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July 18, 2022

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TPDDL/ENGG/ENQ/200001430/22-23 Rate Contract for supply of 1-P Meter Box	04.07.2022	25.07.2022 at 1700 Hrs/ 25.07.2022 at 1730 Hrs

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JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

UTTAR PRADESH



FIRE AT ADVOCATE GENERAL'S OFFICE, CM ORDERS PROBE
PAGE 5



"In anti-cancer therapy, there is (another) pillar: using diet as a drug"

DR SIDDHARTHA MUKHERJEE
ONCOLOGIST
PAGE 10

Violence in TN town over student's death; buses torched, DIG injured



Buses set on fire by protesters in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi on Sunday. PTI

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JULY 17

PROHIBITORY ORDERS were imposed at several places in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi district after protesters clashed with police and indulged in arson at a residential school on Sunday to protest against alleged inaction following the death of a 17-year-old student earlier this week.

Several people, including senior police officers, were injured in the violence at the residential school in Kaniyamoor, near Chinnasalem. Later in the day, the school principal and two school officials were arrested and the government transferred the suicide case to the CB-CID.

The protesters set on fire at least 15 buses, including three police buses. Following the violence, Kallakurichi Collector P N Sridhar issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 until July 31 in Kallakurichi taluk and several places in Chinnasalem.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

WORLD



RUSSIAN MISSILES HIT KEY CITY IN SOUTHERN UKRAINE IN FIRST POLL AFTER HIS OUSTER, IMRAN KHAN'S PTI WINS BY A LANDSLIDE
PAGE 12

PAGE 1 ANCHOR



SHUBHAJIT ROY
COLOMBO, JULY 17

■ An official who worked at former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's office says she's been trying her luck in the fuel queue for the past three days, without success.

PRESIDENTIAL POLLS TODAY

Monsoon session begins today; Govt, Opposition brace for a stormy start

32 Bills likely to be introduced; all-party meet on Lanka tomorrow

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE GOVERNMENT Sunday accused the Opposition of trying to "belittle the image" of Parliament by insisting that "non-issues" such as the updated list of unparliamentary words be taken up for discussion, setting the stage for a stormy Monsoon Session that is set to begin on Monday.

At an all party-meeting ahead of the session, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Opposition leaders demanded that the alleged misuse of investigation agencies, the Agnipath scheme for recruitment in the defence forces, price rise, alleged attacks on the federal structure and the "Chinese incursion", be taken up for discussion.

With the session scheduled

to end on August 12 — during which 32 Bills are likely to be introduced — the Opposition said it anticipates that key Bills would "bulldozed" through. Congress MP and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said that with the session "leaving us effectively with only 14 days", the government did not offer them clear answers on how it plans to discuss the proposed legislation in such a short time.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi later told reporters that while the government was ready to "discuss any issue" under the rules and procedure of the House, the Opposition "is raising non-issues as it does not have anything against the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which has wide acceptance among the people of India and abroad".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



At the all-party meeting chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Parliament House on Sunday. Premnath Pandey

Aviation upturn sees new trends: tourism routes popular; curbs in China benefit India

Goa, Srinagar among top destinations

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE STEADY recovery in India's commercial aviation sector has lifted traffic to near pre-Covid levels — but with a clear realignment in capacities and routes.

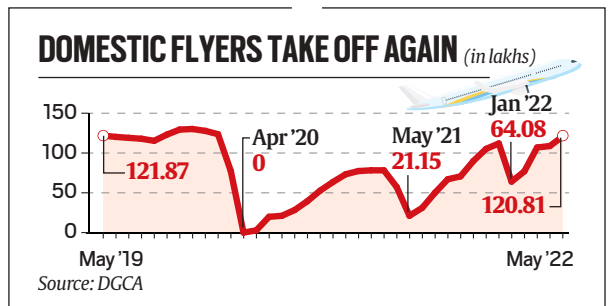
On the domestic front, the numbers show a push for tourism routes and direct connectivity to smaller airports. At the same time, international passenger traffic for Indian carriers has already surpassed pre-Covid levels with airlines that were dependent on China and the far-east now looking at other geographies, including India.

Within the country, destina-

tions such as Srinagar and Goa have seen significant capacity addition by airlines, which underlines the "revenge travel trend" after the Covid curbs. But the relatively slower rebound in business travel means trunk routes like Delhi-Mumbai, Delhi-Chennai, Mumbai-Bengaluru and Delhi-Hyderabad remain subdued (chart, page 2).

According to data sourced from aviation analytics and consultancy firm OAG, domestic airlines deployed 3.27 lakh seats on the Delhi-Srinagar route in June 2022, nearly twice the 1.68 lakh in June 2019. Similarly, the Delhi-Goa route saw 2.07 lakh seats in June 2022, much higher than

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



NDA Presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu with BJP leaders in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

Murmu thanks NDA MPs, says tribal community is 'excited'

LIZ MATHEW

NEW DELHI, JULY 17

A DAY before the election for President, which she is expected to win as the ruling NDA's candidate, former Jharkhand Governor Droupadi Murmu described her nomination as a historic moment that has made the

tribal community, especially its women, "utsahit" (excited), *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Sources said that in a meeting with NDA MPs in the Parliament complex, Murmu also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP for nominating her, adding that around 10 crore tribals, from more than 700 communities, "are all delighted".

The sources quoted Murmu as saying that she hails "from a small village" and has "struggled a lot" to "come up in life". They also quoted her as telling the MPs that it was "an honour to get all your support".

Before Murmu's arrival, a mock voting drill for the poll on Monday was carried out, as BJP

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

V-P polls: Opp picks Alva; TMC, AAP skip meeting

MANOJ CG & HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

SENIOR CONGRESS leader and former Union minister Margaret Alva was on Sunday pulled out of virtual retirement and nominated as the Opposition's candidate for the vice-presidential election scheduled to be held



Congress leader Margaret Alva

next month.

Sources said the Opposition had initially considered former chief election commissioner

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

RBI'S STATE OF THE ECONOMY REPORT

Commodity prices' fall can help India escape global inflation trap

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has said that the Indian economy can escape the global inflation trap if the moderation in commodity prices witnessed in recent weeks endures, alongside an easing of supply-chain pressures.

"The biggest source of relief is from inflation coming off its recent peak, albeit at an elevated

EXPLAINED Moderating inflation

WHILE US inflation shot up to a 41-year high of 9.1 per cent in June, India reported a retail inflation of 7.01 per cent, down from 7.04 per cent in May and 7.79 per cent in April.

level still," the central bank has said in its latest 'State of the economy' report. Nonetheless, the signs of its generalisation and the potential unhinging of inflation expectations have elicited a pre-emptive and frontloaded monetary policy response, the RBI said.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had recently said that inflation was likely to "ease gradually in the second half of 2022-23, precluding the chances of a hard

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

INSIDE



CLOUDBURSTS MAY BE FOREIGN PLOT TO DESTABILISE INDIA, SAYS KCR

INDIA, CHINA ARMIES HOLD NEW ROUND OF TALKS IN E LADAKH

BJP SET TO GOVERN 100 OF 133 MP LOCAL BODIES
PAGE 6

121 tribals, arrested for 2017 Maoist ambush in Chhattisgarh, acquitted after five years in jail

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

A SPECIAL court in Chhattisgarh has acquitted all 121 people who were arrested in connection with the 2017 Burkapal Maoist ambush in Sukma in which 25 CRPF personnel were killed. The accused had spent nearly five years behind bars.

The NIA special court, which pronounced the judgment on Friday, said the prosecution could not prove that the accused — all of them from the tribal community — were either on



A videograb of the accused who were released from prison after a special court acquitted them in the case

the spot of the incident, in possession of any arms or explosives or even members of the CPI (Maoist). "Thus it is clear that the prosecution has failed to prove its case against the accused beyond reasonable doubt," the court of Justice Dipak Kumar Deshlahare said.

The ambush had occurred when a team of 70 soldiers of the CRPF's 74th Battalion had gone to provide security cover for road building in Sukma's Burkapal on April 24, 2017. The CRPF contingent had been surrounded and attacked by a group of 150 Maoists.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

MORE FOR VILLAGES, WOMEN

2 billion jabs: India crosses global Covid milestone

PM flags people's faith in science; hails doctors, nurses and scientists

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

INDIA REPORTED 2 billion cumulative Covid-19 vaccinations on Sunday, going past a global milestone in the ongoing battle against the pandemic. The country has now achieved a record 97 per cent first-dose coverage, while 90 per cent of its adult population has received both doses of the vaccine.

Around 4.90 lakh doses were given on Sunday, taking cumulative vaccinations to 2,00,03,73,288. The country is currently running a special 75-day vaccination drive in which the third, precaution dose is being administered for free at all government vaccinations centres.

Two important features of India's immunisation coverage — which constitute very significant steps to address vaccine inequity — are, first, 74% of vaccination centres have been set up in rural India and 71% of the vaccination coverage has been reported from rural areas and, second, 51.1% of recipients are women.

"India creates history again! Congrats to all Indians on crossing



At a medical college in Ahmedabad after India crossed 200 crore Covid-19 vaccine jabs. Nirmal Harindran

the special figure of 200 crore vaccine doses. Proud of those who contributed to making India's vaccination drive unparalleled in scale and speed. This has strengthened the global fight against COVID-19," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a tweet.

"Throughout the rollout of the vaccine, the people of India have shown remarkable faith in science. Our doctors, nurses, front-line workers, scientists, innovators and entrepreneurs have played a key role in ensuring a safer planet. I appreciate their spirit and determination," Modi said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

VACCINE COVERAGE IN STATES

Top five	Two doses	Cumulative vaccinations
Gujarat	100%	11.25 crore
Karnataka	100%	11.37 crore
Telangana	100%	6.43 crore
Madhya Pradesh	97%	12.13 crore
Uttar Pradesh	96%	34.42 crore
Bottom five	Single dose	Cumulative vaccinations
Nagaland	51%	16.83 lakh
Meghalaya	64%	25.47 lakh
Manipur	74%	30.11 lakh
Jharkhand	81%	4.10 crore
Arunachal Pradesh	87%	17.67 lakh

% coverage as per population projections submitted to the SC

From hospital gate to upmarket store, fuel squeeze chokes Colombo

■ Another official at former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office says he has "just enough" to get to the market. He used to get fuel from government sheds earlier but not after Rajapaksa fled.

■ A senior Sri Lankan diplomat has been working from home for the past week. "I walk to the stores nearby for daily needs," the diplomat said.

■ A former diplomat, down with Covid, has saved up enough fuel to reach the hospital, if needed.

THE FUEL shortage in Sri Lanka has hit the elite as well as common people.

On the streets of Colombo, fewer private cars are plying, serpentine queues outside petrol stations are a common sight and most residents have been walking long distances, keeping the little fuel they have for an "emergency".

Facing the brunt of this shortage are the capital's hospitals. At 7 pm on Friday, when *The Indian Express* reached National Hospital of Sri Lanka, one of the largest government hospitals, doctors and nurses said many of them can't turn up for work due to the shortage.

They said the government has allowed priority access for medical professionals at fuel stations



A patient is brought in a grocery delivery van to the National Hospital of Sri Lanka in Colombo on Friday night. Shubhajit Roy

but it is too little for too many.

A senior doctor, who did not wish to be identified, said she has to change two buses to get to the hospital, and it is "extremely difficult". "Many patients have been calling the free ambulance service to reach the hospital," she said.

Outside, there were hardly any private vehicles, only ambulances arriving every 5-10 minutes and three-wheelers. One man drove up in a pick-up van, with his uncle lying on a mattress on the floor in the back. "I use the vehicle for bread and grocery deliveries, but today there was an emergency," the driver said.

Dr Ananda Wijewardena, a senior consultant at National Institute of Infectious Diseases in Colombo who was part of Lanka's Covid task force, said, "The fuel crisis has had a significant impact, preventing doctors and nursing staff from coming to hospitals... The number of patients coming for regular check-ups, and elective surgeries and treatments, has also been impacted."

In Colombo, the crisis has hit schools, too. Sanka, a 32-year-old housewife with two children, said, "The schools had been closed off and on for the past three months. Now they are saying that schools will open after

the President's election...because of power cuts, online classes are also difficult."

Due to the shortage, fuel prices have risen nearly four-fold from last year. Despite marginal cuts announced on Sunday, diesel is up from SL Rs 106 last year to 440 per litre while petrol prices have risen from SL Rs 130 to 450 per litre. In the black market, petrol is being sold at about SL Rs 2,000 per litre — an Indian rupee is about SL Rs 4.50.

This has also led to a sharp rise in prices of household goods. At Keells, an upmarket store in Colombo's Union Place,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



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TECH

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DR SUMBUL DESAI'Privacy dictates a lot of
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ENTERTAINMENT

REVISITING LIPSTICK
UNDER MY BURKHA'Elderly people believe
they don't have any
sense of sexuality'

EXPRESS AUDIO

Can Neeraj Chopra win
a gold at the World
Championships?

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

For over a decade, no world athlete has won a gold medal in Javelin at both the Olympics and the World Championships. But this time, Neeraj Chopra can accomplish just that.

FROM PAGE ONE

Covid milestone

India's vaccination drive — the world's largest — was rolled out on January 16, 2021, and coverage was progressively expanded in seven phases based on the principle of prioritisation of vulnerable population groups.

Among the priority population, 1 crore healthcare workers have received two doses and 60.21 lakh have received their precaution dose; 1.76 crore frontline workers have received two doses and 1.14 crore have received the precaution dose; 12.15 crore elderly recipients above the age of 60 have got their two doses and 2.81 crores have got the precaution shot as well.

Delhi tops the list of cities that have administered the most double doses with 1.53 crore jabs, followed by Mumbai (97.30 lakh), Bengaluru Urban (93.46 lakh), Pune (83.69 lakh), and the Ahmedabad Corporation area (49.73 lakh).

On January 3 this year, India also started administering Covid-19 vaccines to children: 5.01 crore teens in the age group 15-18 years, and 2.62 crore adolescents ages 12-14 are now fully vaccinated. The drugs regulator has approved vaccines for children younger than 12 as well; however, the expert body of the government is yet to take a decision on rolling out jabs for this age group.

The list of states that have administered the most doses (cumulative) to children is headed by Uttar Pradesh (1.94 crore), followed by Bihar (63.42 lakh), West Bengal (48.39 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (46.24 lakh), and Gujarat (43.49 lakh).

The precautionary dose is currently being administered only to adults, and has been given predominantly in the large metros. The cities that have administered the most precaution doses are Delhi (19.34 lakh), Mumbai (10.33 lakh), Bengaluru Urban (9.30 lakh), Kolkata (7.40 lakh), and Pune (7.08 lakh).

The vaccination drive has made use of the strong child immunisation infrastructure that was already in place in the country. Some 2.6 lakh vaccinators and 4.7 lakh vaccination team members were involved in the drive, and a record 213.51 crore syringes were mobilised.

The drive witnessed augmentation of the existing cold chain for storage and transportation of vaccines: an additional 13,626 ice line refrigerators and 12,461 deep freezers were made available.

"Greater Goals, Bigger Victories! Overcoming all the odds, India under PM @NarendraModi Ji's leadership has achieved the new milestone of #200CroreVaccinations. A moment to remember forever! The world's largest vaccination drive has been consistently creating new records," Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said in a tweet.

Monsoon session

PM Modi's absence in the meeting also drew criticism from the Opposition camp, with Congress general secretary (communication) Jairam Ramesh tweeting, "Isn't this 'unparliamentary'?"

"Because of some reason, the PM did not come. In fact, before 2014, the PM never used to attend these meetings. A senior Cabinet member like Rajnath Singh presided over the meeting, unlike the Congress, which used to send the chief whip to take the meeting during its rule. How many times did (former prime minister) Manmohan Singh attend all-party meetings?" Joshi said.

At the meeting, attended by 36 parties, the Congress made it clear that it plans to raise issues such as the "DHFL bank fraud, rising unemployment, fiscal and rupee value crisis, hate speech, rising crimes in Jammu and Kashmir and attacks on Kashmiri Pandits, the collapse of autonomous bodies and constitutional institutions, and illegal demolition of homes of minorities".

Many parties also raised the issue of the new forest conservation rules, pointing out that it "dilutes" the rights of tribals. "Today in the all-party meeting, many political parties, including those supporting NDA, pointed out the contradiction in the Modi Sarkar claiming credit for its Presidential candidate on the one hand and killing off the Forest Rights Act, 2006, on the other hand!" Ramesh tweeted.

Among other parties, the Trinamool Congress said it will firmly oppose the updated list of unparliamentary words, circular banning protests and dharnas on Parliament premises, apart from "the anti-people policies and schemes such as Agnipath", inflation, and matters of foreign policy. AAP MP Sanjay Singh said he raised the issue of "CBI and ED's misuse". "I said if the government can jail a person like Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain, the architect of projects like mohalla clinics, and intimidate the Opposition, then it is not sending out a good message to the country. We are not going to sit quietly. They are not letting Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal travel to Singapore to attend a summit of global leaders. The government did not have any answers," Singh said.

The DMK and AIADMK also raised the Sri Lankan crisis. The government will on Tuesday hold another all-party meeting on Sri Lanka.

Apart from Kharge, Ramesh and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, DMK's T R Baalu and Tiruchi Siva, TMC's Sudip Bandhyopadhyay, BJP MP Pinaki Misra, YSRCP's Vijaya Sai Reddy, TRS's Keshava Rao, and Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut were among those present in the meeting.

The government, meanwhile, suggested that it was not likely to

Aviation upturn sees new trends: tourism routes popular; curbs in China boost India

1.66 lakh in June 2019.

