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What's Next After Russia Reduced Gas to Europe?



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**India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka FMs,
Maldives president to attend
Commonwealth Summit in Rwanda**



(By Staff Reporter) As Rwanda's capital Kigali is set to host the Commonwealth summit later this week, Foreign Ministers of India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will be in attendance and while Maldives will be represented at Presidential level, by its President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. EAM will be in Kigali from 23rd June to 25th of June for the summit.

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**G7 and NATO Leaders to Ratchet up Pressure
on Russia, Keep Eye on China, Says US**



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**Maharashtra political crisis: Eknath
Shinde with 33 Sena MLAs, 7
Independents leaves Gujarat for Assam**



**Full Story on
Page 30**

India and Australia: Partners with shared interests and entwined destinies

Both nations share a vision for an open, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific region

(By Staff Reporter) It is no accident that my first two bilateral visits as Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Australia are to Japan and India. The case for Australia making India a priority is unassailable: Australia must strengthen its understanding of and engagement with the world's soon-to-be most populous nation and a deeply consequential power. Our world — and our region — faces the most serious strategic confluence of events since the end of the Second World War: Intensifying strategic and geo-economic competition, the return of war to Europe, growing climate risks, and enduring pandemic impacts, all of which are driving inflation and supply chain shocks. Countries which share



common values and interests must work together with resolve to shape our economic and strategic environment so that it continues to support our collective security and prosperity. My visit this week to New Delhi and Goa is based on that conviction, and the commitment by the new Australian government to place India at the heart of Australia's approach to the Indo-Pacific and

beyond. India's economy, manufacturing capabilities and talent ensure it will play a key role in securing supply chains and restarting post-pandemic growth. Its military has the capacity and capability to respond to natural disasters, help stabilise an uncertain region and contribute to an effective balance of power.

(Contd. on page 30)



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2 Women Say Indian-Origin Cop In Singapore Divorced Them After Taking Dowry

The accused has refuted the allegations and claimed that the families of his ex-wives were only looking to tarnish his reputation and get more money from him



(SAI Bureau) An Indian-origin police officer is under investigation in Singapore over allegations of taking dowries worth thousands of dollars to marry two women and then divorcing them but not returning any cash and valuables, according to a media report. Singapore Police Force

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) A Mohamed Rafeek Abdul Kader, however, refuted the allegations and claimed that the families of his ex-wives were only looking to tarnish his reputation and get more money from him, The Straits Times newspaper reported on Thursday. He is accused of having taken dowries worth thousands of dollars to marry the two women and then divorcing them but not returning any cash and valuables, the report said. A police spokesperson said the officer was assisting with the

investigations. A local news outlet in Tamil Nadu reported that Rafeek married Thaslema, an Indian citizen, in 2014 and received 150 pieces of jewellery and a watch worth 1 500,000 (SGD 8,900) as dowry.

The report alleged that the officer sent Thaslema back to India a few days after their marriage and filed for divorce without returning the dowry. Rafeek, however, said they were married in Singapore in 2016, and divorced in 2017. "After our divorce, Thaslema took back the dowry and went back to India, where she is now happily married with a kid," he

claimed. According to the media outlet, Rafeek married his second wife, Ameer Nisha, also an Indian citizen, in 2020. He reportedly received 101 pieces of jewellery, a Rolex watch, a platinum ring and 1 2,81,765 (SGD 5,000) in cash. The family of the second wife has claimed that he again filed for divorce shortly after tying the knot, and did not return the dowry. Rafeek has denied this as well. He said he had filed for divorce in 2021 which was finalised only earlier this year. Both of his marriages were registered in Singapore, he said.

Punjab Kings Co-owner Suggests IPL Of Two Halves, One In India, The Other Abroad

Over the next five years, there is a possibility that the IPL could have as many as 94 games and BCCI secretary Jay Shah has already said that the tournament will have a dedicated two and a half months in the next ICC's FTP calendar



(SAI Bureau) Punjab Kings co-owner Ness Wadia feels that IPL should now be held in two separate halves with a significant increase in number of matches after the BCCI made a 'killing' at the media rights auction with USD 6.2 billion deal. BCCI spreading the media rights into four bundles helped the richest cricketing board amass Rs 48390 crore from the e-auction, nearly three times more than the previous cycle.

Over the next five years, there is a possibility that the IPL could have as many as 94 games and BCCI secretary Jay Shah has already said that the tournament will have a dedicated two and a half months in the next ICC's FTP calendar. Speaking to PTI, Wadia congratulated Shah and Co for delivering on an innovative media rights strategy but hoped the IPL gets what is long overdue: "more home games and a bigger season".

"IPL has taken cricket to the global level. The IPL has

provided the spark cricket needed and made it a global sport. It will get even bigger. "Having said that, seven matches at home, it is way too less. It should be a minimum of 14. I really see a much longer season which is long overdue.

"If you can't have a long season of four months why not look at two seasons, one in India and one in a different country every year. Indians are everywhere around the world. There is huge potential for having many more games," said Wadia.

Until last season, when there were eight franchisees, teams played 14 games on an home and away basis. With 10 teams this year, the format was tweaked but a team continued to play 14 games. Asked why the home games need to be doubled, he said: "It is a logical reason. How much are seven matches at home? Too few in my opinion. There has to be a bigger window. In per match value, the IPL is bigger than EPL now and look at the number of games each team

plays there (38)." IPL getting a longer window and other T20 leagues mushrooming around the world also puts more stress on bilateral cricket. A few experts have already predicted that cricket is going the football way with leagues set to dominate the cricket calendar.

"I would say it is already happening. There is no doubt that will eventually happen. The IPL has revived, grown and globalised cricket. And believe me it is the tip of the iceberg." The tournament

is around for 15 years and the window should have become bigger many years ago. It is long overdue. And it will happen. For how long can you keep genie in the bottle." Asked about the viewer fatigue factor with the IPL getting longer: "At some point, we will have to factor in that also. That is where the creativity comes and we can see how leagues are run around the world. We are long away from fatigue at the moment. We will cross the bridge when we get there.

He Was Shot Multiple Times: Relative Of Man Killed In Kabul Gurdwara Attack

Kabul attack: In Delhi, family members of Sawinder Singh were mourning the loss of a loved one, as they struggled to put behind the horrid images of attack

(SAI Bureau) A relative of the Afghan Sikh man, who is among the two persons killed in a terror attack on a gurdwara in Kabul, said his brother-in-law was taking a bath when he was fatally shot multiple times. Several blasts tore through Gurdwara Karte Parwan in Kabul's Bagh-e Bala neighbourhood on Saturday while Afghan security personnel thwarted a bigger tragedy by stopping an explosive-laden vehicle from reaching the place of worship of the minority community. The ISIS has claimed responsibility for the attack, calling it "an act of support" for the Prophet. In Delhi, family members of Sawinder Singh were mourning the loss of a loved one, as they struggled to put behind the horrid images of attack. While Singh's wife was inconsolable, her brother Pupender Singh, 36, shared the sequence of events he pieced together. "My brother-in-law ran a shop and offered 'sewa' at the Gurdwara Karte Parwan, and also lived in a room on its premises. I

got a call yesterday morning from my younger brother who lives in Kabul that the gurdwara had been attacked. He along with his friend was on his way to Jalalabad, when they told the taxi driver to take them back to Kabul," he said. Kabul-born Pupender Singh said they were an Afghan Sikh family and Sawinder Singh and several other family members were all born and raised in Afghanistan only. "When my brother reached to Kabul, by that time Taliban forces had already arrived and they were moving through the area. Multiple blasts had completed destroyed the gurdwara. My brother then saw the body of our brother-in-law and called me to inform that 'wo shaheed ho gaye hain' (brother-in-law has been martyred)," Pupender Singh told PTI. "We have the pictures and videos of his bullet-riddled body. There are bullet marks on his chest, at two places, and on a foot too. He was shot multiple times, and what information I have

received from my brother in Kabul, he was shot dead while he was taking a bath in the bathroom. The door was found broken," he said, with a heaviness in his voice.

The Islamic State - Khorasan Province (ISKP), an affiliate of the ISIS terrorist group has said that one of its fighters "penetrated a temple for Hindu and Sikh polytheists" in Kabul, after killing the guard, and opened fire on the worshippers inside with his machine gun and hand grenades. It was the latest targeted assault on a place of worship of the Sikh community in Afghanistan. The three attackers were killed by the Taliban forces. In 2018, a suicide bomber struck a gathering in the eastern city of Jalalabad, whilst another gurdwara was attacked in 2020. "My 'mama' (maternal uncle) was killed in the 2018 attack," recalled Pupender Singh, who moved to India in 2010 and now lives in a refugee settlement in Janakpuri.

US Flagged Iranian Funding Of Gupta Brothers' Mine Purchase, Claims Report

The report claimed that efforts by the top three officials at the State Security Agency (SSA) to investigate the Indian-origin Gupta family were thwarted, allegedly by the then minister of the agency, Siyabonga Cwele



Under the leadership of Director General Jeff Maqetuka, Head of the Foreign Branch Moe Shaik and Head of the Domestic Branch Gibson Njenje, the SSA wanted to conduct investigations into the Guptas, it said.

The Commission handed over its final reports to President Ramaphosa after a four-year investigation in which the three Gupta brothers - Ajay, Atul and Rajesh - featured prominently about their alleged looting of billions of rands from state enterprises, allegedly because of their closeness to former president Jacob Zuma.

Atul and Rajesh are now believed to be in custody in Dubai, awaiting the finalisation of an extradition request by South Africa. The entire Gupta family, originally from Saharanpur in India, fled the country when the net closed in on them as pressure mounted on Zuma, who was eventually ousted by his own African National Congress that had appointed him to a second term. "In the Commission's view, a strong case is made, ... that

there were deliberate efforts made ... to capture national intelligence; furthermore, efforts were made to thwart investigations into the Guptas," the report said.

"As to what initially sparked interest in the Guptas, Ambassador Maqetuka confirms the evidence by Mr Shaik and Mr Njenje that it arose because the Americans had raised the concern that the Guptas were getting funds from Iran to buy the Shiva Uranium Mine.

"The second angle from which the need arose to investigate the Guptas, arose from the issue of (Transport) Minister (Fikile) Mbalula having said that he was informed of his impending appointment as Minister by the Guptas even before he was told by the former President. "It needed to be investigated for two reasons according to Ambassador Maqetuka. Firstly, to them, for Minister Mbalula to be informed in advance by an outsider posed a serious security risk. Secondly, there was a need to protect the

former President as that would tarnish his name," the report said. "A further concern was that, by informing Minister Mbalula in advance of his appointment, the Guptas would be creating a dependency by Mr Mbalula on them as their advance knowledge of his appointment would make him feel beholden to them. This kind of undue influence over the Minister of Sport was serious, as the Guptas had interests in businesses that included cricket stadia," the report added. At one stage, the Guptas had attempted to rename all the major cricket stadiums in South Africa under their IT brand, Sahara. The Commission was also told that Minister Susan Shabangu, then Minister of Mining, was summoned to a meeting with Ajay Gupta, which would have been held at a hotel, but the venue was changed to the official residence of President, Mahlabisa Ndlopfu, in Pretoria. The ministerial delegation was ushered into the President's study by Ajay Gupta, who allegedly pressured the minister into fast-tracking mineral rights for his company.

(News Agency) Johannesburg: Commission of Inquiry into State Capture, which was handed over to President Cyril Ramaphosa by Chief Justice Raymond Zondo on Wednesday, claimed that efforts by the top three officials at the State Security Agency (SSA) to investigate the Indian-origin Gupta family were thwarted, allegedly by the then minister of the agency, Siyabonga Cwele. The final report of the

Biden Nominates Indian-American Legal Expert Anjali Chaturvedi For Key Post

Anjali Chaturvedi is a Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, according to the White House website

(News Agency) Washington: Prominent Indian-American legal expert Anjali Chaturvedi has been nominated by US President Joe Biden as General Counsel in the veterans affairs department, the latest from the community to be named for a key position in the administration. Ms Chaturvedi is a Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, according to the White House website.

Ms Chaturvedi has been nominated for General Counsel, US Department of Veterans Affairs.

The main vision of the department is to provide veterans with the world-class benefits and services they have earned — and to do so by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship.

During her career, Ms Chaturvedi has worked in all three branches of the

government and in private practice. Prior to returning to government service, Ms Chaturvedi was the Assistant General Counsel and Director of Investigations for Northrop Grumman Corporation, leading the company's global investigations team.

Ms Chaturvedi earlier served as an Assistant General Counsel at British Petroleum and as a partner at the Washington, DC law firm of Nixon Peabody. Before entering private practice, she was a federal prosecutor.

During her time at the Justice Department, she served both in the District of Columbia and the Northern District of California US Attorneys' Offices, including as Deputy Chief of the Felony Trial Section and Chief of the Organised Crime Strike Force, and detail as Counsel to Senator Dianne Feinstein on the Senate Judiciary Committee. She began her legal career clerking for the

Honourable Gregory E. Mize of the District of Columbia Superior Court. Ms Chaturvedi also taught trial advocacy and criminal procedure as an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University and Hastings College of Law. Born in Cortland, New York, Ms Chaturvedi is a first-generation American. She is a graduate of the Georgetown University Law School and Cornell University. She is also a certified yoga teacher and leadership coach. She lives in Chevy Chase, MD with her husband and son. On Tuesday, leading Indian-American scientist Dr Arti Prabhakar was nominated by Biden as a top science advisor to the US President, a decision hailed by the White House and the Indian-American community as "historic." Last week, Biden nominated Indian-American security expert Radha Iyengar to the top Pentagon position.

Indian Worker In Singapore Dies After Getting Crushed In A Crane

(News Agency) Singapore: A 32-year-old Indian worker died after he was crushed between parts of a mobile crane at a construction site in Singapore, officials said today. The "workplace accident" happened at 1 Mandai Quarry Road at around 10:15 am on Wednesday, they said.

The Indian worker, who was an employee of Hwa Yang Engineering, was retrieving two shackles from a toolbox

underneath the chassis of a mobile crane when the crane turned clockwise. "His chest was crushed between the crane counterweights and the crane undercarriage," the Channel News Asia quoted a Ministry of Manpower (MOM) spokesperson as saying. The man was taken to Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, where he died from his injuries, the spokesperson said, without revealing the person's name.

This was the 27th workplace fatality so far in

Singapore this year. There were a total of 37 workplace deaths for the whole of 2021, according to the Channel report. There were 10 deaths in April alone. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said last



month that workplace fatalities were "not acceptable" and had called on all parties to "put this right". He noted that with the reopening of the economy and more work and social activities resuming, "safety standards and practices seem to have slipped" and accident rates are going up. Starting June 14, companies with poor workplace safety and health performance would face harsher penalties, Ministry of Manpower said last week.

W V V, Indian Consulate organize Yoga Cruise, celebrate International Yoga Day

(By a staff reporter) World Vegan Vision (WVV) organized Yoga Cruise with over 250 people onboard on June 12, 2022 in collaboration with the Indian Consulate to celebrate the International Yoga Day and the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence. World Vegan Vision also dedicated this cruise to celebrate its 30th anniversary, among other celebrations coming up at Thanksgiving.

Honorable NY State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky and Honorable Consul for Press, Information and Culture Vipul Dev graced the occasion. Senator Toby Stavisky appreciated the efforts of World Vegan Vision in spreading the healthy lifestyle and presented the citation to the Founder and Chairman Mr. H.K. Shah. Consul Vipul Dev congratulated H.K. Shah and Mrs. Suman Munjal for conducting the Yoga cruise in celebration of the International Yoga Day coming up on June 21st and the 75th anniversary of India's Independence as well. World Vegan Vision is a 30 years old non-profit organization with a



mission to promote veganism and healthy lifestyle. The main mission of World Vegan Vision is to increase the public awareness on three main aspects of Veganism; Health, Animal Welfare and Environmental Conservation. The Cruise started from World's Fair Marina and went around Manhattan sightseeing and Statue of Liberty. The weather cooperated, so everybody enjoyed the cruise.

Main program started at 12 PM.

President of New York Chapter Suman Munjal in her speech welcomed and thanked all the dignitaries, trustees, past presidents, community leaders, executive committee members and the invited guests. She thanked people for coming and joined outlined the benefits of becoming Vegan. She said "There are enormous benefits of becoming a vegan, which I personally experienced. As soon as I became vegan, I controlled my

diabetes and cholesterol with vegan diet despite reducing my diabetes medicine. I want to encourage you all to become vegan. Many people feel that it is difficult to leave dairy products like milk, yogurt, butter, cheese and ghee, there are now a variety of availability of vegan food, cookies, almond milk, coconut milk etc. and so are various delicious recipes". She urged people to at least try and see the benefits for

themselves. Founder and Chairman Mr. H.K. Shah thanked all for their help and support for the last 30 years. He particularly thanked Mr. Deepak Shah, owner of about 25 pharma stores and Mr. Mukund Thakkar, owner of a few Indian seniors' nursing homes for supporting WVV with their generous donations. Chandra Mehta Vice-Chair of WVV and wife of the Trustee Mr. K. K. Mehta thanked everybody for their continued help and support, especially when she organized the 25th anniversary of Vegetarian Vision/World Vegan Vision. Dr Shrenik Shah, President of NJ Chapter spoke about Yoga and Vegan Lifestyle. Yoga and breathing exercises were conducted by Ms. Sweta Todai. Renowned Guru Dileep ji helped people to execute Yoga. Post lunch, cultural program related to 75th India's independence followed, including Patriotic songs. Free Raffle, Garba Dance, DJ music and Dance entertainment were enjoyed. The Cruise concluded with Vote of Thanks by the Secretary Tejal Raval.

Indian - Origin Man In US Found Injured Inside SUV, Dies In Hospital

About 4:30 am on Monday, Maryland Transportation Authority Police were summoned to a single-vehicle crash on southbound Interstate 95 near the Caton Avenue exit

(SAI Bureau) A 25-year-old man of Indian-origin, who was found injured inside a Sports Utility Vehicle after sustaining an apparent gunshot wound to his head has died, according to authorities in the US state of Maryland. The person identified as Sai Charan Nakka, 25, was found injured with an apparent gunshot wound inside a silver Hyundai Tucson SUV, news portal wmar2news.com reported on Monday. About 4:30 am on Monday, Maryland Transportation Authority Police were summoned to a single-vehicle crash on southbound Interstate 95 near the Caton Avenue exit. Nakka was immediately rushed to the University of Maryland R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Centre, where he was pronounced dead a little later, the report



said. Baltimore police have launched a homicide investigation following Nakka's

death, it added. Additional details about the incident were not immediately clear. Gun violence is a leading cause of premature death in the US. Guns kill more than 38,000 people and cause nearly 85,000 injuries each year, according to the American Public Health Association.

Indian - Origin Man Found Dead With Gunshot Wound To His Head In US' Maryland



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J&K: Heavy Rains Trigger Floods, Landslides; High Alert Sounded as Jhelum Crosses Danger Mark in Anantnag



travelling in 10 vehicles who got trapped due to snowfall and heavy rains in the Kishtwar district. "Snowfall and heavy rains triggered flash-floods in Simthan top area following which 50 passengers including some women and children, were stranded. The police got the track cleared and after a lot of hard work rescued all the passengers," an official said. The water level at Sangam in the Anantnag district was measured at 21.60 ft, marginally above the 21-foot mark for flood declaration, officials said, adding that the Vaishov stream, which flows mainly through Kulgam district, was flowing dangerously above the flood alert mark. However, the water level has started receding since 10 am. A breach was reported in a temporary diversion along the banks of Vaishov stream as Chamgund in Kulgam, officials said, adding many areas of the district have been flooded. Police stations Yaripora, Kund, Devsar and police post Mirbazar received

the distress calls for assistance from the people residing in higher reaches of Kanchloo Kund, and on the banks of Vaishov and Sunman Nallahs stated that 24 families residing in temporary tents needs to be evacuated immediately as their residential places were completely damaged because of heavy rainfall and the families living on the banks of Vaishov and Sunman Nallahs were stuck due to flash floods. "On tip off, police teams under the close

supervision of SSP Kulgam were constituted to rescue the families. With strenuous efforts of the police parties deputed all the 24 families were evacuated and have been shifted to safer places," an official statement reads. Schools in many parts of the valley were closed due to the heavy rains which resulted in waterlogging in low-lying areas. Many houses in the Bemina, Rambagh, and Rajbagh areas of the city were affected due to water logging.

(SAI Bureau) Heavy rainfall in Jammu and Kashmir brought life to a standstill on Wednesday as it triggered flash floods and landslides in several districts of the union territory. Incessant rains also forced the authorities to shut schools in several districts including Doda, Kishtwar, and Ramban. People were evacuated from low-lying areas and the Jammu-Srinagar national highway remained blocked for the second consecutive day due to landslides and mudslides leaving hundreds of vehicles

stranded. In Kashmir, the Jhelum crossed the danger mark at Sangam in the Anantnag district and the water level was rising in other rivers also. A high alert has been sounded in areas close to river Chenab and its tributaries, officials told news agency PTI. The higher reaches of the region, including the Amarnath shrine, have witnessed a dip in the day temperature substantially due to snowfall.

Earlier in the day, Jammu and Kashmir Police rescued 50 passengers



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'Hybrid Terrorist', Three Terrorist Associates of LeT Arrested in Kashmir



(SAI Bureau) Security forces arrested a "hybrid terrorist" of the Lashkar-e-Taiba outfit in Baramulla district while three terrorist associates were held in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said on Tuesday. Acting on specific information regarding the movement of terrorists, a joint checkpoint was

established near Juhama crossing in Baramulla by police and 52 RR of the Army at about 4 pm on Tuesday, a police spokesman said. During checking, the movement of a suspicious person was noticed and after seeing the security forces, he tried to flee. However, the alert joint party apprehended him, he said. The spokesman said the arrested person was identified as Shahid Ahmad Paray, a resident of Kathpora in the Hajin area of Bandipora district. "On his personal search, incriminating material, arms and ammunition including one pistol, one pistol magazine, seven pistol rounds and two hand

grenades were recovered from his possession," he said. The spokesman said preliminary investigation revealed that the accused was working as a hybrid terrorist linked with the LeT. He was trying to carry out terrorist activities in Baramulla town and adjacent areas. In Budgam district, security forces busted a terror module of the LeT by arresting three terrorist associates. They have been identified as Ashiq Hussain Hajam, Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Dar and Tahir Bin Ahmed, all residents of Chadoora, the spokesman said. "Preliminary investigation revealed that the arrested trio was involved in facilitating

transportation of terrorists, arms/explosive materials and providing logistic support to the active terrorists of proscribed terror outfit LeT in Budgam district," he said. Incriminating material, arms and ammunition including one Chinese pistol, two pistol magazines, 22 pistol rounds, one AK magazine and 30 AK rounds have been recovered from their possession, the spokesman said, adding one motorcycle used in terror crimes has also been seized. Accordingly, a case vide FIR No.114/2022 under relevant sections of law was registered at police station Chadoora and further investigation is in progress, he said.

PM Modi to Attend Virtual BRICS Summit at Invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping

(SAI Bureau) Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the annual summit of the five-nation grouping BRICS on June 23 and 24 following an invitation by Chinese President Xi Jinping, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Tuesday. China is hosting the summit in its capacity as its chair of the grouping for the current year. The BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) brings together five of the largest developing countries in the world, representing 41 per cent of the global population, 24 per cent of the global GDP and 16 per cent of the global trade. Russian President Vladimir Putin, Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa are set to attend the summit.

"At the invitation of President Xi Jinping, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be attending the 14th BRICS Summit hosted by China in virtual format on June 23 and 24. This includes a high-level dialogue on global development with guest countries on June 24," the MEA said in a statement. It said the BRICS has become a platform for discussing and deliberating on issues of common concern for all developing countries, adding the grouping has regularly called for reform of the multilateral system to make it more representative and inclusive. "Discussions during the 14th BRICS Summit are expected to cover intra-BRICS cooperation in areas such as counter-terrorism, trade, health, traditional medicine, environment, science and technology, and innovation, agriculture, technical and

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vocational education & training, and MSMEs," the MEA said. It said discussions are also likely on issues like reform of the multilateral system, combating the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic recovery, amongst others. Before the summit, Modi will participate, by way of a recorded keynote speech, in the opening ceremony of the BRICS Business Forum on Wednesday, the MEA said.



450 Sikh Pilgrims Arrive in Pakistan to Observe Death Anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

(SAI Bureau) A group of 450 Sikh pilgrims on Tuesday arrived here in Pakistan from India to observe the 183rd death anniversary of the first ruler of the Sikh Empire, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), which looks after the holy places of minorities in Pakistan, and Pakistan Gurdwara Sikh P r a b a n d h a k Committee officials received them at the Wagah Border.

Some 450 Indian Sikhs arrived here via Wagah Border from India to attend festivities in connection with the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Gurdwara Dera Sahib Lahore. The main event will be held at Dera Sahib on June 29, ETPB spokesperson Amir Hashmi told PTI. He said that a Langer (lunch) was served to all visiting Sikh pilgrims at Wagah before their departure for Gurdwara Janamasthan Nankana Sahib, some

80 kms from Lahore. During their stay, the pilgrims would also visit the Kartarpur Sahib gurudwara. Hashmi said that the Pakistani



government had issued visas to 500 Indian Sikhs. However, 450 turned up, he said. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the founder of the Sikh Empire, which ruled the northwest Indian subcontinent in the early half of the 19th century.

The issuance of visas to Indian Sikhs is covered under the framework of Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974. Every year, a large number of Sikh pilgrims from India visit Pakistan to observe various religious festivals. The visas issued from New Delhi are in addition to the visas granted to Sikh pilgrims participating in these events from other countries.

UP govt to set up women's shelters in Ghazipur, Moradabad and Ghaziabad

(SAI Bureau) The Uttar Pradesh government, under a special action plan, has planned to set up new women's shelters with a capacity of 100 beds each in Ghazipur, Moradabad and Ghaziabad districts at a cost of Rs 20.21 crore. The government will also construct a children's home with a capacity of 50 beds in Agra. State observation homes with a capacity of 100 beds each will also be constructed in Raebareli, Kanpur, Mirzapur and Chitrakoot. A proposal was sent to the state government by the department of women and child

development to build new children's homes and shelters to which the government has given its approval. Brijendra Singh Nirajan, the deputy director of the women and child department said, "The problem of capacity would be solved by the construction of new children's homes, women's shelters and government observation homes in the state." He added that it is the responsibility of the officials to provide shelter with better facilities for orphaned children and make them responsible and self-dependent.

India: Vedanta Copper plant that once contributed 40% of national demand, up for sale

(SAI Bureau) Vedanta Limited, a metals and mining conglomerate issued an advertisement on Monday, saying that its Sterlite Copper Smelter in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu is up for sale. Mentioning that the plant facilities included a Refinery, Copper Rod Plant, 160MW captive power plant, Sulphuric Acid plant, phosphoric acid plant and a residential colony etc, the parent company Vedanta invited Expression of Interest from prospective buyers. This announcement gains significance because of the chequered history of this facility, which had been operating in Southern India. Notably, as the largest such facility in India, it had been contributing nearly 40percent of India's annual copper requirements.

Confirming their announcement of intending to sell the plant, the

company said in a statement "In the best interest of the country and the people of Tamil Nadu, we are exploring options to make sure that the plant and the assets are best utilized to meet growing copper demand of the nation". Since having established the plant in Tamil Nadu in 1994, Sterlite has faced allegations of polluting the environment and has had to close down operations in many instances. It was after seeking a legal remedy that the company resumed operations, almost in all instances. The company has maintained the

stance that its Copper smelter is among the safest and was following



the required norms.

