

OPINION 6

KAMALA EMERGES AS FRONT
RUNNER FOR US PRESIDENCY

WORLD 8

BIDEN REAFFIRMS US
SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

MONEY 10

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

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CBI to probe UPSC aspirants' deaths

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

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

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

Continued on Page 2

No systemic breach in NEET-UG papers: SC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

Medical education was open business before NEET, says Nadda

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst the recent NEET paper leak controversy, which has cast a shadow on the quality and management of medical education in India, Union Health Minister JP Nadda defended the examination system, saying the medical education had become an open business before the NEET was introduced and PG seats were sold for ₹8 crore-₹13 crore each. Addressing concerns during a discussion on a private member resolution by DMK Rajya Sabha member M Mohmed Abdulla, Nadda emphasised that the



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

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consider framing standard operating procedures for adoption of technological advancements to strengthen the examination system.

The bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra gave detailed reasons for its July 23 order refusing to cancel the controversy-ridden NEET-UG 2024 examination. "...Sufficient material is not on record at present which indicates there were no systemic leak or systemic malpractice. The material on record does not, at present, substantiate allegation of widespread malpractices which compromised the integrity of the exam. On the contrary, an assessment of the data indicates that there are no deviations which indicate that systemic cheating has taken place," the court said in a detailed order. CJI Chandrachud said the information before the court at this stage does not show that the question paper was disseminated widely using social media or the internet, or that the answers were being communicated to students using sophisticated electronic means which may prove difficult to trace. "The students who were beneficiaries of the leak at Hazaribagh and Patna are easy to be identified. The CBI probe reveals the number of students who are beneficiaries of the malpractice at Hazaribagh and Patna at this stage.

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AI cancels flights to Tel Aviv amid Israel-Iran tension

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India on Friday announced suspending flights to Tel Aviv till August 8, amid escalating tensions in the Middle East. The Tata Group-owned airline operates four weekly flights to Israeli city from the national Capital. "In view of the ongoing situation in parts of the Middle East, we have suspended the scheduled operation of our flights to and from Tel Aviv with immediate effect up to August 8, 2024," the carrier said in a social media post. The airline also said it was extending support to passengers with confirmed bookings for travel to and from Tel Aviv during this period, with a one-time waiver on rescheduling and cancellation charges. On Thursday, Air India cancelled its flight to Tel Aviv. Tensions continue to remain high in the Middle East amid conflict between Israel and various groups, including Hamas. Earlier this year also, AI had briefly suspended flights to Tel Aviv at different points of time due to the Middle East tensions. After nearly five months, the carrier had recommenced the services to the Israeli city on March 3. Air India had suspended flights to and from Tel Aviv starting on October 7, 2023, after the Hamas group's attack on the Israeli city.



Probe ordered into deaths at Asha Kiran

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Amid deaths of mentally challenged inmates reported at Asha Kiran shelter home with more than a dozen dead in July alone, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Friday directed the Chief Secretary to furnish a white paper on the running of all shelters homes by the Delhi Government in three weeks and initiate action against the administrator immediately. On her part, Minister Atishi ordered the Revenue Department to initiate a magisterial enquiry and submit a report within 48 hours. Asha Kiran is a Delhi Government-run facility for the "mentally challenged" and comes under its Social Welfare Department. The department is currently without a head following the resignation of Raaj Kumar Anand. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is currently lodged in Tihar jail, has not assigned the charge of the department to any minister.

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Building caves in, three killed in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least three people were reportedly killed on Friday after a portion of a two-storey building collapsed in northwest Delhi's Jahangirpuri area. According to police officials, a call was received from the Jahangirpuri area at around 12:50 pm about a house collapse and five fire tenders were rushed to the site. A police official said, "A few more people might still be trapped underneath the rubble and a rescue operation is underway." A police officer said a 45-year-old Mukesh Kumar was injured in the incident. "He was taken to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries," the senior police official said.

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

Govt issues draft notification to declare Western Ghats eco-sensitive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has issued a draft notification to designate over 56,800 square kilometres of the Western Ghats as Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA), including 9,993.7 sq km in Kerala, which encompasses 13 villages in landslide-hit Wayanad. The Government has invited suggestions and objections within 60 days. The notification which proposes banning mining, quarrying, new thermal power projects, and large-scale construction in these areas, while allowing repairs and renovations of existing structures was issued on July 31, a day after a series of landslides claimed over 300 lives in Wayanad district. Existing healthcare facilities and property ownership changes will be unaffected.



The move follows the 2011 recommendations of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel led by Madhav Gadgil. Overall, the notification includes 449 sq km in Gujarat, 17,340 sq km in Maharashtra, 1,461 sq km in Goa, 20,668 sq km in Karnataka, 6,914 sq km in Tamil Nadu, and 9,993.7 sq km in Kerala in the proposed ESA.

Kanwariyas get rousing welcome



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

PTI

Rise in misleading ads during Covid reported

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



advertisements in 2019 and just 411 in 2018, highlighting the disturbing growth of deceptive practices during a critical period when the entire world was looking for Covid cure. To combat this issue, Pharmacovigilance Centres have been established across the country to monitor and report suspicious ads and ensure the safety of Ayush drugs. "Under the pharmaco vigilance

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

Continued on Page 2

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AGRA/NEW DELHI

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

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

allegedly assaulted by four men — Ankit, Gaurav, Karan, and Akash. The attack culminated in the assailants strangling Kishore and burying him alive on their farm, under the assumption that he was dead.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AAP leaders issuing false, misleading statements: LG office

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Lieutenant Governor's office on Friday alleged AAP leaders, including Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, of issuing "patently false deliberately, misleading and blatantly improper" statements that a woman and her child drowned in a DDA drain.

The AAP leaders have alleged that the deaths of the woman and her child in East Delhi on Wednesday evening took place after they fell into a drain of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Wednesday evening and demanded the resignation of the LG, who is chairman of the Authority.

The AAP has also announced a protest at the LG office on Saturday.

"While this is undoubtedly another example of abuse and scoot typical of the AAP and its leadership, the fact of the matter is that the drain in which the unfortunate incident of drowning happened at Khoda colony belonged to the MCD



under the control of AAP" said the LG office.

The 100-metre drain was neither desilted nor covered, it claimed. The total length of the drain is 1,350 metres, out of which 1,000 metres falls in the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), which was handed over to it by the DDA on April 17, 2023, the LG office said.

"AAP MP Sanjay Singh, MLA Kuldeep Kumar, party spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar and the Aam Aadmi

Party (AAP), yesterday issued a patently false, deliberately misleading and blatantly improper statement holding the DDA responsible for the tragic death of a lady and her child by drowning and demanded the Hon'ble LG's resignation. The same set of lies were again peddled today in a press conference by minister Gopal Rai and MLA Kuldeep Kumar", it charged.

The total length of the drain under DDA control is 350 metres, it said.

AAP slams BJP for silence over death of woman, minor son

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP on Friday slammed the BJP over its "silence" on the deaths of a woman and her three-year-old due to falling into a waterlogged drain in east Delhi, saying the party wants all the power but not for the sake of people while the Delhi BJP stated that a fair inquiry should be conducted in the matter and the person responsible for the death should be punished.

Expressing his grief over the matter, BJP South Delhi MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said, "It's a sad incident and it's important to establish that whose drain is it and action be taken on officials whose callousness resulted in the mishap."

He demanded suitable compensation for the bereaved family, which lost two members of its family, while stating that all civic agencies should immediately barricade all open drains, especially the major drains.

action against erring officials and announced that it will protest outside Lt Governor's residence on Saturday. AAP's Delhi Convener Gopal Rai accused the BJP of having "double standards." "Initially when the incident happened, a BJP spokesperson went to the spot and claimed that it was a PWD drain. But ever since it became clear that the drain belongs to DDA, they have maintained silence. Lieutenant Governor is the chairman of DDA. Why is BJP silent now? They have double standards," he charged. Rai also alleged that the BJP went to make a video of the drain to defame Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. "Wherever we have responsibility, we are standing there fighting for the people with full strength. But LG should tell whether he has no responsibility for this negligence of DDA? Whenever there is an incident related to the police or DDA, the BJP and its LG become silent," he charged.

Rai chairs meet to strategise pollution control measures

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Friday said that the '2024 Winter Action Plan' will focus on pollution hotspots and identifying the causes of the city's air quality crisis to plan effective mitigation steps.

Rai chaired a high-level meeting, which included key officials from the Environment Department, Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and Development Department, to strategise pollution control measures. During the meeting, Rai announced that on August 21, the Delhi government will host a 'Save Environment' round table conference at the Delhi Secretariat, where environmental experts will gather to develop a comprehensive winter action plan, according to a statement issued by the AAP government.

The conference aims to create a robust action plan by incorporating expert suggestions, the minister said during the meeting. "By identifying and



addressing various pollution sources, the Delhi government will be able to take necessary steps to mitigate pollution effectively," Rai said.

According to the statement, during the meeting, many crucial suggestions emerged, highlighting focal points, such as dust pollution, vehicular emissions, stubble burning and the burning of garbage.

Industrial pollution will also be addressed by ensuring all registered industrial units in Delhi switch to PNG, Rai said. "We have established the Green War Room and Green Delhi

App, which will be upgraded to enhance public communication and timely action on complaints," he said. Regarding pollution hotspots, the AAP leader said, "The focus will be on the areas of Delhi where people suffer the most from pollution and a Real-Time Apportionment Study will be conducted to identify the causes of real-time pollution." The minister also mentioned the eco park, which will operate based on a zero-waste policy. India's first e-waste eco park is being built in Holambi Kalan village in Delhi.

Mamata threatens stir if Centre fails to roll back GST on LIC, medical premium

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

After requesting Prime Minister Narendra Modi to withhold the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam replacing Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Evidence Act in that order, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has now urged the Centre to withdraw Goods and Services Tax (GST) from life insurance and medical insurance premiums as it pushes up rate of premiums affecting people's ability to take care of their basic needs.

"Our demand to Government of India is to roll back GST from life insurance and medical insurance premium on grounds of people's health imperatives. This GST is bad because it adversely affects the people's ability to take care of their basic vital needs," Banerjee has written on the X, threatening to launch a protest movement if her demands were not met.

