

OPINION 6NEW ARMY CHIEF FOLLOWS
ZORAWAR'S FOOTSTEPS**WORLD 8**CHINA BEGINS KEY MEET TO STEM
ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN**MONEY 10**AUTOMOBILE RETAIL SALES
UP 9% IN APRIL-JUNE: FADA

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THAT EVERYONE IS
PERFORMING: GIL
12 SPORTS

Assam CM's warning: Post 2015 arrivals in the State to be deported

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said anyone coming to Assam in 2015 or later will be deported back to their country of origin.

"We will deport those who have come after 2015. Only eight persons have applied so far who came before 2015 for CAA. Out of these applicants, only two have proceeded to attend interviews with relevant authorities," the CM said at a Press conference in Guwahati to share the insight into the implementation of the Citizens' Act.

The Centre on March 11 implemented the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 CAA by notifying the rules, four years after the law was passed by Parliament to fast-track citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who came to India before December 31, 2014, and stayed here for five years.

"We conducted outreach programmes in the Barak valley and approached many Hindu Bengali families and asked them to apply for citizenship under CAA. However, they refused to do so. The Assam Chief



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma addresses the media, in Guwahati PTI

Minister's statement comes after he stated that the citizenship act will be "completely insignificant" in Assam due to a low number of applications.

Himanta said anybody (according to CAA) who has come to India before 2015, they have the first right to apply for citizenship. "If they don't apply we will lodge a case for them. So this is a statutory instruction," the CM said on a strong note to carry forward implementation of the CAA.

Based on the rules of the Citizenship Amendment Act, migrants belonging to six religious minorities — Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain,

Parsi, and Christian from neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan will be allowed to stay in India as citizens if they entered the country before December 31, 2014.

Sarma claimed that most of the Hindu-Bengali families, who were not included in the final draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), told him that they possessed necessary documents to prove their Indian citizenship and preferred the FT route than applying through the CAA.

Asked whether the Assam Government is dropping cases in Foreigners Tribunals (FT) against Hindu-Bengalis,

Sarma clarified, "This is misleading. We cannot drop any case. We are simply advising that before initiating a case, individuals should apply through the CAA portal. Even if a case is filed, there won't be any outcome because these people are eligible for citizenship."

The Chief Minister said he will request the Advocate General to flag the issue of CAA so that FTs can give time to people whose cases are going on to apply for citizenship under the newly implemented law.

"I can't give a direction to court to pause while deciding the citizenship cases. The FT judges themselves have to decide and they know the latest situation," he added.

Asked about such a low number of applications in CAA, Sarma said the Opposition myth that 15-20 lakh Bangladeshis will get citizenship in Assam has been busted completely.

"In the anti-CAA movement, five Assamese youths lost their lives. So they made the sacrifice to prevent only these eight people! This abysmally low number of eight applications, of which only two turned up for interview, is a bit surprising for us also," he added.

BJP numbers dip in Rajya Sabha, Party eyes bypolls for renewed strength



File Photo: PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

BJP's tally in the Rajya Sabha has dipped below 90 for the first time in many years but the ruling party at Centre with its NDA partners is looking forward to gain berths in the Upper House by-elections to fill the existing vacancies in forthcoming weeks.

The current strength of the Rajya Sabha is 226 with the BJP having 86 followed by 26 of the Congress and 13 of the Trinamool Congress (TMC). There are currently 19 vacancies.

Interestingly, after a decade without a Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha due to a shortage of numbers, this position has now been filled with the appointment of Rahul Gandhi, as the party improved its score in the

Upper House to retain the post of LoP for incumbent Kharge. This has caused a vacancy from Telangana, which will be filled up by the Congress given its numbers in the State Assembly.

After the election of party leaders KC Venugopal and Deepender Singh Hooda to the Lok Sabha and their subsequent resignation from the Rajya Sabha, the Congress strength in the Upper House too has come down to 26, just one more than the minimum 25 members required to qualify for the post.

For this grand old party strategically made its old timer Kesava Rao to quit the RS berth from the BRS party who joined Congress last week which is the party's plan to improve its tally in

the Upper House to retain the post of LoP for incumbent Kharge. This has caused a vacancy from Telangana, which will be filled up by the Congress given its numbers in the State Assembly.

According to sources, Congress is trying to get more members from other parties from Telangana and Karnataka to resign and get them elected on its ticket.

While the BJP-led NDA is confident of winning two seats each in Bihar, Maharashtra and Assam and one each in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tripura due to their numerical superiority over the Opposition, the four new nominated members are also expected to be pro-treasury benches whenever the Government names them.

Kutey appointed OSD in Home Dept

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

1997-batch Odisha-cadre IPS officer DS Kutey has been appointed as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in the Home Department following the revocation of his suspension order.

Kutey, who was Special Secretary to former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, had been suspended during last elections following the order of the Chief Election Commission for unduly interfering in the conduct of elections and was shifted to the Odisha Resident Commission office at New Delhi.

Soon after the elections, he



was reinstated pending disciplinary proceedings and has now been posted as OSD in the Odisha Home Department.

Besides Kutey, IPS officer Ravi Kant, currently Resident Commissioner in Delhi, was also appointed OSD.

In Sambalpur

Annappasanna for girl rescued from borewell held

NIMAIN CHARAN SAHU ■
SAMBALPUR

A newborn girl, who had been rescued from an abandoned 15-foot borewell in Laripali village under the Rengali police station in Sambalpur district, had her Annappasanna ceremony on Monday.

The baby was named 'Bijayini' for her miraculous survival from the borewell. Rukmini Lath Bal Niketan (Orphanage) in the Chhachanpali area of Sambalpur, is her address and thousands of people have applied to adopt her.

Bijayini had been saved after an eight-hour operation by ODRAF and Fire Service personnel on December 12, 2023. The operation involved excavating around 20 feet and manual digging to ensure her safe rescue. She was admitted to the VSS Institute of Medical Science and Research (VIMSAR) for about a month before being taken to the or-



phanage.

Bijayini along with nine other children aged 0-6 years participated in the traditional ritual of touching the chariot of the Trinity. A special bhog (offering) from the nearby Bargaon Jagannath temple was fed to the infant.

The then Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had blessed her following her rescue. Her mother, detained by police, was said to be mentally unsound.

DCPO Suchismita stated, "The NGO at Rukmani Balniketan is taking care of the child now."

CM hears hundreds of grievances

Had also heard 1,500 complaints on July 1

NALINI SAHU ■
BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday held his second public grievance sitting and heard several hundreds of complaints from people coming from across 30 districts of the State.

Like his previous public grievance exercise held on July 1, the second sitting was marked by people, including differently-abled, coming from far-off places like Kalahandi, Malkangiri and Mayurbhanj to air their problems.

"Along with Deputy CM Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, I heard grievances of hundreds



of people and tried to provide them justice. Our government is committed to broad-base the public grievance system. Senior officials of the government have been asked to activate their grievance redressal mechanism," Majhi wrote on micro-blogging platform X.

Sources said the CM is most likely to hold grievances in the

Low pressure to trigger heavy rains in State

Another low pressure to form on July 19

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A low-pressure area has formed over the Bay of Bengal which would trigger heavy rains in Odisha. Another low-pressure system is expected around July 19, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday.

Fishermen were advised against venturing into the sea due to squally weather conditions.

A low-pressure area has formed over northwest adjoining west central Bay of Bengal off south Odisha coast and

extends up to 7.6 km above mean sea-level tilting south-westwards with height.

Under the influence of the above aforesaid low-pressure area, squally weather with gusty surface wind speed reaching 40 to 50 kmph is very likely over northwest adjoining west central Bay of Bengal off south Odisha coast till Tuesday.

On Tuesday, heavy to very heavy rainfall (7 to 20 cm) is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Rayagada.

Heavy rainfall (7 to 11 cm) is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Nuapada, Kalahandi,

Kandhamal, Ganjam, Gajapati and Balangir, said the weather office issuing a Yellow warning.

On Wednesday, heavy rainfall (7 to 11 cm) is very likely to occur to one or two places in the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Nayagarh, Malkangiri and Koraput.

Heavy rainfall (7 to 11 cm) is very likely to occur at occur in the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Balangir on Thursday, said the IMD issuing a Yellow warning.

Bahuda Yatra in Puri

Raths pulled back towards Singhadwar

SJTA chief drags non-servitor out of chariot

SAROJ KUMAR MISHRA ■
PURI

Lakhs of devotees from across the country and abroad thronged Puri on Monday to participate in the Bahuda Yatra of Lord Jagannath and His siblings, for which the Pahandi ritual was held ahead of schedule.

The Bahuda Yatra, which marks the return journey of the Chaturdha Murti - Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, Lord Jagannath and Lord Sudarshan - from the Gundicha Temple to the 12th century shrine, the Pahandi ritual began at about 10.50 am.

The Pahandi ritual was scheduled to be held between 12 noon and 2.30 pm. The



ceremonial procession of Lord Sudarshan was conducted by the servitors first at around 10.50 am.

This was followed by the Pahandi of Lord Balabhadra, who was carried to his 44-foot chariot, Taladhawaja, positioned on the Saradha Bali outside the Gundicha Temple.

Thereafter, the servitors carried Devi Subhadra to Her

chariot, Darpadalana, decked with a covering of red and black colours, symbolising Shakti.

As the Pahandi ritual was underway, a non-servitor was reportedly caught from the chariot of Devi Subhadra.

Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee reportedly spotted the

non-servitor and dragged him out of the chariot, sources said.

As per the guidelines laid down by the temple administration, non-sevayats were not allowed to climb atop the chariots.

Finally, the Pahandi of Lord Jagannath started at around 12:20 pm, with the Lord of the universe emerging from the temple in his usual style, danc-

ing, and swinging along with servitors.

As soon as Lord Jagannath emerged, the joyous devotees burst into ecstasy and shouted "Jai Jagannath" and "Hari Bol", singing the glory of the Mahaprabhu.

A sea of devotees surrounded the Gundicha Temple premises and Grand Road to witness the graceful procession of

the Trinity and seek blessings by pulling the chariots.

At approximately 1:05 pm, Lord Jagannath climbed to the top of his 16-wheeled, tallest chariot, 'Nandigosha', marking the end of the Pahandi rituals and the commencement of the return journey of the chariots.

After the Trinity moved to the three majestic chariots, Chhera Panhara Niti was performed by Gajapati Maharaj Dibyasingha Deb. The Puri King performed the ceremonial sweeping of the chariots with a golden broom amid sprinkling of holy water and flowers and chanting of hymns. The chariot pulling took place as per the scheduled time of 4 pm. The three chariots were pulled to their destination, the Singhadwar. By the time the last chariot, Nandighosa reached the Singhadwar it was 7 pm.

Science at doorstep RSC launches Mobile Science Exhibition in rural Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Regional Science Centre (RSC), Bhubaneswar launched two Mobile Science Exhibition (MSE) buses, an initiative aimed at travelling to various rural districts of Odisha.

The buses are equipped with interactive exhibits based on fundamental sciences and also have facility to conduct science demonstration activities to encourage the rural students. The programme will help more than 30,000 school students in western Odisha across the



network of schools covered under the jurisdictions of Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan (OAVS) and Saraswati Shishu Vidyamandir to learn the difficult concepts of science with simple hands-on experi-

ments.

The first phase of MSE programme will run from July 15 to August 15 in the districts of Khordha, Nayagarh, Boudh and Subarnapur. The exhibition features various hands-on scientific exhibits based on the theme of "Measurement" and "Electricity and Magnetism."

The event was flagged off by Prof Hirendra Nath Ghosh, Director, NISER, Bhubaneswar, and Kapil Jain, Project Coordinator, Regional Science Centre, Bhubaneswar. Prof. Ghosh emphasised how Mobile Science Exhibition plays a key role in disseminating scientific knowledge at the grassroots level and bridging the gap in science education between the rural and urban students.

In city Ex-bank staff dies after hit by truck

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A former bank employee died after being hit by a speeding truck near the Kala Bhoomi, Odisha Crafts Museum at Gandamunda in Bhubaneswar on Monday.

The deceased was identified as Sadananda Swain of the Gandamunda area. The accident took place when Swain was taking a morning walk. He died on the spot, sources said.



On being informed, police reached the spot, arrested the accused driver and seized the sand-laden truck. The body was sent for postmortem and further investigation was ongoing.

KV language cert not valid for Dept of Post Job applicants who studied in KV rejected

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The parents of several applicants for the jobs in the India Post have expressed their anger after the Postal Department, which is under the Central Government, rejected

their applications on the ground that their language certificate was not valid. These applicants were students of Kendriya Vidyalayas. A guardian named Satya Rath, father of applicant Saswati Rath, filed a case in AO 367/22 at the Central Administration Tribunal, Cuttack.

The Tribunal held a final hearing on 21/2/24 and asked

to take a decision in this regard within the next 60 days or two months to the concerned parties. However, Rath complained that the Postal Department remained silent so far. Therefore, he appealed to the Chief Minister, the Union Minister, the newly elected Kandhamal MP Sukant Panigrahi to intervene in the matter to provide justice to many applicants.

Rath Yatra Odisha Police use WhatsApp chatbot, drones

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Police are using technology extensively to provide better policing services, information, security and surveillance during the Rath Yatra this time.

After putting the 'Jaga Drone' to use, the police introduced WhatsApp chatbot to provide real-time information regarding traffic space and route planning for the first time during the Bahuda Yatra.

"After an overwhelming response and cooperation received from devotees resulting in excellent traffic management during the Sri Gundicha Yatra and Bahuda Yatra, Odisha Police is going a step ahead again for Sunabesha," tweeted the Odisha Police.

Police also urged devotees to avail all technological facilities including WhatsApp chatbot for reaching the nearest parking places and smooth traffic regulations.

ADG (Law and Order) Sanjay Kumar said special drones have been kept at specific points along with special tactical units. The entire Bada Danda is covered with CCTV cameras.

"In the first layer, we have Rapid Action Force, Special Operations Group in second layer and normal police personnel in the third layer. Elaborate security arrangements have been made for Bahuda Yatra and Suna Vesha," he added.

NHRC asks Odisha CS, DGP 'Make sustained efforts to end sex workers' plight'

RAJESH BEHERA
■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the Chief Secretary and the DGP, Odisha to take into account the points raised by the petitioner and to evolve a joint strategy involving all the stakeholders and related Government departments and organisations to tackle the problem of sex trade and exploitation of women in Odisha.

Disposing of a petition filed by Supreme Court advocate and rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy, the NHRC passed the order recently.

The petitioner has raised the plight of the girls and women who were working as sex workers in brothels in the Master Canteen/Mali Sahi and other areas of Bhubaneswar. Even if there is an Anti Traffic Unit in the Police Stations but it is not working effectively and police don't take sincere

steps to prohibit recurrence of sex trade, Tripathy alleged.

"Even the functioning of the State Level Coordination Committee to combat trafficking is not satisfactory. The statutory institution, set up under Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act, 1956, is not functional. The Supreme Court judgement with regard to the rights of the sex workers has not been complied with by the State," Tripathy pointed out in his petition before the commission.

He requested the NHRC for holistic measures and permanent solution of the issues faced by the sex workers and their children.

Pursuant to the NHRC direction, the State authorities replied to the issues in point-wise manner. The concerned authorities submitted that steps have been taken to stop the sex trade in the Malisahi area with the help of NGOs and Self-Help Groups. Appropriate provisions of ITTP Act were used to con-

control the problems of sex trade in the area. Steps were taken for rescue and rehabilitation of the victims also, they said.

Woman Helpline Numbers such as 1091 and 181 are functioning round the clock (24x7) to help the distressed women. The victims are kept in Protective Homes as per order of the Child Welfare Committee, and action has been taken against culprits. The State level co-ordination committee under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary and other stakeholder departments and civil society organisations are functioning to monitor such activities on a regular basis, they said.

Compliance of directions issued by SC in Budhadev Karamasakar V/s State of West Bengal is made. Aganwadi centres are operating in and around the area of Malisahi, to provide supplementary nutrition, non-formal peaceful education, health education, immunization, health check-ups and dissemination

of information relating to various Government schemes to the women and children of the area, the authorities said in their replies.

Special health camps etc are organised for regular check-ups as well as sensitising them about sexually transmitted disease and other diseases. The sex workers in the area are being sensitised to join the mainstream. Special efforts are made to involve their children, young girls and third genders to enter the mainstream of the society. Further steps are being taken to re-unite the victims with their family members etc, they said.

The NHRC however is of the view that it is not a one time effort which will end such a problem but requires continuous and multi-pronged efforts, including steps for better health, better education, strict legal action, and providing new opportunities to the persons involved, and their family members.

Interview of the week We have our plans to restore Puri mutt culture



SUGYAN CHOUDHURY



PRITHVIRAJ HARICHANDAN

Prithviraj Harichandan is an illustrious son born to an illustrious father Biswa Bhusan Harichandan, former Law Minister of Odisha and former Governor of Andhra Pradesh and currently Governor of Chhattisgarh. It is a coincidence that Prithviraj has occupied the same berth once ensconced by his father, who is author of much-talked about autobiography "Sangram Sarinahi". As a student leader, Prithviraj was elected as president of the Utkal University Students' Union in 1988 and was subsequently appointed as president of Odisha Chhatra Janata Dal. Thereafter, he was elected as general secretary of the All Odisha Yuba Janata Dal. A Swayam Sevak since 1977, he finally joined the BJP becoming an active member since 1995. He is considered as a leading spokesperson of BJP. He successfully conducted many press conferences on crucial issues for BJP. He has played a pivotal role for the BJP as a think-tank by organising a Chintan Group within the party having conducted research work in the party's counter-move against the then ruling BJD dispensation. As president of the Kalinga Sena, he spear-headed a movement demanding financial autonomy for Odisha which was appreciated by the then Chief Minister Late Biju Pattnaik. In the Assembly elections of 2024, he won a decisive victory from the Chilika constituency by humbling his BJD opponent Raghunath Sahoo. He is singularly lucky to ensure the opening of the Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar, for which his name will be recorded in gilded letters in the annals of history of the temple. In an interview to *The Pioneer*, Harichandan spoke to Sugyan Choudhury at his residence at Bhubaneswar.

Could you please share your feelings about this year's Rath Yatra?

It was indeed a rare kind of Rath Yatra. In one single day, we could complete all rituals of the Lords

with the active cooperation of the Sevayats and full support of the devotees. The chariots were pulled away on the very first day. Everyone did their jobs with all sincerity. It was indeed a great happening for our new government and especially it was a memorable experience for me being the custodian as the Minister of Law, which will be ever remembered by me. Finally, I must say with all humility that the power, providence and blessings of the divine Trinity made this task completely successfully.

Could you tell us about the opening of Ratna Bhandar?

I cannot understand why the previous government did not do it during their tenure. We were very serious about opening of the Ratna Bhandar and, accordingly, we constituted a high-level committee and a sub-committee. This high-level committee will assist the temple managing committee in doing a proper inventory of the jewelleryes. This time with the help of advanced technology, we are going to make a digital catalogue of all the ornaments and precious gem stones, which will serve as an important and indispensable document for posterity. Whenever any government would like to make a fresh inventory, after many decades this digital document will be an invaluable asset for them while computing the ornaments. We are doing it as a ritual and in all transparency so that the people of the State would be able to know about it sans any doubt or dismay. The legacy will carry forward for generations yet unborn.

The ancient mutts and heritage sites in Puri were demolished by the previous government. Are you going to restore them?

The mutt culture is a part and parcel of the cult of Lord Jagannath. It has already been demolished and we are having our own plans to restore them. The compensation money will be deposited with the Commissioner of Endowments. I have the district administration and these two authorities will work in tandem to re-build the demolished

structures. We have plans in the offing and we are going complete the same after the Rath Yatra.

Justice delayed is justice denied. Pendency of cases in Orissa High Court is increasing by every passing day. Paucity of Judges and Counsels is also contributing to the inordinate delay in delivering justice. How are you going to mitigate this syndrome?