In May 2018, following widespread protests and a Police firing that claimed 13 lives, the plant was ordered shut by the Tamil Nadu government. The protests by the local population were over Sterlite's plans to

expand the plant's capacity. Initially, Vedanta approached the Madras High Court to resume operations at the plant but was turned down (the Court upheld the closure ordered by the State Government). Later, the company even approached the Supreme Court, where the case is still pending. According to Sterlite, when in operation, their plant was contributing nearly 40percent of India's copper demand and nearly Rs.2500 to the exchequer. The facility also provided direct and indirect employment to 5,000 and 25,000 people, respectively. The plant has an installed capacity of 4,00,000MTPA and another 4,00,000MTPA under expansion. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Oxygen plants alone within the Sterlite facility were specially operationalized to cater to the growing need for Liquid Medical oxygen.

Tata-owned Air India set to make one of the largest aircraft deals in history



(SAI Bureau) Tata-owned Air India is considering ordering nearly 300 narrowbody jets, which may potentially become one of the most significant orders in the history of commercial aviation, as the airline plans to expand its fleet under new ownership, reported Bloomberg. Bloomberg quoted an anonymous source who claimed that Air India might order Airbus SE's A320neo family jets, Boeing Co.'s 737 Max models, or a mix of both. Even though discounts are typical during such large purchases, a deal for 300 737 Max-10 jets could be approximately worth \$40.5 billion. Since Airbus commonly dominates the skies in India, Boeing winning a narrowbody order will be a massive triumph for the manufacturer. In the world's fastest-growing aviation market before the pandemic, airlines such as IndiGo, operated by InterGlobe Aviation Ltd is the world's largest customers for Airbus best-selling narrowbodies,

ordering more than 700, along with others including Vistara, Go Airlines India Ltd. and AirAsia India Ltd. who fly planes from the same European manufacturer.

Three hundred planes will take several years or even decades to

produce and deliver. Airbus builds close to 50 aircraft in a month and plans to increase production to 65 per month by 2023 and then to 75 in a month by 2025.

Although Air India and Boeing representatives have declined to comment on the matter, a representative from Airbus told Bloomberg that their company is always in contact with existing and potential customers, but their discussions remain confidential. Bloomberg quoted Satyendra Pandey, managing partner of aviation advisory firm AT-TV claiming, "This order presumably involves new

methods of financing to play out in the right manner, including factoring in macroeconomic trends, notably the fluctuating rupee and rising inflation." "Some airlines have placed voluminous orders only to find that they are unable to line up financing at favorable terms. While it is not an outcome that one envisions and certainly not with a group such as the Tatas, nevertheless, it has to be planned for," added Pandey. Bloomberg News previously reported that Air India's owner Tata Group is in close talks with Airbus for an order of the A350 long-range jets that have the capacity of flying as far as

the US West Coast from New Delhi. Although Air India still holds gainful landing spots in the country, the airline faces huge competition from international players providing nonstop services to India and even airlines that fly via hubs in the Middle Eastern countries. The purchase of Air India by Tata was one of the most high-profile privatization under the Modi government earlier this year. Tata is expected to consolidate its aviation businesses which justifies such a large order for new planes, allowing it to cut costs and compete better with rivals offering cheap fares.

Indian and Malaysian satellites are co-passengers on Europe's Ariane rocket

(SAI Bureau) On Wednesday, June 22nd, the European launch vehicle Ariane-5 is scheduled to lift-off from the Kourou Spaceport in French Guiana, carrying a payload weighing nearly 10,863kg. In what is to be the second mission of Arianespace in 2022, and the 257th flight by Ariane (dubbed VA257), a communication satellite each from India and Malaysia is to be placed in orbit. The 4-tonne GSAT-24 is the Indian passenger, whereas the MEASAT-3d is the Malaysian counterpart. GSAT-24 is a Ku-band communication satellite built by New Space India Limited for the Indian Space Research Organization. It is meant to provide high-quality television, telecommunications, and broadcasting services and will meet the DTH needs of Indian customers. GSAT-24 is configured

on ISRO's proven I-3k Bus (satellite infrastructure) with a mission life of 15 years.

The satellite capacity on-board GSAT-24 has been leased by NSIL to M/s Tata Play, an Indian firm that provides Direct-To-Home (DTH) services. This satellite will help M/s Tata Play offer better and more reliable services to its customers. MEASAT-3d is a multi-mission telecommunications satellite built by Airbus Defence and Space for MEASAT, the leading Malaysian satellite operator. This new satellite is meant to enhance broadband speeds of up to 100 Mbps in areas with limited or no terrestrial network throughout Malaysia while continuing to provide redundancy and additional capacity for video distribution in HD, 4K, and ultimately 8K in the Asia-Pacific

region. This spacecraft is intended to operate for over 18 years and is designed to have an electrical power of 12 kW. It will carry C-and Ku-band payloads for direct-to-home (DTH) services and a high-throughput Ka-band payload with multiple user spot beams optimised to deliver high-speed broadband communications over Malaysia for internet connectivity.

Apart from this, the satellite will also host a Q/V band payload, the first of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region, which allows MEASAT to study propagation effects in high rainfall regions like Malaysia, to enable the design of its next generation satellites. While GSAT-24 will be the twenty-fifth Indian satellite launched by Arianespace, MEASAT-3d will mark the fourth satellite launch for Malaysia's MEASAT, by Arianespace.

Agneepath scheme: Service chiefs likely to meet and brief PM Narendra Modi today

(News Agency) Amid a rise in protests against the 'Agneepath scheme', the chiefs of the army, navy, and air force are likely to meet and brief Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the row today. Apprising PM Modi about the various aspects of the implementation of the scheme, the chiefs of three armed forces will also discuss the plan of action. It comes after Modi spoke in favour of Agneepath, or "path of fire", and said a few decisions "may seem bitter at first" but will bear fruits in the coming days. Indian authorities have

cancelled over 500 train services on Monday due to protests by young men angry with the military recruitment plan, which they say will rob them of the opportunity of a stable and secure career in the armed forces. With a provision to retain 25 per cent of them for 15 more years, the Agneepath scheme provides for the recruitment of



youths between the age bracket of 17-and-half years to 21, but for only four years. Aimed at bringing more people into the military on short, four-year contracts to lower the average age of India's 1.38 million-strong armed forces, the scheme will also help cut burgeoning pension costs. Seeking the withdrawal of the scheme,

leaders of the opposition Congress party met Indian President Ram Nath Kovind and said, "Given the situation on our borders, it is imperative that we have soldiers in our armed forces who are young, well-trained, motivated, happy, satisfied and assured of their future." Nitin Pai, director of the Takshashila Institution centre for research on public policy, defended the initiative and said "The Agneepath scheme will reduce the lifetime cost of manpower by several crore (tens of millions) rupees per head."

India to introduce new tax rules for social media influencers, doctors



influencer, then this new rule doesn't apply in such cases. The CBDT specifies that if doctors receive free samples of drugs while working in a hospital, section 194R applies free distribution of samples to the hospital. In case for doctors who work as consultants for a hospital and receive free samples, TDS should be applied first to the hospital which will deduct necessary tax under the section for doctors.

According to CBDT the section doesn't apply the benefits to if supplied to a government institution that is not engaged in business or profession such as a government hospital.

(News Agency) Social media influencers and doctors in India will now be subjected to Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) from July 1, for benefits received from businesses for sales promotions. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has issued recommendations on the new provision's applicability. The Union Budget made provision for TDS on incomes in order to prevent tax revenue leakage by incorporating a new section, 194R into the income Tax Act, 1961. Any individual who gives a resident a benefit of more than 20,000 in a year must pay TDS of 10 per cent, NDTV reported. The Joint Secretary in the Finance Ministry, Kamlesh C Varshney explained advantages which includes free medicine samples for doctors, overseas flight tickets and free tickets of Indian Premier League (IPL) of business and many more things. He stressed that these items should be revealed while submitting an income tax return and shall not be hidden as they are not being sold. The section 194R applies to sellers that offer incentives in cash or any kind such as car, computer, gold coins, mobile phones in addition to discounts. This gave a break for the customers by exempting

sales discounts or cash discounts from the section, claiming if it gets included will put the seller in difficulty. However, if perks such as mobile was returned to the manufacturer after being used for the purpose of service like for a social media

Manoj Tiwari accuses Manish Sisodia of trying to hide corruption in construction of 7 temporary hospitals

BJP MP Manoj Tiwari has accused Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia of trying to hide corruption in construction of seven temporary hospitals

(News Agency) BJP MP Manoj Tiwari on Tuesday slammed Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia accusing him of trying to hide the corruption in construction of seven temporary hospitals. "Instead of clarifying on the charges of corruption in construction of the hospitals, he is lying and trying to mislead the people of Delhi. He has written a letter to the Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena for approving probe by Anti-corruption Branch (ACB) into the matter, while the probe has been ordered by a court," Tiwari said. Tiwari said his complaint of irregularities into construction of hospitals were based on proof. Sisodia, in his press conference today, was expected to present some facts or proofs but instead of doing so he chose to lie, the BJP leader said.

"It was a court order that prima facie there was corruption which need to be probed. But Sisodia said the probe was approved by the LG," Tiwari said. "Sisodia also said that he has



filed a defamation case against me. However, he shied to tell that the Supreme Court has stayed it. He could face contempt of court for his comments," he went on to add. The BJP leader also said that while the Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has asked people to send him videos of government officials asking for bribes, the Deputy CM is trying to shield those involved in corruption. "Arvind Kejriwal had asked people to make videos of corruption against officials and had promised to send the guilty to jail. But Sisodia is trying to protect the corrupt people in his government by citing the provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act," Tiwari said. "I want to ask Sisodia what happened to the Rs 1256 crore that was to be spend on the construction of the hospitals," he added. Earlier in the day, Sisodia in a press conference had said that Manoj Tiwari "has conspired to stall the building of hospitals by levelling baseless graft allegations against Delhi government."

Court sentences Ordnance Clothing Factory's clerk to 7 years in prison

A CBI court on Monday sentenced a former clerk of the Ordnance Clothing Factory to seven years of rigorous imprisonment for forging cheques



(News Agency) The special judge of CBI cases, Lucknow, on Monday sentenced Sanjay Kumar, a former clerk in the office of the joint controller

(finance and Accounts) of Ordnance Clothing Factory to undergo seven years rigorous imprisonment. Sanjay Kumar also has to pay a fine of Rs 2.15 lakh. Along with him, Md. Sarif Khan, the proprietor of a private firm, was also sentenced to seven years of rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs 1.25 lakh. Ordnance Clothing Factory is an Indian clothing manufacturing company in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur.

WHAT IS THE CASE?

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a case in February 2004 on a complaint filed by the joint controller (finance and Accounts) of the Ordnance Clothing Factory. The complaint alleged that Sanjay Kumar and Sarif Khan forged seven cheques by inflating the amount and changing the names of the cheque payees. The incident caused a loss of Rs 36.49 to the government exchequer. After an investigation, a chargesheet was filed against the two accused. The trial court found both the accused guilty and convicted them on Monday.

Delhi government makes changes in auto registration process

The Delhi government on Tuesday issued an order to make changes in the registration process for the ownership of auto rickshaws



(News Agency) The Delhi Government issued an order on Tuesday to prevent the direct transfer of permits and vehicles to a new buyer in the case of default of loans. This was done in the light of various cases that emerged in connection to the procedure being followed for the transfer of auto rickshaws. The

vehicles are often repossessed by financiers like banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) in the case of default of loans.

These provisions were made under section 51 of the Motor Vehicle Act and Rule 61 of the Central Motor Vehicle Rules. In the case of loan defaults, the

vehicle shall be transferred to the financier only under the production of relevant orders given by a court or an arbitrator. This reiterates the provision that a direct transfer of the vehicle and permit to another buyer is not legally permissible. The department has further clarified that the loan arrangement is only in respect of the vehicle and not the permit issued to the original owner. In case the registered owner is unable to produce any evidence to the contrary, the Registration Certificate (RC) of the original registered owner will be cancelled on default of loan and a fresh Registration Certificate (RC) shall be issued in the name of the financier.

The permits issued against

such vehicles shall be deemed to be surrendered to the Transport Department and such repossessed vehicles can be sold by the financier to the auction purchaser following due process and legalities. Even in such cases, the permit will not be transferred or deemed to be transferred in favour of the auction purchaser.

The purchaser, who must be a resident of Delhi having an Aadhaar Card of Delhi address, possessing a valid LMV driving licence and a PSV badge, can then approach the department to get the vehicle transferred in their name. In addition to this, the purchaser must hold a valid LOI and valid permit issued for the auto-rickshaw (TSR) from the

Transport Department but must not possess at present any auto-rickshaw (TSR) in their name. While the financier has the right to retain the vehicle, the original allottee of a surrendered permit shall retain the right to get another TSR registered against that permit within six months from the date of surrender, after which the department will have the right to issue a fresh LOI to another person. The department is in the process of preparing guidelines to ensure that other transport and non-transport vehicles also comply with the same. The department will also share the list of such surrendered permits and registration of vehicles in the name of financiers with the enforcement branch to check for any unauthorised play.

Tata Advanced Systems, Larsen and Toubro deliver 100th missile launcher for IAF's Akash project

Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL) and Larsen and Toubro delivered the 100th missile launcher for IAF's Akash project on Tuesday

(News Agency) Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) and Larsen and Toubro (L&T) on Tuesday jointly delivered the 100th Akash Air Force Launcher (AAFL) for the Indian Air Force, developed with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The event was flagged off by BHVS Narayana Murthy, the Director General, Missiles and Strategic Systems (DG-MSS) of the DRDO at TASL's Vemagal facility in Karnataka. The event was participated by Bharat Electronics Ltd, Missile Systems Quality Assurance Agency, L&T and multiple MSME partners in the programme. TASL has also supplied 49 Akash Launchers earlier to the Indian Army.

Sukaran Singh, the managing director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of TASL said, "The successful delivery of the 100th AAFL is a major milestone for TASL and the Indian defence manufacturing sector. It marks the successful establishment of serial production after completing product development. The repeat order of AAFL being executed shows the user's continued satisfaction and confidence in the operational performance of the indigenously developed and produced AAFL system." Jayant Patil, the Whole Time Director (Defence and Smart



Technologies) at L&T said, "L&T has remained singularly focused on offering indigenously designed, developed and manufactured defence systems to our armed forces. Delivery of the 100th AAFL system, a major milestone toward the iconic Akash missile programme, epitomises the contribution made by the Indian

industry toward the vision of an 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'." He added that this milestone is a testimony to the core strengths and hard work by the Indian industry teaming up in a public-private partnership to deliver a force-multiplying Akash Air Defence system to the Indian Air Force.

The AAFL is a multi-technology weapon launch platform for air defence missiles,

jointly developed under the IGMDP Programme of the DRDO by TASL and L&T and produced collaboratively. It comprises a self-powered and fully-automated electro-mechanical launching system mounted on a trailer and towed by a prime-mover. It is a fully ruggedized all-weather day and night system capable of operating in harsh environmental and terrain conditions.

Maha sankat on Maha Vikas Aghadi: Uddhav firefights 'rebellion' within Sena to save MVA govt

Political uncertainty looms over Maharashtra's ruling alliance on Tuesday after Shiv Sena minister Eknath Shinde rebelled against the party and herded some MLAs to BJP-ruled Gujarat



(News Agency) The political crisis started when Shiv Sena leader and Maharashtra Urban Development Minister Eknath Shinde, along with several other party MLAs, went 'out of reach' after Monday's legislative council election. This fueled rumours of possible rebellion within the Shiv Sena, one of the parties in the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra.

Eknath Shinde along with other 'missing' Shiv Sena MLAs holed up in a hotel in Surat, Gujarat, a BJP-ruled state. Security outside the hotel was beefed up and no one was allowed entry. As uncertainty grew over the MLAs who had gone incommunicado, Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray immediately went into troubleshoot mode and sent two

party leaders- Milind Narvekar and Ravindra Phatak- to meet Eknath Shinde and other legislators and pacify them. During the meeting that lasted for nearly two hours, Milind Narvekar made Eknath Shinde speak to Uddhav Thackeray over the phone, as per sources. Eknath Shinde demanded that the Sena restore its alliance with the BJP, sources added. Sourced said that when Uddhav Thackeray refused to ally with BJP again, claiming that the Shiv Sena was mistreated by the saffron party in the past, Eknath Shinde responded that the MLAs in Surat have issue with Sena aligning with the NCP and the Congress. Apart from this, Eknath Shinde, who was removed as Shiv Sena legislative group leader in Maharashtra assembly, told Uddhav Thackeray that he was not eyeing the CM's post and there was no need to take any action against him.

Meanwhile, in Mumbai, leaders of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) met Uddhav Thackeray at his residence on Tuesday evening. NCP leaders Chhagan Bhujbal, Dilip Walse Patil, Jayant Patil and Ajit Pawar were present during the meeting.

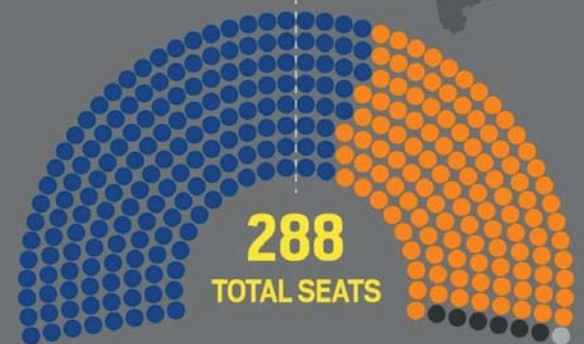
What triggered the political crisis in Maharashtra?

WHO HAS MLAs IN MAHARASHTRA?

MVA's STRENGTH STOOD AT 168 BEFORE THE REBELLION

MAHARASHTRA

FOR MAJORITY (144 SEATS)



It was Eknath Shinde who plunged the ruling alliance in the state into a political crisis by moving to a hotel in Gujarat's Surat with several party MLAs.

The move put a question mark on the future of MVA, comprising of the Shiv Sena, the Congress, and the NCP.

Eknath Shinde, a four-time Shiv Sena MLA, was reportedly upset with the Sena leadership for allegedly being sidelined.

How did Congress, NCP react?

NCP chief Sharad Pawar on

Tuesday alleged that a third attempt was being made to pull down the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra.

Talking about Eknath Shinde's rebellion, Sharad Pawar said that it was Shiv Sena's internal matter. "I hope they resolve their differences soon. We are not scared," he said.

Meanwhile, the Congress deputed Kamal Nath as AICC observer to Maharashtra following the political crisis in the state.

Heavy rains likely across West Bengal, Sikkim over next five days

The weather office on Tuesday said heavy rainfall is likely in West Bengal and Sikkim in the next five days



(News Agency) Widespread rainfall is likely in West Bengal and Sikkim over the next five days under the influence of southwesterly wind from the Bay of Bengal, the weather office said. Heavy rainfall may occur at isolated places in the sub-Himalayan districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Alipurduar, and also in Sikkim, it said. The rainfall is likely to be caused under the influence of southerly and southwesterly winds from the Bay of Bengal. Neora in northern West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district received the highest amount of rainfall in the 24 hours till 8.30 am on Tuesday at 280 mm, while

Murti recorded 210 mm rainfall and Nagrakata got 200 mm rainfall.

Several areas in Kranti block were inundated as waters of rivers Teesta and Chail entered Chapadanga and Rajadanga. The state-highway in the area was also under water. The authorities have asked those living in the low-lying areas to shift out amid incessant rains in the Mal subdivision of the district. Several areas in Siliguri were also inundated following heavy rainfall over the last few days. Soreng and Yuksom in West Sikkim district received 120 mm rainfall since Monday morning.

Yoga is perfect healthcare package: Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi

Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said that yoga is a perfect healthcare package. He celebrated International Yoga Day at Fatehpur Sikri's Panch Mahal

(News Agency) Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi celebrated International Yoga Day on Tuesday by performing yoga at Fatehpur Sikri's Panch Mahal. On the occasion, Naqvi said yoga is the perfect healthcare package for the health, harmony, and happiness of the whole world. He said that good

health is the greatest wealth of a human being and yoga is not only an exercise but it is also a

"health science". Naqvi said that yoga acts as a unity between the mind and the body. It strengthens the body and gives peace to the mind. He added that it is a matter of pride that the day is being celebrated worldwide. Naqvi was joined by hundreds of citizens and dignitaries with whom he performed yoga together. UP MLA

Rajkumar Chahar and MP Haridwar Dubey also attended the event.



Indian Army steps up rescue and relief efforts in flood-hit Assam

The Indian Army has stepped up rescue and relief efforts in flood-hit Assam. The total death toll due to flood has crossed 80



(News Agency) The Indian Army on Tuesday continued its relief and rescue operations as the flood situation remained critical in many parts of Assam. Army officials also assisted local administration with the restoration of tanks and distribution of relief materials. The devastating flood, triggered by incessant rains since last week, has inundated 32 out of 36 districts and has affected nearly 48 lakh people.

In flood affected Rangia of Kamrup district, army officials organised a medical camp at a school for stranded local residents staying in temporary

camps. The officials also repaired a bridge on the road between Changsari and Rangia that was damaged by the flood.

Among the worst affected districts is Barpeta. The army officials rescued at least 48 locals from Sardebadi village of Barpeta on Tuesday. The calamity has affected 125 revenue circles and 5,424 villages across Assam forcing 2,31,819 people to take shelter in 810 relief camps. At least 11,292 people and 27,086 animals have been evacuated by agencies engaged in rescue operations in the past 24 hours.

Who is Droupadi Murmu, NDA's presidential candidate?

Find out everything about Droupadi Murmu, NDA's candidate for the upcoming presidential election

(News Agency) Droupadi Murmu, former Jharkhand Governor, was announced as the National Democratic Alliance's candidate for the presidential polls. She will be facing former Union Minister Yashwant Sinha, who was selected as the joint Opposition candidate in the upcoming election.

WHO IS DROUPADI MURMU?

Droupadi Murmu was born in the Santhal community of Odisha's Baidaposi village on June 20, 1958. Prior to her entry into politics, she taught children as a school teacher and worked as a junior assistant in the irrigation and power department for four years till 1983.

POLITICS

She began her political career after she became a councillor on a BJP ticket in the Rairangpur Nagar Panchayat in 1997. She then became the vice president of BJP's scheduled tribes morcha.



Droupadi Murmu was elected twice as an MLA on a BJP ticket from the Rairangpur constituency in 2000 and 2004. In 2002, she was appointed as the Commerce and Transport Minister in the Naveen Patnaik cabinet. In 2004, Murmu was appointed as the Fisheries and Animal Development Minister in Naveen Pattnaik's second term as chief minister.

She became the governor of Jharkhand in 2015. She holds the record for becoming the first female governor in Jharkhand. She is also the first governor to complete the five-year term.

Droupadi Murmu graduated

from Ramadevi Women's college, which is located in Odisha's Bhubaneswar.

PERSONAL LIFE

Droupadi Murmu was married to Shyam Charan Murmu and the couple had two sons and a daughter. However, tragedy struck Murmu's life when she lost her husband and two sons.

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ANNOUNCEMENT

BJP chief J P Nadda on Tuesday announced Droupadi Murmu's name as the National Democratic Alliance's candidate for the presidential polls. Following the announcement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "Smt. Droupadi Murmu Ji has devoted her life to serving society and empowering the poor, downtrodden as well as the marginalised. She has rich administrative experience and had an outstanding gubernatorial tenure. I am confident she will be a great President of our nation." Murmu also addressed the local media after the news of her candidature was announced and said, "I would like to thank the party for nominating me as the presidential candidate. I would request the support of all public representatives for my election."

She added that her name was also doing the rounds in 2017 and asked Naveen Patnaik for his party's support. Odisha's ruling party Biju Janata Dal (BJD) supported NDA's candidate Ram Nath Kovind in the 2017 presidential elections.

A senior BJD leader who did not want to be named told India Today that the party will support Murmu as the presidential candidate as she is a tribal woman and comes from Odisha. The leader added that if Murmu wins the election, she will be the first native from Odisha to hold the topmost constitutional post. The last date for the filing of nominations for the presidential election is on June 29 and voting will take place on July 18. Counting of votes will take place on July 21.

Bombay HC grants bail to Sheena Bora murder case accused Sanjeev Khanna

Bombay HC grants bail to Indrani Mukerjea's ex-husband Sanjeev Khanna in Sheen Bora murder case

(News Agency) The Bombay High Court has granted bail to Indrani Mukerjea's former husband Sanjeev Khanna in the Sheena Bora murder case. Khanna, Mukerjea, and Mukerjea's another former husband, Peter Mukerjea are accused of murdering Sheena Bora. Advocate Keral Mehta, appearing with advocates Niranjana Mundargi along with Shreyansh Mithare pointed out that the plea was being argued only on the ground of parity as Mukerjea was granted bail by apex court on the ground that she had been incarcerated in the prison for 6.5 years.

Mehta said that they did want to go into the merit of the case. However, special Public Prosecutor Sandesh Patil appearing for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said that the agency was opposing the bail plea as the accused should first approach the trial court on new grounds. He stated that the bail plea filed by Khanna was on the ground of Covid bail. However, Justice Bharti Dangre said that the Apex court had already granted

bail to a co-accused over the issue of long incarceration then would it be really necessary to go into the nitty gritty of the bail plea. Patil agreed and said that he would leave it to the court to decide the



issue. Justice Dangre asked Khanna to furnish one lakh surety so that he could be released from Arthur Road jail. Mithare requested that a provision of furnishing a cash surety be allowed instead of a person as was permitted in Indrani Mukerjea. However Justice Dangre said, "you are a businessman. You are from Kolkata. She was here in Mumbai. Moreover, I am not asking for a local surety." With this, the court ordered Khanna to deposit his

passport as a condition for the bail to be granted and Mithare stated that it was already deposited. It will take sometime for Khanna to complete all the formalities and come out of prison.

Khanna is accused of helping Indrani strangle her own daughter Sheena Bora in 2012 and helping in disposing off the dead body in jungles of Raigadh. Recently, a prime witness in the case Rahul Mukerjea had recognised an earring allegedly belonging to Sheena that was recovered from a club in Kolkata at the instance of Khanna. The earring and many such things were allegedly taken by Khanna to be disposed off so that no evidence remains. The trial in the case has been going on since 2015 when the three accused were arrested. However, due to the pandemic and transfer of a special CBI judge it was stalled for about 2 years. The trial only began again recently. In this case only an accused-turned-approver, driver of Indrani Mukerjea who allegedly was an eyewitness to the murder has been languishing in prison.

100 days of Bhagwant Mann government : Has AAP delivered its promises?

Looking back on the first 100 days of Bhagwant Mann's governance, the question that arises is whether the AAP has delivered its poll promises

(News Agency) The Aam Aadmi Party will complete the first 100 days of its governance in Punjab on Thursday, June 23. The party had won a historic mandate in the state by making certain promises to the people. The two key promises made during the elections include a promise to pay Rs 1000 per month to every adult woman and to provide 300 free power units to all consumers.

While the free power scheme will be effective from July 1, there has been no plan devised to pay Rs 1000 per month to all adult women. Meanwhile, the opposition parties have accused the state government of adding riders to the free power scheme.

Rising crime rate puts government in the dock

The rising crime rate added to the woes of the state government, which was already facing a big challenge of filling the empty coffers. Opposition parties have been criticising the AAP over the rising crime rate during its 100-day tenure.

It began with a violent clash in the name of Khalistan on April 29 in Patiala when two rival groups clashed with each other, leaving two people, including a cop injured.

On May 9, a rocket propelled



grenade was fired at the state police intelligence wing headquarters in Mohali. On May 29, popular singer Sidhu Moosewala was brutally murdered after the state government had curtailed his security besides others. The singer's murder sent shockwaves across the entire country.

