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HEARTBREAK FOR INDIA AT PARIS OLYMPICS

Reformed Waqf Bill on Lok Sabha table

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, proposing sweeping changes to the Act of 1995, is likely to be tabled in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. The legislation circulated to members aims to bring about far-reaching changes in the present Act, including ensuring the representation of Muslim women and non-Muslims in such bodies. The proposed legislation "omits Section 40 relating to the powers of governing Waqf Board to decide if a property is waqf property". The legislation is likely to be tabled in Lok Sabha on Thursday.

The Bill proposes to rename the Act as the "Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, 1995" and seeks to ensure the representation of Muslim women and non-Muslims in Waqf boards, as well as the inclusion of "Aghakhani waqf" and "Bohra waqf" in addition to the existing Sunni and Shia Waqf boards. The Bill aims to empower women by securing their rights in welfare from Waqf and includes a clause related to the "welfare, maintenance of widow, divorced woman and orphan in such manner, as may be prescribed by the Central Government."

It also curtails the powers to declare a property as Waqf, stating that no person shall create a Waqf unless they are the lawful owner of the property and competent to transfer or dedicate such property. The Bill addresses the contentious provision related to the creation of "waqf-alal-aulad," clarifying that it shall not result in the denial of inheritance rights of heirs, including women heirs, of the Waqif. The term Waqf will be clearly defined by a person



practising Islam for at least five years and having ownership of such property. According to its statement of objects and reasons, "Based on the recommendations of the High-Level Committee under the chairmanship of Justice (Retired) Rajinder Sachar and the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Waqf and Central Waqf Council and after having detailed consultation with other stakeholders, comprehensive amendments were made in the Act in the year 2013. Despite the amendments, it has been observed that the Act still requires further improvement to effectively address issues related to the powers of the State Waqf Boards, registration and survey of waqf properties, removal of encroachments, including the definition of the "waqf" itself, according to a statement of objects and reasons of the Bill.

PM Modi crowns Vinesh Phogat Champion of Champions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached out to Vinesh Phogat and called her a "champion among champions." He also asked the wrestler to come back stronger. Modi urged the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to lodge a strong protest with the organisers of the Paris Olympics and spoke with IOA chairperson PT Usha and asked her to explore options to help Phogat's case, sources said. The issue also echoed in the Lok Sabha.

Usha met teary-eyed Phogat at hospital. "Phogat, you are a champion among champions! You are India's pride and an inspiration for each and every Indian. Today's setback hurts.



weighed in a few grams over 50kg this morning," the IOA stated.

"No further comments will be made by the contingent at this time. The Indian team requests you to respect Vinesh's privacy. It would like to focus on the competitions on hand," it added.

International rules stipulate that any grappler found overweight at the time of weigh-in ends up at the bottom of the final standings. She had taken down defending champion Yui Susaki of Japan en route the

finals on Tuesday in a remarkable performance and was to face American Sarah Ann Hildebrandt in the summit bout this evening. Cuban wrestler Yusneylis Guzman Lopez, who lost to Vinesh in the semifinals, replaced the disqualified Indian in the final.

"Vinesh failed second day weigh-in. According to the article 11 of the International Wrestling Rules, Vinesh will be replaced by the wrestler who lost against her in the Semifinal. Therefore Yusneylis Guzman Lopez will compete in the Final," the Paris Games organising committee said in a statement.

PTI ■ PARIS

In a shocking reversal of fortunes, Vinesh Phogat was disqualified on Wednesday from the Olympics after being found overweight ahead of her women's 50kg final here, leaving her medal-less within hours of coming close to an unparalleled gold.

Vinesh had scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman wrestler to reach the gold medal bout in her category on Tuesday night. Before this morning, she was assured of at least a silver medal but will now be coming back empty-handed due to the disqualification.

The shattered 29-year-old had to be taken to the polyclinic inside the Games village due to severe dehydration earlier in the day. "She was found overweight by 100gm this morning. The rules do not allow this and she has been disqualified," said an Indian coach.

The Indian Olympic Association requested privacy for the wrestler, who was competing in her third Olympics.

"It is with regret that the Indian contingent shares news of the disqualification of Phogat from the women's Wrestling 50kg class. Despite the best efforts by the team through the night, she

The Indian Olympic Association requested privacy for the wrestler, who was competing in her third Olympics.



Chopper crashes in Nepal, 5 killed

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Four Chinese tourists and a Nepali pilot were killed on Wednesday when a helicopter crashed in the mountains northwest region of Kathmandu. The crash took place in the border area between Kathmandu and Nuwakot districts.

A Nuwakot district police official said all five persons, including the pilot, on board the helicopter belonging to private airline, Air Dynasty, were killed in the crash.

The 9N-AJD helicopter crashed at the Shivapuri National Park area in Nuwakot district, some 30 km North-West of Kathmandu at around 2 pm local time, he said.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), the helicopter was heading towards Rasuwa's Syafubesi area from Kathmandu with four Chinese passengers.

The chopper took off from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport at 1.54 pm and lost contact with the tower just three minutes after take off, the CAAN said in a Press release. The chopper was piloted by captain Arun Malla. There were three male and one female Chinese nationals in the chopper.

The dead bodies were taken to Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital at Maharajgunj in Kathmandu for postmortem, the airline's officials said. The crash comes just two weeks after a Saurya Airlines plane crashed at the Tribhuvan International Airport on July 24.

Bangladesh unrest K'pada Marine police alerted to prevent infiltration

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

The Kendrapada Superintendent of Police on Wednesday alerted the three Marine police stations in the district in view of the volatile situation in Bangladesh. It is apprehended that people from Bangladesh would infiltrate through the sea route into Odisha to take shelter in the fringes of the Bhitarkanika National Park and also at their relatives' houses in the coastal areas of the district.

Kendrapada SP Siddharth Kataria asked the Marine police to remain vigilant to curb the possible exodus of Bangladeshi immigrants.

Odisha has a largest coastline stretching over 480 km along the Bay of Bengal. But the security measures taken to plug any illegal influx from outside are lax. The

Odisha coast is not protected well despite the setting up of Marine police stations after the 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai.

There were many instances in the past when fishing vessels from Myanmar, Thailand and frequently from Bangladesh had been seized by the forest authorities or by the Indian Coast Guard.

Notably, many areas in Kendrapada and Jagatsinghpur district coasts have turned into mini-Bangladesh with the population of the migrants surging every year.

There are several vulnerable points along the coast, but the State Government, except setting up Marine police stations, has failed to fill the sanctioned strength in most of these police stations and also failed to provide sophisticated weapons and modern patrolling vessels to prevent infiltration, alleged intellectual of the district.

Eyeless in Dhaka, Bangladesh gropes for normalcy

PTI ■ DHAKA

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus-led interim government in Bangladesh will take oath on Thursday, Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman said.

Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, General Waker said the interim government is likely to be sworn in at 8:00pm on Thursday.

He also said the advisory council may have 15 members. Yunus, the 84-year-old economist, was on Tuesday appointed as the head of interim Government by President Mohammed Shahabuddin, a day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled the country following deadly protests against her government over a controversial quota system in jobs.

Meanwhile, students carried out traffic management as volunteers for the second consecutive day on Wednesday in Bangladesh, as a top police official called on every member of the police force to resume their duties gradually and maintain law and order.

Chaos reigned supreme in Bangladesh after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina Government on Monday, with police absent from their duty to keep law and order or manage traffic, local media reports said.

Additional Inspector General of Police (AIG) AKM Shahidur Rahman, who was appointed as the focal person of the Bangladesh Police on Tuesday to handle the



current crisis, called on every member of the police force to resume their duties gradually and maintain public safety and law and order.

The students, including members of Bangladesh Scouts, were seen controlling the traffic movement at several places, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

"The police are friends of the people and work for the public. We cannot imagine a society without the police. Therefore, I request our police members once again to ignore rumours and return to their duties in a phased manner, ensuring that security arrangements are properly in place," said Rahman, who has now been appointed as the Director General of RAB in a fresh reshuffle on Wednesday.

There were reports of attacks on police stations and facilities across the country on Tuesday, resulting in numerous police casualties, which have led to this unprecedented situation, the newspaper said.

The authorities reconstituted the top positions of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) on Wednesday. "AKM Shahidur Rahman has been appointed as Director General of RAB while Md Mainul Hasan will replace Habibur Rahman as the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police," news portal Prothom Alo said.

India brings back non-essential staff from Dhaka mission, P4

Away from home, they pray for peace

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Initially happy at the fall of the "dictatorial" regime of Sheikh Hasina, most Bangladeshis who had come to Kolkata for medical or other reasons are now praying for peace to return. This because they are now a stranded lot as all the trains and bus services between the two countries have been stopped for indefinite period.

"How can we go back home because both Maitryee and Bandhan Express have been suspended and the buses too are not plying... if we have to go we have to make break journey first by crossing the border on foot and then by taking auto-

rickshaws, local buses... and even that is not certain," says Saheb Kamal (name changed) a Bangladesh tourist who had come to India to visit relatives. "I am waiting for peace to return so that I can go back home," he said, adding even flights have been cancelled between the two countries.

"We are stranded... we are sure of our families' safety back in Bangladesh... but we are really concerned about our minority friends who have often been so good to us often arranging for our stay in Kolkata... at present I have postponed my journey and will wait for the things to cool down," said Rafikul Rehman.

Majhi govt scraps 'draconian' 5T, Mo Sarkar initiatives

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP government in Odisha on Wednesday decided to erase the previous Naveen Patnaik-led BJD administration's "draconian" and "illegal administrative" tools like 5T and Mo Sarkar.

The acronym 5T stands for Teamwork, Transparency, Technology, Time, and Transformation. In 2019, Naveen Patnaik had created this governance model and appointed his most trusted bureaucrat V Karthikeyan Pandian as its Sec-

retary. This model helped Pandian put all other Secretaries under his control.

Also in 2019, Naveen had created the 'Mo Sarkar' system to provide "service with dignity to people who are coming to government offices for different purposes". It was then decided that the phone numbers of people who are coming to government offices would be collected randomly and they would be called back to collect feedbacks on the behaviour and professionalism of government officers. The employees would be ranked as good or bad on the

basis of the feedbacks received.

The BJP and the Congress, which were then in the opposition in the State Assembly, had questioned the legality of the two initiatives. They also alleged that the initiatives were deliberately created to undermine the authority of the ministers and make the senior bureaucrats subservient to Pandian. As per the notification issued by the General Administration and Public Grievances Department, there is no longer a need for such mechanism for the evaluation of the Annual Performance Appraisal Report

(PAR) and Annual Confidence Character Rolls (CCR) of government employees in Groups A, B and C.

The previous BJD government ordered for the implementation of the 5T Charter and Mo Sarkar initiatives in the Annual Performance Appraisal Report (PAR). Subsequently, weightage was given to the performance of government employees in the implementation of 5T components earlier. As per the latest notification issued by the government, the format, which was in place prior to 2019-20, will now be implemented.

Low pressure to form in 24 hours

Flashfloods in Mahanadi system likely

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A cyclonic circulation lies over Gangetic West Bengal, adjoining areas of Jharkhand and north Odisha. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday said a low-pressure area is likely to form over the aforesaid area during next 24 hours under its influence.

An Orange warning for

heavy rainfall in the next 24 hours in seven districts of Odisha has been issued by the IMD.

Heavy to very heavy rainfall (7 to 20 cm) and thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Koraput and Nabarangpur, said the Regional Office of the IMD here.

Heavy rainfall (7 to 11 cm) and thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur at

one or two places in the districts of Malkangiri, Baleswar, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Bhadrak, Kendrapada, Jajpur, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Angul, Boudh, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Balangir and Subarnapur, said the IMD issuing a Yellow warning.

On Friday, heavy rainfall (7 to 11 cm) is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Subarnapur and Balangir.

Meanwhile, the Water Resources Department said that

following torrential rains in the upper catchment area in Chhattisgarh and heavy rainfall in Khairamal, Banki, Sonapur and Nayagarh, the water level of Mahanadi would rise further.

Considering the situation, the department has also issued a warning for flashflood in the Mahanadi system.

As per reports, the water level of the Hirakud Dam now stands at 610 feet while over 2 lakh cusecs of water is entering the reservoir against the outflow of 2.5 lakh cusecs.

Athagarh BDO under Vigilance scanner

Huge assets in BBSR, other places found

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Vigilance on Wednesday unearthed huge properties in connection with alleged disproportionate assets (DA) accumulated by Athagarh Block Development Officer (BDO) Pradeep Kumar Sahu.

According to a Vigilance release, simultaneous house searches were conducted by teams led by six DSPs, six Inspectors, 10 ASIs and other supporting staffs at eight places in Bhubaneswar, Khordha, Nayagarh, and Athagarh.

Assets detected in the names of Sahu and his family members during the raids are as follows:



- 1) Single-storey building at Bhalibadi near old police station, Khordha.
- 2) Another building at Rajsunakhala Sahi, Nayagarh district.
- 3) A flat at Shree Enclave, Gautam Nagar, Bhubaneswar.
- 4) Three plots in Khordha and Rajsunakhala
- 5) Rs 6 lakh in cash
- 6) 300-gram gold jewellery and 500-gram silver ornaments
- 7) A four-wheeler and four two-wheelers

Measurement and valuation/assessment of the buildings/flat/plots were being carried out by the Vigilance Technical Wing. Bank, postal, insurance and other deposits were also under verification.

SSEPD Dept inks pact to promote sign language

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) has entered into a landmark agreement with Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech and Hearing Disabilities (AYJNISHD-D) to promote sign language across Odisha.

The initiatives aim to create a cadre of 100 proficient sign language interpreters and provide training to 4,000 deaf students, 800 teachers across 55 special schools for the hearing impaired in Odisha.

The agreement ceremony took place here in the presence of Sri Minister, S&ME, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare, School and Mass Education and Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Nityananda Gond. On the occasion, the Minister said, "There is a need for sign language interpreters in the State. The scarcity has posed substantial obstacles for individuals with hearing impairments, hindering their access to essential services, educational opportunities and equitable participation in societal activities. By addressing this gap, the projects aim to enhance communication, inclusivity and the overall well-being of the hearing-impaired community in the State.

SSEPD Principal Secretary Bishnupada Sethi also laid emphasis on holistic development of deaf students. He said, "The agreement facilitates placed opportunities for trained interpreters in various sectors. The project will identify potential employers and organize networking events to connect trained interpreters with job opportunities."

In city Cops seize fraudster Satyajit's laptop, passport

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Police on Wednesday said they recovered a 'black diary', a laptop, pen drives, a hard disk and other documents following a search in the house of Satyajit Samal, who has been arrested on the charges of multiple marriages and duping victims.

Police had brought Samal on a two-day remand and his house was searched. City DCP Prateek Singh said that during the investigation it was found that the accused was staying at Chandrasekharpur.

"A laptop, two pen drives, nine debit cards including international debit cards, stamp papers (marriage agreements), SIM cards and documents of vehicles have been seized," said Singh.

Singh further said a passport of a woman was also seized and



she was being treated as a victim. Another victim from Brahmapur has also informed to have given the accused over Rs 1 lakh.

"Today, the two-day remand is ending and Capital police will again seek more remand of the accused for further investigation," Singh added.

Sources said Samal travelled to different countries, including Dubai and London. It was suspected that he was in touch with foreign nationals as well. A detailed investigation of whether the accused has cheated any women from other countries would also be investigated.

BJD opposes BPIA privatisation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) spokesperson Diba Shankar Mishra has strongly criticised the Central Government's move to privatise the Bhubaneswar airport.

Notably, answering a question of BJD member Niranjan Bishi in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol informed that it has been decided to privatise India's 25 airports, including the Biju Patnaik In-

ternational Airport (BPIA) in Bhubaneswar by 2025.

Mishra said, "The Central Government's decision to privatise the Bhubaneswar airport is totally unacceptable. This airport is named after the proverbial man Biju Patnaik and it is a symbol of Odisha's Swavimam and Asmita."

Mishra also stated that the Aviation Training Centre running at this airport is also threatened to be closed. The BJD is totally against the privatisation decision and the Central Government should reconsider it.

US envoy meets CM on strengthening ties with Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Consul General of United States of America at Hyderabad Jennifer Larson on Wednesday called on Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi at the Lok Seva Bhawan to discuss ways to strengthen partnership between the US and Odisha.

Welcoming the Consul General, the Chief Minister emphasized on strengthening partnership between the US and Odisha in various sectors such as industries, education, renewable energy, tourism and culture. Citing Odisha's advantage such as trained manpower, availability of land, water and energy, he sought



for cooperation of the US Consul in facilitating larger participation of US industries in the upcoming Utkarsh Utkal Conclave (formerly Make-in-Odisha) which will be held in 6-7 months from now. The CM also expressed his keenness for collaboration with the US universities in

American companies to explore the vast potential of Odisha and explore its vibrant culture, rich heritage and breathtaking natural beauty.

Larson congratulated the Chief Minister for assuming office. She said that the industrial climate in Odisha is very encouraging and the US is keen to partner with Odisha for commercial engagement. She also appreciated the vibrant culture of Odisha and expressed that the US is interested to support Odisha in all possible sectors as per the priorities of the State.

Development Commissioner Anu Garg and ACS to CM Nikunja Bihari Dhal were present among others.

Construction workers decry new Labour Codes

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Nirmana Shramika Union Samanway Committee (Construction Workers' Coordination Committee) on Saturday expressed deep concern over the enforcement of four "anti-working class" Labour Codes and three undemocratic Criminal Laws to curb working class right to strike.

The committee expressed strong reservation over the Labour Department of the State making the Odisha Building & Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board (OBCWWB) nonfunctional in providing the legitimate

dues of construction workers in regard to death benefits, accident benefits, construction workers' children's education scholarship, maternity benefit, housing benefit and other benefits.

Convenor of Nirmana Shramika Union Samanway Committee Odisha Bijaya Jena, Odisha Forest Wood Agriculture & Building Construction Workers Union president Sura Jena, working president Prabin Dash, Biplab Keshari Mohapatra, Odisha Nirman Mazdoor Sabha secretary Satya Narayan Tripathy and OSWA general secretary Manoranjan Moharana spoke.

Patient-centric emergency care system in Puri planned

AIIMS BBS, ICMR, State Govt to implement project

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has launched a National Health Research Priority Project aimed at developing advanced emergency care systems.

The project, which includes the district of Puri in Odisha, seeks to establish a High-Quality Patient-Centric Integrated Model for Emergency Care Systems across five districts in the country including Puri, said AIIMS Bhubaneswar Ex-



ecutive Director Dr Ashutosh Biswas.

The initiative would enhance emergency care by improving logistics, boosting

healthcare provider competencies, integrating information technology and artificial intelligence tools and mapping facilities. Key components of the

project include improving ambulance services, increasing community demand, and training first-level responders. The project would address seven critical emergencies: heart attack, brain stroke, trauma, snake bite, poisoning, respiratory emergencies and neonatal and maternal emergencies, added Dr Biswas.

The AIIMS Bhubaneswar, in collaboration with the ICMR and the State Government, is spearheading the project in Odisha.

A research team led by Dr

Arvind Kumar Singh, Additional Professor at AIIMS Bhubaneswar, has been formed to develop and implement this model in collaboration with the State Government.

Dr Biswas unveiled the Vision Document of INDIA EMS and Training Manuals, advocating for the integration of geo-tagging systems, IT, HR, and HMIS. He emphasised improvements in transport, ALS facility ambulances, immediate response and community education on basic life support.

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HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

CM Majhi must pick truly skilled officials to achieve goals

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi is most certainly a perfectly humble State boss. He may not have mastered the tricky statecraft as yet, but his intentions are evidently noble. Doubtlessly, having been coaxed by populist political colleagues, he has begun holding a grievance 'durbar' which is the job of skilled field bureaucrats and panchayat-level officials. Except KV Singh Deo, the rest of his executive colleagues are all first-timers. But severally-experienced lawmakers Suresh Pujari, a very sane statesman, understands much of the basics of turning a State into a happy place to live in. He is very serious about the rule of law being in force. Obviously, he has picked much of the required skills down the road during his legislative stints. The day he took charge of the Revenue Department, he lost no time in having identified highly-connected encroachers on government land, most of whom are crooks with money or links with the power that be. He has already



BISWARAJ PATNAIK

established himself as a 'demolition man' that has earned him people's respect and trust. Pujari, a perfect material for Chief Minister, is quite happy to work under Mohan Majhi for the greater cause of having big State goals achieved.

