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KAMALA EMERGES AS FRONT
RUNNER FOR US PRESIDENCY

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BIDEN REAFFIRMS US
SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

MONEY 10
MARKETS SNAP FIVE-DAY RALLY;
SENSEX TUMBLES OVER 850 POINTS

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12 SPORTS



CBI to probe UPSC aspirants' deaths

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday transferred the probe into the death of three UPSC aspirants at Rau's IAS Study Circle in Old Rajender Nagar last weekend to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The Court asked the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) to appoint a senior officer to oversee the probe by the CBI in the criminal case. Meanwhile, civil services aspirants protesting the Rajinder Nagar coaching centre deaths continued their agitation for the sixth day on Friday, with many seen studying at the protest site. "In view of the nature of the incident and to ensure that the public has no doubt with regard to the investigation, this court transfers the probe to the CBI," a division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela passed the order given the "seriousness of incident and that it may involve corruption by public servants." The court pulled up the civic body and called the deaths shameful. The Delhi High Court was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

by an organisation named Kutumb seeking a "high-level" probe into the three deaths. The deaths happened when the basement of the coaching centre got flooded following heavy rainfall in the area. Poor drainage system and "illegal" use of the basement were said to be the core reasons behind the

incident. On Friday, at least four UPSC coaching institutes offered ₹10 lakh each to the families of the victims Shreya Yadav, Tanya Soni and Nevin Dalvin. The court also constituted a committee to revamp and reform the physical, financial and administrative infrastructure of the national Capital.

No systemic breach in NEET-UG papers: SC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Giving its detailed reasons for not cancelling the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test undergraduate exam for the year 2024 (NEET UG 2024) over paper leak allegations and other irregularities in the exam, the Supreme Court on Friday said there was no systemic breach, confirming that the leak was confined only to Patna and Hazaribagh. "Therefore no retest would be needed with respect to this year's exam," the top court ruled.

In their 63-page judgment, a Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud, Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said the NTA should avoid "flip flops" which was noticed this year as it does not serve the interest of students. It also expanded the remit of the Centre-appointed panel headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Radhakrishnan constituted to review the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA), which holds the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) (NEET-UG), and recommend examination reforms. The top court said since the remit of the panel has been expanded, the committee would submit its report by September 30 on various measures to rectify deficiencies in the examination system. The bench said the Radhakrishnan panel should



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

Medical education was open business before NEET, says Nadda

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst the recent NEET paper leak controversy, which has cast a shadow on the quality and management of medical education in India, Union Health Minister JP Nadda defended the examination system, saying the medical education had become an open business before the NEET was introduced and PG seats were sold for ₹8 crore-₹13 crore each.

Addressing concerns during a discussion on a private member resolution by DMK Rajya Sabha member M Mohmed Abdulla, Nadda



emphasised that the introduction of NEET was a necessary reform to combat rampant corruption in medical education. The Minister said corruption was rife in medical education before the NEET was brought in during his first stint as Health Minister.

consider framing standard operating procedures for adoption of technological advancements to strengthen the examination system. The bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra gave detailed reasons for its July 23 order refusing to cancel the controversy-ridden NEET-UG 2024 examination. "...Sufficient material is not on record at present which indicates there were no systemic leak or systemic malpractice. The material on record does not, at present, substantiate allegation of widespread malpractices which compromised the integrity of the exam. On the contrary, an assessment of the data indicates that there are no deviations which indicate that systemic cheating has taken place," the court said in a detailed order.

CJI Chandrachud said the information before the court at this stage does not show that the question paper was disseminated widely using social media or the internet, or that the answers were being communicated to students using sophisticated electronic means which may prove difficult to trace. "The students who were beneficiaries of the leak at Hazaribagh and Patna are easy to be identified. The CBI probe reveals the number of students who are beneficiaries of the malpractice at Hazaribagh and Patna at this stage.

AI cancels flights to Tel Aviv amid Israel-Iran tension

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India on Friday announced suspending flights to Tel Aviv till August 8, amid escalating tensions in the Middle East. The Tata Group-owned airline operates four weekly flights to Israeli city from the national Capital. "In view of the ongoing situation in parts of the Middle East, we have suspended the scheduled operation of our flights to and from Tel Aviv with immediate effect up to August 8, 2024," the carrier said in a social media post.

The airline also said it was extending support to passengers with confirmed bookings for travel to and from Tel Aviv during this period, with a one-time waiver on rescheduling and cancellation charges. On Thursday, Air India cancelled its flight to Tel Aviv. Tensions continue to remain high in the Middle East amid conflict between Israel and various groups, including Hamas. Earlier this year also, AI had briefly suspended flights to Tel Aviv at different points of time due to the Middle East tensions. After nearly five months, the carrier had recommenced the services to the Israeli city on March 3. Air India had suspended flights to and from Tel Aviv starting on October 7, 2023, after the Hamas group's attack on the Israeli city.

Vig raids Chief Construction Engineer



85 plots, market complex among assets found

PNS ■ BALESWAR / CUTTACK:

The Vigilance police on Friday conducted simultaneous searches on the properties linked to Pravas Kumar Pradhan, Chief Construction Engineer, Anandpur Barrage Project (Salapada) in Keonjhar district, on the allegations of possession of disproportionate assets.

The raids were underway at seven places in Baleswar district. As per reports, vigilance sleuths have so far traced a five-storied building in Jaleswar of 12,500 sqft, a market complex in Jaleswar of more than 5,000 sqft, 85 plots in the names of Pradhan and his family members in Odisha and West Ben-

gal. Vigilance officials have also found Rs 11 lakh of cash during the raid.

Out of the 85 plots detected, 80 are in Jaleswar in Baleswar, four plots in Delanga of Puri district and one plot in Sunakanika in West Bengal. The total registered sale deed value of the plots comes to over Rs 2 crore. However, the actual value is likely to be higher, which is being verified.

Besides, the plots and cash, 218 grams gold, including a gold biscuit, were unearthed. Bank, postal, insurance and other deposits were being ascertained. A four-wheeler (Indica car) and a two-wheeler (Honda Activa) too were found in his possession.

As further investigations were ongoing, the valuation of Pradhan's assets is likely to increase.

Building caves in, three killed in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least three people were reportedly killed on Friday after a portion of a two-storey building collapsed in northwest Delhi's Jahangirpuri area. According to police officials, a call was received from the Jahangirpuri area at around 12:50 pm about a house collapse and five fire tenders were rushed to the site. A police official said, "A few more people might still be trapped underneath the rubble and a rescue operation is underway."

A police officer said a 45-year-old Mukesh Kumar was injured in the incident. "He was taken to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries," the senior police official said.

Two more persons, including a woman, were pulled out of the rubble and were declared dead, the officer said. Another officer said the two-storey building housed a garment factory. "There was some repair work going on inside the building when it was collapsed," he added. The Delhi Fire Service (DFS) officials said they received an emergency call at 12:51 pm. The local police and other rescue teams were mobilised to assist the rescue efforts, officials said, adding the rescue operation is underway.

Govt issues draft notification to declare Western Ghats eco-sensitive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has issued a draft notification to designate over 56,800 square kilometres of the Western Ghats as Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA), including 9,993.7 sq km in Kerala, which encompasses 13 villages in landslide-hit Wayanad. The Government has invited suggestions and objections within 60 days.

The notification which proposes banning mining, quarrying, new thermal power projects, and large-scale construction in these areas, while allowing repairs and renovations of existing structures was issued on July 31, a day after a series of landslides claimed over 300 lives in Wayanad district. Existing healthcare facilities and property ownership changes will be unaffected.



The move follows the 2011 recommendations of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel led by Madhav Gadgil.

Overall, the notification includes 449 sq km in Gujarat, 17,340 sq km in Maharashtra, 1,461 sq km in Goa, 20,668 sq km in Karnataka, 6,914 sq km in Tamil Nadu, and 9,993.7 sq km in Kerala in the proposed ESA.

Kanwariyas get rousing welcome



A helicopter showers flower petals on 'Kanwariyas', at Pura Mahadev Temple in Baghpatt

PTI

Rise in misleading ads during Covid reported

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

During the Covid-19 pandemic when the entire world was hankering after life saving solutions, a disturbing rise in misleading advertisements in the Ayush sector was noticed with the quacks taking advantage of the public's vulnerability amid the health crisis in India. As per the Government data, in 2020 alone, the first year of

the Covid-19, 5,861 cases of misleading advertisements were identified, including 171 related to Covid. This alarming trend escalated in 2021 with 8,144 cases reported, of which 43 were Covid-related. In the following year i.e. 2022, approximately 7,367 cases were documented, including four related to the Sars-Cov-19 induced infections. In contrast, there were 4,395 cases of misleading



advertisements in 2019 and just 411 in 2018, highlighting the disturbing growth of deceptive practices during a critical period when the entire world was looking for Covid cure.

To combat this issue, Pharmacovigilance Centres have been established across the country to monitor and report suspicious ads and ensure the safety of Ayush drugs. "Under the

pharmacovigilance programme, a total of 38,539 misleading advertisements related to Ayush drugs were identified and reported to the State Licensing Authorities (SLAs) for potential action against the offenders in the past five years," said Union Minister of Ayush, Pratap Rao Jadhav. However, these reports are generally mild in nature, said the Minister replying to a query in Rajya Sabha.

Stray dogs bring man beaten and buried by foes back to life

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AGRA/NEW DELHI

In a shocking and almost surreal incident in Agra, a man in his mid-thirties has narrated a harrowing tale of survival. He said he was attacked, strangled, and buried alive by four men over a land dispute. Defying the odds, his miraculous escape came through an unexpected quarters: A pack of stray dogs, who unearthed him and saved his life.

Roop Kishore, in a spine-chilling account, recounted the ordeal he endured on July 18 in Agra's Artoni area. He said he was

allegedly assaulted by four men — Ankit, Gaurav, Karan, and Akash.

The attack culminated in the assailants strangling Kishore and burying him alive on their farm, under the assumption that he was dead.

In a turn of good luck, Kishore's survival can be attributed to a pack of stray dogs. The dogs, foraging for food, dug up the area where Kishore was buried and began biting his exposed flesh.

The sharp pain caused Kishore to regain consciousness. Drawing on a surge of adrenaline and sheer willpower, Kishore



managed to free himself and walked to a nearby village. There, local residents recognised him and promptly rushed him to the hospital, where he is currently receiving medical treatment.

Kishore's mother, Roop Ramvati, provided additional details, revealing that the accused had forcibly taken her son from their home before subjecting him to the assault.

Their intention to dispose of him in a ditch on their farm seemed foolproof until fate intervened. Neeraj Sharma, the Station House Officer (SHO) of the Sikandra Police Station,

confirmed that an FIR has been lodged against the four accused men.

The police are actively searching for them to bring them to justice. In her distress, Ramvati, who filed the case, expressed her anguish and the family's trauma. As the investigation progresses, the community remains gripped by the sheer brutality of the crime and the miraculous survival of Kishore.

Deepak Kumar said his brother Kishore, who has a six-month-old daughter, worked in a shoe factory. Kishore's mother said on July 18, there was a dispute between two

groups in the locality and Roop had objected to a man using "abusive language."

"Initially, the local police at Sikandra neither sent my son for a medical exam nor registered a case. I had to hire a lawyer and approach police commissioner. The FIR was registered on Thursday, about 13 days after the incident," Ramvati pointed out.

Agra Police said an FIR has been registered against four men under sections 109 (attempt to murder), 115 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 351 (criminal intimidation) of BNS on the basis of a complaint.

69% infants breastfed within 1 hr of birth in Odisha

National average is 42%

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
On the occasion of the World Breastfeeding Week, the Directorate of Family Welfare and UNICEF informed that in Odisha, as per NFHS-5, 68.5% of infants are breastfed within the first hour of birth, which is significantly higher than the national average of 41.8%. The rate of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is 72.9% in Odisha, compared to the national average of 63.7%.
The World Breastfeeding

Week (WBW) is celebrated from August 1 to 7. This year's campaign theme, 'Closing the gap: Breastfeeding support for all', emphasises on the need to ensure that all mothers have access to the support that they need.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF recommend that infants be breastfed within the first hour of birth and exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life, with no other foods or liquids provided during this period. After six months, infants should start eating safe, adequate, and diverse complementary foods

while continuing breastfeeding up to two years or beyond.

"The Government supports breastfeeding through 12 BFHI-accredited hospitals (more being accredited), Comprehensive Lactation Management Centres in 2 hospitals, Lactation Management Units in 18 locations (with 7 more forthcoming) and promoting skin-to-skin contact through Kangaroo Mothers' care (KMC). Additionally, 31 Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF)counselling centres are set up at District Headquarters Hospitals. The 'MAA'

programme has trained Medical Officers, Staff Nurses, ANMs, ASHAs, and AWWs in IYCF across the State," said

Sourav Bhattacharjee, Nutrition Specialist at UNICEF Odisha, further elaborated on the theme, stating, "This year's theme, 'Closing the Gap - Breastfeeding Support for All,' emphasizes that many women face breastfeeding challenges due to structural barriers and aggressive formula marketing. Solutions include comprehensive policies, healthcare improvements, and community initiatives," said Director Family Welfare Dr Sanjukta Sahoo.

Passenger airport at Charbatia demanded

Mahtab pleads in Lok Sabha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Cuttack BJP MP Bhartruhari Mahtab on Friday demanded quick steps by the Central Government to convert the Charbatia airfield in Cuttack district into a full-fledged airport with passenger flight operation.

Raising the issue in Lok Sabha, he said an airport at Charbatia would spur significant development activities as it would become a key transportation hub in the region.

Stating that the Defence airfield at Charbatia-Choudwar was constructed by

the Americans during the Second World War, he said it is being maintained by the air defence. As most of the defence air traffic has shifted to Midnapore in West Bengal, this airfield is scarcely used.

Mahtab said many industries have come up in and around Cuttack; and NALCO township is hardly 50 km from this place. Steel plants have also come up in a big way at Kalinganagar, which is 60 km from Charbatia while Paradip is around 70 km from there. So, the Charbatia airfield may be converted into a passenger airport or passenger air traffic may be allowed to land in Charbatia.

State to bring potatoes from UP



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a major shift from its policy the State Government on Thursday decided to bring potatoes from Uttar Pradesh, thereby reducing dependency on West Bengal, ostensibly to check the Bengal Government for its unilateral decisions to stop vehicles bound to Odisha.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Food Supplies and Consumer

Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra held in the presence of departmental Secretary Vir Vikram Jadav and Odisha Traders' Association secretary Sudhakar Panda.

Patra said the Bengal Government created problems in different times which blocked steady supply of potatoes to Odisha. "Today also, we got some truckloads of potatoes from Uttar Pradesh, and the volume would increase later," Patra stated.

Mountaineer Bibharani meets CM



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Mountaineer Bibharani Patra on Friday met Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and sought his blessings for her upcoming expedition. From August 6, Bibharani would attempt to climb Mount Albros, which is Russia and Europe's highest peak. The Chief Minister, felicitating Bibharani, said her courageous

feat would encourage the youth community. Majhi said she would successfully climb the highest peak and bring glory for her and the State.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling was present during the meeting.

Notably, Bibharani is a native of Meramunduli near Talcher. She has won many national and international awards.

Gujarati bizzman missing; car found

Suspected to have jumped into Kathajodi

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Gujarati businessman, Tushar Bhatt, of the Patia area in Bhubaneswar is missing from Wednesday. It is suspected that Tushar has ended his life by jumping off the Trisulia bridge into the Kathajodi river.

Such suspicion has been raised as Tushar's car and shoes have been recovered from the Trisulia bridge.

Earlier, locals had alerted the Barang police about the vehicle, which was parked on the

Trisulia bridge for a long time. It is suspected that Tushar resorted to such an extreme step after suffering some loss in online trading

Sources said Tushar had left home on Wednesday at around 2 pm and didn't return. Later, his wife lodged a complaint with the police.

Earlier on Wednesday, a woman from Odia Bazar in Cuttack had allegedly jumped off the Trisulia bridge in a similar fashion. The woman Mamata Sahu's two-wheeler was also recovered from the Trisulia bridge. Despite a massive search operation, Mamata's body could not be traced from the river.

Journalism Prof Mahapatra no more

PNS ■ BRAHMAMPUR

Radip Mahapatra, former Senior Professor and Head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC) Berhampur University passed away at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar on Friday. He was 70.

Dr Mahapatra was suffering from pneumonia and had been battling severe lung and brain infections for some time. He was referred to the Apollo Hospital in Bhubaneswar from a hospital in Brahmampur.

His wife Professor Manoj Manjari Pattnaik and close relatives were present.

Later, a meeting was convened here presided over by 'Nabin' editor Rabi Rath where deep grief was expressed over Mahapatra's demise.



Prominent figures of the city such as Krishna Chandra Tripathy, Dr Damrudhar Sahu, Ramakrishna Patra, Manju Rath, Sushant Kar, Ranjan Kumar Sahu, Pabitra Chaudhury and Ananta Jena paid heartfelt tributes to Mahapatra's enduring legacy.

Collection during July Odisha records 24.98% growth in State GST

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha registered a growth rate of 24.98% with a collection of Rs 2,035.18 crore under State GST (OGST + IGST Settlement) during July 2024 against Rs 1,628.43 crore during the corresponding period last year, a government release said on Friday.

It further stated that the progressive collection under State

GST till July 2024 stood at Rs 8,866.95 crore against the corresponding collection of Rs 7,055.53 crore till July 2023 with a growth rate of 25.67%.

"Odisha has also recorded collection of Gross GST (CGST+IGST+ OGST + Cess) of Rs 4,925.02 crore during July 2024 against Rs 4,245.40 crore during the corresponding period last year, registering a growth rate of 16.01%. The progressive

collection under Gross GST up to July 2024 stands at Rs 20,841.33 crore against a collection of Rs 18,058.84 crore up to July 2023 with a growth rate of 15.41%," it said.

There was an 18.15% increase in the collection under all Acts monitored by the Commissionerate of CT & GST, Odisha, including OGST/IGST Settlement / VAT and Profession Tax, with Rs

3,209.66 crore in July 2024 against Rs 2,716.52 crore during the corresponding period last year. The progressive growth rate up to July 2024 under all Acts stood at 19.60%. The release added that 21.02 lakh of waybills were generated in July 2024 compared to 20.13 lakh in July 2023, recording a growth of 4.44%, reflecting a buoyancy in the State economy.

In Rayagada, Kalahandi Vedanta holds blood donation drive



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Vedanta Aluminium recently organised a blood donation camp in the Sijimali area in tribals-dominated Rayagada and Kalahandi districts.

The camp was inaugurated by Thuamul Rampur Block Development Officer Dhuruv Charan Munduli. The event drew participation from employee-volunteers of Vedanta

Aluminium, their families, business partners and the local community.

They all collectively donated over 30 units of blood to the Blood Bank in Bhawanipatna, district headquarters of Kalahandi.

Munduli said, "Blood donation is a noble cause that saves life. I commend the efforts of Vedanta Aluminium for stepping up and supporting this important cause."

Since the blood banks in remote areas often face challenges in maintaining adequate blood supplies for emergencies, the Vedanta Aluminium is enhancing local healthcare through initiatives like blood donation drives as well as by supporting the local administration in ensuring that medical centres and facilities are well-equipped so that they could manage medical crises more effectively.

Fresh low pressure to trigger heavy rains

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Under the influence of the cyclonic circulation over Gangetic West Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh, a fresh low-pressure area has been formed over Gangetic West Bengal and adjoining Jharkhand.

The new cyclonic circulation is very likely to trigger heavy to very heavy rainfall in Odisha, according to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).

"The system will have its impact on Odisha for the next couple of days with many areas in the State expecting heavy to very heavy rainfall activities. Extreme rainfall can be expected for two days, said the weather office.

Though many places are expected to receive 20-cm rainfall, places in north Odisha have recorded deficit rainfall. So, there is low chance of floods, said the IMD.

Landslide threats in hilly dists in State

Wayanad tragedy wakeup call for Odisha Govt

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAMPUR

Landslides have become a growing threat in the hilly regions of Odisha, particularly in districts like Gajapati, Koraput, Malkangiri, Kandhamal and Rayagada.

Notably, the recent tragic events in Kerala's Wayanad have underscored the urgent need for proactive measures to safeguard vulnerable communities. Recognizing this, there is a rising demand for the Odisha Government to implement a comprehensive strategy to mitigate landslide risks, raise awareness, and provide direct assistance to the affected residents.

To reduce the risk of landslides, it is crucial for the Odisha Government to invest in robust infrastructure im-

provements. Constructing retaining walls, terraces, and efficient drainage systems will stabilize vulnerable slopes and prevent landslides. An extensive afforestation programme is needed to plant trees and vegetation that bind the soil, reducing erosion and landslide risk. The installation of advanced landslide early warning systems and weather monitoring stations will provide timely alerts to at-risk communities.

Enhancing community preparedness is essential for minimizing the impact of landslides. The Government should conduct regular training sessions for local communities on disaster preparedness and response, ensuring that residents know how to act during emergencies.

Developing and disseminat-

ing clear evacuation plans and routes is necessary to ensure all residents are aware of the safest paths to take in the event of a landslide.

Continuous research and monitoring are vital for understanding and mitigating landslide risks. The Government must perform detailed geological surveys to identify high-risk areas and monitor changes in the landscape that could indicate impending landslides.