Opposition slams AAP

The opposition party, Shiromani Akali Dal, claimed AAP lost its popularity within the first 100 days of its governance. "100 days of the AAP government have

been very disappointing. They spent the first hundred days blaming the already established system. Whatever the people were getting earlier was snatched. They could not fulfil even a single election promise. It is the very first time that a government became unpopular within 100 days of its governance despite having bagged a big mandate," said the party's general secretary Daljit Singh Cheema. He also said that Bhagwant Mann had surrendered his government to Kejriwal within 100 days. Meanwhile, senior BJP

leader Vineet Joshi said the AAP promised free power to the people but the supply was erratic. "Bhagwant Mann should tell the people how many of the guarantees promised by Arvind Kejriwal have been honoured. Mann promised the farmers that they will get power supply for 8 hours, which means the power is missing during the rest of the time. They had also promised that they would provide Rs 1000 to the women on the very first day," said Joshi. 100 day period not enough to measure

performance: Analysts Political analysts like Kanwalpreet Kaur believe that 100 days cannot be a yardstick to measure the performance of a government. She however said that not fulfilling the election promises could send a wrong message among the masses who trusted the party and gave it a historic mandate. "I believe that 100 days is a very short time, but yes, it is a barometer. The promises were many, the expectations of the people were a lot. I was a little apprehensive about the time because the mess is quite old. For one man or even 10 people to clean up the mess is a herculean task. Let us see what they do in the five years," said Kanwaljeet Kaur. Kanwaljeet Kaur further said that the state government, by acting against the corrupt has tried to clean the system but it also came under fire as some of its MLAs and ministers were facing corruption charges. The broom is on the job, we will clean the system and fulfil every promise: AAP Reacting to the allegations, chief spokesperson of the AAP, Malwinder Singh Kang said that the government in its 100-day rule has done a plethora of services that will definitely set the system right.

Maharashtra CM Uddhav broke Covid protocols, met supporters: BJP's Tajinder Bagga files complaint

BJP leader Tajinder Bagga filed a complaint against Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray for violating Covid protocol

(News Agency) BJP leader Tajinder Pal Singh Bagga has filed an online complaint against Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray for violating Covid protocol and meeting his supporters. CM Uddhav Thackeray tested positive for Covid-19 on Wednesday, an official from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said. The CM confirmed the same during his webcast on Wednesday.

However, as Uddhav Thackeray left the CM residence and moved to Matoshree, he was seen greeting his supporters. BJP leader Tajinder Bagga filed a complaint against the 61-year-old CM at Malabar Hill Police Station in Mumbai for violating Covid rules and meeting people.

Tajinder Bagga also tweeted an image of the police complaint. The complaint stated, "As per Covid protocol patient can't meet anyone and should be in isolation...CM Uddhav Thackeray broke Covid protocols and met with his supporters." BJP leader Amit Malviya also raised questions over violation of Covid protocol by Uddhav Thackeray.

"We were told that Uddhav Thackeray is Covid positive. But he has since met Sharad Pawar at his residence and moved amongst people, who apparently turned out to see him go back home. He shouldn't have left in the first place. This deceit is what has led to Sena MLAs revolting," Amit Malviya tweeted on Wednesday.

Plastic manufacturers' association offers one lakh jobs to 'Agniveers' upon completion of four-year term

Plastindia Foundation on Wednesday announced that the industry can induct over one lakh 'Agniveers' once they complete their four-year term with the armed forces

(News Agency) Plastindia Foundation, a body of plastic manufacturers from across the country, on Wednesday announced that the industry can induct over one lakh 'Agniveers' once they complete their four-year term with the armed forces.

"The industry today comprises more than 50,000 processing units. The Indian plastics industry is growing at a rapid pace with the production and consumption increasing manifold in the last 3 decades. The vibrant industry needs young and dynamic workforce to drive growth. We are delighted to announce that we can induct at least one lakh Agniveers in the industry," said Jigish Doshi, president, Plastindia Foundation.

He said that the industry already employs over four million people directly and 40 million people indirectly across the country.

"However, the demand for manpower is increasing in this high growth industry. We are

confident that Agniveers will help take the industry to greater heights," Jigish Doshi added.



AGNIPATH SCHEME

The Agnipath scheme was launched by the government for recruitment in all three wings-- army, navy and air force-- of the Indian Armed Forces. According to the scheme, 75 per cent

of the recruits will be sent back while 25 per cent will be absorbed in the armed forces after four years of service. The scheme is being condemned by various sections of the society from across the country. There have been ongoing violent protests at many places. Politics has also started over the row, with the Congress staging protest against the scheme in Delhi, and other opposition parties, including Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), also joining various protests against it.

Agnipath: How and why is it vital for India?

By Susmita Ghosh

Agnipath, the much-discussed scheme that sparked a fire of controversy, burning all over our nation, is a new employment scheme introduced by the Government of India on 14th June 2022. The scheme is set to be implemented from September 2022. With its name meaning 'Fire Path'- this particular scheme has attracted a lot of scorching heat of hate, debate and violence by the various political parties. A large number of youths all over India have taken part in spontaneous, yet misguided protests, which, at some point, turned violent. While this scheme has attracted a lot of negative attention, there are some important details about the scheme that are missed entirely.

With its name meaning 'Fire Path'- this particular scheme has attracted a lot of scorching heat of hate, debate and violence by the various political parties. A large number of youths all over India have taken part in spontaneous, yet misguided protests, which turned violent

The scheme targets the youth of the country aged between 17 to 23 years. Those who join the army through the Agnipath scheme will be known as Agniveers. This scheme, as it recruits below the rank of officers, allows them to be in service for 4 years before retiring. After retirement, they will get awarded a one-time pension of 11-12 Lakhs. In every batch, 25 percent of Agniveers will be recruited permanently in the Indian Army. It was a vital point that resulted in unrest and uproar among the youth, as it was not clear initially what would happen to the remaining 75 percent. However, the Indian government, along with several states came forward with clarification and re-joining schemes for that. Various state and central ministries and departments have officially announced that there will be at least 10 percent reservation for Agniveers in many government positions like the Indian C0of Education has introduced a technical education course for Agniveers to prepare them for technical jobs at the undergraduate levels. Also, special courses will be offered to the Agniveers by NIOS to help them get

10th and 12th pass certificates which will help them in the case of higher education. The Agnipath scheme is an excellent and unique scheme that can manifest the dreams of many individuals to join the Indian army into reality. The Agnipath scheme is applicable only to the ranks below commissioned officers. Under this scheme, the Agniveers will get a salary of 30,000 to 45,000 INR. The opposition leaders have left no stone unturned to attack the scheme, branding it dangerous. The senior opposition leader Rahul Gandhi has gone as far as to tell that the scheme will 'weaken the armed forces and it would be 'withdrawn' by the prime

minister like the controversial farm law repeal. Agnipath Yojana takes a unique approach to solving India's burning unemployment issues. The scheme provides a solution to the poverty crisis by giving the retiring personnel a healthy lump sum amount. The Agnipath scheme will give rise to highly specialized and trained youth who will be well prepared for their next jobs. The discipline, routine and physical training of the program will ensure that the retired Agniveers stay ahead of any average candidate when they apply for jobs. The youth need to wipe out the cloud of misunderstanding regarding the scheme and grab the benefits as this scheme can be a big turning point in their life which can lead them to the path of success. At the same time, it solves the problem of average age increase in various branches of the Indian military. The Agnipath Yojana also trains and educates the Agniveers which prepares them for future jobs in addition to the reservation benefits the scheme brings. It also provides the retiring Agniveers with a lump sum that can be invested or used to start a business. The scheme will enhance the Agniveers' talents, physical capabilities and resilience and give them a head start for their next jobs.

India buys more coal from Russia, and urea from the US- diversifying supply sources is good policy

India's imports of Russian coal in June are reportedly expected to be the highest in at least seven and a half years. This comes alongside Russia displacing Saudi Arabia to become India's second-largest oil supplier after Iraq in May. Neither of these are unwelcome developments, nor the fact that India has, for the first time, bought a large

If importing more coal and oil from Russia or urea from the US forces existing suppliers - the likes of Australia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates - to lower prices, it would aid in macroeconomic stability necessary for long-term growth

urea consignment from the US. With Russian traders offering discounts of 25-30 per cent for thermal coal and accepting payment in rupees, it isn't surprising that bulk purchases by Indian cement and steel companies have spiked in recent weeks. The share of Russian crude processed in Reliance Industries' Jamnagar refinery has, similarly, risen to 27 per cent in May, from less than 5 per cent before April. Why should any firm forgo the opportunity of sourcing oil at significant discounts to international prices? It has, likewise, become economical now to import urea from the US, which is quoting \$55-75 per tonne cheaper than that from the Middle East, notwithstanding higher freight costs and longer voyage time. But it is not just about profit calculations of companies. Diversifying supply sources and buying at the lowest price for equivalent quality is also in national interest. India's imports of crude petroleum, coal and finished fertilisers were valued at \$122.45 billion, \$31.72 billion and \$12.72 billion,

respectively, in 2021-22, as against the previous fiscal's corresponding levels of \$59.48 billion, \$16.27 billion and \$6.83 billion. The country's merchandise trade deficit hit a record \$190.71 billion in 2021-

22. A further widening of its deficits, whether external or fiscal, and uncontrolled weakening of the rupee, both external and internal purchasing value, is something it cannot afford. If importing more coal and oil from Russia or urea from the US forces existing suppliers — the likes of Australia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates — to lower prices, it would aid in macroeconomic stability necessary for long-term growth. The growing trade with Russia may not be to the West's liking. While the invasion of Ukraine deserves the widest condemnation, financial sanctions and not buying from Russia don't really help. India and China purchasing more from Russia, if anything, reduces the pressure on the international oil market. Imagine where crude prices would have reached had these two Asian countries not stepped up buying from Russia. In fact, China and India are today the world's top two net crude oil importers, with Russia emerging as the former's No 1 and the latter's No 2 supplier. The economic and national interests of others overriding its geopolitical priorities is a reality that the West has to acknowledge and accept, sooner than later.

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The anti-defection law and why Eknath Shinde could be poised to dodge it in Maharashtra

Maharashtra Shiv Sena political crisis explained: Can the rebelling Shiv Sena MLAs face proceedings under the anti-defection law, or do they have the numbers to escape this? A look at the law, and the roles the Speaker and Governor will play in such situations



These MLAs can merge with another party or become a separate group in the legislature. For example, last year in Meghalaya, 12 of 17 Congress MLAs joined the All India Trinamool Congress. In 2019, all six MLAs of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Rajasthan joined the Congress. The same year, four out of six Telugu Desam Rajya Sabha MPs joined the BJP.

How does the two-thirds rule work in current situation in Maharashtra?

News reports indicate that 30 Shiv Sena MLAs are with Eknath Shinde. Taking this number at face value means it does not reach the two-thirds mark of the 55 MLAs the Shiv Sena has in the Maharashtra Assembly. Therefore, the protection under the anti-defection law would not be available to Shinde and his group. And it is the Assembly Speaker who decides whether an MLA has left a party or a group that constitutes two-thirds of a party. The position of the Speaker of the Maharashtra Assembly is, however, currently vacant. The last Speaker was senior Congress leader Nana Patole

who resigned from the post in 2019. Article 180(1) of the Constitution states that the Deputy Speaker performs the Speaker's duties when the office is vacant. Since then, the Deputy Speaker, Narhari Zirwal of the NCP, has been acting as the Speaker. He has to follow the rules of the Maharashtra legislature that lays down the process under the anti-defection law.

How would a decision be taken whether the anti-defection law applies in this case?

Under the current circumstances, two ways would lead to adjudication under the law. First, any MLA of the Assembly can petition Zirwal that certain MLAs have defected from their political party. Such a petition has to be accompanied by documentary evidence. The Deputy Speaker would then forward the petition to the MLAs against whom their colleagues are making the charge of defection. The MLAs would have seven days or such time that the Deputy Speaker decides is sufficient to enable them to put

across their side of the story. At the same time, Shinde and MLAs supporting him too can write to the Deputy Speaker with evidence claiming that they represent two-thirds of the Shiv Sena strength and claim protection under the anti-defection law. In either case, Speakers will decide the matter after hearing all parties, which could take time.

How much time does it usually take?

In recent years, one of the fastest decisions in a defection proceeding was delivered by Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu. He decided on the defection of JD(U) MPs Sharad Yadav and Ali Anwar in three months. But in state legislatures, defection petitions have taken much longer. For example, in 2020, the Supreme Court used its extraordinary power to remove a Manipur minister from his position. The petition against the Congress legislator, who had defected to the BJP, had been pending for three years. But whether the Speaker decides quickly or takes time, the Speaker is usually challenged in court (Contd. on page 28)

The unfolding political crisis in Maharashtra has thrown the spotlight on the anti-defection law, and the roles of the Deputy Speaker and the Governor. On Wednesday (June 22), the ruling Shiv Sena called a meeting of all its MLAs in Mumbai. Some of its legislators have aligned themselves with the party's rebel leader Eknath Shinde and are camping in Guwahati. The party has warned its MLAs that their absence from the meeting would lead to the presumption they wanted to leave the political party. And this would therefore lead to action against them under the anti-defection law.

What is the anti-defection law, and would it apply to

Shiv Sena rebels?

The anti-defection law provides for the disqualification of MLAs who, after being elected on the ticket of a political party, "voluntarily give up their party membership". The Supreme Court has interpreted the term broadly and ruled an MLA's conduct can indicate whether they have left their party. The law is also applicable to independent MLAs. They are prohibited from joining a political party, and in case they do so, they can also lose their membership in the legislature. But the anti-defection law does not apply if the number of MLAs who leave a political party constitute two-thirds of the party's strength in the legislature.

India's emerging twin deficit problem

The economic growth outlook is likely to be affected by several factors owing to the trade disruptions, export bans and the resulting surge in global commodity prices —all of which will continue to stoke inflation — as long as the Russia-Ukraine conflict persists and global supply chains remain unrepaired

In its latest 'Monthly Economic Review', the Ministry of Finance has painted an overall optimistic picture of the state of the domestic economy. "The World is looking at a distinct possibility of widespread stagflation. India, however, is at low risk of stagflation, owing to its prudent stabilization policies," it states. The economic growth outlook is likely to be affected by several factors owing to the trade disruptions, export bans and the resulting surge in global commodity prices —all of which will continue to stoke inflation — as long as the Russia-Ukraine conflict persists and global supply chains remain unrepaired. "However, the momentum of economic activities sustained in the first two months of the current financial year augurs well for India continuing to be the quickest growing economy among major countries in 2022-23," states the Finance Ministry

report. But, given the uncertainties, the report highlights two key areas of concern for the Indian economy: the fiscal deficit and the current account deficit (or CAD). The report states that "as government revenues take a hit following cuts in excise duties on diesel and petrol, an upside risk to the budgeted level of gross fiscal deficit has emerged". The fiscal deficit is essentially the amount of money that the government has to borrow in any year to fill the gap between its expenditures and revenues. Higher levels of fiscal deficit typically imply the government eats into the pool of investible funds in the market which could have been used by the private sector for its own investment needs. At a time when the government is trying its best to kick-start and sustain a private sector investment cycle, borrowing more than what it budgeted will be counter-

productive. The report underscores the need to trim revenue expenditure (or the money government spends just to meet its daily needs). "Rationalizing non-capex expenditure has thus become critical, not only for protecting growth supportive capex but also for avoiding fiscal slippages," it states. "Capex" or capital expenditure essentially refers to money spent towards creating productive assets such as roads, buildings, ports etc. Capex has a much bigger multiplier effect on the overall GDP growth than revenue expenditure. If a country imports more goods (everything from cars to phones to machinery to food grains etc) than it exports, it is said to have a trade account deficit. A deficit implies that more money is going out of the country than coming in via the trade of physical goods. Similarly, the same country could be earning a surplus on the invisibles

account — that is, it could be exporting more services than importing. If, however, the net effect of a trade account and the invisibles account is a deficit, then it is called a current account deficit or CAD. A widening CAD tends to weaken the domestic currency because a CAD implies more dollars (or foreign currencies) are being demanded than rupees. The Ministry's worry is that costlier imports such as crude oil and other commodities will not only widen the CAD but also put downward pressure on the rupee. A weaker rupee will, in turn, make future imports costlier. There is one more reason why the rupee may weaken. If, in response to higher interest rates in the western economies especially the US, foreign portfolio investors (FPI) continue to pull out money from the Indian markets, that too will hurt the rupee and further increase CAD.

Emmanuel Macron Needs to Turn Foes into Friends and Woo Conservatives



French President Emmanuel Macron spent his first term in office seeking to divide and conquer the traditional centre-right Les Republicains (LR) party - and he largely succeeded. Now he needs them to salvage his second term. And they don't appear to be in any mood to roll over, not officially at least. "We haven't stood up against la Macronie (Macron's camp) until

now only to become a part of it," said Francois-Xavier Bellamy, an influential LR EU lawmaker. One senior LR adviser put it even more bluntly: "He did everything he could during five years to weaken Les Republicains and now he expects us to fall into his open arms? No way!" Macron enjoyed full control over parliament in his first five years, but now he needs to find support

from opponents after voters, angry at inflation and his perceived indifference, delivered a hung parliament in Sunday's elections. Debate is intense within Les Republicains where some, so far rather isolated, voices are pushing for a broad, Germany-style coalition pact. You don't achieve anything from the touchlines," Frank Louvrier, an LR mayor who is very close to former President Nicolas Sarkozy, told Reuters. "We must work on a government pact." Macron's Ensemble alliance and LR are largely compatible on economic policies, including plans to make the French work longer hours. During his first mandate, LR voted in support of 40% of the government's proposed bills, LR officials say. "We can very well remain independent in elections but participate in a German-style coalition in a pragmatic way. The situation of the country requires

it," Paul Louis Villeroy de Galhau, an LR campaigner and business leader, told Reuters. "We could ask for ministers, a government pact."

When he first came to power in 2017, Macron poached LR members and made them ministers - and even prime minister - while his policies drifted to the right, squeezing the mainstream right's political base between him and the far-right. Former senior LR ministers who joined Macron over the past five years are now trying to convince as many as possible in the LR to agree to a deal, a government source told Reuters. "All those who know them well are at it," the source said, adding that they expected cracks to appear behind the facade of unity on rejecting a coalition deal. A source close to a Macron-supporting lawmaker from Alsace - historically a conservative

stronghold - was optimistic: "Could LR really not back the pension reform, when they've always been in favour of it?"

At the very least, LR leaders have said they could be open to deals on a case-by-case basis, if their proposals are taken on board. A coalition pact - or even messy case-by-case deals - would likely come at a heavy cost for Macron, but he has few other options in a very fragmented parliament. Many considered LR a dying force by the end of his first mandate, when LR candidate Valerie Pécresse obtained a mere 4.8% of votes in April's presidential election, as Macron won a second term and poached some more senior LR members. But now, LR's 61 lawmakers, and three more MPs close to them from smaller parties, are just what Macron needs to ensure an absolute majority and get laws adopted.

What Haryana municipal election results mean for BJP, Congress and AAP

Haryana municipal election results explained: What do these results mean for all major political players in the state?



As poll results for Haryana's 46 municipalities rolled in Wednesday, BJP scored a clear edge over its opponents by winning 22 civic bodies, while its ally JJP managed to win three. The lion's share of the remaining local bodies went to the Congress, with debutant AAP managing just one. What do these results mean for all major political players in the state?

Has BJP regained lost

ground in Haryana post the farmers' protest?

Municipal polls do not reflect the mood of rural voters. But with several people with rural background residing in small towns and several others being dependent on the farm economy, the results do indicate that the BJP is shaking off the political damage it endured during the farmers' agitation. Interestingly, the BJP had lost both bypolls - Baroda

(won by Congress) and Ellenabad (won by INLD) - that were held during the farmers' agitation.

Did delay in conducting these elections help the ruling alliance?

The local body polls were delayed for months due to court cases and other technical reasons. The opposition, however, blamed the delay on the ruling party's political designs. Had these elections been

held as per schedule during the farmers' protest, BJP-JJP would have found it difficult to even hit the campaign trail amid mounting opposition at the grassroots level. Further, BJP's recent Assembly poll wins, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, helped boost morale of party cadre in the state, which took the battle to the opposition with renewed vigour.

Haryana election results: Did infighting hurt the Congress?

Thanks to the never-ending squabbles in the state unit, the Congress has not been able to boost its organisational structure at the local level in Haryana. With infighting between state stalwarts intensifying in recent months, the Congress did not contest these polls on party symbol. Further, senior Congress leaders did not campaign for party-backed candidates. While former CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda got a virtual free-hand in running state's affairs, the

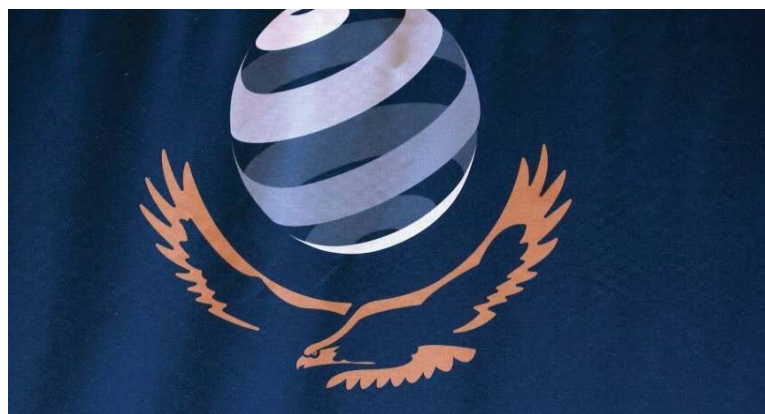
most recent revolt came during Rajya Sabha polls by Kuldeep Bishnoi who voted against the party. But despite all this, the party now claims that 19 Independents that have won in civic polls were backed by it.

What do these results mean for AAP and its prospects in Haryana?

The AAP has succeeded in opening its account by winning a small municipality (Ismailabad) in Kaithal district. AAP had expected an impressive performance here especially after stunning victory in neighbouring Punjab in the Assembly polls. But it could not perform on expected lines even when Congress was not in the battlefield actively. Political analysts believe that the results show that the party will not find it as easy as Punjab or Delhi while trying to expand its base in the state. However, by fighting on party symbol, AAP has ensured that it has dedicated volunteers on the ground for future contests.

The WTO agreement on fisheries is flawed but significant

Negotiations over the global commons are not easy. But the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies is an important milestone in trade governance



One of the most promising outcomes of the recently concluded twelfth ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is the adoption of a new, first-of-its-kind, sustainability-driven trade agreement called the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS). The significance of the adoption of AFS can be gauged from the fact that this is only the third instance of amending the WTO agreement in its 27-year history. The aim of AFS as echoed by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.6 is to address harmful fisheries subsidies provided by countries towards marine fishing and to save the world's fish stocks from further depletion.

Fundamentally, AFS prohibits three kinds of subsidies: First, illegal, unreported, or unregulated (IUU) fishing; second, fishing of already over-exploited stocks; and third, fishing on unregulated high seas. As part of special and differential treatment (S&DT), developing countries like India have been given a two-year transition period for phasing out the first two kinds of subsidies within their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

However, the final negotiated outcome, most crucially, lacks the much-needed discipline on subsidies for fishing in other members' waters and those that contribute to overcapacity and over-fishing (OCOF). India has been steadfastly demanding that developing countries be given a longer transition period of 25 years to put an end to OCOF subsidies within their EEZ. India's stand on this issue is rooted in its national interest. Given its long coastline of nearly 7,500 kilometres, the blue economy — sustainable use of ocean resources for economic

growth — occupies a cardinal place in India's development trajectory. India has set a target of exporting marine products worth \$14 billion by 2025. Thus, India needs the policy space to invest in developing the marine infrastructure to harness the full potential of the blue economy. Moreover, India needs to protect the livelihood concerns of close to four million marine farmers, the majority of whom are engaged in small-scale, artisanal

fishing, which does not pose a great threat to sustainability. India rightly contends that WTO disciplines should not be developed in a manner that throttles its emerging sector while richer nations continue to negotiate exemptions for indefinite subsidisation and exclusion of horizontal, non-specific fuel subsidies (that is, fuel subsidies not limited to marine fishing purposes) in the text. Rich countries have historically provided massive subsidies to build capacity for large-scale fishing and fishing in distant waters, thereby contributing the most to depletion. The sheer numbers — India provided subsidies worth a mere \$277 million in 2018, in sharp contrast to the top five subsidisers (China, EU, US, South Korea, and Japan, whose subsidies range from \$7,261-

\$2,860 million respectively), prove the discrepancies.

However, India's demand for a longer transition period was not acceptable to many countries who insisted on this period being seven years. Consequently, WTO member countries agreed to a limited AFS sans regulations disciplining OCOF subsidies, which have been pushed to the future and are expected to be completed within four years. If negotiations fail, the AFS will stand terminated, as provided in Article 12. Meanwhile, all countries can continue providing most OCOF subsidies, that is, except for fishing on unregulated high seas. For the sake of sustainability, countries need to overcome their differences soon and forge a comprehensive agreement with the inclusion of meaningful S&DT, else they risk the indefinite

continuation of harmful subsidies by all players and/or weaponisation of this agreement as a bargaining chip in other negotiations. One balancing act could be to consider different ways to effectuate such flexibilities while accommodating the demands in a more targeted manner. Other strategies for India could involve strengthening infrastructure and mechanisms now to be able to utilise any future exemptions. For India, the AFS is less-than-perfect, with a potential of no real outcome at the end of four years if the negotiations fail. But negotiations over the global commons are not easy. Countries, true to the SDGs, should fulfil their mandates of sustainability and development in good faith. Although the road ahead is arduous, the AFS is an important milestone in global trade governance.

Why India, EU Should Prioritise Removing Existing Bottlenecks in Trade and Technology Pact

Global trade and stronger collaboration between countries play a major role in advancing technology trade and accessibility. The current geopolitical tension, such as China's aggressive behaviour during the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has created a shroud of uncertainty for states sharing critical technologies. States may now face impediments when trying to improve technology trade. Globalisation has heightened the potential for both global technology trade and restrictions that can also hamper technology dissemination.

As technology remains a critical factor in advancing countries' economies, there is also a quest for improving the accessibility of these critical technologies. The recently announced Europe-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC) Agreement is an attempt to have easier access of key technologies to both actors. The agreement seeks to improve the cross-border flow of technology goods and services between the two



entities. Identifying potential areas of technology collaboration between India and Europe is a key part of the agreement to build on their comparative advantages and address their flaws in certain key technology sectors. Another area of focus would be the existing and potential trade barriers that might impact the agreement. These barriers need to be addressed if the agreement can yield tangible results for the growth of the technology sector in India and Europe. Efficient trade policies facilitate the cross-border movement of goods and services in a supply chain. In the capital and labour-intensive technology sector, both high-

skilled and low-skilled workers are required in different areas of the value chain.

Today, easy movement of labour across countries is a challenge. With many emerging economies facing dire economic situations due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a shortage of skilled workers ready to relocate to another country. The per capita income of India remains on the lower end of the spectrum compared to technological powerhouses like the US and China. Attracting skilled workers from these countries will require additional financial support from the government as well as a favourable investment climate.

With increased economic protectionism around the world, the trade of skilled labour for the technology sector will face constraints.

FEARS OF WEAPONISATION

Recent events, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have raised geopolitical and geo-economic concerns about critical technology supply chains. They have also raised fears about the use of certain technologies to weaponise their respective militaries. These developments can lead to an increase in technonationalist tendencies across regions. Fear of weaponising certain critical technologies can also result in tighter investment screening mechanisms.

Financing that might originate from unverified sources and other potential investors might be viewed with increased scepticism. These developments can impede industry growth including investments in the high-tech sector and hamper technology trade.