The BJD administration, once unmatched on countless fronts of public delivery, had turned arrogantly sinful during the second half of the last tenure. The people recognised the hurtful fact only six

months before the polls. Part of the favoured bureaucracy had gone brutally berserk and boss Naveen let that happen pretty much merrily. Senior leaders, believing that BJD was a permanent power house, would not put their foot down to scream 'foul' with the sole objective of remaining in power, no matter how, as they believed the 'halo' of winning horse Naveen would never vanish. The very few ones that sensed 'Dooms Day' was fast approaching, kept quiet out of fear as by now most lawmakers had been enslaved by clever, favoured bureaucrats. This painful truth is fast unfolding now to stun the masses. For the misery that has befallen the BJD, Naveen is to blame squarely for he too had kept imagining his name spelt incredible magic among the masses who would not let him fall as long as he kept kicking. A few of the insanely self-serving BJD strategists, most of them top grade robbing rascals, made the BJD bite more dust than expected only by fleecing a younger one posing as

leader with rosiest pictures of sure-shot victory. As was destined, the demigod Naveen got dismissed shamefully by a daily wage worker with criminal antecedents. But strangely, the BJD has not begun reviewing the poll outcome introspectively until now to figure out who caused the colossal disaster. Unfortunately further, most of the unacceptable characters in the fold are still being given critical charge of reforming the party to regain public support as until 2029. They are actually destroying the last few weapons lying intact after the war. A few of the magnificent guys that joined the failed party just before the polls are being ignored as non-entities. Oldies that are hated like cruel savages are still holding press meets to cause bigger damage. Nearly all the previously empanelled spokespersons are hated by the masses except perhaps Prasanna Acharya, Amar Satpathy and that ill-fated Shrimoyee Mishra. The new members including Ganeshwar Behera, a double-

edged nuclear sabre who can crush any opponent in public with his pure logic and learning, are seen nowhere around. Bhrgu Baxipatra, though not as sharp as Ganeshwar, is a highly appreciated individual for his gentlemanly approach and truthfulness. Even, the otherwise-mellowed down, previously-ferocious Lekhashri Samantasinghar is a safe weapon. Unless the BJD uses these assets to the full in restoring lost glory, resurrection is ruled out.

CM Majhi is a simple, honest and hardworking CM. He has to only pick the truly eligible bureaucrats to aide him flawlessly. Nikunja Dhal is an adorably skilled person whose commendably high-integrity, impartial performance as the Chief Electoral Officer is part of golden history. CM Majhi has picked him as principal aide absolutely rightly. He has also been wisely tipped by good souls to put Arindam Dakua as private secretary. This young 2011-batch IAS officer is known for honesty, hard work and people-friendly behaviour across the places

he has treaded. The people are so relieved that a no-nonsense top bureaucrat, Arabinda Kumar Padhee has been placed as the Jagannath Temple Chief Administrator, the post he has successfully held earlier. Arabinda, an agro genius heading the Agriculture Department of the State, is also bringing up the dream Millet Mission project in an enviable manner.

CM Majhi has to pick the real best DGP. This columnist, as part of a global corruption watch agency, has done several surveys on public servants, both bureaucrats and ministers, based on corruption and inefficiency among servants as perceived by the people. A quick survey has indicated that YB Khurania is the most highly-rated among the three contenders for quite track records. CM Majhi has only to get this perception cross-confirmed by his unflinching machinery.

CM Majhi, projecting himself as a people's leader, has to settle down fast with a team of select officers who can help ministers deliver the

goods most efficiently. He has a great advantage today as the people find him very adorable because he does not behave like a boss or a gang leader. All the same, unless he turns assertive and takes full command over the State matters soon, the slightly suspecting masses of Odisha may look down upon him as a puppet at the hands of the Central leaders. So, Majhi has to begin with probing into the much-hyped giant-scale corruption cases allegedly slapped of the last regime and bring the crooks to book without wasting more time, rather than basking in the false glory of allocating huge funds for wealthy temples of the State, which is challengeable in courts of law. Instead of wasting precious time and energy on such inane matters, his team would do great by engaging in needs assessment of the distressed and downtrodden communities of the otherwise poor State that has immeasurable divinely-granted natural resources beyond plenty.

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In Subarnapur BJD MLA's PSO, cousin brother shot dead

Service pistol recovered; 2 detained

PNS ■ SONEPUR
The Binika police on Wednesday detained two persons from Chulimala village in connection with the death of two cousin brothers in the Chulimalagaon area in Subarnapur district on Tuesday.

A police service pistol was also recovered from the spot.

While the deceased cousins have been identified as Manoj Jhankar and Seshadev

Jhankar of Chulimalagaon, the identities of the two detained persons were yet to be revealed.

Manoj was a police Constable and posted as a Personal Security Officer (PSO).

The bodies with bullet wounds in their heads were found lying in a pool of blood in an open field.

On being informed, a team from the Binika police station reached the spot, recovered the bodies and seized the pistol from the crime scene. Subarnapur SP also reached the spot for an investigation into the inci-

'Upgrade K'pada Municipality to corporation'

Sangh raises demand before CM

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

The Utkalmani Yubak Sangh demanded the upgradation of the Kendrapada Municipality to a municipal corporation.

The Kendrapada town has a rich heritage as it is the first municipality in Odisha established in 1869. It has long been a centre of cultural and economic activity. In light of its importance and the significant growth it has experienced over the years, Kendrapada Municipality meets all the criteria for being upgraded to a municipal corporation, the Sangh said while raising the demand

before CM Mohan Charan Majhi.

The town has witnessed substantial population growth, necessitating the expansion of municipal services and infrastructure to accommodate the needs of its residents effectively. Kendrapada town serves as a hub for economic activities, contributing significantly to the State's economy through trade, agriculture, and small-scale industries. Over the years, significant investments have been made to improve the infrastructure, including roads, healthcare, and education facilities, aligning with the standards expected of a municipal corporation. The municipality has consistently demonstrated strong admin-

istrative capabilities, effectively managing resources and services to cater to the community's needs, they said further.

The extension of the municipal boundaries will incorporate the rapidly developing suburban areas, ensuring comprehensive urban planning and management. It will facilitate better governance, efficient service delivery, and equitable development across the region, stated the members of the Sangha. Besides, the elevation will attract further investment, improve living standards, and enhance the quality of life for its residents. It will also set a precedent for recognizing other historically significant towns in the State, they said.

IN BRIEF

ONE ODISHA RAJYA SABHA SEAT TO GO TO POLLS ON SEPT 3

Bhubaneswar: Elections to fill 12 vacancies in Rajya Sabha, including one from Odisha, would be held on September 3, the Election Commission of India (ECI) informed on Wednesday. A total of 10 vacancies came up in the House of Elders after the sitting MPs were elected to the Lower House while two members from Odisha and Telangana resigned from their seats last month. In a sudden turn of events, Mamata Mahanta, a BJD member from Odisha, resigned from the Upper House on July 31 two years before completion of her tenure.

ODISHA'S RR SWAIN APPOINTED DGP OF J&K

Bhubaneswar: The Ministry of Home Affairs has appointed Rashmi Ranjan Swain, an Odisha-born senior IPS officer, as Director General of Police (DGP) of Jammu and Kashmir. The senior IPS officer of 1991 batch has been serving as in-charge DGP of the union territory since November 2023.



MOHANTY NOMINATED AS UCO BANK DIRECTOR

Bhubaneswar: The Govt of India has nominated Dr Sarada Prasanna Mohanty as a Director of the UCO Bank. Dr Mohanty currently holds the position of Regional Director of Reserve Bank India in Odisha.



BU SCHOOL OF EDU BLDG UNVEILED

Brahmapur: The new extension building of the School of Education, Berhampur University was inaugurated at Bhanja Bihar on Monday. Vice-Chancellor Prof Geetanjali Dash, Registrar Sachidananda Nayak, PG Council Chairman Prof Sukanta Kumar Tripathy, Director BPPC Prof Sidhartha Sankar Panda, coordinator Dr Bibhuti Bhusan Parida, Principal Dr Sanjit Kumar Sahu, all faculty members of the School of Education, other PG departments, and students were present.



WOMAN KILLED BY HUSBY'S SECOND WIFE IN NUAPADA

Nuapada: A woman was killed at Jamgaon village under the Buden police station in Nuapada district when her husband's second wife hit her with a steel bucket following a heated altercation. The deceased was identified as Baruni and the accused Madhur. Although Baruni received treatment and medication at home after the attack, her condition worsened and she died during treatment. According to Khariar SDPO Arup Abhisekh, the culprits were apprehended with the help of a dog squad used in the investigation.

VDU NSS Bureau holds induction program

PNS ■ JEYPORE
Manoranjan Pradhan. A total of 30 principals, 53 Program Officers and 43 coordinators with four District Program Officers of Koraput (Susant Kumar Behera), Rayagada (SB Mohanty), Nabarangapur (BB Pradhan) and Malkangiri (Saroj Kumar Mahapatra) districts joined. Three technical sessions were delivered by resource persons namely Kishor Chandra Behera, Sushant Behera, Himanshu Baxi and Manasi Mahapatra.

In the inaugural session the Vice Chancellor, Register, CPGC and Program Coordinator addressed the gathering. The session was hosted by Susmita Nayak and Mousumi Priyanka Tripathi and the programme concluded by distributing certificates to all participants.

The programme comprised five sessions including three technical sessions on basics of NSS, documentation of activities and managing ZBSA PFMS accounts.

The session was inaugurated by OSD cum Vice-Chancellor Prof Devi Prasad Misra accompanied by Registrar Prof Ranjan Pradhan, CPGC, Prof Prashant Kumar Patra and Program Coordinator Dr

In Baleswar Close shave for youth in firing incident

Enters MLA's residence to save life

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A youth had a narrow escape after unidentified miscreants opened fire at him at Balia under the Sahadevkhunta police station in Baleswar district on Wednesday.

The youth, identified as Manoranjan Bindhani, sustained minor injury in his face after a bullet fired by the miscreants narrowly missed his face.

As per reports, four bike-borne miscreants intercepted Manoranjan when he was re-

turning from a gymnasium and fired at him.

Manoranjan started running from the spot and entered the house of Remuna MLA Gobinda Chandra Das.

"I was near my house and hearing grievances of people when the youth came rushing and informed me about the incident. I then called police and informed them. I also spoke to the SP and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits involved. It appears that the incident could be over some group rivalry," said the MLA.

Police started an investigation into the incident to identify and trace the culprits.

Class-XII student ends life in Jajpur

Parents allege torture by school authorities

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A Class-XII student of the Renaissance Higher Secondary School in Jajpur district committed suicide after allegedly being harassed by the school authorities.

According to sources, the 17-year-old boy consumed poison at home on Monday night. He was initially admitted to the Madhuban Community Health Centre and later shifted to the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack, where he succumbed on Tuesday.

His father has lodged a complaint at the Dharmasala po-

lice station that his son took the extreme step after being mentally tortured by the school authorities.

"We got a call on August 4 from the school. When we reached there, my son looked stressed. The authorities asked us to take him home. After reaching home, my son said that he was ready for the punishment if the college authorities can provide CCTV evidence of the allegations against him. He committed suicide last night," his father said.

The college authorities have refuted the allegations. "We told the parents that the boy was bunking classes and also kept a mobile phone which was against the rules," said the school secretary.

Plus Two student ends life in Jajpur

Parents allege mental torture by college authorities

PNS ■ JAJPUR

A Plus Two student of a private college allegedly committed suicide by consuming poison at Jarka in Jajpur district on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Ashis Kumar Panda, a resident of Odiso village under Rasulpur block in the district.

As per sources, the college authorities had asked Ashis'

parents to take him home as he was allegedly creating disturbances in the college. Subsequently, his parents took him home.

However, after reaching home, Ashis consumed poison. He was rushed to the Madhuban Community Health Centre and later shifted to the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack as his condition deteriorated. However, he was declared brought dead by the doctors.

Ashis' family members alleged that he committed sui-

cide due to the mental torture by the college authorities.

"Ashis was given punishment by the college authorities. However, he was saying he had not created any disturbances and wanted to check CCTV footage. When we brought him home, he committed suicide," said Banka Bihari Panda, the deceased's father.

"Our son committed suicide due to the mental pressure exerted by the college authorities on him. A conspiracy was hatched against him to prove

that he was creating indiscipline in the college," alleged his mother Sujata.

However, the college authorities refuted the allegations against them.

"We called the guardians of the Ashis and asked them to take him home as he was talking with somebody over the phone and there was a chance that other students would get disturbed by him. No discussion was made about stealing of money," said Bibhuti Bhusan Rout, secretary of the college.

Wayanad landslide

Sniffer dog 'Storm' hope for kin of victims trapped under debris

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even though six days have passed since the catastrophic landslide hit Kerala's Wayanad hard, search operations by the Indian Army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Kerala Fire and Rescue Services, police and other agencies are still on for the missing ones.

A sniffer dog from Odisha is also there extending its expertise to the rescue teams in tracing out victims trapped under debris and rubble.

On July 4, a sniffer dog of



the Odisha Police K9 squad deployed with Brahmapur police named "Storm" along with a team comprising one inspector, two sub-inspectors and a trainer of the K9 dog left for

Kerala from Brahmapur.

Storm, a German Shepherd, has been handpicked for the rescue operations because it is said to be the only dog of Odisha Police with expertise in

search and rescue operations.

With the arrival of Storm, the hope of friends and relatives of missing persons has rekindled as they have been waiting to hear something about their near and dear ones.

The canine expert from Odisha has already started performing the task assigned to it. Along with the other rescue teams, it is searching for the missing persons.

On July 30, Wayanad woke up to one of the deadliest natural calamities as landslides triggered by heavy rainfall left a trail of death and destruction.

In Kendrapada

Headmaster axed for outraging minor girl's modesty

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

District Education Officer (DEO) of Kendrapada, Pradeep Kumar Nag, on Tuesday placed an Assistant teacher-cum-in charge headmaster of a Rajnagar -based high school under suspension for his involvement in outrag-

ing the modesty of a 6th class girl student.

The accused was identified as Biswambar Parida. He was suspended after the BEO of Rajnagar submitted an inquiry report to DEO Nag.

According to sources, some days back Parida had sexually abused a class VI girl

student. As a result, the victim minor girl had brought the matter to the notice of her family. The matter was intimated later to the school managing committee.

When the matter came to the notice of the BEO of Rajnagar, he suo moto directed a probe into the mat-

ter by directing the ABEOs to conduct an inquiry and to submit report.

The ABEO-cum-BRCC of Rajnagar, Bhaktilata Barik, and the ABEO of Rajnagar, Chitta Ranjan Sahu conducted the inquiry and found the accused to be guilty.

Global opportunities growing for Indian handloom sector

August 7 is the National Handloom Day. This year the 10th National Handloom Day was observed. PM Narendra Modi had inaugurated the Day on August 7, 2015, recognising the importance and contribution of the sector to Indian economy, culture, heritage, self-reliance and to the freedom struggle. The day brings a sense of pride among Indians, with the Swadeshi Movement initiated on August 7, 1905. In the past 10 years the sector has made tremendous progress in terms of creating further awareness about handloom across all the generations of consumers and instilled a sense of pride in wearing handloom.



BINAYA BHUSAN JENA

and age groups to show their solidarity with the emotions of the Prime Minister. The impact has been visible in the streets from Delhi to Bhubaneswar, whereby people are celebrating this handloom week by wearing and buying handloom products of their choice.

In the last 10 years the handloom sector has made remarkable progress in many critical areas, that will further strengthen the growth of the sector. While going by the last two handloom census 2009-10 and 2019-20, we see a declining trend of handloom weavers population, that raised a lot of questions. Now

when we see many young generation of weavers who once left their traditional occupation in search of some other opportunities are coming back to weaving again, it is a proof in itself that the situation has changed in their favour. In many of our field observations, it is also noticed that the weavers population has been gradually increasing.

Similarly, it has also been observed that many young educated weavers have now become handloom entrepreneurs, setting new examples for educated young members of the weaving community to look for an entrepreneurial journey. Thanks to the many initiatives taken by the Government of India, vis-à-vis the State Governments in reaching out to the weavers through their different schemes and programmes, the weavers' confidence is growing and they are finding themselves in a respectable profession.

By discontinuing all the useless boards made around handloom, powerloom, wool, jute, and silk,

the Government sent a clear message that no unnecessary interference in the sector would be allowed any more.

Looking at the increasing global market opportunities with rising environmental, ethical and cultural concerns, the Indian handloom sector has a long way to go from now. This is laying a foundation of a new beginning for the handloom sector of India. The size of the weaving community, their craftsmanship, efficiency and diversity in terms of products and adaptability for creating new products with using all eco-friendly fibre is a unique strength of the handloom sector of this country and there is absolutely no competition for them in the global market. The uniqueness of the handloom styles from Sambalpuri, Ponchampalli, Patola, Banarasi, Khandua, Pasapalli, Jamdani, Baluchari, Maheshwari, Pulhukari, Madhubani to name a few, coming from different States of India has an unparalleled strength that

can storm the global market. The opportunity in the global market due to rising appetite for sustainable and ethical fashion brings this unique opportunity for handloom. The slow fashion movement and rising cultural context in preserving and promoting the cultural traditions are strengthening the cause for handloom. The widespread access and ease of using e-commerce platform is playing a central role in reaching out to global markets. As the opportunities for handloom-based clothing and textiles are on the rise, we must look for more product diversification to meet the tastes and preferences of the global consumers. Now its time to move beyond the traditional handloom exports of fabrics, bed linen curtains, cushions, table and kitchen linen, carpets, etc from the country and the focus should shift to apparel and fashion. There is tremendous possibility of setting of export-led handloom clusters specializing on diversified apparel, accessories, home-furnishing-based

products in the lines of the major handloom export centres like Karur, Panipat, Varanasi and Kannur.

There are many calculations done by numerous agencies about the size of the global market and the growth rate of the handloom sector. A majority of these agencies have estimated that the global handloom market is around \$8 billion and projected to reach around \$18 billion by 2030. But what is probably more hidden is invisible market has been boiling with rising eco-ethical consciousness, giving an indication for products that can minimize social and ecological footprint on the planet. While evaluating the available offerings for the new hunger for sustainable fashion in the global market, handloom could be the right choice, provided that we are able to position it right.

Looking at the conversations on different digital and social media platforms about fashion, it is visible that there are influencers, followers, new entrants and aggres-

sive connoisseurs of eco-friendly fashion who often refer handloom as a major choice for them. In the past few years there is a sharp rise in the search volume of key words like eco-friendly fashion, sustainable fashion, handloom fashion, and ethical fashion. The interest of many international and Indian design houses and brands from Burberry to Louis Vuitton, Alberta Ferretti, DKNY, RyokoHaraguchi, Sabyasachi, Abrahama and Thakore among others in incorporating Indian handloom in their collections has propelled the demand for handloom in the luxury segment. The global market will offer immense opportunities for the handloom sector, provided we position it right in the international market and create an integrated supply chain in reaching out to global consumers.

