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HONOURING THE LEGACY OF BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

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3 CHILDREN KILLED, 5 INJURED IN UK STABBING

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IMRAN KHAN HINTS WILLINGNESS TO TALK WITH ARMY

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11 SPORTS

Wayanad landslides leave trail of deaths, destruction

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Two humongous landslides that struck Mundakkai settlement in Wayanad district in Kerala's northern region in the wee hours of Tuesday claimed 123 lives and destroyed hundreds of houses. Rescue workers said the death toll could be more than what had been found by 6 pm on Tuesday. Torrential rain has been battering the State since Sunday morning, disrupting the normal life. This was officially confirmed by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday evening during the media briefing. He said the death toll could increase as many bodies are buried under the earth and efforts are on to retrieve the bodies despite incessant rain and poor visibility.

"Two landslides struck Mundakkai at 2 am and 4 am respectively. The entire population was asleep and there was no possibility of them knowing the impending disaster. This is one of the biggest natural disasters seen by the State," said the Chief Minister. Vijayan said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah had called him and offered all possible help. "But that would not be sufficient as the State alone cannot undertake the rescue and rehabilitation works on its own," lamented Vijayan. Wayanad district has been categorised as one of the most ecologically sensitive zones in the country by the Madhav Gadgil Committee appointed by the Union Government to study the

ground reality of the ecology of the district. The committee found that deforestation, uncontrolled quarrying and mining in the district have played havoc with the environment, contributing to the frequent landslides. Within hours of the landslides, the Central Government deployed National Disaster Response Force of the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Coast Guard to save the people who were trapped by the flood waters, soil and rocks. In addition to the residents of Mundakkai atop the high ranges, many holiday makers staying in the hundreds of high-end resorts in the region too have been trapped in the landslides. Indian Air Force have deployed two choppers from its Sulur base



Rescue operation underway following landslides triggered by heavy rain at Chooralmala, in Wayanad district, Kerala, on Tuesday PTI

for the rescue mission. According to the Defence PRO, a team of 43 personnel, led by the Second-in-Command from the 122 Infantry Battalion (TA) MADRAS, has been mobilised to aid in the ongoing rescue efforts. The team, comprising a Medical Officer, two Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs), and 40 soldiers, is equipped to provide critical assistance in the affected area. Besides that, the Army's engineering group has reached Wayanad for rescue operations in the landslide-hit areas, the district administration said. Most of the persons who were drowned or got killed in the landslides were labourers and workers staying in the Laayams of tea and coffee plantations in the

district. According to environmentalists, Tuesday's disaster is yet another proof that the State administration has not learnt anything from past mistakes. Wayanad has no representative in Parliament as Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition who was elected from the constituency, gave it up immediately after the 2024 Lok Sabha poll to retain Rae Bareilly. Besides the dead bodies, the rescue teams came across mutilated parts of human bodies which were crushed by huge rocks and stones spewed with force by the landslides. At the time of going to the Press, only less than half of the dead bodies have been identified.



Rescue work underway after the Howrah-Mumbai Mail derailed near Badabamboo, in Seraikela-Kharsawan district of Jharkhand, early Tuesday. At least two people were killed in the accident, according to officials PTI

Train accident claims 2 lives in Jharkhand

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Two persons were killed and 20 others injured after at least 18 coaches of the Howrah-Mumbai Mail derailed in Jharkhand's Seraikela-Kharsawan district early on Tuesday. The accident occurred at 3:45 am near Barabamboo, around 80 km from Jamshedpur, under the Chakradharpur Division of South Eastern Railway (SER). The railways have announced an enquiry into the train accident, another SER official said. "Two persons were killed and 20 injured as 18 coaches of the Howrah-Mumbai Mail derailed near Barabamboo," said West Singhbhum Deputy Commissioner Kuldeep Chaudhary. He added that the "Howrah-Mumbai train hit the stationary goods train". Of these, 16 were passenger coaches, one power car and one pantry car, he added. Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren directed officials to expedite relief operations and help the injured people. The railways announced ₹10 lakh ex gratia for kin of each deceased, ₹5 lakh for those with major injuries, ₹1 lakh for those with minor injuries. According to the railway CPRO, rescue and relief operations have been completed. The passengers were sent to their destination by a special train from Chakradharpur at 12.15 pm, an official said. The SER cancelled a few express and passenger trains owing to the accident. These are the 22861 Howrah-Titlagarh-Kantabanji Express, 08015/18019 Kharagpur-Jhargram-Dhanbad Express, 12021/12022 Howrah-Barbil-Howrah Jan Shatabdi Express, 18109 Tatanagar-Itwari Express and 18030 Shalimar-LTT Express. Congress took a swipe at Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw after the train derailment in Jharkhand, saying since June the "Fail Minister" has "overseen three accidents" that have cumulatively cost 17 lives but there is "no accountability" in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's new India.

Report blames coaching centre for Delhi horror

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Days after three IAS aspirants died in rain-induced flood in the basement of Rau's coaching centre, an enquiry report by the Delhi Chief Secretary on Tuesday highlighted that the institute had completely blocked the drainage system and, unlike other similarly placed properties, had not constructed a barrier wall to prevent water from entering the building. Meanwhile, students continued to protest for the third consecutive day against the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and Rau's management. One of the protesting students said ten IAS aspirants have started an indefinite hunger strike demanding compensation of ₹five crore to the victims' families. In his report to the Delhi Minister Atishi, Naresh Kumar has mentioned that the property users in the area have constructed ramps over the entire width of the plot, thereby blocking the entry of storm water during heavy rain into the existing drainage system for the sake of convenience. "The opening in the shape of the manhole over the drainage system has also been covered with finishing items, thus leaving no scope for cleaning of the drains. They have covered the existing, built up section



Students stage a protest after three civil services aspirants died due to drowning at a coaching centre in Old Rajinder Nagar area, in New Delhi on Tuesday Ranjan Dimri / The Pioneer

of drainage system by putting granites, marbles and kota stones," it stated. The report said the road from Shankar Road to Pusa Road is in saucer shape with the lowest point in front of the Rau's (IAS) Coaching Institute, where the incident happened. During peak rain, water accumulates in this stretch of 200 feet and whenever vehicles pass through this stretch there is a huge splash of water which aggravates the situation. "The plinth level of this property is also lower in comparison to the adjoining properties," it stated. On the day of the incident, the gate of the institute broke down after a SUV car, whose driver has been arrested and sent to 14-day judicial custody, passed through the waterlogged area causing the pressure of water to break down the gate, causing the water to gush into the basement. The report said, "This coaching institute has completely blocked the drainage system and also has not taken additional safeguard to meet such eventualities. The parking access to the institute is directly

exposed to the road and in case of heavy rain water instead of going into the storm water drain enters the parking area." This is unlike the other similarly placed properties that have constructed a barrier wall which ensures that in case of heavy waterlogging in the area, the water may not enter into the parking area and basement. "There was no vigil on the part of security staff as a result water uninterruptedly crossed the parking area and entered into the basement and ultimately taking the precious life of three bright children," it said. Meanwhile, civil services aspirants and locals continued their protest outside Rau's coaching centre in Old Rajinder Nagar against the MCD and management of Rau's IAS Study Circle. "We will continue our protest against coaching centres which are not following rules and putting the lives of many students like us in danger," a protester Ayush said. He said a few police officers were advising students to go home and prepare for their exams. "We are planning to hold a candle march and start a hunger strike until all our demands are met," he added.

FM terms misleading Opp claims of Budget bias

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday approved ₹48.21-lakh crore Budget for 2024-25 of the Union Government. The lower House also approved the Budget of the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir with a voice vote. The Union Budget and Budget for J&K was passed by a voice vote by the Lok Sabha. The relevant appropriation Bills were also passed by the House. Replying to the debate, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the fiscal deficit of the Central Government is proposed to be brought down to 4.9 per cent of the GDP during 2024-25 and further to below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. In her reply to the marathon debate and discussion on the Budget, Sitharaman termed misleading claims by Opposition leaders that if any State is not named in the Budget speech, then it does not get any budgetary allocation. She asserted that no State was being denied money. She recalled that in the past Budgets by the UPA Government also did not mention names of all States in their Budget speech. "I have been picking up on Budget speeches since 2004-2005, 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008 and so on. The Budget of 2004-2005 did not take the name of 17 States. I would like to ask the members of the UPA Government at that time — did money not go to those 17 States? Did they stop it?" Sitharaman said. She was responding to comments by several Opposition members that the Budget has provided funds only to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh and nothing to other States. She also said the Government is complying with the fiscal deficit trajectory. It will bring down the deficit to below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26 from the targeted 4.9 per cent for the current fiscal. The deficit was 5.6 per cent in 2023-24. The Budget has provided substantial financial support of ₹17,000 crore to the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir this year. It includes ₹12,000 crore towards financing the cost of J&K police. "That's the burden we want to take on our shoulders," Sitharaman said. The Finance Minister said that the government is working to realise its goal of building 'Viksit Bharat' by the year 2047. Sitharaman stressed that the FY25 Budget has not given lesser allocation to any sector compared to FY24 and no state is being denied any money. "Unemployment rate, for the age group of 15-59 years has actually come down for J&K, from 6.4 per cent in 2020-21 to 5.7 per cent in 2021-22 to 4.4 per cent in 2022-23," Sitharaman said. On agriculture the Finance Minister said, "Agriculture had ₹0.30 lakh crore in 2013-14, whereas now it has ₹1.52 lakh crore. It is 8,000 crores more than last year, which is 2023-24. Education and employment had ₹0.85 lakh crore allotted in 2013-14, whereas today it is ₹1.48 lakh crore, 23 per cent more allocation," she highlighted.

UP Govt passes stricter 'love jihad' law

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Tuesday passed the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2024 that provides for a maximum punishment of life imprisonment, making the law stricter in cases of fraudulent or forced conversion. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna introduced the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the House on Monday. The move, however, has drawn severe criticism from the Opposition. Earlier the maximum punishment provided for those found guilty of marrying a woman by deceiving and changing her religion was 10 years with a fine of ₹50,000. According to the new provisions, if any minor,



Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna presents a supplementary Budget in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and other members during the Monsoon Session of State Legislative Assembly at Vidhan Bhawan, in Lucknow, on Tuesday PTI

disabled or mentally challenged person, woman, or SC-ST individual is converted, the culprit will be punished with life imprisonment and a fine of ₹1 lakh. Similarly, mass religious conversion will also be punishable with life imprisonment and a fine of ₹1 lakh. Receiving funding from foreign or illegal institutions will be punishable with imprisonment of up to 14 years and a fine of ₹10 lakh. If someone, with the intention of causing religious conversion, threatens any person with harm to their life or property, attacks or uses force, promises marriage,

lures, or trafficking a minor, woman, or person, they will be punished with up to 20 years of imprisonment. The punishment will not be less than one year and can be extended up to life imprisonment (until death). Apart from this, a fine will be imposed for the treatment and rehabilitation of the victim. The Bill also proposes that anyone can register an FIR in conversion cases. Presently, Section 4 of the Act says only a person who has been converted, his/her parents, brother, sister, or any other person who is related to him/her by blood, marriage, or adoption may lodge a first information report about the allegation of such conversion and no one else. Further, the Bill aims to add a new offence of receiving funds from foreign or illegal organisations for unlawful conversion purposes. Offenders will face jail terms ranging between 5 years and 14 years. It has been proposed that such cases will not be heard by any court below the Sessions Court and along with this, the bail plea will not be considered without giving an opportunity to the public prosecutor. Also, all the crimes under the amended Act have been made non-bailable. The UP Government introduced this Bill in the Assembly on Monday, and it was passed on Tuesday. It will now be sent to the Legislative Council. After approval from the Houses, it will be sent to the Governor and then to the President. The State Government had earlier passed the Prohibition of Religious Conversion Bill, 2021 in the Assembly. This Bill had a provision for punishment ranging from one to 10 years. Through the amendment, the previous bill has been further strengthened in terms of punishment and fines.

India to be third largest economy within five years, says Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining that India is a beacon of growth and stability in a world facing high inflation and low growth, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Tuesday the country is firmly on the path to becoming the world's third-largest economy within next five years. Making this assertion, he said global investors are eyeing India as an investment destination and exhorted the domestic industry to seize the golden opportunity to be part of the journey of 'Viksit Bharat'. Addressing a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) post-Budget

conference on 'Journey Towards Viksit Bharat', Modi said wealth creators are the main driving force of the country's growth story at a time when India's policies, commitment, determination, decisions and investments are becoming the basis of global progress. "Today, the whole world is looking at India and you (industry). Policies of the Government and commitment and investment are becoming foundation of global development. Investors across the world are keen to come to India. World leaders are filled with positivity for India. This is the golden chance for the Indian industry and we should not lose

this opportunity," Modi said. Pointing towards the growing interest in India among global investors, the Prime Minister informed the industry about his call in the recent NITI Aayog meeting to State Chief Ministers for creating investor-friendly charters, bringing clarity in investment policies and creating a conducive atmosphere for investment. With high growth and low inflation, he said, India is a beacon of growth and stability in a world which is facing high inflation and low growth and other geopolitical challenges. India is growing at 8 per cent and the day is not far when the country will become the third-largest



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during CII post-Budget conference in New Delhi PTI

economy globally from the current fifth position, he said. The Prime Minister exuded confidence that this feat of becoming the third-largest economy will be achieved in his ongoing third term. The Modi Government does not lack political will and will take all decisions keeping in mind 'nation first approach', he said. "The Commitment of 'Nation First' is reflected in the 5 trillion dollar economy goal, saturation approach, emphasis on Zero Effect-Zero Defect and pledge of Aatmnirbhar Bharat or Viksit Bharat," he said. The domestic industry, he said, should compete with the

Government to make India a developed nation by 2047 and also make it a global player in sunrise sectors. He also recalled various measures announced in the Budget, especially for promoting the MSME sector which creates crores of jobs. The Prime Minister said the government is highly focused on skill development and employment keeping in mind Industry 4.0 standards. India is home to 1.40 lakh startups employing lakhs of youth, and more than 8 crore people have started new business with the help of Mudra Yojana, Startup India and Standup India schemes.

Benefits of insurance under PMJJBY to Anganwadi workers

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The state cabinet here on Tuesday, gave approval for ensuring benefit of insurance cover of Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) - A life risk of Rs 2 lakh will be covered in case of death due to any reason by payment of an annual premium of Rs 436 per beneficiary to Anganwadi workers, Mini Anganwadi workers, and Anganwadi assistants in the age group of 18 to 50 years. Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) - Anganwadi workers, mini Anganwadi workers, and Anganwadi assistants in the age group of 18-59 years will get Rs 2 lakh in case of accidental death and permanent total disability and partial but permanent disability by payment of Rs 20 per beneficiary as annual premium. There is a provision to give Rs 1 lakh in case of disability. The implementation of both the

above insurance schemes will be done by the respective bank branch to the bank account where the honorarium of Anganwadi worker, mini Anganwadi worker, and Anganwadi helper is deposited. Under this, the amount of the insurance scheme premium will be deducted from the bank account with the consent of the Anganwadi worker, Mini Anganwadi worker, and Anganwadi Sahayikas, which the department will reimburse as per the 60:40 (Government of India 60 percent and State Government 40 percent) financial expenditure prescribed by the Government of India. The Cabinet approved two schemes for payment of subsidy amounts on gas cylinder refills to all the consumers having gas connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and Ladli

Behnas having gas connections under non-PMUY. For the financial year 2024-25, scheme number 1370 LPG Assistance Scheme (Ujjwala) and scheme no. 1387 LPG Assistance Scheme (non-Ujjwala) has been approved. Now a provision has been made to pay the amount to the beneficiaries under this scheme from the financial year 2024-25. The Cabinet approved to create 213 posts for the establishment and operation of AYUSH wing to provide AYUSH treatment in Niwari Allopathy Hospital in 22 districts of the state including Alirajpur, Agar Malwa, Rewa, Anuppur, Gwalior, Ashoknagar, Bhand, Katni, Umaria, Betul, Bhopal, Burhanpur, Khandwa, Khargone, Dhar, Morena, Satna, Shahdol, Singrauli,

Ujjain, Sagar. It was also decided to give consent for a budget allocation of Rs 19 crore. The Cabinet decided to provide additional approval for the remaining special ex-gratia amount of Rs 45 lakh each to the parents and wife of Late Naresh Kumar Sharma, Assistant Sub-Inspector, District Chhindwara respectively. Naresh Sharma made every possible effort courageously to stop the speeding vehicle. Sharma displayed indomitable bravery and dedication by capturing the accused till he was in a conscious state. Late Sharma was appointed as Assistant Sub Inspector, District Chhindwara in the Police Department on 28 February 1986. He was granted an extraordinary family pension and special ex-gratia amount of Rs 10 lakh on January 19, 2024.