Partnering with geologists and environmental scientists will help study landslide patterns and develop effective mitigation strategies based on the latest research.

Raising awareness about landslide risks and safety measures is a key component of the strategy that the Odisha Government needs to adopt.

Educational programmes, including workshops in schools and community centers, should be organised to educate people about the causes, risks, and preventive measures related to landslides.

The Government should distribute informative leaflets, posters, and booklets that provide practical safety tips. Local radio stations like Brahmampur, Mohana and Phulbani should be used to broadcast safety tips, weather updates, and emergency procedures, while social media platforms can share real-time updates and educational videos. Regular meetings with village leaders and community representatives will ensure the effective dissemination of information and preparedness plans. Identifying and training local champions

will create points of contact and lead community initiatives.

Providing direct assistance to residents in vulnerable areas is vital for their safety and well-being. The Government should develop safe housing projects in less risky areas for residents currently living in the most vulnerable zones. Financial support must be offered to families affected by landslides for rebuilding their homes and livelihoods. Training and resources for sustainable farming practices will reduce soil erosion and landslide risks, while promoting alternate livelihood options that are environmentally safer and less dependent on hill farming. A dedicated relief fund should be established to provide immediate assistance to landslide victims, and emergency sup-

plies such as food, water, and medical aid should be distributed following a landslide.

Regular medical camps will address health issues related to landslides, including injuries and waterborne diseases, and counselling and psychological support should be provided to residents affected by the trauma of landslides.

"Our communities have lived in these hills for generations, but the increasing frequency of landslides is a clear sign that something needs to change. We need the Government to not only provide immediate relief but also to invest in long-term solutions that will protect our homes and livelihoods. Education, infrastructure, and sustainable practices are crucial for our survival," Mulnivasi Manch convenor Rabi Rathan said.

Khallikote Univ's problems yet to be over

Even as it celebrates 147th Foundation Day
RAJEEV RATHAN
■ BRAHMAMAPUR

On the 147th Foundation Day of Khallikote Unitary University, celebrated on Thursday in Brahmmapur, Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj announced that all demands of the university would be fulfilled. Discussions have been ongoing for nine years regarding the conversion of Khallikote Autonomous College into a university in Brahmmapur. Over the period, three universities have been established in the name of the college, yet none has managed to function permanently.

Currently, the university is celebrating its third foundation day on August 1, 2024, but even after three years of establishment, it has not been recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Consequently, Khallikote University has become an experimental laboratory for the State Higher Education Department.

Khallikote is the oldest educational institution in south Odisha, having started during the British rule. It was declared Khallikote Cluster University by the State Higher Education Department on May 30, 2015. With a new design, a cluster university was formed with five nearby colleges, while Khallikote Autonomous College was considered the lead college of the new university.



However, the cluster university's research initiative failed, leading to the Higher Education Department changing its status to Khallikote University (Research) on June 1, 2020.

The university operated from a private Kalyan Mandap far from the city with a monthly income of about Rs

11 lakh. Subsequently, the five colleges initially affiliated with the cluster university were deaffiliated and asked to reaffiliate with their former university. Khallikote University (Research) could not sustain for long and was merged with Berhampur University on September 30, 2021.

Earlier, on May 11, 2021,

the State Government issued a gazette notification upgrading Khallikote Autonomous College to Khallikote University, effective from August 1, 2021. Despite completing three years as a standalone university, it has not been recognized by the UGC, leaving the research courses and professor appointments in limbo.

The lack of UGC recognition remains a significant issue. The notification issued by the Higher Education Department on May 11, 2021, regarding the establishment of a standalone university in Khallikote, has not been passed by the Assembly.

The procedural lapse has led to UGC withholding recognition. Consequently, the certificates of UG and PG students who have studied at

Khallikote over the past nine years face potential validity issues.

In the current Assembly session, a legislator from Ganjam district raised the issue with the Higher Education Minister. In response, the Minister assured that immediate steps would be taken to get the university recognized by the UGC. Meanwhile, the lack of UGC recognition has led to increasing student unrest in Brahmmapur.

Recent days have seen demonstrations and marches by university students and multiple organizations. Many educationists believe that Khallikote University has been made a testing ground by the Higher Education Department, as no other university in the State has faced such complex challenges.

INBRIEF

UTKAL SAMMILANI SEEKS LAND IN BBSR

Bhubaneswar: A delegation of the Utkal Sammilani met new Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj on Thursday and felicitated him. The delegation submitted a proposal for setting up a memorial at the Idgah Ground in Cuttack, where the first



convention of Utkal Sammilani was held in 1903. Besides, the delegation requested the Minister for half an acre of land in Bhubaneswar in favour of the organisation and sanction of funds for construction of a building on it. The Minister was also requested to try that Odia gets second language status in Jharkhand. Utkal Sammilani president Ananta Prasad Jena, vice-president Rabi Ranjan Sahu, general secretary Dillip Dashsharma and Gobinda Charan Subudhi were members of the delegation.

JP DAS GETS ADDITIONAL CHARGE AS OCAC CEO

Bhubaneswar: The State Government on Wednesday appointed IAS officer Jyoti Prakash Das as the CEO, Odisha Computer Application Centre (OCAC). He replaced Manoj Kumar Patnaik. According to a notification issued by the General Administration Department, Das, a 2010-batch IAS officer, will continue to serve as Director, Special Project, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Department, with additional charge of Director, Roti.



IFFCO OFFICERS' ASSN ELECTS NEW OFFICE-BEARERS

Paradip: The IFFCO Officers' Association has elected its office-bearers for a three-year term, 2024-2027. Sushant Kumar Jena has been elected as president, Satyajit Khuntia general



secretary, Lingaraj Mishra vice-president, Jyoti Ranjan Swain joint secretary, Simanchal Panda organising secretary and Prabhat Kumar Pradhan treasurer. IFFCO Director KJ Patel and other officers extended congratulations to the newly-elected members.

KAWARIA DIES AS HE SUFFERS CARDIAC ARREST

Kendrapada: A Kawaria of Mahakalapada died as he suffered a cardiac arrest and collapsed while moving with a water pot on the Cuttack-Chandabali road under the Salepur police limits on Friday. The deceased was identified as Bulu Barik, 35, of Barakandha village under the Mahakalapada police station. Some youths of Barkandha under the banner of Chandrasekhar Bolbom group had lifted water from the Mahanadi river at Gadagadi Ghat in Cuttack and begun moving to Kendrapada on the Cuttack-Chandabali road to pour water on the local Shiva idol on coming Monday. The deceased is survived by his wife and two minor sons.

MAN HELD FOR KILLING FATHER IN SUNDARGARH

Rourkela: Police on Thursday arrested a person for allegedly killing his father at Kurumkela village under the Lephrapada police station in Sundargarh district. The arrested was identified as Nityananda bag (40). According to sources, Nityananda asked his father Sudan about their landed properties and told the latter that their land was being encroached. When Sudan said he was helpless to do anything, Nityananda in a fit of rage attacked him with an axe. Sudan died on the spot. Neighbours nabbed Nityananda and handed him over to police.

QMHS ALUMNI FELICITATE RETIRED TEACHERS

Brahmapur: The 1973 Matric batch of Queen of the Missions Govt. High School (QMHS) felicitated two teachers by visiting their residence with flower bouquets, shawls, umbrellas, etc. The retired teachers are Sitaran Sadangi and NCC Naval Unit teacher Sibaram Panigrahi. The former students inquired about their health and wellbeing and assured them of help whenever needed. President of the Alumni body Ramakrishna Sahu, secretary Ramani Ranjan Ray, Rabindra Patnaik, Ashok, Bhabani, Madhu, Sanatan Jena, Bibhuti, Manoranjan, G Ram, Surendra and others were present.

JAGATSIINGHPUR SCRIBE PARIDA REMEMBERED

Jagatsinghpur: Jagatsinghpur's veteran scribe and non-prison freedom fighter Baidyanath Parida was remembered on his first death anniversary observed at his native Patana village, six km from here on Wednesday. A remembrance meeting was organised where family members and people from various walks of life converged and paid tributes to Parida. Village chief Niranjan Parida chaired the meeting. The late Parida's son Amarnath Parida, who is also a journalist, and other relatives coordinated the event.



8 inter-State dacoits held in Balangir

Gang sold balloon in day, committed crimes at night
PNS ■ BALANGIR

The Balangir police on Friday busted an inter-State criminal gang involved in dacoity and other crimes in Odisha by arresting eight persons. Most of the gang members are from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

A senior police official said the gang members used to sell balloons and other plastic items in the localities during the daytime. Later, they used to commit several crimes, including robberies, during

night. The gang had unleashed terror among the local residents while the police were left clueless about the surge in dacoities and other crimes. However, the gang was nabbed based on CCTV and IT surveillance.

A goldsmith from Barpali, who was receiving the stolen goods, has also been arrested.

"The gang was involved in a number of crimes in Patnagarh, Balangir town and Khaprakhol areas. During festivals, the criminals were mostly active. Some members of the gang are absconding and they will be nabbed soon," said the police official.

PPBS protests undue interference by non-traders



PNS ■ PARADIP

The Paradip Port Banika Sangha (PPBS) held a press conference on Friday to address the ongoing interference and false accusations made by non-traders. The non-traders, allegedly acting for political purposes, have been making baseless accusations against the PPBS president and are interfering in the union's activities while claiming to support the local MLA, minister and MP. An individual in question has a history of legal troubles, including harassment of his own father-in-law.

The union raised concerns about whether the minister and the MP are genuinely interested in protecting and developing the interests of local businessmen or if they aim to replace union workers and take control of the organisation. To address these issues, a 12-member delegation from PPBS plans to meet with the

minister and the MP to advocate for traders' interests. The delegation will also request the port authorities to withdraw the recent increase in shop rents and make arrangements for permanent accommodation for the traders.

During the press conference, PPBS general secretary Debabrata Sahu defended Santosh Kumar Pattnaik, who has been serving as the PPBS president for 16 years. He refuted the false allegations against Pattnaik and highlighted the improvements and achievements of the union under his leadership. Sahu also mentioned that the union has filed a case in the Orissa High Court against the port's shop rent increase, demanding its withdrawal.

Prominent members of the union, including Laxman Nayak, Ayas Kant Samal, Rajendra Prasad Bala, and hundreds of businessmen were present.

Grand celebrations for 'Sambalpuri Din' held

Guv, CM, local MP wish people on the day
NIMAI CHARAN SAHU
■ SAMBALPUR

On the occasion of Sambalpuri Din (Day), which is celebrated on the birth anniversary of Sambalpuri literature and grammar pioneer Guru Satya Narayan Bohidar, grand celebrations took place at Kacheri Chowk and Gangadhar Mandap in town, where people enjoyed the folk songs and dance of old and new artists.

People were seen flaunting apparels made of Sambalpuri handloom and eating tradi-



tional food. The people of Sambalpur and western Odisha who take pride in their culture and tradition were dipped in the fervour.

CM Mohan Charan Majhi, Governor Raghuraj Das and Sambalpur MP Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan gave video messages to people and wished people in Sambalpuri language.

In his video message, Pradhan was seen wearing a Sambalpuri jacket to mark the occasion. He started his message with Jai Maa Samle and continued his wishes in Sambalpuri language. He said, "People will remember the sacrifice and dedication of Guru Shri Satya Narayan Bohidar. For top class research on Sambalpuri culture and history,

we have established the Rangabati Centre for Excellence in IIM Sambalpur. It's a matter of pride and joy. Sambalpuri Culture is a culture of being happy in others' happiness. Let's celebrate the Day of Sambalpuri Asmita."

The programme was attended by Minister of Drinking Water and Panchayati Raj Rabi Nayak, Sambalpur MLA Jayanarayan Mishra, and Minister of Revenue and disaster Management Suresh Pujari. On the other hand, Nistha Parivaar, a social organisation in Bargarh, organised a blood donation camp on the occasion of Sambalpuri Day. They collected 40 units of blood for the blood bank in Bargarh.

Periodicals' editors plead for advertisement

Meet CM Majhi
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Editors of several weekly, fortnightly, and monthly newspapers published from Odisha have requested Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to restart the system of giving the messages of the Governor, Chief Minister and Ministers of various departments through the Information and Public Relations Department for publication in their newspapers as earlier.

In a memorandum submitted to the CM, the editors also requested that the advertisement for the publication of the government's developmental



work on Republic Day, Utkal Diwas, Independence Day and the annual functions of the newspapers be given to them.

They also requested for renewal of health insurance under the Gopababdh Health scheme.

The editors also demanded permission to the authorised mediapersons to enter the Lok Seva Bhavan, Rajiv Bhavan, and Kharvela Bhavan and to consider the

applications of journalists for accreditations lying pending in the I & PR Department for a long.

The CM told the mediapersons that he would decide the matters after consulting officials of the department.

Among others, senior Journalist Pradyumna Mohanty, Debakanta Mohapatra, Ajay Kumar Das, Ashok Kumar Sahu and Madhabananda Beura were present.

In addition, the editors also submitted copies of the memorandum to I&PR Director Saroj Kumar Samal and Director (Technical) Surendra Kumar Parida.

Make AIIMS B'swar unit full-fledged: Sarangi

Baleswar MP also raises Rasgovindpur airstrip issue
PNS ■ BALESWAR

Baleswar MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi raised the issue of AIIMS satellite centre here and Rasgovindpur airstrip in the Parliament urging the early intervention of the concerned Ministry.

Sarangi, besides expressing

concern over the current extended services of AIIMS satellite centre said only in two days in a week the doctors from AIIMS Bhubaneswar visit for OPD here. As a result, the patients of north Odisha as well as neighbouring States who depend on the hospital remain largely disappointed.

Urging the Union Health Minister to make the unit as full-fledged, Sarangi also urged to fill the posts of doctors and paramedics which have

been lying vacant for years. He also pointed out that the condition of the building where the hospital is running is deteriorating owing to want of maintenance and care. These issues are causing public discontentment, he said.

The lawmaker further suggested the Bhubaneswar AIIMS could conduct classes in an extended training centre in the interest of the public.

Further, on the issue of

abandoned British era airstrip at Rasgovindpur, Sarangi said the demand for making it functional was a long pending one of the people of not only Baleswar or Mayurbhanj but the entire State too. The ministry was apprised several times earlier of the project. The airstrip close to Baleswar would boost economic activities of north Odisha as the district (Baleswar) is well connected by rail and road, he said.

221 Hirakud Dam displaced get land Patta

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

As many as 221 Hirakud dam displaced families received land pattas in Rengali block of Sambalpur district on Thursday.

The long-standing demand of people who could not get land pattas will be met by the Government of Odisha in different phases, said Minister of Revenue and Disaster Management, Suresh Pujari, in a programme at Kurla village of Rengali block, while distributing land pattas of 10 decimals each to people of Kurla and Thunti Katarbaga villages in



Rengali. 168 pattas to Kurla and 53 to Thuti Katarbaga were distributed in the programme. The Minister reminded how members of a family went missing and got separated in the rush to save their lives when Hirakud

dam released the first floodwater.

Pujari stated, "Then the Government had arranged hundreds of trucks for people to leave the area. These trucks shifted people to separate places in

Ambabhona, Lakanpur, Sareipali village of Chhattisgarh. As there were no phones, they got separated."

"In the governance of Mohan Majhi, a new era has begun. As per the decision of

the Government, the third or fourth generation of people displaced will get 10 decimals of land. I believe all the remaining displaced people will get land pattas in the coming five years," Pujari stated. He also assured the people below the poverty line with land of 4 decimals.

"Any poor not having land in villages or cities will get 4 decimal land pattas within one year. The tribal people residing in forests without patta will get it. There will be no poor in the State without a house and land ownership," the Minister assured. In the coming five years,

the poor will have ownership of land and a Pradhan Mantri house. Tap water will also be distributed to every house. The patta distribution will start in Bargarh district soon, he informed.

Speaking about his roots and dedication for his native place, he said, "I will come to my area every weekend. I will regularly come to my area and attend various programmes including land patta distribution. The survey on the landless people is underway; once it's over the Odisha Government will distribute land pattas on a priority basis."

Deaf, dumb girl raped in Kendrapada

Police begin probe after complaint lodged
PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

The Kendrapada Sadar police has registered a case against a person for allegedly raping a deaf and dumb girl and making her pregnant.

According to police sources, one Kabir Behera, a resident of Nayagarh, who was staying in a rented house near the victim's house, raped the girl taking advantage of her physi-

cal disability.

As the victim cannot speak, she failed to inform the matter to anybody. But after the girl recently felt pain in her abdomen, her mother took her to the District Headquarters Hospital. It was revealed from the test report that the victim was seven-month pregnant. Later, the girl also identified the accused.

As a result, the mother of the victim lodged an FIR at the Sadar police station. The cops have begun a probe after registering a case.

Govt moves to rejuvenate water bodies in coal, lignite mining regions

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In line with its goal to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030, the Government has launched an initiative to rejuvenate and create at least 500 water bodies in coal and lignite mining regions over the next five years till 2029 that also aims to ensure ecological balance. Deforestation, mining and industrial activities are some of the leading causes of desertification across the world. India's total degraded land is equivalent to the size of 43 million football pitches, according to UN Convention

to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Centering around the fact that water bodies created within the reclaimed dump in the mining areas, not only help in rain water harvesting but also enhance flora and fauna in the region, the Ministry of Coal, in collaboration with Coal / Lignite Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs), district administrations, and gram panchayats, recently launched the project "Rejuvenation of Traditional Water Bodies in Coal / Lignite Mining Regions." Union Minister of Coal and

Mines, G Kishan Reddy after releasing comprehensive guidelines for the programme said that effectively utilizing mine water addresses the ecological impacts of mining by transforming a potential challenge into an opportunity for positive change. "This innovative approach includes various strategies, such as empowering self-help groups (SHGs) to operate floating restaurants on water-filled mine-pits. These floating restaurants provide new economic opportunities for local communities while enhancing local tourism," he added.



This ambitious project also aims to offer new opportunities for local communities and wildlife as CPSUs will manage water bodies within leasehold areas, while District Collectors will handle the water bodies

outside the leasehold area. Each new water body will have a pondage area of at least 0.4 hectares and a capacity of around 10,000 cubic meters. The UN General Assembly has declared 2021-2030 as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, pledging to restore 1 billion hectares of land, an area larger than China, by 2030 to combat the ecosystem degradation crisis. India being a signatory to the UNCCD, has developed the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification, 2023 with the aim to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land and create an additional

carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent by 2030 through increased forest and tree cover. Many big mining companies like Tata Steel are already taking such initiatives that include afforestation through Miyawaki plantations, greenbelt development, plantation through seedballs in hard-to-reach areas, mine reclamation through plantation activities and water body creation with the help of the communities and local stakeholders. Amrit Lal Meena, Coal Secretary added that the project "Rejuvenation of

Traditional Water Bodies in Coal/Lignite Mining Regions," will now serve as a CSR initiative by Coal/Lignite CPSUs, including Coal India Limited (CIL) and NLC India Limited (NLCIL). Also, "in fiscal 2023-2024, approximately 4,892 LKL of treated mine water was offered to 981 villages in coal/lignite-bearing states. Over the past five years, 18,513 LKL of mine water has been made available for community use, including irrigation and drinking purposes, said Minister of State for Coal and Mines, Satish Chandra Dubey.

Opp, BJP spar over Rahul's ED raid claim

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday claimed that an Enforcement Directorate raid is being planned against him after his 'chakravayuh' speech in Parliament which was however dismissed by BJP which said the senior Congress Leader is creating a new narrative to distract people from asking about his accountability as the MP from Wayanad following the devastating landslide tragedy there. In a social media post Rahul Gandhi said, "Apparently, 2 in 1 didn't like my Chakravayuh speech. ED insiders tell me a raid is being planned. Waiting with open arms for ED's tea and biscuits to be served on me". In another development, Congress MP Manickam Tagore submitted a notice to move an adjournment motion on "the BJP Government's misuse of agencies like the ED, CBI, and Income Tax for political harassment". Reacting to Rahul Gandhi's claim, BJP Leader and former Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the former Congress chief might have been told that people are



asking questions about his accountability so he has sought to create a new narrative. However, several Congress and Opposition leaders rallied behind Rahul and accused the Government of "misusing" probe agencies. Rashtriya Loktantrik Party and Nagaur MP Hanuman Ramdev Beniwal said Rahul was right and probe agencies are being misused by the Centre. While Independent MP Pappu Yadav said the tendency of the government and ED is to scare people but ED does not have an iota of fear in him, AAP MP Sanjay Singh said the government's intention of putting ED and CBI against Gandhi could be because of him exposing the government inside Parliament. Several Congress leaders accused the BJP of misusing government agencies and asserted that Gandhi is not

the one to get scared by such tactics. Using the 'chakravayuh' metaphor as a leitmotif, Rahul Gandhi on Monday had claimed that an atmosphere of fear prevails all around with a group of six trapping the entire country in a 'chakravayuh' he promised would be broken by the INDIA bloc. Participating in the debate in the Lok Sabha on Budget 2024-25, Rahul had said the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will ensure that a legal guarantee for MSP as well as a caste census is passed by the House. Thousands of years ago in Haryana's Kurukshetra, six people killed a youth, Abhimanyu, in a 'chakravayuh', he had said, adding that a 'chakravayuh' has violence and fear. Rahul Gandhi's reference was to the Mahabharata legend according to which Abhimanyu was killed in a 'chakravayuh'. 'Chakravayuh' refers to a multi-layered military formation aimed at trapping a warrior by opponents placed strategically in an alignment resembling a lotus-shaped labyrinth.

