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CHANU SETS SIGHTS ON HISTORIC PODIUM FINISH IN PARIS 11 SPORTS

India monitors a neighbour at war with itself



request to come to India "for the moment". "There are an estimated 19,000 Indian nationals there, of which about 9,000 are students. The bulk of the students, however, have already returned to India in the month of July," Jaishankar said. Elaborating upon the sequence of events, he said "On August 5, demonstrators converged in Dhaka despite curfew. Our understanding is that after a meeting with leaders of the security establishment, Hasina apparently made the decision to resign. At very short notice, she requested approval to come for the moment to India." "We simultaneously received a request for flight clearance from Bangladesh authorities. She arrived yesterday evening in Delhi. The situation in Bangladesh is still evolving," he said. "Army Chief General Waqar-uz-Zaman, addressed the nation on August 5. He spoke about assuming responsibility and constituting an interim Government. We are in close and continuous touch with the Indian community in Bangladesh through our diplomatic missions," Jaishankar said. India is also monitoring the situation with regard to the status of minorities, he said. In the all party-meeting, Jaishankar informed them India has assured help to Hasina, who arrived here on Monday evening, and given her time to decide the future course of action, sources said.

Bangladesh prepares for interim Government

PTI ■ DHAKA Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin on Tuesday dissolved Parliament to make way for the formation of an interim administration, a day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled the country following massive protests against her government. "The decision to dissolve the parliament was taken following the President's discussions with Chiefs of three staff of Armed forces, leaders of different political parties, representatives of civil society and leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement," said a statement issued by the President's office. Over 100 people have been killed in the violence across Bangladesh as chaos reigned supreme hours after Hasina resigned as Prime Minister and fled the country on Monday, reports said on Tuesday amid signs of return to normalcy. The situation in Dhaka was largely calm on Tuesday morning after a day of unrest and a night of tension. Buses and other public transport were on the streets and traders were opening shops. Government vehicles were heading to offices. Many battery-run rickshaws plied the roads, BDNews24.Com newsportal said. According to local media reports, 119 people have been killed in the violence and attacks on Hindu



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar speaks in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday (l); people gather around the residence of Bangladeshi Prime Minister in Dhaka, Bangladesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was ousted and arrived here after resigning, the Government informed Parliament it is monitoring the situation with regard to minorities in the neighbouring country and is in "close and continuous" touch with the Indian community there through its diplomatic missions. The Government also apprised MPs about Hasina's "very short notice" request to come to India "for the moment". Taking note of the likely impact of the turmoil in Bangladesh on

India, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also briefed an all-party meeting on the latest situation. He also did not rule out the role of foreign Government in the unrest there. Home Minister Amit Shah, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar and National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval held a meeting to review the fast evolving situation in Bangladesh. They also took stock of the readiness of the forces on the India-Bangladesh border. Doval had met Hasina at the Hindon airbase on Monday. In a statement in the Rajya Sabha, Jaishankar also briefed the Elders on Hasina's "very short notice"

Sheikh Hasina's port of arrival fluid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's travel plan to London remain fluid and she is likely to stay in India for a few more days after arriving here on Monday evening, sources said here on Tuesday. Hasina landed at the Hindon airbase on Monday in a C-130J military transport aircraft hours after resigning. This development arose after



the UK Government indicated that she may not get legal protection against any possible probe into the massive violent protests in her country, they said.

OBCC Addl Chief Engineer arrested

After DA of Rs 14 crore unearthed PNS ■ CUTTACK The Vigilance police on Tuesday arrested and forwarded to court Pradeep Kumar Rath, Additional Chief Engineer, Odisha Bridge and Construction Corporation (OBCC), office at Chief Construction Engineer, R and B, Cuttack Circle, for possession of disproportionate assets to his known sources of income, which he could not account for



satisfactorily. The anti-graft agency during house searches unearthed movable and immovable assets worth Rs 14 crore in the

names of Rath and his family members. The assets included a residential triple-storied building with an area of around 6,660 sqft at SatyaVihar, Pandara, Bhubaneswar, another residential triple-storied building with area of 7,076 sqft at Bhadrak, three high-value flats in Bhubaneswar, a double-storied medicine store-cum-residence of area approx 1,000 sqft at Indradhanu Market in Bhubaneswar, a crusher unit at Ghatipiri, Dhenkanal along with two JCBs, an excavator, a rock breaker worth Rs 3 crore and 50 plots in up-scale areas of Bhubaneswar, Khordha, Cuttack, Dhenkanal and Jajpur. The total registered sale deed value comes to over Rs 2.36 crore. However, the actual value is likely to be higher, which is being verified. Gold jewellery weighing 1 kg, silver weighing 1 kg, bank, postal and insurance deposits of Rs 2 crore, business investment of about Rs 1 crore, two four-wheelers (Eco Sports and Titanium) and two two-wheelers worth Rs 23 lakh were also detected.

Viksit Odisha aimed to be achieved by 2036

NITI Aayog also to help prepare Vision Document 2047 for State State aims at \$500-billion economy by 2036 PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR Under the direction of the Prime Minister, the NITI Aayog has come forward to support Odisha in preparing a Vision Document to realise its goal of Viksit Odisha. NITI Aayog CEO BVR



Subrahmanyam met Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi here for discussion in this regard. Majhi said Odisha has huge potentials in different sectors and needs to realise these to achieve the goal of Viksit Odisha by 2036 and 2047. Odisha desires to become a growth engine of India by 2047. Odisha targets a 500-billion dollar economy by 2036 when the State will be 100 years since its formation. And it also wants to have a 1.5-trillion dollar economy by 2047, he added. The NITI Aayog CEO said the Prime Minister has a spe-

cial focus on Odisha's development. Every State needs to grow exceptionally to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat. "In case of Odisha, we will support for preparation of two vision documents, one for 2036 and another for 2047," he said. It was decided that a Steering Committee would be formed under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary. The roadmap for the vision would be prepared in three months. Public outreach programmes would be taken up for receiving opinions and suggestions to achieve the goal of Viksit Odisha.

BJP pillar LK Advani hospitalised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI Around a month after being discharged, senior BJP leader and former Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani was admitted to Delhi's Apollo Hospital again on Tuesday. The 96-year-old is stable and under observation, according to sources. According to a hospital source, Advani, who was born in undivided India, was admitted to the Apollo hospital here today. In the first week of July too, Advani was brought to this facility and discharged after being kept under observation for a couple of days. Prior to that he had been admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and was discharged following a night-long stay there. Advani served as the Deputy Prime Minister of India from 2002 to 2004 and as the Union Home Minister from 1999 to 2004.

Advertisement for Odisha State Election Commission (OSCE) featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. Text in Odia: 'ଦଶମ ଜାତୀୟ ହସ୍ତତନ୍ତ ଦିବସ ଅଗଷ୍ଟ ୭, ୨୦୨୪'.



ଆମ ହସ୍ତତନ୍ତ ଆମ ଗୌରବ

Police take fraudster Satyajit on 2-day remand

Accused cheated five girls after marrying them

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police on Tuesday took fraudster Satyajit Samal, who has been arrested on the charge of cheating five girls after marrying them, on a two-day remand.

Though police had prayed for 10-day remand, the court allowed them a remand for two days to carry out further investigation in the case. Samal's modus operandi was he used to target divorcees and dupe them of their money and other properties after marrying them.



A diary has been seized from the residence of Samal, who used to cheat women by posing as an Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer. The diary allegedly contains names, addresses, contact numbers and other details of several women.

Earlier, police had said the accused was in contact with 49 more girls on matrimonial websites. He used to target victims via social media or matrimonial websites. He used to go through their profiles; and after doing some research in-

cluding their likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, he used to approach and trap them.

Police have managed to get details of Samal's bank statements and a detailed investigation regarding his financial transactions is underway.

Police are also trying to ascertain the source of money used by Samal to purchase vehicles or other valuables by matching it with bank transaction details.

Samal hails from Jajpur district and was staying in Chandrasekharpur in Bhubaneswar. He was nabbed after a trap laid by the Commissionerate police.

Potato crisis deepens amid depleting stock

Price touches Rs 50 per kg again Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Potato crisis appears to have deepened further in Odisha as the tuber has virtually disappeared from major markets in the State. Potato stock is reportedly getting depleted fast in Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and other commercial centres.

According to traders, no truck carrying potato arrived at the wholesale market at Chhatra Bazar in Cuttack and the price of the tuber has again started rising.

The price of potato, which had come down to Rs 35 per



kg in the last few days, has now shot up to Rs 50 a kilo in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, sources said.

No consignment of potato has arrived at the Aiginia godown in Bhubaneswar during the last two to three days, traders said.

"There is hardly any stock as no potato consignment came from West Bengal. They are demanding bribe and not allowing trucks carrying potato to move into Odisha. Some trucks managed to come after paying bribe," claimed a godown owner.

Similarly, no potato consignment came from Uttar Pradesh despite claims by the Odisha Government about supply from the northern State. The State may face a serious potato crisis if potato consignments do not come soon, traders said.

The trucks with potatoes from West Bengal are stranded at the border and the stock is getting damaged, they said.

Notably, the State Government had claimed that potatoes are being procured from Uttar Pradesh after West Bengal indulged in 'blackmailing'. The government also claimed on Monday that steps may be taken to procure potatoes from Punjab, if necessary.

HC issues notice to Nayagarh MLA

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Orissa High Court has issued a notice to Nayagarh BJD MLA Arun Sahoo in a case alleging that he furnished false information in his affidavit during the recent elections.

The High Court issued the notice to Sahoo on a petition filed by BJD leader Pratyusha Rajeswari Singh, who was the saffron party's candidate against Sahoo in the Assembly constituency.

Pratyusha in her petition has alleged that Sahoo had given false information regarding his assets in the affidavit submitted by him while filing nomination for the election.

Admitting the petition, the High Court issued the notice to Sahoo. The next hearing is scheduled to be held on August 28.



In city

2 arrested over youth's murder in lodge

Money dispute motive behind crime

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police on Tuesday cracked the death of Nabaghana Patasani alias Banka, whose body had been found after he went missing from the Baramunda area in Bhubaneswar, by arresting the two persons.

The arrested are the prime accused Banti and his aide Bijay Nayak.

Commissioner of Police Sanjeeb Panda said that initially a case had been registered at the Bharatpur police station and both the accused were arrested after a detailed investigation.

Panda said Banti was working



with the victim, who had promised the former some money in return. However, as Banka did not give money to Banti and also offended him, the latter killed him.

"Banti had called the victim to a

hotel room and killed him after stabbing him with a knife. After stuffing the deceased's body in a bag, he hired a car and disposed of the body in the Govindpur area. The weapon of offence and Banka's

clothes were dumped at another place," said Panda.

Panda said the weapon used in the crime, blood-soaked clothes of the accused and the vehicle used to transport the deceased's body have also been seized after conducting a probe.

"The hotel room was cleaned after the crime. However, a forensic team found blood stains. The victim's vehicle had been given to some other persons, from whom he had taken a loan of over Rs 3 lakh. We will bring the accused on remand to carry out further investigation and his house will be searched," said Panda.

Banka was into real estate, tractor and JCB businesses and Banti used to help him in the businesses, the Commissioner said.

Accountant embezzles Rs 1 cr govt fund

Probe begins

PNS ■ SONEPUR

An Assistant Accountant posted at the Divisional Office of the Lift Irrigation Department in Subarnapur district has been accused of embezzling over Rs 1 crore.

As per reports, Balram Meher had joined the department as an outsourcing staff in 2014. It is alleged that Meher transferred and embezzled around Rs 1.19 crore.

On getting information, the senior officials of the depart-

ments reached the divisional office and started an investigation into the matter. Meanwhile, questions are raised how the department officials were not aware of the fund transfer.

Sources said the matter would be investigated either through Vigilance or by any other agency. The accused staff, who is now under the scanner, is reportedly not coming to work. When contacted, the executive engineer refused to comment on the matter.

Brahma Kumaris launch anti-addiction drive



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A campaign for "Addiction-Free Odisha" organised by the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya in Unit-9 in Bhubaneswar was inaugurated by School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond and former MLA Arabinda Dhali here on Monday. A bus fitted with a Kumbhakarna image and an

LCD which would move around places to create awareness against liquor and drug addiction, was flagged off by the Minister.

Later, a meeting was held in which the Minister expressed hope that the Brahma Kumaris' anti-addiction campaign would be successful. Zone co-ordinator Sister Leena and Dhali spoke about the campaign's details.

Politics over contentious Polavaram project again

- BJD forms team for assessing impact in M'giri
- Cong targets BJD for failure to address issue while in power
- BJP dubs it as BJD's political stunt

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Politics over Polavaram Dam project in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh gathered mo-

mentum here with opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) sending a special team to review its impact in tribal Malkangiri district. The team formed by BJD

president Naveen Patnaik will visit the areas, which are likely to be affected by the project, on August 8. Former Minister Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak will head the team, which also includes Debi Prasad Mishra, Pradeep Majhi, Bhruagu Baxipatra and local leaders from Malkangiri district. It is expected to submit a report to the party supremo after reviewing the ground situation.

"The members will visit Motu, Padia and other likely to be affected areas in Malkangiri district. The BJD has dealt a blow to Odisha after coming to power at the Centre and the State by granting funds for completion of

Polavaram and according National project status to it," Pradeep Majhi told reporters.

He added that the regional party will put up a good fight against the project, which is likely to inundate about 1,400 hectares (ha) to 1,500 ha land in Malkangiri district, and safeguard the interest of the people there.

In his reaction to the Union Budget, Naveen had earlier slammed the Narendra Modi-led NDA of granting more funds for Polavaram without sorting out the genuine grievances of Odisha.

Congress MLA Sofia Firdous, however, blamed BJD and BJP for the impending

problem. "Instead of visiting the spot, they (BJD) should work to stop the project. The regional party kept the issue hanging while being in power for 24 years. The BJP's double engine Government can also take steps in this direction by holding discussions with the TDP-led Andhra Government, which is their coalition partner, if it wants," she said.

The Congress had earlier created ruckus in Odisha Assembly, demanding formation of a House Committee on Polavaram Dam project to discuss its impact on tribal people in Malkangiri district. Congress Legislature Party (CLP)

leader Rama Chandra Kadam also blamed the Centre for "promoting the irrigation project in Andhra Pradesh without resolving the problems of the affected people in Odisha."

Responding to this development, BJP MLA Babu Singh said the BJD is trying to pull off a political stunt to mislead people of the State. "The party was in power for 24 hours and could have impressed upon the Centre to look into Odisha's concerns. Discussions could have led to some solution. The BJD never raised issues of State's interests then. Taking it up while in the Opposition is certainly laughable," he said.

8 key reforms launched by Majhi govt in just 1.5 months

The first BJP Government led by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has presented its maiden Budget of Rs 2.65 lakh crore for the year 2024-25 in the Assembly recently, which is bigger than the previous government's. It also makes all-out efforts to fulfil the BJP's poll promises, maintain an annual economic growth momentum of 8 per cent and remain much below the FRBM's limit of debt. Within the past one and a half months, the new BJP government has initiated a few noteworthy governance reforms too.



LALIT MOHAN MISHRA

The first visible change that the government has introduced in the State's governance model is the inclusion of social justice ideology in the formation of the political- executive structure. The leaders from the high caste, especially, the Patnaiks, had ruled the State for almost half a century after the Independence. The Congress though had installed tribal Chief Ministers during two terms but it was for short periods towards the end of each term. But the BJP has given

the State the first post-poll tribal Chief Minister, Mohan Majhi, making the governance inclusive of the backward social group that constitutes 22 per cent of the State's population. Similarly, the BJP has made Pravati Parida, the first woman Deputy Chief Minister for the inclusion of women in governance. Earlier, the Congress had made Nandini Satapathy the first woman Chief Minister for once. KV Singh Deo, the senior western

Odisha BJP leader, was also made another Deputy Chief Minister to politically include the backward west Odisha region in the top structure of governance.

This kind of multiple inclusions of the socially backward groups in the top political executive positions of the State had never occurred before. This shall change the feudal political consciousness of the people of Odisha. A common man or woman can now believe that the Chief Minister or the Deputy Chief Minister post is no longer reserved for the high caste elites or the rich or the men folk or the dynasts but is accessible to him or her. This shall create more Chief Ministerial material in the State in future and shall also influence the leadership practices in other parties.

It is important that the new Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Ministers and the Ministers become aware of this social change process introduced by their party and assert themselves while interacting with the previous Chief Minister, Ministers and bureaucrats. When the Chief Minis-

ter went to invite the Leader of Opposition and former Chief Minister Naveenbabu to Assembly, some disapproved it viewing it as a symbol of low-confidence of the new Ministry.

The second change in the governance model is the role of the political executive. During Naveen Patnaik's rule, the Ministers and people's representatives were secondary to the bureaucracy. Even former Chief Minister was not going to office regularly, giving full power to the bureaucracy. Presently, the Mohan Majhi government has restored the leadership position of the Ministers and the elected representatives in governance. The bureaucracy has been pushed behind to its original Constitutional role. Majhi Cabinet is seen taking decisions collectively. The Cabinet meetings are really taking place and discussing matters. They are reading out their decisions to the media. These processes were absent during the previous government.

The third change in the governance structure is the streamlining of the bureaucracy in the State.

During Naveen Patnaik's government, the normal bureaucratic structure was disrupted by the interference of the CMO (Chief Minister Office) and later by the 5-T Secretary system, a controversial system which was later found to have no constitutional legitimacy. The BJP government has begun the process of setting the disrupted bureaucracy into order though it does not seem to have completed the process.

The fourth change one witnesses is in the domain of relationship between the public and the Ministers. Former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik was rarely meeting his own MLAs and Ministers alone, let public. But the new Chief Minister and his Ministers are meeting the public. The CM's public-grievance cell has reopened. The mediapersons have been allowed to enter the State's Secretariat, the Assembly and all Government places which were banned to them by the previous Government. The government is also open to criticism.

The fifth change the BJP government has done in the State is its

revolutionary economic package for the farmers. There was doubt in the public mind whether the new BJP government could fulfil its poll-promise of providing the MSP of Rs 3,100 per quintal of paddy. But the Government made provision for it in the first budget itself. Once the new MSP is implemented, the farmers of the State shall be empowered economically. The sixth governance change is in the domain of Center-State relation. Earlier, the State Government was not implementing certain programmes of the Central Government for political reasons. Now, the BJP's rule at the Centre and the State has put in place the so called double-engine Government. A good Center-State chemistry can help in the settlement of inter-State river disputes and other previous issues. The double-engine government shall surely bring more benefits to the people.

The seventh change is in the domain of action against corruption. The BJP had made corruption an election-issue. During poll campaign, Prime Minister Modi had

accused the previous government of running mafia-raj. Some work is seen by the Vigilance department and the BJP leaders are talking about strong anti-corruption action. But the people are waiting to see if the new government really takes strong step to catch big corruption and establish a corruption-free governance system.

The eighth change is the restoration of Odia pride. Lord Jagannath is treated as the symbol of Odia pride. The new government has opened the four gates of the Jagannath Temple in Puri and the Ratna Bhandar as per its poll promises and has allotted Rs 500 crore for a corpus fund for the shrine. The government has also allotted Rs 200 crore for Odia-pride promotion. It has encouraged the use of Odia language in government offices. But the government has to keep its poll promises of chasing away the non-Odia contractors and give work to Odia contractors.

Most importantly, the Majhi government has prepared the Vision-2036 document for the State for its all-round development.

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Birthday celebration in S'pur Owner of SUVs held for blocking road

Vehicles seized
NIMAI CHARAN SAHU
SAMBALPUR

The owner of two SUVs was arrested by police for violating traffic rules by blocking the Mumbai-Kolkata National Highway under the Burla police station in Sambalpur district on Tuesday.

The police had earlier seized both SUVs following a video that surfaced on social media showing the negligent driving and blocking of roads by the two vehicles.



ment of a group of five to seven people including women by driving the two vehicles in parallel and not giving space to other vehicles to pass.

Police suo moto filed a case against the vehicles' owner and seized the vehicles as the vehicle numbers were clearly vis-

ible. The accused has been identified as Sunny Yadav (34), a resident of Modipara in Sambalpur city. Sources said the group which was on way to a dhaba for birthday celebration, shouted at others and played loud music creating inconvenience to other commuters.

Kalyan Mandap inaugurated by Min Jena



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

On August 4, Minister for Steel, Mines & Transport Bibhuti Bhusan Jena inaugurated Sri Siddheshwar Swamy Kalyan Mandap at Marthapeta Street, Brahmapur. The mandap is newly constructed by the Brahmapur Devanga Community Organization (Patto Bunakar).

