

Kashmir Tone

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Judiciary answerable to 'Constitution and Constitution alone': CJI Ramana

New Delhi, Jul 2: In India a party in power believes that every governmental action is entitled to judicial endorsement and the opposition parties expect the judiciary to advance their political positions and causes but the "judiciary is answerable to the Constitution and Constitution alone" Chief Justice of India N V Ramana said on Saturday.

He also expressed disappointment that even after 75 years of Independence people have not understood the roles and responsibilities assigned by the Constitution to each Institution.

"As we celebrate 75th year of Independence this year and as our Republic turned 72, with some sense of regret I must add here that we still haven't learnt to appreciate wholly the roles and responsibilities assigned by the Constitution to each of the Institutions.

"The party in power believes that every Governmental action is entitled to judicial endorsement. The parties in opposition expect the judiciary to advance their political positions and causes", the CJI said at a felicitation function organised by the Association of Indian Americans in San Fran-



cisco, USA.

He added that this flawed thinking of all hues flourishes in the absence of proper understanding among people about the Constitution and the functioning of the democratic institutions.

"It is the vigorously promoted ignorance among the general public which is coming to the aid of such forces whose only aim is to run down the only independent organ i.e., the judiciary. Let me make it clear. We are answerable to the Constitution and Constitution alone", he said.

CJI Ramana said that to enforce checks and balances envisioned

in the Constitution, "we need to promote Constitutional culture in India. We need to spread awareness about the roles and responsibilities of individuals and institutions. Democracy is all about participation".

He quoted Abraham Lincoln and said, under the Constitution of India, it is the people who are entrusted with the task of passing judgment on the rulers, once every five years.

"...the people of India have done their job remarkably well so far. We should have no reason to doubt the collective wisdom of

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Amravati chemist stabbed to death for alleged social media post supporting Nupur Sharma; five held

Nagpur, Jul 2: A 54-year-old chemist was stabbed to death in Amravati city of Maharashtra, with the police suspecting that the accused committed the offence as the victim had allegedly shared a post on a social messaging platform in support of Nupur Sharma, whose remarks on Prophet Mohammad led to nationwide protests and global condemnation.

The chemist, Umesh

Prahladrao Kolhe, was killed on June 21, and five persons have been arrested so far in this connection, an official said.

The incident occurred a week before two men hacked to death Kanhaiya Lal, a tailor in Rajasthan's Udaipur, with a cleaver at his shop before posting videos online saying that they were avenging an insult to Islam.

"Five persons have been

arrested in connection with the murder of the chemist and a search is on to trace the prime accused Irfan Khan (32), who runs a NGO," Amravati commissioner of police Dr Aarti Singh said on Saturday.

"Kolhe ran a medical store in Amravati city. He had allegedly shared a post on some WhatsApp groups in support of Nupur Sharma

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NIA to probe killing of chemist in Amravati in Maharashtra

New Delhi, Jul 2:

The anti-terror probe agency NIA will investigate the killing of a chemist in Maharashtra's Amravati, the government said on Saturday, after it emerged it might be linked to his social media posts supporting suspended BJP leader Nupur Sharma.

The chemist, Umesh Prahladrao Kolhe, was killed on June 21.

A Home Ministry spokesperson tweeted that the probe of the case relating

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"Udaipur killing"

Cong alleges one of main accused 'BJP member'

New Delhi, Jul 2: The Congress on Saturday alleged that one of the main accused in the brutal killing of a tailor in Udaipur is a "BJP member" and asked whether the Centre had moved quickly to transfer the case to the NIA due to this reason.

Addressing a press conference at the Congress headquarters here, party's media department head Pawan Khara said a very sensational disclosure has been made by a media group in connection with the Udaipur incident which pointed to the BJP links with Riyaz Attari.



Some reports have also referred to the

accused as Riaz Akhtari.

"The killer of Kanhaiya Lal, Riyaz Attari is a member of the BJP," Khara said in a tweet after the press conference.

Earlier in the day, responding to a tweet by a Congress leader referring to one of the accused's alleged BJP links, BJP's IT cell chief Amit Malviya dismissed the claim as "fake news".

"I am not surprised that you are peddling #FakeNews. The Udaipur murderers

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ABVP, NSUI oppose DU order on campus wall defacing, urges rethink

New Delhi, Jul 2: Students organisations at the Delhi University (DU) have expressed concerns over the varsity's recent order warning of strict action against those defacing the campus walls, saying the new norms can be "misused" by miscreants by planting fake posters to implicate others.

In a notification issued on Thursday, DU Proctor Rajni Abbi warned that strict action will be taken against those whose posters and names are found pasted or painted on the walls on the campus. She said "certain elements" are "defacing" the walls on the campus.

Student groups have called on the university to rethink its recent order, saying



there are high chances that it might lead to the "politicisation" of the new norms.

However, the varsity said a proper investigation will be carried out before taking action in the matter.

"I know there is a possibility that somebody else might put up the posters of someone else to sabotage their image

but we will take action only after proper investigations," Abbi said.

Asked about candidates changing the spellings of their names on posters to escape punishment, Abbi said, "We will hold the probe properly. We will track them down."

National Students Union of India (NSUI), the student wing of the Congress, said the university should look for other ways to hold people, who are defacing the university, accountable including by strengthening campus security.

"We are totally against those who are defacing the university but the notification recently issued by the university

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NIA-ATS teams present accused before court

Jaipur, Jul 2: Teams from the National Investigation Agency and the Anti-Terrorism Squad on Saturday presented the four men arrested in the Udaipur tailor's murder case before a court here.

Prior to this, a police team from Jaipur took the accused - Riaz Akhtari and Ghouse Mohammad and their accomplices Asif and Mohseen - to the office of the ATS' Special Operations Group.

According to sources, the NIA has collected all documentary evidences from the ATS.

Akhtari and Mohammad allegedly hacked tailor Kanhaiya Lal to death with a cleaver at his shop on June 28 for extending supporting to now suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma,

See ATS on pg 7...

Ruckus in Odisha House over Nupur Sharma remark

Bhubaneswar, Jul 2: Odisha Assembly Saturday witnessed several adjournments amid uproar by two opposition parties - the Congress and BJP over Nupur Sharma's controversial statement on Prophet Mohammad and subsequent Supreme Court's admonishment of her.

The issue was raised by Congress Legislature Party leader Narasingh Mishra during Zero Hour and sought to know Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's views on Sharma's statement.

Nupur Sharma was the spokesperson or agent of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP). Yesterday Supreme Court reprimanded her and also criticized the



political party indirectly, he said. BJP should be held responsible and the party cannot escape its responsibility, the CLP leader said.

The House witnessed a ruckus when Mishra targeted the BJP. His statement provoked the saffron party members who also stood up near

See Rucks on pg 7...

Shinde govt a 'two-wheeler', says NCP, asks Sena rebels to apologise to Thackeray

Mumbai, Jul 1: The NCP on Friday dubbed the Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis government in Maharashtra as a "two-wheeler" whose handle is in the hands of the pillion rider and demanded the Shiv Sena rebels apologise to party president Uddhav Thackeray.

State NCP spokesman Mahesh Tapase said the BJP had termed the erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government as a "three-wheeler auto-rickshaw" pulling in different directions when the new dispensation headed by Sena rebel Shinde itself resembled a two-wheeler.

Shinde took over as the chief minister on June 30.

The MVA consisted of the Shiv Sena, the

NCP and the Congress.

"The new government is a two-wheeler scooter whose handle is with the pillion rider," he said, apparently referring to BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis, who has been appointed the deputy chief minister.

Tapase said the Uddhav Thackeray-led party is the "real Shiv Sena" and the rebel MLAs should go to 'Matoshree' (private residence of the Thackeray family in suburban Bandra) and seek forgiveness for raising a banner of revolt, which brought down the MVA government.

He said NCP president Sharad Pawar has been served a notice by the Income Tax department, while Shiv Sena leaders

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BJP made Eknath Shinde Maha CM to wrest Mumbai from Shiv Sena, claims Raut

Mumbai, Jul 2: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Saturday alleged that the BJP has made Eknath Shinde the chief minister of Maharashtra to wrest Mumbai from the Shiv Sena of Bal Thackeray.

Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray, who stepped down as the chief minister on June 29 following a rebellion by Shinde, removed the letter from the post of 'Shiv Sena leader', accusing him of "indulging in anti-party activities". Shinde on Thursday took oath as the chief minister, while BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis was sworn in as his deputy.

Talking to reporters here, Raut said, "Uddhav Thackeray made it clear yesterday that Shinde doesn't belong to Shiv Sena. It is now clear that Shinde has been used to defeat Shiv Sena in Mumbai, where civic polls will be held later this year."

Shiv Sena has ruled the cash-rich Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for over two decades.

Raut further said that the Congress was split several times, but the Congress of Indira Gandhi still survives.

"Similarly, Shiv Sena is where Thackeray is," he said.

The Sena MP said Fadnavis needs to be appreciated for taking up the deputy chief minister's post as Shinde was a junior minister in his government earlier, and added that discipline is maintained and orders are obeyed in BJP.

Raut, who appeared before the ED on Friday in connection with a money laundering probe, said he told the central agency officials that he was ready to respond to any questions asked by them.

"The ED grilled me for 10 hours. They treated me well. I told them if any more information is required, I would submit. There is no need to fear as I haven't done anything wrong. Truth is with me," he said.

As member of Parliament, it was my duty to appear before the investigating agency if they require any information. I have no connection with the case they are investigating, he said.

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12 US lawmakers urge Biden to hold India accountable in WTO for its 'trade-distorting practices'

Washington, Jul 2: A dozen American lawmakers have written a letter to President Joe Biden, urging him to file a formal request for consultations with India at the World Trade Organization (WTO) over its "dangerous trade-distorting practices" that they claim have impacted the US farmers and ranchers.

The Congressmen stated that the current WTO rules allowed the governments to subsidise up to 10 per cent of the value of commodity production.

However, the Indian government continues to subsidise



more than half of the value of production for several commodities, including rice and wheat, they said.

India's "lack of rule-following" and the Biden administration's "lack of enforcement" have reshaped the global agricultural production and trade channels by driving down prices, depressing production of rice and wheat commodities, and putting American producers at a disproportionate disadvantage, the Congressmen alleged in the letter.

"India's practices are dangerously trade-distorting on a global scale and impact US farmers and ranchers," the letter read. The lead in the letter was taken

See Biden on pg 7...

J&K Schools, Colleges, Hospitals to be named after those who laid lives for country's integrity: LG

Ganderbal, Jul 02: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Saturday the Schools, Colleges, bridges and other buildings will be named after the "great heroes and sons of the soil", who laid their lives for the protection of country's integrity, peace and prosperity in J&K.

"We can't forget the contribution of brave hearts, who sacrificed their lives for the integrity of the country and those who kept the national flag high in J&K. Schools, Colleges, Universities, Hospitals, and even bridges will be named after these great heroes as they deserve it," LG Sinha said.

As per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), he was speaking on the occasion of 32nd death



anniversary of Sheikh Abdul Jabbar at Lar, Ganderbal. The LG said that in Ganderbal district, important buildings will be named after Sheikh Abdul Jabbar who fell to the bullets of militants 32 years ago for his commitment towards country's sovereignty

See Schools on pg 7...

Cong protests against Vijayan, asks him to face probe in gold smuggling case

Thiruvananthapuram, July 2: The Congress-led opposition in Kerala on Saturday stepped up their protest against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan demanding to face a probe over the allegations levelled by Swapna Suresh, the prime accused in gold smuggling case.

The UDF top brass organised massive protests all across the state in the 14 district headquarters on Saturday.

At several places, the police had to use water cannons to disperse the protesters.

Present on the occasion were all the top leaders of the

UDF at these 14 locations. Last month confessing before a magistrate under Section 164 (5) of the Criminal Procedure Act, Swapna Suresh said that the Chief Minister, his wife and daughter were involved in smuggling currency and gold to and from Kerala.

Later, she revealed more things about the role of Vijayan and his family and said that first Vijayan said he never knew her, then said he has seen her with the UAE Consular general who came to visit him.

Swapna revealed that

See Case on pg 7...

Tejashwi makes fresh bid to fish in NDA's troubled waters

Patna, Jul 2 (PTI): RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Saturday made a fresh attempt at fishing in the NDA's troubled waters in Bihar by questioning the manner in which security for the BJP's leaders and offices were ramped up in the state in the wake of violent protests against 'Agnipath' scheme.

The leader of the opposition came out with a series of tweets accusing BJP leaders, including Deputy Chief Minister Renu Devi, MPs and MLAs, who have been given Y category security, of having no faith in their own double engine government but staying in a coalition with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) just for the sake of power.

Yadav also alleged that deployment of central paramilitary forces at BJP offices was made without taking the state government into confidence and was tantamount to assault on the federal structure.

BJP offices were torched in more than one districts and houses and cars of



Renu Devi, besides party's state unit president Sanjay Jaiswal and a couple of other MLAs were vandalised during the protests against 'Agnipath', the new scheme of recruitment in the armed forces.

The BJP was obviously flabbergasted by the scale and intensity of the protests and contention of the JD(U) that these were spontaneous and not part of a planned conspiracy as suggested by the saffron party, had placed the ties between the two parties under strain.

There have been rumours, neither confirmed nor denied by leaders of the

JD(U) or the administration, that the Narendra Modi government at the Centre decided to give Y category security to 10 Bihar leaders and deploy personnel of central paramilitary forces at party offices, including the state headquarters here, without consulting the chief minister who also holds the home portfolio.

Notably, Kumar himself has so far not spoken about 'Agnipath', which has come in for criticism by his close aides like JD(U) national president Rajiv Ranjan Prasad Singh and parliamentary board chief Upendra Kushwaha.

However, a visit to his residence recently by Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who later also declared that the chief minister was NDA's undisputed leader in Bihar and will complete his five-year-term, was seen as an assuaging tactic by the central BJP leadership which may not like the JD(U), currently its largest ally in the country, to be estranged at this point.