"If Government of India does not roll back the anti-people GST, we will be bound to hit the road," Banerjee said. The Chief Minister's statement on GST is seen as a "fine and subtle move" to create a schism in the BJP particularly after Union Minister Nitin Gadkari,



in his letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman raised the issue on behalf of Nagpur Division LIC Employees Union which had submitted to him a memorandum to this effect. Gadkari said, "Levying GST on life insurance premiums amounts to levying tax on the uncertainties of life. The Union feels that the person who covers the risk of life's uncertainties to give protection to the family should not be levied tax on the premiums to purchase cover against this risk." Referring to the support Banerjee drew from Samajwadi Party Shiv Sena and others, Trinamool Congress leader Kunal Ghosh said, "it is high time the BJP Government understood that they should refrain from political, social and financial dictatorship otherwise the people will show them their right place ... Mamata Banerjee has done the right thing by raising the issue as this blind government will never understand that its GST policy is hurting the people ... particularly in the area of their basic needs."

ED nets another TMC leader in ration scam

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Winning elections with thumping majority notwithstanding, the Mamata Banerjee Government continued to suffer embarrassments with the Enforcement Directorate netting yet another Trinamool Congress leader in connection with the alleged Rs 10,000 crore ration scam.

The ED sleuths on Friday arrested TMC leader Anisur Rahman, along with his brother and party associate Alif Noor, alias Mukul for their alleged role in the ration scam sources said. While Anisur considered a "powerful man" is the TMC Block President of De Ganga in North 24 Parganas his brother is a party worker.

Anisur was arrested after being subjected to 15-hours intense grilling "during which he would not provide satisfactory answers to the queries made to him," officials said.

Block presidents in the TMC hierarchy are considered pretty powerful organizationally and enjoy the status of an MLA, insiders say. "A leader who fails to get the MLA ticket is accommodated generally as a block president for his clout," said a North 24 Parganas leader.

Rahman was arrested in consequence of search operations and interrogations of other TMC functionaries including their jailed leader Sheikh Shahjahan --- of Sandeshkhali fame --- Bakibur Rahman, Anisur Rahman, and Barik Biswas.

Wayanad landslide death toll crosses 340 as Army is hopeful of finding survivors

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The death toll in Tuesday morning's landslides and flash floods in Mundakkai village in Kerala's Wayanad district touched the 340 mark by Friday 6 PM. Efforts are on to locate the missing persons trapped in the mounds of boulders, trees, clay and rocks as the engineers of Indian Army could trace signals from underneath the debris. Thermal Imaging Radars and Scanners have been put into service and the engineers were hopeful of finding living human beings from the slushy regions in the district. Major Seetha Ashok Shilke, an engineer who led the Madras Sappers of the Indian Army in laying the Bailey Bridge has emerged as the "star of Wayanad".

This has rekindled hope among the survivors whose spirits were dampened by the statement made by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan that there was no possibility of any survivors in the landslides at Mundakkai. Round the clock rescue and relief operations under the leadership of Indian Army and the experts of the National Disaster Response Team along the Bailey Bridge in record time has hastened up the rescue missions as most of the areas were cut off from the main-



land. Major Seetha Ashok Shilke of the Indian Army has become the hero of the army operations in Wayanad as she was the one who led the 250-strong engineers in laying the Bailey Bridge that helped in resuming the rescue operations in the landslide affected areas. Pinarayi Vijayan has written to global comity of nations to donate generously to meet the expenses for rescuing and rehabilitating the victims of the deluge and landslides. Meanwhile, the Government of Kerala, in a major faux pas asked its scientific community, especially those working in the fields of environment and earth science not to speak to the media and not to visit the landslide affected areas. Later, the chief secretary of the State by a special order got the directive withdrawn. The chief minister himself had told the media on Tuesday evening not to give any credence to the Madhav Gadgil headed expert group's findings on Western Ghats.

Vijender calls for CBI probe into deaths of mentally challenged kids

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



BJP MLA and former Delhi BJP President, Vijender Gupta today expressed grave concerns regarding the deplorable conditions and tragic deaths at Asha Kiran Home for the Mentally Challenged in Rohini. Over 14 residents have died within the span of a month, exposing severe neglect and mismanagement by the Delhi government run shelter home for mentally challenged.

In a letter addressed to the Honorable Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Vijender Gupta detailed the alarming rise in fatalities highlighting the chronic neglect and abysmal state of healthcare and living conditions at the facility. Many of the deceased succumbed to treatable conditions such as lung infections, tuberculosis, and pneumonia. Alarming reports of malnourishment among inmates further underscore the severe dereliction of duty by those responsible for their care.

Maha Govt to take over Desai's Karjat studio

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government is in the advanced stage of taking over the sprawling 45 acre-ND Art World studio complex at Karjat in Raigad district owned by late debt-trapped Art director, Nitin Chandrakant Desai, develop it and run it on the lines of the Film city in Mumbai.

Making a disclosure to this effect on a day when a solemn memorial was held to mark the first death anniversary of Nitin Desai, the late Art director's uncle Shrikant Desai said: "The Maharashtra Government is working expeditiously to take over the entire studio spread over 45 acres, develop and run it on the lines of the Film City at Goregaon in Mumbai".

"During the past one year, we have had at least three meetings with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar. The state government is likely to finalise the take-over of the studio this month." Shrikant Desai said. After the death of Nitin Desai, Shrikant Desai has been managing the ND Art World studio. "In the last one year, we have had several shootings in the studio. During 2023-24, the studio earned around Rs 9 crore. We have nearly 90 staffers at the studio," Shrikant Desai said.

Pune Court grants bail to Puja Khedkar's mother

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that came two days after the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) cancelled the IAS Probationary Officer candidature of Puja Khedkar, a Pune court on Friday granted bail to her mother Manorama Dilip Khedkar against a personal Rs 50,000 in a criminal in a criminal intimidation case. Fifteen days after she was arrested by the Pune rural police for allegedly threatening some farmers at gunpoint to grab their land, Judge Ajit N. Mare imposed several conditions while granting a bail to her.

Among the conditions imposed on her, she will not to contact or influence the complainants/witnesses, go away from the jurisdiction of the Paud Police Station till the investigations are on, not leave Pune district and cooperate with the police and other agencies. Manorama --- who had absconded for nearly a week after a video showing her threatening farmers at Mulshi in a bid to usurp their land went viral --- was traced to a small lodge Parvati Niwas near Mahad town in Raigad district where the visiting Pune rural police arrested on July 18.

INBRIEF

NFR WORKSHOPS MAKE SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT

Maligaon: The rolling stock workshops at New Bongaigaon and Dibrugarh under Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) have made significant achievements towards maintenance of train coaches & goods wagons. Both the workshops have delivered higher quantity of Periodical Overhauling (POH) outturn of coaches & wagons over the target during the month of July in this financial year. These accomplishments underscore NFR's commitment towards innovations, safety, and operational excellence. The safety is paramount for train operations.

GATP OPERATES AT RECORD PLF

Chandigarh: Punjab Power and Public Works Minister Harbhajan Singh ETO on Friday said that Guru Amardas Thermal Plant (GATP) which has recently been acquired by the Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh led Punjab Government, is operating at a record Plant Load Factor (PLF). In a press communiqué issued here, the Power Minister said that the thermal plant has operated at PLF of about 89.7 per cent in July 2024 with 327Mus of Energy Scheduled.

TATA POWER-DDL PROGRAMME FOR SENELEC

New Delhi: Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd (Tata Power-DDL), a leading power utility supplying electricity to over 2 mn customers in North & North West Delhi, successfully steered a comprehensive Training Programme on "Best Practices in Smart Metering" for senior officials from Senegal National Electricity Agency (SENELEC), Senegal in line with its vision to capacity building in various fields of the power distribution sector. With a legacy in Smart Metering technology, the 14-day program was facilitated by Tata Power-DDL CENPEID team, and aimed to share knowledge and expertise in smart metering technology with SENELEC. The programme was planned out in different cities - Delhi, Jaipur and Agra, to provide all-inclusive information, covering a diverse topics and modules.

VIT'S 39TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION HELD

Vellore: Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Vellore, held its 39th annual convocation on August 2, 2024. Prof Anil D Sahasrabudhe, Chairman of the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), National Board of Accreditation (NBA), Executive Committee-National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was the Chief Guest. TR Parasuraman, Chairman, ASSOCHAM Karnataka State Development Council and Senior Executive Advisor, Toyota Industries Engine India Pvt Ltd, was the guest of honour. Dr G Viswanathan, Founder & Chancellor, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) presided over the convocation. In his convocation address, Prof Sahasrabudhe exhorted young graduates to be constant learners and strive to improve their employability.

Medical education was...

From Page 1

He asserted that before NEET, the medical education sector was plagued by severe malpractices, including the sale of postgraduate seats for exorbitant amounts ranging from Rs 8 crore to Rs 13 crore."Medical education had become the den of a business. When I was health minister and was bringing NEET, one seat of post graduation was sold for Rs 8 crore each and if you had to opt for a discipline like radiology then it was Rs 12-13 crore," Nadda said. He said that before the NEET came in, students had to travel across the country for medical exams. The minister said that beside the money and time spent, the students also had to deal with huge corruption in the medical education system.

CBI to probe UPSC...

From Page 1

On being informed by the MCD commissioner, who was present in the court, that the stormwater drains in the area were dysfunctional, the bench asked why didn't the officials inform the MCD chief about it earlier. The bench castigated the police and MCD over the drowning incident, saying it was unable to fathom how the students could not come out. It said, "administratively, Delhi has multiplicity of authorities who are only passing the buck and blaming each other." "There has to be some accountability. The problem is some organisations have gone beyond the law..." the court said. "The physical infrastructure in Delhi was laid down nearly 75 years ago, the physical infrastructure is not only inadequate but poorly maintained. It is no wonder that Delhi is going from one

No systemic breach of...