On the occasion Brahmapur MLA K Anil Kumar and former Deputy Speaker of Assembly Ram Chandra Panda attended the function as guests

of honour. The function was organised by BJP spokesperson of the Kalyan Mandap Committee T Gopi along with other members.

Among others, Senior BJP leader Kahnu Charan Pati, Saroj Sabata, Ashok Shukla, Pravat Kiran Sadangi, Sunil Sahu, Balakrushna Samantaroy, BeMC corporators T Kishore Patro, N Rama Rao, Bipin Dash and many other guests and devotees of Siddheshwar Swamy Mandap Committee were present.

Nuakhai 'Lagna' finalised in Balangir



PNS ■ BALANGIR

The 'Lagna' (auspicious time) of offering Nabanna (offering of new crop) to the presiding deities on the occasion of Nuakhai, an agrarian festival of western Odisha, in Balangir was announced on Tuesday.

The festival will be observed on September 8, the fifth day of the Sukla Paksha (bright fortnight in the Hindu month of Bhadrab), and Nabanna will be offered to the presiding deities between 9.35 am and 10.06 am, said a release issued by the Shailashree Palace household

office.

Though Nuakhai is basically an agrarian festival, it has morphed into a mass celebration in recent times. It is celebrated with pomp and gaiety in several districts, including Sambalpur, Balangir, Bargarh, Sundargarh, Kalahandi, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Boudh and Subarnapur.

In villages, Nuakhai Bhet Bhat (community meeting) is organised and younger people take blessings of the elders by wishing Nuakhai Juhar. Either a community feast is organised or people exchange the food prepared at their homes.

In Jharsuguda 1 worker dies, 6 critical in gas leak

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

A worker died and six others' conditions became critical after highly toxic carbon monoxide gas leaked at a pellet plant in Jharsuguda district on Tuesday afternoon.

Reports said a contract labourer, Barun Pradhan died after the carbon monoxide gas leaked at the unit of Orissa Metaliks Private Limited lo-

cated at Budhipadar.

The deceased was identified as a native of Kechhobahal under the jurisdiction of Brajrajnagar police station.

The six others, who were severely affected by the toxic gas and turned critical, were admitted to a private hospital in Jharsuguda. Their conditions were stated to be critical. The exact reason behind the gas leak was yet to be ascertained.

Memo to CM for autonomous Southern Odisha Dev Council

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Brahmapur City Urban Area and Rural Development Committee has taken a decisive step by submitting a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Odisha through the Revenue Divisional Commissioner of Southern Odisha here on Friday. The memorandum urgently demands the establishment of an autonomous Southern Odisha Development Council to address the longstanding regional disparities and developmental neglect.

The State Government recently announced plans to create additional development councils for northern Odisha as part of its efforts to combat regional inequalities. However, the southern Odisha region, despite its pressing need for focused development, remains without a dedicated autonomous body.

Local leaders and activists asserted that the southern



Odisha region requires more than a nominal council. They emphasized that an effective solution to the region's developmental challenges necessitates the formation of a robust and fully autonomous council.

"We need an autonomous Southern Odisha Development Council that has real power and resources to drive development," said Committee convenor Sanjib Kumar Patnaik. "A mere symbolic council will not rectify the entrenched regional disparities. Only an autonomous council can ensure that the needs and potential of southern Odisha

are adequately addressed," he added.

The proposed council would be composed of half-elected representatives and half-Government-appointed experts across various sectors. It is suggested that the council should be led by a senior Indian Administrative Service, with its headquarters in Brahmapur.

The structure would enable it to plan and implement projects tailored to the specific needs of the southern Odisha region, manage local resources, and ensure effective utilization of funds.

The committee's demands

include a separate budget allocation in the State's financial plan, legal and constitutional recognition for the council, and an effective administrative framework to oversee its operations. The submission highlights that simply creating another council without substantial powers and resources will not bring about meaningful change.

The committee's memorandum, presented during an event supported by notable figures including Dr Siba Prasad Mishra, Devi Prasad Das, T Sudesh Kumar Patra, BV Sagar and others.

Lions Club B'pur holds Friendship Day



New office-bearers elected

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Lions Club, Brahmapur observed the Friendship Day here on Sunday. The club members planted hundreds of trees of different species at Sardhabali and Khodasingi areas on the outskirts of the city to mark the event and distributed lion's umbrellas to small roadside vendors who are selling goods on the roadside.

Among others, IPDG Ln Dilip Das from Nabarangpur, club president Arun Prasad Panda, Sabita Panigrahy, Naveen Satpathy, Pradipta Mandal, Harihara Das and SK Padhy participated, while

Deputy Public Relations Officer Lion P Dharma Rao coordinated the event. The club's office bearers were also elected on the occasion.

The club also organised various competitions in different educational institutions such as at Government UP School in Utkal Ashram Road, Sahid Laxman Nayak School and Kendriya Vidyalaya and distributed prizes, certificates and mementoes to student winners. District governor Saraswati Patra in her address urged upon the members to render more humanitarian services to the poor and the needy. Secretary Sabita Panigrahy in her address described various programmes undertaken by the club in July-August.

IIM S'pur hosts Mgmt Immersion Programme

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

The IIM Sambalpur successfully concluded its four-day residential Management Immersion Programme (MIP) for 62 students from the IIM University. The programme held from July 30 to August 2 provided students with a comprehensive experience of management education and campus life at IIM Sambalpur.

The MIP featured a range of activities, including flipped classrooms, workshops and case studies led by IIM Sambalpur's faculty and industry experts. Besides industrial visit to the Hindalco Industries, there was a societal out-



reach visit to weaving industries in Attabira, where students could engage with local artisans and learn about the community's craftsmanship.

During the inauguration ceremony, Prof Mahadeo Jaiswal, Director of IIM Sambalpur, said, "At IIM Sambalpur, our core values are

innovation, integrity and inclusiveness. We blend tradition with modernity, uphold high ethical standards and ensure everyone feels valued."

Hindalco Industries joint president Debasish Mallik stated, "True leadership transcends task management; it inspires and empowers. At

Hindalco Hirakud, we foster an environment of learning and growth, enhancing managerial skills and encouraging experimentation."

The programme was structured into five transformative modules, focusing on key management and personal development areas.

CIFA holds 2-day meet on ornamental fisheries



In collaboration with NFDB

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA), in collaboration with the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Hyderabad, organised the National Stakeholder Consultation on Sustainable Development of Ornamental Fisheries in India on August 1-2.

The event brought together more than 65 stakeholders from across the country, in-

cluding ornamental fish breeders, farmers, traders, manufacturers, and hobbyists, as well as fisheries department officers from 11 States and scientists from ICAR fisheries institutes such as CMFRI, NBFGR, CIFE, CIFRI, and CIBA.

Discussions covered pivotal topics such as boosting India's ornamental fish export, advancing domestic production, enhancing retail trade and hobby promotion, fostering indigenous manufacturing, and addressing policy and institutional issues.

Chief Executive of NFDB Dr BK Behera graced the occasion as the chief guest and spoke about various developmental schemes of the NFDB, such as entrepreneurship models, insurance schemes, etc. He informed that the NFDB plans to promote the ornamental fisheries through the development of the cluster approach and motivated the participants to avail the board's different promotional initiatives.

Director of ICAR-CIFA Dr PK Sahoo stressed the importance of adopting scientific

practices to produce quality ornamental fish, thereby increasing India's share in the international market. Key areas of focus identified during the two-day deliberations include enhancing the production of quality ornamental fish on a mass scale through better scientific practices, expanding research and development, strengthening the export framework, encouraging local manufacturing, and framing appropriate policies to create a conducive environment for the growth of the sector in India.

Yrs of wait over; B'pur MG Stadium set to reopen for all

RAJEEV RATHAN
BRAHMAPUR

After years of anticipation, the residents of Brahmapur are about to witness a historic moment as the iconic Mahatma Gandhi Stadium reopens its gates to the public.

In just a week, detailed guidelines will be released, marking the end of a long period of restricted access and heralding a new era of community engagement and sports enthusiasm.

For many years, the stadium's vibrant grounds were off-limits, primarily due to extensive repair work. The stadium, closed for the past five years for renovations, had recently reopened but only to a select few, primarily athletes and hostel residents. However, the city's craving for open spaces for morning walks, sports practice, and community activities has grown louder



and these voices are finally being heard.

During the last election, K Anil Kumar, now Brahmapur MLA, vowed to address the issue of public access to the stadium. Staying true to his word, he has initiated steps to welcome the public back to the stadium. The preparations include meticulous planning about the number of people who can enter and the facilities that will be available. District Sports Officer Santosh Kumar Sahu has been tasked with ensuring everything is in place for the grand reopening.

This move is more than just

reopening a stadium; it's about reviving Brahmapur's rich sporting heritage. Former Sports Minister Tusharkanti Behera has laid the groundwork for enhancing the city's sports infrastructure. Plans are underway to equip various fields with exercise equipment for differently-abled individuals and establish a separate gymnasium for them.

Requests have been made to upgrade the playgrounds of Khallikote University, Binayak Acharya College and the Medical College into synthetic fields, creating state-of-the-art sports facilities.

Moreover, the district sports council's elections, pending for almost four years, will soon be conducted, ensuring a smoother organization of sports events. The step will undoubtedly contribute to a more vibrant sports culture in Brahmapur.

"This is not just about reopening a stadium, it is about reviving Brahmapur's sporting spirit and fostering a sense of community pride. I look forward to seeing our city come alive with enthusiasm and athleticism once again," Brahmapur MLA Anil Kumar said.

Ensure protection of minorities in Bangladesh, VHP urges Govt



People in Dhaka celebrate the downfall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Bangladesh Government

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Tuesday urged the government to take "every possible" step to ensure the safety of Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities in Bangladesh, claiming that "fundamentalists" are targeting them in several districts of the neighbouring country. Addressing a press conference,

VHP president Alok Kumar called for strict security vigil on the Indo-Bangladesh border, saying that attempts could be made to "orchestrate infiltration" into the Indian territory taking advantage of the prevailing situation in the neighbouring country. He also asked the world community to take "effective action" for the safety of minorities and protection of human rights in Bangladesh which he said is

"trapped in a strange uncertainty, violence and anarchy." "In the recent past, religious places, business establishments and houses of Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities have also been rampaged in Bangladesh. Till last night, 22 houses in Panchgarh district alone, 20 houses in Jhenaidah and 22 shops in Jessore became targets of the fundamentalists and in many districts even crematoriums were vandalised," he said.

There is "hardly" any district left in Bangladesh which has not become a target of their "violence and terror," he added. "In Bangladesh, the houses, shops, offices, business establishments of Hindus and women, children and even the centres of their belief, faith and worship such as temples and gurdwaras are not safe. It can be said that the condition of the oppressed minorities there is going from bad to

Minister raises concern over safety of Sikh, Hindu shrines

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Union Minister of State for Railways and Food processing Ravneet Singh Bittu expressed serious concern on Tuesday over attacks on "Sikh shrines and Hindu temples located in Bangladesh" and urged External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to take up the issue with the Army authorities or the interim government of Bangladesh. In a written communication to Jaishankar, Bittu said, "Since the population of Sikhs in Bangladesh is very small and certain anti-India elements were indulging in rampage of religious places, the Sikh community is worried about the safety of Sikh shrines in Bangladesh." "I, therefore, urge you to take up the issue with the Army authorities/Interim Government of Bangladesh to protect the historical Sikh shrines viz. Gurdwara Nanak Shahi and Gurdwara Sangat Tola situated in Dhaka along with the Hindu temples," Bittu said. "It is relevant to mention here that Guru Nanak Dev ji and Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib had visited Dhaka and these gurdwaras were built in their memories," he added. Bittu urged Jaishankar to assure the Sikh and Hindu communities in Bangladesh that the Indian government will take all necessary steps to protect the Sikh shrines and Hindu temples in Bangladesh.

Specify steps taken for stability: Cong MP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
In the wake of the Bangladesh situation, Congress MP Manish Tewari on Tuesday said many countries in South Asia have been hit by political instability in the last three-four years and asked the government to specify what steps it has taken to maintain political stability in the region. Bangladesh has plunged into uncertainty after extraordinary street protest over job quota forced Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to quit and flee. Raising the issue of the Bangladesh situation during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, Tewari said India has had a special relationship with Bangladesh and played a special role in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 due to which the geographical map of South Asia changed for a second time after 1947. "The situation prevailing in Bangladesh is very sensitive and concerning. In January 2024, the Awami League formed the government under Sheikh Hasina for the fourth time in a row and within six months of that, a situation arose that a movement arose due to which Sheikh Hasina had to resign and even leave the country," the former Union minister said. "I want to bring to notice that not just in Bangladesh, in the last three-four years there are many countries in South Asia that have been hit by political instability, be it Myanmar, Sri Lanka or Maldives. Even in Pakistan, the hold of the military is increasing on the civilian government," Tewari said. He further said China's intervention in the western Indian Ocean has increased.

Cong, BJP MPs spar over Budget proposals in LS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The Union Budget for 2024-25 has nothing for the salaried class, and the middle class, and it neither addresses the issue of unemployment nor takes any step to reduce out-of-pocket expenditure for households, Congress MP Amar Singh said in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. Initiating the debate on the Finance Bill, the Fatehgarh Sahib MP said it appears in the Budget that the Union government was taxing the poor, while sparing the rich. BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, meanwhile, welcomed the Budget and called it "historic". "From what the government has proposed, it appears the Centre intends to take away every single rupee from the salaried class, the common man, while the rich are being spared," Singh said. "If we look at Income Tax, the tax on individuals is 19 per cent of total tax, while the corporate tax is 17 per cent. Why is the income tax more? In every way,



you are increasing individual tax, and bringing down the corporate tax. Who is the government working for?" he asked. He said the World Inequality Report has revealed that one per cent of the richest people in India have 40 per cent of the wealth, and accused the government of benefitting the higher income groups. "I want to suggest the finance minister. Around 70 per cent

Income Tax Returns have nil tax... Exempt those up to Rs 5 lakh income, it will increase public consumption and reduce poverty," he said. He questioned whether the exemptions given by the government to the corporate have generated any jobs. Singh said the Economic Survey has said India needs to generate an average of nearly 78.5 lakh jobs annually until

2030 in the non-farm sector to cater to the rising workforce. He also claimed the finance minister said nothing about food inflation which is at 10 per cent. He also questioned what the government was doing on its promise for a law guaranteeing a minimum support price (MSP) on crops to farmers who protested against the now-scrapped farm laws. BJP MP Nishikant Dubey,

meanwhile, welcomed the Budget and called it "historic". "Across the world, economies are growing at 2.5 per cent to 2.7 per cent. India is a ray of hope for the world," he said, lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for it. "We are working towards the goal of a developed India by 2047," he said. Dubey said the NDA government has proposed to abolish angel tax, as it is competing with Singapore and Abu Dhabi, adding that it will generate employment. He further attacked the Congress over its demand for a caste census. "I want to ask the Congress, many people in this country do not believe in religion, caste... how will they participate in caste-based census?" he said. Dubey also said he has with him the Congress manifestos from 1952 to 1990, and claimed it said the party was against OBC reservation. He also alleged that the Congress wants to bring reservations for Christians and Muslims through "backdoor".

Sufi body welcomes Govt move to amend Waqf Boards Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The All India Sufi Sajjadanashin Council (AISSC) on Tuesday welcomed the Government's decision to amend the law governing Waqf boards, saying it was long due. The Government is all set to bring a Bill in Parliament to amend the 1995 law governing Waqf boards to ensure more accountability and transparency in their functioning and mandatory inclusion of women in these bodies, according to sources. AISSC chairman Hazrat Syed Naseruddin Chishty demanded a separate Dargah Board under the amendments. "In the present Waqf Act, there is no mention of dargahs at all. The Waqf Boards do not recognise the traditions of the dargahs as many of our traditions are not there in sharia, so we demand a separate Dargah Board," he said at a press conference. Chishty alleged the Waqf Boards work in a "dictatorial manner" in their present



form and have no transparency at all. "We are hopeful that the draft Waqf Amendment Bill will be comprehensive and serve the interests of all stakeholders. Following a thorough examination of the draft, we intend to submit our recommendations and proposal," he added. The AISSC representatives, including the chairman met National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju, earlier on Monday and presented their concerns. "We were given assurance by the NSA and the Minority Affairs Minister that all the stakeholders will be consulted and the amendments will be in the interest of the Muslims,"

Chishty said. Earlier in the day, Rijju said the AISSC delegation discussed a range of important issues concerning the Muslim community and added that it was a "fruitful" and "forward looking" discussion. "Last evening a delegation of the All India Sufi Sajjadanashin Council (AISSC) comprising of the most revered & prominent Sajjadanashins from various Dargahs across India met me under the leadership of Shri Syed Naseruddin Chishty, Chairman & Successor of the Present Spiritual Head of Ajmer Dargah to discuss a range of important issues concerning the Muslim community. It was a fruitful & forward looking discussion. They lauded & praised the efforts of PM Shri @narendramodi ji towards the welfare of the entire community and minorities in general. They also committed themselves towards the Sankalp of Viksit Bharat 2047. Shri Shehzad Poonawalla, national spokesperson of BJP, was also present," he said in a post on X.

INDIA Bloc protests, demands rollback of GST on life and health insurance premiums

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Members of the INDIA Bloc on Tuesday staged a protest on the Parliament premises demanding the rollback of the 18 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) on life and health insurance premiums. MPs from various parties, including TMC, Congress, AAP, and NCP (SC), gathered on the steps leading to Makar Dwar, carrying placards reading "Tax terrorism" and raising slogans against the tax. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge criticized the GST hike, describing it as a severe blow to the middle class, which is already struggling under the burden of high taxes and medical inflation. He called the tax an example of the BJP's exploitative policies. In a post in Hindi on X, Kharge said, "Today in the Parliament premises, INDIA parties demanded immediate removal of 18% GST on health and life insurance premiums as this extortion is a severe blow to our people, especially the middle class." "The middle class is already struggling under the burden of the Modi government's tax collection policies. India's medical inflation rate is the highest in Asia in 2024 - at 14%! On top of that, this 'Gabbar Singh Tax' on life



insurance and health insurance is inhuman, and another condemnable example of BJP's policy of plundering from 'opportunity in disaster', Kharge said. In a post in Hindi on X, Rahul Gandhi said, "The Modi government even collected Rs 24,000 crore from millions of common Indians who pay health insurance premiums every year by saving every penny to ensure that they do not have to bow down to anyone in case of a 'health crisis' in life." Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said the INDIA bloc parties' protest against the imposition of 18 per cent GST on life and medical insurance premiums is absolutely justified. "India is already the country whose citizens pay the highest out-of-pocket expenses

for health crises in the world. Senior citizens who have taken health insurance are now paying the highest GST rates in the world. How does the government intend to attain the goal of 'insurance for all by 2047', when it is instead ensuring the unaffordability of insurance to most?" Tharoor said on X. Trinamool Congress MPs and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee have been raising the issue, writing to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has also urged the Finance Minister to reconsider the GST, arguing that it hinders the growth of the insurance industry and penalizes individuals facing life uncertainties.

SC lists plea challenging Bombay HC's verdict to uphold dress code

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it has ordered listing of a plea challenging the verdict of the Bombay High Court which had upheld a decision of a Mumbai college to impose a ban on wearing of 'hijab', 'burqa' and 'naqab' inside the campus. The high court had on June 26 refused to interfere with the decision of the Chembur Trombay Education Society's N G Acharya and D K Marathe College imposing the ban, saying such rules do not violate students' fundamental rights. It had said a dress code is meant

to maintain discipline which is part of the college's fundamental right to "establish and administer an educational institution". Taking note of submission seeking urgent listing of the appeal, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said it has already assigned a bench for the matter and that it would be listed soon. Lawyer Abiha Zaidi, appearing for petitioners, including Zainab Abdul Qayyum, sought urgent hearing saying the unit tests in the college are likely to commence on Wednesday.



The top court is yet to conclusively decide the legality of such diktats issued by educational institutions. A two-judge bench of the top court, on October 13, 2022, had delivered opposing verdicts in the hijab controversy emanating

from Karnataka. The then BJP-led state government had imposed a ban on wearing the Islamic head covering in schools there. While Justice Hemant Gupta, since retired, had dismissed the appeals challenging the judgement of the Karnataka High Court which had refused to lift the ban, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia had held there shall be no restriction on the wearing of hijab anywhere in the schools and colleges of the state. The present controversy stems from the decision of a Mumbai college.