(The author is a professor and Chairperson of Fashion Management Studies (FMS) programme at National Institute of Fashion Technology, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India)

WAVE OF SYMPATHY FOR VINESH PHOGAT

President, VP, MPs back wrestler

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar expressed strong support and admiration for Vinesh Phogat who was disqualified at Paris Olympics. President Murmu lauded Phogat's achievements and resilience saying her "extraordinary feats at the Paris Olympics have thrilled every Indian and done the country proud." She said "While we all share her disappointment at the disqualification, she remains a champion in the hearts of 1.4 billion people. Vinesh embodies the truly indefatigable spirit of Indian women, and her epic fortitude and resilience are already inspiring future world champions from India. I wish her many laurels in the future," in a social media post. Vice President Dhankhar echoed similar sentiments

while pointing to Phogat's indomitable spirit and contribution to Indian sports. "Vinesh Phogat's remarkable performance at the Paris Olympics has made India proud. We all share her pain and disappointment at the setback she suffered. Her undaunted spirit remains a testament to courage, conviction, and perseverance. She will remain a champion in the hearts of people of this country. I wish her continued success and many more accolades in life," Dhankhar said. Members of Parliament, cutting across party lines also backed wrestler Vinesh Phogat and praised her hard work and dedication to the sport. Lok Sabha members demanded accountability and a review of the decision. In a shocking turn of events, Phogat was disqualified from the Paris Olympics for being found overweight ahead of her women's 50 kg final.



consuming. So, what was the reason for this girl's weight increased? Who didn't pay attention? This has to be answered," she said. "We were hoping since morning that this girl would bring home the Olympic gold medal, who has struggled on the streets, and today, this has happened to her. Why did it happen? How did it happen?" the Congress leader asked. Congress MP Deepender Hooda called for a review of the decision that led to Phogat's disqualification. "When the entire nation was sitting for Vinesh's final bout, hoping for her to win the gold medal, the whole country was stunned. Everyone feels the pain in their hearts, but Vinesh was, is, and will remain a champion for the entire nation. She worked very hard to reach the final," he said. "While all the other players were practicing, she was sitting in a protest for justice, and then worked hard to reach here. In the eyes of

the nation and the world, she is a true champion," the MP said. Hooda said yesterday, her weight was correct in all three bouts, so she should be considered for the silver medal in the final. While Congress MP Pramod Tiwari said, "I salute the struggle she has fought", Congress MP Jothimani questioned the circumstances surrounding the disqualification. "It is heartbreaking to hear the news. Just for a 100-gram difference, something is not adding up. Someone who defeated her opponent thrice in a day, how can this happen," she questioned. BJP MP Dinesh Sharma expressed unwavering support for Phogat and said, "It was very sorrowful." "She was a champion, is a champion, and will remain a champion for the people of India. It was unfortunate. There will be new efforts and new records will be made," he said.

Support pours in

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

From fans to athletes and public figures to business tycoons India is reeling from the shocking disqualification of Vinesh Phogat, who was found 100 grams overweight ahead of her 50kg wrestling final at the Paris Olympics. This unexpected setback, just before what was expected to be a historic gold medal match, has been described as the "biggest heartbreak" of the games, with widespread anger and disappointment expressed across social media and among celebrities. Cricketer Sunil Gavaskar and wrestler Sakshi Malik, among others, have called the situation "unfair" and "devastating," while AAP MP Sanjay Singh has demanded a boycott of the



Olympics, labeling the incident as a grave injustice to India. Anand Mahindra, Chairman of the Mahindra & Mahindra group, expressed shock as he wrote: "NO! NO! NO! Please make this a bad dream that I will wake up from and find it isn't true..." Bollywood stars like Farhan Akhtar and Taapsee Pannu have also expressed their solidarity, praising Phogat's achievements despite the disheartening end to her Olympic journey.

India brings back non-essential staffers from Dhaka mission

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Non-essential staffers at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka and their family members returned to India on Wednesday on a voluntary basis through commercial flights, official sources said. However, all Indian diplomats at the mission are operating from the Bangladesh Capital, they said adding the Indian High Commission remains functional. The non-essential staffers returned home as various parts of Bangladesh continued to report clashes. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned from the post on Monday and landed at the Hindon air base near Delhi following unprecedented anti-Government protests. It is learnt that non-essential staffers at other Indian missions in Bangladesh are also likely to return to India. In addition to the High Commission in Dhaka, India has Assistant High Commissions in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet. Sources said around 20-30 senior staff are left at the High Commission in Dhaka. Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin dissolved Parliament on



is still evolving... We are in close and continuous touch with Indians in Bangladesh through our diplomatic community," Jaishankar said in Parliament. Addressing MPs in Parliament during an all-party meeting, Jaishankar said the situation in Bangladesh was not that alarming to require the evacuation of the 10,000 Indians in the violence-hit country. Of particular concern for India has been the attack on houses and temples of the minorities in Bangladesh. With an interim Government still to be formed, widespread vandalism and looting of homes have been reported. The interim Government will be headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. The neighbouring country plunged into chaos after a controversial quota system for Government jobs saw massive street protests and violence, leaving over 400 dead and hundreds more injured. On Monday, Sheikh Hasina quit as Prime Minister and fled to India as protesters stormed her residence and vandalised it. After her departure, the Awami League's main office was set on fire and several leaders were targeted by the protesters.

Establish Sri Nankana Sahib Corridor, clean public utilities: MPs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Raghav Chadha (AAP) on Wednesday demanded establishment of a corridor to Sri Nankana Sahib in Pakistan's Punjab province to facilitate the visit of Sikh devotees to the sacred birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev. Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Chadha urged the Government to take the diplomatic route and make the dream of crores of Punjabis and followers of Guru Nanak Dev come true. In this regard, he made three suggestions. He suggested that the Governments of the two countries work together in establishing Sri Nankana Sahib corridor, on the lines of Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor. Also, there should not be any mandatory requirement of passport, visa, and cumbersome forms for the devotees. Chadha also said that no fee should be charged from the devotees. The third suggestion related to a safe road passage starting from Amritsar (Attari-Wagah Border) till Sri Nankana Sahib



in Pakistan. In her Zero Hour mention, Priyanka Chaturvedi (Shiv Sena UBT) expressed concern over gender disparity in access to public utilities. "It is a matter of serious concern that with nearly a decade of Swachh Bharat Mission, the disparity in women's access to clean public utilities and conveniences is very prominent. So we have 48 per cent of the country's population, yet clean public toilets have still not been adequate and hygienic enough for us to be able to feel comfortable," she said. Referring to women representatives visiting various constituencies during elections and public works, she said they have faced challenges to find access to clean toilets.

Constitution's Preamble not dropped from NCERT books: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday said the Preamble to the Constitution is very well there in NCERT textbooks of Class VI as he refuted charges made in this regard by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge. Earlier, Opposition Congress party raised in the Rajya Sabha the issue of dropping Preamble from certain NCERT textbooks, saying this was an attempt to impose communal ideology on the country a claim which Union Minister JP Nadda countered saying the Government was committed to protecting Constitution. During Zero Hour, Leader of the Opposition and Congress President Kharge said Preamble, which is the soul and foundation of Indian Constitution, used to be published in NCERT textbooks. Soon after Zero Hour, Pradhan said Kharge has made certain remarks regarding NCERT books of the education department. "I want to humbly put the facts in the House," he said. The Minister informed the House that till now textbooks for classes up to 7th have been published.



"Leader of the Opposition was saying that earlier there used to be Preamble (in the textbooks). In the new textbooks of Class VI, there is Preamble. Not only Preamble, there is Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights, and National Anthem (in the books). These also represent core values of the Constitution and they are in the books. What he said was not a fact," Pradhan said. In Zero Hour, Kharge said, every citizen especially the future generation needs to be educated about foundational principles and values of Indian democracy and Constitution as well as the sacrifices made by freedom fighters such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, BR Ambedkar, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He then went on to make a Statement on shifting of statues of Gandhi and

Ambedkar in the Parliament complex -- which was objected to from the treasury benches, and Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said Kharge was deviating from the subject. "RSS and BJP are trying to impose their communal ideology on people by tampering with curriculum. And the step taken by NCERT is not right," he said amid protests from the ruling side. At this point, Dhankhar ordered that nothing will go on record and he would "look into what has to be deleted... Last four minutes to be deleted." "You are digressing from the issue," he told Kharge. Kharge demanded that the Government give a clarification on the issue, present facts before the House and withdraw the move to drop Preamble from NCERT textbooks."Undoubtedly all of us are committed to the Constitution and any perception to the contrary will hurt all of us," Dhankhar said. Leader of the House and BJP President JP Nadda said though he has not seen either NCERT textbook or the change but can with all authority State that there is no question of any needling of the Constitution.

Appropriation Bill 2024 introduced in RS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday introduced the Appropriation (No 2) Bill 2024 in the Rajya Sabha which authorises certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund of India for services in 2024-25. Sitharaman also introduced the Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation (No.3) Bill, 2024 in the Upper House. The Lok Sabha passed the two legislations last week. Initiating the discussion on the bills, Digvijaya Singh (Congress) stated that the focus of the Government should be on reducing the disparity between rich and poor, tackling price rise and generating employment.

Attacking the Government, he said for the last decade the Government has just worked for the benefit of big corporations. He stated that household savings have come down in the country signalling that poverty is on the rise. He said while price increase is there, earnings remain at the same level as was the case 10 years ago."The number of billionaires has risen the most during the Modi Government. Poor have become poorer, the rich have become richer," Singh stated. He also advocated levying a 2 per cent wealth tax on the top 300 rich families in the country. Singh also asked the Finance Minister to make all cancer treatment drugs and machines



involved in the treatment free from customs duty. He also sought doing away with the 18 per cent GST on health insurance. Derek O'Brien (TMC) also asked the Finance Minister to roll back 18 per cent GST on health insurance and life insurance. "This was a provision introduced in 2017. Our humble appeal to the FM through you. No one saw this maybe from 2017 to 2024. In the last two weeks it has been brought up in Parliament. The Chief Minister of West Bengal has written a letter. Yesterday there were 350 MPs from 20 parties, we all are together in this," he stated. A senior cabinet Minister has

also written a letter to the Finance Minister in this regard, O'Brien said. O'Brien commenced his speech by lauding wrestler Vinesh Phogat. "Medal or no medal, we salute you. You are our hero Vinesh Phogat. Thank you for what you have done for India," the TMC leader stated in the Upper House. V Vijaysai Reddy (YSRCP) asked the Government to make pension tax free. He also pointed out that the interest on small saving schemes like PPF remain low thereby encouraging people to invest in risky stock markets. Bhubaneswar Kalita (BJP) cited various developmental works taken up by the union Government, especially in the North East region.

INS Tabar conducts maritime partnership exercise with German Navy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Indian Navy's frontline frigate, INS Tabar during her return leg from St Petersburg, Russia conducted Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) with German Navy off Kiel Canal on Monday, navy said here on Wednesday. Giving details, officials said INS Tabar had earlier visited Hamburg, Germany from July 17 - 20. These engagements are aimed at strengthening the maritime relations between both the nations. The conduct of MPX between Indian Navy and German Navy off Kiel Canal signifies Indian Navy's outreach and sustenance efforts, also marking a significant milestone in the maritime cooperation between the two countries.



The MPX with the Sea Lynx of 3rd Squadron Naval Air Wing 5(MFG5) of the German Navy involved a series of advanced maritime operations such as Ship Controlled Approaches, Winching exercises and VERTREP serials. Units from both the navies demonstrated high levels of professionalism and commitment to enhance collaborative efforts.

India and Germany share a relationship built on a foundation of shared values, democratic principles and a commitment to global peace and security. The Indian Navy remains committed to fostering partnerships with navies across the world. The MPX with the German navy reinforces the strong bilateral naval ties and our ability to work together in maritime security operations.

Surge in dogbite cases makes India's goal of eliminating rabies by 2030 difficult

ARCHANA JYOTI | NEW DELHI

India's goal of eliminating rabies by 2030 appears increasingly difficult to achieve amid surge in dog bite cases, which rose from 1.7 million in 2021 to over 3 million in 2023. According to the Government data, the number of reported dog bites escalated from 1,701,133 in 2021 to 2,180,185 in 2022, and further to 3,043,339 in 2023. This troubling increase follows a period of significant decline in reported cases from 2019 to 2021. The issue has gained

prominence in Parliament too, with Ghaziabad MP Atul Garg recently highlighting alarming figures: 30.5 lakh dog bites and 286 deaths nationwide. "If this figure is correct, then in Ghaziabad alone, 35,000 people have been bitten by dogs in a year. Small kids are becoming victims of this...", said Garg urging the Government to form a panel to address the imbalance between animal welfare laws and human safety, emphasising the growing terror among children and families. Garg said that if a pet dog bit

someone, a person could be held responsible but no dog lover came forward to save the person being attacked if it was a stray dog. "... Children cannot play, an atmosphere of terror has been created within the city. So it is my request that a committee be formed and the matter be taken up," he said, adding that there is an imbalance in the laws between love for animals and human freedom, the MP noted. Dr Khyatee Arora, a physiotherapist from Ghaziabad who has been actively raising awareness



about basic life support in such situations, emphasised that it is crucial to educate people on how to handle such

mishaps. "If bitten by a dog, clean the wound with soap and water, apply antiseptic, and seek immediate medical

attention for potential rabies treatment. Check the dog's vaccination status and report the bite to authorities if the dog is stray or its status is unknown. If unvaccinated, get 5 doses on Days 0, 3, 7, 14, and 28," said Dr Arora, ex-senior research officer with AIIMS Delhi. So much the menace has spread across the States, that in a first-of-its-kind compilation of startling figures, Chhattisgarh State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) recently took cognisance of the issue as it noted that a total of 1,19,928

dog bite incidents registered across the State in 2023. It has asked the State to collate information on the number of dog bite cases registered in each district of Chhattisgarh, the vaccinations carried out and if the deaths were reported. The Centre on its part has asked the State health authorities to provide quality data on the number of animal bites from all primary health centres, community health centres, district-level hospitals and tertiary care facilities with specific details on bites by pet dogs and stray

dogs. Separate records have to be maintained for new and follow-up patients in the animal bite exposure register. The Centre has also recently introduced the Animal Birth Control Rules 2023 under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, replacing the previous Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2001. According to the WHO, dog-mediated rabies causes an estimated 59,000 human deaths globally each year, with India accounting for 20,565 (35 per cent) of these deaths. This data is derived from a 2004 study.

CPM ideologue raps State Govt for Wayanad coverup

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN IN KOCHI

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan-led cabal in the CPI-M in Kerala suffered a major setback on Wednesday as a widely respected party ideologue came out in the open lambasting the State Government for covering up its failures and blaming the Centre for last Tuesday's landslides and floods in Wayanad district. More than 400 lives were lost and hundreds were rendered homeless.

Shakthidharan, known as a copybook communist and who was a senior editor of party organ Deshabhimani said in his social media post that what Kerala received as disaster relief from the Centre during the current crisis is the best help which it has got from the past Governments.

The hour-long speech delivered by Home Minister in Parliament is an excellent proof of how the Centre has been alerting the State administration about an impending disaster days before the landslide struck Wayanad. The way the Prime Minister and the Home Minister responded to the mishap shows the Centre cares and Modi deserves full credit for the kind of help being offered to the



State," said Shakthidharan with a plea to the journalists and intellectuals in the State not to categorize him as a Sanghi (part of the RSS Parivar). He was blunt in stating that no other Central Govts have shown the kind of attention and care the Modi Govt is showering in Kerala. "But the Vijayan-led government, enmeshed in corruption, favoritism and misdeeds of all kind wants to save its skin from charges of mismanagement and carelessness," he said.

The Marxist ideologue asked what prevented the Government from having a discussion with Prof Madhav Gadgil who headed the UPA Government appointed Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel that made serious study of the status of the ecologically fragile Western Ghats of which Wayanad is a part. Prof Gadgil had warned of major natural disasters if the State

government went ahead with quarrying, mining and construction activities. Pinarayi Vijayan, while briefing the media on 30th July, the day the district was devastated by the landslide scoffed at the WGEE Panel report and described the same as trash.

Though a CPI(M) follower, Shakthidharan never hesitated to speak his mind out. "Prof Gadgil had warned the State many times about the impending natural disaster. But why the CM Vijayan is reluctant to meet him and discuss with him the solution available to save Wayanad and other such regions in the State. His reluctance has its epicentre on Vijayan's ego and arrogance. Moreover there are dacoits who masquerade as politicians and have made it to the inner chamber of the chief minister's residence and office," said Sakhthidharan.

Chhattisgarh jobs scam: CM Sai slams Cong Govt amid CBI raids

PTI IN RAIPUR

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Wednesday attacked the previous Congress Government in Chhattisgarh for "maligned" the image of an institution like the state public service commission, asserting that the ruling BJP won't spare the corrupt.

His remarks come amid the ongoing CBI searches at multiple locations in the state tied to alleged irregularities in the state Public Service Commission (PSC) recruitment examination during the previous Congress government.

In a post in Hindi on X, Sai said, "Writing a new chapter of good governance - youth of the state will get justice. The previous Congress government in Chhattisgarh maligned an institution with a clean image like PSC by committing scams and playing with the future of the youth. Now, in the government of good governance, scams are being investigated thoroughly and no corrupt person will be spared. Youth will get justice."

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) began searching more than a dozen



locations in Dhamtari, Bilaspur, Durg and Raipur districts over the alleged recruitment scam, official sources said. Last month, the CBI took over the probe into the two cases registered in the state for alleged favouritism in the selection of deputy collectors, deputy superintendents of police and other senior government posts through the Chhattisgarh PSC during 2020-2022, the agency had said.

As per the two cases, the then CGPSC chairman Taman Singh Sonwani, former secretary Jeevan Kishore Dhruv, the then controller of examinations and many public servants and politicians misused their positions to get their children, relatives and acquaintances recruited. Notably, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other top BJP leaders, during electioneering for last year's Assembly polls, had targeted the then-ruling Congress over the alleged recruitment scam and promised to get it probed if the saffron party came to power.

Bangladesh turmoil matter of concern for NE: Himanta

PTI IN GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the situation in Bangladesh is a matter of concern for the northeastern states, apprehending that the neighbouring country may again become a hub of insurgents and people from there may enter the region illegally.

Sarma said he was hopeful that the Centre would continue with dialogue with the new dispensation in Bangladesh and that concerns of the northeastern states would be at the forefront.

"We are concerned about the recent developments in Bangladesh and if the trouble continues, we fear that it will affect the region from two angles," the chief minister told reporters on the sidelines of an event in Dergaon.

The border between the two countries has to be protected as "people from the neighbouring country may try to enter the region through the India-Bangladesh boundary", he said.

"During Sheikh Hasina's regime, insurgents from the northeast region were forced to leave Bangladesh. It will be a matter of concern for us that the neighbouring country may again become a hub of insurgents," the chief minister



said. There is no doubt that with the cooperation of the previous Bangladesh government, 'we have been successful in curbing extremist activities in North East India. I have full confidence that the new government in the neighbouring country will also maintain this cooperation', he said.

The death toll in the anti-government protests in Bangladesh on Tuesday climbed to 440, according to local media, even as efforts were on by the army to bring the situation under control in the violence-hit nation.

Nobel laureate Mohammed Yunus was on Tuesday appointed as the head of Bangladesh's interim government by President Mohammed Shahabuddin, a day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled the country following deadly protests against her government over a controversial quota system in jobs.

Kailashnathan takes oath as Puducherry LG



PTI IN PUDUCHERRY

Former IAS officer Kailashnathan was sworn in as Lt Governor of Puducherry at a ceremony in Raj Nivas here on Wednesday. Acting Chief Justice of Madras High Court Justice D Krishnakumar administered the oath of office and secrecy to Kailashnathan. Chief Secretary to Puducherry Administration Sharat Chauhan read out the warrant of appointment issued recently by President Droupadi Murmu. Kailashnathan is the 25th Lt Governor of the union

territory. Chief Minister N Rangasamy, his cabinet colleagues, the Speaker of Puducherry Assembly R Selvam, Deputy Speaker P Rajavelu, legislators, high ranking Police officials, opposition leader in the Assembly R Siva (DMK), AIADMK Puducherry unit Secretary A Anbalagan, officials and representatives of various organisations were among those who greeted Kailashnathan after the swearing in ceremony. Puducherry police presented the guard of honour to the new Lt Governor outside Raj Nivas after the ceremony.

HP cloudburst: Efforts to trace missing people enter day 7, kin losing hope

PTI IN SHIMLA

Family members of the around 30 people who went missing following flash floods triggered by a cloudburst here on July 31 have begun losing hope as the search and rescue operations to trace the victims entered the seventh day on Wednesday amid incessant rains.

Sharing details about the ongoing operation in Samej village here, Assistant Commanding Officer, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Karam Singh, said, "It is raining but the joint search and rescue operations are underway."

"The water level is rising in Sutlej River and slides are also occurring at multiple places. JCBs and other machines are being used to clear the roads. Our soldiers are skilled and cross the river through ropes to search the sites where there is any possibility of finding the missing people", Singh added.

Samej falls under Sarpara Panchayat in Rampur subdivision of Shimla district and borders the Kullu district.

The family members of the missing persons who have



been camping at the site for the past seven days have now lost hope and are praying for the recovery of bodies to perform last rites.

"The entire family including my brother, two sisters-in-law, daughter-in-law, nephews and niece are missing," said Moti Ram who along with one of his daughter-in-law and grandson survived as they were out of home when the tragedy struck. The water level in the river is increasing and the rescue teams are facing a lot of difficulty due to the continuous rains, said Kair Singh, a local.

