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Sena UBT abandoned Hindutva for Congress vote bank -Eknath Shinde

Mumbai

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday slammed the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena UBT for “abandoning” Hindutva and aligning with the Congress for its votes.

The Chief Minister stated that the Sena UBT won three out of four Lok Sabha seats in Mumbai because of the Congress’s vote bank and that the “original Sena voters” are with his faction.

Shinde was speaking at an event organised by the Shiv Sena led by him on the occasion of the party’s 58th foundation day of at Worli NSCI Dome.

The chief minister claimed that Uddhav Thackeray has forsaken Hindutva and avoids mentioning Hindu in his speeches to secure Congress’s votes.



Shinde asserted that Uddhav has lost the moral authority to use Sena founder Bal Thackeray’s name for votes. Shinde termed the victory of the Shiv Sena (UBT) in the Lok Sabha polls as short-lived, comparing it to a “swelling that will go away in due course.”

“The victory is short-lived and this swelling (victory) will go away on its own in the upcoming elections. They are

now even shying away from using the word Hindutva because they know they have to rely on the Congress’s vote bank,” Shinde claimed.

“We all know who voted for us and who voted for them in Mumbai. They are now getting the Congress’s votes, and hence we lost three seats in Mumbai. They have abandoned Hindutva and the ideology of Balasaheb Thackeray. Hence, they have

not won a single seat in Konkan. They have been wiped out from there,” the chief minister added.

Shinde also highlighted the Shiv Sena’s victory in its bastions like Kalyan, Thane, and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar constituencies, emphasising the party’s formidable presence and support base in the state.

My Hindutva is reformist, not jaded like yours: Uddhav Thackeray

Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray Wednesday accused the BJP of promoting a “blighted and jaded” form of Hindutva and stated that the Hindutva ideology that he subscribed to was “reformist and dynamic” in nature. “The Hindutva that you subscribe to is jaded and blighted. The ideology of Hindutva that I adhere to is reformist and dynamic in nature...Do not teach me Hindutva,” Thackeray said



while addressing a gathering during the party’s 58th foundation day in Mumbai.

Thackeray also predicted the collapse of the Narendra Modi-led government, which took office on June 9, and speculated its replacement

by an INDIA bloc-led dispensation. Regarding the BJP’s debacle in Lok Sabha elections in the state, the former CM accused the party of trying to mask its failures by spreading rumors about Shiv Sena (UBT) joining the

ruling NDA.

“We will never align with those who attempted to undermine Shiv Sena,” said Thackeray dismissing speculation about him joining the BJP-led alliance.

He also questioned the intent behind holding the elections for the 11 seats in the Maharashtra Legislative Council, scheduled for July 12, when the disqualification petitions against rebel MLAs were pending in the Supreme Court.

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'Why did you do this to me': Jilted lover bludgeons woman to death with industrial spanner in Vasai

Palghar

A jilted lover struck 18 blows on the head of his girlfriend on a road in Vasai on Friday, even as scores of people watched the gory spectacle, police said.

"The accused attacked the woman with an industrial spanner. There were 18 wounds on her body," senior inspector Jairaj Ranawre of Valiv police station said.

The man, Rohit Yadav (32) and the woman Arati Yadav (22) were neighbours and in a relationship for the last few years, police said. Of late, she had stopped contact with him, making him to suspect that she was having an affair with someone else.

"Kyun kiya aisa mere saath (why did you do this to me)," the man kept saying as continued to hit her head with the spanner. Except for a person who ventured out to intervene, the scores of bystanders remained mute spectators.

The video footage shows a large crowd watching the attack, but no one intervened to help the woman as the man rained blows on her with the spanner, police said.

The Valiv police have registered a murder case, apprehended the accused,

and are currently investigating the incident further. A video of the attack that took place around 8.30 am in the Chinchpada locality of Vasai surfaced on social media.

The victim and the man lived in the same neighbourhood in Nalla Sopara, and worked at an industrial estate, police said.

She was on her way to work with the assailant when they quarrelled midway, an official said.

The man continued to attack her even after she collapsed on the ground. He did not flee the scene and sat on the steps near the body, the official said.

A team from the Valiv police rushed to the spot and sent the body for a post-mortem.

Police have detained a man and a woman who shot videos of the attack and uploaded them on social media.

CCTV footage of the incident went viral on social media, prompting indignation from the public and people's representatives. Maharashtra Legislative Council deputy chairperson Neelam Gorhe said there is a need to implement the "zero tolerance for crimes against women" policy.



BMC starts crackdown against Mumbai's illegal food stalls

Mumbai

Starting Tuesday, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has initiated a crackdown against illegal food stalls and eateries in Mumbai. The move comes weeks after a teenager lost his life after consuming street food from one of the stalls in Mankhurd locality in Mumbai's eastern suburbs.

Officials said that the main objective behind the drive is to decongest the city's roads that are illegally encroached upon by eateries and to confiscate and return the gas cylinders that are used illegally by the stall owners.

According to the civic body officials, three designated teams have been deployed for the island city, eastern and western suburbs.

On the first day, the teams raided areas across Matunga, Dadar, Andheri, Goregaon and Mumbai Central. Officials maintained that initially warnings are given to vendors for relocating their stalls within 24 hours, and if they are found operating further, then their utilities, including utensils and furniture will be confiscated.

The utilities will be stored in a BMC warehouse, from where the owners will have to take it back by paying a penalty to the civic authorities.

"The action comes following an HC order, which has banned hawkers from



selling and cooking food at the roadside. The hours of action will be from 6 pm and 11 pm which see the maximum footfall at food stalls during the day," said an official.

Earlier in May, the civic authorities had initiated a drive against illegal hawkers in the city.

"During the monsoon, there is a high risk of spreading diseases by eating food prepared and sold by hawkers on the roadside. This move is to ensure that the diseases do not spread. Also the use of gas cylinders openly also poses threat to fire incidents," the official maintained.

A similar drive was launched in 2021, when civic authorities confiscated over 21,000 gas cylinders and other utilities that were used by vendors and returned them to the companies.

Monsoon gathering pace, to strengthen in Maharashtra by June 21-22: IMD

Mumbai

The south-west monsoon, which has slowed down after hitting Mumbai, is gathering pace and is expected to progress further by June 21-22, an official of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Wednesday.

The progress of the monsoon will provide a much-needed relief to north India, which is reeling under an intense heatwave.

"Monsoon activity was weak after it hit Mumbai, but it is slowly turning moderate. It will strengthen by June 21-22 and coastal Maharashtra is likely to receive good rainfall. Central Maharashtra, including Marathwada, will receive light to moderate rainfall during this time," Sunil Kamble, Head of the Regional Meteorological Department (IMD), Mumbai, said.

Several parts of Mumbai received showers on Wednesday morning, but it was insufficient to give respite from oppressive heat.

Monsoon arrived in Mumbai on June 9, two days ahead of its normal schedule.



Since then it made little progress and it is yet to cover parts of northern Maharashtra and Vidarbha.

India has received 20 per cent less rainfall since the start of the monsoon period on June 1, with the rain-bearing system making no significant progress between June 12 and 18.

On Tuesday the IMD said that June will receive below-normal rainfall.

June and July are considered the most important monsoon months for agriculture because most of the sowing for the Kharif crop takes place during this period.

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Elections to 11 seats of MLC on July 12; counting same day

Mumbai

The Election Commission of India Tuesday announced the schedule for the biennial elections to the 11 seats of Maharashtra Legislative Council.

The voting for the 11 seats would be held on July 12 and the counting for it would be held on the same day.

The election is necessitated as the term of office of 11 members of the Maharashtra Legislative Council elected by the Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) is due to expire on their retirement on July 27.

Out of the 11 MLCs retiring on July 27, four belong to BJP,



two to Congress while NCP, Shiv Sena, Sena UBT, Peasants

and Workers Party and Rashtriya Samaj Party have one MLC each.

The election of these 11 MLCs is held through a secret ballot from the MLAs.

With the strength of the Assembly reduced to 274 from 288 — for reasons such as MLAs getting elected to Lok Sabha, death and suspension — the ruling coalition will be on its toes to keep its MLAs together.

In the event of voting, if more than 11 nominations are filed, the MLCs will get elected through a preferential voting system.

The winning candidate would require 23 votes of first preference to get elected.

Based on the strength of each party, the ruling alliance

may win nine seats while the opposition looks comfortable in securing two seats. The sitting MLCs Manisha Kayande (Shiv Sena), Vijay Girkar (BJP), Abdullah Khan A Durrani (NCP), Nilay Naik (BJP), Anil Parab (Sena UBT), Ramesh Patil (BJP), Ramrao Patil (BJP), Dr. Wajahat Mirza (Congress), Pradnya Sarav (Congress), Mahadev Jankar (RSP) and Jayant Patil (PWP) are retiring on July 27.

While the last day of filing the nominations is July 2, after the scrutiny of nominations on July 3, the candidates will have time until July 5 to withdraw their nomination.

BJP leader seeks 'rehabilitation' for Pankaja Munde after LS poll loss



Mumbai

BJP MLC Suresh Dhas has demanded "rehabilitation" for party leader Pankaja Munde, citing unrest among party workers after her loss in the Lok Sabha elections.

Munde lost the Beed Lok Sabha seat to the Congress's Bajrang Sonawane by 6,553 votes in a very close contest in the recently held general elections.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Dhas said, "I had made the same demand previously as well. The party should think of rehabilitating Pankaja Munde immediately. There is unrest on the ground. Whether it is in the Rajya Sabha or any other post, the party should decide quickly." He further said that the Lok Sabha poll result should not be considered in this case.

"We have appealed to Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and BJP state unit president Chandrashekhhar Bawankule about this and will meet other party leaders as well," Dhas said.

Mumbai

Shiv Sena UBT leader and MLA Aaditya Thackeray Monday said that the party will take legal recourse over the results of Mumbai North West Lok Sabha seat, where Shinde Sena's Ravindra Waikar defeated Sena UBT's Amol Kirtikar by a margin of 48 votes.

Aaditya further alleged that that BJP would not have had won even 40 seats if the EVMs were not used. "Had there be no EVMs and elections were free and fair, the BJP would have got only 40 seats and not 240 seats," said Aaditya.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Nirupam on Monday said Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and Aaditya Thackeray should apologise for disseminating "false" information based on a news report on the EVMs.

The Sena UBT had alleged misusing and manipulating the electoral machinery in the Mumbai North West seat.

Sena UBT chief spokesperson persons and MP Sanjay Raut said that Waikar should not be allowed to take oath. "It would be a true display of democracy if he is stopped from being a Lok Sabha member until the investigation is concluded," Raut said.

Sena UBT to move court over Mumbai North West LS results

Even as Kirtikar and Sena UBT is planning to approach the court over the decision, Sena UBT MLC and senior leader Anil Parab said that they are going to file a petition against a Vandana Suryawanshi, the returning

Mangesh Pandilkar, the brother in law of Waikar, was booked by the Mumbai police for allegedly using a mobile phone inside the polling centre. It is being speculated that the mobile was used to "unlock"

to the Election Commission's ENCORE application system, which is an end to end application for returning officers to digitise the votes polled, tabulate the data roundwise, and generate various statutory reports to during the counting.

Denying the allegations of manipulation of the EVM, Suryawanshi said that "EVMs are standalone systems and is independent of any device. There is no One Time Password (OTP) required to programme or unlock it".

Meanwhile, Nirupam expressed concern over doubts being raised about EVM tampering.

He claimed that an announcement of Kirtikar's victory was made before the counting process was completed, suggesting a deliberate effort to malign Waikar and the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Nirupam also sought an apology from the Shiv Sena (UBT) mouthpiece 'Saamana', claiming it published a "false news" about the Mumbai North West seat result, and said he would escalate the matter to the Press Council of India if necessary.



office and additional collector of Mumbai Suburban district for her decisions "The polls results declared were suspicious in nature. Hence we are taking legal recourse. Counting process was going on well till 19th round but post that there was no transparency," Parab alleged.

Further claiming that Form 17 C was not provided, Parab added, "Probe also needs to be done on the constant phone calls to the returning officer. She would move away from her seat several times to talk on the phone," he said.

an EVM when the votes were being counted, allegations which returning officer Vandana Suryavanshi and Mumbai police denied.

Pandilkar and a polling official Dinesh Gurav have been booked by Vanrai police under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for flouting the EC ban on mobile phones inside counting centres.

At a press conference on Sunday, Suryawanshi said that the phone belonged to a data operator Dinesh Gurav who only had access

Priyanka Gandhi Wishes Rahul Gandhi On His Birthday



New Delhi

As Rahul Gandhi turned 54, his sister Priyanka Gandhi today posted a heartfelt message for him on social media and said he was her "friend, argumentative guide, philosopher and leader".

Rahul Gandhi, a former Congress president and MP from Rae Bareilly, has instructed all Congress workers to avoid any grand celebrations, and instead celebrate this occasion by engaging in humanitarian efforts and charity.

In a post on X, Priyanka

Gandhi said, "Happy Birthday to my sweet brother whose unique perspective on life, the universe and everything lights up the path."

"Always my friend, my fellow traveller, argumentative guide, philosopher and leader. Keep shining (star emojis), love you the most!" the Congress general secretary said.

The brother-sister duo often share heartfelt messages for each other on various occasions and post funny exchanges between them.

PM Modi Reviews Work At Upcoming Stadium And Sports Complex In Varanasi

Varanasi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday made a surprise visit to the under-construction Varanasi stadium and sports complex to review the work in progress there after attending a Kisan Samman Sammelan, Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat, and praying at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

Taking to X, PM Modi wrote: "Reviewed the progress at the Dr. Sampurnanand Sports Stadium in Kashi. This stadium and sports complex will greatly help the youth of Kashi."

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during his visit to the upcoming sports facility. In the pictures shared by PM Modi, he can be seen interacting with the officials over the model of the sports complex besides inspecting other facilities. The sports

Over 30 Dead, Over 1.6 Lakh Affected As Assam Flood Situation Worsens



Guwahati

Severe flooding in Assam has killed over 30 and affected over 1.61 lakh people across 15 districts. A landslide in the Badarpur area of Karimganj district resulted in the deaths of five people, including a woman and her three daughters, as well as a three-year-old boy.

The landslide took place in Gainachora village Tuesday night. The landslide deaths bring the total number of deaths in Assam to over 30 since Cyclone Remal made landfall in the state in May.

"Last night at 12.45 am, information was received about a landslide in the Gainachora (Bendargool) village area under the Badarpur police station. Upon receiving the information, the

officer-in-charge of Badarpur police station, along with his staff and SDRF personnel, rushed to the spot and carried out a rescue operation. After three hours, the rescue team recovered five bodies from the debris," said Partha Protim Das, Superintendent of Police for Karimganj district.

The victims were identified as Roymun Nessa (55) and her daughters Sahida Khanam (18), Jahida Khanam (16), and Hamida Khanam (11). The three-year-old boy was identified as Mehdi Hassan, son of Mahimuddin.

According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), Karimganj is the worst affected district, with 1,52,133 people reeling under floodwaters. The calamity has affected a total crop area of 1,378.64 hectares and

54,877 animals. Currently, 470 villages across 24 revenue circles are submerged.

Relief efforts are underway, with 5,114 people taking shelter in 43 relief camps. However, the extent of damage to infrastructure, including embankments, roads, and bridges, has compounded the difficulties in providing aid and assistance. The Kopili river at Kampur is reported to be flowing above danger levels, raising concerns of further inundation.

