, expressing gratitude to Oman’s Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for congratulatory remarks on the Prime Minister’s re-election victory.

“The centuries-old India-Oman strategic ties are destined to scale new heights,” Modi af-

firmed. For India, the CEPA with Oman is anticipated to bolster energy security through cheaper imports of fertilisers and fossil fuels from the Gulf nation. It could also open avenues for increased Omani investments across sectors. Conversely, the agreement may reduce tariffs on Indian exports like rice, tea, dairy, meat, apparel, steel, and machinery entering the Omani market.

Increasing prices of raw material hits Yamunanagar plywood industry

Out of 1020 manufacturing units 351 already closed

PARVESH HANDA
Yamunanagar

According to the manufacturers of Yamunanagar plywood industry which started booming since after 1980, having total number of 1020 licensed manufacturing units in the town including 872 pressing units, 713 saw mills, 734 peeling units and 102 chipper units were known all over in the country in manufacturing plywood and providing employment to nearly two lakh persons. But as a result of rising prices of basic raw material ‘popular’ wood used in plywood industry, presently available at the rate Rs 1700 per quintal, which was earlier available at the price between Rs 500 to 600 per quintal, the production cost of plywood have been much increased now and it has become difficult for Yamunanagar plywood manufacturers to compete plywood being manufactured in Kerala or plywood being imported from Vietnam which is available at the cheaper prices as compared to the locally manufactured plywood.

Information also reveals that out of the total number of 1020 manufacturing licenses



issued by the Haryana state government in Yamunanagar, 351 plywood manufacturers have become completely sick and have not applied for the renewal of their manufacturing license at present. While having a talk with a plywood manufacturer in Yamunanagar, they told that huge stocks of plywood manufactured by them are lying damped in their godown in the absence of buyers. They said earlier 300 to 350 truck loads carrying plywood were being dispatched to the buyers in different places across the country from Yamunanagar every day, but now the manufacturers have no orders, besides huge stocks of ‘popular’ wood are also lying unsold in Mandoli wood market in the area due to poor demand and increased prices of the

basic raw material ‘poplar’ wood. Few manufacturers said that they are planning either to shift their manufacturing units to other states or change their business for their survival.

According to Yamunanagar plywood manufacturers, during year 2002-03 when Yamunanagar plywood industry was booming, the new licenses for manufacturing plywood in the area were discontinued by the state government enabling to stop cutting of trees thus shrinking green area, when matter was taken to the Supreme Court of India by the manufacturers who convinced court that the production of ‘popular’ trees fall under the agriculture sector, when the court lifted the ban over issuing new licenses to manufacture plywood in 2015.

Nokia, Ericsson to pick Rs 2,458-cr stake in Vodafone in lieu of dues



NEW DELHI: Debt-ridden telecom operator Vodafone Idea will allocate shares worth Rs 2,458 crore to vendors Nokia India and Ericsson India to clear their partial dues, a regulatory filing said on Thursday. The board of Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) has cleared allotment of shares on preferential basis at about 35 per cent higher price compared to the follow-on offer price of the company, and comes with a lock-in of 6 months. “The Board of Directors of Vodafone Idea Limited today approved preferential allotment of about 166 crore equity shares of face value of Rs 10 each, at an issue price of Rs 14.80 per share, for an aggregate consideration of up to Rs 2,458 crore, to two of its key vendors, Nokia Solutions and Networks India Private Limited and Ericsson India Private Limited,” the filing said. Nokia and Ericsson will participate for up to Rs 1,520 crore and Rs 938 crore respectively, subject to approval by VIL shareholders at the EGM to be held on July 10, 2024, the telco said in a release.

200 AI cabin crew chargesheeted, union protests

MUMBAI: An Air India Express staff union has said the airline has issued charge sheets against 200 cabin crew members, who went on strike on May 7 to protest against the alleged mismanagement in the airline, resulting in cancellation of hundreds of flights.

The Air India Express Employees Union has termed the move as “unfortunate and unfair labour practice”.

Ola Electric gets Sebi’s nod to launch IPO

NEW DELHI : Electric two-wheeler company Ola Electric has received capital markets regulator Sebi’s clearance to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO) — the first issue by an automaker in the country in more than 20 years, people familiar with the matter said on Tuesday.

The proposed IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares up to Rs 5,500 crore and an offer for sale of 9.52 crore equity shares by promoters and investors.

Startups in India raise over \$97 million in election result week

The Indian startup ecosystem, the world’s third largest, saw \$97.3 million in funding across 10 deals this week as Lok Sabha election results were declared, paving the way for the BJP-led NDA to return to power.

The fintech sector led the overall startup funding. Digital

lending platform Fibe secured \$90 million (\$65.5 million in primary capital and the rest via secondary transactions) led by TR Capital, Trifecta Capital and Amara Partners.

Akshay Mehrotra, Co-founder and CEO, Fibe, said with this capital injection, the startup is set to expand its



reach, strengthen technological infrastructure and deepen its impact across the country.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven, low-code test automation platform Testsigma raised \$8.2 million in funding led by MassMutual Ventures. It had earlier raised \$4.6 million led by VC firm Accel.

Another AI-driven sales prospecting platform Clodura. AI raised \$2 million led by the Bharat Innovation Fund with additional backing from Malpani Ventures. The funding will help the startup further develop its AI capabilities and expand its user base.

Apart from primary startup

funding, leading eyewear retailer Lenskart raised \$200 million in secondary investment from global investment firms Temasek and Fidelity Management and Research Company (FMR).

With this funding, Lenskart’s market valuation has touched \$5 billion.

Accessibility and Affordability of Biologics in Low-Middle Income Countries



DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH

Biopharmaceuticals especially biologics have shown immense promise in treating conditions which were previously challenging to address with conventional drugs. Biologics have revolutionized the treatment of various cancers, autoimmune disorders, and genetic diseases. Certain biopharmaceuticals have become integral components of modern medical treatment as these have been included in the World Health Organization (WHO) Model List of Essential Medicine. But due to high cost of biopharmaceuticals especially biologics, access to therapies remains limited in Low-Middle Income Countries (LMICs). High cost of biologics can be observed from the fact that Tagrisso (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient: Osimertinib) that is used for treatment of Non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) is priced at Rs. 1,51,670 for 10 tablets strip, Stelara (API: Ustekinumab) used in the treatment of Crohn’s disease is priced at Rs. 1,11,218 for 1 vial of 90 mg (single dose injection), Kisqali (API: Ribociclib) used in the treatment of breast cancer is priced at Rs. 15,000 for 3 tablets strip,

and Keytruda (API: Pembrolizumab) used in the treatment of cancer is priced at Rs. 1,97,250 for a vial of 4 ml.

There are 54 economies which fall in the category of LMICs, and India is the largest lower-middle income country. LMICs have the highest burden of diseases, and still these countries have limited access to biopharmaceuticals. World Bank institutions classify countries on the basis of income as “low-income economies”, i.e., economy with a GNI per capita of \$1,135 or less in 2022, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method, “lower-middle income economies”, i.e., economy with a GNI per capita between \$1,136 and \$4,465, “upper middle-income economies”, i.e., economy with a GNI per capita between \$4,466 and \$13,845 and “high income economies”, i.e., an economy with a GNI per capita of \$13,846 or more.