A softening of stance on part of the JD(U) was apparent during the recently concluded monsoon session of the assembly and ministers belonging to the party criticised, in unison with their BJP colleagues, the opposition's ruckus over 'Agnipath'.

Nonetheless, Yadav, who has been buoyant over his party becoming the single largest group with four MLAs of the AIMIM joining the RJD, has indicated that he will not be sitting on his laurels and continue to keep the ruling NDA, whom he has repeatedly accused of achieving power through backdoor, on its toes.

'TET qualified candidates would be appointed in phased manner'

Agartala, Jul 2 (PTI): Tripura Education Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Saturday assured a delegation of Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) qualified candidates that they would be appointed in a phased manner before the Durga puja.

At present, the state has 3,621 people who have qualified the TET and are eligible for appointment as teachers for class 1 to 8.

Hundreds of TET qualified candidates on Saturday gheraoed the Education minister's residence seeking appointment of all the TET qualified teachers in one-go.

A delegation of the TET qualified candidates was called to meet the Education minister to put forward their demand.

Nath, after meeting the delegation told reporters



that the government is keen to appoint the TET qualified teacher in a phased before Durga puja because the government schools are having shortage of teaching staff.

We have already taken a process to issue offers of appointment for around 600 graduate and post-graduate teachers. Besides, the department is contemplating to recruit the TET qualified teachers in a phased manner before puja, he said.

Noting that the government is not going to recruit all the TET qualified teachers

in one go because this kind of recruitment is not done in the country, the Education minister said he would take up the issue (TET qualified candidates) with Chief Minister Manik Saha once he returns.

Currently, the chief minister is in Telangana to attend BJP's national executive meeting.

The Education department will find a solution to the present problem facing the TET qualified candidates after consultation with the chief minister and the Finance department, he said.

Although the minister said the state is having shortage of teachers after sacking of 10,323 teachers around two years back following a Supreme Court order, he did not specify the number the schools that need teachers.

Monsoon has covered entire country: IMD

New Delhi, Jul 2 (PTI): Southwest monsoon has covered the entire country as it brought seasonal rains to Gujarat and Rajasthan, the India Meteorological Department said on Saturday.

"Southwest monsoon has covered the entire country on Saturday, six days before the normal date of July 8," the weather office said.

The southwest monsoon had its onset over Kerala on May 29, three days ahead of the normal date of June 1.

However, the progress of southwest monsoon, crucial to the farm-based economy, has been sluggish with the country reporting rainfall deficit of eight per cent.

Weather scientists expect the monsoon to pick up pace in the coming months.

7 people from Assam killed in Manipur landslide

Guwahati, Jul 2 (PTI): Seven people from Assam including two security personnel were killed in a landslide at a railway construction site in Manipur's Noney district, officials said on Saturday.

At least 12 more workers engaged at the accident site are still missing, they added.

The overall death toll in the landslide at Tupul yard railway construction camp in the neighbouring state on Wednesday night has increased to 25, while 38 others are still missing.

Morigaon Deputy Commissioner PR Gharphalia said four bodies of persons from the district were recovered and identified on Friday, while another was identified the day before.

"So far, five persons from Morigaon have been confirmed to have been killed in the landslide. Several others who were also working at the same site from this district are still missing, he said.

Gharphalia said the administration was in touch with the families of the deceased, injured or missing and rendering all possible assistance.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had on Friday shared a list of 22 names from Morigaon district who were engaged at the railway construction site. Out of these, five were rescued in injured condition, five confirmed dead and 12 others are still to be traced.

The body of the army jawan, hailing from Bajali district, who was killed in the landslide was flown to the state by a special flight from Manipur and taken to his village, where the last rites were performed.

The mortal remains of another security personnel Balam Sharma were also brought to his home town Umrangso in Dima Hasao district on Saturday and guard of honour presented before last rites were performed.

Assam Cabinet Minister Pijush Hazarika, who was deputised by Sarma to oversee the search and rescue operations at the accident site, reached Tupul on Saturday.

Anganwadi workers stage protest at Jantar Mantar

New Delhi, Jul 2 (PTI): The Delhi State Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union (DSAWHU) staged a protest at Jantar Mantar here on Saturday against the termination of some workers and helpers and the new labour codes.

Activists of Bigul Mazdoor Dasta, Disha Student Organisation and the All India Forum for Right to Education (AIFRTE) also joined the protest.

DSAWHU has claimed that 884 Anganwadi workers have been issued termination notices and 11,942 workers were issued show-cause notices by the Delhi government for participating in a 39-day strike to demand increase in honorarium and

bring in respectable working hours.

"We demand that the termination of all workers and helpers must be withdrawn unconditionally. The government should stop victimising the terminated workers...before the matter is resolved before Delhi High Court, DSAWHU member Vrishali Shruti told PTI.

Shruti said that they demand all the dues of the anganwadi workers and helpers up to the month of April must be paid and that arrears of the terminated workers must be cleared without any condition.

Speaking about the new labour codes, she said, The four labour codes are yet another bounty to the capital-

ists. The anti-worker labour codes are in continuation with the unabated attack by the central government on workers' rights.

More than 200 Anganwadi workers and helpers gathered at Jantar Mantar and staged a sit-in protest.

The Anganwadi workers do not come under these labour laws, but when we fight for our regularisation we are seeking these same rights. Any attack on labour laws is an attack on our right to unionise, Shruti said.

Another protesting Anganwadi worker, Priyambada, said that their terminated workers and helpers should be reinstated as soon as possible.

Congress warns of legal action against BJP leaders for sharing 'misleading' Rahul video

New Delhi, Jul 2 (PTI): Accusing BJP leaders, including former Union minister Rajyavardhan Rathore, of sharing "deliberately fabricated and distorted reportage" on Rahul Gandhi's comments in Kerala, the Congress on Saturday threatened to take legal action against them if the saffron party fails to apologise.

Rahul Gandhi also lashed out at the BJP and the RSS, alleging that "propaganda and lies" are their foundation.

The opposition party attacked Rathore and called him "shameless" after Twitter labelled a post by him on a video of Rahul Gandhi's remarks in Kerala as "media presented out of context".

In a letter to BJP chief J P Nadda, Congress general secretary in-charge communication Jairam Ramesh said he was appalled to note that several BJP leaders have been deliberately and enthusiastically sharing "mischievous" reportage that occurred on a news channel on Friday.

"The original video was Shri. Rahul Gandhi's comment on the SFI violence



on his Wayanad office but it was deliberately and mischievously doctored to appear as if it was a comment on the heinous murder of Kanhaiya Lal in Udaipur," Ramesh said.

It was immediately brought to the attention of all concerned that the reportage was false and deliberately misleading, he said.

"What is of even greater concern, is that several of your party colleagues, including Rajyavardhan Rathore, MP, Subrat Pathak MP, Kamlesh Saini, MLA and others, have enthusiastically and without verification published and shared the deliberately fabricated and distorted reportage,"

Ramesh said in his letter.

"Despite being cautioned by my party colleagues that the clip was maliciously false and misleading, Rathore persisted with amplifying the same, first deleting and then re-uploading the same," he said.

This leaves no doubt that Rathore's actions were deliberate and part of your party's strategy to defame the former Congress president, the party and to further polarise an already sensitive, communal situation, Ramesh alleged.

"The fact that some of your colleagues may have deleted the false reportage later after uploading and

sharing is no excuse whatsoever because the damage has already been inflicted," he said.

"We have already initiated appropriate legal action against the original broadcaster. We expect that you and your party colleagues will cease and desist from spreading such falsehoods," Ramesh said in his communication to Nadda.

"Furthermore, I expect that you will immediately issue an appropriate apology on behalf of your colleagues who have acted with such reckless disregard towards the truth.

"If this apology is not issued today, we will take appropriate legal action against your party and its leaders who insist and persist in using social media in such a blatantly irresponsible and criminal manner," Ramesh warned.

There was no immediate reaction from the BJP. In an apparent reference to the issue, Rahul Gandhi in a tweet in Hindi said, "Whole India knows the history of BJP-RSS, which warms its hands by pushing the country in the fire of hatred.

Kejriwal's two-day Gujarat visit from today

Ahmedabad, Jul 2 (PTI): Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal will be on a two-day visit to Gujarat from Sunday, during which he will hold a town hall meeting on "free electricity" and also administer oath to the newly-appointed party office-bearers, a party leader said here.

During his two-day stay in Ahmedabad, the Delhi Chief Minister will also hold meetings with senior leaders of the AAP and interact with party members, he said on Saturday.

The Kejriwal-led party is gearing up to contest elections to the 182-member Assembly in BJP-ruled Gujarat to be held by the end of this year.

"Kejriwal will reach Ahmedabad airport at 3 pm on Sunday. He will administer oath to 7,500 newly-appointed office bearers at a function at 4 pm. They will take pledge to work wholeheartedly for the party and encourage workers for the upcoming Assembly election," AAP's national joint secretary Isudan Gadhvi told reporters here.

These office-bearers were appointed after the AAP dissolved its state organisation structure early last month, he said.



polls are scheduled in December, Gadhvi added.

The AAP functionary accused the ruling party of misleading people by saying that the citizens of Gujarat do not need free electricity as he referred to a statement made by BJP's state unit president C R Paati.

"I would like to appeal to those leaders who do not need free electricity to put up a board outside their house declaring the same, so that more poor people can get free electricity," he said.

AAP leaders in Gujarat believe that the party's "free electricity" campaign will play a key role in the Assembly polls as they said that lakhs of people have supported it across the state.

Delhi govt to plant 35 lakh plants in 2022 to fight pollution: Environment minister

New Delhi, Jul 2 (PTI): To fight pollution more effectively, the Delhi government is aiming to plant 35 lakh plants in the national capital in 2022, Environment Minister Gopal Rai said on Saturday.

We are taking multiple measures to further improve Delhi's green cover. We aim to plant 35 lakh plants in Delhi via different agencies this year, Rai said.

The government will also launch a 15-day plantation drive 'Van Mahotsav' from July 11 in the city, he said.

"Delhi government has been working relentlessly to improve the environment



of the city. The steps that we have taken to combat pollution have set an example for the entire country," Rai said.

He also said contact numbers of 14 nurseries in various parts of Delhi will be made available to people.

"Delhi has increased its green belt up to 32 per cent and we aim to increase it further," Rai said at an event, where he distributed free medicinal saplings as a part of Delhi government's initiative to plant more trees.

TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee's alleged associate declared proclaimed offender in money laundering case

New Delhi, Jul 2 (PTI): A Delhi court has declared Vinay Mishra, an alleged associate of TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee, as a proclaimed offender for evading court proceedings in connection with a money laundering probe into a coal mining "scam" in West Bengal, officials said on Saturday.

The declaration has been made under section 82 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) which requires the appearance of an accused before the court, they said.

Mishra, 36, is an accused in the case where the role of Banerjee, his wife Rujira and others is being probed by the

Enforcement Directorate (ED). The federal agency has questioned and recorded the statement of both Banerjee and Rujira in the case. The ED has said Mishra never joined the probe.

The money laundering case stems from a November, 2020 FIR registered by the CBI that alleged a multi-crore-rupee coal pilferage scam related to Eastern Coalfields Limited mines in West Bengal's Kunistoria and Kajora areas in and around Asansol. A charge sheet was filed by the ED in the case in May last year.

Vinay Mishra's brother Vikas Mishra was arrested

by the ED in the case apart from two other accused.

Vinay Mishra is also being probed by the CBI in this alleged illegal coal mining and pilferage scam case. Both the central agencies are also probing his role in a cross-border cattle smuggling case running along the India-Bangladesh international border in West Bengal.

The ED has claimed that the Mishra brothers received "proceeds of crime worth Rs 730 crore on behalf of some influential persons and for themselves" in the coal case involving an estimated amount of Rs 1,352 crore.

The ED had earlier told a court that it recorded the statement of a witness in this case who informed the agency that "it is a known fact that Vinay Mishra collected money from illegal coal mining of Anup Majhi (local coal trader and prime accused in the case) and his associates for his closely associated political boss in the present ruling party; and that Vinay Mishra is a youth leader of TMC and he is very close to Abhishek Banerjee and that he (Vinay Mishra) is the eyes and ears of Abhishek Banerjee."

It had also attached seven land parcels and two flats located in Amethi in Uttar Pradesh and Kolkata

in West Bengal owned by Vinay Mishra and Vikas Mishra, having book value of Rs 48.57 lakh last year.

The CBI has also declared two separate rewards of Rs 1 lakh each for anyone giving actionable information leading to Vinay Mishra's arrest in either of the two cases.

In a recent public advertisement, the CBI said Vinay Mishra "acted as a middle-man link to collect illegal gratification on behalf of public servants and used to give patronage and protection to the smugglers using his connections in lieu of money routed through non-existent shell companies."

LG felicitates Dr Karan Singh

A towering man of ideas and ideals, Dr. Singh with his multi-faceted personality, has made a remarkable contribution to Indian polity and illumined literary world with his intellectual brilliance: Lt Governor

SRINAGAR, JULY 02: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today attended a programme at Amar Singh Club to felicitate Dr Karan Singh.

Lauding the immense contributions of Dr Karan Singh in Public life, the Lt Governor called him a towering man of ideas and ideals.

Dr Singh with his multi-faceted personality has made a remarkable contribution to Indian polity and illumined literary world with his intellectual brilliance, he said.

The Lt Governor called on the young generation especially those who are engaged in social service, literary field, to draw inspiration from the life of Dr Karan Singh

"It was dreams of our founding fathers that development should be balanced, deeply rooted in the spiritual and cultural traditions of India. The remarkable, robust and resilient growth of J&K is finest example of our collective determination and triumph against various hurdles", the Lt Governor said.

The Lt Governor said that the development in various sectors demonstrates firm commitment of the government to achieve speedy and all-round development. It is also the responsibility of Civil Society, Young and thinking minds to ensure peace and help the administration in providing equal opportunities for all.

