



OPINION 6
INDIA BACKS PHILIPPINES IN SOUTH CHINA SEA STANDOFF

BUDGET 2024-25



Established 1864
the pioneer
BHUBANESWAR, WEDNESDAY JULY 24, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4



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

Late City Vol. 20 Issue 201
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

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LESS TAX, MORE JOBS



RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

Reaching out to the middle class, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday announced major income tax relief from which four crore salaried individuals and pensioners stand to benefit. She also made it known that the Government will undertake a comprehensive review of the Income Tax Act. Presenting Modi 3.0 Government's first Budget after the recently held general elections, the Finance Minister also abolished "angel tax" for all classes of investors in startups, cut customs duty on mobile phones and gold and simplified capital gains tax. Unveiling the Budget proposals in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said, "India's economic growth continues to be the shining exception (in a world that is gripped by policy uncertainties) and will remain so in the years



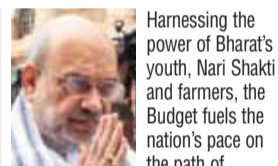
Graphic: Satish C. Jakhmola

ahead." "In this Budget, our primary focus is on employment generation, skilling, MSMEs, and the middle class," stated Sitharaman, the first FM to have presented seventh consecutive Budget. Elaborating upon the relief for the middle class, Sitharaman pointed to the hike in standard deduction — a flat deduction from total salary earned by an employee in a year before calculating applicable



Kursi Bachao Budget. Appear Allies: Hollow promises to them at the cost of other States. Appear Cronies: Benefits to AA with no relief for the common Indian. Copy and Paste: Congress manifesto and previous Budgets

— RAHUL GANDHI
Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said in a post on X



Harnessing the power of Bharat's youth, Nari Shakti and farmers, the Budget fuels the nation's pace on the path of emerging as a developed nation by ushering in a new era of employment and opportunities

— AMIT SHAH
The Home Minister wrote on X with hashtag #BudgetForViksitBharat

income tax rate — by 50 per cent to ₹75,000 and tweaked tax slabs for taxpayers opting for the new income tax regime. This will lead to taxpayers under the new tax regime, which offers lower rates of taxes but permits limited deductions and exemptions, saving up to ₹17,500 in tax annually, she said. Sitharaman said the Government would release standard operating procedures for TDS defaults and simplify and rationalise the compounding of such offences. "The Budget proposes a comprehensive review of the customs duty structure over the next six months; reduction of TDS rate on e-commerce to 0.1 per cent besides, merger of two tax exemption regimes for charities into one. I propose to decriminalise TDS delay up to the filing of tax return," she said. "More than two-thirds of individuals have opted for the new income-tax regime," she revealed. The Finance Minister announced the Government has increased the income tax standard deduction for those who have opted for the new tax regime.

Big push to job creation

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Silencing the critics, the Narendra Modi government on Tuesday allocated a whopping ₹2.10 lakh crore for job creation and also likewise amount of ₹1.52 lakh crore for agriculture and allied sectors to address the employment issue for which the BJP Government have faced flak during the last two tenure. Both the schemes, as announced by Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget, for employment will be based on enrollment in the EPFO [Employees' Provident Fund Organisation] and focus on first time employees and employers." The scheme is expected to benefit 210 lakh youths. The second scheme for job creation in manufacturing will incentivise additional employment in the manufacturing sector, linked to the employment of

first-time employees. The scheme will provide incentives for companies, including paying for one-month salary for first-time employees, incentive at specified sale to both employee and empower with respect to their retirement contribution in the first four years of employment and reimbursing employers up to ₹3,000 per month for two years towards EPFO contribution of each additional employee.

Modi terms Budget visionary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday hailed the Union Budget for its measures for every section of society, asserting that it has heralded better growth and a brighter future. "The Budget will act as a catalyst in making India the third-largest economy in the world and will lay a solid foundation for a developed India," he said in his televised remarks after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the budget in

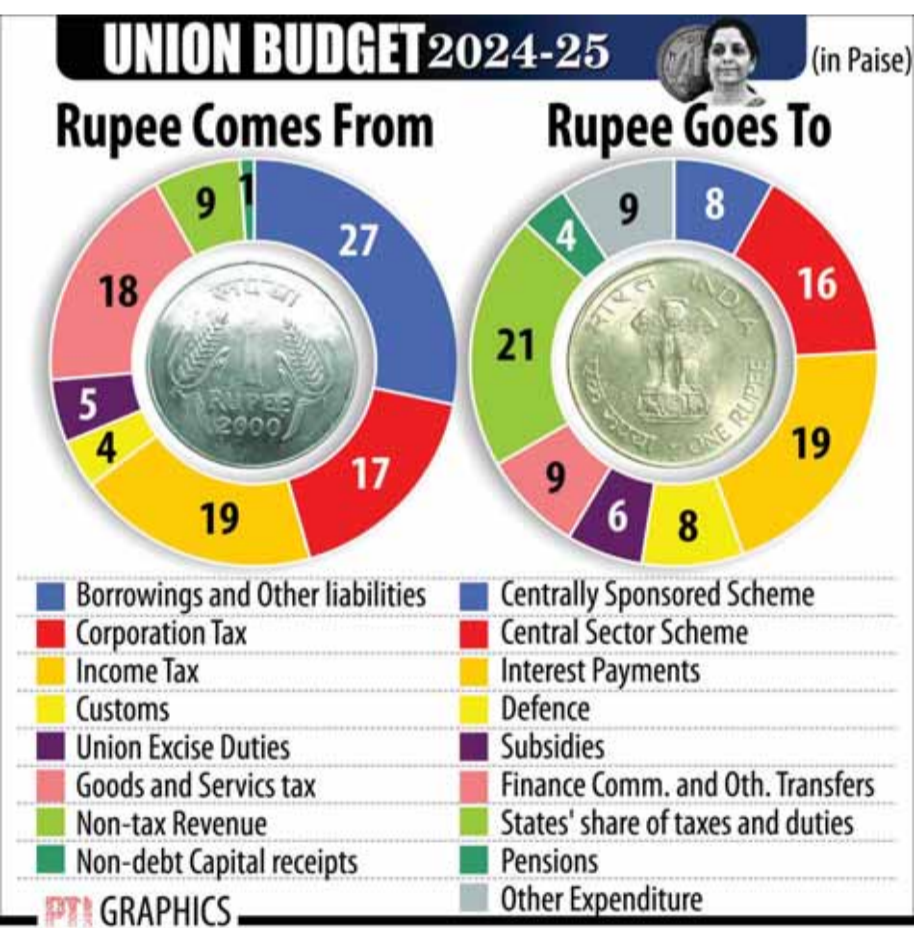
Parliament. Modi lauded the Budget's sharp focus on the youth, backward sections, women and middle class as also on manufacturing and infrastructure sectors, and asserted that the proposed employment-linked incentive schemes will create crores of new jobs. "This visionary Budget will uplift and empower every stratum of our society, paving the way for a brighter future for all," he said, stressing his government's commitment to generating employment and self-employment opportunities.



SC rejects plea for NEET retest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to order a reexamination for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test undergraduate exam for the year 2024 (NEET UG 2024), saying the evidence before it was not sufficient to show a widespread leak of question paper and other malpractices as alleged by the petitioners who moved the court. A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra heard submissions from a battery of lawyers, including Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA), and senior advocates Narendar Hooda, Sanjay Hegde and Mathews Nedomapra for around four days. "At the present stage there is absence of material on record to lead to a conclusion that result of the exam is vitiated or that there is a systemic breach of the sanctity of the exam," the court said while rejecting the plea for retest. The interim verdict, to be followed by a detailed and reasoned order, came as a shot in the arm for the embattled NDA Government and the National Testing Agency (NTA), which were facing strong criticism and protests, on streets and in Parliament, over alleged large-scale malpractices like question paper leak, fraud and impersonation in the prestigious test held on May 5. Instead of reserving the verdict, the bench reassembled around 4:50 pm and started dictating the order. It said "In a matter like this final conclusions of the court be recorded at the present stage since there is an urgent need to provide certainty and finality to the dispute which has occurred and affects the career of over 2 million students."



Bihar, Andhra get special package

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Although a "Special Package" for Narendra Modi's major allies — the JD(U) and TDP-ruled State Governments of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, a cryptic response by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on the Centre's refusal of "Special Category Status" set tongues wagging throughout the day, given the senior JD(U) leader's political maneuvering over the years. "You will get to know all things slowly, and slowly," Nitish said when asked by media in Patna a day after his demand for Special Status was completely denied by the BJP-led NDA regime at the Centre. Nitish led a resolution by his party recently which reiterated firm demand Special Status Category and the conditional support to BJP on the issue. By evening, however, Nitish claimed the Budget "meets our demand for special assistance, if grant of special status was



Bihar Chief Minister NITISH KUMAR



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister CHANDRABABU NAIDU

not possible because of practical difficulties". JD(U) lashed out at the Opposition RJD-Congress-Left combine for creating a ruckus over the demand for Special Status "forgetting that the UPA, of which they were a part, had rejected demand while it was ruling the Centre". "We were speaking of Special Status, and a lot of people said the provision for Special Status has been done away with much earlier. So, instead of that, aid should be given to help development in Bihar. Now, they have begun doing,

Nitish said. Keeping in mind the coalition politics and the key demands of the BJP-led NDA partners — TDP and JD(U), Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced special package for Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. The FM announced Rs 15,000 crore for Andhra Pradesh's new capital, in her Budget speech. While TDP with 16 MPs is the biggest BJP ally in the NDA, the JD(U) has 12 members in Lok Sabha, making it the third largest constituent of the ruling alliance.

Centre to help make Odisha an ultimate tourism hub

Says FM Sitharaman in Union Budget speech

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday announced the Centre's commitment to making Odisha an ultimate tourism destination in the country. While presenting the Union Budget 2024, the minister said, "The government's efforts to position India as a global tourist destination will create jobs, stimulate investments and unlock economic opportunities for other sectors." Sitharaman said Odisha's scenic beauty, temples, monuments, craftsmanship, natural landscape, wildlife sanctuaries and pristine beaches make it an ultimate tourism destination. The Centre would provide assistance for their development. She announced that a plan 'Purvodaya' would be formulated for an all-round development of the eastern region of the country covering Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. "The States in the eastern part of the country are rich in endowments and have strong cultural traditions. We will formulate a plan 'Purvodaya' for the all-round development of the eastern region of the country," said Sitharaman. She further stated that Vishnupath temple at Gaya and Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya are of immense spiritual importance. "We will develop corridors there on the model of the successful Kashi Vishwanath corridor to make them world-class tourist destinations," she said. A comprehensive development initiative for Rajgir and Nalanda in Bihar would be pursued, she added.

Heavy rains in State till July 27

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as heavy rains continued to lash Odisha, including the State capital Bhubaneswar, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday said the State is likely to experience heavy to very heavy rainfall till July 27. On Wednesday, heavy to very heavy rainfall may continue in the districts of Baleswar, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Bhadrak. Heavy rainfall (7 to 11cm) is also likely in Dhenkanal, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Angul, Deogarh and Jajpur districts, said the Regional Office of the IMD here.

On Thursday, heavy to very heavy rain may occur in Nabarangpur and Kalahandi. There is also a forecast for heavy rain in the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Gajapati, Khordha, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack and Nayagarh. On Friday, heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely in Gajapati, Rayagada and Koraput districts. Heavy rain may also lash Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Nayagarh, Khordha, Puri, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts. The intensity of rain is likely to decrease thereafter, said the IMD.

Union Budget is visionary: CM

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Union Budget is visionary an development-oriented. It has given priority to the poor, women, youths and farmers whom Prime Minister Modi gives importance, said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Tuesday. He further said the Budget has given importance to agriculture, skill development and employment. In the Budget, five crore houses would be contracted in the urban and rural areas. By this, the people of Odisha would get benefited. Besides, stress has been laid on developing the social and eco-



nomic conditions of the tribal community. So, tribal people of the State would also benefit. The youths of the State would benefit from the Centre's spending of Rs 2 lakh crore on skill development.

Union Budget anti-Odisha, decry BJD, Congress

BJD members walk out of Rajya Sabha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State's Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) led by former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has termed the Union Budget for 2024-25 as anti-Odisha saying that it has nothing for the State. The BJD members in the Rajya Sabha walked out of the House on Tuesday when the Union Budget was laid, strongly protesting the continued neglect of Odisha in the

Union Budget, BJD MP and national spokesperson Dr Sasmith Patra informed on X. "Before walking out, the BJD MPs said in the House that they are walking out due to denial of Special Category State status to Odisha. While Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar had been asking for Special Category, the two other States got special additional funds while Odisha's demand was not considered," he said. Is this the punishment meted out to Odisha for electing 20 BJP Lok Sabha MPs out of its 21 MPs and the reward to the BJP allies from Bihar and

Andhra Pradesh? Dr Patra questioned while speaking to the media outside the Parliament. "We term the Budget completely anti-Odisha and there is nothing for Odisha in this Budget," Dr Patra added. Similarly, Congress leader and former OPCC president Niranjan Patnaik said there is no fund allocated for Odisha in the Union Budget 2024. "Despite electing 20 BJP MPs and creating a "double-engine Sarkar," the Modi government has ignored Odisha. Modiji boasted that Odisha would be the number one

State, but with no fund allocations, how will our future be shaped? Disappointed!" he wrote on X. While presenting the Union Budget in Parliament, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman only twice mentioned Odisha. "Odisha's scenic beauty, temples, monuments, craftsmanship, natural landscape, wildlife sanctuaries, and pristine beaches make it an ultimate tourism destination. The Centre will provide assistance for their development in Odisha as well," said Sitharaman.

Opposition stalls Assembly for second day

■ Demand Guv's son's arrest in officer assault case
■ Speaker's mike smashed

NALINI SAHU
BHUBANESWAR

Opposition BJD and Congress continued to stall the State Assembly for the second consecutive day on Tuesday protesting the alleged assault of a government official by Governor Raghubar Das' son Lalit Kumar on July 7.