Multiple studies have highlighted the challenges surrounding the ‘accessibility’ and ‘affordability’ of different biologics in LMICs, e.g., immuno-oncology (IO) drugs. In November 2023, the high cost of Zolgensma, one-time gene therapy that is used in treatment of Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) in children became a headline in newspapers across India. Highly expensive drug developed by Novartis, a Swiss company, had a cost of Rs. 17 crore for a single dose which was being sought for a 15-month old boy. Underlying reasons behind high price were cited as high cost of drug development, im-

Table 1:- Region-wise Low-Middle Income Countries (LMICs)	
Region (Number of Economies)	LMICs
Sub-Saharan Africa (19)	Angola, Benin, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Congo, Comoros, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sao Tome and Principe, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe
East-Asia and Pacific (13)	Micronesia, Fed. Sts., Cambodia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Mongolia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Vietnam, Vanuatu, and Samoa
Middle East & North Africa (8)	Djibouti, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia
South Asia (6)	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan
Europe & Central Asia (4)	Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan
Latin America & Caribbean (4)	Bolivia, Honduras, Haiti, and Nicaragua

Source: Compiled from the World Bank website



port cost, taxes, among others. Even in developed economies, affordability is an issue for such drugs, e.g., in the USA alone, there were 10,000 to 25,000 children and adults living with SMA in 2023. The company claimed that it provided about 300 children in 36 countries with the gene therapy free of charge.

Proposed solutions to deal

with the situation include increasing resources for healthcare, stimulation of research on cost-effectiveness, modifications in patent laws for biosimilars and generics, intellectual property licensing, collective procurement efforts, leveraging pharmacologic knowledge to optimize dosing regimens potentially reducing costs and improve access

to treatment, harmonization of regulatory pathways, collaborations between innovator companies and leading generic players, public-private partnerships, innovative financing models, among others. This is being done to address ‘barriers to access’ and to ensure equitable treatment for patients suffering from those diseases which can be treated with the use of biopharmaceuticals.

Biopharmaceutical availability may itself become a concern due to lack of a reliable and sustainable supply chain. Most recently, in the first week of June 2024, South Korea, India, the United States, Japan, and the European Union (EU) came together to launch ‘Biopharmaceutical Alliance’ as a response to the ‘drug supply shortages’ experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants in the Bio International Convention 2024 held in San Diego emphasized on the importance of a ‘reliance and sustainable’ supply chain, and agreed to coordinate the respective countries’ bio policies, regulations, and research and development support measures. It was acknowledged during the Convention that the ‘production of essential raw materials and ingredients’ is concentrated in a few countries. Therefore, they agreed to work together to build a detailed pharmaceutical supply chain map.

To make biopharmaceuticals especially biologics accessible, leading biopharmaceutical companies have also started recognizing the need for their contribution. Their

moves include ‘plans to forgo patent protection on products in LMICs’, ‘grant licenses to generic manufacturers’, ‘launch of programmes which offer treatments for chronic diseases in LMICs at a minimal costs’, ‘offering discounted chronic treatments’, among others. Leading biopharmaceutical companies understand that LMICs hold immense potential in terms of patient population, increasing investment in healthcare spending in these economies, higher possibility of integrating new biopharmaceutical interventions under existing healthcare structures & ongoing healthcare programmes, and possibility of developing innovative delivery mechanisms by prioritizing affordability.

Top innovator biopharma companies globally have strength and resources to contribute in this endeavour. Therapeutic segments provide insights on high cost biologics and companies dominating in that segment. Oncology is the segment in which top 13 biopharmaceutical companies globally namely AbbVie, AstraZeneca, Bristol Myers Squibb, Eli Lilly, Gilead Sciences, Johnson & Johnson, Novartis, Roche, Takeda Pharma, Amgen, Pfizer, Sanofi, and Merck & Co., have presence. In Neuroscience as well as Immunology segment, 11 out of these 13 biopharmaceutical companies have presence. In contrast to this, there are segments where only one company is present out of these top 13 biopharmaceutical companies, e.g., Pfizer in Internal Medicine, and Novartis in Dermatology.

AbbVie is only company that has presence in Aesthetics, Eye Care and Women’s Health. Top selling products of these biopharmaceutical companies clearly show their strength, e.g., Humira from AbbVie, Tagrisso from AstraZeneca, Trulicity from Eli Lilly, Biktary from Gilead Sciences, Stelara from J&J, Kisqali from Novartis, Keytruda from MSD to name a few. These companies consider ‘regulatory environment’, ‘intellectual property protection’, ‘price controls’, and ‘reimbursement constraints’ as major barriers in LMICs for launch of biologics.

Some of these companies have reported about their programs to make biopharmaceuticals accessible such as Access to Care by AbbVie Inc., Healthy Heart Africa by AstraZeneca, Life for a Child Program by Eli Lilly, Max Access Solution by BMS, Novartis, Takeda and Pfizer, ALIVE by Roche, and Blinecyto Humanitarian Access Program by Amgen. Certain biopharmaceutical companies have made interventions through pricing, e.g., Tiered Pricing by Johnson & Johnson, and Differential Pricing by Roche. Differential pricing essentially involves ‘charging different prices for the same product’ based on certain criteria that may be buyer’s ability to pay, market segment, or simply geographic location. Through differential pricing, biopharmaceutical companies make medications more affordable in lower-income regions whereas these companies maintain profitability in higher-income

areas. Roche is said to have applied ‘four-tiered pricing’ too. Four-tiered pricing is also a specific type of ‘differential pricing’ only. But in this case, a biopharmaceutical product is offered at four different price levels based on predefined criteria. And predefined criteria may include a country’s income levels, disease burden or healthcare infrastructure. In this way, pricing strategies by 3 out of 13 top biopharmaceutical companies have been designed to align with the economic realities of different regions, thereby enhancing access to biopharmaceuticals.

Top biopharmaceutical companies need to report their initiatives targeted at making biologics accessible. For this, there need to be better reporting on number of persons who have been supported, total amount of support, total amount of support as a percentage of total number of persons affected in a given region, total donations as a percentage of total revenue from that product, to name a few.

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DISCLAIMER: Views are personal and do not represent the views of the Institute.

Union Budget 2024-25 likely to be presented in Late July

NEW DELHI: Union Government is expected to present the full Budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 during the second fortnight of July, according to sources within the administration.

This timeline emerges following an announcement from Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, who stated that the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha will convene from June 24 to July 7.

Concurrently, the 264th session of the Rajya Sabha will commence on June 27 and conclude on July 3.

After a recess following the Moharram festival on July 17, the second part of the session will reconvene, with the presentation of the Economic Survey for the fiscal year 2023-24, followed by the full Budget.

The government aims to complete the budgetary process by August 14, as a vote-on-account has been taken for the period between April and August.

While the interim Budget primarily focused on the economic achievements of the Modi Government over the past decade and facilitated the vote-on-account, the full Budget is anticipated to include policy



announcements and outline a vision for the upcoming five-year term.

Additionally, the fiscal deficit projection, initially estimated at 5.1 percent for the fiscal year 2025, will be closely monitored.