The flood-affected districts include Biswanath, Lakhimpur, Hojai, Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Tamulpur, Udalguri, Darrang, Dhemaji, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Goalpara, Nagaon, Chirang, and Kokrajhar.

41 airports across India get hoax bomb threat on email

New Delhi

Forty-one airports in the country received bomb threat emails on Tuesday and each of them was declared a hoax following anti-sabotage checks by security agencies that lasted for hours, official sources said.

The emails were received at the airports around 12.40 pm from the email id exhumedyou888@gmail.com. The airports scrambled contingency measures, carried out anti-sabotage checks and swept the terminals following the

respective Bomb Threat Assessment Committee recommendations, the sources said.

An online group called "KNR" is suspected to be behind these hoax threat emails. The group reportedly issued similar emails to several schools in the Delhi-NCR on May 1, they said.

The emails received by the airports carried almost the identical message: "Hello, there are explosives hidden in the airport. The bombs will soon explode. You will all die."

Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi to meet for 4-state elections next week



New Delhi

A day after the BJP announced in-charges for the poll-bound Haryana, J&K, Maharashtra and Jharkhand, the Congress on Tuesday announced that Rahul Gandhi and party president Mallikarjun Kharge would hold strategy meetings with senior leaders of these states.

The two Congress leaders

will meet Jharkhand Congress leaders on June 24, Maharashtra leaders on June 25, Haryana on June 26 and J&K on June 27.

"Carrying forward the momentum in our favour, we are dedicated to ensuring a handsome victory in the state elections," Congress general secretary KC Venugopal announced on X.

2 Terrorists Killed In Encounter In Jammu And Kashmir's Baramulla

Baramulla

Two terrorists have been killed in a fierce encounter that broke out today in Jammu and Kashmir's Hadipora village in the Baramulla district of the Union Territory.

The encounter started after security forces and the police launched a search operation to track down the hiding terrorists. "Two bodies are seen at the encounter site. Both the terrorists have been killed. Their identity is yet to be ascertained" Mr VK Birdi, inspector general police told media.

The encounter in Jammu and Kashmir broke out a day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the capital Srinagar.

This will be the Prime Minister's first visit to the Union Territory after taking the oath of office for the third time on June 9. He will take in International Yoga Day celebrations in Srinagar on Friday. The event will take place on the banks of the Dal Lake in the capital.

Jammu and Kashmir witnessed back-to-back encounters in the past few weeks.

Earlier this month, on June 3, an encounter broke out in Kashmir's Pulwama between security forces and terrorists. A joint operation was launched by the police and armed forces in the Nihama area of District Pulwama.

Almost a week later, a bus with pilgrims was attacked in the Reasi district of Jammu leaving nine people dead. The bus was on its way to the Shiv Khori cave temple when the attackers opened fire. The attack was carried out on the instructions of Lashkar-e-Taiba commander Abu Hamza.

Two days later, a person was reportedly injured after terrorists opened fire in a village in the Union Territory's Kathua district, close to the International Border. A terrorist was also killed.



Some Indian Millionaires Are Migrating To This Country, Says Report

New Delhi

Approximately 4,300 millionaires are projected to leave India this year, with a significant number choosing the UAE as their destination, according to a recent report by international investment migration advisory firm Henley & Partners.

Last year, the same report noted that 5,100 Indian millionaires relocated abroad.

India, the fastest-growing economy in the world, is expected to rank third globally in terms of millionaire migrations, following China and the UK. While India has now overtaken China as the world's most populous nation, its net millionaire exodus is less than 30% percent of China's.

"While India loses thousands of millionaires each year, with many migrating to the UAE, concerns over the outflows may well be mitigated as with wealth growth of 85% over the past decade, the country continues to produce far more new high-net-worth individuals than it loses to emigration," the report states.

The report highlights that many of the departing millionaires retain business interests and second homes in India, which suggests ongoing economic ties.

UAE's Investment Advisory Sector

Indian private banks and wealth management platforms are actively expanding into the UAE to offer seamless



investment advisory services to their clients. Recent examples include Nuvama Private and LGT Wealth Management, both known for supporting Indian clients with global diversification and expansion needs.

Similarly, other banks are also bolstering their presence in the UAE, ensuring competitive wealth management services for Indian families.

"Kotak Mahindra Bank and 360 ONE Wealth are joining the dots to provide Indian families with wealth management services on the ground in the UAE, ensuring that they don't lose out to their competitors," the Henley report said.

Importance of Millionaire Migration

Around 1,28,000 millionaires worldwide are expected to relocate in 2024, with the UAE and the USA topping the list of preferred destinations.

Migrating millionaires contribute significantly to foreign exchange reserves by moving substantial assets with them.

Their investments also stimulate local stock markets through equity placements.

Moreover, businesses established by millionaires often create numerous high-paying jobs, benefiting the middle class. Examples like Microsoft, Apple, and Tesla have demonstrated this effect in the USA.

A millionaire is defined as an individual with liquid investable assets totaling \$1 million or more.

Reasons for Migration

High-net-worth families opt to relocate for various reasons, including safety, financial considerations, tax benefits, retirement prospects, business opportunities, favorable lifestyles, educational opportunities for children, healthcare systems, and overall quality of life.

Delhi Water Crisis: Atishi Writes To PM, Plans Indefinite Fast From June 21

New Delhi

Delhi Water Minister Atishi today said that she has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the water crisis in the national capital and threatened to go on an indefinite fast from June 21 if the issue is not resolved within a couple of days.

Addressing a press conference, Atishi claimed Delhi is grappling with a water crisis since Haryana is not releasing the capital's share of water.

"Yesterday, Haryana released 513 MGD of water to Delhi as against 613 MGD. One MGD of water is for 28,500 people. This means that water was not released for over 28 lakh people," she claimed.

The minister said people are not only battling heatwave conditions but also water shortage.



"I have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the water crisis requesting him to resolve the issue. If the crisis is not solved within two days, I will go on an indefinite fast from June 21," she said.

Atishi said they have written multiple letters to the Haryana government to resolve the issue.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva accused Atishi of indulging in theatrics to distract attention from theft and black marketing of water, and said that the AAP government should be sacked for its inaction.

Modi releases Rs 20,000 crore to 9.26 crore farmers under PM-KISAN scheme

Varanasi (UP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday released Rs 20,000 crore as part of the income support scheme for more than 9.26 crore farmers.

Modi released the amount during the PM Kisan Samman Sammelan in Varanasi. It was his first visit to his Lok Sabha constituency after assuming office as prime minister for the third consecutive term.

After being sworn-in as prime minister, Modi signed his first file authorising the release of the 17th instalment of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. Modi released the instalment amounting to more than Rs 20,000 crore to over 9.26 crore farmers under the scheme through Direct Benefit Transfer. Prime Minister Modi was welcomed by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, and deputy chief ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak among others at the event.



PM Modi to lead yoga day celebrations from Srinagar on June 21

New Delhi

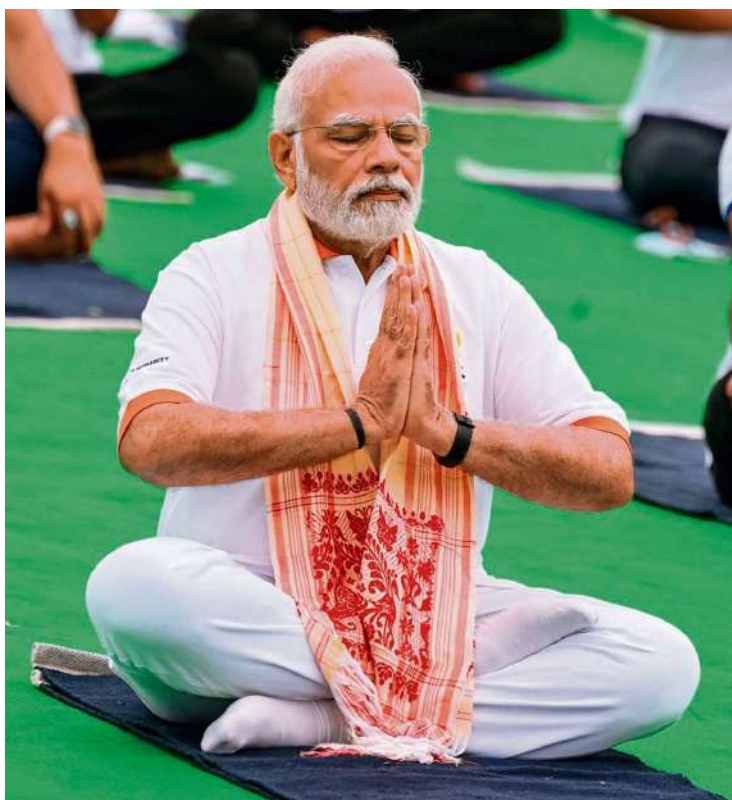
The main International Day of Yoga celebrations this year will be held at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar on June 21 with Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading the event there, AYUSH Minister Prataprao Jadhav said on Tuesday.

Jadhav, the Minister of State for Ayush (independent charge), said this year's theme 'Yoga for Self and Society' highlights yoga's dual role in fostering individual and societal wellbeing.

It underlines promoting connection between the inner-self and the outer world going beyond one's own wellbeing, Jadhav said.

"Yoga nurtures physical, mental, and spiritual growth while promoting societal harmony. The enthusiastic participation of millions in recent years reflects the profound impact of yoga on communities," the minister said.

He also announced that PM has written to each gram pradhan, encouraging grassroots



participation and the spread of yoga in rural areas.

Jadhav launched a 'Common Yoga Protocol Book in Braille'

script to support visually impaired people to learn and practice yoga with convenience. The minister also launched Professor

Ayushman comic on yoga. This book will help children to learn and practice yoga with interest and entertainment.

The United Nations General Assembly, heeding to a call by Prime Minister Modi, had made a declaration in December 2014 to observe June 21 every year as IDY.

The IDY resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in December 2014 came at the initiative of the PM Modi and was passed unanimously.

Since 2015, the IDY has evolved into a mass movement around the world, Jadhav said.

This year, the IDY will witness several events including the 'Yoga for Space'. With support of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), a unique initiative called 'Yoga for Space' is being organised wherein all ISRO scientists/officers will perform Common Yoga Protocol (CYP) on IDY.

The Gaganyaan project team will also be participating in IDY

2024.

The Ayush ministry has already launched a video contest through MyGov Portal and MyBharat portal to raise awareness about yoga and to inspire people to prepare for and become active participants in the observation of IDY 2024.

Families have to record up to one-minute harmonious yoga demonstration short video as a part of the contest.

To promote technology and start-ups in the field of yoga, the ministry has organised Yoga Tech Challenge on MyGov portal and MyBharat portal which aims to identify and promote those start-ups or individuals who have developed yoga related tools.

Last year, the global celebration of IDY was led by Modi at the United Nations headquarters in New York, USA, while the national celebration was led by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh.

Swati Maliwal writes to INDIA bloc leaders, seeks time to discuss 'assault' case

New Delhi

Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on Tuesday sought time from INDIA bloc leaders to discuss the alleged assault against her by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar.

In a letter to INDIA bloc leaders like Rahul Gandhi and Sharad Pawar, the Aam Aadmi Party member complained she was subjected to "victim shaming and character assassination" for speaking up against the abuse.

"Instead of finding support, I was confronted with

incessant attacks on my character and victim shaming orchestrated by the leaders and volunteers of my own party," she wrote.

"Over the past one month, I have encountered first-hand pain and isolation a survivor faces when she fights for justice... I would like to seek your time to discuss this pertinent issue," she added.

Maliwal posted the letters addressed to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and national president Sharad Pawar on X.

"I have worked on the ground for the last 18

years and have heard 1.7 lakh cases in the Women's Commission in 9 years. Without fearing anyone and bowing down to anyone, I have made the Women's Commission stand in a very high position. But it is very sad that first I was beaten badly at the Chief Minister's house, then my character was defamed.

"Today, I have written a letter to all the big leaders of the INDIA alliance regarding this matter. I have asked for an appointment with everyone," she wrote alongside the post.

Even if there's 0.001% negligence, it must be dealt with: Supreme Court on NEET



New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said even if there was "0.001 per cent negligence" on the part of anyone in the conduct of the NEET-UG 2024 examination, it should be thoroughly dealt with.

Observing that students have to labour hard while preparing for these examinations, the apex court said the litigation pertaining to the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate)-2024 examination ought not be treated as adversarial litigation.

"Even if there is 0.001 per cent negligence on the part of anyone, it should be thoroughly dealt with," a Vacation Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and SVN Bhatti told the advocates appearing for the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA). The NTA conducts the all-India pre-medical entrance test.

The Bench was hearing two separate petitions raising grievances, including on grace marks given to students in the examination held on May 5. "We all know the labour which the children undergo, especially in preparing for these exams... Imagine a person who has played fraud on the system becomes a doctor, he is more deleterious to the society," the Bench said.

"Representing an agency which is responsible for conducting the examination, you must stand firm. If there is a mistake, yes this is a mistake and this is the action we are going to take. At least that inspires confidence in your performance," the Bench told the NTA's counsel.

Stressing on timely action by the authority, the top court said the pleas would come up for hearing on July 8 along with other pending petitions, including those which have sought a direction to

conduct the exam afresh. It said the NTA and the Centre would file their responses on these fresh petitions within two weeks.

When one of the advocates appearing for some petitioners raised the issue pertaining to a question asked in the exam, the Bench said, "They (NTA and Centre) will respond to it. Let us understand the purpose of your submissions. In these matters, we are prepared to sit up to evening," it observed.

While hearing separate petitions raising grievances over the NEET-UG 2024, the apex court had last week sought responses from the Centre and the NTA on a plea for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into allegations of question paper leak and other irregularities in the exam. The Centre and the NTA had on June 13 told the top court that they had cancelled the grace marks given to 1,563 candidates who took the examination for admission to MBBS and other such courses. They will have the option to either take a retest or forgo the compensatory marks awarded to them for the loss of time, the Centre had said.

The examination was held on May 5 across 4,750 centres and around 24 lakh candidates took it. The results were expected to be declared on June 14 but were announced on June 4, apparently because the evaluation of the answersheets got completed earlier. There have been allegations of question paper leaks in states like Bihar and other irregularities in the prestigious exam. The allegations have led to protests in several cities and filing of petitions in several high courts as also the Supreme Court. Scores of students protested in Delhi on June 10, seeking a probe into alleged irregularities.

CDS Gen Anil Chauhan releases joint doctrine for cyberspace operations

New Delhi

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan on Tuesday unveiled a joint doctrine for conducting cyberspace operations by the three services, in a significant move aimed at streamlining operations in the key domain.

The doctrine lays emphasis on understanding military aspects of cyberspace operations and provides conceptual guidance to the military in planning, and achieving desired objectives in the domain.

The release of the key document came as the government looked at rolling out theatre commands to bolster India's military might.

The defence ministry said operations in cyberspace need to be "dovetailed" into the national security fabric, to evolve the 'ends', 'ways' and 'means' to "create advantage and influence events in all other operational environments and across all instruments of power".

Gen Chauhan released the 'joint doctrine for cyberspace operations' during a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC).

The defence ministry said the doctrine will guide commanders in "conducting cyberspace operations in today's complex military operating environment".