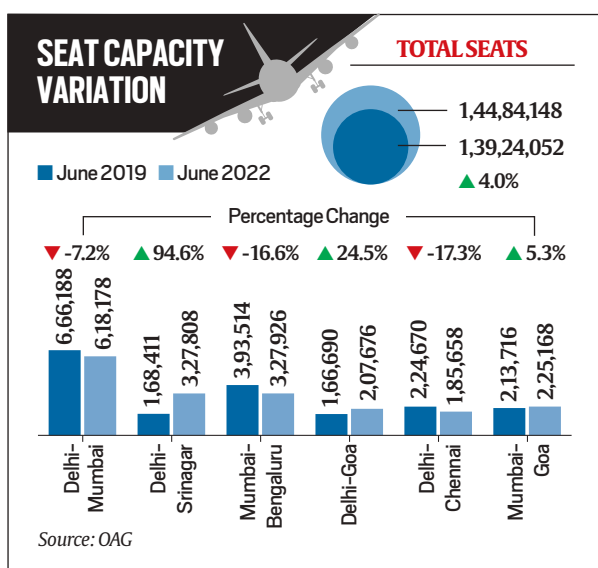
This year's summer schedule also saw the addition of direct connections to Srinagar from non-metro cities such as Ahmedabad and Hyderabad. The seat capacity data includes numbers for both sectors on a given route.

Another emerging trend is the increasing direct connectivity to smaller airports. "...in 2019, just over one-third of capacity growth between 2016 and 2019 in India's domestic market came from new routes that were not previously operating. OAG's capacity data also shows that there are 24 domestic routes operating in March 2022 to and from Delhi that were not operating before 2017," OAG's Regional Sales Director — JAPAC Mayur Patel said.

At the same time, some hub routes are yet to recover to pre-Covid levels. For example, the Delhi-Mumbai route saw 6.18 lakh seats in June this year, lower from 6.66 lakh in June 2019.

The third highest route with the most seats in June 2019 — the Mumbai-Bengaluru route — had airlines deploying 3.28 lakh seats last month, almost as much as Delhi-Srinagar, compared to 3.94 lakh three years ago.

Domestic passenger traffic continues to inch closer to 2019 levels. According to the



latest available data provided by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), 120.81 lakh passengers flew domestically in May this year, compared to 121.87 lakh in May 2019.

In October 2021, the Ministry of Civil Aviation fully lifted the Covid-related capacity restrictions that were imposed on domestic flights in May 2020.

On the international front, India reverted to the pre-Covid scheduled operations and bilateral capacity agreements from March 27 this year. As per ICRA, since then, international passenger traffic for Indian carriers surged to around 21 lakh

in June this year, compared to approximately 18 lakh in June 2019.

Foreign airlines that were dependent on China and the far-east for a meaningful portion of their traffic are now looking at other geographies, such as India and the US, to deploy surplus capacities. This strategy has been further intensified with the various airspace closures and restrictions in light of the Ukraine crisis.

Singapore Airlines, for example, is witnessing strong load factors on all of its India flights and is looking to add to its number of India flights over the next two schedules. Similarly, Helsinki-based

Finnair is adding capacity to India, resuming its suspended flight from Helsinki to Mumbai, given the idle capacity because of the China restrictions and Russia airspace closure.

"We used to operate more than 40 weekly flights to China, but at the moment we only have one. Even on that one flight, our capacity is restricted. Also, because of the (Ukraine) war and the airspace closures, a big part of our network in Asia is closed, mainly China and Japan. We have been forced to restructure our network accordingly," Sakari Romu, General Manager, India, for Finnair, told *The Indian Express*.

"That's why we have been looking at Southeast Asia, India and the US where we have added quite a lot of capacity. From August 5, we are reopening the Helsinki-Mumbai connection. We are starting with three weekly flights, and from November onwards we'll have four. We are also looking at opportunities for other destinations ready to be connected in India," he said.

"(The Ukraine crisis) is also affecting our flights to India but if we look at destinations in Southeast Asia, the flying times have increased by 30-40 per cent, but with India the added flight time is little bit more than 10 per cent. So the effect is not that big," Romu said.

give in to the Opposition's demands to discuss the issue of "unparliamentary words", reiterating Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's statement that the compilation of the words and phrases is merely an updation of practice being carried out since 1954.

The circular on dharnas and protests is also issued routinely ahead of any session, Joshi said. "They do not have any major issue against the government because the government is functioning extremely well, people have accepted the leadership of Narendra Modi. Even foreign delegates and the diaspora have recognised his leadership. That's why these kinds of non-issues are being raised and they are trying to portray that in India even in Parliament they are not allowed to speak. They are trying to belittle the image of Parliament. I condemn the attitude of the opposition parties," Joshi said.

V-P polls

S Y Quraishi — CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury reached out to Quraishi — and turned to Alva after he declined their offer. West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, sources said, had earlier suggested PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti's name but the proposal did not make much headway.

At the meeting of Opposition leaders, held at NCP chief Sharad Pawar's residence on Sunday, Yechury suggested and Pawar seconded Alva's name. That capped a week's groundwork by Yechury, Pawar and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, sources said.

In fact, Yechury suggesting Alva's name at the meeting too was planned to ensure that her candidature is not seen as having come from the Congress — part of a strategy to ensure that Alva has the backing of those uncomfortable with the Congress.

Sources said Yechury had spoken to Alva several days ago while Sonia spoke to her on Saturday. With Alva's name, the Opposition hoped to send out a political message — something they missed while picking the presidential

nominee — by fielding a woman from South India who is also from a minority community.

Among the Opposition parties, the Trinamool Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party, which had extended support to Sinha, did not attend Sunday's meeting.

Pawar informed the leaders that he has spoken to Delhi Chief Minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and he has assured his party's support to the Opposition. Sources said a senior Trinamool Congress leader was spoken to during the meeting and he assured the leaders that his party was with the Opposition. "Your candidate is our candidate," a leader quoted him as having said.

Sources in the Trinamool Congress said the party's leaders could not attend the meeting because they were preoccupied with preparations for the July 21 Martyr's Day rally. They said Banerjee would consult all her MPs before taking a decision.

In the case of Yashwant Sinha, the Opposition's candidate for the presidential polls, Banerjee, whose Trinamool Congress had suggested Sinha's candidature and got the other Opposition parties to accept her choice, later said there could have been a consensus on Droupadi Murmu, the NDA's candidate, had the BJP reached out to the Opposition.

After the meeting on Sunday, Pawar announced that 17 Opposition parties had unanimously decided on Alva's name.

"We have decided to announce a joint candidate for the Vice-President election," Pawar said while introducing Alva as a "person who has a vast experience in administration and in parliamentary affairs".

Alva, a five-term MP, has been a minister in several Congress governments at the Centre — under Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, and PV Narasimha Rao. In 2009, she was appointed Governor of Uttarakhand, which was followed by gubernatorial assignments in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa.

Thanking Opposition parties for deciding on her name, Alva tweeted, "It is a privilege and an honour to be nominated as the candidate of the joint opposition

for the post of Vice President of India. I accept this nomination with great humility and thank the leaders of the opposition for the faith they've put in me."

On Saturday, the BJP had announced West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar as the NDA's vice-presidential candidate.

The election for the office of the 16th Vice-President of India will be held on August 6 and counting will take place on the same day. The last date to file a nomination is July 19.

The term of the current Vice-President, M Venkaiah Naidu, is ending on August 10.

Murmu

leaders with Parliamentary experience and members of the party's legal cell briefed NDA MPs on the process.

On Monday, the BJP MPs will gather at the Parliament annexe around 9.30 am before casting their votes, sources said.

Sunday's meeting was also attended by Chirag Paswan, who had distanced himself from the NDA when the IJP split and several senior members formed another party to partner the BJP.

While BJP leaders pointed out it was for the first time that Chirag had attended an NDA meeting after the Bihar assembly elections in 2020, Paswan said he came only to support Murmu, sources said.

National People's Party MP Agatha Sangma was also present in the meeting, sources said.

Violence in TN

Chief Minister M K Stalin expressed regret over the violence and assured punishment for all those involved in the girl's death. Appealing for peace, the CM said he has ordered the Home Secretary and the DGP to visit the site of the violence.

Sources said that on Sunday morning, around 2,000 people gathered at the school — where the Class 12 student was found dead on Wednesday — in response to a protest call on social media by youth groups in the area.

The student is suspected to have jumped to her death from the third floor of the school building. The autopsy report confirmed

injuries on the girl's body.

Police said that a suicide note purportedly written by the girl mentioned that she struggled in several of her school subjects. The letter allegedly blamed some of her teachers for putting her under pressure over her poor scores and also asked the school to refund her annual school fee to her parents.

The girl's family has refused to accept the body until those allegedly responsible for her death are arrested.

Sources said that shortly after the girl's death, when her family and local residents protested, they were promised strict action against the school. With no action even after three days, the protesters returned to the school in large numbers around 10 am Sunday.

Soon, the protest turned violent, with the mob pelting stones and ransacking the school building, classrooms and the principal's cabin. They also set fire to school buses parked on the campus besides attacking at least three police vehicles.

"DIG M Pandian and the district Superintendent of Police were among those who were injured in the stone-pelting before a police team was able to manage the situation," said an official. The situation was brought under control after additional police forces were called in from neighbouring districts, including Villupuram, Cuddalore and Salem.

Minister C V Ganesan and (ruling DMK ally and VCK leader) Thol Thirumavalavan were among those who visited the victim's family and promised to take up the case with the Chief Minister's Office, said a senior police officer who was at the spot.

After the violence broke out, DGP C Sylendra Babu appealed to the people to maintain calm and warned strictly against those resorting to violence.

Inflation trap

landing in India". Prior to that, Deputy Governor Michael Patra had noted that there were signs of inflation peaking, and harsh policy may not be needed to contain price pressures.

If the commodity-price moderation seen in recent weeks con-

tinues, along with an easing of supply-chain pressures, the worst of the recent inflation surge will be left behind, and the economy can escape the global inflation trap and enjoy the fruits of the ebullient supply response that is taking place, the RBI report said.

While the US inflation rate shot up to a 41-year high of 9.1 per cent in June, India reported a retail inflation of 7.01 per cent in June, down marginally from 7.04 per cent in May and 7.79 per cent in April.

"The international environment is hostile and hence, close and continuous monitoring of the widening trade deficit and portfolio outflows is warranted, notwithstanding strong reserve buffers, moderating external debt, and a fairly valued exchange rate that has wilted less in the face of the monotonic strengthening of the US dollar than many peers," the report said. The recent revival of the southwest monsoon and rejuvenation of sowing activity has raised hopes of another bountiful year for agricultural activity, raising expectations that rural demand will soon catch up with urban spending and consolidate the recovery, it said.

Amidst these developments, India's financial sector remains sound and stable, the RBI said.

Knock-on effects of geopolitical spillovers are visible in several sectors, tapering the pace of recovery. However, there are sparks in the wind that ignite the innate strength of the economy and set it on course to becoming the fastest growing economy in the world, the fears of inflation notwithstanding, it said.

In another report on 'Fed taper and Indian financial markets', the RBI said the mild response of Indian financial markets to the "Taper 2" announcement can be linked to the country's strong external sector position during the announcement period. "However, there is evidence of large volatility spillovers from the US to Indian equity and bond markets," the RBI said.

This emphasizes the need for readiness among EMEs in terms of adequate buffers, pre-emptive and calibrated state contingent and data dependent policy responses to withstand future volatility spillovers, it said.

Food inflation is a major component of headline inflation, and has a tendency to spill over to core components. Food inflation was at an elevated level in 2013 as compared to 2021.

The report said the Taper 2 announcement was somewhat anticipated by the financial markets, given the past experience with Taper 1, and the Fed's communication that hinted at chances of taper before the announcement.

Another potential explanation for the resilience in the Indian markets post Taper 2 could be the backing of stronger economic fundamentals in India as opposed to the period before the Taper 1 announcement, the RBI said.

A lower current account deficit as a percentage of GDP, larger foreign exchange reserves, and stronger economic growth in Taper 2 vis-à-vis the Taper 1 period, imply that the Indian economy is in better shape to withstand the Fed's tightening, and manage any associated change in volatility in the financial markets, it said.

Acquittal

Following the incident, which was the biggest ambush on the CRPF since the 2010 Chintalnar massacre in which 76 CRPF soldiers were killed, the Chhattisgarh Police had arrested 121 tribal people from various villages in the region. All of them were arrested in 2017 and remained in jail till Friday. One accused turned out to be a minor, while another died in detention.

The Chhattisgarh Police registered a case in the matter under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and even invoked provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)

at the time of the charge sheet. As many as 120 people were arrested in the initial phase with one more arrest being made later. Accused Dodi Mangalu of Patel Para in Sukma died in jail.

According to the judgment, 20 prosecution witnesses turned hostile during the trial, refusing to recognise the accused. They also did not support the prosecution's claims of recovery of explosives from the accused. Fifteen of them said their statements were never recorded by police.

"In the context of the incident, the prosecution witnesses have not made any statement with regard to the identity or presence of the accused at the spot of the incident. No recovery of any arms or explosives from the custody of the accused has been proven. Thus, on the basis of statements of prosecution witnesses recorded before this court no charge can be proven against the accused," said the court.

Colombo

The Indian Express compared the prices of different items — with the help of customers and the store manager — and found that they have increased almost five-fold over the past year, with some items being rationed.

Posters on shelves limit each customer to one packet of milk powder, 2 kg of rice and 12 bottles of water. Essential products like milk powder, one of the highest selling items, are in short supply.

According to the manager and customers, the price list has changed dramatically over the past year: Potatoes (SL Rs 110/kg last year to SL Rs 520/kg now); onions (SL Rs 65 to 280), sugar (SL Rs 65 to 451), flour (SL Rs 160 to 350), rice (SL Rs 95-110 to 480) and eggs (SL Rs 13 to 55/egg).

There's more: Toilet roll (SL Rs 30-40/roll last year to SL Rs 215/roll now), Surf Excel detergent powder (SL Rs 350 to 980), Coca-Cola (SL Rs 110 to 390/litre), Maggi noodles (SL Rs 110 to 360/pack) and Lux soap (SL Rs 80 to 225/piece).

Rohana Hettiarachchi, an executive director at an election advocacy group, said his family has reduced consumption of fruits and fish. "My 17-year-old son loves apples and bananas, so we buy just enough fruits for him. If we are denying ourselves these basic needs, imagine the situation of the more vulnerable," he said.

In its latest situation report on Sri Lanka, issued on Friday, the World Food Programme said: "Skyrocketing food costs are making it harder... About 6.7 million people are not consuming adequate diets and 5.3 million people are reducing the number of meals eaten. To cope with the lack of food, 5 million people are using crisis or emergency livelihood coping strategies."

Prof Lalithasiri Gunaruwan, professor of public transport planning and economics at Colombo University, blamed the fuel crisis on lack of foreign exchange. "The real cancer is the shortage of foreign exchange, and the fuel crisis is a symptom, which is visible on the surface," he said, blaming successive governments for the current situation.

Bhavani Fonseka, a lawyer and senior researcher at Centre for Policy Alternatives, said, "While the price rise has hit everyone, it has hit the vulnerable the most. Ambulances cannot reach some places due to lack of fuel."

On Saturday, the Sri Lankan government said a fuel pass will soon be introduced to allocate "a guaranteed weekly fuel quota" with QR codes for each vehicle.

"We have made requests (for fuel) to different countries. So, any country that comes to help us, we appreciate that. Right now, the Indian government is the only country that has provided us with a credit line," Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekara said.

So far, India has extended USD 3.8 billion in economic assistance to Sri Lanka — including fuel.

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5 UTTAR PRADESH

Sanitation worker loses job after spotted carrying PM, CM photos in trash

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JULY 17

THE CONTRACTUAL service of a 40-year-old sanitation worker was terminated for allegedly carrying photos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in a trash can in Mathura.

While showcause notices have been issued to the sanitary inspector and sanitary supervisor for not briefing the sanitary worker about the photographs of dignitaries and public representatives, a probe has also been ordered.

In his representation to the municipal corporation, sanitation worker Bobby said he was innocent as he was illiterate and failed to identify the photographs, said a senior official of the municipal department.

Mathura's Municipal Commissioner Anunaya Jha said a fact-finding committee has been instituted into the matter. The committee has been asked to submit its report in 48 hours. "A final decision on the issue will be taken after the fact-finding committee submits its report," said Jha.

According to the official, Bobby was carrying trash that he had collected from a trash collection centre on Saturday. In the trash can, there were photographs of the PM and CM. On the way, Bobby was intercepted by two persons from Rajasthan. They made a video in which he is seen carrying the trash with photographs of the PM and CM. The photographs were removed from the trash can and Bobby left the spot. The video was widely shared on social media.

An official said, "The contract of sanitation worker Bobby was terminated because the PM and CM could be identified in photographs easily. We have considered Bobby's representation on compassionate ground and a decision will be taken in the coming days."

Amid namaz row, Lulu Mall says it's purely a place of business

Lucknow: Days after the Lulu Mall administration lodged a police complaint against unidentified people who offered namaz in the mall, it issued a statement Sunday saying it is "purely a place of business, which doesn't discriminate against any caste, religion or any section of the society".

On July 14, an FIR was registered on a complaint from the Lulu Mall administration after a video of unidentified people offering namaz inside the mall went viral on social media.

"We are grateful to the people of UP, who have extended support to our mall. We would like to say that the Lulu Mall is purely a place of business, which doesn't discriminate against any caste, religion or any section of society... Our establishment works under the rules and norms of the government. Whoever works for us does so because of the capabilities and merit and not because of religion or caste," said the statement.