(Contd. on page 28)

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China's role in Pakistan's economic crisis

If China does not help solve a problem it has a role in creating, other lenders may also refuse to contribute

Pakistan's latest Economic Survey (2021-22) gives a glimpse of just how deeply it is indebted to China. It has a current debt of \$87.7 billion. Its ongoing economic crisis can be traced to reckless borrowing, enabled by China. Meanwhile, even as the country risks a financial crisis, the military has awarded itself an 11 per cent increase in budgetary allocation, while other heads such as education, housing and health have seen their budgets slashed. This has created an unprecedented backlash against the military.

Given the role Chinese lending has played in the crisis in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, other lenders are coming around to the view that China must also take some of the haircuts and burden of debt relief to these countries directly. Funds from the IMF – which Pakistan is in negotiations with for its 22nd loan — and other aid providers, shouldn't be used to repay opaque financing made on unfair terms. China is Pakistan's largest bilateral creditor, with outstanding loans of \$14.5 billion – only the Asian Development Bank (ADB) at \$14 billion and the World Bank

(WB) at \$18.1 billion have comparable amounts owed to them. However, this number undercounts the true extent of Chinese lending to Pakistan under other categories. For instance, China's SAFE (State Administration of Foreign Exchange) has lent to Pakistan. The Economic Survey lists \$7 billion owed to "SAFE/TIME" (not clarified in the budget documents), which likely includes loans extended by SAFE.

Pakistan also owes \$8.77 billion to "commercial banks", which includes banks from West Asia and three Chinese lenders — the Bank of China, ICBC and China Development Bank, all state-owned banks. Between 2016-17 to 2020-21, the three Chinese lenders extended short-term loans worth \$11.48 billion. It is not clear how much of this amount is still outstanding.

The absolute amounts also don't capture the different interest rates and tenures — most of the multilateral loans (ADB and WB) are for 25-30 years and have been made at much lower rates (Libor + 0.6 per cent), while loans from Chinese "commercial banks" are for shorter tenures

(1-3 years) and at higher interest rates (Libor + 2.75-3 per cent). This means that while ADB/WB lending is around 3 per cent, loans made by Chinese banks are 5.5-6 per cent at current rates. This difference also extends to bilateral lending. Compared to other bilateral lenders, China's loan tenures are shorter and interest rates higher. Bilateral loans from Germany, Japan and France charge interest of under 1 per cent, while bilateral loans from China are at 3-3.5 per cent. The higher interest rates become evident when viewed along with Pakistan's interest payments to its creditors. During 2019-20, the total lending to Pakistan by Paris Club countries and China was about the same — but the interest outflow on Chinese loans was four times higher. In the past two years, Pakistan has paid out just \$7.6 million in interest to the Paris club — likely relief on account of Covid — while it has paid over \$400 million to China. A significant part of the Chinese lending has likely been for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), an ambitious project undertaken on opaque terms. According to Pakistani media

reports, the IMF wants Pakistan to renegotiate the CPEC energy deals before it agrees to assist Pakistan. Earlier research by Gateway House has shown that some of the loans made for CPEC Power projects were at Libor + 4-4.5 per cent, and the cost of projects was significantly higher than similar projects elsewhere. Any lasting solution to the problems of these countries will have to involve China. It will have to chip in, in the form of lower interest rates, extended repayment periods and some debt forgiveness, if Pakistan and others like Sri Lanka, Maldives and Myanmar are to climb out of the financial hole they are in. If China refuses to help solve a problem it has helped create, other lenders may also refuse to contribute: Why write off money that will then be used to pay off a single lender at everyone else's expense? However, if China does write off some of its loans, it will face similar demands from other borrowers that signed up for the BRI. From an Indian perspective, the Chinese debt trap will limit Pakistan's economic growth, in turn reducing its ability to cause mischief for India.

India and Australia: Partners with shared interests and entwined destinies

Both nations share a vision for an open, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific region.

It is no accident that my first two bilateral visits as Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Australia are to Japan and India. The case for Australia making India a priority is unassailable: Australia must strengthen its understanding of and engagement with the world's soon-to-be most populous nation and a deeply consequential power. Our world — and our region — faces the most serious strategic confluence of events since the end of the Second World War: Intensifying strategic and geo-economic competition, the return of war to Europe, growing climate risks, and enduring pandemic impacts, all of which are driving inflation and supply chain shocks. Countries which share common values and interests must work together with resolve to shape our economic and strategic environment so that it continues to support our collective security and prosperity. My visit this week to New Delhi and Goa is based on that conviction, and the commitment by the new Australian government to place India at the heart of Australia's approach to the Indo-Pacific and beyond. India's economy, manufacturing capabilities and talent ensure it will play a key role in securing supply chains and restarting post-pandemic growth. Its military has the capacity and capability to respond to natural disasters, help stabilise an uncertain region and contribute to an effective balance of power. And its technological and scientific capabilities are gateways to a cleaner and more sustainable world. Most of all, India's people have the optimism, the commitment to democracy, the drive and the goodwill to make our region safer, freer and better. Ours is a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership full of practical, tangible actions that strengthen ties and benefit the region. We are among a very small group of countries to hold annual leaders' summits and biennial 2+2 talks involving foreign and defence ministers. Today, our defence forces are

undertaking more complex activities together, such as in Exercise Malabar with the US and Japan. Last year, Indian military officials observed our Exercise Talisman Sabre, and I have renewed the invitation for India's forces to participate fully in future iterations of this exercise. We coordinate closely on maritime domain awareness. This year we have deployed P-8 surveillance aircraft to each other's territories for joint patrols. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to see these capabilities in action, flying alongside dedicated Indian P-8 personnel.

Australia has also committed to a package of partnership initiatives in our update to the India Economic Strategy. The update includes a five-year action plan for the Australian Government to achieve the long-term ambitions set out in the landmark 2018 India Economic Strategy to 2035. It also includes new bilateral cooperation that spans the full breadth of the relationship. These include opening a Consulate-General in Bengaluru in 2023 to tap into India's technology and start-up hub, and a joint Australia-India Centre of Excellence for Critical and Emerging Technology Policy, also in Bengaluru. In Australia, we will open an Australia-based Centre for India-Australia Relations to propel and strengthen our community, institutional and business ties — including through a suite of new Maitri (mateship) scholarships, fellowships, and partnerships.

India and Australia have great potential to cooperate on climate and sustainability. As we do on ethical critical mineral and resource production, cutting-edge renewable technology research and development, skills and education, waste and the circular economy, business, investment, and advanced manufacturing. Our government is focused on making Australia a renewable energy superpower, and we want to see India emerge as a clean technology manufacturing powerhouse.

As our bilateral relationship deepens, we must begin to

work more together with others in the region. We see enormous potential in the Indian and Pacific oceans, where we each have vital interests in combating climate change, illegal fishing and people smuggling and responding to humanitarian crises and natural disasters. India and Australia have shown that when we work in partnership, as in the wake of Tonga's devastating underwater earthquake, we are greater than the sum of our parts. Right across the Bay of Bengal, we are responding to the needs of our partners, including through connectivity, trade and energy, and maritime partnerships in the East Indian Ocean. Australia and India take our commitments to our regional partners seriously. India has assisted Sri Lanka through its current economic crisis. Australia is doing the same, contributing approximately Rs 270 crore (AUD 50 million) in Official Development Assistance to support health services, and economic recovery.

As I have discussed with many of my new counterparts, Australia has a vision for an open, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific region. It is a vision for a region that is more integrated rather than divided, where trade and investment flow freely based on agreed rules and treaty commitments, where disputes are resolved through dialogue in accordance with international law, and where a strategic culture that respects the rights of all states, big and small, prevails. It is a vision that we share with partners like ASEAN, and partners like India. Australia's vision for the region's peace and stability is for these principles, not against any one power. But it is not just words. It is backed by investment, authentic partnership and action. Whether through joint activities with like-minded countries, or our support of regional and multilateral architecture, Australia is ensuring the region has options and balance.

Like farm laws, Centre will have to withdraw Agnipath too: Rahul

While the Congress has accused the ED of harassing him by dragging his questioning for days, the probe agency has said that he has not been able to provide answers to key questions related to the case

Terming his questioning by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) as a "small affair", Congress leader Rahul Gandhi urged his party leaders and workers to protest against the Agnipath scheme instead, which, he said, would "weaken the Armed Forces". Recalling the repeal of the farm laws, he said Prime Minister Narendra Modi would have to "withdraw" the recruitment scheme also. Addressing party leaders and workers, who had gathered at the AICC headquarters here to express solidarity with him over his questioning by the ED, Rahul said: "They are weakening our Army, for which the country will suffer, and they call themselves nationalists. Leave the ED issue, it is a small affair. But our youth, who train so hard to get into the forces, symbolise patriotism... It is our responsibility to secure the future of our youth." "Regarding the farmers, I had said that Modi ji will have to take back the Bills... Were the Bills not taken back? Now the Congress party is saying that Narendra Modi ji will have to withdraw the new Agnipath scheme. Every Indian



youth will be found standing with us because they know true patriotism lies in strengthening the Army, not weakening it," he said.

"They have broken the back of the smallscale industries, MSMEs. Now, they have also blocked the road that offered our youth a job in the Army. There will be no resettlement once these young people retire after four years. On the other hand, the Chinese Army is sitting on Indian soil. Over 1,000 square

metres of land have been snatched from us. Even the Indian government has accepted it. At a time when the forces should be strengthened, they are weakening it. It will have implications when there is a war," he said.

Rahul has been questioned by the ED for 50 hours over five days in a money laundering case related to the National Herald newspaper. While the Congress has accused the ED of harassing him by dragging

his questioning for days, the probe agency has said that he has not been able to provide answers to key questions related to the case.

Rahul said ED officials asked him about the "secret" behind his patience and energy, despite long hours of questioning in a room measuring "about 12 feet by 12 feet". "They asked me not to leave the chair, keep sitting for hours... (said) don't you get tired, we have got tired. They

asked me the secret behind my energy," he said, adding that he attributed it to Vipassana meditation.

"But the real truth is that I was not alone in that room. Crores of Congress workers and leaders were with me. I also had those who fight to safeguard our democracy. They may not have received the special invite of the ED, but they were also with me," he said.

In a lighter vein, Rahul said nobody knows the virtue of patience more than Congress leaders and workers, pointing at senior leaders Sachin Pilot and Siddaramaiah on the dais, where Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Karnataka Congress chief D K Shivakumar were also seated. "I have been working with the Congress since 2004... I will not be patient, then what? Look at Sachin Pilot sitting. I am sitting, Siddaramaiahji is sitting. Our party teaches us patience, it does not let us get tired. On the other side of the fence, there is no need for patience. You just need to not speak the truth, keep your hands folded, prostrate and your work gets done," he said.

Farmers Need Incentives, Not Teachings

Soil is the very basis of life. The 12-15 inches of topsoil is the basis for 87% of the life on this planet, including ourselves. Plants, birds, animals, insects and worms — all thrive on the richness of the topsoil. But in the last 100-150 years, we have destroyed over 50% of this precious soil, which generates 95% of our food.

For any soil to have agricultural potential, it must have a minimum of 3-6% organic content. But 62% of India's land has organic content of less than 0.5% and is on the verge of desertification. In northern Europe, the organic content is somewhere around 2%, and in southern Europe, it is a shade over 1%. In the United States, 30% of the topsoil is simply gone. About 51 million square kilometers of land, which is over 50% of the usable land on the planet, is under agriculture right now. This is a land which human beings are tending to every day. So, this is the land we should first turn around, and it is possible to do it if we take the necessary steps. Either in the form of animal waste, plants, bushes, trees or whichever way, you need to put back organic content. Immediately, people will jump the

gun and say, "Let's do organic farming". They talk about these things because it is fashionable. But if you take away all the pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers from the planet today, global food production could come down to 25% of what it is right now. That will be the worst disaster you will

unfold on the planet. It is very important to understand that farmers do not enjoy throwing fertilisers. Fertiliser is very expensive. They are throwing it because soil is in such a condition that if you do not put enough fertiliser, nothing will come out of it. So, do not go about advocating different types of farming as if it is your religion or philosophy; farming is neither. It is just a practical solution to our requirements of nourishment. Moreover, the farm economy is so fragile that if you try to make any sudden changes, the whole thing will collapse. Farmers are already struggling for their livelihood. So, it is not fair to expect a poor farmer to save the environment. The important thing is to



enhance the richness in the soil and leave how to farm to the farmers. The United

Nations agencies are saying that the planet has agricultural soil only for another 80-100 crops. That means we would run out of soil 45-60 years. If that happens, there will be a serious food crisis on the planet. This is why, we have taken up

the Conscious Planet — the Save Soil movement. As part of the movement, we are trying to touch 3.5 billion citizens across the world, to impress upon all political parties and governments to take to long-term soil regeneration policies. Right now, the simple way to turn this soil extinction around is to provide incentives for every farmer in the world to improve the organic content in agricultural soil. Set up 3% organic content as a minimum average and provide a first level of attractive incentive for the farmers to aspire to get there. Industry and business can facilitate carbon credit systems as a second line of incentive for the farmers. The third level of incentive is recognition in the marketplace

— food products grown in soil with minimum 3-6% organic content should find a different shelf and they will naturally get a better price. So, with these three incentives, we can drive ourselves in a direction where in 6-8 years' time a minimum of 3% organic content should happen.

WHY WE MUST ACT NOW

A time has come where we need to address soil and take corrective measures now. If we start now, in 15-25 years, there will be a significant turnaround. But let us say we wait for another 25-50 years, and then try to turn it around, they say it may take up to 200 years to turn around. And that period is going to be disastrous for human beings as a species. Taking care of the soil, ensuring that desertification and degradation of soil richness does not happen is the most vital responsibility that we have as a generation of people. This one thing should be taken up as an express mission by every citizen, by every government of the many nations on this planet. Without ensuring the richness of the soil, we are in a way giving up on life. Please, let us make it happen.

Afghanistan Quake: At Least 1,000 Killed as Rescuers Scramble for Survivors; India, UN Offer Help



government is working within its capabilities and urged the international community to extend help. "We hope that the International Community & aid agencies will also help our people in this dire situation," he said in a tweet.

Helping Hands

India said it is committed to provide assistance and support to Afghanistan in its "hour of need". External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said India shares the grief of Afghan people. "India expresses sympathy and condolences to the victims and their families, and to all those impacted by the tragic earthquake in Afghanistan. We share the grief of the people of Afghanistan and remain committed to provide assistance and support in this hour of need," he said on Twitter. "We share the grief of the people of Afghanistan and remain committed to provide assistance and support in this hour of need," Bagchi added. Afghan Ambassador Farid Mamundzay appreciated India's

solidarity and support at this "difficult time".

"Appreciate the solidarity and support of India at this difficult time. Humanitarian situation in Afghanistan was already going from worse to worst and with the occurrence of natural disasters like the recent earthquake make life unbearable for many Afghans," he tweeted. Mamundzay said immediate international help is required to deal with both the humanitarian crisis and the damages caused by the natural disaster. "The casualty figure is likely to go up as search operations continue in various parts of Paktika, Khost and Nangarhar," he said. The United Nations and European Union have offered assistance. "Inter-agency assessment teams have already been deployed to a number of affected areas," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in Afghanistan tweeted. Tomas Niklasson, EU special envoy for Afghanistan, tweeted: "The EU is monitoring

the situation and stands ready to coordinate and provide EU emergency assistance to people and communities affected."

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for solidarity from the international community to help families in the country which was already reeling from the impact of years of conflict, economic hardship, and hunger. "I was saddened to hear of the tragic loss of life caused by the earthquake which struck Afghanistan earlier today local time near the city of Khost. Hundreds of people have reportedly been killed and injured, and this tragic toll might continue to rise," Guterres said. "We count on the international community to help support the hundreds of families hit by this latest disaster. Now is the time for solidarity," he said. Conveying his deep condolences to the families of the victims and wishing a speedy recovery to the injured, Guterres said the United Nations in Afghanistan is fully mobilised. "Our teams are already on the ground assessing the needs and providing initial support." A joint statement from Afghanistan embassies urged international organisations to provide aid and assistance.

"Diplomatic missions call for generous support of all countries, organizations to provide urgent humanitarian aid, to thousand of survivors of the earthquake," it said. It also called for the flags of "Islamic Republic missions shall be flown half-mast until sunset on Thursday."

LIMITED RESCUE RESPONSE

Afghanistan's emergency response teams were stretched to deal with the disaster as only a handful of airworthy planes and helicopters left since the Taliban retuned to power. Afghanistan is frequently hit by earthquakes — especially in the Hindu Kush mountain range, which lies near the junction of the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates. Scores of people were killed and injured in January when two quakes struck rural areas in the western province of Badghis, damaging hundreds of buildings. In 2015, more than 380 people were killed in Pakistan and Afghanistan when a 7.5-magnitude earthquake ripped across the two countries, with the bulk of the deaths in Pakistan.

(News Agency) At least 1,000 people have been reported dead and hundreds injured on Wednesday after a powerful 5.9 magnitude earthquake rocked Afghanistan with authorities claiming the toll is likely to rise as rescuers find "grave after grave" in a bid to find survivors from collapsed buildings. The quake that majorly hit the eastern Paktika province early Wednesday morning struck hardest in the rugged east, as the country continues to reel under a severe economic crisis and food shortage following the Taliban takeover in August last year. Mohammad Amin Huzaifa, head of the Information and Culture Department told AFP, "people are digging grave after grave," adding that at least 1,000 people had died in that province alone. "It is raining also, and all houses are destroyed. People are still trapped under the rubble," he told journalists. Death toll continued to rise, leading the country's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, to warn it would likely rise further. Anas Haqqani, a senior Taliban official urged the

Chinese President Xi Warns About 'Expanding Military Alliances' at BRICS Summit

(News Agency) Chinese President Xi Jinping warned against "expanding" military ties on Wednesday in a speech ahead of a virtual summit with top leaders from Russia, India, Brazil, and South Africa. Beijing is hosting the meeting of the influential club of BRICS emerging economies, which accounts for more than 40 percent of the global population and nearly a quarter of the world's gross domestic product. Three of its members — China, India, and South Africa — have abstained from voting on a United Nations resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Xi told the BRICS business forum that the "Ukraine crisis is... a wake-up call" and warned against "expanding military alliances and seeking one's own security at the expense of other countries' security". China and India have strong military links with Russia and buy large amounts of its oil and gas. In a call last week, Xi assured his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin that China would support

Moscow's core interests in "sovereignty and security" — leading the United States to warn Beijing that it risked ending up "on the wrong side of history". South Africa,



one of the few African countries wielding diplomatic influence outside the continent, has also not condemned the Russian military action. Xi also took a swipe at the US and European Union sanctions on Russia in the speech on Wednesday, saying "sanctions are a boomerang and a double-edged sword".

RUSSIAN COOPERATION

The BRICS summit takes place as

Russian troops continue to pummel eastern Ukraine after invading the country four months ago. China and India have both ramped up crude oil imports from Russia,

helping Moscow to offset losses from Western nations scaling back energy purchases from the country. India bought six times more Russian oil from March to May compared with the same period last year, while imports by China during that period tripled, data from research firm Rystad Energy shows. Once bitter Cold War rivals, Beijing and Moscow have stepped up cooperation in recent years. The two countries also flew bomber aircraft over the Sea of Japan and East China Sea

while US President Joe Biden was in Tokyo in late May — signalling strong military links. This month, they also unveiled the first road bridge linking the countries, connecting the far eastern Russian city of Blagoveshchensk with the northern Chinese city of Heihe. President Putin was also in Beijing for the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics, just days before the invasion started.

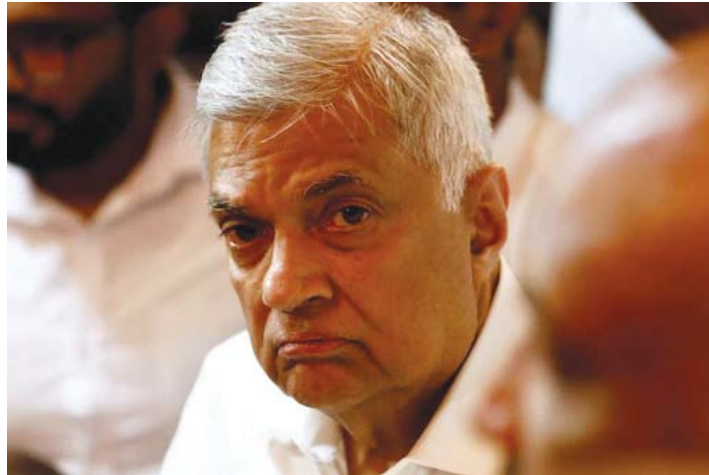
Sri Lanka's Economy Has 'Completely Collapsed': PM Ranil Wickremesinghe

(News Agency) Sri Lanka's economy has "completely collapsed" and it is facing a far more serious situation beyond the mere shortages of fuel, gas, electricity and food, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe warned on Wednesday, underscoring the urgency of arriving at an early agreement with the IMF to obtain an additional credit facility. Sri Lanka has been facing the worst economic crisis since independence in 1948 which has prompted an acute shortage of essential items like food, medicine, cooking gas and fuel across the island nation. Giving an update to Parliament on the government's mitigation measures taken so far, Wickremesinghe, also the finance minister, said, it is no easy task to revive a country with a "completely collapsed" economy, especially one that is dangerously low on foreign reserves.

"If steps had at least been taken to slow down the collapse of the economy at the beginning, we would not be facing this difficult situation today. But we lost out on this opportunity. We are now seeing signs of a possible fall into the very bottom. However, we must come out of this situation. If not, we will be unable to seek solutions to any other

issue in the country," he said. "We are now facing a far more serious situation beyond the mere shortages of fuel, gas, electricity and food. Our economy has faced a complete collapse. That is the most serious issue before us today. These issues can only be resolved through the reviving of the Sri Lankan economy. In order to do this, we must first resolve the foreign reserves crisis faced by us," he said. For Sri Lanka, the Prime Minister said, the only safe option now

is to hold discussions with the International Monetary Fund. In fact, this is our only option. We must take this path. Our aim is to hold discussions with the IMF and arrive at an agreement to obtain an additional credit facility." The nearly-bankrupt country, with an acute foreign currency crisis that resulted in foreign debt default, had announced in April that it is suspending nearly USD 7 billion foreign debt repayment due for this



year out of about USD 25 billion due through 2026. Sri Lanka's total foreign debt stands at USD 51 billion. The foreign currency crisis has crimped imports, creating severe shortages of

food, fuel, electricity and other essentials like medicines, forcing people to stand in long lines to fulfill basic needs.

The Indian credit lines since January this year have provided a lifeline to Sri Lanka amidst growing public dissent over the worsening economic conditions. But Wickremesinghe said India would not be able to keep Sri Lanka afloat for too long. We have taken loans amounting to USD 4 billion under the Indian credit line.

We have requested more loan assistance from our Indian counterparts. But even India will not be able to continuously support us in this manner. Even their assistance has its limits. On the other hand, we too must have a plan to repay these loans. These are not charitable donations," he said. Wickremesinghe said that currently, the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation is USD 700 million in debt. As a result, no country or organisation in the world is willing to provide fuel to us. They are even reluctant to provide fuel for cash, he said. He informed lawmakers that USD 70 million from the World Bank and USD 20 million from Sri Lankan Government funds will be paid to import 100,000 MT of gas to solve the issue soon. He said that on Monday, an IMF team arrived in Sri Lanka and the talks with the group will continue for the next several days. "We have concluded the initial discussions and we have exchanged ideas on various sectors such as public finance, finance, debt sustainability, stability of the banking sector and the social security network," he said. "We intend to enter into an official level agreement with the IMF by the end of July," he said.

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Nepal: Clash breaks out between fuel price protesters and police



"we can afford two meals a day," Hark Bahadur Bohara, a protester told WION. The protesters burnt an effigy of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Dilendra Prasad Badu.

The increase in the price of petrol, diesel, and cooking gas comes amid rising global crude prices after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The state-owned monopoly Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) raised the price of one litre of petrol and diesel by 12 per cent and 16 per cent respectively, prompting fears of broader price hikes. With the new price coming into effect, the price of petrol will now cost Rs 199 per litre and diesel and kerosene Rs 192 per

litre. Similarly, the price of aviation fuel has reached Rs 185 per litre (domestic) and USD 1,645 per kilo litre (international). A cylinder of LPG now costs Rs 1800. However, the NOC has not increased the prices of Liquefied Petroleum (LP) gas. The oil monopoly said that it hiked the prices of petroleum products in line with the international market. As the amount to be paid to the Indian Oil Corporation for the purchase of petroleum products is increasing, the supply system has to be kept smooth and the price has to be adjusted to the cost, the corporation stated. The corporation said it has been facing an extreme financial crisis. Its due amount to be paid to Indian Oil Corporation for the

purchase of petroleum products would reach Rs 22 billion by June 23, indicating another hike soon. Despite the hike, the Nepal Oil Corporation will be facing a monthly loss of around Rs 4.70 billion. The accumulated losses have been expected to reach Rs 55 billion by June end. Following a steep hike in fuel prices, fares for public transport and goods vehicles had been increased by up to a 7.7 per cent following the fuel price increase. Rising oil prices are a major factor fueling inflation that is biting citizens of the country. According to Nepal Rastra Bank, the year-on-year consumer price inflation jumped to a staggering 7.87 per cent in May, hitting a 69-month high, as compared to 3.65 per cent last year in May.

(News Agency) About 100 members of All Nepal National Free Student Union (ANNFSU), the student wing of the main opposition Nepal Communist Party (Unified Marxist-Leninist) clashed with police on Monday during the protest against the fuel price hike. Demonstrators demanded cheaper fuel and food

price control, with placards that read 'Finance Minister resign', 'Shame on the government'. "This unqualified coalition government has been continuously increasing the price of petroleum products. We are protesting to give some price relaxation to the people. At least, to a limit where at least

40 killed in Bangladesh flood, PM Hasina visits affected areas

Bangladesh has so far reported 40 deaths as a result of the flood. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited the flood-affected areas on Tuesday

(News Agency) The Bangladesh administration on Wednesday announced that at least 40 people have been killed so far in the floods. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also visited the flood-hit areas on Tuesday.

Officials said the flood situation is dire in Sylhet and Sunamganj districts, while it remained unchanged in the northeastern districts. The Surma, the main river of Sylhet division, is still flowing over the danger line. The flood water is

flooding the suburbs there. The Surma's water now flows into the town through various drains. The water has flooded several homes and road communication in several areas has been cut off. Two lakh people are trapped in the flood water in two districts.

40 KILLED

A total of 40 people, including three in Rangpur division, 15 in Mymensingh division and 22 in Sylhet division, were killed in the floods from June 16 to June 21.

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited the flood affected areas of Sylhet, Sunamganj, Netrokona and adjoining areas on Tuesday. Hasina said the people of the country have always had to deal with natural calamities and will continue to do so while emphasising building regional infrastructure. The prime minister talked about building elevated roads which could be accessible even during floods and disasters. She also said that



dredging measures would be taken to maintain the depth of the rivers. The prime minister talked about building elevated roads which could be accessible even during floods and disasters. She also said that dredging measures would be taken to maintain the depth of the rivers.

LIFE COMES TO A HALT

According to the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), the Surma was flowing at 1.43 cm above the danger level in Sylhet's Kanaighat area on Tuesday evening. The water level in Surma was 10 cm in Sylhet, 1.3 cm in Amalshid and 0.35 cm in Sheola. Sayed Ahmad Chowdhury, a senior meteorologist at the Sylhet Meteorological Office, said the rainfall in Sylhet has come down a lot. After a week of continuous rains and landslides, floods have occurred all over Chhatak in Sunamganj. Hundreds of acres of boro crops planted on high ground have been submerged in the flood

waters. The water level in all the rivers including Surma, Piyain and Chela, continued to rise till Tuesday morning. All crusher mills in Chhatak town are closed. Cargo loading and unloading on the river has been stopped. Hundreds of workers have been unemployed for a week. 90 percent of the houses in the entire Sunamganj town are still submerged under the water. Traffic is closed on the main roads of Sunamganj and Chhatak municipal areas. The main roads in isolated areas of Chhatak, Tahirpur, Dowarabazar and Bishwamvarpur upazilas are still flooded. There is no alternative means of transportation to these upazilas except by boat. All educational institutions are closed due to flood water. In several areas, the rivers were flowing above the danger level. The flood situation in Sylhet city has been worsening since last Wednesday due to heavy rains. As a result, the residents of the city have fled their homes to stay in other areas.