You see, in comparison to and in contrast with the pendency of cases in other High Courts of our country, we are relatively in a better position. Still then, we are trying to reduce the pendency of cases and the present Chief Justice is very much aware of this problem and I have recently called on the Hon'ble Chief Justice, who has assured me to take steps in this regard. We are seriously considering such problems and, hopefully, we will succeed in this issue.

Increasing number of corruption cases are being registered in the Lokayukta. What steps are you going take to weed out corruption from the State?

Corruption is a phenomenon that has entered from top to bottom. If the top-level people are involved in corruption, then ultimately it percolates at the down level. The last government has made so much of corrupt practices, instances of corruption that we are going to stop it all at all levels. We are committed to deliver a transparent government, a people's government and a corruption-free government. We are committed to it and I may not be able to say that we bring corruption to a zero level, but it will be reduced to a great extent.

How are you going to revise the old, hackneyed OPWD Code to suit to the needs of the modern times?

Yes, we have started working on the same direction. I have directed the department to form a committee and revise the old OPWD Code which was last revised in 2014. I have also instructed the department to give due justice to the locals (Odisha people) since during the last government non-Odia contractors were mostly entertained.

What are the plans on your agenda to stop illegal trading of liquor, drug peddling and unkempt growth of cannabis?

We are going to revise the old Excise Policy by a new one. The enforcement policy will also be changed and rules will be amended so that illegal trading of liquor or drugs will come to a grinding halt. Within a short period, we will be doing a lot of auctioning in a transparent manner and the enforcement will be so galvanised as to bring the illegal liquor trading to a naught.

'Hope Walk 3.0' from BBSR to Puri Fathers separated from kids get ray of hope

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Sanjeev Panda, an equity analyst from Bhubaneswar, identifies himself as 'Fighter Panda' on the microblogging site, X.

The 'fighter' prefix intrigues anyone scouring the internet for interesting posts. What catches the attention even more is the profile picture of the 45-year-old and his son and the bio, reading: 'Father, fighting against the system to meet son, Arya, alienated, by his mom.'

Well, Panda's fight is against 'parental alienation'-a theorised process through which a child becomes estranged from one parent as the result of the psychological manipulation of another parent or often, as in the case of Panda and several others separated or divorced men, due to legal hurdles and custody disputes.

'Waiting to see my child for over 4 years'

The last time Panda caught a glimpse of his son-a brief encounter of about 10 to 15 minutes-was on February 25, 2020, a date that he precisely remembers. His son was barely 9-year-old then. Since then, he has been pleading before the court to get custody of his son, now 13. It's been more than four and a half years-the matter being sub judice-he hasn't seen his son

visitation happened. The first court order allowed me to talk to my child for only 10 minutes over the phone. The reason that was cited was the third wave of Covid," recalls Panda, who now runs a campaign 'Hope Walk' so that fathers like him don't lose 'hope' or give-up to judicial delays and what they term as 'atrocities' inflicted upon by the system.

#HopeWalk3.0

In 2022, a group of such fathers-led by Panda-initiated the campaign. In its second edition in 2023, the 'Hope Walk'-a prayer walk from Bhubaneswar to Puri-witnessed the participation of 12 deprived fathers and six supporters. The group held the third edition of the walk on July 14 on the occasion of Bahuda Yatra



Arya. He is living with the memories of a trip to Shillong and a Diwali spent together with his son, a few months before getting separated from his wife.

"In the four years, not a single

happened. The first court order allowed me to talk to my child for only 10 minutes over the phone. The reason that was cited was the third wave of Covid," recalls Panda, who now runs a campaign 'Hope Walk' so that fathers like him don't lose 'hope' or give-up to judicial delays and what they term as 'atrocities' inflicted upon by the system.

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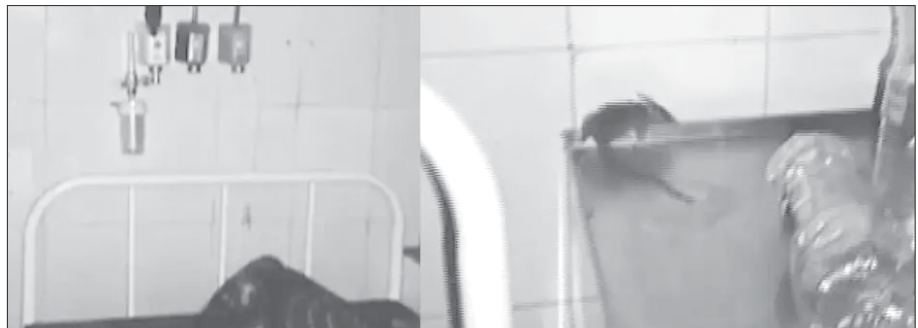
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Koraput SLN Hospital Rat menace gives patients sleepless nights

PNS ■ KORAPUT
The Saheed Laxman Nayak (SLN) Medical College & Hospital is under an unprecedented rat attack.
Apart from disrupting medical services and damaging equipments, the rats are literally seen everywhere on beds, chairs and even the walls of patients. Several cases of rats biting the patients have become a matter of serious concern in the hospital.
"There are so many rats here both inside and outside the hospital. The rats are literally everywhere. Instead of fixing the rat holes, the medical authorities are trying to catch them using cages. It is terrifying for the patients, especially at nights," a patient's attendant said.



As per reports, the medical authorities have set up at least 20 cages in various parts of the hospital to trap the rats. Later, the rats are freed in the forest, it was learnt.
"We have gone to even hospitals in Bhubaneswar and Visakhapatnam but never seen rats there. So, I don't understand why they cannot control rats here. The only reason is lack of cleanliness

in the hospital. The more you keep the house clean, the more rats will not enter the house. The medical authorities are just playing around with excuses of tender, pest control, red tape and cages," alleged a local resident.
When contacted, CDMO Sushant Kumar Sahu said, "We have set up cages across the hospital to trap the rats. I agree these are not sufficient,

but we need time for pest control. We are also trying to create awareness among patients and attendants to use dustbins instead of throwing away leftover foods here and there."
"We are planning to hire an agency for rodent control measures. We have also apprised the Works Department of the need to block all the rat holes," he added.

For Judicial Hub in Baleswar CJ gives nod for patch of land near ITI Square

During his visit to dist
SIBDAS KUNDU ■ BALESWAR
SIBDAS KUNDU



Chief Justice of Orissa High Court Chakradhari Saran Singh has given green signal for a site near ITI Square for establishment of the Judicial Hub in Baleswar. The site selection has been hanging fire for a couple of years in the want of a consensus between the Bar Association and officials of the judiciary of the district.

After considering several probable patches of land, a patch under the Water Resources Department near ITI Square was agreed upon by all for the Judicial Hub. Justice Singh during his visit to Baleswar on Saturday, accom-

panied by other senior officials of the Orissa High Court as well as the District Judge, made a visit to the tentatively selected site for establishment of the Judicial Hub. After visiting the site and having discussions with the judicial officers and Bar Association members, Singh expressed satisfaction over the site and gave the nod for the patch.
"The patch of land which is under the Water Resources

Department has come to the Law Department through the Revenue Department after adopting alienation procedures. We (Bar) are happy that the site has got the approval of the Chief Justice," said Bar Association, Baleswar president Raghunath Pradhan.
Notably, the judicial establishments, including the quarters of judicial officers in the district headquarters town here are scattered owing to paucity

of adequate space and when a proposal for establishment of the Judicial Hub was received from the Orissa High Court, selection of several sites including patches near Kuruda and Remuna took place. But those patches lacked some facilities or the other and were not found to be viable. Even extensions of buildings in the existing main court premises were proposed. Finally, the patch under the Water Resources Department near ITI Square was found to be suitable in all respects.
During the visit of Chief Justice, the Bar Association also placed a demand for establishment of another family court, owing to the case load. Over 4,000 cases are pending and the number is increasing day-by-day due to the filing of fresh cases.

Dev now Principal Secy, Electronics & IT

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Vishal Kumar Dev took over as Principal Secretary, Electronics and Information Technology Department on July 12.
He is a 1996 Batch IAS, a Post Graduate of University of Sussex, UK MBA from IIM, Lucknow and B Tech from BHU. As an honest, hardworking and visionary bureaucrat, Dev has been serving the State for the last 27 years in various capacities.
He has served as Principal Secretary, Finance, Energy, Industries, Sports and Youth Services, Women and Child Development.



Earlier, Dev served Electronics and Information Technology Sector for more than 4 years as CEO Odisha Computer Application Centre (OCAC). Dev will now serve as Chairman OCAC along with his present assignment.
In addition to his duties, Dev has also taken charge of the Chairman, Odisha Forest Development Corporation (OFDC).

1st open-air Rath Yatra held at Abu Dhabi temple



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The first open air Rath Yatra in the gulf region was held at the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from July 7.
The Odia Community in Abu Dhabi in association with ISKCON had organised the Rath Yatra of the Holy Trinity.
More than 1,500 devotees attended the Rath Yatra celebrations, first time held in open air. Brahmavihari Swami, the head of the Abudhabi Hindu Temple did the traditional Chherapanhara to kick off the festival.
The Rathas (chariots) of the Lords were constructed in Puri of Odisha and shipped to Abudhabi a couple of days before the festival.
The Odia Society in UAE had put their efforts from 2016 to have Lord Jagannath worshipped in the temple. Puri Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb had also made efforts to make this possible.
The Odia community members including Dr Chandra Sekhar Khuntia had initially approached the Hindu Temple managing committee chairman Dr BR Shetty. After efforts of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), PM's then

Principal Secretary PK Mahapatra and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan the proposal was accepted to install the idol of Lord Jagannath in the temple.
When the temple was inaugurated on February 14, 2024 by Prime Minister Naredra Modi, Gajapati Dibya Singh Deb was among the special invitees. Before the temple inauguration the idols of the Lords were made in Puri and shipped to Abudhabi. The idol of Lord Jagannath was installed on the right side of Radhakrishna.
The temple was constructed at a cost of 200 million dollars on 14 acre of land provided by UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Later, he also provided additional 14 acres of land to the temple which is located on the Abudhabi-Dubai National Highway. The temple's outer structure is made of pink stone from Rajasthan while the inner structure is made of Italian marble, which was carved in Rajasthan and then shipped to Abu Dhabi. No wonder, the temple has become a major tourist destination in the gulf for the Indians as well as others.
More than 400 skilled workers were involved in the temple construction work out of which 200 skilled sculptors and workers were from Odisha.

After diphtheria, diarrhoea Now, thousands affected in malaria in Rayagada

Blame it on poor health intervention
BADAL TAH ■ RAYAGADA



After a recent outbreak of diphtheria in Kashipur and diarrhoea in Muniguda regions, malaria has spread throughout the district, especially affecting the children in the residential schools managed by the ST-SC Development Department of the Government of Odisha. Even one girl student studying in class VI named Manisha Manding (12) belonging to Durgapadu Residential School under Rayagada block died of the disease.
Sources said that she was sent to home by the school authorities after preliminary treatment at the school. As she was never taken to hospital, she succumbed to the disease. Similarly, the District Headquarters Hospital is inundated with scores of malaria patients. Serious patients have been referred to the MKCG Medical College and Hospital, Brahmapur and SLNMCH, Koraput.
Out of 2,14,225 tests conducted during last five months

from January to May, there are 2,508 malaria positive patients. June witnessed a surge of the case whose number could go up to 3,000 cases. Though malaria parasite "plasmodium falciparum" is prevalent in all parts of the district, which is controllable, but the disease has taken a serious proportion because of slender health services and callous attitude of the concerned authorities.
Lack of strong surveillance systems and continuous reporting, placing trained human resources in remote geographies, innovating with vector-control methods, and diagnostics and drugs for better treatment and care has led to the present catastrophe. Rapid-diagnosis kits (similar to pregnancy-testing kits) are in short supply. There is also a disruption in the supply of

district administration took hardly any step to contain the disease. After its wide spread, the district administration in July casually published a leaflet on Malaria, Dengue and Diarrhoea (MDD) and initiated an integrated health survey from July 1.
"In fact, these kinds of preventive steps should have been initiated much before the onset of monsoon. The district administration, engrossed with the election process, was not sensitive to the pertinent issue. Malaria is not just a bio-medical problem but a socio-economic issue, claiming the maximum lives in a place where health systems are either absent or in a derelict state. A community-based approach is the need of the hour, with a focus on screening and treating malaria-positive patients living in high-transmission areas through camps. Important in this context is understanding the link between malaria and malnutrition, the treatment of affected children in residential hostels and in villages too," former Rayagada College Union president and Odisha Paschim Prant general secretary, SAKSHAM, Shyam Kumar Dash said.
The Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN), a multi-component malaria intervention in hard-to-reach villages, which drew appreciation from the WHO, is now a failure in the district. Consequently, the affected villagers are either left in the lurch or are taking help of the traditional healers. And, it is not difficult to foresee the effectiveness of such treatment.
It may be noted that the highest 9,925 cases were reported in Rayagada during the last financial year. The annual parasite index (API) during 2022 was over 10 in Rayagada, the highest in Odisha, where it was 0.52. In spite of this the

Digapahandi 10 children severely injured by electric shock

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR
A major incident occurred in Fashiguda village in Digapahandi area where ten children were severely injured due to an electric shock. The incident took place on Sunday during a temple establishment ceremony in the village.
The children were watching the Ramayana play being performed as part of the Thakurani Jatra in the village. Due to heavy rains, the children moved under the stage for shelter. Unfortunately, they came in contact with an electric wire lying beneath the stage, resulting in a severe electric shock.
Local residents quickly came to their aid and called

the ambulance service. The critically-injured children were first taken to the Digapahandi Community Health Centre and later they were transferred to the MKCG Medical College Hospital in Brahmapur for further treatment. Two children were admitted to the ICU while the rest were reported to be out of danger, according to the head of the paediatric department.
Local MLA Siddhanta Mohapatra, along with the Sub-Collector of Brahmapur and the Medical Superintendent, visited the injured children to inquire about their health. The children are reported to be between seven and 12 years old.

In Koraput Kidnapped rice mill owner rescued

PNS ■ KORAPUT
Police have rescued a rice mill owner who had allegedly been abducted by miscreants for ransom in Koraput district on Friday.
The victim A Ramesh Patra was abducted while returning home from his rice mill.
Family members of the businessman had claimed that the abductors of Patra had on Saturday night made telephone call and demanded Rs 70 lakh ransom. The kidnappers made the call to the family member of Patra using his mobile phone.
Patra, who owns SLVN Modern Rice Mill in Perahandi, was returning home by his car when some miscreants who had been following him in another vehicle intercepted him near



Perahandi Chowk.
As Patra did not come out of his car, the miscreants broke open the vehicle's window and kidnapped him. After Patra did not return home, his family members lodged a missing persons complaint with the Borigumma police.
Police had formed special teams to trace Patra and raids were conducted in different areas in Jeypore and Borrigumma.

Use AI in services delivery: CS to Secys

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja has been pushing for effective use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) methods to address various challenges and to smoothen the delivery of public service. A tech savvy mandarin, Ahuja has been active in utilising technology for the benefit of public service since long.
According to senior officials, the Chief Secretary from the very beginning, during this first introductory meeting with the Secretaries of various

departments, had advised them to use AI and technology in delivery of services. Ahuja has successfully implemented several AI based methods to address various challenges in the agricultural sector to aid farmers during his tenure as Secretary in the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
One of the major AI interventions is 'Kisan e-Mitra' an AI-powered chatbot to assist farmers with queries about the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme. The solution supports multiple languages and is

evolving to assist with other Government programmes.
The National Pest Surveillance System for tackling the loss of produce due to climate change utilizes AI and Machine Learning to detect crop issues, enabling timely intervention for healthier crops.
AI based analytics being used for field photographs for crop health assessment and crop health monitoring using satellite, weather and soil moisture datasets for rice and wheat crops.
He also rolled out 'My Ciphel' mobile application to help farmers to get precise in-

formation regarding the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) developed post-harvest technologies, products and machineries.
The State has also initiated some AI based methods in different fields. The Government has used AI based cameras technology in smooth conduct of the Matric Board Examination and Rath Yatra this year. In both fields, the State has achieved success. In fact, there is a move to open an AI Cell in the State Government for carrying out innovative initiatives, said sources.

INTACH launches AP's Kalingan sites' documentation

To ensure their preservation and appreciation by future generations
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha State Chapter of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has started a listing and documentation campaign for Kalingan heritage sites found in the State of present-day Andhra Pradesh. Kalinga, historically renowned for its rich cultural heritage, once used to extend its boundaries into parts of present-day Andhra Pradesh, reflecting a broader geographical influence that encompasses diverse cultural practices and architectural legacies across the region.
Many heritage sites in Andhra Pradesh with Kalingan influence need proper listing, documentation and preservation. INTACH's campaign aims to highlight these sites, ensuring that their historical significance is recognized and protected. By documenting Kalingan heritage sites outside the current boundaries of Odisha, INTACH aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the region's historical expanse and influence. The six member's survey team that includes Bishnu Mohan Adhikari, Bikram Kumar Nayak, Suman Prakash Swain, Bikash Das and Chiranjib Rout will be coordinated by Deepak Kumar Nayak (co-convenor,



INTACH Cuttack Chapter).
Project coordinator Deepak Kumar Nayak has provided further insights into the project, saying, "Our team has meticulously documented and

catalogued numerous historic Kalingan sites, primarily situated in the north Andhra Pradesh region. This includes temples, palaces, forts, caves, stupas, inscriptions and other

archaeological remains, all having Kalingan connection. Many of these sites are lesser-known and some of them are documented for the first time by our team."
Architectural and cultural elements of the Kalinga style are prominently featured in several locations throughout Andhra Pradesh, highlighting the historical and cultural connections between these regions. The objective is to locate and document as many Kalingan historic sites as possible in all the districts of Andhra Pradesh in near future," Nayak adds.
Bishnu Mohan Adhikari, a history researcher and a member of the survey team, states, "The Kalingan heritage sites present in Andhra Pradesh is a

rich tapestry woven with threads of history, architecture, religion, and culture. These historic sites collectively form a vital link to our past, offering important historical, cultural, and architectural insights. Their neglect poses a significant threat to our shared heritage. By undertaking a concerted effort to list and document these sites, we can ensure their preservation and continued appreciation by future generations. The initiative will not only honour our history but also enrich the cultural fabric of the land and beyond."
According to INTACH Odisha sources the publishing of the documentation is expected to be completed by the end of the current year.

SC issues notices to pvt parties on NTA pleas to club all cases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday issued notices to private parties on a batch of pleas filed by the National Testing Agency (NTA) seeking transfer of cases pending against it in various high courts on the NEET-UG row to the top court to avoid multiplicity of litigations. Earlier, a vacation bench had on June 14 issued notices to the parties on similar pleas by the NTA. The NTA had submitted that several pleas seeking cancellation of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Under Graduate (NEET-UG), 2024 over allegations of question paper leak and other malpractices are pending in several high courts. Advocate Vardhaman Kaushik, appearing for the NTA, urged a bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala on Monday that the fresh batch of pleas be also transferred to the apex court as they pertained to the same issue. "Issue notice and tag," the bench said, adding that these pleas will also be taken up together with the pending petitions on the NEET-UG row on



July 18. The NTA also urged the bench to stay the pending proceedings in various high courts. The CJ said once the Supreme Court has issued notices on transfer petitions, the high courts, procedurally, do not proceed with the hearing. The bench asked the NTA counsel to bring this to the notice of the high courts concerned. The top court was hearing as many as five petitions seeking transfer of cases from various high courts to it. Earlier, the bench had on July 11 adjourned till July 18 the hearing on a clutch of other petitions seeking cancellation, re-test and probe into alleged malpractices in the conduct of NEET-UG, 2024 as the responses of the Centre and the NTA were not received by some parties. The bench had also said it has

received a status report from the CBI on the progress made in the probe into alleged irregularities in the conduct of the exam. In an additional affidavit filed in the apex court on July 10, the Centre had said data analytics of the results of NEET-UG 2024 was conducted by IIT Madras which found there was neither any indication of "mass malpractice" nor a localised set of candidates benefiting from it and scoring abnormally high marks. The government's assertion assumed significance in view of the observations made by the top court on July 8 that it may order a re-test if there were large-scale malpractices in holding the exam on May 5. The Centre's affidavit had said experts from IIT Madras have found that the marks distribution follows the bell-shaped

curve that is witnessed in any large-scale examination indicating no abnormality. A bell curve describes the shape of data conforming to a normal distribution. The NTA had also filed a separate additional affidavit on the similar lines and said it has carried out an analysis of distribution of marks at the national, state and city level.