The mall administration told police that no staff was involved in the incident. "It is said that some selfish forces have tried to target our establishment. Our workers and staff are also from the UP and India, and more than 80 per cent of them are Hindus, while the rest are Muslims and other communities... no one in the establishment is allowed to conduct any religious activities," it said. "We appeal to you to not target our establishment for selfish reasons and let us do business peacefully serving the consumers," it said. **ENS**

2015 MATHURA DAYLIGHT MURDER

4 brothers get life in jail for murder

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JULY 17

A MATHURA court has sentenced five persons, including four brothers, to life imprisonment in the sensational daylight murder of Tulsidas alias Toley Baba in 2015.

On February 28, 2015, 53-year-old Tulsidas alias Toley Baba was on his way to a court riding pillion on a motorcycle when

'ANIMAL PARTS' NEAR TEMPLE

13 arrested for arson; Kannauj DM, SP removed

Some of those involved in arson could be behind the incident, say police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JULY 17

A DAY after "body parts of an animal" were found outside the entrance of a temple in the district's Rasoolabad village, the Superintendent of Police and District Magistrate of Kannauj were removed from their posts on Sunday, officials said.

The Station House Officer of Talgram police station, under which the village came, was suspended. The police also arrested 13 persons on Sunday in connection with the arson and protests that broke out after the incident.

A senior police officer said, "SP of Kannauj Rajesh Srivastava and DM Rakesh Kumar have been removed from their posts. Shubhant Shukla would be the new DM of Kannauj, while Kunwar Anupam Singh would take over as the new SP."

"The Station House Officer of Talgram police station has been suspended, and Jitendra Pratap Singh would be the new SHO," said an officer.

Rasoolabad village remained tense on Saturday after some "animal body parts" were allegedly found outside the entrance of a temple under the limits of Talgram police station in Kannauj.

Police said a farmer lived inside the temple but he didn't sleep there on Thursday night.

ICSE BOARD RESULTS

With 3 out of 4 toppers from UP, state records 99.98% success rate

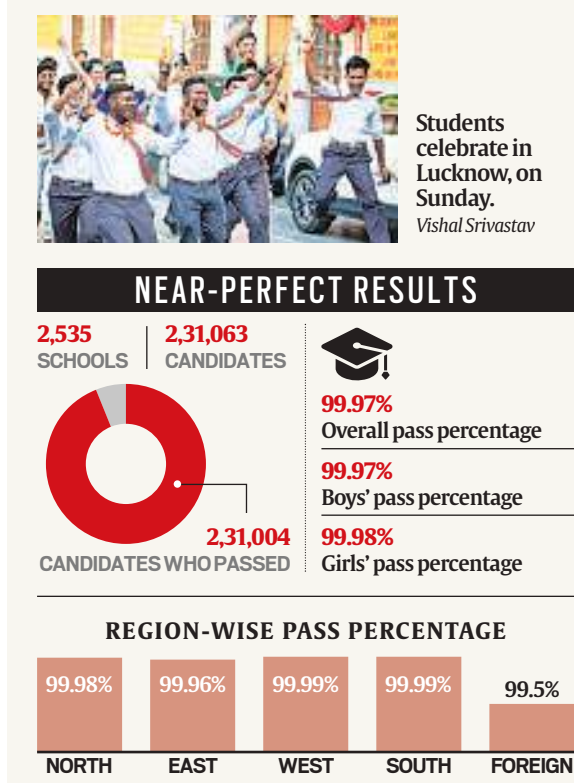
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JULY 17

UTTAR PRADESH has a sizable share in the ICSE topper list this year with three of the four students ranked best in the country belonging to the state.

Anika Gupta from Kanpur's Sheiling House School, Pushkar Tripathi from Balrampur's Jesus and Mary School and College and Kanishka Mittal of Lucknow's City Montessori School (Kanpur Road Branch) are tied for the top position in the country, with Hargun Kaur Matharu of Pune's St Mary's School. All four have scored 499 out of 500 marks or 99.8% (in English and best of four subjects). Gupta describes "consistency and hard work" as the mantra for her success. She is following her parents' footsteps and preparing to become a doctor. Her father, Saurabh Gupta, is an ENT surgeon and her mother, Vandana Agarwal, is a pathologist.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, she said, "Hard work and consistency were important to me. I used to study four to five hours daily on my own. Previous years' question papers and mock tests were also very helpful. I didn't expect to do so well, and therefore, it is overwhelming. I will give the credit for this to my school teachers and my family who always motivated me."

Mittal of Lucknow's City Montessori School (Kanpur Road Branch) said, "For good results, one should plan and be consistent. Students should listen to their teachers because they have



a lot of experience and their guidance is very important."

Overall, students from Uttar Pradesh have achieved a pass percentage of 99.98 in the ICSE results. A total of 47,085 students appeared in the examination, with 26,930 of them being boys while the rest were girls. A total of 10 students failed to clear the examinations, out of which four were girls and six were boys.

The ICSE examinations were conducted in 61 written subjects



Firefighters try to douse a fire at the Advocate General's Office in Prayagraj, Sunday. *PTI*

Advocate General's Prayagraj office catches fire, Adityanath orders probe

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JULY 17

THE OFFICE of the Uttar Pradesh Advocate General located in the Allahabad High Court caught fire on Sunday in Prayagraj district. No one was seriously injured, police said. Efforts were being made till Sunday evening to douse the fire with the help of 15 fire tenders. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered the formation of a committee to probe the reasons that might have led to the fire.

Speaking on Sunday afternoon, Senior Superintendent of Police (Prayagraj) Shailesh

Kumar Pandey said, "We received information about a fire at the Advocate General's office in Bhimrao Ambedkar Bhawan and dispatched fire tenders. In addition, tenders from Pratapgarh and Kaushambi and, the Army and Air Force were also called."

The SSP said the police had received information about a fire on the fifth floor, while the sixth and seventh floor had been cleared. "The fire on the eighth floor is being controlled. As far as the reason is concerned, nothing can be said right now. The reason will be ascertained only after a probe by a team. No one was seriously injured. Some peo-

ple sustained minor injuries due to the breaking of a glass."

A senior officer told *The Indian Express* on Sunday evening, "The work to douse the fire is going on and should be completed soon. There was no serious injury to anyone."

Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath too took cognizance of the incident and formed a committee to probe the reasons for the fire. "The committee will include Prayagraj Additional SP (City), ADM (City) and three other officials. They will submit a report," said a government spokesperson.

Pregnant woman's body exhumed as kin allege murder

Lucknow: The body of a pregnant woman was exhumed on Saturday after her father alleged that her husband and in-laws had killed her over dowry, police said.

As per police, the deceased Meena Jaiswal was six months pregnant and was married to

Surendra who is a labourer. Rehra Bazaar police station SHO Om Prakash Chauhan said Meena's father had a lodged an FIR against Surendra and his sister and mother while alleging that they had killed his daughter on intervening night of July 12

and 13 and later buried her body. On Saturday, her body was exhumed on the direction of the District Magistrate and sent for autopsy.

"After the autopsy, the body was buried again. An investigation is on," said the SHO. **ENS**

PROTEST OVER REMARKS ON THE PROPHET

Prayagraj dist admin invokes NSA against 'prime accused' Javed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JULY 17

MORE THAN a month after his arrest in connection with the June 10 violence that broke out in Prayagraj over the alleged derogatory remarks against Prophet Mohammed made by now suspended Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson Nupur Sharma, the district administration invoked the National Security Act (NSA) against one of the key accused Javed Mohammed on Sunday. He is currently lodged in Deoria jail.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shailesh Kumar Pandey also confirmed that Javed had been charged under NSA.

The NSA was invoked by the district magistrate on the basis of a local police report. Javed's bail application is currently pending in Prayagraj's sessions court.

As per reports, Prayagraj police had arrested 54-year-old businessman and activist Javed Mohammad after his name allegedly came up during questioning of other accused persons in the case.

Police claimed that Javed had called for a "bandh" and urged people to join him through



Javed Mohammed is lodged in Deoria jail. *Express File*

WhatsApp messages. The local businessman is popularly known as 'Pump'.

A day after Javed's arrest, the Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA) demolished his house after receiving a complaint about 'illegal construction' on the property. The PDA had stated that during inquiry, it was found that the construction of the house violated several norms.

On June 12, the PDA had demolished Javed's house, a day after serving a notice to him asking him to vacate the property by next morning to go ahead with demolition proceedings.

Prayagraj police have so far arrested 106 persons including seven minors in connection with the June 10 violence. The police are now looking for 33 others, whose role came to light during the investigation.

Prayagraj police have declared a reward of Rs 25,000 for the five absconding accused persons including AIMIM district president Shah Alam.

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	Highlights	Number	Percentage
1.	CMS students who took the 2022 class X (ICSE) board exam	3715	100
2.	CMS students who passed	3715	100
3.	CMS students who secured 90% and above aggregate marks	2314	62.3
4.	CMS students who secured 95% & above aggregate marks	1014	27.3
5.	CMS students who secured 97% & above aggregate marks	460	12.4
6.	CMS students who secured 98% & above aggregate marks	202	5.4
7.	CMS students who secured 99% & above aggregate marks	35	0.9

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VICTORY MARCH from Maqdoompur Police Chowki to CMS Gomti Nagar (Ext.) on **Monday 18th July 2022 at 7.00 am**

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6 EXPRESS NETWORK

Telangana CM during a visit to a flood-affected area. *Express*

ON VISIT TO FLOOD-HIT TELANGANA TOWN

KCR: Cloudbursts may be foreign plot to destabilise India

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, JULY 17

IF TELANGANA Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao is to be believed, cloudbursts may well be engineered by “foreign entities” to “destabilise” India. KCR presented his conspiracy theory to people in Bhadrachalam town in the state’s Bhadradi Kothagudem district, who have been forced into relief shelters by the overflowing Godavari.

“There is this new phenomenon called cloudburst. This is what happened in the Godavari region which caused the flood. There are reports that these cloudbursts are a conspiracy by foreign sources,” KCR said on Sunday.

“They (the alleged conspirators) first did a cloudburst in Leh-Ladakh, then in Uttarakhand, and now in the Godavari region. There are theories that these cloudbursts are being done to destabilise the country,” the Chief Minister said.

Heavy rain and inflows over a week up led to Godavari rising to levels not seen in Bhadrachalam in more than 35 years, some residents said. The state government moved several thousand people to camps as the river flooded its banks, before

the water level began to fall on Saturday.

The Telangana BJP described the Chief Minister’s conspiracy theory as the “joke of the century”. The Congress advised him to share his information with the central government and intelligence agencies. State BJP president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar accused KCR of making outlandish claims to divert attention from “failures”, including “submergence” of the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project.

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president and Malkajigiri MP A Revanth Reddy said that as Chief Minister, it was KCR’s responsibility to hand over the information about the “foreign hand” behind the cloudburst to the Centre, the Intelligence Bureau, and R&AW.

KCR visited the relief camps, and announced Rs 1,000 crore to build colonies on higher ground for the displaced people.

He promised Rs 10,000 per family as immediate relief during their stay in the camps, as well as free rice and essential commodities when they returned home. The CM said it was “God’s miracle” that the Kadem dam on the Godavari tributary of the same name survived.

—WITH PTI INPUTS

Naidu’s request for farewell gift: a productive RS session

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

RAJYA SABHA Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, who will chair his last session of the House from Monday, has sought a meaningful and productive session from leaders of political parties as a farewell gift.

Naidu will demit office as Vice President on August 10. He made the remarks at a meeting of floor leaders of Rajya Sabha on Sunday. The meeting saw a record 41 leaders attending.

“I am making one last request for upholding the dignity and decorum of the House of Elders,” he said at the meeting. Naidu has presided over 13 sessions.

“It was an emotional evening for all political party leaders with Venkaiah Naidu-garu. They expressed their regret at his departure and praised his many contributions as Rajya Sabha Chairman.

Venkaiah Naidu greets leaders of political parties at his residence on Sunday. *Prem Nath Pandey*

He will be a very tough act to follow,” said Congress chief whip Jairam Ramesh.

The meeting saw the Opposition seeking discussions on 16 issues. These are among them — federalism, Agnipath, in-

flation, declining labour force participation rate, EPFO interest rates, “declining credibility” of central institutions, external threats, hate speech, undemocratic actions against opposition leaders, increasing crime in Jammu & Kashmir and attacks

on Kashmiri pundits and reservations in promotion and in private sector.

The meeting saw some leaders also recalling the efforts made by Naidu to give more opportunities to members by streamlining the conduct of Question Hour, Zero Hour and Special Mentions and debates and his commitment to promote the use of mother tongue.

As the meeting turned into a farewell for Naidu, Leader of the House Piyush Goyal said it was a bit premature to do so as Naidu is to preside over one full session and a formal farewell would be held in the House with all the leaders and members sharing their experiences in detail in the House.

“All sections of the House would work together to present a befitting farewell to the Chairman in the form of a productive monsoon session”, Goyal said.



PARTY MEET

Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Anurag Thakur with BJP MP Anil Baluni during an NDA meeting in Parliament on Sunday. *PTI*

A QUICK GUIDE TO PRESIDENT POLLS

KEY DATES: Election is on July 18 and counting on July 21. President to take oath on July 25

VOTERS: There are 4,809 electors in the electoral college whose votes have a value of 10,86,431

THE RACE: NDA’s Droupadi Murmu is leading with support of 44 parties. Opp’s Yashwant Sinha has the support of 34 parties.

VALUE OF VOTE: The value of a vote of each MLA varies from state to state. In UP, the value is 208, followed by 176 in Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu. In Sikkim it is just 7 and in Nagaland 9

ED probe finds firm linked to ex-Mumbai CP ‘snooped on 91 NSE staffers’

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has found that a firm linked to former Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey snooped on as many as 91 office-bearers of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) on the directions of its then Managing Director Chitra Ramkrishna, sources said.

The agency Thursday booked Pandey and arrested Ramkrishna in a money-laundering case linked to alleged phone tapping. “We are interrogating Ramkrishna as it was on her directions that the tapping was done by Pandey’s company. We want to know the motive behind tapping the phones of so many NSE office-bearers,” an ED official said.

Sources said the agency has found documentary and electronic evidence to show that phones of 91 NSE employees had been tapped by Pandey’s company, iSec Services Pvt Ltd. According to these sources, the agency has found transcripts and voice recordings — most of the conversations are about information on stocks and the functioning of the NSE. iSec Services was incorporated in March 2001. Pandey was not in service at that time. He quit the directorship in May 2006, with his mother Santosh and son Armaan becoming directors.

“However, it was Pandey who was running the company all along. Almost all correspondence between iSec and top officials of NSE are through Pandey’s email ID,” another ED official said.

The agency had questioned Pandey on July 5 in connection with the 2018 case of the alleged manipulation of NSE — a separate case in which some brokers were alleged to have made windfall profits by manipulating the co-location facility of the bourse in connivance with top NSE officials.

Margaret Alva, a once-powerful face who retreated into shadows

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, JULY 17

AT THE start of the year, veteran Congress politician Margaret Alva, 80, wrote a letter to PM Narendra Modi, expressing her angst over a move by the BJP government in Karnataka to bring in a law on religious conversions.

“We Christians are a disciplined, non-violent, service-oriented community. If we were involved in mass conversions, why is our number under three per cent? 200 years of rule by Christian colonial powers and work by so-called ‘missionaries’ involved in forced conversions” should have shown in our numbers, which have been declining. Why this false propaganda and violence against us?” she wrote.

The letter to the PM and participation in protests against the Karnataka Protection of Right of Freedom of Religion Bill in the latter half of 2021 saw Alva, once a political force to be reckoned



Opp V-P nominee Margaret Alva

with in Karnataka, returning to the political stage in the state after a long hiatus. Now the Opposition’s ‘consensus’ candidate for the vice-president’s post, Alva finds herself in the spotlight once again.

Despite hailing from coastal Karnataka and representing the current Uttara Kannada (then known as Kanara) Lok Sabha constituency in Parliament in 1999, Margaret Alva has largely been identified as a national politician.

A lawyer, Alva entered Rajya Sabha at age 32 and was a member of the Upper House for four terms, and 24 years at a stretch, from 1974.

She has been a minister in several Congress governments at the Centre — under Indira Gandhi,

Rajiv Gandhi, and PV Narasimha Rao. She was minister for women and child development during Rajiv Gandhi’s tenure.

Around two decades ago, her connection with the Congress high command was formidable enough for speculation in the Karnataka unit of the party of Alva being a contender for the CM post.

Alva had a brief spell of frosty ties with the Congress leadership in Delhi after she stated, in 2008, that the Karnataka unit of the party was selling election tickets to the highest bidders rather than picking candidates on merit. She was removed from party roles for around six months before being made Uttarakhand Governor.

She later took on gubernatorial assignments in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa, taking her farther away from active politics.

Her son Nivedith Alva has been an aspirant for representing the Uttara Kannada region in the state legislature for many years. One of her sons Niret Alva is a well-known television producer.

Behind Dhankhar choice: Tussle with Mamata, upper-caste tag

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

HIS PERSISTENT wrangles with the Trinamool Congress — seen as a strong pushback to the “confrontational politics” of the ruling party in West Bengal — combined with the RSS’s backing for him led to the BJP choosing Jagdeep Dhankhar as its candidate for the August 6 vice-presidential election.

Party sources said Dhankhar — a lawyer by training and the national convener of the BJP’s law and legal affairs department in 2016 — has in the past “extended solid support both politically and through legal advice and assistance” to the BJP, RSS and its affiliates.

The nomination of Dhankhar, who is from the socially and politically dominant Jat community of Rajasthan, could placate a sec-



NDA V-P nominee Jagdeep Dhankhar

tion in the Sangh Parivar that has been increasingly uncomfortable with the BJP leadership’s aggressive outreach to Dalits, OBCs and other backward communities.