Chouhan accuses Cong of having 'anti-farmer' DNA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday accused the Congress of having "anti-farmer" DNA, saying the party never gave priority to the farm sector throughout its rule post Independence. Replying to a discussion on the working of his ministry in the Rajya Sabha, Chouhan highlighted the work done by the Modi Government in the last 10 years and said the Centre is committed to providing remunerative prices of crops to farmers as well as urea and DAP fertilisers at highly subsidised rates. He said the Government has six priorities for the growth of the agriculture sector -- increasing farm production, reducing input cost for farming, providing remunerative prices to farmers, adequate relief to farmers in case of natural calamities, diversification and value addition in agriculture, and promoting natural farming. The Minister, also a former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, assured the opposition parties that the Central Government was open to considering their



concrete suggestions and would also try to implement the workable ones for farmers' welfare. In his one-hour unfinished long speech that will continue on Monday, Chouhan took on opposition parties for accusing the Modi Government of working against the interest of the farm sector and rejected the charges of reduction in allocation of funds to agriculture and allied sector in the Budget. He also dismissed the allegation that the Government was not buying enough quantity of foodgrains from farmers at the minimum support price (MSP). "Congress ke DNA mein hi kisan-virodh hai. Aaj se nahi, prarambh se hi Congress ki prathamiktayein galat rahi hai (Congress DNA is anti-farmer. Not from

today, but since the beginning), it has misplaced priorities," he said. Taking a dig at the Congress and its Leader Rahul Gandhi, Chouhan said that in Mahabharat, they remember only "Shakuni, Chausar and Chakravayuh", which represent "adharm" (unrighteousness), but "we remember only Lord Krishna". The Minister also said the agriculture sector was ignored, and priorities were misplaced during the Congress rule. People had to eat bad wheat imported from America during the tenure of first Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru, he added. During the rule of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, he said, the Government used to forcibly collect levies from farmers. Late PM Rajiv Gandhi did talk about agriculture price policy but did not take any concrete steps to improve farmers' income, Chouhan said, adding that the late PV Narasimha Rao Government did not de-license the industries related to the farm sector. The Minister pointed out that the UPA rule from 2004-2014 was full of scams.

India to open Embassy in Timor-Leste, says official ahead of President visit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the first-ever presidential visit from India to Timor-Leste, a top Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) official said here on Friday that New Delhi will soon set up an Embassy in Dili, which will make the Delhi-Dili connect stronger. MEA Secretary (East) Jaideep Mazumdar told reporters here Timor-Leste has also announced its intention to open its Embassy in New Delhi. President Droupadi Murmu will undertake a six-day visit of Fiji, New Zealand and Timor-Leste beginning August 5, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) earlier announced. She will visit the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on August 10 at the invitation of President Jose Ramos-Horta. "We have announced the opening of our mission in Timor-Leste, Prime Minister Modi had announced this in September last year. And, we are well on the way to setting up our embassy, and we will be setting it up very soon,"



Mazumdar said. Timor-Leste, meanwhile, has also announced its intention to open its embassy in New Delhi, which "we have welcomed warmly," the MEA secretary said. "So, this will be the 'Delhi-Dili' connect which will only get stronger after the two embassies are opened," he said. Dili is the capital of Timor-Leste. India has "strong, deep and historical connect" with Fiji, New Zealand and Timor-Leste, Mazumdar said. Warm and friendly India-New Zealand ties have seen an uptick in recent years and the President's visit will give it further impetus, the secretary said.



Centre urged to be even-handed in providing help to Himachal, U'khand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Government should in bipartisan manner provide financial assistance to Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand where cloudbursts and accompanying landslides and floods have claimed nearly two dozen lives and several are still missing, Congress Leader Pramod Tiwari demanded in Rajya Sabha on Friday. Raising the issue through a zero hour mention, he said six people have died and 50 are missing following cloudbursts in Shimla, Mandi and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh. Three national highways as well as dozens of other roads have shut due to flooding, stranding tourists and other commuters. In neighbouring Uttarakhand, 16 people have died and many are missing following heavy rains. "Due to cloudburst in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, 22 people have died and 60 are missing," he said. He demanded that the central Government should provide adequate financial assistance. Tiruchi Siva (DMK) raised the welfare of gig workers. Stating that the number of gig workers in the Indian economy are projected to rise from an estimated 80 lakh currently to 2.3 crore by 2030, he said gig workers like those working as delivery partners with food ordering platforms Swiggy and Zomato and e-commerce companies, as well as drivers with ride hailing

apps such as Ola and Uber are vulnerable to unfair treatment. Kartikeya Sharma (Independent) wanted one Government hospital in each district of Haryana be upgraded to a super speciality centre for integrated medicines. DMK's M Shanmugam demanded strict monitoring of use of pesticides and chemicals in the agricultural sector, saying pesticides banned or restricted in many countries are still being used in India. Muzibulla Khan (BJD) sought direct flight from Delhi to Jagdalpur in Chattisgarh to ease travel of tourists and business executives who currently have to go via cities like Hyderabad and Raipur. Kanimozhi NVN Somu (DMK) demanded a public-private partnership model for accurate weather forecasting amid extremely harsh weather conditions, like unprecedented heavy rainfalls causing loss of lives and damage to property. She said the metrological department requires investments of several billion dollars. A public-private partnership model is more suitable for India to leverage the expertise of global private sector players in accurate weather forecasting well in advance, she said. In his Zero Hour mention, Maharaja Sanjaoba Leishemba (BJP) made a demand to expedite the ongoing infrastructure work for the national sports university in Manipur.

Rahul creating narrative to escape accountability on Wayanad, claims BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP took a swipe at Rahul Gandhi for his claim that an Enforcement Directorate (ED) raid is being planned against him, saying he is creating a new narrative to distract people from asking about his accountability as the MP from Wayanad following the devastating landslide tragedy there. He might have been told that people are asking questions about his accountability so he has sought to create a new narrative, BJP leader and former Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar told reporters. Rahul Gandhi has raised an imaginary issue to avoid questions related to Wayanad, he said, adding that local MP is the last person to reach there. People are asking about his accountability, he claimed. Union Minister and BJP ally



Lalan Singh was sharp in his take on the Leader of Opposition's claim, saying Rahul might have done something which he believes might result in such an action. "If someone does no wrong, then why will anything happen," he told reporters. Rahul was elected from Wayanad in the 2019 and 2024 polls. He gave up Wayanad as his

Lok Sabha seat this time and retained Rai Bareilly, another constituency he was elected from. The Congress has announced that his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will contest in the by-poll, which is yet to be announced. Both siblings are currently in Wayanad meeting the affected families. He had earlier said in a social media message post that an Enforcement Directorate raid is being planned against him after his 'chakravayuh' speech in Parliament. Rahul said he was "waiting with open arms". Chandrasekhar said the death of over 300 people, mostly poor, in the disaster is not just a tragedy but a crime. He blamed the successive State Governments since 2009 for this negligence in "commercial interest" and said the people of Wayanad have borne the cost.

Don't narrate stories, ask questions, Birla tells MP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Invoking the Mahabharat in the Lok Sabha is in vogue, Speaker Om Birla said on Friday while telling an MP not to narrate stories but ask to the-point questions. While asking a question to the Union Ayush Minister, BJP member from Odisha's Bargarh Pradip Purohit referred to an Ayurvedic college and traced back the history of the herbs found in the area to ancient times. "Do not tell stories, ask the question (aap Mahabharat mat sunao, aap prashna poocho)," Birla told the member during the Question Hour. The Speaker then said invoking the Mahabharat is in vogue these days. "Aaj kal, Mahabharat sunane ka kissa zyada chala hai yahan par,"



Birla said. Using the 'chakravayuh' metaphor as a leitmotif, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had earlier this week claimed that an atmosphere of fear prevails all around with a group of six trapping the entire country in a 'chakravayuh'. In a speech that invoked the Mahabharat, the former Congress chief alleged that the sole aim of the Union

Budget was to strengthen the framework of big businesses, political monopoly that destroys the democratic structure, and the deep State or the agencies. BJP's Anurag Thakur had hit back at Rahul, saying the Congress had laid several 'chakravayuh' for the country - the first being Partition of the nation, the second gift to Chinese, the third being imposition of Emergency, fourth being the Bofors scam and anti-Sikh riots, the fifth being spinning a narrative against the eternal religion (sanatan) and the sixth being hurting the politics of the country, its culture and traditions. Thakur had said Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the country out of the 'chakravayuh' of the Congress.

PM to open global meet of agri economists

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 32nd International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE) here on Saturday, an event which is being held in India after 65 years, an official statement said. The theme of the six-day triennial conference, organised by the International Association of Agricultural Economists, is Transformation towards Sustainable Agri-Food Systems. The conference will witness participation of around 1,000 delegates from around 75 countries. It aims to tackle the pressing need for sustainable agriculture in the face of global challenges such as climate change, natural resource degradation, rising production costs and conflicts, the Statement said. The conference will highlight India's proactive approach to



global agricultural challenges and showcase the nation's advancements in agricultural research and policy. "The ICAE 2024 will serve as a platform for young researchers and leading professionals to present their work and network with global peers. It aims to strengthen partnerships between research institutes and universities, influence policy making on both national and global scales, and showcase India's agricultural progress, including advancements in digital agriculture and sustainable agri-food systems," it said.

SC seeks to set up neutral panel to break ice with protesting farmers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the Punjab and Haryana Governments to suggest the names of some neutral personalities for setting up an independent committee to reach out to farmers protesting at the Shambhu border over their demands like legal guarantee of MSP for their produce, saying nobody should precipitate the situation. Observing that people have a right to voice their grievances in a democratic set-up, the apex court said it wanted a very smooth beginning to a dialogue involving all sides. The top court was hearing the Haryana Government's plea challenging the Punjab and Haryana High Court order asking it to remove within a week the barricades at the Shambhu border near Ambala where protesting farmers have



been camping since February 13. "Nobody should precipitate the situation. Don't hurt their sentiments. But as a State... you try to persuade them that as far as tractors are concerned, JCB machines are concerned, other agricultural equipment are concerned, let those be taken to places where those are required like agricultural farms, agricultural lands, wherever they want," a bench of Justices Surya Kant and R Mahadevan said. "In a democratic set-up, yes, they have a right to voice their grievances. Those grievances can be voiced at their place also..." the bench observed.

While hearing the matter on July 24, the apex court had proposed constitution of an independent committee comprising eminent people to reach out to the protesters and address their demands. During the hearing on Friday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Haryana Government, said they have undertaken the exercise as asked by the court on July 24. The counsel appearing for Punjab referred to the opening the highway in a phased manner. "Why don't you exchange your proposals? It is not necessary every time to fight between the two States," the bench said. Mehta argued a State can't say that let the farmers go to the Capital of the country. He said farmers had not appeared before the

High Court despite issuance of notice. "We want a very smooth beginning in terms of the dialogue process between all the sides," the bench said, while asking the States to suggest some names of people who could be on the panel. The bench said there are very good and seasoned personalities in the country who have lot of experience, and they know the in and outs of the problems involved. "Think of some neutral personalities. We will welcome if both of you can suggest common names because that will inspire more confidence in the farmers," it said. "We are not experts but there may be some former judges who are having agricultural background, farming background. They might also know little bit about the problem."

Mizoram CM likely to meet Manipur counterpart To address Meitei-Kuki-Zo ethnic violence



PTI ■ AIZAWL

Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma may soon visit Imphal to meet his Manipur counterpart N. Biren Singh to address the ongoing ethnic violence between the Meiteis and Kuki-Zo communities, an official statement said on Friday.

The statement, however, did not clarify whether Lalduhoma would mediate discussions between Meitei and Kuki-Zo organisations. During a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on August 1, Lalduhoma mentioned that Singh had invited him to Imphal and expressed his willingness to comply with the request.

"I was invited by Manipur CM Biren Singh to visit Imphal. I want to respond and comply with his request," Lalduhoma was quoted as

telling Shah in the statement. Sources revealed that Singh made the invitation during a meeting with Lalduhoma on the sidelines of the NITI Aayog meeting in New Delhi on July 28.

During the meeting with Shah, Lalduhoma suggested facilitating a dialogue between the Home Ministry and the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), a tribal organisation representing the Kuki-Zo community, to resolve the conflict, the statement added. On Monday, various ethnic-based groups representing the Kuki-Hmar-Mizo-Zomi communities formed a political platform called the 'Kuki-Zo Council' to represent their interests in future talks with the Centre. The council's full committee and statement of purpose are expected to be finalised on August 7, sources said. The Kuki-Zo organisations,

along with 10 Kuki MLAs and Kuki insurgent groups, currently under the suspension of operations (SoO) pact with the Centre and Manipur government, have demanded a separate Union territory with legislature, similar to Pondicherry, as a solution to the conflict.

Meitei organisations, however, have rejected this proposal and instead call for an Assam-type National Register of Citizens (NRC) to identify "illegal migrants" from the Kuki-Zo communities.

The Manipur Chief Minister told the Assembly recently that the ethnic violence has resulted in 226 deaths since May 2023, with 39 people still missing and over 59,000 displaced in relief camps. The conflict has also led to the destruction of 11,133 houses and damage to 4,569 others, he added.

MP urges Modi to create new lion sanctuaries in Gujarat

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Rajya Sabha MP Parimal Nathwani on Friday said he has drawn the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to various issues related to Asiatic lions in Gujarat and the need for more facilities and infrastructure for tourists visiting Gir forest.

Nathwani, a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment, Forest and Climate Change, presented the first copy of his new book 'Call of the Gir' to Modi in New Delhi on July 31.

Talking to reporters about his interaction with the prime minister, Nathwani said he stressed the need for new lion sanctuaries like Barda Wildlife Sanctuary and the expansion of Keshod airport. "I met the PM in Delhi and discussed about Gir and lion

conservation. There are now four cubs, a male lion and two lionesses in Barda Wildlife Sanctuary in Porbandar district, developed recently by the state forest department as a second home for lions," he said.

As per the last census conducted in 2020, Gujarat is home to 674 Asiatic lions. "New wildlife sanctuaries should be developed considering the rising population of lions. The Gir Wildlife Sanctuary has reached its threshold because it can only accommodate a maximum of 60 to 65 lions. Irrespective of the census, I believe there are nearly 900 lions in Gujarat." He said steps need to be taken because lions have started moving out of Gir and are now in 14 districts. "A busy port like Pipavav in Amreli district is home to



nearly 50 lions. Similarly, lions are sighted in Palitana in Bhavnagar and sometimes near the Dwarka coastline. They are expanding their territories and entering such places because they aren't finding enough space," the MP said.

New sanctuaries can be created to accommodate these big cats, and nilgais (blue bulls) can also be shifted there to ensure the availability of prey, he said. Nathwani, the director of corporate affairs at Reliance Industries Ltd, said nearly

one lakh tourists visit Gir sanctuary every year, and Keshod in Junagadh district is the nearest airport. We have been working to increase flights to Keshod airport. Hardly two flights arrive at this airport every week. You can reach Gir in half an hour from Keshod," he said.

"During my discussion with the PM, I suggested that flight traffic at Keshod will increase if the runway is extended by 300 meters. Another point was the lack of good hotels for foreign tourists," he said.

About recent incidents of lions being run over by trains near Gir forest, Nathwani said the fences the forest department had erected on both sides of tracks were stolen at several places. A new design for fences is under consideration, he said.

CPI(M) demands impartial probe into violence in Tripura's Gandatwisa

PTI ■ AGARTALA

The CPI(M) on Friday said rioting and arson at Gandatwisa in Tripura's Dhalai district rendered around "165 families homeless" and demanded an impartial probe into the violence.

A delegation of CPI(M) visited the violence-hit area on Thursday and interacted with the affected people, a party leader said.

"Besides the death of a college student, shops and houses were looted and torched. All these incidents happened in the presence of police. The panic-stricken people had to flee and stay in jungles to save their lives. Around 165 families became homeless and have taken shelter in a school," CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury said at a press conference here.

The district administration had, earlier, said the rioting and arson at Gandatwisa rendered 40 families homeless.



Many houses were looted and set on fire by a mob on July 12, following the death of a 19-year-old college student in a clash between two groups in the area.

"We want the government to undertake an impartial probe into all the incidents, including the death of college student Parmeshwar Reang and looting of shops and houses. If the criminals involved in such acts are not brought to justice, it will

be a blot on society," he said.

The CPI(M) leader demanded adequate compensation for the violence-affected families and security cover at vulnerable locations.

Chaudhury said the government must undertake peace initiatives to bring back the confidence among the tribal and non-tribal people at Gandatwisa.

"During communal riots in 1980 and disturbances in the late 1990s in the state, the then Left Front government organised peace meetings across Tripura. Such exercises had yielded encouraging results. Therefore, we want the government to organise peace meetings as confidence-building measures," he said.

Chaudhury also urged Chief Minister Manik Saha along with the Chief Secretary, DGP and Revenue Secretary to visit violence-hit Gandatwisa immediately to take stock of the situation.

Anant S Iyer new Director General of CIABC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Anant S Iyer has taken over as the new Director General of the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC), the apex body of the Indian alcohol beverage companies representing more than 20 major domestic liquor manufacturers.

Nanotechnology-based solutions needed to combat environmental hazards: K'taka CM

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Robust international collaboration and a strong link between academia, industry and research are needed to advance nanotechnology in critical areas such as food and energy security, water purification, healthcare and waste management, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Friday.

He was speaking at the inauguration of the 13th edition of Bengaluru India Nano, which aims to create a congenial ecosystem for the growth of nanotechnology.

"Our state is always in the forefront with respect to technology-based innovations. I am quite confident that, with the support of premier research institutions like Indian Institute of Science,

JNCASR, National Centre for Biological Sciences, Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences, etc, Bengaluru will be transformed into nanotech hub of India and will keep up its eminent position in this emerging technology in the years to come," the Chief Minister said.

He said international research collaboration is fundamental for harnessing the potential of this emerging technology.

Also, he urged scientists and engineers to make use of the opportunities and come up with innovative nanotechnology-based solutions for food security, energy security, water purification, infrastructure, medicine, healthcare and waste management as well as to combat environmental hazards, which are expected to increase many-folds in the



near future due to urbanisation and population growth and change in lifestyle. "I believe that, through exchange of information, technology transfer, sharing of costs, risks, access to know-how as well as to develop a talent pool towards the common good of humanity," he said.

"I consider that international events like this will provide enough opportunity for networking, interactions for knowledge sharing, exchange of technology, skill development and business

collaboration," Siddaramaiah added. At the inaugural event, Prof C N R Rao, honorary chairman of Vignan Institute of Technology and Science (VGNT) and Linus Pauling research professor as well as honorary president of Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bengaluru, was felicitated by Siddaramaiah, to mark his 90th birthday.

Incidentally, Bharat Ratna Prof Rao was instrumental in the shaping of Bengaluru India Nano since 2007, when the first edition was held.

Speaking at the event, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said he hoped researchers would soon find solutions through emerging technologies for all pressing problems of the country, especially waste management. "Urbanisation will only

further compound the problem of waste, we really need a solution for that," he added.

Rizwan Arshad, MLA of Shivaji Nagar Assembly constituency, where the event is being held, said the planet and the people are at loggerheads at present, due to the growing needs of the human beings.

"The planet is answering us with natural calamities like landslides and earthquakes, one after the other, with increasing frequency. Hopefully, nanotechnology will act as a peacemaker and bring scientific solutions to environmental hazards," said Arshad.

Executive chairperson of Biocon Ltd and chairperson of Vision Group in Biotechnology (VGBt), an advisory body for the state of

Karnataka, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said one of the greatest critical technologies of today, nanotechnology has the potential to bring transformative solutions to the existing technologies, whether it is chips, or electronics or battery storage.

At the inaugural event, Prof Arindam Ghosh from IISc, Bengaluru, was awarded the Prof C N R Rao Bengaluru India Nano Science Award, for his contribution towards nanotechnology.

The three-day event, which is on till August 3, is being organised by the Department of Science and Technology, government of Karnataka, Karnataka Science & Technology Promotion Society (KSTePS) and Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR).

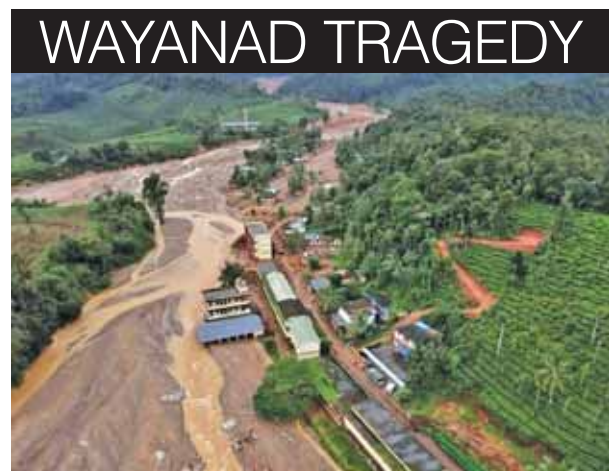
GPS coordinates, aerial drone pictures used by rescuers to locate survivors; 300 missing

PTI ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

Rescue teams on Friday used GPS coordinates from aerial drone pictures and cell phones, including the last location of people who lived in the landslides-hit areas of Wayanad to help locate survivors, amidst accelerated search operations after the completion of the 190-foot-long Bailey bridge by the Army.