Meanwhile, the local meteorological office issued

an orange alert of heavy to very heavy rain, thunderstorm and lightning at isolated places in the state for Wednesday and Saturday.

The Met also said that monsoon activity is likely to intensify in the next five to six days with fairly widespread rains.

So far 16 deaths have been reported due to flash floods and cloudbursts in three districts of Himachal Pradesh on July 31 midnight and over 35 people are still missing in Kullu's Nirmand, Sainj and Malana, Mandi's Padhar and Shimla's Rampur subdivision.

BJP MP Kangana Ranaut who visited Samej village on

Tuesday and other parts of Shimla and Kullu accused the state Congress government of doing "nothing to help the victims.

According to the officials, 410 rescuers from teams of the Army, NDRF, SDRF, ITBP, CISF, Himachal Pradesh Police and home guards are involved in the hunt and rescuers have intensified the search operation by deploying more machinery, sniffer dog squad, drones and other equipment.

A total of 93 people were killed in rain-related incidents between June 27 and August 6 and the state suffered losses amounting to Rs 748 crore.

6-year-old Dalit boy found locked in classroom in UP

PTI IN MUZAFFARNAGAR

A six-year-old Dalit child, A who was allegedly forced to clean the toilet by some teachers, was found locked in the classroom of a government primary school in the Jansath area, police said on Wednesday.

The Basic Education Department has taken action against the school's principal and a teacher. The incident took place on Tuesday when a six-year-old student of class one was found locked in the school classroom, allegedly due to the laxity of Principal Sandhya Jain and class teacher Ravita Rani, police said.

A police complaint in this regard has been lodged by the child's mother in which she alleged that the two teachers used to force her son to clean the toilet as they had "hated" against Dalit children.

She alleged that due to the negligence of the teachers, her son remained locked in the classroom for more than an hour after the school closed. When her son did not reach home after the closure of the school, she inquired about him with other students, who

expressed ignorance, she added. She said she found the school closed when she went there, and heard the cries of her child, after which the villagers and her family members called the principal. Later, teacher Ravita Rani's husband reached the school with the keys and opened it. Rani's husband said the child might have fallen asleep in the class. Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA) Sandeep Kumar told PTI that the principal has been suspended and teacher Rani has been given an adverse entry.

A probe has been ordered into the matter and a two-member committee led by the block shiksha adhikari, Jansath and Shahpur, will look into it and submit its report within three days.

Kumar said that all staff have been asked to check the classrooms before closing the school. Principal Jain said that "injustice" was done with her as the class teacher was responsible for this. "Even if the child was sleeping, the classroom should have been checked before locking it," she said.

Khurshid frustrated, says Vijayvargiya on Cong leader's Bangladesh-like jibe

PTI IN PUDUCHERRY

Senior BJP leader and S Madhya Pradesh minister Kailash Vijayvargiya on Wednesday called Congress leader Salman Khurshid "frustrated" over his remarks that a Bangladesh-like situation could happen in India.

At a book release function on Tuesday night, Khurshid said that though "everything may look normal on the surface, what is happening in Bangladesh could happen in India."

Bangladesh was rocked by waves of violent anti-government protests since mid-July, following which Sheikh Hasina was forced to resign as the prime minister and flee the country.

On Khurshid's comment, Vijayvargiya said, "He should understand that this is (Prime Minister) Modi ji's country. This is Bharat. Such frustrated leaders trying to spread anarchy by giving statements should be ashamed."

Responding to another question, he said that those who were acting as the face of Pakistan have now understood the situation in India, Bangladesh and

Pakistan. "Bharat is a strong country and its leader Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a very strong leader. Therefore, talking about such anarchy in India is reprehensible," said the MP minister.

Khurshid's comments came at the launch of academician Mujibur Rehman's book 'Shikwa-e-Hind: The Political Future of Indian Muslims'. The Congress leader said what is happening in Bangladesh can happen in India though "everything may look normal on the surface."

"Everything may look normal in Kashmir. Everything may look normal here. We may be celebrating the victory, although of course some people believe that that victory or that success of 2024 was perhaps only marginal, perhaps a lot more needs to be done," he said. "The fact remains that under the surface there is something," he said.

"What's happening in Bangladesh can happen here... The spread in our country prevents things blowing up in the manner in which they've blown up in Bangladesh," he said.

One more arrested in BSP leader murder case

PTI IN CHENNAI

A 32-year-old man has been arrested in connection with the brutal killing of BSP state president K Armstrong last month, police said on Wednesday.

The arrested has been identified as N Aswathaman. A police release here said he is a resident of Vyasarpadi in the city. Prior to him, 21 people were arrested as part of the probe into the high profile murder, it said.

One accused person was gunned down by the police last month when he tried to attack them and flee, while being taken to a city location to unearth some weapons allegedly hidden there by him.

Armstrong (52), state chief of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) was hacked to death by a group of assailants last month, sending shockwaves. Political parties, including the AIADMK and the BJP, besides BSP supreme and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati, have demanded a CBI probe into the killing.

TN Ministers Ramachandran, Thennarasu to face trial in assets case: Madras HC

PTI IN CHENNAI

Setting aside trial court orders discharging Tamil Nadu Revenue Minister KKSSR Ramachandran and Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu from disproportionate assets cases, the Madras High Court on Wednesday directed the lower court to frame charges against them and proceed in accordance with law.

Passing an order on the criminal revision petition initiated by him, Justice N Anand Venkatesh set aside the orders of the Special Court for MPs and MLAs cases, Virudhunagar, dated July 20, 2023 and December 12, 2022 respectively, discharging Ramachandran and Thennarasu from the disproportionate wealth cases.

The ministers, both senior DMK leaders, have to face trial in the cases registered against them by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC).

As prima facie materials were available to frame charges, the Special Court shall proceed to frame charges and thereafter proceed in accordance with law.

The judge said that one of the most striking aspects of these two cases was the meticulous



manner in which the DVAC officials have also colluded with each other to ensure that criminal trials against two sitting ministers were "quietly and indecently buried within the precincts of the Special Court."

The judge directed Ramachandran to appear before the Special Court on September 9. Thennarasu has to appear before the Special Court on September 11.

The judge said as the case was of the year 2011 and 2012 respectively, the proceedings of the Special Court shall be conducted on a day-to-day basis keeping in mind the directives of the Supreme Court in Vinod Kumar vs State of Punjab, and dispose of the case as expeditiously as possible.

The judge made it clear "this Court has not examined or commented upon the merits

of the case, which shall be decided by the Special Court on merits, without being influenced by any of the observations made herein above".

Narrating various principles, the judge said tested on the touchstone of the aforesaid principles, the conclusion was that the orders of the Special Court deserves to be set aside on the short ground that it had committed a manifest jurisdictional error in discharging the accused in the face of relevant material, the correctness of which could not be the subject matter for inquiry at the stage of discharge. Additionally, the very fact that the Special Court has not assigned a shred of independent reasoning was another reason warranting interference in exercise of revisional powers, he added.

Bridge over Kali river collapses in Karnataka, traffic disrupted

PTI IN PANAJI/KARWAR

An old bridge across Kali River in Uttara Kannada district collapsed in the small hours of Wednesday, resulting in heavy traffic along National Highway 66, connecting Goa to Karnataka. A large portion of the bridge near here caved in around 1.30 am when a truck was crossing it, leaving the driver of the vehicle injured as he fell into the river, Karwar police said.

According to officials, the bridge was used for Go-bound traffic after the construction of a new one a decade ago. The injured truck driver has been identified as Bala Murugan (37) from Tamil Nadu.

The truck, en route to Karwar, fell into the water, police said, adding that the night patrol team alerted higher police officials. "Our night patrolling team noticed the collapsed bridge and alerted the control room. There was a truck in the river and the injured driver was on top of the vehicle. The local fishermen along with our team managed to rescue the driver," Superintendent of Police

(Karwar) M Narayana said. "He is admitted to Karwar Institute of Medical Sciences and Hospital. The truck driver is stated to be stable and is recovering," he said. "Traffic on the new bridge was stopped for some time following the incident. Later, vehicles, except heavy ones, were allowed to pass through, the Karwar police said. "Due to the bridge collapse, only light vehicles will be allowed on the new Kali bridge while suspending the movement of heavy vehicles temporarily," a statement from Karwar SP said. Traffic movement on the new bridge was restricted as the Karnataka authorities were checking its stability after the collapse of the old bridge, Goa's Canacona police station in-charge Harish Raut Desai said. An FIR has also been registered over the bridge collapse. Following the incident, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah called Deputy Commissioner of Uttara Kannada Lakshmi Priya K and instructed her to ensure the safety of all bridges and roads in the district and to take precautions to prevent any loss of life.



Finance Minister yields

Facing a backlash over changes to the property transaction taxation, the FM has given some concessions to homeowners

owing to the popular pressure and critiques from MPs within the NDA coalition, the Central Government has relented to grant some relief for property transactions. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in the budget that the tax on long-term capital gains was reduced from 20% with indexation benefits to 12.5% but without indexation benefits. However, following significant opposition, an amendment is being made to The Finance Bill, 2024. For the transfer of a long-term capital asset such as land or a building acquired before July 23, 2024, the taxpayer can now choose to calculate their tax either at 12.5% without indexation under the new scheme or at 20% with indexation under the old scheme and pay whichever amount is lower. Indexation adjusts purchase price for inflation, reducing tax liability on gains from investments like debt funds. The government eliminated indexation benefits on long-term capital gains, increasing taxable gains. It prevents inflation from eroding returns on long-term investments.



This adjustment marks a significant reversal from the government's firm stance on the issue after the Budget. The ministry officials had argued that the new tax rate structure, with a lower tax rate minus the indexation benefits, would benefit people in almost all cases. However, the industry experts had different opinions. Industry bodies had sought to rethink the proposal, observing that the removal of indexation benefits amounted to a retrospective tax change for those who had bought properties earlier. They pointed out that this would particularly hurt those who had invested in assets that had delivered lesser appreciation in value over the years. It was widely feared that the removal of indexation benefits on long-term capital gains would slow down property transactions in the Mumbai real estate market, and the real estate engine of the country and could have cascading effects throughout the country. Besides, several MPs also urged the Government to reconsider the proposal. During the debate on the Finance Bill in the Lok Sabha, TDP MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu echoed the concerns of other MPs, emphasising that this issue involves taxpayers' hard-earned money and impacts middle-class people the most. He noted that the middle class views real estate as a safe investment and and so should be protected. Indeed he had a point, as the middle-class is facing the pinch of price rise and rising unemployment. If their small investments and savings are wiped off they would have nothing to fall back upon. Providing taxpayers with the option to choose between the two tax regimes would address some of their concerns. Thankfully the finance minister yielded to allow for the second option. This would indeed give some relief to small and middle-class homeowners, providing a more balanced approach to long-term capital gains taxation in the real estate sector.

PICTALK



Fishermen cast their nets in the Arabian sea, at the Kochi coast PTI

The evolution of Rahul Gandhi



KALYANI SHANKAR

It may be premature to assess Rahul Gandhi's effectiveness as the new Leader of the Opposition, but his initial performance is promising

It might be too soon to judge how well Rahul Gandhi is doing as the new Leader of the Opposition. The current budget session ends in just a few days, so we'll need more time to understand his leadership fully. But he has begun well. After winning in the Lok Sabha polls, Rahul has been confident and strong both inside and outside the house, which is appropriate for an opposition leader. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen recently discussed Rahul's evolution since their days at Cambridge University. Sen underlined that Rahul has significantly matured over the years and underscored that his true test lies in how he steers the Opposition in Parliament.



Rahul stepped into the shoes of the Leader of the Opposition, a quarter of a century after his political debut in 2004. The Lok Sabha had been without a Leader of the Opposition for a decade, as no opposition party had the requisite number of members to stake the claim in the last two Lok Sabhas. During the recent budget session, the first after Rahul became the LOP, he took a vital leadership role in his party and the Opposition. Since becoming the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi has taken on more responsibilities. He now leads and represents the Opposition's viewpoint on various subjects. This is a new role for him. He organised protests, delivered powerful speeches against the Modi government, and worked closely with allies to coordinate their efforts on the floor. He also focused on critical issues for the people and made himself more accessible. In the recent budget session, Rahul Gandhi, as the Leader of the Opposition, took on an important leadership role within his party and the Opposition. He has organised protests, delivered powerful speeches against the Modi government, and worked closely with allies. Additionally, he has focused on critical issues for the people and made himself more accessible. Rahul Gandhi's backroom office has a

team of about twelve key members. This team, led by General Secretary K.C. Venugopal and including Sam Pitroda, Sunil Kanugolu, K. Biju, B. Srivatsa, Manickam Tagore, Alankar Sawai, and Kaushal Vidyarthi, plays a vital role in managing Gandhi's political activities and election strategies, including logistics and social media. Rahul's growth and evolution in the political arena have transformed him into a more confident leader, marking a significant departure from his previous image as a reluctant politician. This change has been compelling to witness in his political journey. Rahul finds it easier to take on a more assertive role now, with a substantial number of opposition members in the 18th Lok Sabha. Furthermore, the success of united allies in the 2024 polls has made them realise the power of unity. When Rahul spoke as the Leader of the Opposition for the first time, he said, "While the government has political power, the Opposition also represents the voice of the Indian people. This time, the Opposition represents significantly more of the Indian people's voice than it



DESPITE BEING AN MP FOR THE PAST TWO DECADES, RAHUL WAS NOT CONSIDERED A GOOD PARLIAMENTARIAN. HE ASKED ONLY 99 QUESTIONS, PARTICIPATED IN 26 DEBATES, AND WASN'T ALWAYS PRESENT AT CRITICAL TIMES

did last time." Rahul Gandhi's criticisms of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have caused strong reactions from the ruling party. During Rahul's maiden speech as LOP, PM Modi spoke up for the first time in 10 years. Modi accused Rahul of saying that the entire Hindu society is 'violent'. The Prime Minister stated, "Democracy and the Constitution have taught me to take the Leader of the Opposition seriously." Modi's responses to Gandhi's criticisms show an acknowledgement of the changed situation and the resulting tension in the Parliament. Rahul Gandhi has been speaking out against the Modi government's decision to arrest AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and JMM chief Hemant Soren. He opposes the BJP's attempts to silence opposing viewpoints. This has caused increased tensions in Parliament for the ruling party. During his Lok Sabha campaign, Rahul Gandhi strategically showed a small red pocket edition of the Constitution at public meetings. This move effectively highlighted what he called the perceived threat to the Constitution from the BJP.

His use of the Constitution helped him gain support from reservation beneficiaries. Despite being an M.P. for the past two decades, Rahul was not considered a good Parliamentarian. He asked only 99 questions, participated in 26 debates, and wasn't always present at critical times. Since 2014, he has been noticeably absent during budget sessions, only appearing occasionally. He also frequently went abroad, leaving the party in a crisis. Rahul is doing well as the Leader of the Opposition (LOP).

His success will depend on his political planning. He missed some opportunities in the past, like becoming a minister in Manmohan Singh's cabinet or strengthening the party as the Congress President. However, his current role shows his potential. He must use this opportunity to face future political challenges confidently. Rahul's belief in the power of the LOP to raise its voice in Parliament gives hope and optimism to the party.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PRESIDENT'S STATE VISIT

Madam — President Droupadi Murmu embarked on a six-day state visit to three nations: Fiji, New Zealand, and Timor-Leste a couple of days ago. I wonder why the President has undertaken this visit? How will engaging with these nations benefit India? Fiji and Timor Leste are almost unheard of countries in India. What is the government's agenda really? As both Fiji and New Zealand are approximately 11,000 kms and Timor Leste is about 6,500 kms away, it goes without saying that a to and fro visit to these countries would cost our nation a humongous sum. Besides, the President who would be travelling by a state aeroplane (read, like a private airliner) would leave a heavy carbon footprint. Will a RTI query in respect of the purpose and cost of the tri-nation jaunt be answered, if at all?
Avinash Godbole | Dewas

BLINDING HEADLIGHTS CAUSE ACCIDENTS

Madam — Blinding headlights are one of the important causes of road accidents in India. A driver can be blinded by the opposite vehicles as well as the rear ones. On an average, glaring headlights are direct or contributory causes of 75 percent of vehicular collisions in India. Of course high beam lights are useful in low visibility when there are little or no street lights. However, rules say high beams can be employed by the drivers only if there are no oncoming vehicles but not many drivers are sticklers for rules. Rear vehicles can distract the front drivers' vision by using bright lights within 60 metres. It has become a fashion for several youngsters, especially in small towns and cities with none to keep a hawk's eye on them, to use ornamental illumination like flashy headlights. Flickers, Light emitting diodes (LED), and its variants, are freely used by irresponsible drivers. Section 177 of the Motor Vehicles Act (MVA) has explicitly detailed the proper and improper use of headlights. Many drivers, especially the non-professional ones, are oblivious to the correct usage of headlights and

Justice delayed is justice denied



This is with reference to your editorial "Justice Delayed". The Chief Justice of India's deep concern over the excessive delay in disposing of cases, as noted in the

this can mainly be blamed on poor quality of driving schools and doling out licences without proper application of mind.
Ganpat Bhat | Akola

TURMOIL IN BANGLADESH

Madam — Sheikh Hasina's resignation as Prime Minister of Bangladesh is a result of socio-political upheaval of her own making. Every nation is an enterprise owned and run by its people who elect a government to run it as also simultaneously place an Opposition as the auditor. So long as the auditor is facilitated by the government to put up dissenting notes and is willing to correction, the shareholders let the checks and balances play out. When the government fails to give credence to the opposition, a plethora of public fora and institutions come in to press an alternative narrative. Should the government resort to suppressing them too, the people step in as suo- moto auditor. The likes of social media then expound dissent and if this too goes unheeded, people act as regulators leveraging electoral

editorial is a concern shared by all. The staggering fact that 44 million cases are pending and could take 300 years to resolve at the current pace should prompt the ruling government to seek a tangible solution. Currently, filing a case itself feels like a punishment for both parties involved. Even after winning a case, the appeals process undertaken by the losing party makes the entire affair extremely frustrating. There is a pressing need to increase the capacity of courts at all levels to handle and dispose of cases in a timely manner. However, it is unfortunate that even the existing courts are forced to operate with severe manpower shortages. Simply changing the Acts and their names is not the change people desire; what is urgently needed is systemic and infrastructural improvement.
A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

platforms to tone down aberrations in governance by impinging on electoral standing of the ruling dispensation. Should a government seek to neutralise the process of such franchise itself, as has been in many nations across the globe, people take to roads to convey the message. An extremely recalcitrant government could then compel people to set up tribunals and don the robes of judge and jury. Bangladesh has apparently slipped into this unhappy final phase. It's military may yet be sagacious enough to restore law and order and enable the nation to reclaim governance and eschew going the Myanmar way. There is a lesson for every progressive democratic nation. Stifling the elected opposition and relentless and heavy handed suppression of dissent perse in hubris of power, is bound to heavily set back economic progress while the socio political fabric stands frayed beyond repair.
R Narayanan | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Renewable energy: Paving the way for a sustainable future



GAURAV PRABHURASHI

By 2030, India plans to achieve 500 GW of installed capacity from non-fossil fuels, marking a significant shift towards sustainability and energy security

India's growth story over the past two decades has been marked by vibrant economic progress, largely driven by service exports and rising domestic consumption. As of 2024, the economy appears robust, poised to replicate its service sector success by transforming into a global manufacturing hub to leverage its demographic dividend.

A robust manufacturing sector necessitates significant resources, with power being a crucial component. Despite this, India's per capita electricity consumption remains low compared to global averages. As the country embarks on its manufacturing-focused era, electricity demand is expected to rise significantly. To meet this demand while adhering to climate commitments, India plans to add new electricity generating capacity primarily from non-fossil fuel sources. The goal is to achieve 500 GW of installed non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030.

By May 31, 2024, India's non-fossil fuel-based power generation capacity stood at 201.7 GW, with renewable energy, including small hydro pro-



jects, contributing 146.6 GW. To meet growing demands, a significant increase in renewable energy capacity is anticipated, supported by the renewable energy procurement roadmap from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), which targets 50 GW of bids annually from FY 2023-24 to FY 2027-28. Regulatory policies for the renewable energy sector are governed by both central and state governments, as electricity is part of the concurrent list. Key aspects of central government policy include promoting domestic manufacturing of solar modules and electrolyzers, safeguarding domestic manufacturing, and domestic content requirements, and implementing policies to encourage specific types of electricity genera-

tion like rooftop solar and offshore wind.