On the occasion, the Lt Governor said that under that guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, a fear-free, corruption-free and transparent system has been established in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Lt Governor said we are constantly striving to revive the vibrant literary-cultural environment, besides efforts are being made to ensure the development of robust infrastructure and strengthening of the grass root democracy.



As part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the government is working on revival and promotion of Kashmiri, Dogri, Punjabi literature and culture. Since last year, two LitFests have been organised in J&K with an aim is to restore the vibrant literary culture of the UT, he added.

Speaking on the developmental issues, the Lt Governor said, in the last two years, rapid efforts are being made for bridging the infrastructure gap between villages and cities. Opportunities have been provided to harness the potential of women and youth in the UT.

The work on developing Jhelum River Front, the cultural heritage of Srinagar and the historical Tawi River Front of Jammu, has started. The work on conservation of heritage sites is going on in planned manner and restoration of Mughal Garden has also been taken up.

The Lt Governor also mentioned about the efforts being made to clean the Dal lake and

other lakes, water bodies across the UT.

Dr Karan Singh, while speaking on the occasion, remembered his time and work as Sadr-i-Riyasat. He also spoke briefly about the huge contribution and work done by his forefathers for the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir princely State.

He made special mentions of efforts of the Lt Governor-led UT administration for the transformation of iconic Dal Lake.

On the occasion, several members of the Club and people from different walks of life were also felicitated.

Sh Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the Lt Governor; Sh Junaid Azim Mattu, Mayor SMC; Dr. Hina Bhat, Vice-Chairperson KVIB; Sh Nasir Hamid Khan, Honorary Secretary, Amar Singh Club; Sh Pandurang K Pole, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; besides various distinguished personalities, Senior officers of UT administration were present on the occasion.

Achieve development targets on time with tangible results on ground: DDC Rajouri

RAJOURI, JULY 02: District Development Commissioner Rajouri, Vikas Kundal today asked the officers to make dedicated efforts to achieve the developmental deliverables on time with tangible results on the ground.

He was chairing a meeting to review the progress under the developmental deliverables of the departments of Education and Youth services and sports.

Officers who attended the meeting included CEO Education, Shailash Kumari; DYSSO, Sunil Samyal; DSEO, Sandeep Sharma; AD Planning, Mohd Rafi and other concerned officers.

Taking stock of the students trained under Nipun Bharat, the meeting was apprised that against the target of training 27300 students, as many as 2163 students have been trained. DDC asked the concerned officer to complete the training exercise at the earliest.

Regarding the 'My school my pride' initiative, it was informed that the program has been launched in all the targeted fifty schools of the district. While reviewing the progress under Talash, the DDC asked the concerned department to intensify the drive to enroll dropouts and all out of school children in the district.

Taking stock of the vocational courses being carried out in the schools, it was informed that 84 courses are being run in 54 schools of the district.

Regarding the Clean School Green Schools initiative, the meeting was informed that eco clubs have been constituted in the district and students are being made aware of environmental problems and motivated towards cleanliness and sanitation.

Discussing the School sanitation program,

Taking stock of the students trained under Nipun Bharat, the meeting was apprised that against the target of training 27300 students, as many as 2163 students have been trained. DDC asked the concerned officer to complete the training exercise at the earliest.

The DDC said that the ZEOs shall visit all the schools in their respective jurisdictions and will ensure that all schools of the district have functional drinking water facilities.

Seeking the status of establishment of kindergartens in schools, the meeting was apprised that the process for formulation of DPRs for 100 kindergartens was in progress.

The DDC also asked to submit the calendar of activities on learning management system and digital classes to be carried out as a part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in the district.

Similarly, the DDC also took a detailed stock of the developmental deliverables of the Youth Services and Sports department.

The DDC stressed on inter-departmental convergence and co-ordination to achieve the desired results in various priority areas set by the government within a set timeline.

The officers of the line departments were also asked to monitor the progress regularly in order to achieve quantifiable results.

Poonch: Horticulture department hosts training for ITI students

POONCH, JULY 02: As per the instruction of Director Horticulture Jammu, Ram Sevak, Department of Horticulture Poonch organised a one day training cum awareness programme for the students of ITI College here in the office MCC. The training was held under the guidance of Sanjeev Kumar, Chief horticulture Officer and Rakesh Kumar, Horticulture Development officer.

Over 50 students participated in which different post harvest management techniques were discussed. The Chief Horticulture Officer acquainted the students with processing, packaging, Grading, branding of various processed products like plum jam, pickles, Apricot squash and Jam, Ginger Tonic, sauces etc as these fruits are locally available.

The HDO delivered a lecture on the importance and scope of Post Harvest Management.

The Horticulture Development officers Sathra and Mendhar were also present on this occasion. Anjana Sharma and Nargis Bano gave a practical demonstration on the processing and preparation of Mango pickle and Plum Jam.

The youth were encouraged to set up food processing to earn livelihood and reduce the Post Harvest losses in the District which are near about 30%-40%.

"The Fruit is grown in abundant/Surplus with a production of 26024.80 Mt tones from an area of 18601 Ha in district Poonch. In the rural areas of Poonch many families are totally dependent upon fruit cultivation like Apples, Plum, Apricot, Lime and processing of these fruits can increase their income" the participants were informed.

The Students were surprised to know the different benefits of Post Harvest products and how to generate income from them. They were also informed about different schemes of the Horticulture department like Plantation, Ultra High Density Plantation of Apples, Pack House, Bore well, Machinery and equipment and other schemes in which subsidy is provided in the form of incentives by the department of Horticulture. The Students requested the Chief Horticulture Officer to organise these types of training programmes on a regular basis so that they can take benefits of different schemes of the department.

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Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board launches Integrated Online Facility for performing Virtual Darshan, Pooja & Hawan for the Devotees

SRINAGAR, JULY 2: In order to provide an opportunity for millions of devotees of Baba Amarnath Ji across the globe who could not come for the Yatra this year, the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board is extending the online facility for performing virtual Pooja, Virtual Hawan, Prasad Booking etc., so that the devotees have a personalized experience of the godliness and bliss of the holy cave shrine.

It was informed that the devotees can book their Pooja, Hawan, and Prasad online, and priests at the holy cave will offer it in the devotee's name, besides the Prasad will be subsequently delivered at doorsteps of the devotees.

On the occasion, CEO, SASB, Sh Nitishwar Kumar noted that the on-

line services can be booked through Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board's website www.shriamarnathjishrine.com by clicking Book Online Pooja/Hawan/Prasad link & through the Board's Mobile application (which may be downloaded through the link <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ncog.shriamarnath>), by paying Rs 1100/- for virtual Pooja, Rs. 1100/- for Prasad booking (with 5gm silver coin of Shri Amarnathji), Rs. 2100/- for Prasad booking (with 10 gm silver coin of Shri Amarnathji) Rs. 5100/- for the special hawan or combination of any of the above.

The Virtual Pooja or Hawan would be carried out by the Pujaris at the Cave shrine by pronouncing the Name and Gotra of the devotee

along with chanting of Mantras and Shlokas.

"Maximizing the use of available technology and digitization, the devotees would be let in a virtual online room through Jio meet application wherein they can have a special virtual Pooja and Darshan of Lord Shiva," he added.

"We have made an arrangement with the Postal Department for dispatching Prasad within 48 hours," CEO, SASB observed. Once the booking is done, the Shrine Board would share the link and date/time on the registered mobile number/ e-mail id of the devotee, he said.

The portal has been developed by Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board with the help of National Informatics Centre, J&K.

Reasi: Regional Transport Authority approves e- Rickshaw permits

REASI, JULY 02: The Regional Transport Authority Rajouri today discussed introduction of e-transport vehicles to reduce the carbon footprints and overcome the problem of non availability of vehicles on the short, peripheral routes, especially last mile connectivity here at a meeting.

The meeting was chaired by Deputy Commissioner, Babil Rakhwal and attended by SSP, Amit Gupta; Assistant Regional Transport Officer, Rajesh Gupta and other stakeholders.

At the outset, the ARTO, apprised the meeting about the operation of the services, identified routes on which e-Rickshaws service shall ply, besides providing transport facilities for heritage places in the district.

The meeting was apprised that a total 47 applications were received for different categories of vehicles viz stage/contract carriage/auto Rickshaw out of which 25 cases have been approved and 22 were disapproved for various reasons as the approval was given on merit basis.

DC Kathua chairs DSC meeting to discuss modalities for finalising proposal under SANKALP scheme

KATHUA, JULY 02: Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rahul Pandey today convened a meeting of District Skill Committee (DSC) here in the Conference hall of DC office to discuss the formulation of revised District Skill Development Action Plan under Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP), a programme of the Ministry of Skill Development, Government of India.

At the outset, the meeting was apprised about the target sectors, target groups, stakeholders, sector-wise training cost to be borne by MSDE under the SANKALP through power point presentation. The meeting held threadbare discussion with regard to finalization of revised plan for the 09 identified sectors wherein MSDE will bear two-third cost and the remaining one-third shall be borne by the External agency.

The DC called for identification of individuals as per the requirement of the

industry and who are ready to contribute the remaining cost for the training or skill upgradation.

The DC emphasized on working out a mechanism for revival of Traditional Crafts for Livelihood Generation including Basohli Paintings, Bamboo Artifacts and Hand Embroidery which besides providing the financial support would help in preserving the local culture. He was informed that the expected number of beneficiaries is 1890 from the district.

The DC stressed upon all stakeholders to work in tandem and prepare revised Skill Development plan according to the needs of the industries in the district. He asked them to map the skills as per the need and profile so that individuals from all categories could be covered and benefited.

The DC stressed upon the need for working out a mechanism to pool in the resources from cooperative societies as it will serve the dual purpose of providing

financial support on one hand and will aid in further expansion on the other. The DC also directed concerned officers to share the training courses/course structure alongwith the minimum qualification/eligibility criteria required.

The DC further asked the concerned officers to prepare the plan by involving the industry representatives so as to ensure that right mapping takes place.

The DC directed the concerned officers to conduct an exercise for identification of the individuals as per the job profile within a period of 15 days and submit a report. He also urged all concerned officers to work with coordination so that better and desirable results could be yielded at ground level.

The meeting also discussed the constitution of Sub Committees of DSC wherein DC exhorted upon the officers to focus on the planning part and doing gap analysis as these are critical areas for success of the plan.

Workshop on Establishment of New Fruit Plant Nurseries held at Maralian

JAMMU, JULY 02: The Department of Horticulture Jammu organized "One day workshop on Establishment of New Fruit Plant Nurseries" today at Government Fruit Plant Nursery Maralian district Jammu.

Over 100 nursery owners and entrepreneurs from different districts of Jammu division participated.

Director Floriculture Jammu S. Jatinder Singh was the Chief Guest and Director Horticulture Jammu Ram Savak presided over the function. Joint Director Horticulture Jammu, C L Sharma; S Tejinder Singh, Member J&K Kissan Advisory Board, besides other officers were also present on the occasion.

The Jammu and Kashmir Fruit Nurseries (Licensing) Act 1987 for establishment, licensing and regulation of fruit nurseries in the state of Jammu & Kashmir came into effect on 4th January 1988. The provisions of the Act were elaborated in detail by a team of experts of the Depart-

ment of Horticulture Jammu. It was informed that for establishment of a new nursery, a minimum of 4 kanal of and a maximum of 80 kanal land is required.

Addressing the nursery owners and entrepreneurs, the Director Horticulture explained the different subsidy components available for the establishment of new nurseries and up gradation of existing ones. The Department is providing an incentive of Rs 7.5 lakh for establishment of a new nursery in an area of 20 kanals. He said that during the current financial year, the department intends to plant more than 25 lakh fruit plants in the Jammu province through farmer participation under different schemes and to meet the target, the department requires excellent nursery support, both from private as well as government.

In govt. sector, one mega fruit plant nursery is being established at Chakroi, where three lakh fruit plants are expected to be produced.

GDC Ukhral Organises Extension Lecture on Female Infanticide: Causes and Preventions

RAMBAN, JULY 02: NSS Unit of Government Degree College, Ukhral today organized an extension lecture on the theme "Female Infanticide: Causes and Preventions" under "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" campaign of Union Government to eradicate the heinous crime of female infanticide and the importance of Girl Education in the society.

The program started with the National Anthem and followed by a welcome address by Prof. Zakir Hussain Naik, NSS Program Officer. He highlighted that the purpose of organising this extension lecture was to promote gender equality, protection of girl child, encourage girl education and improve the child sex ratio.

The Principal of the College, Prof. (Dr.) Ranvijay Singh was the

Chief Guest on the occasion. In his address, he talked about the growing injustice and exploitation with the girl child. He stressed on the need of Girl Education so that they can raise their voice against exploitation that they face in day to day life. Dr. Mussarat Jabeen, Convener Women Development Cell, of GDC Surankote was resource person on the occasion.

In her lecture, she said that the female infanticide is a heinous crime caused by various social evils like poverty, illiteracy, child marriage, abortion, ignorance etc. "The need of the hour is to bring gender equality and justice by changing the narrow mindset of the people" she maintained. She further said that the government has come up with many initiatives and schemes to stamp out discrimination against

the female:

"Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" is one of the initiatives of Govt. of India that ensures the security, safety and education of Girl Child" she informed. Dr. Mussarat also highlighted various preventive measures to enhance Women Empowerment and Girl Education and to end gender differences in the society.

A large number of students and faculty members participated in the program including Prof. Shafiq Ahmad Katoch, Co-ordinator IQAC of the College.

The Program was moderated by Prof. Suresh Chander HoD Dogri, while the formal vote of thanks was presented by Prof. Iftikhar Hussain Lone HoD Engli. The technical support was given by Farooq Ahmed Katoch.