The Bombay High Court trashed the plea against the ban and said the dress code was applicable to all students irrespective of religion or caste. The students, who were in the second and third year of the science degree course, had moved the high court, challenging a directive issued by the college imposing a dress code under which students cannot wear a hijab, naqab, burka, stoles, caps and badges on the premises. The students had claimed it was against their fundamental right to practice religion, the right to privacy and right to choice. The college's action was "arbitrary, unreasonable, bad-in-law and perverse", the plea had said.

Penalty does not apply to PM Jan Dhan accounts, says Sitharaman

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said there is no need to maintain minimum balance in Jan Dhan as well as basic savings accounts, and banks impose penalties only in cases where customers fail to maintain a requisite amount in their accounts. The Minister was replying to a question in Rajya Sabha during Question Hour regarding public sector banks collecting about Rs 8,500 crore in penalty from customers for non-

people. It is only for others whose minimum balance is expected to be at a certain level," Sitharaman said. It emerged in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha that public sector banks collected around Rs 8,500 crore under this head in five years starting FY 2019-20. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary also informed the Lok Sabha last month that state-owned banks have charged depositors Rs 2,331 crore penalty for not maintaining the average monthly minimum balance in FY24.

maintenance of minimum balance in accounts in five years. "Since the member is talking about banks collecting money for basic minimum balance which is not there in the account, that does not apply to PM Jan Dhan accounts and basic accounts of the poor

people. It is only for others whose minimum balance is expected to be at a certain level," Sitharaman said. It emerged in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha that public sector banks collected around Rs 8,500 crore under this head in five years starting FY 2019-20. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary also informed the Lok Sabha last month that state-owned banks have charged depositors Rs 2,331 crore penalty for not maintaining the average monthly minimum balance in FY24.



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AFSPA removed from most parts of Northeast, Parliament informed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, which gives powers to the armed forces operating in disturbed areas to search, arrest and open fire if they deem it necessary, has been removed from most parts of the northeast, except a few districts and some police station areas, Parliament was informed on Tuesday. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said there has

been a considerable reduction in the number of "disturbed areas" under the AFSPA and the law has been withdrawn completely from Tripura (from May 27, 2015) and Meghalaya (April 1, 2018). The AFSPA has also been withdrawn from all districts except four in Assam, he said. Rai said the AFSPA has been withdrawn gradually in Arunachal Pradesh and it is currently applicable only in three police station areas in Namsai district and three other districts — Tirap, Changlang and Longding.

BJP-JD(S) 'Mysuru Chalo' march to demand CM's resignation continues

PTI n MANDYA (KARNATAKA)

The combined opposition, BJP and JD(S), on Tuesday continued their protest march, demanding the resignation of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over the alleged Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam'.

The week-long Bengaluru - Mysuru padayatre (foot march) has sought to highlight the alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by MUDA, including to Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi. The fourth day of the 'Mysuru Chalo' protest began at Nidaghatta near here and is scheduled to cover a distance of 20 km to reach the district headquarters city of Mandya.

BJP State President and MLA B Y Vijayendra, former Deputy Chief Minister C N Ashwath Narayan, Deputy Leader of Opposition in Assembly Arvind Bellad, several legislators, leaders and workers from both parties took part as the march resumed. A large number of workers and leaders from both parties were seen marching shouting



slogans against Siddaramaiah and the Congress government, holding BJP and JD(S) party flags and placards, amidst sounds of drum beat. The stretch through which the march passed was decked up with flags of both parties, bunting and portraits of prominent leaders at several places. Kick started on Saturday at Kengeri near Bengaluru, the march on its first day had covered a distance of 16 km to reach Bidadi, 22 km on day two to reach Kengal, and 20 km on day three to reach Nidaghatta. In the MUDA

'scam', it is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA. The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where MUDA developed a residential layout. Under the controversial scheme, MUDA allotted 50 per cent of developed land to the land losers in lieu of undeveloped land acquired from them for

forming residential layouts. BJP leaders have claimed that the MUDA "scam" is of the magnitude of Rs 4,000 crore to Rs 5,000 crore. The Congress government on July 14 constituted a single member inquiry commission under former High Court Judge Justice P N Desai to probe the MUDA 'scam'. Based on a petition filed by advocate-activist T J Abraham, Karnataka Governor Thaaarchand Gehlot had issued a "show-cause notice" on July 26 directing the Chief Minister to submit his reply to the allegations against him within seven days as to why permission for prosecution should not be granted against him. Subsequently, the Karnataka government had "strongly advised" the Governor to withdraw his "show-cause notice" to the CM, and alleged "gross misuse of the Constitutional Office" of the Governor.

The council of Ministers after their meeting had said a concerted effort is being made to destabilise a lawfully elected majority government in Karnataka for political considerations.

Himachal Govt doing nothing to help victims: Kangana

PTI n SHIMLA

Actor-MP Kangana Ranaut on Tuesday visited disaster-hit Samej in this district and accused the state government of doing "nothing" to help the victims.

"Yeh dil dehla deni wali trasadi hai" (it is a heart-wrenching tragedy). People have lost all their family members, including children. They are terrified and in trauma. I would request the state government to provide immediate relief (financial assistance) to the affected families," Ranaut, who interacted with the flood-affected victims in Samej in Rampur subdivision, said.

The BJP MP from Mandi also demanded a special inquiry into allocation of funds by the Congress-led Himachal Pradesh government to the flood-affected families last year.

Himachal Pradesh has been pummeled by heavy rains for almost a week. Fourteen bodies have been recovered so far and 40 people are still missing after flash floods triggered by cloudbursts hit Kullu's Nirmand, Sainj and Malana, Mandi's Padhar and Shimla's Rampur subdivision on the night of July 31, officials said.

"Malana in Kullu district has been disconnected and the villagers are themselves



making the bridge," Ranaut said.

She accused the state government of doing "nothing" to help the affected people in Samej village, where over 30 people are missing.

"I cannot see anything being done by the state government. Not a single thing has been done here by ministers which is inhuman," the BJP leader alleged.

Samej village, about 148 km from here, has been worst hit in the flash floods. Rampur, Kullu and Mandi are under the Mandi parliamentary constituency from where Ranaut was elected in the recently held Lok Sabha polls.

"I have come as a representative of the Union government. The central government will provide funds to help the flood-affected people but we all know that financial assistance was also given last year after the monsoon disaster. These funds go to the state government and are distributed by them," she

said.

"No one knows what happened to those funds. The Union finance minister, during her recent budget speech, also assured assistance to Himachal Pradesh but the funds would come through the 'ditch' (khada) created by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu. Only God knows if the money will be distributed or not among the affected families," the BJP MP said.

"Himachal has been facing disasters ever since the Congress came to power in the state," she said, claiming the people affected by last year's disaster are still waiting for the promised Rs 7 lakh by CM Sukhu.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had provided an Rs 1,800 crore package to the state after the disaster last year, Ranaut added. According to the officials, 410 rescuers from the Army, NDRF, SDRF, ITBP, CISE, Himachal Pradesh Police and home guards are involved in the search operation, which has been intensified with additional machinery, sniffer dog squads, drones and other equipment.

The hill state has suffered a loss of Rs 684 crore since the onset of the monsoon on June 27 until August 5. Eighty-seven people have lost their lives in rain-related incidents, according to the state emergency operation centre.

HC waives cooling off period for estranged couple

PTI n MUMBAI

Change in social conditions and a rapidly evolving society require a realistic approach to be adopted, the Bombay High Court has said while granting divorce to a couple and waiving the mandatory six months cooling off period.

A single bench of Justice Gauri Godse, in the judgment on July 25, said the waiting period is a "precautionary provision to avoid any injustice to any party and rule out the possibility of reconciliation".

Once the court is satisfied that the parties have taken a conscious decision to separate and move ahead and there is no possibility of reconciliation, the court should adopt a realistic approach and exercise the discretion to waive the waiting period, Justice Godse said.

A copy of the order was made available on Tuesday.

The court granted a decree of dissolution of the marriage of the Pune-based couple who had sought divorce on grounds of mutual consent and also for the six-month waiting period to be waived.

"The purpose of the waiting period needs to be correctly understood while deciding the application for a waiver, Justice Godse noted.

Woman killed, several injured after two houses collapse in Varanasi

PTI n VARANASI

A 43-year-old woman was killed and several people were injured after two old houses in the Khoya Gali Chowk near the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi collapsed early on Tuesday, officials said.

Divisional commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who represents Varanasi in the Lok Sabha, was informed of the situation.

"Two houses collapsed. One belonged to a Mr Gupta in which there were nine people. The other house belonged to one Mr Yadav. Occupants of the second house came out easily while seven people from the first house had to be brought out of the debris," Sharma said.

Of the seven people brought out from the rubble, one woman died. The rest are undergoing treatment, he said. A woman police constable suffered injuries on her jaw, he added.

Officials said Premlata Gupta was brought out from the rubble and taken to a hospital where doctors declared her dead.

The rescue operation is



complete and work is underway to remove the debris, Sharma said. Efforts are underway to restore water and electricity supply to the area.

The official said the second and the third floors of the houses, which seemed to be more than 70 years old, collapsed.

The gate of the house belonging to Yadav would be dismantled to remove the debris, he said.

"These houses are in old localities and there was a trend of building multiple houses on one wall. The lower floors are still intact," he said.

In a statement, Sharma said, "The prime minister sought information on the tragic incident over the phone. He was given detailed

information about the rescue operation conducted by the NDRF (National Disaster Response Force), fire (department), police, administration and the treatment of the injured." Modi also sought information about the people living in the houses and expressed his condolences to the family of the woman who died. He issued instructions to provide the best possible treatment to all the injured people free of cost.

Police commissioner Mohit Agarwal said the injured were taken to the district hospital for treatment.

"A woman constable was injured and she was sent to the Banaras Hindu University trauma centre. Doctors said she was out of danger," he said.

Over 50 students of ashram schools hospitalised due to suspected food poisoning

PTI n PALGHAR

At least 50 students from around 10 ashram schools in Dahanu taluka of Maharashtra's Palghar district fell ill due to suspected food poisoning on Tuesday morning and were admitted to hospitals, officials said.

Ashram schools are residential schools for tribal students. "More than 50 students from different ashram schools under the Dahanu Project of the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) complained of nausea, vomiting and giddiness following which they have admitted to different health facilities in the district," Palghar Resident Deputy Collector Subhash Bhagade said.

"The cause of the food poisoning is being probed. The students admitted to hospitals are undergoing treatment," he said.

The affected schools are located in Dahanu, Palghar, Talasari and Vasai talukas of the district, officials said. As per an official report, students of an ashram school at Rankol in Dahanu complained of vomiting, nausea, stomach pain and



fever hours after consuming dinner on Monday night.

Around 3 am on Tuesday, nearly 28 girl students took ill and were rushed to a nearby health centre, where they are undergoing treatment, it said.

Project Officer at the ITDP in Dahanu, Dr Satyam Gandhi, told PTI that none of the students admitted were serious. "Information about exactly how many students got affected is being compiled," he said.

Another official said that food is supplied to these ashram schools from the central kitchen in Palghar and following the incident, the food samples have been collected for analysis. District Collector Govind Bodke along with health department and other officials are visiting the hospitals in Dahanu and Talasari talukas, where the students have been admitted, to take stock of the situation, he said.

Smuggling racket busted; 3 people with 6,626 dried seahorses arrested at Bengaluru airport

PTI n BENGALURU

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence has busted a racket in smuggling of dried seahorses by arresting three people from Tamil Nadu with 6,626 seahorses at the Kempegowda International Airport here, a DRI official said on Tuesday.

With this, the DRI Bengaluru official claimed, a major smuggling network involved in the illegal trade of dried seahorses has been dismantled.

"Acting on specific intelligence, DRI Bengaluru officers apprehended three individuals linked to this syndicate on August 3 at Terminal-1, Kempegowda Airport," he said.

"The suspects were en route to Singapore via Mumbai, in a flight of a private airline, when their checked baggage was examined, leading to the discovery of 6,626 (dried) seahorses."

It's the biggest seizure of (dried) seahorses in recent times. The three passengers have been arrested and are under investigation. All of them are from Tamil Nadu and are in their mid 30s, the official said.

According to him, all species



of seahorses in India are classified under Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, making their sale, purchase, and any form of utilisation illegal and punishable.

Furthermore, under Export Policy, the export of wild animals and marine species, including their parts and products, is strictly prohibited. Consequently, the seahorses were seized under the provisions of the Customs Act, 1962, in conjunction with the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, it was noted.

DRI sources said that on August 4, 2024, following a meticulously planned operation, the key figure orchestrating the smuggling operation was apprehended here.

"This individual was

instrumental in coordinating the procurement and shipment of the seahorses to Singapore. The investigation is ongoing as authorities work to unravel the broader smuggling network operating between India and Southeast Asian countries," he added.

The DRI official said the demand for dried seahorses in Southeast Asian markets is primarily driven by their use in traditional medicine, gourmet cuisine, and as ornamental species for aquariums.

In traditional Chinese medicine, seahorses are prized for their supposed health benefits, while they are also considered a delicacy in some culinary traditions. Additionally, their unique appearance makes them popular among marine enthusiasts, he added.

SC rejects challenge to prosecution under UAPA in Malegaon blast

PTI n NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected the plea filed by Sameer Kulkarni, arrested for his alleged involvement in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, challenging the sanction for prosecution granted by the Maharashtra Government under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. A Bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Aravind Kumar said it was not inclined to interfere with the Bombay High Court order which dismissed Kulkarni's plea.

"We find no reason to interfere with the impugned judgement," the Bench said. Senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for Kulkarni, submitted that the prosecution has not obtained sanction under Section 45 (2) of UAPA and therefore the charges under the UAPA cannot be sustained.

Divan said once the matter shifts to the National Investigation Agency, there ought to be a sanction by the central Government.

The apex court on April 30 had stayed proceedings against Kulkarni before the special court.



Kulkarni had moved the top court against the High Court order dated June 28, 2023 challenging the trial in the special NIA court, Mumbai, contending that it lacks the valid sanction granted by the competent authority in accordance with Section 45 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Six persons were killed and nearly 100 injured when a bomb strapped to a motorcycle exploded in Malegaon town in Nashik district of Maharashtra on September 29, 2008. Sadhvi Pragna Singh Thakur and Lt Col Prasad Shrikant Purohit were arrested in the same year with nine others for the blast conspiracy. The NIA, which took over the probe from the Maharashtra ATS, gave a clean chit to Sadhvi Pragna.

2018 arms haul case: HC grants bail to five accused citing prima facie insufficient evidence

PTI n MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has granted bail to five persons arrested by the Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) in connection with a 2018 arms haul case and for allegedly conspiring to attack the Sunburn festival in Pune, citing prima facie insufficient evidence to prove the conspiracy charge.

A division bench of Justices Bharati Dhangre and Manjusha Deshpande, in the order of July 30, also took note of the long incarceration of the accused persons with bleak chances of the trial ending soon.

The ATS arrested five persons in 2018 after it seized arms, ammunition and explosives from the residence of two other accused in the Nallasopara area of Thane district. The ATS had claimed the arms and explosives were to be used to target the Sunburn festival in Pune in December 2017.

The bench perused the witness statements and other evidence submitted by the prosecution in its chargesheet and said they were "insufficient".

"We have prima facie



formed an opinion that these statements are insufficient to establish the charge of conspiracy against the appellants before us," the court said.

The court noted that none of the alleged attacks were carried out.

"The Sunburn programme was, in fact, successfully completed without any disturbance, but the arrest in the present case was made in the first week of August 2018, eight months after the programme was over," the court said.

It further noted that the accused were arrested in 2018, and only two witnesses have been summoned in the trial till date. The prosecution intends to examine 417

witnesses in the case.

"The chances of timely completion of trial appear to be bleak. Speedy trial has received recognition of the fundamental right of a person facing accusations," the bench said.

The bench granted all five accused bail on a personal bond of Rs 50,000 each and directed them to appear before the ATS's Mumbai office once a month and before the trial court for each hearing.

The court was hearing five appeals filed by the accused challenging a special court order denying them bail.

The accused have been booked under various provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), Indian Penal Code

(IPC), Explosives Act and Explosive Substances Act.

The five accused, Sujith Rangaswamy, Amit Baddi, Ganesh Miskin, Shrikant Pangarkar and Bharat Kurane, were arrested in 2018.

The ATS had, during the interrogation of two accused, Sharad Kalaskar and Vaibhav Raut, raided their residential premises and seized arms, ammunition and explosives from Nallasopara.

Based on the duo's statements, 10 others were arrested.

The ATS's case was that the accused persons were active members of right-wing groups, Sanatan Sanstha and Hindu Janjagruti Samiti, and were influenced by the philosophy of creation of a 'Hindu Rashtra'.

According to the prosecution, the accused had formed a gang to oppose anti-Hindu elements in the society. They conspired to target music festivals and shows, including the Sunburn festival in Pune in 2017.

It alleged that the accused had planned to disrupt the festival by throwing stones and petrol bombs, creating a ruckus using firearms and so on.

20 years' pursuit: CBI arrests offender, proclaimed dead by court in SBI fraud case

PTI n HYDERABAD

The CBI has arrested V Chalapathi Rao, a proclaimed offender absconding for 20 years in a bank fraud case who was declared dead a few years ago by a court here. A press release from the premier investigating agency on Monday said V Chalapathi Rao avoided arrest by frequently changing his identity and locations. In May 2002, the CBI had registered a case against the accused, working then as a computer operator at SBI Chandulal Biradari Branch, Hyderabad following allegations that he cheated the bank to the tune of Rs. 50 lakh on the basis of fabricated quotations of electronic shops and fake salary certificates created in the names of his family members and close associates. The CBI filed two chargesheets on December 31, 2004. The accused has been missing since 2004. His wife, who is also an accused in the fraud case lodged a complaint with the city police. She had also moved the Civil Court to declare the absconding accused as dead, seven years after he allegedly went missing. Subsequently, an order was passed by a civil court of Hyderabad. The accused constantly changed



locations, contact numbers and identity. However, the CBI relentlessly pursued leads and finally nabbed him in a village in Tamil Nadu. As per information gathered by CBI, the accused had fled to Salem and married a lady in 2007 by changing his name as M. Vineet Kumar and obtained an Aadhaar number as well. Through his second wife, the CBI got information that the PO was in touch with his son out of his first marriage. However, in 2014 he left Salem without any information and reached Bhopal where he worked as a loan recovery agent and then shifted to Rudrapur in Uttarakhand, where he worked in a School. When the team reached Rudrapur, it was found that he had fled in 2016 and shifted to an Ashram, in Verul village, Aurangabad. It was further discovered that the accused changed his name as Swamy Vidhitatmanand Teertha and also obtained an Aadhaar Card



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Ignominious exit

Sheikh Hasina resigns as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and flies to India leaving New Delhi in a quandary

It was writing on the wall which Sheikh Hasina the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh could not read. The people had turned against her. No wonder she had no choice but to resign and leave for the friendly country, India. The protests over the past few months paralysed Bangladesh. The initial spark was the students' demand for doing away with the reservation for the relatives of freedom fighters which evolved into a broader demand for political reforms and the resignation of Hasina Government. The unrest reached a crescendo, with more than 100 deaths in violent clashes between protesters and security forces. Protesters eventually stormed her official residence. Sheikh Hasina's political career has been a roller coaster ride. She is the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding leader and first President of Bangladesh. Hasina's political journey began in earnest after the assassination of her father and most of her family members in 1975. Exiled in India during the subsequent military regimes in Bangladesh, Hasina was elected as the President of the Awami League in 1981. She returned to Bangladesh in 1981. She was instrumental in reviving the Awami League and making it a formidable political force.



Sheikh Hasina first became Prime Minister in 1996 after the Awami League won the general elections. Allegations of corruption and political instability led to her party's defeat in the 2001 elections. But she returned to power in 2009 after the Awami League's landslide victory in the 2008 elections. Her subsequent terms as Prime Minister (2009-2024) have been marked by significant economic growth but also highhandedness which ultimately led to her downfall. Her tenure has been marked by efforts to consolidate power, leading to accusations of authoritarianism and suppression of dissent. But the fact remains that under her leadership, Bangladesh has made significant strides in poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and achieving key development milestones. After a long rule of 15-years she was out of sync with the ground realities; calling people traitors and clamping curfew and issuing shooting orders were grave mistakes which she had to pay for. Her ouster has put New Delhi in fix. India will now have to navigate the uncharted choppy waters of diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal. The alternatives to Hasina's government include the right-wing Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the Jatiya Party, and the army, all of which perceive India as a dominant influence and would like to keep her at bay. The volatility in Bangladesh raises security concerns for India, particularly in the border regions. Sheikh Hasina's departure has significantly altered the political dynamics. No matter who replaces Hasina it would adversely affect Indo-Bangladesh relations. Bangladesh may now move closer to China. New Delhi will have to deal with the interim government and make friends with the BNP and Jatiya party not to mention the army Generals who would be calling the shots for a while till new elections take place.