Sahoo climbed onto the Speaker's podium and smashed his mike. The proceedings of the House were adjourned till 4 pm without transacting any major business following a ruckus by the two opposition parties over the issue. As soon as the House assembled for the day at 10.30 am, Opposition Chief Whip Pramila Mallik raised the issue

and demanded action against the Governor's son for assaulting the government official. Claiming that the State's BJP government has failed to provide security to an official who is an Odia, Mallik said, "By shielding the Governor's son, the State Government has insulted Odia 'Asmita', espousing which the BJP came to power in the State. We demand a statement from the Chief Minister on the matter." She also dubbed Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan's statement on Monday that

the Puri district Collector was probing the matter as "unfortunate". "What will the SP, DSP and other police officials do when the Puri Collector has been asked to probe a criminal case?" Mallik asked and sought a clarification from the CM, who is also in charge of the Home Department. Soon, the BJD members trooped into the Well of the House, raised slogans on Odisha Asmita and demanded arrest of the Governor's son. Speaker Surama Padhy tried to pacify the BJD members,

but they continued their slogan shouting inside the Well. Then, the Speaker adjourned the House till 11.30 am. When the House reassembled at 11.30 am, the BJD members again rushed to the Well and raised slogans in support of their demand. The Congress members too joined their BJD counterparts and went to the Well shouting slogans against the alleged attack on Raj Bhavan Assistant Section Officer (ASO) Baikuntha Pradhan by the Governor's son in Puri. The House soon plunged

into a ruckus with the Opposition insisting on their demand to take action against the Governor's son. The BJD demanded justice for the ASO. Treasury Bench members Jayanarayan Mishra and Tankadhar Tripathy countered the BJD members, stating that the law and order during the tenure of the BJD government in the State was more serious and said the BJD has no moral right to raise the law and order issue. As the ruckus continued, the Speaker again adjourned the House at 11.36 am till 4 pm.

Bibhuti Nayak elected ICAI prez

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

MA Bibhuti Bhusan Nayak, a fellow member of the Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI) and member of the Bhubaneswar Chapter with over 30 years of professional experience has been elected as the 67th president of ICAI for the year 2024-2025.

He is the 3rd Cost Accountant from Odisha to ascend to the esteemed position. He retired as DGM (Finance) from OPTCL and is currently a practicing Cost Accountant. His extensive background in finance and cost accountancy has equipped him with the skills and insights necessary for leading the ICAI. Earlier, he also served as the



chairman of the Bhubaneswar Chapter (2015-16) and as the chairman of the Eastern India Regional Council (EIRC) of ICAI (2022-2023). He has been elected as a Council member of the Institute for the term 2023-27 and served as vice president for the year 2023-24.

In Rajya Sabha BJD MP Patra demands GST withdrawal on KL

Says millions of workers in Odisha hit by imposition of tax
SUDARSHAN CHHOTORAY
BHUBANESWAR

BJD Rajya Sabha MP Dr Sasmit Patra on Monday raised the demand for withdrawal of 18% GST on Kendu leaf through a special mention in the Upper House.

Taking part in a debate, Patra stated that Kendu leaf is the financial backbone of about a million Kendu leaf pluckers, binders and seasonal workers of Odisha, most of whom are tribals. "The tribal people collect the leaf as part of their rights defined under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. They have the right to procure

and sell these products. Imposition of GST (18%) on Kendu leaf is adversely affecting the Kendu leaf trade. This in turn affects the livelihoods of the workers," he said. Patra demanded that in the interest of the livelihoods of the Kendu leaf dependent community, the Government of India should withdraw the imposition of GST on Kendu leaf. He also added that BJD

president and former Chief Minister of Odisha Naveen Patnaik, had written to the Government of India on November 25, 2022 requesting for withdrawal of GST on Kendu leaf. In the 48th GST Council meeting held on December 17, 2022 Odisha's then Finance Minister had also raised the demand for exemption of GST on Kendu leaf, stated Patra.

STA to seize vehicles sans fitness certificates

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a bid to reduce road accidents and prioritise passenger safety, the State Transport Authority (STA) has decided to take strict action against the vehicles operating without valid fitness and registration certificates.

Transport Commissioner Amitabh Thakur has issued a circular mandating a stringent approach against such vehicles. Decisions have been made to not only impose fines but also to seize these vehicles and file legal cases as per the law. All Deputy Transport Commissioners and Regional Transport Officers (RTOs) have been instructed to intensify the inspection process of fitness and registration certificates throughout the State. According to the Central Motor Vehicles Act 1988, it is mandatory for transport

vehicles to have valid registration and fitness certificates, and for non-transport vehicles to have valid registration certificates. Despite repeated awareness campaigns, many vehicle owners were found violating these norms. Such vehicles have been involved in several accidents. Moreover, insurance companies do not compensate for accidents involving vehicles without valid fitness and registration certificates. Therefore, it has been decided to strictly take action against such vehicles and take firm action against the lawbreakers.

These vehicles would be closely monitored. If caught without valid fitness and registration certificates, they would be seized under Section 207 of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988, by issuing e-challan.

Skill workshop begins at CSIR-IMMT

Event to continue till July 27



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The CSIR-IMMT organised a SERB-sponsored skill development workshop titled "Building capabilities in context to energy materials and devices" (BET 2024) on Monday which will continue till July 27 here.

The event marked a significant gathering of students from across the country, convened to explore and advance the boundaries of energy materials and technologies. Speaking on the occasion, Director of CSIR IMMT Dr Ramanuj Narayan extended a heartfelt welcome to every-

one. He remarked that from the dawn of civilization to our ongoing quest for energy, we draw inspiration from nature and learn how to utilize its resources effectively. During the event, chief guest, Prof Chandra Sekhar Sharma from IIT Hyderabad, delivered an inaugural lecture titled "Energy Storage Systems: Learning from the Past for Powering the Future."

Director In-Charge, Dr Laxmidh Besra also delivered an inaugural address. Additionally, Dr Shahid Anwar highlighted the significance and content of the workshop.

Centre seeks DPR from State for approval of Puri airport

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Centre has sought a detailed project report (DPR), including development plan, project cost and funding, traffic projections, timelines for construction of the proposed Shree Jagannath International Airport in Puri.

Replying to a question of BJD member Dr Sasmit Patra in the Rajya Sabha on the delay in execution of the project, Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu said the State Government has to submit an application along with the DPR to the ministry for grant of in-principle approval. According to the Greenfield Airports (GFA) Policy, 2008, the responsibility of implementation of airport projects, including funding of the project, land acquisition, R&R, etc., rests with the concerned airport developer (the State Government in this case), Naidu pointed out. The Centre had granted site clearance to Odisha for setting up of an international greenfield airport at Puri on

September 22, 2023. About 1,500 acres of land alongside the Puri-Brahmagiri road has been identified for the proposed airport. In April, Fairfax, Adani Group and GMR had expressed interest to develop the Rs 2,203-crore airport near Sipsasarubali in Puri. The tender for a public-private partnership (PPP) was floated by the Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (Idco) in February, this year.

Details provided by the Idco also revealed that the total land area of the airport will be around 1,184 acres with 100 acres earmarked for city side development. A 4-lane access road will be provided to the airport. The airport will have a capacity of handling 4.6 million passengers per annum (MPPA) in phase 1. In phase 2, it is expected to be 10.18 MPPA; and in phase 3, it will be an additional 16.69 MPPA, the report added. The construction of Puri airport is likely to be completed within three years.

HARO hails Union Budget

For giving priority to tourism sector
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HARO) expressed its happiness and gratitude to the Central Government for giving priority to the tourism sector in the Union Budget. HARO chairman JK Mohanty said it is heartening to learn that the Government of India would give priority focus on developing the tourism sector of Odisha. The HARO has always mentioned that Odisha has the highest tourism potential in the country; and support of the

Central Government and a modified tourism policy by the Odisha Government can definitely push Odisha tourism to much greater heights. "With the largest lagoon (Chilika Lake) of the northern hemisphere, beaches, mountains, tribes, richness of temple architecture, rich heritage sites, Odishi dance, silver filigree works, art, craft, culture and the rich eco tourist destinations, tourism in Odisha can generate highest employment in rural and urban areas. Presently, the GDP contribution from tourism is 8% and it can go much higher with a double-engine government in power," said Mohanty.

Boosting entrepreneurship, innovation in space tech

Event held at IIT BBS
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Research and Entrepreneurship Park (REP) of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar joined Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in commemorating the National Space Day. The day has been designated to celebrate the successful soft-landing of Chandrayaan-3 at Siva Shakti Point in the South Pole of the Moon on August 23. To commemorate this success, ISRO envisaged capacity building for entrepreneurship and innovation in space science technology throughout the country through a month-long celebration from July 20 to August 23. As part of the celebration, a two-day



event kicked off in the premises of IIT Bhubaneswar on Monday in association with Satish Dhawan Space Centre, SHAR. The event was inaugurated by Director NISER, Bhubaneswar, Prof Hirendra Nath Ghosh in presence of Director, IIT Bhubaneswar Prof Shreepad Karmalkar. Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Ghosh opined that the space technology sector re-

quires brilliant minds. Focusing on linking entrepreneurship and growth of space technology, Prof Karmalkar spoke about the 100-Cube Start-up Initiative, launched in February 2024 by the IIT Bhubaneswar. J Damodaram, Senior Scientist, ISRO and Amitav Mohanty, Scientist-SG, ISRO spoke on the objective of the event. CEO of the Research and Entrepreneurship Park at IIT

Bhubaneswar Dr Soobhankar Pati delivered the welcome address while PRO, Satish Dhawan Space Centre, SHAR, ISRO Kishor Kumar Panda proposed the vote of thanks. The highlights of the two-day event are a mobile exhibition of ISRO's innovations and achievements namely 'Space on the Wheels' and static floor exhibitions of scaled-down models and equipment being used in the space sector.

INBRIEF

BJP MLA BHOI FILES NOMINATION FOR DEPUTY SPEAKER

Bhubaneswar: Talsara BJP MLA Bhabani Shankar Bhoi on Tuesday filed nomination papers for Deputy Speaker of the



Odisha Legislative Assembly. The election will take place on July 24. Bhoi has been winning the Talsara seat for the last two selections.

SANTHANAGOPALAN NEW CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

Bhubaneswar: A 2001-batch IAS officer of Odisha Cadre, R Santhanagopalan has been appointed as Odisha's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). On Tuesday, the Election Commission of India issued a notification in this regard. Santhanagopalan will replace Nikunja Bihari Dhal as the CEO. He had earlier served as Secretary of the Labour and ESI Department. Earlier, Nikunja Dhal has been appointed Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.



UNION BUDGET TO BOOST FUTURE-READY MANPOWER

Bhubaneswar: DSBM Principal DN Mishra said the Union Budget is a booster dose for augmenting economic development and inclusive growth of the country due to special focus on agriculture, urban housing, women empowerment, green energy, digital infrastructure and commitment on various social welfare schemes. This Budget would lead to an eco-system of future-ready manpower due to announcement of educational loan up to Rs 10 lakhs, internship with stipend with 500 fortune companies of India, need-based skill training; and employment opportunities, etc., would certainly empower the young India. But the expectations of the middleclass tax payers have not fulfilled even if some tax reliefs announced.



VSS NAGAR UNNAYAN PARISHAD ANNUAL MEET HELD

Bhubaneswar: The annual function of the Veera Surendra Sai Nagar Unnayan Parishad was held at the local Bhubaneswari Temple on Sunday. Parishad president Krupasindhu Sahu presided over the meeting and vice-president Jayant Kumar



Parida inaugurated the function. Parishad general secretary Dillip Dashsharma discussed about the meeting. The election of office-bearers for the coming two years was held. The construction of a wall near Vani Vihar gate, the problems faced due to the garbage dump near the Sainik School, construction of a road to Laxmi Vihar, removing encroachments and shifting of meat shops alongside roads were discussed.

DUPLICATE SAUCE UNIT UNEARTHED IN CITY

Bhubaneswar: Police on Tuesday busted a duplicate sauce manufacturing unit at Bhimatangi under the Airfield police station in the capital city. Pumpkin, potato and some hazardous chemicals and items were used to prepare sauce at the unit. A senior food official said, "We had earlier found that the sauce served at various street joints was of poor quality. After a detailed investigation, we unearthed the unit." The official added that the concerned unit had some registration. However, the condition of the area where the product was manufactured was unhygienic. Similarly, all artificial things were used to manufacture sauce.



MISCREANT LOOT RS 2.50L FROM CUTTAK GARMENT SHOP

Cuttack: A miscreant broke into a garment shop here on Monday night and decamped with Rs 2.50 lakh kept in the cash box. The act was captured on a CCTV camera installed in the premises. The incident was reported from Madhupatna. The owner came to know about the matter when he came to open his shop on Tuesday morning. "I had kept the cash for paying a few vendors who were scheduled to come today. It is disheartening that such crimes are occurring at places close to the police station," he said. Police registered an FIR in this connection and began examining the CCTV footage to identify the thief.

H&UD SECY REVIEWS MONSOON PREPAREDNESS IN URBAN AREAS

Bhubaneswar: Principal Secretary, Housing and Urban Development Department Usha Padhee on Tuesday reviewed the situation and preparedness in urban areas of the State in



view of the monsoon season. She instructed urban local bodies to ensure that guidelines issued by the department be followed for addressing waterlogging and urban flooding issues. While the State has witnessed incessant rains over the last one week, the wet spell is set to continue through the week, the IMD informed.

Minor minerals theft rampant in Keonjhar

Raids conducted across dist
MALAY MOHAPTRA
KEONJHAR

During the last week, a special police team under instruction of Keonjhar SP Nitin Kushalkar raided different parts of the district on illegal transport of minor minerals. The Ghatgaon Police, Ramchandrapur Police and Ghasipura Police seized 13 sand loaded tippers and arrested 8 persons connected with the crime. Similarly, the

Nandipada Police seized 5 Sand loaded Hywa tippers and arrested two persons. In another instance, the Anandpur Police also conducted a raid and seized a loaded tractor and a Hywa truck carrying sand and chips and 2 accused were arrested.

Well, this is action taken in just a week while illegal mining and transportation of sand from the Baitarani and Kusei river beds has been a regular affair of the mafias for years. Illegal stocking yards are also found across the district to ensure regular supply to cus-



tomers at high price.

According to sources, there is a growing demand of minor minerals like sand, chips, murrum, granites in the construction work across the State. The demand has encouraged rampant illegal mining and transport of the mi-

nor minerals making it a flourishing profitable trade for which the Government has been losing huge revenue.