It described unveiling of the joint doctrines as an important aspect of "jointness and integration, a step which is being actively pursued by the Indian armed forces". "The joint doctrine for cyberspace operations is a significant step to give impetus to the ongoing process. In addition to the traditional domains of warfare including land, sea, and

in a statement.

The ministry also explained the significance of cyberspace and the need for a policy approach to link it to national security.

"Operations in cyberspace need to be dovetailed into the national security fabric, to evolve the 'ends', 'ways' and 'means' to create advantage and influence events in all other operational



air, cyberspace has emerged as a crucial and challenging domain in modern warfare," it said.

"Unlike territorial limits in the domains of land, sea, and air, cyberspace is a global common and hence has shared sovereignty," it said.

"Hostile actions in cyberspace can impact the nation's economy, cohesion, political decision making, and the nation's ability to defend itself," the ministry said

environments and across all instruments of power," it said.

It said the doctrine lays emphasis on understanding military aspects of cyberspace operations and provides conceptual guidance to commanders, staff and practitioners in the planning, and conduct of operations in cyberspace.

The document also seeks to raise awareness in "our warfighters at all levels", it added.

Rahul Gandhi resigns from Wayanad seat, retains Rae Bareilly

New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has resigned from the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat of Kerala and retained the Rae Bareilly constituency in Uttar Pradesh, the Lok Sabha Secretariat said on Tuesday.

A Lok Sabha bulletin said his resignation has been accepted with effect from June 18.

Ending speculation on the issue, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge announced on Monday the decision on the two seats after the party's top brass held discussions at his residence in the National Capital.



Rahul Gandhi's sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will make her electoral debut by contesting the Wayanad bypoll.

Following Rahul Gandhi's resignation from one of the two

seats he had won, the Congress tally in the Lower House now stands at 98.

The Wayanad seat will be the first constituency to go for a bypoll in the 18th Lok Sabha.

"Shri Rahul Gandhi, an elected member of Lok Sabha from two constituencies viz Wayanad and Rae Bareilly parliamentary constituencies of Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, respectively, has resigned his seat in Lok Sabha from Wayanad parliamentary constituency of Kerala and his resignation has been accepted by the speaker with effect from June 18," a Lok Sabha bulletin said.

Arvind Kejriwal's judicial custody extended till July 3 in money laundering case



New Delhi

Delhi court, on Wednesday, extended till July 3 the judicial custody of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering

case linked to the alleged excise scam. Special Judge Niyay Bindu extended the custody of Kejriwal after he was produced before the court through video conference on expiry of his judicial custody granted earlier.

During the hearing, the counsel appearing for Kejriwal, opposed the ED's application seeking extension of his judicial custody, saying there were no grounds justifying extension of his custody.

Rajya Sabha MP's daughter driving BMW runs over man sleeping on footpath in Chennai, gets bail

Chennai

In less than a month after Pune Porsche accident, another case of a hit-and-run involving a high-profile person has been reported. On Monday night, Madhuri, the daughter of Jagan Reddy's party MP Beeda Masthan Rao, was driving a BMW accompanied by a friend and she allegedly ran the car over a 24-year-old painter sleeping on the pavement in Chennai's Besant Nagar. CCTV footage showed while Madhuri fled the spot, but her friend got off the car and argued with the people who had gathered after the accident. Surya was rushed to a hospital, but he succumbed to the injuries. It was later when the police checked the CCTV footage, they found that the car belonged to the BMR (Beeda Masthan Rao) Group and was registered in Puducherry. Madhuri was arrested but granted bail at the police station itself, reports NDTV. Rao became a Rajya Sabha MP in 2022 and has also been an MLA.

PM Modi inaugurates new campus of Nalanda University in Bihar's Rajgir

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday, inaugurated the new campus of Nalanda University in Bihar's Rajgir. After being sworn-in as the Prime Minister for the third term, this is his first official visit to the state.

On the occasion, PM Modi said that Nalanda University is a symbol of India's academic heritage and vibrant cultural exchange.

"This new campus will give the world an example of India's potential. Nalanda will tell that nations which are based on strong human values know how to revive the past and lay the foundation for a better future," he said.

Earlier in the day, the PM visited the ruins of the ancient Nalanda University which were declared a United Nations Heritage site in 2016.

"Education is beyond boundaries; it is beyond perspective of profit and loss. It is education that defines us, gives us views and shapes them. In ancient Nalanda, admission of children was not done on the basis of their nationality. Youth from every country used to come here. In this new campus of Nalanda University, we have to



strengthen the same system in a modern way," he said.

Foreign envoys from 17 countries, including Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, were also present at the event.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said, "It underlines Bharat's endeavour to emerge as a Vishwa Bandhu, extending the hands of friendship and co-operation."

The educational institute, built at a cost of Rs 1,748 crore, was established through the Nalanda University Act in 2010. It started functioning in 2014

from a temporary building.

The ancient Nalanda University, which existed since the fifth century, attracted students from all over the world. It flourished for 800 years before being destroyed by invaders in the 12th century.

It was on the suggestion of then President APJ Abdul Kalam that the Bihar assembly passed a bill to build a foundation for the university.

Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar said, "The Nalanda University has a glorious history. In ancient times, Nalanda University was identified as the centre of education. There were about 10,000 students and about 2,000 teachers in the old Nalanda University."

Amit Shah, JP Nadda ask Maharashtra, Jharkhand leaders to ready poll blueprints



New Delhi

The BJP central leadership on Tuesday directed core teams of Maharashtra and Jharkhand to start preparing for the Assembly elections due later this year and ruled out any change of guard in the crucial western state of Maharashtra.

BJP chief JP Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired meetings of core

committees of both the states in the Capital today. After the meeting Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis said stock was taken of the Maharashtra Lok Sabha losses and course corrections and a decision was taken to prepare ahead with NDA partners on the upcoming state elections.

Asked if the meeting decided on Fadnavis' resignation offer

after the party's poor show in parliament polls Union minister Piyush Goyal said: "There will be no change of guard in Maharashtra. We are preparing for state elections." From Jharkhand core committee, state BJP chief Babulal Marandi said the leadership had asked for a blueprint of the Assembly poll to be readied.

Newly built bridge collapses in Bihar days before inauguration



Patna

A portion of a newly constructed bridge over the Bakra collapsed in Pararia village of Bihar's Araria district on Tuesday, a police officer said. No casualty was reported, he said.

The bridge, constructed by the state government, was yet to be inaugurated and opened to public as approach roads to the bridge were not constructed. The bridge connects Kursa Kanta and

Sikty areas of Araria district.

Amit Ranjan, Araria SP said, "A portion of a newly constructed bridge over Bakra river has collapsed. Officials have reached there to examine the matter." The cause of the incident is not yet known, he added. In March, an under-construction bridge over the Kosi river collapsed in Supaul district, leaving one person dead and 10 others injured.

As Canada 'honours' Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, India reminds world of Kanishka bombing



New Delhi

Soon after the Canadian Parliament 'honoured' a Khalistani activist, the Indian Consulate in Vancouver reminded the world of the bombing of Air India flight 182 (Kanishka) in which 329 people, including 86 children, were killed.

The 'India in Vancouver', the official Twitter account of the Consulate General of India in Vancouver in a post on Wednesday said, "India stands at the forefront of countering the menace of terrorism and works closely with all nations to tackle this global threat."

"23 June 2024 marks the 39th Anniversary of the cowardly terrorist bombing of Air India flight 182 (Kanishka), in which 329 innocent victims, including 86 children, lost their lives in one of the most heinous terror-related air disasters in the history of civil aviation," mentioned the post.

The consulate will also hold a Memorial Service at 1830 hrs on June 23 at the Air India Memorial at Stanley Park's Ceperley Playground area.

"@cgivancouver encourages members of the Indian Diaspora to join the event in a show of solidarity against terrorism," said the consulate in the post.

As India reminds the world of the horrors of terrorism, the Canadian Parliament marked the first anniversary of the death of Hardeep Singh Nijjar by holding a moment of silence in the House of Commons on Tuesday.

This comes days after Canadian PM Justin Trudeau said that there is an "alignment

on several big issues" with India and he sees an "opportunity" to engage with the new Indian government..."

Trudeau had said this after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Italy during the G7 summit.

Nijjar was gunned down in Canada's Surrey, outside a gurdwara on June 18 last year.

India had put him on a list of 'designated terrorists' under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Canada has alleged that Indian officials were involved in the killing but has failed to provide evidence of this. This has strained ties between Ottawa and New Delhi.

India has been maintaining that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistan elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity.

Russia and North Korea sign strategic partnership, vowing closer ties in face of rivalry with West

Seoul

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed a comprehensive strategic partnership during a summit in Pyongyang, in a bid to expand their economic and military cooperation and cement a united front against Washington.

Putin's visit comes amid growing concerns over an arms arrangement in which North Korea provides Russia with badly needed munitions for Moscow's war in Ukraine in exchange for economic assistance and technology transfers that could enhance the threat posed by Kim's nuclear weapons and missile program.

Russian state media said Putin and Kim spoke face-to-face for about two hours in a meeting that was originally planned for one hour.

Speaking before the summit, Putin thanked Kim for North Korea's support in Ukraine and said the two countries would sign an agreement to boost their partnership as both "fight against the imperialist hegemonistic policies of the US and its satellites against the Russian Federation."

North Korea is under heavy UN Security Council sanctions over its weapons program, while Russia also faces sanctions by the United States and its Western partners over its aggression in Ukraine.

Russia media said earlier that Kim will host a reception,

and Putin is expected to leave Wednesday evening for Vietnam.

Before the summit, Putin hailed ties that date to the Soviet army fighting the Japanese military on the Korean Peninsula in the closing moments of World War II, and Moscow's support for Pyongyang during the Korean



War.

Kim said relations between Moscow and Pyongyang are now even closer than during Soviet times and called Putin's visit an opportunity to solidify their "fiery friendship."

Kim vowed his country's "full support and solidarity to the Russian government, army and people in carrying out the special military operation in Ukraine to protect sovereignty, security interests and territorial integrity." It wasn't immediately clear what that support might look like.

Kim has used similar language in the past, consistently saying North Korea supports what he describes as a just action to protect Russia's interests and blaming the crisis on the US-led West's "hegemonic policy."

He also hailed Russia's "important role and mission in preserving the strategic stability

and balance in the world."

Before the talks, Kim welcomed Putin with a lavish ceremony in the city's main square, where he introduced key members of the North Korean leadership including Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui; top aide and ruling party secretary Jo Yong Won; and the leader's powerful sister, Kim Yo Jong.

Huge crowds lined up on the streets to greet Putin's motorcade, chanting "Welcome Putin" and waving flowers and North Korean and Russian flags.

Putin was accompanied by several top officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Denis Mantrurov, Defense Minister Andrei Belousov and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, according to his foreign policy adviser, Yuri Ushakov.

US and South Korean officials accuse the North of providing Russia with artillery, missiles and other military equipment for use in Ukraine, possibly in return for key military technologies and aid. Both Pyongyang and Moscow deny accusations about North Korean weapons transfers, which would violate multiple UN Security Council sanctions that Russia previously endorsed.

Along with China, Russia has provided political cover for Kim's continuing efforts to advance his nuclear arsenal, repeatedly blocking US-led efforts to impose fresh UN sanctions on the North over its weapons tests.

US citizenship for 5 lakh likely under Joe Biden's new plan

Washington

President Joe Biden is taking an expansive, election-year step to offer relief to potentially hundreds of thousands of immigrants without legal status in the US — aiming to balance his own aggressive crackdown on the border earlier this month that enraged advocates and many Democratic lawmakers. The White House announced on Tuesday that the Biden administration will, in the coming months, allow certain spouses of US citizens without legal status to apply for permanent residency and eventually, citizenship. The move could affect upwards of half a million immigrants, according to senior administration officials.

To qualify, an immigrant must have lived

in the United States for 10 years as of Monday and be married to a US citizen. If a qualifying immigrant's application is approved, he or she would have three years to apply for a green card, and receive a temporary work permit and be shielded from deportation in the meantime. About 50,000 non-citizen children with a parent who is married to a US citizen could also potentially qualify for the same process, according to senior administration officials who briefed reporters on the proposal on condition of anonymity. There is no requirement on how long the couple must have been married, and no one becomes eligible after Monday. That means immigrants who reach that 10-year mark any time after June 17, 2024,

will not qualify for the programme, according to the officials. Senior administration officials said they anticipate the process would be open for applications by the end of the summer, and fee to apply have yet to be determined. Biden will speak about his plans at an event at the White House, which will also mark the 12th anniversary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals programme, a popular Obama-era directive that offered deportation protections and temporary work permits for young immigrants who lack legal status. White House officials privately encouraged Democrats in the House, which is in recess this week, to travel back to Washington to attend the announcement.

Bengal train tragedy

A year after India witnessed one of its worst rail disasters — a collision involving Coromandel Express and two other trains in Odisha's Balasore district had claimed over 290 lives — nine persons were killed and over 40 were injured after a goods train rammed into the stationary Sealdah-bound Kanchanjunga Express in West Bengal's Darjeeling district. The deceased included the pilot and co-pilot of the goods train. According to reports, the automatic signalling system between the Ranipatra railway station and the Chattar Hat junction had been defective since 5.50 am — around three hours before the mishap happened. Railway Board chairperson Jaya Varma Sinha has stated that the collision happened because the goods train disregarded the signal. As usual, an inquiry is underway to identify the lapses and fix accountability, while the

Centre has announced Rs 10 lakh each for the kin of the deceased.

The Balasore tragedy had raised hopes



that lessons would be learnt in order to prevent or minimise rail mishaps. However, the situation on the ground doesn't seem to have changed. In October last year, a collision between two passenger trains on the Howrah-Chennai line in Andhra Pradesh's Vizianagaram district had

claimed 14 lives; in February this year, a freight train ran driverless for about 70 km from Kathua (Jammu) to Dasuya (Punjab) — it was just a stroke of luck that no major accident happened.

The spotlight is back on Kavach, the 'train collision avoidance' system aimed at preventing accidents due to human error. It is being implemented in a phased manner, but the pace of route coverage is rather slow — in stark contrast to the government's emphasis on speed on the rail tracks. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida have pledged to expedite the bullet train project, but the Bengal mishap has shown that safety must take precedence over the glitz and glamour of ultra-fast trains.

// satyasya paramarṇ nidhānam //

We would like to hear from you. Please share your comments on editor.acrossstate@gmail.com

You must be the change you wish to see in the world.

-Mahatma Gandhi

G7 summit

Commitment on corridor big takeaway for India

The G7 summit in Italy has demonstrated that India continues to be a key player in this elite group's scheme of things. The summit witnessed the participation of the seven member countries — the US, UK, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan and France — as well as the European Union, while India was present as an 'outreach country'. In his address at this major platform, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that the nations of the Global South were bearing the brunt of uncertainties and tensions. Reiterating the stand that marked India's G20 presidency last year, the PM said the country had assumed responsibility for highlighting the priorities and concerns of developing countries on the world stage.

Modi's words prompted



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to assert that the G7 was not an exclusive club. 'We want a partnership from which everyone benefits,' Scholz declared, though it's obvious that this is easier said than done. The ground reality was summed up by the Group of Seven's reluctance to adopt a combative approach on China. The summit

statement said the G7 was not trying to harm China or thwart its economic development; instead, it sought 'constructive and stable' relations with China and recognised the 'importance of direct and candid engagement to express concerns and manage differences'. The G7's stress on cooperation rather than confrontation

left no room for doubt about China's indispensability to the international community.