Factors such as the record transfer of surplus from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and continued growth in tax

revenues may contribute to a potential downward revision of this deficit projection by 10 to 20 basis points. However, increased allocations for capital expenditure and various Central Sector Schemes could offset any deficit reduction efforts.

Unlike the usual practice, the Demands for Grants and tax proposals will not undergo scrutiny by the Department-related Standing Committee, as no recess is planned after the presentation of the full Budget.

Both Houses of Parliament will deliberate on all expenditure proposals, except those charged on the Consolidated Fund. Once the Lok Sabha approves the Budget, the Rajya Sabha will discuss and potentially suggest amendments before returning the financial statement and Finance Bill to the Lok Sabha.

Deposit rates at peak, may now move down: SBI chief

NEW DELHI: State Bank of India (SBI) Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara has said that deposit rates have peaked and will move southward in the medium term.

The country's largest lender also said the RBI may start easing the interest rate cycle from the third quarter of the current financial year.

Last week, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) left its key interest rates unchanged for the eighth time in a row, keeping the focus on inflation amid robust economic growth.

"We are hoping that in the third quarter starting from October, perhaps there would be some possibility of inflation trajectory moving towards 4 per cent, and that will be the right time when

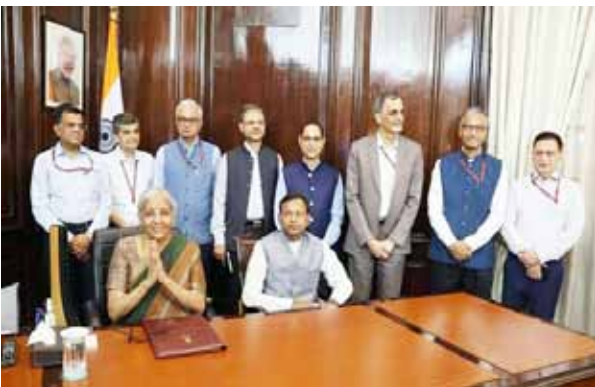


we can expect some interest cut (from RBI)," he said.

As far as the interest rate in the banking system is concerned, the SBI chairman said more or less they have already peaked.

"...I think, if we look at the medium-term trajectory of interest rate, perhaps it would be a downward trend," he said.

Nirmala Sitharaman takes charge as Finance Minister



NEW DELHI: Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday assumed charge as the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs at South Block in Delhi.

After taking charge she signed some files. Sitharaman was accompanied by Pankaj Chaudhary who took charge as Minister of State (MoS) in the Ministry. Nirmala Sitharaman is among a few who have been Union Minister in both the 2014 and 2019 Modi cabinets. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sent a clear message of continuity in the government's economic policy with the reappointment of Nirmala Sitharaman as Finance Minister.

Sitharaman's return comes on the back of a successful track record with the Indian economy clocking a robust 8.2 per cent growth in 2023-24, which is the fastest among the world's major economies, and inflation coming down to below 5 per cent. During her tenure as Finance Minister, the fiscal deficit has also been reduced from more than 9 per cent of GDP in 2020-21 to the targeted level of 5.1 per cent for 2024-25. After having presented an interim budget ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Sitharaman now faces the challenge of presenting a full budget that ensures the economy continues on the high growth trajectory and creates more jobs while at the same time keeping in mind the aspirations of the coalition partners of the Modi 3.0. In 2014, she served as the Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs and later the Minister for Commerce and Industry with Independent Charge. In 2017, he became the Defence Minister. In 2019, Sitharaman assumed charge as the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs.

GST Council to meet on June 22



NEW DELHI: The first GST Council meeting under the new central government will be held here on June 22. The GST Council is chaired by the Union finance minister and consists of representatives from all states, usually the finance ministers, to decide on rate slabs for items under GST.

This will be the 53rd meeting of the GST Council. The GST will take up some pending issues such as taxability for the online gaming sector, ESOPs and corporate guaranties.

SBI to raise \$3 billion through long-term debt

NEW DELHI: State Bank of India (SBI) plans to raise up to \$3 billion through long-term debt in the current financial year (2024-25), according to a stock exchange filing by the country's largest bank.

The proposal has been approved by the board of directors and SBI intends to secure the funds in single or multiple

tranche through a public offering or private placement of senior unsecured notes. These notes will be denominated in US dollars or other major foreign currencies, according to the bank's statement.

"Pursuant to Regulation 30 of SEBI Regulations, 2015, we submit that the Executive Com-



mittee of the Central Board at its meeting held today, i.e., 11th

June 2024, has approved, inter alia, to examine the status and decide on long-term fundraising in single/multiple tranches of up to US\$ 3 Billion...through a public offer and/or private placement of senior unsecured notes in US Dollar or any other major foreign currency during FY 2024-25," SBI said in an exchange filing.

This move comes as Indian banks, including SBI, are strengthening their capital reserves to cater to increasing loan demands. Several other state-run banks including Canara Bank and Punjab National Bank also have plans to raise funds through the debt route during the current financial year.

CredAble raises Rs 30 Cr through SIDBI for MSME Financing

NEW DELHI: CredAble, a Mumbai-based financial technology start-up, has raised Rs 30 crore in debt funding from the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).

The company plans to utilise the newly acquired capital to expand its operations and provide affordable financing solutions to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as well as women-led businesses across India.

Additionally, a portion of the funds will be allocated towards the development of new market-leading financing solutions for CredAble's global



customer base.

Founded in 2017 by Nirav Choksi and Ram Kewalramani, CredAble offers financial growth solutions to businesses.

The start-up's investor portfolio includes Oaks Asset Management, Plutus Wealth Management LLP, and Axis Bank Limited. CredAble currently

serves a growing base of over 350,000 businesses globally.

"The MSME sector is poised for significant growth over the next five years," said Manu Prakash, Managing Director and Head of Partnerships and FI Coverage, CredAble.

He further explained, "From providing affordable financing to scaling up their operations, we're focused on meeting the growing demands of small and medium-sized businesses. This latest injection of capital from SIDBI will further bolster our efforts to strengthen the MSME sector and women-led businesses."

PLI scheme to attract Rs 3-4 lakh crore investment



NEW DELHI: The PLI scheme is expected to attract investments of Rs 3-4 lakh crore in the next four years and generate 2 lakh jobs as large projects in sectors, including semiconductor and pharmaceutical intermediaries, are expected to take off, the ICRA said.

Indian Bank extends Rs 500 Crore credit to MSMEs in Chennai

CHENNAI: Public sector lender Indian Bank has reported a significant credit disbursement to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Chennai during a recent credit camp.

According to a statement released by the bank, over 440 sanction tickets totaling more than Rs 500 crore were distributed to MSME customers on Wednesday.

The credit camp, organised by Indian Bank in the city, aimed to support local businesses by providing them with necessary financial resources.

MSMEs, known for their crucial role in India's economic landscape, often face challenges in accessing formal credit.

This initiative by Indian Bank aligns with the broader national agenda of strengthening the MSME sector, which is a major contributor to the



country's GDP and employment generation.

The bank's statement did not provide details on the terms of the loans or the profiles of the beneficiaries. However, the scale of disbursement indicates a significant boost to the local MSME ecosystem.