While hearing the pleas on July 8, the top court had observed that the sanctity of the examination has been "breached". Saying that a re-test may be ordered if the entire process was affected, the bench had sought details from the NTA and the CBI, including the timing and manner of the alleged paper leak, besides the number of wrongdoers to understand the extent of irregularities claimed by the petitioners. Over 23.33 lakh students had taken the test on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including in 14 cities overseas. The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country.

PM pays tributes to Kamaraj, hails his visionary legacy



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday paid tributes to former Congress President K Kamaraj, a towering leader of his era who hailed from Tamil Nadu, and said his contribution to sectors like education remains unparalleled. "Remembering Thiru K. Kamaraj on his birth anniversary. He is widely respected for his visionary leadership and efforts to uplift the poor. His contribution to sectors like education remain unparalleled. We reiterate our commitment to fulfil his ideals and build a society that is just and compassionate," Modi said in a social media post. Born in 1903 in the erstwhile Madras Presidency, Kamaraj went on to become its chief minister and is credited for introducing several welfare measures to help the poor. He later became the national president of the Congress and was considered a deft organisational leader.

Support to Pacific islands' quest for progress our responsibility: Jaishankar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India considers supporting the Pacific islands' quest for development as its responsibility, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday. In his brief remarks at an event, Jaishankar also said the Islands in the Pacific are not "small Islands" but rather "large Ocean countries" and that India is privileged to be their partners.

"We consider it our responsibility to support the Pacific Islands in their quest for sustainable development. Climate change, natural disasters, poverty alleviation and health-care are common challenges that we need to address together," he said. "India is always ready to do more with our Indo-Pacific partners," he added. Jaishankar's remarks came at a virtual ceremony that saw India signing a MoU for implementation of four community development projects in the Marshall Islands. "I am glad that these projects cover areas, including a community sports centre in Ailuk Atoll, airport terminal on Mejit Island, community centres at the Arno and Wotje Atolls. These would surely provide better infrastructure to the



people of Marshall Islands," he said. The External Affairs Minister said India and the Republic of the Marshall Islands share a long history of friendly bilateral relations, which has expanded over the years, including under the aegis of the Forum of India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC). The FIPIC has emerged as a major framework for cooperation between India and the Pacific Island nations. "I would like to recall what my Prime Minister said at the third FIPIC summit. The Islands in the Pacific are not 'small Islands' but rather 'large Ocean countries,'" he said. Jaishankar also referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of

India's "concrete" commitments to the Pacific Islands at the third FIPIC summit. "I am glad to witness the progress in achieving them. We are also working on the proposals regarding desalination units and dialysis machines for the Republic of Marshall Islands," he said. The External Affairs Minister said India recognises the priorities and needs of the Pacific Island nations. "Healthcare and related infrastructure, quality and affordable medicines, wellness and lifestyle, centres of excellence, education and capacity building, development of SME sector, renewable energy and clean water facilities all these are some of the focus areas of our cooperation," he noted.

PM, leaders congratulate new Nepalese PM Oli

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday congratulated K P Sharma Oli on his appointment as Prime Minister of Nepal and said he looked forward to working closely with him to further strengthen the friendship between the two countries. Oli, the leader of Nepal's largest communist party, was appointed Nepal's Prime Minister for a fourth term on Sunday to lead a new coalition government that faces the daunting challenge of providing political stability in the Himalayan nation. Oli, 72, succeeds Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' who lost the vote of confidence in the House of Representatives on Friday, leading to the formation of the new government as per Article 76 (2) of the Constitution. Congratulating Oli, Modi said in a social media post, "Look forward to working closely to further strengthen the deep bonds of friendship between our two countries and to further expand our mutually beneficial cooperation for the progress and prosperity of our peoples." The Congress also extended its wishes to Oli and said



every Indian looks forward to further strengthening the bonds of cooperation between the two countries for a brighter future. In a social media post, president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "On the behalf of Indian National Congress, we extend our best wishes to Shree K P Sharma Oli, on his appointment as the Prime Minister of Nepal." As close neighbours, India and Nepal share unique ties of friendship and partnership characterised by deep-rooted people-to-people contacts of kinship and culture, he said. "Every Indian looks forward to further strengthening the bonds of mutual cooperation for a brighter future," Kharge said.

IFS Vikram Misri takes over as India's Foreign Secretary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seasoned diplomat Vikram Misri, widely regarded as an expert on China and national security, assumed charge as India's new Foreign Secretary on Monday. Misri, a 1989-batch Indian Foreign Service officer (IFS), who was serving as the deputy national security advisor, succeeded Vinay Kwatra. The 59-year-old assumed charge of the key position at a time India is looking to navigate various geo-political challenges, including its frosty ties with China following the lingering eastern Ladakh border row and the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar congratulated Misri on assuming his new responsibility. "Congratulate Foreign Secretary @VikramMisri as he assumes his new responsibility today. Wish him a productive and successful tenure," he said in a social media post. Misri served in various capacities at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in the Prime's Office and in various Indian missions in Europe, Africa, Asia and North America. He has the rare distinction of serving as private secretary to three Prime Ministers, Inder



Kumar Gujral, Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi. As per norms, Misri is set to have a minimum tenure of two years as the foreign secretary. "Vikram Misri assumed charge as Foreign Secretary today. #TeamMEA extends a warm welcome to Foreign Secretary Misri and wishes him a successful tenure ahead," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a social media post. Before he was appointed as the deputy NSA, Misri served as India's ambassador to China from 2019-2021. Misri is believed to have played a key role in talks between

India and China after tensions flared significantly following the Galwan Valley clashes in June, 2020. The ties between the two countries nosedived following a fierce clash in the Galwan Valley that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. In his illustrious career, Misri also served as India's ambassador to Spain (2014-2016) and Myanmar (2016-2018) besides having stints in many Indian missions, including Pakistan, the US, Germany, Belgium and Sri Lanka. Misri was born in Srinagar and

Indian Coast Guard ship rescues two Olive Ridley turtles



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship Kamla Devi successfully rescued two Olive Ridley turtles entangled in ghost nets approximately 35 nautical miles southeast off the coast of West Bengal on Saturday, officials said here on Monday. The Olive Ridley turtles are classified as endangered species and are protected under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. Giving details, ICG officials said while on routine patrol in the Bay of Bengal, the crew of ICGS Kamla Devi promptly responded and executed a rescue operation, ensuring the safe release of a mother-child turtle duo that were badly entangled in discarded fishing nets. This operation underscores

the Indian Coast Guard's unwavering commitment to marine protection adhering to their motto "Vayam Rakshamah": "We Protect". Over the years, the ICG has saved numerous endangered species and demonstrated its unwavering commitment to marine protection. During the nesting period from 01 Nov 23 to 31 May 24, under "Operation Olivia" the ICG rescued 24 Ridley turtles, further showcasing their dedication. These species play a vital role in maintaining the health of marine ecosystems, making their preservation crucial. By safeguarding these vulnerable marine creatures, the ICG continues to demonstrate its dedication to preserving marine biodiversity and ensuring the health of our oceans.

Shah calls Chief Ministers, takes stock of flood situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday spoke to Chief Ministers of Assam, UP and Gujarat to take stock of situation caused by floods there and assured of all possible assistance and support of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). Shah's call to Assam chief minister took place as flood situation remains grim there affecting common people. Death toll has risen to more than 90 and more than 5 lakh people across 18 districts are reeling under the deluge, with Assam's Cachar being the worst-hit district.



Nanglamuraghat. Over 58,000 people are still taking shelter in 172 relief camps and distribution centres in 13 districts. 2,83,712 domestic animals were also affected by the deluge. The situation in Uttar Pradesh, especially in the eastern and central regions, is also under observation after an increase in the water levels of several rivers impacting around 18 lakh people in more than 900 villages. As per officials, nearly 18 districts, including Azamgarh, Mau, Ballia, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Kushinagar, Shravasti, Balrampur, Lakhimpur Kheri, Barabanki, Sitapur, Gonda Siddharth

Nagar, Moradabad, Bareilly and Basti in Uttar Pradesh were affected by increased water level. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath earlier conducted an aerial survey of the affected districts and directed the officials to provide all possible assistance to the affected people. Due to heavy rain in the Valsad district in Gujarat, many low-lying areas have been inundated, and the national highway was also flooded. Teams from disaster cells were deployed to drain the water from these areas. Additionally, the heavy rains caused the water level in Madhuban Dam to rise.

Congress slams BJP for allegations against Rahul, decries 'cheap politics'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday slammed the BJP for its allegation that Rahul Gandhi encouraged violence against Prime Narendra Modi, saying "cheap politics" should not be played on the issue of security of leaders. The BJP on Sunday had targeted the Leader of Opposition following the assassination attempt on former US president Donald Trump. "Third Time Fail Rahul Gandhi has often encouraged and justified violence against Prime Modi, who he has lost election to, several times now.



How can India ever forget how Punjab Police, then under the Congress, deliberately compromised PM's security, when his convoy was left stranded on a fly-over," BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya had said. Hitting back at the BJP, Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said, "cheap politics should not be played on the issue of security of leaders. The Congress party lost Mahatma ji to Right Wing terrorists. We lost two Prime Ministers at the hands of ter-

rorists. We lost our entire Chhattisgarh leadership to Left Wing terrorists, under the watch of the BJP government." Prime Modi and the entire BJP has been instigating people against the leadership of the Congress party by "spreading vitriolic" lies against Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and the entire family, he alleged. "He (Modi) also mysteriously withdrew their SPG security," Khera said. Donald Trump survived an attempt on his life when a young gunman fired multiple shots at the former US president at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, injuring his right ear.

Indian warships, USS Theodore Roosevelt conduct joint exercise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Navy's frontline warships carried out a mega military exercise with the Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group of the US in the Indian Ocean, demonstrating the growing strategic congruence between the two sides in the key maritime domain. The USS Theodore Roosevelt is a Nimitz-class, nuclear-powered, aircraft carrier of the US Navy.



A carrier battle group or carrier strike group is a mega naval fleet comprising an aircraft carrier, accompanied by a large number of destroyers, frigates and other ships. The Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group operated alongside forces from the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean on July 12, the US embassy said in a read out. The wargame came amid increasing concerns among democratic countries over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the larger Indo-Pacific region. The Indian Navy's deployment included guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam and replenishment ship INS Aditya. "This joint maritime activity advanced interoperability between the two major defence partners and underscores their

shared commitment to upholding a free and open Indo-Pacific," the embassy said. The US and Indian military forces focused on improving shared maritime domain awareness and information sharing, enhancing replenishment and logistics interoperability and improving combined air-to-air capabilities, it said. "Participating units include the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, Carrier Air Wing 11, and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Daniel Inouye," it said. The USS Theodore Roosevelt is currently operating with carrier strike group nine after conducting this joint maritime

activity in the 7th Fleet area of operations. The 7th Fleet is the US Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The Indian Navy routinely participates alongside US Navy units in multilateral exercises across the Pacific, including Southwest Asia and littoral Africa. "In addition to the group sail, the Indian Navy is also operating in leadership roles with the US Navy and other allies and partners in the ongoing Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024 exercise in Hawaii," the US readout said.

Goa Assembly adjourned twice

As BJP MLA seeks breach of privilege motion for statement on Speaker

PTI ■ PANAJI

The Goa Assembly was adjourned twice on Monday after a BJP MLA moved a breach of privilege motion against a Congress legislator over the latter's statement about the Speaker. A commotion started on the floor of the House before the Question Hour when the BJP MLA Daji Krishna Salkar moved a breach of privilege motion against Congress's Altono D'Costa for making statements against Speaker Ramesh Tawadkar. D'Costa had on Friday told reporters that the Speaker had rejected his resolution demanding political reservation for the Scheduled Tribes community in the assembly. Salkar on Monday moved the motion, after which Leader of Opposition Yuri Alemoa questioned how the statement amounted to a breach of privilege. He said, "Nothing stops us from moving a resolution. How is it a breach of privilege?" Chief Minister Pramod Sawant



claimed D'Costa's statement to the media was an insult to the Speaker, and he must tender an apology. When commotion prevailed, Tawadkar initially adjourned the House for half an hour. When the session resumed, the ruling benches reiterated their demand for a breach of privilege motion and the House was again adjourned for half an hour. Talking to reporters, Goa Forward Party MLA Vijai Sardesai said the disruption of the House by the ruling benches was a systematic move to avoid the Question Hour. Sardesai said that he and Congress MLA Carlos Ferreira had tabled a question on the National Education Policy (NEP) that would have exposed the State Government.

Thousands of devotees pull chariots of sibling deities

PTI ■ PURI

Thousands of devotees pulled the chariots of sibling deities — Lord Jagannath, Devi Subhadra and Lord Balabhadra — on the 'Bahuda Yatra' or return car festival on Monday. Though the pulling of chariots was slated to start at 4 pm, it began ahead of the schedule amid chants of 'jai Jagannath' and beating of cymbals. Devotees start pulling Lord Balabhadra's chariot 'Taladwaja' at 3.25 pm and Devi Subhadra's 'Devadalan' at 4 pm. Pulling of Lord Jagannath's chariot

'Nandighoshi' began at 4.15 pm. The chariot pulling started after Puri's titular king 'Gajapati Maharaj' Divya Singha Deb performed 'cheerapahanra', a ritual during which he swept the three chariots with help of golden broom by sprinkling scared water. The deities left the Jagannath temple on July 7 during the Rath Yatra and reached Gundicha temple, considered their birthplace. They stayed there for a week and on Monday are now returning to the Jagannath temple. This journey is known as the 'Bahuda Yatra'.



Earlier, the trinity was ceremonially taken to their respective chariots from the Gundicha Temple in presence of lakhs of devotees. A total of 180 platoons (1 platoon comprises 30 personnel) of police force and 1,000 officers were deployed to maintain law and order and crowd management during the 'Bahuda Yatra'. Additional Director General of Police (Law & Order) Sanjay Kumar said adequate security arrangements have been made and the entire temple town is under CCTV surveillance. Around five lakh people are expected to congregate for the festival.

Necessary steps needed to develop Ayodhya: Yogi

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said necessary steps should be taken to develop all municipal corporations, including Ayodhya, as 'solar cities'. The UP CM conducted a review of the current status of power generation, transmission and distribution in the state. UP Energy Minister A K Sharma was also present in the meeting which focused on the ongoing efforts and future plans. Senior officials

and engineers of the Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) and all Discoms (distribution companies) were in attendance, the UP government said in a statement. Adityanath informed that there is considerable enthusiasm for the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijlee Yojana, with over 18 lakh people having registered for the programme. It is important to promote this scheme widely and encourage more individuals to take part in this, he added.

The UP CM directed to complete the process of land acquisition for the proposed solar parks in Jhansi, Lalitpur, Kanpur Nagar, Kanpur Dehat, Chitrakoot and Jalaun expeditiously, the statement said. Speaking on this occasion, Adityanath said, "Under the leadership of the honourable Prime Minister (Narendra Modi), the state has achieved the goal of 'Sabko Bijli-Nirbaddh Bijli' (uninterrupted supply of electricity to all) in the last seven years. Electricity now reaches every village and majra, ensuring

equitable distribution without any VIP culture. "It is gratifying that currently, electricity is supplied without discrimination. Especially during the intense heat, additional efforts were made to ensure convenience for the public, with round-the-clock electricity provided statewide from March 15 to June 30," the chief minister said. He said in addition to various hydropower projects, 22 thermal projects are successfully operational in the state and they are located in Anpara, Haridwar, Obrha, Parichha and Jawaharpur.

AI cameras installed in K'taka Assembly

To record arrival, exit time of MLAs, duration of presence



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Artificial Intelligence-enabled cameras with facial recognition technology have now been installed in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly that will record arrival and exit time of members, as well as the duration of their presence in the House. KGF Congress MLA Roopakala Shashidhar was the first legislator to be recorded by the cameras on arrival at the Assembly before the quorum bells are rung and their names are read out in appreciation by the Chair. "Some senior legislators like Araga Jnanendra, Basangouda Patil Yatnal (of BJP) and some senior Ministers had made a request that some legislators, despite coming a bit late, sit through the proceedings till six or eight (PM), but no one takes note of it and it is an injustice," the Speaker said. He added: "So, for the first time we have installed Artificial Intelligence

cameras, which will take note of — what time a member arrives and leaves, and for how long he or she was present in the Assembly. Information regarding this comes to the Assembly Secretary's system by the end of the day. There will be data." According to officials, the initiative is part of the effort to improve attendance of legislators and their participation during the session. Meanwhile, aimed at giving a facelift to the Vidhana Soudha, the seat of state legislature and secretariat here, gates at the west entrance of the Assembly hall has been renovated in the first phase, replacing iron grilles with a large and carved grand rosewood door. It was inaugurated by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah today along with a plaque having the preamble of the constitution. The Speaker said: "there is national and international respect for our Vidhana Soudha building. National and international level delegations and tourists come to Vidhana Soudha. It is our duty to make it look good and respectable from both inside and outside. This is the first phase, more work has to be done, I seek your (members) suggestions."

Bhujbal meets Sharad to discuss Maratha quota, OBC protest issues

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra minister Chhagan Bhujbal on Monday met NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar at his residence here and sought his intervention into the Maratha quota issue and objections over it by OBC leaders. Speaking to reporters later, Bhujbal said had a meeting with Pawar for nearly one-and-a-half-hours and the latter told him that he would discuss the matter with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and other leaders in the next two days. Bhujbal, an OBC leader who belongs to the rival NCP led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, met former Union minister Sharad Pawar at his 'Silver Oak' residence in Mumbai. The visit came a day after he veiled attack at Sharad Pawar for the opposition's boycott of an all-party meeting on the Maratha quota issue. eaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), which comprises the Congress, NCP (SP) and Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), did not turn up at the all-party meeting convened by CM Shinde on July 9, claiming the opposition was not taken into confidence on the Maratha reservation issue. Bhujbal on Sunday claimed the opposition leaders stayed away from the meeting on July 9 "after a phone call from



Baramati at 5 pm". Notably, Baramati Lok Sabha constituency in Pune district is the bastion of 83-year-old veteran politician Sharad Pawar. Activist Manoj Jarange has been demanding reservation for the Maratha community under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. Some OBC activists recently held an agitation, seeking an assurance that their quota will not be affected. After the meeting on Monday, Bhujbal said Sharad Pawar told him he would discuss the ongoing deadlock over Marathas demanding their inclusion in the OBC category for quota with CM Shinde and other key leaders in the state. "I requested Sharad Pawar to look into this matter because the situation in the state, particularly in some districts, is very tense. The division between the Marathas and OBCs has reached such a level

that they are not even going to each other's hotels for having food," he claimed. "Pawar has agreed to take the initiative and discuss the issue with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and other important leaders in the state," said the NCP leader, who has also been opposing Maratha quota under the OBC category. Bhujbal also reminded Sharad Pawar of his decision, when he was the CM of Maharashtra, to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations in the state which offered the OBCs reservation in education and in the election to local governing bodies. "When Pawar was the chief minister of Maharashtra, he had resolved the issues of OBCs in the state. Now, the situation demands his intervention again. Pawar also told me that he needs a couple of days to get better as he is not feeling well," Bhujbal said.