Numerous stone crushers are operational in all parts inspite of no legal stone quarry or mining leases in its vicinity. Hence illegal extraction of

stones, granites, sand, morum is done from forest and government land and used in construction of road buildings etc without much restriction.

It is alleged that most of the illegal trade operates under the support of influential political leaders and the enforcing agencies have remained silent spectators to the loot. After the Minor Minerals Directorate was brought under the Steel and Mines Department from the Revenue Department, no measures have been taken to check illegal mining and increase the revenue

from it. A mining officer of minor minerals with two staff stationed at the district level are totally incapable of curbing the illegal trade and only instrumental in data management. Most of the mining plan approved at the initial level are soon revised for a less revenue collection to favour the lessees. Experts on minor minerals opine that although there is a potential of Rs 20,000 crore annual revenue the department in nexus with illegal miners are satisfied with just a less than 1000 crore collection annually.

In Koraput Man gets lifer for raping 4-yr-old girl

PNS ■ KORAPUT

A court in Jeypore on Monday sentenced a 24-year-old man to life imprisonment for raping a four-year-old girl in Koraput district in 2020.

The Special POCSCO Court convicted Raja Ram Muduli of Paraja Sahi of Kakiriguma to life imprisonment based on the depositions of 22 witnesses and 27 pieces of documents. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 20,000 on Muduli.

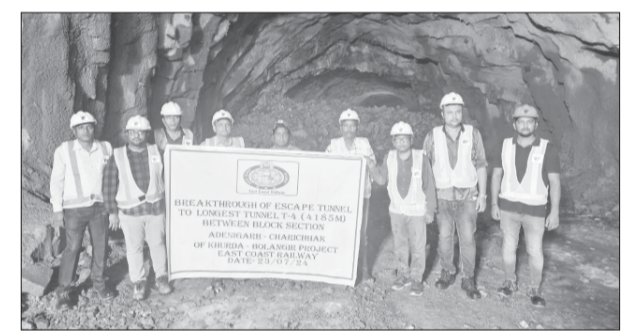
As per the case records, on May 19, 2020, while the victim was playing with other

children on the verandah of her house, Muduli lured her with a chocolate to a forest and raped her. After committing the crime, Muduli left her in an unconscious state.

The victim's parents, after a frantic search, rescued her from the forest. The Kakiriguma police had registered a case in this connection. Following an investigation, police arrested Muduli and forwarded him to court.

The court ordered the District Legal Services Authority to pay a compensation of Rs 10.50 lakh to the rape victim.

Khurda-Balangir line ECoR connects escape route with longest tunnel



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Khurda Road-Balangir rail link project (301 km) achieved a major milestone as the engineering team of the ECoR construction wing conducted breakthrough for 700-meter-long escape tunnel from the National Highway with the 4185-meter-long tunnel in the Adhenigarh-Charichhak section under deep reserve forest of Madhapur Forest Range of Boudh district.

Out of the total 301 kilometers of the project, 152.805 km has been commissioned.

The Railways has been constructing this line from both sides, i.e., from Khurda Road and Balangir, to ensure the early completion of the project. Till now, 105.8 km from Khurda Road to Daspalla and 47 km from Balangir to Sonepur have been commissioned.

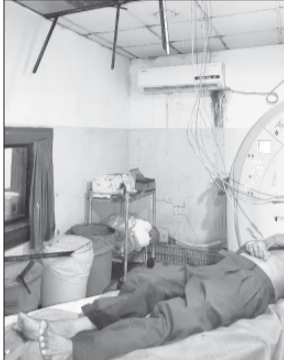
Apart from this, Sonepur to Jharmunda, a distance of 28.765Kms has also been completed. The segment from Sonepur to Purunakatak, covering about 73 km, is expected to be completed within the next few months.

CT scan services disrupted at VIMSAR

Due to ceiling collapse
PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

The Computer Tomography (CT) scan diagnosis service at the VSS Institute of Medical Science and Research (VIMSAR) has been disrupted since Sunday evening after the ceiling of the CT scan room collapsed. As per medical officials, it would take two more days to restart the diagnosis service.

According to the medical staffs, the incident took place around 7 pm. Soon after a pa-



tient laid for diagnosis got into the machine, the ceiling collapsed on the floor and the machine. The patient had no injury.

HOD of Radiology Depart-

ment BB Panda said, "Currently, on an average, we handle 100-120 CT scan cases daily. The entire room, including the wiring, is undergoing an overhaul. This may take 2-3 days. Installation of new machines in the super speciality building can provide an alternative." He added that the current CT scan machine has been in use for five years and is functioning 24/7.

The cost of a CT scanning at private clinics ranges between 2000-4000 rupees. VIMSAR's service is crucial for many poor patients who cannot afford the higher prices.

Director of VIMSAR Dr Bhabagrahi Rath said, "The VIMSAR building is 60 years old. We face difficulties accommodating new technologies in such an old structure. Major overhauls are hard to implement without disrupting services. It's a live hospital. Around three thousand patients visit VIMSAR for treatment daily."

Sambalpur CDMO Dr Sujata Rani Mishra said a new CT scan machine has arrived at the District Headquarters Hospital of Sambalpur last week and is expected to be installed soon.

First time in ferrochrome plant in India Tata Steel conducts successful trial of biomass use

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Tata Steel has successfully conducted the trial of biomass usage in ferrochrome making at its Ferrochrome Plant in Athagarh on Saturday.

The plant, operating under the Ferro Alloys and Minerals Division (FAMD) of the company, becomes first in India to have performed the trial run as part of its sustainable alternative to traditional carbon sources.

Marking a significant step towards sustainable ferrochrome production and reducing the carbon footprint, the trial involved substitution of conventional fossil fuels with biomass, a renewable energy source derived from organic materials.

This initiative is expected to lower CO2 emission by 0.08/t of Ferrochrome (@5% use of biomass) which is around 6% of total CO2 emission from Ferrochrome plant.



"This trial is part of our commitments towards sustainability and our relentless pursuit of reducing our carbon emissions. By leveraging biomass, we aim to create a cleaner, more sustainable production process, contributing to a greener future," said Executive-In-charge, FAMD, Tata Steel Pankaj Satija.

Through the initiative, conventional reductants will be replaced by carbon-neutral biomass which is made by low temperature burning of wood in oxygen starved atmosphere. The carbon released during the burning of charcoal in the Submerged Arc Furnace (SAF) will be balanced by the carbon absorbed by the trees from which it is made.

Book on 100 girls skilled in ITI B'pur unveiled



KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAMUR

The Government ITI Brahmapur unveiled a groundbreaking book titled "100 Women Achievers: Success Stories of 100 Girls Skilled in ITI Berhampur" in both Odia and English languages here on Friday.

The book was officially inaugurated by Secretary, SDTE, Odisha Usha Padhee in the presence of Director, DTET, all Principals of ITIs and Polytechnics, Odisha, and other Government officials.

The inspiring publication showcases the remarkable journey of 100 skilled girls who graduated from various departments at ITI Brahmapur and have successfully established themselves in prestigious Government, private, and in different public sector undertakings.

The book serves as a testament to the institute's commitment to empowering

women through skill development and providing them with ample opportunities to excel in their chosen fields, said Principal of the Institute Dr Rajat K Panigrahi.

"The Government ITI Brahmapur has consistently been the preferred choice for girls due to its exceptional and qualitative training programmes and proven track record of successful placements. For girls from humble backgrounds, it's often a life-changing opportunity," said Principal Dr Panigrahy.

"We believe that, this book will inspire countless young women across the country to pursue careers in the skill sector," he added.

By showcasing the successes of these 100 women, the institute aims to challenge stereotypes and create a more inclusive and equitable workforce. The ITI Brahmapur is confident that the initiative will contribute to a revolution in women's participation in the skill sector nationwide.

INBRIEF

KEONJHAR MUNICIPALITY CHAIRPERSON IMPEACHED

Phulbani: Keonjhar Municipality Chairperson Smita Rani Mohanty was on Tuesday removed from the post after an impeachment motion was passed against her. A meeting was held in the presence of Sub-Collector Chitta Ranjan Mahanta, Municipality Executive Officer Sujith Kumar Chowdhury and Additional Tehsildar Vimkesh Pradhan at the municipal council meeting regarding the impeachment motion against Mohanty. After a prolonged discussion, a vote was taken among the Councillors present for the proposal. Earlier, a council meeting had been held on July 19 against the Chairperson and it was decided that a motion would be laid for voting on Tuesday.

ODM SCHOOLS CELEBRATE YOUTH SKILLS DAY

Bhubaneswar: ODM Global School and ODM Public School celebrated the World Youth Skills Day, highlighting the importance of equipping young people with the skills needed for a sustainable future. Dr Satyabrata Minaketan, founder of



ODM Educational Group, spoke about the need of skill development and its necessity in building a developed Odisha. At the ODM Global School, the event was marked by inspiring presentations from resource persons Dr Sanghamitra Dash, Sandip Mukherjee and Priyanka Sahu.

CII MSME VENDOR CONNECT SERIES AT JHARSUGUDA

Jharsuguda: CII Odisha State Council organised its Maiden Edition of CII MSME Vendor Connect Series 2024 at Jharsuguda. The First Edition CII MSME Vendor Connect Series focused on the overarching theme of 'Expanding Business Horizon', a platform envisioned to play a significant role in enhancing the visibility and growth opportunities for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Odisha. Dr Pradipta Mohanty, Chairman, CII Odisha State Council and Chairman, SNM Group spoke on the occasion.

EX-HEAD MASTER GETS 2-YR RI IN GANJAM

Brahmapur: The Special Judge, Vigilance, Brahmapur on Tuesday convicted Aruna Chand Dash, former Head Master, City High School in Brahmapur, for possession of disproportionate assets (DA) and awarded him two years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for the offence. The court also directed him to pay a fine of Rs 10,000 and in default to undergo another month's RI. Earlier, the anti-corruption agency had charge-sheeted Dash for possession of DA. The Vigilance would now move the competent authority for stoppage of pension of Dash following his conviction.

SHINCHAN, OGGY, HONEY BUNNY NOW AVAILABLE IN ODIA

Bhubaneswar: Get ready to experience the magic of your favourite Sony YAY! toons in Odia. Enjoy Shinchan, the cheekiest kindergartener who can turn any situation upside



down, the comedic battles between Oggy and the Cockroaches and join your favorite OG Jholers, Honey and Bunny as they bring their pocketful of adventures in Odia. Go watch your favourite toons in your mother tongue and enjoy nonstop laughter only on Sony YAY!.

The flip side of capitalism, free market in India

Capitalism and its essential bedrock free market are generating a divided society. Many people lead anxious lives. The social bases of these anxieties are geographic, educational, and moral. It is the rural hinterland rebelling against the metropolis, the less educated rebelling against the more educated.

It is the struggling workers rebelling against the rent-seekers. While the fortune of the educated has soared, pulling up national averages with them, the less educated are now in a crisis. The resentment of the less educated is tinged with fear. They recognize that the well-educated are distancing themselves, socially and culturally. Anxiety, anger, and despair have shredded people's political allegiances, and their trust in government.

The less educated were at the core of the mutinies that saw Donald Trump defeat Hillary Clinton in the USA; and Brexit defeat PM Theresa May in the UK. Capitalism last worked well between 1945 and 1970. During that period, policy was guided by a



SATYA NARAYAN MISRA

communitarian form of social democracy that suffused through the mainstream political parties. But the ethical foundation of social democracy corroded. Its origins had been in the cooperative movements of the 19th century. Its narratives of solidarity became the foundation for a deepening web of reciprocal obligations that addressed these anxieties. However, the leadership of the social democratic parties passed from the cooperative movement to utilitarian technocrats and Rawlesian lawyers. Their ethics lack resonance with most people and voters have gradually with-

drawn their support. Currently, the political battlefield is characterized by alarmed utilitarian and Rawlesian vanguards under assault from populist ideologies.

This is the political menu from hell. Social democracy needs an intellectual reset, setting in motion interesting mid course correction.

Anthony Crosland in The Future of Socialism gave intellectual coherence to social democracy in its heyday. It decisively parted company with the Marxist ideology by recognizing that, far from being the barrier to mass prosperity, capitalism was essential for it. Capitalism spawns and disciplines firms, and organizations that enable people to harness the productive potential of scale and specialization. Far from alienation that Marx thought capitalism causes to the workers, many modern firms give workers a sense of purpose, and sufficient autonomy to take responsibility for fulfilling it. If capitalism is to work for everyone it needs to be managed so as to deliver purpose as well as productivity. Capitalism needs to be

managed, not defeated.

The new class divide between the prospering educated and the despairing less educated has to be narrowed. None of the new social cleavages can be healed by relying on the market pressures and individual self interest, as Adam Smith had cheerily prophesized. The Left assumed that the State knew best, but unfortunately, it did not. The vanguard-guided State was assumed to be the only entity guided by ethics. This wildly exaggerated the ethical capacities of the State. The right put its faith in the belief that breaking the chains of State regulation - the libertarian mantra- would enrich the power of self-interest to enrich everyone. This wildly exaggerated the magic of the market, and correspondingly dismissed ethical restraints.

In a remarkable book "The Future of Capitalism" (2018) Paul Collier proposes to heal these cleavages through policies he calls 'social maternalism'. The State would be active in both economic and social spheres, but it would not overtly empower itself. Its tax

policies would restrain the powerful from appropriating gains that they do not deserve, but not gleefully strip income from the rich to hand to the poor. Its regulation would empower those who suffer from Schumpeter's creative destruction by which competition drives economic progress. The philosophical bedrock of this agenda is a rejection of ideology.

The twentieth century's catastrophes were wrought by political leaders who either passionately espoused an ideology or peddled populism. In contrast to such leaders like Mao or Indira, the most successful leaders of the century were pragmatists. Taking on a society mired in corruption and poverty, Lee Kwan Yew tackled corruption head-on and turned Singapore into the most successful society of the 21st century.

In the book "The Fix", Jonathan Tepperman studied ten such leaders, searching for a formula by which they each remedied serious problems. He concludes that what they had in common was that they eschewed ideology. Instead, they

focused on pragmatic solutions to core problems. They were prepared to be tough when necessary; their willingness to deny patronage to powerful groups was the hallmark of success.