Financial analysts will be closely monitoring the impact of this credit infusion on Chennai's business environment in the coming months.

Banking Sector will Remain Strong



SATISH SINGH

Before, during and after the corona pandemic, the government implemented many schemes and initiatives to strengthen the economy and the banking system, due to which today Indian Banks and the country's economy are in a very strong position. Now the NDA government has been formed again. Therefore, it is expected that the government will stick to its old policies, which will make the Indian economy and Indian banks stronger.

According to the data released by the Ministry of Statistics, GDP growth of 7.8 percent was recorded in the March quarter of FY 2023-24 and the overall growth rate in FY 2023-24 was 8.2 percent, while it was 7 percent in FY 2022-23. The sharp increase in GDP has been possible mainly due to the increase of 9.9 percent in the manufacturing sector in FY 2023-24, which is much higher than the minus 2.2 percent in FY 2022-23. Similarly, the mining sector registered a growth of 7.1 percent during this period, which was 1.9 percent in the financial year 2022-23. It is noteworthy that the manufacturing sector plays an important role in providing quality employment to the youth coming out of the engineering institutes and colleges of the country.

In view of the continued improvement in the Indian economy, S&P recently changed India's rating from Outlook Stable to Positive after 14 years. According to S&P, if economic reforms are taken forward along with



reducing the increased debt pressure on the government and reducing the interest burden, then India's rating can be improved further in the next 24 months. Meanwhile, keeping in view the boom in economic activities, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept the policy rates unchanged in its latest monetary review, so that the pace of development can be accelerated even more.

The central government has collected Rs 1.73 lakh crore from Goods and Services Tax (GST) in May 2024. This is the fourth highest GST collection ever collected in any month and the second highest GST collection of FY-2024-25. Earlier, the government had collected the highest amount of Rs 2.10 lakh crore from GST in April 2024. The overall GST collection has increased by 10 percent on an annual basis. With the increase in revenue collection, the government can implement the works that accelerate development.

Retail inflation in May is 4.75 percent which stood at 4.83 percent in April 2024 & in the month of March, it was 4.85 percent. The

Reserve Bank of India has projected the average retail inflation to be 4.5 percent in the financial year 2024-25 due to the possibility of good monsoon and reduction in factors disrupting the supply chain. The overall inflation rate has come down by 1.3 percent to 5.4 percent in the financial year 2023-24.

The inflation outlook is expected to remain positive due to easing pressure on the supply chain, macro-level moderation in core (non-food-non-energy) inflation and the possibility of above-normal rainfall in FY2024-25.

In recent months, Indian banks have performed the best compared to their counterparts in Asia. The country's 3 big banks, namely State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank, have made it to the list of top 50 banks in the world in 2023, while in 2022 only 2 banks of the country made it to the top 50 banks in the world. According to the S&P Global report, Indian banks have strengthened due to improved strong economic condition, rapid growth in loans, reduction in NPAs and increase in profits. According

to this report, the assets of banks have increased by 50.5 percent to \$ 1.51 trillion in 2023. In July 2022, HDFC Bank's assets grew by 51.3 percent to \$ 466.35 billion. This helped the bank jump 13 places to 33rd position in the top 50 list. According to S&P Global, the loan given by Indian banks has increased rapidly in recent months. As of 29 December 2023, it had reached the level of 15.6 percent, which was 14.9 percent a year ago.

In the financial year 2023-24, Bank of Baroda and Canara Bank have earned a profit of more than Rs 10,000 crore. State Bank of India has earned a profit of Rs 61,077 crore during this period, which is more than 40 percent of the total earnings of public sector banks. In the last financial year, State Bank of India had earned a profit of Rs 50,232 crore. Out of 12 public sector banks, only Punjab & Sind Bank has registered a decline in profit. On March 31, 2024, the cumulative profit of public sector banks crossed the level of Rs.1.4 lakh crore, which is 35 percent more than last year.

In the financial year 2022-

23, public sector banks had earned a net profit of Rs. 1,04,649 crore. During this period, the net profit of Punjab National Bank was Rs 8,245 crore, which is 228 percent more than last year, while Union Bank of India earned a profit of Rs.13,649 crore, which is 62 percent more than last year. Other public sector banks like Central Bank of India earned 61 percent, Bank of India 57 percent, Bank of Maharashtra 56 percent and Indian Bank 53 percent more profit than the previous financial year. Thus, after the loss of Rs.85,390 crore of public sector banks in the financial year 2018, this is the story of the journey of recording record profits in 2024.

The NDA government stood with the public sector banks at every step from the financial year 2016-17 to the financial year 2020-21 and recapitalized the public sector banks by Rs.3,10,997 crore. The Reserve Bank of India also took appropriate steps in this matter during this period. Due to these combined efforts, the net non-performing assets (NPA) of all banks came down to below 1.70 percent in the financial year 2023-24.

The NDA government has been formed again and the work of the Finance Ministry is also in the hands of Nirmala Sitharaman. Therefore, the policies and steps taken by the government and the Reserve Bank of India will remain favourable for Indian banks in the future as well. At present, the net profit of public sector banks is continuously increasing and NPA is decreasing. Apart from this, Indian banks are also performing well on other important parameters.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad based Senior Columnist, Views are personal.

India Exim Bank Expands Presence in East Africa



NEW DELHI: The Export-Import Bank of India (India Exim Bank), a state-run institution focused on facilitating the country's international trade and investment, has inaugurated a new representative office in Nairobi, Kenya.

This strategic move aims to bolster India's commercial ties with the resource-rich and demographically burgeoning East African region. Through this newly established East Africa Representative Office, India Exim Bank anticipates heightened engagement with the region's industries, private and public sector entities, banks, and financial institutions.

Such interactions are expected to augment trade and investment flows between India and East African nations, including Kenya. Trade data underscores the

growing economic relationship between India and East Africa. Merchandise trade between the two regions has witnessed considerable growth over the past decade, escalating from USD 9.7 billion in 2013 to USD 12.9 billion in 2022. India's exports to East Africa, which stood at USD 8.6 billion in 2013, rose to USD 9.4 billion by 2022. As India's premier trade finance institution, India Exim Bank plays a pivotal role in financing, facilitating, and promoting the country's international trade and investment endeavours.

The bank's activities extend to policy formulation and project export finance initiatives aligned with India's economic diplomacy efforts. In addition to its new Kenyan outpost, the bank maintains regional offices in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and

Johannesburg, South Africa. Under its Overseas Investment Finance Program, India Exim Bank has thus far provided financing for 77 ventures established by over 50 companies across 14 African countries.

Since 2022, the bank has supported 76 transactions totalling nearly USD 800 million in 18 African nations, aiding 22 Indian exporters, including 10 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), based in 14 cities across nine Indian states through its Trade Assistance Program (TAP) and other trade facilitation initiatives. Furthermore, on behalf of the Indian government, India Exim Bank has extended over 200 Lines of Credit to 42 African nations, amounting to more than USD 12 billion. These credit facilities aim to support socio-economic development in the region by facilitating access to essential infrastructure, improving livelihoods, boosting agricultural productivity, enhancing industrial output, and promoting sustainable development. This multi-faceted engagement simultaneously creates opportunities for companies in Africa and India across traditional and emerging sectors, benefiting a multitude of MSMEs in the value chain while creating and sustaining employment opportunities.