From Page 1

"This leads us to conclude that it is possible to separate the beneficiaries of malpractice or fraud from the honest students. This being the case, the court cannot direct a re-exam," the bench said. The Court said the paper was leaked in Patna and Hazaribagh. In one of the centres, the rear door of the strong room was opened and unauthorised persons were permitted to access the question papers. This indicates that there is a serious lapse in security and that security measures which are stringent and effective must be implemented by NTA. Further, it came to light that the question papers were sometimes transported in e-rickshaws and that the services of private courier companies were availed of. "Another point of concern is that NTA relies on persons over whom it does not exercise direct oversight to be the invigilators for the exam. There are various methods which may be adopted to ensure appropriate oversight over invigilators and decrease the likelihood of the use of unfair means. All of these issues indicate that the security protocols must be tightened to decrease the possibility of malpractice and fraud and to lessen access by private persons to the question papers." "In at least 12 centres, the question paper stored in Canara Bank was wrongly distributed to candidates. The question paper which should have been distributed was the one stored in SBI. In many centres, aspirants completed the incorrect question paper and were ultimately evaluated while in others, the relevant authorities realised the mistake and then distributed the correct question paper.

Rise in...

From Page 1

He said that "None of them were found to be serious, and none required hospitalisation. No fatalities were reported, and all the cases were self-limiting and non-serious." "The total number of misleading advertisements related to Ayush drugs reported by the pharmacovigilance

Probe ordered into...

From Page 1

She demanded responsibility from Delhi Minister Atishi in the matter. A team from NCW visited the shelter home following which Sharma said, "The shelters run by the Delhi government have become death traps for innocent people. In the capacity for 250 people, Asha Kiran has 450 people staying without proper food, water and medication. Atishi should be made responsible for contaminated water they have been provided," she said, adding that most of the women who died were under 40 years old. Apex child rights body National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) called on Friday for immediate action in the matter and submission of a fact-finding report within 48 hours. Delhi Congress President

Devender Yadav demanded thorough probe into the deaths of inmates of the AAP government while raising question whether a responsible government exists in the Capital, as the AAP ministers were only blaming others for their own lapses and incompetence in effectively administering their Ministries. BJP Northwest MP Yogendra Chandolia raised the issue in the Parliament following his visit to the shelter home. "There is no proper ventilation in the dormitory where the inmates live that they have more than the capacity of the shelter. The nurses and women that take care of them are getting paid pennies for working so hard. I demand magisterial inquiry in the matter," he said, adding that the Delhi Jal Board has stopped the supply of water for three months in the shelter.

Bengal had the least reporting five cases. "Additionally, the Karnataka SLA took action in 94 cases, Tamil Nadu in 31, Madhya Pradesh in 27, Uttarakhand in 15." To ensure the quality and safety of Ayush drugs, Pharmacovigilance Centres for Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, and Homoeopathy (ASU&H) drugs have been established across the country under a Central Scheme of the Ayush Ministry.

C'garh to do everything to woo investors, claims Minister

STAFF REPORTER RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Commerce and Industries Minister Lakhan Lal Dewangan on Friday emphasised setting up new industrial areas to attract investors.

He said this at the 152nd meeting of the Board of Directors of the Chhattisgarh State Industrial Development Corp (CSIDC) in Nava Raipur.

The new industrial policy, to come into effect on November 1, will make Chhattisgarh very appealing for investors, he said.

There are huge opportunities to set up industries in Chhattisgarh, which is rich in natural mineral resources, he said.

This will strengthen the state's economy, boost



employment for the locals and create a better industrial environment, he said.

As per the announcements of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai,

approval has been given to set up a pharmaceutical park on 141.84 acres in Nava Raipur, model industrial areas on 881.60 acres and 245.29 acres across Jangir-Champa district.

The new industrial policy, to come into effect on November 1, will make Chhattisgarh very appealing for investors

industrial areas were approved under the Micro and Small Enterprises Cluster Development Scheme.

'Country surges ahead to attain 'Developed India' tag in Modi 3.0'



STAFF REPORTER KORBA

Chhattisgarh Finance Minister O.P. Choudhary on Friday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for 'Developed India' in his third term reflects in the Union budget.

Korba, the Minister said the budget will boost economic progress and help India scale new heights.

It will strengthen the resolution of making India a developed nation.

He said the budget focuses on "Next Generation Reforms," aiming to bolster economic growth, improve

He said the budget focuses on "Next Generation Reforms," aiming to bolster economic growth, improve productivity and enhance the efficiency of markets and sectors. Choudhary said the budget will help achieve the target of a developed India by 2047.

Suvarnaprashan Camp to boost children's immunity today

STAFF REPORTER RAIPUR

The Government Ayurveda College in Raipur will hold a camp on Saturday to administer an immunity booster called 'Suvarnaprashan' to children under the age of 16.

A total of 10,731 children have been given the medicine in the previous camps this year.

Under the National Ayush Mission, the college holds these

campus on every Pushya Nakshatra date.

The camp will be held in the paediatrics department from 9 a.m.

An official communiqué said that the medicine is highly beneficial for the overall growth of children, and it also protects them from respiratory diseases and boosts their concentration and memory.

The future camps are scheduled for August 30, September 26, October 24, November 20 and December 18.

Five Maoists surrender

STAFF REPORTER SUKMA



Sodi Kosa and Vetti Kanna turned themselves in, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said.

They were tasked with planting spikes to target security forces, attack police parties, dig up roads, fell trees to block roads and put up Maoist banners and posters.

Five Maoists including three women on Friday surrendered to security personnel in Sukma district in Chhattisgarh.

Malle alias Sodi Manisha, Madvi Kosi and Madkam Deve along with



Tribal women in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada are mass producing the high-demand turmeric as part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission. This helps them to take steps towards self-reliance.

Lightning kills woman, son

STAFF REPORTER BALRAMPUR

A 62-year-old woman and her son were killed after being struck by lightning in a village in Balrampur district

of Chhattisgarh, police said on Friday.

The incident took place when Dhanbasiya and her son Himachal (27) were working in a field in Shardapur village on Thursday

evening, Superintendent of Police Rajesh Agrawal said.

Locals took them to a community health centre in Wadrafnagar where doctors declared

them dead.

Deaths by lightning strikes are frequently reported during monsoon from Surguja division, comprising six districts including Balrampur.

Cong raises concern over non-availability of seeds, fertilizers

STAFF REPORTER RAIPUR

The Congress in Chhattisgarh on Friday raised the non-availability of seeds and fertilizers for farmers

and said the BJP government was not paying attention to the problem.

PCC chief Deepak Bajj said in a statement that the farmers were worried and any delay in making these available to them would hit the ongoing sowing work of paddy crop.

He said that more than 80 percent of the cooperative societies were facing a dearth of seeds and fertilizers.

The situation has arisen due to cancellation of transportation contracts and contractors were demanding heavy commission for new contracts, the Congress leader alleged.



The middle men and private vendors are taking the advantage of the situation, he added.

Black Box Limited secures Rs. 410 cr funding for digital infra

BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Black Box Limited, a global digital infrastructure solution integrator, announced that it has received commitment for raising of funds aggregating to Rs. 410 crores via preferential issue aimed at accelerating growth and expansion in digital infrastructure sector, a press statement informed.

The Board of Directors, in its meeting held today, approved the issuance in one or more tranches, 98,32,123 fully convertible warrants, at a price of Rs. 417/- (Rupees Four Hundred and Seventeen Only) per warrant, aggregating to Rs. 410 crores (Rupees Four Hundred and Ten Crores Only) and each Warrants is convertible into 1 (One) equity share of face value of Rs. 2/- (Rupees Two Only) each fully paid-up ("Equity Share") of the Company at a premium of Rs. 415/- (Rupees Four Hundred and Fifteen Only) at the option of Proposed Allottee, in one or more tranches, at any time within 18 (Eighteen) months from the date of allotment of the Warrants in accordance with

relevant provisions of SEBI ICDR Regulations.

The funding round has garnered Rs. 200 crores from the existing promoters of the company, which shows the continued confidence on the business and its growth plans, Rs. 200 crores from the consortium of marquee investors comprises of foreign institutional investors & high-net-worth individuals and Rs. 10 crores by key management personnel of the company. After the conversion of warrants into equity, promoter shareholding will be marginally lower from existing 71.1% to 69.8%. Black Box continues to be Essar's key investment in the technology space.

Sanjeev Verma, Chief Executive Officer of Black Box Limited stated, "We are thrilled to have secured this capital, which will enable us to embark on an ambitious growth trajectory and enhance our digital infrastructure offerings and drive innovation in a rapidly evolving market."

Office of Executive Engineer (E/M) Division, Public Health Engineering Department, Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) NIT No. 01/2024-25/TS/EE/(E&M)/PHED/Rajnandgaon /31/07/2024 Short Notice Inviting Tender

Table with 3 columns: S. No., Description, Qty. Item 1: Drill Rod suitable for hydraulically operated Drilling Rigs having following specifications 15 feet long having OD 114.3 mm Dia and thickness minimum 8.50 mm made of 155 seamless pipe and friction welded and induction hard end to be provided for drilling upto 180.00 mtrs. deep holes. Flush hole dia should be 42mm with adaptor 2.3/8" 4 TPI API thread made of EN 19 steel having each drill rod approximate weight 115 Kg. Grade of Pipe IS1 155 Grade.

- 1. Estimated Cost 4.98 Lakh
2. Earnest Money ? 14940.00
3. Cost of Tender Documents ?750.00
4. Period of Supply 30 days.

- 1.Last date of receipt of application- 21/08/2024 up to 5.30 pm
2.Last date of Sale of tender documents - 22/08/2024 up to 5.30 pm
3.Last date of receipt of tender documents -23/08/2024 up to 3.00 pm
4. Date of opening Tender -23/08/2024 up to 4.00 pm

Terms & Condition
1 Acceptance to the departmental terms & conditions has to be given by the tenderer in writing along with application for purchase of tender documents then only tender documents shall be issued. If any deviation made or additional conditions are give in the offer then tender shall be rejected being treated as conditional tender.

Punjab national bank TENDER NOTICE
Tender for empanelment of SIs for Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning (SITC) and maintenance of CCTV system through AMC at Zonal Office Raipur for its Branches/ Offices (Chhattisgarh & Jharkhand states).