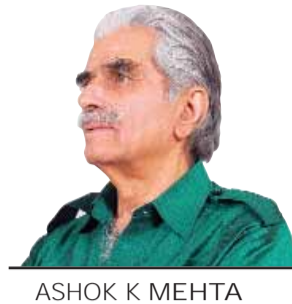
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PICTALK



People walk to their work as torrential rains lash Shimla

Why a national security strategy is vital for India



ASHOK K MEHTA

The military has always codified its practices and procedures for institutional memory. So why is the Government shy of it and using the CDS to justify it?

It is official now. After a decade of speculation over not whether and when a National Security Strategy (NSS) will be prepared and released, we were told that a written NSS is not needed. India's second CDS, Gen Anil Chauhan, recently said at India International Centre New Delhi while releasing the book Indian Craft of War, that a National Security Policy, using the term as an alternative to NSS, was not needed in writing. He added: "we have practices and processes in place...otherwise how did we do Article 370; handle COVID; Balakot air strikes..." A cerebral retired General noted, "it is in the head". < That we have gone on for 75 years without NSS does not mean we don't need one. The strategic ambiguity over not naming adversaries, missions, risks and opportunities is not worth a naya paisa in the contemporary geopolitical context. The contradiction is this: in the cradle of strategic thinking, Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, its Commandant, Lt Gen Verinder Vats, regularly underlines the virtues of NSS to his tri-service students. There is no merit in explaining why a written document is necessary, indeed essential.

All democracies, even authoritarian regimes have an NSS or White Paper on defence and security. For starters you can open former COAS Gen MM Naravane's latest unreleased book, Four Stars of Destiny, to learn of his unenviable predicament in waiting for orders during a grave and critical operational situation on LAC post-Galwan. Tragically, the Indian military has shied away from demanding a White Paper, Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) or any political guidance from the ruling political class. At a recent seminar on national security at New Delhi's IIC, former NSA Shiv Shankar Menon disclosed categorically that during the UPA regime, a draft NSS was prepared thrice but it never saw the light of day. For Menon's presentation, the discussant was former defence secretary NN Vohra, former Governor J&K, and Principal Secretary to



the Prime Minister. He endorsed Menon's claim and if further confirmation was needed it came from former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran who was chairing the event. All three stated that the absence of political will let the NSS drafts collect dust. This raises the issue of the role and responsibility of not only civil servants but also more importantly of Service Chiefs who fail to persuade or even gently coerce the PM/RM on the issuance of written directives. In their single-service operational mission papers, they guessimate their likely missions from the speeches of the Prime Minister during the Combined Commanders' Conferences or elsewhere. The BJP/NDA government has fared no better than the UPA in providing political guidance to the armed forces. Its stellar achievement though was the creation of CDS, which for lack of consensus both among the armed forces and the political class, remained missing for decades. Then, in a burst of zeal, the BJP announced the appointment of CDS in December 2019 without consulting anyone. It is now stuck in the old groove of securing consensus among the military over theorisation. It has taken a full five and a half years for RM Rajnath Singh to state, that too, in response to



TRAGICALLY, THE INDIAN MILITARY HAS SHIED AWAY FROM DEMANDING A WHITE PAPER, STRATEGIC DEFENCE AND SECURITY REVIEW (SDSR) OR ANY POLITICAL GUIDANCE FROM THE RULING POLITICAL CLASS

a question during an interview with PTI in May that consensus is growing among the services. Also in May, Gen Chauhan stated during a lecture at USI New Delhi that theorisation was "imminent" though "there were differences over reforms". As CDS has become synonymous with theatrisation the government needs to be as decisive in setting a deadline for its blueprint and implementation as it was in appointing the CDS. But the IAF, especially has been saying that an NSS is a prerequisite to theatrisation. In 2018 when the Defence Planning Committee was created under NSA Ajit Doval, it was widely expected that an NSS would be prepared by it. It is no secret that two drafts of NSS are lying with Doval - one prepared by Integrated Defence Staff and another by NSC Secretariat in 2021-22. But Gen Chauhan has closed the door to a scripted NSS though he did release last month a written tri-service cyber-space doctrine. Earlier, a tri-service Training Doctrine was also released which attracted severe criticism for its loopholes. One can ask how these documents can be written when there is no NSS and National Defence Strategy. India is the only emerging power with the fifth largest economy and fourth largest armed forces that does not

have an NSS/NSP though it has fought four short wars, - lost one, won one with the remaining two ending in stalemate - and one casualty-ridden successful border skirmish. There is hardly any mention or recognition of India's first out-of-area 32-month IPKF CIS mission in Sri Lanka where coercive diplomacy failed even as 1171 Bravehearts sacrificed their lives. The CDS recently called IPKF a minor operation. High time an NSS was written after a strategic defence review. I can vouch for it as a member of the Defence Planning Staff, the forerunner of IDS, which produced the country's first Defence Plan 2000 in 1988 after conducting a Security and Technology Environment Review that was lauded in Parliament. It was possible due to the political guidance from RRM Arun Singh and three dynamic service chiefs. The military has always codified its practices, processes, and procedures to be good for institutional memory. So why is the government shy of doing it and using CDS to justify it (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BURDEN OF OVER TOURISM

Madam — Apropos the article, "The global crisis of over-tourism", published on August 5, this is my response. With tourism expanding globally all the time, the term 'overtourism' is becoming a concern, which highlights the spiralling number of visitors taking a toll on cities, landmarks and landscapes. As tourist numbers worldwide returned towards pre-pandemic levels, the debate around what constitutes 'too many' visitors continues. Dealing with overtourism, therefore, has become a priority. But despite the mounting howls of protest, tourism promotion endures and unsustainable hordes of tourists continue to descend on cities, beaches and other natural wonders. In an effort to manage the flow of tourists, some cities have taken drastic measures to limit the effects of overtourism, including the introduction of new revised taxation arrangements and fines linked to new local laws. But it's a fine line to tread.

If tourist arrivals see a dramatic decline, it would likely have considerable economic repercussions for those who rely on them. Tourism should be part of the wider destination management system, which must also consider transport and mobility, the preservation of public spaces, the local economy and housing, among other aspects of daily life. Therefore, research, planning and a close dialogue among city administrators, the tourism industry, civil society groups and local residents are essential.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

DEATH OF SENITATION WORKERS

Madam — In the span of last six months, 43 sanitation workers lost their lives while cleaning sewers and septic tanks. These deaths took place despite manual scavenging has been banned and several policy measures have subsequently been put in place to prevent it. The fact is that despite recognising the dehumanising nature of their occupation and understanding how their caste status further

Djokovic wins gold medal



Djokovic carved out a break point in the second game of the opener and three more in the

fourth, all saved by the Spaniard but the vintage tennis was the first gold medal for the veteran tennis player. Then it was Serb's turn to demonstrate his famed powers of resilience off three break points in the fifth game and another five in a marathon ninth game. In a roller-coaster duel, Alcaraz served a set point in the 12th game but his senior opponent dominated the tie break to claim the opener after 93 minutes on court Philippe Chartier. There was no let up in the second set and the serve volley game saw veteran Djokovic having greater control in the tie-break to win the game, set, match and the gold medal in a scintillating display of tennis.

Jayanthi CK Maniam | Mumbai

SHEIKH HASINA RESIGNS

Madam — Now that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh has resigned, a new chapter begins in the country's history. This could be a positive sign for a brighter future. On Sunday, fierce clashes in Bangladesh resulted in the deaths of 91 people, and last month, around 150 demonstrated against the government's failure to address conflicts. This illustrates that the government has been too arrogant and stubborn to describe. The Bangladeshi Government lost the touch with ground reality and ignored the concerns of its people. It is not rocket science to implement a few amendments in the quota system, but the government's behavior had been arrogant to say the least. It only confined itself to the welfare of its supporters. There is hope for a prompt restoration of stability in the neighboring country.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Suppressing scientific studies is injurious to nation's health

Limiting scientific inquiry not only jeopardises public safety but also undermines trust in the authorities responsible for managing such crises

The recent instance of the Kerala government's contentious gag order banning scientific institutions from studying the land slide-affected areas of Wayand has been met with resistance from the scientific community and civil society. Hours later, the order was withdrawn at the behest of the state's Chief Minister. But what is still worrying is how a government or a bureaucrat drafts such an insane order restricting the scientific community from undertaking any studies at Meppadi Panchayat, Wayanad, where the multiple landslides occurred on the morning of July 30 and airing their views to the media. Whatever has happened in Wayanad in the Western Ghats region or the Uttarakhand or Himachal Pradesh in the Himalayan belt is due to the hiding of scientific information from the public. If scientists communicate with the public rather than politicians or policymakers, it brings more validity and acceptance to society. Once we take the public into confidence, it can bring positive changes to society.



These occurrences have emphasised the urgent requirement for thorough catastrophe planning and response methods, encompassing catastrophic earthquakes and tsunamis, industrial mishaps, and pandemics. An essential component in formulating these strategies is the implementation of scientific research carried out at disaster sites. Research conducted at catastrophe sites can improve preparedness and response techniques, ultimately preserving lives and mitigating economic losses in future occurrences. Imposing restrictions on scientific study threatens the general population's safety and erodes people's confidence in the authorities and organisations responsible for managing disasters. Freedom of scientific expression is crucial for all types of scientific research. To

foster the continuous acquisition of knowledge, it is essential to create an atmosphere where scientists can openly communicate their ideas, exchange discoveries, and provide constructive criticism to one another without any concerns about being censored or facing negative consequences. Impeding scientific studies and suppressing the freedom of expression within the scientific community presents a severe danger to the advancement and credibility of Science. Science and scientific facts reveal the truth because researchers conduct systematic studies. In that case, why should one hide it from the media or the public? Unfortunately, every scientist in the country needs approval from their higher-ups to publish a paper or even a popular science article. A committee of few who don't have any work except criticising others oversees the author's creativity. It's a pathetic situation. It's like making things more complicated so that no one dares to venture into new things. Over the past few years, there has been a concerning

increase in the occurrence and severity of catastrophes, including those caused by nature and human activities. These occurrences have emphasised the crucial requirement for thorough catastrophe planning and response methods. During the Joshimath sinking incident, there were reports of ISRO satellite images that showed that many parts of the Himalayas, including the famous Shimla ridge, were sinking. Unfortunately, that report soon vanished from the public domain. Had the information been available, people would be prepared to move from these regions instead of clinging to it. Restricting scientific investigation and hiding the information can lead to misinterpretation by unscrupulous historians, who may distort the true scientific explanations of natural disasters for their interest. This could harm future generations' comprehension of the scientific causes underlying these calamities. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. Views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



FIRST COLUMN

ACCEPTANCE - THE KEY TO REDUCING SUFFERING

When we accept reality, our anger tends to decrease and the pain subsides considerably



BY RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

If you ask anyone what is suffering? they would simply say that it is something that's caused by or is a result of negative events that happen in our life. However, this is not so, because in an actual sense, suffering is never what happens, it is how you feel about what happens in your life. We must understand that suffering is a feeling and our strongest feelings are nothing but our emotions, and when emotions get negative, they give pain. So, in simple words, suffering is our resistance to our negative emotions and our pain. It's a pain about our pain. Hence, we must understand the fact that suffering is the result of OUR emotions and not the events of our Lives.

We all experience pain in our day-to-day lives because it's inevitable and it is a part of being human. However, how many of us have pondered over this philosophical question of life - "What Causes Us PAIN?" or "What is the Cause of Our Negative Emotions?". Our pain might stem from losing a dear one, losing our job, a bad breakup, a fatal accident or undergoing any other kind of trauma or situation. However, when we hide from facing or accepting reality, we create suffering. Therefore, it should be clearly understood that we are the sole creator of good and bad in our lives and hence it's futile to blame others by saying things like - "It's not fair, why Me? this shouldn't have happened with me at least or I can't bear this anymore etc..."



There is a deep instinct in most of us to fight the pain we experience deep within, however, in most cases it backfires and we end up experiencing double the pain. The reason behind this is our tendency to avoid and, in some cases, hide our pain or pretend that it isn't present. Deep within we might ruminate about our suffering, without doing anything about it because of our stubbornness to accept it openly.

A wise person would instead accept the reality and become light instead of getting heavy on the mind because accepting simply means that you stop trying to deny your reality and you acknowledge it because sometimes accepting the painful emotions can reduce our suffering because we are no longer running from them or pushing them away. It however does not mean that you approve of a situation or that you don't want it to change, it's all about reducing our suffering, so if you have been hurt by someone, it's best to accept that YES you were hurt and then move on with your life rather than pondering over why, how, what.... Remember! To forgive or not is each one's prerogative, but acceptance is necessary for moving forward in life or else we would get stuck in a quagmire of wasted thoughts.

Once we accept reality, our anger tends to decrease and the painful situation loses the power it has over us. There is no denying the fact that emotional pain is an intrinsic part of all our lives, however, we create needless suffering when we don't accept reality. When we practice acceptance, we let ourselves move on, we open the door to freedom and we take steps to improve our lives. Most of us may find it hard to accept reality and still prefer to wait for time and situations to change, however in doing so, we forget that time does not heal everything, but acceptance will heal everything.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist views are personal)

Need for rationalising taxes on fertilisers



UTTAM GUPTA

The GST Council, responsible for tax rate decisions has yet to resolve the tax discrepancies despite multiple discussions and recommendations

For over five years now, the fertilizer industry has been facing an 'inverted duty structure'. Inverted duty structure refers to a situation in which raw materials (RMs) are taxed at a higher rate than finished products in whose manufacture these are used. But, there was little that the Budget presented by the Union Finance Minister (UFM) Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23, 2024, could do to address it.

Fertilizers and RMs used in their making are mostly taxed under the GST (Goods and Services Tax) regime. The GST Council - headed by the UFM that includes finance ministers from all States and UTs - has the mandate to fix tax rates besides deciding the procedures for registration, payment of taxes, GST return filing, and other related matters. So, the responsibility for fixing any anomalies in their taxation also lies with the GST Council.

The issue was discussed in the 45th (September 2021) and 47th (June 2022) meetings of the GST Council; but no decision could be taken.

Meanwhile, on August 9, 2023, the Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilisers recommended that the Union Government propose to the GST Council to reduce tax rates on fertilizers as well as RMs used in their making. In its 53rd meeting held on June 22, 2024, the Council referred the matter to the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalization to take holistic view.

At the outset, let us look at the present structure of taxing fertilizers.

To make fertilizers affordable to farmers, the government controls their maximum retail price (MRP) at a low level, unrelated to the cost of production and distribution, and reimburses the excess of the cost over MRP as a subsidy to the manufacturers. In the case of urea, the MRP is about one-tenth of the cost, whereas for all other fertilizers, the price is nearly one-third.

When the government spends heavily from its budget to make fertilizers available to farmers at a fraction of their cost, it makes no sense to impose a tax on them. This increases the cost, only to be reimbursed as an additional subsidy, to the manufacturers. It is a typical case of taking from one hand and giving back from the other.

Two major components of the fertilizer supply chain are taxed under two different regimes: one under GST and the other under the pre-GST regime. All finished fertilizers such as Urea, di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), ammonium sulphate etc are taxed under GST at 5 per cent. Most RMs such as sulfuric acid, ammonia, phosphoric acid etc (these are used for making DAP and other complex fertilizers) are also covered under GST. While sulfuric acid and ammonia are levied 18 per cent GST, phosphoric acid attracts 12 per cent tax. However, natural gas (NG), used for the manufacture of all domestic urea, is taxed under the pre-GST regime. Electricity, a utility intrinsic to the fertilizer-making process, is also kept outside GST.

GST is a single nationwide tax with a provision for set-off tax paid on inputs. It subsumes within it more than a dozen taxes from the pre-GST era, namely cen-



WHEN THE GOVERNMENT SPENDS HEAVILY FROM ITS BUDGET TO MAKE FERTILISERS AVAILABLE TO FARMERS AT A FRACTION OF THEIR COST, IT MAKES NO SENSE TO IMPOSE A TAX ON THEM. THIS INCREASES THE COST, ONLY TO BE REIMBURSED AS AN ADDITIONAL SUBSIDY, TO THE MANUFACTURERS

tral excise duty (CED), service tax, and sales tax/value-added tax (VAT). The Constitutional Amendment Act of 2016 on GST, while providing for the inclusion of NG (besides other petroleum products such as petrol, diesel, ATF etc) under its ambit, kept it 'zero-rated' meaning it continues to be under the pre-GST regime. The GST Council has put fixing the rate for NG (besides ATF) on its agenda umpteen times only to defer it.

Taxing under pre-GST results in a cascading effect on the cost of NG and electricity. Gas companies like Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Limited (OIL) are outside the GST ambit and can't claim credit for the taxes paid on their purchases of inputs, consumables, and equipment, leading to a higher price. Even as NG attracts nil CED on supplies to fertilizer plants, its delivered cost is boosted by VAT, which can be as high as 24.5 per cent in Andhra Pradesh (AP).

Other local taxes, for instance, Gujarat's "purchase tax" on that portion of inputs consumed for making urea that is sold outside the state, also add to the cost. In the case of electricity, power companies don't get any credit for taxes paid on inputs viz., equipment, stores, and so on, used in its generation and distribution, leading to higher costs.

Further, under the Constitution, entry 53 in the State List of the Seventh Schedule empowers states to impose tax (or electricity duty) on the sale and consumption of electricity, except

when it is consumed by the Union Government or the Railways. For electricity duty, too, electricity companies don't get any offset. This further exacerbates the cost of power supplied to fertilizer plants.

Even in areas where the materials are covered under GST hence, no cost cascading effect, the inverted tax structure plays a spoiler. The higher GST levied on ammonia/sulfuric acid/phosphoric acid as against much lower GST on finished fertilizers results in an 'unabsorbed' input tax credit (ITC), as the output tax falls far short of the input tax. The situation gets exacerbated because of the government's control over the MRP of fertilizers at a low level.

Considering that the cost of making fertilizer available to farmers (sans taxes) by itself is substantially higher than the price the Union Government wants them to pay, ideally, it shouldn't levy any tax as the proceeds from such levy will have to be paid back as an additional subsidy. Even if it wants to levy, ideally, all components in the supply chain have to be brought under GST and fertilizers, and all inputs and RMs should be in the lowest tax slab of 5 per cent.

While the tax rate on fertilizers is already 5 per cent, this will require lowering the tax rate on all RMs viz. ammonia/sulfuric acid/phosphoric acid from the current 18/12 per cent to 5 per cent. The tax on micronutrients such as zinc (Zn), boron (B), manganese (Mn), iron (Fe) etc should also be lowered from the

existing 12-18 per cent to 5 per cent in line with the recommendation of the Standing Committee as their importance for plant growth and ensuring balanced nutrient use. NG and power should be brought under GST and taxed at @5 per cent.

Lowering tax on RMs by itself won't address the problem of unabsorbed ITC. This is because the MRP of finished fertilizers is substantially lower than the cost, even with the same GST, tax paid on RMs/inputs would still be higher than output tax liability. This can be resolved only when the government gives subsidies to farmers under direct benefit transfer (DBT) and lets manufacturers charge full price from the farmers.

Lowering tax on ammonia/sulfuric acid/phosphoric acid on supplies to fertilizer manufacturers to accommodate their special needs but leaving GST on supplies to other industries such as detergents, paints, dyes, plastics, etc unchanged can lead to large-scale diversion and misuse as it is impossible to track every grain of supply and ensure that it is used for the intended purpose. We have seen this happening in the case of urea where setting its MRP at a low level prompts diversion.

Diversion/misuse is inevitable in any regime of differential taxation/pricing based on the end use of the product. The only way to prevent it and yet meet the intended objective is DBT. Well, this is shaping up!

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

India's abolition of Angel tax: A major boost for startups and investment

The removal of this tax, combined with procedural simplifications, promises to create a more dynamic and supportive environment for startups

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her seventh Budget, has proposed to abolish the Angel Tax, a significant move aimed at bolstering the Indian startup ecosystem. This tax had long been a contentious issue between startups and the Income Tax Department, acting as a major hindrance to growth and investment.