Shah congratulates Indore for setting tree plantation world record

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has congratulated Indore for setting a Guinness World Record of "the most trees planted by a team in 24 hours" and said Mother Earth is smiling at the city. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday said that Indore, already the cleanest city in India and MP's economic capital, has now achieved the world record of planting more than 11 lakh saplings in a single day. Yadav in a post on X shared the Guinness World Records certificate and pictures of receiving it. Earlier on Sunday, Union minister Shah participated in the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign and planted a sapling in Indore. "Congratulations, Indore! The city of Indore has set a surreal world record by planting 12 lakhs saplings in a day under PM Shri @narendramodi Ji's campaign 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'. They have set an example that will be followed by millions in the years to come. Mother Earth is smiling at Indore," Shah said in a post on X late Sunday night. Prime Minister Narendra



Modi launched the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign on June 5 to mark World Environment Day. Under the drive, approximately 140 crore trees will be planted across the country, including 5.5 crore in Madhya Pradesh, which Shah has described as the "lungs of Bharat". Indore, which has been recognised as the country's cleanest city for several years as per the Swachh Survekshan, will see 51 lakh saplings planted during this campaign, as per officials. The plantation drive was carried out at the BSF Academy's Revati Range,

which was divided into nine zones and 100 sub-zones. Besides 2,000 BSF jawans, more than 100 NRIs, NCC cadets from 50 schools, a large number of citizens, and members of various social organisations participated in the plantation drive, officials earlier said. According to the Guinness World Record website, the previous record for the most saplings planted in 24 hours was 9,21,730. It was achieved by the Assam (India) government's Forest Department at Udalguri on September 13 and 14, 2023.

Kerala man stuck inside hospital lift for 2 days rescued, 3 staffers suspended

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A 59-year-old man was stuck in a lift at the Government Medical College Hospital in the Kerala capital for two days, but the officials responsible for its operation were unaware of the situation until Monday morning, prompting the authorities to initiate disciplinary action against them for their alleged lapses. Ulloor resident Ravindran Nair, a patient who came for a medical check up, had been stuck inside the lift of the OP Block of the government medical college here since Saturday and was rescued by an operator who had arrived for routine work, police said. He has been admitted to the hospital for a detailed medical examination. "He (Nair) got into the lift to go to the first floor but claims that the lift came down and did not open. He says he shouted for help, but no one came. His phone was also switched off," police said. State Health Minister Veena George has ordered a probe into the incident and sought



a report in this regard. The health department has also suspended three staff members — two lift operators and a duty sergeant — in connection with the incident. The officials said that the incident came to light on Monday morning, when the lift operator came for routine work. The man's family had on Sunday night filed a missing case with the medical college

police. Speaking to the media in the hospital, Nair said the lift got stuck, and he kept pressing the alarm, but no one came to the rescue. "I tried calling all the emergency numbers listed inside the lift, but no one answered. The alarm was also sounded, but no one came. After some time, I understood that it was the second Saturday and a

Sunday the next day, and then I waited for help. "Later, after some time, I lost track of time inside the lift. This morning, an operator came, and I pressed the alarm. We both forcefully opened the door from both sides, and I jumped out of it," Nair said. The man said he was sure that someone would come and operate the lift on Monday. Nair's son, Hari Shankar, said his father was pretty shaken up as he had been inside the lift for almost two days. "My father says he kept on ringing the alarm inside the lift, but no one came to the rescue," he said. Thirumala native Nair had gone to the medical college hospital to seek treatment and got stuck in the lift on Saturday around 12 noon. As his phone was not reachable, family members approached the medical college police station on Sunday evening and lodged a complaint. However, the medical college officials maintained that the lift was not a regularly used one.

Heavy rain: Trees uprooted, houses damaged in Kerala

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Incessant downpour accompanied by gusty winds continued to batter several parts of Kerala, prompting authorities to declare a holiday for educational institutions in seven districts on Monday. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted extremely heavy rainfall in northern Malappuram, Kannur and Kasaragod districts and placed these northern districts under red alert. According to its latest update, the weatherman issued an orange alert in Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Idukki, Kozhikode and Wayanad districts. In Kottayam district, fallen trees damaged houses and vehicles following heavy rains and gusty winds since early morning. Several houses suffered partial damage in the rural areas of northern Kozhikode including Onchiyam, Kottur, Payyoli and so on.

300 villagers whose houses set on fire yet to return home

TRIPURA VIOLENCE

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Around 300 villagers whose houses were set on fire three days ago following the death of a 19-year-old man in a clash between two groups in Tripura's Dhalai district are yet to return to their homes, officials said on Monday. They have been staying at a shelter after the July 12 arson in Gandatwisa village, around 110 km from the state capital Agartala. A team led by Dhalai District Magistrate Sajju Vaheed held a meeting with the affected families on Sunday and assured them of the necessary steps for providing security and compensation, the officials said. "At least 40 houses were severely damaged and around 30 shops were looted by the attackers. The affected family members are now staying at the Gandatwisa Higher



Secondary School. Four motorcycles were also burnt on July 12 night. The situation has improved in Gandatwisa with the deployment of additional security personnel in the vulnerable pockets," Gandatwisa Sub Divisional Magistrate Chandrajoy Reang told PTI over the telephone. The administration has taken all possible steps to provide compensation to around 80 families affected by the arson, he said. The team led by the district magistrate also held a

meeting with the members of a local committee to open the market, another official said. According to the officials, the attack on villagers stemmed from the clash between the two groups in the local market on July 7. Parameshwar Reang, a college student, was critically injured in the clash and later succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at GBP Hospital in Agartala on July 12. Four people were arrested in connection with the death of the youth, police said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Expectations from the budget

The Union Budget must address infrastructure growth, job creation and clean energy initiatives

The 2024 Union Budget will be presented in the Lok Sabha on July 23rd. This will be the first budget by NDA-3, likely to continue its earlier policies. However, setbacks in the recent elections might lead to course corrections, and some populist measures may be included in the budget by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. As the Union Budget 2024-25 approaches, the Indian economy stands at a pivotal juncture, characterized by robust growth prospects and lingering challenges. The GDP growth forecast remains optimistic, buoyed by a strong recovery in various sectors, particularly manufacturing, services, and technology. However, inflationary pressures, high fiscal deficits, and global economic uncertainties pose significant challenges. The government has made concerted efforts in the past to enhance infrastructure, digitalisation, and clean energy initiatives, reflecting its commitment to sustainable development. Despite these strides, issues like unemployment, income inequality, and rural distress persist, necessitating targeted fiscal measures.



The forthcoming budget is expected to address these concerns, aiming to foster economic resilience, stimulate investment, and ensure inclusive growth for the nation. It is an opportunity to streamline the economy and heal ailing sectors. People's prime concerns remain inflation, which can be dexterously handled with tight fiscal planning. The Union Budget under NDA 3.0 must prioritise infrastructure growth and job creation, aiming to boost manufacturing through public-private partnerships. Changes in personal taxation and pension schemes are also expected, focusing on long-term fiscal sustainability and middle-class relief.

There is significant industry expectation for reforms and incentives to bring them back on track. The real estate sector, a major catalyst for economic growth and a vital provider of employment, urgently needs industry status to access lower-cost financing and tax benefits. High taxes on essential materials like cement and steel, particularly the 28% GST on cement must be addressed to sustain growth. India's electric vehicle (EV) sector stands at a crucial juncture, with high expectations for the upcoming budget. The government should prioritise incentivising firms to use EVs for last-mile delivery operations. Reducing GST rates for renewable energy components from the current 18% to 5% could lower the cost structure for green energy projects, promoting faster adoption across the country. The upcoming budget is expected to focus on employee welfare, formal job creation, reducing compliance complexity, and addressing the skill gap. Job creation and equipping people with desired skills, especially in technology, must be focal points. The budget should allocate more funds to tech infrastructure and resources, preparing students for a tech-driven job market and supporting entrepreneurial growth. Overall, the Budget must provide a definitive direction for India's economic agenda, with a strong emphasis on infrastructure, job creation, clean energy, and comprehensive sectoral reforms.

PICTALK



Devotees carry idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra on the occasion of Ulta Rath Yatra in Nadia

New army chief follows Zorawar's footsteps



BHOPINDER SINGH

The ancient Duggar region has produced many of India's bravest warriors and earned the highest number of gallantry awards in the annals of the Indian Armed Forces

Ancient Duggar region (land of warrior-Dogra spanning J&K, Himachal Pradesh, and parts of Punjab) has given maximum sacrifice and earned the highest number of gallantry awards in the annals of the Indian Armed Forces. Geographically, they have been the first line of defence against all invading forces. The noble land birthed the likes of King Porus, and the warrior sans pareil, General Zorawar Singh. Unbeknownst to many, the legendary Zorawar's audacious conquests included regions that are now in Pakistan and China like Gilgit-Baltistan, Skardu, Hunza, to even large swathes of Tibet. With such martial traditions, it is the only region in the country that populates not one but four fiery regiments of the Indian Army i.e., Jammu & Kashmir Rifles, Dogra Regiment, Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry and Punjab Regiment, besides other arms, and services. But the Jammu & Kashmir Rifles or Jak Rif, has a hallowed place in history and imagination as a proud and direct legatee of those Zorawar's daredevilry traditions. The only 'State Force' of the Princely Dogra Kingdom to be fully amalgamated in the Indian Army, they remain the quintessential 'Gentlemen Soldiers' owing to pedigree, immense dignity, and professional restraint in personal conduct, but unmatched ferocity in battle. In 1947 the 'Saviour of Kashmir', Brigadier Rajendra Singh Jamwal, MVC, and his band of 300 indefatigable warriors held off Pakistani tribals for crucial three days to allow the con-fabulations and the landing of Indian troops in Srinagar. The Maharaja and Commander of J&K State forces had ordered, "Brigadier Rajender Singh is commanded to hold the enemy at Uri at all costs and to the last man" - he did so by paying the "ultimate sacrifice" himself. In another theatre, Brig Sher Jung Thapa, MVC, of the J&K State Forces earned the title of "Hero of Skardu". Even the first Param Vir Chakra of India, Maj Somnath Sharma, was from the Duggar region. Decades later, when the enemy attempted to



cross over yet again, it was the unparalleled heroics of the 13th Jak Rifbattalion, atop the unforgiving heights of the Kargil War that galvanised the nation. Two combatants from the traditional Duggar catchment areas of Palampur and Bilaspur were to send shivers down the spine of the enemy with their regimental war cries of "Durga Mata ki Jai" as they retook Point 5140. Captain Vikram Batra was to immortalise the moment with his "Yeh dil mange more" spirit and Rifleman (later Subedar Major) Sanjay Kumar would fight to defend their land just as their forefathers did, for aeons. Both won Param Vir Chakra. Even the peace-time equivalent of gallantry, Ashok Chakra, was bestowed on 2/Lt (later Maj Gen) Cyrus Pithwalla of 17th Jak Rif, to be the only 'General' officer with the highest gallantry award. It is from this deep fount of distinguished soldiering, that the 30th Chief of Indian Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, takes over the reigns. Commissioned in the 18th Rif battalion, he is the first Army Chief from the decorated Regiment. Understandably, people in the Duggar land (especially those from the Jak Rif fraternity) are justifiably proud. As 97 years

GENERAL DWIVEDI ASSUMES THE RESPONSIBILITY THAT HIS REGIMENTAL FOREFATHERS HELD WITH MUCH APLOMB, ELAN AND PROFESSIONAL ACUMEN THAT BEFITS THEIR MOTTO, PRASHATA RANVIRTA OR VALOUR IN BATTLE IS PRAISEWORTHY!

'young', Major General Goverdhan Singh Jamwal (the only General who was commissioned by Commander-in-Chief of J&K State Forces, Maharaja Hari Singh) extended congratulations and recalled the countless regimental sacrifices that, "made the State as crown of newly independent India". Today, General Dwivedi assumes the responsibility that his regimental forefathers held with much aplomb, elan and professional acumen that befits their motto, Prashata Ranvirta or Valour in battle is Praise-worthy! The General assumes the mantle in most challenging times, but as the Military truism goes, "The harder the conflict, the greater the triumph". With the Indian Army, he takes over the most disciplined, combat-hardened, and restrained institution of the nation - much like his own regimental ethos. Regrettably, such a selfless attitude in a selfish world can often lead to being 'taken for granted' or lead to institutional diminishment. Transmitting that 'voice' for redressal to the powers-that-be will be his foremost challenge. To his singular credit, he has tenanted the most sensitive posts e.g., Army Commander of the Northern Command that dealt with dual nemesis

i.e., China and Pakistan simultaneously, amongst other operational and staff posts. This makes him a worthy leader. In a movingly reassuring optic that is so typical of the Indian Army and its inimitable ways, the good General took blessings of his family elders, laid a wreath for those who went down fighting at the National War Memorial and then exchanged greetings with religious leaders of all faiths and denominations. Much like the multi-religious and multi-castiest denomination of the Duggar land and the combatants-in-arms from his beloved Jak Rif who could be a Sikh like Honorary Captain Sundar Singh (Ashok Chakra), Parsi like Maj Gen Pithwalla (Ashok Chakra) or even the martyr from his battalion i.e. 18th Jak Rif, Rifleman Arif Khan Pathan, who laid down his life on Indo-Pak Line-of-Control (LoC), Jak Rif's pride is the nation's pride. As regimental patriarch, Maj Gen Goverdhan Singh Jamwal dotingly noted, "General Upendra Dwivedi is the product of this great Regiment of General Zorawar Singh. You can expect results". (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ROT IN THE SYSTEM

Madam - It is ridiculous that the central institutions are being pulled in for series of alleged discrepancies in the entrance exams one after another. After NEET exam paper leaks, now its time for UPSC exam. Probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar's issue in Pune, is now on the limelight to raise many doubts regarding the UPSC and its selection process which is lenient towards IAS officers daughters and sons. It seems that the rules were bent in favor of her due to the political influence of her father and the impact of nepotism while clearing her medical examination certificate under OBC, PwBD quota, which was accepted despite it was done by the private hospital with an excuse of COVID-19 and posting. It is highly doubtful that she passed the exam under OBC category by misusing the law and fooled the interview board regarding her credentials which is not supposed to fall under OBC, PwBD quota as her asset worth is 22 crore. Her attitude, lavish life and pomposity on her probation period was unethical and disrespect to such highest post in the government. Perhaps, its just because of such candidates the honest and deserving get deprived of a chance to serve the society and nation building. It raises a red flag whether rules were misused in the past as well under the guise of obtaining OBC certificate by showing disability by the candidates who have had political affiliation and support. One hopes for fair and proper investigation of this matter to wipe out the rot in the system.

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

RAUT'S UNCHARITABLE COMMENTS

Madam - Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and MP Sanjay Raut now says that Atal Bihari Vajpayee would have imposed emergency in a similar situation. Had Vajpayee told Raut that he would have imposed emergency if he had faced a situation of the kind Indira Gandhi faced? The situation was created by Indira Gandhi herself. Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha of Allahabad High

Trump dodges the bullet



In the shooting incident in Pennsylvania at a Trump rally, the Ex president fortunately had a narrow escape. History is replete with attempts at assassination of US presidents. In

fact world over national leaders elsewhere too have been targeted for differing reasons. In the Trump incident, political observers have highlighted increasing and consistent effort at polarisation in the US, fed by hateful political rhetoric in the past few years. Trump as the serving President would refuse to concede defeat in his bid for re-election in 2020, even after losing it by as many as seven million votes. He not only stuck to a theory of conspiracy to deny him a win but created a partisan following that would recklessly storm into the parliament. The Pennsylvania incident must carry a larger and universal lesson. As a leader grows tall his onus to public propriety and temperance in speech, becomes exponential. Else it stands to rapidly fray the socio-politic fabric of a nation.

R N Narayanan | Mumbai

Court held Indira Gandhi guilty for her electoral malpractices. The Allahabad High Court delivered its judgment on June 12, 1975. The adverse judgment against Indira Gandhi threatened her position as Prime Minister. Top national leaders Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Vajpayee, and many others were arrested when Indira Gandhi had the premonition that her power and position would be in peril. The justification given for imposition of emergency was 'the internal disturbance'. Vajpayee did not indulge in electoral malpractices for facing a situation of the kind Indira Gandhi faced. He never hankered after power. Power came in search of him. The thought of Raut that Vajpayee would have imposed emergency if he had faced similar situation makes a laughing stock. What is wrong if Modi calls the day of emergency as the day of murder of the Constitution?

K V Seetharamiah | Bengaluru

RESPECT GANDHI'S LEGACY

Madam - I want to express my deep concern and disappointment over the recent

removal of the Mahatma Gandhi statue in Doomsday, Assam. The abrupt decision to dismantle this statue, which stood as a symbol of peace and unity at Gandhi Chowk, has understandably sparked widespread outrage among the community, particularly student leaders and local civil society. The statue's removal not only disrespects the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi but also undermines the values of non-violence and harmony that he tirelessly promoted. Such actions can have far-reaching negative impacts on our society, eroding the respect for historical figures who played pivotal roles in shaping our nation. I urge the authorities to reconsider their decision and engage in a dialogue with the community to address their concerns. Restoring the statue or finding a more inclusive solution will help in maintaining social harmony and respecting the sentiments of the people.

Masood Ahmad | Barabanki

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

High seas treaty: A crucial step for marine biodiversity protection

This treaty represents a significant international effort to protect our oceans, promoting equity and cooperation among nations

The world's oceans, vast and mysterious, are crucial to the health of our planet. They regulate the climate, produce half of the oxygen we breathe, and support a rich tapestry of life that is vital to global biodiversity. Marine ecosystems are incredibly diverse, hosting countless species, many of which remain undiscovered. Protecting this biodiversity is not just an ethical obligation but a practical necessity. Healthy marine ecosystems provide essential services, such as carbon sequestration, which helps mitigate climate change.



These regions offer invaluable benefits to humanity, including ecological, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and food security advantages. However, they are vulnerable to significant threats such as pollution, overexploitation, and the escalating impacts of climate change. The anticipated rise in human demand for marine resources in the coming decades—for food, minerals, and biotechnology—poses a risk of worsening these issues. These areas cover nearly half of the Earth's surface, yet they lack comprehensive legal frameworks to regulate human activities, leaving them vulnerable to overfishing, habitat destruction, pollution, and the impacts of climate change.