A family of four was rescued from an isolated house in an area near Padavetti Kunnu on the fourth day of the deadly landslides, giving hope to hundreds of rescuers, racing against time to search for survivors. With nearly 300 persons still missing, the death toll is expected to go up. As many as 201 people have died and 264 were injured in the massive landslides that hit Wayanad district in the wee hours of July 30. Additionally, 130 body parts were also recovered, according to the Kerala Health Department.

The search and rescue operations that resumed early morning received an impetus as the Bailey bridge helped the rescue teams to move the heavy machinery, including excavators, and ambulances to the worst-affected Mundakkai and Chooralmala hamlets.



According to official sources, the extent of human loss will emerge when rescuers clear houses covered by debris and wooden logs using heavy machinery.

Authorities reported that many more body parts had been collected and genetic testing was underway to identify the remains. Earlier in the day, Kerala ADGP M R Ajith Kumar said 300 people were still missing.

Around 40 rescue teams along with cadaver dogs are conducting search operations in six zones of the landslides-hit areas -- Attamala and Aaranamala (first), Mundakkai (second), Panchirimattam (third), Vellarimala village

(fourth), GVHSS Vellarimala (fifth), and riverbank (sixth), officials said.

The joint teams include personnel from the Army, NDRF, DSG, Coast Guard and Navy.

In addition to this, a three-pronged search operation has also been launched, focusing on the Chaliyar river. The eight police stations, along the 40-km stretch of the river, have joined forces with local swimming experts to search for bodies that may have flown downstream or trapped along the riverbanks.

Simultaneously, another search operation is being conducted using a police helicopter.

Uddhav's allegations about arrest fake narrative, says CM Shinde; hails Ladki Bahin scheme

PTI ■ GHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's recent statement about moves to arrest him and his son Aaditya Thackeray was a "fake narrative", Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said here on Friday. In Sillod to inaugurate the state government's Ladki Bahin Yojana, the CM also said Thackeray was using low level language on the matter.

Thackeray, on Wednesday, said NCP (SP) leader and former state home minister Anil Deshmukh had recently spoken about how Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who holds the home portfolio, planned to arrest the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief and his son.

"After tolerating everything, I now stand with determination. Either you will be there, or I will," Thackeray had said in a challenge to Fadnis. "The issue of arrests of Uddhav and Aaditya Thackeray is a fake narrative. Thackeray is using low level language," the CM said while speaking to Marathi news channel ABP Majha. In a swipe at Thackeray, the CM said one needs to hit the roads and have strength of conviction to take on Delhi (BJP-led Union government). Talking on the Ladki Bahin



Yojana at Sillod, the CM said "the opposition is sending people to court against it". Under the scheme, women with an annual family income of less than Rs 2.5 lakh will get Rs 1,500 as monthly aid. The scheme was announced in the recent budget. "The sisters in the state will teach a lesson to such step brothers (referring to the opposition that is targeting the scheme for its financial burden on the exchequer). Our Ladki Bahin is not a poll jumla (rhetoric)," he asserted.

The state government aims to strengthen women socially, financially, educationally and politically and people must not fall prey to the fake narrative of the opposition about the Ladki Bahin Yojana, said Shinde, who also distributed some forms of the

Or else, they (opposition) may tear the forms just to defame the state government. Every eligible woman will get 18,000 per year in their account through the scheme.

The government has also decided to provide three cylinders free each year. We are also giving Rs 1 lakh to the girl child till she attains the age of 18," Shinde said. Asserting that the state government has taken a decision to pay 100 percent fees for women, Shinde said women will be given 50 percent discount on state transport bus fare. "The government is strengthening self help groups in the state. We are making the online market available to them and the government has paid an interest of Rs 22 crore for it," Shinde said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a positive approach towards the Marathwada water grid scheme, he added. Sillod MLA Abdul Sattar called the Ladki Bahin Yojana revolutionary, while district collector Dileep Swami said 7.37 lakh persons were provided benefits of various government schemes and 68 percent of them are women. Zilla Parishad CEO Vikas Meena said 6 lakh women have so far registered for the Ladki Bahin Yojana, two lakh of whom have qualified for it.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

SC removes creamy layer

The Supreme Court's decision to approve sub-categorisation of SC/STs for reservations will pave the way for greater inclusivity

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court has declared that sub-classification within Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is permissible. Justice Pankaj Mithal emphasised that reservations should benefit only the first generation within a category and called for periodic reviews to ensure subsequent generations have reached parity with the general category. This ruling overruled the EV Chinniah case, where the Court had previously held that all castes formed a single homogeneous group that could not be subdivided. This decision has significant implications for the socio-economic upliftment and political representation of these historically marginalised communities. The judgement addresses the issue of the creamy layer within a caste. It is argued that the caste quotas are often usurped by the creamy layer within a caste as some people within a caste are uplifted and have education, means and resources to prevail upon the rest of their ilk. India's Constitution, through Articles 341 and 342, recognises certain communities as marginalised. The government is permitted to make special provisions for the upliftment of these communities which have been historically deprived. These measures include reservations in educational institutions, government jobs, and legislative bodies. Over the years, concerns have been raised regarding the unequal distribution of these benefits. Some sub-castes or sub-tribes within the broader SC/ST categories have been perceived as cornering a disproportionate share of the benefits, leaving others behind. This has led to calls for sub-classification.



The petitioners had argued that such sub-classification would undermine the unity of these communities

and contradict the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Constitution. However, the Supreme Court, in its judgment, emphasised that the primary objective of reservation policies is to ensure social and economic justice. By sub-classifying a caste, the government can design more nuanced policies that ensure benefits are equitably distributed among all sub-groups within the SC/ST categories. The decision can also lead to better political representation for sub-groups within SCs and STs. It opens the door for more inclusive policies that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of these communities. However, the Supreme Court's decision may need additional provisions to address several gaps. The concept of the "creamy layer" or privileged group, particularly regarding the second generation, is not clearly defined and is open to interpretation. This lack of clear definition of "creamy layer" makes it subjective and may lead to varying interpretations which may again be challenged in the court. The Supreme Court has left it to the states to define the "creamy layer" for exclusion. It remains to be seen how this decision will be implemented and interpreted by different governments. While the Court has set the stage for a more inclusive and equitable distribution of affirmative action benefits to SC/ST, it may take time to reach the execution stage.

PICTALK



Devotees stand in queue to offer prayers on the occasion of Shivratri, in New Delhi

Kamala emerges as front runner for US Presidency



KALYANI SHANKAR

As the first woman Vice President, Harris is now poised to break another glass ceiling by becoming the first female President of the United States

The US Vice President Kamala Harris ended the week by declaring, "I am Kamala Harris and I am running for President." This historic moment, ending the suspense after President Biden withdrew from the Presidential contest and endorsed her as the candidate, marks a new chapter in American politics. It is now official.

Many influential Democrats, including former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, fund giver George Clooney, have thrown their weight behind her candidacy. She now has the Party firmly behind her in her fight, instilling confidence in her potential to lead. It's worth noting that in its 248-year history, the US has never elected a female President. Even Hillary Clinton, who ran for President in 2008 and 2016, was unsuccessful. Kamala made history four years ago when she became the first woman Vice President.

Will she make history again by running for President? Can she win? She has to do two things. First, she needs to get the Democratic Party's nomination, and then she needs to win. Time is short, with only four months left before the election on November 5. Indian-origin Kamala Harris has several strengths and a few weaknesses. Her current position as Vice President and her qualifications to assume the role of President in an emergency are her essential advantages. Four years ago, Kamala hoped Biden would finish one term and say goodbye to the White House. However, Biden stuck to his decision and insisted on running for a second term. But he surprised everyone by recently withdrawing and endorsing his Vice President.

One significant advantage was that she could break the glass ceiling by becoming the first woman president. She must work hard to appeal to Black, Asian, and female voters and gain support from other minority groups and undecided and



younger voters. This could help her chances against Trump in swing states. Secondly, another significant factor in Kamala Harris's favour is her strong connection to Biden's legacy, which is not entirely negative. This association could play a pivotal role in her candidacy. She could bring together moderate and conservative members of her Party and act as a unifying force. To defeat Trump, her Party must unite and support her.

Thirdly, Obama was the first Black President, and John F. Kennedy was the first Catholic President. They could be her role models, inspiring hope in the hearts of many. Fourthly, and importantly, Kamala is 59 years old, which works in her favour compared to Trump, who is 78. Her age is not a drawback, but a substantial age difference could bring about change.

She can attract undecided voters by highlighting her achievements to gain their support. Fifthly, she can have Biden's war chest of about \$100 million. She has raised \$200 million in the first week of her candidacy and signed up 17000 volunteers.



THE RACE FOR PRESIDENT BETWEEN KAMALA HARRIS AND DONALD TRUMP IS CURRENTLY TIED, ACCORDING TO A RECENT POLL BY THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. THIS TIE IS SIGNIFICANT. THE POLL SHOWS INCREASED SUPPORT FOR HARRIS AMONG NON-WHITE VOTERS

Still, she must instil confidence in other fundraisers for the enormous poll expenditure. Kamala Harris has strong ties to Silicon Valley since the beginning of her political career.

She is tapping into this support for her battle against Donald Trump. Above all, she must choose the right candidate for her running mate. The right combination should enhance the chances against the Trump-Vance team. Kamala also pledged to do "everything in my power to unite the Democratic Party and our nation, to defeat Donald Trump and his extreme Project 2025 agenda." Harris's mission is urgent and crucial. She must gain the support of those who are uncertain or critical to achieve her goal.

The race for President between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump is currently tied, according to a recent poll by the Wall Street Journal. This tie is significant. The poll shows increased support for Harris among non-white voters and a substantial rise in enthusiasm for the campaign among Democrats. Harris faces challenges such as her past

unsuccessful bid for the 2020 nomination, her approval ratings, and the need to secure significant funding for her campaign.

According to a recent NBC News poll, Trump was ahead of Biden by 45% to 43%, and Trump also led Harris by the same two-point margin of 47% to 45%. But slowly, this is changing. The time is short, as the campaign has just 100 days left. Before the November election, the vice president's team should strategise how to defeat Trump. Trump's team may criticise Harris as inexperienced and risky. She should be ready to face racism from the Trump campaign and run as a Democratic nominee who is a Black and South Asian American woman. This election is a critical decision that will shape America's future. Biden's exit has energised the Democratic. It is up to Kamla to seize the moment to surge forward. Can she step in and be the natural leader in America? Her capacity to lead the next few weeks will show whether she can.

(The writer is a popular columnist, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WAYANAD TRAGEDY: FIXING THE BLAME

Madam — Apropos to "CM refutes Shah's alert claim on Wayanad tragedy" published on 1st August, here is my response. One can do very little when mountain ranges receive unexpected & torrential rain like this, as the forecast was for 64-204 mm rain but Wayanad received 372 mm rain on that fateful night. But such events turning into human tragedies can certainly be minimised and prevented.

What is really tragic is the fact that a warning given by the state disaster management authority four years ago was not heeded where 4000 families were asked to leave landslide prone areas including Mundakkai. As recently as on 23rd July Centre also warned Kerala about excessive rainfall or landslides but nothing was taken seriously. In recent past severe deluge leading to flooding caused serious damage in almost each district of the state and Kerala saw statewide floods in 2018 and 2019 but nothing seems to have been done on disaster prevention in hilly areas. Nature has warned us time and again to keep our house in order and maintain an ecological balance, but sadly we are hell bent on playing havoc with nature.

Bal Govind | Noida

HALWA POLITICS

Madam — This refers to the editorial, "Halwa politics" (1-8-24). Parliament is a place where meaningful discussions and debates take place to decide the livelihood and the course of the country. Those who are privileged to be a member of the house are supposed to be committed to the national priorities and display their utmost respect to the house, decency and focused attention on the development of the country rather than focusing on personal agenda. The ruling dispensation is supposed to give due respect to all the members and all the parties in the house as they are also elected representatives of the people. The leader of the opposition talks

World breast feeding week



The World Breastfeeding Week, observed in the first week of August annually and supported by WHO, UNICEF, and various Ministries of Health and civil society partners, carries the theme "Closing the gap: Breastfeeding support for all" for 2024. The campaign aims to

celebrate the diverse experiences of breastfeeding mothers throughout their journeys while highlighting the crucial role families, societies, communities, and health workers play in supporting them. Despite the natural act of breastfeeding, mothers often face societal stigma, particularly when nursing in public.

This stigma affects not only men but also women who may stare or pass judgment when mothers nurse in public, discouraging them from feeding their babies when needed. This cultural barrier needs to be dismantled to empower mothers to breastfeed confidently and freely, without the necessity of designated feeding rooms. Breastfeeding is a source of pride and a vital aspect of maternal and child health. Ensuring mothers can breastfeed without shame or hindrance in any setting is essential for promoting the well-being of infants and supporting maternal health.

Jayanthy Subramaniam | Chennai

about the necessity of carrying out Caste Census. The member from the treasury bench instead of spelling out the opinion of the government and the convincing statistics or supportive logic. The ex-minister's expressions, unfortunately, lace decency and take the etiquette of the Parliament to its lowest ebb. The leader of his party should have corrected him if not admonished. There can be no civilized person who can encourage, appreciate or support such uncomplimentary expressions.

Such expressions display the lack of convincing reasons to oppose the demand of the opposition party. It is known to all that every party has its caste base and in every stage of its functioning caste plays its predominant role. If the reservation system should be a meaningful one a the latest numerical, economic and social status of all the castes. All political parties should train those peoples' representatives in their parties on the dos and dongs in the house.

AG Rajmohan | Anantapur

PRIORITISE ROAD SAFETY

Madam — Because it saves lives, road safety is vital. In 2022, there were 4.23 lakh injuries and 1.71 lakh fatalities from traffic accidents in India. Road accidents can be avoided by taking real safety precautions, such as proper road design, speed restriction, and sufficient visibility. How can we increase road safety is becoming a subject for concern. Enforcing current standards—for example, local authorities needing qualified personnel and appropriate equipment—is one method to improve road security. Transport operators who don't adhere to safety regulations should face harsh fines. Proper data collection is another strategy to increase road safety. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways should better gather and disseminate information on vehicle registrations, safety certificates, and accident reports.

Neha Tomar | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The rise and impact of political memes in the digital age

The recent surge of memes following President Biden's withdrawal from the race underscores their increasing use for expressing public sentiments

In her book "Memes in Digital Culture," Professor Limor Shifman highlights the significance of political memes, noting that they play a crucial role in shaping discussions about societal norms and the future. The recent surge in memes following U.S. President Joe Biden's decision not to run for the upcoming presidential elections illustrates the increasing use of this medium for expressing public sentiments, including likes, dislikes, and frustrations.



The concept of memes dates back to the late 20th century, introduced by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book "The Selfish Gene." Dawkins described memes as cultural units that spread and evolve similarly to genes. The formal introduction of "Internet Memes" occurred in 1994, thanks to Mike Godwin. These early memes, like the "Nazi comparison memes," circulated rapidly online and laid the foundation for the meme culture we know today. The creation and spread of internet memes began in

the 1990s and early 2000s on forums and imageboards like 4chan and Reddit. These platforms were among the first to host meme-like content, such as humorous images with captions and inside jokes. As the internet and social media expanded, so did the reach and diversity of memes, evolving to include various formats like GIFs, videos, and TikToks. Meme-making has become a popular form of self-expression, communication, and connection online. Some even view it as an art form, with certain memes becoming part of mainstream culture. As the U.S. presidential elections approach, the relevance of political memes becomes increasingly significant. The digital age has revolutionized political communication, shifting it from traditional media to the dynamic realm of social media. This transformation, fueled by internet accessibility and information democratization, has empowered individuals to engage in political dialogue more freely. It is crucial to understand both the profound implications and challenges of this new landscape. Humor, especially through memes, has emerged as a potent tool in this era. Memes distill complex ideas into easily shareable and often humorous content, making them a staple of online political communication. They serve as entertainment and vehicles for critique and satire, simplifying intricate issues and making them more accessible to a broader audience. For example, AI-generated images of Donald Trump at a concert or wordplays like "Joever" and "Kamencing" illustrate how humor is used to navigate serious political situations. The impact of this shift on political campaigns is profound. Today's political actors understand the power of social media in

shaping narratives. The rapid spread and viral potential of online content make social media a crucial battleground for political communication. In this arena, the perceptual environment created by social media often outweighs the significance of the political events themselves. A viral meme about U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris involving a coconut, once used derogatorily, now helps promote her case. Her remark during a widely watched speech, "You exist in the context of all in which you live and what came before you," encapsulates the essence of present-day social media and meme culture. Elections have always been fertile ground for PR stunts, and meme sharing. While there is little evidence to suggest that memes directly impact electoral behavior, they undeniably contribute to digital discourse. Depending on their virality, memes can become part of everyday conversations and even enter mainstream media.

(The author is a poetess, journalist and a writer; views are personal)



ARPITA CHOWDHURY



FIRST COLUMN FINDING TRUE SHELTER

The divine presence of God offers the ultimate refuge and gives true solace



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

I would like to draw attention to where our thoughts normally go to, what we consider is our shelter and what it should ideally be. Where do our minds routinely take us to? The body has to be the first, because of the mind-body connection. We all know that our minds affect our bodies, and our bodies do likewise. For example, there is a fever. The mind will naturally go to it and think about dealing with it. Similarly, if one is feeling depressed, bodily changes will take place like becoming fearful. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 2.1) The next target is sense enjoyment; our senses are forever seeking their sense of objects. Mind is their leader. (15.7) Our so-called intelligence is no friend; it will justify whatever the uncontrolled mind cooks up.

Emotions are not far behind. All of us have some pronounced weakness, be it lust, greed, anger, hate, etc. If not controlled our actions will be controlled by them. And there will be consequences. The ego cannot be left behind for long. I am superior and I will prove it, though no one is big or ever can be; only God is big. The rest of us can excel in something but remain small eternally. One can become very rich, powerful, famous, etc. but will be helpless in other matters. The connected topic is what we consider our shelter to be. Is a home our shelter? In physical terms it is. A famous golfer was asked by a reporter after a famous win achieved after a great deal of physical exertion, "What will you like to do now the most?" He replied, "I will like to sleep long in my own bed in my home." Some world leaders carry their own beds with them when they travel. Their shelter is their beds. But are beds, homes, etc. our real shelters? The wife of a world leader replied, "I get very depressed sometimes." Shelter is mainly a mental issue.

Shelter of a home does not prevent mental illness. Many genuine 'san-nyasis' (saintly persons) don't have a fixed home; they keep on travelling. Yes, this is not for the majority, but the idea is proper shelter. God is the real shelter. A small soul needs a very strong shelter, a very big shelter, which only God can be. Loneliness is becoming a major issue worldwide, especially in Western countries. In the USA, twenty-nine per



cent of households have single occupancy. Upwards of 40% of marriages end in divorce. And 25% plus people have some kind of mental problem. Why is it so? Because the real shelter is being ignored.

We are seeking shelter in material objects like money, power, fame, etc. When we take shelter from God, He teaches us the quality of love. We begin to accept people as they are because all of us have faults; only God is perfect. Seeking perfection in a human being is a lost cause. And we can easily get God's company, as I have done. Just hang a large photo of God near your bed, and look at Him. Then, many changes will begin to happen. God is attractive beyond imagination. Unfortunately, we don't exercise this option. Did you know that God's name Krishna means one who attracts? Soon there will be attachment, because 'atmabala' (inner strength) will flow into you. This strength is the mother of all strengths, i.e. intellectual, mental, physical and even to tolerate.

As this is a spiritual practice, one will make spiritual progress. Slowly, we will begin to consider God as our own, which He is; God is waiting for us. If this practice is so great, what 'naman' (namaskar) can do? Lord Krishna has asked us to do just that in verse #18.65, "Offer obeisance to Me." Our worst enemy in taking shelter from God - the ego will get gradually controlled. We will develop the quality of humility, which will also help in our dealings with others. God will bless us as we remain in His company. We can also pray to Him anytime because in a way God considers it appropriate. Grant of our specific prayers is a tough ask but over a period of time, we will get there. So where should we direct our attention? Whose shelter should we seek?

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Venezuela elections: Plagued by disorder and discontent

Following Nicolás Maduro's victory over right-wing candidate Edmundo González, there is confusion and chaos in the country fanned by Western media



NILANTHA
ILANGAMUWA

In Venezuela, last Sunday was more than just a day of elections; it was the 70th birth anniversary of Hugo Chávez, the transformative leader who revolutionised Venezuela's social fabric. Chávez, who died prematurely from pelvic cancer at the age of 58, left an enduring legacy that continues to shape the nation's history. Unsurprisingly, the Western media is once again engaging in its usual tactic of misleading the public regarding Venezuelan elections to serve its interests. When a leader elected through a free and fair process but who rejects the Western model is demonised as undemocratic, while a leader who aligns with Western ideals is hailed as democratic despite questionable means of coming to power, it reveals a clear bias.