न्यायालय जिला दण्डाधिकारी, विलासपुर, छ.ग.
विधि प्रकरण क्रमांक 64/ब-121/2023-24 पेशी तारीख 12 अगस्त, 2024
कानूनी सहायता के लिए...

न्यायालय जिला दण्डाधिकारी, विलासपुर, छ.ग.
विधि प्रकरण क्रमांक 57/ब-121/2023-24 पेशी तारीख -12 अगस्त 2024
एल.आई.सी. हाउसिंग फाईनेंस, ब्रा.प्राधिकृत अधिकारी कारपोरेट ऑफिस, उषा प्राईड, मोवा, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

न्यायालय जिला दण्डाधिकारी, विलासपुर, छ.ग.
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Govt moves to rejuvenate water bodies in coal, lignite mining regions

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In line with its goal to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030, the Government has launched an initiative to rejuvenate and create at least 500 water bodies in coal and lignite mining regions over the next five years till 2029 that also aims to ensure ecological balance.

Deforestation, mining and industrial activities are some of the leading causes of desertification across the world. India's total degraded land is equivalent to the size of 43 million football pitches, according to UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

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



This ambitious project also aims to offer new opportunities for local communities and wildlife as

CPSUs will manage water bodies within leasehold areas, while District Collectors will handle the water bodies

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

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

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

Opp, BJP spar over Rahul's ED raid claim

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday claimed that an Enforcement Directorate raid is being planned against him after his 'chakravayuh' speech in Parliament which was however dismissed by BJP which said the senior Congress Leader is creating a new narrative to distract people from asking about his accountability as the MP from Wayanad following the devastating landslide tragedy there.



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

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

Chouhan accuses Cong of having 'anti-farmer' DNA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Rahul creating narrative to escape accountability on Wayanad, claims BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

PM to open global meet of agri economists

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

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



PTI ■ AIZAWL
Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma may soon visit Imphal to meet his Manipur counterpart N. Biren Singh to address the ongoing ethnic violence between the Meiteis and Kuki-Zo communities, an official statement said on Friday. The statement, however, did not clarify whether Lalduhoma would mediate discussions between Meitei and Kuki-Zo organisations. During a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on August 1, Lalduhoma mentioned that Singh had invited him to Imphal and expressed his willingness to comply with the request. "I was invited by Manipur CM Biren Singh to visit Imphal. I want to respond and comply with his request," Lalduhoma was quoted as

telling Shah in the statement. Sources revealed that Singh made the invitation during a meeting with Lalduhoma on the sidelines of the NITI Aayog meeting in New Delhi on July 28. During the meeting with Shah, Lalduhoma suggested facilitating a dialogue between the Home Ministry and the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), a tribal organisation representing the Kuki-Zo community, to resolve the conflict, the statement added. On Monday, various ethnic-based groups representing the Kuki-Hmar-Mizo-Zomi communities formed a political platform called the 'Kuki-Zo Council' to represent their interests in future talks with the Centre. The council's full committee and statement of purpose are expected to be finalised on August 7, sources said. The Kuki-Zo organisations,

along with 10 Kuki MLAs and Kuki insurgent groups, currently under the suspension of operations (SoO) pact with the Centre and Manipur government, have demanded a separate Union territory with legislature, similar to Pondicherry, as a solution to the conflict. Meitei organisations, however, have rejected this proposal and instead call for an Assam-type National Register of Citizens (NRC) to identify "illegal migrants" from the Kuki-Zo communities. The Manipur Chief Minister told the Assembly recently that the ethnic violence has resulted in 226 deaths since May 2023, with 39 people still missing and over 59,000 displaced in relief camps. The conflict has also led to the destruction of 11,133 houses and damage to 4,569 others, he added.

MP urges Modi to create new lion sanctuaries in Gujarat

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD
Rajya Sabha MP Parimal Nathwani on Friday said he has drawn the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to various issues related to Asiatic lions in Gujarat and the need for more facilities and infrastructure for tourists visiting Gir forest. Nathwani, a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment, Forest and Climate Change, presented the first copy of his new book 'Call of the Gir' to Modi in New Delhi on July 31. Talking to reporters about his interaction with the prime minister, Nathwani said he stressed the need for new lion sanctuaries like Barda Wildlife Sanctuary and the expansion of Keshod airport. "I met the PM in Delhi and discussed about Gir and lion

conservation. There are now four cubs, a male lion and two lionesses in Barda Wildlife Sanctuary in Porbandar district, developed recently by the state forest department as a second home for lions," he said. As per the last census conducted in 2020, Gujarat is home to 674 Asiatic lions. "New wildlife sanctuaries should be developed considering the rising population of lions. The Gir Wildlife Sanctuary has reached its threshold because it can only accommodate a maximum of 60 to 65 lions. Irrespective of the census, I believe there are nearly 900 lions in Gujarat." He said steps need to be taken because lions have started moving out of Gir and are now in 14 districts. "A busy port like Pipavav in Amreli district is home to



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

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

one lakh tourists visit Gir sanctuary every year, and Keshod in Junagadh district is the nearest airport. We have been working to increase flights to Keshod airport. Hardly two flights arrive at this airport every week. You can reach Gir in half an hour from Keshod," he said. "During my discussion with the PM, I suggested that flight traffic at Keshod will increase if the runway is extended by 300 meters. Another point was the lack of good hotels for foreign tourists," he said. About recent incidents of lions being run over by trains near Gir forest, Nathwani said the fences the forest department had erected on both sides of tracks were stolen at several places. A new design for fences is under consideration, he said.

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

PTI ■ AGARTALA
The CPI(M) on Friday said rioting and arson at Gandatwisa in Tripura's Dhalai district rendered around 165 families homeless and demanded an impartial probe into the violence. A delegation of CPI(M) visited the violence-hit area on Thursday and interacted with the affected people, a party leader said. "Besides the death of a college student, shops and houses were looted and torched. All these incidents happened in the presence of police. The panic-stricken people had to flee and stay in jungles to save their lives. Around 165 families became homeless and have taken shelter in a school," CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury said at a press conference here. The district administration had, earlier, said the rioting and arson at Gandatwisa rendered 40 families homeless.



Many houses were looted and set on fire by a mob on July 12, following the death of a 19-year-old college student in a clash between two groups in the area. "We want the government to undertake an impartial probe into all the incidents, including the death of college student Parmeshwar Reang and looting of shops and houses. If the criminals involved in such acts are not brought to justice, it will

be a blot on society," he said. The CPI(M) leader demanded adequate compensation for the violence-affected families and security cover at vulnerable locations. Chaudhury said the government must undertake peace initiatives to bring back the confidence among the tribal and non-tribal people at Gandatwisa. "During communal riots in 1980 and disturbances in the late 1990s in the state, the then Left Front government organised peace meetings across Tripura. Such exercises had yielded encouraging results. Therefore, we want the government to organise peace meetings as confidence-building measures," he said. Chaudhury also urged Chief Minister Manik Saha along with the Chief Secretary, DGP and Revenue Secretary to visit violence-hit Gandatwisa immediately to take stock of the situation.

Anant S Iyer new Director General of CIABC



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

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

PTI ■ BENGALURU
Robust international collaboration and a strong link between academia, industry and research are needed to advance nanotechnology in critical areas such as food and energy security, water purification, healthcare and waste management, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Friday. He was speaking at the inauguration of the 13th edition of Bengaluru India Nano, which aims to create a congenial ecosystem for the growth of nanotechnology. "Our state is always in the forefront with respect to technology-based innovations. I am quite confident that, with the support of premier research institutions like Indian Institute of Science,

JNCASR, National Centre for Biological Sciences, Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences, etc, Bengaluru will be transformed into nanotech hub of India and will keep up its eminent position in this emerging technology in the years to come," the Chief Minister said. He said international research collaboration is fundamental for harnessing the potential of this emerging technology. Also, he urged scientists and engineers to make use of the opportunities and come up with innovative nanotechnology-based solutions for food security, energy security, water purification, infrastructure, medicine, healthcare and waste management as well as to combat environmental hazards, which are expected to increase many-folds in the



near future due to urbanisation and population growth and change in lifestyle. "I believe that, through exchange of information, technology transfer, sharing of

costs, risks, access to know-how as well as to develop a talent pool towards the common good of humanity," he said. "I consider that international

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

collaboration," Siddaramaiah added. At the inaugural event, Prof C N R Rao, honorary chairman of Vignan Institute of Technology and Science (VGNT) and Linus Pauling research professor as well as honorary president of Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bengaluru, was felicitated by Siddaramaiah, to mark his 90th birthday. Incidentally, Bharat Ratna Prof Rao was instrumental in the shaping of Bengaluru India Nano since 2007, when the first edition was held. Speaking at the event, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said he hoped researchers would soon find solutions through emerging technologies for all pressing problems of the country, especially waste management. "Urbanisation will only

further compound the problem of waste, we really need a solution for that," he added. Rizwan Arshad, MLA of Shivaji Nagar Assembly constituency, where the event is being held, said the planet and the people are at loggerheads at present, due to the growing needs of the human beings. "The planet is answering us with natural calamities like landslides and earthquakes, one after the other, with increasing frequency. Hopefully, nanotechnology will act as a peacemaker and bring scientific solutions to environmental hazards," said Arshad. Executive chairperson of Biocon Ltd and chairperson of Vision Group in Biotechnology (VGBt), an advisory body for the state of

Karnataka, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said one of the greatest critical technologies of today, nanotechnology has the potential to bring transformative solutions to the existing technologies, whether it is chips, or electronics or battery storage. At the inaugural event, Prof Arindam Ghosh from IISc, Bengaluru, was awarded the Prof C N R Rao Bengaluru India Nano Science Award, for his contribution towards nanotechnology. The three-day event, which is on till August 3, is being organised by the Department of Science and Technology, government of Karnataka, Karnataka Science & Technology Promotion Society (KSTePS) and Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR).