TAD initiates series of reforms for tribal education development

SRINAGAR, JULY 02: In a first, the Tribal Affairs Department (TAD) of J&K has approved a series of reforms for the tribal hostels across Jammu and Kashmir with an aim to provide state-of-the-art educational facilities to tribal students and focus on outcome based quality education and skilling.

These major reforms were approved in a meeting of UT level committee headed by Secretary, TAD, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary. The committee also approved number of measures and schemes being launched with immediate effect from the current academic year for providing such state o art facilities to tribal students.

With an endeavour to provide educational facilities to the students throughout the year, the department has notified

that hostels will remain functional round the year instead of 10 months as in vogue. The committee also decided that special courses will be run during the vacation period for skilling of students including tribal students volunteering to enrol for such courses.

The committee also accorded approval for 75% enhancement in the daily diet rate increasing it to Rs 175 per student per day with immediate effect, up from existing Rs 100 per student per day. The committee has also recommended enhancement to Rs 300 per student per day to be taken up in Revised Estimates of budget.

Moreover, in another significant decision, the committee approved the "Technology Enabled Education Scheme" for hostel students under which students enrolled in Class XI, XII and

PG courses will be provided Tabs-PCs with pre-loaded study material including books, animations, mind-maps, resource material and references. The students will be allowed to own the Tab even after being relieved from hostels on completion of course. More than 1000 students studying in notified classes will be provided these tabs before 31st July 2022. The Tribal Research Institute (TRI) has been entrusted with course and content design for tabs and providing them to students.

The committee has also boosted the tuition system in hostels with enhancement in the honorarium for tutors increasing it from the existing rates of Rs 1000, Rs 1200 and Rs 1500 for tutors of Class 6th to 8th, 9th to 10th and 11th & 12th, respectively to Rs 3000, Rs 4500 and Rs 6000 per month, which is a 3-4 times hike.

FIVE KILLED, 49 INJURED AS THREE QUAKES ROCK IRAN

Tehran, July 2 (IANS) At least five people were killed and 49 others injured as three earthquakes measuring above 6 on the Richter scale jolted Iran's southern Hormuzgan province on Saturday, an emergency official said.

According to the official, the first 6.1-magnitude quake occurred at a depth of 10 km at 2.02 a.m., followed by two strong tremors of up to 6.3 magnitude a few hours later, reports Xinhua news agency.

Many aftershocks with a magnitude of above four have also been registered.

The earthquakes have damaged some houses in rural areas, destroyed a number of bridges and overpasses, and caused landslides.

Mojtaba Khaleidi, a spokesman for



the country's emergency services, said ambulances and helicopters have been sent to the quake-hit areas.

He noted that in some areas, power outages have occurred, which are being fixed.

The CEO of Hormuzgan Province's Red Crescent Society, Mokhtar Salahshour, said the rescue work has ended and that people have been given refuge in emergency shelters, adding tents and aid items have been distributed.

Turkey increases minimum wage amid soaring inflation, currency volatility

Ankara, July 2: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that the country's minimum wage would be hiked up in the face of soaring inflation and volatile currency rates.

"The minimum wage will be 5,500 Turkish liras (\$328) with an interim increase of 30 percent, effective immediately starting on July 1," Erdogan said.

At the beginning of this year, the government increased the monthly minimum wage by 50 per cent to alleviate the financial burden on workers, reports Xinhua news agency.

Turkey has long been struggling against ever-increasing inflation.

In June, the total losses of the Turkish lira against the US dollar amounted to almost 100 per cent in one year.



Erdogan has long been focusing on a low-interest policy to increase exports

and production for a stabilised lira, asking for patience from his voters.



US announces \$820mn in additional security assistance for Ukraine

Washington, July 2: The US has announced \$820 million in additional security assistance for Ukraine which includes advanced anti-aircraft and aerial defense systems as well as additional ammunition for advanced rocket systems, the Department of Defence (DOD) said in a statement.

Totaling \$820 million, the new weapons came in two parts, according to the state-

ment issued on Friday.

Aid worth \$50 million, of which additional ammunition for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems is a part, will be drawn from the presidential drawdown authority that authorizes President Joe Biden to directly tap into existing American weapons inventories.

The remaining \$770 million falls under the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative,

through which the US government contracts with arms manufacturers to make weapons for Ukraine.

In this part, the US will provide Ukraine with two National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems, 150,000 rounds of 155 mm artillery ammunition for the howitzers and four counter-artillery radars, the DOD said.

According to the Department, the US

has now committed approximately \$7.6 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the Biden administration in January 2021, including approximately \$6.9 billion since Russia launched its ongoing invasion of Kiev on February 24.

The US has committed more than \$8.8 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since 2014.

Death toll in Colombia prison riot fire rises to 53

Bogota, July 2 (IANS) The number of inmates who died after a fire broke out earlier this week during a prison riot in the Colombian town of Tulua has increased to 53, local health authorities said.

A top health official said that a young inmate succumbed to his injuries on Friday in a medical centre in the neighbouring city of Cali, where other prisoners were also in intensive care units, reports Xinhua news agency.

Minister of Justice Wilson Ruiz said on Tuesday that most of the fatalities were due to smoke inhalation after a fight between two inmates broke out and one of them lit a mattress on fire.

The resulting blaze in the prison, which houses some 180 inmates, was brought under control by the Tulua fire department and the injured inmates were transferred to local health centres.

Inflation in Italy surges to highest level in 36 years

Rome, July 2: Prices in Italy were 8 per cent higher in June than a year earlier, marking the highest one-month increase in prices in 36 years, the country's National Statistics Institute (ISTAT) said.

The year-on-year increase was far higher than in May, when prices rose 6.8 percent, a level that was itself the highest one-month increase since Italy adopted the euro currency in 1999, Xinhua news agency quoted the ISTAT as saying in a report.

But the last time prices rose as much in one month as in June was in January 1986, when Italy still used the now-defunct lira as its national currency.

On a month-to-month basis, prices in June were 1.2 per cent higher than in May, the institute said.

ISTAT said prices were victims of "widespread inflationary tensions" led by energy prices, which were 48.7 per cent higher in June than a year earlier. That is higher than the 42.6 per cent increase between May 2021 and May 2022.

The main factor pushing energy prices higher is the Russia-Ukraine war.

Higher energy prices have also pushed prices higher for processed food (8.2 per cent higher in June), non-processed food (9.6 per cent higher), recreational and personal care services (up 5.0 per cent), transport (7.2 per cent higher), and general services (up 3.4 per cent), since all those areas rely heavily on energy use.

Other factors, such as the unusually hot and dry summer in Italy, are seen as reducing domestic agricultural output by as much as a third this year.

But those developments are too recent to be fully reflected in the June inflation figure.

Nepal's economy not like Sri Lanka's, but can go that way: Former central bank Guv



Kathmandu, July 2: Dipendra Bahadur Chhetri, the former Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), has said that the

situation of Nepal's economy is not like that of Sri Lanka.

However, if the political rights are given to the wrong persons like in Sri Lanka, there is a possibility of Nepal becoming the next Sri Lanka, he said, Republica reported.

Speaking at an interaction programme on the current economic situation in Nepal held in Kathmandu, Chhetri said the present situation in Sri Lanka is due to arbitrary tax rates imposed by the same family as the president, prime minister and finance minister.

He also mentioned that Nepal should not be associated with Sri Lanka as it has just held local elections and is now preparing to hold federal and provincial elections, Republica reported.

Similarly, the former central bank Governor said that Nepal's foreign exchange reserves, SDRs and gold in foreign currency accounted for seven months of imports to meet the growing imports and consumption of petroleum products.

Likewise, he doubted that the forthcoming monetary policy to be introduced by the NRB would be as extensive as in the past. He said that the loans given by the banks to expand the capacity of the industry were used for import.

Typhoon Chaba makes landfall in China



Beijing, July 2: Chaba, the third typhoon of the year, made landfall in the coastal area of Maoming city in China's Guangdong province on Saturday.

According to the provincial meteorological department, Chaba will move northwest at a speed of 15 to 20 km per hour, pass through Maoming and enter Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on Saturday night, reports Xinhua news agency.

Intense downpours and rainstorms are expected to lash the western part of the Pearl River Delta over the weekend, while the seas off Guangdong will experience strong gusts of up to about 160 km per hour, according to the meteorological forecast.

The provincial government has upgraded its emergency response level for typhoons to Level II, the second-highest, effective 8.30 a.m. Saturday.



Russia-Ukraine Aggression— India's Firm Stand A Rejection to Dictatorship

The months-long aggression between Russia and Ukraine has failed to end up. So far, the hostility consumed many lives, damaged the properties and forced many people to flee the country. All this has failed to wake up the consciousness of the twin countries and thus the people living in the other countries are bearing the brunt as well.

In the meantime, India has once again reiterated its long-standing position over the precarious situation by suggesting the issue to be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. This reiteration has given a message loud and clear that the country is not going to accept anyone's dictatorship and will follow only what suits it.

The conversation between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin has not only cleared the stand of India vis-à-vis Russian aggression on Ukraine, but it was a clear rejection that the country is not going to run the affairs on the directions of anyone, it will rule according to its own humor and temper while the dictatorship or directives, even those of the super powers will have no takers in India.

The firm stand was the need of the hour as the time has come when the country needs to go at par with the super powers. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country has significantly increased its rapport at the global level, which has been putting an end to the previous representations when the country was being labeled for running the affairs on the directions of others.

Besides, the firm stand has made it visibly clear that the country doesn't want the use of nuclear and atoms to decide the future of the countries, but wants it to be dealt through a peaceful dialogue process to end the hostilities, which can mitigate the sufferings; the ongoing aggression has led to.

The country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is leading towards the next level to compete and stay at par with the superpowers, but at the same time, it is focused towards ensuring peace and prosperity at the global level.

A farmer's encounter with climate change

Ajay Vir Jakhhar

My grandfather, Balram Jakhhar, was amongst the pioneers of citrus plantation in North India in the mid-1950s. In 1972, when he first became a member of Punjab's legislative assembly, he had promised to transform the bleak near-arid, barren sand dunes into California. As his days came to a close, he loved to talk of the promise and similarities of the much-diversified farming in the area, when asked about it. We farm in village Maujgarh, in the Khuian Sarwar block of Fazilka district in Punjab.

In the block, of the 1,50,000 acres of land, about 37,000 acres are under perennial kinnow citrus plantations, while another 5,000 acres are cultivated for other fruits and vegetables. Approximately 1,00,000 acres of wheat is grown in the rabi season and 75,000 acres of cotton and 28,000 acres of paddy in the kharif season, probably making it amongst the most diversified agricultural landscapes in Punjab. Yet, this region is crying for another transformative vision, confronted as it is by the spectre of climate change. The lessons from this one speck of India, where my son and I farm, surrounded on three sides by Rajasthan, Haryana and Pakistan, are massive and frightening to those who care to know.

Come extreme winter, the flaky ice coating on the top of plants provides a lovely sight for city folks. It spells doom for farmers because that pretty coat of ice is frost and it literally burns the plants where it forms. By the time the January frost set in this year, 40 per cent of last year's kinnow crop had been harvested and sold. The remaining fruit suffered from a frost attack, more vicious than ever before. About 20 per cent of the fruit was destroyed in a week and of whatever did survive, the damaged fruit needed to be harvested immediately, for it too started to deteriorate fast.

In mid-January, farmers would normally have had another two months of the harvesting window till mid-March. But the frost shortened the harvesting season to one month. Further, the quality of the fruit had deteriorated to the point where its shelf-life was reduced to a few days. This double whammy meant that the kinnow could not be transported to the traditional far-off markets of south India. Thus, geographically, the market for the kinnow was reduced to Uttar Pradesh. As a result, there was a glut of the fruit in the market. Consequently, the farmgate price — which had initially been hovering at a historical high of over Rs 23 per kg — fell by over half, amounting to a loss of over Rs 300 crore to the farmers of just one administrative block in India.

Having come out of a particularly harsh winter with the long spell of January frost devastating hopes and the citrus crop, the first week of March brought hope for a new beginning in the spring. The tens of thousands of citrus orchards provided a magical sight — trees with millions of sweet-smelling white flowers and ripening wheat fields turning a golden hue, ready for harvest in April. But, within a fortnight, in the third week of March,



an unexpected blistering heat wave set off uncertainty, gnawing at every farmer's mind. It was not unusually hot but it was particularly hot for March. The farmer's world was coming undone — wheat kernels would not fully ripen and the citrus flowers would not mature into fruit. Sure enough, the wheat yield plummeted over 20 per cent and the loss to farmers growing wheat was about Rs 100 crore. All the crops got impacted, and half the citrus crop was lost. Even by the most conservative kinnow price of 13 /Kg, approximately Rs 300 crore worth of kinnow crop was again destroyed. The resilience of the farmers has reached a breaking point.

My father, who has been living on the farm for 80 years, does not recollect suffering two extreme events within 60 days. Agriculturally, the 49 villages of the block are amongst the least prone to risk as they receive an assured supply of canal water for irrigation. In living memory, the area has never been wrecked by natural calamities like floods, cyclones, drought or earthquakes. But, with a slight variation in temperatures, it suffered an estimated loss of about Rs 700 crore. Everyone lost out in the process — including the farm workers, small shopkeepers, tailors, etc — not just the farmers. The economy was devastated. Children's weddings are being postponed at one end and medical operations for the elderly at the other. Let that sink in for a moment.

Climate change is not a distant nightmare that will

unfold when the earth crosses a statistical threshold of no return of 1.5°Celsius. We are living in an era of a fast-changing climate, but just do not grasp it fully enough to be scared. Generations of knowledge were not enough to prepare us for the climate crisis in the village. Indeed, much of what we have been taught over the last few generations will need to be unlearned. This year has been a rude awakening. New knowledge to confront the billions of excruciating interdependencies of climate change challenges needs to be collated and tested in the fields.