India's renewable energy policy framework adopts a holistic approach, addressing multiple factors. For example, the Ladakh region, with excellent irradiation levels, lacks sufficient infrastructure to integrate its power into the grid. To tackle this, the government announced the green energy corridor. Furthermore, the government identified states with offshore wind potential and introduced a viability gap funding scheme with an outlay of Rs. 7,453 crores for installing 1 GW of offshore wind projects. Regulatory policies also aim to enhance self-sufficiency in the energy. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, with an outlay of Rs. 24,000 crores, targets achieving gigawatt-scale manufacturing capacity of high-efficiency solar PV modules. Additionally, the Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) Program, with an outlay of Rs. 17,490 crores under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, supports domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers and green hydro-

gen production. These investments are expected to generate numerous direct and indirect jobs while ensuring energy security.

The government has also introduced schemes to promote distributed solar generation at the household level in both rural and urban areas. The PM-KUSUM scheme aims to reduce the agricultural sector's reliance on diesel and boost farmers' incomes by providing central government subsidies of up to 50% for installing standalone solar pumps and solarizing existing grid-connected agricultural pumps. Farmers can also install grid-connected solar plants on barren land and sell electricity to local distribution companies (DISCOMs). In the interim budget for FY 2024-25, the government announced the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojna, which offers subsidies covering up to 40% of solar panel installation costs. This scheme aims to equip 10 million homes with solar panels, saving INR 75,000 crores in electricity costs. (The writer is a manager-investments at AMPIN Energy Transition, views are personal)



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Praying, Chanting, meditation and other such practices can transform your life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We are forever doing material acts like eating, sleeping, 'vihar' (entertainment) and, yes, work. Some of us may be doing some spiritual practices as well. Why is there such a mismatch? Because most people do not realize how beneficial spiritual practices are for a human being. Read on and you will agree. I have chosen ten common spiritual practices for this article. They are simple to do and almost everyone can benefit by doing them. Beginning with praying, what is so difficult to do it? Someone is not well in a family, and a family member prays for his or her quick recovery. Even small children pray for their mother when she is unwell. What happens then? God hears them, as He has eyes and ears everywhere. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 13.13) What is God's response? He has to consider several factors like what does the person prayed for deserves, what effect it will have on other family members, who is praying, etc. There will be a response, which will be appropriate taking into consideration everything. Let us remember that God knows 'The Big Picture', which includes the past, present and future also. Whatever God may decide, the act of praying sincerely curbs ego, which helps one to become humble – a necessary quality to be able to deal properly with others. Praying is also a good start for taking shelter from God – the topmost spiritual activity. Chanting of God's names and mantras is quite common across all religions. Many studies have been done to see the effects of chanting on the brain. They have found that chanting stimulates positive changes in the brain. Mantras with the sound 'Ohm'



are especially useful. God's names bring similar benefits. When we take God's name, He must respond. Didn't Lord Krishna respond to calls of Draupadi – 'Krishna, Krishna, Krishna'? How the Lord respond to us depends again upon what we deserve and what will be good for us. 'Darshan' – seeing God's 'murti' in Deity form or a photo of one of God's incarnations like Krishna, Rama, etc. is very useful. This is my favourite spiritual act. I have hung a large photo of Lord Krishna on the right side of my bed. All I do is to sit or lie comfortably and look at the Lord's attractive face. Lord Krishna has allowed gaining spiritual knowledge to be pleasing in doing. (9.2) What better company than of God there can be? My Lord has become my own. And He rewards me in many ways. 'Atmabala' (inner strength) flows into me. This strength – the mother of all strengths has made me stronger mentally. I am also able to tolerate the inevitable miseries of this world better. Meditation is getting quite popular worldwide. People are beginning to see the enormous benefits of this spiritual practice. Lord Krishna has recommended it strongly. In verse # 6.35, the Lord says, "Mind can be brought under control by practice." In verse # 12.8, He tells us where our mind should be fixed, i.e. in Him only. (12.8) In verse # 18.65, the Lord asks us to develop His consciousness. Then, what will happen? We will be in God, i.e. become part of Him. (9.29) Could anything be better than that? Hearing about God is another great activity. Lord Krishna goes to the extent of indicating that those devoted to hearing from others will also benefit greatly. (13.25) There are many, who are conversant with spiritual truths. Satsang is a meeting of persons, who are conversant with spiritual truths. "And preachers of supreme knowledge (spiritual benefits) amongst My devotees please Me the most." (18.69) This is the highest devotion towards God. Remembering God and thanking Him whenever some good happens to us are immensely beneficial; they make us deserving of more such rewards. Why don't we do such activities? Because we are almost entirely focused on material acts. We can all do spiritual acts – the givers of great benefits both spiritual and material. (The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Negligence and tragedy: The price of complacency



RAJDEEP PATHAK

The death of three IAS aspirant highlights severe systemic negligence by coaching center management, property owners, and municipal authorities



In reflecting on the powerful speech delivered by Mark Antony following the assassination of Julius Caesar, one cannot help but recall his stirring words: "Friends, Romans, countrymen, I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him." Antony's oration skillfully ignited the Roman populace, who were initially ambivalent towards Caesar's murder. Through his use of rhetorical questions and ironic praise for Brutus and the other conspirators, Antony incited the crowd to question the motives behind the assassination. < By revealing Caesar's will, which generously bequeathed wealth and public parks to the citizens, Antony further endeared Caesar to the people and painted the conspirators as traitors. The crowd, now convinced of Caesar's benevolence and the conspirators' treachery, erupted into chaos, leading to a violent riot. This turmoil precipitated a civil war, ultimately overthrowing the existing order and paving the way for the rise of the 'Second Triumvirate' (all sought revenge for the murder of Julius Caesar) and the end of the Roman Republic. A tragic incident in the Capital City of India echoes this (Shakespearean) historical upheaval, where the death of three students (IAS aspirants) has incited public (students') outrage. On Saturday, July 27, 2024 evening, a supposed drainage burst led to flooding in the basement of Rau's IAS Study Circle in Old Rajinder Nagar used as a library where approximately 35 students were present when rainwater began to inundate the basement, creating a panic-stricken atmosphere. Despite attempts to evacuate, three students were trapped and subsequently died. This disaster has cut short the dreams of the parents of three students. Unlike Bhola Baba – who philosophically dramatized death as an inevitable part of life following the Hatras stampede tragedy – the negligence displayed by the coaching centre owners in this instance cannot be so easily dismissed. The failure to ensure proper evacuation facilities has underscored the mismanagement of the institution. Although the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has stormed into action, they



REGULATORY LAPSES, SUCH AS ISSUING NO-OBJECTION CERTIFICATES WITHOUT THOROUGH VERIFICATION AND COMPLIANCE CHECKS, FURTHER POINT TOWARDS SIGNIFICANT ENFORCEMENT SHORTCOMINGS

cannot fully absolve themselves of responsibility. More than anything else, the basement, intended for parking and storage, was illegally repurposed as a library. As the news became the talk of the town, sentiments of anger and frustration poured amidst huge grief and loss. The incident in Old Rajinder Nagar underscores a pervasive pattern of systemic negligence among various stakeholders, including coaching centre management, property owners, and municipal authorities. The illegal conversion of the basement into a library, without proper safety measures reveals a severe disregard for student safety. Compounded by chronic infrastructure deficiencies such as inadequate drainage systems, this negligence is exacerbated by municipal authorities' failures. Regulatory lapses, such as issuing No-Objection Certificates (NOCs) without thorough verification and compliance checks, further point towards significant enforcement shortcomings. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) delayed actions in sealing other illegally repurposed basements reflect a reactive rather than proactive enforcement strategy. Additionally, the coaching centre's lack of an effective emergency plan, including proper drills and protocols, significantly contributed to the chaos and heightened the tragedy, demonstrating a critical need for better emergency preparedness, stricter regulations and oversight to prevent such tragedies in the future. Accounts from traumatized students reveal harrowing experiences. Whether it is Aishwarya Rai, a 30-year-old UPSC aspirant from Kanpur, Nakul Tiwari, or Shreya, the very fact that they have been rescued from the terrifying moment of being drowned to death will linger

in their psyche for years to come. The question arises: why does it take such disasters for the administration to take action? The arrest, bulldozing of illegal constructions and other preventive and punitive measures often come only after tragedy strikes. Videos now emerging tell tales of utter mismanagement and illegal use of properties, breaking all norms. Why are the students only now flagging these issues? Another question is why their seniors, who have perhaps lived and studied in these conditions and are either IAS aspirants or have cleared their examinations, did not raise such issues of negligence in the past. Moreover, if a few of them have become Civil Servants from these coaching centres, why didn't they, over the years, bring this to the notice of the local administration? Another crucial issue is that the commercialization of education, driven by the high demand for competitive exam preparation, should not compromise safety standards, which in this case has resulted in unsafe and overcrowded conditions. The commercialization of education, characterized by the increasing influence of profit-driven motives, brings both benefits and drawbacks to student welfare. On the positive side, it often leads to improved infrastructure, better resources, and innovative teaching methods that enhance the learning experience. Private institutions do attempt to provide advanced facilities and extracurricular activities, fostering a more dynamic and engaging educational environment. This recent incident must become an eye-opener. It critically highlights the need for enhanced regulatory oversight and stricter enforcement of building codes and safety regulations, emphasizing regular inspections and audits to ensure compli-

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

Indian cardiologist sparks global debate on mind-based medical protocols In a groundbreaking challenge to conventional medical practices, Prof B M Hegde has called for a paradigm shift in the treatment of serious ailments

The world of medicine is all set to see an intense debate on the medical protocol to be employed in curing serious ailments thanks to an Indian doctor.



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

medical constitution in your body gets deteriorated," he told The Pioneer. "Although there has been a lot of thinking going on in medical circles about the role of the mind in psychological disorders, much needs to be done in the field of physical ailments. Recent data on the important role played by the human mind in the causation of major physical illnesses

like heart attacks and cancer have rekindled our interest in the intricacies of the working of the human mind vis a vis the human body. In the 17th century itself, William Harvey had clearly indicated that in all bodily afflictions there is a mental basis. As there is no big money involved in this kind of research unlike the gold rush in the field of epidemiology and interventions, the field did not until very recently attract good researchers," writes Prof Hegde, who is also the chief editor of the "Journal of Science of Healing Outcomes", a super-peer-reviewed scientific publication. Interestingly, Prof Hegde, a former visiting

professor of cardiology at the University of London, always had strong reservations about the treatment protocol for cardiovascular diseases and cancer. In the editorial of the July 2024 issue of the JSHO, he quoted from the Journal of American Medical Association which has published a large study on the connection between life stresses and their role in the causation of coronary artery diseases. He said the JAMA study focused on the immediate and long-term effects of various emotional stressors that are a part of life in the modern rat race of the monetary economy. Prof Hegde with more than five decades of medical research and prac-



tice to his credit has found that hostility, anger, frustration and bereavement come up on top among the negative emotions. "Love, compassion, social support and job satisfaction have control over one's situation, negative emotions acutely raised the blood

pressure as also the heart rate and the breathing rate," said the octogenarian professor who has been honoured with Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan by the President of India for the scintillating works he has done over the decades. According to Prof Hegde's experience, chronic stress does take its toll leading to killer diseases. "Emotions play a major role in one getting afflicted with such ailments. Scientists, business barons, professionals and politicians should bear this in mind. When the competition becomes too intense, chances of one losing control shoot up and there can be no coming back to normalcy," he said.

Dr Hegde pointed out the debates in Parliament and election campaigns to drive home the point that one should be elegant and cool-headed during the battle for power. "Even military officers behave in a disciplined manner while they are engaged in fighting the enemies. This is what we should learn to stay cool and free of ailments," he said. For the uninitiated, Prof Hegde is the author of many books and has written the preface for medical books published by medical scientists. His seminal work "What Doctors Don't Get to Study in Medical School" is widely read in the world of medicine and many doctors rate it as the Holy Bible of

Modern Medicine. If we stay away from unhealthy competition for wealth and power, we can keep serious ailments like heart disease and cancer miles away from us. The only losers would be pharma companies that charge a fortune for a course of medicine. The JSHO has the whose-who of the world of medicine and science working as its editorial staff and board. This includes Prof Joanna Floros, and Evan Pugh Professor of Paediatrics and Obstetrics, Penn State University Hershey, USA, who is the co-editor in chief. (The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer, views expressed are personal)

Professor's journey to becoming Bangladesh head

PTI n DHAKA

Life has come full circle for Nobel laureate Professor Mohammad Yunus, who faced persecution during Sheikh Hasina's regime for embezzlement, is now all set to head of the interim government in Bangladesh after she resigned and fled the country.

Yunus, who started as a Professor at national and international Universities, earned the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for women's empowerment through poverty alleviation, and received multiple national and international awards over the years. But back home, he faced harsh scrutiny by the Hasina government for more than a

decade due to obscure reasons while authorities initiated a series of investigations against him after she came to power in 2008. Bangladesh authorities launched a review of the statutory Grameen Bank's activities in 2011 and fired Yunus as its founding managing director on charges of violating the government retirement regulation. Many people believe Hasina became enraged when Yunus announced that he would form a political party in 2007 when the country was run by a military-backed government and Hasina was in prison. Yunus, however, did not follow through on the plan but at that time he criticised Bangladeshi politicians alleging they were only interested in money. Meanwhile, over the years, he was charged under dozens of cases. In January, Yunus was sentenced to six months in jail by a court on charges of labour law violation. On June 10 this year, a Dhaka court prosecuted Yunus and 13 others - currently out on bail - for embezzling as it rejected a plea for the dismissal of charges by the accused. The prosecution accused Yunus and the others of embezzling Taka 250 million (about USD 2 million) from the workers

welfare fund of Grameen Telecom, which owns a 34.2 per cent stake in Bangladesh's largest mobile phone operator, Grameenphone, a subsidiary of Norway's telecom giant Telenor. "She destroyed the legacy of her father Bangabandhu Mujibur Rahman. Bangladesh is liberated... We are a free country now," Yunus told an Indian portal from Paris after news broke out of Hasina fleeing the country amid civil unrest. Yunus was in Paris for a minor medical procedure, as reported by local media, when the President agreed to make him the head of the interim government. Notwithstanding the Hasina government's stand, Yunus continued to receive international accolades as was evident by the speech by Susanna B Afan, president of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, on June 27 this year at Manila. In 1984, the then 44-year-old Yunus was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership for "his pioneering efforts in enabling rural men and women to become economically self-sufficient through sound group-managed credit."



Stating that the work by Yunus, globally recognised as 'The Father of Microfinance' has not just inspired similar projects in Philippines, Indonesia and Pakistan but their respective founders too received the Ramon Magsaysay Award. The 2006 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded for his work in poverty alleviation and the empowerment of poor women through Grameen Bank where Yunus has 'successfully melded capitalism with social responsibility' through the microcredit institution. Born in pre-Independence India in 1940 in Chittagong, Yunus first studied at Dhaka University in Bangladesh, which was then East Pakistan; went as a Fulbright

scholar to study economics at Vanderbilt University in the US and obtained PhD in economics in 1969. The very next year, he became an assistant professor of economics at Middle Tennessee State University in the US but returned to Bangladesh to head the economics department at Chittagong University. The bio published at the time when Yunus was awarded the Nobel lists his international achievements inking from 1993 to 1995 as a member of the International Advisory Group for the Fourth World Conference on Women, a post to which he was appointed by the UN secretary general. He has also served on the Global Commission of Women's Health, the Advisory Council for Sustainable Economic Development and the UN Expert Group on Women and Finance, it adds. Apart from multiple national awards, Professor Yunus is the recipient of numerous international awards for his ideas and endeavours from countries including Sri Lanka, USA, Jordan, Sweden, Japan, The Netherlands, and South Korea. Published on January 1, 1991, his auto-

biography, 'Banker to the Poor: Microlending and the Battle Against World Poverty,' has been translated into at least a dozen languages including French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Gujarati, Chinese and Arabic. His sphere of influence was evident when in January, more than 241 global leaders, including over 125 Nobel Laureates and former US President Barack Obama, had expressed their concerns via an open letter to Hasina over Yunus' "continuous judicial harassment and potential jailing." With the regime change, it remains to be seen what will be the fate of over 150 other cases, including the major corruption charges that Yunus faces. Earlier, those could have seen him jailed for years if found guilty while the economist has denied all the wrongdoing. When one clicks on Yunus' own website, the very first quote of the Nobel laureate that greets you is, "If you imagine, Some day it will happen. If you don't imagine, It will never happen." For a person who had dreamed of a poverty-free Bangladesh, Yunus perhaps never had imagined that one day he would be heading his country.

Turkey to join genocide case against Israel in UN court

AP n ANKARA

Turkey on Wednesday filed a request with a UN court to join South Africa's genocide lawsuit against Israel, the foreign minister said. Turkey's ambassador to the Netherlands, accompanied by a group of Turkish legislators, submitted a declaration of intervention to the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Turkey, one of the fiercest critics of Israel's actions in Gaza, becomes the latest nation to seek to participate in the case. "No country in the world is above international law," Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Oncu Koculu said in a post on X. "The case at the International Court of Justice is extremely important in terms of ensuring that the crimes committed by Israel do not go unpunished." Turkish President Recep Tayyip

Erdogan has accused Israel of genocide, called for it to be punished in international courts and criticized Western nations for backing Israel. In May, Turkey suspended trade with Israel, citing its assault on Gaza. In contrast to Western nations that have designated Hamas as a terrorist organisation, Erdogan has commended the group, calling it a liberation movement. South Africa brought a case to the International Court of Justice late last year, accusing Israel of violating the genocide convention through its military operations in Gaza. Israel has strongly rejected accusations of genocide and has argued that the war in Gaza is a legitimate defensive action against Hamas militants for their Oct 7 attack in southern Israel that killed around 1,200 people and in which 250 hostages were taken. Nicaragua, Colombia, Libya,

Mexico, Spain and Palestinian officials have sought to join the case. The court's decision on their requests is still pending. If admitted to the case, the countries would be able to make written submissions and speak at public hearings. Preliminary hearings have already been held in the genocide case against Israel, but the court is expected to take years to reach a final decision. Keceli, meanwhile, called for the immediate implementations of precautionary measures ordered by the court, including a halt to military offensive and an increase in humanitarian aid to Gaza. Former allies Turkey and Israel have experienced a volatile relationship since Erdogan took power in 2003, marked by periods of severe friction and reconciliation. The war in Gaza disrupted the most recent attempts at normalising ties.