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

PTI ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)
Rescue teams on Friday used GPS coordinates from aerial drone pictures and cell phones, including the last location of people who lived in the landslides-hit areas of Wayanad to help locate survivors, amidst accelerated search operations after the completion of the 190-foot-long Bailey bridge by the Army. A family of four was rescued from an isolated house in an area near Padavetti Kunnu on the fourth day of the deadly landslides, giving hope to hundreds of rescuers, racing against time to search for survivors. With nearly 300 persons still missing, the death toll is expected to go up. As many as 201 people have died and 264 were injured in the massive landslides that hit Wayanad district in the wee hours of July 30. Additionally, 130 body parts were also recovered, according to the Kerala Health Department. The search and rescue operations that resumed early morning received an impetus as the Bailey bridge helped the rescue teams to move the heavy machinery, including excavators, and ambulances to the worst-affected Mundakkai and Chooralmala hamlets.



According to official sources, the extent of human loss will emerge when rescuers clear houses covered by debris and wooden logs using heavy machinery. Authorities reported that many more body parts had been collected and genetic testing was underway to identify the remains. Earlier in the day, Kerala ADGP M R Ajith Kumar said 300 people were still missing. Around 40 rescue teams along with cadaver dogs are conducting search operations in six zones of the landslides-hit areas -- Attamala and Aaranamala (first), Mundakkai (second), Panchirimattam (third), Vellarimala village

(fourth), GVHSS Vellarimala (fifth), and riverbank (sixth), officials said. The joint teams include personnel from the Army, NDRF, DSG, Coast Guard and Navy. In addition to this, a three-pronged search operation has also been launched, focusing on the Chaliyar river. The eight police stations, along the 40-km stretch of the river, have joined forces with local swimming experts to search for bodies that may have flown downstream or trapped along the riverbanks. Simultaneously, another search operation is being conducted using a police helicopter.

Besides this, the Coast Guard, Navy, and Forest Department also jointly conducted a search operation focusing on the riverbanks and areas where bodies may be trapped. District Collector Meghashree D R said GPS coordinates from aerial drone pictures and cell phones, including the last location of people who lived in the landslide-hit areas, have been used to identify spots where search and rescue operations can be focused. She also said aerial photographs taken by drones have helped identify GPS coordinates of specific search locations. "We mapped this data and gave it to all the teams so that the search and rescue operations can proceed efficiently and speedily," she said. State Revenue Minister K Rajan, a day ago, had said a drone-based radar from Delhi would arrive on Saturday to locate bodies buried in the mud. He also said that currently, six dogs are assisting in the search operation and four more will join from Tamil Nadu. The dogs are using their keen sense of smell to help find survivors trapped in the rubble.

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

PTI ■ GHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's recent statement about moves to arrest him and his son Aaditya Thackeray was a "fake narrative", Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said here on Friday. In Sillod to inaugurate the state government's Ladki Bahin Yojana, the CM also said Thackeray was using low level language on the matter. Thackeray, on Wednesday, said NCP (SP) leader and former state home minister Anil Deshmukh had recently spoken about how Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who holds the home portfolio, planned to arrest the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief and his son. "After tolerating everything, I now stand with determination. Either you will be there, or I will," Thackeray had said in a challenge to Fadnis. "The issue of arrests of Uddhav and Aaditya Thackeray is a fake narrative. Thackeray is using low level language," the CM said while speaking to Marathi news channel ABP Majha. In a swipe at Thackeray, the CM said one needs to hit the roads and have strength of conviction to take on Delhi (BJP-led Union government). Talking on the Ladki Bahin



Yojana at Sillod, the CM said "the opposition is sending people to court against it". Under the scheme, women with an annual family income of less than Rs 2.5 lakh will get Rs 1,500 as monthly aid. The scheme was announced in the recent budget. "The sisters in the state will teach a lesson to such step brothers (referring to the opposition that is targeting the scheme for its financial burden on the exchequer). Our Ladki Bahin is not a poll jumla (rhetoric)," he asserted. The state government aims to strengthen women socially, financially, educationally and politically and people must not fall prey to the fake narrative of the opposition about the Ladki Bahin Yojana, said Shinde, who also distributed some forms of the

scheme to women as part of the launch event. "The Opposition says these schemes will remain only till elections. But we have been working on these schemes since a year when there were no elections. The schemes will run even after the elections. The opposition can see their defeat due to such schemes," the CM said. Ridiculing the Maha Vikas Aghadi and accusing it of suffering from heartburn due to the work of his government, he sarcastically said the sale of ointments to heal burns was increasing in the state. Shinde said some opposition leaders were getting women to fill up the forms of Ladki Bahin Yojana by omitting the CM's photo. "However, women must fill these forms at official centres.

Or else, they (opposition) may tear the forms just to defame the state government. Every eligible woman will get 18,000 per year in their account through the scheme. The government has also decided to provide three cylinders free each year. We are also giving Rs 1 lakh to the girl child till she attains the age of 18," Shinde said. Asserting that the state government has taken a decision to pay 100 percent fees for women, Shinde said women will be given 50 percent discount on state transport bus fare. "The government is strengthening self help groups in the state. We are making the online market available to them and the government has paid an interest of Rs 22 crore for it," Shinde said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a positive approach towards the Marathwada water grid scheme, he added. Sillod MLA Abdul Sattar called the Ladki Bahin Yojana revolutionary, while district collector Nilesh Swami said 7.37 lakh persons were provided benefits of various government schemes and 68 percent of them are women. Zilla Parishad CEO Vikas Meena said 6 lakh women have so far registered for the Ladki Bahin Yojana, two lakh of whom have qualified for it.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

SC removes creamy layer

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

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

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

PICTALK



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

PTI

The rise and impact of political memes in the digital age

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

In her book "Memes in Digital Culture," Professor Limor Shifman highlights the significance of political memes, noting that they play a crucial role in shaping discussions about societal norms and the future. The recent surge in memes following U.S. President Joe Biden's decision not to run for the upcoming presidential elections illustrates the increasing use of this medium for expressing public sentiments, including likes, dislikes, and frustrations. The concept of memes dates back to the late 20th century, introduced by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book "The Selfish Gene." Dawkins described memes as cultural units that spread and evolve similarly to genes. The formal introduction of "Internet Memes" occurred in 1994, thanks to Mike Godwin. These early memes, like the "Nazi comparison memes," circulated rapidly online and laid the foundation for the meme culture we know today. The creation and spread of internet memes began in



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

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

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ARPITA CHOWDHURY

The US Vice President Kamala Harris ended the week by declaring, "I am Kamala Harris and I am running for President." This historic moment, ending the suspense after President Biden withdrew from the Presidential contest and endorsed her as the candidate, marks a new chapter in American politics. It is now official. Many influential Democrats, including former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, fund giver George Clooney, have thrown their weight behind her candidacy. She now has the Party firmly behind her in her fight, instilling confidence in her potential to lead. It's worth noting that in its 248-year history, the US has never elected a female President. Even Hillary Clinton, who ran for President in 2008 and 2016, was unsuccessful. Kamala made history four years ago when she became the first woman Vice President. Will she make history again by running for President? Can she win? She has to do two things. First, she needs to get the Democratic Party's nomination, and then she needs to win. Time is short, with only four months left before the election on November 5. Indian-origin Kamala Harris has several strengths and a few weaknesses. Her current position as Vice President and her qualifications to assume the role of President in an emergency are her essential advantages. Four years ago, Kamala hoped Biden would finish one term and say goodbye to the White House. However, Biden stuck to his decision and insisted on running for a second term. But he surprised everyone by recently withdrawing and endorsing his Vice President. One significant advantage was that she could break the glass ceiling by becoming the first woman president. She must work hard to appeal to Black, Asian, and female voters and gain support from other minority groups and undecided and

younger voters. This could help her chances against Trump in swing states. Secondly, another significant factor in Kamala Harris's favour is her strong connection to Biden's legacy, which is not entirely negative. This association could play a pivotal role in her candidacy. She could bring together moderate and conservative members of her Party and act as a unifying force. To defeat Trump, her Party must unite and support her. Thirdly, Obama was the first Black President, and John F. Kennedy was the first Catholic President. They could be her role models, inspiring hope in the hearts of many. Fourthly, and importantly, Kamala is 59 years old, which works in her favour compared to Trump, who is 78. Her age is not a drawback, but a substantial age difference could bring about change. She can attract undecided voters by highlighting her achievements to gain their support. Fifthly, she can have Biden's war chest of about \$100 million. She has raised \$200 million in the first week of her candidacy and signed up 17000 volunteers.

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

Kamala emerges as front runner for US Presidency

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

Still, she must instil confidence in other fundraisers for the enormous poll expenditure. Kamala Harris has strong ties to Silicon Valley since the beginning of her political career. She is tapping into this support for her battle against Donald Trump. Above all, she must choose the right candidate for her running mate. The right combination should enhance the chances against the Trump-Vance team. Kamala also pledged to do "everything in my power to unite the Democratic Party and our nation, to defeat Donald Trump and his extreme Project 2025 agenda." Harris's mission is urgent and crucial. She must gain the support of those who are uncertain or critical to achieve her goal. The race for President between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump is currently tied, according to a recent poll by the Wall Street Journal. This tie is significant. The poll shows increased support for Harris among non-white voters and a substantial rise in enthusiasm for the campaign among Democrats. Harris faces challenges such as her past

unsuccessful bid for the 2020 nomination, her approval ratings, and the need to secure significant funding for her campaign. According to a recent NBC News poll, Trump was ahead of Biden by 45% to 43%, and Trump also led Harris by the same two-point margin of 47% to 45%. But slowly, this is changing. The time is short, as the campaign has just 100 days left. Before the November election, the vice president's team should strategise how to defeat Trump. Trump's team may criticise Harris as inexperienced and risky. She should be ready to face racism from the Trump campaign and run as a Democratic nominee who is a Black and South Asian American woman. This election is a critical decision that will shape America's future. Biden's exit has energised the Democratic. It is up to Kamla to seize the moment to surge forward. Can she step in and be the natural leader in America? Her capacity to lead the next few weeks will show whether she can. (The writer is a popular columnist, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WAYANAD TRAGEDY: FIXING THE BLAME