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Lieutenant General Dheeraj Seth AVSM Army Commander Southern Command calls on Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patil at Raj Bhavan in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

BHEL organises awareness session on organ donation

Bhopal: BHEL Bhopal organized an awareness session on "Organ Donation" the other day at Viswakarma Hall, HRDC workshop. The session was organized by HR Dept. in coordination with Kasturba Hospital & HRD. The session started with BHEL GEET. B K Singh, GM (HR) addressed the participants and explained in detail the need of Organ Donation and also that a single person can save life of 7 to 8 persons. He also advised to take online pledge for Organ Donation in Govt. of India website <https://pledge.mygov.in/organ-donation>. Dr Alpina Tiwari, Chief Med Services also explained in detail the need of Organ Donation in present world scenario. She told that people donate money, food & shelter, but by donating organ it will be the greatest donation possible in a life time. She

explained that in India there is a huge difference between the number of donor and number of receiver waiting for Organ. She also explained that if more number of Indians give their consent for Organ Donation like western countries then in India also more number of patients will be get benefited. The guest speaker DR RAM NARAYAN HIRANYA, SR. MGR.(SURGERY) of Kasturba Hospital told that India every year nearly 5 lakh people die because of non-availability of organs. He explained in detail the type of organ donation: Live Donation (when the person making the donation is alive) & Cadaver/ Deceased Donation (After the donor dies). He told that we can donate kidney, lungs, intestine, heart, liver, pancreas, Cornea, heart valves, skin, bone marrow, middle ear etc. even our body for medical study. We can give our consent

by filling the form -7 as per THOA and submit it to NOTTO (National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization). DR (MRS) RIMMI SETHI, Sr. Consultant (OPHTHALM) explained the need of cornea donation and we can see the world even after our death. Now a day's only a soft upper layer called cornea is taken by the doctors' team which does not deform eyes, so we can also give our consent for eye donation. There were around 70 participants (Supervisor Trainee & Apprentice Trainees) from HRD Department. The program was coordinated by Prajwal Adak, DGM (HR) & Paritosh Kumar Dalei, Manager (HR) in coordination with Krishna Chandra Singh, Sr. Manager (HRD). The vote of thanks was proposed by ARIF AHMAD SIDDIQUI, AGM (HR).

Basements sealed in coaching classes

Bhopal: After the death of three students due to waterlogging in the basement of IAS Academy in Delhi, the administration in Madhya Pradesh has become strict. In Bhopal, on Tuesday, the administration sealed the basement and office of Narendra Singh Somvanshi Kautilya Academy located in MP Nagar Zone-2. Children are taught in the basement. In the presence of police, the district administration team is also investigating other coaching classes of MP Nagar. This action was going on in the presence of MP Nagar SDM Ashutosh Sharma. He said, investigation revealed that studies are conducted in the basement of Narendra Singh Somvanshi Kautilya Academy building. However, when the team reached the spot, studies were not going on, but so that coaching is not conducted here in future, the basement and office

were sealed. Studies are going on in the upper part. Investigation is also being done in other coaching classes of MP Nagar. If studies are found to be taking place in the basement, then action will be taken to seal it. After the incident in Delhi, Collector Kausshendra Vikram Singh had instructed all SDMs in the TL meeting held on Monday to inspect the coaching classes in their respective areas. Find out if any coaching is being conducted in the basement. After this, MP Nagar SDM Sharma along with the police came to the field and started investigating. Earlier due to rain on Saturday evening in Delhi, the basement of Rau IAS Coaching Center in Old Rajendra Nagar was flooded. Three students died due to drowning in it. The NDRF team rescued the bodies of 3 students and 14 students safely late at night.

EOW forms two teams to investigate fraud case

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) has formed two teams in the case of fraud by preparing forged documents in a conspiracy against the proprietor of Mark Construction and Consultancy and the then senior manager and branch manager of Punjab National Bank. Raids are being conducted at the possible hideouts of the accused. According to EOW, Kishan Bisaria is the proprietor of Mark Construction and Consultancy. He had applied for a cash credit limit of Rs 2 crore on July 23, 2013 in Malik Market branch of Punjab National Bank for the project of building a multi in Surya Colony located at Banjari on Kolar Road in partnership with Surendra Tiwari and Vandana Tiwari. A cash credit limit of Rs 2 crore was approved for the

After investigation on the complaint of the bank manager, the EOW has filed a case against builder Kishan Bisaria, Surendra Tiwari, Vandana Tiwari, SC Agarwal, Rakesh Sharma and others

construction of a multi in Surya Colony by keeping the building material mortgaged. Surendra and Vandana's 6465 square feet plot in Surya Colony and Krishna Kumar Thakur and Ranjana Thakur's joint property located in MP Nagar Zone-2 were mortgaged as guarantor. Later, Kishan got the credit limit converted into working capital term loan in August 2015 in connivance with PNB officers and employees. The approval for sanctioning the term loan was given by senior manager SC Agarwal. The loan was approved by chief manager

Rakesh Sharma. The bank officers did not even verify the property for which the loan was sanctioned. When the auditor verified, the building material was zero. The builder usurped the bank's money. The bank seized the property worth crores of rupees of Krishna Kumar Thakur and Ranjana Thakur and auctioned it. After investigation on the complaint of the bank manager, the EOW has filed a case against builder Kishan Bisaria, Surendra Tiwari, Vandana Tiwari, SC Agarwal, Rakesh Sharma and others.



Students of Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology stage a protest demanding to allow bikes in the institute campus, in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

It is necessary to encourage science communication in Hindi: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav stated that understanding science becomes easier when communicated in one's native language. He noted that medical studies in Hindi have been initiated in Madhya Pradesh as part of this effort. Creating a supportive environment at all levels is crucial to promoting science communication in Hindi. He commended Vigyan Bharti for their commendable efforts in this regard. Yadav said this at the inauguration of the National Hindi Science Conference-2024 organised by CSIR-Advanced Materials and Processes Research Institute. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav inaugurated the programme by lighting the lamp and released the half-yearly publication of EMPRI "Anusandhan Sandesh" and the souvenir of the National Hindi Science Conference-2024. On this occasion, National Yoga Player Shri Shubham Sharma demonstrated various yoga asanas. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav

also honoured poet, litterateur and educationist Dr. Santosh Chaubey with Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray Vigyan Samvardhan Samman. Yadav stated that translating scientific terms into Hindi will enhance public engagement with science, boost curiosity, and make the subject more accessible. He emphasized the importance of honoring innovations based on practical knowledge. Noting that colonialism had diminished the recognition of national talents, Dr. Yadav highlighted that Hindi is now gaining prominence both domestically and globally. As a tribute to our cultural heritage, efforts are being made to connect the younger generation with their mentors by designating university Vice Chancellors as Kulgurus and continuing the tradition of honoring teachers on Guru Purnima alongside Teachers' Day. Yadav expressed confidence that the Fourth National Hindi Science Conference will promote the use of Hindi in science and pave the way for organizing international Hindi Science Conferences.

Rescued tiger cub dies

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

One of the two female tiger cubs rescued from Budhni and brought to Bhopal's Van Vihar National Park died on Tuesday, while the condition of the other cub is critical. They had multiple fractures on their spinal cord and pelvic girdle. This completely paralyzed their back part. On July 15, a male cub died after being hit by a train on Budhni's Midghat railway track. At the same time, two female cubs were injured. On the same day, a team of doctors from Bhopal had reached here for treatment. The team was preparing for treatment, when a tigress arrived late in the evening. After this, the doctor and the forest department team had to run away. The tigress sat near the cubs all night. Due to this, the rescue was done on July 16. Both the cubs were rescued from Midghat for the first time by train and brought to Bhopal. Since then, treatment has been going on in Van Vihar. One of the two cubs was not eating since the day of rescue. He died on Tuesday. The condition of the other injured cub also remains critical.

Congress MLA found guilty of illegally protesting before PM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Bhopal MP & MLA court has sentenced former Congress MLA from Kalapipal assembly seat Kunal Chaudhary to imprisonment till the rising of the court. In 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had come to address a farmers' conference in Sherpur of Sehore district. During PM Modi's visit to Sehore, Kunal Chaudhary was arrested by the police on the charge of protesting against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit by showing black balloons. The case was heard on Tuesday and the MP and MLA court sentenced Kunal Chaudhary and his two companions. According to information received from Congress leaders, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was coming to Sehore to address a farmers' conference. Since then, the central government had promised to double the income of farmers in 2014 itself. But, the income of farmers did not increase, rather the cost increased due to inflation. Congress leaders had

Santosh Chaubey honored with Acharya Ray Science Award

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Senior poet-storyteller and Chancellor of Rabindranath Tagore University Santosh Chaubey has been conferred with Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray Vigyan Samvardhan Samman for his unparalleled contribution in the development of science through science writing and literary activities in Hindi medium. This award was given by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav on Tuesday at the National Hindi Science Conference 2024 organized by NISPER and CSIR AMPRI. It was underlined in the ceremony that the work done by Santosh Chaubey in the field of science in Hindi language for the upliftment of the society has made it remarkably easy for the people to understand the mysteries of science.

Active for five decades in the field of literature, art, culture, education, technology and skill development, Shri Santosh Chaubey ji has established a distinct identity at the national and international level with his tireless creative efforts. Santosh Chaubey ji, selected for Indian Engineering Service and Indian Administrative Service, is currently the Director of 'Vishwa Rang' Festival, Rabindranath Tagore University and Dr. C.V. He is the Chancellor of Raman University and the Chairman of ISECT Network, State Resource Centre, Vanmali Srijan Peeth and Tagore International Literature and Arts Centre. It is noteworthy that Santosh Chaubey is continuously active at national and international level through writing as well as various literary and cultural activities for the global dissemination

of Hindi literature language. Along with this, he is also making continuous important contributions in the field of science, technology and skill development. In the last fifty years, he has established a network of more than forty thousand training and service centers across India, which is participating in important schemes like Digital India, Skill India, Startup India besides providing employment to thousands of people. Poet-storyteller, novelist, editor and translator Shri Santosh Chaubey has a unique identity at the global level for his innovative creative projects and innovations. With the aim of spreading Hindi language and Indian culture, he started the International 'Vishwarang' Festival from Bhopal in the year 2019, which today has more than 50 member countries.

Recently, he was honoured with the prestigious international 'Bharat Gaurav Samman-2024' in France. Prior to this, he was honoured with "Vatayan UK International Shikhar Samman 2023" in London and 'Life Time Achievement Award-2023' by a prestigious institute of America. Shri Santosh Chaubey has received Madhya Pradesh Sahitya Parishad's Dushyant Kumar Award for poetry (Kahin Aur Sach Honge Sapne), Spandan Alochana Samman for criticism (Kala Ki Sangat), Madhya Pradesh Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti Award for translation (Moscow Diary) and Shailesh Matiyani and International Valley of Words Award for novel (Jaltaranga). He has received National Dushyant and Shvimgal Singh Sunam decorations etc. for overall literary contribution.



Nursing and Dental students under the banner of NSUI medical wing stage a protest demanding posting in Government service, at the residence of Minister for Health and Family Welfare Rajendra Shukla, in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

Encourage school operation on PPP mode: CM

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said that the establishment of private schools should be encouraged in areas where there are no government educational institutions. Providing education to the students is an important and basic task. CM Yadav said that the system of quality education in government institutions should be continuously monitored.

Chief Minister Yadav said that the operation of schools on PPP model should be encouraged. CM Yadav was reviewing the activities of the School Education Department in the Mantralaya today. School Education and Transport Minister Uday Pratap Singh, Chief Secretary Veera Rana, Additional Chief Secretary Chief Minister's Office Rajesh Rajoura

and senior officers were present in the meeting. Chief Minister Yadav apprised himself regarding the appointment of teachers of various categories. It was told in the meeting that various educational facilities are continuously expanding under the Right to Education (RTE). Public co-operation is also being received for the development of basic facilities in schools.

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No rethink to allow investment from China: Commerce Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said there has been no rethink on the government's stand on allowing Chinese investment and the views expressed in the Economic Survey do not represent the government's views.



During the Question Hour, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi alleged that India has become dependent on China and quoted the Economic Survey, saying it supported getting foreign direct investment (FDI) from the neighbouring country. Goyal hit back at the Congress, saying under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) rule, India had become dependent on neighbouring countries. "Under the Congress, imports increased from USD 4 billion to USD 40-45 billion, which is more than 10 times. In our term, the increase is only 2-2.5 times. We took steps to make India self-reliant," the minister said.

UPA Govt refused 50% profit on cost in MSP, says Chouhan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday said the previous UPA government had refused to boost 50 per cent profit on cost to farmers in the minimum support price for crops, as based on the formula suggested by the M S Swaminathan Commission.



During the Question Hour in the Lok Sabha, Congress MP Deepender Hooda asked a supplementary question related to the farmers' protests of 2020-21 and said around 750 farmers lost their lives during the agitation. He asked if the government is considering providing jobs to the next of kin of those who lost their lives during the year-long protests at Delhi's borders against three contentious farm laws of the Centre that have since been repealed. Chouhan said the question was not related to the main question, which was on issues faced by farmers. "The government is totally committed to farmers' welfare," he said.

SC throws out pleas for review of VVPAT verdict

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has dismissed a petition seeking review of its April 26 verdict that rejected the pleas for complete cross-verification of votes cast using the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).

Termining the suspicion about manipulation of the EVMs "unfounded", the apex court had on April 26 rejected the demand for reverting to the old paper ballot system, saying the polling devices were "secure" and they eliminate booth capturing and bogus voting. A plea seeking review of the verdict came up for consideration in-chambers before a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta. "We have carefully perused the review petition, as also the grounds in support thereof. In our opinion, no case for review of the judgment dated April 26 is made out. The review petition is, accordingly, dismissed," the bench said in its order passed on July 25.

SUPREME COURT NEWS

NAWAB GETS BAIL
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to NCP leader Nawab Malik on medical grounds in a money laundering case. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma took note of the submissions of a counsel, appearing for the former Maharashtra minister, which he was suffering from various ailments. The top court said medical bail to Malik will be valid till disposal of the regular bail plea pending before the Bombay High Court.



RANJAN'S BAIL PLEA DISMISSED
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed former Ranchi deputy commissioner Chhavi Ranjan's bail plea in a case related to the sale of army land in the Jharkhand capital. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and S C Sharma said it was not inclined to interfere with the Jharkhand High Court order rejecting the bail in October last year.

BAIL TO TMC LEADER MONDAL
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Anubrata Mondal, who was arrested by the CBI in a cattle smuggling case. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma granted the relief to Mondal after noting that the trial in the matter would take time and he has been in jail for two years.



UDDHAV FACTION PLEA TO BE HEARD ON AUGUST 7
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it will hear on August 7 a plea of the Uddhav Thackeray faction challenging Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar's order declaring the Shiv Sena bloc led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde as the 'real political party' after its split in June 2022. The Speaker had also dismissed the disqualification petitions of the Thackeray faction against CM Shinde and his supporting MLAs.



Centre mulls regulatory framework for acupuncture within country: Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a move that is likely to bring relief to acupuncture practitioners across the country, the Centre is considering the establishment of a regulatory framework for the 3,000 year-old practice. This proposed mechanism aims to enhance accessibility and promote evidence-based practices within the country.



The Madurai bench passed the order while disposing of a plea filed in 2016, by the President of the All Tamil Nadu Acupuncture and Alternative Medical Association Trust, seeking to forgo the police from interfering with the practice of acupuncture by their members. However, with Union Health Minister J P Nadda confirming on Tuesday that the Government is actively reviewing the apex committee's recommendations, practitioners in the sector can

now look forward to formal recognition. Nadda highlighted that a thorough consultation involving multiple departments, including the Ministry of AYUSH, has been completed. Nadda explained that based on the Standing Committee of Experts' recommendations, acupuncture was recognised as a mode of therapy. In 2018, the Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) advised that acupuncture could be considered an independent healthcare system, provided there is sufficient evidence and expertise for teaching, training, and certification. Following the IDC's report, an apex committee on acupuncture (ACA) was formed to oversee the promotion and regulation of acupuncture. The ACA's terms of reference included developing detailed guidelines, suggesting steps for implementing these guidelines, and addressing reimbursement issues for acupuncture treatments. The ACA's recommendations encompass proposed curricula for certificate, degree, and diploma courses in acupuncture, a template for regulatory rules, and suggestions for treatment reimbursement. To ensure effective implementation, the committee has recommended that the government establish a regulatory mechanism to create a supportive environment for acupuncture practice as a recognised healthcare system.

Rahul, Priyanka to visit landslide-hit Wayanad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will visit landslide-hit Wayanad on Wednesday morning, party sources said. Landslides hit the hilly Wayanad district on Tuesday, leaving 57 people dead. The landslides triggered by heavy rainfall, which occurred early on Tuesday, have left a trail of destruction in its wake, with several houses destroyed, water bodies swollen and trees uprooted. Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi condoled the loss of lives in the landslides and urged United Democratic Front (UDF) workers to provide all help to those affected. Rahul Gandhi, who represented Wayanad in the 17th Lok Sabha, said he has spoken to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the Wayanad district collector, who have assured him that rescue operations are underway.



The former Congress chief expressed deep anguish over the loss of lives in the massive landslides near Meppadi in Wayanad. "My heartfelt condolences go out to the bereaved families who have lost their loved ones. I hope those still trapped are brought to safety soon," he said in a social media post. "I have spoken to the Kerala chief minister and the Wayanad district collector who assured me that rescue operations are underway. I have requested them to ensure coordination with all agencies, set up a control room and inform us of any assistance needed for the relief efforts," Rahul Gandhi said. The Congress leader said, "I will speak to the Union ministers and request them to provide all assistance possible to Wayanad." He urged all UDF workers to assist the administration in the rescue and relief operations. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi said she was deeply saddened to see the devastation caused by the massive landslide near Meppadi in Wayanad.