In the Indian context, ideology played a major part in shaping public policy, which eschews economic pragmatism, and the role of incentive in improving productivity. Nehru embraced the socialist ideology of the USSR when he embarked upon central planning with gusto in 1956 and called the public sector undertakings 'temples of modern India'. His daughter Indira went one step further. While emulating Nehru's Fabian socialism, she adopted a deadly cocktail of nationalization of banks and coal mines with populist policies like Loan Melas to garner votes. This was the low noon of growth and productivity when India achieved what Prof Raj Krishna calls a "Hindu rate of growth of 3.5%."

Fortunately, good sense prevailed when spiraling inflation and abysmally low levels of foreign exchange reserves

forced India to turn towards a free market philosophy in the 90s by dismantling the licence, quota, and permit raj. This has unleashed growth momentum, as never seen before, with savings, exports doubling, and a deluge of FDI. Unfortunately, it has also led to an increasingly divided society with the less educated feeling strong resentment against the more educated, because of the lack of employment opportunities. The income inequality between the top 10% and the bottom 50% of the population has sharply increased as per the World Inequality Report (2023). This is not due to an accident of history but as Thomas Piketty writes is due to conscious public policy that favors the superrich by reducing tax rates, abolishing wealth tax (2017), and giving humungous tax refunds to big corporates.

India under Modi is also countenancing the specter of crony capitalism, with a handful of industrialists monopolizing national resources like infrastructure, energy, and telecommunication. State patronage to powerful corporates

has roiled free competition which is the heart of liberal democracy.

Paul Collier writes that 'with the rise of extremist religious and ideological identities, the social menace is fragmentation into oppositional identities sustained by the echo chambers of social media'. After Brexit and the rise of Trump, political menace is exclusionary nationalism. We are seeing similar specter in India. Building a shared identity in a society with diverse cultures and diverse values is necessary for mutual well-being. Fostering brotherhood is a constitutional mandate. Unlike Singapore, which took on corruption head-on, embraced pragmatism and bolstered the quality of education, the main contenders to power in India are twisting the election manifestos to achieve their warped purposes. Free market philosophy which has brought India unprecedented prosperity must not be a hostage to toxic ideology but foster shared identities of culture and prosperity. (Dr Misra is a Professor Emeritus)



Home Ministry gets ₹2.19 lakh cr

Major chunk for central police forces like CRPF, BSF, CISF

Attempt to enhance woman participation in work force

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated Rs 2,19,643.31 crore for 2024-25 to the Ministry of Home Affairs with the majority of it — Rs 1,43,275.90 crore — being given to central police forces like the CRPF, BSF, and CISF which are responsible for internal security, border guarding, and security of vital installations.

The interim budget 2024-25 had allocated Rs 2,02,868.70 crore to the home ministry, helmed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Finance Minister Sitharaman has allocated Rs 42,277.74 crore to Jammu and Kashmir which is currently under the direct control of the central government after the abrogation of Article 370.

In the budget, Rs 5,985.82 crore

has been given to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Rs 5,862.62 crore to Chandigarh, Rs 5,958 crore to Ladakh, Rs 2,648.97 crore to Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu and Rs 1,490.10 crore to Lakshadweep. The budget also allocated Rs 1,309.46 crore (Rs 578.29 crore in 2023-24) towards work related to census and Rs 1,606.95 crore to the National Disaster Response Force (Rs 1,666.38 crore in 2023-24).

Among the paramilitary forces, the CRPF got Rs 31,543.20 crore, up from a revised estimate of Rs 31,389.04 in 2023-24, the BSF got Rs 25,472.44 crore (Rs 25,038.68 crore in 2023-24), the CISF was allotted Rs 14,331.89 crore (Rs 12,929.85 crore in 2023-24), the ITBP got Rs 8,634.21 crore (Rs 8,203.68 crore in 2023-24), the SSB was given Rs 8,881.81 crore (Rs 8,435.68 crore in 2023-24) and the Assam



Rifles was allotted Rs 7,428.33 crore (Rs 7,276.29 crore in 2023-24). The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is mostly deployed for internal security duties, operations against terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir, Naxals in central and eastern

India and the insurgents in the Northeast. The Border Security Force (BSF) guards India's borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh and it is also deployed for internal security duties. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) guards vital installations like nuclear plants, airports, and metro networks.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) guards the Sino-Indian border, the Shashastra Seema Bal (SSB) guards the India-Nepal and India-Bhutan borders, while the Assam Rifles protects India's border with Myanmar.

The Intelligence Bureau (IB) has been allocated Rs 3,823.83 crore (Rs 3,268.94 crore in 2023-24), the Delhi Police got Rs 11,180.33 crore (Rs 11,940.33 crore in 2023-24), the Special Protection Group got Rs 506.32 crore (Rs 446.82 crore in 2023-24).

The IB is India's internal intelligence agency, the Delhi Police guards the national capital and the SPG provides security to the prime minister.

Meanwhile, Rs 3,756.51 crore has been allocated to the Border Infrastructure and Management, Rs 3,152.36 crore has been given for developing police infra-

structure, Rs 1,105 crore for schemes related to women's safety, Rs 9,305.43 crore for various central sector projects and schemes sponsored by the home ministry, Rs 3,199.62 crore for security-related expenditure and Rs 1,050 crore for Vibrant Villages Programme.

The budget allotted Rs 1,248.91 crore to the Cabinet under which the expenditure on the council of ministers, cabinet secretariat, Prime Minister's Office, hospitality and entertainment of the government comes while Rs 6,458 crore has been given for disaster management, relief and rehabilitation and grants-in-aid to state governments among others.

The Safe City Project has been allotted Rs 214.44 crore, the National Forensic Science University got Rs 80 crore and the Rashtriya Raksha University has been given Rs 90 crore.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

increased to 24 per cent in Q2FY24. The budget showed that the recent payroll data shows a notable rise in female workforce participation.

However, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has seen a marginal increase of 2.5 per cent in its Budget allocation for the fiscal year 2024-2025. The total budget for the ministry stands at Rs 26,092 crore, up from the previous year's revised allocation of Rs 25,448 crore.

The SAMARTHYA sub-scheme, supporting projects such as Women Hostels, Swadhar Greh and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, has been allocated Rs 2,516 crore, a slight increase from the previous Revised Budget when Rs 2,325 crore was allocated.

A significant portion of this budget of the WCD ministry is directed towards the centrally sponsored schemes, which received Rs 25,848 crore.

The flagship schemes under the ministry, such as Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0, Mission VATSALYA, and Mission Shakti, have been given substantial funds to continue their efforts in improving nutrition, child protection, and women's empowerment.

Specifically, Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 have been allocated Rs 21,200 crore, aiming to combat malnutrition and support early childhood care.

Other key allocations include Rs 5.60 crore as India's contribution to UNICEF and continued funding of Rs 500 crore for the Nirbhaya Fund, which supports initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women.

Defence outlay hiked 4.79%

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of sustaining the ongoing modernisation and ensure operational readiness, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated Rs 6,21,940 crore to the defence sector for 2024-25. The grant for 2023-24 was Rs 5.94 lakh crore and the hike is 4.79 per cent.

In an effort to keep up the momentum of acquisition of modern weapon systems for the armed forces, the capital outlay is pegged at Rs 1,72,000 crore. The total allocation to the defence sector is 12.9 per cent of the total budget of the government of India for the financial year 2024-25.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the allocation of Rs 1,05,518 crore for domestic capital procurement will provide further impetus to atmanirbharta (self-reliance) in the defence sector. "As far as the allocation to the Ministry of Defence is concerned, I thank Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for giving the highest allocation to the tune of Rs 6,21,940.85 crore, which is 12.9 per cent of the total budget of the govern-

ment for 2024-25," he said in a social media post.

"The capital outlay of Rs 1,72,000 crore will further strengthen the capabilities of Armed Forces. Earmarking of Rs 1,05,518.43 crore for domestic capital procurement will provide further impetus to atmanirbharta (self-reliance) in the defence sector. "As far as the allocation to the Ministry of Defence is concerned, I thank Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for giving the highest allocation to the tune of Rs 6,21,940.85 crore, which is 12.9 per cent of the total budget of the govern-

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Allocation for civil aviation reduced, local air connectivity to get a hit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The budgetary allocation for the civil aviation ministry has been reduced to Rs 2,357.14 crore for the current fiscal ending next March, with regional air connectivity scheme set to get Rs 502 crore during the same period.

In the revised budgetary allocation for 2023-24, the amount for the ministry was at Rs 2,922.12 crore.

As per documents of the Union Budget 2024-25 the ministry will get an allocation of Rs 2,357.14 crore. The money set aside for the regional air connectivity scheme has been cut to Rs 502 crore from Rs 850 crore in the revised budgetary allocation for 2023-24.

The amount is for revival of 22 airports as well as commencement of 124 RCS routes and Viability Gap Funding for North East Connectivity. To improve connectivity in the northeast region, a new scheme has also been formulated for providing air connectivity and aviation infrastructure, as per a document.

However, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for drone and drone component will receive a higher allocation of Rs 57 crore this fiscal compared to Rs 33 crore in the 2023-24 revised estimates.

For 2024-25, the allocations for the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) have been cut to Rs 302.64 crore and Rs 89 crore, respectively.



In the Budget, an amount of Rs 57.14 crore has been allocated for the Hotel Corporation of India Ltd, which will be utilised to meet its statutory and other obligations under the ministry. According to the documents, an amount of Rs 85 crore has been allocated this fiscal for providing medical benefits to retired employees of Air India, which was sold by the government to Tata Group in 2022.

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Govt allocates ₹4,000 cr for Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Presenting the Budget 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that three crore additional houses under the PM Awas Yojana in rural and urban areas will be constructed, for which the necessary allocations are being made.

According to budgetary document, Rs 3,000 crore has been allocated for EWS and LIG groups to construct houses under CLSS in urban areas while the middle income group will be provided Rs 1,000 crore.

Sitharaman announced central assistance of Rs 2.2 lakh crore over the next five years to meet housing requirement of one crore urban poor and middle class families under the PMAY-U and proposed interest subsidy to provide loans at affordable rates.

She said, "Under the PM Awas Yojana Urban 2.0, housing needs of one crore urban poor and middle-class families will be addressed with an investment of Rs 10 lakh crore." "This will include the central assistance of Rs 2.2 lakh crore in the next five years," she added.

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Cancer drugs exempted from customs duty

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Exemption of customs duties on three additional cancer medications essential for treating prevalent types like lung, liver, and endometrial cancers and Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on X-ray tubes and flat panel detectors used in medical X-ray machines under the Phased Manufacturing Programme to "bolster domestic production capacity" were the key highlights of the Budget 2024 announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for the Health sector.

Overall, the Union health ministry has been allocated Rs 90,958.63 crore in the 2024-2025 budget, an increase of 12.96 per cent over the Rs 80,517.62 crore 2023-24 revised estimates.

Addressing the Budget speech here, Sitharaman said, "To provide relief to cancer patients, I propose to fully exempt three more medicines from customs duties. I also propose changes in the BCD on x-ray tubes & flat panel detectors for use in medical x-ray machines..."

Given the high expense of cancer treatment, which often makes them inaccessible to many, this exemption of custom duty on the additional cancer drugs is a crucial step. The three cancer drugs exempted from customs duty are Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib and Durlumab.



Welcoming the move, DS Negi, CEO, Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre called it a significant step towards making essential cancer treatments more accessible and affordable for patients across the country. "The high cost of cancer medication has been a major barrier for many patients, and this exemption will undoubtedly provide much-needed financial relief to those battling the disease."

Similarly, Dr Shyam Aggarwal, Chairman, Medical Oncology at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, was of the view that slashing the custom duty on medical devices in the cancer sector will lead to "spurring of indigenous manufacturing of digital X-ray machines in India."

"The reduction in GST and Import Duty on APIs will help in stabilising the Pharma prices in the country, boost the domestic manufacturing and make the medicines available for the common people at lower prices. This is in alignment with the Government's mandate of providing accessible health for all," said Dr Pradeep Multani, Former President, PHDCCI and Chairman, Multani Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

According to the budget details, out of the Rs 90,958.63 crore, Rs 87,656.90 crore has been allocated to the Department of Health and Family Welfare and Rs 3,301.73 crore to the Department of Health Research. Among the centrally sponsored schemes, the budget allocation for the National Health Mission has been increased from Rs 31,550.87 crore in 2023-24 to Rs 36,000 crore in 2024-25 and for the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) from Rs 6,800 crore to Rs 7,300 crore. For the National Tele Mental Health Programme, the budget allocation has been increased from Rs 65 crore to Rs 90 crore.

Development push to key heritage sites in Bihar, Odisha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In her address unveiling the Union Budget 2024-25, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman placed a spotlight on Bihar and Odisha's rich cultural heritage, announcing ambitious plans for the development of key spiritual and historical sites. Among these, the Vishnupad Temple corridor at Gaya and the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhi Gaya are slated for comprehensive transformation, modeled after the successful Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor.

Sitharaman emphasised that these initiatives aim to elevate these revered sites into world-class pilgrim and tourist destinations, as a part of broader

efforts to position India as a global tourist hub, creating jobs and stimulating investments across various sectors.

Sitharaman also outlined plans for Rajgir and Nalanda in Bihar. Rajgir, known for its religious significance among Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains, will undergo comprehensive development, highlighting its cultural heritage and natural attractions like the Saptarishi hot springs. Nalanda, home to the ancient Nalanda University, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, will be revitalised as a tourist center, with efforts to restore the university to its former glory, she said.

"Rajgir holds immense religious significance for Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. The 20th

disappointment. Rajiv Mehra of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) criticised the budget for not adequately addressing inbound tourism and employment generation opportunities. Aashish Gupta from FAITH, an apex body of the tourism and hospitality industry in the private sector echoed these sentiments, suggesting that while the budget acknowledges India's potential as a global tourism hub, more concrete measures such as increased marketing budgets, infrastructure support, and tax reforms could have been included to fully leverage this potential. Others rued that the main issues concerning the sector such as issues with GST levy and TCS on outbound travel were also ignored.

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Substantial allocation for Maharashtra: Fadnavis

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday accused the Opposition of trying to build a "negative narrative" even though "substantial allocations" are earmarked in the Union Budget for the western state.



