

**OPINION 6**  
BYPOLL RESULTS INDICATE A SHIFTING VOTER PREFERENCE

**WORLD 8**  
BANDAGED TRUMP'S RAPTUROUS GOP CONVENTION DEBUT

**MONEY 10**  
SENSEX, NIFTY CLOSE AT RECORD HIGH LEVELS

Published From  
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR  
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH  
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 20 Issue 194  
\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

BHUBANESWAR, WEDNESDAY JULY 17, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

Established 1864

# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



HARDIK PANDYA TO LEAD INDIA IN T20IS AGAINST SRI LANKA  
12 SPORTS

## Spiralling Terror in Jammu claims four Army personnel

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A Captain of the Indian Army, along with three other soldiers, was martyred during a fierce gunfight with a group of suspected foreign terrorists in Jammu Dessa forest area, which shares its boundaries with Basantgarh in Udhampur, Anantnag, Keshwan in Kishtwar, and Pogal Paristan in Ramban district, late Monday night. It is suspected the joint team of security forces was lured into the deep forest area where they were ambushed by the well-entrenched group of the foreign terrorists. Kashmir Tigers, a proxy outfit of the Jaish-e-Mohammad, has claimed responsibility for the attack. The gruesome attack comes close on the heels of another deadly ambush on the soldiers near Badnota village of Machhedi in the Billaigar tehsil of Kathua district on July 8 in which five soldiers were martyred and five others were injured. The Indian Army, however, maintained that a joint operation with J&K Police was launched in the general area of Urabaggi, 10 km North of Doda. At about 8.40 pm on Monday, the search party was able to establish



Security forces personnel during an encounter with terrorists in Doda forest area, in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, on Tuesday PTI

contact with the terrorists hiding in the area, which is a thickly forested and mountainous area with restricted visibility due to low clouds and rain. In the initial volley of fire, four Indian Army personnel were injured, who later succumbed to their injuries. Additional troops and equipment have been

inducted to flush out the terrorists and the use of drones and other technical resources is being ensured. The bravehearts have been identified as Captain Brijesh Thapa, son of Col (Retd) BK Thapa, Naik D Rajesh, Sepoy Bijendra & Sepoy Ajay. Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh spoke to Indian Army Chief General

Uendra Dwivedi, who apprised him of the ground situation and ongoing operation in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda on Tuesday. In a post on X Defence Minister said, "Deeply saddened by the loss of our brave and courageous Indian Army Soldiers in a counter-terrorist operation in Urra Baggi, Doda (J&K). My heart

goes out to the bereaved families. The nation stands firmly with the families of our soldiers who have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty. Singh said the Counter Terrorist operations are underway, and our soldiers remain committed to eliminating the scourge of terrorism and restoring peace and order in the region."

## MoD marches on self-reliance in manufacturing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sustaining the momentum in achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing and minimising import by defence public sector undertakings (DPSU), the Ministry of Defence has notified the fifth Positive Indigenisation List (PIL) consisting of 346 items. It means Indian industry will manufacture these items. Giving details of the list, officials said here on Tuesday the items include strategically-important Line Replacement Units/Systems/ Sub-systems/Assemblies/Sub-assemblies/Spares and Components and raw materials, with import substitution value worth ₹1,048 crore. The items will only be procured from the Indian industry after the timelines of indigenisation as indicated in the list available on the Srijan portal. The Ministry of Defence had launched the Srijan portal in 2020. On this portal, DPSUs and Service Headquarters (SHQs) offer defence items to the industries, including MSMEs and start-ups, for indigenisation.



Security personnel and locals near the residence of Jitan Sahani, father of former Minister Mukesh Sahani, after he was found dead, at Ghanshyampur in Darbhanga district, on Tuesday PTI

## Spate of political murders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA/CHENNAI/NEW DELHI

In two separate ghastly murder incidents that have sent shock waves across Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and the political circles of the national Capital days ahead of Parliament Session, former State Minister Mukesh Sahni's 70-year-old father was found stabbed to death at his native home in Darbhanga district. Meanwhile, in southern India, a senior functionary of Naam Tamilar Katchi was hacked to death in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, on Tuesday. The killing of Balasubramanian, who is Madurai district deputy secretary of the NTK, comes days after the murder of Bahujan Samaj Party state chief K Armstrong in Chennai. Jitan Sahani, father of Mukesh Sahani, was allegedly

found murdered at his ancestral home in Bihar's Darbhanga district, police said on Tuesday. His body, with several stab injuries and cut marks on his chest and stomach, was found inside his room at his house in Biraul area this morning. A former Bollywood technician who heads a fledgling outfit Vikasheel Insan Party (VIP), Sahni was away in Mumbai when the information reached him, party sources said. Upon arriving in Patna, on way to Darbhanga, Sahni told reporters at the airport that he was telephoned by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and RJD president Lalu Prasad. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, in whose Cabinet he had served for about a year-and-a-half, called Sahni to offer condolences and ensure speedy investigation.



## Two arrested in NEET leak case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday arrested two persons, including a key accused in the NEET-UG paper leak case, who allegedly stole the paper from a National Testing Agency's trunk in Hazaribagh in Jharkhand. With the two arrests, the total number of persons arrested in connection with cases pertaining to leakage, impersonation and other irregularities in the medical entrance exam has now reached 14. The CBI has arrested Pankaj Kumar alias Aditya, a 2017-batch civil engineer from the National Institute of Technology Jamshedpur, who allegedly stole the NEET-UG paper from the NTA trunk in Hazaribagh officials said. Kumar, a resident of Bokaro, was arrested from Patna. According to officials, the CBI has also arrested one Raju Singh who allegedly helped Kumar in stealing the paper and passing them on to other gang members, adding that Singh was arrested from Hazaribagh. Earlier this month, the CBI arrested the main accused, Rakesh Ranjan alias Rocky, from Bihar's Nalanda. Rakesh Ranjan is believed to be one of the key players in the NEET paper leak. The CBI set a trap and conducted raids at four locations in Patna and Kolkata to arrest Ranjan. The CBI has been utilising advanced investigative techniques to track down and apprehend those involved.

## Heavy rains predicted in State till July 21

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The low-pressure area over south Odisha and neighbourhood now lies over south Chhattisgarh adjoining Vidarbha, said the India Meteorological Department on Tuesday. A fresh low-pressure area is likely to form over the west-central and adjoining north-west Bay of Bengal around July 19. As per the IMD, several

parts of Odisha are likely to experience heavy rainfall till July 21. A Yellow warning for heavy to very heavy rainfall has also been issued for some districts. On Wednesday, heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Nabarangpur, Koraput, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Nuapada and Malkangiri. On Thursday, heavy rainfall

is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Kalahandi and Koraput, said the Regional Office of the IMD here issuing a Yellow warning. On Friday, heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Nayagarh, Puri, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Koraput and Nabarangpur.

## EC releases SOPs for EVMs

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Acting on a Supreme Court judgment, the Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday released a technical Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for checking and verifying the burnt memory of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), with expanded choices for candidates. It specifies that if the results of a mock poll tally with the VVPAT slips, then there is no tampering. The technical SOP includes the selection of EVMs from any polling station in an Assembly constituency, the mix and match of EVM units (BU-CU-VVPAT) from any polling station, connecting BU-CU-VVPAT in any sequence and the option of casting up to 1,400 votes in a mock poll in any sequence. In its letter to the Chief Electoral Officers, Chairman-cum-Managing Directors of Bharat Electronics Limited and Electronics Corporation of India Limited, the EC said the candidates would have the choice of selecting EVMs from any polling stations in the constituency and also any combination of the Ballot Units (BUs), Control Units (CUs), and VVPATs up to 5 per cent of the total. They would also be able to decide in which order they want the BU, CU, and VVPAT to be connected. The



order in which the units are connected does not have an impact on how they work. According to the SOP, the checking would be done by authorised and trained engineers from BEL and ECL. The entire process would be carried out under CCTV cameras and in the presence of candidates or their representatives. On April 26, the Supreme Court had ordered the EC to facilitate checking and verification of the burnt memory or microcontrollers of up to 5 per cent of the Electronic Voting Machines (ballot units and control units) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails of an Assembly constituency or Lok Sabha constituency on the written request of the candidates who come in

second and third in that seat. The EC wrote, "There can be varied technical methods to verify the fidelity of a firmware burnt into a microcontroller within confines of a research laboratory or a secured manufacturing environment. Checking and verification of any firmware burnt (fused) into the memory of a microcontroller can be verified in a public process by giving a vast number of ransom test vectors as inputs and evaluating the intended outcome(s)." The poll body said the eligible candidates can give choices of polling stations or serial numbers of machines from within the Assembly segment or constituency, subject to a maximum of five per cent EVMs used in that segment or seat to undergo check and verification

process. This will ensure the EVMs are picked up from across the constituency as per choice of the applicant without the involvement of a third party or officials in selecting or leaving out any particular machine. The choice to mix and match EVM units from any polling station in the assembly constituency has also been offered. If any applicant candidate selects any specific unit — ballot unit, control unit or VVPAT — of a particular polling station, he/she is not bound to choose other units of the same set used at that polling station. At least one ballot unit, one control unit and one VVPAT or paper trail machine makes up for one EVM. Instead, the applicant candidate can mix and match and give his choice of other units from remaining polled units used at other polling stations in the assembly constituency or assembly segment to make a set. Polled units are those which were used in the elections to cast votes. All EVM units will undergo self-diagnosis. Several electrical parameters will be checked, including the fidelity of the burnt memory and only self-diagnosed units will thereafter go for further check and verification.

## CM asks for Daya Canal renovation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Chandra Mahji on Tuesday, reviewing the programmes of the Housing and Urban Development Department, directed to expedite the ongoing schemes and make life comfortable for the urban residents. Majhi directed the officials

to ensure that eligible beneficiaries are selected for different schemes. Besides, employment opportunities should be given on a priority basis to Odia people. The CM also suggested for peripheral development of the urban areas. By this, infrastructure for poor people can be created and they would be able to get all basic

facilities. During the meeting, the condition of the Daya West Canal was discussed. The CM directed for renovation and beatification of the canal. Majhi also directed for bio-mining for cleanliness in the capital city. The progress of Metro Railway, CRUT operations and Gaja Mission were also discussed.

## Wrong test in Nabarangpur

## Woman not having pregnancy given medicine

Till her health goes abnormal  
MONOHAR MOHANTY ■ NABARANGPUR

A woman was stated to be pregnant by a test report undertaken in a PHC and was given periodic medication and vaccinations to monitor her health for ten months. However, finally she was found to have no baby in her womb. The incident happened at Raighar village in Nabaranpur district. One Damayanti Harijan, daughter of Tank Harijan, went to the local PHC and examined her health, and she was found to be pregnant. Following the discovery of the woman's pregnancy, the Anganwadi Center provided immunisations and medicines



etc to her from time to time. However, finding some abnormality in her health, the woman's family members took her to the CHC Umakote for a thorough check-up and found that there was no baby in her womb. How far is it reasonable to play with the life of an inno-

cent lady when the Health Department was delivering medication and vaccinations non stop even if the woman was not pregnant, asked the intellectuals here. Meanwhile, the family members of Damayanti have demanded stern action against the erring medical officials.

## Ratna Bhandar inner chamber to be opened again tomorrow

NALINI SAHU ■ PURI

The Bhitari Bhandar (inner chamber of Lord Jagannath's Ratna Bhandar) in the temple here will be again opened on Thursday (July 18) for shifting of the jewels and gems to a temporary strong room so as to enable the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to undertake the Bhandar's required repair work. This was informed by Justice Biswanath Rath, Chairman of the High-Level Committee formed for reopening of the

Ratna Bhandar, on Tuesday. Justice Rath's announcement came soon after a decision in this respect was taken after a crucial meeting. Speaking to mediapersons, Justice Rath said, "The auspicious time decided for the opening of Ratna Bhandar has been fixed between 9:51 am and 12:15 pm." He informed that after the inner chamber is opened again, the process of shifting valuables would be taken up. "As it is not possible to shift all the almirahs and chests as it

will involve huge manpower, the contents (valuables, ornaments, etc.) in the chests and almirahs will be shifted to the new ones which have been procured," said Justice Rath. Once the process is completed, all the items would be transferred to the temporary Ratna Bhandar set up in the temple complex which has been equipped with CCTV, fire safety and other measures. The temporary Ratna Bhandar would be sealed after completion of the shifting of the valuables, he said.

SJTA Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee reiterated that the keys that were given on the first day of the opening of Ratna Bhandar did not work to open the locks. According to Padhee, there were three locks; one was sealed and two others weren't sealed. However, both were locked. As per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), the old locks were broken and two new locks have been affixed. The keys have been deposited with the treasury, said Padhee.

# Non-servitors on chariots: SJTA files FIR

**PNS ■ PURI**  
The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) on Tuesday filed a complaint at the Singhadwar police station in Puri in connection with the alleged presence of non-servitors on the chariots of the deities during this year's Rath Yatra.



The FIR was lodged by SJTA OSD (Development) Ajaya Kumar Jena. The SJTA has sought stringent action against the unauthorised presence of general public and non-servitors on the chariots of Lord Jagannath and His siblings. This was a violation of the guidelines formulated for the smooth management of Rath

Yatra, the complaint stated. The incident allegedly occurred on July 7 and 8 when persons identified as non-servitors were spotted atop the chariots and seated on the wheels.

The complaint further stated, "You are requested to identify the wrongdoers and take necessary action as per rules. Further, the names of the persons atop the Chariots may please be verified and intimated to us for necessary communication to their higher authority to take suitable disciplinary action."

# Ratna Bhandar inventory Cong demands govt to publish Whitepaper

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The Congress has expressed anguish over the unfortunate incidents that occurred during the Rath Yatra in Puri. The falling down of Lord Bhalabhadra during Pahandi has distressed crores of devotees. The government is trying to suppress the incident which is highly unfortunate, said the party.



Pradesh Congress Committee president Sarat Pattanayak on Tuesday demanded that a former Judge probe the incident, find out who are responsible for the incident and punish the guilty.

Pattanayak also demanded that the government make it clear when the counting and inventory of the valuables in

the Shreemandir's Ratna Bhandar would be completed. He demanded that the government publish a Whitepaper on the whole process.

Pattanayak further said the Governor's son assaulted and injured an Odia Assistant Sec-

tion Officer (ASO). Is this a symbol of Odia Asmita? The law is same for everybody. The Chief Minister holds the Home Department portfolio. Why he is silent till now when an Odia officer was brutally assaulted and injured, questioned Pattanayak.

# Assault on ASO Cong holds demo before Raj Bhavan



**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Members of the Pradesh Youth and Student Congress on Tuesday held a demonstration before the Raj Bhavan demanding stringent action against the Governor's son for assaulting ASO Baikuntha Nth Pradhan.

Later, an effigy of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi was burnt.

Student Congress State president Yasir Nawaj said the Governor and the Chief Minister have hatched a conspiracy to ensure that the accused goes

scot-free. In the State, there are two set of laws for different people, one for the common people and one for the influential people. So, after more than seven days of the incident, the Governor's son and five of his associates are yet to be arrested.

Youth Congress president Ranjit Patra said those who are shouting for Odia Asmita are yet to raise their voice for a helpless Odia officer. He said that until action is taken against the guilty, the Youth and Student Congress would continue their protests.

# 'Provide LPG cylinders within 48 hrs' Minister directs dealers

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra on Tuesday directed the dealers and distribution companies to provide LPG cylinders to consumers within 48 hours or face action.

The direction was issued after a meeting with petrol, diesel and LPG dealers held in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday.

"We had a meeting with the officials of the companies,

dealers and representatives today. There is a provision to deliver LPG cylinders within 48 hours of booking. The dealers have been directed to ensure this or else action would be taken against them," said Patra. Patra further said that the officials and dealers of petrol and diesel have been asked to ensure focus on three aspects, quantity, quality and behaviour.

Besides, regular inspections of petrol pumps would be done to ensure that there is no adulteration and action would be taken in case of any violation, the minister added.

# Implement PESA Act in Odisha, tribal forum urges CM

**SUDARSHAN CHHOTORAY ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The Odisha PESA Gramsabha Coordination Committee, an umbrella organisation of tribals, on Monday, demanded implementation of the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 shortly known as PESA Act, 1996 very strictly as per its true letter and spirit in the Scheduled Areas of Odisha State with immediate effect.

The organisation appealed to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi who hails from tribal community to bring in PESA Rules which is in draft stage to pave way for strict implementation of PESA Act in the State.

As on today eight of the 10

tribal populated States which come under the 5th Schedule of the Constitution have implemented the Central legislation that protects tribal art, culture, heritage, besides Adivasi's right to natural resources, including minor minerals and forest products.

The Act bestows every power on Gram Sabha which is the primary community body.

While speaking to The Pioneer, committee president Budhua Jojo said they have organised a mass agitation and dharna on numerous occasions both in State capital Bhubaneswar and district headquarters. They had also submitted memorandum to the Governor of Odisha on September 26, 2023 in this regard.

He said tribal people of the

Scheduled areas have been provided special provisions and privileges under Schedule-V to the Constitution of India to safeguard and protect the interest of Scheduled Tribes.

The Fifth Schedule to the Constitution of India confers powers on the President of India to declare any area or any part in the territory of India as Scheduled Areas.

Jojo pointed out that out of 30 districts, seven districts of the State are fully Scheduled Areas and six districts are partly Scheduled Areas.

Another activist Panduram Hembrum of Mayurbhanj stated that the Governor may make regulations for the peace and good governance of any area in a State which is for the time being a Scheduled Area.

Jinit Samad, a tribal activist from Kuchinda in Sambalpur, said that even after the lapse of more than 28 years, the Act is not implemented in the State.

"It is very clear that the Government of Odisha is knowingly violating the constitutional laws of the Scheduled Areas. Though we have been demanding its implementation for the last 28 years in different forums, but the Government of Odisha is not taking any steps," Samad stated.

The committee demanded that Chief Minister Majhi consider tabling the the PESA Rules in the Budget and first session of the 17th Vidhan Sabha to safeguard the interest of the Scheduled Tribes of the State.

# Guv's son's attack on ASO decried BJD questions BJP govt's silence on matter

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The BJD on Tuesday accused the BJP government with playing with Odia Asmita (pride) by suppressing the case of alleged humiliation, abuse and physical attack by the Governor's son against an ASO-ranked official of the Raj Bhavan in Puri during Rath Yatra.

BJD spokesperson Dr Lekhasri Samantsinghar told reporters that the Mohan Charan Majhi government is being run by remote control from Delhi and can't take legal recourse even in incidents like this.

She stated that rather than arresting the Governor's son, the victim whose self-respect is lost and whose family had



pleaded with the Governor, the Chief Minister and the police administration for justice, has been transferred from the Raj Bhavan.

Questioning the silence of the government on the matter, Samantsinghar said the Governor's son doesn't enjoy immunity from legal action and should be arrested and brought into the purview of law.

"Are there two laws for BJP, one for common people and the other for political persons? During the Naveen Patnaik regime, even powerful were not spared," she stated.

# IIT workshop on designing structures for fire safety

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Experts delve into use of modern technologies

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar recently organised an international workshop on 'Designing Structures for Fire Safety' in collaboration with the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) as part of the Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC) Scheme, Union Ministry of Education.

The workshop was inaugu-



rated by Prof Venkatesh Kodur, Distinguished Professor, Michigan State University, USA, and Prof Shreepad Karmakar, Director, IIT Bhubaneswar.

The workshop gave a thorough introduction to the prin-

ciples, practices and strategies of fire-safe design in modern constructions. Topics included designing steel and concrete structures for fire safety and using Big Data and AI for knowledge discovery in fire engineering.

Another research-focused discussion covered the instability of thin-walled structures due to fire-induced localised thermal loading. Through the demonstration of case studies and practical exercises, participants gained an opportunity

to learn to integrate fire safety considerations into the design process, ensuring that buildings not only comply with regulations but also enhance occupant safety and resilience in case of a fire.

Prof Kodur, referring to the engineering and construction marvels of the ancient civilisations, stressed that there is a need to address both quality control and combat the hazards through advanced structural designing of the critical infrastructure, which are essential for the survival of the society. He also emphasised on research and development in the field of civil engineering with special focus on the fire safety designing.

Prof Karmalkar said, "While IIT Bhubaneswar is entering the third phase of infrastructure development, this workshop is very relevant." Commenting on the applicability of the research, he said, "A lot of technology is outside the purview of research papers and lies with the experts who practise it."

The workshop was organised by Prof Sarat Kumar Panda and Dr Santhosh Kumar G, faculty members from School of Infrastructure. In conjunction with this workshop, a 15-day Short Course on "Structural Fire Engineering" is being conducted at the School of Infrastructure from July 9 to 23 with Prof Kodur as the Course Instructor.

# 2024 polls BJP's dogged pursuit to wrest power in Odisha finally paid off

**BJD's overconfidence led it to bite dust**

In 2024 polls, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in Odisha for the first time. The BJP's Odisha unit president Manmohan Samal proved lucky for the party as he was the one who was dead against any pre-poll tie up with the BJD. But Samal was personally unlucky as he lost the election.

Not only Samal, for the presidents of the two other major political parties in Odisha, the 2024 elections went unlucky at the individual level. Though Manmohan Samal gifted Odisha to his party but lost from Chandabali Assembly seat as he could not give time to his constituency due to extensive poll campaign. Similarly, the BJD president Naveen Patnaik lost poll from Kantabanji Assembly seat though won from Hinjili. He lost the first poll in his 28 years of political career. Congress president Sarat Pattanayak also lost from Nuapada



**LALIT MOHAN MISHRA**

seat. However, the reason of defeat of each president needs a separate Constituency level analysis.

Why did the BJP's electoral plan succeed in Odisha this time? When BJP's national general secretary (Organisation) BL Santhosh, the Sangha leader, visited Odisha and offered "guru-mantra" to the newly elected BJP MLAs and Ministers, his role and the role of other back-ground strategists came to the fore.

In 2014, though the BJP came to power at the Center, its performance was disastrous in Odisha. The party

could bag only one Lok Sabha and ten Assembly seats. Thereafter, the party put Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in the forefront in Odisha and gained heavily in 2017-Panchayat election. It was Amit Shah, the BJP's master poll strategist and Home Minister, who set the foundation for BJP's win in Odisha. In 2018, he floated two slogans such as "Mo Booth Sabuthu Majboot" (my booth is the strongest booth) and Mission- 120 Assembly seats. But the State BJP could not follow the booth-strengthening strategy and lost the 2019 poll miserably. It had no active coordination with the Sangha. It got only 23 Assembly and 8 Lok Sabha seats. However, it could become main Opposition in the State Assembly and increase its vote share from 20 per cent to 33 per cent in Assembly and 38 per cent in Lok Sabha poll.