“Several leaders from the Parivar have conveyed to the party leaders that it’s the time for the party to pitch for an *agada* (member of a forward caste),” said a party source.

Sources said the party was aware of an increasing disquiet among Brahmin leaders over the community being allegedly ignored in the power-sharing formula. “The nomination of Dhankhar for the vice-president

MP CIVIC POLLS

BJP set to rule 108 of 133 local bodies, but loses four mayor posts to Cong, AAP

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, JULY 17

MADHYA PRADESH’S ruling BJP is poised to rule over 100 of 133 local bodies, the poll results for which were announced Sunday. But the victory was dampened by the party losing its hold over four mayor posts after winning seven of the 11 Nagar Nigams and scraping through in the other two by a slim margin.

The results for the 133 local bodies — comprising 11 municipal corporations, 36 municipal councils and 86 town councils — were announced Sunday during the first phase of counting. The second phase of counting will be held on July 20.

Mayors for 11 municipal councils are being elected directly while the chairperson of the local body will be elected by councilors indirectly in municipal councils. Of the 11 municipal corporations, the BJP won the mayor’s seat in seven. Congress got three mayor’s posts and Aam Aadmi Party one.

With the counting underway until late Sunday evening, the BJP was comfortably headed towards establishing its rule in 10 of the 11 municipal corporations, 31 of the 36 municipal councils and 67 of the 86 town councils. With BJP having the majority of councilors in most local bodies, it is set to appoint a chairperson in them.

Assaduddin Owaisi’s AIMIM also debuted with a four of its four councilors winning. Of these, two are in Jabalpur, one each in Burhanpur and Khandwa corporations. Similarly, 14 of AAP’s candidates emerged victorious while Rani Aggarwal bagged the mayoral seat in Singrauli municipal corporation.

Congress candidates were elected as mayors in Gwalior, Chhindwara and Jabalpur. But even with that, the party will only be establish its rule in

Chhindwara municipal corporation, with its elected councilors falling short of the majority mark in the corporation.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan held a press conference and reasoned that even though Congress won three Municipal Corporations and AAP won in Singrauli, the saffron party holds the majority of wards which is the true picture. “Despite AAP victory in Singrauli municipal corporation, out of the 45 wards, 23 went to the BJP, Congress got 12 and AAP won on five,” said Chouhan.

He continued, “In the local body polls, the BJP emerged victorious on 80 per cent of the seats unlike the earlier trend where vote share was always between 45-55 per cent.”

BJP state chief, VD Sharma said that out of the 37 municipal councils BJP has a clear mandate in 27. Similarly, in 64 of the 86 town councils, BJP has a majority. “Even in Jabalpur where Congress won the mayoral post, BJP won on 44 wards and will rule,” said Sharma.

By winning three of the 11 mayoral seats, the Congress has improved on its tally from the previous civic polls — zero.

Calling it a historic victory for Congress, state chief Kamal Nath said: “It is for the first time since 2009, there will be three congress mayors out of the 11 municipal corporations. The Congress has snatched three seats from BJP, in two seats we lost with slim margin. I want to ask the BJP, what exactly are you celebrating?”

Nath said that even in Indore and Bhopal where they have lost, the number of councilors in wards have doubled. “The BJP and its B team of AIMIM tried their best and even then, the Congress gave a tough fight in Burhanpur and lost with a narrow margin of 300 votes. Even in a place like Ujjain it was a close fight with merely a difference of 700 votes between the BJP and Congress candidates.”

Jharkhand journalist held for Maoist links

Ranchi: Jharkhand police on Sunday arrested a freelance journalist, Rupesh Kumar Singh, in connection with a 2021 case lodged in Saraikela district in which senior CPI (Maoist) leader Prashant Bose alias Kishanda is an accused. The police alleged that Singh used to arrange funds for the Maoists.

Jharkhand Police spokesperson Amol V Homkar confirmed that Singh was arrested from his home in Ramgarh district. “He was arrested for his links with CPI (Maoist) leaders in the case that was registered against Maoist veteran Prashant Bose. There is no fresh FIR against him,” he said. Incidentally, Singh’s name had appeared in the list of journalists who were targeted through the Pegasus spyware.

On November 12 last year, the police had arrested CPI (Maoist) central committee member Kishanda, who carried a reward of Rs 1 crore on his head, along with five others in the Kandra Police Station area of Saraikela. **ENS**

India, China armies begin new round of talks in eastern Ladakh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE 16TH round of high-level military talks between India and China began at the Chushul Moldo meeting point on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh on Sunday morning, official sources said.

The talks, which began around 9.30 am, are aimed at resolving outstanding issues in the remaining friction points along the LAC, the sources said. The discussions were ongoing on Sunday evening.

During Sunday’s talks, India was expected to push for early disengagement of troops at all remaining friction points, and seek a resolution of issues at Depsang Bulge and Demchok. The Indian delegation is being led by Lt Gen Anindya Sengupta, commander

of the Leh-based 14 Corps, while the Chinese side is headed by Maj Gen Yang Lin, chief of the South Xinjiang Military District.

India has always maintained that peace and tranquility on the LAC was key to overall development of the bilateral relationship.

The situation in eastern Ladakh figured prominently in the hour-long talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of the G20 foreign ministers meeting in Bali on July 7.

“Recalling the disengagement achieved in some friction areas, the External Affairs Minister reiterated the need to sustain the momentum to complete disengagement from all the remaining areas to restore peace and tranquility in the border areas,” the Ministry of External Affairs had said in a statement after the meeting.





The IndianEXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BEYOND CAATSA

NDA government emphasises producing more weapons at home. That demands more urgent and purposeful policy action

LAST WEEK THE House of Representatives, the lower House of the US Congress, passed an amendment with a significant majority that called for an India-specific waiver from sanctions for the purchase of advanced Russian weapons. This sets the stage for Delhi and Washington to find a way around the problem of India's continuing dependence on Russian weapons. It is an issue that has acquired greater salience since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act in 2017 demanded sanctions on states that buy Russian weapons. The US imposed these sanctions in 2020 on Turkey, a NATO ally, for purchasing the S-400 missile system from Russia. With India, too, committed to the purchase of the S-400 from Moscow, it seemed inevitable that Washington would impose sanctions on Delhi and undermine a budding strategic partnership. US and India have been steadily building up the bilateral defence and security cooperation, are partners in the Indo-Pacific and members of the Quad along with Australia and Japan.

To be sure, the CAATSA authorised the US President to waive the sanctions provided there was an overriding national security interest. Both the Trump and Biden administrations had avoided imposing the sanctions but were hesitant to offer a waiver. Both were worried about the overwhelming anti-Russian sentiment in the US Congress. The House amendment now offers solid political support for the waiver. This, of course, is only the first step that needs to be matched by the US Senate and jointly approved by the two Houses at a later sitting. But the House amendment acknowledges the danger to the US interests from a mechanical application of CAATSA sanctions on India. It notes the special military challenges that India confronts from an assertive China in the Himalayas. While calling for a waiver, the House amendment calls for a deeper defence collaboration with India, and stronger high technology cooperation, and active encouragement to reduce Delhi's current dependence on Russian military supplies.

Although a rapid diversification away from Russian supplies can't be done overnight, it is a good moment for the Indian security establishment to review the changing context of Delhi's defence ties to Moscow. Indo-Russian defence ties emerged at a moment when Moscow was fighting Beijing in the 1960s. Russia and China are now close partners, while Beijing remains the main source of Delhi's security problems. Russia and China are also aligned against the West, which has become a major partner for India. After invading Ukraine, Russia is locked in a deep confrontation with the US and Europe. Although India can work on the margins to reduce the impact of Western sanctions on Russia, dealing with Moscow will only become trickier for Delhi in the days ahead. If and when the Ukraine war ends, Russia's focus will be on rearming itself rather than exports to other countries. Delhi, however, has no reason to jump from dependence on Russia to total reliance on the West. The NDA government has emphasised the importance of producing more weapons at home. It also wants domestic and foreign private capital to invest in India's arms production. Translating that laudable goal into reality demands more urgent and purposeful policy action in Delhi than we have seen so far.

A LIGHTER TOUCH

Data localisation norms may need easing, but startups should compete without relying on heavy handholding of state

THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM in India, in overdrive for the past few years, is now undergoing a slow churn. After a period of frenzied fund-raising and deal-making, when unicorns (startups with a valuation of \$1 billion or more) were growing at a fast rate, fund-raising has begun to dry up. As per a report by PwC, after three consecutive quarters of more than \$10 billion, funding in Indian startups fell by 40 per cent to \$6.8 billion during April-June this year. This decline can be traced to a combination of factors — end of the era of cheap money with central banks across the world tightening policy to tackle inflation, fears of a global slowdown, and a decline in tech valuations as investors become more circumspect. During such testing times, when many startups have begun to lay off workers as they seek to conserve cash, Indian startups have also been voicing concerns over the "compliance intensive" nature of regulations in the current draft of the personal data protection Bill.

The concerns stem around regulations which mandate that users' personal data be kept within India. Many fear that these rules will restrict operations of startups. While the justification for data localisation is fairly uncomplicated — regulation will address concerns over data privacy and security, and will make it easier for government to access critical information — worldwide, in the designing of localisation rules, a careful balance needs to be struck between privacy and innovation. However, the Indian government seems to be sympathetic to the concerns of startups — as reported in this paper, the Ministry of Electronics and IT is examining the possibility of easing the data localisation requirements as laid out in the current draft of the data protection bill for startups. Considering that such concerns have also been voiced by others in the past, especially by global technology firms, carving out exemptions for startups, even as what constitutes a startup, the terms of its definition, remains difficult to ascertain, may not be a prudent approach.

Policies as critical as data protection should not be tweaked to accommodate the business plans of a few startups, corporate strategies should not be drawn up solely on the basis of the ability to influence policy. Should similar exemptions be also carved out for startups whose applications to become payment aggregators have been rejected by the RBI? The startup ecosystem is vibrant, in part, because it allows for easy entry and exit of firms — some startups will succeed handsomely, while many others will fail. That's the nature of business. Firms should compete without having to rely on government intervention.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



NEERJA CHOWDHURY

MONSOON SESSIONS OF Parliament are usually turbulent and the one starting Monday, July 18, is unlikely to be an exception. This session will also be dominated by the presidential and vice-presidential polls. It will start on a historic note, with MPs voting on opening day to choose the country's next rashtrapati. Droupadi Murmu is certain to be elected president.

Her elevation to the high office may or may not improve the lot of Adivasis. But it will signal that a member of a tribal group, who is also a woman, can occupy the highest position in the country.

It is the nomination of the NDA's vice-presidential candidate which has, however, grabbed eyeballs. In a surprise move — though, by now, we should not be surprised by any move of the prime minister — the BJP announced that Jagdeep Dhankhar would be the NDA's candidate for VP. The BJP's choice may come to have a bearing on how the Rajya Sabha functions.

Dhankhar was an active MoS, parliamentary affairs, in the Chandra Shekhar government in 1990. He is from the Jat community, belongs to Rajasthan and came into prominence as governor of West Bengal for the confrontational bouts he had with Mamata Banerjee's government. His three attributes — being a Jat, belonging to Rajasthan and acting "tough" as a governor — point to the BJP's thinking, and the strategy it could adopt in the months to come.

That the BJP wants to get back into its fold the farming community of Jats who inhabit western UP, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan, is obvious. Unhappy with the farm bills, the Jats were the mainstay of the year-long agitation the farmers mounted outside Delhi last year, compelling the central government to take back the laws. Rajasthan, where elections are due in 2023, is clearly on the party's radar.

More importantly, Dhankhar, as the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, responsible for its proceedings, could be tougher on the Opposition. He is likely to win given the arithmetic of both the Houses which elect the VP. Going by his track record in West Bengal — he was not shy of run-ins with the state government — it could lead to greater contention



RAKESH KACKER AND NIDHI SRIVASTAVA

SINCE THE ONSET of the pandemic and over the past few months, after the Ukraine-Russia war, commodity prices, especially that of energy, have surged worldwide. With inflation at unprecedented levels in many countries, concerns over energy security have gained centre stage.

Recently, there have been several policy initiatives in the coal sector in India. One which has gone largely unnoticed is the introduction of the national coal index (NCI). This index was created to provide a benchmark for revenue-sharing contracts being executed after the auctions for commercial mining of coal.

The NCI had to be introduced as the wholesale price index (WPI) for coal has no component of imported coal. For the last six months, the WPI for Coal has been stable at around 131. Over the same period, the NCI has jumped from about 165 to about 238 reflecting the sharp increase in international coal prices. The domestic coal industry has responded to this situation with an increase of over 30 per cent in coal production from April to June this year. This has helped reduce inflationary pressures in the economy.

This development shows the importance of increasing domestic coal production to reduce the exposure of the domestic economy to the price volatility of international markets. Anticipating these problems, a big effort toward permitting commercial mining



Drawing harder lines

As Parliament reopens, votes are cast for new president, Opposition diminution, BJP aggression

The Lok Sabha issued a new booklet adding more words that are to be deemed unconstitutional to the existing list, and they are words of common usage like 'corrupt', 'ashamed', 'tanashah' (dictator), which the Opposition leaders use against those in power. If the word 'tanashah' had been declared unconstitutional 50 years ago, Indira Gandhi might not have lost the 1977 elections. If the word 'corrupt' had been banned in 1987, Rajiv Gandhi might not have been ousted in 1989, nor the UPA swamped in scams like 2-G, Coalgate, and attacked day after day in Parliament.

with the Opposition in the Upper House.

Dhankhar's nomination came within days of moves that have created a sense of disquiet amongst the Opposition and may have a bearing on MPs' free speech and freedom to assemble. The Rajya Sabha put out an advisory that MPs will no longer be allowed to hold dharmas within the precincts of Parliament; earlier such "requests" used to be made to MPs to desist from protesting in Parliament. The Lok Sabha issued a new booklet adding more words that are to be deemed unconstitutional to the existing list, and they are words of common usage like "corrupt", "ashamed", "tanashah" (dictator), which the Opposition leaders use against those in power. If the word "tanashah" had been declared unconstitutional 50 years ago, Indira Gandhi might not have lost the 1977 elections. If the word "corrupt" had been banned in 1987, Rajiv Gandhi might not have been ousted in 1989, nor the UPA swamped in scams like 2-G, Coalgate, and attacked day after day in Parliament.

Om Birla, the Lok Sabha Speaker, tried to reassure MPs that they will have the freedom to speak and the expunction of words would be done by the Speaker depending on the context. What was the need, then, to publish a booklet? That power vests in the Speaker anyway. These moves show a growing toughness adopted by the BJP towards the Opposition.

But it is mystifying why the BJP, which is increasing its footprint in the country, winning election after election, should want to be seen to be stifling the free speech of parliamentarians, or be worried about a dharna or two in Parliament. Particularly as the prime minister loses no opportunity to emphasise India's democratic credentials in world capitals. It is even more curious at a time when the Opposition is weakening.

As for the Opposition, the disarray in its ranks has been growing, evident even in the way it handled the presidential contest. Nobody expected Yashwant Sinha to win, only to present a dignified counter narrative. After all, in the past too, the Opposition fielded candidates who had no chance to win — Lakshmi Sahgal against APJ Abdul Kalam in 2002, or PA Sangma in 2012

against Pranab Mukherjee.

Having projected Sinha as the candidate of the Opposition, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena and Hemant Soren's JMM have decided to support Murmu. Mamata Banerjee, who had proposed Sinha's name for rashtrapati, found herself in a difficult situation, and had to ask Sinha not to come to West Bengal to campaign. Given this state of affairs, few will want to stand as candidates of the unified Opposition against the BJP, for any post.

Undoubtedly, the BJP caught the Opposition on the wrong foot by fielding Murmu. It hopes to augment the support of tribals in states in the Hindi heartland and west India where there's a concentration of these groups, and it may have to offset disaffection after being in power for 10 years. Its stakes are the highest in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Orissa and West Bengal in the run-up to 2024. It may also hope that Murmu, being a Santhal — the group has sizeable numbers in West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand — may help it breach the support base of its opponents in these states.

While the BJP knew what it was doing by projecting Murmu, the Opposition did not think through its political messaging with its candidate.

The Opposition will try to raise the issues agitating it to corner the government in the forthcoming session of Parliament — Agnipath, price rise, intrusions by China, the latest move to regulate digital media, among others — provided the din does not drown out debate.

Events of the last few days have shown that an already assertive BJP has decided to become even more aggressive in taking on the Opposition, which is anyway weakening — addressing an event in the Rajasthan assembly on Saturday, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana has also pointed to the "diminishing" space of the Opposition. That space may become smaller still, both within Parliament and outside it.

That is neither good for the ruling party, or for the Opposition, or the country.

The writer is a senior journalist

AN ORDERLY TRANSITION

The switchover from coal to renewables needs to be gradual and careful

Looking at coal from a singular focus on GHG emissions will give a myopic view of energy requirements for a growing economy like India. The path to achieving 500 GW of renewables needs to be gradual, ensuring an orderly transition as coal is unavoidable in the near future. Reducing coal imports and increasing domestic production of coal needs focused attention. The changes in the coal industry in the last few years are in the right direction. These were long overdue.

has been made to get the private sector to produce more coal. After taking preparatory action, about 50 contracts have been finalised in the last two years. Several other steps have been taken to increase domestic coal production.

However, much more needs to be done to make these measures more effective. First, and most importantly, the financial community has to be sensitised to the need of increasing domestic coal production to meet the growing energy demand. The Ministry of Power recognised the need to increase coal-based generation in the country in its draft National Electricity Policy released in May 2021, before the present crisis erupted. This policy has not yet been finalised. It should clearly articulate the importance of domestic coal-based generation. Apart from the government, the industry should also take up this issue with the financial community in adopting a more holistic approach toward environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria.