Hong Kong's iconic Jumbo Floating Restaurant capsizes after encountering 'adverse conditions'

(News Agency) Hong Kong's famous Jumbo Floating Restaurant capsized on Sunday (June 19) after encountering "adverse conditions" in the South China Sea. No crew members were injured, said the Aberdeen Restaurant Enterprises in a statement posted on Twitter. "When passing Xisha



Islands in the South China Sea, the vessel encountered adverse conditions which water soon entered before it began to tip." "Despite the efforts of the towing company responsible for the trip to rescue the vessel, unfortunately, it capsized on Sunday." The company added it

was "very saddened" by this incident. The vessel, which resembled a Chinese imperial palace, has welcomed celebrities such as Queen Elizabeth II and Tom Cruise with Cantonese cuisine since 1976. Residents had said their goodbyes to the iconic Jumbo Seafood Restaurant on

Tuesday (June 14) as it was towed away by tugboats from its home of 46 years. In 2020, Jumbo ceased operations due to the coronavirus outbreak. After months of Covid-19 restrictions, its parent company was unable to find a new owner and lacked the funds to maintain it.

Terrorists mulling assassination of Imran Khan, Pak's counter-terrorism department warns

Pakistan's counter-terrorism department warned that terrorists are planning to assassinate Imran Khan

(News Agency) Terrorists are planning to assassinate Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan and they have sought assistance from an assassin in Afghanistan to target him, the Counter-Terrorism Department's (CTD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wing has warned, according to a media report on Tuesday. The CTD has directed all concerned agencies to take all possible measures for the security of the former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman in the wake of the threat alert, Urdu language newspaper 'Jang' reported.

It said that the threat alert issued by CTD's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wing stated that "terrorists are planning to assassinate Imran Khan, for which they have sought assistance from an assassin in Afghanistan". The paper said that the text of the threat alert has been

shared with various forums, according to which an Afghan assassin has been given the responsibility to target Khan.

Citing a senior police official, the paper said that the CTD issued the alert on June 18. However, there were orders to keep the threat a secret and prevent it from being leaked on social media, he said.

PTI leaders have recently expressed concerns about the threat to Khan's life and have claimed that a target killer has been hired to assassinate him. On Saturday, PTI leader Fayyaz Chohan said that "some people" have tasked a terrorist with

assassinating Khan. "I have details that some people have ordered a terrorist named 'Cochi' in Afghanistan to



assassinate PTI Chairman Imran Khan," the former provincial minister said in a tweet. Khan, who was ousted from power in April through a no-trust vote, has been claiming that the no-trust motion against him was the result of a

"foreign conspiracy" because his independent foreign policy and funds were being channelled from abroad to oust him from power. He has named the US as the country behind the conspiracy, a charge denied by Washington. Last month, Khan claimed that there was a threat to his life, following which he recorded a video of the characters behind the "conspiracy" against his government, and if something happens to him, it will be released. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed the Interior Ministry last month to provide foolproof security to Khan at his home in Islamabad and during political rallies. Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in December 2007 in a gun and grenade attack while campaigning for upcoming parliamentary elections in Rawalpindi.

Sri Lanka Prez Gotabaya thanks Chinese counterpart Xi for 'continued friendship' during 'trying times'

Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa thanked his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Monday for the continued friendship during trying times

(News Agency) Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Monday expressed his appreciation for China for its "continued friendship, particularly during these trying times", as he thanked his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping for wishing him on his birthday. Rajapaksa was born on June 20, 1949.

"Thank you President Xi Jinping for the warm birthday wishes. Along with all of #lka I also want to thank #China for her continued friendship, particularly during these trying times. May the ties between our two nations grow from strength to strength," he tweeted, referring to the worst economic crisis faced by the island nation and Rajapaksa's bid to restructure debts owed to Beijing.

It is estimated that Sri Lanka owes debt payments to China in the region of USD 1.5 to 2 billion this year. China's loans and investments in Sri Lanka were estimated to be more than USD eight billion in the last few years. China's takeover of the Hambantota port on 99 years' lease for USD 1.2 billion debt swap drew international concerns over Beijing acquiring strategic assets far away from home by providing heavy loans and investment to smaller nations to build unviable

infrastructure projects.

Xi sent a birthday letter to Rajapaksa and underlined the spirit of the Rubber-Rice Pact "independence, self-reliance, unity & mutual support" against the current situation, the Chinese Embassy in Sri Lanka tweeted last week. China always stands ready to extend its support to Sri Lanka, Xi, also General Secretary of the

ruling Communist Party of China, wrote in his letter to Rajapaksa. "2022 marks the 65th anniversary of China and Sri Lanka diplomatic ties. We have been understanding & supporting each other for 65 years. I attach great importance to the development of our relations and would continue work to elevate it to new heights," he wrote. Sri Lanka has been grappling with

unprecedented economic turmoil since its independence from Britain in 1948. The economic crisis has also created political unrest in the country. There have been street protests in Sri Lanka against the government since early April due to its mishandling of the economic crisis. A crippling shortage of foreign reserves has led to long queues for fuel, cooking gas, and other

essentials while power cuts and soaring food prices have heaped misery on the people. On May 9, the political crisis saw the unleashing of violence with 10 people, including a parliamentarian, being killed. Gotabaya Rajapaksa's elder brother Mahinda Rajapaksa had to resign as prime minister amidst the political and economic turmoil.

Crisis-hit Sri Lanka plans donor conference, interim budget in August

(News Agency) Sri Lanka will call China, India and Japan to a donor conference to drum up more foreign assistance and present an interim budget in August, the prime minister said on Wednesday, amid ongoing negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The island nation of 22 million people is struggling with its worst economic crisis in seven decades, unable to import essentials including food, fuel and medicines because of a severe shortage of foreign exchange. An interim budget will be presented in August, seeking to put public finances on a more sustainable path and increase funds to the poor who have been hardest hit, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told parliament.

"The interim budget will set the path forward. This, together with an IMF programme and debt sustainability, will

lay the foundation for Sri Lanka to return to economic stability," he said. In late May, Wickremesinghe had told Reuters he would present an interim budget within six weeks, cutting government spending down "to the bone".

The dearth of basic necessities and spiralling inflation has stoked public unrest, pushing Wickremesinghe's government to redouble efforts to bring in assistance from the likes of the IMF and friendly countries.

"We need the support of India, Japan and China who have been historic allies. We plan to convene a donor conference with the involvement of these countries to find solutions for Sri Lanka's crisis," Wickremesinghe told parliament.

"We will also seek help from the U.S.," he said, adding that his administration will use \$70 million from the World Bank for buying cooking gas, which has been

in short supply, setting off sporadic protests.

A high-level delegation from India will arrive on Thursday for talks on additional support from New Delhi, and a team from the U.S. Treasury will visit next week, Wickremesinghe said.

India has so far provided around \$4 billion worth of assistance, the prime minister said, including a \$400 million swap and credit lines totalling \$1.5 billion.

China, which has traditionally jostled with New Delhi for influence over the Indian Ocean island, is considering an appeal from Sri Lanka to renegotiate the terms of a yuan-denominated swap worth \$1.5 billion to fund essential imports.

The government also delayed publication of its first quarter GDP data, due on Wednesday, because its census and statistics department did not receive all required inputs on time, an official said.

Kellogg To Split Into 3 Companies: Snacks, Cereals and Plant; Board Approves Plan



strong underlying growth momentum and profitability, Kellogg said. "This business is expected to be a higher-growth company than today's Kellogg Company, featuring a more growth-oriented portfolio and aided by more focused resources and attention to brand building, innovation, and international expansion of world-class brands, and to building scale in emerging markets," the statement said.

It added that the snacks business is expected to expand profit margins through operating leverage, revenue growth management, productivity, and increasing emerging-markets scale.

The cereal business, with about \$2.4 billion in net sales, will be a leading cereal company in the US, Canada, and Caribbean, with a portfolio of iconic, world-class brands and compelling opportunities for investment and profit growth "Near term, North

America Cereal Co. will be focused on the restoration of inventory, profit margins, and share position following 2021 supply disruptions. Longer term, it will focus resources and strengthen the business through enhancing its portfolio, operating capabilities, and productivity," it added. The company said this business is expected to generate stable net sales over time, with improving profit margins that will drive profit growth, higher cash flow, and increased return on invested capital. The plant business, with about \$340 million in net sales, will be a leading, profitable, pure-play plant-based foods company, anchored by the MorningStar Farms brand, with a significant opportunity to capitalize on strong long-term category prospects by investing further in North America penetration and future international expansion.

"As an independent business,

Plant Co will have the opportunity to build on its strong base of growth and profitability, focusing its resources and investments towards capitalizing on strong category prospects, by building awareness and penetration in North America, and expanding internationally in the future. The business is expected to accelerate net sales growth over time, from previously disclosed portfolio-segment assumptions," the company said. In the statement, Kellogg said cereal and plant companies will both remain headquartered in Battle Creek, Michigan, while its snacking company will maintain dual campuses in Battle Creek and Chicago, Illinois, with its corporate headquarters located in Chicago. Kellogg Company's three international regions' headquarters in Europe, Latin America, and AMEA (Asia, Middle East and Africa) will remain in their current locations.

(News Agency) US-based food giant Kellogg on Tuesday said its board has approved a plan to split the company into three entities. The new companies, whose names will be determined later, will be focused on snacking, cereals, and plant separately, according to a company statement.

"We expect the North America Cereal spin-off may precede that of Plant, with both currently targeted to be completed by the end of 2023," the company said in the statement.

It added that the proposed spin-

offs are intended to result in tax-free distributions of North America Cereal Co and Plant Co shares to Kellogg Company shareowners. Shareowners would receive shares in the two spin-off entities on a pro-rata basis relative to their Kellogg holdings at the record date for each spin-off.

The snacking business, with about \$11.4 billion in net sales, will be a leading company in global snacking, international cereal and noodles, and North America frozen breakfast, with iconic, world-class brands and

Nearly 1 in 5 adults who were infected with Covid have lingering symptoms: US Study

The analysis also found that younger adults were more likely to have persistent symptoms than older adults

(News Agency) Nearly 1 in 5 American adults who reported having COVID-19 in the past are still having symptoms of long COVID, according to survey data collected in the first two weeks of June, U.S. health officials said

on Wednesday. Overall, 1 in 13 adults in the United States have long COVID symptoms lasting for three months or more after first contracting the disease, and which they did not

have before the infection, the data showed. The data was collected from June 1-13 by the U.S. Census Bureau and analyzed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Long COVID symptoms range from fatigue, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, cognitive difficulties, chronic pain, sensory abnormalities and muscle weakness. They can be debilitating and last for weeks or months after recovery from the initial infection.

The CDC analysis also

found that younger adults were more likely to have persistent symptoms than older adults. Women were also more likely to have long COVID than men, according to the study, with 9.4% of U.S. adult women reporting

long COVID symptoms compared to 5.5% of men. The survey found nearly 9% of Hispanic adults have long COVID, higher than non-Hispanic white and Black adults, and more than twice the percentage of non-Hispanic Asian adults. There were also differences based on U.S. states, with Kentucky and Alabama reporting the highest percentage of adults with long COVID symptoms, while Hawaii, Maryland and Virginia reported the lowest, according to the

survey.



Biden To Urge US Congress For 3-Month Suspension Of Federal Gas Tax As Prices Skyrocket

(News Agency) US President Joe Biden will ask Congress Wednesday to suspend the federal gas tax for three months as skyrocketing prices cause widespread anger among Americans just months before crucial mid-term elections. The White House wants to discontinue the tax of 18 cents per gallon (3.78 liters) until September and will call on US states, which also tax at the pump, to do the same to "provide direct relief to American consumers who have been hit with Putin's price hike," a senior administration official said.

The official noted that prices had gone up almost \$2 a gallon since Russian President Vladimir Putin began building up forces on the Ukrainian border earlier this year. Federal taxes on gas and diesel help fund the Highway Trust Fund, which maintains roads and supports public transport, but Biden will call on Congress to ensure the fund does not suffer from the lost revenue. "With our deficit already down by a historic \$1.6 trillion this year, the president believes that we can afford to suspend the



gas tax to help consumers while using other revenues to make the Highway Trust Fund whole for the roughly \$10 billion cost," the official said. Facing growing public anger over the rising cost of gas, several states including New York and Connecticut have already suspended fuel taxes, while others have delayed planned tax increases.

Biden has taken steps to alleviate the pain at the pump after Putin's February 24 invasion of Ukraine led to soaring fuel prices not just in the United States but worldwide,

exacerbating inflation already on the rise. Those measures include releasing a million barrels of oil per day from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, negotiating the release of an additional 60 million barrels from international partners and expanding access to biofuels. But with average gas prices across the country near \$5 a gallon, the Biden administration is keen to lessen the pain consumers feel over rising prices ahead of November mid-term elections that could see the Democrats lose control of Congress.

Biden Considers Cutting Trump-Era Tariffs. For China, it's Time for Revenge



perfect time to squeeze out concessions from the US which is reeling under an inflation rate of 8.6% reported in May, the highest in 40 years. The United States is in essence planning to restore the pre-Trump status quo and strengthen its biggest enemy, China, while being engaged in the economic isolation of a much smaller economic threat, Russia.

CHINA REVEALS IN VICTORY AND OPPORTUNITY

Meanwhile, for China, Joe Biden's desperation is good news as it brings it an opportunity to leave the US red-faced and settle scores since Trump's trade war. For Beijing, which was once taken aback, devastated by the tariffs and brought to the negotiating table by the previous US administration, the tables have turned. It now sees the USA's overtures as "admitting its mistake," regretting its punitive measures, and begging for help. Chinese propaganda outlet Global Times, a mouthpiece for China's Communist Party, has made it amply clear that China will not see Biden's overtures and possible tariff reductions as a gift,

and would rather extract more humiliating compromises from the American side as a trade-off. "Washington needs to unconditionally cancel all the additional tariffs," said Chinese 'experts' quoted by GT.

GT also says, "since the US is now the side with heavier pressure, China needs to seize the chance and push the US to correct more of the mistakes it made." It also adds that the Biden administration needs to do more to bring bilateral ties back on track which is a hint towards extracting redactions in rhetoric starting from matters like Taiwan. China, which is not fulfilling the terms of the existing trade deal borne out of Trump's trade war, is emboldened by the Biden administration's failure to impose those conditions and its flirtation with the idea of removing the tariffs altogether instead. In the deal, China had committed to purchase an additional \$200 billion worth of US exports before the end of 2021. None of those additional exports ever took place, and instead, China, with its retaliatory tariffs, reduced its

imports from the US to just 57% of its commitment which is not enough to match levels seen even before the trade war.

ACOMPREHENSIVE DEFEAT What's more, this would only encourage China to leverage its dominance in the global supply chains with other nations. Not just this, but it would also send a message of American unreliability to the USA's partners in Asia, including India, Vietnam and others, which have seen businesses flee China and have benefited from this "restructuring" of supply chains to varying degrees. It can also weaken the Quad's credibility significantly before ASEAN, as its "strongest" member may now become its weakest link. The USA's commitment to fine-tuning the global supply chains and curbing undue Chinese dominance in the markets is fading in the eyes of international stakeholders and this will add to their apprehensions about getting on board with any US or Quad initiative to restructure global supply chains.

(News Agency) Amid historic inflation rates in the United States and tanking approval ratings, US President Joe Biden is considering speaking to China's Xi Jinping and removing some of the tariffs on Chinese goods imposed by the Trump administration in 2018 when the former president launched an unprecedented trade war against China. Such a move, however, may come with tremendous risks for the American economy and a near-certain political dent in the President's already troubled legacy.

Despite all the simplistic chatter on how rolling back tariffs on

China will ease the burden on the average American consumer and hence will eventually emerge as a popular measure, the risks far outweigh the gains, if any, as the move would encourage American companies to operate in China at the cost of American jobs, and symbolise a desperate American retreat in the face of a hostile economic relationship with China, while vindicating Beijing's actions in recent years including not sticking to the terms of the Trump-era trade deal.

In fact, China is well aware of the inflationary pressures ailing the Biden administration and believes that this may be the

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The first signs of global warming are now clearly visible. We urgently need to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Nothing and no-one will be spared from climate change. This warning is therefore to all people, all countries and, in particular, to the Belgian Council of Ministers who, on the weekend of March 20 and 21, will have to decide what action to take regarding essential measures linked to the Kyoto Protocol.



18-foot-long, weighing 98 kg: Florida has just unveiled its heaviest python so far

(NewsAgency) A female python weighing 98 kg (215 pounds) was found in Florida state of the US, the officials said. The snake, which was nearly 18-foot-long (5 metres), had 122 developing eggs, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida said in a press release. It is the heaviest Burmese python ever captured in the state. The discovery was made by a team of



biologists during the python removal programme of the state. A male "scout" snake, which had radio transmitters implanted, was used by the team to find this python. This scout snake was named Dionysus or Dion. It found the python in an area of the western Everglades. The "scout" snakes help the experts study python movements, habitat use and breeding behaviours, said Ian Bartoszek, wildlife biologist

and environmental science project manager for the conservancy's programme. "How do you find the needle in the haystack? You could use a magnet, and in a similar way our male scout snakes are attracted to

the biggest females around," Bartoszek added. In the capture of the female python, biologist Ian Easterling and intern Kyle Findley also contributed. From the woods, it was taken to the field truck. The invasive pythons are known for rapid reproduction and depletion of the surrounding native wildlife. The removal of the female pythons plays a significant role in disrupting the breeding cycle, Bartoszek further said.

Supreme Court Says Americans Have Right to Carry Guns in Public

(NewsAgency) The US Supreme Court ruled on Thursday that Americans have a fundamental right to carry firearms in public in a landmark decision that came just weeks after another deadly school shooting. The 6-3 ruling strikes down a New York law that required a person to prove they had legitimate self-defense needs to receive a gun permit and will prevent states from restricting people carrying guns.

Despite a growing call for limits on firearms after two mass shootings in May stunned the country, the court sided with advocates who said the US Constitution guarantees the right to own and carry guns. The ruling is the first by the court in a major Second Amendment case in a decade and a victory for the powerful gun lobby, the National Rifle Association. "Today's ruling is a watershed win for good men and women all across America and is the result of a decades-long fight the NRA has led," NRA executive vice president Wayne LaPierre said in a statement. "The right to self-defense and to defend your family and loved ones should not end at your home." Justice Clarence Thomas, who wrote the majority opinion, said "the Second and Fourteenth Amendments protect an individual's right to carry a handgun for self-defense outside the home."

"New York's proper-cause requirement violates the Fourteenth Amendment by preventing law-abiding citizens with ordinary self-defense needs from exercising their Second Amendment right to keep and bear

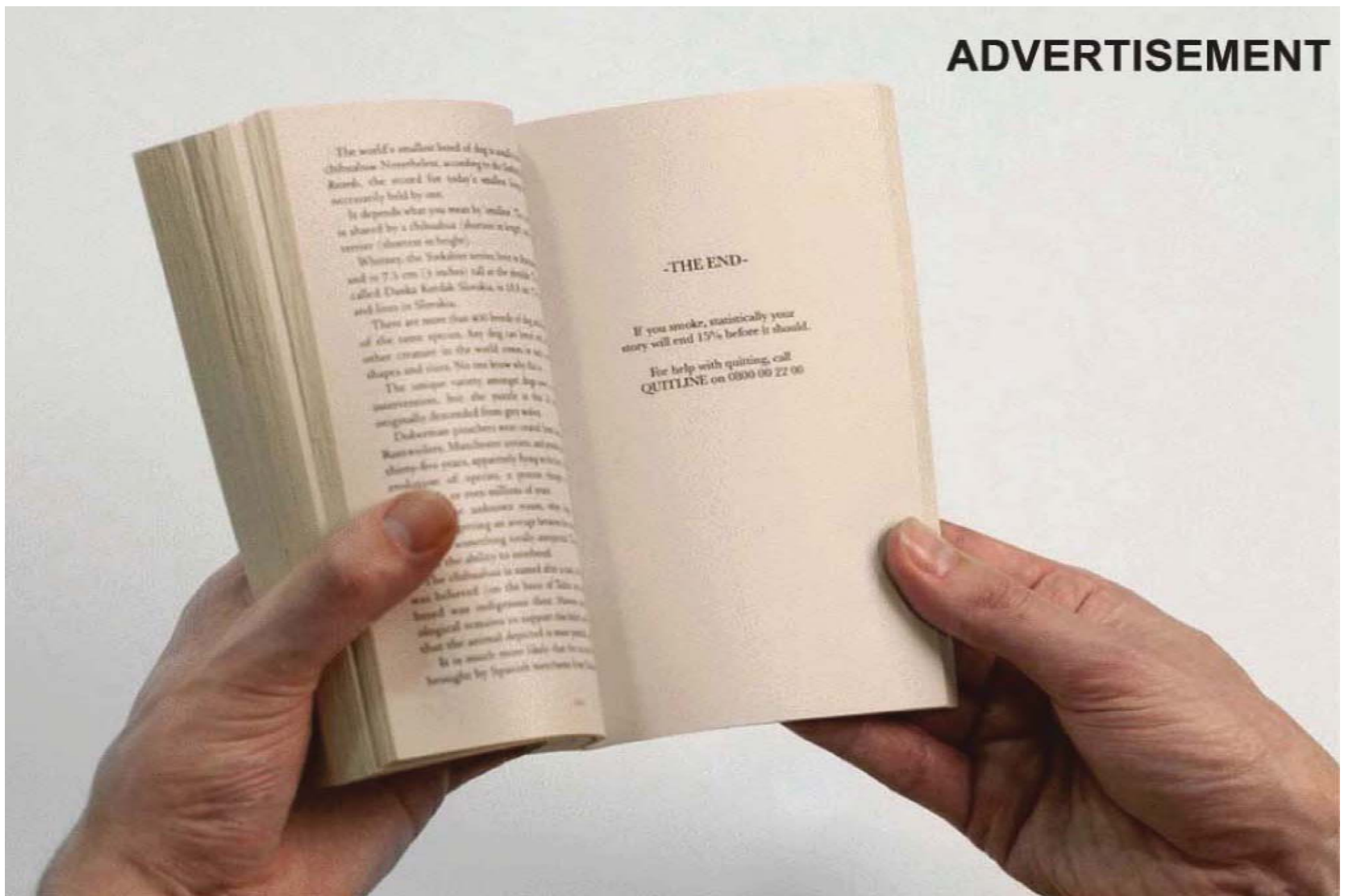
arms in public for self-defense." The US Senate is currently considering a rare bipartisan bill that includes modest gun control measures.

MASS SHOOTINGS IN BUFFALO, UVALDE

On May 14, an 18-year-old used an AR-15-type assault rifle to kill 10 African Americans at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York. Less than two weeks later 19 children and two teachers were shot and killed at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, by another teen with the same type of high-powered, semi-automatic rifle. The New York law said that to be given a permit to carry a firearm outside the home, a gun owner must clearly demonstrate that it is explicitly needed for self-defense — meaning those without the demonstrated need could not do so.

Gun-rights advocates said that violated the Second Amendment of the Constitution, which says "the right of people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." More than half of US states already allow permit less carry of firearms, most of them only doing so in the past decade. But more than 20 still maintain restrictions which they could now be forced to abandon based on the court's ruling. In the ruling, the court overturned a New York state law dating to 1913 that had stood based on the understanding that individual states had the right to regulate gun usage and ownership. Over the past two decades more than 200 million guns have hit the US market, led by assault rifles and personal handguns, feeding a surge in murders, mass shootings and suicides.

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G7 and NATO Leaders to Ratchet up Pressure on Russia, Keep Eye on China, Says US

(NewsAgency) Leaders from the Group of Seven rich democracies and the NATO alliance will work to increase pressure on Russia over its war in Ukraine next week, while underscoring their continued concerns about China, senior US officials said on Wednesday.

President Joe Biden leaves Saturday to meet with other G7 leaders in southern Germany before heading to Madrid for a summit where NATO is expected to announce plans to expand its forces in eastern Europe and Washington will lay out steps to strengthen European security.

Inclusion, for the first time, of leaders from Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand in the NATO summit was aimed at showing that the war in Ukraine has not detracted from Western nations' focus on China, the officials said.

G7 leaders, meeting at an alpine

castle an hour south of Munich on June 26-28, are also expected to address China's "coercive economic practices," which have become even more aggressive in recent years, one of the officials said. "Russia's war against Ukraine has galvanized our partnerships around the world," a second official said. "It's also showing how Ukraine is not causing us to take our eye off the ball on China. In fact, quite the opposite."

In fact, a new strategic concept to be endorsed by NATO leaders when they meet in Madrid June 29-30 will address threats posed by Russia, and for the first time, China, the official said.

Germany, which leads the G7 this year, has also invited Argentina, India, Indonesia, Senegal and South Africa to participate in select sessions at the summit.

G7 leaders will launch a new

infrastructure initiative aimed at offering low- and middle-income countries high-quality, transparent investment alternatives, officials said, a clear reference to China's Belt and Road project, which has been criticized for opaque contracts and onerous loan terms.

"At the summit, we will roll out a concrete set of proposals to increase pressure on Russia and demonstrate our support collectively for Ukraine," one of the officials said, without providing details. The impact of Russia's war in Ukraine in driving energy and food prices sharply higher and jeopardizing low- and middle-income countries will be another focal point, officials said.

"Leaders will also advance a vision of the world grounded in freedom and openness - not coercion, not aggression, not spheres of influence. They will strengthen our cooperation

on economic issues, cyberspace and quantum, and in particular, the challenges posed by China," the official added.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy will address both meetings virtually, mapping out his battle plan to counter Russia and the security assistance his country needs to carry it out, US officials said. Biden will meet bilaterally with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and will meet in Madrid with Spanish President Pedro Sanchez and King Felipe, the officials said.

There was no announcement about any bilateral meeting between Biden and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who is blocking plans for Finland and Sweden to join NATO, but one of the officials said Washington was confident that Turkey's concerns would be addressed and consensus could be reached.

Why India, EU Should Prioritise Removing Existing Bottlenecks in Trade and Technology Pact

(Contd from page 16)

EXPORT CONTROL MECHANISMS

When technologies are used to build defence and military systems, dual-use application applies and can trigger export regulations and restrictions, as per multilateral conventions such as the Wassenaar Arrangement. Like nuclear technology, this attaches a component or threat of proliferation, which makes the technology liable to certain export controls. Put in place to prevent the excessive exports of dual-use technologies, the Wassenaar Arrangement's 42 signatories include the US, Japan, Netherlands, and South Korea. According to the list, export controls on specific technologies have been divided into five categories: materials, software, technical data, and two covering physical commodities. The

list of products specifies more than 500 technology products and more than 150 types of critical technology manufacturing equipment.

There is also the possibility of unilateral controls on the export of emerging technologies by countries. The best example is the United States' Export Control Reform Act (ECRA 2018), which identifies export controls essential for technologies directly related to the country's national security.

According to this Act, the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security has the authority to update the Export Administration Regulations. Unilateral controls by a technology giant such as the US can hamper the chances of other countries to access critical materials and equipment in the

technology sphere.