After 2019 polls, the Central BJP did not adopt a confrontational attitude against the BJD and put soft leaders in "Leader of Opposition" and State-president posts. It did not activate or open up new

CBI or ED cases against the ruling BJD as it did elsewhere. On the other hand, the BJD sent BJP's leader Ashwini Vaishnav to Rajya Sabha and supported NDA Government's bills in the Parliament. Public support for the BJD dropped. The BJD performed very badly in February-March 2022 Panchayat and urban local body elections.

The Panchayat poll disaster perhaps forced the BJP to rise from slumber. It started preparation for 2024 elections for Odisha. Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and party president JP Nadda seemed to have given the responsibility of the State to the BJP's national general secretary (organization) BL Santhosh. Under his supervision, national general secretary Sunil Bansal and later Bijay Pal Singh Tomar, former MP and former president Kissan Morcha, took the election process forward to its logical end in Odisha with the local support of State general secretary (organization) Manas Mohanty and BJP State president Manmohan Samal.

Bansal, one of the best poll strat-

egists of the party, took charge of Odisha in August 2022. His first task was to change the image of the State BJP from "BJD-friendly opposition" to "real opposition". He changed the soft-spoken "Leader of Opposition" and the State president and brought Jayanarayan Mishra and Manmohan Samal respectively, who were known as anti-Naveen leaders. He also activated party's frontal organisations, IT cells, district organisations, and focused again on booth building. The coordination between Sangha and party was established which was weak in 2019 poll.

Just after taking charge Bansal faced the Dhamnagar Assembly by-election in November 2022. This was a BJP's seat and he succeeded in re-capturing the seat. Earlier the BJP had lost its Baleswar Assembly seat in by-election. This win, built the confidence of the BJP and Sangha cadets. Though the BJP could not win the Assembly by-elections later but the party could emerge as the tough opposition in those seats, decimating the Congress. These by-elections also served

as learning sources for Bansal who tried various poll narratives, caste equations, social media strategies and election management processes and could also know about the weaknesses of the BJD and the Congress.

Odisha's electoral strategy was chalked out during the meet of top BJP leaders of twelve eastern and north-eastern States in Assam in July 2023. This was followed up in Odisha.

While the State BJP was fully prepared for 2024 election, the talk of BJD-BJP alliance before the election tarnished the credibility of Odisha BJP. There was enough background to the talk like BJD's support to the BJP in Rajya Sabha election and in Parliament. VK Pandian's fast VRS-application approval, friendly relation between Modi and Naveen etc indicated the BJP and BJD could go for a pre-poll understanding. It was heard that the BJD wanted alliance for smooth succession and weeding out some leaders while pro-alliance leaders in the BJP wanted easy access to State Government and more Lok

Sabha seats.

However, it was seen that BL Santhosh's team, Manmohan, State Sangha leaders and many BJP leaders and workers objected tooth and nail to the alliance proposal and finally Prime Minister Narendra Modi scrapped the proposal. Once Modi set the election ball rolling, the BJP's poll machinery marched ahead.

The State BJP picked up only those poll narratives which were prevalent in the public mind so that the election becomes people's election.

The decision to go alone to the poll, inducting dropped-out senior BJD leaders, drawing regional and local plans, building people-centric poll narrative, high pitch campaign, transferring political officers, caste-engineering, strong social media use and the promise of good governance and better welfare schemes paved the way for BJP to victory. On the other hand, the BJD's underestimation of the BJP's poll strategy and complacency made it to bite the dust.

(Mob-7008233729)

# Orphaned sisters struggle to survive in Nuapada

Not yet provided any succour

AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA

Two young orphaned girls, Pramila (9) and Damayanti (7), are facing immense hardships since losing their parents in Chicher village of Khariar block of Nuapada district.

Their mother succumbed to breast cancer in 2020, and their father died of liver disease in 2023. Now, the sisters live with their elderly grandfather, Dambarudhar Bag, who struggles to provide even two square meals a day. Often, the children rely on the mercy of their neighbours for sustenance.

Despite his poverty, Dambarudhar is unwilling to send his granddaughters to child care centers. There are



two Government programmes under Mission Batsalya aimed at helping children identified as Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP). One option places

the children in various child care institutions within the district, while the other offers financial sponsorship ranging from Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000 per month. However,

Dambarudhar has twice refused officials from the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) who suggested institutional care for the girls.

Although sponsorship under CNCP is available, it has not yet been provided to Pramila and Damayanti. According to officials, the sponsorship target for Nuapada district is a mere 41 children, far fewer than the actual number in need. "The target allowed is very less, considering the great number of the destitute in need of care and protection in Nuapada district," said chairman, Child Welfare Committee (CWC) Fanindam Deo.

"There is a need to increase the sponsorship target but at the same time the monitoring unit has to be strengthened by staff support for effective monitoring," he added.

## 2 schools run sans teachers in P'mundai

30 schools with single teacher

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

The primary education has taken a backseat at Pattamundai with two primary schools functioning without a teacher. Similarly, 30 primary schools are operating with a single teacher.

All this thanks to the callous attitude of the School and Mass Education Department in addressing the teachers' vacancy in the block.

According to official sources, as many as 20,089 students have been studying in 245 primary and upper primary schools, besides 17 Nodal High Schools under Pattamundai Block Education office. However, while 661 teachers are working presently, 151 more teachers are required

for the schools.

If sources are to be believed, posting of new teachers has not been made in Pattamundai block since last 2018. Several primary schools do not have permanent headmasters. Rationalization of students and teachers has been stopped for the last four years. The posts which lay vacant after the retirement of teachers were not filled. While the government has been giving emphasis on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) in the new education policy, it has not been successful here. The Telipatana Primary School and Jaria Project Primary School have been functioning without a teacher. Meanwhile, several school managing committees and guardians have urged the Patamundai Block Education officer to provide the required number of teachers to the schools.

## IN BRIEF

### SARAT BARIK BJP KHORDHA DIST MEDIA COORDINATOR

Khordha: The Khordha district BJP has appointed Sarat Chandra Barik as district media coordinator. BJP district president Rashmi Ranjan Mohapatra informed about the appointment of Barik, who is well-known as a strong organiser and a social activist. He is also working as the District Correspondent in a national daily.



### ARMED MISCREANTS LOOT JSPUR LIQUOR SHOP

Jagatsinghpur: About 6 miscreants armed with weapons landed at a roadside liquor shop near Sarala road on Cuttack-Paradip road on Sunday night and looted the shop after overpowering the night watchman. According to liquor shop owner Rashmi Ranjan Mohanty, who lodged an FIR at Tirtol police station, the miscreants broke open the shutters and entered the shop. Later, they transported the liquor cartons stocked inside the shop in a mini truck and looted the cash from the cash counter. Before entering the shop, the miscreants had damaged the CCTV installed outside the shop and tied up night watchman Tapas Khuntia whom the villagers rescued after the miscreants fled from the spot. Meanwhile, police and excise personnel have started an investigation.

### JSPUR VILLAGERS HOLD DEMO AT RWSS OFFICE

Jagatsinghpur: On Monday, a section of villagers from Tartanga village under Jagatsinghpur block, staged a demonstration in front of the RWSS department division office demanding potable pipe water supply to their villages and a

## KIMS to offer free cleft lip surgeries from Aug



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The KIMS here has announced a new initiative to offer free cleft lip and cleft palate surgeries starting next month. The move aims to benefit patients from all sections of society and is being launched in association with the Smile Foundation.

The idea for this initiative developed last year when a family inquired about the availability of cleft lip and palate surgeries at the KIMS. Recognising the need for such services, the KIMS decided to make these life-changing sur-

geries accessible to everyone.

The announcement was made on Monday during the celebration of World Plastic Surgery Day by a team of senior functionaries from KIMS, including Principal Prof (Dr) AP Mohanty, Medical Superintendent; Prof RC Das, advisor to the KIIT & KIMS founder; Dr RN Samanta; and senior advisor Dr PK Patnaik. Dr Samir Kumar Patel, Assistant Professor, noted that the average incidence of cleft lip and palate worldwide is 1 in 700 live births, emphasising the importance of making these surgeries available to all.

## Student's death due to wall collapse NHRC notice to Baleswar DM, SP, DEO

RAJESH BEHERA ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on July 15 sought for an Action Taken Report (ATR) from the district Collector, Superintendent of Police and District Education Officer of Baleswar district on the issue of death of a student due to wall collapse.

The NHRC passed the order acting on a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer and rights defender, Radhakanta Tripathy.

The petitioner earlier had drawn attention of the Commission towards a shocking incident on June 28, when a 10-year-old student died, after the wall of a water tank collapsed on him in a school premises at Padmapur in Baleswar district. The deceased was identified as Narayan

Tudu, a class V student of Banchhanidhi English Medium School.

The incident took place when he along with other hostel inmates went to wash their hands near the water tank, after completing breakfast. He was rescued from under the debris of the wall and rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital where doctors declared him dead. Several other students also sustained injuries in the mishap, the petition contended.

Tripathy earlier requested to ensure justice in the matter, an independent and impartial investigation of the incident with the legal action against the culprits and payment of compensation to the next of kin (NoK) of the deceased student. The NHRC asked the authorities to ensure the needful action and submit their ATR to the Commission within four weeks.

## In Brahmapur

# Man held for killing moneylender over loan

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR

A body of a moneylender, Arun Kumar Patro, was found in Brahma Nagar under the Baidyanathpur police station of Brahmapur on July 11.

Police after investigation revealed that Arun was killed due to a loan dispute.

The prime suspect, Sambit Kumar Mahapatra (28), has been arrested; and during interrogation, he confessed to the crime. The case, initially registered as an unnatural death, has now been classified as a murder. Sambit was ar-

rested by Baidyanathpur police and presented in court on Tuesday (July 16).

According to the police, the incident came to light when Arun's body was found near a garbage dump. Initial investigations suggested an unnatural death.

However, further probing revealed that Arun had been killed. Arun, a moneylender, had lent Rs 6 lakh to Sambit, who invested it in the stock market. Unfortunately, Sambit faced losses and was unable to repay the loan.

Arun repeatedly demanded his money back,

which led to frequent altercations between the two. Sambit, unable to bear the pressure and fearing that Arun would reveal the matter to his family, hatched a plan to murder him. On July 10 night, Sambit bought some biryani and mixed it with rat killer poison. He then offered the poisoned biryani to Arun, who consumed it. Shortly after eating, Arun collapsed, leading to his death due to the poison.

To cover up his crime, Sambit dragged Arun's body to a nearby garbage dump and disposed of his mobile phone in a nearby sand pit. He then fled the scene.

Police, upon discovering Arun's body and mobile phone, launched an investigation. It was revealed that both men had been in contact on the day of the incident and had partied together that night, Baidyanathpur IIC Suchitra Parida said.

Police have recovered Arun's mobile phone and gathered crucial evidence linking Sambit to the murder. Further investigations are ongoing to uncover more details related to the case.

## Transparent transfer process begins in BeMC

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) has initiated a significant administrative reform aimed at ensuring fairness and efficiency within the organisation. In a move to address concerns over the equitable distribution of staff transfers, the BeMC administration and the Housing and Urban Development (H and UD) Department will oversee all employee transfers across BeMC departments.

The decision comes amidst previous challenges where influential staff members managed to evade transfers, raising questions about impartiality. "There is a necessity of a transparent and impartial transfer process to maintain a balanced working environment. The initiative with the H and UD Department aims to eliminate undue influence and foster a culture of fairness and efficiency," Mayor Sanghamitra Dalai said.

The comprehensive transfer process is expected to impact numerous employees across

various departments, ensuring no department faces disproportionate staffing issues. Specific details regarding the transfer procedures and timelines will be disclosed in an upcoming official statement from the BeMC.

In a related news, the BeMC has taken steps to address personnel concerns within its administrative framework. Steno Surendra Choudhury, who continued his duties after retiring in 2021, faced criticism from corporators for alleged unauthorised continuation. In response to these concerns, the corporation proposed appointing senior employee Kamakhya Prasad Khadanga as the new personal assistant. Despite challenges posed by ongoing election regulations, Mayor Dalai confirmed the decision to remove Choudhury and appoint Khadanga, pending an official statement. "These developments mark crucial steps towards enhancing administrative integrity and efficiency within the Brahmapur Municipal Corporation (BeMC)," Mayor Dalai added.

## MSCBU observes 27th Foundation Day



Felicitations of eminent persons, plantation drive held

KAVI VISHNU SATPATHY ■ BARIPADA

The Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanjdeo University (MSCBU) here observed its 27th Foundation Day on Saturday. It was marked by a glittering ceremony as well as a plantation drive.

The meeting was presided over by Vice-Chancellor Prof Santosh Kumar Tripathy.

While State Housing and Urban Development Minister Dr Krushna Chandra Mohapatra was the chief guest on the occasion, Mayurbhanj MP Naba Charan Majhi was the guest of honour. Baripada MLA Prakash Chandra Soren and Saraskana MLA Bhadrav Chandra Hansdah were also guests at the celebration. All

the speakers spoke of the need of taking Mayurbhanj to new heights of glory. Former Professor and writer Dr Kavita Barik, cine-artist Asit Pati and administrator Rajanikant Biswal were felicitated on the occasion with "Bhoomi Gaurav Samman-2024".

Prominent among others who were present at the meeting and honoured with citations include Professors Prafulla Mishra, Kishore Basa, Sudarsan Nanda and Pradeep Chand, all former Vice-chancellors of the university. While PG Council Chairman Professor Hemant Kumar Sahu delivered the welcome speech at the outset, Registrar Sahadev Samadhia read out the annual report and University Development Officer Basant Kumar Mohanta proposed the vote of thanks.

Successful students were given awards on the occasion for their excellence in their respective faculties.



nearby old age home. The agitators raised their voices against the RWSS authority, for their negligent act of not supplying pipe water to their village, which is causing immense hardships to them. Even inmates living in an old age home are being deprived of water. A memorandum was submitted before the Superintendent Engineer, RWSS. Arabinda Sahani, Satyabrata Parija, and Soumya Ranjan Jena among others were present.

### SEPTUAGENARIAN CRUSHED UNDER TRAIN WHEELS IN JSPUR

Jagatsinghpur: A septuagenarian man, Padmanava Sethy, hailing from Balia village under Kujang block, was crushed under train wheels adjacent to the Badabandha railway station on the Cuttack-Paradeep rail line on Sunday. Sethy was walking on the railway track towards his village when all of a sudden a goods train coming in opposite direction hit him, who died on the spot.

### KCT HOLDS MASS THREAD CEREMONY IN BRAHMAPUR



BRAHMAPUR: Kanha Charitable Trust (KCT), a leading socio-cultural organisation, conducted a Samuhika Bratopanayan Mahotsav (mass thread ceremony) at the Hillpatna Sidhi Binayak temple Kalyan Mandap here recently. Six needy Brahmin boys of Ganjam district became Brahmacharis according to the Vedic rituals. This event was held by the Trust's president and noted social worker Ranjana Misra. Dignitaries, social activists and intellectuals graced the event to bless the Brahmacharis.

### 1 DIES, 2 HURT AS BIKE HITS TREE IN SUNDARGARH

Rourkela: A youth was killed and two others were critically injured when their bike hit a roadside tree under the Dharuadih police station in Sundargarh district on Tuesday. The deceased along with two others was going from Kapatpurpria to Banki by the bike.

# Odisha's poor healthcare leads to rampant rights violations

Recently, malaria has reached alarming levels in Rayagada district of Odisha, with more than 100 students from an Ashram school at Anchabadi village in Kalyansingpur block testing positive for the disease within the past week. The school is managed by the SC and ST Development Department.

With the disease spreading rapidly among the students, there is growing concern that the general population may also be at risk.

Health officials are on high alert in Kuttinga village under Laxmipur block, Koraput after a person was reportedly found positive for anthrax and many others suspected to have been affected by the bacterial illness. Local sources indicate that villagers of Kuttinga allegedly consumed contaminated meat from dead cattle a few days



RABINDRA MISHRA

ago.

In April 2024, a malaria outbreak was reported in tribal villages at the foothills of Niyamgiri hills in Muniguda and Kalyansingpur blocks, where affected individuals received treatment. Just last month, the block faced a Diphtheria outbreak in some regions of Odisha that claimed

many lives. The State also witnessed a spurt in diarrhoea, Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and jaundice cases in several districts due to contamination of water sources, and it is revealing a gap in vaccination, awareness and health services efforts despite records indicating achievement of targets.

Despite claims of ongoing measures, efforts to sensitise the citizens have been limited to accessible areas, leaving the most remote regions of Odisha neglected. Not only the remote regions, a state government audit report reveals that, more than 8 lakh people in the city of Brahmapur and nearby regions are drinking contaminated water which causes malaria, dengue, diarrhoea and other water borne diseases and it is due to irresponsibilities of PHED or RWSS officials who are not treating the water

through WTP and ETP. So just think, if a Municipal Corporation area is not getting the safe drinking water then how the remote regions will be safe.

Human rights, gender and equity related barriers to health services can make people more vulnerable to infection, more likely to experience poorer health outcomes, and make it harder to access HIV, TB, dengue, diphtheria, Japanese Encephalitis (JE), jaundice and malaria services. These diseases can also exacerbate inequality, impoverish people, and make them more vulnerable to human rights violations. Not only do these barriers hinder access to health services, but many also constitute human rights violations themselves. Lack of preparedness, screening, sanitation, hygiene, safety, responsibility and accountability of public servants

and public representatives towards the most vulnerable sections and regions in our society are the veritable challenges before the authorities.

Eliminating HIV, TB, dengue, diphtheria, jaundice, Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and malaria related stigma and discrimination in all settings, ensuring non-discriminatory provision of healthcare, legal literacy to know the human rights violations, increasing access to legal services and supporting the affected people, improving laws, regulations and policies are some of the key steps.

Besides, by reducing health related gender discrimination, harmful gender norms and violence against women and girls, including trans and gender diverse people, initiating community mobilization and human rights advocacy to put

robust chlorination systems in place for disinfection of all drinking water supply sources in rural areas and regular monitoring of water quality to provide safe drinking water to the interior villages and cities and laying a motorable road to the remote regions to save the pregnant women, elderlies, children and vulnerable people are also essential measures to keep people safe from infection.

Various reports have revealed that Odisha's overall health index and performance indicators have not improved. Rayagada, Kalahandi, Malkangiri, Koraput and Kandhamal have recorded maximum malaria cases fueling the numbers of infected in the State. The Government of India and Odisha have been focusing on inclusive growth and taken various steps to pro-

vide access to the basic services and promote welfare of the people in the country. In this direction, various schemes have been launched such as National Health Mission to provide health services, Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PMJAY), BSKY (Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana) to provide health cover, Swachh Bharat Mission to provide access to toilets in households, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) to provide connectivity to unconnected habitations, and many other programs to provide social, economic and financial assistance to the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social security and health schemes etc. But the ground level implementation of these schemes is slow; appointment of skilled and hon-

est health officials is decreasing, monitoring is poor, corruption is rampant while political favouritism, capitalism and nepotism are ruining the health services. Due to these problems, health services in Odisha is affected and there is a large scale violation of human rights in the State. The Human Rights Commission envisioned an inclusive society where everyone takes responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights where everyone is valued and treated with equal dignity and respect; and where everyone's human rights are a lived reality.

Therefore, the new government may promote human rights in the State by providing basic healthcare services by reducing the inequality, corruption, barriers to health services and reach out to the unreachable areas of the State.

# Exam panel receives feedback on curbing lapses in exam process

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Laying down norms for any irregularities or lapses in the exam process, no normalisation of marks, infrastructure checks at exam centres and proper communication to candidates in case of schedule changes are among thousands of suggestions the Centre's high-level exam reform panel has received from stakeholders. According to sources, a majority of these suggestions have come from students.

"Some aspirants have suggested laying down clear norms in case of any lapses. Like the grace marks issue, aspirants want to know what will happen in a given scenario, what the options are and what formula will be used. There are also complaints about some centres being too far off and not having the required infrastructure," a source said.

"There are concerns about the normalisation process too. Some aspirants have suggested against it, some have asked for transparency in the process so scores are neither inflated nor



drastically reduced," the source added.

Headed by former ISRO chief R Radhakrishnan, the committee tasked with reviewing the National Testing Agency's functioning had sought suggestions, views and ideas from stakeholders, particularly students and parents, between June 27 and July 7 through the MyGov platform.

The panel has received over 37,000 responses from students, parents, coaching insti-

tutions, school teachers, academic institutions and even career counsellors among others. It is supposed to submit its report within two months. In the line of fire over alleged irregularities in the medical entrance examination NEET and PhD entrance NET, the Centre last month set up the panel to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations through the National Testing Agency (NTA).

While NEET is under the scanner over several irregularities, including alleged leaks, UGC-NET was cancelled as the Ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam had been compromised. Both matters are being probed by the CBI. Two other exams - CSIR-UGC NET and NEET PG - were cancelled at the last moment as a pre-emptive step. The panel also includes former AIIMS Delhi director Randeep Guleria, Central University of Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor B J Rao, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Civil Engineering at IIT Madras K Ramamurthy, People Strong co-founder and Karmayogi Bharat board member Pankaj Bansal, IIT Delhi Dean of Student Affairs Aditya Mittal and MoE Joint Secretary Govind Jaiswal. The committee has also been tasked with examining the existing security protocols related to the setting of the papers and other processes for various examinations and making recommendations to enhance the robustness of the system.

# India protests Zelensky's remarks against PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Moscow, India has conveyed to Kyiv its displeasure over the remarks, diplomatic sources said on Monday. It is learnt that India's disappointment over the comments by Zelensky was communicated to Ukraine's mission in Delhi. New Delhi's views on the comments (by Zelensky) were conveyed to Kyiv, the sources said. There was no official word on the matter yet. Last Tuesday, the Ukrainian president described Modi's visit to Moscow as a "huge" disappointment and a "devastating blow" to peace efforts. In a social media post on, Zelensky specifically referred to Russia's missile attacks on Ukraine including on a children's hospital in Kyiv. "A Russian missile struck the largest children's hospital in Ukraine, targeting young cancer patients. Many were buried under the rubble," Zelensky said. "It is a huge disappointment and a devastating blow



to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal in Moscow on such a day," he said. Modi visited Moscow on July 8 and 9 in his first trip to Russia since its invasion of Ukraine.