(being swift) remark which went viral during the Lok Sabha poll campaign. Gandhi had purportedly promised a transfer of Rs 1 lakh in the bank account of one woman from every poor household in the country if the Congress won the elections. "Where is their (Congress) Khatakhat Khatakhat scheme? They are in power in some states, but we do not see it being implemented in any of those states," Fadnavis added. He also addressed allegations on Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, led by BJP allies and part of the Modi-led NDA government, receiving more funds than Maharashtra. "Maharashtra will receive Rs 908 crore under MUP-3 which will strengthen the

Industries hail Budget, welcome provisions for MSMEs, skilling

PTI ■ INDORE

Businessmen and industrialists in Madhya Pradesh were largely positive about the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday, saying it will give a new boost to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and help achieve the goal of a self-reliant India. The Budget will strengthen MSMEs, and they will be able to give tough competition to China in the international market, Yogesh Mehta, president of the Association of Industries Madhya Pradesh, an organisation of the MSME sector, told PTI. He also praised the proposal to allocate Rs 1.48 lakh crore

for education, employment and skill development, calling it a "historic allocation" for these sectors. Sitharaman has announced income tax relief for the middle class, a Rs 2 lakh crore outlay for job creation schemes over the next five years, allocated Rs 1.48 lakh crore for education, employment and skilling and provided credit support to small and medium businesses and raised small loans to Rs 20 lakh for small business. Ashish Vaish, chairman of the Madhya Pradesh unit of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), said that the Budget underscores the government's unwavering commitment to achieving the vision of a "Viksit Bharat".



It is inclusive and addresses the needs of all segments of society, ensuring that every class benefits, he said. "We are confident today's announcements will significantly expedite our journey towards an Atmanirbhar Bharat. The Budget also emphasises the importance of skilling and

capacity building, aligning with our goal to equip the workforce with the necessary skills to drive innovation and growth," Vaish said. The Pithampur industrial organisation, which represents 1,500 small and big industries in Pithampur, the largest industrial area of the state, also lauded the Budget. "Special attention has been given to the development of the MSME sector, employment and internship opportunities to the youth, which is a welcome step of the government," said Gautam Kothari, the organisation's president. Ramesh Khandelwal, president of the Ahilya Chamber of Commerce, a federation of business

organisations in Indore, termed the Budget "normal". "The business world was expecting big income tax relief and a simplified Goods and Services Tax (GST) system. It is disappointing that this expectation was not fulfilled," Khandelwal said. Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) National Vice President Rameshchandra Gupta claimed small traders have been struggling with the complexities of the GST system for a long time, but the Budget has not given any solution. Gupta, however, welcomed the provision for doubling the loan limit under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana to Rs 20 lakh and strengthening the infrastructure.

Puducherry CM lauds Budget, says it is good for all sections

PTI ■ PUDUCHERRY

Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangasamy on Tuesday hailed the Union Budget and said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had come out with several schemes and plans for people. Sitharaman presented the Budget for 2024-25. This is the first Budget during Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's third term in office. Rangasamy, who heads the AINRC-Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) coalition government in the union territory said, "The welfare of all sections will improve under the provisions of the Central Budget announced by



Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament." The youth, women, tribal population, farmers, the downtrodden and the youth would witness "a massive improvement in their welfare in keeping with the various schemes and programmes announced by the finance minister," he said. The allocation of Rs 1.52 lakh crore for the agriculture

sector shows the priority the NDA government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is giving to farmers. The finance minister has accommodated the prime minister's guarantees for the betterment of the tribal population, the Dalits, youth and women. "The provisions for skill development and promotion of the well being of women are the main highlights of the Budget," he said. The chief minister lauded the finance minister for her vision and practical approach to the betterment of the people and for taking the country on the path of development.

Slight rise in fund for disability sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Budget 2024-25 for the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) has seen a slight rise to Rs 1,225.27 crore, a mere 0.02 per cent increase from the previous year's revised estimate. The budget allocation for the National Program for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities stood at Rs 615.33 crore, up from Rs 502 crore in the previous year's revised budget. Assistance to Disabled Persons for Aids and Appliances also saw marginal increase to Rs 315 crore from Rs 305 crore while Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme saw

an increase to Rs 165.00 crore from Rs 130 crore. Scholarships for students with disabilities decreased to Rs 142.68 crore from Rs 155 crore while funding was reduced from Rs 76 crore to Rs 25 crores for disability sports. Funds for National Institutes also reduced to Rs 370 crore from Rs 408.75 crore while for National Trust, the allocation is Rs 25 crore. Rs 194 crore allocated for bodies like National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation and Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India is low, said disability activists Muralidharan from NPRD, said that budgetary support remains disproportionately low, just 0.025 per cent of the total budget, far below the 5 per cent allocation that has been advocated across ministries.

Public welfare Budget, says Yogi; Mayawati terms it disappointing

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday hailed the Union Budget, saying it is a "public welfare budget" that will make 'Ram Rajya' a reality. Speaking to reporters here, Adityanath said "the budget will play a big role in the prosperity of the farmers of Uttar Pradesh". In the budget, a provision of Rs 1.52 lakh crore has been made for the prosperity of the farmers, agriculture and allied sectors and more than Rs 3 lakh crore for women empowerment, he said. Uttar Pradesh will benefit the most benefited from this as the state has been effectively implementing the 'Mission Shakti' programme since

2020, CM Adityanath said, adding that the country's maximum farmers live in the state. Earlier, in a post in Hindi on X, the chief minister said that the budget will fulfil the hopes and aspirations of 140 crore Indians and all the resolutions of 'Amritkaal'. "Under the guidance of the respected prime minister, the 'sarvasparshi' (all-encompassing), 'sarvasamaveshi' (all-inclusive), 'vikaasonmukhi' (development-oriented) General Budget 2024-25 presented today by the Union finance minister is going to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of 140 crore Indians and all the resolutions of 'Amritkaal'," he said. He said the Union Budget



2024-25, which was presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha, "is an economic document for the creation of a developed India-self-reliant India". "It has the sacred spirit of 'Antyodaya', infinite possibilities of development and a new vision of innovation. This budget has a



resolve for the holistic development of all sections of society, including villages, poor, farmers, women, youth, a vision to become self-reliant in every field and a roadmap to free the deprived from deprivation," Adityanath said in the post. The chief minister said he welcomes the announcement

of new provisions regarding the direct tax system as they will provide major relief to the middle class. "This demand was going on for a long time. There will be no tax on income up to three lakh. Other slabs are also full of relief. Provisions made for different sectors will create lakhs of jobs," he said while speaking to the reporters. "Heartfelt gratitude to the respected prime minister and heartfelt congratulations to the Hon'ble Union finance minister for this public welfare budget that paves the way to make the 'New India' a 5 trillion dollar economy and the growth engine of the world," Adityanath said in the post on X. Meanwhile, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati

termed the budget a disappointment for the poor, unemployed, farmers, women, marginalised and neglected 'bahujans' (communities) of the country. "The Union Budget presented in Parliament today follows the same old pattern, where except for a handful of rich and wealthy people, it offers little hope of good days for the country's poor, unemployed, farmers, women, labourers, marginalised and neglected communities and is more full of disappointment for them," she said in a post in Hindi on X. The BSP chief said that while the country is struggling with extreme poverty, unemployment, inflation and underdevelopment, the

government at the Centre has no intentions of working towards its upliftment. "This new government also lacks the required reformist policies and intentions for the upliftment of over 125 crore underprivileged sections and the provision of basic facilities for them. Will people's lives become happy and prosperous with such provisions in the budget?," she said in the post. Mayawati said that the development of the country and the upliftment of its people should not be a maze of statistics. "Instead, it should provide everyone with basic progress like employment opportunities, money/income for expenses to truly relieve them from

their distressed lives. The development of the railways is also very important. The government should ensure work for every hand, like the BSP government did," she added in the post. Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) state unit spokesperson Ankur Saxena, however, welcomed the provisions of the Union Budget, saying it will "trigger economic growth in the country as well as in Uttar Pradesh". "The new income tax regime will definitely help a large section of the salaried class people. Apart from this, I feel that the budget will bring holistic development in the country and every section of the society will gain and benefit from it," Saxena said.

TMC slams absence of allocations for flood control in West Bengal

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Tuesday criticised Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for not including the Ghatat Master Plan, aimed at managing floods in low-lying areas of Paschim and Purba Medinipur districts, in her Budget speech. The speech also overlooked long-standing Ganga erosion issues in districts such as Malda and Murshidabad, which have consistently gained national attention. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had recently announced that the state government would proceed with implementing the master plan using its own resources, citing the Centre's lack of response to the demand. Ghatat MP and Bengal film star Deepak Adhikari aka Dev described the non-allocation of funds for the Ghatat Master Plan in the Union Budget as "nothing but a vindictive political attitude" of the Narendra Modi government. Talking to PTI over the phone, Dev said, "It is sad (that funds weren't allocated for Ghatat Master Plan). I think the reason behind this could be that the BJP won fewer seats in the state this

time and also because Bengal is ruled by the Trinamool Congress." The Ghatat MP, representing the constituency since 2014, had previously said implementing the master plan, which entails thorough dredging of the local Kangsabati and Silabati rivers which overflow during the monsoons, construction of river embankments and setting up lock gates, was a "mission" he aims to fulfill during his current tenure. "I am not saying this because I am a TMC MP, but because I understand the problem of the people of Ghatat and know how they are badly affected by floods every year. Narendra Modi must realise that he is not the PM of BJP-ruled states only, but also of the other states, including Bengal," Dev said. "Ghatat has been suffering for the last several decades because of recurrent floods. The Modi government never paid attention to the needs of the people there. For the last 11 years, they have been waiting for the Centre to respond, but sorry to say there has been no positive action. The PM and the Finance Minister must realise which states require more attention and plan the budget accordingly," he added.

In her Budget speech, Sitharaman unveiled a comprehensive plan to address recurring flood crises in several states, with significant allocations for Bihar, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim. Bihar, frequently impacted by floods, will receive substantial financial support through programmes such as the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme. Assam, grappling with annual floods from the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, will receive assistance for flood management and related initiatives, Sitharaman said in her Budget speech. She added that Himachal Pradesh, which faced severe losses due to floods last year, will receive support for reconstruction and rehabilitation through multilateral development assistance. Uttarakhand, affected by cloud bursts and landslides, will also benefit from government assistance aimed at recovery efforts. Sikkim, which was hit by devastating flash floods and landslides in October last year, will also get financial assistance from the Centre to rebuild the state.

Despite these allocations, there was minimal mention of Bengal in the Finance Minister's budget, except in the context of the Purvodaya programme, which aims to foster the comprehensive development of the eastern region, encompassing Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh. "This reflects the BJP's consistent anti-Bengal stance and vindictive politics. They withhold support even for natural disaster relief in non-BJP ruled states like Bengal because they cannot gain politically," TMC spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Santanu Sen told PTI. Slamming the Union Budget as "directionless" and "anti-poor", Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee questioned the logic behind opening up government coffers for Sikkim but making no mention of funds for the Darjeeling hills. "I am happy that Sikkim was provided financial assistance but the hills of Darjeeling and Kalimpong also face similar crises. The BJP remembers Darjeeling only when an election comes knocking. At other times, it falls on their blind spot," she alleged.

Telangana gets nothing in Budget, says BRS leader K T Rama Rao

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President K T Rama Rao on Tuesday expressed disappointment with the Union Budget, alleging that Telangana received nothing. Despite having a budget of more than Rs 48 lakh crores, only a few states received major benefits, he alleged. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday presented the Budget for 2024-25. This is the first Budget during Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's third term in office. Referring to BJP and Congress winning eight Lok Sabha seats each in Telangana (out of 17), Rama Rao said the people of the state should think as to what happened when they gave 16 seats to the two national parties. BRS drew a blank in the LS polls. "It is disappointing that Telangana is not mentioned in the entire Budget. Once again, Telangana received nothing," he said in a statement. Stating that BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao had requested the Centre to take decisions on about 35 "promises" made to Telangana in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 when he was chief



minister, Rama Rao said national status has not been granted to any irrigation projects in the state despite requests. The BRS had made several requests, including central institutes such as IIM to Telangana, funds for industrial corridors from Telangana to Mumbai-Nagpur and others and establishment of a new handloom cluster along with a mega power loom cluster, but the Centre did not respond, he charged. "Even the requests made by the present chief minister and ministers from Telangana during their visits to Delhi were ignored. Once again, Telangana has received nothing in this Central Budget," Rama Rao, son of former CM Chandrasekhar Rao, said. Stating that Telangana people should take note of the funds allocated to Andhra Pradesh and Bihar which have more

seats in Parliament, he claimed that the people need to understand that "own political identity and strength" is crucial for Telangana's development. The people of Telangana will certainly teach a lesson to the BJP government for giving zero funds despite having eight MPs, he said. Maintaining that BRS has no problem with the funds given to Andhra Pradesh and that his party wishes the neighbouring state, Rama Rao said the Central government, however, did not mention the word Telangana even once when discussing the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act. "We are happy with the significant funds given to Andhra Pradesh. But it is truly disappointing to see that only Andhra Pradesh and Bihar received funds while the remaining 26 states were overlooked," he said.

Budget looks after farmers' interest: Shivraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday said here the budget looked after interests of farmers adding to increase productivity, reduce input cost and ensure fair prices to farmers, Minimum Support Price (MSP) rates are being continuously increased. Chouhan said Rs 1.52 lakh crore has been given for agriculture and related sectors. Agricultural production and productivity is the first priority. 109 varieties of 32 high-yielding and climate-friendly crops will be released. Agricultural research will be comprehensively reviewed to emphasise the development of climate-friendly crops. Pulses and oilseeds (mustard, groundnut, sesame, soybean, sunflower) crops will be produced on mission mode. Production, storage and marketing of crops will be strengthened, which will benefit farmers and also increase their income. To increase productivity as well as reduce input costs, one crore farmers will be linked to natural farming in the next two years.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Optimistic outlook

The Economic Survey for 2023-24 emphasises the urgency of addressing inequality and unemployment

The Economic Survey for 2023-24 released on the eve of the Union Budget is optimistic about the Indian story of growth and development; however, it also indicates the areas of concern on which it suggests the Central Government to act on priority. It is customary to have the Economic Survey just before the budget as it sets the tone of the budget and puts things in perspective. This year round it is buoyant on growth and pegs India's GDP growth at 6.5-7.0% in this fiscal year. The Economic Survey, a comprehensive report that reviews the developments in the Indian economy over the past year, forecasts robust growth in various sectors. This optimism is grounded in several factors, including strong domestic consumption, increased investments, and favourable government policies. Interestingly this is despite the fact that most economies around the world are struggling to attain much lower levels of GDP. The survey underscores the Government's focus on infrastructure as a critical driver of growth. Ongoing projects in road, rail, and port development are expected to boost connectivity and efficiency, facilitating smoother trade and commerce. Besides, the rapid expansion of the digital economy is another significant area of growth. Though open to criticism, the Survey maintains that the 'Make in India' initiative continues to show promising results.