IMPORT RESTRICTIONS

Import restrictions also still exist in many economies, including India. After the government announced the semiconductor package in December 2021, the Indian Cellular and Electronics Association, an industry body made of the leaders of major domestic firms, reminded that the rates for semiconductor imports remain high and certain restrictions remain in the form of high tariffs and sensitive technologies. The statement also emphasised how this would negate the benefits offered by the fiscal support package. Import restrictions can continue to hamper the growth of India's technology industry and prevent free technology trade. The government should prioritise unilaterally reducing import tariffs for critical technology

components. While there are now financial incentives to set up shop in India, efficient operations require a constant inflow of essential goods at lower prices. Restructuring import rules and regulations to facilitate such an outcome is the first step.

The Europe-India TTC Agreement is a positive step for the country to integrate itself into the global technology supply chains and improve its bilateral trade relations with the European Union (EU). But technology trade remains a convoluted road to navigate with many existential roadblocks. If India and the EU can prioritise to develop a strategy to circumvent existing bottlenecks, then the agreement can reap huge dividends for both parties. This remains critical especially for a rising technological power like India.

The anti-defection law and why Eknath Shinde could be poised to dodge it in Maharashtra

(Contd from page 14)

which further delays the decision. For example, the defection cases involving West Bengal MLA Mukul Roy and Jharkhand MLA Babu Lal Marandi are embroiled in judicial proceedings. Both Venkaiah Naidu and the Supreme Court have recommended that Speakers decide on defection cases in three months.

What is the Governor's role?

The Governor has a crucial role when there is political instability in a state. Before 1994, Governors were quick to dismiss a state government, charging that it did not have a majority in the state legislature and recommending the imposition of the President's rule in the state. But the Supreme Court ended this practice with its judgment in the S R Bommai case in 1994. In this landmark case, the court ruled

that the place for deciding whether a government has lost its majority was in the legislature. Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari can ask Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to convene the Assembly and prove his majority on the floor of the House. One question being discussed is whether the political crisis in Maharashtra could lead to the dissolution of the Assembly. The Chief

Minister of a state can recommend to the Governor to dissolve the legislature before the end of its five-year term and call for elections. Here, the Governor's discretion comes into play. The Governor may choose not to dissolve the legislature if he or she believes that the recommendation is coming from a council of ministers who do not enjoy the confidence of the state legislature.

What's Next After Russia Reduced Gas to Europe?

(News Agency) It's not a summer heat wave that's making European leaders and businesses sweat. It's fear that Russia's manipulation of natural gas supplies will lead to an economic and political crisis next winter. Or, in the worst case, even sooner.

Here are key things to know about the energy pressure game over the war in Ukraine:

WHAT'S HAPPENED?

Russia last week reduced gas supplies to five European Union countries, including Germany, the 27-country bloc's biggest economy that heavily depends on Moscow's gas to generate electricity and power industry. Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom has cut supplies through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline running under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany — Europe's major natural gas pipeline — by 60%. Italy is seeing its supply cut by half. Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia also have seen reductions.

This comes on top of gas shutoffs to Poland, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France and the Netherlands in recent weeks. Those shutoffs were initially seen as less of a problem because Poland, for instance, was already phasing out Russian gas by year's end, while others had alternative supplies.

The latest cutbacks, however, hit countries that are major economies and use lots of Russian natural gas. Germany relies on Russia for 35% of its gas imports; Italy for 40%. Right now, gas supplies are enough for current needs.

WHY ARE THE REDUCTIONS A CONCERN?

Europe is scrambling to fill its underground gas storage ahead of the winter. Gas utilities operate on a regular rhythm, filling reserves over the summer — when, hopefully, they can buy gas cheaper — and then drawing it down over the winter as heating demand rises. The reductions will make refilling storage more expensive and difficult to accomplish.

The move also has brought closer the specter of a complete Russian gas shutoff that would make it impossible for Europe to get all the fuel it needs for the winter. Natural gas is used by several energy-intensive industries, such as glassmakers and steel manufacturers, that are already facing higher costs and dialing back use, helping to slow the European economy. For electricity production, gas is the "swing" energy source that kicks in when renewables like wind and sun generate less power due to unpredictable weather and when electricity use spikes during cold or hot weather, like the heat wave last weekend that spurred record highs in Europe. Right now, Europe's underground storage caverns are 57% full. The European Commission's latest proposal is for each

country to reach 80% by Nov. 1, while Germany has set goals of 80% by Oct. 1 and 90% by Nov. 1.

Analysts at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels warn that "Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania will not meet the EU 80% target if they continue at the current speed," while "Germany, Austria and Slovakia will find it very difficult to fill their storage facilities if gas flows from Russia are stopped."

WHAT'S BEING DONE

The EU, which before the war got some 40% of its gas from Russia, has outlined plans to cut imports by two-thirds by year's end and phase out Russian gas entirely by 2027. The bloc has already said it will block Russian coal starting in August and most Russian oil in six months.

The goal is to reduce the \$850 million per day Russia has been reaping from oil and gas sales to Europe to prevent funding its war in Ukraine. European governments and utilities have bought expensive liquefied natural gas, or LNG, from the United States that is delivered by ship, as opposed to gas that comes by pipeline from Russia and is typically cheaper. But the war has spiked energy prices, which are fueling record inflation in Europe and helping keep revenue high for Russia.

There are efforts to get more pipeline gas from Norway and Azerbaijan, while the accelerated rollout of renewable energy and conservation are expected to play smaller roles. Germany, which has no LNG import terminals, is bringing in four floating terminals, two of which should be operating this year.

Despite a focus on renewable energy, the crisis is pushing countries back to fossil fuels. Germany is rushing through legislation to restart coal-fired power plants as a temporary patch despite plans to exit coal entirely by 2030.

Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck said it was "bitter" to turn to coal but that "in this situation, it is sheer necessity." The government plans measures to incentivize industry and utilities to use less natural gas. Habeck also urged Germans to conserve energy.

"Gas use must be further reduced, so that more gas can go into storage, otherwise in winter it's going to be tight," he said.

The Dutch government says it will allow coal-fired power stations to operate at full capacity again to conserve natural gas that would otherwise be burned to produce electricity.

Europe's gas security is fragile despite all those measures. Liquefied gas export terminals in energy-producing countries like the U.S. and Qatar are running at full speed, meaning Europe is bidding against Asia for finite supplies.

Plus, an explosion and fire at an export terminal in Freeport, Texas, took a fifth of U.S. export capacity offline for months

sending another shudder through the gas market. Most of the terminal's exports were going to Europe, Rystad Energy said.

"The situation on the European natural gas market is escalating further," commodities analyst Carsten Fritsch at Commerzbank Research said, pointing to the explosion and a scheduled maintenance shutdown of Nord Stream 1 that will mean no gas flowing through the pipeline July 11-21. "The urgently needed buildup of gas stocks for the winter months could therefore falter" and prices will likely go even higher.

WHAT'S RUSSIA'S GAME?

Gazprom says it had to cut back the flows to Europe through Nord Stream 1 because Western sanctions stranded a key piece of equipment in Canada, where it had been taken for maintenance. European governments aren't buying it and call the gas reductions political. Gazprom's steps have sent natural gas prices sharply higher after they had fallen in the wake of the winter heating season. That increases revenue for Russia at a time when it's under pressure from Western economic sanctions and adds to stress on Europe as it gives Ukraine political and military support.

Gazprom's moves also can be seen

as pushback against Western sanctions and as a deterrent to imposing further penalties. And bigger gas users have been put on notice that, just like smaller ones, they are not exempt from a possible cutoff.

Germany and Italy saw their supplies cut around the time their leaders joined French President Emmanuel Macron in Kyiv to meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and back EU candidate status for Ukraine.

"Cutting Nord Stream 1 flows to Europe seems clearly an effort by Putin to stall Europe's efforts to build gas stocks through the summer, ready presumably for another installment in the European energy wars this winter," said Tim Ash, senior emerging markets sovereign strategist at BlueBay Asset Management.

WILL EUROPEANS SEE THE LIGHTS GO OUT OR FREEZE THIS WINTER?

That is unlikely because EU law mandates that governments ration gas supplies to industry so that homes, schools and hospitals are spared. Countries that run short of gas also can ask for help from others that may be in better shape, though that depends on adequate pipeline connections.



FBI TEN MOST WANTED FUGITIVE

BHADRESHKUMAR CHETANBHAI PATEL

Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution - First Degree Murder, Second Degree Murder, First Degree Assault, Second Degree Assault, Dangerous Weapon with Intent to Injure



Photograph taken April 2015

DESCRIPTION

Alias: Bhadreshkumar C. Patel	Place of Birth: Kantrodi Ta Viramgam, Gujarat, India
Date(s) of Birth Used: May 15, 1990	Eyes: Brown
Hair: Brown	Weight: 165 pounds
Height: 5'9"	Occupation: Employee of donut shop
Sex: Male	
Nationality: Indian	

REWARD

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$100,000 for information leading to the arrest of Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel.

REMARKS

Patel was last known to be in the Newark, New Jersey, area.

CAUTION

Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel is wanted for allegedly killing his wife by striking her multiple times with an object while they were both working at a donut shop in Hanover, Maryland, on April 12, 2015. A local arrest warrant was issued in the District Court of Maryland for Anne Arundel County on April 13, 2015, and Patel was charged with first degree murder, second degree murder, first degree assault, second degree assault, and dangerous weapon with intent to injure. A federal arrest warrant was issued in the United States District Court, District of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland, on April 20, 2015, after Patel was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Baltimore

India and Australia: Partners with shared interests and entwined destinies

its technological and surveillance aircraft to each other's territories for joint patrols. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to see these capabilities in action, flying alongside dedicated Indian P-8 personnel.

Australia has also committed to a package of partnership initiatives in our update to the India Economic Comprehensive Strategic Partnership full of practical, tangible actions that strengthen ties and benefit the region. We are among a very small group of countries to hold annual leaders' summits and biennial 2+2 talks involving foreign and defence ministers. Today, our defence forces are undertaking more complex activities together, such as in Exercise Malabar with the US and Japan. Last year, Indian military officials observed our Exercise Talisman Sabre, and I have renewed the invitation for India's forces to participate fully in future iterations of this exercise. We coordinate closely on maritime domain awareness. This year we have deployed P-8

business ties — including through a suite of new Maitri (mateship) scholarships, fellowships, and partnerships. India and Australia have great potential to cooperate on climate and sustainability. As we do on ethical critical mineral and resource production, cutting-edge renewable technology research and development, skills and education, waste and the circular economy, business, investment, and advanced manufacturing. Our government is focused on making Australia a renewable energy superpower, and we want to see India emerge as a clean technology manufacturing powerhouse. As our bilateral relationship deepens, we must begin to work more together with others in the region. We see enormous potential in the Indian and Pacific oceans, where we each have vital interests in combating climate change, illegal fishing and people smuggling and responding to humanitarian crises and natural disasters.

India and Australia have shown that when we work in partnership, as in the wake of Tonga's devastating underwater earthquake, we are greater than the sum of our parts. Right across the Bay of Bengal, we are responding to the needs of our partners, including through connectivity, trade and energy, and maritime partnerships in the East Indian Ocean.

Australia and India take our commitments to our regional partners seriously. India has assisted Sri Lanka through its current economic crisis. Australia is doing the same, contributing approximately Rs 270 crore (AUD 50 million) in Official Development Assistance to support health services, and economic recovery. As I have discussed with many of my new counterparts, Australia has a vision for an open, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific region. It is a vision for a region that is more integrated rather than divided, where trade and investment flow freely based on agreed rules and treaty commitments, where disputes are resolved through dialogue in accordance with international law, and where a strategic culture that respects the rights of all states, big and small, prevails. It is a vision that we share with partners like ASEAN, and partners like India. Australia's vision for the region's peace and stability is for these principles, not against any one power. But it is not just words. It is backed by investment, authentic partnership and action. Whether through joint activities with like-minded countries, or our support of regional and multilateral architecture, Australia is ensuring the region has options and balance. Australia's interests don't just align with India's, they are inextricably entwined. Expect this relationship to grow and prosper, our cooperation to deepen. This might be my first visit as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, but it will certainly not be my last.

Maharashtra political crisis: Eknath Shinde with 33 Sena MLAs, 7 Independents leaves Gujarat for Assam

(News Agency)The political crisis is continuing in the western Indian state of Maharashtra. On June 22 morning, Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde, along with 33 party MLAs and seven independent MLAs who were staying at the Le Meridien hotel in Surat, flew from Surat International Airport to Guwahati, Assam. This follows allegations of cross-voting in Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC) elections, in which the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won five seats, handing the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance government led by Shiv Sena a huge setback. The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Shiv Sena each won two seats, while Congress won one of the ten seats in the Legislative Council that were up for election on Monday. Shinde, along with a few other Shiv Sena MLAs, stayed at the Le Meridien hotel in Surat after the MLC elections. In Surat, a Shiv Sena group led by Milind Narvekar and Ravindra Phatak, close aides to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, met with Shinde and other party MPs.

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut acknowledged on Tuesday that some Shiv Sena MLAs and Eknath Shinde were currently "not approachable," despite allegations that efforts were being undertaken to topple the MVA government. Shiv Sena MLAs were in Surat, he claimed, and they were not permitted to leave. In the midst of the controversy, Shinde tweeted a veiled jab at the Shiv Sena for teaming up with the Congress and the NCP to establish the state government, "We are Balasaheb's staunch Shiv Sainiks ... Balasaheb has taught us Hindutva. We have never and will never cheat for power regarding Balasaheb's thoughts and Dharmaveer Anand Dighe Saheb's teachings." Shinde has also dropped "Shiv Sena" from his Twitter bio. After the Shiv Sena split from the BJP in 2014, he was appointed Leader of the Opposition in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly. Shinde was nominated to the MVA government's cabinet as a minister. But he has been feeling marginalised since the MVA government was formed, according to sources. Shrikant Shinde, his son, is a Lok Sabha member from Kalyan. In the midst of this, Shiv Sena representatives met with Maharashtra Assembly Deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal and presented him a letter requesting that Eknath Shinde be removed from his position as Shiv Sena Legislative Party Leader and replaced by Ajay Chaudhary.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra BJP head Chandrakant Patil said that the state government is now "technically" in "minority" due to the departure of Eknath Shinde and other Shiv Sena MLAs. He stated that the BJP was currently in a "wait and watch" mode, and that neither the BJP nor Shinde had made any proposals on government formation. "BJP got support from independents and small political parties for Rajya Sabha and MLC elections. As per our information, Eknath Shinde and 35 MLAs have gone. This means technically state government is in minority but practically it will take some time for the government to be in minority," he said. "It's too early to say anything, we are currently waiting and keeping an eye on the situation. So far, there has not been any proposal regarding government formation neither from the BJP nor from Eknath Shinde but anything can happen in politics at any time," the BJP leader added. The BJP and the Shiv Sena used to be allies until 2019, when they split over the question of the chief ministerial office after contesting the Maharashtra Assembly elections jointly. Following days of political gridlock and high-octane drama, the Shiv Sena, along with the Congress and the NCP, created the Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance government, led by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka FMs, Maldives president to attend Commonwealth Summit in Rwanda

Pakistan will be represented by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina R Khar. Initially Pakistani foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto was to represent his country, but due to some personal issues he is skipping the mega meet. If FM Bhutto had gone, this would have been for the first time both External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar and Pakistan's new Foreign Minister would have been present at any summit together. Last year EAM Jaishankar and the then Pakistani FM SM Qureshi were present together in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe for a meet on Afghanistan. Sri Lankan foreign minister Prof. GL Peiris and Bangladeshi FM AK Momen will also be present, a bilateral with the Indian side cannot be ruled out. Remember over the weekend, Bangladeshi FM was in Delhi for a joint consultative commission meet.

Maldives President's presence is important given that the country rejoined the grouping in 2020. Maldives President Yameen had pulled out of the 54-member grouping in 2016 after the Commonwealth criticised his government over his authoritarian actions back home, like the detention of opposition leaders

and undermining the judiciary. Leaders of Commonwealth countries meet every two years for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Since 1971, a total of 24 summits have been held, with the most recent being in British Capital London in 2018. PM Modi had attended the meet that time. The 2015 Commonwealth summit in Malta saw India being represented by the then EAM Sushma Swaraj.

Meanwhile, Rwanda is decked up as the country is ready to welcome the largest gathering of world leaders the African continent has seen in years. For Rwanda's President Paul Kagame it will be a moment to show his country's progress and economic growth. Almost 35 heads of state are expected, while other representations are at the foreign and official levels. Of the 54 countries, 53 are attending with Nauru excusing itself due to elections. "We expect 35 Heads of State and other high profile guests representing countries and organisations. We will also have First Ladies and in total, we expect over 5,000 people," said Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda Prof. Nshuti Manasseh who was quoted in Rwanda's KT

Press. Brunei is represented by its Sultan, Eswatini by its king Mswati III even though 14 countries will be present at the Presidential level, 17 at the Prime ministerial level, and 10 at the foreign minister-level. Countries represented at the Prime Minister level include Mauritius by PM Pravind Kumar, the UK by PM Boris Johnson, and Canada by PM Justin Trudeau. Countries represented by the foreign minister level are Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Malawi. Australia is represented by Deputy PM Richard Marles. Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) has started on Monday, the official opening takes place on Friday, 24th June and will be followed by main high-level meetings of Heads on Friday & Saturday (24-25 June). The CHOGM summit was due to take place in June of 2020 but was postponed twice due to the COVID pandemic. The Commonwealth is a group of 54 countries, almost all of them at one pointed under British rule and united by the common use of the English language. The grouping is home to 2.5 billion people and includes a mix of both developed and developing countries. The last country to join the commonwealth is Rwanda.

Diabetics Popping Metformin Pills Must Regularly Check Vitamin B12 Levels: UK Health Agency

Patients consuming the popular anti-diabetic pill metformin must check their vitamin B12 levels at regular intervals, the health agency of the United Kingdom has said in an advisory. The warning holds relevance in the Indian context as well considering that the country is known as the diabetes capital of the world and accounts for 17% of the total number of diabetics globally. As per the estimates released in 2021, there are close to 8 crore people with diabetes in India and the number is expected to increase to 13.5 crore by 2045. Metformin is one of the most commonly used antidiabetic medicines across the globe including in India as it helps to control blood sugar in people with type 2 diabetes mellitus. According to the UK's advisory titled "Metformin and reduced vitamin B12 levels: new advice for monitoring patients at risk", the decreased vitamin B12 levels, or vitamin B12 deficiency, is now considered to be a common side effect in patients on metformin treatment. The deficiency, it said, is most common among patients who are receiving a higher dose or longer treatment duration or are those with existing risk factors. The deficiency of vitamin B12 leads to anaemia as this micronutrient is needed to make red blood cells.

"We are therefore advising checking vitamin B12 serum levels in patients being treated with metformin who have symptoms suggestive of vitamin B12 deficiency," said the advisory dated June 20. "We also advise that periodic monitoring for patients with risk factors for vitamin B12 deficiency should be considered." Metformin is an anti-diabetic medication that works by lowering glucose production

in the liver, delaying the absorption of sugar (glucose) from the intestines, and increasing the body's sensitivity to insulin. According to Dr Anoop Mishra, executive chairman, Fortis C DOC, a chain that manages diabetes and other

endocrinological diseases, "Metformin is an important drug and is given to about 80 per cent of diabetics." He said that while it has been known that metformin decreases B12 levels, it holds more relevance in the Indian context, especially

because "Indian vegetarians are more likely to have B12 deficiency". "We supplement it for almost all patients," he said while advising that all doctors should prescribe B12 testing among patients using metformin.

ASEAN Should Rethink Its Approach to Myanmar Crisis, UN Expert Says

The Southeast Asian bloc ASEAN should rethink its approach to engaging with Myanmar and demand specific actions and timeframes to end hostilities in the military-ruled country, a United Nations expert said on Thursday. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Tom Andrews, also called on U.N. member states to engage formally or informally with Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government (NUG) to help the humanitarian situation. The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is divided over how to deal

with Myanmar, where the military overthrew an elected government last year and has since led a brutal crackdown on opponents. Shortly after its coup, ASEAN members, including Myanmar, came to an agreement to restore peace, but progress has stalled amid weak enforcement. "The (agreement) is meaningless if it sits on a piece of paper," Andrews told a news conference after a six-day trip to Malaysia, one of the junta's most vocal critics in the region. "After

one year of a lack of progress, let's rethink this approach by adding a strategy to the implementation of that approach," he said, adding ASEAN countries should

heed Malaysia's call for more action. ASEAN late last year took the unusual step of excluding Myanmar's military leaders from a high-profile regional summit for failing to honour the peace deal. But current chair Cambodia has since made overtures to the junta, including inviting its defence minister to a regional meeting on Wednesday, despite

criticism from activists. Countries are also divided over communicating with the NUG, an alliance of anti-junta groups in hiding or in self-imposed exile, which Andrews called a "legitimate entity". "From a practical point of view... there's lots of information that (the NUG) has available, that could be of extremely valuable use for these countries seeking to give humanitarian aid," he said. The junta has outlawed the NUG for being "terrorists" and urged countries not to engage with them.



US expected to send \$450 million in security aid to Ukraine: Officials

The United States is expected to provide an additional \$450 million in security assistance to Ukraine, including more long-range rocket systems, two U.S. officials told Reuters on Thursday.

Moscow's forces are advancing in Ukraine's east in a bid to capture the industrial heartland known as the Donbas, where Ukraine fears some of its troops could be encircled in a Russian pincer move. One of the officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said an announcement was expected later on Thursday and the latest package is expected to include four additional High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS). The official added that details on the package could

change at the last minute. Earlier on Thursday, Ukraine said it had received the first tranche of HIMARS, a powerful long-range weapon system that Kyiv hopes can help turn the tide in the months-long battle. The latest package comes after President Joe Biden's administration last week announced a fresh infusion of \$1 billion in weapons for Ukraine that includes anti-ship rocket systems, artillery rockets, howitzers and ammunition. The war has entered a brutal attritional phase in recent weeks, with Russian forces concentrating overwhelming artillery firepower on the Donbas, which Moscow claims on behalf of separatists. Ukraine says it needs the HIMARS systems to better

match the range of Russian rocket systems that it says are being extensively used to pummel Ukrainian positions in Donbas. Washington has said it has received assurances from Kyiv that those longer-range weapons would not be used to attack Russian territory, fearing an escalation of the conflict.

U.S. officials have said that while HIMARS are important for Ukrainian forces, no single weapon system alone can change the war. Moscow has warned it will strike targets in Ukraine which they "have not yet been hitting" if the West supplies longer-range missiles to Ukraine for use in high-precision mobile rocket systems.

'Historic moment': EU agrees to grant candidate status to Ukraine, Moldova

European Union leaders agreed to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova on Thursday as President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed the move as "a unique and historic moment". The move allows both countries to enter into a year-long path toward joining the EU with several steps to be taken before it becomes a member of the European alliance. Ukraine had applied to become an EU candidate just days after President Vladimir Putin launched his "special military operation" against Ukraine on February 24 as Russian forces invaded the neighbouring country. "A historic moment. Today marks a crucial step on your path towards the EU," chief of EU Charles Michel said, adding, "our future is together." The development comes even as Russian forces continue to pound key cities in eastern Ukraine as the war entered the fourth month this week.

Zelensky said it "is a unique and historic moment in Ukraine-EU relations, adding, "Ukraine's future is within the EU". Heavy fighting has been reported in Slovyansk and Kramatorsk in eastern Ukraine even as civilian evacuations continue in the region. Meanwhile, Russia slashed gas supply to Germany as the country raised the alert level under an emergency plan bringing Berlin closer to gas rationing amid deteriorating relations with Russia. Kremlin said there was "no double meaning" behind the cut in gas supply to Germany. Russian energy giant Gazprom had earlier cut gas supply to Poland, Bulgaria, Finland and the Netherlands.

How The Unfolding Crisis Was Created For Uddhav Thackeray

Like all vanishing acts, it's all the more astounding because of its suddenness. Eknath Shinde, Shiv Sena minister, left Mumbai around 1.30 am along with 21 MLAs for Surat, the citadel of the BJP. The rebel MLAs travelled with vada pao snack packs. As the Maharashtra government tries to stare down its biggest crisis yet, its self-preservation instincts are questionable. Did Mumbai Police which reports to Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil (of the NCP), a prominent Sharad Pawar loyalist, miss the en masse movement of the MLAs, all of whom have security details provided by Mumbai police? It is unlikely Patil would have been unaware of the movement of the MLAs. Contact has been established nearly 12 hours later, the Sena announced at around 12.30 pm today. The role in the current crisis of Sharad Pawar is an undeniable headline. After all, it was he who assembled the Maharashtra government out of an unlikely partnership of the Sena, the Congress and his own NCP, pulling Uddhav Thackeray away from his 25-year-long "Yuti" (alliance) with the BJP. Sharad Pawar, at the best of the times, is opaque and a hard political read. But what you can take as a given is that even if the government collapse, Sharad Pawar will remain the most powerful and indispensable political player from and in Maharashtra. No party can form the government without him. Giving flex and core to his political capital is something Sharad Pawar is always in the process of conveying.

The chronology of the crisis is easy enough to piece together. 10 days ago, cross-voting by Sena and Congress members in the Rajya Sabha elections gave the BJP one more seat than it should have won. Yesterday, cross-voting took

place again in key elections for the Legislative Council. Eknath Shinde was reportedly reprimanded last night by the usually soft-spoken Uddhav Thackeray. (12 Sena MLAs had voted for the BJP). The Sena was also unable to get the support of independent MLAs and the smaller parties. The conversation about the debacle was the last contact Ekanth Shinde had with the Chief Minister. Sharad Pawar is in Delhi to serve as a key liaison in the Opposition's plan to contest the Presidential election. The master of mixed signals said last week that he would not be the Opposition's candidate, stating that he wants to remain in active politics. His allies could perhaps have taken that as a sign of something big in the mix. The 'Operation Kamal' now unfolding in Maharashtra proves the go-getter credentials of Devendra Fadnavis, the

former Maharashtra Chief Minister, who reportedly teamed with union minister Narayan Rane to build the crisis. The latter was the first to sense that Eknath Shinde was upset at the growing primacy accorded to Sanjay Raut, Sena MP, by Uddhav Thackeray. Shinde, who is a mass leader from Thane and used to choreograph the biggest Sena events, felt slighted at the new order of precedence in the party and the government. Sources say that he had no problem with the increasing prominence of the Chief Minister's son, Aaditya, but resented Sanjay Raut. Sources say Narayan Rane and Devendra Fadnavis had a joint meeting with Home Minister who decreed that 'Operation Kamal' in this case should be low-key without involving charter flights to ferry the MLAs, a signature BJP move.



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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ

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ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ

ਓਰੀਜਨਲ: ਸ਼ਬਦ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਇਸ ਸਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਭੇਜੇ ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ, ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ, ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ, ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਹਨ।

ਇਹ ਮੰਨਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਸ ਸਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੋਂ ਭੇਜੇ ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ, ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ, ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਹਨ।

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ਸੱਜਣ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਚਾ-ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖੇਗਾ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ

ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ: ਸਿੱਖ ਨਾਜ਼ਕਗੋਸ਼ਟੀ ਵਿਚ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਸੱਜਣ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਬਚਾ-ਬਚਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖੇਗਾ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ, ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ, ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਹਨ।

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ਨਵੇਂ ਸਾਲ ਮੌਕੇ ਅਮਰੀਕੀ ਫੌਜ ਨੇ ਬੰਬ ਦਾ ਟਵੀਟ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮੰਗੀ ਮੁਆਫੀ

ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ, ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸਾਲ 1.25 ਲੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ, ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਲਈ ਭੇਜੇ ਹਨ।

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The perils of India's street veto: The other side of the Nupur Sharma saga

The problem is not that the cabal has no power or say, that is a choice made by India's electorate. The problem is that the state currently follows a suicidal approach, allowing the cabal to have a say despite this choice

Recently, I argued in an article on Firstpost that there were many aspects to India's ruling party acting against its own spokesperson at the behest of the Arab world. At the onset, had India anticipated where the Arab world's priorities lay, the diplomatic repercussions might have been contained. However, since India engages deeply with many stakeholders in the region who do not see eye to eye, India retrospectively chose not to rock the boat and continue extracting benefits.