They also support fisheries that millions of people rely on for food and livelihoods. Yet, the high seas—the areas of the ocean that lie beyond national jurisdictions—remain largely unprotected and poorly managed. The significance of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement comes into the picture here. BBNJ is an international treaty under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, also

known as the High Seas Treaty, is a significant international treaty aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Areas beyond national jurisdiction cover approximately two-thirds of the ocean's surface and 95% of its volume. These regions offer invaluable benefits to humanity, including ecological, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and food security advantages. However, they are vulnerable to significant threats such as pollution, overexploitation, and the escalating impacts of climate change. The anticipated rise in human demand for marine resources in the coming decades—for food, minerals, and biotechnology—poses a risk of worsening these issues. These areas cover nearly half of the Earth's surface,

yet they lack comprehensive legal frameworks to regulate human activities, leaving them vulnerable to overfishing, habitat destruction, pollution, and the impacts of climate change. The BBNJ Agreement aims to ensure marine biological diversity conservation and sustainable use in areas beyond national jurisdiction. One of the most commendable aspects of the BBNJ Agreement is its emphasis on equity. The agreement recognises the differing capacities of developed and developing nations in managing marine resources. It includes provisions for capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology, helping to level the playing field and enable all nations to participate effectively in ocean governance. This is vital for ensuring that the benefits of marine resources are shared fairly. The BBNJ Agreement represents a vision of global stewardship where nations come together to protect the shared heritage of our oceans. It establishes mechanisms for creating marine protected areas (MPAs), conducting environmental impact assess-



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

ments (EIAs), and sharing marine genetic resources (MGRs) and associated benefits equitably. This holistic approach ensures that conservation efforts are globally coordinated, scientifically informed, and inclusive of all stakeholders. It is a testament to the power of multilateralism in addressing global challenges. While the BBNJ Agreement is a significant step forward, it faces considerable challenges. Ensuring compliance and enforcement in the vast and remote high seas areas will be complex. Effective implementation will require robust monitoring systems, international collaboration, and sufficient funding. Moreover, the agreement must harmonise with existing regional and sectoral bodies to avoid conflicts and duplication of efforts. An international agreement like the BBNJ Agreement, where countries work together for a common goal, is a beacon of hope for resurrecting our planet from the hardships caused by human activities. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

MANY REASONS FOR THANKING GOD

God helps us in many ways, and the least we can do is thank Him for His generosity



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Anyone, who has even tried to link with God either by praying or by chanting or by any other spiritual practice, would have benefited in some way. Because God can never be a debtor; He doesn't have to be. After all, He is the controller. I do many spiritual activities, and I am rewarded much beyond my expectations. How do I respond? I thank God profusely. This entitles me to more favours from God because thanking God is a high-class spiritual act. Over a long period of being in the shelter of God, many changes have occurred in my life. I am more peaceful; feel more secure; am 'sukhi' (happy); bad times don't last long; help comes, as required; guidance is generally available; etc. There are multiple reasons to thank God. I will detail a few. The first one has to be God's role in keeping the Creation going for our benefit. There have been many wars. But the world remains intact. Because God is the only entity, who could have prevented an all-out war like a nuclear war, which could have destroyed the world. God keeps the Creation going for His parts (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7). A businessman tries to keep his business going for his children, grandchildren, etc, but doesn't always succeed, because we all are limited; God is not.

God uses good souls, those who possess divine qualities to keep the Creation going. He rewards them in many ways including a better next birth. Shouldn't we thank God for this 'kripa' (grace)? The second reason to thank God profusely is for protecting good souls from demons. Lord Krishna has stated in verse # 16.6, "There are two types of living beings in this world: possessing divine qualities and having demonic qualities. Every person has either the predominance of divine or demonic qualities." Those with a preponderance of demonic qualities remain engaged in cruel acts. (16.4) There is a good percentage of such people. How do good people, i.e. having a preponderance of divine qualities, escape their attention?

God manages that. I cannot imagine living the way I do, i.e. with freedom and escape from being hurt by them. Believe me, I thank my Lord for this great mercy a lot, knowing how vulnerable I am. My third reason to be thankful to God is for bailing me out of all troubles, which make



their painful appearance due to my past bad/sinful acts, mostly in my past lives. I must have, otherwise I wouldn't be giving birth in this *dukhalaya*. God has promised this to all those who have God's consciousness. The fourth reason to thank God is for acting as karta (doer) in my life. There are five factors for accomplishing any task. These are: the place of action and the doer and many different kinds of instruments and many different efforts and fifth in this connection is the providence only." (18.14) Only God can control all the five. No human being has control over any other factor except being a doer. And when God is the karta, a task gets surely done. God does this kripa on us whenever He feels that it is according to dharma and we deserve it.

The fifth reason to thank God, especially by me is for God using me as His nimitta (instrument). I am one of many whom God has chosen. I suspect that all good people get this privilege, as Arjuna was. (11.33) The sixth reason to thank God one and all human beings is His mercy in allowing very simple spiritual practices like praying, naman (obeisance), chanting and, yes, thanking.

Once we begin doing them, God is in the picture. He doesn't wait for us to become His devotees; God begins to help us to become one. Because all these acts signal to God our intention to take His shelter. In my case, God has been micromanaging my life for a long time encouraging me to go on with my spiritual activities like writing spiritual texts such as articles and books. All the religions promote this act of thanking God. If we don't thank when we should we are becoming a debtor. I look for opportunities to thank others, and to God of course. He gives me plenty of reasons to be thankful.

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

Prioritising growth and regional development



A S MITTAL

The first budget by NDA-3 is anticipated to address the demands of stakeholders and States seeking assistance to bridge regional disparities



The NDA-3 government is gearing up to present its first budget on July 23. This budget carries high expectations as it is anticipated to outline a 5-year economic agenda and is expected to deliver substantially to meet the demands of stakeholders and states seeking assistance. Discussions are underway regarding the reinstatement of special status for states like Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, with demands from Janata Dal (United) and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in exchange for their support for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government. Andhra Pradesh's CM, N. Chandrababu Naidu, has demanded Rs one trillion to support the state's industrial and infrastructure development. The demand for special category status for Bihar and Andhra Pradesh poses the crucial question of why a similar approach should not be adopted to accelerate and expand the industrial growth of Punjab, a landlocked border state. This expectation arises at a critical time when the state is experiencing a significant divergence in its industrial activities due to stagnant growth and reduced exports. These circumstances demand new measures to catapult the state to greater heights. In the mid-nineties, neighbouring hill states like Himachal Pradesh reaped the benefits of a central special industrial package, while Punjab faced significant setbacks as many major players expanded and shifted their operations to the hilly states. The geographical disadvantage of being distant from seaports has led to certain investment disadvantages and stagnant growth in the industrial sector. Today, Punjab demands a level playing field to compete on an equal footing, as its key manufacturing industries have the potential to become an 'Engine of Growth.' Punjab inherited a fragile industrial base at the time of India's partition in 1947, which was further eroded with the creation of Haryana in 1966. The 1980s and 1990s were tumultuous due to terrorism and social unrest, impacting industrial growth in the region. Currently, Punjab only accounts for 5% of industrial units in the country, with a 3.6% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in the industrial sector over the last five fiscal years. In contrast,



THE DEMAND FOR SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS FOR BIHAR AND ANDHRA PRADESH POSES THE CRUCIAL QUESTION OF WHY A SIMILAR APPROACH SHOULD NOT BE ADOPTED TO ACCELERATE AND EXPAND THE INDUSTRIAL GROWTH OF PUNJAB, A LANDLOCKED BORDER STATE

neighbouring states like Haryana have demonstrated higher growth rates at 5.9%. Punjab is positioned 10th with a score of 58.95 in the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) ranking 2023, whereas Haryana holds the 5th position with a score of 63.65. It raises concern that Gujarat has the highest number of 8 districts among the top 25 districts in terms of export share, followed by Maharashtra with 5 districts, Haryana with one, and Punjab with none. Moreover, in terms of foreign direct investments (FDI), Punjab ranks 12th, having attracted only 0.49% of FDI. This is in stark contrast to neighbouring Haryana, which ranks sixth with FDI equity inflows accounting for 4.17% of the total inflows. The erosion of industry is a pressing crisis in Punjab. Despite efforts by successive governments to attract investments, significant hurdles such as location disadvantage, law and order and frequent protests persist. One major issue is the location disadvantage, as Punjab's distance from seaports makes its industrial operations non-competitive in the global market. Two years ago, CM Bhagwant Maan announced in the Vision Punjab conclave of ASSOCHAM that Punjab aims to become the first state in the country to own wagons (Punjab on wheels), offering a potential solution to dilute the freight burden. However, the success of this endeavour depends on the support from both the central and state governments. Punjab is an exceptional hub for textile yarn, bicycles, hosiery, tractors, automobile components, sports goods, engineering goods, and leather. These industrial clusters possess immense potential and can be further strengthened. Ludhiana proudly leads as the top producer of blended yarn and hosiery, as well

as the second-largest producer of polyester silk, fibre, and cotton yarn. It dominates woollen knitwear (95%) and hosiery (65%) exports, showcasing its strength in the global market. While China holds a dominant position with a 37% share, India is positioned with a 5% share in the global export market, and there is huge potential for expansion in export markets such as the USA, UAE, UK, Germany, France, and Australia. Ludhiana also commands a remarkable 92% of India's total bicycle parts production and 75% of bicycle production, securing its position as the leading exporter of bicycles from India with an 80% share. While India lags behind China in bicycle exports, there is clear potential to aggressively expand global exports with untapped opportunities in the US, European countries, and Africa as burgeoning bicycle markets. Jalandhar holds a solid 45% share of the total production, with 75% of the country's sports goods being exported from the city. Despite China's dominant position as the largest exporter of sports goods with a share of 42.2%, India's current 0.56% share of global exports signifies the untapped potential for Punjab's growth, with lucrative prospects in the USA, UK, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Colombia, and Argentina. Punjab plays a pivotal role, hosting one-third of total OEMs in the farm equipment segment and serving as the leading tractor manufacturer, contributing one-third to India's production. With a commanding share in exports, Punjab stands tall as the largest exporter. Despite India's current 2.2% share, the potential for over 2 lakh tractors to be exported in the next 3 years to burgeoning markets such as Brazil, Argentina, Turkey, SAARC, and African nations is undeniable. Wish List: Priority Focus on PLI:

The Production Linked Incentives (PLI) scheme should be thoroughly re-evaluated to ensure it delivers the intended impact on competitiveness and scale. Monitoring its progress closely is critical. The slow progress of the PLI scheme, especially in labour-intensive sectors like textiles, automobiles, and components, must be addressed urgently. To achieve broader goals such as enhancing exports, attracting significant investments, and generating employment, expanding PLI to new sectors like bicycles and sports goods is imperative to encompass the maximum number of MSMEs. Assertive GST Rationalization: There is an urgent need to rationalize the current GST structure to eliminate the complex hurdles created by multiple tax slabs. Transitioning from the existing structure to a simplified two or three-slab framework and providing exemptions such as farm implements is crucial to streamline the system. Critical Focus on Logistics Cost: Competitive and efficient logistics are the foundation for industrial growth. Policy-backed support for state-owned wagons in landlocked border states like Punjab is essential to address the over-freight burden and provide a level playing field to manufacturing hubs. Incentivizing labour-intensive and export-oriented industries in the upcoming budget is vital to driving the country's economic growth and employment generation. (The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika ITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association. Views expressed are personal)

Cinema: A potent tool in global politics and cultural diplomacy

In our multipolar world, cinema has become a critical component of soft power, shaping global perceptions through its captivating narratives

Movies have evolved far beyond mere entertainment; they now play a significant role in global politics and cultural relations. Through creative expressions, films harness the ecosystem comprising key stakeholders to nurture and develop soft power dynamics and geopolitical equations. In the realm of geopolitics, movies are more than art; they are potent tools used by countries to showcase their soft power and expand their influence worldwide. Through their film industries, nations share stories that resonate globally, reflecting their identities and serving as diplomatic instruments. Films offer profound insights into the societal dynamics of different countries, profound



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

enhancing communication and ushering in a new era where technology plays a pivotal role in shaping these interactions. The emergence of the new players can be attributed to the concept of Soft Power dynamics. This idea, coined by Joseph S. Nye, describes the ability to attract and persuade through culture, political ideals, and policies. In this context, cinema has become an essential component of Soft Power. Cinema, as a medium and platform, acts as a catalyst to position soft power dynamics, decoding perceptions, perspectives and geopolitical stances globally. The portrayal on the big screen infuses fresh thinking into the policy debate dynamics, global issues and management of ideas in a

global framework, bound by multipolarity and instant communication. Many films in the past have mirrored multidimensional dynamics and impact on different ecosystems, nations and individuals. Cinema and foreign policy interface reinforces the global appeal of a concept, or idea leading to a dynamic framework for cultural diplomacy. Cinema as a medium has added a new tool to the dynamics of bilateralism, the use of creative tools in the portrayal of a new point of view, ideology and intervention along with better cultural understanding. Cinema has emerged as a vehicle of Collaboration, Cooperation, Cohesion, Coordination, and Convergence — the 5Cs of cinema. On the global front, cinema breaks barriers, overcomes obstacles, and thrives on the creativity of both old and new players. It no longer caters solely to Western or Eurocentric narratives but embraces a diverse global perspective, which plays a crucial role in shaping cinema perceptions and adding a soft touch to global power dynamics. The importance of cinema in geopolitics has

grown significantly over recent years, with governments increasingly funding film projects that reflect their national interests and cultural heritage. Many countries use their film industries as a powerful tool for soft power to shape their global impression. The impact of movies is greatly amplified by their global presence, thanks to the rise of streaming services that have revolutionised film distribution, making it easier for films from smaller markets to reach a worldwide audience. Platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu have democratised access to movies from various countries, allowing filmmakers worldwide to showcase their cultural stories without relying on traditional distribution. Cinema transcends power structures by influencing public opinion and shaping international policies through its captivating narratives. Movies serve as platforms for discussions and political analysis, sparking conversations that can drive societal transformation. Filmmakers and actors act as ambassadors with significant sway, using their works to facilitate cultural exchange and international conversations. Cinema has become a platform for new ideas and concepts, driving integration through International Film Festivals. The role of cinema in today's world is incredibly significant. It serves as a diplomatic tool and a compelling medium to communicate ideas through storytelling, influencing inter-



national relationships. Beyond its audience, cinema has a far-reaching impact on global leaders, policymakers, and communities worldwide. It acts as an envoy, spreading messages of peace, empathy, and solidarity through engaging stories that mirror the complexities of human life. There is no doubt that cinema now transcends entertainment in contemporary society. Nations are recognising the power of cinema as a tool to promote their agendas and perspectives on the world stage, underscoring its importance in diplomacy. (The writer is former additional DG, DFF and Festival Director, IFFI; Inputs by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan. Views are personal)



'I'm supposed to be dead'

TRUMP REFLECTS ON ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

PTI ■ MILWAUKEE

Donald Trump has said he is "supposed to be dead" after the assassination attempt on him at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, calling the incident a "surreal experience". In one of his first interviews since the incident, the 78-year-old former president told conservative US media that he felt that he had been saved "by luck or by God". "I'm not supposed to be here, I'm supposed to be dead," the former US president said, speaking to the New York Post while en route

to Milwaukee for the Republican National Convention starting on Monday which will nominate him as the party's candidate for the November 5 presidential election. "The most incredible thing was that I happened to not only turn [my head] but to turn at the exact right time and in just the right amount," he said, adding that the bullet that grazed his ear could have easily killed him. "I'm supposed to be dead, I'm not supposed to be here," he said. He called the entire incident a "surreal experience". A spectator was killed in the attack, while two other people were seriously injured. The 20-

year-old gunman, who also died, has been named as Thomas Matthew Crooks. Trump wore a white bandage that covered his right ear but his aides did not allow any photographs to be taken, said the Post. "The doctor at the hospital said he never saw anything like this, he called it a miracle," Trump added. "By luck or by God, many people are saying it's by God I'm still here." Trump also addressed the photos of him raising his fist and saying "Fight!" as he had blood on his face. "A lot of people say it's the most iconic photo they've ever seen," Trump said. "They're

right and I didn't die. Usually, you have to die to have an iconic picture." Trump told the paper he wanted to keep speaking following the shooting but the Secret Service insisted he go to the hospital. "I just wanted to keep speaking, but I just got shot," he said. Trump also said he appreciated the call he received from President Joe Biden, also expected to be his rival in the election, according to the Post, calling it "fine" and "very nice." The paper reported that Trump suggested the campaign between him and Biden, a Democrat, could be more civil from now on.

Biden calls for national unity, says time to 'cool down'

PTI ■ MILWAUKEE

US President Joe Biden on Sunday urged citizens to unite in the hour of crisis when a failed assassination bid was made on his predecessor Donald Trump and said it was time to "cool down" political rhetoric in the country. In a prime-time national address from the Oval Office, "I want to speak to you tonight about the need for us to lower the temperature in our politics and to remember, while we may disagree, we are not enemies we are neighbours, friends, coworkers, citizens, and most importantly, we are fellow Americans." Calling for national unity, he said, "We must stand together." "Yesterday's shooting at Donald Trump's rally in Pennsylvania calls on all of us to take a step back, take stock of where we are and how we go forward from here," he said. The President spoke for the third time in less than 24 hours after Trump was shot at during an election rally in Pennsylvania. Biden said the motive of the shooter is not known yet. "We don't know his opinions or affiliations. We don't know whether he had help or support or if he communicated with anyone else. Law enforcement professionals, as I speak, are investigating those questions." "A former president was shot and an American citizen killed for simply exercising his freedom to support the candidate of his choosing. We cannot... we must not go down this road in America. We've travelled before throughout our history. Violence has never been the



answer," he said. "There is no place in America for this kind of violence, for any violence ever. Period. No exceptions. We can't allow this violence to be normalised," he said. Disagreement is inevitable in American democracy, he observed. "Political rhetoric in this country has gotten very heated. It's time to cool it down. We all have a responsibility to do that," the President said. "It's part of human nature that politics must never be a little battlefield, or God forbid, a killing field. I believe politics ought to be an arena for peaceful debate, to pursue justice and to make decisions guided by the Declaration of Independence in our constitution," he said. "We stand for an America not of extremism of fury, but of decency and grace. All of us now face atomic testing as the election approaches. The higher the stakes, the more fervent

the passions become. This place is an added burden on each of us to ensure that no matter how strong our conviction was never descending into violence," he added. In a passionate appeal to the nation, Biden said, "Let's remember here in America, all unity is the most elusive of gold goals right now. Nothing is more important for us now. And standing together. We can do this." "We must be an American democracy, where arguments are made in good faith... where the rule of law is respected and where decency, dignity and fair play aren't just quaint notions but living breathing realities." "We owe that to those who come before us, those who gave their life in this country and we owe that to ourselves..... Let's remember we are the United States of America. There is nothing beyond our capacity. When we do it. Together," Biden said.

Anger and anxiety loom over the Republican convention

AP ■ MILWAUKEE

Donald Trump's campaign chiefs designed the convention opening this week to feature a softer and more optimistic message, focusing on themes that would help a divisive leader expand his appeal among moderate voters and people of colour. Then came a shooting that rattled the foundation of American politics. Suddenly, the Democrats' turmoil after the debate, the GOP's potential governing agenda and even Trump's criminal convictions became secondary to fears about political violence and the country's stability. The presumptive Republican nominee and his allies will face the nation during their four-day convention in Milwaukee unquestionably united and ready to "fight," as the bloodied Trump cried out Saturday while Secret Service agents at his Pennsylvania rally rushed him to safety. Anger and anxiety are coursing through the party, even as many top Republicans call for calm and a lowering of tensions. Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, known for his sunny and optimistic vision of Republican politics, suggested online the attempted assassination had been "aided and abetted by the radical Left and corporate media incessantly calling Trump a threat to democracy, fascists, or worse." Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, another likely convention speaker, offered a



more somber tone during a Sunday appearance on NBC. "We've got to turn the temperature down in this country," Johnson said. "We need leaders of all parties, on both sides, to call that out and make sure that happens so that we can go forward and maintain our free society that we all are blessed to have." There are no changes yet to the convention programme. In an interview on Sunday, Republican Party chairman Michael Whatley said the convention's programming wouldn't be changed after the shooting. The agenda, he said, will feature more than 100 speakers overwhelmingly focused on kitchen table issues and

Trump's plans to lift everyday working Americans. "We have to be able to lay out a vision for where we want to take this country," he said. Whatley said the central message would have little to do with President Joe Biden's political struggles, Trump's grievances about the 2020 election or the ex-president's promises to exact retribution against political enemies. "We are going to have the convention that we have been planning for the last 18 months," he said. "We are a combination of relieved and grateful that the president is going to be here and is going to accept the nomination."

Beyond voting to formally give Trump the nomination, elected delegates from across the nation will update the GOP's policy platform for the first time since 2016. The scaled-down platform proposal — just 16 pages with limited specifics on key issues, including abortion — reflects a desire by the Trump campaign to avoid giving Democrats more material on a key campaign issue. The platform approved by a committee last week doesn't include an explicit call for a national abortion ban, two years after the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade and ended a federally guaranteed right to abortion.