Beyond the optics of PM Modi's interaction with several world leaders days after he assumed office for a third term, a big takeaway for India was the commitment made by the G7 to promote infrastructure initiatives such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). This ambitious project, which envisages a vast road, railroad and shipping network connecting Asia with the West, is seen as a counter to China's multi-modal, multilateral Belt and Road Initiative. However, the IMEC's fate hangs in the balance amid the ongoing turbulence in West Asia.

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J&K terror attacks

India's response must be firm and forceful

A series of terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir has prompted Prime Minister Narendra Modi to tell officials to deploy the 'full spectrum of counter-terror capabilities'. Terrorists have struck in Reasi, Kathua and Doda districts within a week, killing nine civilians and a CRPF jawan. The Reasi incident, in which gunmen opened fire on a bus carrying pilgrims when it was en route to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine on Sunday, coincided with the swearing-in ceremony of the new government at the Centre. The worrisome security situation poses a big challenge to the Modi dispensation, which is planning to hold Assembly elections in the state-turned-UT later this year. The Centre has also promised to restore J&K's statehood and consider the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

The encouraging turnout in Kashmir in the recent Lok Sabha elections has sent out a clear message that the people of the trouble-torn Valley have faith in the democratic process. However, terrorists and their handlers are unleashing violence in a bid to undermine the turnaround. Accusing Pakistan of trying to disturb peace in the UT through its mercenaries,

J&K DGP RR Swain has asserted that the country's security forces would give a befitting reply to the enemy. He has also warned local agents of the hostile neighbour not to support militancy. It's this local assistance that is spurring infiltrators from across the border to execute terror strikes with apparent ease.

Amid these attacks comes the reappointment of Ajit Doval as National



Security Adviser. He played a key role in two major counter-terror operations — the surgical strikes in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after the Uri attack of 2016 and the Balakot airstrikes in the wake of the Pulwama suicide bombing in 2019. Doval will be called upon to help the PM deal with the current situation in a firm and forceful manner. All eyes will be on India's military and diplomatic response.

ACUTE water scarcity in summer months has a familiar ring to it for Shimla's residents. It's the least of concerns though for the thousands of tourists who flock to the hills in sheer desperation to escape the scorching heat of the plains. In 2018, the scarcity in Shimla was aggravated to a full-blown crisis as taps ran dry for weeks. Elaborate remedial measures were taken. The century-old water storage and distribution network was refurbished. Restoration initiatives were put in place. Improving the quality of water was prioritised. Things did look up for some time. This year, the crisis is slowly inching back toward the dreaded 2018 levels. Rationing has been announced. Water will be supplied after a gap of two days. Residents of some localities, mainly on the periphery, claim they are getting supply after three or four days. Much like in Delhi, the alarm bells are ringing.

An expert analysis of the 2018 crisis

focused on the man-made factors. In the popular narrative, however, a repeat is being played out six years down the line. The prolonged dry spell is being blamed for the reduction in the water level at all sources of supply schemes. Several are on the verge of drying up due to excessive heat and less snowfall during the winter season. Any hope of relief has been pinned on a spell of rainfall. In short, since nature did us in, nature will bail us out. We pretend that none of it is our doing: neither

4 years since Galwan

Widening trust deficit a stumbling block



Four years since the first face-to-face military confrontation between India and China in over five decades, the shadow of the Galwan valley clash of June 15, 2020, looms large, hugely impacting the strategic calculus of the two countries. India lost 20 Army personnel in the clash in eastern Ladakh. Beijing has acknowledged only four casualties, though western researchers put the figure at 40. A resolution of the border stalemate, especially the standoffs in critical areas, remains a contentious issue. A series of military and diplomatic engagements have yielded little. There's now a sense of permanence to the massive military build-up on both sides. Heavy weaponry has been inducted by India to counter the relentless offensive posturing

by China; land and air connectivity is seeing an upgrade along the entire Line of Actual Control. The trust deficit has only widened. It is to no one's advantage.

To Beijing's call for normalisation of ties beyond the border dispute, New Delhi has steadfastly held on to its stance that the relationship cannot be normal without restoring the status

quo ante along the border as of April 2020. Is there a way forward? Amid the entrenched positions, it is difficult to imagine any toning down of the belligerent posturing and rhetoric by Beijing. The prospects of a constructive dialogue on critical regional and global issues appear remote amid the border tensions. For India, the options are limited. It has to stay the course on bolstering its defences, reducing dependence on Chinese imports and protecting its digital sovereignty.

The appointment of the Chinese ambassador to New Delhi after 18 months may suggest a willingness to explore a fresh start to reduce the tensions. But as experience has shown, India cannot afford to lower its guard.

ways.

Native wisdom says respect nature and it will reciprocate. The construct of collective responsibility

Nature of things

Familiar water crisis story plays out in Shimla



climate change, nor man-made folly like reckless concretisation or the encroachment of catchment areas. So unabashedly self-destructive are our

and accountability escapes even routine political and policy-making conversations. Each of us is a stakeholder — it's that simple.

Gender gap

Low ranking must spur policy relook

THE World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index has ranked India 129th out of 146 nations on the list. The data reflects a troubling reality in stark contrast to the India growth story. The methodology of arriving at the conclusions may be open to debate, but numbers don't lie. It would be prudent to heed the larger message. As the results of the Lok Sabha elections have shown, the distress on the ground is real. Continuity in the governance model is all very well, but the developmental strategies need comprehensive evaluation, with rebooting of policies and plans, if required. Change is visible, but it is skewed and too slow.

According to the report, India's economic parity score has been on



an upward trend for the past four years. That said, in the economic parity and opportunity sub-index, it finds itself at the 142nd position, one of the lowest globally. India is ranked 120th on wage equality for similar work. Women in India on

an average earn

Rs 39.8 for every Rs 100 that men earn. The country maintains its 142nd slot on the health and survival index. A notable positive is India's high ranking

on gender parity in secondary education enrolment. Ranked 65th in the parameter of political empowerment of women, it is 10th on parity in the number of years with female and male heads of state over the last 50 years. The women's reservation legislation could be a transformative moment, provided the political leadership accords the issue the seriousness it deserves.

Globally, 68.5 per cent of the gender gap has been closed, says the report. Achieving full gender parity will take 134 years more, equivalent to five generations. This is India's century, we are constantly reminded. No excuse would suffice.

Kuwait tragedy

Workers' wellbeing should be Delhi's priority

THE death of 49 people, mostly Indians, in a fire that engulfed a building housing foreign workers in Mangaf, Kuwait, has turned the spotlight on the conditions under which these employees live and work not only in this Gulf nation but the region as a whole. Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, who visited the site, has blamed the greed of real-estate owners for such incidents, even as an investigation has been launched to pinpoint the lapses and fix accountability. India's immediate focus is on the identification of the bodies and bringing back the mortal remains of the victims, besides granting ex gratia relief to the families of the deceased. At the same time, New Delhi needs to be actively involved in the probe to ensure that those responsible for the tragedy are dealt with strictly.

Those under scrutiny include the companies that hire foreign workers and the realtors who provide

accommodation, besides travel agents who facilitate recruitment. According to reports, India's embassy in Kuwait received over 16,000 complaints from Indian citizens working there between March 2021 and December 2023. Most of them pertained to delays in the payment of salaries, below-par accommodation and harassment by employers. Alarming, over 1,400 Indians, mostly migrant workers, died in Kuwait in 2022 and 2023, according to information shared by the Ministry of External Affairs in Parliament earlier this year. All this suggests that the Indian authorities have been lax in addressing the workers' concerns.

India is the world leader in terms of remittance receipts, with a total of \$125 billion being sent by Indians living across the globe to their families back home last year. Gulf Cooperation Council countries are among the biggest sources of India's remittance inflow. New Delhi must press these nations to crack down on unscrupulous employers who compromise the safety and wellbeing of workers.

Two good for Naidu

Andhra CM a key stakeholder in Modi govt

IT's a 'best of both worlds' situation for Chandrababu Naidu. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) supremo has not only become the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh for the fourth time, he has also emerged as a key stakeholder in the BJP-led government at the Centre. On Wednesday, he took oath as CM in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior BJP leaders. The alliance comprising the TDP, the BJP and the Janasena Party recorded a landslide victory in the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the southern state recently, winning 21 of the 25 Lok Sabha seats and 164 of the 175 Assembly seats. Notably, the TDP alone has the majority in the Andhra House with 135 MLAs.

Naidu's enviable status in the scheme of things has led to speculation that he might press Modi to walk the talk on granting special category status (SCS) to AP. The Congress has already upped the ante against the PM, saying that he has failed to fulfil

the promise made in this regard in Tirupati in March 2014. The basis of Andhra's demand for SCS is the loss of revenue attributed to the state's bifurcation, which led to the formation of Telangana under the AP Reorganisation Act in February 2014. Another NDA-ruled state, Bihar, is also demanding this status, with CM Nitish Kumar's cabinet having passed a resolution in November 2023. The stability of the Modi 3.0 government will hinge a lot on how far Naidu and Nitish will go for the sake of their respective states.

In contrast, things are pretty simple and straightforward for the BJP in Odisha, where tribal leader Mohan Charan Majhi has taken oath as the party's first CM in that state. The saffron party ended the Naveen Patnaik-led Biju Janata Dal's long reign with an impressive win in the recent Assembly elections. The challenge for Majhi would be to sustain the momentum of development that Odisha witnessed when Naveen was at the helm.

Cybersecurity lecture at Desh Bhagat University

A 1 pb naval unit organised a guest Lecture on cybersecurity during the NCC annual training (ATC) camp at Desh Bhagat University. Captain Harjit Singh Deol (Commanding Officer) welcomed Inspector Amit Singh and Sub-Inspector Sunaina (Punjab State Cyber Crime Mohali) as the resource persons. Inspector Singh said cybersecurity aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills required to defend the computer operating systems, networks and data from cyber-attacks.

CERA opens studio in Mohali

Premium Bathroom Solutions provider CERA inaugurates a company owned display studio in Sector 82, Mohali. CERA Style Studio inauguration was done by Joint Managing Director Deepshikha Khaitan along with company officials Mr Rahul Jain (president marketing), Sandeep Abraham (president sales), Arun Sharma, assistant general manager sales in the presence of architects, developers and channel partners.

Haier unveils graphite fridges

Haier Appliances India, the No 1 global major appliances brand for 15 consecutive years, unveiled its Graphite series, a premium range of steel door refrigerators featuring a matte finish and contemporary design elevating the aesthetics of modern Indian homes. The series will be available in capacities ranging from 205 to 602 lts.

Sri Chaitanya shines in JEE Adv

In a remarkable display of academic excellence, Sri Chaitanya Institute has once again proven its mettle in the JEE Advanced examination, with Vedant Saini emerging as tricity topper by securing AIR 14. Additionally, from Chandigarh campus, 11 students secured ranks under top 500. Gurnoor Sohal secured a place at the prestigious IIT Bombay. She also became the only girl from Chandigarh to achieve this feat.

Platinum Evara Nova launched

Platinum Guild International (PGI) India, in collaboration with Senco Gold & Diamonds, introduced the Platinum Evara Nova Collection. The new platinum jewellery collection offers a wide range of collection that can be worn for various occasions as well as paired with a variety of outfits. Among the highlights of the collection are the neckwear pieces, including the bi-metal chain necklaces.

Awareness drive on IVF myths

Actress Savita Bhatti launched Punjab's First Educational Comic IVF Book by newly launched Simran IVF. This session featured an awareness talk by Dr Gursimran, a renowned gynaecologist, on common misconceptions about IVF treatments. Chief Guest Bhatti lauded efforts of Dr Gursimran by simplifying In Vitro Fertilisation in comic book.

Trident hoists tallest Tricolour

Trident Realty has hoisted the one of the tallest Indian Tricolours at its project site - Trident Hills, Panchkula. The flag, measuring 45 meters in height, is one of the tallest in the tricity region, making it a prominent landmark. The flag was hoisted by Trident Realty Group Chairman Sumit Kumar Narvar. This initiative aims to promote the national flag and its significance in Indian culture.

Mahindra marks Vijay Diwas

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd, India's leading manufacturer of SUVs and armoured vehicles for defence and paramilitary forces, proudly announces the launch of 'Hearts to Bravehearts', an initiative to commemorate the 25th anniversary of India's victory in the Kargil War. This initiative is a heartfelt mission to honour the courage, sacrifice, and resilience of brave soldiers.

SEA seeks end to export ban on de-oiled rice bran as prices slump

Mumbai

Edible oil industry body SEA on Tuesday appealed to the government not to extend the ban on export of de-oiled rice bran beyond July 31, as domestic prices have slumped on increased supply of an alternative animal feed.

India typically exports 5-6 lakh tonne of de-oiled rice bran annually, mainly to Vietnam, Thailand and other Asian countries, positioning itself as a reliable supplier in the international market.

However, the government prohibited exports of the commodity on July 28 last year, citing high fodder prices, with the ban initially imposed until March 31, 2024, and later extended till July 31.

De-oiled rice bran prices are now at lower levels and likely to decline further with increased availability of distillers' dried grains with solubles (DDGS), a byproduct of the ethanol industry used as an animal feed, the Solvent Extractors' Association



of India (SEA) said.

"In view of the sharp fall in prices of de-oiled rice bran, the association has appealed to the government not to extend the prohibition beyond July 31, 2024," SEA said in a statement.

The move is aimed at helping Indian exporters regain their foothold in global markets and earn valuable foreign exchange, it said.

As per the SEA data, oilmeals export from India declined by 31 per cent to 3,02,280 tonne during May this year from 4,36,587 tonne in May 2023.

Soyabean extraction rose to 1,44,706 tonne last month from 1,14,228 tonne in May 2023, while rape-mustard extraction declined to 1,33,263 tonne from 2,33,663 tonne.

Castor extraction also fell to 23,000 tonne from 43,761 tonne in the period under review.

The overall export of oilmeals during April-May 2024 was 767,436 tonne, down 17 per cent from 930,045 tonne year-on-year mainly due to reduction in export of rapeseed meal and castorseed meal.

Zomato in talks to acquire Paytm's movies and events business

New Delhi

Food delivery company Zomato is in talks with Paytm to acquire the fintech company's movies and events businesses, the company said in its filing on the stock exchange. Zomato, on Monday, said, "We acknowledge that we are in discussions with Paytm for the aforementioned transaction, however, no binding decision has been taken at this stage that would warrant a Board approval and subsequent disclosure in accordance with applicable law."

The food aggregator further said, "We have noticed that there are certain news articles circulating in the mainstream media with the subject 'Zomato in talks to acquire Paytm's movies, ticketing business'. This voluntary disclosure is being made to clarify our stance on the matter given that any transaction that is considered potentially meaningful may create uncertainty in the market." Paytm also confirmed the talks and said, "The Company routinely explores various strategic opportunities aimed at enhancing shareholder value. The potential transfer of Paytm's Entertainment business, a component of our Marketing Services, is one opportunity under consideration." Paytm added that they have indicated in their earnings call that going forward

the company will focus on payment and financial services. "As noted in our earnings call, our focus will be on payment and financial services along with digital goods commerce, which are designed to help our merchants scale their businesses," it said.