The survey notes that boosting exports, particularly in high-growth industries such as pharmaceutical, electronics, and textiles, could significantly enhance India's global economic standing. The Survey also talks about the problem area of the Indian economy. Agriculture, the backbone of the Indian economy, remains a priority.

The survey recommends further reforms to increase productivity and ensure sustainable growth in this sector. Innovations in technology and better access to markets are crucial to achieving these goals. The Economic Survey rightly numerates various factors which could pull down the economy and be an impediment in the national growth. The biggest stumbling block is of course inflation. The survey suggests a balanced approach to monetary policy to manage inflation without stifling growth. Unemployment yet another constraint needs to be addressed on priority. The survey calls for policies that support skill development and entrepreneurship to harness the potential of the burgeoning young population. PM Modi reaffirmed the government's commitment to fostering an environment conducive to growth. Indeed, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget for 2024-25 incorporates several suggestions made by the Economic Survey. Setting a roadmap for the third term of Modi Government, Union Finance Minister has defined nine priorities. These are agriculture, employment, human development, energy security, manufacturing, innovation, infrastructure and next generation reforms. These would indeed go a long way in reducing unemployment, curbing inflation and giving economy a push that would be inclusive and sustainable.

PICTALK



Hindu devotees offer prayers during the holy month of Shrawan at the Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu

India backs Philippines in South China Sea standoff



ASHOK K MEHTA

As China continues its aggressive tactics, the Philippines, bolstered by international alliances, stands resilient against Beijing's coercion

My enemy's enemy is my friend is a fitting adage for India; 's support to the Philippines which is fighting a battle royale in the South China Sea with China. Chinese Coast Guards have been regularly intruding into the Philippines Exclusive Economic Zone (PEEZ) which they regard as part of the South China Sea under its default claim of 10 dash line that was rejected by an arbitration court at Hague under UNCLOS in 2016. Bash on regardless is PLA's dictum in coercing the Filipinos as they to us along LAC. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar visited Manila in May and expressed full support for the Philippines in its claims in PEEZ.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson after the 17 June clash said "We oppose destabilizing unilateral action to change status quo by force or coercion". Earlier in 2022 India made its first international sale of the Brahmos anti-ship missile system to the Philippines. I was in Manila last month, days after the 17 June incident comparable to our own Galwan clash on 15 June 2020. It was evident that the Chinese were bullying Filipinos in their waters. The 17 June incident has been flogged with Chinese but mainly Filipino accounts. In brief, Chinese Coast Guards are trying to force out Filipino Coast Guards from their outpost on Thomas Shoal 2 which they preemptively occupied in 1999 denying a free run to China in seizing unoccupied islands in PEEZ.

Like pirates, the Chinese Coast Guard are even poaching in EEZ of Asian countries. Chinese have unilaterally promulgated law in the South China Sea laws that allow them to seize for 60 days without trial, foreign vessels and even fire at them -which they have not done - if necessary. Chinese Coast Guard is employing lethal weapons short of firearms like picks, axes, spears and rods to inflict casualties with medieval warfare equipment that the PLA used to surprise Indian troops in Galwan. Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam and Indonesia have quietly accepted Chinese bullying while the Philippines



backed by the US is pushing back. All these countries are hugely reliant on China for trade and BRI benefits. The Philippines like Taiwan is resisting Chinese coercion while balancing its economic relations with Beijing. Between 2000 and 2020 China committed a total of USD9.1 bn in financial support to the Philippines.

In Manila, after the violent incident near Thomas Shoal Chinese Coast Guard intercepted the Philippines Coast Guard that was trying to resupply its small island garrison. Seven Filipino sailors were wounded in the clash and one lost a thumb. Seven rifles were also impounded and have not been returned. President Bong Bong Ferdinand Marcos Jr who had recently warned China at Shangri-la Dialogue of 'consequences' and vowed not to yield 'even an inch or a millimeter' has been blowing hot and cold as have his ministers also.

The Philippines has a Mutual Defence Treaty of 1951 with the US whose conditions are more specific and binding than the US-Taiwan Act. Still, no one wants to invoke the Treaty over the 'territorial integrity of a Shoal'. American Ambassador to the Philippines Mary Carlsson said in Manila on 24 June that China should settle disputes by international law and "not bully our partners in their backyard". The US is wary of opening another



IN MANILA, AFTER THE VIOLENT INCIDENT NEAR THOMAS SHOAL CHINESE COAST GUARD INTERCEPTED THE PHILIPPINES COAST GUARD THAT WAS TRYING TO RESUPPLY ITS SMALL ISLAND GARRISON

front after Ukraine, Gaza and the Red Sea, even as the risk of accidental escalation or misunderstanding is high in the Taiwan Straits. The US plans to revive and modernize Subic Bay and adjoining Clarks Airbase and is deploying the deadly Typhon missile system at some of their ten bases in the Philippines.

The Indian Brahmos missiles are located in Luzon facing the South China Sea and can reach out to Chinese-occupied Mischief Reef, Thomas Shoal 2 and Scarborough Shoal. It is believed that some 3 to 400,000 Americans reside in the Philippines and US-Philippines relations under Marcos Jr are back to its heyday. The Philippines is actively collaborating with QUAD-US, India and Australia.

Japan and the Philippines signed a defence agreement this month that will allow the deployment of troops on each other's territory with Tokyo pledging to provide additional defence aid. Similarly, Manila and Seoul are coordinating maritime coordination and joint exercises.

South Korean shipyards are likely to receive orders to build Coast Guard vessels for the Philippines. Canada and even the European Union are coordinating maritime activities in PEEZ. None of the Philippines' brave calls for standing its ground in the South China Sea and pledges of support from its friends and allies has deterred China in its show of force.

It fielded its aircraft carrier Shandong and the world's largest Coast Guard vessel 5901 in PEEZ while at the same time, it held talks with Filipino officials on de-escalation measures this month. The code of conduct in the South China Sea under preparation for over two decades is expected to be finalized in 2026.

However, the most recent agreement is about establishing hotlines at various levels for stopping maritime incidents. From the US and Indian perspective, the Chinese claimed preeminence in the South China Sea has to be contested by QUAD, AUKUS, the new trilateral between Japan, the Philippines and South Korea. Further resistance to the reunification of Taiwan must continue and Taiwan Straits remain free for navigation and overflights.

As China's economy declines, and Asian economies grow through new supply chains and the realization of India's Act East policy, Western collective deterrence will dampen Chinese bravado in the South China Sea. The Philippines will be the immediate natural southern pillar of the Indo-Pacific strategy.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THAT GOOD MORNING THUD

Madam — Day after day, month after month and year after year, I have waited, and have been rewarded with the familiar thud of a bundle of newspapers at my doorstep. Two newspapers rolled into a cylindrical bundle, a Hindi one for my significant other, and an English one for myself, have made their presence felt at a fixed time, and at a designated landing spot — a coir doormat placed just outside of our front door. Kudos to our "paperwallah bhaiya" whose throw never misses the mat. And what's more, the bundle always aligns itself in the North-South direction, even after a seemingly careless throw. The soft thud is much like the firing of a starter pistol before a sprint, albeit much less noisy. The familiar thud signals that yet another day has begun, and we have no time to fritter away. What remains now is to pour the hot coffee into our waiting tumblers, put on our specs and try to take the world in our stride.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

MAMATA'S GOODWILL GESTURE

Madam — This is in response to the news report titled "Opposition curses NDA Sarkar" (July 22). A state government might not have any locus standi to offer shelter to foreign citizens within its border, but West Bengal Chief minister Mamata Banerjee must be appreciated for displaying such warmth for the innocent Bangladeshis running away from internal unrest. After all humanity must reign supreme over petty artificial international borders. So instead of maligning Banerjee with all sorts of ridiculous accusations possible, BJP leaders must ask it's own government in New Delhi to act as gallant-hearted as Indira Gandhi (during the 1971 turmoil prior to formation of Bangladesh) and allow refuge to the escaping Bangladeshis in the neighboring Indian states including West Bengal.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

Joe Bide backs Kamala Harris



US President Joe Biden has endorsed Vice-President Kamala Harris as the Democratic Party's presidential nominee, marking the end of his re-election bid. Kamala Harris pledged to do everything in her power to unite the nation. If nominated, Kamala Harris would be the second woman, following Hillary Clinton, to run for the U.S. presidency. If successful, she would make history as the first female president of the United States. Despite being the world's oldest modern

democracy, America has not yet elected a woman as president in its 236 years of electoral history. In contrast, India, a much younger democracy, elected Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister in 1966. Women face numerous hurdles in politics, including time poverty, lack of campaign funding, and fewer opportunities for political training and mentorship. Social media also facilitates personal attacks that disproportionately target women, potentially driving them out of politics, according to Silveria E. Jacobs, former Prime Minister of Sint Maarten.

If Kamala Harris breaks the American glass ceiling, it could inspire women worldwide to pursue politics and promote female leadership. Her achievement would symbolize progress and motivate more women to seek political office, enhancing gender diversity and representation in global political leadership.

Srinivas Madhav | Hyderabad

BANGLADESH BLUES

Madam — Apropos, "Trouble in Bangladesh," Jul 22. The tragic death of about 100 people in violence triggered by the students' protest demanding a roll-back of 30 percent job reservation for relatives of veterans who fought in the 1971 war in Bangladesh, has shown the Sheikh Hasina government in poor light. The quota provision has been under fire as it apparently benefits the supporters of PM Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement.

She had defended it on the grounds that veterans deserved the highest respect for their contribution to the liberation, regardless of their political affiliation. However, the PM cannot afford to ignore the present realities. A merit-based system for jobs will help Bangladesh sustain its impressive economic march. Hopefully, the government will implement the apex court's order in letter and spirit. And there is also a lesson here for India, where unemployment is a major issue and sev-

eral states have witnessed an uproar over quotas. Prioritising political considerations over ensuring a level playing field for recruitments is fraught with grave consequences.

The tragic deaths resulting from the students' protest against job reservations have cast a shadow over the Sheikh Hasina government. While the PM defends the quota for veterans, a merit-based system is essential for Bangladesh's economic progress.

The government must heed the apex court's order to ensure fairness. This situation also serves as a cautionary tale for India, where prioritising political considerations in job quotas could have serious repercussions. Now the apex court of Bangladesh has toned down the quotas it is likely that Bangladesh will once again have peace and chart on its path to progress. It will also be good for India-Bangladesh relations.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

To mitigate heatwave effects we must prioritise innovations in RE

This climatic extremity underscores the urgent need for innovative solutions in the renewable energy sector



RATUL PURI

India is no stranger to scorching summers. Recently, the country has endured its longest and most intense heatwave in recorded history, with temperatures in some areas soaring to a blistering 50 degrees Celsius.

Heatwaves in India typically occur between March and June, with May being the peak month. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) defines a heatwave as a period where temperatures exceed 40°C in plains, 37°C in coastal areas, and 30°C in hills, with significant deviations from average temperatures. When this deviation reaches 6.5°C or more, it is classified as a "severe heatwave." The public health implications of such extreme temperatures are severe. Heatstroke, dehydration, and heat exhaustion become common, exacerbating pre-existing conditions like heart disease and respiratory issues. Vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and outdoor workers, are particularly at risk. The heatwaves also impact wildlife, causing water scarcity, disrupted food chains, and habitat loss. Livestock suffers from



heat stress, affecting milk production and overall health. Global warming has raised average temperatures, creating conditions ripe for extreme weather events. Heatwaves, in turn, drive up electricity demand, straining power grids to their limits. A 2022 report from the World Meteorological Organization underscored the vicious cycle: greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel-based electricity production contribute to heatwaves, which increase power demand, further straining fossil fuel resources and exacerbating the climate crisis. This highlights the urgent need for large-scale renewable energy adoption. India has ambitious renewable energy goals, aiming for 500 GW of capacity by 2030. However, the very heatwaves that renewable energy seeks

to combat pose challenges, particularly for the solar energy sector. Solar panels, primarily using photovoltaic technology, are designed for optimal efficiency between 15 and 35 degrees Celsius. As temperatures rise, their efficiency drops, with prolonged exposure to high temperatures potentially reducing efficiency by 10-25%. This is because increased thermal agitation disrupts electron flow within the circuits, decreasing voltage output. To address this challenge, several solutions are being explored. Monocrystalline panels, known for their superior performance under stress, could be a viable alternative for heatwave-prone areas, despite their higher cost. Advances in technologies like TOPCon (Tunnel Oxide Passivated Contact) are also promising, enhancing the efficiency and performance of solar components in harsh environments. Additionally, incorporating advanced cooling systems, such as ventilation within panels, can manage excess heat. Using heat-resistant materials in solar panel construction could also help

withstand high temperatures with minimal efficiency loss. The intense heatwaves in India underscore the urgency of climate action. The renewable energy sector must innovate continuously to develop efficient and affordable solar panels capable of withstanding India's diverse weather patterns, from extreme heatwaves to heavy monsoons. Local geographical factors must be considered in design and deployment strategies. The country's renewable energy sector must rise to the challenge by fostering resilient technologies that can withstand extreme weather events like heatwaves. This journey demands a multi-pronged approach to accelerate the development of heat-resistant solar technologies. Promoting public-private partnerships can facilitate the large-scale deployment of these advancements, making them more accessible and affordable. Only then can India ensure a cleaner, greener legacy for future generations.