This pattern was evident in the aftermath of Venezuela's recent elections, where protests, statue removals, and airport blockades dominated the news because the outcome did not align with Western expectations. Following Nicolás Maduro's victory over the right-wing candidate Edmundo González, the opposition—who had promised to accept the results only if they won—immediately denounced the election as fraudulent without presenting credible evidence. Their claims centre around alleged discrepancies between paper ballots and electronic results, which they use to suggest tampering. Venezuela's voting system aims to prevent fraud with electronic voting, ID and fingerprint verification, and paper receipts for cross-checking. Election observers from 95 countries reported a calm process, while opposition claims of having three-quarters of the paper ballots remain unsubstantiated.

Media reports, including an Edison Research exit poll showing González leading by over 30%, are questioned due to their ties to U.S. state media and the fact that exit polling is illegal in Venezuela. The opposition and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken quickly declared the election illegitimate, reflecting a pattern of U.S. interference, such as the 2019 recognition of Juan Guaidó over Maduro and past support for coups against Venezuelan leaders. The U.S. has consistently sought to control Venezuela's vast oil reserves, the largest in the world. Chávez's 1990 election disrupted the elite and foreign corporations' exploitation of these resources, redirecting oil revenue to the Venezuelan people. U.S.-backed coups in 2002 and 2019 aimed to reclaim control over Venezuela's oil. John Bolton, Trump's national security advisor, openly expressed desires for U.S. companies to dominate Venezuela's energy sector, revealing economic motives behind political actions. Chávez's anti-imperialist stance and Maduro's continuation of these policies challenged U.S. dominance in Latin America.

Venezuela's support for global South nations and opposition to U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq inspired regional progressive movements. The U.S., under the guise of humanitarian concern, enforces sanctions causing severe poverty and scarcity in Venezuela, driving migration and economic collapse. These sanctions have decimated Venezuela's oil sector and government income, exacerbating the very crises the U.S. claims to address.

The U.S. strategy of manufactured poverty and social crises is a well-worn tactic to justify regime change. The United States' obsession with overthrowing Venezuela's



government stems from multiple factors, with oil being a significant one. Venezuela holds the largest oil reserves in the world, and many U.S. companies have long desired access to these resources. Despite the U.S. being a major oil producer, the nationalisation of Venezuelan oil under Hugo Chávez and the subsequent exclusion of U.S. oil corporations have driven American interests in destabilising the Venezuelan government. This nationalisation was seen as a direct challenge to U.S. economic interests and a disruption of the global oil market that the U.S. seeks to dominate. Beyond oil, Venezuela's push for a multipolar world presents a direct challenge to U.S. hegemony.

Since the Bolivarian revolution led by Hugo Chávez, Venezuela has sought to forge alliances with countries such as China, Russia, and Iran. Additionally, Venezuela has been instrumental in the creation of regional organisations like CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) and ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America). These efforts are aimed at reducing dependency on the U.S. economy. This ideological shift threatens the traditional power structures maintained by U.S. influence in the Western Hemisphere. In response to these obstacles, the U.S. has imposed severe sanctions and blockades on Venezuela, much like its long-standing policies against Cuba.

These measures are designed to suffocate Venezuela's economy, incite political unrest, and ultimately force a change in government. The deepening of Venezuela's relationships with major powers such as China and Russia further threatens U.S. geopolitical interests. These partnerships offer Venezuela economic and military support, making it increasingly resilient against U.S. attempts at destabilisation. The U.S. perceives these multipolar alliances as a direct affront to its global dominance and has consequently intensified its efforts to undermine the Venezuelan government. It is in this context that the U.S. government is backing yet another coup attempt in

Venezuela, after their "disappointed elections" result.

Over the past two decades, Washington has sponsored several coup attempts, often violent, to overthrow Venezuela's government, including targeting former revolutionary president Hugo Chávez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro. In 2002, the U.S. backed a military coup that briefly overthrew Chávez, Venezuela's democratically elected president. Despite mainstream acknowledgement from sources like The Guardian that the Bush administration supported this coup, it lasted only two days as the Venezuelan people reinstated Chávez, who continued his Bolivarian revolution.

Following the presidential elections on 28 July, where Maduro was re-elected, the U.S. and its Latin American allies refused to recognise the results. Instead, violent extremists, supported by powerful figures like billionaire Elon Musk, have been burning down public institutions, government buildings, and hospitals, and destroying buses while looting offices to overthrow Maduro.

This aligns with Musk's history of supporting U.S.-backed coups in Latin America, as seen in his 2019 backing of the Bolivian coup to access lithium reserves for electric vehicles. Independent analysts have reported that the unproven claims of electoral fraud in Venezuela originate from Edison Research, a New Jersey-based firm with reported close ties to the U.S. government and the CIA. This firm works with U.S. government propaganda outlets like Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, which were established by the CIA. Despite these baseless allegations, independent international electoral observers, including the National Lawyers Guild and human rights activists, have confirmed the transparency and fairness of Venezuela's electoral process. They condemned the U.S.-backed opposition's refusal to accept the results, which undermines Venezuela's democracy. Donald Trump, during his presidency, admitted the U.S. aimed to take

over Venezuela and its oil. His administration recognised right-wing opposition figure Juan Guaidó as the supposed president of Venezuela, despite his lack of electoral participation. The Trump administration's coup attempt in 2019 failed, as Guaidó never gained power. The Biden administration continues to back far-right extremists like María Corina Machado, who allegedly collaborates with oligarchs and calls for military intervention to overthrow Maduro. Historically, U.S.-backed coup attempts in Venezuela have been violent. After Chávez died in 2013 and Maduro's election, far-right extremists launched another coup attempt in 2014, burning government buildings and attacking supporters of the government. Leaders of these coup attempts, like Leopoldo López and María Corina Machado, have close ties to the U.S. government.

Despite engaging in violent coup attempts, these opponents walk free in Venezuela, which starkly contrasts with the U.S.'s portrayal of the country as a dictatorship. U.S. sanctions have severely worsened Venezuela's economic crisis. Ironically, these sanctions have led to a U.S. energy crisis, as sanctions on Iran and Russia have made affordable energy scarce for Europe. Despite the high cost and insufficiency of U.S. liquefied natural gas, Venezuelan oil remains blocked from European markets due to the sanctions. In June 2022, the U.S. pivoted its strategy by permitting the transport of Venezuelan oil to Europe to compensate for the void left by reduced Russian supplies. This strategic recalibration paved the way for the Barbados Agreement in October 2023, which initiated a gradual easing of sanctions. The elections held on 28 July were a direct result of this process. However, the U.S. encountered significant challenges in realising its typical political objectives through overt manipulation, while it continued to exert its influence through covert channels.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views are personal)



OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES, WASHINGTON HAS SPONSORED SEVERAL COUP ATTEMPTS, OFTEN VIOLENT, TO OVERTHROW VENEZUELA'S GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING TARGETING FORMER REVOLUTIONARY PRESIDENT HUGO CHÁVEZ AND HIS SUCCESSOR, NICOLÁS MADURO

Operation Safedsagar: The Indian Air Force's triumph in the Kargil war

This operation highlighted the bravery, ingenuity, and strategic importance of the IAF, cementing its legacy in modern warfare

The Kargil War of 1999 marked a significant milestone for the Indian Air Force (IAF), which participated in large-scale combat for the first time since the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. In April 1999, around 1500 Pakistani soldiers infiltrated Indian territory in Kargil, Jammu, and Kashmir to sever the connection between Kashmir and Ladakh.



DEEPAK KUMAR
PANDEY

The air operations in the Kargil region by IAF were named 'Operation Safedsagar'. In the 1990s, covert intruders from Pakistan stationed at high-altitude peaks made it difficult for the Indian army and IAF to carry out military operations in the challenging mountainous terrain of J&K since it was impossible to pinpoint their exact locations.

Operation Safedsagar marked a revolutionary use of aerial capabilities in a distinct and demanding setting. The IAF's successful use of air power in the Kargil conflict is a source of pride for India. The strategic deployment of air power became essential in the War, as it effectively provided direct air support to ground troops and executed highly precise bombings on enemy targets, thereby exerting a substantial

impact on the final result of the battle. The IAF encountered notable challenges due to its operational areas' geographical and environmental factors.

The Kargil region is known for its very intricate topography. Engaging in operations at high altitudes invariably presents formidable obstacles, such as the notable deterioration of both aircraft and weapon efficiency. The delivery of a weapon to the target is significantly influenced by weather at higher altitudes. The winds are usually powerful and higher than the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) required 'minima'. Given this, manoeuvring is necessary to complete the essential launch. Despite challenging geographical and meteorological condi-



tions, the operation exemplified exceptional bravery, persistence, and commitment. By July 23, 1999, the Indian forces successfully recaptured the Kargil Heights, a testament to their unwavering commitment and bravery that is sure to inspire.

Innovations for Technical Asymmetry Dividends
The IAF demonstrated exceptional ingenuity and resourcefulness during the Kargil conflict by successfully deploying several unique innovations. The IAF aimed to develop and use several weapon launch strategies. The Indian Air Force effectively used laser-

guided bombs deployed from Mirage-2000 aircraft to significantly impair the adversary's logistical routes, a testament to their innovative tactics. The laser-guided missile pods were modified to carry 1000-kilogram bombs from the World War II era, particularly for storage aboard the Ajeet aircraft. The Mirage-2000 aircraft used these bombs for the first time after making immediate modifications. The IAF reportedly chose weapon-impact zones that may trigger a domino effect leading to avalanches or landslides. To establish firing limits for rockets and weaponry at high heights, a meticulous process is needed to determine specific mountain peaks that closely resemble the height of enemy fortifications.

Performing real-time shooting trials in such conditions enables the acquisition of crucial data to enhance and improve the efficiency of these weapons. Using laser designators installed on MiG-29 aircraft to guide the ammunition released by Mirage-2000 combat fighters was an incredible achievement. By using this innovative methodology, the precision and efficiency of the impacts were significantly improved. The Mirage-2000 aircraft were outfitted with Litening pods that enhanced target detection and facilitated the precise launching of guided missiles. This was the first-ever deployment of cutting-edge targeting technology by the IAF in combat operations. During air operations in the

Kargil War, the capabilities of precision strikes helped the IAF reduce the amount of collateral damage and neutralise hostile positions. The efficient use of air power has averted more casualties considerably reduced the duration of the Indian Army has achieved substantial progress on the battlefield. An in-depth understanding of the Kargil operations is crucial for appreciating India's changing alignment in aerospace power. This battle serves as an exceptional case study for analysing the use of airpower in joint engagements in extremely mountainous regions.

(The writer is Retd Group Captain, IAF, and Senior Fellow, Centre for Air Power Studies; views are personal)

Biden reaffirms US support for Israel in call with Netanyahu

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden has spoken to Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and reaffirmed his commitment to Israel's security against all threats from Iran and its proxies, as the country braces for a response to the assassination of a top Hamas leader in Tehran. Vice President Kamala Harris, who is now the presumptive presidential candidate of the Democratic Party in the November 5 election, also joined the call on Thursday. "The president reaffirmed his commitment to Israel's security against all threats from Iran, including its proxy terrorist groups Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis," said a readout of the call. The president discussed efforts to support Israel's defence against threats, including against ballistic missiles and drones, to include new defensive US military deployments, it said. The call comes following the assassinations of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and Hezbollah senior general Fuad Shukr in Beirut. "Together with this commitment to Israel's defence, the president stressed the importance of ongoing efforts to de-escalate broader tensions in the region. Vice President Harris also joined the call," the White House said. Netanyahu's government has not commented on the slaying of Haniyeh in Tehran, but the Palestinian militant group has blamed Israel. Iran has vowed to avenge the killing. Hamas' armed wing said the death of Haniyeh, who was widely viewed as the group's overall leader, would take the battle with Israel to new dimensions and have major repercussions. The group attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people. Since the attack, Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas. Hours before Haniyeh was targeted, Israel said it had killed senior Hezbollah leader Shukr in Beirut. Israel believes he was responsible for a rocket attack that killed 12 people in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on Saturday.

Australian inquiry blames Israeli military for Gaza aid drone attack

AP ■ MENBOURNE

The Israeli military's attack on an aid convoy in Gaza in April that killed seven people was the result of serious failures of defence procedures, mistaken identification and errors in decision-making, according to an Australian investigation that was made public Friday. Australia initiated the investigation to examine Tel Aviv's response to the widely condemned Israeli Defence Forces' drone strikes on three World Central Kitchen vehicles on April 1. Australian Zomi Frankom, three of her aid worker colleagues and three British personal security staff died in the attack. Former Australian Defence Force Chief Mark Binskin was appointed the government's special adviser on the matter and visited Israel in May. He also engaged with World Central Kitchen and Solace Global, the company that provided the convoy's security team. Binskin blamed the fatal strikes on "serious failures to follow IDF procedures, mistaken identification and errors in decision-making," a statement said. The armed security guards

were likely mistaken for Hamas operatives, Binskin said. This was the primary factor behind a "significant break down in situational awareness." He found the strikes were not deliberately directed against World Central Kitchen. But Binskin wrote: "It is important to all the families that an appropriate apology be provided to them by the government of Israel." Foreign Minister Penny Wong said she had told Israel that the families deserved an apology. While Binskin's report outlined steps Israeli had taken to avoid a repeat tragedy, "stronger protocols" were needed to protect aid workers in Gaza, Wong said. "Gaza remains the deadliest place on earth to be an aid worker. This was not a one-off incident," Wong told reporters. "The UN reports that more than 250 aid workers have been killed since the start of this conflict and in recent weeks, a number of UN vehicles have come under attack. This is not acceptable," Wong added. Binskin said his conclusions were "fairly consistent" with an Israeli military investigation in April that led to two officers being dismissed and three

being reprimanded within a week of the bungled attack. Military Advocate General Brig. Gen. Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi, Israel's top military lawyer, is considering further potential action against those responsible. Wong said the Frankom family felt that disciplinary action to date had been insufficient. "The Australian government will continue to press for full accountability, including any appropriate criminal charges, and we will continue to advocate the views of the Frankom family and the Australian government to Israel," Wong said. A family representative issued a statement Friday welcoming Binskin's report as an "important first step." "We hope it will be followed by further investigations in Israel regarding those responsible for this tragic event, followed by appropriate action," the family statement said. Binskin said the Israeli Defence Forces had been "very forthcoming" toward his investigation. But the level of detail the Israelis provided on specific operational improvements they had made since the convoy blunder made it difficult for him to assess how effective the changes were.

3 Americans back on US soil after prisoner exchange with Russia

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States and Russia completed their biggest prisoner swap in post-Soviet history on Thursday, with Moscow releasing journalist Evan Gershkovich and fellow American Paul Whelan, along with dissidents including Vladimir Kara-Murza, in a multinational deal that set two dozen people free. Gershkovich, Whelan and Alsu Kurmasheva, a journalist with dual U.S.-Russia citizenship, arrived on American soil shortly before midnight for a joyful reunion with their families. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris also were at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland to greet them and dispense hugs all around. The trade unfolded despite relations between Washington and Moscow being at their lowest point since the Cold

War after Russian President Vladimir Putin's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Negotiators in backchannel talks at one point explored an exchange involving Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, but after his death in February ultimately stitched together a 24-person deal that required significant concessions from European allies, including the release of a Russian assassin, and secured freedom for a cluster of journalists, suspected spies, political prisoners and others. Biden trumpeted the exchange, by far the largest in a series of swaps with Russia, as a diplomatic feat while welcoming families of the returning Americans to the White House. But the deal, like others before it, reflected an innate imbalance: The U.S. and allies gave up Russians charged or convicted of serious crimes in exchange for

Russia releasing journalists, dissidents and others imprisoned by the country's highly politicized legal system on charges seen by the West as trumped-up. "Deals like this one come with tough calls," Biden said. He added, "There's nothing that matters more to me than protecting Americans at home and abroad." Under the deal, Russia released Gershkovich, a reporter for The Wall Street Journal who was jailed in 2023 and convicted in July of espionage charges that he and the U.S. government vehemently denied. His family said in a statement released by the newspaper that "we can't wait to give him the biggest hug and see his sweet and brave smile up close." The paper's editor-in-chief, Emma Tucker, called it a "joyous day." "While we waited for this momentous day, we were determined to be as loud as we

could be on Evan's behalf. We are so grateful for all the voices that were raised when his was silent. We can finally say, in unison, Welcome home, Evan," she wrote in a letter posted online. Also released was Whelan, a Michigan corporate security executive jailed since 2018, also on espionage charges he and Washington have denied, and Kurmasheva, a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist convicted in July of spreading false information about the Russian military, accusations her family and employer have rejected. The three flew from Maryland to Texas and landed at Joint Base San Antonio early Friday to begin medical evaluations after spending some time with their family members. If they choose, they can receive treatment the military offers to wrongfully detained Americans.

Slovenia praises landmark US-Russia prisoner exchange

AP ■ LJUBLJANA

Slovenian officials on Friday praised a landmark East-West prisoner exchange in which the tiny Alpine state participated by handing over two convicted Russian sleeper agents following secretive planning and negotiations with US officials. The United States and Russia on Thursday completed their biggest prisoner swap in post-Soviet history, with Moscow releasing journalist Evan Gershkovich and fellow American Paul Whelan, along with dissidents including Vladimir Kara-Murza, in a multinational deal that set two dozen people free. Among those exchanged was the Russian couple who posed as Argentine citizens after settling in Slovenia in 2017. The husband, who used the name Ludwig Gisch, ran a startup IT company. The wife, who had fake documents in the name of Maria Rosa Mayer Muñoz, had an online art gallery.

Their actual names are Artem Dultsev and Anna Dultseva. The couple reportedly used the Slovenian capital as their base to travel to neighbouring NATO and EU member states, relay orders from Moscow and bring money to other Russian sleeper agents. They were arrested in December 2022. On Wednesday, a day before the exchange, the two were sentenced in the Slovenian capital to 19 months in prison each after pleading guilty to spying charges. Slovenia's 24.ur news portal reported that their guilty pleas were coordinated as part of the prisoner exchange. The report, carried by Slovenia's STA state news agency, said the trial had not been supposed to end before the autumn. Although the couple had categorically denied the spying charges since their arrest, they suddenly changed their narrative on Wednesday. STA and other Slovenian media outlets said that the

couple's two children, who had lived in foster care after the couple's 2022 arrest, were on a CIA plane that took them from Ljubljana to the Turkish capital, Ankara. Slovenian President Nataša Pirc Musar praised the way the exchange operation was conducted. "Slovenia and its intelligence agencies worked tirelessly and with great sensitivity with our allies and partners in prisoner exchange which successfully concluded yesterday," she said on X. "I would like to pay respect and compliment everyone involved in this difficult action that saved lives." US President Joe Biden has thanked US allies, including Slovenia, for the major prisoner swap. "I am grateful to our Allies who stood with us through tough, complex negotiations to achieve this outcome — including Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Norway, and Turkey," Biden wrote on X.

Fire in Manila's Chinatown kills at least 11

Manila (AP): A fire swept through a part of a small building in Manila's crowded Chinatown district Friday, leaving at least 11 people dead, police said, adding that an investigation was underway to determine the cause of the blaze. About 14 firetrucks battled for more than two hours to control the blaze in an old five-story building in one of the world's oldest Chinatowns, a densely populated riverside section of the capital. Fire investigator Roderick Andres said the fire started in an eatery on the ground floor, and that several of its staff were among the dead. Most of the dead, he added, were found on the second and third floors, and no one else has been reported missing. Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna offered condolences to the victims' families and ordered inspections to ensure old buildings comply with safety regulations and standards.

Mourners pay respects to slain Hamas leader as worries of regional war mount

Doha (AP): Mourners gathered in Doha on Friday to hold funeral prayers for slain Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh as Iran and its regional allies vowed to retaliate against Israel. With the bodies of Haniyeh and his bodyguard in coffins draped with Palestinian flags, men knelt and prayed while senior leaders of Hamas' Qatar-based political office paid their respects to Haniyeh's family. That included two men seen as his possible successors: Khalil Al-Hayya, a Hamas senior official and the head of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and former Hamas Chief Khaled Mashaal, a close Haniyeh aide. Al-Hayya told family mem-

bers that Haniyeh was "no better or dearer" than the children killed in Gaza. Some 39,480 Palestinians have been killed throughout the war, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. "We are sure that his blood will bring out victory, dignity and liberation," he said. The funeral came a day after Israel said it had confirmed that the head of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Deif, was killed in an July 13 airstrike in Gaza, and a few days after Israel said it had killed Hezbollah commander Fouad Shukur in a strike in Lebanon.