It also said that discussions with Zomato are ongoing, but at a very preliminary stage. "However, any discussions currently underway are preliminary and do not involve any binding agreements that require approval or disclosure under Regulation 30 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, or other applicable laws. As such, any information pertaining to these discussions should be considered speculative at this time," Zomato said. As per media reports, the potential size of the deal may be valued between Rs 1,500-Rs 2,000 crore. Zomato clarified in the filing that the intent behind the move is to strengthen its 'going-out' business. The company said it aims to strengthen its position in its four key business segments currently. The deal finalised will be the second big acquisition of Zomato after the food aggregator acquired quick commerce platform Blinkit (previously Grofers) in an all-stock deal worth Rs 4,447 crore.

Fed needs to cut interest rates sooner rather than later

"It doesn't matter when the Federal Reserve starts cutting rates. What really matters is where they finish." That is one view that is being heard around Wall Street.

At first glance, this advice serves as a timely caution for the many market participants currently obsessed with whether the Federal Reserve, reassured by the latest inflation data, will begin its rate-cutting cycle in September or wait longer, as several Fed officials suggested last week.

However, this opinion overlooks the significance of the timing of the first cut. In current circumstances, the timing is crucial for determining the cumulative magnitude of the cycle and the economy's wellbeing.

The usual argument for the importance of timing posits that the first rate reduction allows markets to price the entirety of the cutting cycle with greater confidence. This seems less important given today's overly data-dependent Fed, which has refrained from taking a strategic view and, regrettably, seems unlikely to change this approach any time soon.

This lack of policy anchoring has robbed the fixed-income markets of an important steer. You see this in the behaviour of US treasury yields, be it the policy-sensitive 2-year bond, or the 10-year which captures more comprehensive market views of the whole rate cycle as well as inflationary and growth outcomes.

In just the four weeks before the last Fed policy meeting, the 2-year yield fluctuated significantly: rising to almost 5 per cent, then falling by 0.26 percentage



points, increasing by 0.18 points, and dropping again by 0.22 points to a low of 4.67 per cent. The 10-year yield exhibited similar volatility, though with larger magnitudes.

The stronger argument for the importance of timing relates to the state of the economy. Mounting, though not yet universal, data signal economic weakening, including deteriorating forward-looking indicators. This has coincided with a significant erosion of balance sheet buffers held by small businesses and lower-income households. The vulnerabilities, likely to increase as more of the lagged effects of the large 2022-23 hiking cycle take hold, come amid significant cyclical economic and political volatility, as well as transitions in areas such as technology, sustainable energy, supply chain management and trade.

There is also the historical perspective suggesting that a timely rate cut contributes to better economic outcomes. As Bob Michele of JPMorgan emphasised in a Bloomberg Television interview last week, a swift rate cut played a significant role in delivering a "soft landing" after the 3 percentage point hiking cycle in 1994-95, a rare occurrence in history. This historical precedent should instil a sense of optimism, suggesting that a well-timed rate cut could potentially lead to a similar positive outcome in the current economic landscape (a soft landing probability that I place at 50 per cent right now).

Given the inflation dynamics, pushing back the first rate cut increases the likelihood that, ultimately, the Fed will need to cut more to minimise the risk of recession. This scenario

would constitute an inverse of the Fed's initial 2021-22 policy mistake. By mischaracterising then inflation as "transitory" and delaying its policy reaction, the Fed had to increase rates aggressively by over 5 percentage points, including four successive hikes of 0.75 percentage points.

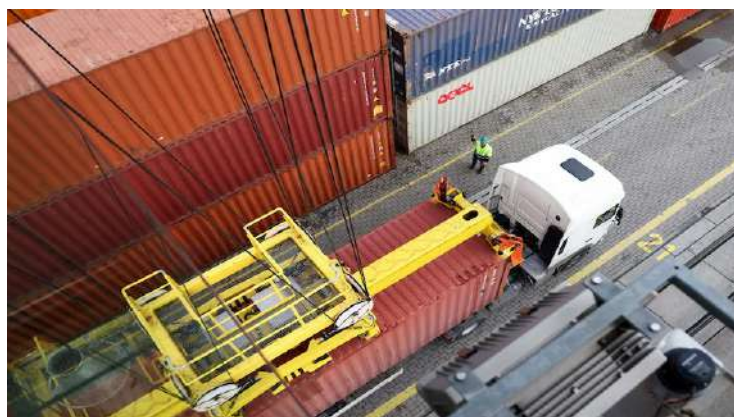
If, this time around, the Fed is forced into a large cutting cycle due to a delayed start and accelerating economic and financial weaknesses, it would also have to end up cutting by more than necessary based on longer-term conditions. This follows the previous upside overshoot that exposed pockets of financial vulnerability and, internationally, the policy challenges facing many other countries.

Once again, vulnerable households and small businesses would be most exposed to such an overshoot. The benefits of lower rates would be overshadowed by increased income insecurity or outright unemployment.

Rather than a given, the terminal rate for the upcoming Fed rate reduction cycle depends on when it starts. The longer central bankers wait to cut, the more the economy risks unnecessary harm to its growth prospects and financial stability, hitting the more vulnerable segments particularly hard. In the process, the Fed would be stuck again with a reactive policy reaction that firefights rather than a more strategic one that guides the economy to the soft landing many of us are hoping for and the world desperately needs.

India's goods exports are up, but they are only back to 2022 levels

At first glance, India's merchandise exports for May 2024 show good growth, at 9.07 percent year-over-year. It's the strongest growth since February, after two lacklustre months. Growth in petroleum products exports was 15.72 percent over a year ago, while non-petroleum product exports also did well, with growth at 7.73 percent, a two-month high. With a recovery in the global economy, trade is expected to improve this year. At the very least, India's merchandise exports should do better than in 2023-24, when they fell by 2.97 percent. Several free trade agreements between India and other nations are in the pipeline, and with the formation of the new government, these could now be expedited.



flagship publication, "Global Economic Prospects" (GEP), out this month, says, "Global trade growth is recovering, supported by a pickup in goods trade. Services-trade growth is expected to provide less of a tailwind this year, given that tourism has nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels. However, the trade outlook remains lacklustre

compared to recent decades, partly reflecting a proliferation of trade-restrictive measures and elevated trade policy uncertainty." The World Bank estimates that world trade volume should grow by 2.5 percent this year, after a piffling 0.1 percent growth in 2023.

A close look at India's merchandise trade numbers

shows that, while exports have indeed jumped from a year ago, they are still lower than the levels reached in May 2022. As the chart shows, total exports in May 2022 were \$39 billion, compared to \$38.1 billion in May 2024. The saving grace, however, is that non-petroleum products exports are slightly higher.

Imports, on the other hand, were a bit higher in May 2024 compared to two years ago, mainly because crude oil imports went up sharply. This is despite the much higher crude prices in May 2022, on account of the disruption caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

That is perhaps an indicator of strong economic growth in India.

Yet, apart from higher oil imports, note that non-oil,

non-bullion imports in May 2024 were up a mere 1.2 percent from May 2022.

It may be too early to rely too much on exports as an engine of growth this year. As the GEP says, "Despite the expected growth in trade this year, by the end of 2024 global trade is set to register the slowest half-decade of growth since the 1990s, mirroring subdued global GDP growth. In the near term, the responsiveness of global trade to global output is likely to remain lower than before the pandemic, reflecting muted investment growth and the recent proliferation of trade restrictions worldwide." Over the longer term, of course, the effort must be to push exports by taking advantage of the Cold War by the West against China.

Hyundai may raise Rs 25,000 crore via IPO



New Delhi

South Korean automaker Hyundai's Indian arm is likely to file preliminary papers with Sebi shortly to raise at least USD 3 billion (around Rs 25,000 crore) through an initial public offering, sources close to the development said on Friday.

The company's initial public offering (IPO), if it goes through, would be the largest in India, surpassing LIC's share sale of Rs 21,000 crore. This development marks a significant milestone for

the Indian industry, as it is the first automaker to go for an initial share sale in over two decades, after Japanese automaker Maruti Suzuki's listing in 2003.

Earlier this week, electric two-wheeler company Ola Electric received capital markets regulator Sebi's clearance to raise funds through an IPO. Under the proposed IPO, Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) may dilute 15-20 per cent stake to raise funds in the range of USD 3.3-5.6 billion, sources said.

Wholesale inflation rises to 15-month high of 2.6% in May

New Delhi

The wholesale price index (WPI) based inflation rate rose to a 15-month high of 2.61 per cent in May, mainly due to the increase in prices of food items which went up by 7.4 per cent during the same month.

Heatwave conditions also pushed up prices of food items, especially vegetables. "The positive rate of inflation in May is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, manufacture of food products, crude petroleum and natural gas, mineral oils, other manufacturing," acknowledged the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in a statement on Friday.

The wholesale price index (WPI) based inflation has been rising for three months in a row. It was 1.26 per cent in the previous month and (-) 3.61 per cent in May 2023.

Despite the high food inflation, analysts saw better



days ahead. "The outlook for food inflation has brightened due to anticipations of a normal monsoon, which is expected to bolster agricultural production. However, monitoring the monsoon's temporal and spatial distribution is critical. We expect the WPI inflation to average around 3 per cent in FY25," said Sarbartho Mukherjee of CareEdge Ratings.

Inflation in vegetables was 32.42 per cent in May, up from 23.60 per cent in the previous month. Onion inflation was at 58.05 per cent, while that of potato was 64.05 per cent. Pulses inflation rose 21.95 per cent in May. Crude petroleum and natural gas also turned costlier by 1.35 per cent and prices of manufactured products rose by 0.78 per cent.

RIL's Jio gets space regulator's nod to launch satellite internet

Bengaluru

A joint venture between Reliance Industries' Jio Platforms and Luxembourg-based SES to provide gigabit fibre internet has won approval from the Indian space regulator to operate satellites there, a government executive said.

The three approvals issued to Orbit Connect India - which aims to provide satellite-based high-speed internet access - come as companies from Amazon.com to Elon Musk's Starlink have been vying for the go-ahead to launch satellite communication services in the world's most populous nation.

The authorisations have not been previously reported. They were granted in



April and June from the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, known as IN-SPACE. These allow Orbit Connect to operate satellites above India, but further approvals are needed by the

country's department of telecoms to begin operations.

Reliance, which owns Jio, did not respond to an email seeking further details.

Inmarsat, another company hoping to provide high-speed satellite-based internet, has also gotten approval to operate satellites over India, IN-SPACE chairman Pawan Goenka told Reuters. Two other companies, Elon Musk's Starlink and Amazon.com's Kuiper, have applied. Eutelsat's Bharti Enterprises-backed OneWeb was given all of its approvals late last year.

India's satellite broadband service market is expected to grow 36% per year over the next five years and reach

\$1.9 billion by 2030, according to the consultancy Deloitte.

Globally, the race to connect rural areas of the world via space-based internet is accelerating. Amazon plans to invest \$10 billion in Kuiper, which was announced in 2019, the year SpaceX began deploying its first operational Starlink satellites.

"Comparatively low pricing of communication services in India will compel global players to drive innovation to reduce their pricing," said Goenka. "This is already being done in many industries like automotive, where multinational OEMs had to innovate to meet expectations of Indian consumers of high performance and low cost."

International Energy Agency: India to lead world in fuel demand growth

New Delhi

India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer, will in the second half of the decade become the driver of global oil demand, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said today,

forecasting rise in consumption by a massive 1.3 million barrels between 2023 and 2030. In its Oil 2024 Report, the Paris-based energy watchdog said India's demand is projected to rise from 5.4 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2023 to 6.7 million bpd by 2030, a growth of 3.2 per cent or 1.3 million bpd.



The Global Security Initiative: China Buttresses its Defence Diplomacy

'Defence diplomacy' is the pursuit of external military relationships through sustained exchange of army personnel, negotiations, arms control talks, cooperation in military intelligence and military technology, global peace-keeping duties, and activities related to military alliances. For China, the aim of defence diplomacy is to bolster the overall national foreign policy, influence the global security environment, and enable the modernisation of the armed forces. Analysts have also observed that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) deploys military diplomacy to obtain intelligence, improve combat skills, and compare its capabilities vis-à-vis other militaries.

The following paragraphs discuss the drivers of China's defence diplomacy.

Political discourse and external outlook

China's external outlook was for long restrained by former leader Deng Xiaoping's guiding principle, "tāo guāng yǎng hui (to hide one's strengths, and bide one's time)". In 2003, the Communist Party of China (CPC) proposed the notion of China's 'peaceful rise (héping juéqǐ)', and in Hu Jintao's presidency, the slogans of 'harmonious world (héxí shìjiè)' and 'peaceful development (héping fāzhǎn)' took precedence. Since Xi Jinping became president in 2013, China appears to have abandoned Deng's dictum. In the past decade, as China has grown to become the world's second largest economy, Xi has been working to strengthen his country's military capability, declaring China's twin goals of "rich nation and strong army."

Changing nature of China's external engagement and PLA reforms

In October 2014, the CPC organised a conclave on the theme of "diplomacy towards the periphery", which resolved to grow China's influence in the country's peripheral regions. The gathering also pledged to capitalise on the "strategic opportunity" to realise the rise of China. In the same conclave, the CPC hierarchy declared their ambition for "China to be a defender of the Asia-Pacific order" by 2050. In 2015, a White Paper on Defence urged the PLA to expand military and security cooperation with the armed forces of other nations to create a security environment favourable to China's peaceful development.

In 2023, Xi completed a decade at the helm of the Central Military Commission (CMC) that oversees the CPC's vast military. According to Chinese experts, Xi's reforms, in which the land-based army is being pruned in favour of improving aerial, naval and strategic service branches, constitute the largest overhaul of the PLA since the 1990s. In China's mind, attaining dominance in the air, space, and cyber domains will allow it to project power and protect its

interests overseas.

Other factors

Xi has also stated that the Party has the right to use force to bring Taiwan back to the fold and complete the "reunification" of China; it is therefore important for the PLA to become a superior fighting force. In parallel, China seeks to delegitimise the United States (US) by portraying its military alliances in Asia as a danger to stability, reinforced by Foreign Minister Wang Yi's exhortation to US allies such as South Korea to develop a sense of

should safeguard the country's national sovereignty, security, and developmental interests. The PLA, therefore, occupies an elevated position in the CPC's global grand strategy. Unlike other nations where the national armies serve the state, the PLA owes its allegiance to the CPC.

Under Xi, China's defence engagements have increased when compared across the metrics of military exercises, interactions of the military brass, and naval port calls. In 2012 and 2013, there were,



autonomy.

The PLA's Role in China's Global Strategy

In 2015, at the All-Army Foreign Affairs Work Conference and the Military Attaches Work Conference, Xi underscored the priorities for the PLA to fully implement the CPC's key diplomatic policies. He added that military diplomacy has taken on a heightened role in the country's overall national diplomacy and security strategy.

A turning point came in 2020 as the PLA re-evaluated its role. The fifth plenum of the CPC's 19th Central Committee assessed that there were "changes not seen in a century"—alluding to America's decline in the world order—and that it needed to use this opportunity to become a great power. During the plenum, the Party announced that defence modernisation would be among the country's most important tools to fulfil its goals of "rich nation and strong army". The Party surmised that such modernisation would boost the PLA's ability to help fulfill the country's development goals, defend its sovereignty, and promote national security. According to Junfei Wu of the Hong Kong-based think tank Tianda Institute, it was perhaps the first time that the PLA had been considered with respect to the CPC's development goals. Song Zhongping, a Chinese analyst tracking the military, posited that the objective of the defence modernisation was to place the Chinese military on a par with the US army by 2027, which marks the PLA's centenary.