In his summit talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Modi, delivering an unambiguous message, said a solution to the Ukraine conflict is not possible on the battlefield and peace talks do not succeed amidst bombs, guns and bullets. In his televised opening remarks, Modi said the killing of innocent children is heart-wrenching

and very painful in a reference to the strike in the children's hospital in Kyiv. "Let's take war, any conflict or terrorist acts: any person who believes in humanity feels pain when people die, and especially when innocent children die. When we feel such pain, the heart simply explodes, and I had the opportunity to talk about these issues with you yesterday," Modi told Putin. The Ohmادت Children's Hospital in Kyiv was hit after Russia unleashed a barrage of missiles on cities across Ukraine on July 8. At least 38 people, including two in the hospital, were killed in the strikes.

# UP provides 84 per cent rural homes with tap water

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh Government on Tuesday informed the Centre that more than two lakh rural households in the State have been provided with tap water connection with water-scarce Bundelkhand region having an average of 90 per cent coverage. The Government made a presentation before the Jal Shakti Ministry in which these findings were shared. According to the presentation, 2,23,86,760 rural families (84.19 per cent) have been provided with tap connections under the 'Har Ghar Nal Se Jal' scheme as of Monday. The Jal Jeevan Mission aims to provide tap water connection to all rural households in the country by this year. Till now, about 77.55 per cent rural households have been provided with tap water connections, according to the official data. All districts of Bundelkhand have over 90 per cent coverage, according to the State Government.

# India inaugurates Asia's first CEPI 'Pre-clinical Network Facility'



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Joining a network of pre-clinical hi-tech labs that include counterparts in the USA, Europe, and Australia, India can now boast to house Asia's pioneering 'Pre-clinical Network Facility' set up under the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) at the Regional Centre of Biotechnology, Faridabad. It was inaugurated by Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh on Tuesday. The facility is equipped to handle BSL3 pathogens and features one of the largest small animal facilities in the country, capable of housing around 75,000 mice along with other species for experimental purposes. This infrastructure will support high-impact research and development efforts related to epidemic preparedness and vaccine development.

BSL-3 laboratories are used to study infectious agents or toxins that may be transmitted through the air and cause potentially lethal infections. Researchers perform all experiments in a biosafety cabinet. In addition, Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated the "Genetically Defined Human Associated Microbial Culture Collection" (Ge-HuMic) facility. This new repository will provide microbial cultures to research institutions, universities, and industries, fostering national and international research collaborations. The facility will also offer genetically characterized specific pathogen-free animals, including cryopreserved

embryos and sperm, supporting researchers across India, said the Minister.

The Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), a part of the Biotechnology Research and Innovation Council (BRIC), has played a key role in facilitating over a dozen agreements and MoUs with the private sector. These agreements focus on vaccine development for Nipah Virus, Influenza, and other respiratory diseases, further advancing innovative research and translational science in the country.

Speaking at the 14th Foundation Day of THSTI, Dr. Jitendra Singh praised the institute's accomplishments over a short span of 14 years, noting its critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic. He acknowledged the contributions of Dr. M.K. Bhan established the facility and emphasized the Department of Biotechnology's progress despite resource constraints. Dr. Singh highlighted the importance of the institute's contributions to vaccine development and its alignment with the Prime Minister's vision for a TB-free India. He also addressed contemporary health challenges, including lifestyle-related metabolic diseases and the global adoption of kangaroo mother care practices.

The event was attended by Dr. Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary of DBT, Dr. K. Shrinath Reddy, former President of the Public Health Foundation of India, and Dr. Kathikeyan, Director of THSTI among others.

# WHO urges Southeast Asia to expand rehabilitation services

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that approximately 590 million people in the South-East Asia Region require rehabilitation services - particularly for conditions such as low back pain, vision loss, fractures, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) - the World Health Organization (WHO) on Tuesday urged countries in the region to accelerate access to rehabilitative and assistive technology services. These measures are crucial for enhancing quality of life and fostering community participation.

Additionally, the WHO called for the integration of basic rehabilitation into routine health services and the expansion of innovative care models to ensure equitable access, particularly for those in remote and underserved areas. "Rehabilitation services encompass a wide range of essential support systems, from physical therapy for injury recovery to counselling for mental health and addiction recovery. These services are not merely about medical treatment; they are about restoring dignity,

hope, and the ability to participate fully in society," said Saima Wazed, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia.

Emphasising the urgency of the situation, she added, "The last 20 years' trends depict that the need for rehabilitation is increasing in South-East Asia region, and will further elevate in coming years, given the increasing prevalence of conditions associated with ageing and non-communicable diseases (NCDs)." Rehabilitation is a set of interventions designed to optimize functioning and reduce disability in individuals with health conditions in interaction with their environment.

Primary healthcare facilities often lack sufficient rehabilitation services and benefit packages offer inadequate coverage. Additionally, there is a significant shortage of healthcare professionals in this field. "People and communities must be engaged and empowered, with a focus on increasing health literacy and enhancing demand for rehabilitation services, including assistive technologies," said Wazed.

# Govt urges retailers to ensure pulse prices are affordable

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Consumer Affairs organised a meeting with Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Tuesday to discuss the price scenario in respect of pulses and compliance to the stock limits for Tur and Chana prescribed in the Removal of Licensing Requirements, Stock Limits and Movement Restrictions on Specified Foodstuffs (First and Second Amendments) Order, 2024 dated 21.06.2024 and 11.07.2024. The meeting was chaired by Nidhi Khare, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs. RAI has more than 2300 members and has about 6,00,000 outlets in the country. The meeting was attended by representatives of RAI, Reliance Retail, D Mart, Tata Stores, Spencer's, RSPG, V Mart among others. During the meetin, the Secretary, informed that prices of Chana, Tur and Urad in major mandis had declined by up to 4 percent in past one month, but retail prices have not seen similar decline. She



pointed out the diverging trends between wholesale mandi prices and retail prices, which seems to suggest that retailers are deriving higher profit margin. She also pointed out that sowing progress for Kharif pulses are robust.

The Government has undertaken numerous efforts in facilitating enhanced production of Tur and Urad in major Kharif pulses producing States, including distribution of good quality seeds to farmers through NAFED and NCCF and the Department of Agriculture is in continuous engagement with the State Agriculture Departments to provide all necessary support. Considering the current price scenario and Kharif outlook,

Khare asked retail industry to extend all possible support to the Government in its efforts to keep prices of dals affordable to the consumers. She informed that stock positions of all stockholding entities, including that of big chain retailers are being closely monitored to ensure that the prescribed limits are not breached. Breach of stock limits, unscrupulous speculation and profiteering on the part of market players would invite stern actions from the Government. Retail industry participants assured that they would make necessary adjustments in their retail margins and maintain at nominal level to ensure availability of prices at affordable prices to the consumers.

# SC to hear Haryana's plea against removal of barricades at Shambhu border

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court will on July 22 hear the Haryana Government's plea challenging a high court order giving it a week to remove barricades at the Shambhu border near Ambala where farmers have been camping since February 13.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan on Tuesday agreed to list the matter for next Monday after senior additional advocate general Lokesh Sinhal, appearing for the state Government, said the issue requires urgent consideration. The appeal filed through advocate Akshay Amritanshu against the July 10 order of the high court said it is limited to

the impugned direction that the Haryana should open the Shambhu border within a week on an experimental basis so the general public is not inconvenienced.

The Haryana Government had set up the barricades on the Ambala-New Delhi national highway after the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha announced that farmers would march to Delhi in support of various demands, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

"It is humbly submitted that though the petitioner is most concerned about any inconvenience of any kind caused to general public, the present SLP



has been filed on an urgent basis..." the plea said. The state Government said the high court while dealing with the issue did not pass any orders on its affidavit where it had specifically pleaded that the barricading can only be removed if the farmers shift their dharna from the National Highway.

It said the affidavit before the high court spoke of the likelihood of tension, annoyance, obstruction, sabotage of public or private property, injury to persons lawfully employed and risk to damage to human life and property, disturbance of public peace and public order within Haryana/Punjab by the agitators.

"Despite the categorical submission regarding law and order issue that may arise, the threat to life and property and despite a plea to shift the agitators out of the National Highway, the high court has on an 'experimental basis' directed for opening of the Shambhu Border without passing any directions against the agitators," it said. The Haryana

Government said law and order is a state subject under the Constitution and it is entirely the state's responsibility to assess ground realities, threat perception, likelihood of breach of peace and violation of law.

It pointed out that the high court order records that 400-500 trolleys and 50-60 other vehicles with a gathering of around 500 agitators are still at site at Shambhu Border but no directions have been passed to these "illegally agitating groups" to vacate the highway, to stop causing inconvenience and to stop creating law and order issues.

On July 12, while hearing a related matter, the top court asked the Haryana

Government to remove the barricades and questioned its authority to block the highway. "How can a state block a highway? It has a duty to regulate traffic. We are saying open it but regulate," the bench had said on June 12 after the counsel informed the bench about the state's intention of filing an appeal in the apex court.

The top court had made the observations while hearing a plea of the Haryana Government challenging a March 7 Punjab and Haryana High Court decision to set up a committee headed by a former high court judge to probe the death of a farmer during a clash between the protesting farmers and Haryana security personnel in February.

# India's e-mobility R&D roadmap proposes Aadhaar for batteries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's e-mobility R&D roadmap has suggested an Aadhaar number for batteries to keep a digital record of its material composition, usage history and end of life management as part of efforts to streamline the recycling process. The suggestion is part of the eMobility R&D Roadmap for India, released by Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government Prof A K Sood, that lists out 34 research projects to become self-reliant and emerge as a global leader in providing innovative mobility solutions.

"This roadmap aims to fill critical gaps in the current research and development framework. While many iden-

tified projects are yet to achieve global success, some areas already demonstrate significant international accomplishments where India is yet to commence preparations," said Prof Karthick Athmanathan, a member of the Consultative Group of e-Mobility Advisory Committee.

The roadmap has listed 34 projects for research and development across four broad areas - energy storage cells, EV aggregates, materials and recycling, charging and refueling. Among the projects listed for R&D is development of a battery Aadhaar system that would help adopt efficient recycling procedures for batteries that are more beneficial to the environment. "It is a completely thought out



standardization of a 16-digit number, which will provide complete information about the battery pack. It will help us in the battery's second use, recyclability and everything during the life-cycle of that battery," said Abhijit Mulay, Deputy Director, Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI). A similar project called

the battery passport is underway in Germany with financial support from the federal Government in Berlin. In the Indian context, the roadmap suggested development of the battery Aadhaar standardized system or protocol to improve sustainability, efficiency and safety in manufacturing, usage and recycling by providing a detailed information about each battery's composition, usage history and end-of-life management.

The proposed Aadhaar numeric barcode for each battery would contain the data and description about the battery manufacturing year, lithium import, electrode materials, cell localization, manufacturing history, battery chemistry, battery capacity, manufacturing

location and battery potting. "This information will be more convenient to recyclers for streamlining the recycling process," Mulay said. Addressing the gathering earlier, Sood said India has set itself a goal to achieve energy independence by 2047 and 30 per cent electric vehicle penetration by 2030 as part of efforts to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070. The e-Mobility R&D Roadmap has assigned high priority to this project due to the significant need for digital data storage, transparency, traceability and localization of batteries. The roadmap stated that determination of these parameters will aid in second life applications as well as recycling and management of batteries.

# NIA arrests four key accused in trafficking of Indian youths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested four key accused involved in luring and trafficking Indian youth to foreign countries on the pretext of offering them jobs.

The accused arrested on Monday have been identified as Manjoor Alam alias Guddu of Delhi, Sahil and Ashish alias Akhil of Bahadurgarh (Haryana), and Pawan Yadav alias Afroz alias Afzal of Siwan (Bihar), according to a press statement issued by the agency.

They were part of an organised trafficking syndicate involved in luring and traf-

ficking Indian youth to foreign countries on the pretext of offering them lucrative jobs, NIA's investigations have revealed. The trafficked youth were forced to work in fake call centres at Laos, Golden Triangle SEZ, among other places in the South East Asian region, as part of the massive network being operated by foreign nationals through operatives based in various parts of India, Laos, and other countries," said the statement issued by the federal probe agency.

Through these call centres, the youth were coerced into carrying out illegal online activities such as investment scams, relationship scams, and cryp-

tocurrency scams, it said. The NIA, which had taken over the case from Delhi Police on June 19 this year, is continuing with its investigations to dismantle all such human trafficking syndicates. In May, the agency conducted extensive searches in 15 locations across six states and two Union territories, in collaboration with the respective state/UT police.

The searches led to the registration of eight new FIRs in human trafficking and cyber fraud cases. Subsequently, in June, the NIA charge sheeted five accused, including foreign nationals, in a similar case in Mumbai.

# Cauvery row: K'taka Deputy CM appeals to TN to cooperate on Mekedatu project

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Tuesday made a passionate appeal to the Tamil Nadu government to cooperate with the implementation of the Mekedatu project across river Cauvery which, he said, would be more beneficial to the neighbouring State. He also expressed hope about "problems in releasing water to Tamil Nadu to get sorted out, if god permits" and the rains continue in the Cauvery catchment areas of Karnataka. "One thing I would like to appeal to Tamil Nadu, for your interest and our interest. More than our interest it is your interest, this Mekedatu reservoir, you just permit us, whatever storage we will do, we will give you that water, we can't take back that water," Shivakumar said. Speaking to reporters here, he said: "It is my humble appeal on behalf of the people of Karnataka, where all selections -- Tamilians, Kannadigs, Andhraites and people from North India -- are there. It is for Bengaluru for drinking water and it is for you (Tamil Nadu). Please permit us for Makedatu, don't object, we will cooperate in whatever way we can." Mekedatu is a multi-purpose (drinking water and power) project proposed by Karnataka, which involves building a balancing reservoir near Kanakapura in Ramanagara district. Tamil Nadu has been opposing the project, raising apprehensions that the state would be affected if the project takes shape. The project, once completed, is aimed at



ensuring drinking water to Bengaluru and neighbouring areas (4.75 tmcft); it also can generate 400 MW power, and the estimated cost of the project is Rs 9,000 crore (2019 rates), according to Karnataka officials. A separate Project Division and two Sub-Divisions have already been set up to implement the ambitious 'Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir and drinking water project of Cauvery river valley', Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had said, presenting the state budget in February. "A survey to identify land that will be submerged under this project and the counting process of trees have already been initiated," he had also said, adding, "action will be taken on priority to

commence the work early after obtaining remaining necessary clearances from the competent authorities." Responding to a question regarding Tamil Nadu holding an all party meeting about getting Cauvery water for the state from Karnataka, Shivakumar said: "Tamil Nadu has every right to meet as we met, we don't object to their meeting, I don't want to comment on that." He said: "At the same time from yesterday I'm getting good inflow, more than 50,000 cusecs inflow in Cauvery region, whatever is there we are allowing the water to go out of Harangi (dam), I think more than 20,000 cusecs was going out from Harangi and other places. If gods permit us, all our problems will be sorted out." Asked if his government will honour the directive of the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) to release one tmcft of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu if rains continue at this rate, Shivakumar said: "of course, of course, we have to (release), we will. Whatever the inflow is coming, we are not holding it, we are leaving it to Mettur (in Tamil Nadu)." Siddaramaiah had after an all party meeting on Sunday said the government was ready to release 8,000 cusecs of water from the Cauvery river every day to Tamil Nadu instead of one tmcft (11,500 cusecs). The storage in the four reservoirs in the Cauvery basin stood at 63 per cent of the total capacity and, in this situation, the state was not in a position to release one tmcft water every day, the Chief Minister had said.

# Bullet train project: Bridge over Kolak river completed, nine out of 24 bridges on route constructed

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The National High-Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) has finished constructing a 160-metre bridge over the Kolak river in Gujarat's Valsad district as part of the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project, an official said on Tuesday. With this, nine out of 24 river bridges on the 508-km corridor have been completed, the NHSRCL said in its latest update. The bridge between Vapi and Bilimora stations comprises four full-span girders of 40 meters each, it said. Kolak River is seven kilometres from Vapi and 43 km from Bilimora railway stations. The river originates from Saputara hills near Valveri and meets the Arabian Sea, the NHSRCL said. According to the NHSRCL, bridges have been constructed on the rivers Par and Auranga in Valsad, Purna, Mindhola, Ambika and Venganiya in Navsari, Mohar in Kheda and Dhadhar in Vadodara district. Bridge construction on Narmada, Tapti, Mahi and Sabarmati rivers was underway, it said. The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train corridor will have 12 stations on its 508-km route, of which eight will be in Gujarat and four in Maharashtra. Stations will come up at Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, Anand, Vadodara, Bharuch, Surat, Bilimora and Vapi in Gujarat, and Boisar, Virar, Thane and Mumbai in Maharashtra. The NHSRCL said the construction of stations was progressing rapidly, with the foundation work on all eight stations in Gujarat completed and the construction



of superstructures at an advanced stage. The stations will have modern and advanced facilities and amenities for passengers, and some were being developed as transport hubs through integration with all basic modes of transportation, such as autos, buses and taxis, for faster and hassle-free connectivity. As of July 2, all civil contracts have been awarded, and 190 km of the viaduct and 321 km of pier work were completed, the NHSRCL stated in its update. The land required for the project has been acquired in Gujarat, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Maharashtra. The first mountain tunnel of 350 metres near Zaroli village in Valsad has been completed, and work has commenced on

the country's first 7-km undersea rail tunnel, which is a part of 21 km long tunnel between BKC and Shilphata in Maharashtra, it said. The government aims to run the bullet train's first phase between Surat and Bilimora in south Gujarat by 2026. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe launched the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project in Gujarat on September 14, 2017. The 508-km route is expected to be covered in three to three-and-a-half hours. The high-speed rail line being built using Japan's Shinkansen technology has been funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).



# 98% crimes against women, children in Goa detected: CM in Assembly

PTI ■ PANAJI

The Goa police have achieved a 98 per cent detection rate in crimes against women and children this year, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant informed the state legislative assembly on Tuesday. Sawant was responding to a Calling Attention motion moved by BJP MLA Michael Lobo, citing the murder of a senior citizen in his constituency, Calangute. A senior citizen was killed by an assailant in his house in Candolim village on Sunday. The accused has been arrested from neighbouring Karnataka, the chief minister said. During the discussion, he said police verification of all tenants has been made mandatory.

"There is 98 per cent detection of crime against women and children this year. There is awareness amongst victims to come forward to lodge complaints," he said. The average detection has been 84 per cent for crimes against women and children since 2019, Sawant said. Legislators from the opposition benches, including AAP MLA Venzy Viegas, demanded that CCTV cameras installed in public places and at private establishments be connected to local police stations. The chief minister agreed to the suggestion and said measures would be taken to ensure that all CCTV cameras, including ones in private establishments, were connected to respective police stations.

# T'gana CM urges DCs to undertake field visits to understand people's problems

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday said district Collectors should undertake field visits to understand people's problems. Speaking at a conference of district Collectors, Superintendents of Police and other officials, he said officials should make decisions with a humane touch and that they will not have job satisfaction if they are confined to "AC rooms." The Collectors need to balance development and welfare in discharging their duties, an official release

quoted him as saying. Observing that the officials belong to different states, he said they can serve people better if they become part of Telangana's culture. Noting that the government spends Rs 85,000 per month for every poor student, Revanth Reddy said the Collectors should see to it that the education system is not hurt in any way, it said. The Collectors should supervise government schools and hospitals. They should also ensure the transparent implementation of the six poll guarantees of the ruling Congress, he said.

He suggested taking up 'geo-tagging' to safeguard government lands against encroachments. The Chief Minister also said steps should be taken to provide Arogya Sri health insurance scheme to all in the state, the release said. He said a 'digital health profile' should be prepared for every citizen in the state. Revanth Reddy said measures should be taken to incentivise doctors who work in rural areas. The Collectors should take measures to see that proper medical treatment is available in tribal areas.

# Andhra Pradesh CM Naidu leaves for New Delhi

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday embarked on his second visit to New Delhi after the TDP-led government came to power after the recently held assembly elections. Following a Cabinet meeting at the Secretariat today, the

chief minister left for New Delhi. Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat, Information & Public Relations Minister K Parthasarathy said that he doesn't exactly know the agenda of the CM's visit to New Delhi but noted that he is going for the betterment of the southern state. "I am not sure of the exact agenda, but the CM is going

for the betterment of the state and also to bring financial help for Andhra Pradesh," said Parthasarathy. However, there is no clarity as to how many days Naidu would stay in New Delhi. Naidu's first visit to New Delhi was in the first week of July after he took oath as the chief minister for the fourth time.

# Preventive detention orders should be passed with extreme care: HC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has urged authorities to pass preventive detention orders with extreme care and caution as a casual approach may deprive a person of his "most precious" fundamental right, his freedom and liberty. A division bench of Justices Bharati Dangle and Manjusha Deshpande on July 2 quashed a preventive detention order passed against a man in October 2023, noting he was not given an opportunity to file a representation against the order, and directed that he be released. The court said it was incumbent on the authority passing the detention order to act in a responsible manner, as it has an effect of depriving a person of his liberty, the most cherished value. "The authority is expected to act with care and caution and see that the detention of the person is in larger interest and strictly for the purpose, which the detention law aims to achieve," the HC said. The bench noted that when a statutory enactment confers an extraordinary power on the executive, such as to detain a



person without recourse to the ordinary laws of land, then such a power has to be exercised with extreme care. "Any casual approach may deprive a citizen of his most precious fundamental right, his freedom and liberty," the court said. The exercise of the power to detain a person preventively shall be balanced against injustice to the person, who is detained, it said. Rakesh Jejurkar was detained in October 2023 to prevent him from smuggling goods, abetting smuggling of goods and engaging in transport or concealing smuggled goods in future.