The abolition of this tax, if coupled with procedural simplifications, could indeed be a game-changer, fostering a more vibrant and dynamic startup ecosystem that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship. The Angel Tax, essentially a tax on capital raised by unlisted companies through the issue of



B K JHA

shares, was introduced under Section 56(2)(viii) of the Income Tax Act, 1961. It taxed investments above the fair market value of a company as 'Income from other sources', primarily affecting angel investors. The excess realization was considered income and taxed accordingly. This provision while well-intentioned to curb money laundering, ended up stifling

genuine investments and became a nightmare for startups. The abolition of this tax removes a significant barrier that has long hindered the growth of startups and discouraged investment. Startups can now raise capital without the looming fear of being taxed on perceived excess valuations, which often did not account for the future growth prospects and potential of these young companies.

This move aligns with the government's broader agenda of promoting innovation, employment, education, skilling, and research. The abolition of the Angel Tax is expected to boost the entire startup ecosystem by making it easier for startups to attract investments.

This, in turn, will stimulate economic growth and job creation. For instance, the comprehensive digitalization of taxpayer services and the simplification of the GST tax structure are indicative of the government's commitment to digitalization, which will benefit tech startups across various fields such as education, healthcare, and taxation. India has been a global leader in creating successful entrepreneurship opportunities in recent years.

The investor community, including high-net-worth individuals (HNIs), foreign funds, venture capitalists, and angel investors, has remained bullish on the growth potential of the Indian startup ecosystem.



However, the Angel Tax had cast a shadow over this optimism, causing significant distress among startups and investors alike. While the government's initiatives such as Startup India, Stand-up India, and Digital India have provided a favourable environment for startups, the Angel Tax was a significant pain point. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had even

shaken the startup ecosystem by directly deducting income tax under Section 68 from the bank accounts of certain startups on unexplained cash credits. The abolition of the Angel Tax, coupled with the recent notification simplifying compliance procedures, reflects the government's responsiveness to the concerns of the startup community.

Startups no longer need to procure a fair market value certificate issued by a merchant banker or seek approval from an inter-ministerial board. Instead, they can request angel tax exemption from the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP) with the necessary supporting documents.

The CBDT is mandated to respond to such applications within 45 days, providing much-needed clarity and certainty to startups. While the abolition of the Angel Tax is a significant step forward, its impact will depend on the implementation and further simplifications of procedures. The focus should be on creating a startup-friendly regulatory environment that encourages investment and innovation. The government's emphasis on digital public infrastructure and the digitalization of the economy will also play a crucial role in supporting tech startups and fostering a culture of innovation. Overall, the abolition of the Angel Tax is a welcome move that promis-

es to remove a significant barrier to startup growth and investment. However, for this initiative to truly be a game-changer, it must be accompanied by procedural simplifications and a supportive regulatory environment.

The government's continued focus on innovation, digitalization, and economic growth will be crucial in realizing the full potential of this policy change. This could very well mark the beginning of a new era for the Indian startup ecosystem, driving innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth in the years to come.

(The author is a senior journalist and the views expressed are personal)

Judge in Trump's hush money case delays date for ruling on presidential immunity

AP n NEW YORK

The judge in Donald Trump's hush money trial is pushing back a date for a key ruling on presidential immunity until two days before Trump's scheduled sentencing.

The immunity decision had been due September 6, with the sentencing set for September 18. But then Trump's lawyers asked Judge Juan M. Merchan last week to rule first on their renewed bid to get the judge to step aside from the case.

In a letter made public on Tuesday, Judge Juan M. Merchan postponed the immunity ruling to September 16 — if it's still needed after he decides next week whether to recuse himself.

Merchan said the Republican presidential nominee is still due in court September 18 for "the imposition of sentence or other proceedings as appropriate".

Trump lawyer Todd Blanche and the Manhattan district attorney's office, which is prosecuting the case, declined to comment.

A jury found Trump guilty in May of falsifying business



records to conceal a deal to pay off porn actor Stormy Daniels shortly before the 2016 election. At the time, she was considering going public with a story of a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier.

Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen paid Daniels and was later reimbursed by Trump, whose company logged the repayment as legal expenses. Prosecutors said that was an effort to disguise the true nature of the transactions and the underlying hush money deal.

Trump denies Daniels' claim, maintains he did nothing

wrong and says the case is politically motivated. Manhattan DA Alvin Bragg is a Democrat.

Trump's lawyers say the Supreme Court's July ruling on presidential immunity warrants overturning the May guilty verdict and entirely dismissing the hush money case against Trump. The defence also contends that the trial was "tainted" by evidence that should not have been allowed under the high court's ruling, such as testimony from some Trump White House staffers and tweets he sent while president in 2018.

The high court's ruling curbs prosecutions of ex-presidents for official acts and restricts prosecutors in pointing to official acts as evidence that a commander in chief's unofficial actions were illegal.

The Manhattan district attorney's office maintains that the high court's opinion "has no bearing" on the hush money case because it involves unofficial acts for which the former president is not immune.

Meanwhile, Trump's lawyers asked Merchan last week, for a third time, to exit the case, saying his daughter's work for Vice President Kamala Harris' 2020 presidential campaign underscores questions about his ability to be impartial. Harris is now the Democratic nominee for president.

Merchan rejected two prior recusal requests last year, saying the defense's concerns were "hypothetical" and based on "innuendos" and "unsupported speculation". But Trump lawyer Todd Blanche argued that Harris' entry into the presidential race makes those issues "even more concrete" and said the judge hadn't addressed them in enough detail.

At least 24 killed in hotel owned by Awami League leader in B'desh

PTI n DHAKA

At least 24 people, including an Indonesian national, were burnt alive by a mob in Bangladesh at a starred hotel owned by a leader of Awami League party after its leader Sheikh Hasina resigned as prime minister and fled the country, local journalists and hospital sources said on Tuesday.

The victims, mostly boarders, were burnt alive late on Monday night as the mob set afire Zahir International Hotel owned by district Awami League general secretary Shahin Chakkladar in Joshor district. "The dead included an Indonesian national," a local journalist told PTI in Dhaka over phone.

He added the doctors at Joshor General Hospital confirmed they counted 24 bodies while surviving hotel staff feared more bodies could be found inside the debris.

Media reports suggested unidentified mob, opposed to the Awami League (AL) regime, set the ground floor of the hotel on fire which quick-



ly spread to the upper floors. There were almost identical reports from across the country where the angry mob simultaneously vandalised residences and business establishments of many Awami League leaders and activists, including its central office in

Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital. Bangladesh descended into chaos on Monday after Hasina resigned, surreptitiously fled the country and landed in India while the army stepped in to fill the power vacuum. As the news of Hasina's departure spread, Dhaka and other

parts of the country saw fresh round of violence in the already battered South Asian nation with mobs resorting to street violence, vandalising government property and even breaking into Hasina's government residence and looting the interiors.

8 Palestinians killed in West Bank as world leaders try to avoid regional war

AP n JERUSALEM

Israeli fire during military raids in the occupied West Bank killed eight Palestinians, including four teenagers, and wounded another seven, Palestinian officials said Tuesday, as world leaders try to stop tensions in the Middle East from boiling over into a regional war.

An Israeli airstrike on a village in southern Lebanon killed four people, the country's Health Ministry said. Later Tuesday, Lebanon's Hezbollah launched a drone attack on northern Israel, wounding five people, in response to the killing of one of its fighters.

Israel and Hezbollah have exchanged near-daily strikes for the past 10 months during the war in Gaza. Leaders in Egypt and Türkiye say they are exhausting all avenues possible to prevent the Israel-Hamas war from becoming a wider regional conflict after the killings of a senior Hezbollah commander in Lebanon and Hamas' top political leader in Iran. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet over the weekend that Israel is already in a "multi-front war" with Iran and its proxies.

Hezbollah launches drone attack in northern Israel

Lebanon's Hezbollah launched a drone attack Tuesday on northern Israel, wounding at least seven people, in response to the killing of one of its fighters in an Israeli airstrike.

The attack did not appear to be linked to Hezbollah's vow to avenge the killing of one of its top commanders in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut the previous week, which has raised fears of an all-out war.

Hezbollah has launched nearly a dozen drone and rocket attacks since the start of the Gaza war in what it says is an act of solidarity with the Palestinians. Israel has responded with airstrikes, one of which killed four people in southern Lebanon earlier Tuesday, according to Lebanese authorities. Hezbollah said it launched a drone attack targeting army bases in northern Israel in retaliation for the killing of a lower-level commander in a strike late Monday. Gal Zaid, spokesperson for Galilee Medical Center,

said it was treating one severely wounded person and four others with mild injuries. Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service said it was treating seven wounded in three locations in Western Galilee. The Israeli military said "a number" of drones entered from Lebanon, one of which was intercepted. It said several civilians were wounded near the coastal town of Nahariya, some 6 kilometres south of the border, without giving a precise

location. "Because of security concerns, US Embassy personnel in Bangladesh are subject to some movement and travel restrictions. The US government may have limited ability to provide emergency services to US citizens in Bangladesh due to these travel restrictions, a lack of infrastructure, and limited host government emergency response resources," it added.

Attack on Iraqi military base injures US personnel

AP n WASHINGTON

Several US personnel were injured in a suspected rocket attack at a military base in Iraq, US defense officials said Monday, in what has been a recent uptick in strikes on American forces by Iranian-backed militias.

The attack comes as tensions across the Middle East are spiking following the killings last week of a senior Hezbollah commander in Lebanon and Hamas' top political leader in Iran, in suspected Israeli strikes. Both groups are backed by Iran. The US defense officials said troops at al-Asad air base were still assessing the injuries and damage, and it appeared that as many as seven military troops and civilians were injured. Earlier Monday, Iraqi security officials confirmed the attack, but no group has claimed responsibility. The American officials said the US looked into reports of a possible second attack at the base but determined there had not been another one.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations. The White House said the president and vice president were briefed on the attack.

Indian mission in UK issues safety advisory amid violent clashes

PTI n LONDON

The High Commission of India in London on Tuesday issued a safety advisory for Indian nationals to "stay vigilant and exercise due caution" amid ongoing violent clashes which have targeted immigrants and asylum-seekers in parts of the UK since last week. The advisory posted on the social media channels of the Indian mission also provides emergency contact information for anyone in need of urgent assistance. It comes a week after the fatal stabbing of three young girls in Southport, north-west England, and incorrect social media claims over the UK-born suspect's asylum-seeker status.

"Indian travellers would be aware of recent disturbances in some parts of the United Kingdom. The High Commission of India in London is closely monitoring the situation," reads the message entitled 'Advisory for

Indian Citizens Visiting the UK.'

"Visitors from India are advised to stay vigilant and exercise due caution while travelling in the UK. It is advisable to follow local news and advisories issued by local security agencies, and to avoid areas where protests are underway," it added. The contact provided for India House at Aldwych, London, in case of an emergency is: +44-2078369147 and inf.london@mea.gov.in. Birmingham in the north and Plymouth in southern England witnessed the latest scenes of clashes between two sets of protesters overnight on Monday.

A man is in a serious condition in hospital after being attacked in a suspected hate crime in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and police officers were attacked with bricks in Darlington, northern England.

The British government said it has accelerated its plans to deal with prison capacity

to ensure sufficient space for an expected rise in prisoners due to rioting after hundreds of arrests have been made.

"I think we have seen serious acts of violence designed to cause terror to a section of our community," Neil Basu, the former head of counter-terrorism policing, told the BBC. Basu also blamed social media companies for not taking tough enough action to clampdown on misinformation and said "we should be appealing" to advertisers to cut the funding of social media giants if responsibility was not exercised.

Meanwhile, the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology are investigating the role of foreign state actors amplifying misinformation and disinformation about the UK riots, including cracking down on automated online bots.

"Clearly we have seen bot activity online, much of which may

well be amplified with the involvement of state actors amplifying some of the disinformation and misinformation that we've seen," said Prime Minister Keir Starmer's official spokesperson, but declined to say which states may be involved.

On Monday after a high-level COBRA security meeting, Starmer pledged a "standing army" of specialist officers to stamp out the riots across several cities in the country, which he has termed as "far-right thuggery".

"I've asked for the early consideration of the earliest naming and identification of those involved in the process, who will feel the full force of the law," he said.

Many of his own Labour Party MPs and Opposition members are calling for Parliament to be recalled from its summer recess to debate the issue, but Starmer has so far insisted the government needs to focus on restoring calm on the streets.

US urges its citizens not to travel to Bangladesh

PTI n WASHINGTON

The United States on Tuesday recommended its citizens not to travel to Bangladesh, witnessing civil unrest, crime, and terrorism following the resignation and fleeing of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina. Elevating its travel advisory to the highest 'Level 4: Do Not Travel' category, the US State Department has also recommended the departure of non-emergency US government employees and family members. Over 100 people have been killed in the violence across Bangladesh as chaos reigned supreme hours after Hasina resigned as prime minister and fled the country on Monday, amid signs of a return to normalcy.

"On August 5, 2024, the Department ordered the departure of non-emergency US government employees and family members. Travellers should not travel to Bangladesh due to ongoing civil unrest in Dhaka," the State Department said in its advisory.

Travellers should be aware of petty crimes such as pickpocketing in crowded areas, the advisory said, adding that crimes such as muggings, burglaries, assaults, and illegal drug trafficking constitute the majority of criminal activity in Bangladesh's major cities, but there are no indications foreigners are being targeted because of their nationality. These crimes tend to be situational, based on time and location, it said.

According to the travel advisory, terrorist attacks can happen with little or no warning, with terrorists targeting public areas such as tourist locations, transportation hubs, markets/shopping malls, restaurants, places of worship, school campuses, and government facilities.

"Because of security concerns, US Embassy personnel in Bangladesh are subject to some movement and travel restrictions. The US government may have limited ability to provide emergency services to US citizens in Bangladesh due to these travel restrictions, a lack of infrastructure, and limited host government emergency response resources," it added.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer welcomes Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, the Sultan of Oman to 10 Downing Street in London on Tuesday. AP/PTI

Kamala Harris picks Minnesota Gov Tim Walz as running mate

PTI n WASHINGTON

US Vice President Kamala Harris, who is of Indian and African heritage, has formally secured the Democratic presidential nomination becoming the first Indian-American to win the nomination from a major political party and chose Minnesota Gov Tim Walz as her running mate on Tuesday.

Harris, 59, would face Republican presidential candidate and former president Donald Trump, 78, in the general elections scheduled to be held on November 5. Harris picked Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, 60, to be her running mate on Tuesday morning ahead of the Philadelphia rally, Washington Post said quoting sources. Walz has served 12 years in Congress before he became Minnesota governor in 2018. Earlier last month, Harris abruptly thrust into the role of presidential candidate after President Joe Biden withdrew from the race for the White



House. Harris' nomination became official on Monday night after she received 99 per cent of the votes of the pledged and automatic delegates at the conclusion of the roll call vote after a five-day round of online balloting by Democratic National Convention delegates. As many as 4,567 delegates from across the country cast their vote for Harris.

The next steps in the nominating process include the certification of the roll call by the

Democratic National Convention (DNC) secretary Jason Rae, and the acceptance of the nomination by Harris and her running mate, certified by DNC Chair (DNCC) Minyon Moore.

The Convention is to be held in Chicago from August 19 to 22. "With the support of 99 per cent of all participating delegates in the virtual roll call, Vice President Harris has historic momentum at her back as we embark on the final steps in officially certifying her as our party's nominee," DNC chair Jaime Harrison and DNCC chair Minyon Moore said in a joint statement. Last Friday, Harris was declared the 2024 presidential nominee of the ruling Democratic Party after she won enough votes from Democratic delegates in a virtual roll call.

A step away from breaking the last glass ceiling of the United States, Harris became the first ever woman of colour to be on the top of a presidential ticket of a major American political party.

UN fires additional staffers after probe finds potential involvement in attack on Israel

AP n JERUSALEM

The United Nations said Monday it has fired additional staff members from its agency for Palestinian refugees after an internal investigation found they may have been involved in the Hamas-led October 7 attack against Israel. The UN secretary-general's office announced the move in a brief statement to journalists. Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, did not elaborate on the UNRWA staffers' likely role in the attack or on the evidence that prompted its decision. UNRWA previously fired 12

staffers and put seven staffers on administrative leave without pay over the claims. The group of nine staffers the UN announced it had fired Monday includes some from each group, said Juliette Touma, communications director for UNRWA. The UN did not clarify how many have now been fired from the agency in total.

The UN's internal watchdog has been investigating the agency since Israel in January accused 12 UNRWA staffers of being involved in the October 7 attack on Israel, in which militants killed 1,200 people and abducted some 250 others. Israel's allegations initially led

top donor countries to suspend their funding for UNRWA. That caused a cash crunch of about USD 450 million dollars. Since then, all donor countries, except for the US have decided to resume funding. Oren Marmorstein, the spokesperson for Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote on X following the announcement of the firings that Israel was again calling for donor countries to suspend funding "as the funds may go to terrorist elements."

"UNRWA is part of the problem and not part of the solution, and anyone who seeks the best interests of Israel, the Gaza Strip and the region

should act to replace UNRWA's activities with other agencies," he wrote.

The UN watchdog charged with investigating UNRWA, called the Office of Internal Oversight Services, said it drew on evidence provided by Israeli authorities. It said it could not independently corroborate that evidence since it did not have direct access to it. The investigators also reviewed internal UNRWA information, including staff records, email and other communications data. It said it found sufficient evidence pointing to nine employees' potential involvement in the October 7 attack.

N-disarmament must be tackled as a pressing issue: Hiroshima Guv

AP n TOKYO

Hiroshima officials urged world leaders Tuesday to stop relying on nuclear weapons as deterrence and take immediate action toward abolition — not as an ideal, but to remove the risk of atomic war amid conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East and rising tensions in East Asia. They commented as Hiroshima remembered its atomic bombing 79 years ago at the end of World War II. The

memorial comes days after Japan and the US reaffirmed Washington's commitment to "extended deterrence," which includes atomic weapons, to protect its Asian ally. That is a shift from Japan's past reluctance to openly discuss the sensitive issue as the world's only country to have suffered atomic attacks. Hiroshima Gov. Hidehiko Yuzaki said nuclear-armed nations and supporters of atomic deterrence "deliberately ignore ... the fact that once

people invented a weapon, they used it without exception." "As long as nuclear weapons exist, they will surely be used again someday," Yuzaki said in his address at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. "Nuclear weapons abolition is not an ideal to achieve far in the future. Instead, it is a pressing and real issue that we should desperately engage in at this moment since nuclear problems involve an imminent risk to human survival," he said. Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi

Matsui said Russia's war on Ukraine and the worsening conflict between Israel and Palestinians are "deepening distrust and fear among nations" and reinforcing a view that use of force in settling conflict is unavoidable. The atomic bomb dropped by the United States on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, destroyed the city, killing 140,000 people. A second bomb dropped three days later on Nagasaki killed 70,000 more. Japan surrendered on August 15, ending

World War II and Japan's nearly half-century aggression in Asia. About 50,000 people at the ceremony observed a minute of silence with the sound of a peace bell at 8:15 am, the time when a US B-29 dropped the bomb on the city. Hundreds of white doves, considered symbols of peace, were released. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who attended the ceremony, said global conflicts and divided views over approaches to nuclear disarmament make

achieving that goal "all the more challenging," but pledged to do his utmost in pursuing "realistic and practical measures" to build momentum within the international community. His critics say it is a hollow promise because Japan relies on the US nuclear umbrella for protection and has been rapidly expanding its military. Japan, the United States and other regional allies have been stepping up security cooperation in response to a more assertive China and the

growing nuclear and missile threats from North Korea. Japan has sought stronger US protection by its nuclear capability. Many survivors of the bombings have lasting injuries and illnesses resulting from the explosions and radiation exposure and have faced discrimination in Japan. As of March, 106,823 survivors — 6,824 fewer than a year ago, and now with an average age of 85.58 — are certified as eligible for government medical support, according to the Health

and Welfare Ministry. Many others, including those who say they were victims of the radioactive "black rain" that fell outside the initially designated areas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are still without support. Hiroshima officials called on Kishida's government to do more to provide support and address their wishes. The aging survivors, known as "hibakusha," continue to push for a nuclear arms ban as they desperately campaign to have their effort kept alive by younger generations.

Strategically important Myanmar military HQ appears to fall to the resistance

AP n BANGKOK

Myanmar's military regime acknowledged Monday it had lost communications with the commanders of a strategically important army headquarters in the northeast, adding credence to a militia group's claims it had captured the base.