The Arab world was not particularly hypocritical on the issue because the logical grooves on which one generally moves have little bearing on it. In its regressive and inhuman worldview, a certain arbitrary line on the desert sand was crossed in a dramatic way. The big takeaway, however, was that a class of people in India who claim to represent the Indian Muslims and make a case for how oppressed the community is, were neither taken seriously by the Indian dispensation nor the Arab world. This has been the story ever since their charade began eight years ago. For the first time, with the Nupur Sharma issue, their grievances mirrored those of the Arab world. The Indian dispensation, however, chose only to acknowledge and act on the latter's.

The diplomatic fallout might have been avoidable, but as pointed out, it was hardly as big a setback as it was made out to be. After all, even an important power like Iran withdrew the statement it made on the issue after parleys with India. The domestic fallout, though, seems to indicate that this class of people who claim to represent Indian Muslims, successfully instigated some parts of their target audience. Unable to make any headway politically, or in dictating the ruling dispensation's decisions or actions, they have used the street route to undermine the Indian state. This has now become a routine fixture in their playbook.

Riots were witnessed on the day that both the prime minister and the president visited Kanpur. The following Friday, systematic mobilisation took place across the country. From Uttar Pradesh to Jharkhand to West Bengal, from Kashmir to Karnataka, a well-oiled machinery was activated. While some used loudspeakers to call for Nupur's beheading, others hung her effigy on the street. The rioters then blocked roads, pelted stones, vandalized property, and indulged in arson. Images emerged from Bengal of multiple fires at regular intervals on a large stretch of road, and a highway being blocked for hours. In Ranchi, the police were forced to open fire, killing two rioters. In Uttar Pradesh, the police would have none of it, beating up the rioters and bulldozing their property



to rubble. The instigators, meanwhile, continued to play the victim card. The street veto is becoming these instigators' favourite tool, because other routes, both electoral and backdoor, have started to close. However, it is also fast becoming their go-to route because the state has failed to close this one. As is common knowledge now, an amalgamation of forces from different walks of life with hatred towards the current dispensation being their only binding glue, came together and used the street veto option in a concerted way after the government enacted the Citizenship Amendment Bill. The state cracked down on many of these elements retrospectively, but till date, it is a widely held belief that the state was shaken at its very foundations. This belief stems from the government's hesitation to frame the act's rules till date. Once the instigators tasted blood, the state lost half the battle. They returned a few months later to block arterial roads around the national capital for over a year until the government finally withdrew the long-awaited farm laws that were all set to usher in agricultural reforms. When it comes to the Nupur Sharma issue, it is evident that the cabal of instigators did not want her to set a precedent with the manner in which she narrated a controversial episode on live television. For her and for others to desist from this in the future, they systematically put her life in danger and decided to force the ruling party's hand to act against her. Here too, since there was no guarantee whatsoever that their demands would be met, they used the street route to make their point, so that nobody would follow suit.

Therein lies the problem with the street veto. Democratic mandates, the rule of law, and the concept of the state having a monopoly over violence are chucked aside because they do not fulfil what a certain group seeks. This group, despite being an 'intransigent minority' as described by

is all set to deport expat Muslims who took part in protests against Nupur Sharma on Kuwaiti soil. These include Indian Muslims. Considering that not too long ago the Kuwaitis were raising the same issue with India, it is evident that for the Arab world, the Nupur Sharma issue is now a bygone. However, and more importantly, the Kuwaitis have refused to encourage individuals who have the same grievance. The authorities seem very clear that such liberties will not be extended, irrespective of the issue. Today expats who have no right to demonstrate might protest peacefully about the same issue that Kuwait brought up, but how will it be dealt with tomorrow when they cross another line that the state has drawn, perhaps with violence and for an unfavourable cause? The Kuwaitis realise the dangers of a mob pushing back against the margins the state sets. They have chosen therefore to stick to the right forums to register their protest by summoning the Indian ambassador, and to let the rule of law prevail domestically. In India however, the state continues to be pushed back.

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Demolitions as per law, not linked to protests: UP to Supreme Court

Regarding two demolitions in Kanpur, the UP government said, the house owners had "admitted" illegalities in the construction

Denying allegations of illegal demolition of private properties in the state following violent protests over remarks on the Prophet, the Uttar Pradesh government has told the Supreme Court that action was "carried out by the Kanpur Development Authority and Prayagraj Development Authority strictly in accordance with the Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1972", and "had no relation to the riots".

In an affidavit filed in response to a plea by the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind against the demolitions, the state government said: "The petitioner has attempted to give a mala fide colour to lawful action taken by the local development authorities, as per procedure established by law, by cherry-picking one-sided media reporting of a few incidents and extrapolating sweeping allegations from the same against the state... The same, it is submitted, is completely false and misleading. The said demolitions have been carried out by the local development authorities, which are statutory autonomous bodies, independent of the state administration, as per law, as part of their routine effort against unauthorised/illegal constructions, in accordance with" the 1972 Act. Regarding two demolitions in Kanpur, the UP government said, the house owners had "admitted" illegalities in the construction. The Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind had referred to statements by some state officials to buttress its charge that the demolitions targeted those allegedly involved in the protests. Countering this, the UP government said it "takes strong exception to the attempt by the petitioner to name the highest constitutional functionaries of the state and falsely colour... the local development authority's lawful actions strictly complying with the Act as 'extra legal punitive measures' against accused persons, targeting any particular religious community. All such allegations are absolutely false and are vehemently denied". "In so far as taking action against the persons accused in rioting, the

state government is taking stringent steps against them in accordance with a completely different set of statutes," it said, listing the CRPC, IPC, UP Gangster and Anti Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 1986, Prevention of Public Property Damages Act and Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Act, 2020.

Listing specific cases, the affidavit said that in the case of Ishtiaq Ahmed in Kanpur, "there was commercial construction work being undertaken on the basement, ground, first, second and third floor of the building in a residential area of about 130 square metres, contrary to the plan that was sanctioned for the building on 6.7.2016."

According to the affidavit, Ishtiaq Ahmed was issued a showcase notice on August 17, 2020, to stop the construction and appear for a hearing on August 28. But neither he nor his representative appeared for the hearing, after which "several notices" were sent and the property was sealed. The seal was broken, following which an FIR was filed.

"The construction... was made on the site in contravention of the approved double-storey residential building map by the builder. Commercial construction was also done against the approved residential map," it said, adding that a demolition notice was sent on April 19 this year, giving the house owner 15 days to demolish the unauthorised construction. Since he failed to comply, certain portions of the construction were demolished on June 11, said the affidavit.

In an application filed on June 17, Ishtiaq Ahmed's son, Iftikar Ahmed, said "the non-compoundable portion of the construction will be demolished by the dependent himself... Thus the offence of illegal construction has been admitted by the builder himself," said the affidavit. In the case of Riyaz Ahmed in Kanpur, the affidavit said, he was undertaking work to set up a petrol pump "without any sanction or approval from the authority". A notice

was issued on February 18, followed by a showcase notice on February 23 fixing a hearing on March 8. However, as he did not appear for the hearing, the premises was ordered to be sealed and a demolition order was passed on April 20. Subsequently, a portion of the under-construction boundary wall was removed on June 11, said the affidavit.

Thereafter, Riyaz Ahmed moved an application for compounding the construction on June 17 along with an affidavit "wherein the illegality and irregularity in the building has been admitted by the owner", it said.

"Thus a perusal of the aforesaid facts reveal that two instances of removal of unauthorised illegal constructions in Kanpur by the Kanpur Development Authority on June 11 were part of the ongoing demolition drive against encroachments and illegal constructions and had no relation to the riots as falsely alleged by the petitioner. The petitioner has deliberately obfuscated the true

facts to paint a nefarious picture of alleged mala fides on the part of the administration, and that too without stating any facts on affidavit," said the state government. In the case of Javed Mohammed in Prayagraj, the state government said, action for "illegal construction without any sanction at all... (and) unauthorised use of residential land as an office had been initiated prior to incidents of rioting".

"A nameplate made of marble was installed on the boundary wall of the building on which 'Javed M' was written, and above the boundary there was a signboard showing 'Welfare Party of India' on which the name of Mr Javed Mohammed, State General Secretary, was written," said the affidavit.

The Prayagraj Development Authority received several complaints from residents of the area "in respect of the unauthorised office use in a residential area as well as illegal constructions and encroachments qua the said property," it said.

A showcase notice was issued on May 10, granting a personal hearing on May 24. "The notice was attempted to be delivered in person at the premises; however, the server informed that though the family members were present at the site, they refused to take the notice," said the affidavit, following which the notice was pasted on the wall of the building.

Neither Javed Mohammed nor his representative appeared for the hearing, and he was asked to demolish the unauthorised construction within 15 days, by June 9, it said. "It was only after due service and providing adequate opportunity under the Act that the illegal construction was demolished by the Prayagraj Development Authority on June 12, after following due process of law, and the same had no relation to incident of rioting," it said. The state government urged the court to "hold the petitioner to terms for the said false allegations without basis", and to dismiss the petition.



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Vikramjeet Singh**



International Yoga Day 2022: Your guide to the 11 most popular styles of yoga in the world

There are 11 different styles of yoga in the world and we have compiled a short description of each of them in this article for you to read about on International Yoga Day

(News Agency) International Yoga Day is being celebrated across the world today. The theme for this year is Yoga for Humanity. There are several benefits of practicing yoga, like weight loss, stress reduction and immunity building, among others. It has become a way of life for a number of people and they absolutely swear by it. While we are on the topic of International Yoga Day, we would also like to shine a light upon the different types of yoga practiced all over the world. There are 11 different styles of doing yoga and in this article, we have compiled a short description of all of them.

ASHTANGA YOGA

Ashtanga is derived from the Sanskrit word eight and that's why it has eight pillars, such as principles, personal discipline, asana and postures, pranayama, withdrawal, concentration, meditation and salvation. Some asanas practiced in Ashtanga yoga are Padmasana, Kapalbhati Pranayam, Anulom Vilom Pranayam, Simhasana etc. These are best for anxiety and stress relief, weight loss and back pain.

VINYASA YOGA

This style of yoga is also called flow yoga and involves movement and breathing techniques. Bhujangasana, Kumbhakasana, Ashtanga Namaskara are some of the asanas in this style. It has two parts. 'Vi' means variation and 'Nyasa' means within prescribed limits. This form is ideal for controlling blood pressure.

KUNDALINI YOGA

This kind of yoga is equal parts spiritual and physical. It is practiced to release the energy trapped in the lower spine. It is suitable for stress and anxiety relief, depression and better cognitive function.

IYENGAR YOGA

Iyengar yoga was founded by BKS Iyengar and focuses on alignment. It involves performing a plethora of postures while maintaining breath. The poses are held for a long time. It is great for people with injuries.

BIKRAM YOGA

Bikram yoga is named after

Bikram Choudhury and involves performing asanas in a sequence inside a hot room with 40 percent humidity. The sequence set includes 26 postures with each one performed twice.

HATHA YOGA

Hatha is an umbrella term for all physical postures of yoga in Sanskrit. It also refers to all other styles of yoga such as Iyengar, Bikram, Ashtanga etc. This type is best for beginners and is usually slower than other styles.

YIN YOGA

If you are looking for a slow-paced style with lots of seated postures,

Yin yoga is for you. It is also a form of meditative yoga and postures can be held for 45 seconds to 2 minutes.

RESTORATIVE YOGA

This style of yoga is about relaxing the mind and body after a long day. It also helps to cleanse and free your mind.

ANUSARA YOGA

Anusara yoga is a modern-day version of Hatha yoga and mostly focuses on alignment. It was founded by John Friend and focuses on mind-body-heart connection. It is also known to emphasise more heart opening.

PRENATAL YOGA

Prenatal yoga is for all pregnant women and is designed to suit them in all trimesters. It is said to be the best kind of yoga for expecting mothers as it also helps in preparing for labour and delivery.

JIVAMUKTI YOGA

This style of yoga was founded by Sharon Gannon and David Life in 1984. It involves connecting to the Earth as a living being and starts with a series of chants. It is then followed by several asanas that align with the five tenets of Jivamukti yoga. International Yoga Day is being celebrated on June 21 since 2015.

International Yoga Day 2022: How to control diabetes with yoga, experts reveal

(News Agency) On International Yoga Day 2022, IndiaToday.in spoke to experts who shared several tips to control diabetes with the help of yoga. June 21 marks International Yoga Day. It is celebrated across the world to spread awareness about the benefits of yoga. Practising yoga regularly is, hands down, one of the best ways to lead a healthy life. Doing so not only helps battle physical health related issues but also keeps the mind calm. Yoga can help one deal with diabetes as well. One of the most common diseases in the country, diabetes comes with an array of risk factors and complications. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, "India is home to the world's second-largest adult diabetes population and every sixth person with diabetes in the world is an Indian. The past three decades witnessed a 150 per cent increase in the number of people with diabetes in the country." On International

Yoga Day, IndiaToday.in spoke to several yoga experts who shared how yoga can help control diabetes.

EAT HEALTHY FOOD

Himalayan Siddha Akshar, Founder of Akshar Yoga Research and Development



Centre, said, "The first step towards controlling the condition of diabetes is to regulate your lifestyle. Modify your diet to ensure your meals are healthy, fresh, and home-cooked. Avoid eating heavily processed

foods that contain fats, sugar and other unhealthy ingredients." "Yoga includes several techniques - physical postures known as asanas, breathing techniques called Pranayam and spiritual exercises like Siddha Walk. To prevent, control and treat diabetes, there are a few poses that you can practice like Mandukasana which is Frog pose, Paschimottanasana which is a seated forward bend and Padahasthasana which is a standing forward bend," the yoga expert added. Riya Kakkad, fitness coach and diet nutrition consultant, also shared several yoga asanas that help control diabetes. Dhanurasana (bow pose), Sssankasana (child pose), Bhujangasana (upward facing dog pose), Yoga Mudra Asana (forward bending in Padmasana), Mandukasan (frog pose), Chakrasana (wheel pose), Ardhamatsyendrasana (half lord of fish pose) and Paschimotanasan (seated forward bend).

Inability to balance on one leg at later stages of life raises risk of death, says study

The ability to balance on one leg can give valuable insights about one's health at later stages of life, says a recent study. The chances of dying in a decade are twice for middle-aged person or senior citizen who are not able to stand on one leg for more than 10 seconds than those people who can do it, added the study. This 12-year research, which shows the link between balance and mortality, has been carried out by a

group of international experts belonging to the US, the UK, Finland, Australia and Brazil.

This study, which was published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, was observational and cannot establish the cause. It was led by Dr Claudio Gil Araujo of the Clinimex exercise medicine clinic in Rio de Janeiro. As the findings are striking, the researchers suggest that a balance test

should always be done in health checkups of older people.

For the study carried out from 2008 to 2020, around 1,702 people, who were aged between 51 and 75 and had stable gait, were included. The participants were asked to stand on one leg for 10 seconds without any support. Three attempts on either foot were allowed. Around 21% could not pass the test. In the next decade, 123 people died of

several causes. The inability to stand on one leg for more than 10 seconds in adults showed to increase the risk of death from any cause by 84%. The researchers said the test "provides rapid and objective feedback for the patient and health professionals regarding static balance" and "adds useful information regarding mortality risk in middle-aged and older men and women".



What is poliovirus type 2 (VDPV2)?

said. No human cases of polio have been found in Britain, but let's take a look at this alarming virus.

What is poliovirus type 2 (VDPV2)? The original "wild" poliovirus (WPV) and the much more common modified oral vaccination strains, or circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus, are the two causes of recent polio infections (cVDPV). The three wild polio strains each gave rise to different cVDPV strains, with cVDPV2 being the most prevalent. In 2021, there were 689 paralytic polio cases recorded globally due to cVDPV. Despite being less potent than the wild

poliovirus, this version can nonetheless paralyse unvaccinated individuals and cause serious sickness.

According to the WHO, there were 959 confirmed cases of VDPV2 worldwide in 2020. Symptoms and the possibility of spread Fever, exhaustion, headaches, nausea, neck stiffness, limb discomfort, and, in a very tiny percentage of cases, paralysis, which is frequently irreversible, are among the signs and symptoms of polio. Polio has no known treatment. Vaccine-derived poliovirus has the potential to spread, particularly in communities where vaccine

uptake is lower. The weakened poliovirus seen in some regions of the world's live oral polio vaccine is the source of vaccine-derived polioviruses like those recently discovered in London. Both vaccine-derived poliovirus and other viruses have the potential to evolve over time to act more like the wild virus, especially in unprotected individuals. Polio vaccinations to be up to date The risk to the public for the virus is considered low because no cases have been reported. Vanessa Saliba, consultant epidemiologist at the UKHSA, urges the public to check their polio vaccinations to be up to date.

(News Agency) UK health officials are urging people to get vaccinated against polio after the virus was found during routine surveillance of London sewage samples. In a statement on Wednesday, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said that investigations are underway after several closely related

viruses were found in sewage samples from the Beckton Sewage Treatment Works taken between February and May.

"It is normal for 1 to 3 'vaccine-like' polioviruses to be detected each year in UK sewage samples, but these have always been one-off findings that were not detected again," the UKHSA

Heatwave directly impact your stomach, heart and other organs, says doctors

Find out what doctors are saying about the impact of the heatwave on the different organs of the body and their advice to avoid these complications

(News Agency) Are you experiencing constant discomfort in your stomach, nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting-like symptoms? Symptoms and health impacts vary from person to person, but in some cases it affects different parts of the body such as the liver, stomach, heart and muscles. The searing heat wave in North India is playing havoc with human health. Experts say that during a heat wave, there's an increased risk for inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and it can also cause severe dehydration due to persistent diarrhoea and vomiting and some can even get typhoid. This is also the season where viral infection can spread rapidly.

Health experts are seeing a major increase in patients due to the heatwave, especially with the temperatures soaring up to nearly 49 degrees. This is of course, attributed to various climatic changes which have led to a lot of heatwaves in the country.

HEAT AFFECTING THE STOMACH

Keeping yourself extremely hydrated during these hot summer days, especially when the temperature of North India soars above 40 degrees - Delhi is currently

burning at 43.7 degrees - is crucial. Dr. Charu Goel Sachadeva, HOD and Consultant, Internal Medicine, Manipal Hospital, Dwarka said, "We are seeing a lot of gastroenteritis problems in patients as the heatwave causes contamination of water and food. During summers, the risk of water and food getting contaminated is very high. Therefore, the risk of jaundice, vomiting, and diarrhoea increases. During this time, viral infections are also very high due to the increased replication of the virus. The sudden change in climate increases the chances of viral infections, food and water-borne diseases due to contamination."

HEAT AFFECTING THE MUSCLES

"Although the body can adjust itself to different temperatures, in the case of an extreme rise in temperature, our body is unable to follow this mechanism. It starts with simple heat exhaustion and escalates over time. We have seen patients who are involved in field jobs with complaints of

fatigue, leg cramps and even heat strokes. At times, due to spending too much time in the scorching heat, patients suffer from



multiple organ failures. There are cases of extreme dehydration, and the situation becomes complex in case a patient is on medication for other comorbidities," said Dr Charu Goel. Dr Goel added, "In the case of diabetic and heart patients, there are chances of electrolyte imbalance inside their bodies. Young children and elderly people are at a higher risk."

HEAT AFFECTING THE HEART

Dr Tarun Jhamb, Consultant - Internal Medicine, Manipal Hospital, Gurugram said, "People with comorbidities must

pay special attention to their bodies, especially when one is suffering from heart, kidney and liver ailments. Apart from following the general precautions, they must balance the amount of liquid intake inside their bodies. If you are feeling dizzy or nauseous from the heat, take some time to sit in a quiet place. They must not panic, as it will increase the pressure on the heart." "There have been cases seen where it affects the heart as well. People have been coming with problems of tachycardia (low heart rate), acute cerebrovascular and thrombogenesis (blood clots) in which immediate intervention is required", Dr Shailesh Sahay, Internal medicine, Associate director, Max hospital, Gurugram.

COMORBIDS, ELDERLY AND CHILDREN NEED TO BE CAUTIOUS

"The most serious form of heat mainly affects people more than 50 years of age. Usually they progress from milder forms of heat injury like heat cramps, heat stroke and heat exhaustion, and lead to much bigger health issues.

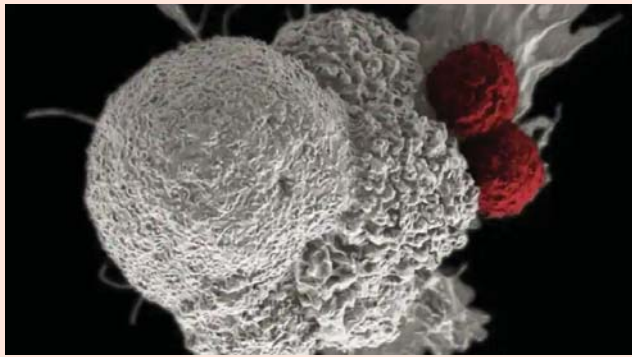
Light at the end of tunnel: Scientists harness new therapy to kill cancer cells

(News Agency) In a major breakthrough, scientists have developed a new therapy that can effectively treat and kill cancer cells in patients. This "revolutionary" treatment, called light-activated therapy, is a new form of photoimmunotherapy that can wipe out microscopic cancer cells. This new treatment was developed by a joint team of engineers, physicists, neurosurgeons, biologists and immunologists from the UK, Poland and Sweden. They believe that this new form of treatment has the potential to become the world's fifth major cancer treatment after surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and immunotherapy. The treatment, developed at The Institute of Cancer Research, London, could help surgeons to remove brain cancers like

glioblastoma, one of the most common and aggressive types of brain cancer, more effectively, and boost the body's response to cancer cells that remain after surgery. The light-activated therapy helps cancer cells to lit up in the dark, helping surgeons to remove more of the tumours compared with existing techniques, and then kill off remaining cells within minutes once the surgery is complete.

This treatment uses synthetic molecules called 'affibodies'— small proteins engineered in the lab to bind with a specific target with high

precision. In this study, the researchers combined an 'affibody' created to



recognise a protein called EGFR — which is mutated in many cases of glioblastoma — with a fluorescent molecule called IR700, which is used in surgery. Shining light on these compounds causes the fluorescent dye

to glow, highlighting microscopic regions of tumours left in the brain, while switching to near-infrared light triggers anti-tumour activity that kills tumour cells. "Brain cancers like glioblastoma can be hard to treat and, sadly, there are too few treatment options for patients," the study leader, Dr Gabriela Kramer-Marek, told the Guardian. "Surgery is challenging due to the location of the tumours, and so new ways to see tumour cells to be removed during surgery, and to treat residual cancer cells that remain afterwards, could be of great benefit." Researchers are now also studying the new treatment for childhood cancer neuroblastoma. The study was published in the journal BMC Medicine.

Alien signal or human interference?

Researcher using 'Sky Eye' telescope explains



(News Agency) Chinese researchers caused a massive stir in the scientific community when they claimed that the "Sky Eye" telescope has picked up signals which they believed

(SETI) at the University of Berkeley, California and a co-author on the research project which first spotted the signal, believes that the signals are actually from "human interference". The news about the signals coming from aliens was reported by a lot of media outlets after it appeared on the official newspaper of China's Ministry of Science and Technology. The claim found more footing as the narrow-band radio signals found by the radio telescope are not found from natural sources, but Werthimer said they were most probably artificial signals. "The big problem, and the problem in this particular case, is that we're

looking for signals from extraterrestrials, but what we find is a zillion signals from terrestrials," Werthimer told Live Science. "They're very weak signals, but the cryogenic receivers on the telescopes are super sensitive and can pick up signals from cell phones, television, radar and satellites — and there are more and more satellites in the sky every day. If you're kind of new in the game, and you don't know all these different ways that interference can get into your data and corrupt it, it's pretty easy to get excited." Despite the claims by the authorities, the team of scientists have remained quite

cautious in their approach and have kept the possibility open of the signals not being from alien sources. "These are several narrow-band electromagnetic signals different from the past, and the team is currently working on further investigation," Zhang Tongjie, head scientist at the China Extraterrestrial Civilization Research Group at Beijing Normal University, said in the report. "The possibility that the suspicious signal is some kind of radio interference is also very high, and it needs to be further confirmed and ruled out. This may be a long process."

Everyone wants a grain: Countries queue up to get a piece of asteroid that hides ingredients for life

Japanese researchers for the first time discovered 20 amino acids in samples returned from an asteroid. Now everyone is queuing up to get a piece of the asteroid

(News Agency) As many as 40 scientific proposals have been accepted from research teams across the world as everyone queues up to get a piece of asteroid that hides ingredients for life. The selected proposals are from nine countries, requesting 74 sample grains, which is 230 mg of the total asteroid samples collected. A spacecraft named Hayabusa2 returned a sample capsule containing material collected from the C-type asteroid Ryugu to Earth in December 2020. Japanese

researchers then identified 20 amino acids in the samples.

Amino acids are molecules that combine to form proteins and are building blocks of life. These molecules are essential for living beings as

they help in breaking down food, growth, repairing body tissues, and performing several other bodily

functions. These can also be used as a source of energy by the body. These

amino acids have previously been detected in the asteroids that fell on Earth. However, they were barely quantified as they were lost during entry through Earth's atmosphere that burns and creates plasma. The discovery of 20 of these key ingredients confirms the



presence of organic material in these remnants from the creation of the solar system. Following the discovery, research teams were invited to submit a scientific proposal requesting grains from the sample for a planned analysis by April 22, 2022. The Ryugu Sample Research Open Call Committee discussed the submissions from 12 countries and selected 40 of the proposals, which were then approved by the Hayabusa2 Sample Allocation Committee on June 13, 2022.

NASA to gradually shut Voyager probes as they drift away

(News Agency) Voyager spacecrafts have travelled further into space than any made-made space vehicle has ever gone. Voyager 1 and Voyager 2, launched in 1977, were meant to last just five years. But decades on, the spacecrafts have continued on their path sending back invaluable data never before obtained.

The spacecrafts are humankind's imprint on the space. The spacecrafts are so far away from Earth it takes 20 light hours

and 33 minutes for a signal to travel from Voyager-1 to Earth. In case of Voyager 2, a signal takes 18 light hours to reach Earth. These spacecrafts are 23.3 billion kilometres from Earth. These spacecrafts carrying out such a long journey is in itself a wonder and a thing to be proud of as a human. But the arduous and still continuing journey has begun to take its toll it seems. NASA has been gradually turning off equipments aboard both the

spacecrafts. Both of these probes are equipped with television cameras, infrared and ultraviolet sensors, magnetometers, plasma detectors, and cosmic-ray and charged-particle sensors. But 44 years on, the need to conserve energy in order to transmit data has assumed great priority. NASA has hence been gradually switching of instruments one by one. It has been decades since NASA shut down cameras on the probes. And though it feels sad it appears that NASA would

continue shutting down more instruments. Though it is not certain, will there be a time when we would cut all contact with both spacecrafts? The Voyagers will continue their journey into nothingness of space even after that. They will bear testimony of human ingenuity as they would chart lonely path in the deep expanse. You can now write for wionews.com and be a part of the community. Share your stories and opinions with us here.