Many anti-abortion advocates strongly opposed the Trump campaign's rewriting of the platform. But after the shooting, at least one major religious conservative said he wouldn't press to reverse the committee's decision. "More divisiveness would not be healthy," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council. Perhaps most importantly, Trump will use the convention to unveil his choice for vice president, which could come as soon as Monday. Some Republicans believe the pick will take on more importance than it would have otherwise given the new threats to Trump's life. His top three contenders are North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, Ohio Sen. JD Vance and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, all expected to speak this week. Despite a contentious primary season, any lingering tensions appear to have been set aside. Former rivals Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley, the former United Nations ambassador, are expected to speak at the convention on Trump's behalf. Veteran Republican pollster Frank Luntz said the shooting ensured the GOP is united and motivated behind Trump, a dynamic he said will be on display all week in Wisconsin. "Every single Trump supporter will now be a Trump voter," Luntz said. "The average Trump voter is so angry at what just happened. They were angry before this, and now they're furious."

'Gunman acted alone; being probed as act of domestic terror'

PTI ■ MILWAUKEE

The gunman who shot at former president Donald Trump during an election rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday appears to have acted alone, according to the FBI, which is investigating it as a potential "domestic terrorism" act. The gunman has been identified as Thomas Matthew Crooks (20). "At this point in the investigation, it appears that he was a lone actor, but we still have more information to go," said Robert Wells, the executive assistant director of the FBI's National Security Branch. The FBI, he said, is investigating this as an assassination attempt, and also as a "potential domestic terrorism act." The counterterrorism division and criminal divisions are working jointly together to determine the motive, he added. The FBI is leading the investigation into the assassination attempt of Trump at an election rally in Pennsylvania. Trump was hit with a bullet that pierced the upper part of his right ear. He is now safe and is continuing with his schedule that includes travelling to Milwaukee to attend the Republican National Convention, which would formally nominate him as the party's presidential nominee

against incumbent Joe Biden. "The shooter may be deceased, but the investigation is very much ongoing. And, because of that, we are limited in what we say at this point," FBI Director Christopher Wray said. "What we witnessed yesterday was nothing short of an attack on democracy and our democratic process," he told reporters at a news conference in Washington DC. According to an FBI official, the investigation into the gunman at Donald Trump's rally Saturday has not yet turned up any mental health issues, threatening posts or other motives, but cautioned it was still early. The shooter, as per FBI, used an AR-style rifle chambered in 5.56mm, a common calibre for such weapons. The New York Times said authorities were scouring the gunman's social media and other property as they sought to determine a motive for the attack. Biden is likely to address the nation at 8 pm from the Oval Office. He will give "a forceful and needed address to update the nation on the horrifying attack on Donald Trump and the need for every American to come together to not just condemn, but put to an end political violence in this country once and for all," a campaign official told the daily.

Rescuers in Nepal recover 11 bodies

AP ■ KATHMANDU

Rescuers in Nepal have recovered a total of 11 bodies from the river that two buses full of people were swept into by a landslide, officials said Monday. Rescuers found the bodies in different spots along the riverbanks as they searched for the missing buses and some 50 people who were on board. Government administrator Khima Nanda Bhusal said seven bodies were identified and relatives contacted. Three of the dead are Indians and the remaining four are Nepali nationals. He said four more bodies were also recovered from the river, but because they haven't been identified, it was unclear if they had been on board the buses. "We will continue the search as long as it is needed and have no plans to give up. We will work until all of them are found," he said. The buses were on the key highway connecting Nepal's capital to southern parts of the country when they were swept away Friday morning near Simaltal, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) west of Kathmandu. Three people were ejected from the buses and were being treated in a nearby hospital.

Days after NATO allies called Beijing a Ukraine war enabler, China, Russia start joint naval drills

AP ■ BEIJING

China and Russia's naval forces on Sunday kicked off a joint exercise at a military port in southern China on Sunday, official news agency Xinhua reported, days after NATO allies called Beijing a "decisive enabler" of the war in Ukraine. The Chinese defense ministry said in a brief statement forces from both sides recently patrolled the western and northern Pacific Ocean and that the operation had nothing to do with international and regional situations and didn't target any third party. The exercise, which began in

Guangdong province on Sunday and is expected to last until mid-July, aimed to demonstrate the capabilities of the navies in addressing security threats and preserving peace and stability globally and regionally, state broadcaster CCTV reported Saturday, adding it would include anti-missile exercises, sea strikes and air defense. Xinhua News Agency reported the Chinese and Russian naval forces carried out on-map military simulation and tactical coordination exercises after the opening ceremony in the city of Zhanjiang. The joint drills came on the heels of China's latest tensions

with NATO allies last week. The sternly worded final communiqué, approved by the 32 NATO members at their summit in Washington, made clear that China is becoming a focus of the military alliance, calling Beijing a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine. The European and North American members and their partners in the Indo-Pacific increasingly see shared security concerns coming from Russia and its Asian supporters, especially China. In response, China accused NATO of seeking security at the expense of others and told the alliance not to bring the same "chaos" to Asia. Its foreign

ministry maintained that China has a fair and objective stance on the war in Ukraine. Last week, a US Coast Guard cutter on routine patrol in the Bering Sea also came across several Chinese military ships in international waters but within the US exclusive economic zone, American officials said. Its crew detected three vessels approximately 124 miles (200 kilometers) north of the Amchitka Pass in the Aleutian Islands, which mark a separation and linkage between the North Pacific and the Bering Sea. Later, a fourth ship was spotted approximately 84 miles (135 kilometers) north of the Amukta Pass.

China's Communist Party begins key meet to stem economic slowdown

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's GDP dipped to 4.7 per cent in the second quarter, the government said on Monday, as the ruling Communist Party began a key meeting stated to be a defining moment for President Xi Jinping's leadership to revive the world's second-largest economy. The four-day meeting called the 'Third Plenum' is being attended by 376 full and alternate members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee to primarily examine issues related to comprehensively deepening reforms and advancing China's modernisation to work out a course correction for the economy plagued by deepening demographic crisis, sluggish

growth and mounting local government debts. Kicking off the meeting Xi 71, who is also general secretary of the party, delivered a work report and expounded on a draft decision of the CPC Central Committee on further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernisation, the official media reported. The meeting, however, began here on a disappointing note for the party leadership as the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) announced the GDP for the second quarter expanded by 4.7 per cent well below the 5.3 per cent annual pace of growth in the first quarter of the year. The silver lining for the CPC, which is searching for a new set of reforms to shake off the post-

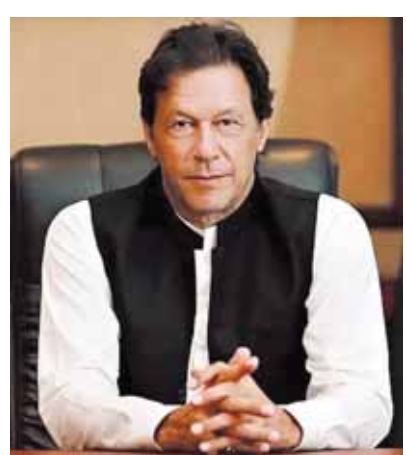
COVID lockdown blues, the economy posted a five per cent growth in the first half, within the range of the official growth target fixed for the year. "The current external environment is complicated, while domestic demand remains insufficient. We still need to consolidate the foundation for economic recovery," the NBS said on Monday. While the third plenum of the CPC was regarded as important to set the reform agenda for the next decade, the meeting was seen as a defining moment for Xi, who is into the unprecedented third five-year term as the economy was unable to shake off its slowdown mode resulting in a sense of unease about the recovery in the near future. Ahead of the meeting, Xi presided over a host of meetings to set the tone for the key plenum and chart the direction for the nation's future reform highlighting that "the furthering of reform must focus on refining and developing the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and advance modernisation of the country's governance system and governance capacity". A readout of a key party meeting presided over by Xi in February said: "Reform measures need to be sharply focused, targeting the most pressing problems. Reform efforts must be substantial and impactful." The event could be the most important "defining moment" of President Xi Jinping's rule since a similar gathering in 2013 that set out his vision for

reforming the country, a political researcher from Tsinghua University, who requested anonymity, told the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post. He said the watershed third plenum would be used by the party elite to review achievements under Xi's leadership and lay down plans to hit goals set for 2035, "which will lay the groundwork for the President's grand legacy of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation by 2049". The plenum is also taking place at a time when China, struggling with various curbs and sanctions from the US and the EU, especially its high-tech products, is trying to assure both foreign business and the private sector at home about the country's economic prospects to

attract investments. Neil Thomas, a fellow for Chinese politics at the Asia Society Policy Institute's Centre for China Analysis, said Xi would use the plenum to advance his existing agenda focused on party control, technological self-reliance, financial de-risking, social welfare, and supply-side industrial policy. But the political challenges of economic pessimism could lead to some very modest 'positive surprises,' he told the Post. The most intriguing new signals ahead of the plenum suggest the possibility of more pro-business policies in hi-tech domains, although Xi does not want to unleash entrepreneurs and markets but rather harness them to develop technology and boost manufacturing, he said.

Pak govt's bid to ban party act of desperation: Imran

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD



Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Monday reacted sharply to the government's decision to ban the party, saying the move came "out of desperation" and is a "sign of panic" within the federal administration. The Pakistan government announced that it would ban the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party for its alleged involvement in anti-state activities and slap cases against him and two of his senior party colleagues for treason.

Khan, 71, faces over 200 cases, has been convicted in a few of them, and is currently lodged at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi. "The federal government has decided to ban PTI as a political party. Reasons cited by the information minister are the cipher case and the US Congressional Resolution on electoral rigging and politically motivated cases with no merit in sight. The PML-N is shooting its own foot for these reasons," the PTI said in a statement. The PML-N — Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz — is run by Khan's arch rival Nawaz Sharif and is a major coalition partner in the ruling dispensation headed by his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif. "The PML-N is shooting its own foot for these reasons because Khan has been acquitted in a cipher case and the US congressional resolution points out the ordeal a political party has to face over the period of a few months," the PTI statement added.

Senior PTI leader Senator Ali Zafar told Geo News that the federal government was attempting to ban the party "out of desperation" as the Supreme Court had ruled in its favour in the reserved seats case and said that his party would not allow the decision's implementation "even for a second" as it is against the law of the land. He was referring to the key judgment of the Supreme Court last week that declared that Khan's PTI was eligible for the seats reserved for women and minorities in the national and four provincial assemblies. If allotted thus, the PTI will become the largest party in the National Assembly with 109 seats. "The government doesn't realise, the UN resolution wasn't a bilateral agreement but an independent observation made by a

charter, Pakistan is a part of. Pakistan is a signatory of the UN and therefore any provocative comments could lead to Pakistan losing its membership," the party added. The PTI statement also pointed out that the Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, who announced the government decision at a press conference, ignored all questions regarding the US and the UN working group observations, "maybe because he's either unaware of its implications or just doesn't have a clue." "And this is a sign of panic as they have realised the courts can't be threatened and put under pressure. So they will try to move under the cabinet," it said, adding, "Since no judge is willing to give in to blackmail or pressure, I have been saying for a while now we are under a soft martial law and this move only proves our point further." The party also issued a longish statement on its X handle. Khan has already claimed the February 8 general elections to have witnessed the 'Mother of All Rigging' and called his rivals the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) as "mandate thieves." In the election, both PML-N and PPP individually won fewer seats than 92 won by independent candidates backed by Khan's PTI. The two parties entered into a post-poll alliance under which the PML-N got the prime minister's post and the chief ministership of Punjab province while the PPP got the presidential post and the chief ministership in Sindh province.

KP Sharma Oli sworn in as Nepal's PM for 4th time

PTI ■ KATHMANDU



Outgoing Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal (left) congratulates newly-elected Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli (right) after the oath of office at the Presidential residence in Kathmandu on Monday.

KP Sharma Oli on Monday was sworn in as Nepal's Prime Minister for the fourth time to lead a new coalition government that faces the daunting challenge of providing political stability in the Himalayan nation. The leader of Nepal's largest communist party was appointed as prime minister on Sunday by President Ram Chandra Poudel to lead the coalition government with the Nepali Congress (NC), the largest party in Parliament, apart from other smaller parties. Oli, 72, succeeds Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', who lost the vote of confidence in the House of Representatives (HoR) on Friday, leading to the formation of the new government. Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), Oli was sworn in by President Poudel at Shital Niwas, the main building of Rashtrapati Bhawan at a ceremony that was delayed by more than half an hour. According to the news portal MyRepublica, the swearing-in ceremony was delayed due to the failure of the Nepali Congress to finalise the names

of its ministers to join the government amid disputes within the party. The President also administered oaths to the two Deputy PMs — Prakash Man Singh and Bishnu Paudel — and 19 other ministers. Singh would also look after the Urban Development Ministry while Vishnu Prakash Paudel would look after the Finance Ministry. Arzoo Rana Deuba, wife of Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba is the Foreign Minister in the cabinet. There are 10 cabinet ministers from the Nepali Congress;

eight, excluding the Prime Minister, from the CPN-UML, two from the Janata Samajwadi Party and one from the Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party in the government. Outgoing Prime Minister Prachanda was also present at the ceremony, which was attended by foreign diplomats and other dignitaries. Earlier on Sunday, President Poudel had appointed Oli as the new Prime Minister under Article 76-2 of the Constitution of Nepal, according to a notice issued by the President's Office. On Friday night, Oli had staked his claim to become the next Prime Minister with the backing of NC President Deuba and submitted the signatures of 165 House of Representatives (HoR) members — 77 from his Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) party and 88 from the Nepali Congress, (NC). Oli will now need to secure a vote of confidence from Parliament within 30 days of appointment, which he is likely to secure easily as the minimum number to form a government in the 275-strong HoR is just 138. Prachanda faced the vote of confidence as earlier last week, Oli's party withdrew its support to that coalition and inked a new seven-point deal with Deuba to form a new coalition government. According to the July 1 deal between NC and CPN-UML, the two parties will lead the government on a rotational basis until the next general elections scheduled for 2027. Oli served as Nepal's prime minister from October 11, 2015, to August 3, 2016 and then, from February 5, 2018, to July 13, 2021. He continued to serve from May 13, 2021, to July 13, 2021.

Pakistan govt files review petition against allotting reserved seats to Imran's party

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party-led government on Monday filed a review petition in the Supreme Court against its decision to allocate reserved seats to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party. A 13-member full court in a key judgment on July 12 ruled that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was eligible for the seats reserved for women and minorities in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies. The case gave a major boost to PTI and its founder Khan while

the government criticised the apex court and decided to challenge it. Following the ruling, PTI will become the largest party in the National Assembly as its seats will likely soar from 86 to 109, after it gains 23 reserved seats, Pakistani media reports said. In the review petition, the PML-N stated the PTI had not requested for specific seats while the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), which had filed the petition, was a separate political entity. It further contended that the independent candidates have already joined the Sunni Ittehad Council and as per the July 12 decision, the members who were declared as part of

PTI have declared themselves independent in the papers. The PML-N in the review petition took the stand that the July 12 decision of the Supreme Court regarding specific seats is against the law asking independent members to join a political party within 15 days. It has been argued in the petition that the Constitution and law are clear that independent candidates can join a political party within three days. It also mentioned in the petition that the court did not hear the arguments of the parties while giving the decision in favour of the PTI. In this review appeal, it has been requested that the Supreme Court should review the decision of the specific seats and suspend the July 12 decision pending the decision on the review application. The latest development comes as Information Minister Atta Tarar dropped the bombshell about banning the PTI, creating political uncertainty which may further exacerbate the economic situation of the country. Tarar in the controversial move announced the government will ban jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party for its alleged involvement in anti-state activities and slap cases against him and two of his senior party colleagues for treason.

Ukrainian startups create low cost robots to fight Russia

AP ■ NORTHERN UKRAINE

Struggling with manpower shortages, overwhelming odds and uneven international assistance, Ukraine hopes to find a strategic edge against Russia in an abandoned warehouse or a factory basement. An ecosystem of laboratories in hundreds of secret workshops is leveraging innovation to create a robot army that Ukraine hopes will kill Russian troops and save its own wounded soldiers and civilians. Defense startups across Ukraine — about 250 according to industry estimates — are creating the killing machines at secret locations that typically look like rural car repair shops. Employees at a startup run by entrepreneur Andrii Denysenko can put together an unmanned ground vehicle called the Odyssey in four days at a shed used by the company. Its most important feature is the price tag: USD 35,000, or roughly 10 per cent of the cost of an imported model. Denysenko asked that The Associated Press not publish details of the location to protect the infrastructure and the people working there. The site is partitioned into small rooms for welding and body work. That includes making fiber-glass cargo beds, spray-painting the vehicles gun-green and fitting basic electronics, battery-powered engines, off-the-shelf cameras and thermal sensors. The military is assessing dozens of new unmanned air, ground and marine vehicles produced by the no-frills startup sector, whose production methods are far removed from giant Western defense companies. A fourth branch of Ukraine's military — the Unmanned Systems Forces — joined the army, navy and air force in May. Engineers take inspiration from articles in defense magazines or online videos to produce cut-price platforms. Weapons or smart components can be added later. "We are fighting a huge country, and they don't have any resource

limits. We understand that we cannot spend a lot of human lives," said Denysenko, who heads the defense startup UkrPrototyp. "War is mathematics."

One of its drones, the car-sized Odyssey, spun on its axis and kicked up dust as it rumbled forward in a cornfield in the north of the country last month.