The Government of India's joint secretary passed the order under provisions of the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act. It was alleged that the detainee was a habitual offender and was a key player in the smuggling of Areca nuts from Dubai to India. The HC said when a person is detained preventively, then the ordinary laws of land, then such a power has to be exercised with extreme care. "Any casual approach may deprive a citizen of his most precious fundamental right, his freedom and liberty," the court said. The exercise of the power to detain a person preventively shall be balanced against injustice to the person, who is detained, it said. Rakesh Jejurkar was detained in October 2023 to prevent him from smuggling goods, abetting smuggling of goods and engaging in transport or concealing smuggled goods in future. safeguards provided under Articles 22 (4) and (5) (a person cannot be kept in preventive detention for more than three months and when a person is detained then he shall be given the earliest opportunity to make a representation against the order) must necessarily be adhered to. The petitioner claimed the detaining authority was not clear in the order as to what activity the authorities intended to prevent. The court set aside the petitioner's detention order and directed for him to be released.

# 5 pilgrims dead in collision on Mumbai-Pune Expressway



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Five pilgrims died and more than 30 were injured after their bus collided with a tractor on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, police said on Tuesday. The deceased were warkaris (devotees of Lord Vitthal) who were on their way to Pandharpur for the Ashadhi Ekadashi celebrations from their hometown Dombivli near Mumbai, police said. The bus collided against the tractor and fell into a gorge around midnight. DCP Vivek Pansare told reporters that a total of 42 passengers from Dombivli were on their way to Pandharpur when their bus hit a tractor near Adne village. The injured were rushed to a nearby of hospital, he said, adding the condition of three of them is serious.

# 'State-sponsored terrorism' taking place in Tripura, claims Cong

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday slammed the BJP over the violence in Tripura, claiming that "state-sponsored terrorism" was taking place there ahead of the panchayat polls and the state was appearing to be treading down a "distressing path, echoing the turmoil witnessed in Manipur". Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has deputed Lok Sabha MPs Tariq Anwar and Gaurav Gogoi as the AICC Observers to Tripura with regard to the recent violence and attacks on party workers and offices by the ruling party after declaration of panchayat elections in the state. Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, Congress leader Ajoy Kumar dubbed the BJP cadres as "congenial rioters" and claimed his party workers are facing continuous unjust and violent situations in Tripura. "In Tripura, under the current BJP administration, life for the Congress workers unfolds in a daily struggle against targeted violence and intimidation simply for their political affiliation. The state has witnessed a disturbing breakdown of law and order, with the ruling party turning a blind eye to these atrocities," Kumar said.



The Congress leader said "state-sponsored terrorism" was being carried out in Tripura. During the recent Lok Sabha elections, over 1,000 incidents of violence and electoral violations were reported, painting a grim picture of the deteriorating democratic norms in Tripura, he said. "Shocking, no substantial actions have been taken against the perpetrators, highlighting a stark disregard for justice and fairness under the current regime," Kumar said. "The plight of Congress workers serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges faced by political dissenters in maintaining their democratic rights amidst an environment marred by unchecked aggression and impunity" he

added. Kumar said the lead-up to the 2023 Tripura Assembly elections revealed the stark reality of violence that has gripped the state. "Workers of the Congress and our alliance partners endured unimaginable atrocities. Both state and AICC leadership faced targeted violence and attacks," he claimed. Hundreds of our dedicated workers were brutally beaten and their properties vandalized at the hands of the ruling regime, the Congress leader alleged. "These reprehensible acts underscore a distressing erosion of democratic values and principles, where dissent is met with aggression and suppression. The rampant use of force and intimidation

tactics by the ruling establishment not only undermines the electoral process but also threatens the very foundation of a fair and free democracy in Tripura," he said. Kumar said the "BJP's track record is marred by incidents of communal violence, a tactic for which they are unfortunately renowned." "A glaring example is Manipur, where historically, the Meiteis and Kukis have coexisted as brethren for generations. However, over the past year, Manipur has been engulfed in flames of discord and unrest," Kumar said. "Similarly, Tripura appears to be treading down a distressing path, echoing the turmoil witnessed in Manipur. The rising tensions and communal strife in these regions underscore a worrisome trend exacerbated under BJP rule," he added. The recent events surrounding the panchayat elections in Tripura have unveiled a distressing narrative of democratic erosion and violence, the Congress leader alleged. "Allegations against the BJP affiliates describe a calculated campaign to stifle opposition voices, employing intimidation tactics ranging from physical assaults on the Congress candidates to the destruction of party offices

and private residences," Kumar said. In light of these developments, it is imperative for authorities to uphold the rule of law impartially and ensure the safety and rights of all citizens, regardless of political affiliation, he added. Kumar said the upcoming panchayat elections "should serve as a testament to the democratic values enshrined in our constitution, free from fear and coercion." As the panchayat poll dates draw near, the BJP's aggression against the Congress party workers intensified, the Congress leader alleged and listed the recent incidents of violence in the state. The "nefarious hands" of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) struck again as they orchestrated an attack on Badal Shil (49), the CPI (M) candidate for South Tripura Zilla Parishad, in Rajnagar, South Tripura, July 12, Kumar said. "Shil's grievous condition compelled his transfer to GBP Hospital in Agartala, where he tragically passed away due to the inflicted injuries," he added. Kumar said these incidents highlight a disturbing trend of political intimidation and violence orchestrated against the opposition members as electoral preparations escalate in the region.

# TN Home Secretary, others transferred in bureaucratic reshuffle



PTI ■ CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Government on Tuesday effected a bureaucratic reshuffle, transferring among others, Principal Home Secretary P Amudha, IAS. She has been replaced with Dheeraj Kumar, currently Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Information Technology and Digital Services Department. Kumar has been allotted the Home, Prohibition and Excise Department. Amudha has been posted as Principal Secretary, Revenue and Disaster Management Department. The government also transferred a number of other senior officials, including

Greater Chennai Corporation Commissioner Dr J Radhakrishnan and posted him as Additional Chief Secretary, Cooperation, Food and Consumer Protection Department, vice Dr K Gopal. Senior IAS officer Kumar Jayant has been transferred and posted as Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Information Technology and Digital Services Department, according to a Public (Special A) Department order. J Kumaragurubaran, Secretary, School Education Department succeeds Radhakrishnan in the city civic body. Similarly, many district collectors were also transferred.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Cycle of terror

### Terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir continue unabated, resulting in a heavy toll on lives

In yet another tragic incident four security personnel lost their lives in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), underscoring the persistent instability in the region. Four Indian Army soldiers, including a Major, were killed in action during an encounter with terrorists in Doda district. This incident highlights the ongoing challenges faced by security forces and raises concerns about the broader implications for peace and security in the area. Despite tall claims to restore order, the frequency and intensity of attacks remain alarming. The recent fatalities among security personnel are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of violence that has plagued Jammu and Kashmir in recent times. The shift of terror incidents and targeted killings to Jammu, which had been peaceful for two decades, represents a significant and concerning development. Since 2021, following the abrogation of Article 370, Jammu has seen a troubling rise in terror attacks and targeted killings, leading to an alarming escalation in violence that has destabilized the region. The counter-terrorism strategies that proved effective in Kashmir may not be suitable for Jammu's unique geopolitical and social landscape. Although past strategic lessons can provide some guidance, the new wave of terror in Jammu requires a new counter-terrorism approach.



A notable change is the decline in stone-pelting and social unrest in Kashmir; however, the militancy and terrorist groups that remained active have now relocated to the Jammu region. These groups often receive support from across the border, complicating the security landscape. Despite significant military operations aimed at curbing militancy, the resilience of these groups remains a significant hurdle. The socio-political environment in Jammu and Kashmir also plays a crucial role in perpetuating violence. Historical grievances, political disenfranchisement, and socio-economic challenges contribute to a fertile ground for militancy. Many local youths, feeling marginalised, are drawn into the cycle of violence, further complicating the security situation. Addressing these underlying issues is vital for any long-term solution to the conflict. The loss of security personnel is not just a statistic; it represents the human cost of the ongoing conflict. Each casualty not only affects the families of the deceased but also has a profound impact on the morale of security forces operating in the region. The high casualty rate raises questions about the effectiveness of current strategies and the need for a re-evaluation of approaches to counter-terrorism and internal security. Following the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, there was a glimmer of hope, but that now appears to be diminishing. Jammu and Kashmir seems to be slipping back into its previous cycle of violence and persecution. To address the unabated violence in Jammu and Kashmir, a multi-faceted approach is essential. This includes not only robust security measures but also concerted efforts towards political dialogue and community engagement.

groups remains a significant hurdle. The socio-political environment in Jammu and Kashmir also plays a crucial role in perpetuating violence. Historical grievances, political disenfranchisement, and socio-economic challenges contribute to a fertile ground for militancy. Many local youths, feeling marginalised, are drawn into the cycle of violence, further complicating the security situation. Addressing these underlying issues is vital for any long-term solution to the conflict. The loss of security personnel is not just a statistic; it represents the human cost of the ongoing conflict. Each casualty not only affects the families of the deceased but also has a profound impact on the morale of security forces operating in the region. The high casualty rate raises questions about the effectiveness of current strategies and the need for a re-evaluation of approaches to counter-terrorism and internal security. Following the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, there was a glimmer of hope, but that now appears to be diminishing. Jammu and Kashmir seems to be slipping back into its previous cycle of violence and persecution. To address the unabated violence in Jammu and Kashmir, a multi-faceted approach is essential. This includes not only robust security measures but also concerted efforts towards political dialogue and community engagement.

### PICTALK



A vendor sells Capsicum at Azadpur Mandi, in New Delhi

# Bypoll results indicate a shifting voter preference



KALYANI SHANKAR

### This outcome raises questions about the stability of the Govt, as the BJP grapples with internal and external pressures to maintain its coalition

The recent results of by-elections for 13 seats in various states are essential for understanding what people think of the major political parties. One month after the 2024 elections, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi won a third term, the INDIA bloc's significant victory in securing ten of the 13 seats has shifted the country's politics. This positive result for the INDIA bloc could weaken the ruling coalition's power. The BJP won 240 seats but fell short of the 272-majority mark in the recent Lok Sabha elections. As a result, the party had to seek the support of NDA allies, which could influence its policy decisions and lead to compromises to maintain the coalition. This situation raises concerns about the government's stability. A boost to the Opposition could create unpredictability within the ruling coalition. Despite securing 240 seats in last month's Lok Sabha polls, the BJP fell short of the 272-majority mark. It had to seek the help of the NDA allies. This reliance could sway the BJP's policy decisions.



The BJP may have to compromise on specific issues to maintain the coalition. There is also a shadow of uncertainty over the government's stability. A substantial boost to the Opposition can shift the balance of power and create a sense of unease and unpredictability in the ruling coalition. The Election Commission conducts the by-polls when a legislative seat becomes vacant. There could be many reasons for a vacant seat. It could be death, resignation, disqualification, or expulsion of a sitting member. Elections are held to fill empty seats when a member of Parliament resigns or dies. Only voters from the area can vote, and there is no party vote. On Wednesday, by-elections were held for 13 assembly seats in Punjab (1), Himachal Pradesh (3), Uttarakhand (2), West Bengal (4), Madhya Pradesh (1), Bihar (1), and Tamil Nadu (1). The Congress, TMC, AAP, and DMK are some of the parties that put forward candidates in the by-elections to test their strength. The INDIA bloc's win significantly boosted the Opposition. They have been a crucial test for the INDIA bloc as it faced the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the first electoral battle after the Lok Sabha Elections 2024. The regional chieftains in the Opposition performed exceptionally well. Trinamool Congress, a key player in the INDIA bloc, secured all four seats in Bengal, a significant victory. At the same time, the surging Congress won two seats each in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, further strengthening its position in these states. The DMK won one seat, and AAP captured Jalandhar West. These diverse outcomes hint at potential shifts in power dynamics, adding a layer of uncertainty to the current political scenario. Also, the BJP securing only two seats and an independent candidate winning in Bihar add a layer of complexity. Typically, the party in power wins the by-election seat. The TMC, DMK,



THERE IS ALSO A SHADOW OF UNCERTAINTY OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S STABILITY. A SUBSTANTIAL BOOST TO THE OPPOSITION CAN SHIFT THE BALANCE OF POWER AND CREATE A SENSE OF UNEASE AND UNPREDICTABILITY IN THE RULING COALITION.

Congress, and Aam Admi Party controlled their states. For the TMC, the results were a shot in the arm just a month after it had bagged 29 parliamentary seats, up from 22 in 2019. In Uttarakhand and Bihar, things were different. The candidates from the ruling parties - BJP and JD(U) - lost. Congress won two out of the three by-elections in Himachal. After the results, the party has 40 members again in the 68-member house. This will bring stability to our government. Bye-elections are a crucial test for political parties and their popularity. Parties gauge public sentiment and assess their support base. They often use by-elections to test campaign strategies, influencing future elections. If the ruling party wins seats in the by-election, it could increase its overall number of seats and have more influence on the government's stability and decision-making. The BJP still needs to improve its performance despite investigating the reasons for its low number of seats in the Lok Sabha elections. This raises questions and potential strains within the party. There are speculations about

a possible strain between the RSS and the BJP, which could negatively affect the RSS's support for the party, adding to tension and uncertainty in the ruling coalition. The strong performance of the INDIA bloc shows that power dynamics may be shifting. Despite their differences, this success is because the opposition parties continued to work together. Some analysts think that both factors led to their success. The Opposition's strong showing could weaken the ruling coalition's power and strengthen the Opposition's position. The future is difficult to predict at this stage. Winning and losing are part of the game in a democracy. The impact of these events will be more precise in the upcoming assembly polls in Maharashtra and Haryana later this year. The INDIA bloc's strong showing in the by-elections could strengthen the Opposition's position in these forthcoming assembly polls. They will help determine whether the Opposition gains strength or weakens. (The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### OPPOSITION GAINING GROUND

Madam — The recent state assembly bypolls held on July 10 may not have been critical for the survival of state governments in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. However, the results were highly anticipated as a potential indicator of shifting political winds, especially after the national elections where the BJP saw a reduced tally and the Congress-led INDIA bloc significantly increased its presence in the Lok Sabha. In these state assembly by-elections, the Congress and its allies achieved significant victories, winning 10 out of 13 seats. The ruling BJP secured only two seats, with an independent candidate winning in Bihar. While these results do not necessarily signal a nationwide trend, the BJP's below-par performance should be a concern for the central ruling party. The Congress and its partners in the IN

### AP and Telangana resolve issues



It is heartening that the chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have, putting aside their political affiliations, met each other recently to amicably resolve long-standing issues that have arisen after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh. AP Chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu is has taken the initiative. Both the sides have agreed upon setting up high-level chief secretarial and ministerial dispute resolution committees that will address grievances. Contentious issues like water shar-

ing and power distribution are not easy to sort out but it is heartening that Naidu and Reddy have made a start.

Both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are claiming power payment "dues" from either side while Telangana appears keen to get more water allocation. Division of assets and liabilities running into a whopping 1.42 lakh crores, some that have been mentioned in the AP Reorganisation Act and a few that have not been stated, figured prominently in the chief ministers' meeting. Telangana's access to the long coastal corridor of AP may be an important issue. It's no wonder that allocation of some important landmark buildings of Hyderabad, that has exclusively become the capital of Telangana from June 2, have already occupied the attention of both chief ministers.

Ganpathi Bhat | Akola

words "NO REVENGE" to promptly bring back the situation under control. Even though Mandela was yet to become the President of the country, he led the nation in what a sane way guiding the society towards light by shedding all sorts of jingoism. Immediately after his release from prison Mandela said "I am not the only one who did not want revenge. Almost all my colleagues in prison did not want revenge, because there is no time to do anything else except to try and save your people". Yes, "Save your people" needs to be the only priority of a true leader, not "call of revenge". And Mandela indeed did walk the talk when Chris Hani got murdered rendering him to a statesman and torch-bearer of the society guiding all on the path of peace. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr had stated "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that", "We must learn to live together as brothers or we will perish together as fools".

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

**ALCARAZ TRIUMPHS AGAIN**  
Madam — Winning is a habit, and Alcaraz has mastered the art, clinching the Wimbledon men's singles title for the second time against all odds. Spectators at the Centre Court were treated to vintage tennis in a packed stadium. Alcaraz set the ball rolling, winning the first two sets rather comfortably. The final lasted for 147 minutes, with the defending champion establishing a 5-4 lead and serving for the championship point. However, he committed a couple of double faults, and the set went to a tie-break. The number three seed secured his second Wimbledon title and fourth Grand Slam win with a straight-set victory. Djokovic could not recover from the fierce serve-and-volley game of the Spaniard. Alcaraz played calculated tennis on his fourth match point, ultimately winning the tie-break, set, match, and Championship.

C K Subramaniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

# Cultivating civic sense: The path to a better society



GURDEEP KAUR

### A lack of civic sense results in numerous societal issues, but it can be instilled through awareness and the enforcement of stringent punitive measures

Citizens are one of the four essential elements that define a country, and a responsible citizenry is undoubtedly an asset to any nation. Today, our country boasts state-of-the-art facilities, with concerted efforts being made to upgrade infrastructure, services, logistics, and public transport. Additionally, inclusive and integrated policies are being formulated, and comprehensive citizen-centric actions are being implemented. While the government's efforts are commendable, there is also a need for citizens to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining public goods and ensuring resources are accessible to all, especially the marginalised. Civic sense is the act of considering others in society and having a sense of responsibility towards public goods. It can be described as "a set of perceptions and attitudes that guides an individual's independent actions or actions within a group for the benefit of many and harm towards none." Conversely, a lack of civic



signifies disregard for fellow beings, depriving others of a fair chance of accessing what is due to them. Civic sense involves inculcated socially and ethically good behavior, conduct, and approach. Patriotism is deeply rooted among Indians, and we have a strong affinity for our civilizational values and ethos. However many of us are not adept at it, and civic rules are often flouted in some way or another. Examples of this lack of civic sense include vandalism, mishandling public property, disobeying laws, infringing traffic rules, evading taxes, prejudice, intolerance, indiscipline, sectarianism, and insensitivity towards the beliefs and prac-

tices of other social and religious groups. These behaviors create law and order problems and are rooted in disregard for social norms and appropriate behavior. Despite significant improvements in literacy rates in our country over the past few decades, people often remain casual regarding their societal responsibilities. Examples of this include dumping household waste on streets; destroying public property and so on. Such uncivil behavior is rampant and alarming, detrimentally impacting the collective well-being of society. It not only translates into social conflicts but also triggers a vicious cycle, where such behavior, often being an easier way out, is quickly emulated by many, making the problem difficult to address. India witnessed 461,312 road accidents in 2022, resulting in the tragic loss of 168,491 lives. Many of these accidents could have been avoided had people not flouted traffic rules. Similarly, problems arising from adulteration, corruption, and exploitation can be mitigated through a mindful

approach that prioritizes common interest over self-interest. Civic sense is crucial for quality of life and plays an important role in building the reputation of the country. Inculcating civic virtues is not a choice but is essential for addressing both perennial and new problems. Education plays a significant role in civilising people, but the fact that even well-educated individuals living in metropolitan cities often behave in an unruly and uncivilised manner makes it imperative that the desire to perform constructive and positive roles should come "from within." Elders need to set good examples for the young to emulate. Spreading awareness, rewarding good practices, and enforcing stringent punitive actions against law violations can be effective strategies for inculcating civic sense among the people.

(The writer is Assistant Professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, Delhi; views are personal)

FIRST COLUMN

THE TRUE MEANING OF SUCCESS

Strive for achieving success that is based on contentment, humility, peace and respect



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Most of us want to be successful, but not everyone knows what success looks like. The concept of "success" can be a real subject of contention because everyone has their definition of success. Success has different meanings to different people, however, to define it in simple words, it can be said that success is very largely a matter of adjusting one's self to the ever-varying and changing environments of life, in a spirit of harmony and poise. So, is it simply the completion of the next task, another job well done, a promise kept, an exam passed, a medal won or a mountain climbed? Whatever we believe success to be, there is no doubt that it will have a profound influence on our lives.

The great philosopher Lao Tzu said - "When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everyone will respect you." However, what we see today in the so-called modern society is something way too different. If we were to follow the trends of the current world, then success would be measured by acquisition i.e. the more you have the more successful you are. Nowadays even our education systems are geared to producing people whose character and skills are shaped and developed to make more. Similarly, economic growth is the yardstick for national success based on the production and selling of more. And amidst all this, we continue to avoid the connection between the philosophy of more and the unprecedented levels of unhappiness, abuse and breakdown of human relationships worldwide.

Some of us say that because we have more telephones there is more communication between more people in more countries every day than at any other time in history. But communication of what? Electronic symbols, packets of data, cold information? This is far from human communication. We seldom nourish each other at the level of mind and spirit over a telephone. Do we? Off lately we have developed more intimate relationships with our techno-toys than we do with each other. So what exactly does it mean to be successful? At what level, in what context and by whose standards? If we were to live in this question for long enough it would challenge us at the deepest level. It would invite us to



review and probably revise our core values. But we don't want that challenge because it means we might have to change how we think and what we do. So we live instead in avoidance and denial while going with the flow of traditional belief, and then we wonder why both contentment and fulfillment are so elusive. Just imagine for a moment that every school student in the world spent one year discussing and debating the question, "What is success?" inside out, and upside down. What would our children tell us? Would we have the patience and the faith to listen and to learn from them?