In 2022, as head of the CMC, Xi signed a directive on the PLA's tasks other than war, in which he emphasised that the military

respectively, 12 and 15 military exercises with other states. The number steadily climbed over the following years, dropping during the COVID-19 pandemic due to restrictions on movement globally.

Engagements of senior military officers abroad increased from 92 in 2012 to 129 in 2015; and Navy port calls rose from 17 (2012) to 45 in 2017, the same year that China announced its first overseas naval base in Djibouti in East Africa.

Considering China's aspiration to be "a defender of the Asia-Pacific order" by 2050, Asia is an important priority for its defence diplomacy engagements that reached over 1,000 between 2002 and 2021. This is followed by Europe and Africa, at 606 and 334, respectively, over the same period.

Of the 1,104 defence-diplomacy engagements within the continent between 2002 and 2021, China had more with countries in South-East Asia (48 percent of the total number) and South Asia (26 percent) as compared to Central Asia (13 percent) and North-East Asia (13 percent). These numbers are underpinned by geopolitical and economic factors.

In South Asia, for example, Pakistan accounts for a bulk of the PLA's interactions, mainly due to the India-Pakistan and India-China contestations. Chinese scholars describe the rivalry between India and China as "complex", given how both perceive themselves to be rising powers. China finds utility in Pakistan in its effort to balance India, with the PLA leveraging the combat experience of the Pakistani Army that has fought against the Indian Army in a number of direct conflicts.

The Indian Ocean and South China Sea are key corridors for China's energy requirements from West Asia, and China's trade with Africa that accounts for the strategic salience of South and Southeast Asia for the PLA. In addition to hard power, the Chinese state also seeks to leverage relationships through soft power in the form of humanitarian and relief missions through PLA's medical vessels such as 'Peace Ark'. The ship, equipped with advanced medical facilities and having medical professionals among its crew, can tend to nearly 1,000 patients at a time. During the last 16 years, the vessel has visited 43 regions and nations, providing medical treatment to some 250,000 people. Both constant defence engagements and benign soft-power initiatives aid in the PLA's understanding of the security situation in those regions.

China's Perceptions of Warfare and Neighbourhood Threats

For the PLA, China faces difficult challenges due to the campaign of containment by the US and its allies. It is of the view that warfare in modern times is dependent on a state's overall national strength, not just on military capability. China should thus build the PLA's capabilities through continuous military engagement and exercises with other armies, international tours of duty involving peacekeeping missions, and through induction of advanced technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI).

According to the reading of some Chinese scholars, the aim of American policy towards China has been to suppress it; in the recent years under Biden, the US has worked to attract allies and form blocs in this regard. This includes, according to the PLA, mediating a rapprochement between South Korea and Japan after a hiatus of more than a decade. Chinese analysts view a threat in such a resumption of friendly relations, and is gearing up the PLA to be vigilant amid regular military drills between the US, Japan, and South Korea. The same analysts anticipate that military cooperation in Asia between these three countries could serve as a foundation for the 'Five-Eyes' intelligence-sharing arrangement between the US, Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand. The perception is that the US will cement a NATO-like trilateral military bloc and intelligence-pooling arrangement in Asia, and that a "perilous" nuclear arms race in China's backyard could emerge; Chinese observers point to a recent agreement whereby the US can deploy US nuclear-armed submarines in South Korean waters.

Thus, China sees that amid its contest with the US, the latter is

invigorating its historical alliances. In contrast, as China watchers argue, China is a "partial power" since its security presence overseas has not evolved in the same manner as traditional great powers on the metrics of formalising alliances, stationing troops abroad, projecting power globally, or fighting conflicts either on its own or through proxy actors. China has no allies, but its most proximate relationships are with nations like Russia, North Korea and Pakistan that are regarded as "rogue states" with great amount of deficit in trust from the international community. Russia, for instance, is a neighbour with which China has to deal with, but not a partner that it can rely on. Despite Xi signing a no-limits partnership with Russia, analysts say, China must distance itself from Putin in the aftermath of the Ukraine aggression.

Chinese strategists argue that in the current scenario there must be an effort to redress the security deficit. China has made a case that influence between 'East and West', 'South and North' are evolving in a balanced direction, amid a global shift in the balance of power as the West declines and the East rises. There is a "bloc mindset" as far as China is concerned, reinforced by a "new Cold War" with states asserting supremacy through belligerent action. With China's assessment that American supremacy is in decline and its rise is inevitable, it is moving in to fill the security deficit.

Soon after the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out, Xi announced the Global Security Initiative (GSI) in April 2022, referencing the concept of "indivisible security"—i.e., that the security of one nation cannot come at the expense of another's; he warned that there were efforts to build "small circles" (read: power blocs) or provoke conflict along ideological lines. A year later, China announced plans to train 5,000 security personnel from developing countries over the next five years.

Beijing plans to create more international platforms for exchange and cooperation to address security challenges in areas such as counterterrorism, cybersecurity, biosecurity, and emerging technologies, with a view to improving governance capacity in non-traditional security. China has announced more exchanges and cooperation among university-level military and law-enforcement academics. China's efforts to boost multilateral and bilateral security training programmes have expanded in recent years, spreading to countries in the Pacific Islands and Central Asia. Through such capacity-building programmes, China looks to build links with the security and military elites in other nations.

Improving urban freight transport

Freight transport refers to the total movement of goods from one place to another. Standard freight includes commercial goods, commodities, and bulk merchandise. Such freight could be moved by ship, air, rail, or road. Globally, ocean shipping is accountable for driving 90 percent of traded goods. Air freight transportation is the fastest but the most expensive within a country. Rail freight transport has the advantages of accessibility and lower costs. However, the shipment is time-consuming and sometimes the waiting queue may be long. Road freight transportation has the advantages of low cost and ready availability. However, all roads may not have the capacity to allow the smooth passage of large trucks and containers. In the context of cities, urban freight transport allows goods and commodities to be picked up and delivered to destinations in cities from where citizens and businesses can be serviced. Such goods have to contend with traffic, quality of roads, challenging routes, and local traffic policies.

Freight transport refers to the total movement of goods from one place to another. Standard freight includes commercial goods, commodities, and bulk merchandise.

Many strands of issues are intertwined in urban freight transport. Firstly, rising urbanisation would mean the increasing concentration of economic activities in cities. This is estimated to hike demand for urban freight transport by 140 percent in the next decade. Secondly, the first- and last-mile freight movements in Indian cities are accountable for 50 percent of the total logistics cost in India's rising e-commerce supply chains. This is even though urban delivery, distance-wise, is the shortest leg among all stages of transport. However, urban freight is vital for the economy of a city. It provides products to citizens for consumption and businesses with materials they need to run their enterprises.

It is imperative, therefore, to make urban freight transport much more efficient than it currently is. This has significant value in terms of improving the competitiveness of Indian goods both in domestic as well as export markets. This also aids the Government of India (GoI)'s initiative, 'Ease of Doing Business'. Unfortunately, city freight transport contributes

significantly to environmental pollution. Urban freight is estimated to be accountable for 10 percent of India's freight-related Co2 emissions and the biggest contributor to in-city transport-related Nox and PM emissions. Thus, the need to protect the urban environment also demands that urban freight transport be

and all metropolitan cities, that is, urban settlements with more than 1 million population.

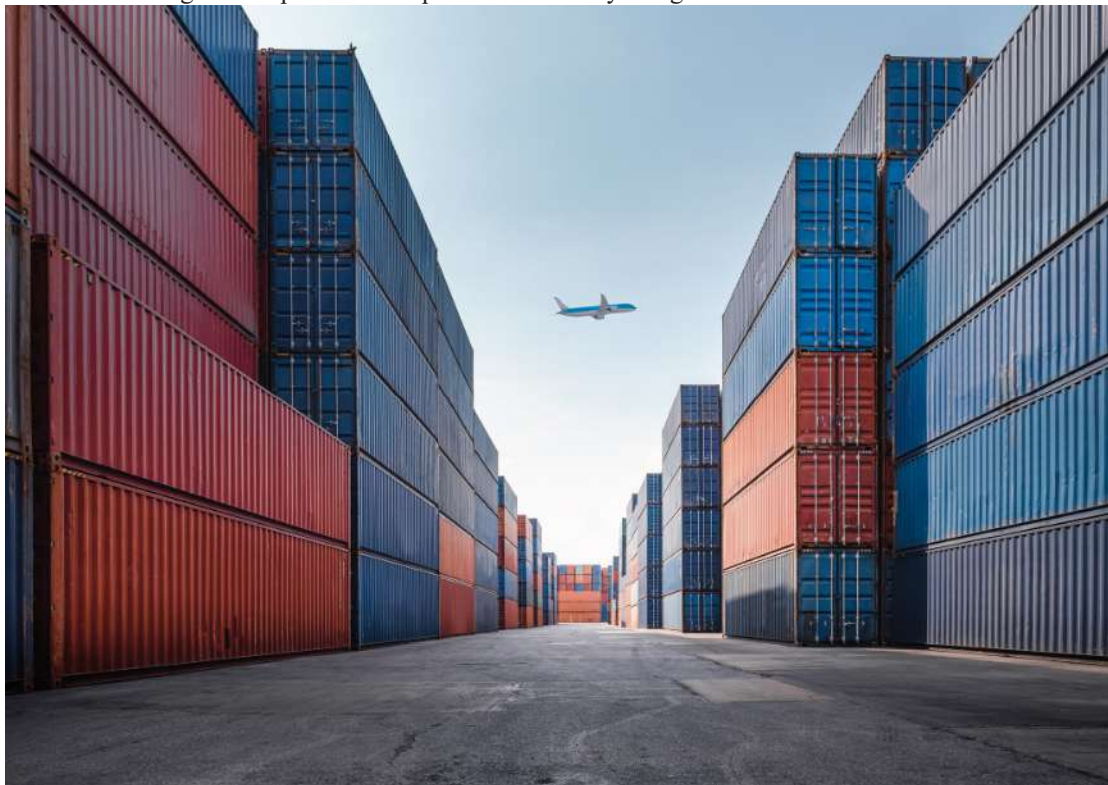
In September 2022, the Prime Minister launched the National Logistics Policy (NLP). The primary objective of the policy is to reduce logistics costs and improve the country's logistics

identify the gaps that exist in it. The identification of deficits will allow the urban local body (ULB) to plan its future course of action in terms of infrastructure, technology inputs and environmental planning to improve urban freight transport efficiency. It would be critical for the ULB to engage in stakeholder consultations

also help to organise the supply chain management systems that would guarantee greater consolidation of freight flows. This would result in fewer but larger vehicle consignments. Technology is also critical in promoting online shopping and home delivery services.

However, a whole set of problem areas lie in injecting efficiency into urban freight transport. Indian cities are notorious for economising on land they are prepared to put under roads. Most cities have, on average 10 to 12 percent of their land area under roads (barring exceptions such as Delhi with about 18 percent). That is almost half of the global norm. Bringing more land under roads post-development is both complex and highly costly. With high human and vehicular density on Indian city roads, urban freight transport is the first casualty as congestion is managed locally by restricting freight movement, either through time restrictions, vehicular size limits and permissible weight of freight carried by transport carriers. This offsets any improvements in the automobile sector in improving vehicle productivity through greater fuel efficiency and utilisation and vehicular emissions. Such restrictions do not help reduce costs or improve freight efficiency. A more daunting task before cities is finding money to improve their freight infrastructure. As most cities eke out a hand-to-mouth existence, they may not find any resources to put into tasks related to urban freight.

In such a situation, given the national economic significance of freight efficiency in cities and the prospects of greater urbanisation, it would be advisable that GoI, along with city-level prescriptions, backs cities up with resources. In the absence of such support, there is little that the ULBs would be able to achieve. It would also be advisable that states prescribe a minimum criterion set regarding spatial provision in land use planning for roads. Any city that does not abide by such a prescription may not have its master plan approved. Without such measures, as vehicular densities of Indian cities rise, traffic congestion is not likely to go down. Local restrictive policies would remain, and urban freight would continue to face the daunting challenges of time and cost.



well-organised. Therefore, urban freight policy's key objective is to maximise the quality of goods delivery by doing this as quickly and as cheaply as possible and minimise the negative impacts on the city and the environment by keeping freight movement as non-polluting, non-congesting and as safe as possible.

It is imperative, therefore, to make urban freight transport much more efficient than it currently is. This has significant value in terms of improving the competitiveness of Indian goods both in domestic as well as export markets.

To improve urban freight transport in India, GoI decided in 2021 to identify 10 cities that could be developed as 'Freight Smart Cities'. At the same time, state and city governments were encouraged to establish peri-urban freight centres and night-time deliveries, create truck routes, use intelligent transportation systems and modern technologies, and promote electrification of urban freight and parcel delivery terminals. Over time, GoI also planned to scale up the number of freight smart cities to 75 and eventually include all state capitals

performance index ranking. Among its key objectives is to assist the development of city-level logistics plans along with an institutional framework. The NLP spelt out a comprehensive logistics action plan. It identified problematic issues and proposed solutions. Among its significant propositions was to develop a system of unified logistics interface to link multiple data sources and develop cross-sectoral use cases for logistics stakeholders, enhance interoperability, minimise handling risks, undertake process optimisation, and improve ease of doing business. From the specific point of view of cities, the NLP advised that each city should prepare a city logistics plan (CLP) and set up a city-level institutional framework to measure and monitor city-level action.

In September 2022, the Prime Minister launched the National Logistics Policy (NLP). The primary objective of the policy is to reduce logistics costs and improve the country's logistics performance index ranking.

A city's CLP will enable the local body to appreciate the nuances of urban logistics and

comprising the people, private players in the sector, and a wide array of individual and business consumers.

In urban transport, the attention of cities has been concentrated on public transport and car traffic. Road freight transport and its requirements have been a neglected area. The fact is that, as cited earlier, urban freight transport is enormously significant. On the one hand, it sustains productivity and living in cities and plays a vital role in servicing industrial and trading activities that generate city wealth. Enhancement of its efficiency has a significant impact on the cost of commodities consumed and industrial competitiveness. On the other hand, its environmental and health impacts on pollution and noise must be addressed.

In terms of imparting efficiency to urban transport, technology has a vital role to play. Technology can aid vehicle routing and scheduling. This would cut the distance that vehicles need to negotiate. They can assist in load planning systems that could improve the utilisation of vehicle load space. The technology could

Peak emissions in India and China: Promises, progress and prognosis

The 2014 report by working group III of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) noted that the energy sector was responsible for 35 percent of total anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Despite the efforts of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, emissions from the energy sector grew more rapidly between 2001 and 2010 than in the previous decade. Energy sector GHG emissions growth accelerated from 1.7 percent a year in the period 1991-2000 to 3.1 percent a year from 2001-2010. The main contribution to this growth came from rapid economic growth in developing countries primarily China and India and the increase in the share of coal in the global fuel mix on account of growth in coal consumption in India and China. The report argued that in the absence of mitigation policies, energy related CO₂ (Carbon Dioxide) emissions are likely to increase to 50-70 GtCO₂ (giga tonnes of CO₂) by 2050. The report concluded that the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere can only be stabilised if global net emissions of CO₂ emissions peak and decline towards zero in the long term. In most of the stabilisation scenarios (limiting concentration of CO₂ equivalent in the atmosphere to 450-530 ppm [parts per million]), the share of low carbon energy in electricity supply increase from 30 percent to 80 percent. Following the release of the report, China made the following statement in 2014 when the then-President of the United States visited China:

'China intends to achieve the peaking of CO₂ emission around 2030 and make best efforts to peak early and intends to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 20 percent by 2030.'