Tropical Storm Debby swirls over Atlantic, still dumping rain on Carolinas before moving north

AP n CHARLESTON (US)

Tropical Storm Debby was swirling over coastal Georgia and Carolinas on Wednesday, its wide bands of rain swelling inland waterways before it slowly marches north. Debby was expected to restrengthen a little and turn north toward the South Carolina coastline before its centre makes a second landfall late Wednesday or early Thursday, weather officials said. The meandering storm -- moving forward at just 4 mph (6 kph) Wednesday morning -- has already drenched coastal cities in Georgia and South Carolina with more than a foot (30 centimetres) of rain in places, stirring up tornadoes and submerging streets with waist-high floodwaters. But its core was surrounded by drier air and the worst rainfall was falling hundreds of miles to the north, into eastern North Carolina before spreading into southeast Virginia. Both declared a state of emergency. Forecasters warned 5 inches (13 centimetres) of rain could fall from South Carolina to Vermont through this weekend. The area of most concern Wednesday was in southeastern North Carolina, where Hurricane Matthew caused a historic billion-dollar flood in 2016. Two years later, many of



those records were broken during Hurricane Florence. Both storms killed dozens. The National Weather Service warned up to 9 inches (23 centimetres) of rain could fall west of Wilmington, North Carolina, in areas that already saw heavy rains overnight. Charleston and Savannah, Georgia, were deluged Monday and Tuesday, and Charleston imposed a curfew in its downtown peninsula that lasted 32 hours before it was lifted Wednesday. Dozens of roads were closed because of flooding similar to what the city sees several times a year now because of rising sea levels. Charleston Mayor Williams Cogswell said the closures avoided the need for water rescues and kept 'yahoos' from damaging properties by driving through flooded streets and pushing water over sandbags. In one Savannah neighbourhood, firefighters used boats to evacuate some residents and waded through floodwaters to deliver bottled water and other supplies to those who refused to leave. Michael Jones said water gushed into his home Monday evening, overturning the refrigerator and causing furniture to float. Outside, the water seemed to be everywhere and was too deep to flee safely. So Jones spent a sleepless night on his kitchen table before firefighters going door to door showed up in a boat Tuesday morning. "It was hell all night," Jones said. Debby's centre was about 90 miles (145 kilometres) east of

Savannah on Wednesday morning, according to a bulletin from the National Hurricane Center. It had maximum sustained winds of 45 mph (73 kph). "Tropical cyclones always produce heavy rain, but normally as they're moving, you know, it doesn't accumulate that much in one place," said Richard Pasch, of the hurricane centre. "But when they move very slowly, that's the worst situation." Green Pond in rural Colleton County, South Carolina, reported the most rain so far, just over 14 inches (36 centimetres). A nearby dam had water run over its top but did not crumble, while trees and washouts blocked a number of roads, county Fire-Rescue Assistant Chief David Greene said. Floodwaters remained in Colleton County Wednesday morning where police officers kept watch on barricades blocking roads where stately trees were reflected in the standing water. Tornadoes knocked down trees and damaged a few homes on Kiawah Island and Edisto Island. Crooked Hammock Brewery in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, closed early on Tuesday. "Flash flooding is super unpredictable, and we'd rather our staff and guests be home and safe," marketing coordinator Georgena Dimitriadis said. Far to the north in New York City, heavy storms that meteorologists said were being enhanced by Debby flooded some streets and expressways, stranding motorists. The weather service issued a flood watch until noon Wednesday for the entire city. Emergency officials warned of potential flash flooding, flying drones with loudspeakers in some New York City neighbourhoods to tell people in basement apartments to be ready to flee at a moment's notice. Debby made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane early Monday along the Gulf Coast of Florida. At least six people have died due to the storm, five of them in traffic accidents or from fallen trees. The sixth death involved a 48-year-old man in Gulfport, Florida, whose body was recovered after his anchored sailboat partially sank, WTSP-TV reported. President Joe Biden approved emergency declarations making federal disaster assistance available to Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas. Debby is finally forecast to pick up speed Thursday before weakening inland as the weather moves north over North Carolina and Virginia into the Washington area by Saturday.

UK police prepares for more clashes

PTI n LONDON

Thousands of police personnel, including those with specialist training, are geared up for the so-called 'standing army' of defence against an expected surge of far-right 'anti-immigration protests on Wednesday, this time targeted at immigration lawyers and their offices. After a week of violent clashes on the streets of different cities across the UK, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer chaired his second emergency COBRA meeting on Tuesday evening with ministers, police chiefs and security experts to draft a detailed strategy to counter any further riots. A list of solicitors' firms and immigration advice agencies has been circulating online, inviting protesters to "mask up" and turn out - described by the government as "unacceptable". "We're doing everything we can to ensure that where a police response is needed, it's in place, where support is needed for particular places, that is in place," Starmer told reporters after the Cabinet Office Briefing Room A (COBRA) meeting. "Obviously it's a difficult situation with disorder going on in a number of different places at the same time, but that is precisely why I held my second COBRA meeting to coor-

dinate the response and to get the assurance that I want and need that we do have adequate police in place, that we are able to cope with this disorder," he said. Around 400 arrests have been made, with around 100 charged and appearing before the courts for a sped up "substantive sentencing" process. "That should send a very powerful message to anybody involved, either directly or online, that you are likely to be dealt with within a week. Nobody, but nobody, should be involved themselves in this disorder," added Starmer, who pledged that all communities "will be safe". Stephen Parkinson, England's director of public prosecutions, has warned rioters that they could face terrorism charges. "We are willing to look at terrorism offences. I'm aware of at least one instance where that is happening," he told the BBC. In addition to more riot police being on standby, forces are also stepping up neighbourhood policing patrols, teams of detectives are drawing on CCTV, officers' body-worn footage and making use of retrospective facial recognition to identify perpetrators of violence, and intelligence teams are monitoring known influencers and organisers for activity.

Act responsibly, UK gov't tells Elon Musk

AP n LONDON

The British government has called on Elon Musk to act responsibly after the tech billionaire used his social media platform X to unleash a barrage of posts that officials say risk inflaming the violent unrest gripping the country. Justice Minister Heidi Alexander made the comments Tuesday morning after Musk posted a comment saying that "Civil war is inevitable" in the UK Musk later doubled down, highlighting complaints that the British criminal justice system treats Muslims more leniently than far-right activists and comparing Britain's crack-down on social media users to the Soviet Union. "Use of language such as a civil war is in no way acceptable," Alexander told Times Radio. "We are seeing police officers being seriously injured, buildings set alight, and so I really do think that everyone who has a platform should be exercising their power responsibly." Britain has been shaken by violence for more than a week, as police clashed with crowds spouting anti-immigrant and Islamophobic slogans in cities and towns from Northern Ireland to the south coast of England.

Khaleda Zia gets renewed passport B'desh violence: US

PTI n DHAKA

Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia, who was released from jail after the ouster of her arch-rival Sheikh Hasina, has received a renewed passport, her party said on Wednesday. Zia, 79, was sentenced to 17 years in prison for graft in 2018 under the rule of Hasina, 76, who resigned as prime minister on Monday and fled to India in the face of massive protests against her government. She has received a renewed passport, BNP media cell member Shairul Kabir Khan was quoted as saying by Dhaka Tribune newspaper. The renewal process for her passport was completed on Tuesday. Subsequently, Zia's personal secretary ABM Abdus Sattar received her renewed

machine-readable passport on her behalf later that night, it said. The Bangladesh National Party (BNP) chairperson, currently undergoing treatment for various ailments, was released on executive order from President Mohammed Shahabuddin on Tuesday following the collapse of the Hasina-led Awami League government. Zia had been imprisoned for more than two years. On March 25, 2020, the Hasina government suspended her sentence and granted her conditional release through an executive order. Subsequently, the government extended her sentence suspension and release period every six months, upon application. The rivalry between the two begums - Hasina and Zia - has defined politics in Bangladesh for decades.

retribution or revenge," the spokesperson said in response to a question. "As a friend and partner to the Bangladeshi people, the United States will continue to support Bangladesh's democratic aspirations and promote respect for human rights for all," said the spokesperson. Bangladesh is going through an unprecedented crisis with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was in power for 15 years, resigning and fleeing the country after a protest against a jobs quota scheme snowballed into a massive agitation against her and her government. More than 300 people have died during the past few tumultuous weeks. "We are monitoring the situation in Bangladesh very closely. We have long called for respect of democratic rights in Bangladesh, and we urge that the interim government formation be democratic and inclusive," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters at her daily news conference. "We commend the army for the restraint they have shown. We encourage all parties to refrain from further violence and restore peace as quickly as possible," she said. "We express our deep concern and sadness about the reports of casualties and injuries over the weekend and past weeks. We share our deepest condolences with those who lost loved ones and those who are suffering," said the press secretary. "It will be vital for the new government to carefully and credibly investigate all attacks and provide accountability and justice for victims," she said.

China, Saudi, UAE agree to roll over cash-strapped Pak's USD 12 bn debt for one year

PTI n ISLAMABAD

China, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have agreed to roll over cash-strapped Pakistan's USD 12 billion debt for one year, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is likely to approve its USD 7 billion bailout package later this month. After a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance on Tuesday, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb told reporters that there was no delay in the IMF Executive Board meeting, which is going to take place by the end of this month to approve the USD 7 billion Extended Fund Facility, the

Express Tribune reported on Wednesday. The Executive Board is scheduled to meet on August 28 to approve the USD 7 billion package, the report said, quoting government officials. The development marks an end to the uncertainty over the timing of the Executive Board meeting, which was contingent upon the rollover of debts by Pakistan's three traditional creditors, it said. Aurangzeb said the USD 12 billion cash deposits by China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates would be rolled over for one year, like last time. Earlier, he had said that the IMF had asked for the rollover for three to five years

after the Executive Board meeting. However, he clarified that the requirement was to secure the rollover for one year but the government was trying to have these rollovers for three to five years. He added that the three bilateral creditors had agreed to roll the loans over on the existing terms and conditions. The IMF announced a staff-level agreement for USD 7 billion last month subject to the approval of the Executive Board and securing financing commitments from the bilateral and multilateral creditors. The finance minister said there was no point in asking for an increase in the interest rates on these loans when the country's

foreign exchange reserves had strengthened compared to a year ago. The IMF, he added, had identified only a USD 3-5 billion financing gap over the three-year programme period, which was quite manageable. "Pakistan has also received an offer from a foreign commercial bank but we are waiting for the IMF Board approval to ask the lender to cut the offered interest rates," said Aurangzeb. The offer had come from a non-Gulf and non-Chinese commercial bank, he added, without disclosing the name.

A finance ministry official said that Standard Chartered Bank had offered a less than USD 400 million loan but it was asking for a double-digit interest rate that the government could not afford to pay. Aurangzeb said the government would wait for the IMF Board's approval to get the commercial bank to cut its offered interest rates. The finance minister said two important developments had taken place in the last few days which showed that Pakistan was well on its way to achieving macroeconomic stability. He described the Fitch

rating agency's decision to improve Pakistan's credit rating by one notch and the central bank's decision to cut the interest rates by 1% as "very critical elements for achieving macroeconomic stability". When asked as to why Standard and Poor's had not improved Pakistan's CCC+ rating, the minister stated that raising a CCC+ rating to a B negative one would have been a big jump. He hoped that the three rating agencies would improve Pakistan's standing to B negative by the end of this year, a grade where it can venture into the international capital markets to float sovereign bonds at relatively lower rates than offered at the current CCC+ ratings. The three international credit rating agencies have given below investment grade to Pakistani bonds due to their weak economic position and huge external financing requirements. However, Fitch last week improved the rating by one notch - from CCC to CCC+ - which was still below the investment grade. The finance minister said the government was trying to issue the Panda bond in the Chinese markets and had engaged a Chinese financial adviser firm to complete the transaction either by the end of this calendar year or in early 2025. Aurangzeb said the govern-



US to skip A-bomb memorial service in Nagasaki as Israel not invited

AP n TOKYO

US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel will skip this year's atomic bombing memorial service in Nagasaki because Israel was not invited, the embassy said Wednesday. Emanuel will not attend the event on Friday because it was "politicized" by Nagasaki's decision not to invite Israel, the embassy said.

He will instead honor the victims of the Nagasaki atomic bombing at a ceremony at a Buddhist temple in Tokyo, it said.

An atomic bomb dropped by the United States on Hiroshima on Aug. 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 Aug. 15, 1945, ending World War II and the country's nearly half-century of aggression in Asia.

Nagasaki Mayor Shiro Suzuki had indicated his reluctance in June to invite Israel, noting the

escalating conflict in the Middle East. He announced last week that Israel was not invited because of concern over "possible unforeseen situations" such as protests, sabotage or attacks on attendees. Nagasaki hoped to honor the atomic bomb victims "in a peaceful and solemn atmosphere," he said.

Suzuki said he made the decision based on "various developments in the international community in response to the ongoing situation in the Middle East" that suggested a possible risk that the ceremony would be disrupted.

In contrast, Hiroshima invited the Israeli ambassador to Japan to its memorial ceremony on Tuesday among 50,000 attendees who included Emanuel and other envoys, though Palestinian representatives were not invited.

Nagasaki officials said they were told that an official of the US Consulate in Fukuoka will represent the United States at Friday's ceremony. Five other

Group of Seven nations — Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the UK — and the European Union are also expected to send lower-ranking envoys to Nagasaki. Envoys from those nations signed a joint letter expressing their shared concern about Israel's exclusion, saying treating the country on the same level as Russia and Belarus — the only other countries not invited — would be misleading.

The envoys urged Nagasaki to reverse the decision and invite Israel to preserve the universal message of the city's ceremony. The exclusion of Israel would make their "high-level participation" difficult, they said.

British Ambassador to Japan Julia Longbottom, who attended the 79th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on Tuesday, told Japanese media that she planned to skip the Nagasaki ceremony because the city's decision to exclude Israel could send a wrong message.

Helicopter with 5 people on board crashes in Nepal

PTI n KATHMANDU

Four Chinese tourists were among five people killed in Nepal on Wednesday when a helicopter crashed in the mountains northwest region of Kathmandu.

Police have recovered five dead bodies from the crash site in Ward No 7 of Shivapuri Rural Municipality, Nuwakot, Myrepublica newspaper reported.

Nepal-based Air Dynasty helicopter, 9N-AJD, was en route to Rasuwa from Kathmandu when it crashed.

The helicopter departed from Kathmandu at 1:54 PM and was en route to Syaprubensi when it crashed. According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), a Prabhut helicopter (9N-ANL) was dispatched to the crash site immediately after the incident. There were five individuals on board, including four Chinese tourists, the paper said. The helicopter lost contact with the tower just three minutes after takeoff from Tribhuvan International Airport, according to the CAAN.

Citing a police official, the paper said that the bodies of two men, one woman and the pilot, identified as Arun Malla, were recovered from the crash site.

One body has not been identified yet as it is charred beyond recognition, Myrepublica reported. Superintendent of Police (SP) Shantiraj Koirala, at the District Police Office, Nuwakot, who reached the crash site, confirmed that five bodies had been recovered.

This crash comes just weeks after the Saurya Airlines plane crash at the Tribhuvan International Airport on July 24.

Putin accuses Ukraine of 'large-scale provocation'

AP n KYIV

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday described a Ukrainian incursion into the country's southwestern Kursk region as a "large-scale provocation" as his officials asserted that they were fighting off cross-border raids for a second day. Ukrainian official remained quiet about the scope of the operation.

Putin told Cabinet officials he would meet with top defense and security officials to discuss what he called the "indiscriminate shelling of civilian buildings, residential houses, ambulances with different types of weapons." He instructed the Cabinet to coordinate assistance to the Kursk region.

The head of the region urged residents to donate blood due to the intense fighting. "In the last 24 hours, our region has been heroically resisting attacks" by Ukrainian fighters, acting Gov. Alexei Smirnov said on Telegram, adding that all emergency services were on high alert.

Smirnov also said authorities had evacuated more than 200 people from areas under shelling, while several thousand others left in their own vehicles. If confirmed, the cross-border foray would be among Ukraine's largest since Russia's

full-scale invasion in February 2022, and unprecedented for its deployment of Ukrainian military units. Kyiv's aim could be to draw Russian reserves to the area, potentially weakening Moscow's offensive operations in several parts of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region where Russian forces have increased attacks and are advancing gradually toward operationally significant gains. But it could risk stretching out-manned Ukrainian troops further along the front line, which is more than 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) long. Even if Russia were to commit reserves to stabilize the new front, given its vast manpower and the relatively small number of Ukrainian forces engaged in the operation, it would likely have little long-term impact. However, the operation could boost Ukrainian morale at a time when Kyiv's forces are facing relentless Russian attacks and are expected to face more in coming weeks. Several Ukrainian brigades stationed along the border region said they could not comment. Ukraine's Defense Ministry and General Staff said they would not comment. Russian forces have swiftly repelled previous cross-border incursions, but not before

they caused damage and embarrassed authorities. The Russian Defense Ministry said Tuesday that up to 300 Ukrainian troops, supported by 11 tanks and more than 20 armoured combat vehicles, had crossed into Russia and suffered heavy losses. It said Wednesday that military and border guard troops "continued to destroy Ukrainian military units in the areas alongside the border in the Kursk region."

The ministry said Russian forces backed by artillery and warplanes "didn't allow the enemy to advance deeper into the territory of the Russian Federation." It wasn't possible to verify the Russian claims. Open-source monitors have also not been able to verify the claims. The US-based Institute for the Study of War could not verify whether damaged and abandoned armoured vehicles shown in geolocated video 7 kilometres (4 miles) north of the border west of Lyubimovka in the Kursk region were Ukrainian. The think tank also cast doubt on video shared by Russian military bloggers claiming to show the aftermath of the Ukrainian raids. Most of the damage shown "appears to be the result of routine Ukrainian shelling and does not indicate

that there was ground activity in the area," it said in its daily report. Responsibility for previous incursions into Russia's Belgorod and Bryansk regions has been claimed by two murky groups: the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Freedom of Russia Legion, which are made up of Russian citizens and have fought alongside Ukrainian forces. Disinformation and propaganda have played a central role in the war, now in its third year. Some Russian war bloggers who have proved knowledgeable about the war said that Ukrainian soldiers were in Kursk. Rybar, a Telegram channel run by Mikhail Zvinchuk, a retired Russian Defense Ministry press officer, said Ukrainian troops had seized three settlements in the region and continued to fight their way deeper into it. Another pro-Kremlin military blog, Two Majors, claimed that Ukrainian troops had advanced up to 15 kilometres (9 miles) into the region. Neither claim could be independently verified. The Kursk region's border with Ukraine is 245 kilometres (150 miles) long, making it possible for saboteur groups to launch swift incursions and capture some ground before Russia deploys reinforcements.

Namal Rajapaksa announced as candidate for Lanka presidency

PTI n COLOMBO

Namal Rajapaksa, the 38-year-old heir to the Rajapaksa dynasty, was on Wednesday named as the SLPP candidate for the presidential election, thus officially ending Rajapaksa family's backing to the incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Sagara Kariyawasam, the general secretary of the Sri Lanka People's Front (SLFP, also known locally by its popular Sinhalese name, Sri Lanka

Podujana Peramuna), announced the younger Rajapaksa's candidacy early on Wednesday morning at a ceremony at the party headquarters. Namal's entry has made the election a four-cornered contest. Besides, President Wickremesinghe, the main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and the Marxist JVP leader Anura Kumara Disanayake are already in the fray. The Rajapaksa - Mahinda, Basil and Gotabaya - were

instrumental in Wickremesinghe winning the parliamentary vote in July 2022 to take over Gotabaya's remaining term. It was soon after the unprecedented development of mid-April 2022 when the island nation declared its first-ever sovereign default since gaining independence from Britain in 1948 and almost civil war-like conditions followed as unrest spread amid locals over inflation and other economic stress that had led to Gotabaya's

ouster.

NASA delays next crew launch to buy more time for Boeing's troubled capsule

AP n WASHINGTON

NASA is delaying its next astronaut launch to buy more time at the International Space Station for Boeing's troubled new crew capsule. The space agency said Tuesday it's bumping SpaceX's four-person flight from this month to next. It's now targeted for Sept. 24 at the earliest. Officials said that will give them more time to analyze thruster and leak problems that hit Boeing's Starliner capsule after its June liftoff, its first with a crew on board.

Tuesday marked the two-month point at the space station for Starliner's test pilots, Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, who should have

been back by mid-June. NASA is weighing all its options for returning the two veteran astronauts, including a ride home in a SpaceX capsule. "NASA and Boeing continue to evaluate the spacecraft's readiness, and no decisions have been made regarding Starliner's return," NASA said in a statement. Further details were expected at a news conference set for Wednesday. Only two docking ports at the space station can accommodate U.S. astronaut capsules and, right now, both are occupied. So one will need to be vacated before the next SpaceX crew can arrive. Russia has its own parking places for its Soyuz capsules. The latest setback means the

four astronauts who flew up with SpaceX in March now also face a longer mission than planned. Over the past several weeks, Boeing has conducted thruster test firings on the ground as well as in space to better understand why five thrusters failed ahead of Starliner's June 6 arrival at the space station. All but one came back online. Helium leaks in the capsule's propulsion system also cropped up. Citing the testing, the company late last week said: "Boeing remains confident in the Starliner spacecraft and its ability to return safely with crew." Boeing and SpaceX topped NASA's list for astronaut taxi

service to and from the space station, after the shuttles retired in 2011. NASA signed contracts worth billions with both companies in order to have a backup in case one of them got sidelined by an accident. SpaceX launched its first crew in 2020; the upcoming flight will be its 10th astronaut flight for NASA. It's also sent a few private crews into orbit. Boeing has had to overcome multiple Starliner problems over the years. The company had to launch an empty Starliner twice before committing to a crew, repeating the initial flight test because of bad software and other issues. The delays have cost the company more than \$1 billion.



A group of Mexican faithful wearing traditional costumes meet with Pope Francis attends the weekly general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican on Wednesday. AP/PTI

Tunisian Oppn figure Moussi sentenced to prison

AP n TUNIS

A potential presidential candidate in Tunisia has been sentenced to two years in prison, marking another setback to the country's fledgling opposition challenging President Kais Saied as he seeks a new term.