Instead of imposing our inherited beliefs, definitions and conditions, would we have the humility to facilitate their discussion and allow them to tell us? Or do we intuitively know they would be wiser than us and therefore pull the carpet from under our comfortable feet? Would we be threatened if their wisdom defined success as a simpler, more considerate, caring, sharing, spiritual state of being and giving, and not a material state of acquisition, accumulation and possession? Would success be less and not more for them? If we were to give ourselves the time to explore this question, we would likely arrive at the fairly obvious insight that success is not a material thing, it is not something that can be possessed, it is a state of being. We might call it contentment, or happiness, or even peace because these are the deepest and most meaningful symptoms of success, but only when they are not dependent on anything outside ourselves. So, let us engage our energies in achieving success that is based on a strong foundation of values like contentment, humility, peace, and respect and inspire the next generation to do so.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist for publications; views are personal)

Imam Husain dared fighting terrorism



HASAN KHURSHID

The tragic events of Karbala, where Husain and his followers were mercilessly slain, serve as a poignant reminder of the values of justice and unwavering faith in the face of oppression



John Bradshaw once said, "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." Can man stand up to these conditions? "Man can but not necessarily with ease", Imam Husain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad announced from the battlefield of Karbala (Iraq), on the fateful day of 10th Muharram, 61 A.H. (October 10, 680 A.D.). The pre-Islamic period in Arabia is known as the "age of ignorance". Scudding away from the noble attributes of human principles, the Arabs were treading the path of retrogression and abhorrence. Suffering from the worst evils and vices, these Arabs known as Bedouins (uncivilised rustics) were highly tentative of wrecking vengeance, group quarrels, and tribal animosities leading to bloody warfare that lasted for generations. In the pre-Islamic period, these Arabian Bedouins used to bury their newly born daughters alive out of ego. They had no sense of equality, humanity, decency and brotherhood. In this crucial moment, the Prophet of Islam Hazrat Mohammad brought the message of peace, tolerance, humanity, forbearance, liberty, equality, and brotherhood, assisting to weak and securing justice for the persecuted. The Prophet gradually started transforming the heartless brutes to humanise and turn towards peaceful life. The most notorious among them were the Bedouin tribals of "Bani-Omayya" (Omayyads). Omayyads did not tolerate the sojourn of humanity and peace. They violently opposed the Prophet's teachings. Omayya's grandson, Abu Sufiyan, son of Herb, unfurled the flag of revolt against Islamic teachings. They started a campaign of persecution on the Prophet, who was forced to migrate from his home in Mecca to Medina. As such, the year of the Prophet's flight from Mecca to Medina is marked as the beginning of the Hijri era of the Islamic calendar. Still, the Prophet Mohammad was not given any respite or relief. Mohammad was compelled to fight battles many a time. In Medina, the



AFTER THE DEATH OF MUAWIYA, HIS SON ACCUSED YAZID ASCENDED TO THE CALIPHATE SEAT OF SYRIA. HE WAS A HARDCORE TERRORIST AND HAD SURPASSED ALL HIS ANCESTORS IN PRACTISING CRUELTY, VIOLENCE AND CORRUPTION

Prophet established the system for administering the "rule of law" in the light of Islamic jurisprudence, under the command of his son-in-law Hazrat Ali Murtaza. Notwithstanding the bravery of Ali, Omayyads suffered a thorough collapse. The shrewd Abu Sufiyan played a trick to subscribe to Islam outwardly and the Prophet mercifully granted a quarter to Abu Sufiyan and his men. On the contrary, Mohammad realised his duties as Prophet were preparing his two beloved grandsons, 'Hasan' and 'Husain', sons of Ali Murtaza and Fatima Zehra, as perfect specimens of his attainment and imparted to their young minds all the characteristics of his high morality. After the demise of the Holy Prophet Mohammad, the school of Islamic thought, philosophy, culture and administration was shifted to the 'Caliphate' with temporal and ecclesiastical powers. The first three caliphs were: Abubakar, Umar and Usman. The last caliph Imam Ali Murtaza, was assassinated by the henchmen of the conspirator and hypocrite Muawiya son of Abu Sufyan while Hazrat Ali Murtaza was prostrating before Allah in the mosque. After Ali's assassination, Muawiya with the might of a sword, usurped the seat of the Caliphate in Syria and declared himself as the self-appointed caliph. Muawiya, the first ruler of the House of Omayyads displaced the democratic Islamic rule by oligarchical and barbaric despotic rule. After the death of Muawiya, his son accused Yazid ascended to the Caliphate seat of Syria. He was a hardcore terrorist and had surpassed all his ancestors in prac-

tising cruelty, violence and corruption. Yazid was a libertine and sinner to the extent that the barest mention of his objectionable character is taboo in this civilised society. Yazid was the mammon of unrighteousness, whose lust for power prompted him to beat society into the mould he favoured. Yazid's criminal behaviour indicated the extreme occurrence of vulgar, and inhuman innovations in the established Islamic values. On the contrary Imam Husain was recognised throughout the Arab world for his excellence of behaviour, wisdom, compassion and piety. When Yazid occupied the erstwhile seat of the Caliphate, deceitfully usurped by his father Muawiya, Yazid by terrorising the citizens sought their allegiance to accept him as leader of the faithfully. He then demanded allegiance from Hazrat Imam Husain. Yazid was equipped with all the paraphernalia of power but so long, he didn't get the allegiance of Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet, he had no religious sanction to claim the Caliphate. He therefore demanded allegiance from Imam Husain to subscribe to him as the leader of the faithfully. When Yazid bargained hard for Imam Husain to choose between allegiance and death, Husain straightaway refused his allegiance, saying, "A person of my kind, can not accept the allegiance of a man of his (Yazid's) kind." Husain knew that recognition of Yazid's immorality would permanently disfigure the "true faith" and a "pseudo-religion" would emerge in the guise of Islam. Had he encountered no opposition, Islam was bound to acclimatise to

the paralysing atonality from Yazid's degenerated symphony. Imam Husain was mercilessly assassinated in the desert of Karbala along with 71 family members and companions on the 10th of Muharram, 61 Hijri (October 10, 680 A.D.), after being kept hungry and thirsty for three days. Their heads were severed from the bodies and were mounted on lancers. Among the slain martyrs was Husain's six-month-old infant son, Ali Asghar, the buoyancy of whose innocent blood floated the sinking ship of Islam. Ali Asghar's moon-like innocent severed head was too mounted on a lancer. Asghar's little body among 71 others was too trampled through the hoofs of office horses of Yazid's cavalry. The tents of Husain's household were torched. Daughters and grandchildren of Prophet Mohammad's extended family and the only surviving, ailing son office Imam Husain, were taken captives and paraded from Karbala to Syria, on bare backs of camels, where they appeared before accused Yazid, the wild beast in human form. 10th Muharram is universally observed by right-thinking and kind-hearted people irrespective of caste, religion or faith. "Never in the fight of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few", said Churchill. The event of Karbala, taking place on 10th Moharram, 61 Hijri, teaches us: Never to support injustice and oppression, no matter, how powerful the oppressor might be. No matter, what incentive, what threat you might be given. (The writer is a legal journalist and author. The views expressed are personal)

Indian tourism industry: The challenges, resilience, and future prospects

As the Union Budget 2024 approaches, the Indian tourism industry has high hopes for increased support and strategic initiatives

Tourism has always been a significant contributor to the economic growth and GDP of nations worldwide, and India is no exception. Indian tourism has consistently shown remarkable growth, even though it has not been a primary focus of government policies. There have been improvements in infrastructure and connectivity, but these efforts have been limited. The Indian Tourism and Hospitality industry, faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sharp decline in both domestic and international travel led to a significant downturn. Despite these challenges, the industry began to show signs of recovery in 2023. According



DIVYA BHATIA

to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), 2023 saw 152 million domestic flyers, an increase of almost 24% from 123 million in 2022, and nearly 6% more than the 144 million in 2019. International travel also showed signs of revival, with 63.9 million international travellers to and from India in 2023, close to the 64.2 million seen in 2019, and 35% more than the 47 million in 2022. Consulting firm McKinsey & Company pro-

jects that India will become the fourth-largest domestic travel market in terms of spending by 2030. Additionally, aviation analytics firm OAG indicates that India is now the third-largest domestic aviation market, after the U.S. and China. The WTTC reported that this sector contributed INR 19.13 trillion (\$230 billion) to the Indian GDP in 2023, marking a nearly 10% increase over 2019 levels. Employment in the industry also saw an 8% rise, reaching 43 million jobs. This highlights the sector's resilience and its vital role in the national economy. They projects that the Indian tourism industry will continue to grow, with contributions to the GDP expected to reach INR 21.15 trillion (\$253 billion) in 2024. Jobs in the

industry are also projected to increase by 2.45 million, accounting for one in every 11 jobs in India. Despite positive indicators, the tourism industry has been largely overlooked in recent government budgets. This lack of support is concerning given the sector's significant contributions to the economy and employment. Substantial investments and strategic initiatives are essential to fully capitalize on the industry's potential and ensure sustained growth. As the Union Budget 2024 approaches, the tourism industry remains hopeful for greater support and investment from the government. Industry Perspectives Jyoti Mayal, President, The Travel Agents Association of

India (TAAI) feels that the allocation for overseas promotion and publicity has been drastically reduced to just Rs. 3 crore, down from Rs. 100 crore in the previous year. She says, "The industry eagerly anticipates increased budget allocations to enhance infrastructure, marketing, and skill development. Investments in connectivity, heritage sites, and eco-tourism can propel growth. A focus on sustainable practices, waste management, and conservation efforts aligns with responsible tourism. Simplifying visa requirements and encouraging visa-free entry for tourists visiting India can significantly enhance foreign tourist arrivals". Pradeep Shetty, President, Hotel and Restaurant Association Western India

(HRAWI) says that the tourism and hospitality, accounting for around 10 percent of India's GDP and should be declared a priority sector. "Granting infrastructure status to hotels and convention centers of project cost of Rs 10 crore and above is essential for attracting investments and accelerating growth in the hospitality sector. Abolition of the 18 percent GST category for hotels with room rates above Rs.7500/-, merging it with the 12 percent GST category, would boost both domestic and inbound tourism," he says. Riaz Munshi, President, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) says the outbound tourism sector is hoping for positive policy changes. "One key

expectation is the reduction of GST rates on outbound tour packages, making international travel more affordable. Additionally, better Tax Collected at Source (TCS) policies are hoped for as compared to current TCS rates, which are causing financial and administrative problems," says he. Mr Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) feels that the adequate funding is needed for promote tourism on global map. He says, "Ministry of Tourism should be given separate substantial funds for marketing and promotion for participation in overseas travel marts along with industry stakeholders, organizing road shows and for MDA Assistance to tour operators".

Mr. Ajay Prakash, President, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) feels that for all the lip service to the economic and social benefits of tourism, the industry remains sadly neglected. Mere infrastructure development is not enough - the sector needs specific incentives if it is to realize its potential. The travel and tourism industry puts forth its Wishlist every year before the Budget and, come the day, is invariably disappointed. "The highest GST slab should not exceed 10% and travel agents/tour operators should be eligible to claim a setoff. Aviation fuel must be brought under GST to make airfares more affordable," says he. (The writer is a travel influencer and writes on travel & tourism; views are personal)

# Bandaged Trump's rapturous GOP convention debut

PTI ■ MILWAUKEE

Donald Trump, wearing a white bandage partially covering his injured right ear, stole the show when he made his first public appearance on the opening night of the Republican National Convention here, days after surviving an assassination attempt.

Trump on Monday entered the convention hall to roaring applause from thousands of delegates and holding his fist aloft towards the end of the first day of the four-day convention being held at the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee, a city in the US state of Wisconsin.

The former president entered the convention arena here with a fist raised and to the strains of a live performance of "God Bless the USA".

He then slowly walked through cheering delegates who pumped their fists and called out "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

He then greeted key political allies and members of his fam-



Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump and Republican vice presidential candidate Sen. JD Vance, R-Ohio, attend the first day of the Republican National Convention, Monday.

ily, including three of his children, but not his wife Melania. The former US president escaped an assassination bid when a bullet grazed his ear at

a campaign rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday. Supporters on the convention floor and standing in the stadium sang along to a live rendition

of "God Bless the USA" with singer Lee Greenwood. Trump was accompanied by his newly-announced running mate Senator JD Vance. Trump, 78, wore a subdued look as the room around him erupted and chants of "USA" rang out. On Monday, delegates from across the country nominated him as the Republican presidential nominee for the November 5 general election against incumbent Democratic President Joe Biden. It was the third consecutive time that Trump has received the Republican Party's nomination. Trump will deliver his acceptance speech on Thursday. The delegation from Florida put him over the top, with Eric Trump, the second son of Trump, awarding the state's delegates to his father. Several lawmakers and other officials spoke, including Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, Senator Tim Scott, and Representative Byron Donalds. The Democratic party would

formally nominate Biden as its candidate at its convention in Chicago in August. Earlier in the day, Trump announced that Senator Vance, 39, would be his running mate. He was welcomed by the crowd with a thunderous applause. The choice reflects Trump's belief that Vance is an effective communicator who can sell Trump's populist agenda — particularly to working-class voters in states like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, where presidential elections can be decided by thousands of votes. "He is consistent with Trump's appeal to working men and women," Ohio Governor Mike DeWine said of Vance. "Also, someone who shares his desire to expand the base of the Republican Party," DeWine was quoted as saying by CNN. Trump survived an attempt on his life on Saturday when a young shooter fired multiple shots at him at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, injuring his right ear.

## Sikh Republican Party leader recites 'ardas' at RNC

Milwaukee (PTI): Indian-American Sikh Republican Party leader Harmeet Kaur Dhillon on Monday recited 'ardas' at the Republican National Convention here in the presence of the party's presidential nominee Donald Trump. Amidst tight security, the four-day Republican National Convention began on Monday with delegates and officials coming to the US state of Wisconsin to greet Trump like a hero for the first time since a gunman on Sunday opened fire at the former president during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, grazing his ear. Dhillon, a Republican Party leader and Civil Rights Attorney discussing the attack on Trump said: "These last 48 hours have been some of the most intense, yet more prayerful of our lives, the heinous attack on President Trump and his supporters made all of us pause and seek answers in comfort."

A video posted on social media platform X by the California Republican Party, showed Dhillon, 55, as saying at the Fiserv Forum: "I come from a family of Sikh immigrants and I'm honoured to share with you, my fellow Republicans and guests tonight, a prayer from my faith and tradition prac-

tised by over 25 million worldwide." "We recite the Ardaas (Sikh prayer) before any new endeavour, giving thanks to God and asking for his protection and help to uphold the values of humility, truth, courage, service, and justice for all," she added. "Dear Waheguru, our one true God, we thank you for creating America as a unique heaven on this Earth, where all people are free to worship according to their faith. We seek your blessings and guidance for our beloved country. Please bless our people with wisdom as they vote for the upcoming election and please bless with humility, honesty, skill and integrity all those who conduct the election," she said after offering the 'ardas'. Dhillon, who has also served as the vice chairwoman of the California Republican Party and also co-chairs the Women for Trump organisation, thanked God for protecting Trump's life, and also mentioned the leader's "tireless and uplifting spirit". Dhillon was born in a Sikh family in Chandigarh and immigrated to the US. She has experience working on matters involving intellectual property, unfair competition, civil rights, employment discrimination and others, and also has her law firm.

## Israeli strikes across Gaza kill more than 30

PTI ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

Israeli strikes in the central Gaza Strip overnight into Tuesday killed 24 people, including women and children, according to hospital records, in deadly violence that continues to rage as Israel and Hamas weigh the latest cease-fire proposal. The deaths in Nuseirat and Zawaida, which included 10 women and four children, came days after Hamas said cease-fire talks meant to wind down the nine-month-long war would continue even after Israel targeted the militant group's top military commander, Mohammed Deif, whose fate remained unclear. Israel says another senior Hamas militant was killed in that strike which, according to local officials, killed 90 Palestinians, including children. International mediators are working to push Israel and Hamas toward agreeing to a deal that would bring a halt to the devastating fighting and set free roughly 120 hostages held by the militant group in Gaza. The strikes late Monday and early Tuesday hit four residential homes, according to emergency workers. An Associated Press journalist saw the bodies of the dead, some wrapped in blue blankets and a floral sheet, as they were ferried to Al Aqsa hospital in Deir al-Balah. Clouds of smoke from Israeli strikes could be seen rising above the city. The military said it "conducted targeted raids on terror targets" in central Gaza, without elaborating. It did not immediately provide additional details on the targets. In southern Gaza, nine people were killed in two separate strikes overnight Monday, according to medical officials and Associated Press journalists. Four people were killed in a blast that struck a house in eastern Khan Younis while five other people were killed in a strike on a street in southernmost Rafah, accord-

ing to ambulance workers who transported the bodies to Nasser Hospital. An AP journalist counted the bodies at the hospital before a funeral was held at its gates. The military said that air force planes struck some 40 targets in Gaza over the past day, among them observation posts, Hamas military structures and explosives-rigged buildings. The war in Gaza, which was sparked by Hamas' October 7 attack, has killed more than 38,600 people, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. The war has sparked a humanitarian catastrophe in the coastal Palestinian territory, displaced most of its 2.3 million population and triggered widespread hunger. Hamas' surprise attack killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and militants took roughly 250 people hostage. About 120 remain in captivity, with about a third of them believed to be dead, according to Israeli authorities. Violence has also surged in the West Bank during the war and on Tuesday a Palestinian stabbed an Israeli policeman, wounding him lightly, before another officer opened fire, killing the assailant, who was identified as a 19-year-old from Gaza. Meanwhile, hospital officials say an Israeli airstrike killed 17 Palestinians on Tuesday in a military-declared "safe zone" outside the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. Officials at Nasser Hospital said the strike hit near a gas station in Muwasi, an area packed with tent camps housing thousands of Palestinians who have fled Israeli offensives in other parts of Gaza. The site lies in a humanitarian "safe zone" where the Israeli military has told evacuating Palestinians to take refuge. The strike raises to at least 59 the number of people killed in southern and central Gaza by strikes overnight into Tuesday.

## Oman mosque shooting leaves 5 dead, dozens injured

Dubai (AP): A rare shooting by multiple attackers at a Shiite mosque in Oman killed five people and wounded many more including a police officer, authorities said on Tuesday. Pakistan's government said four of its nationals were dead and 30 hurt. The Royal Oman Police said in a statement mentioned no motive or suspect and said the shooting occurred on Monday night in the Wadi Kabir neighbourhood of the capital, Muscat. The state-run Oman News Agency said three attackers were killed. It reported 28 wounded of "different nationalities". The shooting occurred on the eve of Ashoura, a remembrance of the 7th century martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussein, that gave birth to their faith. The day falls in the Islamic month of Muharram, one of the holiest months for Shiite Muslims.

## Biden acknowledges 'mistake' in Bull's-eye comment on Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden told NBC News in an interview Monday that it was a "mistake" to say he wanted to put a "bull's-eye" on Republican nominee Donald Trump, but argued that the rhetoric from his opponent was more incendiary while warning that Trump remained a threat to democratic institutions. The remark in question came during a private call with donors last week as Biden had been scrambling to shore up his imperiled candidacy with key party constituencies. During that conversation, Biden declared he was "done" talking about his poor debate performance and said it was "time to put Trump in the bull's-eye," saying Trump has gotten far too little scrutiny on his stances, rhetoric and lack of campaigning. The NBC interview — during which, at times, Biden grew defensive under questions about his fitness for office — came as the president and his reelection team pre-

pared to resume full-throttle campaigning after a brief pause following the weekend assassination attempt on Trump. The president and his campaign let loose a flurry of criticism after the GOP nominee announced freshman Sen JD Vance of Ohio as his running mate. "He's a clone of Trump on the issues," Biden told reporters as he headed to Nevada for a series of speeches and campaign events. "I don't see any difference." He expanded on that during the NBC interview, telling Lester Holt that Vance has the same policies as Trump when it comes to abortion, taxes and climate change, adding, "He signed onto the Trump agenda, which he should, if he's running with Trump." Once Vance was tapped as Trump's vice-presidential pick, the Biden campaign hit send on a fundraising solicitation signed by the president, and his team issued a blistering statement saying he picked the freshman senator because he would "bend over backwards

to enable Trump and his extreme MAGA agenda." For her part, Vice President Kamala Harris phoned Vance to congratulate him and left him a voicemail message, according to a person familiar with the matter. And to NBC's Holt, Biden made it clear that he would keep up his focus on Trump. While he acknowledged his "mistake," Biden nonetheless said he is "not the guy who said I wanted to be a dictator on day one" and he wanted the focus to be on what Trump was saying. It's Trump, not Biden, who engages in that kind of rhetoric, Biden said, referring to Trump's past comments about a "bloodbath" if the Republican loses in November. "Look, how do you talk about the threat to democracy, which is real, when a president says things like he says?" Biden said. "Do you just not say anything because it may incite somebody?" The NBC interview, scheduled before the attempt on Trump's life at a rally in Pennsylvania,

had been part of Biden's broader strategy to prove his fitness for office after angst grew among Democrats because of his disastrous June 27 debate performance. Asked by Holt if he has weathered the worst of it from his own party, Biden responded that 14 million Democratic voters selected him through the primaries and added, "I listen to them." His mental acuity is "pretty damn good," Biden added, but he said the question of his age was "legitimate" to ask. Yet Biden grew visibly testy when asked whether he was eager to "get back on the horse" by participating in another debate against Trump, even before their next scheduled one in September. "I'm on the horse. Where have you been?" a defensive Biden said. He rattled off his recent travels across the country and a lengthy press conference last week in Washington where he parried questions from nearly a dozen reporters. He said he is "demonstrating to the American people that I have

command of all my faculties, that I don't need notes, I don't need teleprompters" — although Biden has used notes and teleprompters in recent appearances, which is not unusual. As for a potential repeat of his rocky debate, Biden said, "I don't plan on having another performance on that level." The Biden campaign recalibrated some of its political plans in the immediate aftermath of the assassination attempt on Saturday, pulling advertising off the air and hitting pause on messaging. The White House also scrapped Biden's planned Monday visit to the Lyndon B. Johnson library, where he had been slated to deliver remarks on civil rights. Biden also spoke privately to Trump after the assassination attempt, a call that the president described in the NBC interview as "very cordial." "I told him how concerned I was and wanted to make sure I knew how he was actually doing," Biden said.

## Welsh leader to resign over campaign donation scandal

AP ■ LONDON

The leader of Wales' government, First Minister Vaughan Gething, said on Tuesday he will resign after several members of his government quit over a campaign donation scandal. Gething said that "I have this morning taken the difficult decision to begin the process of stepping down as leader of the Welsh Labour Party and, as a result, First Minister." The announcement came after four members of Gething's semiautonomous government quit, demanding he resign. Gething, the son of a Welsh father and a Zambian mother, made history in March when he was elected to head the Cardiff-based administration, becoming the first Black leader of a government in the UK. He has faced criticism for accepting 200,000 pounds (USD 255,000) in donations during his leadership campaign from a recycling company whose owner had been found guilty of environmental



offenses and breaching health and safety regulations. His leadership has crumbled since the Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru ended a cooperation arrangement with Gething's minority Labour government in April. The following month Gething lost a non-binding no-confidence vote in Wales' parliament, the Senedd. In a resignation statement, Gething said he had "hoped that over the summer a period of reflection, rebuilding and renewal could take place under

my leadership. "I recognise that this is not possible," he added. Wales, which has a population of about three million, is one of four parts of the United Kingdom, along with England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The British government in London is responsible for defence, foreign affairs and other UK-wide issues, while administrations in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast control areas such as education and health.