Martin Wolf recently wrote: "... given the immense political and organisational challenges, the chances that humanity will prevent damaging climate change are slim." For all practical purposes, I am convinced that irrespective of what we do in India — which is precious little anyway — the process of climate change is irreversible. The terrifying aspect is that in India, not only are we unconcerned about preparing for the inevitable (2-degree Celsius rise in 50 years), we have absolutely no clue about how events will unfold and impact us. There seems to be no substantive policy for preparation as the country enters a dark zone of political bankruptcy, bureaucratic stagnation, public ignorance and corporate trickery of garnering climate change incentives. We don't choose the times we live in, the only choice we have is how we respond to the circumstances. And we are failing miserably at it. Our worst nightmare is yet to appear in our dreams.

How RBI unconventionally innovated policy to fight pandemic

Soumya Kanti Ghosh

RBI's inflation management. Writing an epitaph for such articles reminds me of a recent interaction with RBI Deputy Governor Michael Patra at an event in Delhi. When the DG was specifically asked about how much interest rates will rise, he recalled the tale of Albert Einstein landing in heaven. When Einstein was introduced to people across the strata with very high and very low IQs, he said that he will discuss interest rates only with persons with the lowest IQs!

Recently Arvind Subramanian and Josh Felman have asserted that the RBI has been missing the inflation target since 2019 by not raising rates ("The RBI's misdiagnosis", IE, June 15). Interestingly, Subramanian, while he was the Chief Economic Adviser, had taken the opposite position by arguing for rate cuts from the RBI. In the Economic Survey, he strongly argued for more fiscal dominance by stating that the RBI was holding significant excess reserves that could be given to the government.

Inflation has been largely the result of supply side shocks from vegetable prices, caused by crop damages due to unseasonal rains (tomato, onion and potato) in late 2019 and widespread supply-side disruptions after the outbreak of the pandemic. A narrow-minded focus on inflation caused by supply shocks would have constrained the MPC from supporting growth amidst the unprecedented loss of life and livelihood. Therefore, it was necessary to provide a lifeline to the economy at that juncture by focusing on the recovery. The MPC shifted to policy tightening to control inflation when growth impulses became more definitive and entrenched across sectors. Moreover, the wide tolerance band of 200bps +/- in the inflation targeting framework was specifically designed to accommodate such supply shocks, which provided the flexibility in the flexible targeting (FIT) framework (Patra and Bhattacharyya, 2022). In contrast to a pure inflation targeting framework (inflation nutters), the amended mandate of the RBI under FIT reads as "price stability, taking into account the objective of growth". Therefore, the MPC was justified in looking through the higher inflation print during the pandemic while trying to resurrect growth. And it worked.

Rajeshwari Sengupta has raised some contradictions between the Governor's statement (GS) and the MPC resolution.

First, the MPC highlighted inflation concerns and voted to raise the policy repo



rate. However, as per Sengupta, the governor's statement of the same day noted that the RBI will ensure an orderly completion of the government's borrowing programme. This, according to Sengupta, created confusion as lowering inflation and lowering government bond yields are contradictory objectives. This justification is redundant as an orderly completion of the borrowing programme does not imply lowering yields. It basically ensures that the borrowing programme is completed seamlessly at low costs (ensured through auctions). The bids in auctions are based on the prevailing macroeconomic and financial conditions. The RBI only ensures cost minimisation among the bids, given that it's the debt manager of the government by statute. Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, this is not inconsistent because controlling inflation and lowering inflation expectations bodes well for the term premia of bond yields — which moderate once expectations are anchored. Therefore, if inflation is reined in, the government stands to gain in terms of lower interest costs.

Second, as per Sengupta, the MPC kept repo rates unchanged while the RBI changed the reverse repo rate during the pandemic, meaning that the fixed width of the corridor was lost and the MPC lost its role in setting interest rates and so, its credibility.

This argument does not stand scrutiny. During the pandemic, the policy repo rate was cumulatively reduced by an unprecedented 115 bps and the interest rate on the overnight fixed-rate reverse repo was reduced cumulatively by 155 bps. These dissimilar adjustments rendered the policy interest rate corridor asymmetric with a downward bias. This measure was not incongruous with contemporary wisdom as

an asymmetric corridor has been justified, particularly during crisis times (Goodhart, 2010). It may be noted that under normal circumstances, the reverse repo rate and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate are mechanically linked to the policy repo rate by a fixed identical margin. Hence, any changes in the policy rate automatically, symmetrically adjusts the entire corridor (without changing its width).

During the pandemic, the RBI activated other segments of financial markets to keep the lifeblood of finance flowing as muted demand and heightened risk aversion broke down the traditional credit channel of policy transmission. Given that elevated inflation concerns precluded the possibility of any further repo rate cuts (cumulatively reduced by 250 basis points since February 2019), financial conditions were eased substantially by reducing the reverse repo rate, which lowered the floor rate of interest in the economy. Analogous to almost all central banks during the pandemic, the operating target thus aligned with the lower bound of the corridor instead of being in the middle. Since the mandate of the MPC is to control inflation for which the policy instrument is the repo rate, the RBI had used the LAF through changes in the reverse repo rate to alter liquidity conditions. The intent was to reactivate the credit channel by encouraging banks to explore opportunities for extending credit.

We must remember that inflation-targeting countries, because of their sole focus on inflation, experience lower inflation volatility but higher output volatility. Higher output volatility entails a higher sacrifice ratio — the proportion of output foregone for lowering inflation. For an emerging economy, the costs of higher output foregone against the benefits of lower inflation must always be balanced as potential output keeps on changing given the shift of the production function. Developed countries, on the other hand, operate near full employment — therefore, sacrifice ratios are lower. As a result, smoothening inflation volatility is relatively costless for them.

The RBI has innovated admirably under its current stewards during the pandemic, keeping in mind the task of reinvigorating the economy. Despite the existing targeting framework, it did not get fixated on a one-point agenda, daring to look beyond the inflation print. Had the RBI followed the advice of its critics by sticking to textbooks, perhaps the Indian economy would have been in a quagmire today.

A renewables revolution



Antonio Guterres

Nero was famously accused of fiddling while Rome burned. Today, some leaders are doing worse. They are throwing fuel on the fire. Literally. As the fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine ripples across the globe, the response of some nations to the growing energy crisis has been to double down on fossil fuels, pouring billions more dollars into the coal, oil and gas that are deepening the climate emergency.

Meanwhile, all climate indicators continue to break records, forecasting a future of ferocious storms, floods, droughts, wildfires and unlivable temperatures in vast swathes of the planet. Fossil fuels are not the answer, nor will they ever be. We can see the damage we are doing to the planet and our societies.

Fossil fuels are the cause of the climate crisis. Renewable energy can limit climate disruption and boost energy security. Renewables are the peace plan of the 21st century. But the battle for a rapid and just energy transition is not being fought on a level field. Investors are still backing fossil fuels, and governments still hand out billions in subsidies for coal, oil and gas — about \$11 million every minute.

There is a word for favouring short-term relief over long-term well-being — addiction. We are addicted to fossil fuels. For the health of our societies and planet, we need to quit. The only true path to energy security, stable power prices, prosperity and a livable planet lies in abandoning polluting fossil fuels and accelerating the renewables-based energy transition.

To that end, I have called on G20 governments to dismantle coal infrastructure, with a full phase-out by 2030 for OECD countries and 2040 for all others. I have urged financial actors to abandon fossil fuel finance and invest in renewable energy. And I have proposed a five-point plan to boost renewable energy around the world.

First, we must make renewable energy technology a global public good, including removing intellectual property barriers to technology transfer. Second, we must improve global access to supply chains for renewable energy technologies, components and raw materials. In 2020, the world installed five gigawatts of battery storage. We need 600 gigawatts of storage capacity by 2030. Clearly, we need a global coalition

to get there. Shipping bottlenecks and supply-chain constraints, as well as higher costs for lithium and other battery metals, are hurting the deployment of such technologies and materials.

Third, we must cut the red tape that holds up solar and wind projects. We need fast-track approvals and more effort to modernise electricity grids. Fourth, the world must shift energy subsidies from fossil fuels to protect vulnerable people from energy shocks and invest in a just transition to a sustainable future. And fifth, we need to triple investments in renewables. This includes multilateral development banks and development finance institutions, as well as commercial banks.

We need more urgency from all global leaders. We are already perilously close to hitting the 1.5°C limit that science tells us is the maximum level of warming to avoid the worst climate impacts. We must reduce emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by mid-century. But current national commitments will lead to an increase of almost 14 per cent this decade. That spells catastrophe.

The answer lies in renewables — for climate action, energy security, and providing clean electricity to the hundreds of millions of people who currently lack it.

There is no excuse for anyone to reject a renewables revolution. While oil and gas prices have reached record price levels, renewables are getting cheaper all the time. The cost of solar energy and batteries has plummeted 85 per cent over the past decade. The cost of wind power fell by 55 per cent. And investment in renewables creates three times more jobs than fossil fuels.

Of course, renewables are not the only answer to the climate crisis. Nature-based solutions, such as reversing deforestation and land degradation, are essential. So too are efforts to promote energy efficiency. But a rapid renewable energy transition must be our ambition.

As we wean ourselves off fossil fuels, the benefits will be vast, and not just to the climate. Energy prices will be lower and more predictable, with positive knock-on effects for food and economic security. When energy prices rise, so do the costs of food and all the goods we rely on. So, let us all agree that a rapid renewables revolution is necessary and stop fiddling while our future burns.

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Capex route to economic revival: Nirmala Sitharaman

New Delhi, Jul 2: The government would depend on its public capital expenditure programme to revive demand in the economy and might not go for sector-specific fiscal measures, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

In a wide-ranging interview, Sitharaman said the Centre would finalise the privatisation of a public sector bank soon. Also, the fiscal deficit and growth situation were very comfortable this year in spite of continuing external headwinds, she added.

"The route we have chosen and the one we are sticking with is capex. Even during the pandemic, we adopted this method of spend on capital assets to ensure economic revival. And states really showed that they had the absorptive capacity," Sitharaman said.

The Centre's capex outlay is estimated at Rs 7.5 trillion in FY23. Of that, Rs 1 trillion will go to states as a long-term, interest-free loan for their capex needs, according to the FM.

The entire Rs 1 trillion could be given to states in the July-September quarter itself. "Many states are ready with their plans to spend the capex on greenfield or brownfield projects. The rules for distributing the Rs 1 trillion loan were framed by late April and states brought their projects for evaluation in May."

Sitharaman said she was confident that the amount (Rs 1 trillion) would be picked up by states before the end of the second quarter.

Speaking on the biggest challenge for fiscal and monetary policymakers — inflation — Sitharaman said the 6 per cent upper limit of the Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC's) medium-term inflation target was a 'sacred' number.

"The challenges are all external. Our



inflation is nowhere near what countries have experienced. But even this will be burdensome on our people, because we have people with very low income who can't afford to have that kind of burden on themselves," she said.

Headline retail inflation for May 2022 cooled down from the 8-year high of the previous month to settle at 7.04 per cent. It was still a fifth straight month of headline retail inflation staying above the MPC's medium-term target of 4 (+/-2) per cent. The Reserve Bank of India expects inflation to average above the 6 per cent mark till the October-December quarter.

Sitharaman said the economy recovered strongly from the three waves of the Covid-19 pandemic because the Centre took a "variegated approach" for different sectors rather than opting for "one size fits all" measures.

"We had our way of handling the pandemic and that was very much tailored to the uniqueness of the Indian economy. In that, you have a large number of medium and small-scale industries spread across so many sectors. You had to have one kind of solution for one area," she said.

FPIs pulled out equities worth Rs 50203 crore in June

New Delhi, Jul 2: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have pulled out Rs 50,203 crore worth of equities from India in the month of June, according to the latest National Securities Depository data.

FPIs have been persistently selling equities in the Indian markets for the past nine-to-ten months due to various reasons, including tightening of monetary policy, rising current account deficit on account of depreciation of rupee, rising dollar and bond yields

in the US.

FPIs typically preferred advanced economies in times of sharp volatility and uncertainty in the overall financial markets.

So far in 2022, they sold equities worth Rs 217,619 crore, NSDL data showed. During the same period, Sensex and Nifty declined over 10 per cent each.

"This massive capital outflow has significantly contributed to the depreciation in INR which breached 79 to the dollar recently. The relentless FPI selling has



to be seen in the context of a steadily rising dollar and

bond yields in US," said VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

"FPIs are selling more in countries with rising current account deficits like India because the currencies of such countries are vulnerable to further depreciation. Towards the end of June FPI selling has been showing a declining trend."

"This trend will be halted only when the dollar stabilises and US bond yields decline, Vijayakumar added.

Govt revamps Banks Board into Financial Services Institutions Bureau

New Delhi, Jul 2 (PTI): The government has transformed Banks Board Bureau (BBB), the headhunter for directors of state-owned banks and financial institutions, into Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) by making some amendments.

Guidelines for selection of general managers and directors of public sector general insurance companies have been made part of FSIB, sources said.

The amendments were required as the Delhi High Court in its order last year said the BBB is not a competent body to select the general managers and directors of state-owned general insurers.

Subsequently, at least half a dozen newly-appointed directors of non-life insurers had to vacate their positions, sources said.



The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has asked the Department of Financial Services to carry out necessary modifications in the Nationalized Banks (Management and Miscellaneous Provisions) Scheme of 1970/1980 with the approval

of Finance Minister, and then notify the government resolution for establishing FSIB as a single entity for making recommendations for appointments of whole time directors and non-executive chairman of banks and financial institutions.

Large borrowers' loan accounts, bad loans decline: RBI

Chennai, Jul 2: The share of large borrowers for scheduled commercial banks (SCB) has declined in the recent times while their share in the gross non-performing assets (GNPA) also went down, said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

According to the RBI's Financial Stability Report, the share of large borrowers, those having aggregate fund and non-fund based exposure of Rs 5 crore and above, has been declining in the recent years.

This indicates the reduction in credit concentration and diversification of borrowers.

Their share in total GNPA of SCBs moderated marginally to 62.3 per cent during second half of 2021-22 and remained well below its level in September 2020 (75.6 per cent).