"My heartfelt condolences and prayers are with all those who have lost loved ones. I hope and pray that everyone is brought to safety as soon as possible," she said. "I urge the government to take immediate action to expedite relief and rescue operations and request UDF workers to step forward to do all they can to be of support and comfort to all those affected by this tragedy," Priyanka Gandhi said in a social media post. Speaking in the Lok Sabha later, Rahul Gandhi demanded the Centre extend all possible support for the rescue and rehabilitation of those affected. Raising the issue during Zero Hour, he also sought enhanced compensation to the next of kin of those killed in the landslides and restoration of vital transport and communication lines. Rahul Gandhi won Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly and Kerala's Wayanad seat this time but decided to represent Rae Bareilly in the Lok Sabha. Priyanka Gandhi is slated to contest the bypolls in Wayanad whenever they take place.

SC pulls up Centre for indecision on OROP, imposes fine

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court came down heavily on the Centre on Tuesday for failing to take any decision for years on the pension payable to retired regular captains of the army in accordance with the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme and imposed a fine of Rs 2 lakh on it. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and R Mahadevan gave one last opportunity to the Centre till November 14 for resolving the anomalies with regard to the pension of such retired officers under the scheme. It said the cost of Rs 2 lakh shall be deposited in the welfare funds of the Army and warned the government that if the decision is not taken by November 14, it will direct for enhanced pension by 10 per cent to the retired regular captains. It listed the matter for further hearing on November 25. Appearing in the court on behalf of the Centre, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhatti said six anomalies have been pointed out by the Kochi bench of the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT), which needs to be rectified, but the government is yet to take a stand in the matter. The bench said, "For how many years will this go on? Either you pay an enhanced pension by 10 per cent or we are imposing a cost on you. We wanted a decision to be taken, but you have not taken it. This matter came up in 2021 but still no decision has been taken."



holistically and consider all the six anomalies as the decision may affect others. "All I can do is tender my apology. Please give us one more chance, we will take a decision in this regard. We will file an affidavit in this regard. Give us three months' time, we will take a decision," the additional solicitor general said. The bench initially refused to give any further time to the Centre and accept any affidavit and said it will direct an enhanced pension to these retired officers. Justice Khanna said, "What is this? If the government is not taking a decision, I cannot do anything. This does not give solace to these officers. They are retired captains. They have no say. They have no access to you people. Either you start paying 10 per cent more or pay the cost. The choice is yours." As soon as the bench started dictating the order for enhanced pension for the retired captains, Bhatti asked it to kindly impose a cost because that will serve equity better than enhanced pension. The bench then gave time till November 14 to the government as a last opportunity but imposed a cost of Rs 2 lakh on it, saying the amount has to be deposited in the welfare fund of the armed forces in four weeks. On July 23, the top court had noted that the regional bench of the AFT had passed an order on December 7, 2021 according to which the government was to take a decision on the pension payable to the retired regular captains, noticing that there was an anomaly that required to be resolved for the implementation of OROP. The Centre has challenged the AFT order and arrayed 13 retired regular captains as a party to the dispute. The bench noted that this court has repeatedly adjourned the matter to enable the appellant government to take a decision on the pension of the retired regular captains. "In these circumstances, we are inclined to impose exemplary costs and also direct that the regular captains will get pension enhanced by 20 per cent from the date the OROP scheme is applicable. However, as a last opportunity to enable the appellant to obtain instructions, re-list on July 30," the bench had said in its July 23 order. The root of the dispute lies in the OROP scheme introduced by the Centre in 2015. Under the scheme, the rate of pensions for past retirees were fixed at par with that for the current retirees of the armed forces. However, certain anomalies crept in the pension tables for captains and majors for the lack of proper data of the officers in the ranks of regular captains and majors since the minimum current rank of retirement to attain pensionable service is lieutenant colonel. The Ministry of Defence appointed a One Man Judicial Committee (OMJC) to recommend the resolution of this anomaly in 2016 but no decision was taken by the ministry on the matter after that. Subsequently, the Kochi Bench of the AFT directed the ministry to resolve the anomaly based on the OMJC's recommendations in a time-bound manner. However, the Centre challenged the AFT order in the Supreme Court.

Defence Ministry inks MoU to set up three testing facilities under UPDIC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ministry of Defence on Tuesday here inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up three state-of-the-art testing facilities under the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (UPDIC), officials said. Giving details, they said under the MoU, one facility will be established in Lucknow in Mechanical & Material (M&M) domain, and two in Kanpur - one each in Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) and Communications domains. The MoU, under the Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS), was exchanged between senior officials of defence ministry and Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) in New Delhi. The DTIS was launched by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in May 2020, with an outlay of Rs 400 crore, to set up state-of-the-art testing facilities in collaboration with private industry and Central/State Government, promoting indigenous defence production, reducing imports and enhancing self-reliance. To provide impetus to the defence and aerospace sectors within the Defence Industrial Corridors, seven testing facilities were approved - four in Tamil Nadu and three in Uttar Pradesh. While the MoU to establish three testing facilities in



UPDIC has been signed today, the agreement to set up three facilities under the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor in the domains of UAS, Electronic Warfare and Electro Optics in Chennai was inked on July 20. The DTIS provides up to 75% government funding as 'Grant-in-Aid', with the remaining 25% funded by the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPVs), comprising Indian private entities and State/Central Governments. For the M&M facility, MIDHANI is the lead SPV member, with some private sector companies being the consortium members. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Bharat Electronics Limited are the lead SPV members in the UAS and Communications testing facilities respectively. Upon the completion of the project, these facilities will provide advanced testing equipment and services to both government and private entities, with revenue reinvested to enhance testing capabilities and processes, thereby giving a boost to Aatmanirbharta in defence.

Delhi Govt, top cop get NHRC notices over deaths of IAS aspirants in coaching centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The NHRC has issued notices to the Delhi Government, city police chief and municipal commissioner in connection with the deaths of three civil services aspirants in the basement of a coaching centre here. It has sought a detailed report from them in two weeks. The Delhi Chief secretary has also been asked to get a thorough survey done to ascertain the exact number of such institutes and coaching centres running in violation of the prescribed norms across Delhi. Every detail of such institutes, including complaints pending against them and action taken by the department concerned, is to be mentioned in the report, a statement issued by the NHRC said. The NHRC said it has "taken suo motu cognisance of media reports that three students drowned in the flooded basement library of a prominent civil services coaching centre in Delhi on July 27". The news reports indicated that many complaints regarding waterlogging were made to the authorities, but "no action was taken". Expressing serious concern over the incident, the commission observed that the contents of the news report indicate negligence on the part of the authorities concerned. The commission also took cognisance of the death of another civil services aspirant in Delhi's Patel Nagar Area. It has been noted that a few days back, reportedly in another incident of authorities' negligence, another civil services aspirant died due to electrocution while crossing a waterlogged street. The commission has taken suo motu cognisance of it, the statement said.

Only Centre can raise quota limit by removing 50% cap: Uddhav

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday said the state lacks the power to remove the 50% cap on reservations, asserting that only the Centre has the authority to raise the ceiling limit through Parliament. Thackeray slammed the Eknath Shinde-led government over the vexed Maratha reservation issue and demanded deliberations with various sections to find a solution through mutual understanding instead of holding discussions only with politicians. "The state does not have the right to increase the limit of reservations. It can be resolved in Lok Sabha. My MPs will back it (if any law is proposed to increase the 50% cap)," the former chief minister told reporters. "Everyone must go to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and he should decide (on resolving the reservation issue). Whatever it is (the decision), we will accept it," he said. Thackeray said the ruling party must clarify whether it wants to hurt the (interests of) Other Backward Classes, citing the High Court's stay on the Bihar government's decision to raise quotas to 65 per cent. The former chief minister said Marathas won't get justice till incumbent rulers



(Shiv Sena led by Shinde, BJP, and NCP headed by Ajit Pawar) continue to be at the helm of affairs. Thackeray said the former ally (BJP) has changed and become "brutal". "This brutal tendency must be destroyed in Maharashtra and the country," he said while responding to a query on allegations raised by former state home minister and NCP (SP) leader Anil Deshmukh against Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Deshmukh had claimed an

"intermediary" had visited him when he was the home minister in the previous MVA government on behalf of Fadnavis, who was the opposition leader, with affidavits implicating then CM Uddhav Thackeray and ministers Aaditya Thackeray, Ajit Pawar and Anil Parab. Fadnavis has denied these charges. Thackeray called for rehabilitating residents of Dharavi slum sprawl, undergoing redevelopment, in the same locality and not elsewhere in the city.

Four killed in lightning strikes in Jharkhand



PTI ■ RANCHI

At least four people were killed and four others were injured in separate incidents of lightning strikes in Jharkhand's Ranchi district on Tuesday, an official said. Three persons were killed in Mandar block and one in Chanhoo block, he said. Mandar Circle Officer Rajendra Das said that one death each was reported in three villages — Cambo, Tilta and Baski — in Mandar police station area, around 30 km from Ranchi. "Four others, who were injured in lightning strikes, hail from Cambo village. They were referred to Ranchi's Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences for better treatment," he said. Das said that lightning struck them when they were sowing paddy in their fields. A 30-year-old woman was killed in a lightning strike in Lundi village in Chanhoo police station area, another official said.

Rajasthan schools to commemorate Article 370 abrogation, Congress condemns move

PTI ■ JAIPUR

The Rajasthan Education Department's academic calendar for new session in state government schools has sparked a political debate as it proposes to celebrate abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and birthday of Hindutva ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Article 370 of the Constitution, which granted special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, was abrogated on August 5, 2019. Congress state president Govind Singh Dotsra criticised the BJP-led state government's decision, terming it as a "shameless" move to serve political interests. The secondary education department calendar, Shivira Panchang, also proposes to observe Savarkar's birthday on May 28. "Congress opposes this politicisation of education and imposing its divisive ideology on students," Dotsra said. The calendar, which was released on Sunday, also features Surya Namaskar Diwas on February 4, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti on February 7, Mother's Day-Father's Day on February 14, and Subhas Chandra Bose Diwas, also referred to as Desh Prem



Diwas, on January 23. Earlier, the primary school education department had published its annual calendar on July 9, incorporating the celebration of the Ram temple consecration. After taking charge of the office on February 26, School Education Minister Madan Dilawar had criticised the historical portrayal of figures like Savarkar and Maharana Pratap, arguing that previous narratives unjustly glorified the Mughal emperor Akbar. He had alleged that Savarkar's role in the freedom struggle was wrongly written in history. Congress spokesperson

Swarnim Chaturvedi also condemned the new calendar, saying it is an attempt to politicise education and propagate Hindutva ideology. The school education minister's approach lacks focus on education, instead it is intended towards teaching students about Savarkar, who apologised to the British instead of fighting against them, Chaturvedi alleged. BJP spokesperson Mukesh Pareek defended the calendar and accused the Congress of indulging in appeasement politics. Pareek asserted that the BJP's intention is to educate students about influential

leaders like Savarkar and Maharana Pratap so that they can be inspired by them. "The BJP government will ensure that students take inspiration from the lives and roles of great leaders like Maharana Pratap and Savarkar," he said. The secondary education department calendar also encourages students' participation in school activities. It includes initiatives, such as "No Bag Day" on the second and fourth Saturdays, and celebration of national events, such as Independence Day, Republic Day and Gandhi Jayanti.

Unauthorised hawkers a mammoth problem; need proactive measures: HC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Unauthorised hawkers and vendors on public roads and footpaths were a mammoth problem, the Bombay High Court said on Tuesday, calling for proactive measures from the authorities. A division bench of Justices M S Sonak and Kamal Khata said its concern was that nobody should suffer. "No one should suffer...Public should not suffer...Shop owners should not suffer...Hawkers with a legal and valid license should also not suffer," the court said. Last year, the high court took suo motu (on its own) cognisance of the problem of illegal and unauthorised hawkers and vendors in the city. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Maharashtra government on Tuesday submitted their affidavits, informing the court about steps they have taken against unauthorised hawkers and vendors and what they propose to do to ensure the problem does not recur. BMC's counsel, Anil Singh, submitted that as per earlier directives from the court, 20 areas in the city were identified, and regular vigilance was kept to ensure hawkers do not set up their stalls without authorisation. The court said time and place management would help. "The problem is mammoth.



Hence, there have to be some proactive measures," the bench said. Senior counsel Gayatri Singh, appearing for the hawkers union, told the court that hawkers and vendors who hold valid licences are also forcibly removed by the civic authorities. To this, the court said, "We understand that you (hawkers holding legal licences) have your own set of difficulties. Whoever has permission should be given full protection. The ones who don't have permission overwhelm everybody else." The bench directed the union to file an affidavit and posted the matter for further hearing on Thursday. The BMC, in its affidavit, said daily checks are carried out in all wards to ensure no hawkers puts up stalls without the requisite permissions. An area of 150 meters around suburban railway stations is kept hawker-free, it said, adding that hawking zones have been earmarked in certain places.

Cong to counter BJP-JD(S) foot march over MUDA scam with public meetings

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said the ruling Congress has planned to organise public meetings to counter the opposition BJP-JD(S)' foot march over the alleged Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment scam. The two opposition parties have decided to hold a foot march from Bengaluru to Mysuru from August 3 to 10 in protest against the alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by MUDA, including to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi, and demanding his resignation. Reiterating that the police will not give permission to the foot march, but also won't stop them, the Minister, however, warned action against any activities in violation of law. Parameshwara, who met Siddaramaiah on Monday night ahead of his Delhi visit today, accused the opposition of indulging in "false propaganda and spreading information that is far from truth." "We (Congress) will also make efforts to inform the people as to what the truth is. We will inform truth to the people a day before they start spreading lies, we will inform the people whether it is in Mandya, Bidadi, Ramanagara, Mysuru -- as to what the truth is by organising meetings (on August 2)." With police permission



denied for the foot march, BJP state President B Y Vijayendra on Tuesday said the opposition will not be cowed down. "... If they (govt) try to suppress it, it will reach some level that is unimaginable. This government cannot stop us." Reacting to a question on this, Parameshwara said: "Let's see what happens. If they threaten the government, is the government weak? Is the Karnataka government so weak? I have said that we will not give them the permission, but we will also not stop them." "It is their right to protest, let them do it, but if anything is done in violation of law, naturally the police will do their duty to protect the law. I'm not saying that they will

violate the law. In case such things happen we will do our duty to protect the law. There is no need for them to threaten us or for us to threaten them," he said. Asked if members of the opposition will be arrested or booked for holding 'padayatre' (foot march) without permission, the Minister said: "Let them do their 'padayatre', didn't we do it when they (BJP govt) did not give permission to us earlier? We will not do such things (book cases or arrest), we will file FIR in case they violate law, if not why should we do it? no one will do it unnecessarily." Denying any wrong doing, the Chief Minister has said MUDA had legally allotted 14 residential sites to his wife in

lieu of illegally acquiring her land. The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where MUDA developed a residential layout. Under the controversial scheme, MUDA allotted 50 per cent of developed land to the land losers in lieu of undeveloped land acquired from them for forming residential layouts. BJP leaders have claimed that the MUDA "scam" is of the magnitude of Rs 4,000 crore to Rs 5,000 crore. The Congress government on July 14 constituted a single member inquiry commission under former High Court Judge Justice P N Desai to probe the MUDA 'scam'.

Karnataka to identify Bangladeshi illegally staying in State, deport them: Home Minister



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said Bangladeshi nationals illegally staying in the state will be sent to detention centres and necessary action will be taken to deport them. His statement came a day after BJP leader and former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said the illegal stay of Bangladeshi nationals in Bengaluru poses a threat to both the state and the nation. Parameshwara said the police will identify those who come to Karnataka from Bangladesh. "If they don't have valid documents like passport, visa, they will be arrested immediately and sent to detention centres; after that, we will inform Bangladesh High Commission or Ambassador, about the arrest of their nationals and seek

their permission to deport them," Parameshwara told reporters here in response to a question. The Minister took a dig at BJP leader B Bhaskar Rao, a former Bengaluru Police Commissioner, over his reported statement that it has not been possible to deport Bangladeshi nationals as they enjoy political support. "During his tenure as Commissioner it was not possible for him to do it, we are doing it now," Parameshwara said. "We are tightening the law and order situation in the state, whoever it is, will not allow them to go against the law," he said. Parameshwara also said that police crack down on Bangladeshi nationals illegally staying in the State has been taking place on a regular basis.

Himachal: Footbridge, makeshift sheds washed away in flash flood triggered by cloudburst in Kullu

PTI ■ SHIMLA

A footbridge and three makeshift sheds, including a liquor shop, were washed away following a flash flood triggered by a cloudburst in Tosh Nallah in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu district, officials said on Tuesday. The incident took place in the Tosh area of Manikaran early in the morning and no loss of life was reported, Deputy Commissioner Kullu Torul S Raveesh said, adding that a team has been sent to the spot to assess the situation. "Our appeal to the people is to stay away from rivers and rivulets and do not make temporary structures near nallahs," she said. The deputy commissioner said that construction



activity is prohibited during the monsoon and strict action would be taken against anyone defying the norms. The local meteorological

office has issued an 'orange' alert for heavy to very heavy rain accompanied with thunderstorms and lightning in seven districts of the state on Wednesday and Thursday.