Madam — Apropos to "CM refutes Shah's alert claim on Wayanad tragedy" published on 1st August, here is my response. One can do very little when mountain ranges receive unexpected & torrential rain like this, as the forecast was for 64-204 mm rain but Wayanad received 372 mm rain on that fateful night. But such events turning into human tragedies can certainly be minimised and prevented. What is really tragic is the fact that a warning given by the state disaster management authority four years ago was not heeded where 4000 families were asked to leave landslide prone areas including Mundakkai. As recently as on 23rd July Centre also warned Kerala about excessive rainfall or landslides but nothing was taken seriously. In recent past severe deluge leading to flooding caused serious damage in almost each district of the state and Kerala saw statewide floods in 2018 and 2019 but nothing seems to have been done on disaster prevention in hilly areas. Nature has warned us time and again to keep our house in order and maintain an ecological balance, but sadly we are hell bent on playing havoc with nature. Bal Govind| Noida

HALWA POLITICS

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

World breast feeding week



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

celebrate the diverse experiences of breastfeeding mothers throughout their journeys while highlighting the crucial role families, societies, communities, and health workers play in supporting them. Despite the natural act of breastfeeding, mothers often face societal stigma, particularly when nursing in public. This stigma affects not only men but also women who may stare or pass judgment when mothers nurse in public, discouraging them from feeding their babies when needed. This cultural barrier needs to be dismantled to empower mothers to breastfeed confidently and freely, without the necessity of designated feeding rooms. Breastfeeding is a source of pride and a vital aspect of maternal and child health. Ensuring mothers can breastfeed without shame or hindrance in any setting is essential for promoting the well-being of infants and supporting maternal health. Jayanthi Subramaniam | Chennai

about the necessity of carrying out Caste Census. The member from the treasury bench instead of spelling out the opinion of the government and the convincing statistics or supportive logic. The ex-minister's expressions, unfortunately, lace decency and take the etiquette of the Parliament to its lowest ebb. The leader of his party should have corrected him if not admonished. There can be no civilized person who can encourage, appreciate or support such uncomplimentary expressions. Such expressions display the lack of convincing reasons to oppose the demand of the opposition party. It is known to all that every party has its caste base and in every stage of its functioning caste plays its predominant role. If the reservation system should be a meaningful one a the latest numerical, economic and social status of all the castes. All political parties should train those peoples' representatives in their parties on the dos and donts in the house. AG Rajmohan | Anantapur

PRIORITISE ROAD SAFETY

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

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN FINDING TRUE SHELTER

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



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Venezuela elections: Plagued by disorder and discontent

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

NILANTHA
ILANGAMUWA

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

Venezuela, after their "disappointed elections" result.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEEPAK KUMAR
PANDEY

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

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

The Kargil region is known for its very intricate topography. Engaging in operations at high altitudes invariably presents formidable obstacles, such as the notable deterioration of both aircraft and weapon efficiency.

The delivery of a weapon to the target is significantly influenced by weather at higher altitudes. The winds are usually powerful and higher than the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) required 'minima'. Given this, manoeuvring is necessary to complete the essential launch. Despite challenging geographical and meteorological condi-



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

Innovations for Technical

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

guided bombs deployed from Mirage-2000 aircraft to significantly impair the adversary's logistical routes, a testament to their innovative tactics.

The laser-guided missile pods were modified to carry 1000-kilogram bombs from the World War II era, particularly for storage aboard the Ajeet aircraft.

The Mirage-2000 aircraft used these bombs for the first time after making immediate modifications. The IAF reportedly chose weapon-impact zones that may trigger a domino effect leading to avalanches or landslides. To establish firing limits for rockets and weaponry at high heights, a meticulous process is needed to determine specific mountain peaks that closely resemble the height of enemy fortifications.

Performing real-time shooting trials in such conditions enables the acquisition of crucial data to enhance and improve the efficiency of these weapons.

Using laser designators installed on MiG-29 aircraft to guide the ammunition released by Mirage-2000 combat fighters was an incredible achievement. By using this innovative methodology, the precision and efficiency of the impacts were significantly improved. The Mirage-2000 aircraft were outfitted with Litening pods that enhanced target detection and facilitated the precise launching of guided missiles. This was the first-ever deployment of cutting-edge targeting technology by the IAF in combat operations.

During air operations in the

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

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

Biden reaffirms US support for Israel in call with Netanyahu

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

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

Australian inquiry blames Israeli military for Gaza aid drone attack

AP ■ MENBOURNE

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

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

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

3 Americans back on US soil after prisoner exchange with Russia

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

Slovenia praises landmark US-Russia prisoner exchange

AP ■ LJUBLJANA

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

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

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

Fire in Manila's Chinatown kills at least 11

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Team Harris raise \$310 mn for campaign against Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

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



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

dent tabling at a club fair. It is the product of a campaign and coalition that knows the hard work and fighting spirit needed to win in November — and when we fight, we win," she said. The USD 377 million in cash on hand is the largest ever war chest at this point in the cycle and USD 50 million more than the Trump team's post-July cash on hand. July's USD 310 million haul was also the strongest grassroots month in presidential campaign history and was powered by a surge in new support. Two-thirds of the record-shattering haul came from first-time donors, the campaign said, adding that it is further proof of the tremendous support for Harris.

Trump campaign raised USD 139 million in July

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

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

US recognises González as winner of Venezuela's presidential poll

AP ■ CARACAS

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

Antony Blinken said in a statement on Thursday. The National Electoral Council declared Maduro the winner of Sunday's highly anticipated election, but the president's main challenger, González, and opposition leader Maria Corina Machado have said they obtained more than two-thirds of the tally sheets that each electronic voting machine printed after polls closed. They said the release of the data on those tallies would prove Maduro lost. The announcement from the US government came amid diplomatic efforts to persuade Maduro to release vote tallies from the election and increasing calls for an independent

review of the results, according to officials from Brazil and Mexico. Government officials from Brazil, Colombia and Mexico have been in constant communication with Maduro's administration to convince him that he must show the vote tally sheets from Sunday's election and allow impartial verification, a Brazilian government official said. The officials have told Venezuela's government that showing the data is the only way to dispel any doubt in the results, said the Brazilian official, who asked not be identified because they are not authorized to publicly speak about the diplomatic efforts.

Turkiye blocks access to Instagram

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

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

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

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

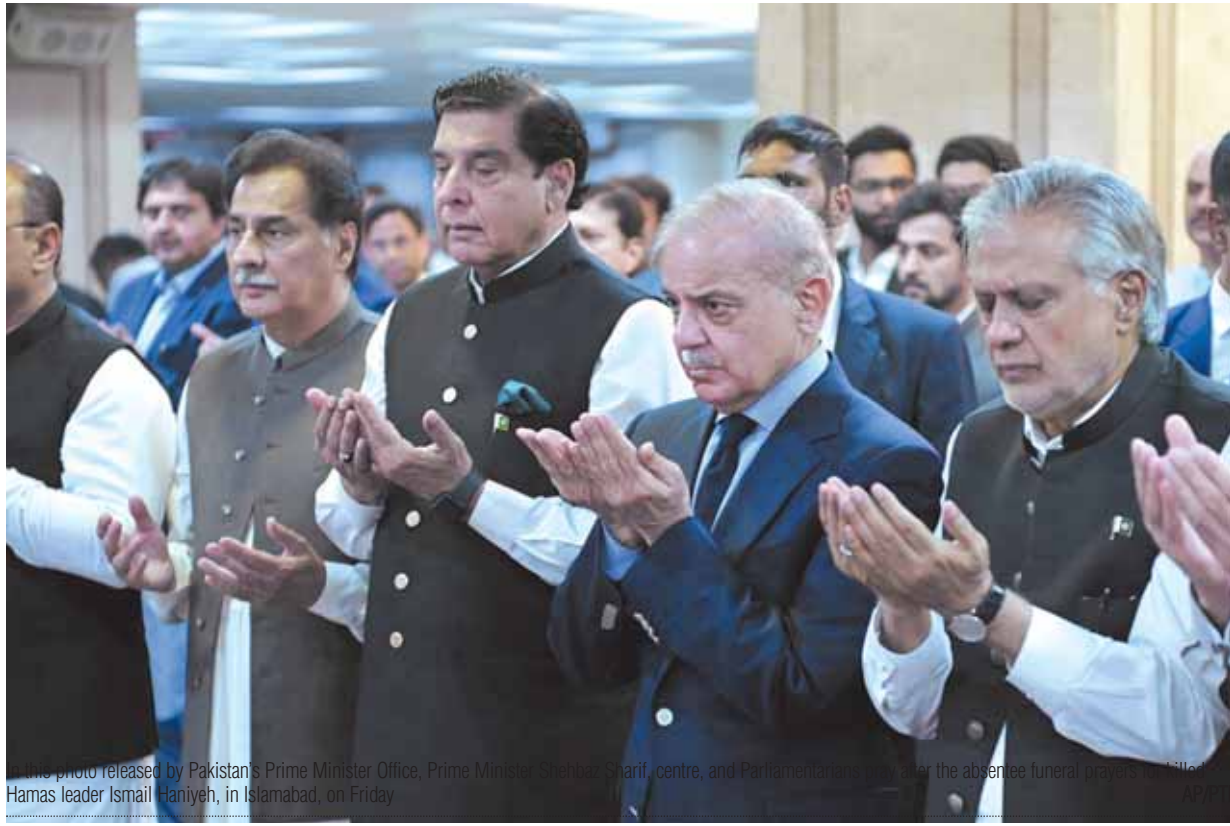
mosques, flares thrown at the statue of Winston Churchill, a Nazi salute at the Cenotaph ... we've resolved to show who we are. A country that will not allow understandable fear to curdle into division and hate in our communities," he said. The authorities stressed that extremist groups will not be allowed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

Imran's party to form alliance against govt

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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



This photo released by Pakistan's Prime Minister Office, Prime Minister's Secretariat, and the National Accountability Bureau on Friday shows PTI leader Ismail Haniyeh, in Islamabad, on Friday.

ment over skyrocketing power bills. He said the bloated electricity bills were "unacceptable" for the inflation-hit masses. The PTI leader also said that they support Jamaat-e-Islami's (JI) sit-in — underway on Rawalpindi's Murree Road since

July 26 — against the massive hike in power bills. However, JI Emir Hafiz Naemur Rehman has said that his party would not become part of the PTI proposed grand alliance as history suggests that the opposition parties use such platforms for self-interest.