Second, is the need for a regulator to address the issues arising from a greater role of the private sector. The current arrangements were put in place at a time when the public sector dominated. There are several issues where new private commercial miners would need help. A single point of contact for the industry in the form of a dedicated regulator would give great comfort to private

players and would help to overcome problems that could arise in due course.

Third, increasing domestic production of coal and diversifying the production base are both needed. This must be complemented with efforts to improve the quality of the coal produced. And fourth, the undue financial burden on the coal sector due to various cross subsidies needs attention. The regime needs to be reformed. High prices of coal and coal-based generation will only encourage imported coal and expose the country to price risks from international energy prices.

Looking at coal from a singular focus on GHG emissions will give a myopic view of energy requirements for a growing economy like India. The path to achieving 500 GW of renewables needs to be gradual, ensuring an orderly transition as coal is unavoidable in the near future. Reducing coal imports and increasing domestic production of coal needs focused attention. The changes in the coal industry in the last few years are in the right direction. These were long overdue. Action on the issues discussed above will only help to deepen and strengthen these reforms which are needed to overcome the challenges that have resurfaced over the past few months.

Kacker is a former secretary, Government of India, and Srivastava is a PhD scholar at Energy Studies Programme, JNU

JULY 18, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

MISHRA ELECTED CM

SRIPAT MISHRA, THE 58-year-old Speaker of the Vidhan Sabha, will be sworn in as the 13th Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh after his unanimous election by the Congress (I) legislature party, according to reliable sources in Lucknow. According to a UNI report quoting sources in New Delhi, Mishra has been chosen by the Congress (I) high command to succeed V P Singh. Singh is believed to have made it known that he would abide by any decision taken by the party high command in this regard. Half of the ministers of the outgoing 48-members three-tier ministry of Singh are expected to be dropped. There is a

panic among the 16 cabinet ministers, 23 ministers of state and six deputy ministers. Most of them may lose their jobs.

MOSCOW IRE AT CPI

THE LEADERSHIP OF the Communist Party of India, which is already facing the anger of the rank and file over its latest stand on the Bharatiya Janata Party, is believed to have earned Moscow's ire also on the question, according to sources close to the CPI. During the party's general secretary Rajeswar Rao's visit to Moscow recently, senior leaders of the Soviet Communist Party, according to CPI sources, had clearly attacked the recent de-

cision of the CPI leadership to join hands with the BJP. Rajeswar Rao is reported to have met the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Yuri Andropov and the alternate member of the politburo, Boris Ponomarev.

INDIANS RELEASED

ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN completed for receiving the 10 Indian nationals being released after eight years' detention in a Pakistani jail without a trial. The Indians will be handed over to India's consul general in Karachi. They will be flown out from Karachi to Delhi by Indian airlines on July 20.

9 THE IDEAS PAGE

A prosperity lesson for India

As it prepares to become most populous by 2023, it must remember: Improvement of human development index hinges on providing quality education to girl child



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

THE UNITED NATIONS' latest report, "Population Prospects" forecasts that India will surpass China's population by 2023, reaching 1.5 billion by 2030 and 1.66 billion by 2050. It was only three years ago that the UN Population Prospects (2019) projected that India will surpass China's population by 2027. But it seems that the rate of growth of India's population is faster than that of China, and the global agencies had to change their forecast significantly in three years.

Every country intends for its people to be prosperous and frames policies to attain this goal. China's story since 1978 is unique — the country has achieved the fastest decline in poverty and is today a superpower, perhaps, second only to the US. Its experiences hold some important lessons for India, especially because in 1978, when China embarked on its economic reforms, its per capita income at \$156.4 was way below that of India at \$205.7. Both countries were saddled with humongous poverty. Today, China is more than six times ahead of India in terms of per capita income — China's per capita income in 2021 was \$12,556, while that of India was \$1,933 in 2020. It is this economic prosperity that has enabled China to spend large amounts on building its military might.

How did China do all this? It is well known that China started its economic reforms in 1978 with a primary focus on agriculture. It broke away from the commune system and liberated agri-markets from myriad controls. As a result, during 1978-84, China's agri-GDP grew by 7.1 per cent per annum and farmers' real incomes grew by 14 per cent per annum with the liberalisation of agri-prices. As people gained prosperity and farmers' real incomes doubled, poverty fell by half in just six years. Enhanced incomes of rural people created a huge demand for industrial products, and also gave political legitimacy for pushing further the reform agenda. The aim of China's manufacturing through Town and Village Enterprises (TVEs) was basically to meet the surging demand from the hinterlands. The rest is history.

But one important policy during this period that is not talked about much was the one-child policy. China introduced the one-child per family policy in September 1980, which lasted till early 2016. It is this strict control on population growth, coupled with booming growth in overall GDP over these years, that led to a rapid increase in per capita incomes. Chinese population growth today is just 0.1 per cent per annum compared to India's 1.1 per cent per annum. India's overall growth story — though one of reasonable success — has not been as impressive as that of China, certainly not in agriculture. Over a 40-year period, 1978-2018, China's agriculture has grown at 4.5 per cent per annum while India's agri-GDP growth ever since reforms began in 1991 has hovered at around 3 per cent per annum. Market and price liberalisation in agriculture still remains a major issue, and at the drop of any hint of food price rise, the government clamps down exports, im-



C R Sasikumar

poses stock limits on traders, suspends futures markets, and pushes other measures that strangle markets. The net result of all this is reflected in the "implicit taxation" of farmers to favour the vocal lobby of consumers, especially the urban middle class.

Let's get back to the population story, and try to understand what India can do at this juncture. There is no way India can impose the one-child norm that China did in 1980. After Sanjay Gandhi's forceful attempts to control population through sterilisation methods in the early 1970s, and the people's discontent against it, no government is going to attempt it. The only way is through effective education, especially that of the girl child, open discussion and dialogue about family planning methods and conversations about the benefits of small family size in society. The record on that front is not very good.

As per the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21), of all the girls and women above the age of 6 years, only 16.6 per cent were educated for 12 years or more. If one talks of the quality of education, several ASER reports point to the poor quality of education. In our earlier research, based on unit-level data of NFHS, we found that women's education is the most critical determinant of the status of malnutrition amongst children below the age of five. The NFHS-5 data shows that more than 35 per cent of our children below the age of five are stunted, which means their earning capac-

Unless a focused and aggressive campaign is launched to educate the girl child and provide her with more than 12 years of good quality education, India's performance in terms of the prosperity of its masses, and the human development index may not improve significantly for many more years to come. From a policy perspective, if there is any subsidy that deserves priority, it should be for the education of the girl child.

ity will remain hampered throughout life. They will remain stuck in a low-level income trap. Moreover, 57 per cent of women in the reproductive age group of 15-49, are anaemic, as per NFHS-5 (2019-21), up from 53 per cent in NFHS-4 (2015-16). With this dismal status of women's health and education, the future of children in India is a serious issue to ponder over.

Biofortification of staples, supplying clean and safe drinking water to every household (nal se jal) and mid-day meals are all steps in the right direction to improve the well-being of people. But unless a focused and aggressive campaign is launched to educate the girl child and provide her with more than 12 years of good quality education, India's performance in terms of the prosperity of its masses, and the human development index may not improve significantly for many more years to come. From a policy perspective, if there is any subsidy that deserves priority, it should be for the education of the girl child.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIR

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Like unscrupulous populists and nationalists everywhere, the Rajapaksa exploited divisions stemming from economic insecurity, prejudice and plain ignorance, setting the Sinhalese Buddhist majority against the mostly Hindu Tamil and Muslim minorities."
— THE OBSERVER

The power of goodness

In the late Jagat Mehta's vision lies a lesson for the India of today



ABHIJIT V BANERJEE

I HAD NO reason to get to know Jagat Mehta. He was one of those who came of age during India's transition to Independence. Had he been with us he would be one hundred this month.

I knew of him of course. From the newspapers. He was the foreign secretary when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the External Affairs Minister in the Janata government of the late 1970s — a committed Nehruvian (he worked as Nehru's private secretary in his early years in the IAS) who made such a success of his partnership with Vajpayee that Indira Gandhi felt compelled to fire him when she returned to power. These were years of unusual cordiality between India and Pakistan, and key water-sharing agreements were negotiated. Jagatsaheb, as he was widely known, was justly proud of the achievements of those years. He gave a lot of credit to Vajpayee, who despite being ideologically close to the RSS, was capable of genuine warmth and empathy, which goes a long way in diplomacy. But I imagine Jagatsaheb, with his commitment to finding mutually acceptable solutions and above all, an effortless graciousness that extended to one and all, must have played a central role.

That graciousness touched me even before I met him. This was in the mid-1990s. I was trying to start my first randomised controlled trial (RCT). I had contacted Ajay Mehta, one of Jagatsaheb's four remarkable children through his brother, Uday, who taught political philosophy at MIT. Ajay headed Seva Mandir, a Udaipur-based NGO with a deep commitment to Gandhian ideals and community building. I was going to visit Udaipur to explore working with them. Ajay told me that Jagatsaheb had invited me to stay with them. I demurred, worried about imposing. He insisted. I didn't resist too much, and it was one of the best decisions I ever took.

I remember very clearly the morning I arrived in Udaipur for the first time and was taken to Jeevan Niwas, Jagatsaheb's beautiful house just outside the old city in Udaipur. He was waiting for me to have breakfast, and as soon as we sat down at the enormous table in the dining room — as I was to many, many, times more — he began to quiz me about what I was there to do. I noticed immediately there was an intellectual intensity to his queries, barely masked by the slightly old-fashioned politeness that was his second nature, that took it beyond the usual table talk. This was also Jagatsaheb — some of the leading minds of the time, people like Daniel Moynihan and John Kenneth Galbraith, were his close friends — but he offered his full attention to all comers, including young professors with strange ideas. When he asked me about the subject of

my study, I remember saying that I didn't really have one — if there was an intervention that Seva Mandir felt was important enough to test out, that was good for me. He probably found that odd but was too polite to say so.

Eventually, we started what would be a long sequence of RCTs across health and education, and for the next decade and more, I was in and out of Udaipur every few months and almost always, unless there was a large family gathering, I got to stay in Jeevan Niwas. Often, it was just the two of us. I would come back from a day in the field, shower and settle down in his enormous living room with its walls chock-a-block in Rajasthani miniatures with a glass of whiskey soda. And after some small-talk, Jagatsaheb would lean forward, furrow his brows and ask, "So how is Ind-ia doing?". Ind-ia, with an emphasis on the "d". Never Indiya.

This was the late 1990s and early 2000s, the economy was speeding up, poverty was falling, and I was mostly optimistic. Jagatsaheb didn't disagree, but his stance was always that we can and must do better. Because we are Ind-ia. Because we are the children of Gandhi and Nehru, who for him were the greatest idealists of the 20th century. Because we pledged ourselves to the ideals of equality of all, of universal adult suffrage, of tolerance and brotherhood, already in the 1920s, right from when our national movement became a peoples' movement. This was roughly the time when America only recognised the rights of white (men) and most of Europe was obsessed with race and religion, he would tell me.

It was not because he didn't see our flaws. Having spent his life working in government, he knew all about the rigidity and high-handedness of our bureaucracy, the venality of our politicians, the greed and cynicism among our leaders of industry. He would often quiz me in great detail about the implementation of various programmes and policies — about what might be going wrong, and how to fix it.

He was particularly harsh about the foreign policy establishment, especially during the years when he was active there. He thought we made a huge mistake by not supporting our Afghan friends during the Russian invasion in 1979, which, he believed, pushed them into the hands of Pakistan and contributed to the disastrous dynamic that led to 9/11 and beyond. He blamed himself, among others, for being too unwilling to read the warning signs to an uncomprehending Nehru, which ultimately led to our Chinese catastrophe. Protocol and blind love (for Nehru) make a bad combination, he once told me.

And yet he remained an idealist; unwavering in his belief that we must try to do the right things for the right reason, internally and externally, while accepting that it won't always happen. At a time when we seem to be wavering between trying to be powerful and wanting to be good, I dearly miss his voice telling us that we, Ind-ia, can only be powerful if we are good.

The writer, a Nobel laureate in economics, is professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The Agniveer's journey

There is need for a deeper conversation about potential social fallout of Agnipath



AAKASH JOSHI

"Back there I could fly a gunship, I could drive a tank, I was in charge of million-dollar equipment, back here I can't even hold a job parking cars."

— Sylvester Stallone, in 'Rambo: First Blood' THANKS TO THE pervasive power of Hollywood, even those who have never been to America are likely to have some idea of the country's attitude towards armed forces personnel after they have completed their "tour(s) of duty". A strong sense of nationalism is tied up with their sacrifice and often promoted by the military-industrial complex. "Supporting the troops" and "thanking them for their service" is an integral part of the political identity of many Americans. Conversely, veterans suffer disproportionately from homelessness and mental health issues compared to the rest of the population — almost 20 per cent of them, according to the US National Institute for Drug Abuse. The prevalence of addiction, a disease of despair, is understandable. Violence is, by definition, traumatic and war — even when it is necessary — wounds entire generations.

Things get worse. As Kathleen Belew points out in *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, after every major conflict, many veterans who are unable to readjust well to civilian life have been involved in violent, organised crime and even terrorist activities. World War II veterans formed the Hells Angels (an "outlaw" motorcycle club) and there is an increasing

amount of scholarship on how veterans have fed the cadres of the White Power movement. Louis Beam, for example, was a decorated pilot in the Vietnam War. On his return, he joined the Ku Klux Klan and is now one of the leading ideologues for racist organisations. His conception of a "leaderless resistance" continues to be an inspiration for violent, anti-state, anti-minority groups and individuals. Unfortunately, Beam is a notable exception only in his notoriety.

The model for the Indian armed forces — a colonial legacy in some ways, to be sure — is different. Until now, short-term recruits formed a negligible part of the non-commissioned personnel. Soldiers are expected to die and kill for their country and are offered, in return, job security, pensions and health benefits. The military, by and large, has taken care of its own.

The economic and strategic imperative for reform in the armed forces is undeniable. The time for better technology, hardware and a more adaptable, efficient and versatile fighting force has long been here, and we are already late to the party. Continuing with the current structure of employment and benefits at the same scale is also an economically untenable proposition: More than half of India's defence budget is spent on pensions, while just around 5 per cent is earmarked for research and development.

The question, then, is not whether the armed forces need reform and restructuring. It is about the limited conversation

around the potential social upheaval the scheme could well lead to. As the protests around the Agnipath scheme die down, is India ready for the inevitable influx of thousands of young men, Agniveers, who are likely to have seen conflict and must now adjust to civilian life?

The protests — and the government's response — have been centred on the lack of job security (Agniveers will serve for four years, including 6 months of training) and benefits. A significant number will be employed in paramilitary forces, and their service and training will be recognised as a degree. Yet, many — if not most — Agniveers will have to make their own way. And the value of a "degree" for employers, more often than not, is only significant if it is a marker for skills that they can use.

The first lesson from America in this regard, then, is: The cold logic of the free market may pay lip service to patriotic sentiments, but it does not give salaries or jobs based on them.

Another issue, perhaps even more important, with creating thousands of armed forces gig workers is the social and psychological readjustment that Agniveers will need assistance with. And dealing with it in any meaningful manner requires facing the more uncomfortable weaves of India's social fabric.

The fact remains that ours is a society permeated by violence and hierarchy, as much as it is by compassion, decency and frater-

nity. Our political conversation continues to be dominated by wounds — real and imagined — of history. Caste animosity — including violence to protect its boundaries — is stoked at regular intervals. A camera on every phone means acts of brutality are recorded and shared, as boastful messages from diseased minds as well as for disturbing ideological ends. When men who have seen death at close quarters, and are trained in violence, are added to this already volatile mix, serious consideration and resources must be put in place to help them readjust. Mental health, community and vocational therapy — and less obvious initiatives — would be a good first step. India does not need — and cannot afford — its own version of the KKK and White Power.

The final lesson from America is a tangential one. Most of the sub-genres of its mainstream cinema have been replicated by Hollywood's Indian counterparts — the romantic comedy, the action movie and even the slick nationalist war film, a la *Uri: The Surgical Strike*. What we haven't had yet is the "war vet" genre — stories of soldiers who come back to a world that does not, cannot understand them. The first *Rambo*, for example, isn't just an action movie, it is a tragedy about irrelevance and loneliness. Let's hope a home-grown version of that tale never has any resonance.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIPLOMATIC BRIDGES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bridge to the gulf' (IE, July 16). The I2U2 grouping and the summit of its leaders offer a sneak peek into the future. India has reaffirmed its plan to open itself up for international capital and technologies to address its issues, especially in the key markets of food and energy. The four leaders have also called for strengthening of peace, especially between Israel and the UAE. This is bound to result in more economic opportunities for all.

SS Paul, Chakdaha

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bridge to the gulf' (IE, July 16). After QUAD, the new formation of I2U2, which has taken UAE and Israel on board, has extended the outreach of India in the gulf region even further. Admittedly, this is a step in the right direction. However, India should ensure that the platform not seem hostile to any nation, especially Iran, keeping the historical animosity of the other three partners in mind. Moreover, Biden's recent visit to Israel and their open stance against Iran's purported plan to become a "nuclear power" will surely make Iran doubtful about the intentions of this nascent organisation. We should make our diplomatic intentions clear.