Bitcoin could reach \$28,000 by year-end: Deutsche Bank

New Delhi, Jul 2: Even as the world's largest digital currency by market capitalisation continues to stay above the \$19,000 mark amid a broader market slump, Bitcoin (BTC) could go as high as \$28,000 by the end of the year, according to Deutsche Bank.

BTC is currently trading flat at \$19,250 after making a low of \$18,729 on Friday morning, a far cry from the high of \$48,234 level seen in March this year.

In November 2021, BTC had reached an all-time high of nearly \$69,000.

An analysis by Deutsche Bank strategists Marion Labouré and Galina Pozdnyakova suggests that BTC could rally around 30 per cent from its current levels, however still over halfway from its all-time high.

"The digital currency is more like diamonds — a highly marketed asset — rather than gold, a stable safe-haven commodity," they said.

Equating BTC with the leading diamond company The De Beers Group, Labouré and Pozdnyakova said they changed the perception of consumers with rigorous



advertising efforts. "By marketing an idea rather than a product, they built a solid foundation for

the \$72-billion-a-year diamond industry, which they have dominated for the last eighty years. What's true for diamonds, is true for many goods and services, including Bitcoins," they said.

Raising concerns over the valuation models of cryptos, they said, "Stabilising token prices is hard because there are no common valuation models like those within the public equity system. In addition, the crypto market is highly fragmented," they said. "The crypto free-fall could continue because of the system's complexity."

Meanwhile, according to JP Morgan, deleveraging of the crypto markets is in an advanced stage, which may result at the end of the bear market soon.

"The severity of deleveraging of some crypto firms could be so severe that they suggest that the tremors from this year's crypto market fall continue to reverberate. The fact (is) that crypto entities with the stronger balance sheets are currently stepping in to help contain the contagion," according to JPMorgan strategist Nikolaos Panigirtzoglou.

Auto sales jump in June as global semiconductor shortage eases

Mumbai, Jul 2: Auto sales in June advanced for most manufacturers as the global semiconductor shortage, which had been crippling production for a year and a half, is easing. Auto companies in India count dispatches to dealers as sales.

The combined sales at the top eight passenger vehicle makers rose year-on-year by 25 per cent to 292,461 units from 234,025 in the corresponding period last year, shows the monthly sales data released by companies.

Except the market leader, which had a muted dispatch compared to last year, most saw sales increasing in high double digits.

Analysts expect the good run to continue for passenger vehicle makers because they bring in new models in the run-up to the festive season to make the most of the robust demand. June alone saw three new SUV models — the new Venue, Scorpio-N, and all new Brezza.

"The supply chain bottlenecks, particularly the semiconductor availability, have improved and it shows in the volumes," said Hemal Thakkar, director, CRISIL Research.

CRISIL expects the passenger vehicle market to end the year with 14-15 per cent growth year-on-year and surpass the peak FY19 volumes.

Maruti Suzuki dispatched 128,999 units to its dealers in June as against 128,432 units in the same period last year. The shortage of electronic components had a minor impact on production, mainly domestic models.

"The company took all

possible measures to minimise the impact," Maruti Suzuki said in a statement.

Reinforcing the trend of a rapid shift from entry-level small cars to pricier models, sales of the Alto and S-Presso declined year-on-year by 17 per cent during the month. Maruti Suzuki launched the new-generation Brezza on Thursday. It's the first among the multiple SUV models it plans to launch in its attempt to re-coup the ground it has lost to its South Korean and Indian rivals.

Maruti Suzuki has got over 46,000 bookings for the new Brezza since it went on sale.

Thakkar expects the car segment, particularly the entry-level ones, to remain under pressure amid the inflationary trend, rising fuel prices, and the shift in buyer preferences.

"I won't be surprised if the segment ends the year with a decline," he said.

Riding on the new Venue, the subcompact SUV, sales at Hyundai Motor India increased 21 per cent year-on-year to 49,001 units. Hyundai has got over 30,000 bookings for the new model since it went on sale on June 16.

"With the semiconductor situation showing signs of easing, sales have again started showing a positive trend. Further, the newly launched Hyundai Venue has created excitement in the market space and has been receiving tremendous customer response," said Tarun Garg, director (sales, marketing and service), Hyundai Motor India, in a statement.

Ola Electric slips to 4th spot as EV registrations fall amid fire fears

New Delhi, Jul 2: As customers delay purchasing electric two-wheelers amid fire incidents, Ola Electric again saw its registration dipping in the month of June, taking the company to fourth place in the overall category.

Bhavish Aggarwal-run Ola Electric saw 5,869 electric scooters' registrations (as of June 30), according to the VAHAN data.

The June tally for EV two-wheelers was led by Okinawa Autotech, at 6,976 vehicles, followed by Ampere Vehicles Pvt Ltd at 6,534.

Hero Electric came third with 6,486 EV 2-W registrations across the country.

Ather Energy moved up from May to reach 3,797 vehicles, along with Revolt that saw a big leap in registrations to reach 2,419 vehicles for June.

Ola Electric was the top EV player in the country in April and since then, it has seen its position sliding continuously.

Ola's registration numbers fell by more than 30 per cent on June 30, compared to May 30.

Okinawa had sold 9,302 electric scooters in May and Ola Electric delivered 9,225 units of the S1 Pro electric scooter.

According to Ola Electric, they were prepared to see the impact of supply chain constraints, especially on cell shortage in June.

"We calibrated our business priority for the month to focus on bettering our customer service and brought our TAT (turnaround time) to within 48 hours. Come July, we are confident that supply chain issues will start fading out and our strong order book will be fulfilled," the company said in a statement.

However, industry experts feel that the continu-



ous fall in the EV 2-W registrations number is owing to the fear the new buyers have around them amid rising fire episodes, battery explosions and government probes that have found fault with batteries.

An expert committee set up by the Union Road Transport and Highways Ministry has found safety system flaws in batteries of electric two-wheelers.

The electric two-wheeler manufacturers took short-cuts in order to bump up the production and meet the growing demand rather than looking into ensuring safety for the riders, according to the initial report.

The expert committee found that the EV manufacturers offered no mechanism to identify overheating of cells and isolate failed battery cells.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which was earlier tasked with investigating electric two-wheeler fire incidents by the Road Transport and Highways Ministry, also found serious defects in the EV two-wheeler batteries.

These defects occurred because the electric two-wheeler manufacturers like Okinawa Autotech, Pure EV, Jitendra Electric Vehicles, Ola Electric and Boom Motors may have used "lower-grade materials to cut costs", the DRDO probe had revealed.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has now issued new performance standards for lithium-ion batteries to safeguard the consumers amid the rising EV fire episodes in the country.

Bharat Forge, subsidiary buy JS Autocast Foundry India for Rs 489 cr

Mumbai, Jul 2: Pune-based auto parts maker Bharat Forge Ltd said that it along with subsidiary BF Industrial Solutions has successfully completed the acquisition of Coimbatore-based JS Autocast Foundry India Private Limited.

The deal to acquire JS Autocast, which supplies critical machined ductile castings for wind, hydraulic, off-highways and automotive applications, was announced in February.

"Bharat Forge Limited along with its subsidiary, BF Industrial Solutions Limited has successfully completed the previously announced acquisition of JS Autocast Foundry India Private Limited. The Enterprise Value of the transaction is Rs 489.63 crores," the company said in a release.

"This acquisition significantly enhances our capabilities and addressable market segments both domestically and in export markets, especially in niche industrial segments and also brings with it significant synergies that particularly strengthen Bharat Forge's positioning as a preferred 'Industrial Solutions' provider," it said.

JSA logged 59.5 per cent year-on-year growth in revenue at Rs 416.87 crore despite a challenging and volatile



environment, the release said.

Recently, JSA has been granted environmental clearance to expand its existing foundry operations at SIPCOT (State Industrial Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu) from 21,768 tonnes per annum to 72,000 tonnes per annum, it stated.

This coupled with 28,800 TPA foundry capacity at Coimbatore, provides a significant growth platform for

the company, Bharat Forge said, adding, JSA will focus on enhancing its product portfolio from current small castings to address opportunities in medium sized castings for both renewable and other industrial applications.

In the next three years, JSA will start manufacturing 'green castings' utilising 100 per cent renewable energy and raw material which is predominantly recycled scrap, it added.

Windfall tax: RIL's refining margins to be hit by upto \$8/bbl, say analysts

Mumbai, Jul 2: With the government making it clear that the new windfall tax will also be imposed on special economic zones, Reliance Industries' gross refining margins (GRMs) will be negatively impacted by \$6-8 a barrel, said analysts with Morgan Stanley and Jefferies.

"No sunset date has been specified, though we believe this is an extraordinary measure given the inflated profit environment in refining today. Gasoline and diesel are the key contributors to Reliance's refining slate contributing 72 per cent of refining throughput. We estimate \$7/bbl blended impact on RIL excluding any exemption. With 58 per cent of RIL's refined products being exported, the blended impact for Reliance could be Rs 3.4 a litre translating to \$7 a barrel impact on realized GRM," a report by Jefferies said

The government has imposed a sharp windfall tax of Rs 13 per litre on diesel exports and Rs 6 per litre on gasoline exports. Reacting to the announcement, RIL's shares lost 7 per cent or Rs 1.25 trillion of its value on Friday with the total market valuation at Rs Rs 16.29 trillion. Of this, the promoters' net worth was eroded by Rs 61,497 crore.

Apart from windfall tax, the government also announced multiple steps to secure fuel supplies within the country against rising shortages of global diesel and gasoline supplies. India has made compulsory sale of half of refined products domestically for refiners. This, however, does not apply to SEZ refiners like RIL. RIL has two refineries in Jamnagar with one refinery set up as an exclusive special economic zone. The SEZ refinery has a capacity for processing 580,000 barrels a day of crude.



According to the plan, export-oriented units like RIL will have to sell 30 per cent of diesel locally so as to not attract this tax. RIL cur-

rently, via its petrochemical, B2B and retail fuel stations, sells about 40-50 per cent of its products locally. However, the sales are heav-

ily naphtha weighted and Morgan Stanley analysts say they are still awaiting details on RIL's diesel sales locally.

"Assuming the full impact of the regulations on both diesel and gasoline, RIL's GRM would be negatively impacted by \$6-8/bbl realistically vs last week's margin of \$24-26/bbl. This would still be above our base case estimates on earnings. Every \$1/bbl impacts RIL's earnings by 2.5-3 per cent. Most other refiners largely sell locally and the impact on earnings will be limited," said an analyst with Morgan Stanley.

Overall, India exported 42 per cent of its diesel and 44 per cent of its gasoline production in FY22 and 40 per cent of its diesel and 44 per cent of its gasoline production year to date.

Reliance has not commented on the impact as yet.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

CJI...

our people. Significantly, the voter in rural India is more proactive in discharging this task when compared to their urban, educated and well-to-do counterparts", he added.

CJI Ramen said both India and the United States are known for their diversity which needs to be honoured and cherished, everywhere in the world.

"It is only because the United States honours and respects diversity, that you were all able to reach this country and make a mark through your hard work and extraordinary skills. Please remember. It is the tolerance and inclusive nature of American society that is able to attract the best talents from all over the world, which in turn is contributing to its growth", CJI Ramana said while addressing the Indian diaspora.

He added that honouring qualified talents from diverse backgrounds is also essential to sustain the confidence of all sections of the society in the system.

"This principle of inclusivity is universal. It needs to be honoured everywhere in the world, including in India. Inclusivity strengthens the unity in society which is key to peace and progress. We need to focus on issues that unite us. Not on those that divide us. In the 21st century, we cannot allow petty, narrow and divisive issues to dictate human and societal relationships. We have to rise above all the divisive issues to remain focused on human development. A non-inclusive approach is an invitation to disaster", he said.

The CJI told the audience that they might have become millionaires and billionaires but to enjoy wealth, they need to have peace around them.

"Your parents back home also should be able to live in a peaceful society which is free from hate and violence. If you cannot take care of the well-being of your family and society back home, what is the use of your wealth and status here? You have to contribute your own way to improve your own society. What really matters is the honour and respect that you command in your homeland. This is the litmus test for your true success", he said.

The CJI said that the Indian Diaspora in the United States has played an active role in building modern America from modest beginnings; they have transformed not only their identities but also the face of this nation.

Highly skilled Indian professionals in diverse fields are found today across the globe, the CJI said, adding that the unprecedented opportunities offered by the IT sector to women have changed how Indians perceive the role of women in our society.

Noting that more and more women from India found their wings in the emerging sector that helped them become empowered, independent and self-reliant, he said an empowered woman changes the dynamics of the family and society positively. "As they say, 'If you empower a man, you empower an individual. But, if you empower a woman, you empower a family and the nation.'" PTI MNL

Five...

for her comments. He even mistakenly shared the post in a WhatsApp group in which some Muslims were also members, including his customers," an official of the City Kotwali police station said.

After that, Irfan Khan hatched a conspiracy to eliminate Kolhe and roped in five persons for it. He promised to give Rs 10,000 to them and a safe escape in a car, he said.

The incident occurred between 10 pm and 10.30 pm on June 21, when Kolhe was going home on a two-wheeler after closing his shop, he said, adding that his son Sanket (27) and wife Vaishnavi were accompanying him on a different vehicle.

"When all of them reached near Mahila College's gate, two motorcycle-borne men came from behind and blocked Kolhe's path. A youth alighted from the motorcycle and stabbed Kolhe on his neck with a sharp weapon and escaped from the spot. Kolhe collapsed on the road in a pool of blood. Sanket rushed him to a hospital, where he died," the official said.

Based on Saket's complaint, an FIR was registered and five persons, identified as Muddsir Ahemad (22), Shahrukh Pathan (25), Abdul Thoufique (24) Shoaib Khan (22) and Atib Rashid (22), all residents of Amravati and daily wage workers, have been arrested.