## Thailand to launch controversial \$13.8 bn digital money handout

AP ■ BANGKOK

Thailand's prime minister has said that eligible businesses and individuals can register from August for digital cash handouts, a controversial programme that will cost billions of dollars and is meant to boost the lagging economy. The government announced in April the widely criticised ambitious plan, named the Digital Wallet, meant to give 10,000 baht (about \$275) to 50 million citizens in digital money to spend at local businesses. Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin posted on the social platform X on Monday, saying the registration will begin Aug 1 and that he has given instructions to ensure the smooth implementation of the program. The "Digital Wallet" was a major campaign promise of the ruling Srettha's Pheu Thai party ahead of last year's general election. The government says that this scheme will cause an "economic tornado," and Srettha has said the stimulus and subsequent consumption are expected to boost gross domestic product growth by 1.2 to 1.6 percentage points. However, economists have criticised the programme, calling it an ineffective way to contribute to sustainable economic growth compared to other measures. In addition, its financing has faced several hurdles, delaying its planned implementation. At first, the government said the state Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives would cover some of the funding needed. However, after warnings by financial

experts, it was announced that the project's funding would come out of the 2024 and 2025 fiscal budgets. Deputy Minister of Finance Julapan Amornvivat said at a news conference on Monday the budgetary funding became possible after the plan's estimated cost dropped from 500 billion baht (\$13.8 billion) to 450 billion baht (\$12.4 billion), asserting that all estimated 50 million people will still be part of the program as only up to 90% of those eligible utilised them in previous handouts. Julapan added that the Digital Wallet committee has agreed to exclude tens of thousands of shop owners and cash recipients who have a record of committing fraud in past programmes. The plan also has certain limitations, such as excluding certain goods that are yet to be decided, and earlier proposals suggested oil, services, and online purchases should be among them. Julapan said the Commerce Ministry would handle the exclusions set to be announced next week after the detailed plan is submitted to the Cabinet. Thailand has in recent years suffered from a sluggish economy that appears to have deteriorated with no clear sign of growth. This month, the World Bank's Thailand Economic Monitor projected GDP growth of 2.4% for the year 2024. The ruling Pheu Thai party had initially suggested digital wallet payments for all Thais 16 and older, but later this was limited to only lower-income Thais, defined as people with yearly incomes not exceeding 840,000 baht (about \$23,000) and savings in financial institutions not totalling more than 500,000 baht (\$13,700)

## Shiite Muslims commemorate mourning day of Ashura with processions in Iran

Tehran (AP): Iranian Shiite Muslims on Tuesday commemorated Ashura, a remembrance of the seventh century martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussein, that gave birth to their faith. Over 1,340 years after Hussein's death, Tehran and other cities across the country were adorned with symbols of Shiite piety and repentance. Red flags represented Hussein's blood, black funeral tents and clothes indicated mourning, and processions of chest-beating and self-flagellating men expressed fervour. Some sprayed water over the mourners in the intense heat. Many Iranian people also travelled to the Iraqi city of Karbala, where Hussein is entombed in a gold-domed shrine, to mourn there. Iranian state TV broadcast live from there, showing people at the shrine. Shiites represent over 10 per cent of the world's 1.8



Shiite Muslims touch a horse, that symbolizes the horse that carried Imam Hussein during the battle of Karbala, during a Muharram procession, in Lahore, Pakistan, Tuesday.

billion Muslims and view Hussein as the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad. Hussein's

death in battle at the hands of Sunnis at Karbala, south of Baghdad, ingrained a deep rift in

Islam and continues to this day to play a key role in shaping Shiite identity.

## UK gurdwara attack being treated as 'religiously aggravated': Police

PTI ■ LONDON

The gurdwara attack in southeast England last week in which a 17-year-old boy was arrested and charged with multiple offences, including threats to kill, is being treated as "religiously aggravated", the local police have said. The Kent Police said the boy appeared before Maidstone Crown Court where he was further charged with attempted grievous bodily harm along with assault occasioning actual bodily harm, using or threatening unlawful violence, threats to kill, threatening a person with a bladed weapon and possessing a bladed article in a public place. He was bailed by the court over the incident at Sri Guru

Nanak Darbar Gurdwara in Gravesend last Thursday and was "immediately detained by officers for a mental health assessment". "This is an isolated incident and our initial enquiries suggest it is not terrorism-related," said Chief Superintendent Angie Chapman, North Kent Divisional Commander for Kent Police. "We are treating it as religiously aggravated. It was upsetting for local people and our officers will remain on patrol in the area for reassurance and engagement with the community. I would like to thank the local community for their ongoing support and assistance while this investigation continues," she said. He will next appear before Medway Youth Court on Thursday after a mental

health assessment. Earlier, investigators from the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate charged the boy, who cannot be named as a minor, over what the local police referred to as a "disturbance" at the gurdwara in Gravesend on July 11 evening. The Gurdwara, one of the largest outside India, held an "All Sangat Meeting" at its Lecture Theatre on Sunday to reassure the community after it stated that 'Guru Granth Sahib Ji' was not present in the Darbar Hall at the time of the attack. Two women suffered cuts and bruises in an assault outside the building shortly afterwards. "Nobody was seriously injured during the incident and the constables recovered a bladed weapon," the police

said. According to the gurdwara's management team, the suspect was spotted by its security team and police were called immediately. "A person has been arrested by Kent Police on suspicion of attempted murder, after entering the gurdwara and creating an incident in one of the Darbar Halls. We can confirm that the incident happened after Sukhasan and 'Guru Granth Sahib Ji' were not present in the Darbar Hall," the gurdwara said in a statement in the aftermath. Sri Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara opened its doors to the congregation in November 2010 and is a well-known place of worship in Kent that offers regular "langar seva" for the local community.



# Khyber Pakhtunkhwa attack: 8 soldiers, 10 terrorists killed

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

At least eight soldiers of the Pakistan Army and 10 terrorists were killed when a group of 10 terrorists attacked a major military cantonment in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the army said on Tuesday. All 10 terrorists who launched the daring attack were also eliminated after they attempted to enter the Bannu Cantonment on Monday, with security forces effectively thwarting the move, the statement said. The terrorists' failed attempt forced them to ram an explosive-laden vehicle into the perimeter wall of the cantonment, leading to the collapse of a portion of the wall and damaging the adjoining infrastructure. Eight soldiers were killed in the ensuing operation and all the terrorists were "sent to hell", the statement added.



"This timely and effective response by the security forces prevented major catastrophe, saving precious innocent lives," the statement said, adding that the heinous act was undertaken by the Hafiz Gul Bahadur group, which operates from Afghanistan and has used Afghan soil to orchestrate acts of terrorism inside Pakistan in the past as well. Pakistan has consistently raised its concerns with the interim Afghan government, asking

them to deny persistent use of Afghan soil by the terrorists and take effective action against such elements, the statement said, adding that the Pakistani side will take all necessary measures as deemed appropriate against these threats emanating from Afghanistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur condemned the attack and said the sacrifices of the Pakistan Army in the war against terror would not go to waste.

"Security forces' timely action saved Bannu Cantonment from a big catastrophe," he said. Pakistan has witnessed an increase in terrorist activities over the past year, particularly in regions like Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan following the cessation of a ceasefire between the government and the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militant group in November 2022. Last week, Islamabad reiterated its stance against engaging in talks with the TTP and called for Kabul's action against terrorists operating from Afghan territory. According to the Centre for Research and Security Studies' annual security report, violence and casualties in Pakistan saw a notable decline in the second quarter of 2024. The report said there was a 12 per cent reduction in overall violence, with 380 fatalities reported compared to 432 in the preceding quarter.

# Move to ban Imran's party finds little support among ruling PML-N's allies

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government's controversial move to ban jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party has attracted flack from across the political spectrum with the stakeholders calling the move undemocratic, which could have far-reaching ramifications if executed. The Pakistan government on Monday decided to ban Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on charges of illegally receiving foreign funds, involvement in riots and alleged involvement in "anti-state" activities. The government led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party has also threatened to slap treason charges on 71-year-old Khan as well as on former president Arif Alvi, 74, among others. Besides the PTI, which has called the move an act of "desperation" and a "sign of panic" within the federal administration, leaders from other parties including the Pakistan Peoples

Party, Awami National Party, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, and Jamaat-i-Islami have criticised the decision. The PPP led by former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has distanced itself from the controversial move, saying the party was not consulted on the move to ban the Khan-founded party. PPP Information Secretary Shazia Atta Marri also said the party, a key ally of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led government in the centre, would hold consultations on the government's decision to ban the PTI. The decision was announced by Federal Information Minister Attaulah Tarar, who in a press conference on Monday, said the PTI and Pakistan "cannot co-exist" and the matter to ban the party would go to the federal cabinet and the Supreme Court. The move drew a strong reaction from the PTI which in return has also demanded invoking Article 6 of the Constitution against those who undertook the unconstitutional steps even though

there is a Constitution in the country. The party also called on allies of the ruling coalition government, including the PPP and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), to clarify their position on the move. PPP's Senator Sherry Rehman confirmed Marri's remarks about not being consulted and noted that the party had no idea that such a move by the Centre would be taken, Geo News reported. Responding to a question regarding their alliance with the PML-N, the senator acknowledged that the government's move should not come as a surprise to them as they are allies. "We have also worked with allies before where every step is taken with careful due consideration about its repercussions. I have no idea on what level this whole issue was discussed by the government," she said. When asked if the banning of the PTI would achieve anything, Rehman answered in the negative and said: "My personal opinion is that this won't achieve

anything [...] Even though the PPP was subjected to various tactics in the past it still stands strong today." "In the view of that you can't stop anything or anyone via ban or censorship, there are other ways to make someone mend their ways," the PPP leader said. The PPP's move to distance itself from the PML-N government's decision is significant as the party is a key ally of PM Shehbaz-led administration and enjoys a key position politically and parliamentarily as none of the parties managed to secure a simple majority in the February 8 polls. The party's support is therefore essential to the survival of the Centre as the PTI-backed independent candidates — who emerged as the largest single group in the general elections — got a major boost via the Supreme Court ruling declaring them eligible for reserved seats. The development has deprived the ruling coalition of a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly.

# Violent clashes over govt jobs injures many in B'desh

AP ■ DHAKA

Police fired tear gas and charged with batons during violent clashes between a pro-government student body and student protesters overnight, leaving dozens injured at a public university outside Bangladesh's capital, authorities and students said on Tuesday. The violence spread early Tuesday at Jahangir Nagar University in Savar, outside Dhaka, where protesters demanded an end to a quota reserved for family members of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971, allowing them to take up 30 per cent of governmental jobs. While job opportunities have expanded in Bangladesh's private sector, many find government jobs stable and lucrative. Each year, some 3,000 such jobs open up to nearly 400,000 graduates. Protesters argue such quota appointments are discriminatory and should be merit-based. Some even said the current system benefits groups supporting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Some Cabinet ministers criticized the protesters, saying they played on students' emotions. Hasina said on Tuesday war



veterans — commonly known as "freedom fighters" — should receive the highest respect for their sacrifice in 1971 regardless of their current political ideologies. "Abandoning the dream of their own life, leaving behind their families, parents and everything, they joined the war with whatever they had..." she said during an event at her office in Dhaka. Meanwhile, protesters gathered in front of the university's official residence of the vice-chancellor early Tuesday when

violence broke out. Demonstrators accused the Bangladesh Chhatra League, a student wing of Hasina's ruling Awami League party, of attacking their "peaceful protests". According to local media reports, police and the ruling party-backed student wing attacked the protesters. But Abdullahi Kafi, a senior police official, told the country's leading English-language newspaper Daily Star that they fired tear gas and "blank rounds" as protesters attacked the police.

He said up to 15 police officers were injured. More than 50 people were treated at Enam Medical College Hospital near Jahangir Nagar University as the violence continued for hours, said Ali Bin Solaiman, a medical officer of the hospital. He said at least 30 of them suffered pellet wounds. On Monday, violence also spread at Dhaka University, the country's leading public university, as clashes gripped the campus in the capital. More than 100 students were injured in the clashes, police said. On Tuesday, protesters blocked railways and some highways across the country, and in Dhaka, they halted traffic in many areas as they vowed to continue demonstrating until the demands were met. Local media said police forces were spread across the capital to safeguard the peace. Swapon, a protester and student of Dhaka University who only gave his first name, said they only want the "rational reformation of the quota system." He said after studying for six years, if he can't find a job, "it will cause me and my family to suffer." Protesters say they are apolitical, but leaders of the ruling

parties accused the opposition of using the demonstrations for political gains. A ruling party-backed student activist, who refused to give his name, told The Associated Press the protesters with the help of "goons" of the opposition's Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami party vandalized their rooms at the student dormitories near the Curzon Hall of the Dhaka University. The family of the veterans' quota system was halted following a court order after mass student protests in 2018. But last month, Bangladesh's High Court nullified the decision to reinstate the system once more, angering scores of students and triggering protests. Last week, the Supreme Court halted the High Court's order for four weeks and the chief justice asked protesting students to return to their classes, saying the court would issue a decision in four weeks. However, the protests have continued daily, halting traffic in Dhaka. The quota system also reserves government jobs for women, disabled people and ethnic minority groups, but students have only protested against jobs reserved for veterans' families.

# N Korean diplomat in Cuba defected to S Korea in November, Seoul says

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's spy agency said Tuesday that a senior North Korea diplomat based in Cuba has fled to South Korea, the latest in a series of defections by members of the North's ruling elite in recent years. The National Intelligence Service said media reports on the defection of a North Korean counselor of political affairs in Cuba were true. A brief statement by the NIS public affairs office gave no further details. South Korea's mass-circulation Chosun Ilbo newspaper reported earlier Tuesday that diplomat Ri Il Kyu fled to South Korea with his wife and children in November. Chosun Ilbo cited Ri as telling the newspaper in an interview that he had decided to defect because of what he called disillusionment with North Korea's political system, an unfair job evaluation by Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry, and the ministry's disapproval of his hopes to visit Mexico to treat his neural damage. He said that hospitals in Cuba didn't have the necessary medical equipment to treat his health problem due to international sanctions. Other South Korean media outlets carried

similar reports later Tuesday. Ri defected before South Korea and Cuba established diplomatic ties in February, an event that experts say likely posed a political blow to North Korea, whose diplomatic footing is largely dependent on a small number of Cold War-era allies like Cuba. The Chosun report said Ri had been engaged in efforts to block Cuba from opening diplomatic ties with South Korea until his defection. The report said Ri won a commendation from leader Kim Jong Un for his role in negotiations with Panama that led to the release of a ship detained in 2013 for allegedly carrying banned items like missiles and fighter jet parts. The report said Ri was then a third secretary of the North Korean Embassy in Cuba. The South Korean government says the number of highly educated North Koreans with professional jobs escaping to South Korea has steadily increased in recent years. But it's still unusual for a member of the North's ruling elite to come to South Korea. About 34,000 North Koreans have defected to South Korea to avoid economic hardship and political suppression since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. A majority of

them are women from the North's poorer northern regions who arrived in South Korea since the mid-1990s, when North Korea suffered a devastating famine that was estimated to have killed hundreds of thousands of people. In 2016, Tae Yongho, then a minister at the North Korean Embassy in London, defected to South Korea. He told reporters in Seoul that he decided to flee because he didn't want his children to live "miserable" lives in North Korea and he fell into "despair" after watching North Korean leader Kim execute officials and pursue development of nuclear weapons. North Korea has called him "human scum" and accused him of embezzling government money and committing other crimes. Tae was elected to South Korea's parliament in 2020. In 2019, North Korea's acting ambassador to Italy, Jo Song Gil, arrived in South Korea. Also in 2019, North Korea's acting ambassador to Kuwait arrived in South Korea with his family. In 2021, lawmakers cited the NIS as telling them the diplomat changed his name to Ryu Hyunwoo after arriving in South Korea.

# Some EU officials boycott meetings over Orbán's visits to Russia, China

AP ■ BUDAPEST

Some European Union leaders protested on Tuesday what they see as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's misuse of the bloc's rotating presidency, with many including those in the EU's executive commission boycotting an informal meeting hosted by Hungary in response to Orbán's actions. Officials are angry that Orbán, a nationalist populist who is seen as having the warmest ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin among EU leaders, made unannounced trips to Moscow and Beijing earlier this month on what he called a "peace mission" aimed at brokering an end to Russia's war in Ukraine. Orbán said he was seeking the quickest path to peace in Ukraine and portrayed himself as uniquely positioned to communicate with both warring parties. He also met last week with former US President Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago compound and expressed confidence that Trump would quickly "solve" the conflict. But Orbán's EU partners were startled by the appearance that he was acting on behalf of the 27-member bloc during his meetings with Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, and worried that he was undermining EU unity on support for Ukraine. Hungary holds the rotating presidency of the EU

Council from July to December 2024. In response, some nations including Sweden, Finland and the Baltic countries, as well as the Commission, said their top officials would boycott meetings in Budapest and send civil servants instead. But not all EU members joined the boycott. The energy ministers of Austria, Belgium and Bulgaria attended an informal meeting on energy on Tuesday in Hungary's capital, with one downplaying the boycott. "I think that we have a good representation," Vladimir Malinov, Bulgaria's caretaker energy minister, said as he entered the meeting. "Having in mind that this is an informal meeting, it's not an issue. Maybe on the formal level we will have much more high representation." The boycott prompted mixed reactions from Hungarian officials, with some employing the kind of bellicose tone that has characterised Orbán's government when it comes to the EU. Kinga Gal, a top EU lawmaker from Orbán's Fidesz party, said the Commission's boycott is "clearly a part of von der Leyen's election campaign," a reference to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who hopes to be elected to another five-year term on Thursday. "We have become used to (von der Leyen) using the EU institutions, especially against Hungary for

political blackmail and pressure," Gal wrote on the social media site X on Monday. "This is unacceptable and goes against the very essence of European cooperation." Hungary's finance minister, Mihaly Varga, was more subdued, saying in Brussels on Tuesday that Hungary's EU presidency "remains committed to sincere cooperation with all member states and institutions." Varga said ministers "are free to decide to take part in our events or not. But I am absolutely sure that there will be a high-level participation in the events". Speaking from outside the same Brussels meeting, Elisabeth Svantesson, Sweden's finance minister, said she was "both angry and quite sad" about how the Hungarian presidency has gone so far. "That Mr. Orbán went to Putin in Moscow is an insult not only to Ukraine, but to all other 26 member states, and that's what I will tell today in the meeting," she said. During a media briefing on Tuesday, Stefan de Keersmaecker, a Commission spokesperson, said that by sending lower-level officials to Hungary's meetings, the body wanted to "mark our disapproval" with Orbán's uncoordinated trips and the message they sent concerning the war in Ukraine. The visits, he said, "have indeed harmed the indispensable image of unity in the European Union".

# New hotline aims to prevent Chinese-Philippine sea clashes

Manila (AP): A recently signed agreement will open a direct line of communication between the presidential offices of China and the Philippines to help prevent any new confrontation from spiralling out of control in the disputed South China Sea, according to highlights of the accord seen by The Associated Press on Tuesday. China and the Philippines have created such emergency telephone hotlines at lower levels in the past to better manage disputes, particularly in two fiercely disputed shoals where the Philippines has accused Chinese forces of increasingly hostile actions and China says Philippine ships have encroached despite repeated warnings. The territorial disputes, however, have persisted since last year, sparking fears of a larger armed conflict that could involve the United States, which has repeatedly warned that it's obligated to defend the Philippines, a key Asian treaty ally, if Filipino forces come under attack in the disputed waters. US Gen. Charles Brown Jr., chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff, met Philippine military chief Gen. Romeo Brawner in Manila on Tuesday and discussed ways to further boost defence ties, enhance the militaries' ability to operate jointly and ensure regional stability, the Philippine military said. During a confrontation between Chinese and Philippine forces at the Philippines-occupied Second Thomas Shoal in August 2023, the Philippine government said it was unable to reach Chinese officials through an established "maritime communication mechanism" for several hours. That emergency telephone hotline was arranged after Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing in January 2023. Chinese and Philippine officials dealing with the territorial disputes held talks in Manila on July 2, following a violent confrontation at the Second Thomas Shoal in which Chinese coast guard personnel reportedly wielded knives, an axe and improvised spears and Philippine navy personnel were injured. The Chinese forces also seized seven

Philippine navy rifles, said Brawner, who demanded China return the firearms and pay for damages. Both sides "recognised the need to strengthen the bilateral maritime communication mechanism on the South China Sea" and signed an arrangement "on improving Philippines-China maritime communication mechanisms", the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said in a statement after the talks in Manila, but did not provide a copy or details of the agreement. A copy of the agreement's highlights, seen by the AP, said it "provides several channels for communication between the Philippines and China, specifically on maritime issues, through the representatives to be designated by their leaders". The hotline talks could also be done "through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs counterparts, including at the foreign minister and vice foreign minister levels or through their designated representatives", it said, and added without elaborating that

Philippine officials were "in discussions with the Chinese side on the guidelines that will govern the implementation of this arrangement". There was also a plan to set up a new communication channel between the Chinese and Philippine coast guards "once the corresponding memorandum of understanding" between them is concluded, according to the agreement. During the talks in Manila, China and the Philippines agreed on two other confidence-building steps to intensify "cooperation between their respective coast guard authorities" and the possible convening of a maritime forum between Chinese and Philippine scientists and academic leaders. "Both sides recognised that there is a need to restore trust, rebuild confidence and create conditions conducive to productive dialogue and interaction," the Philippine department of foreign affairs statement said. It added that China and the Philippines "affirmed their commitment to de-escalate tensions without prejudice to their respective positions".

# Scientists confirm moon cave discovery

Cape Canaveral (US) (AP): Scientists have confirmed a cave on the moon, not far from where Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed 55 years ago, and suspect there are hundreds more that could house future astronauts.



was created by the collapse of a lava tube. Researchers analysed radar measurements by NASA's

Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, and compared the results with lava tubes on Earth. Their findings appeared in the jour-

nal Nature Astronomy. The radar data reveals only the initial part of the underground cavity, according to the scientists. They estimate it's at least 130 feet (40 metres) wide and tens of yards (metres) long, probably more. "Lunar caves have remained a mystery for over 50 years. So it was exciting to be able to finally prove the existence" of one, Leonardo Carrer and Lorenzo Bruzzone of the University of Trento, wrote in an email. Most of the pits seem to be located in the moon's ancient lava plains, according to the scientists.