// ई-निविदा आमंत्रण //						
उज्जैन स्मार्ट सिटी लिमिटेड (USCL) द्वारा श्री महाकाल महालोक के बेसमेंट पार्किंग के ऊपर निर्मित दुकान/कियोस्क "प्रसादम" (Prasadam) के लिए ऑनलाइन निविदा आमंत्रित की गई है। जिसका विवरण निम्नानुसार है। समय सारणी :-						
क्रमांक	विवरण	दिनांक एवं समय				
1.	ऑनलाइन निविदा पंजीयन प्रारंभ करने का दिनांक एवं समय	15.07.2024				
2.	ऑनलाइन निविदा ऑफर प्रस्तुत करने का अंतिम दिनांक एवं समय (तकनीकी और वित्तीय बोली जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि)	20.08.2024, 17:00 pm				
3.	निविदा के तकनीकी प्रस्ताव खुलने की दिनांक एवं समय	22.08.2024, 11:00 am				
4.	निविदा का ऑनलाइन वित्तीय प्रस्ताव निविदा प्रणाली का मूल्यांकन होने पश्चात ओपन किया जाएगा। जिसकी सूचना एस एम एस/ईमेल के माध्यम से दी जावेगी	सूचित किया जाएगा				
5.	निविदा की वैधता अवधि	वित्तीय प्रस्ताव खुलने की तिथि से 180 दिन तक				

अतः निम्नानुसार निविदा विज्ञापित की सूचना समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित कराया जाना प्रस्तावित है :-

दुकान क्रमांक	NIT क्रमांक	टेंडर आई. डी.	दुकान/कियोस्क का विल्ड-अप एरिया	निकटतम सी.रू. के मूल्य पर पूर्णांकित करते हुए	आरक्षण स्थिति	अमानत राशि (5 प्रतिशत)
Shop No. 5	USCL/343	2024_UAD_357079_1	13.12	23,83,100.00	अन्य पिछड़ वर्ग	1,19,155.00
Shop No. 6	USCL/344	2024_UAD_357082_1	26.12	47,93,800.00	अनारक्षित वर्ग	2,39,690.00
Shop No. 7	USCL/345	2024_UAD_357087_1	14.48	26,35,200.00	अनारक्षित वर्ग	1,31,760.00
Shop No. 9	USCL/346	2024_UAD_357092_1	15.76	28,71,700.00	अनारक्षित वर्ग	1,43,585.00
Shop No. 10	USCL/347	2024_UAD_357095_1	15.76	28,71,700.00	अनारक्षित वर्ग की विद्यवा	1,43,585.00
Shop No. 13	USCL/348	2024_UAD_357098_1	12.78	23,21,200.00	अनारक्षित वर्ग	1,16,060.00
Shop No. 14	USCL/349	2024_UAD_357089_1	24.18	44,33,700.00	अनारक्षित वर्ग	2,21,685.00
Shop No. 15	USCL/350	2024_UAD_357117_1	14.61	26,68,200.00	अनारक्षित वर्ग	1,33,410.00
Shop No. 16	USCL/351	2024_UAD_357123_1	14.53	26,62,900.00	अनारक्षित वर्ग	1,33,145.00

विशेष नोट :-

- ई-निविदा में भाग लेने वाले व्यक्ति/संस्था/साझेदारी फर्म/कंपनी या कंपनी द्वारा अधिकृत व्यक्ति/संस्था/फ्रेंचाईजी मध्य प्रदेश क ई-निविदा पोर्टल <https://mptenders.gov.in> पर ई-निविदा प्रस्तुत कर सकते हैं।
- प्रत्येक दुकान की निविदा के लिए पृथक-पृथक आवेदन प्रस्तुत किये जायेंगे।

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

Notice Inviting Tender www.verka.coop

Sealed tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Mohali Dairy a) Hiring of Insulated & Refrigerated vehicles with different capacities for supply of Verka milk and milk products. b) Outsourcing the activities related to city supply :- • Demand, Dispatch & Milk Supply Helpers. • Security Personnel, BCC and Accounts personnels	65 No's (no. of vehicles may increased or decreased) Annual Annual
2.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy Repair of 04 TPH husk feed boiler (replacement of shell and water valve tubes) including material and supply of ID fan complete in all respects.	01 Complete job
3.	For Verka Jalandhar Dairy a) Annual Rate Contract for the supply of Nitric Acid b) Outsourcing of housekeeping activities of Old Dairy and New Dairy at Verka Jalandhar Dairy. c) Annual Labour Contract for packing of milk & milk products in different pack sizes. d) Hiring of refrigerated vehicles for supply of frozen (like ice cream, table butter, cheese etc.) and Ambient Verka products in Verka Jalandhar Dairy Milkshed area.	Annual
4.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy a) Outsourcing of Milk Booth at Park back side main shopping centre sector 32-A, Chandigarh Road, Ludhiana. b) Outsourcing of Verka Milk Bar at :- • Macchiwara • Kamalpur	Three Years
5.	For Verka Amritsar Dairy a) e-tenders for supply, installation, testing & commissioning of :- • 125 KVA DG set for Milk Chilling Centre Mehta. • 100 KVA DG set for Milk Chilling Centre Fatehgarh Churian. b) Sealed Tenders for Sale of :- • Tata 407 (Model 1994) vehicle at Verka Amritsar dairy. • Tata 709 (Model 1997) vehicle at Verka Amritsar dairy. • Ambassador Car (Model 2010) vehicle at Verka Amritsar dairy.	01 No. Complete job.
6.	For Verka Moga Dairy, Bassi Pathana Loading/ Unloading of Verka Milk & Milk Products, Corrugated Boxes, SMP bags etc.	01.09.2024 to 31.08.2025

NOTE:

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

Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

NA/12/24135/2023/35653 Dated CHD :- 7/15/2024

Anti-terrorism court indicts ex-Pak foreign minister Qureshi in May 9 violence case

PTI ■ LAHORE

An anti-terrorism court here on Monday charged top Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in a case involving the burning down of a police station during the May 9 violence last year. Qureshi, 68, who was brought to Kot Lakhpat jail here from Adiala jail in Rawalpindi under tight security, has several cases related to May 9 violence, including arson, filed against him at the Shadman police station. Geo News reported. The court had summoned Qureshi to initiate indictment proceedings against him and ordered him to present witnesses in the next hearing scheduled for July 22. The indictment of Qureshi came hours before the Pakistan government announced its decision to ban Khan's PTI for its alleged involvement in anti-



state activities. The Lahore police had registered a case against several leaders and activists of the PTI on the charges of attacking and burning down the Shadman police station during the May 9 riots following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan by the Rangers in an alleged corruption case. Besides this case, multiple cases

Court (IHC) on June 3 acquitted Khan and Qureshi in the Cipher case, suspending their 10-year sentence, the two remain in jail as they are named in multiple cases in connection with the May 9 violence across Pakistan. Qureshi was earlier this year indicted in eight more cases related to the May 9 violence. The May 9 riots were triggered across the country after 71-year-old Khan was arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the 190-million-pound corruption case. He is currently facing over 200 cases and has been in jail since August last year. Hundreds of PTI workers and senior leaders were put behind bars for their involvement in violence and attacks on military installations, including the Jinnah House, ISI building in Faisalabad and General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, last year on May 9.

World's rarest whale may have washed up on NZ beach

AP ■ WELLINGTON

The spade-toothed whales are the world's rarest, with no live sightings ever recorded. No one knows how many there are, what they eat, or even where they live in the vast expanse of the southern Pacific Ocean. However, scientists in New Zealand may have finally caught a break. The country's conservation agency said Monday a creature that washed up on a South Island beach this month is believed to be a spade-toothed whale. The five-meter-long creature, a type of beaked whale, was identified after it washed ashore on Otago beach from its color patterns and the shape of its skull, beak and teeth. "We know very little, practically nothing" about the creatures, Hannah Hendriks, Marine Technical Advisor for the Department of Conservation, told the Associated Press. "This is going to lead to some amazing science and world-first information." If the cetacean is confirmed to be the elusive spade-toothed whale, it would be the first specimen found in a state that would

permit scientists to dissect it, allowing them to study the relationship of the whale to the few others of the species found, and learn what it eats and perhaps lead to clues about where they live. Only six other spade-toothed whales have ever been pinpointed, and those found intact on New Zealand's North Island beaches had been buried before DNA testing could verify their identification, Hendriks said, thwarting any chance to study them. This time, the beached whale was quickly transported to cold storage and researchers will work with local Maori iwi (tribes) to plan how it will be examined, the conservation agency said. New Zealand's indigenous people consider whales a taonga — a sacred treasure — of cultural significance. In April, Pacific Indigenous leaders signed a treaty recognizing whales as "legal persons," although such a declaration is not reflected in the laws of participating nations. Nothing is currently known about the whales' habitat. The creatures deep-dive for food and likely surface so rarely that it has been impossible to narrow their loca-



tion further than the southern Pacific Ocean, home to some of the world's deepest ocean trenches, Hendriks said. "It's very hard to do research on marine mammals if you don't see them at sea," she said. "It's a bit of a needle in a haystack. You don't know where to look." The conservation agency said the genetic testing to confirm the whale's identification could take months. It took "many years and a mammoth amount of effort by researchers and local people" to identify the "incredibly cryptic" mammals, Kirsten Young, a senior lecturer at the University of Exeter who has studied spade-toothed whales, said in emailed remarks. The fresh discovery "makes me wonder — how many are out in the deep ocean and how do they live?" Young said. The first spade-toothed whale bones were found in 1872 on New Zealand's Pitt Island. Another discovery was made at an offshore island in the 1950s, and the bones of a third were found on Chile's Robinson Crusoe Island in 1986. DNA sequencing in 2002 proved that all three specimens were of the same species — and that it was one distinct from other beaked whales. Researchers studying the mammal couldn't confirm if the species went extinct. Then in 2010, two, whole, spade-toothed whales, both dead, washed up on a New Zealand beach. Firstly mistaken for one of New Zealand's 13 other more common types of beaked whale, tissue samples — taken after they were buried — revealed them as the enigmatic species. New Zealand is a whale-stranding hotspot, with more than 5,000 episodes recorded since 1840, according to the Department of Conservation.

WPI inflation surges to 16-month high in June

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wholesale inflation in the country surged to a 16-month high of 3.36 per cent in June on account of rise in prices of food articles, especially vegetables and manufactured items. This was the fourth consecutive month when inflation witnessed an upward journey. The wholesale price index (WPI) based inflation was 2.61 per cent in May. It was (-) 4.18 per cent in June 2023. Wholesale inflation had touched a high of 3.85 per cent in February 2023. "Positive rate of inflation in June, 2024 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, manufacture of food products, crude petroleum & natural gas, mineral oils, other manufacturing etc," the Ministry of Commerce & Industry said in a statement on Monday. As per the data, inflation in food articles rose 10.87 per cent in June, as against 9.82 per cent in May. Inflation in vegetables was 38.76 per cent during June, up



from 32.42 per cent in May. Onion inflation was at 93.35 per cent, while potato was 66.37 per cent in the month under review. Pulses inflation rose 21.64 per cent in June. During the month, inflation in other food items like fruits stood at 10.14 per cent, cereals at 9.27 per cent, and milk at 3.37 per cent. The upmove in the WPI inflation in June 2024 was broad-based, driven by all the

major segments except fuel and power, ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said. Looking ahead, she said, the headline WPI inflation is expected to dip to about 2 per cent in July 2024, driven by a favourable base, as well as some cooling in global commodity prices. With regard to oil prices, she said, the average price of the Indian basket of crude oil has been quite

volatile in July 2024 so far, on the back of supply-demand mismatches, witnessing a month-on-month rise (USD 86.6/bbl up to July 11). Higher crude oil prices might exert an upward pressure to the headline WPI inflation in the ongoing month, she added. In the fuel and power basket, inflation stood at 1.03 per cent, marginally lower than 1.35 per cent in May. However, price rise in crude petroleum & Natural gas was in double digit at 12.55 per cent during the month. In manufactured products, inflation was at 1.43 per cent in June, higher than 0.78 per cent in May. The rise in June WPI was in line with the retail inflation data for the month. Retail inflation rose to a four-month high of 5.1 per cent in June, data released last week showed. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mainly takes into account retail inflation while framing the monetary policy.

India's exports rise 2.56% to USD 35.2 bn in June



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports in June increased 2.56 per cent to USD 35.2 billion from USD 34.32 billion in the year-ago month, according to government data released on Monday. Imports rose by about 5 per cent to USD 56.18 billion in June against USD 53.51 billion a year ago. The trade deficit, or the gap between imports and exports, during the month under review stood at USD 20.98 billion. Briefing media on the data, Commerce Secretary Sunil

Barthwal said going by the current trend, the country's total exports of goods and services may cross USD 800 billion this fiscal. During the first quarter of 2024-25, the exports of goods and services stood at about USD 200 billion, he added. India's merchandise exports rose by 9.1 per cent to USD 38.13 billion in May, even as the trade deficit widened to a seven-month high of USD 23.78 billion. Exports during April-June this fiscal increased 5.84 per cent to USD 109.96 billion, and imports grew 7.6 per cent to USD 172.23 billion.

Sai Life Sciences files IPO papers with Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Private equity major TPG Capital-backed Sai Life Sciences has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The company's proposed IPO comprises fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 800 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of 6.15 crore shares by a promoter, investor shareholders and other shareholders, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). Under the OFS, one of the promoter entities -- Sai Quest Syn Pvt Ltd -- and investor shareholders -- TPG Asia VII SF Pte Ltd, HBM Private Equity India -- will partly offload their respective stakes. At present, Sai Quest Syn holds 5.61 per cent stake in the company, TPG owns 39.69 per cent shareholding and HBM Private Equity India has 5.5 per cent stake. Of the IPO proceeds, funds to the tune of Rs 600 crore will be used for debt payment and a portion will be used for corporate general purposes, the draft papers filed on Friday showed. The Hyderabad-based Sai Life



Sciences provides end-to-end services across the drug discovery, development, and manufacturing value chain, for small molecule new chemical entities (NCE), to global pharmaceutical innovator companies and biotechnology firms. According to a F&S report, India CRDMO market (contract research, development and manufacturing organization) was amongst the fastest growing markets in APAC over 2018-2023. This growth is expected to continue, with the Indian market projected to grow by 14 per cent between 2023 and 2028 reaching an estimated value of USD 14.1 billion in 2028. Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Ltd, IIFL Securities Ltd, Jefferies India Private Ltd and Morgan Stanley India Company Private Ltd have been appointed as merchant bankers to manage the company's IPO.

Hindustan Zinc contributes ₹13,195 cr to exchequer in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) on Monday said it has contributed Rs 13,195 crore to the exchequer in the last financial year, representing about 46 per cent of its total revenues. In FY 2023-24, Hindustan Zinc's total contribution to the exchequer stood at Rs 13,195 crores, the Vedanta group firm said in a regulatory filing. With this, HZL's cumulative contribution to the exchequer over the past five years stood at Rs 77,803 crore. "As our businesses grow, so will these numbers. At Hindustan Zinc, we are committed to continuing to do business with a purpose in a manner that is sustainable,

transparent and creates value for all our stakeholders," Hindustan Zinc Chairperson Priya Agarwal Hebbar said. Over the past five years, that company has consistently contributed an average of approximately Rs 3,250 crore per year to Rajasthan in the form of royalties, contributions to the District Mineral Foundation (DMF), and other levies. "This substantial contribution underlines Hindustan Zinc's commitment to the state's

economic development," the company said. Over the past five years, Hindustan Zinc has consistently contributed an average of approximately Rs 3,250 crore annually to the state of Rajasthan in the form of royalties, contributions to the District Mineral Foundation (DMF), and other levies. In the past five years, the company said it has paid Rs 16,350 crore in government royalties, Rs 10,100 crore as corporate income tax, Rs 18,008 crore as corporate dividend and Rs 26,384 crore as indirect taxes. Hindustan Zinc Limited, a Vedanta Group company, is the world's second-largest integrated zinc producer and the third-largest silver producer.

Imports from Bangladesh aggravate jute sector crisis: Stakeholders

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A body of jute suppliers have written to Union Minister Giriraj Singh, alleging that raw material imports from Bangladesh, either directly by mills or through third parties, have adversely impacted the industry and farmers. In a letter to the textile minister, the Jute Balers' Association has raised concerns over the "unregulated import of raw jute" from the neighbouring country and "low orders" for mills have led to a severe payment crisis for domestic raw jute suppliers. Indian Jute Mills Association has also raised concerns over the issue and sought intervention from the central and state governments to tide over the crisis. A meeting between the industry stakeholders and the

ministry is expected later on Monday, an official said. The balers' association, which has been serving the sector for over 115 years, outlined the critical issues threatening the industry's survival. "Despite a bumper crop year in 2023-24, where domestic supply was sufficient, mills have continued to import large quantities of raw jute from Bangladesh. In June 2024 alone, 73,000 bales, or 22 per cent of the total 3,34,000 bales, were imported," Jute Balers' Association secretary Pulak Jha said in the letter. "There is an opening stock of 3 million bales of raw jute for the jute season as of July 1, 2024, and the new crop is also around the corner. These factors caused prices to plummet below the minimum support price (MSP)," Jute Balers'



Association senior functionary Om Prakash Soni told PTI. Prices of the golden fibre fell below Rs 5,000 per quintal, while the minimum support price (MSP) is Rs 5,335 per quintal for the 2024-25 season, he said. There has been a bar on the use of imported jute in

creating a vicious cycle, where mills are obligated to buy MSP-linked jute, which reduces their market purchases, further depressing prices and pushing more farmers towards MSP dependency. "Already six mills are closed. The current dues are about Rs 1,400 crore of which Rs 400 crore is legacy dues from the mills," Soni said explaining the current situation. The association called for a rigorous crackdown on illegal jute imports and a reaffirmation of commitment to lawful practices. "The future of millions of livelihoods is at stake," the letter said, urging immediate government intervention to curb the menace of "unregulated imports" and address the issue of reduced orders.

Cardiac ward inaugurated

PNS ■ NEW RAIPUR

In a significant step to help children born with congenital heart diseases from economically weaker sections of society, REC Limited, a Maharatna CPSE under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, inaugurated the "REC Gift of Life-Cardiac Ward" at the state-of-the-art Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital in New Raipur. Vivek Kumar Dewangan, Chairman and Managing Director, REC Ltd inaugurated the "REC Gift of Life-Cardiac Ward" in presence of distinguished guests, hospital management, doctors, medical staff, patients and their family members, and senior officials from REC Ltd.

Induction ceremony for 2024 freshers held

PNS ■ CHENNAI



It was a field day for first year students of Allied Health Sciences and Health Sciences Colleges when they received a warm welcome during an induction ceremony at Kattankulathur near Chennai today. N Ram, Director, The Hindu Group said learning always is a must to stay updated in one's field of study. Skills have to be constantly upgraded. He was the chief guest at the ceremony held at Dr T P Ganesan Auditorium on SRMIST premises at Kattankulathur near Chennai. They must also have good conduct and humbleness, as these are very essential while interacting with the patients, he said.

Showering praises on SRMIST, N Ram said the institution has a very robust entrance exam system designed to intake students into various courses. The entrance exam can be said to be an ideal one as it is designed taking into view all streams in school education in India. "Colleges of Allied Health Sciences and Health Sciences have over 100 courses and have an enrolment of 1500 students."

Govt aims to cover 25% of kharif paddy area with climate-resilient seeds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



In a bid to combat the growing challenges posed by climate change, the government is targeting to bring 25 per cent of the total kharif paddy area under climate-resilient seeds, a senior agriculture ministry official said on Monday. The move comes as erratic rainfall patterns have become increasingly common in recent years, threatening rice production in the country. India, the world's second-largest rice producer after China, cultivates paddy over 410 lakh hectares during the kharif season. Speaking on the sidelines of ICAR's 96th Foundation and Technology Day celebrations, ICAR Director General

Himanshu Pathak said, "While we have achieved 75 per cent coverage of climate-resilient seeds in wheat cultivation, the adoption in paddy is still limited." Pathak revealed that ICAR has developed paddy seeds resistant to drought and lodging. These seeds were sown in 16 per cent of the total paddy area during the 2023 kharif season. "For the ongoing kharif season, we aim to increase this

coverage to 25 per cent," he added. The push for climate-resilient seeds comes at a crucial time. Research studies indicate that climate change could reduce rice yields in India by 3-5 per cent under a medium emissions scenario, and up to 31.3 per cent by 2030 under high emissions. India's estimated rice production for the 2023-24 crop year (July-June) stands at 136.7 million tonne. The top rice-producing states include West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. Pathak attributed the record wheat output of 112.9 million tonne in 2023-24 to the widespread use of climate-resilient seeds, despite weather aberrations.

Automobile retail sales up 9% in April-June: FADA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Automobile retail sales increased 9 per cent year-on-year in June quarter FY25 with all segments, barring tractors, reporting growth, dealers' body FADA said on Monday. Overall retail sales rose to 61,91,225 units in the April-June period from 56,59,060 units in the same quarter of FY24. Passenger vehicle retails increased 2.53 per cent to 9,20,047 units as against 8,97,361 units a year ago. "Despite strong bookings and customer flow, high competition, excess supply and discounting presented challenges for sustained growth in the PV segment," FADA President Manish Raj Singhania said in a statement. Dealers reported significant impacts from elections, extreme heat and market liquidity issues, he noted. The extreme heat led to 18 per cent drop in showroom walk-ins in May, with inventory levels reaching an all-time high of 62-67 days by the end of June, Singhania said. "Despite improved product availability and substantial discounts aimed at stimulating demand, market sentiment remains subdued due to the extreme heat and delayed monsoons, resulting in 15 per cent fewer walk-ins," he added. Two-wheeler retails stood at 45,54,255 units in April-June, up 12.56 per cent as compared with 40,46,169 units in the year-ago period. "The recovery in the two-wheeler segment is

promising, largely due to the emerging performance in rural areas, although these are early trends," Singhania said. The segment also faced significant challenges from extreme heat and the election period, resulting in 13 per cent reduction in walk-ins in the showrooms during May and June, he stated. Three-wheeler sales rose 11.36 per cent to 2,72,691 units in the first quarter from 2,44,878 units in the same period last fiscal. Commercial vehicle retail sales witnessed marginal increase at 2,46,513 units as against 2,44,834 units earlier. "Commercial vehicle segment experienced a slowdown due to the elections and a pause in infrastructure projects. In April, elections dampened sentiment, causing delays in expansion plans. Additionally, limited financing options and regional challenges, such as water scarcity, further impacted performance," Singhania said. Tractor retail sales declined 12.44 per cent to 1,97,719 units from 2,25,818 units a year ago.