INTERNATIONAL

G7 leaders agree \$50bn loan for Ukraine from Russian assets

G7 has agreed to use frozen Russian assets to raise \$50bn (£39bn) for Ukraine to help it fight invading Russian forces.

US President Joe Biden said it was another reminder to Russia “that we’re not backing down”, but Moscow has threatened “extremely painful” retaliatory measures.

The money is not expected to arrive until the end of the year but is seen as a longer-term solution to support Ukraine’s war effort and economy.

Also at the G7 summit in Italy, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Mr Biden signed a 10-year bilateral security deal between Ukraine and the US, hailed by Kyiv as “historic”.



The agreement envisages US military and training aid to Ukraine - but it does not commit Washington to send troops to fight for its ally.

Some \$325bn worth of assets were frozen by the G7, alongside the EU, following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine

in 2022.

The pot of assets is generating about \$3bn a year in interest.

Under the G7 plan, that \$3bn will be used to pay off the annual interest on the \$50bn loan for the Ukrainians, taken out on the international markets.

Speaking at a joint news

conference at the summit’s venue in Puglia, southern Italy, President Biden said the \$50bn loan would “put that money to work for Ukraine and send another reminder to [Russian President Vladimir] Putin that we’re not backing down”.

The US leader stressed that the Mr Putin “cannot wait us out, he cannot divide us, and we’ll be with Ukraine until they prevail in this war”.

President Zelensky thanked his American and other allies for their unwavering support.

And referring to the new security deal, he said: “It’s a truly historic day and we have signed the strongest agreement within Ukraine and the US since our independence [in 1991]”.

The G7 group of rich nations,

Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and US, have been important financial and military supporters of Ukraine as it battles to contain occupying Russian forces.

Other G7 leaders also hailed the \$50bn loan deal, with UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak describing it as “game changing”.

Most of the frozen assets of the Central Bank of Russia are being held in Belgium.

Under international law, countries cannot confiscate those assets from Russia and give them to Ukraine.

Several hours before the G7 decision was announced, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova warned that there would be “extremely painful” retaliatory measures.

US : Greek-owned vessel damaged by Houthi attack



WASHINGTON: An unmanned surface vessel launched by Iran-backed Houthi rebels has hit a Greek-owned and operated ship off the coast of Yemen, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

The impact of the hit caused severe flooding and damage to the ship’s engine room. There were no injuries reported. The Liberian flagged M/V Tutor most recently docked in Russia. CENCTOM said on Wednesday that its forces destroyed three anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM) launchers in a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen and one uncrewed aerial system also launched from a Houthi area over the Red Sea in the past 24 hours.

“This continued malign and reckless behaviour by

the Iranian-backed Houthis threatens regional stability and endangers the lives of mariners across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden,” the statement said. Houthi militants have repeatedly fired on merchant ships in the critical Red Sea shipping corridor that connects to the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal since the start of the war in Gaza in October.

The militants have said the attacks are intended to support the Palestinian militant group Hamas by making it more difficult for cargo ships to reach Israel. In response to the attacks, the US and the UK have carried out several military strikes against Houthi positions in Yemen. The European Union has also launched a military operation to protect merchant shipping in the Red Sea.

Canada announces rockets and other military aid for Ukraine



BRUSSELS: Canada will supply Ukraine with rockets, small arms ammunition and remote-controlled weapon mounts for vehicles, Canadian Defence Minister Bill Blair announced in Brussels on Thursday. “Canada will provide Ukraine with 2, 300 Canadian Rocket Vehicle 7s or CRV rocket motors,” Blair said. He added, “Canada will send an additional number of rounds of small arms ammunition, as well as 29 Nanuk remote systems,” which are remote-controlled weapon mounts for military vehicles. He said the CRV7s were “formerly used by the Royal Canadian Air Force on our CF-18 aircraft.” Meanwhile, “the Nanuk is a remotely-controlled weapon station used by the Canadian Army on our light armoured vehicles.” He added, “This week, Canada is beginning the shipments of a new fleet of 50 armoured vehicles to Ukraine. The first four vehicles are departing Canada this week, and they will be delivered to the Ukrainian armed forces in the coming weeks.”

North Korea warns of ‘new counteraction’ against South Korea



SEOUL: The sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has warned that South Korea will face unspecified “new counteraction” by the North if it keeps sending anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets and playing its loudspeaker broadcasts across the border.

The statement by Kim Yo-jong came after the South resumed propaganda loud-speaker broadcasts toward the North for the first time in six years, in retaliation against the North’s repeated sending of trash-carrying balloons, reports Yonhap news agency.

“If the ROK simultaneously carries out the leaflet scattering and loudspeaker broadcasting provocation over the border, it will undoubtedly witness the new counteraction of the DPRK,” Kim said in the English statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency on Sunday, using the acronyms for the official names of the South and the North.

Kim claimed that the North had sent some 7.5 tonnes of “waste paper” in 1, 400 balloons across the border over the weekend, arguing that they were just garbage that contained nothing related to political propaganda, unlike anti-Pyongyang leaflets sent by North Korean defectors in the South. “It is quite different from the provocative political agitation rubbish scattered by the scum of the ROK against the DPRK,” Kim said, adding that the South “will suffer a bitter embarrassment of picking up waste paper without rest, and it will be its daily work.”

UN chief condoles death of Malawi’s Vice President in plane crash

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condoled the plane crash that killed Malawi’s Vice President and nine other people, said his Deputy Spokesman.

“The Secretary-General was very saddened to hear of this plane crash which claimed the life of the Vice President of Malawi and many other senior Malawian officials,”



said Farhan Haq, the Deputy



Spokesman.

Pak PM sends ‘felicitations’ to PM Modi; Nawaz Sharif says let’s replace hate with hope

NEW DELHI: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sent “felicitations” to Narendra Modi on taking oath as the Prime Minister of India for the third consecutive time.

In a short message on X, Shehbaz wrote, “Felicitations to Narendra Modi on taking oath as Prime Minister of India.”

Prime Minister Modi and his Council of Ministers took oath in a historic ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhawan in Delhi on Sunday.

While dozens of global leaders have sent congratulatory messages, Pakistan PM’s message to his Indian counterpart holds quite a significance considering the tense relationship between the neighbouring nations during the past two terms of the Modi government.

“PM Shehbaz’s felicitation message shows clearly the rift that persists between the two countries. The message didn’t show any sign of warmth or express hopes of working towards normalisation of relations between the two countries. Instead, it seemed more like a forced formality that the premier had to undertake,” said senior political analyst Javed Siddique.

It should also be noted that



PM Modi did not extend an invitation to Pakistan to participate in the swearing-in ceremony like he did in 2014 when then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was invited.

Interestingly, a vast difference is also seen in the messages sent to PM Modi on Monday by PM Shehbaz Sharif and by his elder brother Nawaz Sharif, the President of the country’s ruling party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

In his message to the Indian PM, Nawaz Sharif congratulated him on assuming office for the third consecutive time and expressed hope of “replacing hate with hope” for better future progress of the two nations.