There also could be some at the moon's south pole, the planned location of NASA's astronaut landings later this decade. Permanently shadowed craters there are believed to hold frozen water that could provide drinking water and rocket fuel. During NASA's Apollo programme, 12 astronauts landed on the moon, beginning with Armstrong and Aldrin on July 20, 1969. The findings suggest there could be hundreds of pits on the moon and thousands of lava tubes. Such places could serve as a natural shelter for

astronauts, protecting them from cosmic rays and solar radiation as well as from micrometeorite strikes. Building habitats from scratch would be more time-consuming and challenging, even when factoring in the potential need of reinforcing the cave walls to prevent a collapse, the team said. Rocks and other material inside these caves — unaltered by the harsh surface conditions over the eons — also can help scientists better understand how the moon evolved, especially involving its volcanic activity.

**Baba Farid University of Health Sciences Faridkot**  
(University Centre of Excellence in Research UCER, Faridkot)

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences Sadiq Road, Faridkot - 151203  
Ph: 01639-256232, 256236

**ADMISSION NOTICE - 2024**  
**MASTER IN HOSPITAL AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (MHHA) COURSE**

Online applications are invited through University website for admission to Master in Hospital and Health Administration (MHHA) Session, 2024 at the Department of Master in Hospital and Health Administration, University Centre of Excellence in Research (UCER), BFUHS, Faridkot from 18/07/2024 to 17/08/2024, along with requisite fee:

Receipt of Application/Fee	Through University
Rs 5000/- 18% GST (Rs.5900/-) and for SC candidates Rs.2500+18% GST (Rs.2950/-)	Payment Gateway

The Selected candidates will pay the tuition fee (40,000/-) in the shape of Demand Draft in favor of Registrar, BFUHS payable at Faridkot or through online University gateway.

Note: For Eligibility/Detail/Fee/Prospectus visit University website i.e. [www.bfuh.ac.in](http://www.bfuh.ac.in)

For details/updates kindly visit University website ([www.bfuh.ac.in](http://www.bfuh.ac.in)) regularly.

**Registrar**

nll/12/200/2023/35681 Dated CHD :- 7/16/2024



## AWS' KUMARA RAGHAVAN SEES HUGE POTENTIAL IN STARTUPS

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian startup ecosystem is mature, with multiple tailwinds that are poised to escalate India to become the third largest economy in the world, said AWS' Kumara Raghavan. In a conversation with PTI, Raghavan, Head, Startups, Amazon Web Services (AWS) India, and South Asia, discussed the vibrant Indian startup scene, noting its strength and innovation potential. "We are the 5th

largest economy, we are trending towards becoming the 3rd largest... factors that will contribute to it are labor addition, infrastructure growth, and efficiency improvements, where technologies like GenAI will play their part, a large developer ecosystem, the ability to build products in the country and serviced all over the world, then there are regulatory tailwinds as well," he said.

## Sensex, Nifty close at record high levels for 3rd day in a row

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty settled at record high levels in their third straight day of gains on Tuesday following buying in FMCG, telecom and select IT shares and FII inflows. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 51.69 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a new lifetime high of 80,716.55. During the day, it advanced 233.44 points or 0.28 per cent to hit a fresh record high of 80,898.30. The NSE Nifty went up by 26.30 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 24,613. Intra-day, it rallied 74.55 points or 0.30 to hit a new record peak of 24,661.25. Sensex and Nifty have been on a record-breaking run since Friday as foreign investors have turned buyers in the Indian equities ahead of the presentation of the Union budget for 2024-25. Encouraging quarterly results by blue-chips have also



supported the rally despite high valuation concerns, according to analysts. Among Sensex shares, Hindustan Unilever, Bharti Airtel, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Mahindra & Mahindra, ICICI Bank, ITC and Asian Paints were the biggest winners. On the other hand, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Reliance Industries, NTPC, UltraTech Cement and Power Grid were among the laggards. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,684.78 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled higher, while Hong Kong ended lower

amid dovish comments from the US Fed Chair Jerome Powell bolstering hopes of a rate cut by September. European markets were trading lower. US markets ended in positive territory on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.80 per cent to USD 84.13 a barrel. On Monday, the BSE benchmark climbed 145.52 points or 0.18 per cent to settle at a new record high of 80,664.86. The NSE Nifty rallied 84.55 points or 0.35 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 24,586.70. Markets will remain closed on Wednesday for Muharram.

## Gold rallies ₹550; silver jumps ₹400 amid strong global cues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rallied by Rs 550 to Rs 75,700 per 10 grams in the local market on Tuesday on the back of fresh buying by jewellers as well as strong trends in the international markets. According to All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal rates had closed at Rs 75,150 per 10 grams on Monday. In the national capital, gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity quoted higher at Rs 75,700 per 10 grams and Rs 75,350 per 10 grams, respectively. Traders attributed the rise in gold prices to a pick-up in demand by local jewellers and retailers in the domestic market. In addition, silver prices also jumped by Rs 400 to Rs 94,400 per kg. It had ended at Rs 94,000 per kg in the previous session. "Gold and silver prices witnessed a sharp recovery on the back of rate cut expectations. "No major data points were



scheduled on Monday, however, comments from US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell were in limelight," Manav Modi, Senior Analyst, Commodity Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd (MOFSL), said. Fed Chair Powell said that second quarter data has given policymakers greater confidence that inflation is heading down to the central bank's 2 per cent goal. Powell reiterated that the US central bank is in no rush to cut rates but he also raised concerns regarding ease off in labour market and increase in deficits.

This week, traders will keep an eye on important data points like US retail sales, industrial production and a few housing numbers, which could provide clarity on overall economic health, Modi added. On the overseas front, spot gold at Comex was traded at USD 2,436 per ounce, registering a gain of USD 28 per ounce from previous day. According to Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, gold prices traded higher amid ETF demand and speculative buying as the global gold prices hovering near the record high. "...Decline in the treasury yields and US dollar index also supported the spot gold prices," Parmar added. Additionally, silver was also quoted higher at USD 30.77 per ounce. In the previous session, it had finished at USD 30.68 per ounce. "Gold continues to trade positive, supported by a steady US dollar and easing bond yields as focus remains on an early rate cut by the Federal Reserve."

## Govt likely to scale down fiscal deficit target to 5% or less in Budget: ICRA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is likely to lower fiscal deficit to 4.9-5 per cent of the GDP for this financial year in the upcoming Budget aided by revenue buoyancy. The government had pegged the fiscal deficit estimate at 5.1 per cent for the current fiscal year when it presented the interim Budget in February. "The union government is likely to set a fiscal deficit target at 4.9-5 per cent, lower than projected 5.1 per cent of GDP, without compromising the capital expenditure target of Rs 11.1 lakh crore," ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar told PTI. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to present the full Budget on July 23. This will be her seventh Budget in a row. This budget aims to set the foundation for India's journey towards becoming a developed nation (Viksit Bharat) by 2047. The government achieved a fiscal deficit of 5.6 per cent of the GDP during the previous financial year.



"There is also a high likelihood of reducing the net market borrowings for the current financial year by Rs 35,000-Rs 55,000 crore vis-à-vis the interim Budget estimate of Rs 11.8 lakh crore, which would augur well for yields, along with the demand boost for G-secs owing to their inclusion in the J P Morgan Government Bond Index," she said. The incremental revenue receipts of Rs 1.2 lakh crore can be split to increase the revenue spending and facilitate fiscal consolidation, she said, adding, the government could utilise it for spurring consumption by providing

some income tax sops. She further said that reducing the absolute size of the fiscal deficit will be quite difficult over the next 3-4 years, with the decline in the fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio largely dependent on the increase in nominal GDP. If the government continues with capex at 3.4 per cent of GDP over the medium term (in line with the FY2025 Interim Budget), then incremental fiscal consolidation would require a sustained compression in the revenue deficit, she said. Notably, she said, the government has 'on-budgeted' a large portion of previously off-budget capex; this should be considered while determining the endpoint of the awaited fresh fiscal consolidation roadmap beyond FY26. Assuming that capex of about 1 per cent of GDP has been brought on budget, the government could consider further reducing its fiscal deficit target to 4 per cent of GDP over the medium term, from the expected sub-4.5 per cent of GDP in FY'26, she added.

## Incuspaze takes on lease 1.15 lakh sq ft office space in B'luru to start coworking centre

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coworking firm Incuspaze has taken on lease a 1.15 lakh square feet area in Bengaluru to open a new centre as part of its strategy to expand business amid a rise in demand for flexible workspace. In a statement, the company said it has expanded its portfolio in Bengaluru with leasing of 1.15 lakh sq ft office space at Whitefield, a major hub for the tech industry. "The new facility will accommodate 1,800 seats," Incuspaze said. "Our new facility is designed to foster creativity and collaboration among businesses," said Sanjay Choudhary, founder and CEO of Incuspaze. Incuspaze said it aims to expand its portfolio in southern India, with a focus on Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad. Since its inception in 2016, Incuspaze has 44 centres across 18 cities



and a total portfolio of 3 million square feet. The company embraces the 'space-as-a-service' model, integrating technology with real estate to deliver innovative solutions tailored for enterprises, MSMEs, and startups. "Bengaluru is India's most active office market, accounting for the highest absorption of 23 per cent in pan-India during H1 2024. While the IT-ITes sector accounts for nearly half of the city's absorption, flex spaces account for 5.4 per cent of the total absorption in H1 2024," Vestian CEO Shrinivasa Rao said. Flex spaces nearly account for 16 per cent of the total absorption in pan-India during the same period.

## Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 83.58 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day 3 paise higher at 83.58 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, on firm domestic markets and sustained inflow of foreign capital. Forex traders said a decline in crude oil prices favoured the rupee, while a strong US dollar capped sharp gains. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.59, and touched an intraday high of 83.53 and a low of 83.60 against the dollar during the trading session. It finally settled at 83.58 (provisional) against the American currency, registering a gain of 3 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee depreciated 10 paise to 83.61 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading marginally higher by 0.11 per cent at 104.29. "The US dollar gained on positive US markets and a surge in US treasury yields on



rising expectations that Donald Trump may be re-elected as the President of the United States in the upcoming elections in November," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were trading 0.68 per cent lower at USD 84.27 per barrel. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on the strong US dollar and weak Asian currencies. However, a decline in crude oil prices and continued foreign inflows may support the rupee at lower levels," Choudhary said, adding that any intervention by the RBI may also support the local unit. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended the day 51.69

points, or 0.06 per cent, higher at 80,716.55 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 26.30 points, or 0.11 per cent, higher at 24,613.00 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Monday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 2,684.78 crore, according to exchange data. India's merchandise exports in June increased 2.56 per cent to USD 35.2 billion despite global challenges, even as the trade deficit widened to USD 20.98 billion during the month. On the price front, wholesale inflation in the country surged to a 16-month high of 3.36 per cent in June on account of a rise in prices of food articles, especially vegetables and manufactured items.

## Telecom Ministry to work on actionable plan on issues identified by panels: Scindia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The telecom ministry will work on actionable plan with defined timelines on issues that have been discussed with telecom operators and other players in the sector, Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Tuesday. The minister held meetings with three of the six committees set by his ministry. The meeting with the committee on telecom operators was attended by telecom chiefs including Reliance Jio Chairman Akash Ambani, Bharti Airtel Founder and Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal, and Vodafone Idea MD and CEO Akshaya Moondra. "We've identified a rather deep agenda for these committees. Now the members of these committees and us will be working together," Scindia said. Industry body Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) Director General S P Kochhar was also part of the meeting. Scindia said there are varied schedule for the first presentation of these committees that will be over the next couple of weeks. "Then we will be taking on each individual issue, delving into the details and devising an action plan, timelines and actionable items, so that we can take our sector forward," Scindia said. He said the six committees

are the backbone of the Indian communication sector. "By forging these committees we hope to take the sector forward realising Prime Minister's goal of creating not only an Atmanirbhar (self-reliant) Bharat but a telecom superpower within India that we will hopefully transcend our boundaries in days to come," Scindia said. The minister also met representatives of internet service providers and infrastructure committee as well as those of academia and R&D committee. On Monday, Scindia held meetings with three advisory groups on satellite, communications and electronics ecosystem and original equipment makers to prepare a roadmap for achieving self-reliance and global leadership in the sector. The meetings were attended by Nokia India Country Head Tarun Chhabra, Samsung President and CEO Southwest Asia J B Park, Cisco System India Managing Director Harish Krishnan, STL Managing Director and CEO Ankit Agarwal, Tejas Non-Executive Chairman N G Subramaniam, Viasat India Managing Director Gautam Sharma, and Hughes Communications India CEO, President and Managing Director Shivaji Chatterjee, among others.

## NAREDCO pitches for raising tax exemption limit on home loan interest to ₹5 lakh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realtors' body NAREDCO on Tuesday suggested that the tax exemption on interest on self-occupied property loans should be increased to Rs 5 lakh in the upcoming budget from Rs 2 lakh currently to boost housing demand amid a rise in housing prices and mortgage rates. Builders also sought some tax incentives to boost demand and supply of affordable homes. NAREDCO noted that under Section 24 of the Income Tax Act, the deduction allowed on interest on loans for self-occupied property is limited to Rs 2 lakh. "Given the rising property prices and interest rates, NAREDCO proposes

increasing this limit to at least Rs 5 lakh," the association said in a statement. The realtors' body mentioned that currently the annual value of property held as stock-in-trade and not let out is considered nil for up to two years from the end of the financial year in which the construction completion certificate is obtained. After this period, the notional income is taxed. It suggested that this provision should not apply to real estate developers holding stock due to weak market conditions and recommended increasing the time limit from two to five years. G Hari Babu, President of NAREDCO, said these recommendations, if implemented, will not only provide much-needed relief to developers but also



stimulate demand in the housing sector. Ramani Sastri - Chairman & MD, Sterling Developers, said, "This year, the demands go beyond the usual expectation of single-window clearance and industry status, which could unlock financial advantages and streamline project approvals. There is an express need for more tax sops for both homebuyers as well as investors." The government should raise

the deduction limit for interest payment on home loans from the existing Rs 2 lakh a year to Rs 5 lakh, which will add momentum to housing demand, he added. "The budget should offer a degree of personal tax relief, either by ways of lower tax rates or by readjusting tax slabs, which is the need of the hour," Sastri said. In his wishlist, Dhruv Agarwala, Group CEO, Housing.Com and

could further stimulate activity in this sector. It's noteworthy that substantial demand persists within the Rs 15-75 lakh price category, necessitating focused governmental action in the upcoming budget," he observed. Agarwala said this approach would not only catalyse growth in the real estate sector but also stimulate approximately 200 ancillary industries, substantially boosting job creation across these sectors. "Moreover, longstanding sector demands, such as granting industry or infrastructure status and raising tax exemption limits on home loan repayments, should be considered to sustain long-term growth in the housing sector," he added.

## Auto industry needs 2 lakh skilled people by 2030 to meet 30% EV adoption target: SIAM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian automotive industry will need up to 2 lakh skilled people by 2030 to meet the government's vision of 30 per cent electric vehicle adoption, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers said on Tuesday. A total talent investment of Rs 13,552 crore is expected for hiring and training the workforce. "As we look ahead, one of the major constraints the auto industry will face is the dearth of skilled electric vehicle capable manpower," Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) President Vinod Aggarwal

said while addressing a workshop on empowering EV-ready workforce in the Indian auto industry. Aggarwal, who is also MD & CEO, Volvo Eicher Commercial Vehicle Ltd, pointed out the need for specialised domain skills in the areas of battery technology, powered electronics and motor design. "To keep the pace of global trends and make our auto industry a globally competitive industry, there is an urgent need that our workforce be equipped with new skills by upskilling, rescaling and skilling them," he added. Detailing the gap, SIAM Vice President Shailesh Chandra said, "By 2030, India will need nearly one to two



lakh people with specific skills to meet the government's mission of 30 per cent EV adoption." The talent need will be spread across multiple blue-collar and white-collar professionals, ranging from technicians in manufacturing and testing to PhD scientists and engineers in R&D, he added. "The talent requirements will

add 30,000 EV-ready workers per year till 2030, up from a current rate of 15,000 per year. The report pointed out that 43 per cent of technical competencies between Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) and EV have minimal overlap and therefore would require fresh skilling of talent. On the other hand, 27 per cent of technical competencies have a high overlap between ICE and EV and may require re-skilling of existing talent. "The estimated hiring cost would be Rs 7,671 crore, while the training cost would be around Rs 5,881 crore. The total talent investment is expected to be around Rs 13,552 crore," the report said.

## Graphisads launches G Force

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Graphisads Limited, Glazing advertising Company and Outdoor Media owner, has entered into a groundbreaking partnership with the prestigious Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow to unveil "G Force," an innovative accelerator programme. This initiative aims to cultivate and empower aspiring entrepreneurs within the Media sectors through a dynamic collaboration of industry expertise and academic leadership.

# Balaji has explosive game, we can't be written off just like that: Bopanna

PTI ■ PARIS

As if a fine wine, Rohan Bopanna is all fired up for his last hurrah at the Olympic Games. Not the one who would rail against circumstances or crib about not having the strongest of partners, the veteran Indian tennis player says his comrade N Sriram Balaji has enough firepower and the scratch pairing is potent enough to test the big teams in Paris. Had Bopanna been ranked outside the top-10, India would not have any representation in the men's doubles event at the Paris Olympics, starting July 26. The 44-year-old had to make a choice between Balaji and Yuki Bhambri and after consulting his coaches -- Scott Davidoff and Balachandran Mannikath -- he eventually settled for the more "athletic and agile" Balaji. "I really believe that when we go out there, we genuinely have a chance to win every match, whoever we play against. It's not like we're just going to be written off, I feel," Bopanna told PTI in an exclusive interview. Bopanna has reason to have that confidence in Balaji's ability to rise to the occasion. He had a chance to test Balaji at

the French Open where Bopanna was pushed along with Matthew Ebden by the Tamil Nadu player and his Mexican partner Miguel Reyes-Varela. Not only this, Balaji had a consistent run on the ATP Tour where he scalped a few big names such as Americans Rajeev Ram and Austin Krajicek -- both top-10 players -- at the Houston ATP 250 event on clay. With his German partner Andre Begemann, Balaji also defeated Austria's top-50 players Alexander Erler and Lucas Miedler. Balaji also showed that he can quickly adapt to conditions when he was asked to do the singles duty during the Davis Cup tie against Pakistan on grass. The rival was not of the highest quality but Balaji showed that he was willing to come out of his comfort zone if the team demands. "The idea is to go prepared, at least believe in as a team. That is what we're trying to do. With Bala, he definitely has the firepower to do well," Bopanna said. He also gave his reason for picking Balaji over Bhambri. "I felt Balaji, depending on the surface we're playing with, which is the clay, would have been the ideal partner. Currently, even if you look at



(Matthew) Ebden, who I'm playing with, he's somebody who's more agile, more explosive on that surface. "And for clay, especially, I need a partner who would suit me

better in terms of going by the surface. If it was a hard court or a grass court, maybe Yuki would have been the preferred choice." Bopanna though admitted that

it was not an obvious but a difficult choice since he has not played with either of them on the Tour. "Balaji can move well on both flanks? I think he is, given on

the clay court, he's definitely more athletic, given the two of us. Between me and Bala, I definitely need a partner who's more athletic, more agile. "Bala has similar capabilities as

Matthew. Bala would be fast, quick, swift like Ebden. But Ebden comes with a lot of experience and Bala hasn't played at that level much." It also means that Bopanna has to be leader of the team all the time. On the Tour he has Ebden to pull the team out of the pit if Bopanna is having an off day. In the past Olympics, he had illustrious teammates like Leander Paes, Mahesh Bhupathi and Sania Mirza. In Paris, it will Bopanna, who has to do the heavy lifting. But did he have any choice? "There is nobody currently in the country who has played that kind of experience as Matthew Ebden. So, no matter who I played with on the country, it would be the same scenario." Due to the considerable gap in their rankings in the past, Bopanna could never play with Balaji on the Tour. But they have planned to compete in a couple of ATP events, starting with Hamburg Open, to prepare for the Olympics. "This is my time at home basically to rest, recover and then come back into the circuit. But I thought it'll be nice to get to know whoever the partner I'm playing with. Try and work and at least try and prepare better than what we have done before

maybe." As the discussion veered over Balaji's game and how he compliments him, Bopanna had a good things to say about his partner. "His serve is definitely a big strength. He's got a powerful shot there. Which definitely helps in the doubles game. No question on it." Bopanna also said that they don't just want to show up and get back. They consider themselves worthy of a medal. "Every athlete who goes into Olympics wants to win a medal, right? There is 100 percent that belief. Everybody wants to do better than the previous time. There's no question on it, right? That's how life is. You want to do better. You want to keep going higher and higher. "Nobody can tell you what can happen. But the preparation going into the games is what really matters. "This time I was even listening that they have a fantastic medical team there to help the recovery, help the sports science, which is the first time ever, which is amazing. This is what is the progress already for what athletes can get and really see and make a difference," he signed off. Tennis events at Paris Olympics start on July 27.