Abir Moussi, a 49-year-old lawyer and the head of the right-wing Free Destourian Party, was arrested in October after criticizing the electoral process and presidential decrees guiding it, alleging a lack of transparency.

Following a complaint by the North African nation's election authority, she was found guilty of violating a controversial anti-fake news decree outlawing spreading information that slanders or harms others. The law has been widely used to prosecute those who criticize authorities. Moussi's lawyer Nafaa Laribi told The Associated Press on Tuesday that she still intends to run in the Oct. 6 presidential election, and that, unlike other candidates, nothing in Monday's sentence prevents her from running.

Laribi said Moussi's morale remained high, and he planned to appeal. The sentence is the latest in a growing crackdown that observers have said is politically motivated against Saied's critics, regardless of political affiliation. With Moussi and other leading opposition figures in prison, Saied is expected to face little election competition in what was once the Middle East and North

Africa's most progressive democracy. Moussi appeals to parts of the population nostalgic for Tunisia's pre-revolutionary era. A strong critic of Islamists such as imprisoned Ennahda leader Rached Ghannouchi, Moussi was an official in longtime President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's ruling party. Over the years, she became one of the country's most popular and contentious political figures.

Thai court dissolves progressive Move Forward Party, which won election but failed to take power

AP n BANGKOK

A court in Thailand on Wednesday ordered the dissolution of the progressive Move Forward Party, which finished first in last year's general election, saying it violated the constitution by proposing an amendment of a law against defaming the country's royal family.

The Constitutional Court said it voted unanimously to dissolve the party because its campaign to amend the law was considered an attempt to overthrow the nation's constitutional monarchy.

The Move Forward Party was unable to form a government after topping the polls because members of the Senate, at that time a conservative military-appointed body, declined to endorse its candidate for prime minister.

The Election Commission had filed a petition against the Move Forward Party after the Constitutional Court ruled in January that it must stop advocating changes to the law, known as Article 112, which protects the monarchy from criticism with penalties of up to 15 years in jail per offense. The ruling also imposed a 10-year ban on political activity on those who held the party's executive positions while it

campaigns for the proposed amendment. Among them are its charismatic former leader, Pita Limjaroenrat, and current chief Chaithawat Tulathon. It remained unclear what will happen to the rest of its non-executive lawmakers, although Pita said in an interview with The Associated Press that the party will ensure they have a smooth transition into a new house, or a new party.

Lawmakers of a dissolved political party can keep their seats in Parliament if they move to a new party within 60 days. Move Forward and its reform agenda shook up Thai politics by winning the most seats in the 2023 elections even though afterward it was blocked from taking power. The latest legal action is one of many that have drawn widespread criticism and are seen as part of a years-long attack on the country's progressive movement by conservative forces trying to keep their grip on power.

The party was denied power after the Senate refused to accept its then-leader Pita's nomination as prime minister. Senators, who were given power to veto prime ministerial candidates by the constitution adopted in 2017 under a military government, said they opposed Pita because of his intention to reform the royal

defamation law. Move Forward was later removed from a coalition formed with the now-governing Pheu Thai party and became head of the opposition. In its arguments submitted to the court, Move Forward said the Constitutional Court does not have jurisdiction to rule on the case and the petition filed by the Election Commission did not follow due process because Move Forward was not given an opportunity to defend itself before it was submitted to the court.

The court said in its ruling that it has the authority to rule on the case, and that its previous ruling in January was enough of an evidence for the Election Commission to file the case without having to hear more evidence from the party. Human rights organizations have expressed concern about the case. Amy Smith, executive director of the human rights group Fortify Rights, ahead of the ruling called the attempt to "directly attack on democratic principles" that "severely undermines Thailand's commitment to human rights". The chairperson of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Ben Cardin, sent a letter to Thai Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa to express his concern. He said

that dissolving a party that "secured a significant victory" in the 2023 elections would "disenfranchise millions of voters who called for progressive change and democratic reform". Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin has maintained that the Thai justice system is fair and impartial, and that the government cannot interfere with the judicial process.

Move Forward's predecessor, the Future Forward party, was dissolved by the Constitutional Court in 2020 on charges of violating election laws on donations to political parties.

Thailand's courts, especially the Constitutional Court, are considered a bulwark of the country's royalist establishment, which has used them and nominally independent state agencies such as the Election Commission to issue rulings to cripple or sink political opponents.

The dissolution of Future Forward, whose promises of reforms were particularly attractive for younger people disillusioned after years of military rule, further highlighted the struggle between the progressive movement and conservative forces in Thailand. It was one of the triggers for youth-led pro-democracy protests that sprang up across the country in 2020.

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Assistant Registrar	1	Last basic pay drawn basic pension + DA
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-sd/
Managing Director
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Short Term E-Tender Enq. No. 7586/P-1/EMP-12751 dated 05.08.24
Dy.Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-1) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender Id No. 2024_POWER_124984_1 for Procurement of Special purpose Welding Electrodes for the year 2024-25. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 06.08.24/ 02.00 PM onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
RTP-80/24

76155/12/3240/2023/36455 Dated CHD :- 8/7/2024

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Mobile No. 96461-22067

E-Tender Enq. No. 7591/P-3/EMP-12761 dated 06.08.24
Dy.Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender Id No. 2024_POWER_125048_1 for Procurement of MSRL tank for Storage of HCL acid in DM Plant. Stage-II at GGSSTP, Rupnagar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 07.08.2024/ 04.00 PM onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
RTP-81/24

76155/12/3254/2023/36472 Dated CHD :- 8/7/2024

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Stock markets snap 3-day slump

PTI n MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty bounced back sharply on Wednesday after three straight days of slump following a rally in global peers and value-buying in metal, IT and oil shares at lower levels.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 874.94 points or 1.11 per cent to settle at 79,468.01 with 25 of its constituents ending with gains and five with losses. During the day, it jumped 1,046.13 points or 1.33 per cent to 79,639.20. The NSE Nifty jumped 304.95 points or 1.27 per cent to 24,297.50. Intra-day, it surged 345.15 points or 1.43 per cent to 24,337.70. Among Sensex firms, Adani Ports & SEZ rose the most by 3.42 per cent. Power Grid climbed 3.39 per cent, Tata Steel by 2.4 per cent and JSW Steel by 2.61 per cent.



metals, energy, and pharma being the top performers. "Global markets experienced a notable rebound after the BoJ's Deputy Governor reassured that the central bank would not raise interest rates during a period of financial instability. The Indian market also witnessed broad-based buying across sectors, with the realty sector seeing a relief rally due to the reinstatement of indexation benefits," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 2.63 per cent and smallcap index climbed 2.39 per cent. All indices ended in the positive territory. Oil & Gas jumped 3.75 per cent, metal

surged 3.44 per cent, energy (3.32 per cent), capital goods (2.89 per cent), telecommunication (2.80 per cent), services (2.53 per cent), commodities (2.49 per cent), healthcare (2.03 per cent). Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said that markets experienced a breather after the recent decline, gaining over a percent, driven by strong global cues. As many as 2,985 stocks advanced while 948 declined and 98 remained unchanged. Asian markets settled in the positive territory, where Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended significantly higher. European markets also rallied.

Sebi issues `25 cr notice to Karvy Stock Broking, Parthasarathy

PTI n NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Wednesday sent a notice to Karvy Stock Broking Ltd (KSBL) and its CMD C Parthasarathy asking them to pay around Rs 25 crore within 15 days in a case pertaining to misappropriation of clients' funds by misusing the Power of Attorney.

The notice came after they failed to pay the fine imposed on them by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). Sebi in April 2023 barred KSBL and Parthasarathy from the securities market for seven years and also imposed a penalty of Rs 21 crore on them for misappropriating clients' funds by misusing the Power of Attorney given to the broking firm. Individually, the regulator had levied a fine of Rs 13 crore on KSBL and Rs 8 crore on Parthasarathy, promoter-cum-managing director. In its fresh notice, the regulator has directed KSBL and Parthasarathy to pay Rs 15.21 crore and Rs 9.36 crore, respectively, which includes interest and recovery cost,

within 15 days. In the event of non-payment of dues, the markets regulator will recover the amount by attaching bank accounts, attaching as well as selling the entities' moveable and immovable property. Besides, Parthasarathy may face "arrest and detention in prison". The case relates to KSBL's massive asset mobilisation drive followed by raising of huge funds from financial institutions by using the securities mobilised from the clients with a promise to pay them interest. These funds were misappropriated and diverted to KSBL's connected entities, thereby defaulting in its obligations to settle the securities and funds with the clients as per regulatory instructions. In its order passed in April last year, the regulator found that KSBL was raising funds by pledging clients' securities and by misusing the Power of Attorney (PoA) granted to it by its clients. Further, the funds by KSBL were being diverted to its group entities thereby violating various provisions of law.

Rupee settles 4 paise lower at 83.96 against US dollar

PTI n MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day lower by 4 paise at 83.96 (provisional) against US dollar on Wednesday, weighed down by a recovery in the US dollar and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. Forex traders said the Indian rupee depreciated on Wednesday on a strong US dollar and positive crude oil prices. However, strength in the domestic markets cushioned the downside. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.86 and touched an intraday low of 83.97 against the dollar during the session. It finally settled at 83.96 (provisional) against the American currency, down 4 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee recovered from its all-time low level and settled for the day 17 paise higher at 83.92 against the US dollar. The local unit had slumped 37 paise to settle at an all-time low of 84.09 against the US dollar on Monday.



"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on a recovery in the US dollar and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. However, positive global equities may support the rupee at lower levels," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Any further intervention by the Reserve Bank may also support the rupee. Investors may watch out for RBI's monetary policy decision. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.75 to Rs 84.20, Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, gained 0.31 per cent to

103.28 points. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 1.22 per cent higher at USD 77.41 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 874.94 points, or 1.11 per cent, to close at 79,468.01 points, while the Nifty advanced 304.95 points, or 1.27 per cent, to 24,297.50 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Tuesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 3,531.24 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel started its three-day deliberations for the next set of bi-monthly monetary policy on Tuesday 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.

Goyal urges BIMSTEC group to relook at progress of FTA talks

PTI n NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday suggested the seven member countries of the BIMSTEC bloc to relook at the progress of Free Trade Agreement talks which are moving at a very slow pace. He said that the members can think of negotiating a preferential trade agreement instead of a full-fledged free trade pact. BIMSTEC stands for the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. Its seven members are five South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka) and two Southeast Asian countries (Myanmar and Thailand). The bloc has been negotiating a proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) since 2004. So far over 20 rounds of talks have been held. The last one was held in 2018. "I would like to raise a few fundamental issues about where we stand and what are the possibilities of making this FTA a reality," Goyal said here at CII's BIMSTEC Business Summit 2024.



He said that so far 22 rounds of talks have been held for the agreement and this itself raises a question on whether "we need to pause and have a relook at the track where we are going." The last round of negotiations took place some six years ago, which means something is holding back this FTA. The reasons for slow progress can be the non-trade barriers or trade barriers coming in the way of normal trade, he said adding the possible impact of other regional FTAs on the BIMSTEC region could be the cause of the delay. "It could be the trade

practices or current trade relationships that could be a reason for this FTA not taking place," the minister said. He also asked the business leaders of the seven countries to think whether they need this agreement. The minister further suggested the member nations to consider trade in local currencies to balance out trade imbalances. "I would urge business leaders also to give honest feedback of what you feel about the potential BIMSTEC FTA. Do you see merit in it, Do you see value in it," he said. Feedback from the business community would help the

political leaders to take a decision on this. He asked the CII to take the lead and discuss about the proposed pact and come out with their recommendations by next year's Summit. "Maybe, we can begin with a PTA (preferential trade agreement) if not a full blown FTA...But let's examine the realistic possibility and move forward on a fast track basis," he said. Representatives from the member countries including Sri Lanka, Myanmar and, Thailand talked about the early conclusion of FTA negotiations as it would help boost trade and investments in the region. Overall, India's total trade with BIMSTEC countries amounted to USD 44.32 billion in 2023-24. On Bangladesh, Goyal said, "We are all deeply concerned about the evolving situation in Bangladesh and we wish the people of Bangladesh well and we will convey our best wishes for a smooth transition and bright future for the people of Bangladesh".

Pan masala makers to pay `1 lakh penalty from Oct 1 for failure to register machines with taxmen

PTI n NEW DELHI

The government has notified October 1 as the date for implementation of the penalty provision for manufacturers of pan masala and similar tobacco products, if they fail to register their packing machinery with GST authorities. The GST Network had earlier in May and June notified two forms GST SRM-I and II for registering machines used by such manufacturers and to report inputs procured and corresponding outputs with tax authorities. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on August 6 notified October 1, 2024, as the date for levy of up to Rs 1 lakh penalty for failure to register their packing machines with GST authorities. In January, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) had announced the introduction of a new registration and monthly return filing procedure to improve GST compliance for manufacturers of pan masala and tobacco products effective April 1. The date was later extended till May 15.



The move to overhaul the registration, record-keeping, and monthly filing of such businesses was aimed at improving Goods and Service Tax (GST) compliance for manufacturers of pan masala and tobacco products. Via the Finance Bill 2024 in February, the GST law was amended to say that manufacturers of pan masala, gutka and similar tobacco products will have to pay a penalty of up to Rs 1 lakh, if they fail to register their packing machinery with GST authorities with effect from April 1. The procedure was to be applicable for manufacturers of pan-masala, unmanufactured tobacco

(without lime tube) with or without brand name, 'Hookah' or 'gudaku' tobacco, smoking mixtures for pipes and cigarettes, chewing tobacco (without lime tube), filter khaini, jarda scented tobacco, snuff and branded or unbranded 'Guthka', etc. The manufacturers of such tobacco products are required to furnish the details of packing machines being used for filling and packing of packages in Form GST SRM-I, electronically within 30 days of the notification coming into effect i.e., April 1, 2024. The input and output statement GST SRM-II needs to be filed by the 10th of the succeeding month.

Amazon partners with 45 Govt emporiums, NGOs, trade bodies to empower local artisans

PTI n NEW DELHI

E-commerce major Amazon India on Wednesday said that it has partnered with over 45 government emporiums, NGOs, and trade bodies in India to bridge the gap between artisans and customers, providing economic opportunities for marginalized weaving communities. "Customers can shop for over 1.5 lakh products featured from 25 states depicting regional various crafts of India. "Amazon will also launch a showcase of selection from over 35 State emporiums including Biswa Bangla, Panthoibi, Garvi Gurjari, House of Himalayas and more," said a company statement. More than 2,500 master weavers, co-operatives, artisans and government organisations under various ministries like Textiles, Cottage Industries, and Tribal Welfare, among others have been onboarded on Amazon.in to sell online, according to the statement.

TRAI to review, tighten regulations to curb spam calls: Lahoti

PTI n NEW DELHI

Telecom regulator will review and strengthen regulations to curb pesky, spam calls, TRAI Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti said on Wednesday. The crackdown on pesky calls has figured high on the agenda of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, and the regulator has been hardening its stance on the issue, amid rising consumer complaints around unsolicited communications from unauthorised telemarketers. "We had an interaction with service providers on spam calls and that is the next thing on our table. We will work seriously...We will plug any loopholes that people are finding on existing regulations to tighten (the checks on) spam call issue," Lahoti said on the sidelines of India SatCom 2024 organised by Broadband India Forum (BIF). TRAI on Tuesday held a meeting and conveyed a strong message to service providers and their telemarketers to take effective measures to curb bulk communications using voice calls. As part of the crackdown, the regulator has sought proactive action from all the stakeholders specially access



service providers (telcos) and their delivery telemarketers. The immediate action sought includes implementing technical solutions for traceability and preventing bulk calling by enterprise customers using 10-digit numbers. Asked about the rising instances of fraud and scams over calls, and actions that are being proposed, Lahoti said that a joint committee of regulators is working collectively to address the issue. "The role of TRAI comes in controlling spam calls. Where it is fraudster or scammer...It also becomes an issue of law enforcement where Ministry of Home Affairs... And financial sector regulator also plays a role," he said. Asked if raising the criminal liability could serve as an effective deterrent, he said, "We will review regulations to make it strong and very strict as far as control of spam is concerned...As far as the scam is concerned that falls in the domain of law".

Jio's share of data traffic in India rises to about 60% in FY24: RIL annual report

PTI n NEW DELHI

Telecom major Jio's share in the overall data traffic in India increased to about 60 per cent in 2023-24, according to the annual report of parent firm Reliance Industries Limited. Jio's ahead-of-the-curve investments in next-generation network and digital technologies would sustain a competitive edge and market share gains, it said and added this will ensure strong and consistent shareholder return over the coming years. In the annual report, Reliance Industries' Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani said Jio turned a "Data Dark India" into a "Data Rich" nation with affordable, high-speed 4G data, and followed it up with a 5G network rollout across India in world-record time. According to the annual report, the rollout of the next-generation fixed wireless networks would catalyse demand for high-speed fixed broadband. Rural areas are expected to see a higher uptake of these services due to limited last-mile infrastructure currently. The report further said Jio's indigenously developed technologies are being deployed at scale in India and will subsequently be taken to the rest of the world.



With highest average per capita data usage at 28.7 GB per month in the March 2024 quarter, the company has recorded a 31 per cent year-over-year increase in overall data traffic to about 149 exabytes during FY 2023-24 with increase in 5G user base as well as its fixed broadband connections. An extraordinarily large unit of digital data, one exabyte is equal to one billion gigabytes. "Jio has built enough data capacity to serve over a billion Indians for their digital needs at homes, offices, and on-the-go. Jio's share of data traffic in India has increased to about 60 per cent, making it the most preferred broadband network," the RIL annual report said. The company leads the Indian telecom market both in mobile and fixed line segment with a total subscriber base of 48.18 crore comprising 10.8 crore 5G

users and 1.2 crore fixed broadband users. "The Jio True5G network now carries almost 30 per cent of Jio's mobility data traffic, and the entire 5G data is now carried on Jio's own 5G+4G combo core. Jio is the only operator in India rolling out 5G on Standalone architecture," the report said. Highlighting the opportunities, it said Jio's all-India True5G network is "strongly positioned" to lead the progress towards 5G in India. Jio's deep fiber presence and rollout of fixed wireless access services are primed to connect 100 million premises with digital solutions, it said emphasising that Jio's connectivity and compute infrastructure would drive market share gains. On the threats landscape, the annual report said that disruptive technological changes could make current

technologies obsolete and that entry of a new disruptive player or price competition could impact long-term returns. "Jio's ahead-of-the-curve investments in next-generation network and digital technologies would sustain a competitive edge and market share gains. This will ensure strong and consistent shareholder return over the coming years," the report said. The company is also making concerted efforts in building capabilities in evolving technologies such as AI/ML (Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning), AR/VR (Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality), robotics, natural language recognition and processing. Ambani said the world is increasingly recognising India as an innovation hub, and asserted that Jio will continue to play a stellar role in building the nation's digital infrastructure and capabilities. "With the launch of Jio 4G in 2016, we set out on a journey to make digital inclusion in India a reality. Jio turned a Data Dark India into a Data Rich nation, supplying every Indian home with affordable, high-speed 4G data, and this year, Jio has further enhanced the country's digital infrastructure by rolling out its True5G network across India in world-record time," he said.

Bangladesh unrest: Buyers hesitant to place orders in India unless Govt tweaks policies, says AEPC

PTI n NEW DELHI

Amid the civil unrest in Bangladesh, buyers will remain hesitant to place their orders in India unless the Modi government tweaks its import policies to allow greater and easier access to imported man-made fabrics, trims and accessories, Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) said on Wednesday. AEPC also stated that buyers are "very concerned" with the escalation of the civil unrest in Bangladesh and have no option but to pull out their orders from the nation and place them elsewhere at least in the short term. According to AEPC Chairman Sudhir Sekhri, most of these orders are in man-made fabrics, purchased from buyer nominated sources in China, Korea and even Europe. "Shifting these short-delivery orders using special imported fabrics to India is not viable, given India's current import policies. Only orders in fabrics of Indian origin are expected to be shifted to Indian factories," he added. The AEPC Chairman observed that buyers will continue to be hesitant to place their orders in India unless Government of India tweaks its import policies to allow greater and easier access to imported man-made fabrics, trims and accessories.