The police have seized the knife used in the crime and obtained the CCTV footages that captured the sequence of events.

Police commissioner Singh said the exact reason behind the

murder is being ascertained.

The BJP had on June 5 suspended its national spokesperson Nupur Sharma and expelled Delhi BJP media head Jindal after their alleged derogatory remarks against the Prophet led to an outrage in India and Gulf countries.

NIA...

to the "barbaric killing" of Kolhe has been handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

The federal probe agency would thoroughly investigate the conspiracy behind the killing and involvement of organisations and international linkages.

Kolhe's killing had taken place a week before two men hacked to death a tailor in Rajasthan's Udaipur before posting videos online saying that they were avenging an insult to Islam.

Days before his killing, the Udaipur tailor had told the local police that he had received threats over a social media post shared from his account, apparently supporting BJP leader Sharma's remarks on Prophet Mohammad.

The NIA is also probing the killing of the Udaipur tailor, Kanhaiya Lal.

The Maharashtra Police have arrested five people in connection with the Amravati killing and are looking for one Irfan Khan, who runs an NGO and is alleged to be the prime accused in the case.

According to the police, Kolhe had allegedly shared a post on some WhatsApp groups in support of Nupur Sharma, following which Khan is alleged to have hatched a conspiracy to eliminate him.

Kolhe was killed between 10 pm and 10.30 pm on June 21 when he was returning home on a two-wheeler after closing his shop.

Cong...

WERN'T members of the BJP. Their attempt to infiltrate was like the LTTE assassin's attempt to enter the Congress to kill Rajiv Gandhi," he tweeted.

"Congress should stop fooling around with terror and national security," Malviya said.

Tailor Kanhaiya Lal was killed Tuesday afternoon by two cleaver-wielding men, who posted a grisly video of the crime online claiming responsibility for the murder.

The two accused, Riaz Akhtari and Ghouse Mohammad, have been sent to judicial custody for 14 days.

At the presser, Khera cited pictures and posts linking Attari with BJP leaders - Irshad Chainwala and Mohammad Tahir.

"It has also come to the fore in the same disclosure that the main accused Riyaz Attari often participated in the programmes of Rajasthan BJP leader and former minister Gulabchand Kataria," he alleged.

"Not only this, pictures of the main accused Riyaz Attari attending the meetings of the BJP's Rajasthan minority unit are also in front of the world," Khera claimed.

Through the posts of BJP leader Irshad Chainwala on Facebook on November 30, 2018, and Mohammad Tahir on February 3, 2019, October 27, 2019, August 10, 2021, November 28, 2019, and other posts, it is clear that Attari was not only "close to BJP leaders", but was also an active member of the BJP, Khera alleged.

Questioning the "silence" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, the Congress leader asked whether the Bharatiya Janata Party and its leaders are trying to create an atmosphere of religious frenzy in the country.

"Is the Bharatiya Janata Party, through its spokespersons and leaders, trying to take advantage by polarising the country," he asked.

Khera said Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had welcomed the transfer of this case to the NIA.

However, in light of "new facts", the question that arises is whether the BJP-led government at the Centre moved quickly to transfer the case to the NIA due to these reasons, he said.

Rucks...

their seats and hurled allegations against the Congress.

BJP deputy leader in the House, B C Sethi said that Congress is in power in the state (Rajasthan) where the barbaric killing of a tailor took place recently.

Referring to the incident in Udaipur, he said "Did the Chief Minister of that state resign after the incident? Nupur Sharma is not a member of Odisha Assembly. Why would there be a debate on her remarks? Sethi said.

Besides, BJP has already suspended her and she has also apologized for the same, he said.

Sethi also targeted the Congress over the issue of exodus of Kashmiri pandits.

As the sloganeering continued in the House, the members of both opposition parties rushed to the well demanding action against each other.

Speaker B K Arukha, who for the first time presided over the House after his election last month, said that the House should not discuss on a person who is not its member and was not present.

The speaker's comment drew the ire of the Congress lawmakers who intensified their protests in the well of the House.

Unable to conduct the business, the speaker adjourned the house proceedings twice for 10 minutes and later till 4 PM.

Wall...

is not correct as somebody else can put your fake poster to sabotage your image and it will lead to the politicisation of the rule. The university needs to be careful about this," NSUI National Secretary Nitish Gaur said.

"The university must strengthen the security. They are spending a lot of money on security agencies. The security people should be held responsible and they should ensure that nobody defaces the walls. Night duty guards should remain vigilant and check who is pasting them. The university should also install CCTVs everywhere so that nobody can paint over a wall," he said.

Gaur's remarks were echoed by Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), which is affiliated to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

National media convener of ABVP Siddharth Yadav said the university needs to remain alert and ensure that the order is not misused.

"It should be the collective responsibility of everyone that university is not defaced and is kept clean but the university should also remain alert and vigilant that nobody defaces the walls," he said.

These are the walls inside the university and university's workers and several employees are present 24x7 there. Those miscreants who are pasting posters, if they are caught in action, then only it is a real justice otherwise there is a high chance that it might be misused," he added.

Varsity officials said despite having "democracy walls" - dedicated spaces provided by the administration to paste campaign material - in the university, posters especially vote for dot the campus.

The situation worsens during the Delhi University Student Union elections when parties try to cover the entire walls with posters, they said.

All India Students' Association (AISA) said it should be allowed to paste posters everywhere in the university.

"It is the culture and the university by prevent us from pasting posters on the walls want to curb this culture. I believe that posters should be allowed everywhere inside the campus," AISA Delhi president Abhigyan said.

ATS...

and posted videos online saying they are avenging an insult to Islam.

Additional police force has been deployed at the court as well as in city areas for security reasons. PTI

BJP...

The ED had summoned the Rajya Sabha member for questioning in the money laundering probe linked to the re-development of a Mumbai 'chawli' (tenement) and related financial transactions involving his wife and friends. PTI MR

Sena...

Sanjay Raut and Anil Parab are being "hounded" by the ED.

"Is it just a coincidence that the MVA government has collapsed?" he asked.

Referring to the proposed move by the Shinde-Fadnavis government to relocate a Metro car shed in Aarey Colony, declared a reserved forest, he said the previous MVA regime had decided to shift the depot to another site (Kanjurmargin) to protect Mumbai's environment.

He said the CAG had made several negative observations against the Jalyukit Shivhar, a water conservation scheme which was discontinued by the MVA administration, but is being revived by the new government.

"The scheme is being revived now to fulfil personal ambitions," the NCP spokesman said.

The scheme was launched when Fadnavis was the chief minister (2014-19). PTI

BSF...

it said. "The BSF always takes a humane approach while dealing with inadvertent border crossers," it said.

Case...

she was present at the official residence of Vijayan on numerous occasions and on some she was alone and held discussions on various topics.

The Congress-led UDF took up this issue in the fresh assembly session which is presently underway and Vijayan, while agreeing to discuss the issue in the floor of the assembly, failed to give the required answers on various topics raised by the opposition.

Then the Congress decided that they will take to the streets to protest against Vijayan demanding him to face a probe in this issue.

They have cited the example how his predecessor and Congress veteran Oommen Chandy initiated a judicial probe by a retired judge in the Solar scam (2014) after coming under flak from the then Vijayan-led opposition.

Vijayan has come under attack from not just the opposition, but also the media as they have started replaying the words and sentences that Vijayan as the CPI-M state secretary spoke against Chandy, when he led the protests demanding him to quit between 2014 and 2016.

Leader of Opposition V. D. Satheesan said Vijayan will not be allowed to wriggle out from the position as he is now got entangled following the revelations.

"He must face a probe as the allegations levelled have never been heard before against any chief minister in the country. If he thinks these are all baseless allegations, then why is he not seeking legal redress, as the charges are all very grave. Since he is not doing this for obvious reasons, he has no other way but to face a probe," said Satheesan who was leading the protests at Trissur.

With the protests now spilling on to the streets, the opposition is going to increase its protests inside the floor of the assembly when it meets on Monday.

The only relief for Vijayan so far is that the Left Democratic Front is united and supporting Vijayan, but with more and more revelations, murmurs have begun in the allies of the CPI-M, and all eyes are on how far this silence in the ruling dispensation will continue.

Schools...

, peace and prosperity in J&K. "He was a great son of soil whose patriotism can never be forgotten," the LG said.

"Great men like Sheikh Abdul Jabbar never die, rather they continue to live in many ways. Ishaq Jabbar is following into the footsteps of his great father and keeping his legacy of commitment towards country's sovereignty, peace and prosperity in J&K, alive," the LG said, adding Ishaq's wife who is also DDC member, is also working to strengthen the panchayati raj system by ensuring round the clock development of Ganderbal district.

He said recently, militants resorted to mindless killings of minority community members to provoke security forces so that they commit a mistake that could trigger public anger and unrest. "Let me tell you that security forces won't commit any mistake that would harm the prevailing peaceful atmosphere in Kashmir. We will continue to eradicate menace of militancy. Innocents won't be touched but militants and their supporters won't be spared," the LG said.

He said that his government is committed to end corruption by ensuring minimum human interference. "Everything is being conducted online and that's the best way to end nepotism and corruption," the LG said, adding that E-Governance is flourishing and J&K is getting involved in E-Governance mode.

He said that one lakh crore worth highway and tunnel projects are underway in J&K at present. "In the past one year, more than Rs 52000 Cr investments have been received. Rs 4500 crore worth investment is coming with regard to private hospitals etc," he said, adding that in next one year, Rs 70,000 Crore investment proposals will be received that will generate 5 to 6 lakh job opportunities—(KNO)

Biden...

by Congressmen Tracey Mann and Rick Crawford.

"We urge the administration to file a formal request for consultations with India at the WTO and to continue monitoring other WTO members' domestic support programmes that undermine fair trade practices," they said.

The US must not yield for the sake of reaching a consensus. Instead, America must work to promote solutions that will alleviate the global supply chain and food shortages.

It must take actions that will address those consumers most impacted by inflation and rising food prices, the lawmakers demanded.

"It is up to the American agriculture to contribute to building resilient conditions for food security for the US and throughout the world, they said.

India has defended its stand at the WTO. Several countries and organisations across the world have applauded India for taking a firm stand in protecting the interests of its farmers.

The Geneva-based WTO is an intergovernmental organisation that regulates and facilitates international trade. Governments use the organisation to establish, revise, and enforce the rules that govern international trade.

Sri Lanka civil society expresses displeasure over 22nd Amendment to Constitution

Colombo, Jul 2 (PTI) A group of civil society representatives on Saturday met Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to express displeasure on the proposed 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, saying it does not curtail the unfettered powers of the president nor does it place any checks and balances on the power structure.

Sri Lanka's Cabinet on Monday approved the proposal presented by the Minister of Justice, Prison Affairs and Constitutional Reforms, to publish the bill in the Government Gazette.

The new legislation sets out a broad definition of the issues to be considered and met in the appointment of the President, the powers of the Prime Minister and the nature of the post, the new commissions and how the Cabinet will be collectively accountable.

We told the Prime Minister that this does not address the serious governance issues the country is facing. Although some of it appears progressive it is not so in most areas," Rohana Hettiarachchi, a civil society leader, told reporters.

The 22A has been gazetted and is expected to be presented in Parliament after the due process for enactment, the government announced last week.

The 22nd Amendment was originally named 21A and meant to replace the 20A. The amendment was formulated amid the ongoing economic crisis in the country which also caused a political crisis.

The amendment will be called 22nd as another draft 21st Amendment has already been gazetted.

The 20A adopted in 2020 had given unfettered powers to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa after abolishing the 19th Amendment.

The powerful Rajapaksa family tightened their grip on power after their massive victory in the general elections in August 2020, which allowed them to amend the Constitution to restore presidential powers and install close family members in key positions.

Hettiarachchi said the 22A in no way curtails Rajapaksa's powers nor does it place any checks and balances on the power structure given the background of the political situation which demanded the introduction of 21A. After the resignation of his brother Mahinda Rajapaksa as the prime minister to pave the way for a consensus government of all parties, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa pledged to introduce the 21st Amendment to the Constitution to tackle the wide-scale public protest over his failure to foresee the current unprecedented economic crisis.

The constitutional reform was a major plank of the agreement between Rajapaksa and Wickremesinghe when he took over the job of prime minister on May 12.

Sri Lanka is facing the worst economic crisis since independence in 1948 which has led to an acute shortage of essential items like food, medicine, cooking gas and fuel across the country.

EU prepares emergency plan to do without Russian energy

Prague, Jul 2: The European Union's executive arm on Friday pledged to draft an emergency plan this month aimed at helping member countries do without Russian energy in the wake of the Kremlin's war in Ukraine.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the initiative would build on EU moves to ditch Russian coal, oil and natural gas and would complement a bloc-wide push to accelerate the development of renewable energy such as wind and solar power.

We are preparing emergency plans for Europe, von der Leyen said in the Czech town of Litomyšl, where she marked the start of the country's six-month stint as holder of the rotating EU presidency. Energy prices are high. People - rightly so - expect us to do something about it.

She said the contingency plan, due around mid-July, would focus on two key points including having a clear idea" of where to cut back on Russian energy supply and to do it in a smart way as well as to rally around EU countries facing supply squeezes.

We need a good, common plan that the energy flows, or the gas flows, where it is needed most, von der Leyen said.

She said the plan would be developed in coordination with the Czech government, whose prime minister highlighted the political pressure across the EU to act.

Energy prices are suffocating our economy, Premier Petr Fiala said alongside von der Leyen. This is our biggest test for the coming months. The commission announced in May a plan dubbed REPowerEU to abandon Russian energy amid the Kremlin's war in Ukraine, proposing a nearly 300 billion-euro (312 billion) package that includes more efficient use of fuels and faster rollout of renewable power.

The next step is to make available to the EU member states the 300 billion euros that come along with REPowerEU, and therefore, of course, we count on your presidency to reach rapidly agreement on the adoption of the REPowerEU regulation, von der Leyen told the Czech premier.