The Met has also sunded a 'yellow' alert for heavy rain at isolated places on August 2 and 3. Monsoon activity is likely to intensify with widespread precipitation in the next four to five days, it said. Spells of heavy to very heavy rainfall are likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Una, Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Kangra, Mandi, Shimla and Sirmour on Wednesday and Thursday, the weather office said. It also cautioned of possibility of landslides and flash floods in vulnerable areas of Kullu, Solan, Sirmour, Shimla, and Kinnaur districts, and damage to plantations and standing crops, vulnerable structures and 'kutcha' houses due to strong winds

and waterlogging in low-lying areas. Meanwhile, light rainfall was witnessed in a few parts of the state. According to Meteorological Centre, Shimla, Sarahan and Rohru recorded 12 mm of rainfall since Monday evening followed by Sangrah (10 mm), Jogindernagar (8 mm), Sainj (6.5 mm), Manali (6 mm), Rampur (5.8 mm), Dharamshala (5.4 mm) and Gohar (5 mm). Official data recorded until Monday evening showed rain-related incidents have claimed 62 lives in the past one month since the onset of monsoon on June 27. The state has suffered losses to the tune of Rs 425 crore in the ongoing monsoon, according to the state emergency operation centre.

Horticulture policy being drafted, expected to be ready by September: Arunachal Minister

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Agriculture Minister Gabriel Denwang Wangshu on Tuesday said that a state horticulture policy is being drafted and is expected to be ready by September this year. Wangshu, who also holds the Horticulture, Diary Development and Fisheries portfolios, said that the horticulture policy was among the 24 major initiatives announced by the Pema Khandu government after returning to power in the state this year. "The target for framing the state horticulture policy is September this year and drafting of the policy is under process," the minister told reporters here. "One of the objectives of the policy is to provide a roadmap

for the state's self-reliance in producing disease-free and high-quality planting materials (QPM) through certified nurseries and plant tissue culture," he said. The comprehensive policy will guide the government's decisions, plans and programmes for achieving the desired output and outcome, Wangsu added. The minister said that the horticulture department is also preparing an action plan for providing incentives to large cardamom farmers for increasing production. He said Arunachal Pradesh is soon expected to become the top producer of large cardamom in the country, replacing Sikkim from the position. Three large cardamom nurseries are being developed at Khonsa in Tirap district,

Metengliang in Anjaw and Mariyang in Siang district with technical and financial support from Kozhikode-based Directorate of Arecanut and Spice Development (DASD) and the Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Ministry. He said the government has taken steps to address the issue of quality planting materials in the state. "The department has established the Kiwi Research & Development Centre (KRDC) at Ziro in Lower Subansiri district and Orange Research & Development Centre (ORDC) at Balek in Lower Dibang Valley district under the State Horticulture Research and Development Institute (SHRDI)," he said. A plant tissue culture laboratory at the state horticulture farm at Shergaon in West Kameng district is at an advanced stage of completion.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Taking on the dragon

S Jaishankar admits strained relations with China but rules out third-party mediation

In what can be construed as a candid admission by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, he has categorically stated that relations between India and China are not on an even keel. His recent statement underscores the ongoing diplomatic tension between India and China. Even earlier he had said that China is a bigger economy, implying that we should think twice before acting against China. The Minister's assessment of the current state of the India-China relationship highlights the challenges that persist despite various diplomatic efforts and high-level engagements. One of the key aspects of Jaishankar's statement was his firm rejection of third-party mediation in resolving the disputes with China. The Foreign Minister emphasised that India prefers to handle its issues with China bilaterally, without external intervention. This stance aligns with India's long-standing policy of managing its international relations directly. Jaishankar's comments reflect India's approach to maintaining sovereignty and autonomy in its foreign policy. By ruling out third-party mediation, India is signalling its intention to address its differences with China through direct dialogue and negotiation. This position underscores India's commitment to resolving disputes through established diplomatic channels while rejecting external influence that might complicate or hinder the process.



Prime Minister Modi had personally taken a keen interest in resolving the issue but to no avail. Chinese Premier Xi was invited and given a grand welcome but that did not break ice and the tension on borders continued. In the complex web of geopolitics, India has drifted closer to the US which wants to use India to contain Chinese influence, naturally much to the consternation of China. The Chinese unease is reflected in its actions on the border which had remained peaceful from 1962 to 2017 when the Doklam incident happened. India-China relations are complex and multifaceted, influenced by historical, political, economic, and strategic factors. The two countries share a long border. The most notable conflict occurred in 1962 when the Sino-Indian War broke out over border disputes in the Aksai Chin region. Ironically trade relations between the two countries have grown despite border disputes. China is one of India's largest trading partners. However, recent years have seen border skirmishes and strategic rivalries. In recent years, the relationship has been marked by both cooperation and contention. The Doklam skirmish in 2017 was a prominent example of border tensions. The confrontation occurred in the Doklam plateau, an area disputed between China and Bhutan. Additionally, the 2020 clashes in the Galwan Valley further highlighted ongoing tensions. Despite these challenges, India and China have continued to engage diplomatically and economically. Both nations must recognise the importance of managing their differences while pursuing mutual benefits, given their significant roles in the global economy and regional geopolitics.

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PICTALK



Clouds hover over the hill town of Shimla

Kolkata's healthcare transformation into world-class medical facilities

Over the past two decades, Kolkata's medical facilities have transformed significantly, reducing the exodus of patients to Chennai and Vellore

The hordes of medical pilgrims filling up berths in Coromandel Express and Madras Mail have thinned substantially over the years, as Kolkata's private healthcare sector scrambles to make up for lost time. Kolkata was not always best served in matters of healthcare, and for patients with serious ailments and often with not-so-serious conditions, Chennai, Vellore or Mumbai were the default destinations. It was also a matter of perception as most Kolkatans believed they would receive superior care in outstation hospitals only. However, the healthcare landscape in Kolkata has been undergoing a paradigm shift over the past two decades, riding the tailwinds of private sector initiatives, as the bed count continues to soar. The availability of able doctors was never a problem in the city and now that the pool of healthcare experts has increased significantly with a steady reverse traffic of medical practitioners coming back from the NHS in the UK and other advanced countries' health systems to cater to the growing demand



back in their hometown. Over time, the city has gradually regained its confidence in its private hospitals seeing that they aren't short of modern facilities and latest equipment anymore. The faith is beginning to trickle back, ounce by ounce, and the Coromandel isn't as packed with south-bound patients as before. Of course, it hasn't happened overnight, and there is still a long way to go. Kolkata's progress in terms of private sector participation is in sync with the national scenario as analysts say between 2016 and now, the country's healthcare industry has grown at a CAGR of 22% and the Centre's allocation of Rs 90,658.63 crore for the sector in the interim Budget for 2024-25 reflects this uptrend. However, restora-

tion of faith in any service, not the least healthcare delivery, takes a lot of commitment and meticulous planning. After all, like any other customer, a patient has a retail choice and can switch allegiance if expectations are not met. It is well known that a big and significant milestone in this medical makeover of Kolkata was the unveiling of the Rabindranath Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Sciences in 2000 by Narayana Health Group's Founder, Dr. Devi Shetty. This set the ball rolling and many other world class hospitals started their services in Kolkata. It was the flagship venture of the founder which he started in his favourite city, Kolkata. The journey began over two decades ago with a single speciality hospital and has grown into a network of four super-speciality hospitals in Kolkata. Now Kolkata can boast of super-speciality tertiary care, these facilities offer over 35 specialities such as Cancer Care, Mother & Child Care, and Orthopaedics. The healthcare sector in India, serving a vast population of

1.4 billion, faces challenges like inadequate infrastructure, doctor shortages, poor rural facilities, and limited health insurance access. Addressing these issues, the Group plans a 1,000-bed hospital in New Town and a 100-bed facility in Mukundapur. The New Town hospital will treat 5,000 to 7,000 OPD patients daily. Kolkata's hospitals also serve patients from neighbouring countries, managing a growing load of non-communicable diseases. The adoption of cutting-edge technology and modern treatment protocols has reduced the average hospital stay from six to four days, optimizing resources. A future-ready approach aims to increase smiles by saving lives. Healthcare evolution, on desirable lines, is crucial in the region. This would lead to a higher stage of advancement, guided by the principles of compassion, innovation, and deep dedication that were envisioned over two decades ago. (The Author is the Group Chief Operating Officer of Narayana Health. Views expressed are personal)



R VENKATESH

Honouring the legacy of Bal Gangadhar Tilak



RAJDEEP PATHAK

As the nation commemorates Tilak's 168th birth anniversary, we reflect on his profound influence on the independence movement and his contributions as a reformer

In 1921, Mahatma Gandhi's visit to the Nellore district marked a significant moment in India's freedom movement. He inaugurated the Satyagraha Ashram in Pallepadu and delivered significant speeches at the Town Hall and V.R. College. At the Rebala Lakshmi Narasa Reddy Town Hall, he unveiled a portrait of his political mentor, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, emphasizing Tilak's profound patriotism and leadership, which galvanized the freedom movement. Gandhi extolled Tilak's legacy, invoking the ideals of "Swaraj" (self-rule) and characterizing the Non-Cooperation Movement as an act of 'self-purification'. He urged contributions to the 'Tilak Swaraj Fund', established in 1920, to support educational institutions, Khadi promotion, and Swadeshi efforts. It was a successful mobilized mission. July 23, 2024, marked the 168th birth anniversary of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, also revered as "Lokmanya" and "The Lion of Maharashtra". This is for his dual role, as a freedom fighter and social reformer. His impact has also been underscored by notable figures, such as British journalist Valentine Chirol who termed him "the father of Indian unrest," while, Jawaharlal Nehru hailed him as "the father of the Indian revolution" and Mahatma Gandhi recognized him as "the Maker of Modern India." A distinguished Sanskrit scholar and thinker, Tilak was also a visionary leader. Sri Aurobindo, in his collection of Tilak's writings and speeches, emphasized Tilak's transformative influence on the Indian National Congress, reshaping it from its occidental characteristics to embrace mass participation in the freedom struggle. In "The Intellectual Biography of Bal Gangadhar Tilak" published in the 'Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science', Raj Hans Ojha, contends that "The story of Tilak is the story of India's Swaraj, of the Indian National Congress, coming to its adulthood, and of the rise of Indian masses for the first time in quest of 'Home Rule' and 'Independence' Lokmanya Tilak believed that "Swaraj is the foun-



ation and not the height of our future prosperity. We have to build a new nation, develop a new character, live the principles, which we advocate, faith in spiritual values, love of country and tolerance for views from which we differ. Tilak's intellectual contributions were many. His works such as, "The Orion and Research into The Antiquity of The Vedas" (1893) and "The Arctic Home of Vedas" (1901), complemented his political activism. Despite his devotion to independence, he expressed a preference for academia, a path cut short by his untimely death on August 1, 1920, at age 64. His educational contributions are equally noteworthy. He co-founded institutions like the 'New English School', the 'Deccan Society for Education', and 'Fergusson College', and presented a comprehensive educational blueprint to the Hunter Commission (1882 & 1919). Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a strategist, transcending the roles of an idealist and philosopher, and his multifaceted contributions continue to resonate in India's historical and educational landscape. As a formidable journalist, Tilak was renowned for his fearless and impartial stance in his weekly publication, 'Kesari'. He championed a rigorous

HE WAS AMONG THE FIRST MAINSTREAM POLITICAL LEADERS IN INDIA TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT "THE NATION THINKS NOT WITH THE BRAIN BUT WITH AN OVERHEATED HEART. IT IS ONLY IN THE THROES OF TUMULT THAT NATIONS ARE BORN"

approach to journalism, asserting that 'Kesari' would boldly address all issues, resisting the prevailing trend of appeasing the British and embodying its namesake's courage. Bal Gangadhar Tilak also leveraged his paper 'Mahratha Advocate for the People, drawing upon Hindu scriptures and the Bhagavad Gita to support his arguments. His profound contributions as a patriot, scholar, and politician had a significant impact on Mahatma Gandhi, who, in a March 4, 1905, article, lauded Lokmanya's scholarship, particularly his astronomical findings that traced Indian scriptures to over 10,000 years old, recognizing him as a luminary whose intellectual influence extended beyond national borders. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was imprisoned in 1908. He strongly believed that "There are higher powers that rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of providence that the cause I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free." Gandhi and Tilak had great mutual respect for one another. In his reflections in The Indian Opinion, Gandhi praised Tilak for his readiness to endure suffering for the cause of India's freedom. While they were ideologically different in their thoughts and actions, both

Lokmanya Tilak and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi fought for one cause, which was 'freedom'. Mahatma Gandhi maintained a profound respect for Tilak's contributions and acknowledged his unparalleled influence and the reverence he commanded among the masses. In his tributes and public statements, Gandhi consistently lauded Tilak's selfless service, burning patriotism, and magnetic leadership. Tilak's mantra, "Swaraj is our birthright, and I shall have it", resonated deeply with Mahatma Gandhi, who adapted it to his philosophy of truth and non-violence, and thus, Tilak's assertive nationalism blended with Gandhi's principles of peaceful resistance. Mahadev Desai, recalls Mahatma Gandhi's views on Lokmanya Tilak, which he expressed on 24 July 1934 at Cawnpore (Kanpur today), in one of the meetings. Mahatma Gandhi said: "If Tilak Maharaj taught us that 'swaraj is our birthright', he also taught us that 'selfless service' is the key to win it. Selfless service may have been in existence before Tilak came, but he was who systematized it." Tilak's life was a demonstration of this great ideal of Karma Yoga. (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UNAUTHORISED PG MUSHROOMING

Madam — Paying guest accommodations (PG) for women have made headlines following the brutal murder of a woman in one such facility located in a posh Bengaluru locality. It is crucial to take strict action against unauthorized PGs. The police argue that without a formal complaint, securing PGs is not inherently their responsibility, and this claim is understandable. Nonetheless, increased patrolling in sensitive areas where these accommodations are situated should not be overlooked. Thus, the responsibility for ensuring the safety and security of female residents falls on the PG owners. It is alarming to note that many PGs in India lack security guards. Security personnel should thoroughly frisk strangers seeking entry into PGs. The importance of a biometric fingerprint system for all entrants cannot be overstated. Additionally, providing kitchens that prepare hygienic food is essential to prevent women from frequently venturing out for meals, enhancing their safety. Troublemakers such as hawkers and beggars should be kept at bay. Regular presence and unwavering supervision by the owners at the PGs can significantly boost residents' morale. Overall, a collective commitment is vital. Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

USE OF TRIBALS IN THE SCHOOL NAMES

Madam — The Madras High Court has strongly criticised the Tamil Nadu government for using the term "Tribal" in the names of government schools. This issue arose with schools in the Kalvarayan Hills being named "Government Tribal Residential School." The court rightly observed that this terminology is inappropriate, especially for a secular government. The use of caste or community names in school titles is astonishing and deemed unacceptable by the court. The court emphasised that labeling a school as a "Tribal School" could stigmatise the children attending it, making them feel their school is inferior to others. This could lead to an inferiority complex among the

Grand spectacle of Paris Olympics



The Paris Olympics 2024 have begun, filling the city with excitement and drawing visitors from around the world to witness this grand sporting event. While the Olympic games promise thrilling spectacles, Paris offers many other activities to enrich your visit. If you're a food enthusiast with a penchant for history, indulge in iconic Parisian bites

that offer a delightful journey through time and taste. Wander through charming streets and savor culinary delights that are integral to Parisian culture. For those seeking unique experiences, venture beyond the usual tourist spots and discover offbeat attractions that provide a different perspective on the city. Additionally, Paris offers various free activities that allow you to enjoy the city's charm without breaking the bank. From serene parks to historical landmarks, there's no shortage of cost-free ways to immerse yourself in the Parisian ambience. Lastly, don't miss out on the must-see attractions that define Paris. Iconic sites such as the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, and Notre-Dame Cathedral are timeless treasures that captivate visitors. Jayanthi Subramaniam | Mumbai

students. Caste and community play a significant role in the political arena as vote banks. The caste system is deeply entrenched in government policies and programs, leading to reverse discrimination. The principle of "all are equal in law" is often neglected, with reservation in education and employment based on caste. Some states have defied the Supreme Court's directive to limit reservations to 50 percent, extending them to over 75 percent, which adversely affects merit. If some communities feel deprived of fair representation in education and employment, the government may consider pro-rata reservations for all communities as a solution. KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS

Madam — Since independence, our country has undergone significant changes. While we have adopted many new governance systems, we still retain some from our colonial past. One such legacy is the role of governors acting as representatives of the President in all states, a practice that

continues unchanged. Recently, the Supreme Court agreed to consider separate petitions from opposition-ruled Kerala and West Bengal. These petitions allege that the respective governors refused to assent to bills passed by their assemblies. This is not an isolated incident; similar cases have been brought before the Hon'ble Supreme Court numerous times. West Bengal, for example, claimed in its petition that the Governor had withheld assent to eight bills. I believe the position of governors has never been impartial in this country. The office has become increasingly politicized; a study found that between 1950 and 2015, only a quarter of governors completed a five-year term, with 37 percent serving less than a year. Defying traditions, governors are typically appointed by the ruling party without consulting the elected state government, leading to strained relations between federal and state governments. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

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FIRST COLUMN

CURIOUS MINDS ENGINEER CHANGE

Mental re-engineering can infuse life with renewed vigor and purpose



RAVI VALLURI

Often, conventional and commonplace way of thinking only results in clambering the ladder. A person leading a ho-hum existence cannot re-engineer his/her personality. Tale of an old man Aeon's ago, lived an elderly gentleman who in the winter of his life decided to embark on a spiritual journey to transfigure his personality. The pater now embarked on the spiritual sojourn and enrolled in a monastery. Upon completing his tutelage, armed with various nuances of Zen teachings, he left for his small town. He stepped out of the portals of the temple of knowledge and involuntarily slipped into a rivulet. "Oh, the old monk falls in the river!" chortled some young tutees.