Team Harris raise \$310 mn for campaign against Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Kamala Harris has raised a record USD 310 million in July, her campaign said on Friday, as the presumptive Democratic Party nominee stepped up her election campaign against her Republican Party rival Donald Trump in the US presidential election. Comparatively, the rival Trump campaign of the Republican Party raised USD 138.7 million in July and has USD 327 million cash on hand. Vice President Harris, 59, is the only candidate who has filed paperwork to be the nominee of the Democratic Party for the November 5 presidential elections after her boss and incumbent President Joe Biden on July 20 announced his withdrawal from the race and endorsed her as the candidate. "With today's announcement, Team Harris has already raised over USD 1 billion this cycle, the fastest a presidential campaign has crossed the USD 1 billion threshold in presidential history," the Harris Campaign said Friday. "This is a history-making haul for a candidate who will make history this November. The tremendous outpouring of support we've seen in just a short

Trump campaign raised USD 139 million in July

Washington (PTI): Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump received USD 138.7 million in donations in July, a hefty sum but much behind the USD 200 million his Democratic rival Vice President Kamala Harris raked in in the week after announcing her candidacy. The 78-year-old former president also has USD 327 million in cash on hand. "There has never been anything like the MAGA (Make America Great Again) Movement. We raised USD 139 Million in July alone. We now have a whopping USD 327 Million Cash On Hand," Trump said on Truth Social, his social media platform. "Spectacular support from Great American Patriots who are donating to our Campaign for President of the United States, and helping out in many other ways. Much work to be done, but I will always keep fighting for YOU. Our Country is failing, but we will turn it around, quickly, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" he said on Thursday. The Trump Campaign, in a statement, said these numbers reflect continued momentum with donors at every level and provide the resources for the final 96 days until victory on November 5. July saw several major moments in Trump's re-election campaign, as the former president survived an assassination attempt; formally accepted the Republican presidential nomina-

tion and tapped JD Vance as his running mate. His July sum eclipsed his USD 111.8 million June total but fell short of the USD 141 million in contributions he received in May, the same month he was found guilty in the Manhattan hush-money case. The Harris campaign has not released full numbers for their fundraising totals in July. However, the campaign did reveal that they raised over USD 200 million in the first week after her candidacy was announced—including USD 81 million raised within the first 24 hours of her campaign. Harris' haul does not include funds the vice president inherited from Biden's campaign and committee accounts, which the Trump campaign has asked the Federal Election Commission to look into, arguing that the transfer is the "largest campaign finance violation in American history." With less than 100 days until the election, Trump is focussing his campaign on Harris' race. Trump participated in a controversial live interview at a convention of Black journalists in Chicago and quickly stumbled into racially insensitive remarks about Harris as he questioned her identity and qualifications. Trump falsely claimed Harris had only emphasised her Asian-American heritage until recently when, he said, "she became a black person" for political gain.

time makes clear the Harris coalition is mobilised, growing, and ready to put in the work to defeat Trump this November," said Harris for President campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez. If elected on November 5 to succeed President Biden, Harris — the daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother — would not only be the first woman, but also the first Indian-American, the first Asian, the first Black woman and the first person of Jamaican descent to ascend to the office. "Our money is going to the work that wins close elections — whether it be an organiser knocking doors in DeKalb County, a rural office opening in Pennsylvania, or a college stu-



13 killed during protests over Nigeria's economic crisis, hundreds arrested

Abuja (AP): At least 13 protesters were killed during mass protests in Nigeria against the country's economic crisis that turned violent in several states, a rights group said Friday. Authorities confirmed four people killed by a bomb and the arrests of hundreds in the protests that triggered curfews in several states. Amnesty International's Nigeria director Isa Sanusi said in an interview that it independently verified the deaths that were reported by witnesses, families of the victims and lawyers. More than 300 protesters were arrested and curfews imposed in the northern states of Kano and Katsina after the looting of government and public properties, Nigerian police said. One police officer was also killed and several others injured. The protests were mainly over food shortages and alleged bad governance in the country. Nigeria's public officials, frequently accused of corruption,



are among the best paid in Africa, a stark contrast in a country that has some of the world's poorest and hungriest people, despite being one of the continent's top oil producers. Carrying placards, bells and Nigeria's green-and-white flag, protesters chanted songs as they listed their demands, including the reinstatement of gas and electricity subsidies whose removal as part of the government's audacious reforms to grow the economy has had a knock-on effect on the price of just about everything else.

US recognises González as winner of Venezuela's presidential poll

AP ■ CARACAS

The US government has recognised Venezuelan opposition candidate Edmundo González as the winner of the South American country's presidential election, discrediting the results announced by electoral authorities who declared President Nicolás Maduro the victor. "Given the overwhelming evidence, it is clear to the United States and, most importantly, to the Venezuelan people that Edmundo González Urrutia won the most votes in Venezuela's July 28 presidential election," US Secretary of State

Turkiye blocks access to Instagram

Ankara (AP): Turkiye's communications authority blocked access to the social media platform Instagram on Friday, the latest instance of a clampdown on websites in the country. The Information and Communication Technologies Authority, which regulates the internet, announced the block early Friday but did not provide a reason. Sabah newspaper, which is close to the government, said access was blocked in response to Instagram removing posts by Turkish users that expressed condolences over the killing of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh. It came days after Fahrettin Altun, the presidential communications director and aide to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, criticized the Meta-

UK PM Starmer's new scheme to clamp down on violent disorder

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has announced a new scheme that pulls together police and intelligence resources to clamp down on violent disorder on the streets of London amid reports of further protests planned by far-right groups following the fatal stabbing of three schoolgirls. The new National Violent Disorder Programme is designed to stop criminals intent on causing violence and unrest by bringing together policing capabilities from across the UK to share intelligence on the activity of mobs for officials to make swift arrests. Violent protests

UK PM Starmer's new scheme to clamp down on violent disorder

included a mosque being attacked in Southport — the site of Monday's stabbings in north-west England, several police officers injured, objects hurled and vehicles set on fire as the unrest spread around the country to Downing Street in London. "It's not a protest. It's not legitimate. It's a crime and violent disorder. An assault on the rule of law and the execution of justice," said Starmer, after an urgent meeting with police chiefs on Thursday. "Whether it's in Southport, London or Hartlepool, these people are showing our country exactly who they are. Mosques targeted because they are

mosques, flares thrown at the statue of Winston Churchill, a Nazi salute at the Cenotaph ... we've resolved to show who we are. A country that will not allow understandable fear to curdle into division and hate in our communities," he said. The authorities stressed that extremist groups will not be allowed to "hide behind" the legitimate right to protest to "wreak havoc and intimidation." "Police are already tracking down those involved in violence and anyone else thinking of joining in should know they will face the full force of the law," said Chief Constable Andy Marsh, CEO at the College of Policing.

owned platform for preventing users in Turkiye from posting messages of condolences for Haniyeh. Unlike its Western allies, Turkiye does not consider Hamas to be a terror organization. A strong critic of Israel's military actions in Gaza, Erdogan has described the group as "liberation fighters." The country is observing a day of mourning for Haniyeh on Friday, during which flags will be flown at half-staff. Turkiye has a track record of censoring social media and websites. Hundreds of thousands of domains have been blocked since 2022, according to the Freedom of Expression Association, a non-profit organisation regrouping lawyers and human rights activists.

Imran's party to form alliance against govt

'Pak paid over \$3.6 bn in interest to IMF'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan has approved the formation of a "grand opposition alliance" by expanding the existing platform, Tehreek Tahafuz-e-Ayine-Pakistan, to act as a powerful anti-government movement, a senior party leader has said. Former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser, who addressed reporters alongside the party's secretary-general Omar Ayub Khan outside Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail where the 71-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician is lodged since last August, said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to expand the opposition alliance in a meeting with Imran Khan on Thursday, Geo News reported. Qaiser announced that the former ruling party would gather all opposition parties to run a powerful anti-government movement. He said that the party's forthcoming power show in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Swabi was aimed at raising a "strong voice" for the release of the PTI founder and other detained leaders. "This country will only be governed in accordance with the law and the Constitution," Qaiser emphasised. During his address, Qaiser also rebuked the incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led coalition govern-

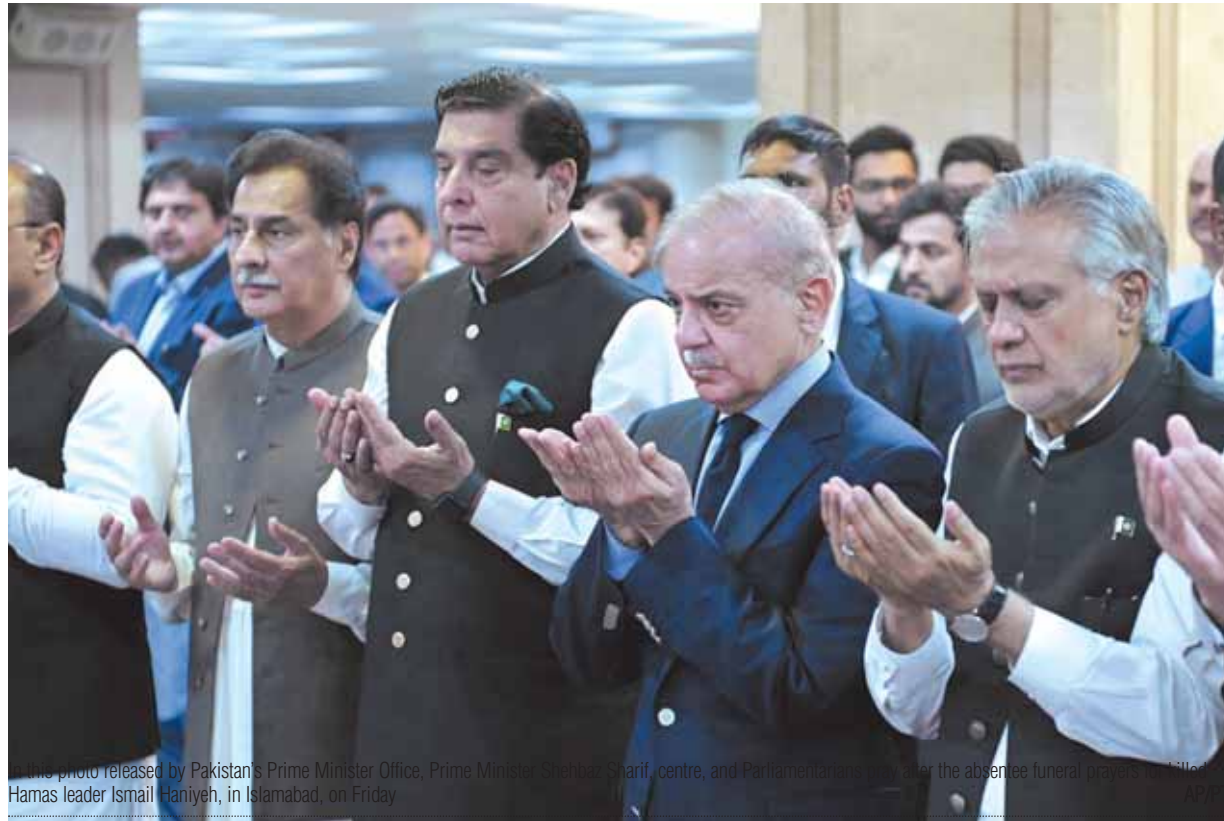


Photo released by Pakistan's Prime Minister Office, Prime Minister's Secretariat, and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for the absence funeral of the late PTI leader Ismail Haniyeh, in Islamabad, on Friday

ment over skyrocketing power bills. He said the bloated electricity bills were "unacceptable" for the inflation-hit masses. The PTI leader also said that they support Jamaat-e-Islami's (JI) sit-in — underway on Rawalpindi's Murree Road since July 26 — against the massive hike in power bills. However, JI Emir Hafiz Naemir Rehman has said that his party would not become part of the PTI proposed grand alliance as history suggests that the opposition parties use such platforms for self-interest. "We will have the same stance as the opposition parties on some issues and hold meetings with them, but we will not become part of any alliance," Naemir said on Thursday. Ayub, while addressing the same press conference, appealed to the masses to attend the public gathering in Swabi on August 5 in large numbers from across the country to show solidarity with the former premier. Responding to criticism against the PTI founder for demanding negotiations with the Pakistan Army, Ayub said that they did not hold any discussion regarding the dialogue, however, he added that Khan made it clear that the military belongs to the nation and vice versa. He further said that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) were trying to drive a wedge between the military and the nation. Commenting on the cases against the jailed ex-prime minister, the opposition leader said that they were fighting a legal battle for Khan's release. Ayub blamed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for stopping the release of former first lady Bushra Bibi despite having no connections with the Toshakhana corruption case. The PTI secretary general demanded Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamer Farooq to recuse themselves from hearing the PTI founder's cases, Geo News reported. The PTI believes he is being arrested in more cases at the behest of the powerful military establishment to make sure that he does not come out of jail. Khan was first arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in a 190-million-pound corruption case. He faces over 200 cases and has been in jail since August last year.

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has paid more than USD 3.6 billion in interest on loans to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the last 40 years, the finance ministry of the cash-strapped government has informed Parliament. This was revealed by the government during a meeting of the Senate's Standing Committee on Economic Affairs on Thursday at the Parliament House, where the Ministry of Finance presented details of the loans and repayments made to the Washington-based global lender so far. According to The Express Tribune newspaper, during the briefing by officials from the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank of Pakistan, it was disclosed that Pakistan has paid over USD 3.60 billion in interest to the IMF. The documents presented in the meeting revealed that the interest paid amounts to over Rs 1,000 billion in Pakistani currency. It also emerged that over the past 30 years, the cash-strapped country has borrowed approximately USD 29 billion from the IMF and has repaid more than USD 21.72 billion in the same period. In the last four years alone, Pakistan borrowed over USD 6.26 billion from the IMF and repaid USD 4.52 billion. Additionally, in the last four years, Pakistan has paid over USD 1.10 billion in interest to the IMF. In 2024, Pakistan borrowed USD 1.35 billion in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) from the IMF and repaid USD 646.69 million in SDRs. SDRs are an international reserve asset created by the IMF. They are used to supplement the official reserves of member countries and can be exchanged among governments for freely usable currencies in times of need. The value of SDRs is based on a basket of major international currencies. The Ministry of Finance officials also informed the committee that Pakistan borrowed USD 19.55 billion SDRs (USD 25.94 billion) from the IMF since 1984 and repaid USD 14.71 (USD 19.51b) billion SDRs, with USD 2.44 (USD 3.23b) billion SDRs paid in interest. The committee chairman Senator Saifullah Abro said that the country was not being destroyed on its own "but we all have a part in its destruction". The committee later sought details of every programme with the IMF, stating that the committee should be informed about what has happened in each programme, according to the paper.

Japan asks Denmark to extradite activist

Tokyo (AP): Japan has asked Denmark to extradite anti-whaling activist Paul Watson, who has been in custody in Greenland since his arrest last month under a Japanese warrant, officials said on Friday. Watson, a 73-year-old Canadian American citizen, is a former head of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, whose high seas confrontations with whaling vessels have drawn support from celebrities and even featured in the reality television series "Whale Wars." Japan's coast guard sought his arrest over an encounter with a Japanese whaling research ship in 2010 when he was accused of obstructing the crew's official duties by ordering the captain of his ship to throw explosives at the whaling ship. He was sought in an Interpol red notice, and the perpetrator, a New Zealand citizen, was convicted of assault and given a suspended prison term allowing him to leave Japan.

Algeria courts disenchanting youth

AP ■ ALGIERS
A few years after taking to the streets with hundreds of thousands of other Algerians, Kaci Taher says he now feels so disengaged that he won't even vote in the country's presidential elections next month. The 28-year-old from Kabylia is precisely the kind of voter that President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has targeted as he vies for a second term in office, describing himself as a "candidate of youth" in his campaign announcement last month. Most of the young people who make up more than half of the population in Algeria are so disenchanted that, like Taher, they may not vote in next month's presidential election. Though he is almost certain to win, a low turnout could put the legitimacy of Tebboune's victory in doubt. "Voting has no meaning in Algeria like in the big democracies," he said. "Where I come from, the results and quotas are fixed in advance in the back room of

the government, so what's the point of taking part in the electoral farce?" Taher said he is politically suffocating and has little confidence in elections securing the type of democratic outcome that people demanded in 2019. In that year, massive street protests throughout the country known as the Hirak led to the ouster of octogenarian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika after two decades leading gas-rich Algeria, Africa's largest nation by area and a key security partner for Western nations. Like many young people in Algeria, Taher struggles with unemployment, boredom and malaise. Voter turnout has long been low in Algeria, particularly among people under 30, who make up 51 per cent of the population, according to the country's National Statistics Bureau. Though little data exists on why people in Algeria abstain from voting, experts say that the aging political elite — which still includes politicians

who were involved in wresting independence from France more than 60 years ago — aren't reaching young people. "There is a big gap between the new generation and the existing political structures — political parties and institutions," said Redouane Boudjema, a professor at the Algiers Institute of Journalism who has researched youth and social movements. "Young people no longer identify with the political elites who occupy the public arena." Hirak activists like Taher were disappointed when authorities called for quick elections amid protests in 2019. The timeline, demonstrators said, offered little opportunity to come to consensus on deep reforms, allowing then-74 year-old Tebboune, seen as close to the military, to win in a low turnout race. Throughout his tenure, journalists have faced prosecution and the economic challenges afflicting many of the country's 45 million people have persist-

Senior leader of PTI shot dead

Lahore (PTI): A senior leader of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party was shot dead in Lahore while he was coming out of a mosque after offering Friday prayers, police said. "Dr Shahid Saddique Khan was coming out of a mosque in Valancia Town in Lahore after offering Friday

prayers when four unidentified men opened fire on him and fled on two motorcycles. He was shifted to a hospital where he succumbed to his wounds," a Lahore police spokesperson told PTI. The spokesperson said that the Lahore police chief has constituted a special team to probe the incident. Khan was

the owner of a private hospital and former information secretary of PTI's Punjab chapter. IGP Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has directed the Lahore police to immediately arrest the perpetrators. The PTI has been at loggerheads with the establishment ever since the May 9, 2023, riots.

Ukraine adds another Turkish corvette to its navy for war against Russia



AP ■ KYIV
Ukraine has taken delivery of a second Turkish-built navy corvette, officials said on Friday, although they did not say specifically how the warships might be used in the war against Russia. Ukraine's first lady, Olena Zelenska, attended the launching ceremony of the Adak-class corvette during a visit to Turkey, the Ukrainian presidency announced on its website. The corvette Ukraine already had is currently undergoing sea trials. Turkish Adak-class ships are typically able to strike planes, other ships and submarines. Ukraine, which has coastlines on the Black Sea and the smaller Sea of Azov, had a small navy at the time of Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion. But it has developed deadly uncrewed sea drones that have severely limited Moscow's Black Sea naval capability. The Ukrainian presidency said the corvettes would help

protect the country's interests in the Black and Azov seas "but also, in particular, in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean." The presidency statement did not elaborate. International law forbids the passage of warships through Turkey's busy Bosphorus Strait, which links the Mediterranean and Black seas, during times of war. However, the presidency's statement didn't say where exactly the Turkish shipyard was located, meaning it could be on the northern side of the strait, with a direct route to Ukraine. Ukraine ordered the two Turkish corvettes under an agreement signed in 2020, the presidency said. Ukrainian authorities last month adopted a Maritime Security Strategy that aims to rebuild its naval capability. It is also getting help with that from Western partners. The maritime capability coalition, headed by the United Kingdom and Norway, was established last December.

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813
Mobile NO. 96461-55525, Website: www.pspcl.in

Short Term E-Tender Enq. No.543/P-3/EMP-12748 Dated 01-08-24
Dy. Chief Engineer/ Head quarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2024_POWER_124801_1 for Replacement of damaged Rubber Lagging Sheet of Pulleys of Conveyor belt system of Coal Handling Plant, GGSSTP, Rupnagar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eprocs.punjab.gov.in> from 02-08-2024/ 01.00 PM onwards. Note:- Corrigendum & Addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

RTP-72/24
76155/12/3218/2023/36323 Dated CHD :- 8/2/2024

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(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813
Mobile NO. 96461-55525, Website: www.pspcl.in

Short Term E-Tender Enq. No.7582/P-3/EMP-12750 Dated 01-08-24
Dy. Chief Engineer/ Head quarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2024_POWER_124771_1 for Procurement of Spares for HP Bypass System (Oil Side). For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eprocs.punjab.gov.in> from 02-08-2024/ 01.00 PM onwards. Note:- Corrigendum & Addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

RTP-71/24
76155/12/3217/2023/36322 Dated CHD :- 8/2/2024

verka
Har On Ok, Har On De

THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66

Notice Inviting e Tender www.verka.coop

e-tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following item :-

Sr.No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh	
	Packaging Material:-	Annual/
	1) 15 Kg Ghee Tins	74K
	2) Ice Cream Cup	20 Lac
	i. 65 ml	3.60 Lac
	ii. 80ml	
	3) WMP Tins with C.Boxes	90K
	i. ½ kg	90K
	ii. 1 kg	
2.	For Verka CFP, Bhattian (Khanna)	Annual
	Disposal of Old Bardana (Jute Bags & P.P Bags)	

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

NA/12/24537/2023/36295 Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

Yaari Digital Integrated Services Limited
(CIN: L51101HR2007PLC077999)

Extract of Consolidated Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter ended 30 June 2024 (Rs. in Crores)

Particulars	Quarter ended 30-Jun-24	Quarter ended 31-Mar-24	Quarter ended 30-Jun-23	Year ended 31-Mar-24
	Unaudited	Refer note-3	Unaudited	Audited
Total Income from Operations	0.50	0.28	0.24	3.15
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Minority Interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of Associate, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(5.28)	(6.70)	(5.50)	(21.61)
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Minority Interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of Associate (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items))	(5.28)	(6.70)	(5.50)	(21.61)
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after Tax, Minority Interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of Associate (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(5.28)	(6.70)	(5.50)	(21.61)
Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	4.34	(7.34)	(0.19)	(12.31)
Equity Share Capital	19.74	19.74	19.74	19.74
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the audited Balance Sheet				(253.50)
Earnings per Share (EPS) before extraordinary items				
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	(0.53)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(2.15)
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	(0.53)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(2.15)
Earnings per Share (EPS) after extraordinary items				
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	(0.53)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(2.15)
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	(0.53)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(2.15)

Notes:
1) The above results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and subsequently approved at the meeting of the Board of Directors held on 02 August 2024.
2) Key Standalone Financial Information: (Rs. in Crores)

Particulars	Quarter ended 30-Jun-24	Quarter ended 31-Mar-24	Quarter ended 30-Jun-23	Year ended 31-Mar-24
	Unaudited	Refer note-3	Unaudited	Audited
Total Income	0.59	0.37	0.18	3.57
Profit/(Loss) before Tax	(11.22)	(14.36)	(10.32)	(43.37)
Net Profit/(Loss) after Tax	(11.22)	(14.36)	(10.32)	(43.37)

3) Figures for the quarter ended 31 March 2024 represent the balancing figures between the audited figures for the full financial year and published reviewed year to date figures upto third quarter of the respective financial year.
4) The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://www.yaari.com>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).