"We will have the same stance as the opposition parties on some issues and hold meetings with them, but we will not become part of any alliance," Naemur said on Thursday. Ayub, while addressing the same press conference, appealed to the masses to attend

the public gathering in Swabi on August 5 in large numbers from across the country to show solidarity with the former premier. Responding to criticism against the PTI founder for demanding negotiations with the Pakistan Army, Ayub said that they did

not hold any discussion regarding the dialogue, however, he added that Khan made it clear that the military belongs to the nation and vice versa. He further said that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) were trying to drive a wedge between the military and the nation. Commenting on the cases against the jailed ex-prime minister, the opposition leader said that they were fighting a legal battle for Khan's release. Ayub blamed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for stopping the release of former first lady Bushra Bibi despite having no connections with the Toshakhana corruption case. The PTI secretary general demanded Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamer Farooq to recuse themselves from hearing the PTI founder's cases, Geo News reported. The PTI believes he is being arrested in more cases at the behest of the powerful military establishment to make sure that he does not come out of jail. Khan was first arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in a 190-million-pound corruption case. He faces over 200 cases and has been in jail since August last year.

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

Japan asks Denmark to extradite activist

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

Algeria courts disenchanted youth

AP ■ ALGIERS

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

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

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

ed. The government has juggled competing priorities, trying to combat inflation while maintaining state spending, subsidies and price controls that keep people afloat. Tebboune continues to refer to the Hirak movement in speeches in which he makes overtures to disaffected Algerian youth,

Senior leader of PTI shot dead

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

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

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

Yaari Digital Integrated Services Limited (CIN: L51101HR2007PLC07999)				
Extract of Consolidated Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter ended 30 June 2024				
Particulars	Quarter ended 30-Jun-24	Quarter ended 31-Mar-24	Quarter ended 30-Jun-23	Year ended 31-Mar-24
	Unaudited	Refer note-3	Unaudited	Audited
Total Income from Operations	0.50	0.28	0.24	3.15
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Minority Interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of Associate, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(5.28)	(6.70)	(5.50)	(21.61)
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Minority Interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of Associate (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items))	(5.28)	(6.70)	(5.50)	(21.61)
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after Tax, Minority Interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of Associate (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(5.28)	(6.70)	(5.50)	(21.61)
Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	4.34	(7.34)	(0.19)	(12.31)
Equity Share Capital	19.74	19.74	19.74	19.74
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the audited Balance Sheet				(253.50)
Earnings per Share (EPS) before extraordinary items				
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	(0.53)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(2.15)
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	(0.53)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(2.15)
Earnings per Share (EPS) after extraordinary items				
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	(0.53)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(2.15)
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	(0.53)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(2.15)

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

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

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

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

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



AP ■ KYIV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

verka
Har On Dh. Har On Dh

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

Notice Inviting e Tender www.verka.coop

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

During the peak filing period, the e-filing portal successfully handled huge traffic, providing a seamless experience to taxpayers for filing of ITRs. On July 31, 2024 alone, successful logins stood at 3.2 crore.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Detailed project reports of two hydro pumped storage plants approved in record time: Power Ministry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

"Black Box Limited...Has received commitment for raising of funds aggregating to Rs 410 crore via preferential issue aimed at accelerating growth and expansion in the digital infrastructure sector," the company said in a statement.

The company's board in a meeting approved the issuance of 98,32,123 fully convertible warrants at Rs 417 per warrant, in one or more tranches, aggregating to Rs 410 crore, it said.

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



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

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

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

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

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

The IT firm reported a multi-fold rise to Rs 138 crore in its profits for FY24, while its revenue remained almost flat at Rs 6,282 crore.

Black Box, listed on the Indian stock exchanges, has operations spread across 35 countries, but its major business comes from the US. Shares of Black Box were trading 4.99 per cent higher at Rs 557.35 apiece on the BSE on Friday.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



the gainers.

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

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.77 per cent to USD 80.13 a barrel.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul ended lower on Thursday.

The US stock market also finished in the negative territory on Thursday.

Foreign institutional investors bought equities worth Rs 2,089.28 crore in the capital markets on Thursday.

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Funds raised through the issue at SSE will support Swades Foundation's programmes, including sustainable livelihoods through goat rearing, health and hygiene initiatives and youth education as well as employability programmes.

The 'zero-coupon, zero-principal' are instruments for donating money to non-profit organisations listed on the SSE.

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



transparency and credibility to the sector, which will continue to encourage a lot of new retail donors," Ronnie Screwvala, Co-Founder, Swades Foundation, said.

Over the past 11 years, Swades, dedicated to holistic rural empowerment, has reached out to 3,310 hamlets in Raigad and Nashik districts of Maharashtra, with an estimated population of 1.1 million.

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

"Our 10th listing of Swades Foundation is raising Rs 10 crore which is nearly equal to the first 7 issues combined and is a testament to growing interest and trust being shown by NPOs and donors on the NSE SSE platform".

Markets regulator Sebi has been taking measures to widen the participation of subscribers at the social stock exchange.

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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



process.

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

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

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

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

Buch said this innovation,

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

Sebi will be bringing a consultation paper on this idea before moving ahead with the proposal, she said, adding that the process will be cost-effective and faster.

Buch said making the IPO process faster has been a key objective for her, and pointed that there are eight applications which have exceeded the three month threshold at present due to lack of necessary regulatory approvals, judicial interventions and some non-compliances.

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

incomplete.

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

The new system of demystified offer document will help the young companies in its listing process, Buch said, adding that Sebi is also working on rationalising the disclosures to be made by a loss-making company in its listing.

The possible solutions will be out in a month, she said, adding that the solutions are being found courtesy the deliberations at the industry standard forum (ISF).

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

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

To help the errant companies who are in violation of securities laws, the regulator has also put in place a settlement amount calculator on its website, she said.

It is also working on a benchmarking agency which will help compare the performance of infrastructure investment trusts and real estate infrastructure trusts, she said.

Omaxe slide show continues, hits lower circuit for third day

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

In the past three sessions, the company's shares declined 15 per cent on both bourses.

In broader equity markets, 30-share benchmark BSE Sensex tumbled 700.52 points or 0.86 per cent to trade at 81,167.03 while NSE Nifty declined 239.75 points to 24,771.15.

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

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



spokesperson said in a statement.

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

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

The regulator has also levied a fine of Rs 47 lakh on 16 entities, including Omaxe, Rohtas Goel, Mohit Goel, and three others.

Sebi said these entities have "acted in concert in order to execute a fraudulent scheme that they tried to portray as normal transactions for the benefit of the company although it was experiencing

German firm Deutsche Aircraft partners with SASMOS HET

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

SASMOS currently exports more than 70 per cent of its products to Israel, the US and Europe, as per the statement.

"We welcome SASMOS HET Technologies as our partner in the D328eco programme. Their reputation for developing and delivering top-tier aerospace wiring solutions aligns perfectly with our needs for the D328eco," said Nico Neumann, COO at Deutsche Aircraft.



THE STORY OF A TIGRESS LEGACY

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



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

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



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



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



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

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

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

THE HAUNTING PAST

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



I should have controlled mistakes in defence: Sindhu

PTI ■ PARIS

P.V. Sindhu has no regrets regarding her preparations for the Games as she did everything she could to be in the best shape but admitted defence let her down in the pre-quarterfinal against China's He Bingjiao, here Thursday.

Sindhu ran the Chinese world number 9 close in the first game but unending unforced errors meant that Bingjiao ran away with the match 21-19 21-14 in 56 minutes. Sindhu even dictated a few points but had no answer to Bingjiao's superior attack.

"I should have controlled in terms of a little bit of mistakes on my defense is what I felt," Sindhu said, reflecting upon the reason for her defeat.

Sindhu had a training camp in Germany and also joined forces with mentor Prakash Padukone for better preparation.

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

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

points, you can't think that you have finished the game." Bingjiao's smashes and soft drops had Sindhu scurrying on both sides of the court. But when Sindhu attacked, the Chinese defended well.

"She has that jump smash. Even my smashes, I think, which were mid-court, they were just going out when she was challenging. "I should have hit them inside and I should have got those points where I've made those unforced errors. "She got much more confident in that because when I was hitting, she was defending, but still some points which were really mid-court also, I was hitting just out or just into her hand."

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

"It's sad that I couldn't convert it to win, especially in the first game because it was 19 all at some point. "I think if it would have been the other way, especially when I challenged it. If I would have won the first set, maybe it would have been different. But I think it was... I mean, there

were rallies and it was going on well, but only one can win." Asked if she would try to play in the next Olympics in the USA, Sindhu was non-committal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ CHATEAURoux

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

The 22-year-old, who has already made history by becoming the first Indian athlete to win two bronze medals in one edition of the quadrennial showpiece, can add to her aura if she wins a third medal on Saturday, something which is well within her grasp after her commanding performance in the qualification round.

Manu, who continued to dominate the event and remained among the top three almost throughout the qualification phase of 'precision' and 'rapid' rounds,



aggregated 590 to be placed second behind Hungary's Veronika Major who equalled the Olympic record with a score of 592.

Manu, who has seen a marked improvement in her shooting after patching up with legendary former shooter-turned-coach Jaspal Rana, has won the 10m women's air pistol bronze and 10m air pistol mixed team bronze pairing Sarabjot Singh.

She was in impeccable form in the sports pistol qualification rounds, firing 294 in the gruelling 'precision'

round with scores of 97, 98 and 99.

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

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

Just after winning her second bronze medal here, in 10m air pistol mixed team event, Manu had urged the countrymen not to be "disappointed" if she can't add more medals to the tally.

But going by her imperious form, the Jhajjar shooter could well be in line to win a gold or silver.

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

tournament, was rock solid in front of the goal, making some vital saves to deny the Kookaburras.