(The writer is the Chairman of Hindustan Power Group; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

HARNESSING THE POWER OF OPTIMISM

In the high-pressure maze of the corporate world, optimism emerges as a powerful antidote to stress



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

The corporate world is a maze of challenges, deadlines, and pressures that often leave an employee drained and disheartened. However, amidst this complex and mostly daunting environment, there lies a strong antidote: optimism. That very saying, "The whole world runs on hope," has within itself a very deep message that can turn around professional life and make it work wonders. Optimism, not pessimism, is not some feel-good philosophy but a very practical way to build resilience, increase productivity, and foster a more positive workplace culture. Long-term optimism is the positivity of thinking towards the occurrence of good things and ultimately positive results from our efforts. This mindset should be at the core of every working principle in a corporate setting. Projects may fail, market conditions may go for a toss, or other obstacles might impede; it is then that the optimist who views these obstacles not as insurmountable barriers but as opportunities for growth and learning.

Consider its effect on workplace morale. The optimistic frame of mind can make a lot of difference in the general feel of an office. If leaders or team members have bright, twinkling eyes and a positive outlook, this no doubt will breed others to emulate and follow in their footsteps, creating an upward spiral of sentiments. This sort of collective optimism yields openness to collaboration, increasing innovation, and a willingness to take calculated risks. A team that believes in the possibility of success is going to realize it far more than one that is bogged down in doubt and negativity. Optimism allows for an increase in resiliency. When faced with setbacks, an optimistic person is more likely to try again and views these failures as being transitory, or conquerable.

This elasticity can prove particularly useful in business circles where preservations are often what distinguish between giving up and breaking through to success. In its instance, the optimistic approach will make individuals keep themselves motivated and move consistently toward their goals, even when the odds are not favourable. Even so, optimism needs to strike a correct and delicate balance with realism. Blind optimism that is not based on the real situation brings over-optimistic expect-



tations with a sense of subsequent disappointment. The key here is to adopt realistic optimism: know the challenges, and uncertainties, but emphasise solving the problems and cultivating the outcomes. This balanced approach will keep one hopeful without losing sight of practical considerations.

One of the ignored facts about optimism is its relationship with the capability of stress management. The corporate world itself is a very stressful environment with great stakes and constant demands. Optimism hence acts as a defence mechanism against this stress and thus helps them cope better under pressure. Optimistic employees must, therefore, be more likely to resort to proactive coping strategies like problem-solving and seeking support than become prey to anxiety and despair.

This kind of camaraderie enhances job satisfaction, reducing turnover rates and generally creating a stable and harmonious work environment. Inculcating optimism in professional life does not mean one gets oblivious to challenges and uncertainties in a business environment. Instead, it is a manner of relating to them with hope and activity. Without attachment to the outcomes, giving it our best creates the opportunity for a whole lot of possibilities to start unwrapping. Life itself, much like work, is unpredictable. Embracing that uncertainty optimistically makes us able to move through the corporate landscape resiliently, creatively, and in high spirits. Optimists by choice can build a workplace that is productive, enriching, and supportive. This means that optimism is not merely a personal virtue; rather, it is a business asset with its key to professional success and better careers.

(The writer is a motivator; views are personal)

Income tax amendment promises relief for MSMEs



UTTAM GUPTA

The biggest problem faced by small enterprises is delayed payment of their dues by large enterprises as it results in a shortage of working capital severely impacting their production



An amendment to the Income Tax Act, introduced through Finance Act 2023, and effective from April 1, 2024 stops businesses from claiming tax deductions for payments beyond 45 days to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) for supply of goods and services has caused much consternation. The MSMEs are ancillary units engaged in the production, manufacturing and processing of goods and commodities (mostly intermediate goods) which are supplied to large enterprises or master units. These units operate on a small scale and are further categorized into micro, small and medium enterprises depending on the 'investment' and 'turnover' threshold as defined under the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006.

A micro-enterprise is one where investment in the plant and machinery or equipment doesn't exceed Rs 10 million and turnover doesn't exceed Rs 50 million. A small enterprise is an entity where investment in the plant and machinery is less than 100 million and turnover doesn't exceed Rs 500 million. For a medium enterprise, the thresholds are set at Rs 200 million for investment in the plant and machinery or equipment and Rs 1000 million for turnover. According to the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, the share of MSME Gross Value Added (GVA) in India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is around 30 per cent. The share of MSME manufacturing output in all India Manufacturing output is even higher at around 36 per cent.

The share of export of MSME-specified products in all India exports has oscillated between 44-50 per cent during the last couple of years, according to the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIIS). As for employment, according to a report released by the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), MSMEs in India contribute 62 per cent to the total. Looking at the omnibus 'informal' sector - apart from MSMEs, it also includes proprietary household and partnership establishments - its contribution to employment is even higher at more than 75 per cent whereas in GDP its share is almost 50 per cent. The MSMEs thus play a predominant



A MICRO-ENTERPRISE IS ONE WHERE INVESTMENT IN THE PLANT AND MACHINERY OR EQUIPMENT DOESN'T EXCEED RS 10 MILLION AND TURNOVER DOESN'T EXCEED RS 50 MILLION

role in shaping the prospects of the economy more so in promoting 'inclusive' development with particular emphasis on increasing employment and income and reducing income inequalities.

Yet, they have borne the brunt of far-reaching economic decisions implemented by the Modi - Government during its first two terms such as demonetization (2016) and introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), 2017 also the devastating impact of the Corona - pandemic (2020). The government has taken several mitigation steps including a Rs 500,000 crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for businesses/MSMEs; equity infusion of Rs 50,000 crore through MSME Self-Reliant India Fund; no global tenders for procurement up to Rs. 200 crores (it bolsters their chances of securing government contract); relaxing threshold for classification of MSMEs; extension of non-tax benefits for 3 years in case of an upward change in status of MSMEs; inclusion of retail and wholesale trades as MSMEs; launch of Udyam Assist Platform (UAP) to bring the Informal Micro Enterprises (IMEs) under the formal ambit for availing the benefit under Priority Sector Lending (PSL); launch of an online Portal "Champions" to cover various aspects of e-governance including grievance redress and handholding of MSMEs and so on.

Even as all these initiatives seek to address issues of credit availability, technology infusion, market support etc, a problem haunting small enterprises has to do with delayed payment of their dues by large enterprises. When they don't receive payment for the goods supplied by them, it results in a shortage of working capital severely impacting their ability to continue with production. To address this problem, Section 15 of the MSMEs Development Act 2006, had mandated payments to micro

and small enterprises within 45 days in case of written agreement (in case, there was no written agreement, the time limit was set at 15 days). In 2019, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs came up with the Specified Companies (Furnishing of information about payment to micro and small enterprise suppliers) Order that required large firms to file returns every six months even if there is no outstanding to MSME beyond 45 days.

Yet, the problem persisted forcing numerous firms to down shutters. This prompted the Union Government to look for a solution under the IT Act (1961). The Finance Act 2023, inserted Section 43B(h) in the IT Act (1961), which prescribes that if a larger company doesn't make payments to micro and small enterprises within 45 days in case of written agreements, it cannot deduct that expense while calculating the taxable income of the relevant financial year. How does it impact the large enterprises? To arrive at the profits during a financial year (FY) and hence the income on which tax is levied (known in IT parlance as 'taxable income'), a company deducts all expenses incurred on running the business from the total revenue it earns. The payments made by it for the purchase of goods from the MSMEs are an important item of expense; therefore it is deductible from the revenue.

If, it doesn't pay the small firm say Rs 5 lakh within the prescribed 45 days, Section 43B(h) will kick in and the large firm won't be allowed to deduct this amount in that FY thereby increasing its taxable income to that extent. So, it will end up paying more tax during that FY. Taking an effective corporate tax of 34.9 per cent (basic corporate tax of 30 per cent plus 12 per cent surcharge plus 4 per cent Health & Education Cess), the extra tax works out to Rs 174,500/-. This will

be a deterrent strong enough to dissuade large enterprises from holding back payments to MSMEs.

It is not as if this extra tax ends up impacting the company's balance sheet forever. This additional tax paid (albeit due to delays in making payments to MSMEs) can be adjusted the following year when the company pays the supplier. The Section thus strikes a good balance between the interests of all stakeholders. Even while creating a strong incentive for large enterprises to prioritize payments to the MSMEs thereby bolstering the latter's financial health and growth, it doesn't unduly penalize the former. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has also relaxed the reporting requirements under its 2019 Order. A notification issued on July 15, 2024, requires that "only those specified companies which are having payments pending to any micro or small enterprises for more than 45 days from the date of acceptance or the date of deemed acceptance of the goods or services under section 9 of the MSMEs Development Act, 2006 shall furnish the information". Earlier, they were required to furnish even if there was no outstanding to MSME beyond 45 days. Yet, industries and businesses have asked Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to defer the implementation of the clause in the IT Act by a year to April 2025.

At the same time, we see reports of large enterprises arm-twisting small firms by deciding not to buy from MSMEs; instead deal with those MSMEs that are not registered with the Udyam portal (It's an online system for registering MSMEs, launched by the Union MSME ministry) or from non-MSMEs. This must be avoided. Section 43B(h) of the IT Act should be given a fair chance to succeed.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

India introduces three new criminal laws: A shift from colonial past

While some legal bodies have criticised the new laws, other see these laws as a transformative step towards a modern justice system

At the onset, with the introduction of three new criminal laws, launched on July 1st, some of the legal bodies and other civil organisations opposed the move stating it to have been introduced without 'much discussion' in the Parliament. Whereas, some of legal experts consider it to be a 'New Avatar' that will enable the country to have a paradigm shift from favoured colonial laws to a contemporary India. The laws; of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA) have replaced the almost 150 years ago laws of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian



MANOJ VARGHESE

Evidence Act (IEA), formulated during the British regime. The new laws will bring in a modern justice system, incorporating provisions such as Zero FIR, online registration of police complaints, summonses through electronic modes such as SMS and mandatory videography of crime scenes for all heinous crimes. With around 20 new offences added, 40 offences amended, 83 new fines imposed and six community services introduced, the

new laws are all set to deliver speedy justice in the public interest.

The new laws are framed on the lines of 'citizen first, honour first and justice first'. The general impression is that the police will now need to work with 'data' instead of 'danda' (baton). Universally, introducing and executing a change in any system is a challenging task. Above all, a change in the legal system is a complex mechanism for adaptation. "Change is inevitable, and progressive laws are good for any nation", says Prof Mahesh Verma, Vice Chancellor, of Indraprastha University.

The police need to understand that they cannot refuse to register an FIR based on lack of jurisdiction or disputed

jurisdiction. It is tough for them to bring it into practice as the number of cases filed in their jurisdiction will bring in a bad reputation for their respective Police station.

They are now legally bound to register (Zero FIR) and transfer such a case to the respective police station. Section 37 of the BNSS requires a police officer in every police station, not below the rank of Assistant Sub-inspector, to be responsible for maintaining and prominently displaying information about the arrested persons. Justice M L Mehta, Former Judge of Delhi High Court says, "Law is a set of norms enshrined by state for the welfare of the people. Law is the efficacious remedy for legal system. Delays are unavoidable mechanism in the legal system.



With only 20% cases reaching the court, over five crore cases are pending. It is a herculean task and will take over 300 years to dispose of these pending cases."

As per the BNSS, the new laws prioritise the investigations of crimes against women and children, ensuring timely completion within two months of recording information

(Section 193). Summons can now be served electronically (Sections 64, 70, 71). Courts grant a maximum of two adjournments to avoid unnecessary delays in case hearings (Section 346).

The new laws mandate all state governments to implement the Witness Protection Scheme (Section 398). A new chapter has been added to the BNS specifically to address offences against women and children (Chapter V) and the introduction of community service for minor offences (Sections 4, 202, 209, 226, 303, 355, 356). For its effective implementation, and creating awareness among all stakeholders including police, prisons, prosecutors, judicial, forensic personnel as well as the general public, the

Government has organised several rounds of orientation and training programs. The awareness is happening at different levels to understand the legal system better concerning the newly introduced three criminal laws. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has made 23 functional modifications to the existing CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems) application to facilitate technology compatibility with new criminal laws, including the filing of an FIR. The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has developed 13 training modules for capacity building of police, prisons, prosecutors, judicial officers, forensic experts and central police organisations.

The Bar Council of India has made it mandatory to include the three new criminal laws in the curriculum of universities and legal education centres from the academic year 2024-25. Justice Talwant Singh, Former Judge of Delhi High Court is all praise for the role of academicians in drafting the new laws. He suggests that in the days to come the country will require an ample number of forensic experts. In contrast, the more new laws are unfolded; the more is the possibility of its lacunae being exposed. Is growing incidents of crime good for police and lawyers, is a million-dollar question! *(The writer is former editor with Free Press Journal and Media Advisor to Delhi Govt. Presently Media Advisor to GGSIPU; views are personal)*

Palestinian factions unite after China-brokered talks

PTI ■ BEIJING

In a rare show of solidarity amidst the war in Gaza, 14 Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas, have jointly pledged to end their deep divisions and strengthen Palestinian unity by signing a declaration on Tuesday at a meeting brokered by China.

China's Foreign Ministry, which coordinated the dialogue among the rival factions for the past three days, said on Tuesday that the declaration was a first step to promote a "comprehensive, durable and sustainable ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip battered by Israeli attacks.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi who met the leaders' factions said the signing of the agreement was "an important, historic moment in the Palestinian cause". He said that under the deal the rival groups had agreed to set up an "interim national reconciliation government" to govern post-war Gaza.

The pact aims to unite Palestinians in their conflict with Israel which launched the war against Hamas in Gaza in October last year following the abduction of over 200 Israeli hostages.

Signatories included senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzuk and Fatah envoy Mahmoud al-Aloul along with emissaries from 12 other Palestinian groups.

The Chinese foreign ministry said it was the first time the 14 rival groups had gathered together in Beijing for reconciliation talks.

"Reconciliation is an internal matter for the Palestinian factions, but at the same time it cannot be achieved without the support of the international community," Wang said.

"The core outcome is that the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) is the sole legitimate representative of all Palestinian people," Wang said, adding that "an agreement has been reached on post-Gaza war governance and the establishment of a provisional national reconciliation government." It was unclear from Wang's comments what role Hamas, which is not part of the PLO, would play in such an arrangement, or what the immediate impact of any deal would be.