Registered Office: 5th Floor, Plot No. 108, IT Park, Udyog Vihar, Phase-1 Gurugram, Haryana 122016
Place : Gurugram
Date : 02 August 2024
For and on behalf of the Board of Directors
Kubair Khera
Executive Director & CEO

Indiabulls Enterprises Limited
(CIN: U71290HR2019PLC077579)

Extract of Consolidated Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter ended 30 June 2024 (Rs. in Crores)

Particulars	Quarter ended 30-Jun-24	Quarter ended 31-Mar-24	Quarter ended 30-Jun-23	Year ended 31-Mar-24
	Unaudited	Refer note-3	Unaudited	Audited
Total Income from Operations	15.55	14.67	16.30	58.76
Net (Loss)/Profit for the period (before Tax, minority interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of associates, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(2.97)	(18.81)	(0.00)	(25.20)
Net (Loss)/Profit for the period (before Tax, minority interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of associates (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items))	(2.97)	(18.81)	(0.00)	(25.20)
Net (Loss)/Profit for the period (after Tax, minority interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of associates (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items))	(3.37)	(18.84)	(0.76)	(27.15)
Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(3.39)	(18.92)	(1.12)	(25.33)
Equity Share Capital	39.67	39.67	39.67	39.67
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the audited Balance Sheet				206.07
Earnings per Share (EPS) of Rs.2 each from continuing operations				
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	(0.17)	(0.95)	(0.04)	(1.37)
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	(0.17)	(0.95)	(0.04)	(1.37)
Earnings per Share (EPS) of Rs.2 each from discontinued operations				
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	(0.00)	0.02	(0.02)	0.10
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	(0.00)	0.02	(0.02)	0.10

Notes:
1. The above results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and subsequently approved at the meeting of the Board of Directors held on 02 August 2024.
2) Key Standalone Financial Information: (Rs. in Crores)

Particulars	Quarter ended 30-Jun-24	Quarter ended 31-Mar-24	Quarter ended 30-Jun-23	Year ended 31-Mar-24
	Unaudited	Refer note-3	Unaudited	Audited
Total Income	13.50	12.43	12.09	48.43
Profit/(Loss) before Tax	(5.17)	(17.88)	(4.50)	(33.00)
Net Profit/(Loss) after Tax	(5.17)	(17.31)	(4.50)	(32.43)

3. Figures for the quarter ended 31 March 2024 represents the balancing figures between the audited figures for the full financial year ended 31 March 2024 and published reviewed year to date figures upto 31 December 2023.
4. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://www.indiabullsentprises.com>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).

Registered Office: 5th Floor, Plot No. 108, IT Park, Udyog Vihar, Phase-1 Gurugram, Haryana 122016
Place : Gurugram
Date : 02 August 2024
For and on behalf of Board of Directors
Vijay Kumar Agarwal
Executive Director

Tax Dept: Record over 7.28 crore income-tax returns filed

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Income tax returns (ITRs) touched a new record of over 7.28 crore, 7.5 per cent higher compared to previous fiscal, by the July 31 deadline, the income tax department said on Friday.

The total number of ITRs for assessment year 2024-25 filed till July 31, 2024 is more than 7.28 crore, which is 7.5 per cent higher than the total ITRs for AY 2023-24 (6.77 crore) filed till July 31, 2023, the department said in a statement.

"Out of the total ITRs of 7.28 crore filed for AY 2024-25, 5.27 crore have been filed in the new tax regime compared to 2.01 crore ITRs filed in the old tax regime," it said.

Thus, about 72 per cent of taxpayers have opted for the new tax regime, while 28 per cent continue to be in the old tax regime.

The filing of ITRs peaked on July 31, 2024 (the due date for salaried taxpayers and other non-tax audit cases), with over 69.92 lakh ITRs having been filed on a single day.



The department also received 58.57 lakh ITRs from first-time filers, a fair indication of the widening of the tax base. In a historic first, ITRs (ITR-1, ITR-2, ITR-4, ITR-6) were deployed on the e-filing portal on the first day of the Financial Year i.e. On April 1, 2024.

Out of the 7.28 crore ITRs filed for A.Y. 2024-25, 45.77 per cent are ITR-1 (3.34 crore), 14.93 per cent are ITR-2 (1.09 crore), 12.5 per cent are ITR-3 (91.10 lakh), 25.77 per cent are ITR-4 (1.88 crore) and 1.03 per cent are ITR-5 to ITR-7 (7.48 lakh).

Over 43.82 per cent of these ITRs have been filed using the online ITR utility available on the e-filing portal and the remaining have been filed using offline ITR utilities, it said.

During the peak filing period, the e-filing portal successfully handled huge traffic, providing a seamless experience to taxpayers for filing of ITRs.

On July 31, 2024 alone, successful logins stood at 3.2 crore.

The process of e-verification is important to commence the processing of ITRs and to issue refunds, if any, it said. It is encouraging to note that

over 6.21 crore ITRs have been e-verified, out of which more than 5.81 crore are through Aadhaar-based OTP (93.56 per cent).

Of the e-verified ITRs, more than 2.69 crore ITRs for the A.Y. 2024-2025 have been processed (43.34 per cent) till July 31, 2024.

Over 91.94 lakh challans have been received through TIN 2.0 payment system in the month of July, 2024 (for AY 2024-25), while total number of challans filed through TIN 2.0 since April 1, 2024 stands at 1.64 crore (for AY 2024-25).

The e-filing helpdesk team has handled approximately 10.64 lakh queries from taxpayers during the year up to July 31, supporting the taxpayers proactively during the peak filing period.

While expressing its gratitude to tax professionals and taxpayers for their support in compliances in filing of ITRs and forms, the statement said, taxpayers are also requested to verify their unverified ITRs if any, within 30 days of filing the ITR.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The power ministry on Friday said the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has approved the detailed project report of two hydro pumped storage plants -- 600 MW Upper Indravati in Odisha and 2,000 MW Sharavathy in Karnataka -- in record time.

To fast-track the concurrence process of hydro PSPs (pumped storage projects) in line with ease of doing business drive of the Government of India, the CEA has further revised the guidelines to simplify the process for preparation of DPRs (detailed project reports) of PSPs and its concurrence, a ministry statement said.

According to the statement, the 600 MW Upper Indravati in Odisha is being developed by OHPC Ltd (a Odisha government undertaking) and 2,000 MW Sharavathy in Karnataka is being developed by KPCL (a unit of Karnataka government). CEA has received a number of proposals of hydro PSPs (around 60 GW), under survey and investigation for



preparation of DPRs. All the developers are at various stages of preparation of DPRs. After preparation of DPRs, these PSPs will be uploaded by the developers on CEA website for concurrence under section 8 of the Electricity Act, 2003.

According to the ministry, the government has prioritized the development of energy storage systems, particularly PSPs, to ensure the energy security of the country.

As per the National Electricity Plan (Generation), the installed

capacity of energy storage systems including BESS is projected at 74 GW by 2031-32.

Under the revised guidelines for approval of DPRs of PSPs, the developers are allowed to submit the DPR online with completion of first 13 chapters. Some of the chapters have been dispensed with.

Now there is no mandatory requirement of approval of cost and financial chapters. These chapters need to be submitted only for reference and record to meet the requirement of the Act.

For close loop hydro PSP, there is no requirement to submit the alternative location plan for reservoirs. The guidelines also provide for inclusion of an undertaking from developer stating that the DPR submitted is in line with pre-DPR clearances. This obviates the requirement of again sending the DPR for reexamination. This is expected to save around 4 to 5 months' time in the concurrence process.

The process for giving excavation permission at the risk and cost of developers has been streamlined so that advance action can be taken by the developers to start the work at the site. This is expected to save around 6 to 8 months' time in execution of the project, the ministry said.

The developers have also been advised to carry out investigations and submit the reports to the appraising agencies on time so that parallel activities can be done by the appraising agencies. This is expected to save around 1 to 2 months' time, it added.

Essar's IT firm Black Box to raise ₹410 crore via preferential issue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Conglomerate Essar Group's IT firm Black Box on Friday said its board has approved plans to raise up to Rs 410 crore through preferential issue.

The fundraising plan includes Rs 200 crore from existing promoters of the company, Rs 200 crore from marquee investors, including foreign institutional investors and Rs 10 crore from the company's key management personnel, according to a statement.

"Black Box Limited...Has received commitment for raising of funds aggregating to Rs 410 crore via preferential issue aimed at accelerating growth and expansion in the digital infrastructure sector," the company said in a statement. The company's board in a meeting approved the issuance of 98,32,123 fully convertible warrants at Rs 417 per warrant, in one or more tranches, aggregating to Rs 410 crore, it said.

"After the conversion of warrants into equity, promoter shareholding will be marginally lower from existing 71.1 per cent to 69.8 per cent. Black Box continues



to be Essar's key investment in the technology space," the statement said.

The fresh capital will be invested across several key areas spanning data centres, network infrastructure, research and development, and market expansion, it added.

"The investment will support the company's strategic expansion and growth initiatives into key Industry Verticals with relevant technology solutions with key leadership hiring and expanding its sales and business development efforts significantly both in North America and emerging markets," it said.

Black Box, listed on the Indian stock exchanges, has operations spread across 35

countries, but its major business comes from the US. Black Box CEO Sanjeev Verma said the raised funds will "enable us to embark on an ambitious growth trajectory and enhance our digital infrastructure offerings and drive innovation in a rapidly evolving market."

The IT firm reported a multi-fold rise to Rs 138 crore in its profits for FY24, while its revenue remained almost flat at Rs 6,282 crore. Black Box, listed on the Indian stock exchanges, has operations spread across 35 countries, but its major business comes from the US. Shares of Black Box were trading 4.99 per cent higher at Rs 557.35 apiece on the BSE on Friday.

Markets snap five-day rally; Sensex tumbles over 850 points

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty halted their five-day rally to close with deep cuts on Friday in line with a global sell-off as investors dialled back risk exposure in metal, auto and IT stocks after weak US job data.

Amid widespread selling pressure, the 30-share BSE Sensex plunged 885.60 points or 1.08 per cent to close at 80,981.95. During the day, it nosedived 998.64 points or 1.21 per cent to hit an intraday low of 80,868.91.

The broader Nifty of NSE slipped 293.20 points or 1.17 per cent to end at 24,717.70. It fell 324.05 points or 1.29 per cent to 24,686.85 during the session.

From the Sensex stocks, Maruti Suzuki India, Tata Motors, JSW Steel, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, Mahindra and Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies and Infosys were the laggards. HDFC Bank, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Nestle India and Asian Paints were among



the gainers.

The European markets were quoting lower in mid-session deals on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.77 per cent to USD 80.13 a barrel. In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul ended lower on Thursday.

The US stock market also finished in the negative territory on Thursday. Foreign institutional investors bought equities worth Rs 2,089.28 crore in the capital markets on Thursday.

The 30-share Sensex climbed 126.21 points to close at a new lifetime high of 81,867.55, while NSE Nifty rose 59.75 points to settle at an all-time closing peak of 25,010.90.

NPO Swades Foundation eyes ₹10-cr via zero coupon zero principal bond; issue opens at SSE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Swades Foundation, a non-profit organisation founded by Zarina and Ronnie Screwvala, on Friday announced that its Rs 10-crore ZCZP (Zero Coupon Zero Principal) instrument opened for subscription on the NSE's Social Stock Exchange (SSE) platform.

This will be the biggest issue size by an NPO at the SSE and the issue will be open until August 13 for online subscription, Swades Foundation said in a statement.

Funds raised through the issue at SSE will support Swades Foundation's programmes, including sustainable livelihoods through goat rearing, health and hygiene initiatives and youth education as well as employability programmes. The 'zero-coupon, zero-principal' are instruments for donating money to non-profit organisations listed on the SSE.

"The SSE with its level of diligence for a listing and the subsequent reports of fund utilisation (for the donors) will extend a lot of



transparency and credibility to the sector, which will continue to encourage a lot of new retail donors," Ronnie Screwvala, Co-Founder, Swades Foundation, said. Over the past 11 years, Swades, dedicated to holistic rural empowerment, has reached out to 3,310 hamlets in Raigad and Nashik districts of Maharashtra, with an estimated population of 1.1 million.

Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD & CEO, NSE said that SSE of NSE witnessed a growing traction by NPOs for fundraising for their projects.

"Our 10th listing of Swades Foundation is raising Rs 10 crore which is nearly equal to the first 7 issues combined and is a testament to growing interest and trust being shown by NPOs and donors on the NSE SSE platform". Markets regulator Sebi has been taking measures to widen the participation of subscribers at the social stock exchange.

In November 2023, the regulator reduced the issue size of ZCZP from Rs 1 crore to Rs 50 lakh. It has also reduced the minimum application size for donors to Rs 10,000 from Rs 2 lakh.

Sebi working on templatised offer document for firms to fill in blanks' to get approval, says Buch

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch on Friday said the capital markets regulator is working on a mechanism to expedite IPO approvals, where companies can simply fill in the blanks in a template to get the go-ahead.

Separately, Sebi is also developing an artificial intelligence tool to check IPO documents being filed by companies for faster approvals, Buch said speaking at the Capam event of FICCI and added that this tool should be in place by December.

Stating that a mystique has been built around the IPO process like filing of a complex draft red herring prospectus, Buch said the attempt is to demystify the process now.

Elaborating on the "demystified offer document" aspect, Buch said Sebi is working on a process which will have a template where companies can just fill in the blanks to prepare the IPO document.

There will be a separate column for articulating any complexities and explaining the variations on a particular aspect, she said.

"The document will be precise, meaningful and any variation will be explained separately," she said, adding that the new process will smoothen the processing time and also demystify the



process. She, however, did not spell out a timeline for implementation of the plan or also the process that will be followed in the run up.

Apart from this, the regulator is also working on a new process of fundraising for listed companies, which will be a combination of rights issue and a preferential allotment.

The overall duration for end-to-end process for getting the go-aheads will nearly halve to 23 days from the present 42 days for preferential issues, which is the fastest route of fundraise, she said.

Under the innovation, the watchdog is eliminating the need for getting approval from Sebi and will also do away with the requirement for merchant bankers as the fundraising document will be a simple two-page one listing out the necessary details for investors precisely. Buch said this innovation,

which will potentially deprive merchant bankers of the fees, is a homegrown solution and the idea has not come from the industry.

Sebi will be bringing a consultation paper on this idea before moving ahead with the proposal, she said, adding that the process will be cost-effective and faster. Buch said making the IPO process faster has been a key objective for her, and pointed that there are eight applications which have exceeded the three month threshold at present due to lack of necessary regulatory approvals, judicial interventions and some non-compliances.

She also said that Sebi has taken an approach where it prefers to return documents when it discovers things like conflict of interest at merchant bankers' ends, directors being accused of fraud, objects of issue not being clear or it being simply

incomplete. "We return the documents to unclutter the path so that the genuine applications are not delayed," she added.

The new system of demystified offer document will help the young companies in its listing process, Buch said, adding that Sebi is also working on rationalising the disclosures to be made by a loss-making company in its listing. The possible solutions will be out in a month, she said, adding that the solutions are being found courtesy the deliberations at the industry standard forum (ISF).

The Sebi management will also be taking the ISF to its board with the intent of formalising it, she said.

The board will also be seen deliberating on a proposal to streamline the ongoing disclosures to be made under the listing obligation and disclosure requirements (LODR) framework which have been formulated in consultation with the industry.

To help the errant companies who are in violation of securities laws, the regulator has also put in place a settlement amount calculator on its website, she said. It is also working on a benchmarking agency which will help compare the performance of infrastructure investment trusts and real estate infrastructure trusts, she said.

Omaxe slide show continues, hits lower circuit for third day

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Omaxe fell 5 per cent on Friday following Sebi restrictions on the realty firm, its Chairman, MD, and three others from the securities market for two years for misrepresenting the company's financials.

Extending its losses for the third consecutive session, Omaxe's shares declined 5 per cent each of Rs 139.15 and 137.40 apiece -- its lower circuit limit -- on the NSE and BSE, respectively.

In the past three sessions, the company's shares declined 15 per cent on both bourses. In broader equity markets, 30-share benchmark BSE Sensex tumbled 700.52 points or 0.86 per cent to trade at 81,167.03 while NSE Nifty declined 239.75 points to 24,771.15.

Realty firm Omaxe said it will consider challenging market regulator Sebi's order on Tuesday that barred the company, its Chairman Rohtas Goel, MD Mohit Goel, and three others from the securities market for two years for misrepresentation in the company's financial statements.

"The company has not received any order from Sebi. Once received, the content will be verified and appropriate remedy available under the law, including the filing of appeal, will be contemplated," Omaxe



spokesperson said in a statement.

"As per news articles, it appears more in the nature of accounting interpretations, which were duly explained through documentation, market practice and case laws. Rest we will be filing our response to stock exchanges within the stipulated time frame, on receipt of order," the spokesperson added.

In its 126-page final order, Sebi has also restrained three others -- Sudhangshu S Biswal, Arun Kumar Pandey, and Vimal Gupta -- from the securities markets.

The regulator has also levied a fine of Rs 47 lakh on 16 entities, including Omaxe, Rohtas Goel, Mohit Goel, and three others. Sebi said these entities have "acted in concert in order to execute a fraudulent scheme that they tried to portray as normal transactions for the benefit of the company although it was experiencing

loss, while also trying to portray these as merely lending activities, thereby trying to maintain the price of the scrip of Omaxe for a period of three years".

The company misrepresented the financial statements during 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 through its various items -- revenue, debtors, advances, and expenses.

The order came after Sebi received a complaint against Omaxe alleging that the company conducted fraudulent transactions, diverted/siphoned funds, misrepresented the financial statements, and inflated turnover among others.

As these were serious allegations, the matter was taken up for further examination by Sebi, including a forensic audit into the affairs of Omaxe. The investigation period in the matter was taken from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2021, that includes 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21.

German firm Deutsche Aircraft partners with SASMOS HET

PTI ■ MUMBAI

German aircraft maker Deutsche Aircraft on Friday said it has collaborated with Bengaluru-based SASMOS HET Technologies for its 40-seater turboprop regional aircraft D328eco project.

Under this strategic collaboration, SASMOS HET Technologies will provide specialised design and development of Electrical Wiring Interconnection Systems (EWIS) for regional aircraft, marking a significant milestone in the efforts to advance aerospace engineering globally, the company said in a statement.

SASMOS HET Technologies Ltd, which started operations in 2007, is a manufacturer of wiring harnesses, electro-mechanical assemblies and unit integration products for the aerospace, defence and marine industry sphere in India.

SASMOS currently exports more than 70 per cent of its products to Israel, the US and Europe, as per the statement. "We welcome SASMOS HET Technologies as our partner in the D328eco programme. Their reputation for developing and delivering top-tier aerospace wiring solutions aligns perfectly with our needs for the D328eco," said Nico Neumann, COO at Deutsche Aircraft.