“My warm felicitations to Modi Ji on assuming office for the third time. Your party’s success in recent elections reflects the confidence of the people in your leadership. Let us replace

hate with hope and seize the opportunity to shape the destiny of the two billion people of South Asia,” he posted on X.

While PM Shehbaz enjoys a close relationship with the country’s powerful establishment currently running a coalition government, his elder brother is seen as a leader who refuses to fall in line with the country’s military.

Having failed to secure a majority to form the government after the general polls held in February this year, Nawaz Sharif is managing party politics through his daughter and Chief Minister of Punjab province, Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

PM Modi’s close relations with Nawaz Sharif also became evident when he made a surprise visit to Lahore in 2015 on the latter’s invitation and even spent time at Sharif’s Jati Umra residence.

UNSC endorses Gaza hostage freedom for ceasefire deal proposed by US

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council with near unanimity signed on to a deal proposed by the US for a ceasefire in Gaza in exchange for the release of hostages putting the responsibility on Hamas for ending the conflict with Israel.

The US-sponsored resolution that includes a long-term resolution of the Israel-Hamas war was adopted on Monday with 14 members of the Council, including China, voting for it, while a reluctant veto-wielding Russia abstained, allowing it to go through.

The resolution puts into play a three-phase peace proposal US President Joe Biden made last month in which Qatar and Egypt have a role. US Permanent Representative to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said after the vote, “Today, this Council sent a clear message to Hamas: Accept the ceasefire deal on the table.” Israel has already agreed to this deal and the fighting could stop today if Hamas would do the same, “she added.

“Egypt and Qatar have assured the US that they are continuing to work to ensure that Hamas engages constructively,



“she said. “And the US will help ensure that Israel lives up to its obligations as well, assuming Hamas accepts the deal.”

Israeli diplomat Reut Shapir Ben-Naftaly told the Council, “The war will end if Hamas were to release the hostages and turn themselves in; not one more shot needs to be fired.” The Security Council resolution came amid important developments in Gaza and in Israel over the weekend and the arrival of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Israel to promote the proposal. Israel’s Opposition leader Benny Gantz, who had joined the Israeli war cabinet, resigned on Sunday accusing

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of putting his political interests ahead of getting the hostages back and ending the war and failing to come up with a post-war plan for Gaza.

Israeli special forces made a dramatic rescue of four hostages on Saturday from a Hamas-held area in Gaza. Ben-Naftaly said, “Hamas’s refusal to release the hostages through diplomacy has proven that the effort to bring our hostages home must also include military means. And this Saturday was the perfect example of how this can be achieved.” Speaking to reporters outside the Council chamber, Palestine’s Observer

Riyad Mansour said, “We the Palestinian people are united in seeing the implementation of the resolution.”

Asked about the US assurances about Israel being on board, he said, “The proof is in the details and we want to see that this resolution is implemented beginning with the ceasefire and that this ceasefire to be permanent.”

At the same time, he said: “We saw the loss of a tremendous number of people” and will continue to seek accountability for the killings.

The Palestine Authority, which nominally governs the occupied Palestine territories, does not control the Gaza Strip which is ruled by a hostile Hamas.

The plan approved by the Council is the latest attempt by the splintered Council to end the bloodshed that began with the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel on October 7 in which about 1, 200 Israelis were killed and about 240 taken hostage.

In Israel’s retaliatory attacks, over 35, 000 Palestinians have been killed, according to the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry.

SOUTH ASIA TO EUROPE

New Mandate Reinvigorates Modii for a Major Peace Offensive

GOPAL MISRA
India’s renewed bid to win back the neighbors in her immediate neighborhood for closer economic and strategic ties is expected to be more pronounced in the coming weeks.

It’s indication didn’t get unnoticed, when the heads of the governments of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka were personally present to greet Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the majestic forecourt of the historic Rashtrapati Bhawan on Sunday, June nine for successfully winning the polls.

The weather, indeed, was too hot, when the swearing-in took place. The leaders of the South Asian region braved the weather, including the Delhi-based high-profile members of the diplomatic corps, thus, finally reaffirming their faith in India and her democracy. The presence of Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adan, known as the members of the club of the richest industrialists on the earth added a new confidence that India would be the vehicle of progress and prosperity.

The presence of the political leaders accompanied by the presence of the people representing a broad spectrum of society in the swearing-in

ceremony that India is now poised for initiating a new mode of development

It is believed that their presence was jointly planned by India’s External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, and the National Security Advisor, Ajit Kumar Doval.

The Crown Country

The presence of the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, during the swearing-in ceremony, perhaps, has finally nailed the dream project of the US and its satellite country, UK, for setting up a Crown Country with the help of Beijing. Earlier this year in January, the Americans wanted to set up a multidimensional military base at St. Martin Island, just nine kilometers from Cox Bazar in Bangladesh.

It appears that the buffoons of the American Deep State have accessed an old file in the British archives for creating a Christian State for fragmenting India. It is true that the British wanted to carve out an independent state comprising India’s north-east region. About 150-year ago in 1873, the British had introduced the inner line system to keep the hilly regions of Assam insulated from the rest of India, thus prohibiting the people of the rest of India to visit the hills, but allowed the Protestant priests to camp in



the region. The agenda was to alienate these brave tribes from the rest of India.

During the late 19th-century, when the US was an agricultural country, the unemployed youths from American Universities were recruited to spread the faith in these remote areas.

It is not known whether the renewed initiative for a Christian State is being carved out with the help of Beijing. Earlier, during sixties, just a few years before the visit of the then US President Richard Nixon, to China, the CIA agents deployed at the US mission in Dacca, then the provincial capital of East Pakistan, were actively promoting insurgency in Mizoram and Nagaland. In this task, they were shamelessly conniving with China, though pronounced an enemy by American media.

Chin’s Love for India

In spite of the colonial

penetration in the region, the hill tribes comprising a broad spectrum of tribes such as Naga, Lushai, Chins, Kukis and even Meitei belong to a common gene stock

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Chin insurgents have already appealed to New Delhi for becoming a part of India. A proposal in this regard has been pending with New Delhi for the past three decades, more specifically the request was submitted to the then PM Vishwanath Pratap Singh.

Proximity with Nepal

Much significance is being attached to the presence of the Nepalese PM Kamal Dahal, who was accompanied by his winsome daughter, Ganga, known for her political intelligence. It is quite known in India that she brought truce among her father’s peers in the ruling party, Nepal Com-

munist Party. In spite of some adverse comments in media, she has been assisting her father following the unfortunate deaths her brother, Prakash, and sister Renu,

This visit was expected to enable her to understand the challenges her most intimate neighbor India is facing from the Dragon.

President Muizzu Welcomed

In spite of some decline in the India - Maldives ties after Mohamed Muizzu, who had won the coveted post of the President in the Island state, by criticizing India. He, however, was accorded a warm welcome in New Delhi at the swearing-in ceremony. It is hoped that the two countries would finally improve their ties

The other leaders such as the Present of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe, Mauritius PM Pravind Jugnath, the PM of Bhutan, Tshering Tobogay and Ahmed of Seychelles attended the function. Modi had also met them separately, thus further cementing their ties with India

Gopal Misra has been associated with national and international media. His books on journalism and geo-politics have been well-appreciated. Views are personal.