This investment initiative is meant to help the 27 EU countries start weaning themselves off Russian fossil fuels this year. The goal is to deprive Russia, the EU's main supplier of oil, natural gas and coal, of tens of billions in revenue and strengthen EU climate policies. (AP)

US announces \$820M in Ukraine aid, including missile systems

Washington, Jul 2: The US announced on Friday that it will provide Ukraine with 820 million in new military aid, including new surface-to-air missile systems and counter-artillery radars to respond to Russia's heavily reliance on long-range strikes in the war.

Russia in recent days has launched dozens of missiles across Ukraine and pinned down Ukrainian forces with continuous fire for sometimes hours at a time. Ukraine's leaders have publicly called on Western allies to quickly send more ammunition and advanced systems that will help them narrow the gap in equipment and manpower.

All told, the U.S. has committed more than 8.8 billion in weapons and military training to Ukraine, whose leaders have sought more help from Western allies to repel larger and heavily equipped Russian forces. About 7 billion of that aid has been announced since Russia's February invasion.

"We are going to support Ukraine as long as it takes," President Joe Biden said this week at a press conference during the NATO summit in Madrid. He argued that Russia had already suffered a blow to its international standing and major damage to its economy from Western sanctions imposed over the invasion.

The U.S. is giving Ukrainians the capacity so that they can continue to resist the Russian aggression, Biden said. And so I don't know how it's going to end, but it will not end with a Russian defeat of Ukraine in Ukraine.

As part of the new package, the U.S. will purchase two systems known as NASAMS, a Norwegian-developed anti-aircraft system that is used to protect the airspace around the White House and Capitol in Washington. The Pentagon will also provide the Ukrainians with up to 150,000 rounds of 155-millimeter artillery ammunition.

The Pentagon will also provide additional ammunition for medium-range rocket systems it provided Ukraine in June, known as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS. The ammunition will come from the Defense Department's own inventory under what's known as drawdown authority. This is the 14th package of military weapons and equipment transferred to Ukraine from Defense Department stocks since August 2021.

The war has evolved into a grinding stalemate in which both sides are heavily reliant on artillery, according to Western officials and analysts. While Russia has not achieved its initial goals of toppling Ukraine's government, it is believed to be making slow progress in consolidating control over the eastern Ukrainian region known as the Donbas. (AP)

Russians press assault on eastern Ukrainian city

Kyiv (Ukraine), Jul 2: Russian forces are pounding the city of Lysychansk and its surroundings in an all-out attempt to seize the last stronghold of resistance in eastern Ukraine's Luhansk province, the governor said Saturday.

Ukrainian fighters have spent weeks trying to defend the city and to keep it from falling to Russia, as neighbouring Sievierodonetsk did a week ago. The Russian Defense Ministry said its forces took control of an oil refinery on Lysychansk's edge in recent days, but Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai reported Friday that fighting for the facility continued.

Over the last day, the occupiers opened fire from all available kinds of weapons, Haidai said Saturday on the Telegram messaging app.

Luhansk and neighboring Donetsk are the two provinces that make up the Donbas region, where Russia has focused its offensive since pulling back from the northern Ukraine and the capital, Kyiv, in the spring. Pro-Russia separatists have held portions of both provinces since 2014, and Moscow recognises all of Luhansk and Donetsk as sovereign republics. Syria's government said Wednesday that it would also recognize the independence and sovereignty of the two areas and work to establish diplomatic relations with the separatists.

In Slovyansk, a major Donetsk city still under Ukrainian control, four people died when Russian forces fired cluster munitions late Friday, Mayor Vadym Lyakh said on Facebook. He said the neighbourhoods that were hit did not contain any potential military targets.

Russia's messages with missiles tell West to back off

Kyiv (Ukraine), Jul 2: The latest in a litany of horrors in Ukraine came this week as Russian firepower rained down on civilians in a busy shopping mall far from the front lines of a war in its fifth month.

The timing was not likely a coincidence.

While much of the attritional war in Ukraine's east is hidden from sight, the brutality of Russian missile strikes on a mall in the central city of Kremenchuk and on residential buildings in the capital, Kyiv, unfolded in full view of the world and especially of Western leaders gathered for a trio of summits in Europe.

Were the attacks a message from Russian President Vladimir Putin as the West sought to arm Ukraine with more effective weapons to bolster its resistance, and to set Ukraine on the path to joining the European Union?

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko suggested as much when missiles struck the capital on June 26, three days after EU leaders unanimously agreed to make Ukraine a candidate for membership.

It was maybe a symbolic attack as the Group of Seven leading economic powers and then NATO leaders prepared to meet and apply further pressure on Moscow, he said. At least six people were killed in the Kyiv strike, which pummeled an apartment building.



Bumrah sets world record with bat

Birmingham, July 2: Jasprit Bumrah on Saturday claimed a world record in his debut Test as captain as he scored 29 runs off a Stuart Broad over which leaked 35 runs, the most in an over in the history of Test cricket, in the rescheduled fifth Test against England at Edgbaston on Saturday.

In the process of inflicting a whirlwind carnage over Broad and England, Bumrah surpassed the previous record which was in the hands of Brian Lara, George Bailey and Keshav Maharaj at 28 runs.

Before Bumrah hammered Broad for

four fours, two sixes besides picking up a single from the eight-ball over which also included a no-ball and five wides, India were 377/9 with England's chances of keeping them under 400 looking bright.

Bumrah pulled the first ball from Stuart Broad in the 84th over for a boundary. It was a top-edge that Crawley very nearly got to, but it evaded him and bounced over the rope.

Broad again dug it short and it went high over wicketkeeper Sam Billings' head for five wides. India got seven runs off the next ball as Bumrah top-edged a pull over third man for a

six after Broad overstepped.

More agony followed for him as Bumrah bludgeoned a friendly full toss over mid-on for another boundary and then got an inside edge to fine leg for yet another boundary.

Bumrah fell while trying to swat Broad over deep square leg, but the ball sailed comfortably for the fourth boundary of the over.

Another short ball from Broad was pulled brilliantly by Bumrah over fine leg for six, giving him the world record for scoring most runs in an over of Test cricket - 29.

Co-incidentally, Broad has the dubious distinction of being hit for six sixes by Yuvraj Singh in an over during the inaugural Men's T20 World Cup in South Africa in 2007. Clearly, he had a day to forget at Edgbaston despite reaching the 550 Test wickets mark.

Bumrah remained unbeaten on 31 off 16 balls and added 41 for the last wicket along with Mohammed Siraj (2) as India ended their first innings on 416 in 84.5 overs, with Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja top-scoring with 146 and 104 respectively.

India's boxer Kalaivani storms into final in Elorda Cup; Kuldeep in semis

New Delhi, July 2: Indian boxer Kalaivani Srinivasan entered the final with a dominating victory while Kuldeep Kumar progressed into the semifinals of the Elorda Cup in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan on Saturday.

According to information received here, Kalaivani demonstrated excellent skills against Uzbekistan's Farzona Fozilova in the women's 48kg semifinal. The Chennai-born boxer's powerful blows and the persistent attack didn't allow her opponent any opportunity to settle down as she comfortably won by unanimous decision in the end.

Kuldeep provided India a winning start on the fourth day of the competition but had to work hard for the victory. Kuldeep faced a stiff challenge from the local boy Kairat Yernur in the nail-biting men's 48kg quarterfinal encounter. However, with a cautious approach and precise attack, he notched up a close 3-2 win.

Meanwhile, another boxer in the men's section, Yashpal lost to Kazakhstan's Aslanbek Shymbergenov by a 0-5 margin in the 71kg quarterfinal.

Among women, Babita Bisht (61kg), Jyoti (52kg) and Neema (63kg) signed off with bronze medals after defeats in the semifinals. While Babita suffered a defeat against China's Zheng Lu by the 'Referee Stops the Contest' verdict, Jyoti and Neema conceded identical 0-5 losses against Uzbekistan's Feruza Kazakova and Kazakhstan's Anar Tursynbek respectively.

Savita's challenge also came to an end in the quarterfinals as she was handed a 0-5 loss by the Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Japan's Namiki Tsukimi in the 50kg category.

Later on Saturday night, 2021 Youth World champions Gitika (48kg) and Alfiya Pathan (+81kg), and Lalita (70kg) will fight in the semi-finals while Rajni (50kg) will play her quarter-final.

The inaugural edition of Elorda Cup has been witnessing the presence of top players from strong boxing countries such as India, Uzbekistan, hosts Kazakhstan, Cuba, China and Mongolia. The finals will be played on Monday.

Wriddhiman Saha quits Bengal after receiving No Objection Certificate from CAB

Kolkata, July 2: Veteran wicketkeeper-batter Wriddhiman Saha on Saturday received a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) on Saturday, marking the end of his association with Bengal in domestic cricket.

"Mr. Wriddhiman Saha came to CAB and in an application to President Avishek Dalmiya sought the NOC from the association. CAB gave concurrence to the request of Mr. Saha and provided the NOC to him for playing for another state. CAB also wished him the very best for his future endeavours," said the CAB in its official statement.

It is still not yet known that Saha, who played 122 first-class matches for Bengal since debuting in 2007, will play for which team in the upcoming season of Indian domestic cricket.

In his time with Bengal, Saha scored 6,423 runs at an average of 41.98, including 13 centuries and 38 half-centuries. The end of Saha's association with Bengal came after CAB joint secretary Debabrata Das questioned his commitment to turning out for the state team earlier this year.

Saha had made himself unavailable for the group phase of the 2021/22 Ranji Trophy due to personal reasons. The move came around the time he was dropped from India's squad for the two-match home Test series against Sri Lanka in March.

Saha was named in Bengal's squad for the Ranji Trophy quarterfinal match against Jharkhand, but the move happened without his consent and CAB president Avishek Dalmiya later said in a statement that Saha was not willing to play in the knockout match.

'Can't tell how tough time was', confident Sakshi Malik determined to win medal at CWG after getting her 'mojo' back

New Delhi, July 2: Olympic bronze medalist Sakshi Malik on Saturday revealed that she has gone through a tough time in the last two years but the national trials helped in getting her 'confidence' and 'mojo' back and the wrestler is determined to win the medal at the Commonwealth Games, scheduled to begin from July 28 in Birmingham.

Sakshi had grabbed a place in the 62kg weight category in the national squad in May. It had taken the 29-year-old Sakshi five bouts to finally beat her nemesis - 20-year-old Sonam Malik - in the selection trials to earn that place.

The 2014 Olympics wrestling bronze medalist recently won the gold medal at the UWW Ranking Series in Kazakhstan. However, the grappler believes that it was the national trial that gave her more confidence than the Ranking Series triumph.

"I have been struggling for the last two years. And when I won the trials (for CWG) I was so



relieved at that time. Yes, I bagged gold in Ranking. It was also important but the win in the trials was something I felt great about.

"I can't tell how tough time was for me, losing bouts made me feel bad and I used to speak about my problems with my husband

only and he would support me. I never believed in aggressive fighting, my style is simple to attack and defence but I faced rough fights too. Hair pulling and breaking fingers is what I am talking about. One of my opponents used to do it. But I believe that when you love a sport you must follow what is right. And it helped me," an emotional Sakshi told IANS.

Further talking about her preparations for CWG, she said that the training is "going great guns".

"I am working hard for the CWG and currently, I am in Lucknow. I want to win a medal in CWG and make my country proud. I have always got support from the people of my nation and I want to give it back with my good performance in Birmingham," she said.

The Indian women's team: Pooja Gehlot (50 kg), Vinesh Phogat (53 kg), Anshu Malik (57 kg), Sakshi Malik (62 kg), Divyja Kakran (68 kg), Pooja Sihag (76 kg)

Captain Assad Vala determined to show PNG belongs to Men's T20 World Cup

Port Moresby, July 2: Papua New Guinea captain Assad Vala is determined to ensure his country's maiden ICC Men's T20 World Cup appearance last year does not represent a one-off as they look to seal their place in October's mega event in Australia.

Vala's side is preparing for ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier B, with two qualification spots up for grabs, and will begin by taking on the Netherlands, Hong Kong and Uganda in Group B later this month.

The PNG skipper remembers all too well the jubilation that followed his side's success at this stage three years ago and believes they have the tools at their disposal to stage a repeat performance as they look to capitalise on growing cricketing interest back home.

"We know from experience how special it is to qualify for a World Cup. It was a dream come true. Having played for so many years and tried to get to a World Cup, to make it playing good cricket as we did was fantastic,"

said Vala.

"We enjoyed the experience of playing in the big stadiums and we want to experience that atmosphere again. There was a lot of interest when the World Cup was on, not just in the cricket fraternity - everyone in Papua New Guinea was behind us.

"We know it will be tough - everyone is going out there with the same goal and from the first ball against the Netherlands, we have to be ready," he added.

The Barramundis were beaten in all three of their Group B games in the UAE last October, letting a good position slip in the opener against Oman before going down against Scotland and Bangladesh.

Vala believes his side learned plenty from the experience. However, he is backing some new and returning players to make an impact in Zimbabwe.

"We are feeling pretty confident. We know we have to play our best cricket to qualify but if we do that, we'll have a good chance. We played our first T20s

since the World Cup in Nepal in April and we have just finished our domestic T20 competition," he said.

"We have a young wicketkeeper, Hila Vare, who has been scoring runs in that competition, so he is going to make his debut in the coming games. Hopefully, he can carry that form into this tournament and produce the goods on the international stage," he added.

Also heading to Zimbabwe in form is Tony Ura, the 32-year-old who came to the fore in Nepal. He peaked against Malaysia, blasting 10 sixes in his unbeaten 86 from 34 balls, and his captain hopes he can continue his momentum.

"Tony Ura has been exceptional over the last couple of months. He finished the Nepal series really strongly and has been in good form domestically. He's been scoring consistently and striking the ball really well - he's been difficult to bowl at in the nets. He's a match-winner for us," said the PNG skipper.