He was to dramatically declare that the re-engineering processes and techniques he acquired had enabled him to accommodate water into himself and not the other way around. "We are shaped by our thoughts, we become what we think. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves," said Gautama Buddha. The thought process, thinking patterns, building blocks of thought, organised thinking and goal direction are five keys to re-engineer the mind to metamorphose and refashion our lives. An ingenious individual to re-engineer his life has to change the existing pattern. He should begin by identifying the problem. In the swaths of his mind, such a process represents and delineates the problem; as he/she is mindful and discerning, solutions and a set of sub-goals are outlined. The quick-witted individual then selects the balm for the misadventure and executes it with precision.

The human mind is now brim-full of ideas and it is time to evaluate the outcome and once again rethink and redefine problems and arrive at new solutions. It was the time of Sakhyia Muni Gautama Buddha when an animated group of denizens were involved in a rambunctious argument about Divinity and various religions. In sheer exasperation, they arrived at the feet of Lord Buddha. The Compassionate and Enlightened One smiled and ruminated for a while. Lord Buddha then asked his disciples to arrange for an elephant and for four persons to be blindfolded. And so, it happened that the first of the blindfolded persons felt the elephant's leg and exclaimed that God appeared as a pillar. The second person



touched the elephant's tummy and opined that Almighty God was a wall. The third gentleman stroked the elephant's ear and observed that God was a piece of cloth. The fourth man grazed the tail and described that God was a piece of rope. Once again, the group of four was engaged in a raging debate on the form of Almighty God. After the exercise was completed, Buddha asked the assembled disciples and citizens. The four blindfolded individuals felt the same elephant, but provided varying answers, so what could be the correct answer? The episode just proved that no one individual or thought process is complete. One should always be prepared to accept that one might be correct in parts and that other streams of thought could be complementary. Techniques for training the spiritually inclined can re-engineer their lives by undertaking the bouquet of courses imparted by the Art of Living, or pursue Vipassana; attempting to mutate their minds through the practice of yoga, pranayama and meditation. Others have a logical bent of mind and charter a different path.

They need to develop a passion, take up a sport, and read inspirational literature among other things. But it is elemental and foundational to re-engineer the mind and thought processes at regular intervals to live life with gusto.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Balanced budget reflects Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat'



K S TOMAR

PM Modi's "self-reliant India" vision is central to the 2024-25 Union Budget. It boosts domestic production, supports SMEs, and fosters innovation to reduce import dependency

Prime Minister Modi's vision of a "self-reliant India" (Atmanirbhar Bharat) is a recurring theme in the budget. This vision emphasizes self-sufficiency in critical sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. The budget outlines measures to boost domestic production, support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and encourage innovation. These initiatives are designed to reduce import dependency and create a robust, self-sustaining economy. At the same time, the budget reflects Modi's understanding of India's interconnectedness with the global economy. The focus on enhancing India's export competitiveness, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), and participating in global value chains underscores the dual approach of strengthening domestic capabilities while engaging with the global market.

This balanced approach is crucial for India to navigate the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly complex global economic landscape. The Union Budget, a cornerstone of the country's economic planning, may serve as a reflection of the government's strategic priorities and vision for the future. It is being billed as a path-breaking foundation of Reforms for the next 5 years. According to some experts, under the leadership of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, the budget has been targeted to foster economic growth, address social inequalities, and position India as a key player on the global stage. The latest budget unveiled amidst a backdrop of global economic uncertainty, showcases a balanced approach, combining domestic development with an international outlook.

CHALLENGES BEFORE FM

In light of the 2024-25 Union Budget, the BJP-led central government faces scrutiny over its dealings with opposition-ruled states, which allege discrimination in fund allocation and policy implementation. Experts say that Central Schemes and Fund Allocation; The Budget reveals a 15% increase in allocations for flagship schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and Ayushman Bharat. However, opposition states argue that their share of these funds does not reflect their proportionate needs. For instance, Tamil Nadu has claimed that despite a significant allocation under PMAY, delays in fund release and implementation hinder effective utilization. The central government's response involves reiterating the equitable distribution based on various factors, but opposition states view these explanations sceptically. Implementation Issues; Critics point to inefficiencies in scheme implementation as evidence of discrimination. The opposition-ruled states have raised concerns about delays and insufficient execution of these schemes.

The central government needs to ensure that these funds are utilized efficiently and that implementation is monitored closely to address these grievances. Political Dynamics; Allegations of political bias also come into play. Opposition leaders argue that central agencies are used to target political rivals, exacerbating feelings of discrimination. With the BJP's political rivals accusing it of manipulating central resources, the government must navigate these complex political dynamics carefully.

STEPS TO ADDRESS THE CONCERNS



THE BUDGET REVEALS A 15% INCREASE IN ALLOCATIONS FOR FLAGSHIP SCHEMES SUCH AS THE PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA (PMAY) AND AYUSHMAN BHARAT. HOWEVER, OPPOSITION STATES ARGUE THAT THEIR SHARE OF THESE FUNDS DOES NOT REFLECT THEIR PROPORTIONATE NEEDS

To mitigate allegations of discrimination, the central government should adopt multiple strategies which include Enhanced Transparency; Provide detailed reports on fund allocations and expenditures to ensure transparency and address concerns of inequitable distribution. The focus should be on the efficient and timely execution of central schemes, particularly in opposition-ruled states, to demonstrate commitment to equitable development. The Centre must engage in regular discussions with opposition state governments to address grievances and ensure that their concerns are heard and addressed. A Balanced Approach for Sustainable Growth; The Indian Union Budget, under the leadership of Modi, presents a balanced blueprint for growth, combining a focus on domestic development with a strategic international outlook. The emphasis on infrastructure, healthcare, education, and financial inclusion reflects the government's commitment to inclusive growth.

At the same time, the focus on global partnerships, defence manufacturing, and renewable energy highlights India's aspirations to be a key player on the world stage. Domestic Positives: A Focus on Inclusive Development; The budget's primary focus is on inclusive growth, ensuring that the benefits of economic development reach all sections of society. A significant allocation has been made towards infrastructure development, including roads, railways, and digital infrastructure. This not only promises to create jobs but also lays the groundwork for long-term economic resilience. The emphasis on renewable energy and green technology is another forward-looking aspect, aligning with global trends towards sustainability. Healthcare and educa-

tion have not received substantial attention. The substantial increase in funding for public health infrastructure is a must, especially after the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, investments in education, particularly in digital and vocational training, will equip the younger generation with skills for the future job market. This focus on human capital development is critical for sustaining economic growth in the long term. The government's commitment to financial inclusion continues with initiatives to expand the reach of banking and financial services to rural areas. This effort is crucial for integrating rural populations into the formal economy, enhancing their economic opportunities, and reducing regional disparities. Moreover, targeted welfare schemes for farmers, women, and marginalized communities underscore the government's intent to address social inequalities and ensure a more equitable distribution of resources. Extreme evidence of a discriminatory approach exhibited in the union budget estimates for 2024-24 pertains to the allocation of Rs 11,500 crore for flood mitigation to Bihar whereas Himachal as well as Uttarakhand faced unprecedented catastrophe in July/August 2023 which suffered extensive damages to the tune of over Rs 12,000 crore and Rs 4,000 crore respectively but figures have not been mentioned in the budget.

Himachal government is in a quandary as 550 lives were lost and rehabilitation of lakhs of hapless people had been undertaken by the state government by making provision of Rs 650 crore hence expected a liberal Special Package from the union finance minister who preferred to just give an assurance about financial assistance to the state but no allocation

of the budget. Inordinate delay in the announcement of a "Special Package" had affected relief and rehabilitation works though the state demanded immediate help of Rs 9,042 crore from the centre in Aug 2023. Chief Minister, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu regretted the apathy of the centre which gave nothing for one year. The finance minister skipped Punjab also which witnessed devastation owing to heavy rains and floods in 21 out of 23 districts and damages were more than Rs 1,680 crore. About 70 lives were lost and the state government has been demanding financial assistance which has been ignored in this budget. Contrary to it, Bihar has been chosen for special treatment and the finance minister allocated Rs 11,500 crore for flood mitigation which is being interpreted as a Reward for helping BHP to form a government after its reduced strength in Lok Sabha. Experts say that Bihar has been India's most flood-prone state with 76% of the population of north Bihar living under recurring threat of devastating floods for decades hence it deserves a special package but not by ignoring other states that suffer an identical natural disaster every year. As India navigates the challenges of a post-pandemic world, the budget's provisions for economic resilience, social equity, and environmental sustainability provide a solid foundation for future growth. Modi's vision of a self-reliant India resonates throughout the budget, offering a roadmap for the country's economic and strategic aspirations. This holistic approach, balancing domestic priorities with international engagement, positions India well for a sustainable and prosperous future.

(The writer is a political analyst and senior journalist based in Shimla; views are personal)

How persistence and empathy can cure tuberculosis

Tuberculosis is a 'curable infectious disease linked to inequities, it is therefore crucial to invest in partnerships that address these disparities with empathy

A year ago 20-year-old Tahira was convinced she was going to die. A fever that refused to go accompanied by a persistent cough, a loss in appetite and extreme weakness had confined her to the bed for months. Her husband, a rickshaw puller, had neither the means nor the time to take her to a doctor. It was only when her brother came to visit her in Kolkata and saw her failing health that he decided to take matters into his own hands. He brought Tahira back with him to her natal house in Seemapuri, Delhi. This decision was to save her life. Around this time, Humana People to People India (HPPPI), a not-for-profit, was reaching out with information and guidance on tuberculosis (TB)



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

as a part of their Project LEAD (Leveraging Educating, Advocating to Disrupt TB transmission). Working in close coordination with the government's National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP), LEAD focussed on the oft-ignored and overlooked marginalized communities living in low-grade urban slums, the homeless and migratory population in four cities, Delhi, Mumbai, Howrah and Hyderabad.

Persistence Pays When LEAD field officer Shanti met Tahira, she immediately knew what had to be done. First, she was taken for a chest X-ray. When it showed Tahira presumptive for TB, sputum microscopy was conducted which confirmed TB. Once this became clear, the diagnosis was reconfirmed through the WHO-recommended molecular test via the Cartridge-Based Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (CBNAAT) and drug susceptibility test via Line Probe Assay (LPA) provided free at the government GTB Hospital. The drug susceptibility test is done to ensure that the TB bacteria (Bacillus Mycobacterium Tuberculosis), that infects a person is not resistant to the medicines they are treated with.

Realising there was no time to waste, Shanti quickly enabled her registration on Ni-Akshay, the government's NTEP real-time patient management web system, so that her card could be made and her treatment started the same day. As a trained worker, Shanti knew time was of the essence and treatment adherence critical. So, for the next six months, Shanti would become Tahira's shadow. She kept a watchful eye and followed up doggedly with 40 visits to ensure Tahira didn't miss out or falter in sticking to the drug regimen. Her persistence paid off when Tahira tested negative a couple of months ago and is now completely cured. The Techno CATTB being an infectious disease, early detection and



treatment is vital especially as it spreads when persons with the illness expel the bacteria into the air, mostly by coughing. Here is where technology can play a role. Cough Against TB (CAT) an innovative application AI-powered cough-sound-based screening tool to assess the likelihood of pulmonary TB developed by Wadhvani AI, resulted in a 10.8% presumptive rate and a positivity yield of 15.6%.

One of the important outcomes of using CAT was its detection of asymptomatic cases, which otherwise would have been missed. While technology has been an enabling tool, the real success of screening over 600,000 individuals, identifying 3,182 people with TB (PwTB), and supporting 98% of them in Delhi with treatment adherence has been due to the commitment and compassion shown by the women field workers. The project findings at the end of the one-year project indicate that the female field officers proved to be more effective than their male counterparts in TB awareness and screening because of their empathy. A Human Touch How a human touch can make all the difference was seen in Tahira's

case. Shanti's support to Tahira during her challenging treatment journey was not just by counselling but also through food ration supplements every month through her contacts with an NGO. Additionally, she also linked her to NTEP's Ni-Akshay Poshan Yojana, the government scheme to provide Rs 500 per month for PwTB to buy food. Deploying women now cured of TB as activists and field workers have also worked wonders to reach out to those who fall through the cracks. They know what it means to live with TB and the societal stigma that have to face. Their determination to help others in similar situations has boosted early detection and treatment. It is a known fact that those most at risk are people residing in poorly ven-

tilated and overcrowded conditions, suffering from malnutrition and diseases and with limited access to healthcare. Project LEAD has shown that women field officers are more successful in persuading TB screening and treatment adherence among the vulnerable and marginalized because of their understanding and sensitivity. TB researchers Dr Anurag Bhargava, Dr Madhukar Pai and Dr Madhvi Bhargava reiterate that TB is a "curable" infectious disease linked to inequities, it is even more imperative to invest in more partnerships that bridge these inequalities with empathy.

(The author is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views are expressed are personal)

3 children killed, 5 injured in UK stabbing

PTI ■ LONDON

A nine-year-old girl died on Tuesday in the "ferocious" stabbing incident in Southport, north-west England, taking the death toll to three after two children – girls aged six and seven – were killed on the spot.

Five others continue to fight for their lives as Merseyside Police detectives question a 17-year-old male arrested on suspicion of murder to try and establish the motive behind the attack at a children's dance workshop at Hart Street on Monday.

The police force on Tuesday reiterated the incident is "not currently being treated as terror-related and we are not looking for anyone else in connection with it". In its update on the investigation, Merseyside Police said the third child died as a result of injuries sustained in the knife attack in the early hours of this morning.

Eight other children suffered stab wounds during the attack, five of whom remain in a "critical condition". Two adults are also in critical condition after



being injured during the incident.

"A name has been shared on social media in connection with the suspect in the incident in Southport. This name is incorrect and we would urge people not to speculate on details of the incident while the investigation is ongoing," the police statement said, concerning the suspect who remains in custody.

The children, aged between six and 11 years, were attending a summer holiday workshop themed around singer Taylor Swift's music.

"A 17-year-old male from Banks in Lancashire, who was born in Cardiff (Wales), has been arrested on suspicion of murder and attempted murder and has been taken to a police station where he will be interviewed by detectives," Merseyside Police Chief Constable Serena Kennedy told reporters, giving details of what she said was a "ferocious" attack.

"It is understood that the children were attending a Taylor Swift event at a dance school when the offender, who was armed with a knife, walked into the premises and started to

attack those inside. We believe that the adults who were injured were trying to protect the children at the time they were attacked," she said. "As a mum of two daughters, and the nanna of a five-year-old granddaughter, I cannot begin to imagine the pain and suffering the families of the victims are currently going through and I want to send them our heartfelt condolences and sympathies," she added.

The royal family, including King Charles, Queen Camilla and the Prince and Princess of Wales, issued statements expressing their shock and sadness at the "utterly horrific" incident.

"We send our most heartfelt condolences, prayers and deepest sympathies to the families and loved ones of those who have so tragically lost their lives and to all those affected by this truly appalling attack," reads the King's message.

On a personal note, Prince William and Kate Middleton said that as parents they "could not begin to imagine" what the families of the children were going through.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the whole country had been "deeply shocked" by the attack.

"I know I speak for everybody in the whole country in saying our thoughts and condolences are with the victims, their families, their friends and the wider community. It's almost impossible to imagine the grief that they're going through and the trauma that they are going through," he said.

Opposition Leader Rishi Sunak also expressed his shock over the "horrendous attack" and thanked the emergency services for their response.

Singer Taylor Swift has said the knife attack at a dance workshop themed around her music which left three children dead and nine more injured has left her "completely in shock".

Posting on Instagram, the star said she was "at a complete loss" for how to convey her sympathies.

She said the "horrendous trauma inflicted on everyone who was there" had left her at a "complete loss for how to ever con-

vey my sympathies to these families."

Meanwhile, flowers, notes and cards expressing an outpouring of grief have been piling up at the site of the attack, a community centre used regularly by the locals including for mother and child events.

The local Labour MP, Patrick Hurley, said the community was waking up in "shock and grief" after the brutal stabbings and that a vigil is planned for Tuesday night in support of the victims and their families and friends.

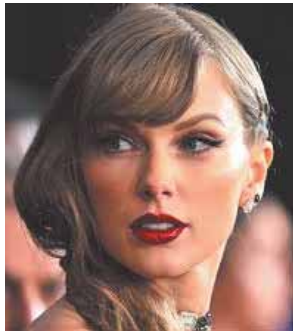
Several witnesses described horrific scenes as a knifeman launched the attack, with bleeding children seen on the street as they ran out of the community centre to flee the attacker.

Horror-struck and screaming parents were seen rushing about, with locals trying to help the injured children. The dance class is believed to have been fully booked with 25 young children in attendance.

A police cordon remains in place around the scene at Hart Street in Southport, a seaside town north of Liverpool – referred to as Merseyside.