An equivalent statement on carbon peak was not extracted from India in 2014 but pressure began to mount and more recent expert opinion has suggested that India could achieve peak carbon by 2040-45.

Progress

In 2022, the share of non-fossil fuels (nuclear energy, hydropower and renewable energy) in China's primary energy mix was close to its 2030 target at 18.37 percent. Although India has not committed to a share of non-fossil fuels in its primary energy mix, India derived 11 percent of its primary energy from non-fossil fuels in 2022. Globally, non-fossil fuels accounted for about 18.2 percent of primary energy in 2022, which means over 82 percent of

global primary energy came from fossil fuels. Coal's share in the global primary energy fuel mix increased by 5 percent from 2003-2013, to touch 29 percent, making it the second most important fuel behind oil. Projections made in 2013-14 anticipated that China would remain the single largest coal consumer, accounting for 51 percent of global consumption, while India was expected to take the second place with 13 percent of global consumption overtaking the United States in 2024. This projection has materialised earlier than forecast. More moderate projections expected China's coal demand growth to decelerate rapidly from 1.3 billion tonnes (BT) representing an annual growth of 6.1 percent in 2005-15 to just 19.5 MT (million tonnes) representing a



growth of just 0.1 percent a year in 2025-35 with coal peak in 2030. India and China were expected to contribute 87 percent of global coal growth by 2035. Structural changes and policy measures, such as China's move from a manufacturing & industry-driven economy to a service and domestic demand-driven economy along with efficiency improvements and stringent environmental policy, were expected to drive a rapid fall in coal demand in China. More ambitious projections expected China to stop importing coal by 2015 and China's coal demand to start declining by 2016.

Projections made in 2015 celebrating the 'coal crash' in the United States argued that the decline in demand for coal in Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD) countries will not be made up by China and India. Drawing on the fact that the price of seaborne thermal coal had weakened the argument was made that much of exported production to China and India would not cover costs and that future prices of coal were unlikely to show much improvement. As China's coal consumption fell for the first time in 14 years despite economic growth of 7.4 percent, peak coal consumption in

China was expected before 2020. The impending coal peak was attributed to a structural shift, driven by China following the western world in beginning to phase out coal.

In 2022, China's coal consumption was 88.41 EJ (exajoules), accounting for over 54.8 percent of global coal consumption. Though growth in coal consumption in China in 2012-22 had slowed down to an annual average of 0.9 percent compared to over 9 percent in 2002-12, it has not peaked as expected by ambitious projections. In 2002-12, China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at annual average of 10.7 percent and in 2012-22 it grew at an annual average of 6.25 percent. India's coal consumption grew at an annual average of over 6.2 percent in 2002-12, and at 3.9 percent in 2012-22 while India's GDP grew at an annual average of 6.9 percent in 2002-12 and at 5.6 percent in 2012-22. Sustained economic growth in China and India without proportional growth in coal consumption indicates an extent of decoupling between carbon emissions and economic growth. This is illustrated by the declining trend in the coal intensity of the Chinese and Indian economies (coal required per unit of GDP) since 2002. In the last two decades, the coal intensity of the Chinese economy has fallen by over 48 percent, while the coal intensity of India's economy fell by about 18 percent. Services, which are generally less energy-intensive, contribute a much larger share to the economy in India than in China, but India's coal use efficiency is lower than that of China resulting in higher coal intensity.

Sustained economic growth in China and India without proportional growth in coal consumption indicates an extent of decoupling between carbon emissions and economic growth.

China committed to reducing carbon intensity of its economy (CO₂ emissions per unit of GDP) by 40-45 percent during 2005-2020, but China experienced a 3 percent increase in carbon intensity in 2002-09 because gains in efficiency were offset by movement towards a carbon intensive economic structure. If China accelerates the progress towards peak emissions, it could end up increasing carbon emissions as it could potentially drive industries to less efficient countries.

Prognosis

China and India can reduce their emissions and prosper materially only if economic growth is disentangled from energy-related emissions. This is theoretically possible, but the

required transformation would impose considerable costs, and drastically re-orienting development towards low carbon growth is not cost-less. In June 2023, the Katowice committee of experts under the UNFCCC acknowledged that developing countries will bear disproportionate cost of decarbonisation in its technical paper on the impacts of the implementation of response measures (to climate change).

Most of the reduction in carbon emission achieved in OECD countries was without any radical policy interventions. Fuels with higher carbon-to-hydrogen ratio, such as firewood, were replaced with cheaper fuels with lower carbon-to-hydrogen ratio such as coal, oil and gas. Some countries in OECD have achieved an annual reduction of 2 percent in carbon intensity, but this was not necessarily because of a shift towards alternative fuels or greater efficiency in using energy. Structural changes in the economy, such as a move towards a service-oriented system, played a big part. The shift was natural as most OECD countries had already completed their industrialisation processes. Decarbonisation rates sustained from 1971-2006 range across the 26 OECD nations, from a 3.6 percent per year. The unweighted average rate for all 26 OECD nations is 1.5 percent per year, only 16.5 percent faster than long-term global decarbonisation rates (1.3 percent per year).

Many OECD nations also decarbonised by exporting their polluting industries to other countries. Japan had an explicit policy of locating heavily polluting industries in foreign countries. European countries reduced carbon emissions by 6 percent from 1990 to 2008 by exporting production to developing countries. In the same period, European import of embodied carbon from developing countries increased 36 percent. 18 percent of embodied carbon was through exports from China.

In 2022, carbon emissions were 64 percent higher than in 1990, the year the first report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was released and 5.2 percent higher than in 2015 when the Paris Agreement was signed. Even when the economy slowed down dramatically under COVID-19 restrictions, carbon emissions fell by only about 6 percent in 2020 and rebounded quickly after restrictions were lifted.

China in horizon, G7 eyes the Global South



The grand convergence at the Apulia G7 Summit in Italy between the western democracies and the Global South was facilitated by the G7's sensitivity to the systemic risks it faces from the Russia-China dyad. Once seen as the sole shepherd to the global economy, the G7 nations along with the EU gathered under the Italian Presidency for the group's 50th Summit with an agenda to deepen inter-group coordination against Russia as well as enhance their collective outreach to Africa, where China is seen as a dominant investor through its Belt and Road Initiative. Guided by the G7's own stratagem, the Summit's outreach session saw an invitee list dominated by the Global South with leadership presence from Brazil, Argentina, the UAE, Turkey, Jordan, Algeria, Kenya, Tunisia, Mauritania and India.

Africa taking the centre stage at the Indian G20 in 2023 and then at the very next G7 Summit concluded recently, signals two dynamics at play.

India's presence at Apulia affirmed the nation's increasing heft within the broader G-summitry. The G7's focus on Africa follows the inclusion of the African Union (AU) in the G20 as a permanent member at the Delhi Summit. Africa taking the centre stage at the Indian G20 in 2023 and then at the very next G7 Summit concluded recently,

signals two dynamics at play.

There is a unified global consciousness that there is no progress without Africa, an integral part of the Global South. Second, this G7 confirmed that the voice raised by India for the Global South, during its G20 Presidency last year by facilitating the inclusion of the AU, is instrumental in steering the global multilateral agenda and is bulkier than mere rhetoric.

However, the focus on Africa is also derivative from the fact that Africa remains central to curbing the climate crisis and economically driven migration into Europe, as well as a crucial avenue for Europe to address its own energy insecurities that have a root in the Russia-Ukraine war. Founded on this logic, G7 launched the Energy for Growth in Africa initiative to invest in sustainable industrial and infrastructural development in African countries. To tackle the issue of migration, the group launched the G7 coalition to prevent and counter the smuggling of migrants. G7 also declared that its flagship infrastructure financing initiative, Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), will particularly focus on G7's outreach to Africa by facilitating investments in energy and climate-friendly infrastructure. PGII is touted as a Western competitor to China's BRI. The G7 communiqué

also targeted Russia by highlighting that "sustainable development and democracy are mutually reinforcing" but the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group and other emerging Russia-backed forces are having a destabilising impact on building democracy in Africa.

G7 also declared that its flagship infrastructure financing initiative, Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), will particularly focus on G7's outreach to Africa by facilitating investments in energy and climate-friendly infrastructure.

The final communiqué released by the G7 leaders was broadly condemnatory towards China, be it on the issue of Chinese support to Russia by transfer of dual-use materials that become inputs for Russia's defence sector or on China's recent encirclement of Taiwan.

The Summit also saw the group launch a Semiconductors G7 Point of Contact Group, which is linked to the fears of a Taiwan contingency-induced disruption of the supply chain in semiconductor trade. G7 showed no reservation in mentioning Chinese human rights violations in Tibet and in Xinjiang, and also opposed "China's dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia in the South China Sea". Accordingly, consistent invites to India from a G7 which remains locked in a strained

relationship with China suggests that the Western democracies find India as an interoperable partner in the Indo-Pacific. Moreover, Prime Minister Modi's bilateral meetings with France, Italy, Japan and the UK at Apulia were also an apparent signal to China.

The Summit also projected a unified West against the Russian aggression in Ukraine as the G7 launched the Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) loans whereby Ukraine will be provided with \$50 billion by the end of 2024 to finance its military budget and reconstruction needs. This loan is to be serviced by interest revenues generated from Russian sovereign assets seized by the European Union and other G7 partners. Though the exact response from the Kremlin will be visible in the upcoming days, a Russian Yasen class nuclear submarine was seen trailing along the west coast of Ireland to Scotland the very next day of the G7 summit, seen as apparent signalling directed towards Europe.

While the G7 will remain crucial for the global governance architecture at large, the policy implications of a change in administration at Washington as well as political instability generated by recent European Parliament elections will raise valid concerns on the continuity of policies that came out at Apulia.

Akshay Kumar sports bearded look in 'Sarfire' poster, trailer to be out soon



Makers of the much-awaited film 'Sarfire' starring Akshay Kumar on Friday are all set to unveil the trailer and also shared a first-look poster.

Taking to Instagram, Akshay treated fans with the character's poster along with the trailer announcement date.

The poster captures Akshay sporting a beard and looking away from the camera.

The poster comes with a tagline, "Dream so big, they call you crazy".

He wrote, "The story of a man who dared to dream big! And for me this is a story, a character, a film, an opportunity of a lifetime! #Sarfire trailer out on 18th June. Catch Sarfire on 12th July, only in cinemas." The trailer of 'Sarfire' will be released on June 18.

Recently, a video of Akshay and Radhika Madan went viral on social media.

In the video, Akshay and Radhika are seen together with two others. All four grooved to the beats of the music. The two can be seen performing dance steps on the background music. It seems to have been shot during the shoot of their upcoming film 'Sarfire'.

'Sarfire' is a remake of Tamil film 'Soorai Potru'.

The title of the film was announced in February, and it is scheduled for release on July 12.

Taking to Instagram, Akshay shared a short teaser of the film which he captioned, "Dream so Big, they call you Crazy! #Sarfire releasing only in cinemas on 12th

July, 2024." The film is all set to hit theatres on July 12, 2024. The film also features Paresh Rawal and Seema Biswas in pivotal roles.

Sharing her excitement, director Sudha Kongara stated, "With 'Sarfire,' we have aimed to craft a musical marvel that not only entertains but also leaves a lasting impact on the viewers' hearts. The soundtrack is diverse and will connect with fans across segments." An incredible story, set in the world of startups and aviation, Sarfire is all set to inspire the common man to dream big and to chase your dreams even if the world calls you crazy.

Sarfire is a uniquely Indian story of grit, determination and jugaad, of an underdog challenging the socio-economic fabric of a system entrenched in class, caste and power dynamics.

National award winner, Sudha Kongara is the director of the film. She has previously directed 'Irudhi Suttru' (Tamil) and 'Saala Khadoos' (Hindi), which was also made in Telugu as 'Guru', and 'Soorai Potru' itself.

Written by Sudha and Shalini Ushadevi, with dialogues by Pooja Tolani, and a G.V. Prakash Kumar musical, Sarfire is produced by Aruna Bhatia (Cape of Good Films), South superstars Suriya and Jyotika (2D Entertainment) and Vikram Malhotra.

South actor Suriya had played the lead role in 'Soorai Potru', he will also be seen in a guest appearance role in 'Sarfire'.

More laughs ahead: 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' renewed for Season 2

The makers of 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' announced the second season of the celebrity comedy chat show on Monday.

The ongoing season of 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' featured guests such as superstar Aamir Khan, Ranbir Kapoor and his family, cricketers Rohit Sharma and Shreyas Iyer, international pop icon Ed Sheeran, and many other icons from the entertainment industry.

Taking to social media, the makers shared a recap video of the ongoing season and announced the show's second season.

They wrote, 'Entertainment ki baarish hogi do-bara, kyunki The Great Indian Kapil Show ka

Season 2 aayega bas kuch hi mahino mein! Aur naye season ka wait karte hue Season 1 binge karo! (The Great Indian Kapil Show's season 2 will arrive in just a few months! While you wait for the new season, binge watch season 1).'

Talking about season two, the host of the show, Kapil Sharma, shared, "This has been a wonderful first season. There have been many firsts, and we will cherish those. We are grateful for all the love pouring in from across the globe."

"We promise not to keep our audience waiting for too long for the next season. Enjoy the finale episode with Kartik Aryan this weekend and stay tuned as we gear up for season two," he added.

Badshah blames show promoter after Dallas gig is stopped midway

Rapper Badshah has issued a statement after his show was stopped midway in Dallas, Texas. The rapper said the show promoter was at fault for not coordinating properly with the local administration.

Stating that he is "heartbroken and bummed about what happened", Badshah said he was really looking forward to performing in Dallas but due to a discrepancy between the local promoters and the production



company, he was forced to cut short the set and stop the show midway.

"Promoters need to be better equipped, especially for large-format shows and this kind of nonchalance is just unacceptable to most performing artistes. It takes a considerable amount of energy and effort to put together a tour of considerable scale. This isn't fair to the fans who spend their hard-earned money, and it definitely isn't fair to the whole crew who pours their hearts into putting on these tours," he said.

Avneet Kaur declares she is not getting married anytime soon

Popular actress and social media influencer Avneet Kaur has addressed the talk about her marriage and cleared the air with a mix of humour and sincerity that there is no wedding happening anytime soon. Avneet Kaur was interacting with media on the sidelines of a launch event in Mumbai. When asked about her marriage, she said, "Now this one question has been asked so many times, I don't know why everyone is so worried about my marriage, let me tell you, there is plenty of time in my marriage, so calm down and wait a little longer."

"I personally believe in love marriage, but if I can get my parents' blessings for a love marriage, it becomes arranged and love marriage,



I wish to have something like that, and if I cannot get it, I think I am going to cry alone then," she added. The young actress has a whopping 32 million followers on Instagram. Avneet also added that she loves glamour and fashion, and her new movie Luv Ki Arrange Marriage, is an extension of love for fashion. She said, "Glam and fashion for me are never going to end, I'd love to style myself, I love fashion, I love everything about fashion. In my new movie, Luv Ki Arrange Marriage, I have done many glamorous looks in it." Luv Ki Arrange Marriage is directed by Ishrat R. Khan, written by Raaj Shaandilyaa, also stars Sunny Singh, Annu Kapoor, Supriya Pathak and Rajpal Yadav in key roles.