Bangladesh’s PM Sheikh Hasina Accepts GCA Local Adaptation Champions Award

GCA CEO’s official visit to Bangladesh paves way for enhanced collaborations for climate resilience

DHAKA (BANGLADESH): Bangladesh’s Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina graciously accepted the Global Center on Adaptation’s Local Adaptation Champions Award from GCA CEO Professor Patrick V. Verkooijen today, on the occasion of his official visit to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh, the first government to receive the global Local Adaptation Champions Award, won in the Innovation in Devolving Finance category for the Local Government Initiative on Climate Change (LoGIC). Implemented by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-Operatives, Government of Bangladesh, LoGIC provides a mechanism for accessing and managing climate finance from various sources, a platform for sharing best practices and lessons learned, and a system for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness and impact.

“I am deeply honored to accept this prestigious award on behalf of the Government and people of Bangladesh, whose unwavering resilience and innovative spirit have always guided us through natural adversities,” declared Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. “This recognition underscores our commitment to sustainable development and climate resilience, and we are grateful for the Global



Center on Adaptation’s invaluable support in our journey towards a prosperous and resilient future.”

H.E. Ban Ki-moon, 8th Secretary of the United Nations and Chairperson of the Board of the GCA, lauded Prime Minister Hasina, stating: “Once again, Bangladesh stands at the forefront of supporting the most climate-vulnerable populations, demonstrating leadership in channelling essential climate finance to those in dire need.”

Professor Verkooijen added “The GCA’s Global Hub on Locally Led Adaptation, inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2022, is dedicated to amplifying the voices of the most vulnerable. The insights and ownership in their locally led People’s Adaptation Plans are invaluable for guiding international financial institutions. At GCA we are supporting the scaling up of such initiatives and linking them to larger funding sources. We know for climate action to be effective it must prioritize protecting those living on the frontlines of our climate emergency.”

US military says aid flow through Gaza pier has resumed



WASHINGTON: The US military said that the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian aid for Gaza residents has resumed after a temporary pier on the territory’s coast was repaired.

The temporary harbour had been damaged in rough seas at the end of May, just a few days after its completion. Due to strong waves, four US military ships anchored in the area broke free from their moorings.

The regional command Centcom on Saturday said in a statement that at about 10:30 am local time (0730 GMT), it “began delivery of humanitarian assistance ashore in Gaza.”

“Today, a total of approximately 492 metric tonnes (1.1 million pounds) of much-needed humanitarian assistance was delivered to the people of Gaza. To date, USCENTCOM has assisted in the delivery of more than 1, 573 metric tonnes (3.5 million pounds) of humanitarian aid,” the statement continued.

The regional command stressed that “no US military personnel went ashore in Gaza.”

MUMBAI: Actor Alia Bhatt, who will soon be seen in the upcoming movie 'Jigra', has made a stylish statement with her latest outfit.

On Sunday, the actress took to Instagram and shared several pictures of her new outfit.

In the photos, she is seen wearing a beige bikini top with a pink floral design. She paired it with a matching jacket featuring embellished borders and solid beige pants.

Alia accessorised minimally and left her hair open.

The actress captioned the post: "From not so long ago."

On the work front, Alia also has an untitled film from the YRF spy universe in which she will share the screen with Sharvari.

The film is set to feature seven action sequences and is directed by Shiv Rawail, who made his directorial debut with the acclaimed miniseries 'The Railway Men', based on the contributions of railway officials during the Bhopal Gas Tragedy.

Alia Bhatt amps up her oomph quotient in her bikini top outfit



Popular Kannada Actor Darshan Among 11 Arrested in Shocking Karnataka Murder Case

Actor Enraged by Victim's Derogatory Post About Girlfriend

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru



were reportedly present during the fatal beating.

Darshan, who has had a troubled marriage and was previously arrested for attempting to murder his wife in 2011, was detained by police from a star hotel on MG Road, Mysore, around 8:30 AM on Tuesday and brought to Bengaluru. Pavithra, an actress turned boutique owner, claims she and Darshan have been together for over 10 years. All the accused have been remanded in police custody for six days, while authorities continue to search for four more suspect.

Preliminary investigations revealed that Pavan, who works at Darshan's RR Nagar residence, created a fake Instagram account in Pavithra Gowda's name and had been chatting with Swamy for the past two months. Pavan showed these messages to Darshan, who then shared them with Pavithra, according to the investigation. During one chat, Swamy revealed that he was from Chitradurga and shared his name. Upon learning this, Darshan instructed Raghvendra, President of the Akhila Karnataka Darshan Thooegadeepa Sena, to bring Swamy to Bengaluru.

Following Darshan's instruction, Raghvendra and a few others abducted Swamy on Saturday morning while he was on his way to a pharmacy in Chitradurga. Swamy was forcibly taken to RR Nagar, Bengaluru and locked in a shed in Pattanagere as per the plan. Raghvendra and others initially beat Swamy, and by evening, Darshan and his associates visited the shed for a second round of thrashing.

Nawaz shows up in formal attire to promote 'Rautu Ka Raaz' in Juhu



MUMBAI: Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui was spotted in Mumbai's Juhu area on Friday, promoting his upcoming mystery thriller 'Rautu Ka Raaz'.

The photos show Nawazuddin looking dapper in a blue and white striped blazer, black trousers, and a red tie.

'Rautu Ka Raaz' features Nawazuddin in the lead role as Inspector Deepak Negi.

Set in 'Rautu Ki Beli' in Uttarakhnad, the film revolves around the mysterious death of a warden at a blind school in a sleepy village that hasn't witnessed a murder in over a decade and a half.

The film shows a jovial camaraderie between SHO Deepak Negi and sub-inspector Dimri (Rajesh Kumar), who are forced out of their slumber owing to the murder probe.

The movie also stars Atul Tiwari and Narayani Shastri in key roles.

Nawazuddin, who last featured in 'Haddi', said: "I am someone who enjoys watching

crime dramas, and hence I can confidently say that this film will be an entertaining watch with a unique twist. What sets the movie apart are the quirky characters and the lazy but breathtaking backdrop of Uttarakhnad."

Produced by Zee Studios and Phat Phish Records, and directed by Anand Surapur, 'Rautu Ka Raaz' premiered at the 54th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) last year.

'Rautu Ka Raaz' will premiere on ZEE5 on June 28.