The fall of the army's Northeast Command in Lashio city would be the biggest in a series of setbacks for Myanmar's military government this year, as an offensive by an alliance of powerful militias of ethnic minority groups makes broad gains in the civil war.

The regime's loss of the Northeast Command is the most humiliating defeat of the war," said Morgan Michaels, a Singapore-based analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies who runs its Myanmar Conflict Map project. "Without Lashio, it will be extremely difficult for the regime to hold onto its final outposts in the theatre."

Those include the key Muse border crossing with China, as well as the strategic crossroads at Kyaukse, and it opens the way for attacks on Pyin Oo Lwin and Myanmar's second-largest city, Mandalay, Michaels said.

In a video broadcast Monday night on state television, the head of the ruling military council, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, gave a vague account of the base's fall, saying some security forces in northern Shan State left their outposts because keeping people safe was their priority.

In his 25-minute address, he accused the ethnic resistance forces and "traitor maggots" inside and outside Myanmar of working together and circulating propaganda to demoralize people.

He alleged that warlordism is growing among leaders of the insurgent groups, and that people are likely to face illegal and unjust killings and an economy involving drug trafficking and gambling. The army will continue to carry out security measures to restore stability, he said.

The loss of Lashio raises questions about whether Myanmar's ruling military council could be forced to give up attempts to hold contested territory in order to consolidate a defense of the central heartland.

It could also contribute to growing discontent with Min Aung Hlaing, who seized power after leading the overthrow of the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in

2021. "It seems increasingly unlikely that the army could survive with Min Aung Hlaing at the helm," Michaels said.

Lashio, about 110 kilometers (70 miles) south of the Chinese border, has been the target of an offensive by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army since early July.

The MNDAA is a military force of the Kokang minority, who are ethnic Chinese. It is part of the Three Brotherhood Alliance, which in October launched a surprise offensive that succeeded in seizing large tracts of territory along the northern border with China. The Chinese Embassy in Myanmar on Tuesday urged its citizens in Lashio and other parts of Shan state to strengthen their security precautions, and stay away from conflict zones or return to China.

Beijing helped broker a ceasefire in January, but that fell apart in June when the Taang National Liberation Army, another member of the Three Brotherhood Alliance made up of Taang ethnic minority members, launched new attacks, followed by the MNDAA.

The alliance's third member, the Arakan Army, has never stopped fighting in its home

Rakhine State in western Myanmar.

The groups in the alliance have been fighting for decades for greater autonomy from Myanmar's central government. They are loosely allied with People's Defense Forces, pro-democracy resistance groups that have emerged to fight military rule.

Glen Malcolm Conning, a pilot for Indonesian aviation company PT Intan Angkasa Air Service, was shot to death by gunmen allegedly with the West Papua Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Free Papua Movement, after landing in Alama, a remote village in the Mimika district of Central Papua province, said Faizal Ramadhani, a National Police member who heads the joint security peace force in Papua.

The gunmen released the Indigenous Papuan passengers and set fire to the plane, he said. "All passengers were safe because they were local residents of Alama village," said

Gunmen kill New Zealand chopper pilot in Papua region

AP n JAYAPURA (INDONESIA)

Gunmen stormed a helicopter and killed its New Zealand pilot shortly after it landed in Indonesia's restive Papua region on Monday, and they released two health workers and two children it was carrying, police said.

Glen Malcolm Conning, a pilot for Indonesian aviation company PT Intan Angkasa Air Service, was shot to death by gunmen allegedly with the West Papua Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Free Papua Movement, after landing in Alama, a remote village in the Mimika district of Central Papua province, said Faizal Ramadhani, a National Police member who heads the joint security peace force in Papua.

The gunmen released the Indigenous Papuan passengers and set fire to the plane, he said. "All passengers were safe because they were local residents of Alama village," said

Ramadhani, adding that the village is in a mountainous district that can be reached only by helicopter. A joint security force was deployed to search for the attackers, who ran into the dense jungle.

New Zealand's Foreign Ministry confirmed late Tuesday that Conning had been killed. Consular officials in Jakarta were working with authorities to "understand more about the circumstances" surrounding the helicopter pilot's death, the ministry said in a statement.

West Papua Liberation Army spokesperson Sebby Sambom told The Associated Press he had not received any reports from fighters on the ground about the killing.

"But, if that happens, it was his own fault for entering our forbidden territory," Sambom said. "We have released warnings several times that the area is under our restricted zone, an armed conflict area that is pro-

hibited for any civilian aircraft to land."

Sambom called on Indonesian authorities to stop all development in Papua until the government is willing to negotiate with the rebels, and "if anyone disobeys, they must bear the risk themselves."

Conflicts between Indigenous Papuans and Indonesian security forces are common in the impoverished Papua region, a former Dutch colony in the western part of New Guinea that is ethnically and culturally distinct from much of Indonesia. Conflict has spiked in the past year, with dozens of rebels, security forces and civilians killed. Monday's killing was the latest violence against New Zealand nationals in the Papua region.

In February 2023, Egianus Kogoya, a regional commander in the Free Papua Movement, abducted Philip Mark Mehrtens, a pilot from Christchurch who was working for Indonesian

aviation company Susi Air. Kogoya and his troops stormed a single-engine plane shortly after it landed on a small runway in a mountainous village. Planning to use the pilot to negotiate, Kogoya has said they won't release Mehrtens unless Indonesia frees Papua as a sovereign country.

In 2020, seven employees of PT Freeport Indonesia, including a New Zealand miner, Graeme Thomas Wall from Ngaruawahia, were attacked by gunmen in a parking area in Tembagapura, a mining town. Wall was shot in his chest and died. Papua was incorporated into Indonesia in 1969 after a UN-sponsored ballot that was widely seen as a sham. Since then, a low-level insurgency has simmered in the mineral-rich region, which is divided into six provinces. Flying is the only practical way to access many areas in the mountainous easternmost provinces of Papua and West Papua.

Pak's NA passes bill restricting independent lawmakers from joining other parties

PTI n ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's National Assembly on Tuesday passed a bill seeking to bar independent lawmakers from joining a party after a stipulated period, with the jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party voicing a strong protest against it. The Election Act Amendment Bill 2024 was moved by ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) members Bilal Kayani and Zeb Jafar and passed by the National Assembly with a majority vote despite protest by opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The amendment changed Sections 66 and 104 of the Elections Act 2017, restricting independent candidates from joining political parties after a constitutionally and legally defined period.

It states that parties failing to submit a list of reserved seats within the specified period will not be eligible for those seats. It further stipulates that candidates who do not submit an affidavit of party affiliation to the returning officer will be considered independent, and their declaration of party affiliation after elections will not be recognised.

When the bill was taken up for voting, the opposition members stood on their seats and started protesting and sloganeering. They came in front of the speaker's dais, tore copies of the bill, and raised slogans "Bill Rejected" and "Attack on Judiciary and Democracy Rejected" and decried the government. PTI's Ali Muhammad Khan proposed an amendment to the Election Act, which was rejected by the house when Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar opposed it.

Later, addressing the House, Ali Muhammad termed the amendment to the Election Act unconstitutional and questioned how the party could be deprived of its rights given by the Supreme Court. "The Election Act Amendment Bill is a politically motivated attempt to deprive the PTI of reserved seats," he added.

Ali Muhammad said the PTI would move the Supreme Court against the legislation, which, he said, would reject it because this bill is not legislation but a manifestation of the fascist approach of a political party. He added that the Parliament was used to attack the Supreme Court through this law. Law Minister Tarar said 81

members took oath as members of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) and now are saying they are members of another party.

The minister said the purpose of the amendment is to bring clarity to the election law. The amendment to the Elections Act 2017 will be enforced retroactively, clearly showing that the aim was to target the 41 independent lawmakers who could join the PTI after the Supreme Court verdict of July 12, which recognised that the PTI was a party and independents could join it.

The court also declared that 39 members who had shown affiliation with the PTI while filing nomination for elections were its members, while another 41 lawmakers who were elected with the party's support may join it after filing an affidavit. The Election Commission of Pakistan already issued a notification recognising the 39 lawmakers as members of the PTI, while the fate of 41 others is still pending.

After the Supreme Court verdict, the PTI was expected to become the largest party in the Parliament, while the ruling coalition was deprived of its two-thirds majority as Khan's party also got a share in the

reserved seats.

The new law would stop the 41 independent candidates from joining the PTI as they already joined the SIC after the election.

After the elections, the PTI asked its supported independents to join the SIC to get a share in the reserved seats allotted to the party based on strength in the Parliament. However, the SIC bid to get reserved seats failed, and its petition in the top court led to the decision that independents could join the PTI.

The proposed amendment also forbade allotting reserved seats to a party which had not submitted the list of candidates for these seats before elections. The apex court's judgment opened doors for the PTI to apply for reserved seats even without submitting the list before the poll.

Khan's PTI party could not contest the February 8 elections as the ECP rejected its intra-party elections and deprived it of the bat symbol for contesting the elections as a party. So its candidates, who had won independently but with the support of PTI, were asked by the PTI leadership to join a SIC to form a parliamentary party to claim reserved seats.

AP n LOS ANGELES

Elon Musk filed a lawsuit on Monday against OpenAI and two of its founders, Sam Altman and Greg Brockman, renewing claims that the ChatGPT-maker betrayed its founding aims of benefiting the public good rather than pursuing profits.

The lawsuit, filed in a Northern California federal court, called Musk's case a "textbook tale of altruism versus greed." Altman and others named in the suit "intentionally courted and

deceived Musk, preying on Musk's humanitarian concern about the existential dangers posed by artificial intelligence," according to the complaint.

Musk was an early investor in OpenAI when it was founded in 2015 and co-chaired its board alongside Altman. In the lawsuit, he said he invested "tens of millions" of dollars and recruited top AI research scientists for OpenAI. Musk resigned from the board in early 2018 in a move that OpenAI said — at the time — would prevent conflicts of

interest as he was recruiting AI talent to build self-driving technology at the electric car maker.

The Tesla CEO dropped his previous lawsuit against OpenAI without explanation in June. That lawsuit alleged that when Musk bankrolled OpenAI's creation, he secured an agreement with Altman and Brockman to keep the AI company as a nonprofit that would develop technology for the benefit of the public and keep its code open.

"As we said about Elon's initial

legal filing, which was subsequently withdrawn, Elon's prior emails continue to speak for themselves," a spokesperson for OpenAI said in an emailed statement. In March, OpenAI released emails from Musk showing his earlier support for making it a for-profit company. Musk claims in the new suit that he and OpenAI's namesake objective were "betrayed by Altman and his accomplices." "The perfidy and deceit are of Shakespearean proportions," the complaint said.

Maldives and China to start FTA in September

PTI n MALE

Maldives on Tuesday said it has begun efforts to establish a Chinese bank in the country and announced that the implementation of the FTA between the archipelago nation and China is set to commence in September. Maldives' Minister of Economic Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed was speaking here at the inauguration of the 'Maldives-Sichuan Trade and Investment Cooperation Conference' when he highlighted the potential business opportunities in the Maldives. Relevant laws have already been passed for the imple-

mentation of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), under which a 'local currency settlement' between the Maldivian Rufiyaa and the Chinese Yuan would enable Maldivian businesses to import goods from China using local currency instead of USD, news portal Edition.mv said quoting Saeed. "Work has begun to establish a Chinese bank in the Maldives. In addition to it, the free trade agreement between the Maldives and China would offer numerous benefits, with the agreement's implementation set to commence in September," Saeed said. "The most urgent task is to enable businesses from both

countries to conduct transactions using their respective currencies. An agreement between the People's Bank of China and the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) is also underway," he added. The minister also explained how converting the dollar demand into Maldivian Rufiyaa and Chinese Yuan would facilitate the import of vegetables, fruits, construction materials, and technology. The Maldives currently imports goods worth USD 700 million from China each year, including USD 19 million from Sichuan province alone, Edition.mv said. The conference, attended by

over 100 participants from Sichuan Province and the Maldives, aims to enhance business relations and provide Chinese companies with information on investment opportunities in the Maldives. Maldives is also working out a similar Rupee-Rufiyaa arrangement with India. In July, Maldives' Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer undertook an official visit to China from July 20 to 24 at the invitation of Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs and China's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Imran's party marks one year of arrest with rally in KP province

PTI n PESHAWAR

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party held a massive rally in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on the completion of the party founder's one year in jail and pledged to make concerted efforts for his release with a similar rally in capital Islamabad by month end. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) rally was held in Swabi district of the party-ruled province bordering Punjab on Monday and addressed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur

besides party chairman Gohar Ali Khan and Secretary General Omar Ayub. Khan, 71, was arrested on August 5 last year and lodged at Attock jail. However, in September he was shifted to Adiala Jail at Rawalpindi. Khan, who served as prime minister of Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022, faces over 200 cases, with convictions in a few of them. The PTI leaders said the former cricketer-turned-politician cannot be kept in jail any longer as he is the leader of the biggest party of the country. They also announced to hold

the party's next show of strength in the capital Islamabad "by the end of this month or in September" and declared that no authority could stop them from holding the rally. Announcing that the rally would be held in Islamabad's D Chowk, Gandapur said that Khan stood firm on what he believed in. He said that the former prime minister was taking steps to "secure the future of the country and its children." "The founding chairman has said that he will not let the nation bow down in front of

anyone. Freedom is being taken away from us, and we cannot allow that," Gandapur said. He added that Khan believed in achieving freedom in the truest sense of the word. "If we do not achieve this objective, history and the nation will not forgive us. We raise our voices and promise to support Khan till the last drop of our blood," the KP chief minister said. Gandapur assured that if his party returned to power, it would put an end to terrorism. He asked the gathering which government functionaries had created lawlessness in the country.

Seven people killed in Nepal landslide, four rescued

PTI n KATHMANDU

Seven people were killed in a landslide that hit a remote area in western Nepal on Tuesday morning, according to the police. A team of Nepal Police and local representatives were involved in the rescue and rehabilitation operations, carried out soon after the landslide triggered by incessant rain in Badgad Rural Municipality of Baglung district. Seven people were killed when the landslide swept away two houses in the Badgad area on Tuesday, according to the

police. The four people who sustained injuries in the incident, have been admitted to the local hospital for treatment. Necessary relief material has been dispatched to the affected area. In a similar rain-triggered landslide incident on July 12, two tribes were swept away into the Trishuli river at Simalta on the Narayanghat-Mugling road. As many as 62 passengers, including seven Indians, went missing and only three of them swam to safety in the tragic incident involving buses heading to Kathmandu from Gaur.

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
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E-Tender Enquiry No. 535/P-2/EMPW-12689 Dated 20.06.2024
Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Purchase Cell-2) GGSSTP, Rupnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2024_POWER_123689_1 for Assistance in Breakdown/ Preventive Maintenance and Annual overhauling of FSSS & SADC Systems for GGSSTP Slago-II & III Units.
For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 31.07.2024 onwards
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> **RTP-78/24**

76155/12/3231/2023/36404 Dated CHD :- 8/6/2024

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Press (Open) Tender Enq. No. 549/P-3/EMPW-12747 Dated 05.08.2024
Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Purchase Cell-3) GGSSTP, Rupnagar invites Press Tender for Repair of Bush bearing of ID Fan Motor and PA Fan.
For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to PSPCL Website www.pspcl.in from 05-08-24 from 05:00 P.M. onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online PSPCL Website www.pspcl.in **RTP-79/24**

76155/12/3234/2023/36408 Dated CHD :- 8/6/2024

Stock markets pare gains to close lower, Nifty falls below 24,000

PTI n MUMBAI

Stock markets surrendered Searly gains and settled lower in volatile trade on Tuesday with Sensex losing 166 points and Nifty ending below the 24,000 level due to fag-end selling in banking and telecom stocks.

Falling for the third straight day, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled at 78,593.07, down 166.33 points or 0.21 per cent, as 17 of its constituents declined and 13 gained.

The index opened sharply higher and rallied further 1,092.68 points or 1.38 per cent to a high of 79,852.08 on value-buying by investors. However, the barometer faltered later and hit a low of 78,496.57 as banking shares came under selling pressure. Similarly, the NSE Nifty declined 63.05 points or 0.26 per cent to settle below the 24,000 level at 23,992.55. The index surged 327 points or 1.35 per cent to 24,382.60 in intra-day trade but failed to hold onto gains. "The domestic market tried to rebound mirroring the Asian markets. However,



momentum was short-lived and closed below the threshold level of 24,000. Investors are watching the appreciating Yen, weak US economic data, and rising geopolitical tensions," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said. From the 30 Sensex pack, State Bank of India, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Titan, HDFC Bank, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance were the biggest laggards. JSW Steel, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Hindustan Unilever, HCL Technologies and Reliance Industries were among the gainers from the pack.

The RBI Monetary Policy Committee started three-day deliberations on Tuesday. The RBI governor will announce the bi-monthly policy on Thursday. Suman Bannerjee, CIO, Hedonova, said, "Amid persistent inflationary pressures, particularly due to rising food prices, the RBI is expected to maintain the current benchmark rate. This cautious approach is designed to balance economic growth with price stability." Asian markets also rebounded sharply, where Seoul, Tokyo, and Shanghai settled significantly higher. Hong

Kong, however ended lower. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 share index soared as much as 10.7 per cent early Tuesday, a day after it plunged the most in 37 years. European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended with deep cuts on Monday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 10,073.75 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.30 per cent to USD 76.52 a barrel. The BSE benchmark plummeted 2,222.55 points or 2.74 per cent to settle at over a month's low of 78,759.40 on Monday, marking its worst single-day retreat since June 4, 2024. During the day, it tanked 2,686.09 points or 3.31 per cent to 78,295.86. The NSE Nifty slumped 662.10 points or 2.68 per cent to settle at 24,055.60. During the day, it tumbled 824 points or 3.33 per cent to 23,893.70. Nifty also saw its worst single-day fall since June 4, 2024, when markets crashed more than 5 per cent after the general election results.

Rupee recovers from all-time low level, closes 16 paise higher at 83.93/USD

PTI n MUMBAI

The rupee recovered from its all-time low level and settled for the day 16 paise higher at 83.93 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, on suspected intervention by the Reserve Bank.

Forex traders said mixed to weak global equities on rising concerns over recession fears in the US and the geopolitical tensions in the Middle East dented investor sentiments. Moreover, the sentimental impact of unwinding of the Yen carry-trade weighed on the riskier currencies such as the rupee. However, suspected intervention by the Reserve Bank supported the local unit.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.92 and touched an intra-day high of 83.84 and a low of 83.97 against the dollar during the session. It finally settled at 83.93 (provisional) against the American currency, up 16 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee slumped 37 paise to settle at an all-time low of 84.09 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on risk



aversion in the global markets, amid geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and rising risk of recession in the US which may lead to outflows by foreign investors. However, overall weakness in the US dollar and declining crude oil prices may support the rupee at lower levels. "Any further intervention by the RBI may also support the rupee. Traders may take cues from trade balance data from the US. Investors may watch out for RBI's monetary policy decision this week. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.75 to Rs 84.20," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, gained 0.37

per cent to 103.07 points. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.17 per cent lower at USD 76.17 per barrel in futures trade, on fears of spreading Middle East conflict that could hit supplies, outweighing fears of a possible US recession that could hurt demand in the world's biggest oil consumer. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 166.33 points, or 0.21 per cent, to cost at 78,593.07 points, while the Nifty declined by 63.05 points, or 0.26 per cent, to 23,992.55 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Monday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 10,073.75 crore, according to exchange data.

BCCI paid `2,038 crore GST in FY23, FY24



PTI n NEW DELHI

Gross GST revenue collection from BCCI during 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years was Rs 2,038.55 crore, Parliament was informed on Tuesday. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said BCCI, which is the apex body for the promotion of cricket in India, is an autonomous body registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975. "Services by way of admission to sporting events like Indian Premier League attract GST @ 28 per cent. During Financial Years 2022-23 and 2023-24, Gross GST revenue collection from BCCI was Rs 2,038.55 crore," Chaudhary said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

He said the Income Tax department has denied tax exemption to BCCI under Section 11 of the I-T Act, and the matter is now sub judice. Section 11 of the I-T Act deals with charitable institutions. BCCI is claiming exemption under section 11 of the Income Tax Act, 1961. However, during assessment proceedings, the exemption is being disallowed by the Income Tax department.