Diljit says appearing on 'The Tonight Show' is a dream come true for all Punjabi music lovers

Actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh, who made his debut on 'The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon', described the experience as a "dream come true" for all Punjabi music lovers around the world.

Diljit is the first Indian artist to perform on the iconic late-night show.

This upcoming appearance on 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon' sets a new benchmark for the 'Born to Shine' hitmaker.

"It's an incredible honour to be invited onto 'The Tonight Show'. I can't wait to share my music and Punjabi culture with a global audience," said Diljit.

The actor added: "This is a dream come true, not just for me, but for all the Punjabi music lovers around the world."

In 2023, Diljit became the first-ever South Asian artist to headline the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. He then embarked on his record-breaking world tour, 'Dil-Luminati', in Vancouver's BC Place Stadium, he became the first Indian artist to sell out the venue, drawing crowds in Oakland, Newark, Washington, and beyond.



His latest movies include 'Crew' and the critically acclaimed Netflix biopic 'Amar Singh Chamkila'.

On Tuesday morning, Fallon shared a video in which Diljit was seen giving the talk show host a masterclass in Punjabi.

The clip, titled "Learning how to speak Punjabi with Diljit Dosanjh," featured Fallon repeating what the 'Lover' singer was saying in the video.

Fallon also shared another video where the two were seen swapping gloves, with Diljit's track 'Born to Shine' playing in the background.

Allu Arjun's 'Pushpa 2: The Rule' to now release on December 6

Allu Arjun's much-awaited movie "Pushpa 2: The Rule" has a new release date and will now hit the theatres worldwide on December 6, the makers have announced.

Directed by Sukumar, "Pushpa 2: The Rule" is a sequel to Arjun's "Pushpa 1: The Rise", which had turned out to be a huge blockbuster in the country after its release in December 2021.

In a post on X on Monday evening, production banner Mythri Movie Makers shared the new release date of the movie, which was earlier slated for come in cinemas on August 15.



"We intend to give you the best. The wait increases for a memorable experience on the big screens. #Pushpa2TheRule Grand release worldwide on 6th DECEMBER 2024. His rule will be phenomenal. His rule will be unprecedented," the studio posted along with a brand new poster.

Mythri Movie Makers also released a statement, explaining the reason behind postponing the release of the film.

"Pushpa 2: The Rule' is one of the most anticipated Indian films. Following the immense success of Pushpa: The Rise, our responsibility to deliver excellence has increased significantly. We have been tirelessly working to complete the movie and release it on time.

"However, due to the remaining shoot and subsequent post-production work, we will not be releasing the film on August 15th, 2024," the studio.

The company said the decision was made in the best interests of the "film, the audience, and all stakeholders".

"Our goal is to provide a memorable experience on the big screen without compromising quality," the statement added.

The studio has so far released a teaser of the film as well as two songs – "Pushpa Pushpa" and "Sooseki" -- and it said the "overwhelming response" across all languages has been "heartening".

"We promise to deliver a film that you will truly love. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the audiences and

our partners worldwide for their unwavering support. The media and film industries have also been incredibly supportive.

"Pushpa 2: The Rule' will now be released worldwide on December 6th, 2024. We are committed to giving you the best, and you will see only the best in cinemas," the statement concluded.

Also starring Rashmika Mandanna, "Pushpa: The Rise" depicted the rise of a low wage labourer (Arjun) in the smuggling syndicate of red sandalwood, a rare wood that grows only in the Seshachalam Hills of Andhra Pradesh state.

The first part had set up a clash between Arjun's titular character and Malayalam star Fahadh Faasil's menacing inspector Bhanwar Singh Shekhawat.

"Pushpa 2: The Rule" is produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y Ravi Shankar of Mythri Movie Makers in association with Sukumar Writings.

Alka Yagnik diagnosed with 'rare hearing loss' due to viral attack

Renowned playback singer Alka Yagnik recently shared an update from her life on social media.

The artist has been diagnosed with a rare sensory neural nerve hearing loss caused by a viral attack.

In her heartfelt Instagram post, she revealed that the issue began suddenly a few weeks ago after she walked out of a flight and experienced a significant loss of hearing. The singer bravely took her time to process the diagnosis before deciding to speak out.

"Having mustered some courage in the weeks following the episode, I want to break my silence now for all my friends and well wishers who have been asking me why I'm missing in action.

"It has been diagnosed by my docs as a rare sensory neural nerve hearing loss, due to a viral attack... This sudden, major setback has caught me completely unawares. As I attempt to come to terms with it please keep me in your prayers," Alka wrote.



She also cautioned her fans and younger colleagues about the dangers of exposure to very loud music and the frequent use of headphones, highlighting the potential health risks associated with her professional life.

The outpouring of support from her peers and fans has been overwhelming. Singers Ila Arun and Sonu Nigam responded to Alka's post. Ila conveyed her heartfelt sorrow and said, 'I'm deeply saddened to hear this, Dearest Alka. With blessings and today's best doctors, you'll recover soon, and we'll hear your lovely voice again.'

Sonu said, 'I had a feeling something was wrong... I'll visit you once I return... May you recover quickly by God's grace.'

Actress Poonam Dhillon also sent her love and support, saying, 'Sending you so much love and countless prayers and blessings. You will receive all the healing power of love and soon be your beautiful, healthy self again. Love you.'

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

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

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



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

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

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

investigation.

As per the defamation notice, the man asked the actor to send a request letter seeking removal of the video from his X account, which was sent on June 5 via email.

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

T20 World Cup: West Indies' Nicholas Pooran equals Yuvraj Singh's record, hits Afghanistan's Omarzai for 36 runs in an over

Gros Islet (St Lucia)

The West Indies team, on a record-shattering spree, equalled the T20 World Cup record for most runs in an over in the game against Afghanistan in Gros Islet on Tuesday.

Windies achieve the feat during their last Group stage match of the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup.

West Indies' Nicholas Pooran scored 36 runs off Azmatullah Omarzai's fourth over, equalling India's record set in 2007 by former all-rounder Yuvraj Singh with six sixes against England. However, the over didn't witness all six balls going out of the park as happened in 2007.

It is an unwanted record for Afghanistan seamer Omarzai, who conceded a total of 36 in one over during the Powerplay. Nicholas Pooran smashed three sixes and a pair of fours during Omarzai's second over which included some wayward bowling, meaning Yuvraj Singh's long-standing record for most runs in one over at a Men's T20 World Cup was equalled.

The explosive wicketkeeper-batter hammered 36 runs off Omarzai's bowling: 6, 5NB, 5WD, 0, 4LB, 4, 6, 6.

Pooran's onslaught landed him on an elite list that also includes three Indian players.



Yuvraj became the first batter to score 36 runs in an over when he faced England's Stuart Broad and hit the pacer for six maximums in one over. Rohit Sharma and Rinku Singh are also on the elite list.

During his 98-run innings, Pooran smoked eight sixes against Afghanistan, taking his tally to 128 in the T20I format and past West Indies great Chris Gayle's total of 124.

Coming to the match, after being put to bat first, the West Indies made their intentions obvious by going for big shots. However, opener Brandon King struggled to get the start and fell

prey to left Omarzai after scoring 7 runs off 6 balls. From there, Pooran and Johnson Charles played their shots to put the Caribbean squad in command.

Pooran's brutal assault of 98 runs propelled West Indies to 218/5 against Afghanistan in the final game of Group C of the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup 2024 at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium on Monday (local time).

West Indies notched up the highest first-innings total in the ongoing marquee event and their highest total in the T20 World Cups.

After early exit, Kirsten slams Pakistan team's lack of unity



In a scathing criticism of the beleaguered Pakistan cricket team, head coach Gary Kirsten has said that there is "no unity" in the side and he has "never seen such a situation" in his long coaching career. Kirsten's criticism follows the Pakistan's team's group stage exit from the ongoing T20 World Cup. Pakistan, who were the runners-up at the previous edition, produced one of their worst performances in recent years and ended the event with a consolation win over Ireland, having suffered a shock loss to newcomers USA before biting the dust against traditional rivals India. According to media reports in Pakistan, Kirsten, who guided India to the ODI World Cup triumph in 2011, pulled no punches in his assessment of the team after being eliminated from the ongoing T20 showpiece. "There's no unity in Pakistan's team. They call it a team, but it isn't a team. They aren't supporting each other; everyone is separated, left and right. I've worked with many teams, but I've

never seen such a situation," Kirsten said as per reports quoting a senior scribe. Sources said that Kirsten had expressed his displeasure over the fitness level of the players. The former South Africa opener also said the team is far behind in terms of skill level as compared to the rest of the world.

Under-fire Pakistan skipper Babar Azam hasn't yet thought about quitting captaincy despite his team's early exit, insisting that any decision on the matter will be taken only after discussions with Pakistan's cricket board. "When I go back, we will discuss all the things that happened here. And if I have to leave the captaincy, this decision, I will tell you openly. I will not announce anything behind the scenes. Whatever happens, will happen in front of you," Babar said. "We did not lose this because of one person. We are losing as a team. I think we as a team have not been able to apply, follow and finish things. We have to settle down and accept that we didn't play well as a team," he said.

'Amazing servant of our game': Kane Williamson hails speedster Trent Boult after his T20 World Cup swansong

Tarouba (Trinidad and Tobago)

Star speedster Trent Boult's final T20 World Cup game for the Blackcaps left New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson overwhelmed with emotions, as he expressed his admiration for the veteran pacer.

Boult's legendary run in the main T20I event came to an end when New Zealand won the match against Papua New Guinea.

In their last Group C game, New Zealand defeated Papua New Guinea by seven wickets, after bundling the associate nation out for 78.

Williamson acknowledged Boult's enormous achievements for both New Zealand and international cricket, highlighting his long-lasting reputation

as a remarkable player.

"Yeah, I mean, he's been an amazing servant of our game and like you mentioned, we've sort of grown up playing together from age group cricket, the ages of sort of 10, 11, and really followed a similar path and what he's been able to do in the game, not just for New Zealand but really recognition from all around the world, a skill set, a strong desire to keep getting better and to be at the stage of his career that he is at the moment," Williamson said in a post-match conference.

"Still bowling beautifully, still fit, and strong is a testament to all the work that he's put in. And from us in the inner sanctum, he's always brought great energy, a real willingness to compete,

and a big player for us that's difficult to replace. But I think when somebody puts the time that he has into the black cap and the effort he's put into his country, it paves the way for new players to come through and see a standard that's been set and I think he can be really proud of that," he added.

It was a bittersweet moment for New Zealand, as one of the game's greats could be saying farewell to T20I cricket. However, it marked the end of a disastrous T20 World Cup campaign for the previous finalists.

Boult revealed after the game at Trinidad's Brian Lara Stadium that he is not considering retiring from white-ball cricket at this time.

The speedster completed his T20 World Cup campaign on a good note, taking two wickets for 14 runs.

It was also the day when Lockie Ferguson broke the world record for the most economical spell in men's T20I cricket, taking three wickets in four overs without conceding a single run.

In Group C, NZ ends in third place with two wins and two losses to the West Indies and Afghanistan, giving them four points.

With a win in this game, the Kiwis have been able to salvage some pride and walk out of their worst World Cup showings across 50-over and 20-over formats in recent years with their heads up.

Rohit Sharma's coach shaped my career: USA's Harmeet Singh



New Delhi

Left-arm spinner Harmeet Singh, who is a part of the USA team that is enjoying a fairytale run in the T20 World Cup, has revealed that Indian captain Rohit Sharma's coach Dinesh Lad has been instrumental in shaping his career. The 31-year-old represented India in two Under-19 World Cups and played for Mumbai at the age-group level before moving to the USA. "I would like to thank everybody who supported me in this journey and especially to Dinesh Lad Sir. My talent was first recognised by Lad Sir, who was the coach and mentor during my school days (Rohit Sharma studied in the same school)," Harmeet said. "In fact, he advised me to join his school. There he provided me with everything he possibly could," he said.

Olympics Qualifier: Bhajan Kaur seals Paris quota with gold

Antalya

Bhajan Kaur clinched India an Olympics quota in style, winning a gold medal at the 'Archery In Paris Final Olympic Qualifier' here today. The inexperienced Bhajan grabbed the limelight by stunning top seed Mobina Fallah of Iran without dropping a set to clinch the women's individual recurve gold. The third seed showed exceptional shooting to go all the way, winning 6-2 (28-26, 29-29, 29-26, 29-29) in a one-sided final.

Her teammate Ankita Bhakat made a quarterfinal exit, but she also secured an Olympics quota by virtue of that last-eight entry. The individual quotas are allotted to the top-eight nations. Each country gets one individual quota. India thus have secured individual quotas



in both men's and women's sections. Dhiraj Bommadevara had secured the men's individual quota from the Asian qualifying leg earlier.

Bhajan, who got a bye into the Round of 32, started off by overcoming Urantungalag

India's Sumit Nagal attains career-high ATP ranking of 71



New Delhi

India's Sumit Nagal continued his ascent in the ATP singles chart, climbing to a career-high ranking of 71 on Monday. His previous best was 77 last week. The Olympic-bound

Nagal jumped six places following his runner-up finish at the Perugia ATP Challenger tournament on Sunday.

The 26-year-old, who will be the sole Indian in the men's singles event at the

Paris Olympics, has so far logged 777 ATP points.

A string of impressive results in recent times has not only helped Nagal improve his ranking but also make the cut for singles event at the Paris Games.

The year began with a historic second round outing at the Australian Open. While he bowed out of the French Open in the first round, Nagal is set to compete at in the main draw of Wimbledon followed by the Paris Olympics at Roland Garros.

He had won the men's singles crown at the Heilbronn Neckarcup 2024 Challenger event in Germany earlier this month and the Chennai Open in February.

Nagal, who is currently the best-ranked Indian singles player, has won four ATP Challenger titles since 2023 and Heilbronn was his fourth title on clay.

Shubman Gill sent back home due to 'disciplinary issue'?

As India winded up their group stage fixtures positively in the ongoing T20 World Cup with their final league match on Saturday against Canada abandoned due to a wet outfield, speculation was rife that the team's travelling reserve Shubman Gill was sent back home due to a 'disciplinary issue'.

However, the rumours surrounding the same were quashed by India batting coach Vikram Rathour, who said that "it was decided since the team was selected."

Meanwhile, Shubman Gill too put an end to the rumours surrounding the 'disciplinary issue' by sharing a cryptic post on the Instagram stories.

The Indian batter on Sunday put a picture of him with skipper Rohit Sharma and his daughter Samaira on the Insta stories, captioning it: "Sammy and I learning the art of discipline from @

rohitsharma45..."

Topping Group A with seven points, the 'Men in Blue' will now head to the West Indies to play their Super Eight matches, while Shubman Gill and Avesh Khan, who were part of the four-member travelling reserves, will be released and return home.

The other two travelling reserves — Rinku Singh and Khaleel Ahmed — will remain with the side for the remainder of the tournament.

"This was a plan from the beginning. When we come to the US, four players will come together. After that two will be released and two will travel with us to West Indies. So, this plan was made from the beginning since the team was selected. This was planned so we are just following that," Rathour said in a press conference after India's match against Canada abandoned without a ball being bowled.



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