Empowering India's MSMEs : How Vendor Financing Drives Growth in the World's Largest MSME Ecosystem

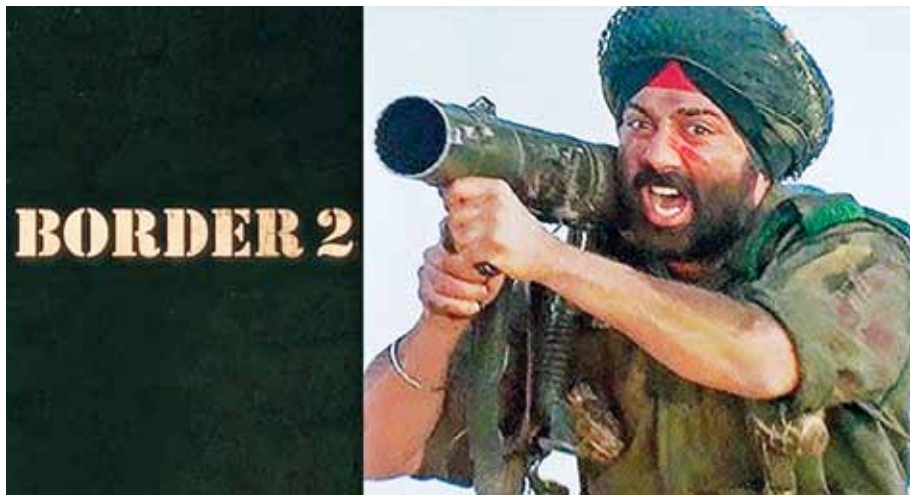


KAMAL MEHTA

India's position in the world economy

is significant and evolving. As of recent data, India is considered one of the largest economies globally, usually ranking around the fifth or sixth position in terms of nominal GDP. It holds a prominent position in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) ecosystem globally because of its vast number of MSMEs, making it one of the largest MSME ecosystems in the world. They are significant contributors to job creation and economic growth.

The government has been taking steps to encourage MSME registration and formalization through initiatives such as the Udyam Registration portal and according to official government data, as of March 2021, there were over 1.5 crore (15 million) registered MSMEs in India. These include businesses that have registered under the MSME Act and are eligible for various benefits and support schemes and estimating the number of unregistered MSMEs can be more challenging due to the informal nature of many small businesses in India. It is believed that there are a significant number of unregistered MSMEs operating across



by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, JP Dutta and Nidhi Dutta.

'Border', which was released in 1997, featured an ensemble cast including Suniel Shetty, Jackie Shroff, Akshaye Khan-

na, Sudesh Berry, and Puneet Issar, alongside a supporting cast including Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Tabu, Raakhee, Pooja Bhatt, and Sharbani Mukherjee.

The film showcased the

Battle of Longewala, albeit in a fictional way. It featured music by Anu Malik and lyrics by Javed Akhtar. The film became a watershed moment in India's repertoire of war films.

Diljit Dosanjh on playing a Punjab cop in 'Jatt & Juliet 3'



CHANDIGARH: Punjab singer and actor Diljit Dosanjh, who was present at the trailer launch of his upcoming film 'Jatt & Juliet 3', opened up about playing a cop in the movie and shared how the attitude and style of Punjab Police is very different, saying he has tried to copy as much as he can.

At the trailer launch, Diljit wore a brown coat, matching trousers, and a white shirt. He was accompanied by his co-star Neeru Bajwa and other

team members. Talking about his role as a police officer, Diljit said: "The attitude of the Punjab Police is very different from others. Just as the Maharashtra police have their own attitude and style. Similarly, the Punjab Police has an altogether different style. So, we have seen that a lot in our childhood, like you are going on a scooter, you see Punjab Police every day." "They have a very sweet, witty humour, and style. We cannot copy each and every-

thing, but we tried to copy as much as we can," said Diljit, who is known for his work in movies like 'Honsla Rakh', and 'Mukhtiar Chadha' among others.

Recalling an incident from the shoot, the 'Arjun Patiala' actor added, "I remember we were in costume and shooting in Canada. I went into a mall to use the washroom, and I met an Indian man who said to me, 'Tussi ethe bhi aa gaye' (You have come here too)."

'Jatt & Juliet 3' is written and directed by Jagdeep Sidhu and produced by Balvinder Singh, Dinesh Auluck, Gunbir Singh Sidhu, Manmord Singh Sidhu, and Diljit Dosanjh.

The film also stars Jasmin Bajwa, Rana Ranbir, BN Sharma, Nasir Chinyoti, Akram Udas, Har-dip Gill, Mohini Toor, and Sukh Pindiala. It is set to be released on June 28.

Masaba Gupta turns co-producer with upcoming reality show rooted in fashion



MUMBAI: Celebrated fashion designer and actress Masaba Gupta is set to don the hat of a producer with her upcoming reality television show. The upcoming yet-to-be-titled show, in which she serves as a co-producer, blends fashion with the emotions surrounding Indian weddings. It will feature glimpses of the unique sense and emotions of wearing the quintessential Masaba silhouettes. The reality show focuses on real people, their candid stories, and the raw emotions that drive the celebration of love and the joy of getting married.

Co-produced with Lucifer Circus, the show promises to strengthen the idea of fashion beyond barriers and revolutionise traditional wear showcased by Masaba. Talking about the new development, Masaba said: "I'm thrilled to bring you captivating stories of marriages, companionship, and everything in between. Join us as we go behind the scenes of one of life's most cherished moments for any Indian -- the wedding. Together, we'll showcase the joy, traditions, and heartfelt moments that make these celebrations truly special." The show follows the success of her bridal collection, which paid tribute to the regal heritage of Hyderabad and Patiala.

SC halts release of Annu Kapoor movie 'Hamare Baarah'

NEWDELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday halted the screening of the Bollywood movie 'Hamare Baarah' till the petition challenging its release is decided by the Bombay High Court.

Asking the high court to expeditiously decide the plea challenging the certification given by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), a vacation bench of the apex court presided over by Justice Vikram Nath rejected the filmmakers' contention that objectionable parts were taken away from the teaser.

"We saw the teaser this morning. It continues with all those offensive dialogues," added the Bench, also comprising Justice Sandeep Mehta.

In an order passed on June 7, the Bombay High Court lift-



ed the interim stay granted on the release of the film after a panel formed by the CBFC on the court's direction sought an extension of time to give an uninfluenced opinion on the film.

Further, a bench of Justices Kamal Khata and Rajesh S.

Patil of the high court noted that the filmmakers have voluntarily agreed to delete certain controversial dialogues.

Last week, the Karnataka government banned the release of the film in the state, stating that it may disturb communal harmony.

Raveena Tandon sends defamation notice to man for 'fake' road rage video



MUMBAI: Actor Raveena Tandon has sent a defamation notice to a man for not removing a video posted by him on social media in connection with an alleged road rage incident.

In the video, which went viral on social media, the man had claimed Tandon's car hit his mother and had accused the actor of assaulting her on being questioned.

The man had also claimed the incident took place when his mother, sister and niece were near the actor's home here.

However, a Mumbai police probe found the actor's car did not dash into anyone.

The defamation notice, sent through advocate Sana Khan, said the actor has informed the man about the "true and correct facts" as has been revealed from the police investigation.

As per the defamation notice, the man asked the actor to send

a request letter seeking removal of the video from his X account, which was sent on June 5 via email.

"However, you (the man) have denied deleting the post from your handle and more-over threatened our client to initiate legal action if the said request letter is not withdrawn within 24 hours," the notice said.

In the notice, Tandon said the man had defamed her on

social media and news portals through the video "which is admittedly fake news" and is also derogatory. It has been made to defame her in public by causing her mental harassment and agony, the notice further said.

"We are currently taking all necessary legal steps to address this issue and ensure that justice is served and action is taken against him for perpetuating this defamatory campaign," advocate Khan said.