Devendra Awasthi, Lucknow

LAGGING BEHIND

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Maths without Pythagoras' (IE, July 15). Dropping mathematical concepts like linear equations and Pythagoras' theorem from the Class X CBSE curriculum is like removing the middle rungs of the ladder. Mathematical concepts are heavily interrelated. Since other boards are not cutting their syllabus, CBSE students will lose the opportunity of a level playing field. The CBSE board should have consulted concerned subject teachers regarding revisions, if needed. Moving forward, they must abide by the aims and objectives of NEP 2020.

Ravindra Zinjurke, Ahmednagar

DOUBLE STANDARD

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Need to ask some questions', (IE, July 16). Gaurav Bhatia exhorts the duty of the then ruling party to be answerable, but he forgets the same lacuna in the current regime. There is an iron curtain over the current government's work-from Pegasus to PM CARES. Additionally, there is no official data on child labour or employment. There must be a proper investigation of the allegations on the Vice President of India if circumstances demand so. However, the same metric must also be applied to matters concerning the current ruling government.

Abhishek Kumar Anshu, Patna

11 ECONOMY

HUSSAIN HAQQANI, APARNA PANDE IN OPINION PIECE

US ‘must be alarmed’ by foreign cos exiting India: Hudson Institute dirs

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE IMPACT of multiple major global corporations pulling out from India on the country's foreign investment climate could be amplified by the broader geopolitical implications of these exits, given that several of these companies are based in the US. From automobile companies such as Ford, General Motors and Harley Davidson to Citibank, Holcim, Carrefour, and Metro AG, a string of global companies have either exited, scaled down or are working on pulling out of India.

Notably, while some of these companies have either cited poor competitive position or global business strategies, others have had long-running tiffs with law enforcement and tax authorities.

In an opinion piece published by *The Hill*, Washington-based Hudson Institute directors Hussain Haqqani and Aparna Pande have posited that the Joe

Biden administration “must be alarmed” by the decisions of several foreign corporations to either pull out of the Indian market or put their long-term plans on hold. This assumes significance, particularly, because for years the US has hoped to enable China's rise “as a way of checking China's growing power,” they wrote.

The authors also argued that Western democracies, which see India as a natural ally, believe that India would be able to deliver on its economic and military potential only if it attains higher growth rates — something that would only be possible “with larger inflows of foreign investment and further opening of India's markets”. In the year ending March 2022, India saw foreign direct investment inflows of \$58.77 billion, marginally down from \$59.64 billion a year ago.

Last year, the Indian government took steps to address some of the long-standing tax disputes with foreign companies in an effort to repair its damaged repu-

FDI FLOWS

■ In the year ending March 2022, India saw foreign direct investment inflows of \$58.77 billion, marginally down from \$59.64 billion a year ago.

tation as an investment destination. The government had announced rules, which when adhered to, will lead to the Centre withdrawing tax demands raised using the 2012 retrospective tax law and any tax collected in the enforcement of such demand being paid back. The retrospective tax law had an impact on corporations such as UK telecom giant Vodafone Plc, energy company Cairn Energy Plc, pharmaceuticals company Sanofi and brewer SABMiller, now owned by AB InBev.

However, a number of disputes still fester. As per a *Reuters*

report last week, French spirits group Pernod Ricard, in a letter to the Prime Minister's Office, has noted that three-decade old tax disputes with authorities on valuing liquor imports has inhibited fresh investment and its current business.

The sale of Swiss cement-maker Holcim's India assets to the Adani Group was also preceded by fines amounting to over Rs 2,300 crore by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Holcim's India companies — ACC and Ambuja Cements. The fines will be paid by the new owner.

Further, in May, Ford, which had already announced that it will stop selling its cars in India, retracted its plans to manufacture and export electric vehicles from India — a plan it had announced only a few months earlier.

In a 2021 report on India's investment climate, the US State Department noted that India remained a challenging place to do business. “New protectionist

measures, including increased tariffs, procurement rules that limit competitive choices, sanitary and phytosanitary measures not based on science, and Indian-specific standards not aligned with international standards, effectively closed off producers from global supply chains and restricted the expansion in bilateral trade,” the report said.

Authors of *The Hill* piece also said despite the challenges, India's large size and location continue to make it an attractive market for foreign businesses. “Access to the large Indian consumer market is a dream, as is the hope for a stake in the upgradation of India's civilian and military infrastructure... India's current rate of economic growth is woefully inadequate for India's domestic goals as well as the objective of becoming a serious rival to global economic juggernaut, China. The latter makes India's economic policies a strategic concern for US policymakers,” they wrote.

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL MANAGER INDIA AT FINNAIR

‘Own operations a priority, there may be opportunity to have partner in India’

HELSINKI-BASED LEGACY airline Finnair is set to expand its services in India by adding a flight to Mumbai next month, as it also continues to look beyond Delhi and Mumbai for other destinations in the country, SAKARI ROMU, general manager India for Finnair, told PRANAV MUKUL in an interview. Romu also spoke about the airline's plans to look for a local partner in India, and on the potential re-emergence of low-cost long-haul travel. Edited excerpts:

You mentioned that your flights to China have reduced from 40 per cent to just one. Where is this surplus capacity being deployed?

If you look at the time before Covid, we had around 370 daily departures, and this year, we are flying about 70 per cent of that on our own, 10 per cent we have been able to wet-lease to British Airways and Lufthansa Group. And by winter of 2023, we will be above 80 per cent but not 100 per cent.

Within India, are you looking at destinations other than Delhi and Mumbai?

We are looking but nothing concrete yet. But certainly, we are making the calculations, but that's normal business for an airline.

Are you looking at destinations from where you're getting traffic from into hubs like Delhi and Mumbai?

At the moment, we do not have a local airline partner in India. I think we have been successful, and I would like to see a good airline partner in India that would help in any way. But that's not something we can't live without. Demand just from Delhi and surrounding areas is taking up our capacity, and it's picking up. If you look at the other end, there was a strong trend before Covid, the travel to Scandinavian destinations, Helsinki and Baltic destinations from India was increasing strongly — by about 40 per cent every year. That's something, which will recur. About 15 per cent of our customers are



Sakari Romu

Finnish visiting India, and if we look only Finland as the destination, about 10 per cent of our customers are Indians visiting only Finland, and all the others are transfer, where the most important destination is the US.

So in the medium term, what would be the priority for Finnair to go to other destinations in India — having an airline partner or flying directly?

In my opinion, we should look for help or have a good co-operation with a partner. But first come our own operations. At a certain point, there might be an opportunity to have a partner in India.

Because of the higher oil prices and the longer flying time for Finnair, how are you dealing with the fare part of business?

We are trying to effect our prices but finally it is the Indian customer who decides what is the correct price for Finnair and we really have to ensure our

prices are set according to the market.

Finnair has a business class fare with no baggage allowance. That is quite unusual...

That is something I have had lot of discussions about. Especially in China and also India, probably the market has not experienced that kind of product, where the customer is only looking for a comfortable in-flight experience. In Europe, and the US, it is very common — no luggage, no change fees, but you're travelling on business class. But the market in India is not ready for that. It is not something very new. We've had such products in Europe for years.

But how has the Indian customer responded to this fare offering?

We will do a study and make changes to this product, and we have faced the same cases in other markets and in some markets, we have taken out the product totally. But I think, India will be also ready in the near future, where people are buying the cheapest possible business class fare. Maybe it is too new for India right now”

where people are buying the cheapest possible business class fare. Maybe it is too new for India right now.

The Airbus A321XLR is coming out soon and it is expected to change the dynamics of medium to long-haul low-cost travel. How does a full-service airline respond to this scenario?

I think especially now, if we think about making an airline profitable or making a certain route profitable, you can count on passengers but cargo also has a very big role. All those light version of flying impacts opportunities for cargo revenues. Cargo has always played a big role in our business, from India as well.

MARKETS WATCH

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTORS

FPIs in selling mode, pull out ₹7.4K cr from equities in July so far

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

FOREIGN INVESTORS continue to be cautious about the Indian equity market and have pulled out over Rs 7,400 crore this month so far amid sustained strengthening of the dollar and increasing concerns over a recession in the US.

This comes following a net withdrawal of Rs 50,203 crore from equities in June.

While foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have slowed down their pace of selling, this does not indicate a change in trend as there has not been any significant improvement in the underlying drivers, said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India.

There has been an exodus of foreign funds from the Indian equity market over the last nine months.

“Given the uncertainty in the forex market and the sustained strengthening of the dollar, FPIs are unlikely to turn aggressive buyers in the Indian market and at higher levels they may again turn sellers,” said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

Going forward, FPI flows will remain volatile in the emerging markets on account of rising geopolitical risks, rising inflation and tightening of monetary policy by central banks, Shrikant Chouhan, Head-Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities, said.

According to data with depositories, FPIs pulled out a net



The BSE, Mumbai File

amount of Rs 7,432 crore from Indian equities during July 1-15. While there have been sporadic net inflows by FPIs last week, the broader trend continues to be cautious, Srivastava added.

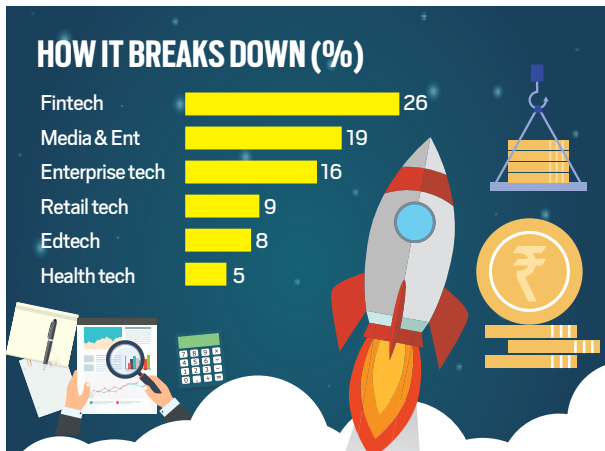
FPIs withdrew a net Rs 50,203 crore from equities in June. This was the highest net outflow since March 2020, when they had pulled out Rs 61,973 crore. With the latest pull out, net outflow by FPIs from equities this year so far has reached around Rs 2.25 lakh crore — a record high. Before this, they withdrew Rs 52,987 crore in the entire 2008, data showed.

According to Chouhan, Indian equities witnessed weakness as global inflation prints remained elevated, concerns of US recession increased, dollar index continued its sharp rally and Q1 results of large IT companies were weaker than expected.

Rupee has touched 80 per dollar mark briefly during the week, highlighting the trouble RBI faces on controlling the currency, said Vijay Singhania, chairman of TradeSmart. **WITHPTI**

‘Sequoia, Tiger Global lead startup funding in Apr-Jun’

Sequoia Capital and Tiger Global led funding in Indian startups during April-June, Nasscom said in a report



April-June quarter saw only four unicorns — neobanking firm Open, SaaS platform LeadSquared, edtech start-up PhysicsWallah and online beauty products marketplace Purple

January-March period had witnessed creation of 16 new unicorns, which dropped to only four in the reporting quarter due to decline in fund inflows into the Indian startup space

About 17% drop in investment into Indian tech startups, to \$6 billion, in April-June 2022 owing to macroeconomic slowdown

60% of the investments by Tiger Global and Sequoia were made in the growth stage of the startups

Of Tiger Global's investments, 40% were in the fintech sector and 20% in the enterprise technology domain. For Sequoia, enterprise technology accounted for about 25% of the funding

MAJOR INVESTORS

- Sequoia Capital
- Tiger Global
- Alpha wave
- Accel

Source: Nasscom/PTI

CURRENTLY HOLDS MD-CEO POST AT BSE

Chauhan to be NSE MD & CEO

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has approved the appointment of Ashishkumar Chauhan as the next Managing Director and CEO of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), the country's largest stock exchange.

Chauhan is currently the MD and CEO of the BSE and his tenure will end in November this year. He will join in place of Vikram Limaye whose five-year tenure ended on July 15.

Chauhan is one of the founders of the NSE where he worked from 1992 to 2000. At the NSE, he was involved in setting up India's first fully automated screen-based trading system and first commercial satellite communications network.

This is Chauhan's second



Ashishkumar Chauhan File

tenure in the BSE and under SEBI guidelines, a candidate cannot be appointed as MD & CEO for more than two tenures. BSE is also searching for a new CEO in place of Chauhan.

As per Sebi norm, the MD and CEO of a stock exchange has to apply and compete with other candidates for the top job after the completion of the five-year term. Limaye was appointed the NSE chief in July 2017 following the

exit of Chitra Ramkrishna amid the probe into co-location scam.

According to market observers, the priority of Chauhan will be to implement fair and ethical corporate and market governing practices at the NSE, which was hit by a series of scandals. He will also have to prepare the exchange for the much-delayed IPO.

Market regulator had earlier penalised Limaye's predecessors Ravi Narain and Chitra Ramkrishna for alleged lapses in corporate governance during the appointment of its group operating officer Anand Subramanian. In 2019, NSE was also penalised for giving preferential access to some stock brokers between 2012-2014 through their co-location facility.

Earlier in March, NSE, the largest derivatives exchange in the world, invited applications for the MD & CEO position.

FROM TODAY

Prepacked, labelled cereal, pulses, flour weighing up to 25 kg to attract 5% GST

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE CENTRAL Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on Sunday said single packages of food items like cereals, pulses and flour weighing up to 25 kg will be considered as 'prepackaged and labelled', and liable to five per cent GST from July 18.

It also clarified that if a retail shopkeeper supplies in loose quantity the item bought from a manufacturer or a distributor in a 25-kg pack, such sale to consumers will not attract GST.

The CBIC on Sunday night issued a set of frequently asked

The CBIC said GST will apply on a package that contains multiple retail packages

questions (FAQs) on GST applicability on 'pre-packaged and labelled' goods, just a day before the five per cent GST on such items becomes applicable.

In the context of food items (such as pulses, cereals like rice, wheat, flour etc), the supply of specified pre-packaged food articles would fall within the purview of the definition of 'pre-packaged commodity' un-

der the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, if such pre-packaged and labelled packages contained a quantity up to 25 kilogram (or 25 litres).

“It is clarified that a single package of these items (cereals, pulses, flour etc), containing a quantity of more than 25 Kg/25 litre would not fall in the category of pre-packaged and labelled commodity for the purposes of GST and would therefore not attract GST,” it said.

The CBIC said the supply of pre-packed atta meant for retail sale to ultimate consumer of 25 Kg shall be liable to GST. However, supply of such a 30-kg pack thereof shall be exempt

from levy of GST.

The board also said that GST would apply on a package that contains multiple retail packages, for example a package containing 10 retail packs of flour of 10 kg each, the CBIC said.

It said for the purpose of GST, “pre-packaged commodity” would mean a commodity which, without the purchaser being present, is placed in a package of whatever nature, whether sealed or not, so that the product contained therein has a pre-determined quantity.

Any such supply which requires declaration under the Legal Metrology act would attract GST, it said. **WITHPTI**

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE INSURANCE regulator has proposed the involvement of insurance companies at the state level and a big hike in the premium collection target in the next five years to deepen insurance penetration in the country.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) Chairman Debasish Panda said insurance companies should become members of the State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) and boost the growth of the sector. “States and insurers will benefit from the inclusion of insurers in the SLBC. Quite a bit of AUM (assets under management) is going into the developments in the state,” Panda said at a conclave of insurance CEOs in Hyderabad recently.

“I'm going to request the RBI and the ministry to include insurance in the SLBC Forum,” he said, adding that each state will be assigned to one or two insurance companies for close coordination.

Irdai Chairman also proposed a steep hike in premium collection in the next five years. The regulator has proposed that the premium collection which was at Rs 2.20 lakh crore in the year FY2022 could be increased to Rs 2.98 lakh crore in FY2023. This is expected to rise to Rs 11.73 lakh crore in FY2027, a rise of 433 per cent, it said.

It has also proposed a company-wise target for premium collection in the next five years.

STEEP HIKE

■ The regulator has proposed that the premium collection, which was at Rs 2.2 lakh crore in FY22, could be increased to Rs 2.98 lakh crore in FY23. This is expected to rise to Rs 11.73 lakh crore in FY27

New India Assurance's premium collection target is Rs 99,430 crore for FY2027 as against Rs 32,569 crore in FY2022. The steepest hike is in the case of Go Digit General Insurance which is being given a target of Rs 150,610 crore in FY27 as against Rs 4,674 crore now, a growth of 3,122 per cent.

Panda said the insurance sector needs more players. “It can be small, medium or niche players. General insurance penetration in India is just one per cent as against the world average of 4.16 per cent,” Panda said, adding that this needs to be changed.

“Of around 29.5 crore vehicles in the country, nearly 50 per cent are uninsured. Over 40 crore individuals are devoid of a health insurance policy,” Panda said. Irdai has proposed a 45 per cent growth in the health insurance segment to Rs 106,689 crore in FY2023 and a 37.30 per cent rise in the motor segment to Rs 96,6789 crore.

Panda also proposed a long-term insurance policy for 15 years in the case of motor vehicles. “This is something which

EXPLAINED

Raising coverage

WITH AN eye on deeper insurance penetration in the country, Irdai has pitched a company-wise target for premium collection in the next five years.

can be looked into by insurance companies,” he said.

Irdai Chairman also hinted that the regulator is working on a proposal for a salary band for CEOs of insurance companies. “You can decide on the salary based on the band,” he said.

Responding to Irdai Chairman's proposals, Star Health and Allied Insurance MD S Prakash said mis-selling in the health segment is creating a trust deficit. “We need to enhance penetration in the health insurance segment,” he said.

On crop insurance, many insurance CEOs complained about the lack of adequate reinsurance support. Regarding long-term motor policy, Madhulika Bhaskar, Chairman-in-charge of New India Assurance, said the issue of solvency margin needs to be sorted out and the focus is now more on bottom-line. “How do you account for it in the investment guidelines?” she said.