Next round of talks for proposed trade, investments agreement between India, EU likely in September

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials of India and the 27-nation European Union (EU) are expected to hold the next round of talks for the proposed free trade agreement, which aims at boosting commerce and investments, in September, an official said. Joint Secretary in the Department of Commerce Darpan Jain said that the eighth round of talks was concluded on June 28. He said that discussions were held on all 21 chapters in the meeting and progress was made in number of areas such as government procurement, digital trade, technical barriers to trade,

goods, and market access. "We plan to hold more inter-session meetings in July and August and we intend to have another round (of talks) in the last week of September," Jain told reporters here. On June 17, 2022, India and the EU formally resumed negotiations on the proposed agreement, after a gap of over eight years. They are negotiating Trade and Investment Agreement, and a pact on Geographical Indications (GI). India had started negotiations for a trade pact with the EU in 2007, but the talks stalled in 2013 as both sides failed to reach an agreement on key issues, including customs duties on automobiles and spirits and the movement of professionals. The trade agreement with the EU would help India further expand and diversify its exports of goods and services, including securing the value chains. India's merchandise exports to EU member countries have increased to USD 75.92 billion in 2023-24 from USD 74.83 billion in 2022-23. Imports also rose to USD 59.38 billion in 2023-24 from USD 61 billion in 2022-23. The EU accounts for over 17 per cent of India's total exports and about 8.8 per cent of the country's total imports. Talking about the proposed

trade pact with the UK, another official said that with the new government taking charge in Britain, the two countries will take forward the negotiations. The official said the new government in the UK will look into the agreement. The India-UK talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles. Britain's newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently and said he stood ready to conclude an FTA that worked for both sides.

The two leaders agreed to work towards the early conclusion of a mutually beneficial India-UK FTA. There are pending issues in both the goods and services sectors. The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty. On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items. Britain is also looking for

more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services (banking and insurance). The two countries are also negotiating a bilateral investment treaty (BIT). There are 26 chapters in the agreement, which include goods, services, investments and intellectual property rights. The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24 from USD 20.36 billion in 2022-23. The Labour Party's election manifesto for the recent polls also committed to clinching the deal.

ARGENTINA WINS RECORD 16TH COPA AMERICA TITLE, BEATS COLOMBIA 1-0 AFTER MESSI GETS HURT

AP ■ MIAMI GARDENS (USA)

Argentina won its second straight Copa America championship, overcoming Lionel Messi's second-half leg injury to beat Colombia 1-0 on Lautaro Martinez's 112th-minute goal.



The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner looked to the bench as soon as he fell to the field in the second half, appearing to know his tournament was over.

The 2026 World Cup. Days after Uruguay players were involved in a brawl with Colombia fans following their semifinal match in Charlotte, North Carolina, video showed fans climbing fences and railings to get inside the championship match, with officials unable to keep track of who had purchased tickets and who didn't.

Nicolás Tagliafico thought he scored in the 75th minute but was ruled offside. Nicolás González, who replaced Messi. Was stopped by Vargas in the 95th minute.



Spain wins record fourth European Championship title by inflicting another painful loss on England

AP ■ BERLIN

Spain is the king of European Soccer for a record fourth time. For England, it's another agonizing near-miss in the team's decades-long tale of underachievement.

through the Sahara desert. "I believe there is a historical change, we are really grateful," said Williams, the player of the match with his darting runs and his second goal of Euro 2024.

a great sporting day for the nation, with Carlos Alcaraz winning the Wimbledon men's singles title for a second straight year hours before the Euro 2024 final.

England's Harry Kane and Spain's Dani Olmo end Euro 2024 in 6-way tie for Golden Boot top scorer

AP ■ BERLIN

England striker Harry Kane finished Euro 2024 in a six-way tie for the Golden Boot top scorer as his team lost the final 2-1 to Spain.



Kane ended the tournament tied on three goals with Spain midfielder Dani Olmo, Germany midfielder Jamal Musiala, Netherlands forward Cody Gakpo, Slovakia winger Ivan Schranz and Georgia striker Georges Mikautadze.

Guéhi's header off the line to keep his team in the lead late on. "I told him that he is my top scorer because his save counts as a goal for me," goalkeeper Unai Simón said.

change from recent tournaments. At the last men's European Championship, Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and Czech striker Patrik Schick both had five goals but Ronaldo was named the winner because he had an assist and Schick had none.

Kate, the Princess of Wales, hands Carlos Alcaraz his Wimbledon trophy in rare appearance for her

AP ■ LONDON

Kate, the Princess of Wales, handed Carlos Alcaraz the champion's trophy after the Wimbledon men's final at the All England Club in only her second public appearance since announcing she was diagnosed with cancer.



Kate, wife of heir to the throne Prince William, was greeted by a standing ovation when she arrived in the Royal Box at Centre Court on Sunday to watch Alcaraz's victory over Novak Djokovic.

try, but also for Wimbledon." Kate and her 9-year-old daughter, Princess Charlotte, got to the site of the grass-court Grand Slam tournament in southwest London in a motorcade about a half-hour before the final was scheduled to begin.

Athletics biggest gainer in Govt funding for Paris Olympics preparations

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

One Olympic medal is all it takes to raise the profile of a sport and if the colour happens to be gold, it is just icing on the cake.

time is substantially higher keeping in mind higher expectations after the seven medals achieved last time. The country's shuttlers were the second biggest gainers, receiving Rs 72.02 crore followed by boxing (Rs 60.93 crore) and shooting (Rs 60.42 crore).



The Indian table tennis team, which will be spearheaded by star paddler Achanti Sharath Kamal, who will be India's joint flag-bearer along with Sindhu during the opening ceremony, got a funding of Rs 12.92 crore from the government.

precise. The shooters got 45 foreign exposure trips, followed by tennis (40), athletics (31), table tennis (28), wrestling (27), archery (24), boxing (23), sailing (22), hockey (18), judo (15), golf (12) and swimming (11).

Cycle, Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Elaborating on the process, a SAI source told PTI that it kicks in after proposals are received from the athletes and respective national federations.

"The athletes who are interested in government support for their preparations for major events send their proposals to SAI, which puts those proposals in front of Mission Olympic Cell and after serious deliberations and debate, they are approved," the source told PTI.

specific expenditure, the Indian men's hockey team got the highest of Rs 41.81 crore, which includes 76 national camps and 19 foreign exposure trips.

REMEMBER THEIR FACES: KOHLI SAYS GOOD LUCK TO INDIA'S OLYMPIC-BOUND ATHLETES

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian cricket's reigning superstar Virat Kohli has urged the nation to get behind its Olympic-bound contingent, asking the fans to join him in supporting the athletes as "they inch closer to the podium with dogged determination" in the quadrennial showpiece starting July 26 in Paris.

In a little over a minute long video post on social media, featuring some Paris-bound athletes like javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and boxing hope Nishant Dev, Kohli said it is time for India to be recognised as a global sporting powerhouse.

"There was a time when the world could only think of India as a land of snake charmers and elephants. Over time, that has changed. Today we are known to the world as the largest democracy, a global tech hub," he said.

"We are known for cricket and Bollywood, for start-up unicorns and as the fastest growing economy in the world. So, what is the next big thing



for this great nation? Well, that will be more gold, more silver and more bronze," he added.

He then went on to address Indian sports fans, asking them to support the 118-strong group of athletes, who

would be aiming to better the country's best ever performance of seven medals achieved in the previous

Games in Tokyo.

"Our brothers and sisters are headed to Paris, hungry for medals. A billion of us will be watching them nervous and excited as our athletes set foot in the tracks and fields and courts and rings.

"Every neighbourhood, every corner of India will hear a chorus of voices chanting 'India, India, India'. Join me in remembering their faces as they inch closer to the podium with the dogged determination of waving the Tiranga with pride. Jai Hind and good luck India," Kohli, who is currently in London on a break after India's T20 World Cup triumph in the West Indies last month, said in his monologue.

Most of the Indian competitors are currently training abroad and will head to the French capital from their respective bases. India's medal hopes will rest on shooting, badminton, wrestling, and boxing aside from the expectations of a second successive podium finisher from Chopra, who scripted history with his javelin throw gold in Tokyo.



It is good thing that everyone performing: Gill on competition for openers' slots

PTI ■ HARARE

The competition for the openers' slots has intensified following India's T20I series win in Zimbabwe and for contender Shubman Gill, that can only be a 'good thing'.

Gill, who is expected to open alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal in the three T20Is in Sri Lanka later this month, was the leading run getter in the five-match series in Harare. He was not part of the T20 World Cup squad in the USA and the Caribbean.

For the major part of the series, India played as many as four openers in the playing eleven and all of them did well including Gill, Jaiswal, Abhishek Sharma and Rituraj Gaikwad.

Gill captained India's second string team and played as an opener in all the five matches with Jaiswal joining him at the top from the third game onwards.

For the first two games, he opened with Punjab teammate Abhishek Sharma who scored a hundred and a fifty in his debut series. Among the four openers, Gill had the lowest strike rate, 125.92, compared to Jaiswal's 165.88, Gaikwad's 158.33 and Abhishek's 174.64.

"It's a good thing that everyone's performing. It shows that everyone is hungry and nobody is ready to take it easy. For any country or board, that's always a good thing," said Gill on Sunday referring to the openers.

Following the retirement of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli from T20Is, the selectors will have a problem of plenty when it comes to picking the openers for the Sri Lanka series.

opportunity grabbed it with both hands. The openers to bowlers to all-rounders to spinners, everyone made a mark and I think the selectors have now seen everything and it's up to them to name the squad for the next series," he said after India's 4-1 series win over Zimbabwe.

On captaining the team through the series, Gill said he enjoyed every bit of the challenge.

"One thing about captaincy I feel is how much confidence you can show in your players. I try to do that and make them believe that if you try and execute the plans, the results will always follow," Gill said.

"After losing the first match, we were under a bit of pressure. It's not easy to play back to back games and the series was planned in a way that there were two back-to-back games, a couple of days rest and then again back-to-back games."

"It's never easy playing a series like that but I think the way we came back after losing the first T20I was really remarkable." India bounced back to win the series 4-1 after losing the opener.

"Seeing everyone hungry and so quickly adapting to the situation and assessing the conditions was truly spectacular to watch," said Gill. With the ball moving around in the powerplay, the opener thought it was important to be a little cautious early in the innings.

"I think, as per the conditions of the wicket, there were some challenging conditions, especially in the powerplay, the ball was always doing something or the other. As an opening batter, my focus was to see out 4-5 overs and not concede any wicket," he added.

Our planning is that he will not be there in Pakistan: Bailey on Warner in Champions Trophy

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian national selector George Bailey has said that the national team plans to move on from the recently-retired David Warner despite the southpaw's desire to be considered for the Champions Trophy in Pakistan next year.

The 37-year-old Warner retired from international cricket following the T20 World Cup in the Americas last month, where the Aussies failed to progress beyond the Super 8 stage. However, he had insisted that he will keep the door open for a return for the Champions Trophy, a One-Day International format ICC event.

"Our understanding is that David is retired, and [he] should be commended on what has been an incredible career across all three formats. Certainly, our planning is that he won't be there in Pakistan," Bailey was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

Warner had a decent run during the T20 World Cup, finishing as the side's second-highest run-scorer, after Travis Head.

On his remarks on making a comeback during the Champions Trophy, Bailey said that Warner might be "stirring the pot",



with the team planning "to transition to some different players".

"You never know when Bull's joking...think he's just stirring the pot a bit. He's had a wonderful career, can't celebrate it enough, and think as time goes

by, his legacy of what he has done for Australia and we reflect back on that, the legend of a player is only going to continue to grow," added Bailey.

"But, as far as this team goes and the journey to transition to some different players, in his case across all three formats, it's going to be exciting."

The Australians will have a young squad during their upcoming tour of the United Kingdom, which includes limited-overs meetings against Scotland and England.

With the likes of Matthew Wade, Mitchell Starc and Glenn Maxwell missing out, Bailey said the Kangaroos might see a more youthful squad going forward, with an eye on the next T20 World Cup in 2026.

"I don't think there's anyone who's not there that we've put a line through permanently besides David (Warner). This is the way we are going with this squad," he continued.

The next T20 World Cup is 2026, so I imagine there may be some more changes than what we are seeing in this squad. But specifically, to those guys (Starc and Maxwell), no we haven't had any conversations about where they think their T20 journey may finish.

Rohit says he will continue to play Tests and ODIs at least for a while



PTI ■ DALLAS (USA)

India captain Rohit Sharma says he will continue to play Test and ODI cricket "at least for a while" after ending his T20 international career with a World Cup win last month.

Rohit has been on a break since the title win in the West Indies and is set to miss the limited-overs tour of Sri Lanka later this month, which includes three ODIs.

"I just said it. I don't look that far ahead. So clearly, you will be seeing me play at least for a while," the 37-year-old said at an event here on Sunday night.

His statement was reiteration of a position he made clear after announcing his T20 retirement after the final in the West Indies in which India defeated South Africa by seven runs.

Earlier this month, BCCI secretary Jay Shah had confirmed that Rohit will captain India in the ongoing World Test Championship cycle and the Champions Trophy next year in February-March.

Rohit had led India in the 2022 T20 World Cup where the team was ousted in the semifinals by eventual champions England. A year later, India reached the final of the 50-over World Cup at home under his leadership, but succumbed to Australia in the summit clash at Ahmedabad. Rohit left T20Is with 4231 runs from 159 matches, having made five hundreds and 32 fifties.



Cummins to miss Australia's limited-overs cricket tour to England and Scotland

AP ■ MELBOURNE

World Cup-winning skipper Pat Cummins will be rested for Australia's upcoming limited-overs tour to Britain and Mitchell Starc will miss the Twenty20 portion of the trip as part of a workload management program.

Australia is scheduled to play three T20s against Scotland and five one-day internationals against England in September. Cricket Australia said Cummins' absence was part of a "pre-planned, long-term load management strategy" as part of preparations for the Champions Trophy next year.

Mitchell Marsh, who led Australia at the recent T20 World Cup in the United States and Caribbean, will be captain for the tour. Veteran opener David Warner has retired and wicketkeeper Matthew Wade wasn't selected, with selectors looking at the future.

Young batter Jake Fraser-McGurk was included in both the ODI and T20 squads after being a designated traveling reserve for the T20 World Cup. "This tour gives us a great opportunity to bring in some new players in the absence of David Warner and Matthew Wade, as well as giving some senior players time to prepare for the home summer and a busy first half of next year," George

Bailey, Australia's selection chairman, said.

The likes of Fraser-McGurk, Spencer Johnson, Xavier Bartlett and Aaron Hardie "are exciting prospects to join the likes of Cameron Green, Nathan Ellis and Josh Inglis in the white ball setup," Bailey said. "With the Champions Trophy next year... There has been a lot of planning invested into these next six months.

"That has included gradual integration of new players into our white ball squads who have earned international opportunities via excellent form." Australia is the World Cup champion in the 50-over format and holder of the World Test Championship title, but didn't reach the semifinals of the T20 World Cup.

T20 squad: Mitch Marsh (captain), Xavier Bartlett, Cooper Connolly, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Cameron Green, Aaron Hardie, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa. **ODI squad:** Mitch Marsh (captain), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Aaron Hardie, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Short, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Adam Zampa.

Mental conditioning camp ahead of Paris Olympics will help India handle pressure better: Abhishek

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian men's hockey team forward Abhishek feels the mental conditioning camp the players underwent at renowned adventurer Mike Horn's base in Switzerland ahead of the Paris Olympics has helped them prepare for high-pressure situations.

The Indian team has completed a three-day mental conditioning camp at Horn's base and are slated to play a

few practice matches in the Netherlands before making their way to Paris Games. The expectations from the team will be high after India's bronze medal win at Tokyo Olympics. India will start their Paris Olympics campaign against New Zealand in their first Pool B match.

"After months of focusing on the physical aspect of the game, this camp is exactly what we needed," Abhishek said in a Hockey India release. "The team has been spending time



connecting on and off the field, improving our bond and learning to handle high-pressure situations better," he said.

Abhishek, who has played 74 matches for India since his international debut in 2022, is set for his maiden appearance at the Olympics. "Ever since I was 14, it has been my dream to play for India in the Olympics." Abhishek asserted that he is someone who doesn't buckle under pressure. "The pressure in big tournaments

doesn't deter me or change my approach. I just try to execute on the pitch," he said.

For Abhishek, playing for India in the Olympics will be an achievement which is far beyond what his family had thought.

"When I started doing well in hockey, the most we expected was a government job. Seeing me reach this level is thrilling for them. My brother, especially, has always been my biggest supporter," he said.

Indian cricket has lot of depth but transition should be gradual: Vikram Rathour

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Outgoing batting coach Vikram Rathour knows that a tough transition period awaits India in the near future but having worked with the available talent pool, he feels the side is well-equipped to handle the phase provided it unfolds in a "controlled and gradual manner".

While Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will still play ODIs and Tests for now, India will have to grapple with the transition phase in another couple of years when they move towards the last phase of their respective careers.

"It is never going to be easy to replace people of Rohit and Virat's calibre," Rathour, also a former selector, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"The recently-concluded series against Zimbabwe (on Sunday) gave us some glimpse into how the T20 team will look like in future. But we still have a few years in Test and ODI cricket to get to that point," said one of the key members of Rahul Dravid's coaching team. Having served as both national

selector and one of the coaches of the senior team, Rathour has an inside view of Indian cricket's talent pool and he finds it reassuring.

"I won't be too concerned about it. We have a lot of depth in Indian cricket. There are lots of very talented and skilful players who are coming through the system. The only thing we need to make sure is the transition is done in a controlled manner. It needs to be gradual.

He feels that by the time, Rohit and Kohli bid adieu to all formats, the younger stars would be well-settled, forming the nucleus for the next 10 years.

"I am hoping that by then, players like Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel to name a few, would establish themselves and will make the transition smooth. "In ODIs also, we have experienced players like Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul and Hardik Pandya to take over," Rathour said in a confident analysis. Just as Kohli and Rohit carried



India's batting on their shoulders for more than a decade, the next decade could well belong to Gill and Jaiswal. "There are many exciting players coming through but these two are equipped to play all three formats for a long time. They are going to be the

backbone of Indian batting in years to come," the former Punjab skipper said.

Rathour was a good sounding board for Dravid in the last three years and when he says that Rinku Singh would make a good Test batter, the statement does carry weight.

"When I see him (Rinku) bat in nets, I can't find any technical reasons why Rinku cannot be a successful Test batter. I understand he has made his name as a terrific finisher in T20 cricket but if you look at his first-class record, he is averaging in high 50s.

"He (Rinku) is also blessed with a very calm temperament. So all these factors indicate that if given an opportunity, he can develop into a Test cricketer," Rathour said.

"ALWAYS TOLD VIRAT TO BELIEVE IN HIS METHODS": One question that Rathour would face at every second press conference during his tenure was Kohli's extended lean patch after the 2019 World Cup and he maintained it was a "phase that everyone has to go through."

"There were no technical issues that we worked on specifically during this phase. The constant messaging to him was to keep working hard and believe in his methods. Eventually he came back stronger and an even better player," he said. **RAHUL GAVE US SPACE**

AND HONEST FEEDBACK": Rathour and Dravid made their Test debuts in the same series against England in 1996 and have played against each other in domestic cricket even before that.

A three-decade relationship helped when they came together as back-room staff. "Rahul is the best coach that I have worked with, who gives you lots of space to work, is open to suggestions and will provide you an honest feedback. "One of the first discussions we had was about changing the batting template in T20 cricket. We agreed that we needed to bring in more intent and aggression in our batting approach," he revealed.

Rathour said a case in point was Axar Patel, who fixed their problem of a decent batting option at number eight.

"That made a massive difference and gave the batters in top order lot more freedom to bat." Axar was always a good batter and all he needed was opportunity to express himself fearlessly with an "uncomplicated technique".