## Olympic tennis players return to red clay of Paris' Roland Garros after Wimbledon's grass

AP ■ PARIS

The competition surface doesn't change for most Olympic sports. A pool's a pool. A track's a track. A wrestling mat's a mat. And so on. Tennis? That's a whole other story, with tournaments contested on clay, hard or grass courts -- and now there's a shift for the Paris Games. For the first time in more than 30 years, the tennis competition at an Olympics will be held on red clay, which means players who recently made the adjustment from the dirt at the French Open in early June to grass at Wimbledon in early July will need to reverse course again in short order. The "terre battue" at Roland Garros used for the French Open hosts Olympic matches starting on July 27 -- two weeks after Wimbledon wrapped up with singles titles for Barbora Krejickova of the Czech Republic and Carlos Alcaraz of Spain -- and the transition back to that site is more concerning to some athletes than others. "That'll definitely be interesting. But everyone's kind of doing it. We'll all be in the same boat," said Jessica Pegula, an American ranked in the top 10 who is expected to play singles, women's doubles with U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff and perhaps mixed doubles, too. "I usually don't struggle too much with switching. And I like how the courts play there. It might be easier than some other places we play on clay. When the weather is warm in Paris, it plays pretty true. There's a good speed. There's not a lot to get used to." For her, maybe. "It's going to be the first time for me, going from grass to clay," said Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan, the 2022 Wimbledon champion and a semifinalist there this month. "It's not easy. Physically, it's not easy, (or) mentally." One additional factor on



some players' minds: There will be another brief turnaround after the Olympics to prepare for the move to the hard courts ahead of the U.S. Open, which starts in late August. That's less than a month after the medals are awarded in France. "It's awful for the schedule," said Taylor Fritz, Pegula's teammate for the United States and someone who just reached the quarterfinals at the All England Club. "It makes absolutely no sense. It screws everything up, for sure." Tennis becomes a different sport, in some key ways, depending on where it's being played. "You have to adapt to it. ... It's going to be weird, obviously, going back on the clay quickly," said Cam Norrie, who will represent Britain at the Olympics, "but we're changing surface and changing variables all the time." Clay is softer and slower, which can dull the power on serves and groundstrokes and create longer exchanges, putting a premium on stamina, while the grittiness can magnify the effect of heavy topspin. Grass is speedier and balls bounce lower. Hard courts tend to produce truer, midrange

bounces and generally will reward those who go for point-ending shots. The biggest difference among them might be the footwork. Clay requires sliding. Grass is more about choppy steps, to avoid slipping. Hard courts generally do not cause as many falls as either of the others. "For a clay-court player, the adjustment's not that hard," 1989 French Open champion Michael Chang said. "For (people) that have grown up playing on the surface, you just know the surface so well." So someone like Iga Swiatek, who has won four of the past five French Opens, should feel comfortable and confident on clay, by far her best surface. The same goes, of course, for Rafael Nadal, a 14-time champion at Roland Garros. Novak Djokovic has won at least three Grand Slam titles at each of the sport's biggest events, the only man to do so, and the adjustments required come rather naturally to him. Then again, Alcaraz, whose title at Roland Garros this year made him, at 21, the youngest man to win a major trophy on clay, hard and grass courts, had this to say about going from London to Paris: "It's not easy to change surfaces in just a week.

## Messi loses fitness battle at Copa America, puts goal of playing 6th World Cup on hold

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES

Lionel Messi cried uncontrollably after he exited from a Copa America final before fulltime for the first time in his career. Beyond the severe pain in his right ankle on Sunday night in Miami Gardens, the tears on the face of Argentina's captain showed a deeper anguish. Despite winning the title in one of his "last battles," as Messi described this Copa, the 37-year-old superstar did not pass the fitness test that could have opened the way for him to play his sixth World Cup in 2026. Argentina successfully defended its South American title with a hard-fought 1-0 extra-time win against Colombia. Messi left the pitch in Hard Rock Stadium in the 64th minute, breaking down without being touched. The Copa was Messi's first major tournament since leaving European soccer to play in the less competitive Major League Soccer in the US. Still, he has missed several games over the last year for his Inter Miami club and Argentina due to muscle issues. Messi felt muscular pains in his right leg in the second group match against Chile, which sidelined him from the



following game against Peru. He did not deliver an impressive performance in the quarterfinals against Ecuador and missed his chance in the penalty shootout. In the semifinal victory over Canada, he scored his only goal in the tournament in the 2-0 win. With a limp, Messi celebrated his second Copa title in modest fashion on the field. The injury still hurt the star on Monday. "One more," he said on his social media

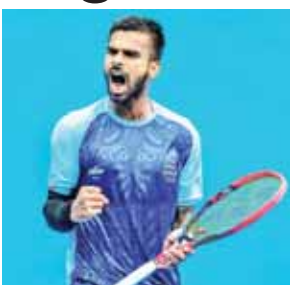
channels. Messi did not speak to the media after the injury, and Argentina did not give details about the damage. Messi's farewell to the national team is still on hold, but there's other players aged above 35 who are likely to have played their last major international tournament; winger Ángel Di María (36), defender Nicolás Otamendi (36), and substitute goalkeeper Franco Armani (37).

Argentina does have up-and-coming players and a squad averaging 28 years of age when the veterans are not counted. That is partly why it held strong against Colombia despite the absence of its star for 56 minutes of play. "I don't know whether we marked an era, but this team never ceases to surprise. It recovers from difficulties," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "When (Messi) leaves, the team multiplies with the one that comes in and we play better in a different way." Young talents such as Alejandro Garnacho, Valentín Carboni, Thiago Almada, Claudio Echeverri and Valentín Barco are not to be compared with the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner, but they can help Argentina remain competitive when it defends the World Cup in 2026. Key squad members such as goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez, defender Cristian Romero, midfielder Rodrigo de Paul and striker Lautaro Martínez are likely to remain. Argentina will return to action in September in World Cup qualifying against Chile and Colombia. The Argentines lead South America. That international window will give more hints about whether Messi's legend will go on or stop at Sunday's title.

## Nagal attains career-high ATP ranking of 68

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic-bound Sumit Nagal continued his ascent in the ATP singles chart, climbing to a career-high ranking of 68. The 26-year-old rose five spots in the latest ATP ranking list released on Monday. His previous best was 71. Nagal thus moves past former world No. 71 Sashi Menon to become the fourth highest-ranked Indian man since 1973. Vijay Amritraj (ranked 18th in 1980), Ramesh Krishnan (ranked 23rd in 1985) and Somdev Devvarman (ranked 62nd in 2011) are the only other Indian players who have



held a higher rank than Nagal. A string of impressive results in recent times has not only helped Nagal improve his ranking but also make the cut for singles event at the Paris Games. Nagal, who will be the sole Indian in the men's singles

event at the Paris Olympics, has so far logged 779 ATP points. The year began with a win against Alexander Bublik, the 31st seed from Kazakhstan at the Australian Open. He also competed at the French Open and Wimbledon. He had won the men's singles crown at the Heilbronn Neckarcup 2024 Challenger event in Germany earlier this month and the Chennai Open in February. Nagal, who is currently the best-ranked Indian singles player, has won four ATP Challenger titles since 2023 and Heilbronn was his fourth title on clay.



## Gareth says he will step down as England manager

AP ■ LONDON

After eight years, four tournaments and two finals, Gareth Southgate announced he was stepping down as England manager on Tuesday, saying it was "time for change." Sunday's 2-1 loss to Spain in the European Championship final proved to be his last game in charge of the national team. "As a proud Englishman, it has been the honour of my life to play for England and to manage England. It has meant everything to me, and I have given it my all," he said. "But it's time for change, and for a new chapter." Southgate's contract was due to expire this year and his announcement comes after months of uncertainty surrounding his future. Mikel Oyarzabal's 86th-minute winner in Berlin was a painful way to end his reign after he transformed the fortunes of England's underperforming national team. Hired in 2016, he led England to back-to-back finals at the Euros and to the semifinals of the World Cup in 2018. But, ultimately, he was unable to end the nation's decades-long wait for a first major trophy since the World Cup in

1966. "Gareth has made the impossible job possible and laid strong foundations for future success. He is held in the highest regard by the players, the backroom team, by everyone at the FA and across the world of football," said Mark Bullingham, chief executive of the English Football Association. Southgate said before the European Championship that it would likely be his last tournament if England did not win. During it, he faced fierce criticism for the team's early performances and some fans throw plastic beer cups towards him at the end of the 0-0 draw with Slovenia in the group phase. But he achieved what no other England manager has by leading his team to two finals, including the first final on foreign soil. "We look back at Gareth's tenure with huge pride - his contribution to the English game, including a significant role in player development, and in culture transformation has been unique. However, it is his record of winning tournament games which is most extraordinary," Bullingham said.

## On incredible day, Mbappé welcomed by Real Madrid fans at packed Santiago Bernabeu

AP ■ MADRID

Kylian Mbappé finally put on a Real Madrid jersey on Tuesday, fulfilling his childhood dream in front of a packed Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Nearly 80,000 fans were in hand at the Bernabeu to welcome the 25-year-old France star during his official presentation as the club's newest player. After signing his five-year contract with the Spanish powerhouse alongside club president Florentino Pérez, Mbappé entered the stage set up at the Bernabeu to loud

cheers by the Madrid fans. Wearing the No. 9 jersey, Mbappé smiled broadly and waved to the fans who chanted his name, then embraced Pérez and former Madrid player and coach Zinedine Zidane, who invited Mbappé to visit the Spanish club for the first time when he was just a teenager. "It's incredible day for me," Mbappé told the crowd, in Spanish. "Since being a kid I dreamed about playing for Madrid and today I'm here. It means a lot to me." Mbappé's relatives, club officials and several former players were by the stage at the



Bernabeu, which had its roof closed for the midday ceremony in the Spanish capital. Kids linked to

Mbappé's foundation were also on hand. The record-15 European Cups won by Madrid were also on display on the stage where Mbappé was introduced. The message "Welcome, Mbappé" was shown on the large video boards at the newly revamped Bernabeu. Some of the club's most iconic moments were also shown while the song "Nessun Dorma" was played on the loudspeakers. Images of Mbappé's career were also displayed, as well as photos including Mbappé wearing Madrid's uniform as a kid and

posing alongside former club star Cristiano Ronaldo. Pérez called Mbappé's presentation a "historic act" for the club. "Today we welcome an exceptional player who today is fulfilling his childhood dream," Pérez said. "Today you are here because it's something that you wanted. Thank you for making a great effort to be able to wear this white jersey." Mbappé's presentation came after he played at the 2024 European Championship, where France lost to eventual champion Spain in the semifinals.

# HARDIK PANDYA TO LEAD INDIA IN T20IS AGAINST SRI LANKA



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya is all set to lead India in the three-match T20 International series against Sri Lanka starting July 27. However, one of the heroes of India's T20 World Cup victory last month will take a break during the three-match ODI series, which is scheduled in

August, due to "personal reasons". "Hardik Pandya was India's T20 vice-captain under Rohit Sharma. He is completely fit and available for the three-match T20I series and will lead the side," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Rohit retired from T20 Internationals at the end of the World Cup. The T20Is against Sri Lanka will run

from July 27 to 30 in Pallekele, followed by the ODIs from August 2 to 7 in Colombo. The squad for the series is expected to be announced in the next couple of days. While there is still no clarity on who would be Pandya's deputy, the toss-up is between Shubman Gill, who recently captained India to a 4-1 series win over Zimbabwe, and Suryakumar Yadav,

who led the side during the T20Is against South Africa last year. About the ODIs, the official confirmed that Pandya has asked for leave and has already communicated this to regular skipper Rohit Sharma, who is also taking a break from this series. "The break from ODIs is for very personal reasons. Hardik doesn't have any fitness issue as is being floated in the media," the official said. For the ODIs, KL Rahul, who led in the last ODI series in South Africa, and Gill are in contention for the leadership role.

**THRUST ON DOMESTIC AVAILABILITY:** BCCI secretary Jay Shah has made it clear that even star cricketers must make themselves available for domestic engagements when they are free from national duty. But exceptions will be made for the likes of Rohit, Virat Kohli and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah. The BCCI would, however, want all the other Test specialists to play at least one if not a couple of Duleep Trophy games in August as a precursor to the Tests against Bangladesh and New Zealand. "This time there is no zonal selection committee for Duleep Trophy. Only national selection committee will pick Duleep teams. "All Test team contenders will be picked. For Rohit, Virat and Bumrah, it will be their choice if they want to play or not," the source added.



## Harmanpreet moves to 12th, Shafali 15th in ICC T20 rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India opener Shafali Verma on Tuesday moved to 15th place while her skipper Harmanpreet Kaur climbed to the 12th spot in the latest ICC T20 rankings, following their strong performances in the series against South Africa. Harmanpreet has moved up three places and now has 613 rating points while Shafali rose two rungs to share the 15th spot with New Zealand's Amelia Kerr and Danni Wyatt

from England. The swashbuckling Smriti Mandhana continues to be the top-ranked Indian batter as she remained static on the fifth spot. In the bowlers' list, the seasoned Deepti Sharma continued her stay at the third place. Radha Yadav moved eight spots to 15th while Pooja Vastrakar climbed up six places to 23rd and Shreyanka Patil rose nine rungs to 60th. England spinner Sarah Glenn

has claimed a new career-high rating of 768 points. She has claimed eight wickets through four matches of England's ongoing T20I series at home against New Zealand. This has allowed the right-arter to maintain her place as the No.2 ranked T20I bowler in the world. The only player in front of Glenn in the ratings is teammate and fellow spinner Sophie Ecclestone and she also has eight scalps from the first four matches of the five-game series.

# Lakshya underdog in reasonable Olympics draw, will play freely: Coach Vimal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The presence of some established foes notwithstanding, Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen has got a "fair" draw in his debut Olympics, according to his coach Vimal Kumar, who expects the youngster to play freely in Paris thanks to his "underdog" status and some technical improvements in his overall game. World No. 19 Sen's path to an Olympic medal has multiple hurdles as he will need to get past

familiar Indonesian nemesis Jonatan Christie, last Olympics' surprise semifinalist Kevin Cordon from Guatemala, and Julian Carraggi from Belgium in Group L. "I think it (the draw) is very fair, I feel it is a very reasonable draw for him," Vimal, a former India coach, told PTI from Marseille, France where Sen is currently training ahead of the Paris Olympics. "A couple of times, he has lost to Jonathan Christie in close matches. It's a 50-50 match. You

have to convert (chances) if you have to get to the second stage. In my opinion, Lakshya has nothing to lose. He will be the underdog and he can play a lot more freely," he asserted. Describing Sen as a big-match player, Vimal said he expects Sen to trump former Asian Games champion Christie, who was also a part of Indonesia's Thomas Cup-winning team in 2022. Vimal said Sen has worked on his front-court alertness and closing stage composure. The 22-year-old would be aiming to become the



first Indian male shuttler to finish on the Olympic podium. India's previous badminton medals at the Games have been clinched by Saina Nehwal (bronze in 2012, London) and P V Sindhu (silver in 2016, Rio de Janeiro and bronze in 2020, Tokyo). "Jonathan will be the last match of the group and Lakshya should pull through. So I see a lot of positives. Not going to the Canada Open was a dampener but he has overcome that. Being away here in similar conditions will help him," Vimal said

referring to Sen being forced out of his title defence in Canada Open owing to visa issues. To prepare the player from Almor, Korea's Yoo Yong-Sung, a two-time men's doubles Olympic silver-medallist, was brought back to polish his net game, improve his on-court pace and dial up the focus in crunch situations. Yong-Sung had worked with Sen in 2022. "We have brought in a lot of speed work into closing stages, we introduced a lot of double drills in finishing, pushing the pace

towards certain points. Last three weeks, Yoo Yong-Sung has been helping us with those drills," Vimal said. Vimal said Sen has also been doing a lot of service variations practice. "(The idea is) basically to bring in some sort of intensity in the routines. Certain sets of routines that we follow are mostly singles-oriented. He (Sen) worked on those flat exchanges, retrieving and things like approaching the net and being a little more alert at the net," Vimal explained.

# Moudgil overcomes mental demons to secure place in shooting contingent for Paris Games

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Overcoming mental demons after being left out of the Indian team from last year's Asian Games and the World Championships was key to shooter Anjum Moudgil securing a Paris Olympic berth. Former world no.1 Moudgil, a world championships and Commonwealth Games medallist, competed in two events during the last edition in Tokyo. She finished 15th in the 50m rifle 3 position and 18th in the 10m air rifle, but in Paris, she will be featuring in only women's 50m 3 position. By her own admission, the outster from the Indian team for Worlds and Asian Games due to inconsistent form was an eye opener for her as the 30-year-old worked on bettering her mental toughness besides focussing entirely on her training.

didn't make the team for World Championships and the Asian Games because of just 2 points in the trials. "I was too focussed and positive in giving my best in the trials. I knew my strengths and how to work under pressure and it paid off. "One year after Tokyo, I won couple of medals in World Cups and became world no.1. I



and find what works better for me," she added. Understanding the importance of mental health issues, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), has set up the Mentally Fit Helpline, a dedicated, independent and confidential mental health counselling service available to all athletes accredited for the Paris Games.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**e-Procurement Notice, Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Angul**  
**Bid Identification No. 01 of 2024-25**  
**e-mail ID-eemidivision\_angul@yahoo.com**  
**Letter No. 1725 Date:- 12.07.2024**

1. Number of Works	: 10 (TEN) numbers of Civil works
2. Approximate estimated cost	: 8.12 lakh to 32.92
3. Cost of Tender Paper	: Rs.4000/- to Rs.6000/- (Non-Refundable)
4. Period of completion	: 03 (Three) Calendar months
5. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: Dt. 19.07.2024 at 10.00 A.M. to Dt. 29.07.2024 up to 5.00 P.M
6. Last date / Time for receipt of bid in the portal	: Dt. 29.07.2024 up to 5.00 P.M
7. Date of opening of bid documents	: Dt. 30.07.2024 at 11.00 A.M
8. Date of lottery if required	: Dt. 03.08.2024 At 11.00 A.M.
9. Name and address of the Office Inviting Bid	: Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Angul. At / P.O.: Hakimpada, College Square, District :Angul, PIN-759143 Ph. No. : 06764-236522 Email ID:eemidivision_angul@yahoo.com
10. The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only.	: Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <a href="http://tendersorissa.gov.in">http://tendersorissa.gov.in</a>

Superintending Engineer  
M.I. Division, Angul.

OIPR-32284/11/0002/2425

**LOST**  
 I Sk. Akhtar Ali, S/o- Sk. Kala, VIII-Mohajidnagar, Po/PS/Dist-Bhadrak declared that on dtd. 06.07.2024 while I coming by motor cycle from Kacheri Bazar to Mahindra Finance Office, Bypass. My documents bag has been missed anywhere without my knowledge and I am not able to trace it. In said bag my sale deed No. 378, dtd.06.02.2002, seller- Muktiyar Khan, S/o- Abdul Jabar, VIII/Po-Garadpur (Nuasahi), Ps-Purunabazar, Dist-Bhadrak, buyer - Kamrun Bibi, W/o-Muktiyar Khan & other finance related document. I have been lodged a FIR before I.I.C, Town P.S., Bhadrak on dtd. 08.07.2024.  
 Sd/-  
 Sk. Akhtar Ali

Sl No	Name of works	Estimate cost (without GST)	Bid identification no.	Period of completion	Class contractor	Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal	Date and time of receipt of bids in portal	Last date and time of for receipt of bid in the portal	Date & time of opening of bid document (Bid opening date)	Date of lottery	Bid security	Cost of tender paper	Procurement officer
1	Construction 10nos recharge shaft at tanks/ponds of Bhubaneswar block of khurda district under GWD Division-I, Bhubaneswar during the FY-2024-25. Phase-I	1. Rs. 19,51,553.00 2. Rs. 19,48,256.00 3. Rs. 10,06,297.00	1. GWD DIVN -1, BBSR-01 /2024-25 2. GWD DIVN -1, BBSR-02 /2024-25 3. GWD DIVN -1, BBSR -03/2024-25	Two month	D & C	Di. 24.07.2024, 11.00hrs to 03.08.2024, 17.00hrs	Di. 24.07.2024, 11.00hrs to 03.08.2024, 17.00hrs	03.08.2024, 17.00hrs	05.08.2024 at 11.00hrs in the office of the Executive Engineer, G.W.D. Division-I, Bhubaneswar.	To be intimated to the responsive bidders through their registered e-mail id	1. Rs. 59,516.00 2. Rs. 19,483.00 3. Rs. 8900.00	1. Rs. 8900.00 2. Rs. 8900.00 3. Rs. 8900.00	Executive Engineer, G.W.D. Division-I, Bhubaneswar.

Executive Engineer  
GWD Division-I, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-32372/11/0001/2425

**SIKSHA 'O' ANUSANDHAN**  
 20 years of Rich Legacy  
 Celebration of 18th Foundation Day  
 SOA Deemed to be University

<p><b>NIRF INDIA RANKINGS 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15<sup>th</sup> in University Category</li> <li>16<sup>th</sup> in Medical Category</li> <li>27<sup>th</sup> in Engineering Category</li> <li>9<sup>th</sup> in Dental Category</li> <li>8<sup>th</sup> in Law Category</li> <li>57<sup>th</sup> in Management Category</li> </ul>	<p>Internationally Ranked by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS</li> <li>THE WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS</li> <li>Stanford University</li> </ul>	<p>Accredited By NAAC with Highest A++ Grade</p> <p>Category - 1 Graded Autonomy Status UGC 12(B) Status Recognized as SIRO by DSIR, Govt. of India</p> <p>22 Professors of SOA figure among the Top 2% scientists of the world as listed by Stanford University</p>
<p><b>STATUTORY APPROVALS</b></p> <p>UGC, AICTE, PCI, MMC, INC, DCI, VCI, BCI</p>	<p><b>ACCREDITATIONS &amp; RECOGNITIONS</b></p> <p>NBA, ICAR, DSIR, NABH, NABL, ISO 9001:2015</p>	
<p><b>SOA Hospitals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IMS AND SUM HOSPITAL (2200 bedded), 250 MBBS Seats</li> <li>SUM ULTIMATE MEDICARE (400 bedded)</li> <li>IMS AND SUM HOSPITAL-Campus 2 (700 bedded), 150 MBBS Seats</li> <li>IMS AND SUM HOSPITAL-Campus 3 (200 bedded)</li> </ul>	<p><b>FACULTIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engineering and Technology</li> <li>Medical Sciences</li> <li>Dental Sciences</li> <li>Management Sciences</li> <li>Pharmaceutical Sciences</li> <li>Nursing</li> <li>Hospitality &amp; Tourism Management</li> <li>Legal Studies</li> <li>Agricultural Sciences</li> <li>Veterinary Science &amp; Animal Husbandry</li> </ul>	
<p>• 20 Research centres in niche areas</p> <p>• Atal Incubation Centre</p> <p>• Over 400 foreign students from 30 Countries</p> <p>• Diamond University rating by QS-I-GAUGE</p>	<p><b>MAJOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS</b></p> <p>Association of Universities (AIU), Indian Institution of Industrial Engineering (IIE), American Society of Mechanical Engineering (ASME), ASCE, American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), Institute of Electricals &amp; Electronics Engineering (IEEE), Computer Society of India (CSI), The Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET), Indian Medical Association (IMA)</p>	

**SIKSHA 'O' ANUSANDHAN**  
 DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY  
 BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA, INDIA  
[www.soa.ac.in](http://www.soa.ac.in)