"In the long term, buyers will remain skeptical of being overly dependent on Bangladesh. Even before the current turmoil in Bangladesh, buyers were already looking for capacities elsewhere, due to capacity saturation in Bangladesh. The recent turmoil will expedite their plans. Indian factories will get a piece of the cake only if they ramp up capacities," Sekhri stated. Bangladesh is facing its worst political crisis since Independence in 1971. The neighbouring country has plunged into uncertainty after street protests over job quota forced Sheikh Hasina to quit as prime minister and flee. "Buyers are very concerned with the escalation of the civil unrest in Bangladesh. In the short term, fast fashion buyers have no option but to pull out their orders from Bangladesh and place them elsewhere," the AEPC Chairman said.

I THINK IT MIGHT BE SABOTAGE: BOXING ICON VIJENDER ON VINESH'S DISQUALIFICATION

PTI n NEW DELHI

Indian boxing stalwart Vijender Singh has alleged that wrestler Vinesh Phogat's disqualification from the Olympics final might be a case of sabotage as elite athletes like her are well-versed with the techniques of cutting weight before major competitions.



Vijender, who is India's first and only male boxer to have won an Olympic medal, knows a thing or two about maintaining weight before major bouts and he said it is shocking that Vinesh was 100gm over in the weigh-in before an Olympic final.

"I think it might be sabotage. 100gm, you have got to be kidding me. We athletes can shed 5 to 6kg overnight. It is difficult no doubt but we know how to control our hunger, thirst, and exert to the extreme," the middle-weight (75kg) boxer told PTI.

"And when I say sabotage I mean people who are not happy to see India rise as a sporting nation. This girl has been through so much, your heart breaks for her. What more could she have done? Which other test?" he wondered.

Vinesh was the face of a lengthy protest against former Wrestling Federation of India head Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has been accused of sexual harassment and intimidation by women wrestlers. She had endured police detention, nights on the streets and a tumultuous qualification process before

making it here. The highlight of her remarkable performance at the Olympics was the opening win over defending champion Yui Susaki of Japan who came into the competition undefeated in her international career.



Tough challenge awaits Chopra in bid for another piece of history

PTI n PARIS

His stunning monster throw of 89.34m in the qualification round made quite a statement but a tough challenge awaits defending champion Neeraj Chopra as he seeks another piece of history in the Paris Olympics men's javelin throw final round here on Thursday.

Just like he did at the same stage in the Tokyo Olympics three years back, Chopra needed just a few seconds to top the qualification round with his opening throw but the similarity ends there.

This time, the quality of the field is better than Tokyo with nine throwers crossing the automatic final round qualification mark of 84m in Paris as against six in Tokyo.

Kellie of Ireland wins second boxing gold and retires

AP n PARIS

Kellie Harrington is an unusual boxing champion. She is passionate only about the amateur version of her pro-dominated sport, and she has long claimed to have no ambitions of being paid to fight.



"I'm going to go out a champion. That's the way I want to go out. I don't want to go out and lose a fight and then retire. I'll retire happy."

Harrington is the first Irish woman to win gold medals at two Olympics, and she is just one of four Irish athletes to retain an Olympic title. After winning

three years ago in Tokyo, she clinched her second gold with a remarkable charge through the Paris field, capped by her 4-1 victory over China's Yang Wenlu at Roland Garros.

Harrington isn't the fastest or the most powerful woman in the lightweight division, but she might be the best ever to fight at the weight in the four Olympics with women's boxing.

"It has been four fights with absolutely fantastic opponents," Harrington said. "Everyone who is here is the best of the best. Everyone deserves respect."

Harrington's final drew thousands of Irish fans to the famed tennis arena where she clinched her gold. They waved flags, chanted her name and generally put on a party while their improbable boxing hero got her final job done.

"To have the support of the nation. It is just amazing," Harrington said. "The people here today lifted me. They made me feel like I wasn't tired and I was exhausted."

Demoralised India need to regroup quickly to win in bronze medal play-off

PTI n PARIS

A heart-wrenching defeat in the semifinals, notwithstanding, a demoralised Indian men's hockey team will have to regroup quickly and aim for a second consecutive podium finish at the Olympics when it takes on Spain in the bronze medal play-off here on Thursday.



The Indians played bravely against Germany, putting their defence under pressure from the start and in the process took the lead in the seventh minute through a penalty corner conversion by skipper Harmanpreet Singh.

But the Germans came back strongly in the second quarter and fourth quarters to secure the close win, courtesy some silly defensive lapses from the Indians, especially Jarmanpreet Singh.

The Indians too were guilty of wasting too many scoring chances, including as many as 10 penalty corners, while converting two, one directly and another through variation. The opposition teams seemed to have found out a way to deny one of the world's best drag-flicker Harmanpreet as he is second best option from set pieces after Harmanpreet.

US rolls into semifinals of basketball tournament, eases past Brazil 122-87

AP n PARIS

All the favored teams in the first three men's basketball quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics had problems. Canada lost to France, Serbia erased a 24-point deficit to beat Australia. Germany had to shake off a double-digit deficit before beating Greece.



night for the gold medal; Thursday's losers will play Saturday morning for the bronze medal.

"Everybody expects us to win," U.S. Forward Jayson Tatum said. "But you don't take things for granted, right? Canada lost earlier. It's a different game. It's not like playoffs, where it's a series. We've got one game and a lot of (stuff) can happen in one game, especially over here."

If there was one issue, it was this: LeBron James left in the third quarter after catching an elbow around his left eye, struck by Brazil's Georjinho de Paula while going for a rebound. James went down, eventually pressed a towel over the eye and left for the locker room area later in the

Echikunwoke changes countries and wins a hammer silver for US

AP n SAINT-DENIS

This time at the Olympics, hammer thrower Annette Nneka Echikunwoke got to compete. Not only compete, but win a medal - for the United States.

Three years ago, Echikunwoke arrived at the Tokyo Games ready to represent Nigeria, but she wound up needing to leave before even getting to take a throw. Nigeria was among a handful of countries deemed "high risk" by track's anti-doping regulators in the lead-up to those Olympics - forcing its athletes to be subjected to more drug testing.

Echikunwoke was among those from Nigeria who did not meet the requirement and so was not allowed to participate. The 28-year-old was born in

Ohio and originally decided to represent Nigeria because that's where her parents are from. But after the issues in 2021, she switched her Olympic country to the U.S., and on Tuesday night became the first American woman to earn Summer Games medal in the hammer, getting a silver.



Echikunwoke was in the early lead before Canada's Camryn Rogers won the gold on her second-to-last throw. "I think (this medal) could have happened three years ago, but I'm happy it's happening now," Echikunwoke said. "I feel like everything happens for a reason, even if it's bad or good or ugly or whatever the case may be. This is beautiful!"



HISTORY-MAKING BHAKEE ARRIVES HOME TO ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION

PTI n NEW DELHI
Star pistol shooter Manu Bhaker landed back in the country on Wednesday after her historic feat of winning two medals in a single edition of the Olympic Games and was welcomed by hundreds of supporters and her family, who braved a steady drizzle to give her a memorable reception here.

The Air India flight (AI 142), which brought Bhaker from Paris to Delhi, landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport at around 9:20am, delayed by one hour.

Hundreds of people, who waited at the airport long before her arrival despite the morning drizzle in the city, accorded her — and her coach Jaspal Rana — an enthusiastic reception.

The 22-year-old Bhaker won a bronze each in the women's 10m air pistol and 10m air pistol mixed team event — where she had paired with Sarabjot Singh — to script Olympic history for the country.

Before her, only British-Indian athlete Norman Pritchard had achieved the rare landmark for the country with his two silver medals in 200m sprint and 200m hurdles at the 1900 Olympics but this happened in the pre-Independence era.

Before leaving for India, Bhaker had stated that she was looking forward to a grand welcome and she was not disappointed on Wednesday. The youngster was greeted with bouquets, garlands, and celebratory dhol emerging from the airport exit. Flower petals were showered on her and Rana as soon as they came out amid significant police presence to manage the crowd.

Among those present were Bhaker's parents — Ram Kishan and Sumedha — and sports enthusiasts and officials from her home state Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, the state to which Rana belongs. Rana's father was also there at the airport.

"It is a matter of pride for us that a daughter of India is coming back after creating history by winning two medals in an Olympics. It has never happened before. She is only 22 years old," said former Uttarakhnad Sports Minister and Rana's father, Narayan Singh Rana.

"She is coming along with her coach Jaspal Rana. He is my son. He brought glory playing for India in shooting. Jaspal Rana and Abhinav Bindra started it all," he added.

People gathered at the airport long before her arrival and they celebrated her feat with song and dance, holding banners with photos of Bhaker and Rana.

Bhaker will be meeting sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya in the afternoon. She will head back to Paris on Saturday to participate in the closing ceremony on Sunday where she will be one of India's flag-bearers.

Top surfers converge in Kovalam for final National Surfing Championship

PTI n CHENNAI
The Covelong Classic, the final National Surfing Championship of the year, is set to kick off at Kovalam near here on Thursday, with over 75 surfers from across the country competing for top honours.

The event will happen across four categories — Men's Open, Women's Open, Junior Boys & U-16, and Junior Girls & U-16. The 2024 season started with the International Surfing Festival Kerala Varkala, followed by the Indian Open of Surfing in Mangalore, and the third stop — Mahabs Point Break Challenge — happening earlier this month in Mahabalipuram.

Covelong Classic will be a three-day surfing carnival organised by the Tamil Nadu Surfing Association under the aegis of the Surfing Federation of India, to be hosted by Surf Surf.

The competition has also received significant support from the Tamil Nadu Government and the Ministry of Youth Welfare and Sports Development.

Among the top surfers to participate will be Ajeesh Ali, Srikanth D, Harish M and Ramesh Budihal in the Men's Open categories.

Recently, Ajeesh, Harish and Srikanth were named in the Indian squad for the Asian Surfing Championship happening next week in Maldives.

Additionally, Srikanth D will be looking to defend his title.

In the Women's Open category, Kamali P (ranked first) has already secured the overall championship title, making her performance at the Covelong Classic irrelevant.

However, she is anticipated to face stern competition from fellow surfers Sandhya Arun (ranked second), Shrishti Selvam (ranked third), and Sugar Shanti Banarse (ranked fourth).

Kamali and Sugar have also been selected for the Indian squad competing in the Asian Surfing Championship, representing the Women's Open and Junior U-18 categories, respectively.

Local surfers Tayin Arun and Kishore Kumar will grab eyeballs, thanks to their recent performances and national rankings in the Junior Boys & U-16 category.

Additionally, fellow local surfer Harish P, having gained recognition for his impressive surfing skills, will aim to defend his Covelong Classic championship title with determination.

In the Junior Girls & U-16 category, defending champion Kamali P will look to secure a double victory, as she is a strong contender for both the Women's Open and Junior Girls & U-16 titles at the Covelong Classic.

Meanwhile, Dhamayanthi Sriram (ranked second) and Saanvi Hegde (ranked third) will be putting forth their best efforts to claim the title.

Surfing Federation of India's president, Arun Vasu said, "As the surfing calendar culminates with the year's final national championship, the Covelong Classic, the best surfers are set to compete in the Asian Surfing Championship. I would like to extend my best wishes to all the surfers participating in this prestigious national championship."

Apart from the medals and trophies, victors in each category will receive cash rewards, with the overall competition champion being awarded a Jawa Yezdi motorbike.

Refugee athlete's dream of taekwondo medal cut short

AP n PARIS
Having overcome so many hurdles, the disappointment was immense for refugee athlete Hadi Tiranvalipour as his dream of winning an Olympic medal was cut short when he lost in a taekwondo qualification bout on Wednesday at the Paris Games.

Tiranvalipour was up against Omar Ismail of Palestine in the men's under 58 kilograms competition and was handed a 2-0 loss in a lopsided match at the lavish Grand Palais venue on the first day of taekwondo events.

"I'm not satisfied with my performance, I don't have an answer for this. I wanted a good result, it's not happening," he said.

Before making the IOC Refugee Olympic Team, Tiranvalipour fought for eight years as a member of the



Iranian national team, winning the gold medal at the 2015 Asian Junior championship back in 2015.

But Tiranvalipour, who also worked as a TV presenter and studied sports science, was forced to leave his country after speaking out in favour of women's rights, losing his job.

In October 2022, he travelled to Turkey, then to Italy where he lived in a forest for 10 days and then slept three months

and to call attention to the plight of refugees worldwide.

After training alone in a park, Tiranvalipour finally approached the Italian federation, which helped him apply for asylum and settle for good in the country.

In the build-up to the Games, he trained at the Olympic Sports Center in Roma with the likes of Vito Dell'Aquila, the defending Olympic champion.

After missing out on Olympic qualification during the European qualifiers in March, he was selected by the refugee Olympic team and had big expectations in Paris.

"I'm not satisfied because I had too much sacrifices about my losing weight process, my training. I'm really sad," he said.

"We passed so many difficult journeys. If you have a target, you have to keep going. Life is like this.

US women's volleyball team advances to semifinal with straight-set win against Poland

AP n PARIS
The reigning Olympic champion U.S. women's volleyball team posted a straight-set victory against Poland on Tuesday night at the Paris Olympics.

The Americans led throughout while taking the first two sets, 25-22 and 25-14. They fell behind 5-0 and 7-1 in the third set before rallying to close it out, 25-20.

Next up is a semifinal date on Thursday with powerhouse Brazil, which swept the Dominican Republic earlier in the day. It's a rematch of the Tokyo Games final.

Turkey eliminated China with a 3-2 victory and was waiting on the result of Tuesday's late match between Italy and Serbia to learn its next opponent.

US coach Karch Kiraly said he was thrilled to get his players off their feet sooner - and not have to play any extra sets, especially for setter Jordyn Poulter as she continues to regain her form in match play after coming back from a devastating left knee injury in December 2022 that required surgery.

"To be able to chip away and get back and tie it up at 13-all and get out with 3-0 instead of 17-15 in the fifth, which happens so often, that's really big, especially for somebody like Jordyn Poulter who's on a really good recovery," Kiraly said.

"But to have less load here and more recovery before we play a really big Brazil team was big."



Kiraly made a lineup change after the team's five-set defeat to China on July 29 to open group stage play, moving veterans Jordan Larson and Kelsey Robinson Cook to reserve roles and bringing in Avery Skinner and Kathryn Plummer. The Americans bounced back to beat Serbia two days later. The new starting six are beginning to click.

Sprint powerhouse Jamaica has had more injuries than medals and celebrations

AP n SAINT-DENIS
The midpoint of the Olympic track meet used to be time for Jamaica sprint stars - Usain Bolt, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and all the rest - to catch their breath, recover from their victory parties, then start gearing up for more.

This year in Paris, there hasn't been much to celebrate, and there's a sense that it could be years, not days, until the good times start rolling again for the Caribbean nation known for sun, sand and sprints.

After Tuesday, which marked the halfway point of the action at the Stade de France, Kishane Thompson's silver in the 100 meters was the only medal the Jamaican team had won on the track.

And in a twist hardly anyone on the island could have ever imagined, Jamaica actually had more medals from field events (three) than from sprinting.

"I know the world is used to Jamaica winning, and Jamaica always celebrating," said Asafa Powell, the Jamaican legend who held or shared the 100-meter world record for nearly three years before Bolt broke it when he surged onto the scene in 2008. "But believe me, it's going to happen again." It almost happened this time.

Thompson's quest to become Jamaica's next Olympic male sprint champ came a scant .005 seconds short.

THE JAMAICAN SPRINTING WOMEN HAVE DEALT WITH INJURIES: For the women's program, the problem has simply been getting a contender to the starting line.

Elaine Thompson-Herah, Shericka Jackson and Fraser-Pryce, all in their 30s, all pulled out of their Olympic sprints with injuries. They made up the entire 100-meter podium in Tokyo in 2021.

The team that won 15 of the 24 Olympic medals in the women's 100 and 200 between 2008 and 2021 will go home with none this year. It will mark the first time since 1976 the country hasn't won a women's medal in either of those events. "I think people appreciate us more when they see a down period like this," said Powell, who is in town hanging at the PUMA house, which used to be party central for Jamaica at the Olympics. The pieces started crumbling on



June 9, when Thompson-Herah, the two-time defending champion at 100 and 200 meters, hurt her Achilles at a meet in New York.

Exactly a month later, Jackson, the second-fastest woman of all time at 200 meters, pulled out with an undisclosed injury, saying on social media it was "difficult for me to describe the depth of my disappointment."

WHO ARE THE NEXT STARS FOR JAMAICAN TRACK?: Now, track fans await the lineup for Thursday's 4x100


relays. Have the old guard healed enough to compete? Or will the world see the likes of Tia Clayton, 19, who finished seventh in the 100 final; Shashalee Forbes, 28, who finished sixth in the 100 semifinal; and Niesha Burgher, 21, who came in fifth in the 200-meter semifinal?

"It's a very young team," said Lanae Tava-Thomas, another relay candidate, who is 23 and finished fifth in the 200-meter semifinal. "We definitely have time to develop. It's going to be a very strong team when we get actually fully developed."

JAMAICA HAS A HISTORY OF FINDING NEW SPRINTERS: History shows there is hope for Jamaica.

There was a time when Merlene Ottey (three silver, six bronze medals over six Olympics with Jamaica) seemed irreplaceable. Then along came Veronica Campbell-Brown, who won eight Olympic medals, including three golds, over a stretch that covered 2004-16. In the weeks before the 2008

Beijing Games, vitriol flew at the then-21-year-old newcomer, who then went by Shelly-Ann Fraser, from those who believed the spot she captured in the 100 was depriving Jamaica and "VCB" a sure medal.



पावरग्रिड POWERGRID

NOTICE

1. Approval under regulation-86 of CERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations' 1999 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations 2019 for determination of Transmission Tariff from DCOs to 31-03-2024 for Assets (03 nos) under Fibre Optic communication system under Expansion of Wideband Communication Network in Eastern Region.

2. The beneficiaries of the above mentioned Transmission system are: (i) Bihar State Power (Holding) Company Ltd, (ii) West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd., (iii) Grid Corporation of Orissa Ltd., (iv) Damodar Valley Corporation, (v) Power Department, Govt of Sikkim, Gangtok, (vi) Jharkhand Biju Vitran Nigam Ltd.

3. Optic fibre line Length, Apportioned Approved capital cost (₹ In Lacs), Date of Commercial Operation and Capital cost up to date of Commercial Operation (₹ In Lacs):

Asset	OPGW Line Length (km)	Apportioned approved Capital cost (₹ In Lakhs)	DOCO	Capital cost on DOCO (₹ In Lakhs)
Asset-I	288.00	746.43	19.05.2019	733.49
Asset-II	111.00	342.69	19.01.2021	392.53
Asset-III	183.87	476.55	27.06.2023	564.22

4. The annual transmission tariff for the tariff period 2019-24 is summarized as below:

Asset/Tariff	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Asset-I	131.09	147.32	143.34	139.33	135.29
Asset-II	-	16.02	82.11	82.08	80.85
Asset-III	-	-	-	-	85.97

5. A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at www.powergridindia.com.

6. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3rd & 4th floor, Chandrakol Building, Jangpith, New Delhi - 110 001 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place: Gurugram Sd/-
 Date: 07.08.2024 General Manager (Commercial)

POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED
 (A Government of India Enterprise)
 Registered Office: B-9, Qutab Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi 110 016
 Corporate Office: Saudamin, Plot No. 2, Sector-29, Gurugram, Haryana - 122 001
www.powergrid.in, CM: L40101DL1989SG0038121
A Maharatna PSU

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER DHENKANAL (R&B) DIVISION, DHENKANAL
 Email - eedklpwtd@gmail.com
INVITATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
 Bid Identification No. SE DKL (R&B), 07/ 2024-25

Invitation for Bids

1. The Superintending Engineer Dhenkanal (R&B) Division, Dhenkanal, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in single cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Construction of Building work as detailed below.	
2. Nature of work	: Civil (Building) Works
3. No. of work	: 01 Nos.
4. Bid Cost.	: ₹ 6,000/-
5. Class of Contractor	: 'C' & 'B' Class
6. Availability of Bid Documents in the website	: From 10.00 AM of 27.08.2024 to 5.00 PM of 27.08.2024
7. Date of Opening of Bid	: Dt. 28.08.2024 at 11:00 AM.
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website https://tendersodisha.gov.in . Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.	

Superintending Engineer
Dhenkanal (R&B) Division

OIPR-34016/110005/2425