"The issue of the BCCI's tax exemption is currently sub judice. Further, there is no direct tax proposal pending in this regard, at present," Chaudhary said. BCCI does not receive any grants from any scheme of the Ministry of Sports, he added. In reply to a separate question, Chaudhary said from July 2017 to June 2024, the number of GST evasion cases booked by Central Tax formations in Gujarat was 13,494. The amount of GST evasion was about Rs 52,394 crore, involving the arrest of 214 persons.

Softbank-backed Unicommerce eSolutions IPO fully subscribed within hours of opening for bidding

PTI n NEW DELHI

The initial public offering of SoftBank-backed SaaS platform Unicommerce eSolutions Ltd got fully-subscribed within hours of opening for subscription on Tuesday. The initial share sale received bids for 2,09,25,906 shares, as against 1,40,84,681 shares on offer, translating into 1.49 times subscription, as per NSE data till 13:42 hours.

The portion for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) attracted 6.66 times subscription, while the category for non-institutional investors fetched 1.01 times subscription. Unicommerce eSolutions Ltd on Monday said it has garnered over Rs 124 crore from anchor investors. The issue, with a price band of Rs 102 to Rs 108 a share, is open for public subscription from August 6-8.

The issue is entirely an offer-for-sale (OFS) aggregating up to 2.56 crore equity shares valued at Rs



276.6 crore at the upper end of the price band. Since the IPO is completely an OFS, the entire proceeds will go to the selling shareholders. Under the OFS, SB Investment Holdings (UK) Ltd, an affiliate of Japan's SoftBank, will offload 1.61 crore shares, and promoter AceVector Limited (formerly known as Snapdeal Limited) will sell up to 94.38 lakh shares. Founded in 2012, Unicommerce eSolutions is India's leading e-commerce enablement software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform. The company's suite of SaaS

solutions enables end-to-end management of e-commerce operations for brands, retailers, marketplaces, and logistics service providers. It serves a large and growing base of clients in India, including Lenskart, Fabindia, Zivame, TCNS, Mamaearth, Emami, Sugar, BoAt, Portronics, Pharmeasy, Cello, Urban Company, Mensa, Shiprocket and Xpressbees. IIFL Securities and CLSA India are the book-running lead managers to the issue. Shares of the company will be listed on BSE and the National Stock Exchange.

Bangladesh crisis poses significant concerns for India's textile, apparel industry: CITI

PTI n NEW DELHI

Bangladesh, which is facing its worst political crisis since Independence in 1971, poses "significant concerns" for India's textile and apparel sector, particularly for companies operating factories in the neighbouring country, the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry said on Tuesday.

The domestic textile industry body believes that any supply disruption in Bangladesh will have an immediate impact on the supply chain, potentially affecting production schedules and delivery timelines of Indian firms. "The situation in Bangladesh is indeed concerning, and we are closely monitoring the developments. Bangladesh's growth in the textile sector has been inspiring and has lent strength to the trade flows in the entire subcontinent. "While we are concerned about the impact on the supply chain and the potential delays and disruptions it might cause, we are hopeful that the situation will improve soon,"



Chandrima Chatterjee, Secretary General, Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) said. According to CITI, Indian companies with manufacturing operations in the country are likely to face challenges in maintaining their production flow, leading to delays and potential shortages in the market. This disruption could affect the availability of products and might force companies to seek alternative manufacturing solutions to mitigate the impact. "Amid the uncertainties in Bangladesh, there is already a

noticeable shift towards alternative manufacturing hubs such as a strategic move by companies to diversify their production bases and reduce dependency on a single market," CITI stated. It observed that Indian textile hub Tirupur, known for its robust textile and apparel manufacturing capabilities, may emerge as a key beneficiary of this shift. Bangladesh is facing its worst political crisis since independence in 1971, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigning amid massive anti-government protests.

Bangladesh Army Chief General Waqar-uz-Zaman on Monday announced that an interim government would be taking over the responsibilities. "Several major global brands that rely on Bangladesh for their sourcing needs will also be affected by these disruptions. Brands with significant portions of their supply chain rooted in Bangladesh may experience delays and a decrease in the availability of their products. This, in turn, could lead to a ripple effect across the global retail market, affecting inventory levels and sales," CITI said.

Bangladesh is a crucial market for Indian textiles, serving as both a manufacturing hub and a significant export destination. "The Indian industry is deeply concerned about the current events and hopes for the swift restoration of normalcy. Stability in Bangladesh is vital for maintaining the smooth operation of cross-border trade and production," CITI said.

Sebi issues cautionary statement, passes directions to protect investors from unregistered entities

PTI n NEW DELHI

To safeguard retail investors, Sebi has taken several measures, including cautioning them against trading on stock tips given by unregistered entities, conducting probes and issuing directions against non-compliant ones, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

Under the Sebi's rule, no person can render investment advice unless he is registered with the capital markets regulator.

Sebi (Investment Advisers) norms specify the eligibility conditions for registration, obligations and responsibilities and procedure for action in case of default, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary in a written reply to Rajya Sabha. Responding to a query on steps taken by the government to protect retail investors against the frauds happening the social media in the name of giving advice as stock market experts, Chaudhary said that Sebi has issued several press releases advising investors to deal with only registered investment advisers for availing investment advisory services. Investors can check the registration status of the entity providing investment advisory services on the regulator's website. Additionally, the regulator has cautioned investors against



trading in the securities markets based on the tips/recommendations provided by unregistered entities/persons and entities impersonating Sebi-registered intermediaries, the minister said. "On receipt of any complaints/references against unregistered entities carrying out such activities, and also after suo moto cognizance, Sebi conducts examination of these entities. In case of non-compliance, appropriate sections of the Sebi Act, 1992 and various Sebi Regulations are invoked, and requisite directions are issued to non-compliant entities," he added. Further, the issue of the association of Sebi-regulated intermediaries with such unregistered persons or entities was discussed in the Sebi's Intermediary Advisory Committee. Considering its recommendations, a proposal for carrying out necessary regulatory amendments to restrict the association of all Sebi-regulated intermediaries with any unregistered entity has been approved, Chaudhary said.

RBI starts deliberations on monetary policy amid expectations of status quo on interest rate

PTI n MUMBAI

Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel started its three-day deliberations for the next set of bi-monthly monetary policy amid expectations of no change in benchmark interest rate in view of concerns on inflation and economic growth remaining steady.

The decision of the RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das-headed six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will be announced on Thursday.

The MPC may also refrain from rate cut as economic growth is picking up, notwithstanding the elevated interest rate of 6.5 per cent (repo rate), said experts. Retail inflation based on consumer price index (CPI) increased to a four-month high of 5.08 per cent in June as food items, including vegetables became dearer. The government will release the data for July later this month. "RBI is likely to pause as food price movements currently is imparting a positive bias to RBI 4.5 per cent projection...Likely prospects of an excess rainfall in August and September could also have a debilitating impact on food prices," said a SBI research report.

It also expects the Reserve Bank to continue with its monetary stance of withdrawal of accommodation.



According to a report of Goldman Sachs, the MPC is likely to keep the policy rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent on August 8.

"We expect the RBI MPC to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at the Aug 8 meeting at 6.50 per cent, with a 4:2 vote in favour, retain the monetary policy stance of 'withdrawal of accommodation', sound relatively optimistic on growth, and continue to reiterate the commitment to the 4 per cent headline inflation target," it said. The central bank last hiked the repo rate to 6.5 per cent in February 2023 and since then it has held the rate at same level in its last seven bi-monthly monetary policy reviews. Commenting on the RBI's monetary policy, Radhika Rao, Executive Director and Senior Economist, DBS Bank, said that in light of the firm

expectations over the last week. We maintain our forecast of an RBI rate cut in December, but note the risk of a delay if inflation does not progress in line with the RBI's expectations," Sodhani said. Sanjoo Bhadana, Founder and MD, 4S Developers, too said the MPC is likely to keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent as risks from higher food inflation pose a challenge for the apex bank. "We hope the central bank withdraws its accommodative stance and help provide an impetus to the housing momentum by enabling aspiring homebuyers to enter the market," Bhadana said. H S Bhatia, managing director, Daweebo India, said lower interest rates can boost consumer confidence and spending power, driving demand for durables. "However, the RBI's primary focus on managing inflation might restrict its room for monetary easing. The policy's impact on disposable income will be crucial as it determines consumer spending capacity," he said.

Additionally, any measures to improve credit availability could benefit the sector. A supportive policy stance can propel growth in the consumer durable market, Bhatia added. The MPC is entrusted with the responsibility of deciding the policy repo rate to achieve the inflation target of 4 per cent, keeping in mind the objective of growth.

Electric vehicle sales rose 55.2% to 1.79 lakh units in July, says FADA

PTI n MUMBAI

Electric vehicle sales registered a 55.2 per cent on-year growth at 1,79,038 units in July driven by a massive 96 per cent jump in e-two-wheeler sales, automobile dealers' body FADA said on Tuesday.

The total electric vehicles sales for July 2023 were at 1,16,221 units, according to the monthly sales data from Federation of Automobile Dealers' Association (FADA). The electric two-wheelers sales during the previous month stood at 1,07,016 units, up 95.94 per cent, from 54,616 units sold in July last year, while the electric three-wheeler sales grew 18.18 per cent at 63,667 units, from 58,873 units year earlier, as per FADA.

The commercial vehicle sales during the reporting month was also on an upward trajectory, growing two-fold on a year-on-year basis to 816 units, from 364 commercial vehicles sold in July 2023, it stated. Passenger vehicles, however, declined 2.92 per cent at 7,541 units in July, as against 7,768 units in the same month of last year, as per data. "The rising market share in the 2W and 3W EV segments for July 2024, with YoY growth rates of 95.94 per cent and 18.18 per cent respectively, and a market share of 7.4 per cent and 57.6



per cent, respectively for the month, is a clear indication of the growing acceptance and demand for electric vehicles in India," FADA President Manish Raj Singhania said. The PV segment, while showing a marginal year-on-year decline of 2.92 per cent, maintains a market share of 2.4 per cent, Singhania said, adding that the CV segment has shown remarkable growth with a year-on-year increase of 124.2 per cent and a current (July) market share of 1.02 per cent. The combination of attractive discounts and the anticipation of the discontinuation of the EMPS (Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme), despite its extension, has significantly boosted sales, he said. Announced by the Ministry of Heavy Industries in March, for a four months period-April 1,2024 to July 31,2024- to boost the adoption of EVs across the country with a total outlay of Rs 500 crore, the EMP scheme has now been extended by September 30, while the scheme's outlay has also been increased to Rs 778 crore.

RESILIENT CHANU SETS SIGHTS ON HISTORIC PODIUM FINISH IN PARIS

PTI n PARIS

Away from the spotlight owing to an injury-plagued buildup, Mirabai Chanu will be in focus on Wednesday when she attempts to become India's first weightlifter to win two Olympic medals but a challenging field and lingering fitness concerns stand in the way.

The lifter, who opened India's tally on the first day of the competition at the Tokyo Olympics with a sparkling silver, has kept a low profile since suffering hip tendonitis during the Asian Games last October.

Chanu has endured a rather underwhelming Olympic cycle thanks to injury and workload management. Her best effort since Tokyo came at the 2022 Commonwealth Games where she lifted 201kg (88kg+113kg). She had won the silver in Tokyo by heaving 202kg (87kg+115kg).

Competing in her pet 49kg weight category, Chanu is likely to be in the scramble for a silver or bronze if she matches or better her personal best in both sections. Reigning Olympic champion China's Hou Zhihui is the favourite to defend her title.

While there are still murmurs surrounding her fitness after she returned from a five-month hiatus following the hip injury, both Chanu and chief national coach Vijay Sharma have asserted that the Manipuri has completely recovered.

"We know that Mira has to go well beyond the 200kg mark. 202kg will not cut it this time but somewhere around 205-206kg should do it. But we are prepared for the challenge," coach Sharma told PTI.



However, this is easier said than done, as the 29-year-old has struggled to surpass her personal best of 88kg in the snatch, set at the 2020 National Championships, and 119kg in clean and jerk, achieved at the 2021 Asian Championships, for quite a while.

While Chanu, who turns 30 on Thursday, will have one eye on her competitors' barbells, the Manipuri's main battle will be with herself at the South Paris Arena.

Her performance in the snatch section continues to be her achilles heel and her mediocre clean and jerk performance recently also doesn't inspire confidence.

While a 90kg snatch lift continues to elude Chanu, four of her competitors have breached the coveted mark.

Having said that, Chanu has been known to be a fighter and one of the most tenacious athletes in the country. Be it battling intense menstrual camps to win a medal in Tokyo or attempting a 117kg clean and jerk lift despite injuring herself during the Asian Games, she has shown her resolute side.

Despite the absence of North Korea's Asian Games champion and world record holder Ri Song Gum, the 49kg event is a highly competitive contest. Chanu has set an entry weight of 200kg

alongside two others — USA's three-time Pan American champion and a world bronze medallist Jourdan Delacruz and 2021 world champion Surodchana Khambao of Thailand. Zhihui and two-time European champion Romanian Mihaela Cambei have set entry weights of 210kg and 205kg respectively.

Chanu has been training in Paris for a month. She also got help from American Dr Aaron Horschig, a former weightlifter-turned-physical therapist and strength and conditioning coach, who has been working with Chanu since 2020.

Lauren, Diana bring experience to women's basketball teams

PTI n PARIS

Diana Taurasi wishes people would stop talking about her age. Lauren Jackson just admits it — she's old.

The two 40-plus WNBA greats are in the quarterfinals of the Olympics and have a potential matchup in the offing Friday if they can help their countries advance Wednesday.

While the 42-year-old Taurasi is playing in her sixth straight Olympics, Jackson is back after a 12-year gap from her last one.

"It's crazy. You know, I never, ever anticipated that I'd be back here again," the 43-year-old Aussie said. "I couldn't have imagined it, three years ago. Two years ago, a year ago. Six months ago. Like, I just wasn't going to be doing it. So to be here, it's like it really does feel so different to what it used to feel like."

Jackson retired in 2016 after knee injuries derailed her career. She had hoped to compete in the Olympics that year, but an ACL injury ended that dream. She made a return playing domestically in Australia and then helped the Opals to a magical run to a bronze medal at the 2022 World Cup, which the country hosted.

She scored 30 points in that bronze medal game. The Australians would love to see

another game like that when they play Serbia in the Olympic quarterfinals Wednesday.

Australia and the U.S. Didn't meet two years ago in the Worlds, but they could play Friday. That would be the latest contest between Jackson and Taurasi. The two friends have squared off many times over the years in the Olympics, WNBA and other international contests.

"It's a bit of a time warp. You know, I think being in this environment again, it is crazy. And like I said, I've just taken every day as it comes and it's got me back here," Jackson said. "So long as I'm able to contribute, play defense, get some rebounds, you know, not let my team down in those minutes. I'm happy ... And I feel like I'm doing my job."

Unlike Jackson, Taurasi has been a bit annoyed with the narrative that she's old for an Olympic basketball player. There were people outside USA Basketball that said she should have been passed over for a younger player, like WNBA rookie Caitlin Clark.

"If there's one thing you can't escape in this country, it is ageism. I've gone back and forth with this answer. When you dedicate your whole life, your whole career to something, and you get the question of, 'Why don't you just retire?'" Taurasi said

before the Olympics began. "It's something I've been doing since I was 5. It's something I've dedicated my whole life to. And it's just so easy ... For a question to be brought up in a manner where it's not meant to be disrespectful. But if you're the person being asked, it is a bit disrespectful."

No women's basketball player has ever played in six Olympics and none have been as successful as Taurasi. She feels that there's a gender bias with age more commonly brought up against women.

"I tell people that all the time, especially in women's sports, in women's professions. Only a woman would have 20 years of experience and it'd be an Achilles' heel, instead of something that is treasured and used as a way forward, for sport and for women."

While both Jackson and Taurasi haven't put up huge numbers on the court yet during the Paris Games, their experience has been invaluable to their teammates.

"She's like another coach. She's had so many years of experience and the way she sees the game is really special," U.S. Forward Napheesa Collier said. "She's really smart in the way that she can break things down and sees what's open and how to dissect the game."



Jena on verge of crashing out early from javelin throw even

PTI n PARIS

India's Kishore Jena on Tuesday finished ninth in the men's javelin throw Group A qualification round with an underwhelming throw of 80.73m, which left him on the verge of making an early exit from the Olympics.

Jena will await the result of Group B qualification round where superstar Neeraj Chopra will begin his campaign later in the day.

All those who throw 84m or above, or at least 12 best performers from Group A and B combined will advance to the final to be held on Thursday.

Jena's opening throw was 80.73m, and he fouled his second attempt before coming

up with 80.21m in his last effort.

Julian Weber of Germany topped Group A with a first round throw of 87.76m while former world champion Julius Yego (85.97m) of Kenya and Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Jakub Vadlejch (85.63m) of Czech Republic were second and third respectively.

Toni Keranen (85.27m) of Finland was the fourth athlete to go past the automatic qualification mark of 84m.

Jena had booked an automatic Olympics berth with his 87.54m throw for a silver medal in the Asian Games in October last year.

After that, he crossed the 80m mark in just one out of six competitions before Tuesday.

AP n PARIS

Cuban Greco-Roman wrestler Mijain Lopez has earned a shot at a record fifth Olympic gold medal in wrestling.

Just two weeks shy of his 42nd birthday, Lopez beat Azerbaijan's Sabah Saleh Shariati 4-1 on Monday and advanced to the final in the 130-kilogram category.

Lopez knew there were doubters, but he gladly has proven them wrong. By clinching at least silver, Lopez has tied West Germany's Wilfried Dietrich for the most Olympic wrestling medals with five.

"I know some people were skeptical, but I knew I was ready for this," Lopez said in comments translated from Spanish. "Whenever I compete in the Olympics and world championships, I do it trying to bring joy to my country. We want to listen to our anthem tomorrow."

Lopez, 41, wins semis to earn shot at record 5th gold in wrestling

After Tuesday, he's done. "I'll be retiring, it's over," he said. "We need to make some space for those who are coming (into the sport). Wrestling for me has been the love of my life, for all of my life."

Lopez will face Chile's Yasmani Acosta Fernandez in the final on Tuesday at Champ-de-Mars Arena. Acosta defeated China's Meng Lingzhe in the semifinals. The score was 1-1, but Acosta Fernandez got the win on criteria because he scored last. Acosta Fernandez was born in Cuba but moved after he couldn't get opportunities in the big events because Lopez was in the way.

Lopez was excited about the matchup.



"We share a brotherhood, we have the same blood," Lopez said.

Last Olympics, Lopez became the first male wrestler to win four gold medals when he dominated in Tokyo, blowing through the field unscored upon in four matches.

On the opening day of competition in Paris, he continued his dominance. In his first match, he defeated South Korea's Lee Seung-chan 7-0. In the second round, he surprisingly was scored upon, but still defeated Iran's Amin Mirzazadeh, the top seed and 2023 world champion, 3-1 to advance.

In the semifinal, Lopez led 3-0 at the break. Shariati scored a point for passivity, then nearly scored again before Lopez scored on a reversal to go up 4-1. After time ran out, Lopez held up his right hand with all five fingers outstretched.

"I'm so happy," he said. "It has been a very special day, not only for Latin America, but the whole world."

Mahuchikh and other medal winning Ukrainians put attention on war

AP n PARIS

Yaroslava Mahuchikh, the Ukrainian world-record high jumper, may have just won Olympic gold, but she and other winning athletes from Ukraine are not resting in Paris — they're trying to shine the spotlight on the war tearing apart their country.

"The Olympic Games are about peace," she said. "But Russia didn't stop, and during these Games, there were massive attacks on Ukrainian cities."

These missile strikes forced Mahuchikh to spend the last two and a half years mostly abroad as she focused on her main goal — the Olympic gold, which she won Sunday.

She trained far from her family, including in Portugal, Estonia, Belgium and Germany. She occasionally comes to her

hometown of Dnipro in eastern Ukraine, but every time she left the country, she didn't know when she would return.

"To achieve such high results on the international stage, you need to train abroad," Mahuchikh said. "And it is very sad, and I really want us to be able to train fully at home for the next Olympic cycle."

Despite the hardships, she succeeded, saying that the war gave her motivation and a greater purpose to represent her country. But the success was bittersweet.

When she broke a 37-year-old world record last month, jumping 2.10 meters (6.88 feet), her joy was brief.

"We were happy on the first evening, but the next day ... Unfortunately, we have a very aggressive enemy," she said. "Russia struck Ohmatdyt. And



honestly, there was no joy anymore," referring to the missile attack in Kyiv last month that hit the largest children's hospital in Ukraine.