In the 11th minute, Sreejesh made the first save to deny Tom Wickham, which resulted in a penalty corner. But the resultant effort from Jeremy Hayward was off target.

Jarmanpreet Singh then fired a pass to Sukhjeet Singh from the right flank. He just needed to deflect the ball but he could not stop the powerful strike. The strong Australian defence easily foiled his attempt by the time he

gathered the ball and was ready to strike.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



And Harmanpreet made no mistake by converting the chance.

OTHER SPORTS

AP ■ PARIS

FIFA offered talks with global groups of soccer leagues and player unions to end a three-month deadlock after they threatened legal action over adding to the packed competitions calendar.

In a letter seen by The Associated Press, FIFA told the World Leagues Association and FIFPRO on Thursday "our offer to engage in dialogue remains on the table" amid a swirl of legal filings and threats in international soccer politics.

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

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

Also in the coming season, UEFA is expanding its three season-long club competitions

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



complaint to Brussels. That is being handled by the European Commission, the executive arm of the 27-nation European Union that can intervene on alleged breaches of competition law.

FIFPRO member unions in England and France also filed suit against FIFA at a commercial court in Brussels, seeking a referral to the European Court of Justice. That court in Luxembourg was critical of FIFA and UEFA last year in a ruling in the

Super League case brought by some storied soccer clubs. FIFA manages the calendar of international matches, which mandates when clubs must release players to national-team duty through 2030. The global groups of leagues and unions want talks on it reopened with them getting a greater say.

On Thursday, FIFA said it "serves and balances the overall interests of world football, including the protection of players.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virender Sehwag wouldn't mind if youngsters starting with T20 cricket develop an aggressive streak which helps them grow as Test players who can be crowd-pullers in future.

One of India's greatest Test openers, Sehwag, who was unveiled as Brand Ambassador of the inaugural Delhi Premier League, said one can't blame youngsters who are attracted to the shortest format which also provides financial viability.

"The manner in which England is playing Test cricket, scoring at five runs an over. In our playing days, Australia used to score at 4 runs per over. I have always believed that if you can attack, then you give your team more chances to win the Test matches," Sehwag told mediapersons on the



sidelines of an event to announce the league. The inevitable question was whether too many T20 leagues would drive the youngsters away from the red-ball game.

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

think of playing IPL, and DPL gives you that opportunity. "So, if anyone develops an aggressive game that can suit Test cricket then why not? After all, we would like people to come and watch Tests," said the Nawab of Najafgarh.

But didn't Sehwag play that aggressive game in Test even before IPL? "Was it good or bad? I scored a triple ton in 270-

odd balls. Today's kid might score 400 if they play that many balls," said Sehwag, whose son, Aaryavir, will be a part of the DPL T20 draft. The six teams taking part in the league are Central Delhi Kings, East Delhi Riders, North Delhi Strikers, Purani Delhi 6, South Delhi Superstars and West Delhi Lions.

Rishabh Pant, if he manages to play a couple of games based on his availability, will be the biggest attraction, and other big names are: Ishant Sharma, Harshit Rana, Navdeep Saini and Ayush Badoni to name a few.

There are four categories and Rs 10 lakh is the salary per player in the marquee A group. The winners' cheque is for Rs 1 crore. DDCA president Rohan Jaitley said the matches which will be aired live on a leading OTT platform will also have DRS with Hawk Eye facility.

Asked about the Anti-Corruption arrangements, Jaitley said: "There will be zero tolerance with regards to corruption. The BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit will be working and the BCCI guidelines regarding code of conduct will be followed."

As per sources, BCCI will deploy 8 ACU officials and they will be assisted by 8 more provided by the state unit. Jaitley also said they are trying to arrange an Inter-Delhi red-ball meet which will be held in the window between end of the Ranji Trophy and start of the IPL to keep young cricketers focused on red-ball game. So, will DPL T20 become the selection criteria for the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) team selection? Jaitley didn't give a definitive answer terming it the prerogative of the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC).

ICICI Home Finance Corporate Office: ICICI Home Finance Company Limited ICICI HFC Tower, Andheri-Kurla Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai-400059, India

Branch Office: 1st floor, Indira Tower, A-26, Zone II, Main Road Vyapar Vihar Bilaspur (C.G.)-495001

Branch Office: Sky Park, Ground floor, Unit No.1, Near Canal Road Raipur-492001

Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical Possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd., will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Legal Heirs. Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured Asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price/ Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Dinesh Markam (Borrower) Kunti Ulkey (Co-Borrowers) Loan Account No. LHBSR00001457572 & LHBSR00001457571	Part of Diverted Land Bearing Survey No. 594/1, Situated at Village Amsena, P.H.No. 38, R.N.M. Amsena Tah. Sakri, Block Takhatpur Dist. Bilaspur C.G. Under Gram Panchayat Amsena.	Rs. 23,67,069/-	Rs. 19,44,000/-	August 22, 2024 11:00 AM	August 22, 2024 02:00 PM

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link- <https://BestAuctionDeal.com>) of our auction agency Globe Tech. The Mortgagee's notice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till August 21, 2024 before 05:00 PM else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) RTGS/ Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited, 1st floor, Indira Tower, A-26, Zone II, Main Road Vyapar Vihar Bilaspur (C.G.)-495001 on or before August 21, 2024 before 04:00 PM. The Prospective Bidder(s) must also submit signed copy of Registration Form & Bid Terms and Conditions form at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited, 1st floor, Indira Tower, A-26, Zone II, Main Road Vyapar Vihar Bilaspur (C.G.)-495001 on or before August 21, 2024 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit Demand Draft (DD) should be from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favor of "ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd. - Auction" payable at Bilaspur.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Home Finance Company Limited on 9920807300 or our Sales & Marketing Partner NexXen Solutions Private Limited.

The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit <https://www.icicifhc.com>.

Date : August 03, 2024, Place : Bilaspur Authorized Officer, ICICI Home Finance Company Limited CIN Number:- U69222MH1999PLC120106

ICICI Home Finance Corporate Office: ICICI Home Finance Company Limited ICICI HFC Tower, Andheri-Kurla Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai-400059, India

Branch Office: 1st floor, Indira Tower, A-26, Zone II, Main Road Vyapar Vihar Bilaspur (C.G.)-495001

Branch Office: Sky Park, Ground floor, Unit No.1, Near Canal Road Raipur-492001

Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd., will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Legal Heirs. Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured Asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price/ Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Rakesh Vaishnav (Borrower) Saroj Vaishnav (Co-Borrowers) Loan Account No. LHBSR00001378302 & LHBSR00001378301	Part of Land Bearing Survey No. 322/24 Situated at Village Lormi, Ph.No. 23, Tah. Thakurkoti, Tah. & Dist. Rajnandgaon (C.G)	Rs. 28,07,022/-	Rs. 25,56,630/-	August 26, 2024 11:00 AM	September 06, 2024 03:00 PM
2.	Rohit Kumar Sahu (Borrower) Padma Bai Sahu (Co-Borrowers) Loan Account No. LHBSR00001514153 & LHDRG00001514152	Plot/ House Part of Khasra No. 138/6, Situated at Mouza Pankriela P.H. No. 58, R.N.M. Thakurkoti, Tah. & Dist. Rajnandgaon (C.G)	Rs. 23,51,359/-	Rs. 25,39,890/-	August 26, 2024 11:00 AM	September 06, 2024 03:00 PM
3.	Hiradas Patre (Borrower) Kalam Patre (Co-Borrowers) Loan Account No. LHBSR00001358942 & LHBSR00001312657	Part of Khasra No. 345/9 Mouja Domuhani P.H.No. 24/31 RNM Bilaspur Vikaskhand Vilia Gram Panchayat Bilaspur-495001	Rs. 19,70,110/-	Rs. 41,20,200/-	August 26, 2024 11:00 AM	September 06, 2024 03:00 PM
4.	Arvind Jaswal (Borrower) Sanju Jaswal (Co-Borrowers) Loan Account No. LHBSR00001410786	Khasra No. 605/14, Mouja Ratanpur Property is Situated at West No. 02, Gandhi Nagar, N.R. (C.G) Gramin Bank P.N.H. No. 37 Pendra Road Ratanpur (C.G.)-495001	Rs. 55,64,221/-	Rs. 99,00,000/-	August 26, 2024 11:00 AM	September 06, 2024 03:00 PM
5.	Geeta Prasad Dewangan (Borrower) Madhu Dewangan (Co-Borrowers) Loan Account No. LHBSR00001506519 & LHBSR00001506545	Ph No. 110 Kheawat No. 205 Khasra No. Part of 12 Abadi Khasra, Mouja Juna, Bilaspur Katyapara Ward Bilaspur C.G.-495001	Rs. 32,86,460/-	Rs. 32,67,720/-	August 26, 2024 11:00 AM	September 06, 2024 03:00 PM
6.	Sushila Agrahari (Borrower) Sandeep Agrahari, Satish Agrahari (Co-Borrowers) Loan Account No. LHBSR00001316641	Ward No. 06 Survey No. 382/18 & 383/18 and Part of Survey No. 382/22 & 383/22 Patwari Circle No. 14, Jawahar Lal Nehru Ward, Tahsil KOLA, District-Bilaspur C.G.	Rs. 31,55,515/-	Rs. 44,95,500/-	August 26, 2024 11:00 AM	September 06, 2024 03:00 PM

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link- <https://BestAuctionDeal.com>) of our auction agency Globe Tech. The Mortgagee's notice are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till September 05, 2024 before 05:00 PM else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) RTGS/ Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited, 1st floor, Indira Tower, A-26, Zone II, Main Road Vyapar Vihar Bilaspur (C.G.)-495001 on or before September 05, 2024 before 04:00 PM. The Prospective Bidder(s) must also submit signed copy of Registration Form & Bid Terms and Conditions form at ICICI Home Finance Company Limited on 9920807300 or our Sales & Marketing Partner NexXen Solutions Private Limited.

The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit <https://www.icicifhc.com>.

Date : August 03, 2024, Place : Bilaspur, Rajnandgaon, Mungeli, Ratanpur. Authorized Officer, ICICI Home Finance Company Limited CIN Number:- U69222MH1999PLC120106