China planning to bring Mars sample to Earth before NASA, ESA joint mission



(News Agency) According to reports, China intends to return Mars samples to Earth in 2031, two years ahead of NASA and European Space Agency's joint project. China's Tianwen-1 had started sending pictures of Mars in February last year. The rover had begun exploring the red planet in May 2021. Sun Zezhou who is the chief designer of Tianwen-1, reportedly presented China's ambitious plan during a presentation.

The plan included lifting off to Mars in 2028 and after extensive research which includes sampling and drilling, the spacecraft is expected to depart Mars in 2030 and return to Earth in July 2031. China has poured billions of dollars into its space programme. The country is also planning to build a base on the Moon.

Tianwen-1 orbiter is also reportedly set to conduct sample return preparation, Sun revealed. China had earlier conducted lunar sample return in 2020. Last month three Chinese astronauts arrived at the country's space station as the Communist nation continues its complex space operation. The astronauts had blasted off from the Long March-2F rocket from the Gobi desert.

NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) had decided to delay their launches to 2028 and said the Mars samples will be possible in 2033 under a revised schedule.

ESA and NASA are also in talks to put the first European on the Moon. The US had banned China from the International Space Station (ISS) in 2011 due to national security concerns.

Narrow escape! International Space Station dodges space debris from Russian anti-satellite test

(News Agency) The International Space Station had a close shave on Thursday as it narrowly avoided crashing into a piece of space junk from a Russian anti-satellite weapons test. NASA confirmed that the ISS had to quickly maneuver in order to avoid the orbital debris. The space debris originated from an anti-satellite weapons test that ended up destroying the Soviet-era Cosmos 1408 satellite in November 2021. A rough estimate states that there were

around 1500 pieces of debris from the incident. The crew was never in any danger and the maneuver had no impact on station operations," read a statement released by NASA about the avoidance maneuver. "Without the

maneuver, it was predicted that the fragment could have passed within around a half-mile from the station."



This was not the first time that the ISS had to perform such avoidance maneuvers in the recent past as they had to avoid space debris in November and December of 2021. Any collision with space debris can result in

massive damage to the system and also the astronauts inside the ISS. Russian space agency Roscosmos posted a video on Telegram of the entire process as they used an uncrewed Progress 81 cargo ship to move the orbiting lab away from the path of the debris.

"I confirm that at 22.03 Moscow time, the engines of the Russian Progress MS-20 transport cargo ship carried out an unscheduled maneuver to avoid a dangerous approach of the International Space Station with a fragment of the Kosmos-1408 spacecraft," Roscosmos chief Dmitry Rogozin said.

South Korea launches domestically-developed space rocket, successfully puts satellites in orbit

(News Agency) South Korea on Tuesday (June 21) launched its first domestically-developed space rocket informally called Nuri. The launch has successfully placed several satellites in orbit, officials said. This is the country's second attempt after a launch last October failed. South Korea's state television pictures showed the rocket lifting off from Naro Space Center on

the southern coast of South Korea at 0700 GMT. The launch is termed a major step in the country's efforts to jumpstart the space programme after the failed test last year. After the launch, the officials revealed that Nuri, which is a 162.5-kg (358 lb) satellite designed to verify the rocket's performance entered the orbit and successfully made contact

with a base station in Antarctica.

As per the officials, the rocket successfully placed a 1.3-ton

billion and it weighs 200 tonnes and is 47.2 metres long, fitted with a total of six liquid-fuelled engines.



Science and ICT Minister Lee Jong-ho told a briefing: "The sky of the Korean universe is now wide open. Our science and technology has made great strides." President Yoon Suk-yeol hailed the achievement as he watched the launch from his office. As

per a statement by his office, he thanked everyone involved in the project. As quoted by media outlets, Yoon said: "Now the road to space from our land has been opened. It was the product of 30 years of daunting challenges. From now on, the dreams and hopes of our people and our youth will extend into space."

Yes Bank Launches Floating-Rate Fixed Deposits; All You Need To Know

Private sector lender Yes Bank on Tuesday announced the launch of floating-rate fixed deposit (FD) for domestic customers. In this, the interest rate will keep fluctuating based on the changes in repo rate, allowing the customers of the bank to enjoy dynamic returns on their fixed deposits



we are committed to innovation and customer-centricity as the core of our banking initiatives. We consistently strive to provide the best-in-class benefits and experience to our customers across segments. Floating-rate fixed deposit is a one-of-a-kind FD product which is yet another testament to such continuous endeavours."

Kumar added that one of the main advantages of this product is that the revision on the interest rate will happen automatically and will not require any manual intervention by the Bank or the customers. "There has been careful deliberation and thought behind the launch of this floating rate FD, and it is another step towards further enhancing our retail product offering." As the

Reserve Bank of India is in the tight monetary policy mode and increasing its key repo rates to control inflation, commercial banks are also following the suit and raising their interest rates. Several banks have increased their interest rates, including ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Punjab National Bank, in the past days. ICICI Bank has an interest rate range of 2.75-6.50 per cent on fixed deposits, depending upon the tenure and age of the depositors. HDFC Bank is also offering the same interest rates in its term deposits. However, Punjab National Bank is giving returns in the range of 3-6 per cent. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee last week unanimously decided to raise the repo rate by 50 basis points to

4.90 per cent with the focus on withdrawal of accommodation. It has prompted the lenders to hike interest rates on loans. Retail inflation slightly eased to 7.04 per cent in May, according to the data released by the ministry of statistics and programme implementation (MoSPI) on Monday. India's headline inflation touched near-eight-year high of 7.79 per cent in April. A sharp drop in the fuel prices after the reduction in excise duty had significantly contributed to bring down the food prices last month, believed experts. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation in May remained above the upper tolerance limit of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), for the fifth consecutive month.

(News Agency) "This floating rate FD can be availed for a tenure of one year to less than three years, as per the customer's preference," the lender said in a statement, adding that the bank has also raised its interest rates on standard fixed deposit up to 6.5 per cent per annum for regular customers and up to an enhanced rate of 7.25 per cent per annum for senior citizens. Prashant Kumar, MD & CEO of Yes Bank, said, "At Yes Bank,

Life Insurance Companies May Soon Be Able To Offer Health Insurance Policies

Private sector lender Yes Bank on Tuesday announced the launch of floating-rate fixed deposit (FD) for domestic customers. In this, the interest rate will keep fluctuating based on the changes in repo rate, allowing the customers of the bank to enjoy dynamic returns on their fixed deposits

(News Agency) The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) is planning to allow life insurance companies to offer health insurance policies and it is expected to issue draft guidelines soon, according to a media report. The move is likely to reduce premiums and increase access to affordable health cover. "Life insurance companies inherently get more customers than health insurers in the retail space, which will help them get more people covered under medical insurance at more affordable premiums," according to the livemint report quoting a source. The report added that the Irdai's internal committee has been discussing the proposal over the past few weeks.

Life insurance companies posted an 84 per cent growth in their cumulative new business premium at Rs 17,940 crore in April 2022, primarily helped by LIC, Irdai data showed. All 24 life insurers had collected Rs 9,739 crore as new business premium during the same month a year ago. The largest insurer, state-owned LIC's first year premium or new business premium more than doubled (at 141 per cent rise) to Rs 11,716 crore as against Rs 4,856.76 crore in April 2021, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) said. Five standalone private sector health insurance companies posted

a 29.14 per cent growth in their collective gross premium income during the month at Rs 1,550.14 crore, as against Rs 1,200.34 crore in the year-ago period. Of the total 31 non-life insurance companies, 24 general insurers registered a growth of 23.57 per cent in their gross direct premium written in April at Rs 19,705.86 crore, according to data from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

Will It Benefit LIC?

The move is also expected to benefit LIC, whose shares are currently witnessing a continuous fall. Its shares were on Tuesday trading at Rs 666 apiece, against the IPO issue price of Rs 949 per share last month. LIC had a 44 per cent market share in FY22 but has lost market share to peers over the last five years, J P Morgan highlights in its report. LIC's retail premium is growing faster than the industry and is above the 2019 level. LIC is focused on addressing portfolio white spaces. It is making a distribution push as well in agency and other channels, opening upside risk- J P Morgan said in its report. With 30 crore policyholders and the highest market share — 61 per cent in new business premium and 71 per cent in terms of the number of policies — LIC is the oldest and most trusted brand when it comes to insurance products.



Gautam Adani Pledges Rs.60,000 Crore For Social Causes

Gautam Adani, Asia's richest person and his family on Thursday pledged to donate Rs.60,000 crore to a range of social causes

(News Agency) Gautam Adani, Asia's richest person and his family on Thursday pledged to donate Rs 60,000 crore to a range of social causes, to mark his 60th birthday. The corpus will be administered by Adani Foundation. "In addition to being the 100th birth anniversary of my inspiring father, this year also happens to be the year of my 60th birthday and therefore the family decided to contribute Rs 60,000 crores towards charitable activities

build an equitable and future-ready India. Our experience in large project planning and execution and the learnings from the work done by the Adani Foundation will help us uniquely accelerate these programs. This contribution



related to healthcare, education, and skill development, especially in the rural regions of our nation". said Mr Adani in a statement. To utilise the potential of India's demographic advantage, there is an ever growing need to focus on the areas of healthcare, education, and skill development. The shortfalls in each of these areas are roadblocks for an Atmanirbhar Bharat, the statement added. "At a very fundamental level, programs related to all these three areas should be seen holistically and they collectively form the drivers to

from the Adani Family intends to draw upon some of the brightest minds that have a passion to make a difference in the Adani Foundation's journey to do more towards fulfilling our 'Growth with Goodness' philosophy," Mr Adani said. The Indian tycoon, a first-generation entrepreneur who turns 60 on Friday, joins the ranks of global billionaires like Mark Zuckerberg and Warren Buffett who have committed large parts of their wealth for philanthropy. With a net worth of almost \$92 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, Adani has added a little more \$15 billion to his wealth this year.

Top restaurant body, ONDC in talks to end 'monopolisation' by Zomato, Swiggy



(News Agency) Atop Indian restaurant body held initial talks with officials of Online Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) on June 21, according to sources close to the developments. Over the next couple of months, a mix of few large and smaller restaurants may join the network for a pilot on the interoperable e-commerce network after a requisite technology standardisation.

Meanwhile, a note prepared by

ONDC on a potential collaboration with food outlets that was accessed by Moneycontrol said: "With multiple NPs (network partners) offering their services on the open network with no pre filters, it will help break away from current monopolisation/cartelisation of the online food delivery ecosystem."

"Today's was an introductory meet where ONDC explained to us about their vision of how

restaurants can integrate and benefit by joining the network," said a member of the National Restaurants Association of India (NRAI).

According to a person in the know, some preliminary discussions with an executive of one of the top pizza chains in the country has also happened.

Last year, the NRAI filed information with the Competition Committee of India (CCI) against foodtech majors Zomato and Swiggy, claiming that their practices have "appreciable adverse effects on competition". Issues such as bundling of services, data masking, deep discounting, lack of transparency and exorbitant commission were highlighted in the submission.

"The current ecosystem of food deliveries is broken and yet no one is able to disrupt it as it will take an infinite amount of funding.

At present, the business model of foodtech can't let a third party handle the hyperlocal logistics

even though restaurants and end customers might end up benefiting from such a thing," said a restaurant owner who did not want to be named.

"That's why the ONDC effort is worth giving a try where an integrated network may allow more localised food aggregators and intra-city logistics providers to come up. Ultimately, this has the potential to reduce commissions that restaurants have to pay and better prices for customers as well," he said. In the ONDC system, restaurant network partners (RNP) in different areas may solely focus on aggregating restaurants, onboard them onto the network and manage them post onboarding i.e. educating restaurants on how to conduct online delivery business, advise on packaging and hygiene norms, ensure food preparation as per service level agreements. This RNP need not worry about building the consumer pipeline

and delivery infrastructure as other NPs will focus on those areas. Moneycontrol explained the various building blocks of ONDC and how it will operate from a consumer, a platform and a seller's perspective last week in this article.

Although ONDC pilots started at the end of April this year, people close to the developments say that it will take another 6-12 months for all the pieces of the puzzle to come together.

At present, Paytm Mall has signed up with the network as a buyer app. Tech companies like Amazon, Flipkart, Google, Shopify and retail majors such as ITC, Dabur and Hindustan Unilever are reportedly in talks to join the network. According to the commerce ministry officials, 80 firms are currently working with the network and are at different stages of integration. Further, ONDC reportedly plans to add 150 retailers in five cities during the pilot phase.

IDBI Bank puts properties of Great India Tamasha Co on sale for non-payment of loan dues

Properties of Great Indian Tamasha Company have been put up for sale for non-payment of loans taken from IDBI Bank, HDFC Bank and Bank of Baroda

(News Agency) Properties of Great Indian Tamasha Company -- corporate guarantor of Great Indian Nautanki Company -- have been put up for sale for non-payment of loans taken from IDBI Bank, HDFC Bank and Bank of Baroda. According to a public notice issued by IDBI Bank, the immovable properties, which will be sold through e-auction next month, are located in Karnataka's Kodagu district. "IDBI Bank invites bids/offers in sealed covers for sale of the property of Great Indian Tamasha Company (corporate guarantor of Great Indian Nautanki Company) under the provisions of the Securitisation



Growth momentum continues, employment outlook improving: FICCI on manufacturing sector

(News Agency) The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry's (FICCI) latest quarterly survey on the manufacturing sector has revealed that after experiencing a revival in the first three quarters of 2021-22, momentum of growth continued in subsequent quarters of Q4 (Jan-Mar 2021-22) and Q1 April-June (2022-23) and there seems to be an improvement in hiring/employment outlook after a long gap. The survey noted that 54.8% of respondents reported higher production levels in Q1 with an average expectation of increase in production by over 10%. This is slightly more than the percentage of respondents experiencing higher growth in Q1 of last year. Also, the FICCI survey observed that there seems to be an improvement in employment creation by the sector as compared to the previous quarter (Q3 of 2021-22), where only 25% of the respondents were looking at hiring in the next few months.

This percentage has improved significantly to 53% of the respondents in Q1, who are now looking at hiring additional workforce in the next three months. This assessment is also reflective in order books as 55% of the respondents in Q1 are expecting a higher number of orders, the survey noted. FICCI's latest survey assessed the sentiments of manufacturers for Q1 for twelve major sectors namely automotive, capital goods, cement, chemicals, fertilizers and pharmaceuticals, footwear, machine tools, metal and metal products, paper products, textiles, toys, tyre and miscellaneous. Responses have been drawn from over 300 manufacturing units from both large and SME segments with a combined annual turnover of over 3 lakh crores. The existing average capacity utilization for Q4 in manufacturing is 77%, a little higher than 75% in the previous quarter, which reflects increased economic activity in the sector.

and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act," the lender said. The company owes IDBI Bank Rs 86.48 crore, HDFC Bank Rs 6.26 crore and Bank of Baroda Rs 49.23 crore. According to the notice, "The dues of IDBI Bank outstanding as of May 1, 2022, stand at Rs 92.69 crore plus interest thereon with effect from May 2, 2022".

The sale of the secured assets for which the reserve price has been fixed at Rs 11.53 crore will be on "as is where is basis", "as is what is basis", "whatever there is basis", and "no recourse basis" on behalf of the secured creditors, which are IDBI Bank, Bank of Baroda and HDFC Bank. The

prospective buyer will have to deposit earnest money of Rs 1.15 crore. IDBI said it took possession of the property on May 20, 2022. The property is situated at Peroor village of Kodagu district, measuring a total of 107.24 acres. The e-auction will take place on July 27, 2022, and the last date of submission of bids is July 22. Set up in January 2008, Great Indian Tamasha Company is classified as a non-govt company with an authorised share capital of Rs 2 crore and its paid-up capital is Rs 2 lakh. It is involved in sporting and other recreational activities. Directors of the company are Anumod Sharma, Sanjay Choudhry and Wizcraft International Entertainment Pvt Ltd, among others.

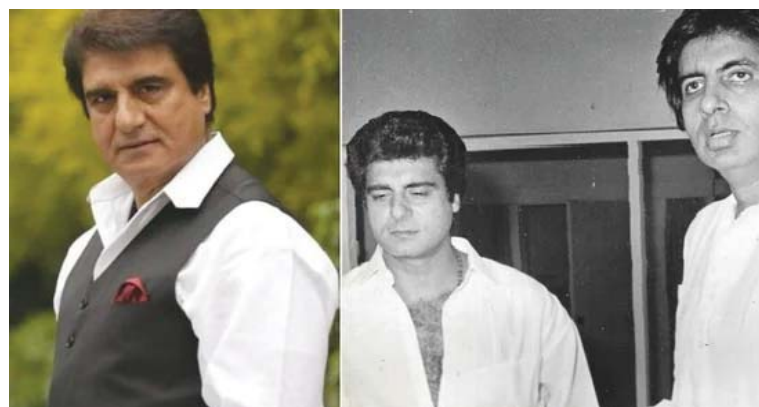
When Raj Babbar recalled being replaced in films by Amitabh Bachchan, Shashi Kapoor: 'Mere saath aise haadse hote rahe'

Raj Babbar once revealed that he was replaced in a film by Amitabh Bachchan after he had already moved to Mumbai to shoot for it. The actor was also replaced by Shashi Kapoor in a film

(News Agency) Raj Babbar had once recalled how he used to be replaced in movies before he made a name for himself in the film industry. The actor, who is celebrating his 70th birthday on Thursday, even lost out on a role to Amitabh Bachchan after he had already received the signing amount. In an interview in 2016, Raj had admitted that he was replaced by Amitabh in the 1982 film Shakti, which also starred his future wife Smita Patil. That same year, he was replaced by Shashi Kapoor in Namak Halal, which also starred both Amitabh and Smita. Asked about being replaced in Shakti, Raj had told

India TV, "It's the truth. I used to do plays in Delhi and Salim-Javed (screenwriter duo Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar) had picked me up from here. My screentest was shown to Dilip Kumar sahab (who played Amitabh's father in the film). Ramesh Sippy was the director. I was selected. But for some commercial reasons I was removed from the film." When asked if it was because makers thought Amitabh would earn them more money, Raj said, "But that's right only, he was a star at the time and I was a completely new face." When asked if it's true that he was replaced in Namak Halal as

well, Raj said, "Sir mere saath aise haadse hote rahe. Jo mujhe milna chahiye tha wo chheen ke koi aur le jaata tha. Lekin chheen ke nahi kahunga. (These mishaps used to happen to me a lot. Whatever I wanted, someone would snatch away from me. Well, not exactly snatched). Prakash Mehra had signed me for two films, one of them being Namak Halal. I told him that I have no place in Mumbai so you will have to provide me a home. He gave me a place to stay for a year, but after he told me that we won't be able to give you this role, I said that I am still going to use this house for a year.



That house is why I have been able to build a home for me in Mumbai."

Raj also revealed that his breakthrough role in Insaaf Ka Taraazu, which featured him as a rapist, also came to him after nobody agreed to accept the

negative character. The actor later became popular for being able to play both negative and positive characters on the screen. The actor-politician was last seen in the 2021 Hotstar web series Dil Bekaraar.

Rhea Chakraborty, brother Showik Chakraborty charged by NCB in drugs case connected to Sushant Singh Rajput's death



The NCB has filed draft charges against Rhea Chakraborty and her brother Showik Chakraborty in drugs case connected to Sushant Singh Rajput's death. Here's what it means

drugs. Most of them are out on bail. As per the report, the prosecution has proposed the court to charge Rhea and Showik for consumption of narcotic substances and also for procuring and paying for such substances for Sushant. The special public prosecutor said the court was scheduled to frame charges against all the accused. However, it couldn't be done as a few of

the accused moved discharge applications. The court has said that the charges would be framed only after the discharge pleas are decided, he said. Rhea and Showik along with the other accused were present before the court on Wednesday. Special judge V G Raghuwanshi posted the matter for hearing on July 12. Recently, on Sushant's second death anniversary Rhea paid him

a tribute on Instagram along with throwback photographs. "Miss you everyday..." she wrote. In the first picture, Rhea pouted and Sushant smiled and in the next one, Rhea smiled at Sushant as he sat on the grass. In another photo, Rhea gave Sushant a peck on his cheek. The last photo showed Sushant carrying Rhea in his arms as they enjoyed the rain.

(News Agency)The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Wednesday filed draft charges against actor Rhea Chakraborty, her brother Showik Chakraborty, and others before a special court in Mumbai in connection with drugs case linked to actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death. As per news agency PTI, special public prosecutor Atul Sarpande said the prosecution maintained charges against all the accused as mentioned in the charge sheet filed before the court.

Sushant was found dead at his residence in Bandra on June 14, 2020. The CBI is probing the case pertaining to his death. After that, the Enforcement Directorate and Narcotics Control Bureau also did separate investigations in the case. Rhea, Sushant's girlfriend at the time, was arrested in the case in September 2020 and was granted bail by the Bombay High Court almost a month later.

Showik and several others are also arraigned as accused in the case for alleged consumption, possession and financing of

Shivaleeka Oberoi: Nothing comes easy in this industry

Actor Shivaleeka Oberoi feels proud to have paved her own path in the acting world

(News Agency) Actor Shivaleeka Oberoi feels proud to have paved her own path in the acting world. "Nothing comes easy and one has to learn to take challenges head on to find a way for oneself. That's all the more the reason I wish to make the most of the opportunities coming my way as competition is great and I can't afford to slow down. I have it in me to mould into any given character and portray it well. Making the most of the opportunities will help me leave a mark as an actor and swiftly reach where I wish to," says the Yeh Saali Aashiqui (2019) and Khuda Haafiz (2020) actor. Talking about her debut in 2019, she

said, "I made my debut with Vardhan Puri in YSA and the film actually picked up by word of mouth but till then it was very late and theatres just took the film down. Meri to pehli film hi theatre se utaar di gayi thi but it went on for digital release and followed by KH which gave me my first hit project. All these have been experiences of sorts and made me mentally stronger." Starting as an assistant after an acting course, Oberoi is glad to get a chance to explore the actor in her with her last release.

"I am an absolutely outgoing, bubbly being, so when KH1 was offered, I was all game to be this newly married girl

who is trapped in an unwanted situation. It was a tough call as there were fewer dialogues and more expressions assigned to my character. But thankfully, I was able to emote that pain, vulnerability and it really worked well." In her next film Oberoi will be seen playing a mother on screen. "The story goes forward in KH: Chapter II and the couple adopt a kid. Playing a mom was absolutely okay for me. See, every film will have a different spectrum and what matters is how well I blend with its premise. I have no qualms about playing a mother on screen, as that's what acting is all about," says the actor.

Why July will be a blockbuster month for Bollywood

In July, box office will see the arrival of Ranbir Kapoor's *Shamshera*, John Abraham-Arjun Kapoor's *Ek Villain Returns* and other Bollywood biggies



Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor, Maniesh Paul, Prajakta Koli and Tisca Chopra is the Bollywood release of June and we are expecting it to open well at the ticket windows. While the first half of 2022, didn't give Bollywood desired results, the second half is expected to take a great start as we are expecting a good number of money-spinners from the Hindi film industry in the month of July due to these reasons...

Variety of content and genre
In the month of July, Bollywood will give us films of every genre. Right from masala actioners like

Aditya Roy Kapur's *Om*, Ranbir Kapoor's *Shamshera* and Vidyut Jammwal's *Khuda Haafiz 2* to impeccable thrillers in the form of John Abraham and Arjun Kapoor's *Ek Villain Returns* and Rajkummar Rao's *Hit: The First Case*. Not to forget, R Madhavan's biographical drama film *Rocketry: The Nambi Effect* based on the life of Nambi Narayanan is also releasing in the next month. The film has been shot simultaneously in Hindi, Tamil and English and that's why we are taking this as a Bollywood movie. With these biggies, we can definitely expect great

numbers at the box office.

Star Power

While Ranbir Kapoor enjoys a humongous fanbase among the youth, R Madhavan's fandom in the Tamil-speaking areas is huge. On the other hand, Vidyut Jammwal, Rajkummar Rao, John Abraham and Aditya Roy Kapur are expected to make the cash register ringing with the help of their biggies.

The Buzz factor

The best part about the above-mentioned movies is that all these films have garnered humongous and excitement among the cine-goers and we are hoping that this curiosity turns into numbers at the ticket windows.

(News Agency) 2022 has not been one of the years for Bollywood so far as many biggies like Bachchan Karan Johar's multi-starrer *Jug Paandey*, *Runway 34*, *Jugg Jeeyo* featuring Varun Heropanti 2, Jayeshbhai Dhawan, Kiara Advani, Anil

Jordaar, *Jersey*, *Samrat Prithviraj* and others have failed miserably at the box office.

Priyanka Chopra talks about being an immigrant in US as she launches homeware line: 'I left my roots behind'

After starting an Indian restaurant named Sona in New York, Priyanka Chopra has now launched a homeware line named Sona Home in



(News Agency) Priyanka Chopra spoke about being an immigrant in the United States and leaving her roots behind as she launched a new homeware line, named Sona Home. The actor said that she tried to bring a piece of her Indian heritage to the homes in the US with Sona Home. She also spoke about how it was challenging for her to make a second home for herself in the United States after she moved there for work, and later married singer-actor Nick Jonas.

Priyanka Chopra took to her Instagram account on Wednesday to make the announcement. In a video, she showed off the pieces from her homeware line with Sona Home co-founder Maneesh Goyal. Talking about her new venture, the actor said, "The thing about our culture in India is family, is community, is bringing people together, and that's what the ethos of Sona Home to me is." Maneesh added to this, "We want it to be like it's so fun, if we're having takeout or a fabulous party. Whatever we might be doing together with our friends or family, we just want it to be rooted in culture and home, and a sense of like there's no place else I want to be."

Priyanka continued, "That's what Sona Home is rooted in. It's

rooted in creating a home out of a house. It's created in helping family and friends come together and build community. And that's like to me, is so important as an immigrant, who has moved from India. I left my roots behind, but I found you and my friends here and family here. You guys here are the family I've chosen and this is my adoptive country. And to be able to bring the heritage of where I grew up in and put it into homes across the country in America."

She also spoke about moving to America in the video's caption, which read, "I couldn't be more proud to introduce you all to Sona Home. It was

challenging to come from India and make America my second home, but my journey led me to a place where I found a second family and friends. I bring a piece of India into everything I do and this is an extension of that thought." She also shared pictures of the pieces in her homeware line in another post. Meanwhile, the actor recently wrapped up a schedule for her upcoming Amazon Prime Video series *Citadel*. She also has *Ending Things* and *It's All Coming Back To Me* in the pipeline. She will also be seen in Bollywood in Farhan Akhtar's film *Jee Le Zaraa* alongside Katrina Kaif and Alia Bhatt.

Mandakini reveals first look poster from comeback project, fans react

(News Agency) Ram Teri Ganga Maili actor Mandakini is all set to make her comeback with a music video, titled *Maa-O-Maa*. Recently, she shared the first look poster of the music video on her Instagram handle. The music video will also mark the screen debut of her son Rabbil Thakur. In the poster, Mandakini is seen in a new look, dressed in a red salwar suit with her son Rabbil among others. *Maa-O-Maa* is written by Sajan Agarwal, who has also directed the song. Babil Haque and Meera have composed the music. The song is sung by Rishabh Giri and backed by Guruji Kailash Raigar. Sharing the first look, the actor wrote to her fans, "Comment your feedback on the poster! I would love to know." Mandakini's

comeback project has left fans nostalgic on social media. Reacting to her posts, a fan wrote, "Looks promising... Welcome back." "Missed you so many years ma'am," another fan added. "I can't wait to see you again on the screen," commented someone else. Mandakini made her debut in Raj Kapoor's *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, which made her an instant success. She starred opposite the late Rajiv Kapoor in the film. The film was a hit and even created controversy as Mandakini appeared partially nude on screen for two sequences. Since her debut, she has worked with popular actors like Mithun Chakraborty and Govinda. She last appeared in the 1996 film, *Zordaar*.

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