Sunday was a successful day for Ukraine at the Olympics, with three athletes from the country scoring medals in

athletics. Fellow high jumper Iryna Gerashchenko won bronze, and Mykhaylo Kokhan scored the bronze in the hammer throw.

Russian athletes, competing as neutrals because of the war on Ukraine, also have won medals at the Paris Games. The first

was silver for tennis players Mirra Andreeva and Diana Shnaider in women's doubles Sunday.

Neutral athletes from Belarus, a key Russian ally, also won gold and silver medals in the men's and women's trampoline competitions, respectively, on

Friday, and Belarusian rower Yauheni Zolotarev won a silver Saturday. Mahuchikh and other Ukrainian athletes have spoken out against the presence of Russian competitors at the Paris Games.

The three Ukrainian athletes who have won medals came to the Ukrainian house dubbed Volia Space on Monday. They said that they were short on sleep because while the attention lasts, they are trying to give as many interviews as possible, raising awareness about the war.

"It is very important to win and keep winning," Mahuchikh said. "It is difficult for Ukrainian athletes to focus solely on sports, our thoughts are at home with our families." The 22-year-old athlete said there are still many things that could be conquered.

Biles closes out with her 11th career medal — a silver in floor exercise

AP n PARIS

Simone Biles wrapped up her final day of the Paris Olympic s with more hardware for the greatest gymnast of her generation.

The woman who didn't think she'd even be here a couple years ago will leave Paris — and perhaps her final Olympics — with three golds and a silver, earned Monday when she placed second in the floor exercise.

It marked the first time in her career that Biles did not win the floor exercise at a major competition. She finished second to Rebeca Andrade of Brazil. Third went to American gymnast Jordan Chiles, who was bumped to bronze when the U.S. Coaches asked for a review of her degree of difficulty on the routine.

The review changed her score just enough to push her onto the podium, where the three Black women posed together

four days after Biles, Andrade and Sunisa Lee, who is Hmong-American, stood in the same spot following the all-around. Their collective success is symbolic of a sport that is becoming more diverse and more inclusive at the highest level.

Prior to the floor exercise, Biles and Lee failed to medal on the balance beam. Both gymnasts made mistakes and wondered if Paris organizers' decision not to play music during the events created a distracting eerie silence.

Biles is now an 11-time Olympic medalist and hasn't ruled out trying to compete in Los Angeles in 2028.

A look at some of the highlights of Day 10 of the Paris Olympics: U.S. Has mixed results in beach volleyball Two U.S. Teams fell on the sand at Eiffel Tower Stadium, with Taryn Kloth and Kristen Nuss losing to Canada in the women's quarterfinals a

few hours after Chase Budinger and Miles Evans lost to Norway in the men's.

Only Miles Evans and Andy Benesh advanced on the day, joining Kelly Cheng and Sara Hughes in the elite eight.

Kloth and Nuss are ranked No. 2 in the world, and Nuss said she was "definitely a little heartbroken."

Brandie Wilkerson and Melissa Humana-Paredes beat Nuss and Kloth 21-19, 21-18, leaving the country that has won four of the last five women's gold medals with just one team in the bracket.

Budinger, a former NBA player, and Evans lost in straight sets to Norway, the defending Olympic champions. Already at Paris, five-time Olympian and Rio de Janeiro gold medalist Laura Ludwig of Germany has been eliminated, and the 42-year-old Herrera has said he will retire.

Swimming in the Seine The



Seine River was determined safe enough to swim in and Olympic triathletes plunged into the murky water for the mixed relay event after organizers said bacteria levels in the long-polluted Paris waterway were at acceptable levels.

The plan to hold the swimming portion of the triathlons and the marathon swimming events in the Seine was an ambitious one as swimming in the river has, with some exceptions, been off-limits since 1923 because it has been too toxic.

Water quality tests were reviewed Sunday night and the results indicated the water quality at the triathlon site had improved over the preceding hours and was within the limits mandated by World Triathlon by Monday morning.

In a very close sprint finish, the team from Germany won the gold medal in the team relay. The United States took silver and Britain clinched bronze.

The decision to allow the event to go forward with swimmers in the Seine came after Belgium's Olympic committee announced Sunday that it would withdraw its team from the mixed relay triathlon after one of its competitors who swam in the river last week fell ill. Another three triathletes — of the more than 100 who competed in the men's and women's races last Wednesday — became sick in the following days, though it's unclear whether the water was to blame.

Spain reaches second straight Olympic soccer final Juanlu Sanchez came off the bench to lift Spain into a record-equaling fifth Olympic men's soccer final. Sanchez scored in the 85th minute at Stade de Marseille to seal a 2-1 win over Morocco and set up a final against either France or Egypt. Morocco led 1-0 at halftime after the tournament's leading scorer Soufiane Rahimi converted a penalty in the 37th.

Spain evened the score in the 65th after Fermin Lopez showed quick feet in the box and fired a left-footed shot low in the bottom corner. It was the Barcelona midfielder's fourth goal of the tournament and over-exuberant celebrations earned him a yellow card after kicking the corner flag and breaking it in two.

It was Lopez's assist that set up Sanchez to sweep his winning goal low into the far corner. Spain, which won gold at the

1992 Barcelona Olympics, lost in the final at the Tokyo Games three years ago to Brazil.

British cyclists set world record in women's team sprint The British trio of Katy Marchant, Sophie Capewell and Emma Finucane shattered the world record in the women's team sprint while beating New Zealand in a head-to-head showdown for the gold medal to open the track cycling program.

In the three-lap race, the British trio trailed Rebecca Petech, Shaane Fulton and Ellesse Andrews after the first 250 meters. But they quickly pulled ahead after the second lap, then blitzed the last to finish in 45.196 seconds, earning their nation's first medal inside the Velodrome National de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

Despite its proud sprinting tradition, the British had repeatedly missed the podium since the event's debut in 2008.

INDIA BATTERS IN FOCUS AGAINST LANKA

To avoid 1st series loss to SL in 27 years

AP ■ COLOMBO

The onus will be on Indian batters, particularly the talismanic Virat Kohli, to follow the path laid down by skipper Rohit Sharma and tactfully counter the spin challenge in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday to avoid their first series defeat to Sri Lanka in 27 years. It's certainly not the start Gautam Gambhir, a stickler for victories, would want in his first ODI assignment as the team's head coach. India's previous bilateral ODI series defeat against the Islanders came in 1997. The Arjuna Ranatunga-led Lankans then inflicted a 0-3 hammering on Sachin Tendulkar and his men. Since then, India and Sri Lanka have played 11 bilateral ODI rubbers home and away, with the 'Men in Blue' emerging on the right side of the result in all of them. India will not be able to win the current three-match series after succumbing to the hosts by 32 runs in the second ODI, and conceding a tie in the first game. This position of discomfort is brought upon the team by the batsmen, who seemed to have been plagued by indecisiveness on a RPSC pitch that offered plenty of



turn to the spinners. Curiously, none reflected that brittleness more than star batter Kohli. He has made 38 runs in two matches, but more than the volume of runs, the manner of his dismissals evoked

greater concern. Kohli looked subdued in the middle, particularly after the fiery starts given by Rohit. Kohli just needed to build on it. But the master batter in him remained dormant as he

pottered around the leg-spin of Wanindu Hasaranga in the first match and of six-wicket man Jeffrey Vandersay in the next, before eventually getting consumed by them. He looked a far cry from the

dominant batsman who once cracked four hundreds at this very same venue. Perhaps, Kohli should direct his mind to happier times than allowing it to be fettered by the demons of the present.

A flowing Kohli is imperative for India's healthy run in the middle overs, be it while chasing or setting a target. But then his turmoil is a true reflection of the struggle that has gripped the Indian

management might look at the position of Dube, despite a 24-ball 25 in the first match. Under the existing conditions, Riyan Parag's spin, either off-spin or leg-spin, might come handier than the honest medium pace of Dube, and the former is an equally good hard-hitter. From their part, the Indian bowlers too should improve their effort in the business end as they failed to apply finishing touches to Lanka after reducing them to 142 for six and 136 for six.

TEAMS (FROM)
INDIA: Rohit Sharma (C), Shubman Gill (VC), Virat Kohli, KL Rahul (WK), Rishabh Pant (WK), Shreyas Iyer, Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Washington Sundar, Arshdeep Singh, Riyan Parag, Axar Patel, Khaleel Ahmed, Harshit Rana.
SRI LANKA: Charith Asalanka (c), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Kamindu Mendis, Janith Liyanage, Nishan Madushka, Dumith Wellalage, Chamika Karunaratne, Akila Dananjaya, Mohamed Shiraz, Maheesh Theekshana, Asitha Fernando, Eshan Malinga, Jeffrey Vandersay.

Allman wins second straight Olympic title in discus throw

AP ■ SAINT-DENIS (FRANCE)

Sam Kendrick appreciates the Olympics again. Valarie Allman never stopped. It's just the healing power that medals have to mend and reinforce feelings. In a short span Monday night, Allman won her second straight Olympic title in the discus throw, while Kendrick captured silver in a pole vault competition that featured Sweden's Armand "Mondo" Duplantis breaking his own world record. The medals from Allman and Kendrick, 31, gave the U.S. 11 so far in the meet, including three golds. Three years ago in Tokyo, Kendrick didn't get the chance to compete. He was placed in isolation because of a positive COVID-19 test and didn't feel supported by Olympic officials. It led to some pretty hard feelings - feelings that had the Mississippi native wondering if he even wanted to compete in Paris. His love-loathe relationship is back on path to love after he earned a silver medal. It pairs with the bronze he captured at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. "I was definitely bitter," Kendrick said. "I wasn't going to come to Paris until it was proven to me that it was going to be great and shining into the future. "It's tough, being turned away from. All of a sudden you're sick, and every doctor throws you to the wolves, and all of a sudden you're stuck in isolation when Team USA is supposed to love you."



It took some soul-searching for him to arrive in Paris for another Olympics. "Rather than run away from it like I really wanted to, you've got to come back," Kendrick said. "You've got to face that lion." Kendrick went up against a pole-vaulting beast in Duplantis, the 24-year-old from Louisiana who competes for his mother's native Sweden. Kendrick watched the journey up close of Duplantis blossoming into the world's best. It culminated Monday with Duplantis clearing 6.25 meters (20 feet, 6 inches) to defend his gold medal. "His story is written in the stars, for sure," said Kendrick, who cleared 5.95 meters (19-6 1/4) to hold off Emmanouil Karalis of Greece. "But I think mine will have a tapestry hanging on my wall one day worthy of reading." Same with Allman's tale. After winning in Tokyo, the 29-year-old who competed for Stanford realized she needed to dial back on the

discus training. It had become her sole focus in and out of the global pandemic. "I think I might be the only person in the world that probably had too much discus in their life," Allman joked. "When you want to be as good as you can at something, you slowly start making sacrifices, and you don't realize that it's happening." To scale back, she bought a house and hung out with friends. "Such basic things," Allman said. "When I went out to perform, I said that no matter how it played out, I'm so grateful that I get to do what I love. No matter if I get a medal, whatever color it is, if I don't get a medal, this is going to be a night that I'm proud of the fight that I showed. I think there was something freeing in that." Early on, Allman showed some jitters by fouling on her first attempt. "I felt the weight of like, Holy crap, this is the Olympics," Allman explained. "It took me a minute to find my groove." She went 68.74 meters (225-6) on her second throw and 69.50 (228-0) on her fourth. "It was enough to beat Feng Bin of China and Sandra Elkasevic of Croatia. "Pressure is becoming my friend," Allman said. "I think it's one of those things I've learned can bring out the best in you if you embrace it. "To walk into the ring having one attempt left and knowing I'd already won, it was hard fighting back tears.

American entries cut in half in Paris Olympic beach volleyball tournament

AP ■ PARIS

On the Champ de Mars, Paris was sent to the guillotine during the Reign of Terror, the American beach volleyball squad got cut in half. Two U.S. Teams fell on the sand at Eiffel Tower Stadium on Monday, with Taryn Kloth and Kristen Nuss losing to Canada in the women's round of 16 a few hours after Chase Budinger and Miles Evans lost to Norway in the men's. Only Miles Partain and Andy Benesh advanced on the day, joining Kelly Cheng and Sara Hughes in the elite eight. "Definitely a little heartbroken," said Nuss, who along with her former LSU teammate formed the No. 2 team in the world rankings. "We came in wanting to bring home gold back to the United States. That's been our goal for the past four years. So to go out in the round of 16 is obviously an earlier exit than we would have liked." Brandie Wilkerson and Melissa Humana-Paredes beat Nuss and Kloth 21-19, 21-18, leaving the country that has won four of the last five women's gold medals with just one team in the bracket. Wilkerson isn't just a giant killer in Olympic beach volleyball. She's an American giant killer. She also eliminated the U.S. Pair of Cheng and Sarah Sponcil in the first round of the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games. "That's what she's good at doing," Humana-Paredes said with a laugh. "But honestly," Wilkerson said, "they're an amazing team. And it's a whole new tournament. It's a whole new Games, whole new atmosphere. We're all

different skill levels from what I was even, four years ago. "We knew we were going to play this team at some point. They're one of the best teams in the world. We thought it would be later in the tournament, because we both deserve to have a shot at those medals. But when we're put in this situation, we were ready to respond." In other men's matches on Monday, Qatar beat Chile in straight sets, setting up a quarterfinal matchup with Partain and Benesh. Spain beat Poland, keeping six-time Olympian Pablo Herrera alive in his quest for his first medal since he won silver in Athens, 20 years ago. On the women's side, Latvia beat Germany, Spain beat the Netherlands and Brazil beat Japan. Budinger, a former NBA player, and Evans lost in straight sets to Norway, the defending Olympic champions, on Monday afternoon. To start off the night session, first-time Olympians Benesh and Partain knocked out four-time Olympian Paolo Nicolai and his partner, Samuele Cottafava, 21-19, 21-18. "I am very in awe of how long they've been playing at such a high level. It's definitely difficult to keep pushing your body after you're at such a level of excellence. So I'm really inspired by those guys," said Partain, who at 22 is the youngest person ever to represent the United States in Olympic beach volleyball. "It's cool that beach volleyball is a lifelong sport that you can play at a really high level till how old they are - and even past," he said. "So I'm really glad to be a part of the sport that can do that encourages that and it's part of its, kind of aura."

Spain beat Morocco to reach its second straight Olympics final in men's soccer

AP ■ MARSEILLE (FRANCE)

Juanlu Sanchez came off the bench to fire Spain to a record-equaling fifth Olympic men's soccer final. Sanchez struck in the 85th minute at Stade de Marseille to seal a 2-1 win over Morocco and set up a final against France at the Paris Games. "The moment passed so fast that I didn't even realize it, but then when you realized that you scored the goal that puts your team in the final, well, I'm really happy," Sanchez said. Morocco led 1-0 at halftime after the tournament's leading scorer, Soufiane Rahimi, converted a penalty in the 37th. Spain evened the score in the 65th when Fermin Lopez



showed quick feet in the box and hit a left-footed shot low in the bottom corner. The Barcelona midfielder then provided the assist that set up Sanchez to sweep his winning goal into the far corner. "I think that my goal changed a bit the match, and I think it was a great match for the whole team and we deserved it," Lopez said. "And here we are." Spain, which won gold at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, lost to Brazil in the final at the Tokyo Games three years ago. It will get the chance to make up for that and add to what has already been a successful year after the men's senior team won the European Championship last month. "It's basically a World Cup for



the under 23s" Spain coach Santi Denia said about playing for the gold medal on Friday at Parc des Princes in Paris. For Morocco, it was another

painful loss at a semifinal of a major tournament. It will face Egypt for the bronze medal on Thursday in Nantes. Egypt lost to France 3-1 hours after Morocco's defeat. Morocco became the first Arab and African nation to advance to the semifinals of the World Cup in 2022 - eventually taking fourth place. "We were really motivated today to play in the final. What has happened has happened," Morocco coach Tarik Sektioui said. "And now we must be focused on the next game. There is a medal to be won. That's not nothing for us. It's very important for us that we return to Morocco from this tournament with a medal." Playing in front of a fervent crowd, largely comprised of

Morocco supporters, it threatened another upset at these Games after already beating Argentina in the group stage. Rahimi had scored five goals going into the game and took his total to six when he coolly fired down the middle to beat Spain goalkeeper Arnaud Tenas from the spot. Spain came close to leveling in first-half stoppage time when Alex Baena's 25-yard effort was deflected onto the outside of the post. The equalizer came through Lopez' clinical finish - his fourth goal of the tournament - and his over-exuberant celebrations earned him a yellow card after kicking the corner flag and breaking it in two.

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(ଓଡିଶା ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ବିଭାଗ ଅଧିକାର ଏକ ଉପାଦାନ)
ODISHA BRIDGE & CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking under Works Department)

CAD-769
No. 7954
File: SMT- 2028
Date: 06.08.2024

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

1.	Name of Work	ADDITIONAL WORKS OF EKAMRA KSHETRA UNDER EKAMRA CONSERVATION PLAN (PHASE-II) IN BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA.
2.	Bid Identification No. of the Tender Document	03/Tender/OBCC/2024-25
3.	Date of availability in e-procurement portal	from 14.08.2024 .
4.	Last date of receipt of pre-bid queries	upto 5:00 P.M of 19.08.2024
5.	Date & Time for Pre-bid Meeting	On 20.08.2024 at 12:00 Noon (Through Video Conferencing) https://meet.google.com/kmq-pqjh-rkt
6.	Date of issue of pre-bid clarifications	28.08.2024
7.	Last Date & time of receipt of online bid	12.09.2024 till 5.00 P.M.
8.	Date of Opening of online technical bid	13.09.2024 at 11:30 A.M
9.	Period of completion	12 Months
10.	Class of Contractor	Super Class

11. Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>.
12. OBCC has the right to accept or reject the Notice/ RFP/Proposal without assigning any reasons thereof.
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Fax No. 06852-251095

NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
Bid Identification No. 04 of 2024-25 Dt. 05.08.2024

O-176
Sealed quotations are invited from registered manufacturers/ Authorised dealers/ Reputed firms for the following items. The quotations should reach in this office on or before 22.08.2024 up to 5.00 PM & the same will be opened on 23.08.2024 at 11.00 AM in presence of the bidders or their authorised agents.

Sl no.	Description of items	Qty.	Unit	Rate per mtr.	
				In ward.	In
1.	ISI Marked steel tubes casing piped used in water wells of type electric resistance welder (ERW) conforming to IS-4270/2001 with subsequent amendments if any having length of 3.05 mtr cutting tolerance (-0.00 mtr + 0.05 mtr) and both sides beveled. The angle of bevel shall be 15° in one end and 45° in other end. The fin must be removed throughout inside the pipe. Nominal bore of 200mm dia with wall thickness 6.70 mm for sinking of production wells.	30	MT		
	8"(200 mm dia) ERW MS Pipe.				

1. EMD:- The quotationers are required to deposit Earnest money equal to 2% of the quoted value (Offered value) the quotation in the shape of postal saving pass Book/NSC/KVP/Bank Guarantee duly pledged in favour of the Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Koraput No. Cheque or cash payment will be accepted.
2. GST/PAN/Dealership/Registration of Manufacturer Certificate:- The quotationer shall furnish true copies of the PAN Card/Sales Tax/ GST Registration certificate along with his quotation failing which the quotations will not be accepted. The Original certificates are to be produced before the Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Koraput at the time of opening of tender paper. The sub dealers must produce the authorization certificate from the dealer and their dealership certificate also.
3. Rate:-The rate should be quoted for destination at Sectional store at Bandhugam /Semiliguda /Potangi including all charges but excluding excise duty, GST entry tax and transportation charges which will be paid extra as applicable as per current PWD schedule of rate.
4. Period of Delivery:- The materials should be delivered to the consignee store within 20 days from the date of issue of supply order.
5. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all the quotations without assigning any reason thereof.
6. The authority may increase or decrease the quantity as per the requirement on willingness of the agency.
7. The eligible quotationer must furnish the manufacture test certificate at the time of supply of materials failing which the materials cannot be accepted.
8. All materials must be guaranteed against any kind of manufacturing defect for a penou of one year from the date of receipt of materials within which all defective materials must be replaced by the agency at his own cost. The Predelivery and post delivery inspection of materials will be done by the supplier at his own cost.
9. 5% (Five) percent will be deducted from the bill towards security deposit which will be released after one year from the date of supply or six months from the date of commissioning whichever is earlier.
10. The bill is to be furnished by the supplier separately for each consignee in duplicate as indicated in supply order.
Superintending Engineer, RWS&S, Division, Koraput
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