Irdai has also set up two task forces to suggest steps to sort out the issues between insurers and reinsurers and other problems facing the industry.



POPE FRANCIS EXPRESSES PAIN
CANADA TRIP ‘PILGRIMAGE OF PENANCE’

Pope Francis has he hopes his coming trip to Canada from July 24 to 30 can help heal the wrongs done to indigenous people by Roman Catholic priests and nuns who ran abusive residential schools.

TOP OF THE
WORLD



French President
Emmanuel Macron

FRANCE
Anti-Semitism
still rampant,
says Macron

President Emmanuel Macron warned against anti-Semitism and historical revisionism on Sunday as he commemorated victims of the Holocaust on the 80th anniversary of the Vel d'Hiv roundup of Jewish families. On July 16-17, 1942, around 13,000 people were taken to the Winter Velodrome, the Vel d'Hiv, in Paris before being sent on to concentration camps across Europe. It was the largest mass detention of Jewish people by French police. "We have not finished with anti-Semitism, it is still there - stronger and more rampant," said Macron at the inauguration of a memorial in the central town of Pithiviers. **REUTERS**

SUDAN
Death toll from
tribal clashes
at 65: minister

THE DEATH toll from days of tribal clashes in a southern Sudanese province climbed to at least 65 people, a senior health official said on Sunday. The fighting between the Hausa and Birta ethnic groups in the Blue Nile province also injured around 150 others, said Gamal Nasser al-Sayed, the province's health minister, adding that most of the dead were young men who were either shot or stabbed. The fighting in the Blue Nile grew out of the killing of a farmer earlier last week and continued through Saturday, according to the local government. **AP**

SOUTH AFRICA
Police hunt for
suspects after 9
killed in attacks

Police are on the hunt for suspects after nine people were fatally shot in separate shooting incidents in two provinces of South Africa on Saturday night, police said. The latest shootings come on the heels of an uptick in violent deaths in a country with one of the world's highest murder rates. The shootings took place in the Gauteng and also in Thembelihle. Police said it was not yet clear whether the suspects were involved in an earlier shooting in Alexandria. **REUTERS**

BANGLADESH: FEARFUL RESIDENTS LEAVE VILLAGE

Temple, homes vandalised over Facebook post

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA, JULY 17

A TEMPLE, shops and several houses of the Hindu community have been vandalised in south-western Bangladesh by some unidentified persons over a Facebook post allegedly belittling Islam, in the latest spate of violence targeting the religious minority in the country, according to media reports on Sunday. Police fired warning shots to disperse a mob that vandalised several homes and torched one

of them in Sahapara village in Narail district on Friday evening, *bdnews24.com*, an online newspaper quoted Haran Chandra Paul, an inspector at the local police station, as saying.

The attackers also threw bricks at a temple in the village during the attack around 7:30pm, he said. They also broke the furniture inside the temple. Haran said a young man posted something offensive on Facebook, triggering anger among Muslims. Police took his father to the police station after a search for the young man failed to trace him.

The situation was normal at night, said the police inspector. Narail Superintendent of Police Prabir Kumar Roy said the law enforcers were working to keep the situation under control. "We're investigating the incident. Those responsible for the violence will face action. The situation is normal for now," Roy said. Police were deployed in the area to prevent further violence, *The Daily Star* reported. "After one group looted all our valuables, another group came and found our door open. As there was nothing left to loot,

they set our home on fire," the paper quoted Deepali Rani Saha, a resident of Sahapara village, as saying.

A former Dighalia Union Parishad said most of the able-bodied people have left the village after the attack. "Almost all houses are locked. Only the elders of some families are home. They too are scared," she said. "Police are on guard in the village, but we cannot trust them," the newspaper quoted Shibnath Saha, president of the village's Radha-Govinda temple, as saying.

UAE sentences
Khashoggi's
ex-lawyer to
3 years in jail

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DUBAI, JULY 17

THE UAE has sentenced the former lawyer of Jamal Khashoggi — the dissident Saudi journalist who



Jamal
Khashoggi

was killed at Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul in 2018 — to three years in prison on charges of money laundering and tax evasion.

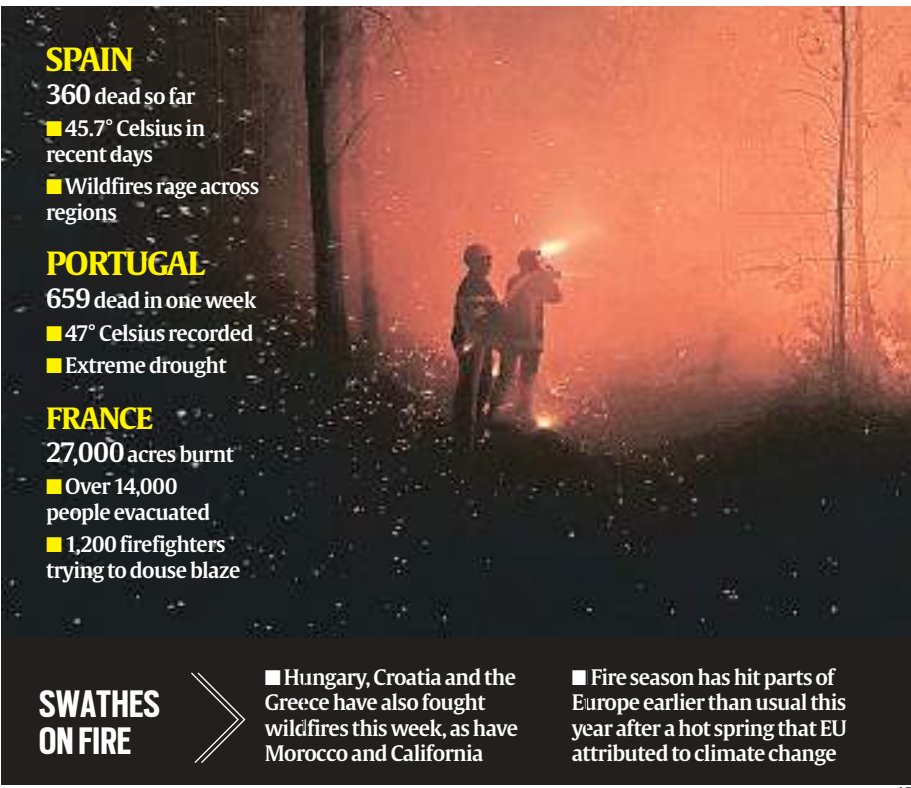
The lawyer, US citizen Asim Ghafoor, was also ordered to pay a fine of USD 816,748 stemming from his in absentia conviction, the UAE's state-run WAM news agency reported, adding he would be deported after completing his sentence. Ghafoor's lawyer dismissed the charges as "absolutely not accurate at all".

"I'm just hoping for a fair trial. I hope there's no political motivation here," his US-based lawyer Faisal Gill said. "He had never heard anything about these charges and all of a sudden he's put in jail."

Emirati state-run media said American authorities had requested the UAE's help with an investigation into Ghafoor's alleged tax evasion and suspicious money transfers in the Emirates.

Gill cast doubt on that claim, saying, "If the US had anything against him, why wouldn't they just deal with it in the US?"

US-based human rights watchdog DAWN said Ghafoor was in transit to Istanbul on Thursday to attend a wedding when plainclothes Emirati agents scooped him up.



SPAIN
360 dead so far
■ 45.7° Celsius in recent days
■ Wildfires rage across regions

PORTUGAL
659 dead in one week
■ 47° Celsius recorded
■ Extreme drought

FRANCE
27,000 acres burnt
■ Over 14,000 people evacuated
■ 1,200 firefighters trying to douse blaze

SWATHES ON FIRE ➤ ■ Hungary, Croatia and the Greece have also fought wildfires this week, as have Morocco and California

■ Fire season has hit parts of Europe earlier than usual this year after a hot spring that EU attributed to climate change

AP

Europe battles to control wildfires

AGENCIES
PARIS, JERTE (SPAIN), JULY 17

FIREFIGHTERS CONTINUED to battle wildfires raging out of control in France and Spain on Sunday as Europe sweltered under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities in Madrid blamed for hundreds of deaths.

In Spain, firefighters supported by military brigades tried to stamp out over 30 fires consuming forests spread across the country. According to Carlos III Institute, which records temperature-related fatalities daily, 360 deaths were attributed to high temperatures from July 10 to 15.

Fires were raging in several other regions including Castille and Leon in central Spain and Galicia in the north on Sunday.

In Malaga province in southwestern Spain, wildfires raged into the night, affecting local residents near Mijas, a town popular with northern European tourists.

In Portugal, a pilot of a firefighting plane died when his aircraft crashed on Friday.

Two huge blazes, which have consumed pine forests for six days in southwestern France, have forced the evacuation of some 14,000 people.

Italy is in the midst of an early summer heat wave, coupled with the worst drought in its north in 70 years.

Scorching temperatures have even reached northern Europe.

Britain's weather agency has issued its first-ever "red warning" of extreme heat for Monday and Tuesday, when temperatures in southern England may reach 40 C (104 F) for the first time.

24 dead in floods in China, Sudan

Beijing, Cairo: Flash floods in southwest and northwest China have left at least a dozen dead and put thousands of others in harm's way, state media reported Sunday. More than 4,000 people have been evacuated, the report said.

The rains come amid a heat wave in parts of the country including eastern Zhejiang province and Shanghai, with temperatures soaring as high as 42 degrees Celsius last week.

In Sudan's western Darfur region, 12 people, including children, were killed in floods, the UN and an aid group said Sunday. According to the UN, at least 9,336 people have been affected by heavy rains and flooding since June. **AP**

Tory voters feel Sunak will be a good PM

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, JULY 17

ALMOST HALF of the voters for the UK's governing Conservative Party believe Rishi Sunak will make a good Prime Minister, according to the results of a new opinion poll on Sunday.

The *Sunday Telegraph* reported that the JL Partners poll of more than 4,400 people found that 48 per cent of those who backed the Tories in the 2019 general election felt the British Indian former Chancellor would be a good Prime Minister.

This is also the first poll that puts Foreign Secretary Liz Truss in second place, with 39 per cent backing her for Prime Minister and 33 per cent in favour of



In the survey of over 4,400 people, who had backed the Conservative party in 2019, 48 per cent felt Sunak will be a good PM, while 39 per cent were in favour of Liz Truss. File



Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt.

The survey comes as the race to elect Boris Johnson's successor as the next Conservative Party leader is narrowing down to these three main contenders.

James Johnson, co-founder of JL Partners and a ex-Downing Street pollster, told the newspaper: "Sunak invites strong opin-

ions. One-third of voters think he would be good in the top job, one third do not. But in an unpopular field where every other candidate is in net-negative territory, this score draw makes him the public's favourite. He is particularly popular with the all-important 2019 Conservative voter, as the only candidate to have half

approve of him," he said.

Among all voters, the most popular policy priority was to "turn the economy around", with addressing the National Health Service (NHS) backlog and restoring trust and integrity in public life coming second and third respectively.

Cutting taxes, which has emerged as a central focus of all the debates so far, was the fourth priority, selected by 38 per cent of voters overall and 40 per cent of Conservative voters.

"While the public chew over the economy, the NHS and public trust, Conservative MPs may have a much simpler question: who is the best candidate to hold their seat? On this evidence, the answer is Mr Sunak," added James Johnson.

ATTACKS INTENSIFY IN DONBAS

Russian missiles hit key city in southern Ukraine

HANNA ARHIROVA
& CARA ANNA
VINNYTSIA (UKRAINE)

RUSSIAN MISSILES hit industrial facilities at a strategic city in southern Ukraine Sunday as a funeral was held for a 4-year-old girl killed in an earlier deadly strike elsewhere in the country. Liza, who had Down syndrome, was en route to see a speech therapist with her mother when a Russian missile struck the city of Vinnytsia in central Ukraine on Thursday. At least 24 people were killed, including Liza and two boys aged 7 and 8.

On Sunday, more Russian missiles struck industrial facilities in the strategic southern city of Mykolaiv, a key shipbuilding center in the estuary of the Southern Bug river. There was no immediate information about casualties.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Sunday that Russian missiles destroyed a depot for anti-ship Harpoon missiles delivered to Ukraine by NATO allies, a claim that couldn't be independently confirmed.

The British Defense Ministry said Sunday that Russia is moving manpower and equipment between Kherson, Mariupol and Zaporizhzhia. It said the Russians also are increasing their security measures around Melitopol.

It added: "Given the pressures on Russian manpower, the reinforcement of the south



A damaged building in Chuhuiv town in Kharkiv. Reuters

whilst the fight for the Donbas continues indicates the seriousness with which Russian commanders view the threat."

The bombings in south apart. Russia has so far focused its efforts on trying to take control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas, where the most capable and well-equipped Ukrainian forces are located.

Ukraine says it still controls two small villages in Luhansk region, one of the two provinces that make up Donbas, and are successfully fending off Russian attempts to advance deeper into Donetsk.

The Ukrainian military's General Staff said that Ukrainian troops thwarted Russian attempts to advance toward a key stronghold in Donetsk. **AP**

EXPLAINED
A strategic war goal

THE RUSSIAN military has declared a goal to cut off Ukraine's entire Black Sea coast all the way to the Romanian border. If successful, such an effort would deal a crushing blow to the Ukrainian economy and trade and allow Moscow to secure a land bridge to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, which hosts a Russian military base.

CALLS FOR EARLY GENERAL ELECTIONS

In first poll after his ouster, Imran's PTI wins by a landslide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE, JULY 17

OUSTED PM Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Sunday made a 'clean sweep' in the crucial Punjab assembly by-

polls, in a major setback to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif whose Chief Minister son Hamza Shehbaz is all set to lose his post. The election for the CM will be held on July 22 on the Supreme Court's order and PTI-PTI joint candidate Chaudhary Parvez Elahi is likely to be the new chief minister of politically crucial province Punjab.

The ruling PML-N of the Sharifs has accepted its defeat and even congratulation PTI Chairman Khan for 'landslide victory' in the by-polls.

"We respect the mandate of the people. Now we ask the PTI-PMLQ to form the government in Punjab," the Prime Minister's spokesperson Malik Ahmad Khan said.

To a question whether Prime Minister Shehbaz would dissolve the National Assembly to call early general elections, he said: "The PML-N leadership will decide about it in consultation with its allies."

PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz also accepted her party's defeat.

Senior PTI leader Asad Umar said Khan would announce the party strategy after a meeting of the core committee on Monday. He said the ruling PML-N is left with only one option and that is "immediately calling for fresh general elections."



Thanking the people, Imran Khan's party called the victory a historic decision "in this struggle for true freedom" @PTIOfficial

DISPUTE HAS DIVIDED dos SANTOS's FAMILY, COULD DECIDE FATE OF HIS PARTY

Dead but not buried, ex-President's body sparks cross-continental fight

GILBERTO NETO,
JOSEBAUTISTA
& LYNSEY CHUTEL
LUANDA, JULY 17

EVEN IN death, Angola's long-time ruler, José Eduardo dos Santos, is at the center of political infighting.

The former president died in Barcelona on July 8 at the age of 79, but when and where he will be buried has set off a cross-continental fight that has pitted the Angolan government and his widow against some of his adult children.

José Eduardo dos Santos's death came just weeks before a

crucial election. Angola's governing party and current president, João Lourenço, along with dos Santos's widow, want to bring his body home for a state funeral and burial in a Soviet-style mausoleum — the kind of spectacle that could rally support for a party struggling to stay in power.

But his daughter Welwitschia dos Santos is pushing for a private funeral and a discreet grave site in Spain, where his children can visit. She says she has the support of some of her siblings who, like her, face accusations of corruption in Angola and could be arrested if they return. They could also be

trying to parlay the return of their father's body to regain their place in Angola's political elite.

With both sides fighting it out in a Spanish court, it is now up to a judge in Barcelona to decide the feud.

The outcome could sway the August election in Angola, a country rich in oil and minerals on the west coast of southern Africa.

"People are just trying to use the body and all these related issues to advance their own personal agendas," said Augusto Santana, a political analyst in Angola. He added that the incumbent president wants to use the death "for electoral purposes."



With his body still in Spain, dos Santos's portrait was the official focus of mourning in Luanda last week. AP

poses," and the children to negotiate "the dropping of accusations related to corruption."

dos Santos, one of Africa's longest-serving leaders, was a towering figure in Angola for nearly four decades.

To his supporters, many of whom entered Angola's moneyed elite, he shepherded the country out of violent turmoil to make it one of the world's largest oil producers, its coastal capital dotted with skyscrapers.

But to his many detractors, he was a ruthless dictator who suppressed democracy and oversaw an economy choked by corruption, with most Angolans living

on less than \$2 a day.

dos Santos had been living in self-imposed exile in Barcelona for three years. According to Welwitschia dos Santos, popularly known as Tchizé, he had said he wanted to be buried there.

His handpicked successor, Lourenço, who came to power in 2017, had turned on him, blaming the dos Santos administration for Angola's economic malaise. Lourenço and dos Santos attempted a rapprochement last year, dos Santos returned to Angola and was set to appear at the party's conference. But then he learned that his son José Filomeno dos Santos would

be sentenced to five years in prison for embezzling the state's sovereign fund.

Angola held a seven-day mourning period for its former leader. In lieu of a casket, a large portrait of dos Santos was erected in a government plaza, with a red carpet leading up to it while uniformed soldiers stood guard.

But the fight over dos Santos's remains is of little concern to ordinary Angolans.