Taylor Swift 'in shock'

AP ■ LONDON



British police say a third child has died after a stabbing at a kids' yoga and dance class. The 9-year-old girl died on Tuesday. Two girls aged 6 and 7 previously died following Monday's attack in Southport, northwest England. Five children and two adults are in critical condition in hospitals.

A 17-year-old boy has been arrested and is being questioned by police.

Police were questioning a suspect and working Tuesday to understand what motivated a 17-year-old boy to attack children at a Taylor Swift-themed dance and yoga class, leaving two dead and six in critical condition.

A total of nine children and two adults were hurt in the rampage in Southport in northwest England. Both adults and six of the children were in critical condition in local hospitals.

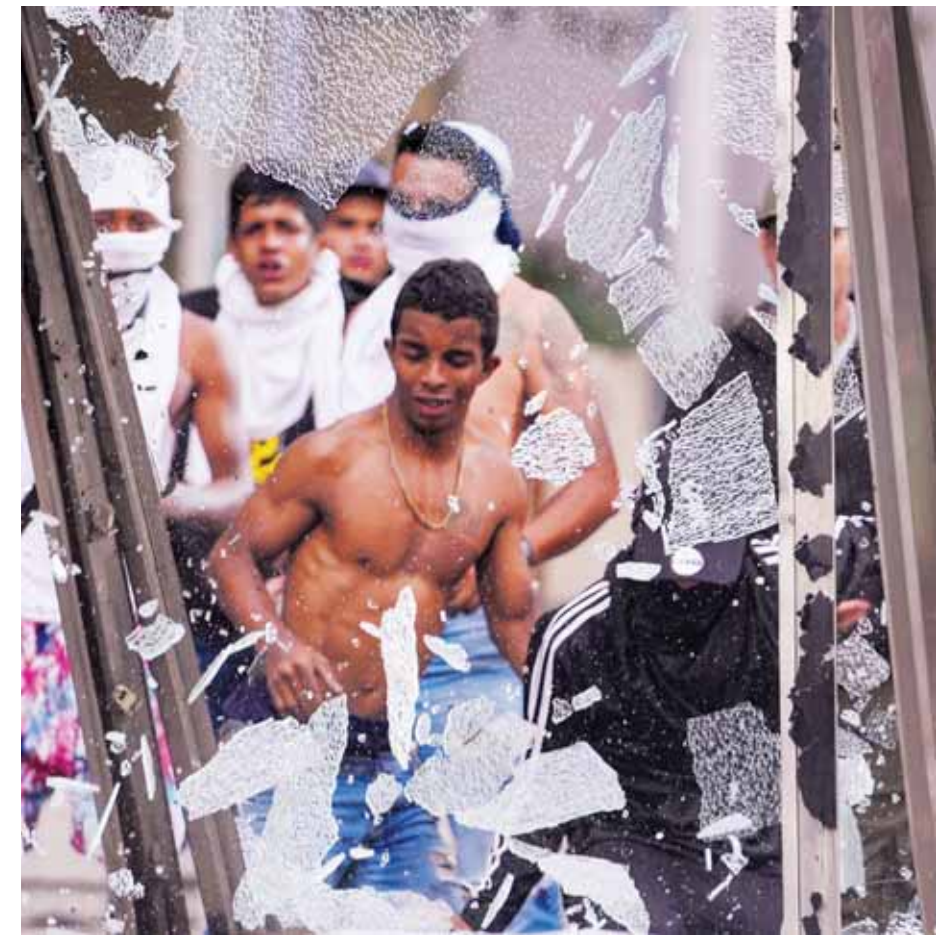
Swift said she was "completely in shock" and still taking in "the horror" of the event.

"These were just little kids at

a dance class," she wrote on Instagram. "I am at a complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families."

A 17-year-old boy was arrested on suspicion of murder and attempted murder.

Local people left flowers and stuffed animals in tribute at a police cordon on the street lined with brick houses in the seaside resort near Liverpool – nicknamed "sunny Southport" – whose beach and pier attract vacationers from across northwest England. Witnesses described scenes "from a horror movie" as bloodied children ran from the attack just before noon on Monday.



Protesters smash an advertising board during demonstrations against the official election results declaring President Nicolas Maduro's reelection, the day after the vote in Caracas, Venezuela on Monday.

Venezuelan opp says it has proof its candidate defeated Maduro

AP ■ CARACAS

As thousands of people demonstrated across Venezuela, opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez on Monday announced that his campaign has the proof it needs to show he won the country's disputed election whose victory electoral authorities handed to President Nicolas Maduro.

Gonzalez and opposition leader Maria Corina Machado told reporters they have obtained more than 70 per cent of tally sheets from Sunday's election, and they show Gonzalez with more than double Maduro's votes.

Both called on people, some of whom protested in the hours after Maduro was declared winner, to remain calm and invited them to gather peacefully at 11 am Tuesday to celebrate the results.

"I speak to you with the calmness of the truth," Gonzalez said as dozens of supporters cheered outside campaign headquarters in the capital, Caracas. "We have in our hands the tally sheets that

demonstrate our categorical and mathematically irreversible victory."

Their announcement came after the National Electoral Council, which is loyal to Maduro's ruling Unites Socialist Party of Venezuela, officially declared him the winner, handing him his third six-year term.

In the capital, the protests were mostly peaceful, but when dozens of riot gear-clad national police officers blocked the caravan, a brawl broke. Police used tear gas to disperse the protesters, some of whom threw stones and other objects at officers who had stationed themselves on a main avenue of an upper-class district.

A man fired a gun as the protesters moved through the city's financial district. No one suffered a gunshot wound.

The demonstrations followed an election that was among the most peaceful in recent memory, reflecting hopes that Venezuela could avoid bloodshed and end 25 years of single-party rule. The winner was to take control of an economy

recovering from collapse and a population desperate for change. "We have never been moved by hatred. On the contrary, we have always been victims of the powerful," Maduro said in a nationally televised ceremony. "An attempt is being made to impose a coup d'état in Venezuela again of a fascist and counterrevolutionary nature."

"We already know this movie, and this time, there will be no kind of weakness," he added, saying that Venezuela's "law will be respected."

Machado told reporters tally sheets show Maduro and Gonzalez received more than 2.7 million and roughly 6.2 million votes respectively.

"A free people is one that is respected, and we are going to fight for our freedom," Gonzalez said. "Dear friends, I understand your indignation, but our response from the democratic sectors is of calmness and firmness."

Venezuelans vote using electronic machines, which record votes and provide every voter a paper receipt that shows the candidate of their choice.

Voters are supposed to deposit their receipt at ballot boxes before exiting the polls. After polls close, each machine prints a tally sheet showing the candidates' names and the votes they received.

But the ruling party wields tight control over the voting system, both through a loyal five-member electoral council and a network of longtime local party coordinators who get near unrestricted access to voting centres. Those coordinators, some of whom are responsible for handing out government benefits including subsidised food, have blocked representatives of opposition parties from entering voting centres as allowed by law to witness the voting process, vote counting and, crucially, to obtain a copy of the machines' final tally sheet.

Electoral authorities had not yet released the tally sheets for each of the 30,000 voting machines as of Monday evening. The electoral body's website was down, and it remained unclear when the tallies would be available.

British Pakistani radical preacher jailed for life

London (PTI): Anjem Choudary, a radical Islamist preacher with dual British and Pakistani nationality, was on Tuesday jailed for life with a minimum term of 28 years behind bars by a UK court for directing a terrorist organisation.

Choudary, 57, had been found guilty at Woolwich Crown Court of directing Al-Muhajiroun (ALM) and encouraging support for the proscribed organisation through online meetings.

Sentencing him at the same court to a prison term means he would be in his 80s by the time he can seek parole.

Justice Mark Wall told Choudary his behaviour was of the "highest culpability".

"Organisations such as yours normalise violence in pursuit of an ideological cause. They drive wedges between people who would otherwise live together in peaceful co-existence," said Judge Wall.

During a six-week trial which concluded last week, the jury heard how Choudary helped found ALM in 1996 and spent nearly 30 years running its operations under dozens of different names.

ALM was first proscribed, or banned, by the UK in 2006 under the name Al Ghurabaa. In 2010, ALM was included in the ban as an alternate name.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said Choudary was still acting as its leader as late as July 2023, when he was arrested, making online speeches to a US-based offshoot called Islamic Thinkers Society (ITS). That group was infiltrated by undercover law enforcement officers in the US, who were present at online lectures in 2022 and 2023. The court heard that Choudary said he viewed being called an extremist as a "medal" during lectures.

Choudary was released early from a five-year sentence for inviting support for the Islamic State (ISIS) terror group in October 2018 under licence conditions that prevented him from using the internet until July 2021. But within days of the conditions expiring, he began issuing press releases on WhatsApp and Telegram from his home in Ilford, his trial heard. Following a joint investigation by the Metropolitan Police, the New York Police Department, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, he was arrested and charged with terrorism offences.

Harris worse than Biden: Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Former president and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has called his likely Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, a "worse candidate" than President Joe Biden, who she replaced more than a week ago.

"I think she (Harris) is the worst candidate than him (Biden). She is far more radical left," Trump told Fox News host Laura Ingraham in an interview on Monday, his first after Harris, 59, became the presumptive nominee of the Democratic Party.

Harris officially declared her candidacy after incumbent President Biden withdrew from the race for a second term on July 20. She is expected to be officially declared as the presidential candidate by the Democrats next month.

"I thought she was a little younger. I mean, she's 60 years old. I didn't realise she was 60. She's talking a big game. But her game is pretty bad. She was the border czar. She's trying to pretend that she wasn't," Trump said. "She was for defunding the

police. She was for open borders. She was for having anybody come in. Now I notice that they're actually saying they want to have immunity for everybody that came into the country, and they want to have citizenship," Trump alleged, asserting that giving citizenship to everybody would destroy the country.

"It's in such bad shape. Our country has never been in a position like this. In addition to which we could end up in a third world war. We have 20 million people that have come into the country. I would say by now 20 (million) is probably going over that number," he said.

Trump reiterated his allegations that the Democratic establishment staged a coup against Biden.

"They staged a coup against the president of the United States. They went to him and told him 'You are leaving. You are way down in the poll. Seventeen points, I think,'" he said. "It's like you're in a fight with somebody, and you're really winning, and they take him out and they put somebody else in. Nobody ever heard of this before," he added.

"This is a coup. They took him.

They said even though you got 14 million votes, you're out. And he said 'I am not going out... They took him out. He was losing badly, so they took him out. He wants something to say. He's sitting there with nothing to do, nobody to talk to. They threw him out. This was a coup, the first one of the president of the United States,'" Trump said.

Trump also said that while he "probably" will debate Harris, he "could also make a case" to avoid a face-to-face confrontation with her, CNBC News reported.

After the interview's broadcast, the Harris for President campaign said Ingraham practically begged Trump on Fox News to commit to debating Harris.

"Why won't Donald Trump give a straight answer on debating Vice President Harris? It's clear from tonight's question-dodging: he's scared he'll have to defend his running mate's weird attacks on women or his own calls to end elections in America in a debate against the vice president," said Harris for President spokesperson Ammar Moussa.

"Vice President Harris will be on

the debate stage (on) September 10th. Donald Trump can show up, or not," Moussa said.

Donald Trump seems to be backing away from his earlier commitment to debate Vice President Kamala Harris, questioning the value of a meetup and saying he "probably" will debate but he "can also make a case for not doing it" — prompting her campaign to say he's "scared."

Trump, in an interview with Fox News Channel that aired Monday night, was pressed several times about committing to debating Harris before giving a squishier answer than he had in recent days.

The Republican former president had been willing to debate President Joe Biden when Biden was the Democratic nominee after months of suggesting that the president was not mentally up for the matchup — or the presidency.

But after Biden dropped out of the race and Harris became poised to be the Democratic presidential candidate, Trump has been questioning the terms of the original debate he agreed to with Biden.

Despite rising tension, Beirut airport remains operational

AP ■ BEIRUT

Fears of an escalation in the simmering conflict between Hezbollah and Israel have prompted some airlines to cancel flights to Lebanon, but business appeared to be proceeding as usual Tuesday at the Beirut airport, where many travellers greeted the warnings with a shrug.

Hadi Sharqawi, 24, a Lebanese student in Italy, arrived Tuesday after two days of flight cancellations, to spend a month and a half with his family as he normally does in the summer. He is from the town of Kharayeb, which is in southern Lebanon although relatively far from the border where clashes have been ongoing for 10 months.

"As far as the threats, they didn't influence me at all to not come to Lebanon," Sharqawi said. "Even if there are threats, we will still come." Seventy-one-year-old Mohammad Mokhaled, from the southern town of Jarjouh,

who was waiting to pick up his daughter Tuesday, agreed. "We are not scared of the situation, because we are used to this," he said. "We hear airstrikes regularly and the breaking of the sound barrier, and it doesn't affect us."

Lebanon is bracing for a retaliatory strike from Israel after a missile hit a soccer field in the town of Majdal Shams in the Israeli-annexed Syrian Golan over the weekend, killing 12 children and adolescents. Israel accused the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah of carrying out the strike, to which Hezbollah issued a rare denial.

Even before the deadly incident, rhetoric and fears of a full-blown conflict had been intensifying, but it has had relatively little impact on the summer tourist season, during which tens of thousands of Lebanese working or studying abroad typically come to visit their families, filling up restaurants and beach clubs.

Israel and the Lebanese militant group have traded near-daily strikes since the war in Gaza erupted on Oct. 7 following Hamas' surprise attack on southern Israel.

The Beirut airport reported that 406,396 passengers arrived in June compared to 427,854 arrivals in the same period in 2023, a decrease of 5 per cent. It also recorded 300,362 departed the country in June, compared to 280,366, an increase of 7 per cent.

Amal Ahmadieh, 23, was leaving Tuesday to return to Qatar, where she works in a restaurant, after a vacation in Lebanon. Ahmadieh said she was leaving as originally scheduled and had not pushed up her flight due to security concerns.

"Honestly everyone was telling me that the situation was not good but I wanted to come to see my friends and my family," she said. "Whatever happens, at the end of the day, this is my country."

Taliban disavows many Af diplomatic missions abroad

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The Taliban on Tuesday disavowed many Afghan diplomatic missions overseas, saying it will not honour passports, visas and other documents issued by diplomats associated with Afghanistan's former Western-backed administration. It's the Taliban's latest attempt to seize control of diplomatic missions since returning to power in 2021.

Many Taliban leaders are under sanctions, and no country recognises them as Afghanistan's legitimate rulers. The country's seat at the United Nations is still held by the former government that was led by Ashraf Ghani, but the Taliban wants it. In a statement posted to social media platform X, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said documents issued by missions in London, Berlin, Belgium,

Bonn, Switzerland, Austria, France, Italy, Greece, Poland, Australia, Sweden, Canada and Norway are no longer accepted and the ministry "bears no responsibility" for those documents. The documents affected include passports, visa stickers, deeds and endorsements.

The ministry wrote that people in those countries will need to approach embassies and consulates controlled by the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan government instead. "All Afghan nationals living abroad and foreigners can visit the IEA political and consular missions in other countries, other than the above-mentioned missions, to access consular services," it said.

The Taliban did not immediately respond to questions. One Afghan national living in London, Asad Mobariz,

expressed disappointment and frustration with the decision. The master's student called it unfair and impractical to expect Afghans in affected countries to travel abroad for consular services. "This decision disregards our needs and places an undue burden on us," he told The Associated Press. "These services are crucial for my ability to travel, work and maintain my legal status in the UK." The decision would create immense hardship for the Afghan population in Europe and lead to increased financial strain and potential legal issues for those unable to access consular services locally, he said.

Another Afghan national, Adnan Najibi, who lives in Germany, said discrediting embassies was unlikely to benefit the Taliban. "I live in a small town with a rela-

tively low population; however, I still see that there are hundreds of Afghans living here," Najibi said. "If someone previously obtained an Afghan passport, marriage certificate or any other document in a day, it may now take weeks or even longer." In March 2023, the Taliban said they were trying to take charge of more Afghan embassies abroad. Their chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said the administration had sent diplomats to at least 14 countries. The new developments mean the closest available Afghan embassies are likely to be in Spain and the Netherlands. In October, they stressed that they were working with Taliban authorities in Kabul after the Taliban suspended consular services at the embassies in London and Vienna over their "lack of transparency

and cooperation."

Some countries retain an active diplomatic mission in Afghanistan, including Pakistan and China. Also on Tuesday, the UN mission in Afghanistan said local intelligence officials in May forcibly closed the office of a women-led nongovernmental group for allowing some of its female employees to physically report to work. The NGO was allowed to reopen days later after signing a letter saying it would not allow women employees to come to the office, according to the mission's latest report on human rights in Afghanistan. The report did not disclose the location for "protection reasons." Restrictions on women and girls are a major obstacle to the Taliban gaining official recognition as the country's legitimate government.

Taiwan president urges democracies to unite at gathering of foreign lawmakers

AP ■ TAIPEI/ TAIWAN

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te welcomed what he called the "largest-ever" delegation of foreign lawmakers to Taiwan and said Tuesday it showed the importance of democracies uniting, even as Beijing pressured members of the delegation not to visit.

"This demonstrates the support and the value various other countries place on Taiwan," Lai said. "It also sends an important message to democratic countries around the world. Maintaining democracy requires unity, and we must protect democracy together."