THE STORY OF A TIGRESS LEGACY

Explore the journey through the lens of **MANISH KALANI**, a wildlife photographer, as he unveils the legacy of Ranthambore's tigresses, revealing their untold stories and the majesty of their wilderness, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



Manish Kalani's *Warrior Queens of Ranthambore* is more than just a coffee table book, it's a journey into the heart of Ranthambore National Park and a touching tribute to one of its most iconic residents, Machhli. This book is a celebration of the majestic tigresses who have roamed the park over five generations, captured through Kalani's lens in an eight-year photographic adventure. The book opens with a striking portrait of Machhli, the legendary tigress known as "The Lady of the Lakes." Kalani's photographs capture her in all her glory, her powerful presence, her regal bearing and the deep wisdom in her eyes. Machhli was not just a tigress; she was a symbol of strength and resilience, her story woven into the fabric of Ranthambore's conservation history. Kalani's images of her are infused with a sense of reverence, reflecting the profound impact

she had on the park and its tiger population. Machhli's story is central to the book, but Kalani extends his narrative to include her descendants, creating a rich tapestry of the tiger lineage. The book features photographs of Machhli's daughter, Krishna, her granddaughter, Arrowhead and her great-granddaughter, Riddhi. Each of these tigresses is portrayed with a blend of awe and intimacy. For instance, Arrowhead is shown with her fierce territorial instincts, contrasting with the more complex interactions of Riddhi, who navigates the challenges of her position within the family. Through Kalani's lens, these tigresses come to life as individuals with their own personalities, struggles and triumphs. Kalani's dedication to his craft is evident in every page. His photographs are not just visually stunning; they are imbued with emotion and context. Each image



tells a story whether it's a serene moment of rest or an intense interaction with other wildlife. The book is filled with moments that make you feel as though you are right there in the forest, sharing in the experiences of these magnificent animals. The accompanying narratives provide insights into the lives of the tigresses, offering a deeper



THE BOOK OPENS WITH A STRIKING PORTRAIT OF MACHHLI, THE LEGENDARY TIGRESS KNOWN AS "THE LADY OF THE LAKES." KALANI'S PHOTOGRAPHS CAPTURE HER IN ALL HER GLORY, HER POWERFUL PRESENCE, HER REGAL BEARING AND THE DEEP WISDOM IN HER EYES



understanding of their behaviors and relationships. What makes *Warrior Queens of Ranthambore* particularly compelling is its role in conservation. Kalani has dedicated the proceeds from the book to the Regal Roar Trust, a tribute to his commitment to the protection of these incredible creatures. This aspect of the book highlights how storytelling can

be a powerful tool for change, transforming a beautiful collection of photographs into a means of supporting conservation efforts. The book serves not only as a tribute to the tigresses but also as a call to action for their continued protection. Reading *Warrior Queens of Ranthambore* is like taking a personal journey with Kalani into

the heart of Ranthambore. It's more than just a visual experience; it's an emotional one. The book invites you to connect with the tigresses on a deeper level, to feel their struggles and triumphs, and to appreciate the beauty and complexity of their lives. Kalani's passion for wildlife and his respect for the tigers shine through every page, making this book a heartfelt and moving experience. Arguably, *Warrior Queens of Ranthambore* is a masterful blend of art and conservation. Manish Kalani's photographic journey offers a window into the lives of Ranthambore's royal tigresses, capturing their beauty, strength and spirit. The book is not only a must-have for wildlife enthusiasts but also serves as an important reminder of the ongoing efforts needed to protect our natural heritage. Through Kalani's eyes, we are reminded of the enduring spirit of Ranthambore's tigers and the crucial role we all play in ensuring their future.

THE HAUNTING PAST

Mamta Sharma's debut novel masterfully intertwines personal loss with a suspenseful mystery, creating a profound narrative of emotional healing and the quest for answer, says **TEAM VIVA**

Mamta Sharma's *Searching for Sarah* is a compelling narrative that delves into themes of grief, loss and the quest for closure through a gripping mystery. The story begins with Rini, a 34-year-old widow, navigating her life in Mumbai as she deals with the deep-seated sorrow following her husband's untimely death. Her personal journey intertwines with a decades-old mystery that unravels as she embarks on a quest for answers. The novel opens with Rini grappling with the emotional aftermath of her husband's passing. Her life, marked by a pervasive sense of emptiness, is depicted with raw honesty. Rini's struggle to find meaning and solace in her daily existence is palpable as she works as an estate agent, a role that provides her with some distraction from her grief. The routine of her professional life, however,

cannot fully shield her from the emotional turmoil she faces. Her sleep is disturbed by recurring nightmares, adding to the weight of her sorrow. The turning point in Rini's life occurs during a routine work trip when she encounters a bungalow that piques her interest. The bungalow, owned by Mr. and Mrs. D'souza, an elderly Christian couple, holds a dark secret from the past. Their daughter, Sarah, disappeared 34 years ago, leaving the couple in a state of perpetual mourning and relentless searching for answers. The disappearance of Sarah has cast a long shadow over their lives, creating an atmosphere of melancholy and unresolved tension. Rini's curiosity is immediately sparked by the D'souzias' story. The more she learns about Sarah's disappearance, the more she becomes emotionally invested in the case. Sharma effectively uses Rini's growing obsession with

the mystery to drive the narrative forward, intertwining Rini's personal grief with the broader mystery of Sarah's vanishing. This dual focus enriches the story, providing a nuanced exploration of how personal loss can intersect with and amplify the search for external truths. As Rini delves deeper into the case, the novel reveals her complex emotional landscape. The investigation forces Rini to confront her own fears and insecurities, mirroring her internal struggle with her husband's death. Sharma's portrayal of Rini's psychological state is both sensitive and profound, illustrating how personal trauma can influence one's actions and decisions. Rini's interactions with the D'souzias and other characters involved in the case are marked by empathy and determination, showcasing her growth as she navigates the intricacies of the mystery.



The narrative unfolds with increasing tension as Rini uncovers hidden layers of the case. Sharma crafts a suspenseful plot, filled with unexpected twists and turns, that keeps readers engaged and invested in the outcome. The process of unraveling Sarah's fate is depicted with meticulous detail, reflecting the complexity

of real-life investigations where every clue can lead to multiple possibilities. The author's attention to detail enhances the authenticity of the story, making Rini's journey both credible and captivating. In the "One Year Later" chapter, the novel takes a reflective turn as Rini looks back on the changes that have occurred in her life since her involvement in the case. This chapter provides a poignant conclusion to Rini's emotional arc, highlighting her personal growth and the impact of the investigation on her life. The passage of time allows Rini to evaluate the significance of her journey, offering insights into how the search for answers can lead to personal transformation and healing. In terms of style, Sharma's prose is evocative and often poetic, enhancing the emotional impact of the story. The descriptive passages are not merely visual but also sensory, immersing

readers in the sights, sounds, and feelings of the settings. This sensory richness contributes to the novel's immersive quality, making the reader feel as though they are experiencing Rini's world firsthand. Sharma also employs a meticulous and detailed approach to plot development. The author's careful attention to the investigation into Sarah's disappearance lends credibility to the story and engages readers with its methodical unraveling. The suspenseful elements of the narrative are crafted with precision, maintaining a steady pace that keeps readers invested in the unfolding mystery. Sharma's ability to blend personal grief with a compelling investigative plot showcases her skill in balancing different narrative threads. Sharma's writing throughout *Searching for Sarah* is marked by its emotional depth and character-driven narrative. The author skillfully

balances the elements of mystery and psychological exploration, creating a story that resonates on multiple levels. The interplay between Rini's personal struggles and the mystery of Sarah's disappearance adds layers of complexity to the narrative, making it a rich and engaging read. *Searching for Sarah* is a masterful debut by Mamta Sharma that successfully blends elements of crime fiction with a deep psychological exploration. The novel's exploration of grief, loss and the search for closure is handled with sensitivity and insight, making it a standout addition to the genre. Sharma's ability to weave a captivating mystery with a profound emotional journey ensures that *Searching for Sarah* will resonate with readers long after the final page is turned. Price of the book : Rs.200/- Self Publish and available on Kindle and Amazon



Manu qualifies for 25m sports pistol in second position at Olympics

PTI ■ CHATEAURoux

Indian shooter Manu Bhaker kept herself on track for a hat-trick of Olympic medals, coming up with one of her most memorable performances in her favourite event, the 25m sports pistol, as she booked a place in the final placed second at the Chateauroux shooting range here on Friday.

The 22-year-old, who has already made history by becoming the first Indian athlete to win two bronze medals in one edition of the quadrennial showpiece, can add to her aura if she wins a third medal on Saturday, something which is well within her grasp after her commanding performance in the qualification round. Manu, who continued to dominate the event and remained among the top three almost throughout the qualification phase of 'precision' and 'rapid' rounds,



aggregated 590 to be placed second behind Hungary's Veronika Major who equalled the Olympic record with a score of 592. Manu, who has seen a marked improvement in her shooting after patching up with legendary former shooter-

turned-coach Jaspal Rana, has won the 10m women's air pistol bronze and 10m air pistol mixed team bronze pairing Sarabjot Singh, She was in impregnable form in the sports pistol qualification rounds, firing 294 in the gruelling 'precision'

round with scores of 97, 98 and 99.

The 'rapid round' brought out the best in her as she shot a perfect 100, followed by two 98s for an aggregate of 296.

India's upcoming shooter and multiple Hangzhou Asian Games medallist Esha Singh faltered to aggregate 581 (291 in precision and 290 in rapid) to finish 18th among 40 shooters and miss the eighth-shooter final by a distance.

Just after winning her second bronze medal here, in 10m air pistol mixed team event, Manu had urged the countrymen not to be "disappointed" if she can't add more medals to the tally. But going by her imperious form, the Jhajjar shooter could well be in line to win a gold or silver.

Bhaker's sterling performance here has come after a failed campaign at the Tokyo Games in 2021 where a pistol malfunction stopped her from achieving her Olympic dream. She said that heartbreak made

her value the medals here even more.

Manu, the second youngest Indian athlete to win an Olympic medal after shuttler PV Sindhu, had added that she looks up to ace javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and Sindhu because they have "proved themselves".

India has won all three medals so far in shooting, with Manu bagging two and Swapnil Kusale taking the bronze in 50m rifle three-positions on Thursday.

Legendary India cricketer Rahul Dravid had also termed Manu performance "incredible" following her second Olympic bronze medal. "Manu's story is incredible about the disappointment of Tokyo Olympics, to come here and be able to get over that and compete and bronze is a phenomenal achievement," Dravid, the former India coach, had said during a panel discussion at India House in Paris.

I should have controlled mistakes in defence: Sindhu

PTI ■ PARIS

PV Sindhu has no regrets regarding her preparations for the Games as she did everything she could to be in the best shape but admitted defence let her down in the pre-quarterfinal against China's He Bing Jiao, here Thursday. Sindhu ran the Chinese world number 9 close in the first game but unending unforced errors meant that Bing Jiao ran away with the match 21-19 21-14 in 56 minutes. Sindhu even dictated a few points but had no answer to Bing Jiao's superior attack.

"I should have controlled in terms of a little bit of mistakes on my defense is what I felt," Sindhu said, reflecting upon the reason for her defeat. Sindhu had a training camp in Germany and also joined forces with mentor Prakash Padukone for better preparation.

"Everybody worked hard, so we've done whatever we could. Rest is destiny. I don't regret it," she said.

"I kept fighting still because you never know anything can happen. Both of us were fighting for each point because until the end you can't expect. "It's not easy win or easy

points, you can't think that you have finished the game."

Bing Jiao's smashes and soft drops had Sindhu scurrying on both sides of the court. But when Sindhu attacked, the Chinese defended well.

"She has that jump smash. Even my smashes, I think, which were mid-court, they were just going out when she was challenging.

"I should have hit them inside and I should have got those points where I've made those unforced errors.

"She got much more confident in that because when I was hitting, she was defending, but still some points which were really mid-court also, I was hitting just out or just into her hand."

It was neck-and-neck in the first game with Sindhu and her rival locked 19-19. The two-time Olympic medalist said winning the game from that position could have changed things for her.

"It's sad that I couldn't convert it to win, especially in the first game because it was 19 all at some point.

"I think if it would have been the other way, especially when I challenged it. If I would have won the first set, maybe it would have been different. But I think it was... I mean, there

were rallies and it was going on well, but only one can win."

Asked if she would try to play in the next Olympics in the USA, Sindhu was non-committal.

"It's still four years away. So for me, right now, I just go back and rest for a bit, maybe just take some break and then come back and let's see what it is because four years is a very, very long time. So let's see," the 29-year-old said.

"It's sad. The result, I couldn't get what I expected, but it's a journey, isn't it?"

"It's been a wonderful journey so far. There were ups and downs, and I came back from an injury, and everything was going on well. You can't expect easy wins or picking the form at the right time. Sometimes it might not be your day. We all really worked hard."

In game two, Sindhu tried to unsettle Bing Jiao with smashes but her opponent was picking up all those low shots as well.

"Her defense was really good today. She was taking everything and I had to be even more patient. Sometimes I was changing and I was getting points. I was dictating and I was getting a few points, but I think it was not enough today."

PTI ■ PARIS

Skipper Harmanpreet Singh scored a brace as the India men's hockey team registered a famous 3-2 win over Tokyo Games silver medallist and nemesis Australia in its final Pool B match here on Friday.

Already assured of a quarterfinal berth before Friday's encounter, the Indians played valiantly and dominated the proceedings for major part of the match to stun the Kookaburras, against whom they last won in Olympics in the 1972 Munich edition. It seemed India had saved their best for their last pool match, as it delivered a power-packed performance, playing attacking hockey from the beginning, and defending well throughout.

Abhishek (12th), skipper Harmanpreet (13th, 33rd) scored for India while Tom Craig (25th) and Blake Govers (55) found the net for Australia.

With this win, India most likely will finish their pool engagements in the second position with nine points, finishing behind table toppers Belgium (12), who are yet to play a match. The pole position will not change even if Belgium loses its match against Argentina.

The goal difference after that match will determine the final placing. The Indians started on an aggressive note and made two circle entries in the first two minutes.

Veteran India custodian PR Sreejesh, who is playing his last international

Hockey: India stun Australia, register first win in 52 years in Olympics



tournament, was rock solid in front of the goal, making some vital saves to deny the Kookaburras. In the 11th minute, Sreejesh made the first save to deny Tom Wickham, which resulted in a penalty corner. But the resultant effort from Jeremy Hayward was off target. Harmanpreet Singh then fired a pass to Sukhjeet Singh from the right flank. He just needed to deflect the ball but he could not stop the powerful strike. The strong Australian defence easily foiled his attempt by the time he

gathered the ball and was ready to strike.

Australia created two back-to-back opportunities, but the Indian defence was rock solid.

India stunned Australia by taking the lead through Abhishek in the 12th minute. It was Lalit, who received a pass in an empty D, he attempted a shot but that was saved by goalie Andrew Charter. Abhishek got the ball on rebound, turned, and hammered the it past rival goalkeeper Andrew Charter.

A minute later, India got a penalty corner when the ball touched the foot of Jake Harvie and Harmanpreet beat Charter's defence with fierce grounded flick.

Tim Brand had an opportunity to reduce the deficit early in the second quarter but he struck the ball wide.

Australia earned their second penalty corner of the match in the 19th minute but Govers' shot was blocked Sreejesh. Vice-captain Hardik Singh was a livewire in the mid-field, feeding the forwards consistently.

Australia got their third short corner in the 25th minute. It was a poor injection from skipper Aran Zalewski but it turned into a goal as the Australians recovered quickly to pass it to an unmarked Craig at the second post, who deflected the ball in.

India also got a penalty corner soon but this time Harmanpreet's strike was kept at bay by Charter. India led 2-1 at half time.

India got their third penalty corner when Manpreet Singh was tackled by an Australian defender. Harmanpreet's goalmouth strike was obstructed by Flynn Oglivie. India took a referral, which resulted in a penalty stroke. And Harmanpreet made no mistake by converting the chance.

OTHER SPORTS

AP ■ PARIS

FIFA offered talks with global groups of soccer leagues and player unions to end a three-month deadlock after they threatened legal action over adding to the packed competitions calendar. In a letter seen by The Associated Press, FIFA told the World Leagues Association and FIFPRO on Thursday "our offer to engage in dialogue remains on the table" amid a swirl of legal filings and threats in international soccer politics.

"FIFA believes there is a more productive way forward for football than the threat of legal action," soccer's world body said in a statement to the AP.

FIFA offers talks to leagues, player unions amid legal filings and threats in soccer politics

In May, the leagues and union said FIFA was "inherently abusive" for continuing to add games and competitions that forced their members to adapt. FIFA has expanded the 2026 World Cup, hosted across North America, to 48 teams from 32, and added a 32-team Club World Cup that will also be played every four years. It launches next June in the United States. Also in the coming season, UEFA is expanding its three season-long club competitions



with extra teams and more games that squeeze domestic schedules.

The European groups of leagues and player unions also have targeted FIFA - but not UEFA - in a formal legal complaint to Brussels. That is being handled by the European Commission, the executive arm of the 27-nation European Union that can intervene on alleged breaches of competition law. FIFPRO member unions in England and France also filed

suit against FIFA at a commercial court in Brussels, seeking a referral to the European Court of Justice. That court in Luxembourg was critical of FIFA and UEFA last year in a ruling in the Super League case brought by some storied soccer clubs. FIFA manages the calendar of international matches, which mandates when clubs must release players to national-team duty through 2030. The global groups of leagues and unions want talks on it reopened with them getting a greater say. On Thursday, FIFA said it "serves and balances the overall interests of world football, including the protection of players."

SL players' cricket awareness needs sharpening: Jayasuriya

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Interim coach Sanath Jayasuriya said Sri Lankan players will have to work on improving their "cricket awareness" in the wake of their collapse in the recently-concluded T20I series against India. Sri Lanka were in good positions during the three-match rubber but they lost wickets in a heap to suffer a 0-3 defeat. "I don't see a lack of commitment, but they have got to tackle pressure better. Their cricket awareness also needs sharpening. We are taking the responsibility; you can't go away from that," Jayasuriya was quoted as saying by 'ESPNCricinfo' as his side entered the three-match ODI series against India. "As long as they realise that, and make sure that, we'll have to keep giving them the confidence and support," he added. Jayasuriya said batsmen need not worry about hitting sixes constantly as large Sri Lankan grounds offer ample chances to score off through boundaries and twos.

"When you talk about power hitting, I don't think you need that much (in SL). If you hit enough fours and enough twos, you get the total that you need. "The Sri Lankan grounds are a little bigger. There's no reason why you can't hit boundaries, or twos, or threes. If you can do that, you can get by without hitting so many sixes," he said. The former Lankan captain said the players should be ready to accept criticism after a shoddy show such as theirs in the T20Is series.

If T20 produces attacking Test players, then I will not mind: Sehwag

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virender Sehwag wouldn't mind if youngsters starting with T20 cricket develop an aggressive streak which helps them grow as Test players who can be crowd-pullers in future. One of India's greatest Test openers, Sehwag, who was unveiled as Brand Ambassador of the inaugural Delhi Premier League, said one can't blame youngsters who are attracted to the shortest format which also provides financial viability. "The manner in which England is playing Test cricket, scoring at five runs an over. In our playing days, Australia used to score at 4 runs per over. I have always believed that if you can attack, then you give your team more chances to win the Test matches," Sehwag told mediapersons on the sidelines of an event to announce the league.

The inevitable question was whether too many T20 leagues would drive the youngsters away from the red-ball game.

"Look my elder son is 17 and he played three-day cricket for Delhi U16 but there are a lot of boys who might be waiting for that opportunity. When we were 18, there was no IPL. But, now, a youngster might think of playing IPL, and DPL gives you that opportunity.

"So, if anyone develops an aggressive game that can suit Test cricket then why not? After all, we would like people to come and watch Tests," said the Nawab of Najafgarh. But didn't Sehwag play that aggressive game in Test even before IPL?

"Was it good or bad? I scored a triple ton in 270-odd balls. Today's kid might score 400 if they play that many balls," said Sehwag, whose son, Aaryavir, will be a part of the DPL T20 draft.



The six teams taking part in the league are Central Delhi Kings, East Delhi Riders, North Delhi Strikers, Purani Delhi 6, South Delhi

Superstars and West Delhi Lions.

Rishabh Pant, if he manages to play a couple of games based on his availability, will

be the biggest attraction, and other big names are: Ishant Sharma, Harshit Rana, Navdeep Saini and Ayush Badoni to name a few.

There are four categories and Rs 10 lakh is the salary per player in the marquee A group. The winners' cheque is for Rs 1 crore. DDCA president Rohan Jaitley said the matches which will be aired live on a leading OTT platform will also have DRS with Hawk Eye facility. Asked about the Anti-Corruption arrangements, Jaitley said: "There will be zero tolerance with regards to corruption. The BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit will be working and the BCCI guidelines regarding code of conduct will be followed." As per sources, BCCI will deploy 8 ACU officials and they will be assisted by 8 more provided by the state unit. Jaitley also said they are trying to arrange an Inter-Delhi red-ball meet which

WANTED
WANTED TAILORS MEN ONLY. BASIC PAY (MONTHLY) FOR EXPERIENCED WORKERS, Rs. 15000 to 18000 FOR FRESHERS, Rs. 10000 to 12000, Driver - 15000 to 18000 SITHY GARMENTS, CHENNAI. Mail id: idris.ameen9947@gmail.com CALL - 98400 57371

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) 'e' PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Bid Identification No. S.E. JSRP(R&B)- 02/2024-25

1. Name of work : Electrical work for the year 2024-25
2. No. of Works. : Total:- 01 (One) no Work
3. Estimated cost : Above Rs.05.00 lakhs up to Rs.20.00 Lakhs (Approx)
4. Period of completion : As per Column No-8 of this NIT
5. Class of contractors : As per Column No-7 of this NIT

Other details as follows :-
6. Date & time of availability of bid documents in Portal:-07.08.2024 at 11.30.A.M
7. Last date/ time for receipt of bids in Portal:-21.08.2024 up to 05.00 PM.
8. Opening of Bid documents :-22.08.2024. at 11.30.A.M
9. Procurement Officer: Superintending Engineer, Jagatsinghpur (R&B) Division, Jagatsinghpur.

With E-Mail address:- eerbjspr@gmail.com

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website tendersorissa.gov.in
Superintending Engineer Jagatsinghpur (R&B) Division
OIPR-34093/11/0003/2425