"Do you know how much my husband and I earn?" asked Avenina de Vasco, 37, a street cleaner. "I don't care whether he is buried here or in Europe or America." **NYT**



Lucknow

BRIEFLY

Babar ton leaves Test evenly poised

Calles: Pakistan captain Babar Azam pulled his side back from the brink with a century that helped the touring side dig themselves out of trouble on day two of the first test against Sri Lanka on Sunday. With Pakistan on 148-9, the writing appeared to be on the wall as they appeared set to concede a huge lead to the home side on a turning track. But a record partnership for the last wicket between Babar and Naseem Shah put Pakistan back in contention as they conceded just a four-run deficit in the first innings. **BRIEF SCORES:** Sri Lanka 1st innings 222 and second innings 36/1 (Oshada Fernando 17; Mohammad Nawaz 1/12) leading against **Pakistan** 1st innings 218 all out (Babar Azam 119; Prabath Jayasuriya 5/82, Ramesh Mendis 2/18) by 40 runs. **REUTERS**

India bow out of FIBA Asia Cup after 3rd loss

Jakarta: The Indian men's basketball team suffered a huge defeat against Lebanon, its third consecutive in the competition, to end its campaign in the FIBA Asia Cup on a disappointing note here on Sunday. India lost 63-104 in its final Group D match at the Istora Gelora Bung Karno Stadium. Winless India finished last in the four-team group. The top team from each group advanced to the quarterfinals, while the second and third placed sides will feature in the playoffs. India had earlier lost 47-100 against New Zealand before suffering a 59-101 defeat at the hands of Philippines. **PTI**

TT players rue lack of psychologist at CWG

New Delhi: The absence of sports psychologist Gayatri Vartak from India's 14-member table tennis contingent for the upcoming CWG has not gone down well with the players. Vartak, a former badminton player, was on the list of players and support staff for the Birmingham Games but has not made the final squad. Sharath Kamal, reigning national champion Sreeja Akula and Reeth Rishya said that Vartak's presence in the contingent would have made a big difference. **PTI**

Moudgil wins bronze at ISSF World Cup

Changwon: India's Anjum Moudgil won a bronze medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Sunday. Anjum shot 402.9 in the final round to finish third. She had 100.7 in kneeling, 101.6 in prone and 200.6 in standing position. She had qualified for the finals after finishing sixth in the ranking round on Saturday. Germany's Anna Janssen won the gold while Italy's Barbara Gambaro took the silver medal. Anjum had won a silver in the 2018 Changwon World Cup. **PTI**

Singapore Open title 'just the start' as Indian shuttler fine-tunes her game for the Worlds with an impressive win over Zhi Yi Wang in the final

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, JULY 17

WHEN PV SINDHU grinned brightly post winning the Singapore Open defeating Chinese Zhi Yi Wang, and refrained from gushing, calling the Super 500 title “just the start”, it signalled the most realistic perspective from an athlete aware of belonging to the higher echelons and firmly on the upswing in confidence.

The onset of July and August has historically proven a harbinger of the former World Champion's peaking at the biggest tournaments - whether the Olympics or Worlds. And for someone who's been in three World Championship finals and one at the Olympics, an easy Singapore Open Super 500 victory could only count as a good injection of confidence, a five-match-week paced perfectly, before the real battles fetch up - this time at the Tokyo Worlds.

VIP congratulatory tweets cannot discern between a Sunday spent downing a pugna-cious 22-year-old Chinese in a fisticuff final after a week of negotiating past pesky unseeded opponents and a Sunday battle-hardened, scar-riven and ice bath-soaked from taking out fellow Top Tenners. She might not have won a big title for three years now - not that Sindhu craved the smaller ones ever - but the swag of the World Champion from Basel, the muscle memory of rising to the pinnacle scything stacked fields, is firmly intact in the towering Indian.

A 21-9, 11-21, 21-15 victory with two lopsided games, and a decider that the World No. 7 cleverly controlled at the clutch, pointed to settled nerves and a calmer court presence, that sets her up nicely for bigger battles that'll demand she keep her head during tricky phases of play. Not that Sindhu needs reminding, but the title restores belief she can lord over opponents, after some bruising losses in the past few months.

Metaphorically and literally, Sindhu read the winds, gauged the backline judg-



PV Sindhu managed to stay strong in the key moments to come up trumps 21-9 11-21 21-15.

AP

ments, trained her peripheral vision to the flying bird's whimsy idiosyncrasies better than at any tournament in 2022, at Singapore where she picked her first Super 500 title. The decorated Indian has traversed global arenas all these years, and not once complained about the a/c- induced drift ever costing her a match. As such, Sindhu is India's best all-court, all-conditions player over the years, unfazed by shuttle speeds. Perhaps from an itchy lack of confidence, the last few tournaments since the Asian Championship had seen her wrestle and wrangle uncharacteristically

with line calls and Hawk-Eye judgments, impacting her poise on court, and costing her matches even.

At Singapore, Sindhu was spot on with her referrals through the week, and solidly aware of shuttle flight. Even more impressive was how her crosscourt game was neatly curated to neutralise the drift. She eschewed the straight, floating, baseline-kissing tosses and wildly transgressing smashes, and smartly deployed the short cross, angled drops from the forecourt to allow the shuttle to fall within bounds and not unnecessarily tempt fate, playing to the tramlines.

Smart gameplan

Zhi Yi Wang can beat the top names on her day (and their bad ones), but isn't quite pickled in the craft of deception. Ratchanok Intanon has drilled holes in her game for a while now, and Sindhu used canny deception on her strokes to get her to fall short in the forecourt as she was often found stranded at the back.

The drift dictated not just the lopsided individual game scores. It also nipped extravagances of hard hitting, as given half a whiff, the shuttle would gladly stray along the lines, such was the drift from left to

No medal, but vindication attained for Sreeshankar at Worlds

ANDREW AMSAN
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

LONG JUMPER Murali Sreeshankar would be a tad upset about not being able to produce a jump anywhere close to his personal best of 8.36m that would have certainly sealed him a podium spot at the Oregon World Championships. In the high drama long jump final, China's Jianan Wang, who was sitting in the fifth spot till the penultimate round, snatched the gold away from Tokyo champion Miltiádis Tentóglou with an 8.36m leap in his final attempt.

Sreeshankar, the only Indian male jumper to reach the finals at Worlds, finished seventh with a best attempt of 7.96m. In his fourth and sixth attempts, he measured 7.89 and 7.83m failing to breach the 8m mark as he did during the qualification round. The 23-year-old can take heart from the fact that no Indian male jumper has come this far at the World championships.

A top-eight finish at Worlds proves that Sreeshankar belongs at the elite level and will

set the tone for the upcoming Commonwealth Games. His Worlds campaign should also erase the bitter memories that have been haunting him since Tokyo.

When Sreeshankar returned from a disappointing outing at the Olympics, he contemplated quitting the sport and focussing on his studies. The criticism, his father and coach Murali says, got to the then 22-year-old. In his debut Games, he could only manage a best jump of 7.69m and finished 24th in the heats.

“He came back and was reading all the papers, including all the not-so-nice things written about him,” says father Murali in a lighter vein. It took a lot of encouragement from family and friends to pull out Sreeshankar from the mental slump he had fallen post-Tokyo.

And if the Tokyo disappointment wasn't enough, things got tougher when the Athletics Federation of India decided to remove Murali as Sreeshankar's coach. “We are not happy with his coaching programme, first action is already being taken as we have changed his coach,” AFI president Adille Sumariwalla had bluntly put it.



Murali Sreeshankar during the long jump final at the World Athletics Championships.

Reuters

But Sreeshankar and his father were adamant. They continued their training in Pallakad, Kerala after a month-long rehab at the JSW facilities in Bellary. AFI's removal of Murali as an official coach meant that he could no longer avail paid leave from Indian Railways, his employer, to train Sreeshankar. “I always felt hurt when I was told that I don't know anything. I studied in a sports college, studied under several coaches, and was

in the national camp for over 10 years. I have competed in the domestic circuit for many years. I can see changes much faster,” says Murali, a former triple jumper.

It was a tough period for the duo until the Federation Cup in April where they silenced their critics with a national record of 8.36m. Murali not only felt vindicated but regained a spot in the good books of the federation who now seem to have conceded its best the duo train together.

“My father understands me and my body better than me. I have always had complete faith in him and his decisions for me,” says Sreeshankar who started training informally under his father when he was just 10. He wasn't allowed to follow in his father's footsteps and take up triple jump as Murali felt it was an injury-prone sport.

Murali generally keeps his cool with Sreeshankar and doesn't believe in a harsh postmortem of events where things have not gone their way. “He never scolds or speaks to me harshly if I perform poorly. He just asks me to forget it and focus on the next competition,” says Sreeshankar.

Pandya provides balance, breathing space for Virat

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
JULY 17

OFF THE last ball of his sixth over, Hardik Pandya bounced Jos Buttler and the England white-ball captain accepted the bait. Buttler swung the ball high in front of square from outside off, but Ravindra Jadeja's elite athleticism ensured that he not only sprinted to the ball from deep square leg, but also held onto it after impact with the turf.

Jadeja's spectacular take had given Pandya his fourth wicket in the third ODI in Manchester - the first time the all-rounder has taken a four-for in ODIs, after which he proceeded to rescue India from 72 for 4 with his 71 off 55. Last week, Pandya had taken only his second T20I four-for in Southampton, right after hitting 51 off 33.

Balancing the combination

Since his comeback to the national team in June, against South Africa, Pandya has instantly shown just how much India were missing him, especially in his fit-and-firing avatar. He provides just the right balance to this unit, the value of which goes well beyond the crucial breakthroughs he regularly provides or the runs he scores.

And no other all-rounder that India possess has been able to calibrate the team-combination scales in white-ball cricket with such finesse; about that, there remains absolutely no doubt.

Pandya's presence has allowed India a decent amount of cushion if one of the bowlers goes on to be expensive. It also did not let them feel the absence of their pre-



Hardik Pandya took four wickets and scored 71 runs to help India to victory in the third ODI against England.

AP

mier pacer Jasprit Bumrah too much at Old Trafford. Even if it is something as basic, but critical, as putting in a reliable second-change spell after the opening bursts from Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, Pandya has stepped up to that role too.

Similarly, on the batting front, his name - and Jadeja's - on the team sheet means that much more buffer for the preceding specialists, and that much more breathing space if one or more of them is out of form, like Virat Kohli is at the moment. With genuine all-rounders around instead of a

Shardul Thakur or Bhuvaneshwar Kumar, the specialists can bat with more freedom and take more risks at the top, in keeping with how the white-ball game is evolving around the world.

And most importantly, a fit Pandya means India's T20 World Cup build-up is ticking along. India will keep hoping that this hard-fought fitness holds going into Australia. Pandya had bowled just four overs in five games in the 2021 T20 World Cup, effectively playing as a specialist batsman; that is not what they want him to be, as has been made clear.

White-ball craft

In that regard, it was heartening that Pandya sent down as many as seven overs in Manchester. The last time he bowled more was March 2021 and the last time he bowled his full quota in an ODI was in the 2019 World Cup semi-final. His workload's been steadily building up since he bowled a solitary over in his comeback match against South Africa in Delhi last month.

At Old Trafford, a majority of Pandya's deliveries were either short or just short of a good length. Only Mohammed Siraj had found some movement with the new ball; Mohammed Shami had gone for plenty with his full lengths, in search of early swing. Pandya saw that and altered his strategy. Not that Pandya cannot move the ball around - he has a Test five-for in England - but he uses his varied short balls smartly in white-ball cricket.

Pandya played on Liam Livingstone's ego in Manchester. His first spell of four overs had gone for a mere two runs, so he could afford to concede a few for another wicket. He had Livingstone swinging and missing, ducking and fending his bounc-

ers. In between, Livingstone also connected, depositing two over the boundary. But Pandya had the last laugh, revealing after the match that he was fine being hit for a few sixes if it increased the chances of getting his wicket.

Rescue act

Pandya's batting on Sunday was as switched-on as his bowling was. When England went short into his body, he did not hold back on the pull. When they pitched up, he was ready to take advantage of the vast vacant spaces at deep extra cover.

When Craig Overton zipped a lifter past his outside edge, Pandya gave the bowler a thumbs-up, and calmly played the next one late past backward point for a single. After Reece Topley appealed unsuccessfully for caught-behind down the leg side, Pandya replied with a rocket of a straight drive for four. He has this ability to consign the previous delivery to history in an instant, and then immediately hit back hard.

There was an incredible reflex back-foot punch off Livingstone that hurtled past extra cover and had such good timing it beat the sweeper's dive into the rope; it also left the bowler scratching his head in disbelief.

By the time he fell to Brydon Carse, Pandya had gone at a strike rate of nearly 130 and had outscored and outpaced Rishabh Pant. That rarely happens, and when it does, it requires something special.

BRIEF SCORES: England 259 all out in 45.5 overs (Jos Buttler 60, Jason Roy 41; Hardik Pandya 4/24, Yuzvendra Chahal 3/60) lost to **India** 261 for 5 in 42.1 overs (Rishabh Pant 125 not out, Hardik Pandya 71; Reece Topley 3/35) by five wickets.

Pant paces his way to first ton, leads India to win

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
JULY 17

UNTIL HIS 24th delivery, Rishabh Pant had not hit a single boundary. And the first one was an indication that he had had enough of reining it in. He charged out to Craig Overton, had a heave, and outside-edged the ball past the wicketkeeper for four. Off his 27th delivery, he would provide England a much bigger opening.

He jumped down the track to Moeen Ali and swung with all his might, so much so that he was off the ground for an instant before completing the bat-swing and falling back on the pitch to try and make his ground. Fortunately for him, and unfortunately for England, Jos Buttler had failed to collect the ball. He was on 18 then.

It has been somewhat incongruous that Pant had already scored five Test hundreds, and had managed none across ODIs and T20Is. After the reprieve from Buttler, he would go on to correct that anomaly in Manchester on Sunday, hammering an unbeaten 125 off 113 deliveries that gave India the ODI series over England 2-1. In an indication of how well he paced his innings, Pant took 71 balls for his fifty, and just 35 to move to the hundred thereafter.

Pant first revived India from 72 for 4 in a 133-run partnership with Hardik Pandya. After the all-rounder fell with another 55 needed, Pant proceeded to absolutely flatten England. Having played the situation - as Pandya would say later - all along and turned it around for his team, Pant decided to have fun; he carved David Willey for five suc-

SMITH WINS BRITISH OPEN

Cameron Smith staged one of the greatest back-nine charges ever witnessed at a major championship, coming from four shots behind to win the 150th British Open on Sunday as Rory McIlroy's major drought continued. Smith carded a sensational final round eight-under 64 that included a spectacular run of five consecutive birdies from the turn to win.

REUTERS

right and from the near side of the court. It was in grappling with that wild bird that Sindhu displayed her seasoned skill. The diagonal is always the longest leeway on a shuttle court, and playing across made sense to keep the shuttle on a plausible leash.

So, the power hitter Sindhu would fold away her unfettered attack and play the soft touches - angled drops from mid-court with a veiled racquet face, pinpoint net exchanges - not one shot more than required, pushing Wang back one step at a time.

Matters level at 1-1, and twice with the Chinese threatening to close down gaps at 11-12 and 14-16 in the decider, Sindhu would show precise shot selection and use more of the tempered drops and pushes to widen the gap once more. Prone to getting agitated if gaps narrowed earlier, Sindhu would stay cool as a cat, and then stamp her authority in closing out. That composure has been lacking against bigger players, but that seemed down to confidence, and nothing inherently in her game. Against Wang, the Indian looked well in control.

Titles like in Singapore have always been in Sindhu's reach, though she has prioritised the big stage, high-intensity, mounting-pressure tournaments like Worlds and Olympics over the circuit rigmarole. Three weeks back-to-back in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore helped her err and figure out corrections in her closing-out game, and the title is best seen as a smoothening of rough edges.

Granting it any more importance would be a disservice to Sindhu's calibre and potential of winning the big ones of the season. Even the Commonwealth Games ought to be seen, relative to the competition on offer, as a box to be ticked for the champion athlete, without going over the top once that happens. A five-time Worlds medallist knows her stomping ground is the World Championship. Singapore was a pitstop, albeit a validating one. “Just a start”, as Sindhu offered.

Kerley wins men's world 100m final

Eugene (USA): Fred Kerley led an American clean sweep in the 100 metres final on Saturday, the first since 1991, to send the home fans wild and give the sport's dominant nation a night to remember as they hosted the World Championships for the first time.

Kerley timed his dip perfectly to clock 9.86 seconds as Marvin Bracy took silver and Trayvon Bromell bronze, both with 9.88 seconds, but Bracy edging it by two thousandths of a second. There was nothing between the medallists once they were into their running, and with Bromell out in lane eight and the other two side-by-side in three and four it was an impossible finish to call. **REUTERS**

In an indication of how well he paced his innings, Pant took 71 balls for his fifty, and just 35 to move to the hundred thereafter.

cessive fours to bring India to the brink of victory, and then teased everyone present at Old Trafford by tapping a single off the last ball of the over. He reverted to typical Pant style, ending the game with a reverse-swept four off Joe Root.

He has cracked the big-innings puzzle in Test cricket long ago. But the fine line between attack and self-destruction that he straddles in the longer format has proved to be finer, and harder to sustain, in white-ball cricket. We see this a lot in T20, where he can go into a bit of a shell and then suddenly try to break the shackles, only to give it away.

Not that it couldn't have happened on Sunday, but he put that Buttler chance behind him and applied himself to the task at hand. Not as eye-catching as the late volley of boundaries, but perhaps more important, were the calm dabs square of the wicket and the hard running between the wickets with Pandya. Even when he was squeezed for width, he found a way to rotate the strike, like when he hit the ball hard into the ground and got it to bounce over point.

A maiden white-ball hundred in a chase to seal an away series; as Pant said after the game, “Hopefully I remember (this century) for the rest of my life.”