Lai made his remarks at a conference in Taipei held by the

Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC), a group of hundreds of lawmakers from dozens of countries concerned about how democracies approach Beijing. Beijing views the self-governed island democracy of Taiwan as part of its territory and has been upping its threats to annex it by force if necessary.

Lai's party, the Democratic Progressive Party, doesn't seek independence from China because he believes that Taiwan is already a sovereign nation.

Beijing sees Lai as a separatist and refuses to speak with him. China has ramped up pressure against the island since Lai took office in May, sending ships and planes on a large

military drill to show displeasure at his inauguration. That comes after years of Beijing's pressure on Taiwan — which has been ruled by the DPP for three terms now — on diplomatic, military and economic fronts.

Lai said at the conference that Taiwan would work with other democracies to protect democracy from "the threat of authoritarian expansionism." "China's threat to any country is a threat to the whole world," Lai told attendees.

China "uses diplomatic kidnapping, economic coercion, internet attacks, and spreading false and fake things to continuously muddle matters and seek to undermine regional peace and stability."

US boosts alliance with the Philippines with \$500 mn funding

AP ■ MANILA

Washington's top diplomat and defence chief announced USD 500 million in military funding on Tuesday to boost Philippine defences and progress on a proposed military intelligence-sharing pact as both allies renewed their concerns over China's continuing aggressive actions in the region. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin met with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, who has fortified Manila's decades-old treaty alliance with Washington as hostilities between Philippine and Chinese forces flared since last year in the disputed South China Sea. Marcos hailed "very open" communication lines between

Washington and Manila, adding that the two countries' treaty alliance and key issues in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific region "are continuously examined and reexamined so we are agile in terms of our responses". Marcos has underscored the need for a US military presence for Asian stability and peace. After meeting their Philippine counterparts later, Blinken and Austin announced the USD 500 million military funding to help in an ongoing modernisation of the Philippine military and coast guard and boost security collaboration amid shared concerns over China's assertive actions. "Both of us share concerns and many other countries in the region share concerns, as well, about some of the actions that

the People's Republic of China has taken, escalatory actions in the South China Sea, the East China Sea," including "coercive methods", Blinken said in a joint news conference. He renewed a warning that the US would help defend the Philippines if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under attack in the Pacific, including in the South China Sea. The US officials also offered condolences over the dozens of deaths wrought by typhoon-worsened monsoon rains in recent weeks and announced an additional USD 1 million in aid for the victims and to help devastated communities recover. The visit came the week after the Philippines and reached a temporary arrangement to prevent clashes around the Philippine-occupied Second

Thomas Shoal like the violent faceoff between their forces on June 17. Philippine forces transported food and other supplies and a fresh batch of navy personnel Saturday to Manila's territorial outpost at the shoal without a confrontation were reported for the first time since last year. But the Philippines would continue strengthening its territorial defence with the assistance of the US and other friendly military powers and build new security alliances, Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel Romualdez said. "The non-confrontational resupply and rotation is purely temporary. The People's Republic of China will not stop and we are determined just as well," Romualdez told The

Associated Press. The USD 500 million in US military financing would include funding for reinforcing the Philippine navy's capability. About USD 125 million would be used for construction and other improvements in parts of Philippine military bases to be occupied by US forces under the 2014 Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement, Romualdez said. With strong support in Congress, US military funding may double next year "depending on our capacity to absorb it", Romualdez said. Progress in negotiations on a proposed military intelligence-sharing pact, the General Security of Military Information Agreement was announced by Austin, who

said that the accord may be signed later this year. The agreement, similar to ones Washington has forged with other allied countries, would allow the US to provide high-level intelligence, more sophisticated weapons, including missile systems, and access to satellite and drone surveillance systems to the Philippines with an assurance that such intelligence and details about sophisticated weapons would be closely kept secret in a highly secured manner to prevent leaks, two Philippine officials told the AP, speaking on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss the issue publicly. Philippine efforts to obtain sophisticated weapons from the US military in the past have been hampered by the lack of

such an intelligence deal. In his meeting with Blinken and Austin, Marcos alluded to the intense political divisions in the US ahead of the presidential elections this year. "I'm a bit surprised considering how interesting your political situation has become back in the States, but I'm glad that you found the time to come and visit with us," Marcos said. Meanwhile, Romualdez said that US support to the Philippines would "absolutely" not change regardless of who becomes America's next president. Numerous countries have expressed concerns about the implications of former President Donald Trump returning to the White House in January after President Joe Biden withdrew and threw his support to Vice President

Kamala Harris. "Both Republicans and Democrats are in full agreement for the Philippines," he said, adding that both sides have given assurances of continued support to Manila. Marcos approved last year an expansion of the US military presence in four more Philippine military camps under the 2014 defense agreement, and the largest war drills between Filipino and US forces have been staged under his administration, drawing opposition and alarm from China, which said that increased deployments of American forces would endanger regional peace and security. The Philippines has responded that it has the right to move to safeguard its territorial interests and national security.

Imran Khan hints willingness to talk with army

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's beleaguered former prime minister Imran Khan on Tuesday signalled willingness to hold talks with the powerful army after finding himself at a blind alley due to scores of cases slapped on him, his wife and senior party leaders. While talking to journalists inside the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi on the sidelines of a hearing of a case against him, Khan, 71, expressed his desire for dialogue with the military, clarifying that he never accused the establishment but offered constructive criticism. The cricketer-turned-politician likened the military to a spoiled child in a household, explaining that just as a wayward child is critiqued, the military was criticised and that criticism is the essence of democracy. The Express Tribune reported. This comes as Khan's wife Bushra Bibi was on Tuesday named as a suspect in 11 cases, including the attack on the army headquarters on May 9 last year. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder also approached an Anti-Terrorism Court and sought bail in 12 cases linked

to last year's May 9 riots. The Pakistan Army, which has ruled the coup-prone country for years, has wielded considerable power in matters of politics, security and foreign policy. Khan, who is currently on judicial remand in all the cases, claims that there is no recovery to be made from him. He argues that the cases are based on malice and are a form of political retaliation against him. The May 9 riots in 2023 were triggered nationwide after Khan was 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. Khan has been imprisoned at the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi for almost a year upon his conviction in multiple cases. His wife Bushra Bibi is also jailed along with him. When questioned about his recent statements suggesting a desire to reconcile with the military despite previously leveling accusations against it, Khan emphasised he never made accusations, only criticisms. He insisted that no one should teach them that the military has never made mistakes.

B'desh to ban fundamentalist Jamaat following unrest

PTI ■ DHAKA

The Bangladesh government on Tuesday decided to ban the Jamaat-e-Islami following the deadly nationwide students' protests over quotas in government jobs, accusing the fundamentalist party of exploiting the movement that left at least 150 people dead. The development to ban the Jamaat-e-Islami from Wednesday comes a day after a meeting of the ruling Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League-led 14-party alliance passed a resolution that Jamaat, an ally of former prime minister Khaleda Zia Bangladesh National Party (BNP), must be banned from politics. "God willing... the decision (of banning Jamaat) will be announced tomorrow," Law Minister Anisul Haq told newsmen at his office on Tuesday, adding it would be an "executive order" that will ban the Jamaat-e-Islami, a party founded in 1941 in undivided India under British rule. The students, who waged protests during the anti-quota movement, said they had no link to the violence while evidence was there that Jamaat, its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh National Party (BNP), and militant party of its students front, Chhatra Dal, carried out the mayhem, the minister claimed.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League's (AL) general secretary Obaidul Quader, meanwhile, said the government would thoroughly examine legal aspects before banning Jamaat-Shibir to block any possible legal loophole, which could be exploited by "this extremist group" to engage in politics in Bangladesh. For the sake of the country, the 14-party alliance has decided to ban Jamaat-Shibir to eliminate anti-national evil forces, Quader said. Quader, also the Road Transport Minister, said that Jamaat and BNP used students as "shields" during the movement while "the government is aware of the sources of their instructions, incitements, and funding." Violence gripped Bangladesh for almost the entire of July when the protests that had started in universities and colleges earlier this month, quickly turned into a widespread agitation against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government's policies. The government called in the army to quell protests against job quotas after the unrest left at least 150 dead and several thousand people, including policemen, wounded and major government installations damaged. Meanwhile, the ruling Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League-led 14-party alliance leaders held a meeting with Hasina in the chair and



Military personnel stand guard in front of a large cutout portrait of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the national mourning day, declared by the Bangladesh government to remember victims of the recent countrywide deadly clashes, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Tuesday, July 30

Mourning for 150 people killed in violence

Dhaka (PTI): Bangladesh on Tuesday observed a national day of mourning for the 150 people killed in the recent anti-government violence, amid calls for the unconditional release of six coordinators of the quota reform movement within 24 hours. It was on Monday that the Bangladesh government, for the first time, officially acknowledged that 150 people were killed across the country during the students' unrest over the quota system. Nationwide mourning was observed today recalling those who were killed during the quota reform movement. On this day, black badges were worn and prayers were organised in all mosques. Besides, special prayers will be offered in all temples, churches and pagodas across the country, media reports said. Violence gripped Bangladesh for days when the protests that had started in universities and colleges, quickly turned into a widespread agitation against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government's policies. The government called in the army to quell protests against job quotas after the unrest left several thousand people, including policemen, wounded and major government installations damaged.

China reports 7 more deaths from torrential rains; toll rises to 22

Beijing (AP): Torrential rains have left at least seven people dead and three others missing in southeastern China, state media said on Tuesday, raising the death toll from a tropical storm to 22. All the deaths have been in Hunan province. Heavy rains have been falling on eastern Hunan for days as Tropical Storm Gaemi moved inland after making landfall at typhoon strength in neighbouring Fujian province on the Chinese coast. Four deaths and three missing people were reported in four villages in Xixing city, the official Xinhua News Agency said. The rain has damaged hundreds of homes in the city and prompted the evacuation of more than 11,000 people, Xinhua said. The bodies of three other missing people were found in a vil-

lage in a nearby city, state broadcaster CCTV said in an online report. They were victims of a sudden mudslide caused by the rain, according to CCTV. The seven deaths are in an area south of a summertime tourist region where a mudslide killed 15 people and injured six others after barreling into a homestay house Sunday morning. Elsewhere in Hunan, the rains breached dikes on two sections of the Juanshui River on Sunday in Xiangtan county, and more than 3,000 people were evacuated, Xinhua said. One of the breaches had been resealed on Monday afternoon. Tropical Storm Gaemi also brought heavy rain to northeastern China and North Korea, swelling the Yalu River, which divides the two countries.

Pak ex-PM seeks bail in 12 terrorism cases

PTI ■ LAHORE/ISLAMABAD

Jailed former prime minister Jand Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has approached an Anti-Terrorism Court here seeking bail in 12 cases linked to last year's May 9 riots, a media report said on Tuesday. The 71-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician's legal team, led by lawyer Salman Safdar, has filed the petitions, the Express Tribune reported on Tuesday. Khan, who is currently on judicial remand in all the cases, claims that there is no recovery to be made from him. He argues that the cases are based on malice and are a form of political retaliation against him. The petitions request the court to grant post-arrest bail in these cases. Recently, the Lahore High Court (LHC) provided major relief to Khan by declaring his physical remand in several

May 9 cases null and void. LHC division bench comprising Justices Tariq Saleem and Anwarul Haq had passed the order on petitions filed by Khan challenging the ATC's decision to approve his physical remand in the cases related to the May 9 violence. After hearing the arguments of the prosecutor general and Khan's counsel, the LHC set aside the anti-terrorism court's decision to grant his physical remand noting that he will remain in judicial custody in these cases. The May 9 riots in 2023 were triggered nationwide after Khan was 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. Khan has been imprisoned at the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi for almost a year upon his conviction multiple in cases. His wife Bushra Bibi is

also jailed along with him. Though Khan had secured bail or his conviction was set aside, he has not been released. Khan was arrested on August 5 last year after his conviction in the first Toshakhana corruption case filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Since then, he has been kept in jail in various cases. 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. **BUSHRA BIBI NAMED AS SUSPECT IN 11 CASES** Bushra Bibi, the wife of Imran Khan, has been named as a suspect in 11 cases, including the attack on the army headquarters on May 9 last year, the Rawalpindi district police informed the Islamabad High Court on Tuesday. The Rawalpindi police presented a report in the IHC, pro-

viding details of the cases filed against 49-year-old Bushra, who has been incarcerated in the Adiala Jail of Rawalpindi along with her husband. The court had ordered authorities to provide details of the cases registered against her. During the hearing, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor also submitted a response according to the court's order, revealing that four cases have been registered against her with NAB, including three in Rawalpindi and one in Lahore. Though Rawalpindi and Islamabad police and NAB submitted their responses, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Balochistan police have not come up with the details of the cases against Bibi. The IHC issued fresh notices to the FIA and Balochistan police to come up with details by Monday and adjourned the case until then.

Gunmen open fire on vehicle carrying UN staff in Pakistan, no casualties

Dera Ismail Khan (AP): Unidentified gunmen opened fire on a bulletproof vehicle carrying local staff working for a UN development agency in Pakistan's volatile northwest bordering Afghanistan on Tuesday, but no one was harmed, police said. The attack on the vehicle of the United Nations Office for Project Services happened in Dera Ismail Khan, a district in the Khyber, said Abdul Salam, who is the district police chief there. He said all the people were traveling in the vehicle are safe. Salam said police have launched a search to trace and arrest those involved in the assault. No one immediately claimed responsibility and the Pakistani Taliban in a statement said they were not behind the

attack. Pakistan has witnessed a surge in militant attacks, mostly in the northwest, in recent years. Authorities have blamed the Pakistani Taliban for such previous attacks on security forces and civilians. The insurgents, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP, are a separate group but are an ally of the Afghan Taliban. The group has been emboldened since the Afghan Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 2021.

How two Syrians in Rome using hummus to aid war refugees and help migrants integrate

Rome (AP): A pair of Syrians have created a community that provides support to migrants and vulnerable people in Rome, by sharing the flavours of a homeland torn by civil war. Founded in 2018 as a "humanitarian catering service", HummusTown was originally aimed at raising funds for families and friends in Syria. It has since grown into a successful small business that has shifted from sending remittances to helping new migrants integrate in Italy, all the while gaining a steady following on Rome's gastronomic scene. As the Syrian war continued to rage, Shaza Saker, a long-time UN employee living in Rome, and Joumana Farho, who was working as her cook, wanted to find a way to help people at home. Farho, 48, brought her "divine" cooking, while Saker,

49, networked. "I told her: Let's start inviting people over for dinner... and whatever we make out of these dinners we'll just send to Syria," Saker said. "My house had become a bit of, you know, a restaurant, a home restaurant. But it was fun. We felt useful." The non-profit that started with 45,000 euros (USD 48,670) raised through crowdfunding now employs 13 full-time and 10 part-time staff at its kitchen kiosk near Rome's train station and a small bistro, with plans to open a restaurant. The expanded group now also organizes cooking classes, cultural events and summer aperitifs, as well as catering for events in the Italian capital. Each month, they donate food to the homeless and last year they raised 40,000 euros for victims of the earthquakes that struck Syria on February 6,

2023 with the loss of thousands of lives. As more refugees arrived in Rome, the two shifted their focus to providing Syrian asylum-seekers with work and a support network, eventually expanding their mission to all vulnerable people, including Italians. They include Mayyada al-Amrani, a Palestinian woman who fled Gaza with her eldest daughter, who is getting treatment for cancer. She spends her days rolling traditional spiced rice into grape leaves, working alongside four other cooks of Syrian and Palestinian origin. While she is able to earn money to help support herself and her daughter in Italy, she worries about her five other children back in Gaza, the youngest not yet 9 months old. "They are surviving," she said. "They struggle and suffer mostly from (lack of) water."

White House says no need to restrict 'open-source' AI

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The White House is coming out in favor of "open-source" artificial intelligence technology, arguing in a report Tuesday that there's no need right now for restrictions on companies making key components of their powerful AI systems widely available. "We recognize the importance of open systems," said Alan Davidson, an assistant secretary of the US Commerce Department, in an interview with The Associated Press. As part of a sweeping executive order on AI last year, President Joe Biden gave the US Commerce Department until July to talk to experts and come back with recommendations on how to manage the potential benefits and risks of so-called

open models. The term "open-source" comes from a decades-old practice of building software in which the code is free or widely accessible for anyone to examine, modify and build upon. However, open-source AI development involves more than just code and computer scientists differ on how to define it depending on which components of the technology are publicly available, and if there are restrictions limiting its use. The report is the US government's first to delve into a tech industry debate between developers such as ChatGPT-maker OpenAI advocating closing off their models' inner workings to guard against misuse, and others, such as Meta Platforms CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who have lobbied for a more open approach they say favors inno-

vation. "A year ago, there was a strong narrative about risk and long-term concerns about AI systems being too powerful," said Davidson, administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. "We continue to have concerns about AI safety, but this report reflects a more balanced view that shows that there are real benefits in the openness of these technologies." The NTIA's report says "current evidence is not sufficient" to warrant restrictions on AI models with "widely available weights." Weights are numerical values that influence how an AI model performs. But it also says US officials must continue to monitor potential dangers and "take steps to ensure that the government is prepared to act if heightened risks emerge."

'Russia-North Korea defence deal is risky for the world'

Seoul (AP): Australia's foreign minister said on Tuesday the recent defence deal between North Korea and Russia was "destabilising" and "risky for the world," after she visited the tense border village shared by North and South Korea on Tuesday. In June, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a pact stipulating mutual military assistance if either country is attacked, deepening worries about the expanding ties between the countries. The US and its partners have steadfastly accused North Korea of supplying much-needed conventional arms to Russia for its war in Ukraine in return for military and economic assistance. "I also want to say something about the security pact between North Korea and Russia. And say again, this is destabilising. This is risky for the world and

again we say Russia is behaving in ways which are not conducive to peace but are escalatory," Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong told reporters.

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MANU CLINCHES HISTORIC SECOND OLYMPIC MEDAL WINS 10M AIR PISTOL MIXED TEAM BRONZE WITH SARABJOT

PTI ■ CHATEAUXROUX (FRANCE)

Manu Bhaker scripted history to become the first Indian athlete in post-independence era to win two Olympic medals in a single edition of the Games as she combined with an equally unruffled Sarabjot Singh to clinch the 10m air pistol mixed team bronze here on Tuesday.



Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh celebrating their bronze medal win in the 10m air pistol mixed team event at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

aggregated 20.5 to take the opening round and open a 2-0 lead. In mixed team events, the pair that reaches 16 points first wins the medal. Down 0-2, Bhaker's consistency came to the fore and it rubbed off on Sarabjot as the pair took the next four rounds to take their tally to 8-2.

Chinese women beat reigning champions United States in volleyball

AP ■ PARIS

The U.S. Women's volleyball team had a bad enough start in its Olympic title defense. It managed to keep it from turning into a disaster. The Americans lost the first two sets to China on Monday in a pool play format where total points and sets won can become playoff tiebreakers.



and did not lose a set in the knockout stage en route to their first-ever gold medal. With eight holdovers from the 2021 champions, they arrived in Paris as the fifth-ranked team in the world. But sixth-ranked China won the first two sets handily, 25-20 and 25-19, before the Americans came back to win the third 25-17 and rallied from a 13-10 deficit to tie it 13-11 on a challenged ball that barely caught the Chinese end line.

Concorde Urban Park. But then came the end, when he and Eaton had one final chance to springboard Horigome and claim gold. Each wiped out in the final two jumps of the day.

Nyjah Huston for a repeat title. Horigome scored a 97.08 on Monday to vault into first and secure back-to-back gold medals. He beat Eaton by just 0.1 points in a thrilling finish in front of a charged-up crowd that was much different than the empty stands in Tokyo three years ago.

"It means everything," Horigome said. "It feels like a dream, a living dream. It's crazy. Tokyo, no one was there, no crowds, so I'm very happy this time (with) all the fans here. It's a special moment." Eaton and Huston each sat in first place during the final. Eaton was in gold medal position until Horigome finished a trick known as a nollie 270 to nosebluntside - similar to the one the Arizona native did minutes earlier to get into that spot.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS CHANGE OF NAME I, Harpreet Kaur Chhabra D/o Gurjeet Singh Chhabra R/o-48 Neelkanth Colony Under Madhya Pradesh-452001 changed my name to Tanya Chhabra. PD(636)A

Manika becomes first Indian TT player to reach pre-quarterfinals

PTI ■ PARIS

Manika Batra made history by becoming the first Indian table tennis player to reach the singles pre-quarterfinals at the Olympic Games with a fluent 4-0 win over world number 18 and home favourite Prithika Pavade here on Monday.



match. I will give my best whatever I play against in the next round," she said. Prithika's parents are originally from Puducherry but the family shifted to France in 2003. She was born in a Paris suburb a year later.

Bank of Baroda POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Properties) Kolar Road Branch, Bhopal. Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of Baroda under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002...

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US men's soccer team close to reaching knockouts of Olympics for first time since 2000

AP ■ SAINT-ETIENNE (FRANCE)

The United States men's soccer team is closing in on qualification to the knockout phase of the Olympics for the first time since Sydney 2000. Argentina is back in control of its destiny after its first game was marred by violence and chaos - and a shock defeat to Morocco. The group stage of the men's soccer tournament at the Paris Games concludes on Tuesday and with only Spain and Japan guaranteed their place in the quarterfinals tensions are likely to be high as a host of nations battle for a place in the final eight. The U.S. is competing in its first Olympics since Beijing 2008 and the 4-1 win against New Zealand last week has put it in a strong position to advance. "I said, even before coming here, when people ask me what they can expect from us, I said one thing: I promise that this group is going to give everything on the field and where that's going to take us, I don't know. But I know that they're going to give everything," U.S. Coach Marko Mitrovic said.

The Americans face Guinea at Stade Geoffroy-Guichard in Saint-Etienne after the win against New Zealand saw Mitrovic's team bounce back from an opening 3-0 loss to France in Group A. The U.S. is in second place, level with New Zealand on three points, but ahead on goal difference. France, which is top on six points, plays New Zealand in its final match and is expected to secure the win or draw needed to be certain to advance. There is the potential that three teams could be tied on either six or three points, depending on results in the final round of games. That would mean goal difference or other tiebreaker criteria is required to determine which teams advance. **GROUP B:** Argentina plays Ukraine and is on top of Group B on goal difference, with all four teams tied on three points. Argentina beat Iraq 3-1 in its second game after its opening loss, which was marred by violent scenes when Moroccan fans rushed the field and forced a delay of around two hours. Ukraine's late 2-1 win against



Morocco means all four teams won and lost their opening two games and a tiebreaker could be required if there are two draws in the final round of fixtures. "We're not thinking about the next round. First we have to beat Ukraine," said Argentina coach Javier Mascherano. **GROUP C:** Spain (6 points) has qualified after back-to-back wins in Group C but could still have a big say over who joins it in the next round. Spain plays second-placed Egypt (4 points), which needs a draw to guarantee it advances. Third-placed Dominican Republic (1 point) plays already eliminated Uzbekistan (0 points). **GROUP D:** Any one of three teams could join Japan and advance from Group D. Japan (6 points) is into quarterfinals after back-to-back wins and plays last-placed Israel (1 point), which needs a victory to stand any hope of qualifying. Second-placed Paraguay (3 points) plays Mali (1 point). A win for Paraguay would guarantee its place in the quarterfinals.

Carlos says he has been dealing with groin muscle problem since Wimbledon

AP ■ PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz took a medical timeout for what he said is a lingering groin muscle issue in the second set of his 6-1, 7-6 (3) singles victory over Tallon Griekspoor at the Paris Olympics. Alcaraz is scheduled to play doubles for Spain with Rafael Nadal on Tuesday - and the opponents happen to be the Dutch pair of Griekspoor and Wesley Koolhof. "It's a pain that I've been dealing with. I know what I have to do ... To deal with this pain," said Alcaraz, a 21-year-old who won the French Open at Roland Garros, the same site being used for Olympics tennis, last month, and Wimbledon this month. "I will try to recover as soon and as (best) as I can tonight," he said, "to be ready ... 100 percent tomorrow in my doubles." Alcaraz said he watched part of Nadal's 6-1, 6-4 loss to Novak Djokovic in singles earlier Monday, before preparing to face Griekspoor. "When Djokovic is playing at this level, it's really, really difficult to play against him. Really aggressive, no mistakes, moving very, very well," Alcaraz said. "I saw Rafa playing decent, let's say. Not his best tennis, for sure. But when Djokovic is like this, he's almost unbeatable." That last word is one often used to describe Alcaraz, who was the first teenager to reach No. 1 in the ATP rankings, was the youngest man to win major titles on hard, grass and clay courts, and defeated Djokovic in each of the past two Wimbledon finals. "One of the best players there is," Griekspoor said about Alcaraz. "Someone who likes to play on this court. He made it very difficult for me in the first set." That was clear. But in the second, Griekspoor began to serve better and hit more aggressively, and suddenly it was a much tighter match. After Alcaraz left the court with a trainer while trailing 5-4 in that set, he



returned and was a single point from being pushed to a third. Griekspoor couldn't convert that chance, which Alcaraz erased with a volley winner that he celebrated with a right uppercut and a yell of "Vamos!" Soon, in the tiebreaker, he was back in full control. "I didn't see any problems with him," Griekspoor said when asked how Alcaraz seemed in the second set. "I don't know what the problem was, but it's not like he fell down or twisted his ankle and couldn't walk anymore. He was still all over the place." Griekspoor said he would prepare for the rematch of sorts by going back and taking a look at the first-round doubles victory for Nadal and Alcaraz to help figure out a game plan. Giant barrels and steady swells for men's third day of surfing competition Teahupo'o (France), Jul 30 (AP) With the ceremonial blow of a conch shell and blare of a judge's horn, the third day of the Paris Olympics surfing competition in Tahiti began on Monday with the men's surfers going head-to-head, some reaching the end of the road in their quest for gold. Stunning waves and steady swells in the morning heats brought a fresh surge of energy to competitors and spectators, after Sunday's lackluster

Gabriel Medina from Brazil made Olympic history on the waves, receiving the highest score in Olympic surfing history - a 9.9, just shy of a perfect 10. After the ride he launched himself into the air, raising his right arm and pointing towards the sky in a gravity-defying moment. At times water safety patrol staff on jet skis pulled surfers from the water after their rides, towing them to calmer waters before jettisoning them back out to the wave. "It's really dangerous out there. It's super shallow ... You can see the corals," Medina said after his win against Kanoa Igarashi from Japan. On land, emotions ran high. Expletives were commonly heard from losing surfers coming back to shore. Broken boards, snapped from the power of the waves, were laid on the ground and inspected by teams shaking their heads. Staff of opposing teams going head-to-head whistled in awe and clapped at their opponents' rides, marveling as surfers reappeared from being inside heavy barrels of water. Blustery winds swept in around midday, turning the surf conditions sour, marring the men's final heats and causing the women's competition being postponed. Monday was the last men's competition day before the quarterfinals, semifinals and gold medal heats take place on the fourth and final day of competition. Correa from Peru, Inaba from Japan, Joan Duru and Vaast from France, Joao Chianca and Medina from Brazil, Ethan Ewing and Jack Robinson from Australia all qualified to compete in the final day of the men's competition. The rest of the competition functions as a single-elimination, head-to-head bracket. Each heat will feature two surfers, with the winner advancing to the final stage of competition: the quarterfinals, semifinals and final gold medal heat. The next competition day will be determined after officials assess wave conditions.

Ex-NBA player Chase wins beach volleyball debut in Paris

AP ■ PARIS

Chase Budinger has never forgotten how badly he played in his first NBA game. He'll have only good memories from his Olympic debut. The former Arizona and professional basketball player and his partner, Miles Evans, beat host France in straight sets on Monday to coast through their opening match of the Paris beach volleyball tournament. "I really tried to use my basketball experience of playing in front of big crowds to be composed the whole time," Budinger said after a 21-14, 21-11 victory. "But it definitely was not like that inside." Budinger spent seven years in the NBA, mostly as a bench player for the Rockets and Timberwolves, before turning to beach volleyball to fulfill an Olympic dream. His first game, he still remembers, "I played awful."



"On the bus ride over here, I was telling Miles about my first basketball game, of how nervous I was and how the nerves really got to me," Budinger said. "I was 0-for-2 (from 3-point range), had two turnovers and one of my shots I had was an airball. So the nerves affected my game play." At the Eiffel Tower Stadium on Monday the jitters didn't get to him - even against a French team that had won the last three matchups on the

international tour. "It took me six years. It took me a long time to finally achieve this goal and I am here competing at the Olympics," Budinger said. "And there is no better feeling." Budinger and Evans scored the first three points and never trailed in the first set. In the second, France did eke out a 3-1 lead before the Americans won the next three points and finished the match in just 32 minutes. In other notable beach action on Monday, Americans Kristen Nuss and Taryn Kloth beat Tokyo silver medalist Taliquna Clancy of Australia and her new partner, Marifate Artacho del Solar, in straight sets to improve to 2-0 in Paris. France swept Rio gold medalist Laura Ludwig of Germany and her new partner, Louisa Lippmann. Qatar, the bronze medalist in Tokyo on the men's side, beat top-ranked Sweden 2-1 to improve to 2-0 in pool play.

Chennaiyin FC announces 22-member squad for Durand Cup

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennaiyin FC on Tuesday announced a 22-member squad for the 133rd edition of the Durand Cup being played from July 27 to August 31. Chennaiyin FC are placed in Group D along with ISL side Jamshedpur FC, Indian Army and Assam Rifles with all six games of the stage to be played at the JRD Tata Sports Complex in Jamshedpur. The Marina Machans will face Indian Army in their opening game on Wednesday as the group winners and possibly the second-placed team will advance to the knockouts. "The squad features a blend of senior team members and promising reserves, including notable players such as Vincy Barretto, Bikash Yumnam, Irfan Yadwad, Samik Mitra,



Alexander Romario Jesuraj, and Sachu Siby," the club said in a statement. "This mix of experience and youth is reflected in the roster, which comprises three goalkeepers, eight defenders, nine midfielders, and two forwards, ensuring a well-

balanced team across all positions." Chennaiyin FC, who reached the quarterfinal stage in the 2022 and 2023 iterations of the Durand Cup, will take on Jamshedpur FC on August 4 followed by their last group stage game against Assam Rifles on August 11. "We are going there to win games. We are not going there to take part. As a team, we are going to be together, on the field, off the field. There's going to be unity. We are going to go on the field and fight and give our 100 per cent," said CFC assistant coach Noel Wilson, who joined the club ahead of this season. **CHENNAIYIN FC SQUAD:** **Goalkeepers:** Mohanraj K, Samik Mitra, Malhar Umesh Mohol **Defenders:** Niketh N, Bikash Yumnam, Alexander Romario Jesuraj, Rojjak Ali SK, YV Praful Kumar, Aby S, Shanu Stellus, Sachu Siby **Midfielders:** Ngangom Raman Singh, Ganeshpandi S, Solaimalai R, Jayasurya, Vivek S, Karthik T, Vincy Barretto, Komal Thatal, Lalpekhlu

AP ■ NANTERRE (FRANCE)

Canadian phenom Summer McIntosh claimed the first gold medal of her just-burgeoning career Monday night with a dominating victory in the 400-meter individual medley at the Paris Olympics. The 17-year-old McIntosh collected her first medal of any color on the opening night of swimming, taking a silver in the 400 freestyle behind Arianne Titmus - and ahead of Katie Ledecky. Now, McIntosh has the most prized color of all. "I try to take every event very individually and just do my work, but starting off for me - getting on the podium - is definitely a great way to start," McIntosh said. "You try to continue to get better and better." She pushed the pace hard through the first half of the grueling race - the butterfly and backstroke legs - to leave everyone in her wake except American Katie Grimes. McIntosh was under her own world-record pace, but couldn't keep it going. She touched in 4 minutes, 27.71 seconds, more than three seconds off the mark of

17-year-old McIntosh wins gold in 400-metre IM

4:24.38 she set at the Canadian trials in May. But it was more than enough to blow away the field in the Olympic final. McIntosh seemed to take it all in stride. Maybe it's because she competed at the Tokyo Olympics at age 14, so she sort of feels like a veteran now. "Every single time I get to race on the world stage, I learn more and more about handling mentally and physically and emotionally and trying not to get too high or too low," McIntosh said. She's got a grueling schedule in Paris which includes two more individual races - the 200 butterfly and 200 IM. There are no plans to celebrate just yet. "I mean, obviously I'm super happy with this gold," McIntosh said. "But now I'm all about the 200 fly on day five." Grimes, who is also swimming the open water event in Paris, held on to claim the silver in 4:33.40. The Americans also grabbed the bronze



when Emma Weyant touched in 4:34.93. **ANOTHER TEEN RULES:** David Popovici made the teenagers 2-for-2 on the night when he pulled off a thrilling victory in the men's 200 freestyle. The 19-year-old Romanian was among three swimmers who swapped the lead back and forth on the final lap. First, it was American Luke Hobson edging in front. Then Britain's Matthew Richards, out in Lane 1, pushed to the lead. Finally, it was Popovici mustering everything he had to get to the wall in 1:44.72 -- a mere two-hundredths ahead of Richards, with Hobson just 0.07 back to earn the bronze. Britain's Duncan Scott, the silver medalist in Tokyo three years ago, finished in 1:44.87 to miss out on the podium this time. The top four were separated by a mere 0.15 seconds. **GOLD FOR ITALY, AGAIN:** Thomas Ceccon gave Italy its second gold in as many nights at La Defense Arena, rallying to win the

men's 100 backstroke. China's Xu Jiayu led at the turn, just ahead of American Ryan Murphy - the 2016 gold medalist. Ceccon was third, but he switched to another gear on the return lap. The Italian, who has held the world record since the 2022 world championships in Budapest, now has a gold medal to go with it after finishing in 52.00. Xu claimed the silver (52.32), while the 29-year-old Murphy settled for the bronze for the second Olympics in a row at 52.39. Ceccon followed Nicolo Martinenghi, who grabbed Italy's first gold at the pool with a victory in the 100 breaststroke Sunday night. **LOOKING AHEAD:** In the only semifinals of the night, Australia's Kaylee McKeown and Regan Smith of the U.S. Set up a much-anticipated duel in the women's 100 backstroke. They each won their heats, with McKeown posting the fastest time (57.97) ad McKeown right on her heels (57.99). McKeown is the reigning Olympic champion and former world-record holder - a mark that Smith snatched away with time of 57.