Israeli govt quietly funds West Bank settler outposts

AP ■ JERUSALEM

The Israeli government has budgeted millions of dollars to protect small, unauthorized Jewish farms in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, underwriting tiny outposts meant to grow into fully-fledged settlements, according to an anti-settlement monitoring group.

Documents uncovered by Peace Now illustrate how Israel's pro-settler government has quietly poured money into the unauthorized outposts, which are separate from its more than 100 officially recognized settlements. Some of those outposts have been linked to settler violence against Palestinians and are sanctioned by the US. Palestinians and the international community say all settlements are illegal or illegitimate and undermine hopes for a two-state solution.

The Ministry of Settlements and National Mission, which is headed by a far-right settler leader, confirmed it budgeted 75 million shekels (USD 20.5 million) last year for security equipment for "young settlements" — the term it uses for unauthorized Jewish farms and outposts in the West Bank. The money was quietly authorized in December while the country's attention was focused on the war against Hamas in Gaza.

Peace Now said the funds have been used for vehicles, drones, cameras, generators, electric gates, fences and new roads that reach some of the more remote farms. The group estimates approximately 500 people live on the small, unauthorized farms and 25,000 more live in larger outposts. Those outposts, while not officially authorized by the government, often receive tacit support before they are retroactively legalized.

Hagit Ofra, director of Peace Now's "settlement watch" program, said the funding was the first time the Israeli government has channeled money to the outposts so openly.

Rights groups say the expanding network of remote farms atop



China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, center, hosts an event for Mahmoud al-Aloul, left, vice chairman of Fatah, and Mussa Abu Marzuk, a senior member of Hamas, to meet at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, Tuesday. AP/PTI

West Bank hilltops are the primary drivers of violence and displacement of Palestinians.

In the last month alone, Israel's government has legalized five formerly unauthorized settlements and made the largest land grab in the West Bank in three decades, declaring a wide swath of the territory state land in preparation for new construction.

Palestinians say violence by people associated with these farms has soared since Hamas' October 7 attack, which sparked Israel's war against the militant group in the Gaza Strip. On Friday, the top United Nations court said Israel's presence in the Palestinian territories is unlawful and called for an immediate halt to settlement construction.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu quickly denounced the nonbinding opinion, saying the territories are part of the Jewish people's historic homeland.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza — areas claimed by the Palestinians for a future state — in the 1967 Mideast war. It has settled over 5,00,000 Jews in the West Bank, most of whom live on authorized settlements, in addition to over 2,00,000 others in contest-

Rishi Sunak to remain interim UK Opposition leader until Nov 2

PTI ■ LONDON

Rishi Sunak will remain in place as the UK's interim Opposition Leader for over three months after the Conservative Party set out the timetable to elect his successor by November, with nominations opening on Wednesday.

The 1922 Committee of backbench members of Parliament responsible for the Tory leadership race on Monday evening unveiled a two-phase election process that will see the new leader being installed on November 2. The 44-year-old British Indian leader, who had announced his resignation on July 5 after the party's worst general election defeat, had said he would remain in place as interim Tory leader until his successor has been elected.

"I will stay in post until November 2 and the result of our leadership election," said Sunak.



"This will allow our party to fulfil its role as the official opposition professionally and effectively. I believe this is what is best for the Conservative Party and, most importantly, our country," he said.

"It would be inappropriate for me to make any comment about the leadership campaign or candidates. I am confident that this timetable decided by the party board and the 1922 Committee will allow for a thoughtful, professional and respectful contest," he added.

Among the leading Tories expected to contest to become the Opposition Leader include former Indian-origin home secretary Priti Patel and Suella Braverman, shadow ministers James Cleverly, Kemi Badenoch, Tom Tugendhat and Mel Stride, and former minister Robert Jenrick.

To be nominated, each candidate will require a proposer, seconder, and eight further nominations which would mean a maximum of 11 possible Tory MPs could be on the ballot paper by the time nominations close on July 29.

This will be followed by a first round of campaigning in August after which the Conservative Parliamentary Party will whittle down the candidates to four MPs, with votes scheduled between September 4 and 11.

The Tory party conference between September 29 and October 2 will be seen as a so-

called "beauty contest" when the four finalists will be given key speaking slots to address the wider Conservative membership and make their pitch.

The parliamentary party will get a second-round vote to further whittle down candidates to the final two by October 10, who will go ahead for a head-to-head clash in an online ballot by the entire Tory membership.

After voting closes on October 31, the winner will be declared on November 2. Bob Blackman, the newly elected Chair of the 1922 committee, said he believed this timetable would allow for "a respectful and thorough leadership debate."

"While there are significant debates to be had about our party's future, we must remember that the country — and our members — want to see us engaged in proper debate not personal attacks," he said.

Taiwan cancels air force drills due to approaching typhoon

AP ■ TAIPEI

An approaching typhoon prompted the cancellation of air force drills off Taiwan's east coast on Tuesday, although naval and land exercises were set to continue in other parts of the self-governing island democracy, which China threatens to invade.

The Air Force 5th Tactical Mixed Wing announced the cancellation, citing adverse weather conditions. According to the Central Weather Bureau, Typhoon Gaemi was heading westward toward the island with sustained winds of 144 km (about 90 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 180 kph (110 mph). Ferries and some domestic flights were cancelled Tuesday, Taiwan's Central News Agency said.

Military spokesperson Sun Li-fang said the annual Han Kuang military exercises are on track to continue with adjustments to ensure the safety of personnel and equipment, although some sea and air exercises would be altered due to the weather.

This year's drills follow the election of Lai Cheng-te as presi-



dent, who continues the Democratic Progressive Party's near-decade in power. The party rejects Beijing's demands it recognises Taiwan as a Chinese territory.

Taiwan's military has long relied on support from the United States, but has in recent years reinvigorated its domestic arms industry, producing submarines and training aircraft that complement upgraded weapon systems purchased from abroad.

Taipei and the surrounding regions also held a regularly scheduled air raid drill Tuesday

afternoon, with sirens sounding, vehicles parking and pedestrians clearing the streets to enter buildings and metro stations as they would in the event of an air attack from China or a natural disaster.

Troops were also deployed to the port of Tamsui, a key entryway to Taipei's river system which a motor boat from China entered last month. The boat apparently went undetected by radar and other security systems in what was seen as a test of Taiwan's capacity to respond to covert missions by the Chinese military.

UK police warn: Violence against women at 'epidemic' levels

London (AP): Violence against women and girls has reached "epidemic levels" and police are treating it as a threat on the same scale as terrorism, Britain's police chiefs said Tuesday.

More than 1 million violent crimes against women and girls were recorded by UK police in 2022 to 2023 — accounting for one-fifth of all recorded crime, a new report commissioned by the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing said.

One in every six murders was related to domestic abuse in the same period. At least one in every 12 women each year will be a victim of crimes including sexual offenses, rape, stalking, harassment or online sexual abuse, the report estimated, with the exact number thought to be much higher because of crimes that go unreported.

"Violence against women and girls is a national emergency," Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth said in a statement.

British Pakistani radical preacher faces life term

London (PTI): Anjem Choudary, a radical Islamist preacher with dual British and Pakistani nationality, was on Tuesday found guilty of directing a banned terrorist organisation and faces life imprisonment in the UK following a joint international investigation.

Choudary, 57, was found to have taken on a "caretaker role" in the Al-Muhajiroun (ALM) and a trial at Woolwich Crown Court in London heard that he directed the terror group for a significant period after 2014 and encouraged support for it by addressing online meetings.

He now faces a life imprisonment term when he is sentenced on July 30 following the conviction, which was the result of investigations by the Metropolitan Police, the New York Police Department, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

"ALM's tentacles have spread across the world and have had a massive impact on public safety and security," said Commander Dominic Murphy, head of the Metropolitan Police's Counter-Terrorism Command. ALM was first proscribed, or banned, by the UK in 2006 under the name Al Ghurabaa. In 2010, ALM was included in the ban as an alternate name. Choudary was one of the original three members of ALM, which was founded in 1996.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said he was still acting as its leader as late as July 2023, making online speeches to a US-based offshoot called Islamic Thinkers Society (ITS). That group was infiltrated by undercover law enforcement officers in the US, who were present at online lectures in 2022 and 2023. The court heard that Choudary said he viewed being called an extremist as a "medal" during lectures. Choudary was released early from a five-year sentence for inviting support for the Islamic State (ISIS) terror group in October 2018 but his licence conditions prevented him from using the internet until July 2021.

Trump's lawyers urge NY appeals court to overturn 'egregious' civil fraud verdict

AP ■ NEW YORK

Fresh off victories in other legal cases, Donald Trump on Monday pressed a New York appeals court to overturn the nearly USD 500 million New York civil fraud judgment that threatens to drain his personal cash reserves as he campaigns to retake the White House.

In paperwork filed with the state's mid-level appeals court, the former president's lawyers said Manhattan Judge Arthur Engoron's Feb. 16 finding that Trump lied to banks, insurers and others about his wealth was "erroneous" and "egregious."

Trump's appeal arguments echoed many of the gripes he delivered during his trial to TV cameras outside the courtroom. His lawyers argued that New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit should have been promptly dismissed, the statute of limitations barred some allegations, that no one was harmed by Trump's alleged

fraud and that James' involvement in private business transactions threatens to drive business out of the state.

Trump's lawyers contend that Engoron's decision, if upheld, would bestow James, a Democrat, with "limitless power to target anyone she desires, including her self-described political opponents," Trump's lawyers wrote in a 116-page filing with the Appellate Division of the state's trial court. Engoron rejected many of the same objections as the case proceeded to trial last year, at one point equating them to the plot of the film "Groundhog Day" and fining some of Trump's lawyers USD 7,500 each for "repetitive, frivolous" argument.

Trump posted a USD 175 million bond in April to halt collection of the judgment and prevent James' office from seizing his assets while he appeals. If he wins, he won't have to pay the state anything and will get back the money he has put up

now.

"Such an outrageous miscarriage of justice is profoundly un-American, and a complete reversal is the only means available to restore public confidence in the integrity of the New York judicial system," Trump lawyer Christopher Kise said in a statement. He called Engoron's decisions "legally bereft" and "untethered to the law or to commercial reality," and described the staggering judgment as "draconian, unlawful, and unconstitutional."

The Appellate Division has said it will hear oral arguments in late September. Trump's lawyers initiated the appeal days after Engoron's ruling and had until Monday to file written arguments.

James' office said Trump and his lawyers are raising ungrounded arguments. "We won this case based on the facts and the law, and we are confident we will prevail on appeal," James' office said in a statement. Monday's appeal filing is the lat-

Harris visits battleground Wisconsin in first rally

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Vice President Kamala Harris is making her first visit to a battleground state Tuesday after locking up enough support from Democratic delegates to win her party's nomination to challenge Republican former President Donald Trump, two days after President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid.

As the Democratic Party continues to coalesce around her, Harris is travelling to Milwaukee, where she will hold her first campaign rally since she launched her campaign on Sunday with Biden's endorsement. Harris has raised more than USD 100 million since Sunday afternoon and has scored the backing of Democratic officials and political groups.

Tuesday's visit was scheduled before Biden ended his campaign, but it took on new resonance as Harris prepared to take up the mantle of her party

against Trump and looks to project calm and confidence after weeks of Democratic Party confusion over Biden's political future. The visit comes a week after the Republican National Convention wrapped up in the city and as Harris works to sharpen her message against the GOP nominee with just over 100 days until Election Day.

Wisconsin is part of the Democrats' "blue wall" of Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania that is critical to their 2024 plans.

The vice president previewed the themes that will be prominent in her campaign against Trump on Monday during a stop at her campaign headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware, contrasting her time as a prosecutor with Trump's felony convictions — "I know Donald Trump's type," she said — and casting herself as a defender of economic opportunity and abortion access.

"This election will present a clear choice between two different visions. Donald Trump wants to take our country back to a time before many of us had full freedoms and equal rights," she said in a statement responding to the AP delegate tally. "I believe in a future that strengthens our democracy, protects reproductive freedom and ensures every person has the opportunity to not just get by, but to get ahead."

"I am grateful to President Biden and everyone in the Democratic Party who has already put their faith in me, and I look forward to taking our case directly to the American people," she added.

By Monday night, Harris, who also ran for president in 2020, had the support of well more than the 1,976 delegates she'll need to win on a first ballot, according to the AP tally of delegates. No other candidate was named by a delegate contacted by the AP.

Nearly 40 mn had HIV in 2023: UN

United Nations (AP): Nearly 40 million people were living with the HIV virus that causes AIDS last year, over 9 million weren't getting any treatment, and the result was that every minute someone died of AIDS-related causes, the UN said in a new report launched Monday.

While advances are being made to end the global AIDS pandemic, the report said progress has slowed, funding is shrinking, and new infections are rising in three regions: the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America.

In 2023, around 630,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses, a significant decline from the 2.1 million deaths in 2004. But the latest figure is more than double the target for 2025 of fewer than 250,000 deaths, according to the report

by UNAIDS, the UN agency leading the global effort to end the pandemic.

Gender inequality is exacerbating the risks for girls and women, the report said, citing the extraordinarily high incidence of HIV among adolescents and young women in parts of Africa.

The proportion of new infections globally among marginalised communities that face stigma and discrimination — sex workers, men who have sex with men, and people who inject drugs also increased to 55 per cent in 2023 from 45 per cent in 2010, it said.

UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima said: "World leaders pledged to end the AIDS pandemic as a public health threat by 2030, and they can uphold their promise, but only if they ensure that the HIV response has the resources it

BAPS Hindu temple vandalised in Canada

PTI ■ OTTAWA

A BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in the Canadian city of Edmonton has been vandalised with alleged hateful and anti-India graffiti, amidst rising Hinduophobia in the country.

The Consulate General of India in Vancouver said in a post on X: "We condemn the defacing of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in #Edmonton with anti-India graffiti. We have requested the Canadian authorities to investigate the incident and take prompt action against the perpetrators." There has been no reaction as yet from the BAPS — the B o c h a s a n w a s i A k s h a r p u r u s h o t t a m Swaminarayan Sanstha, the organisation that runs the temple. Also, there are no reports yet of any official action against the vandalism that took place on Monday morning. "Earlier today,

the Edmonton BAPS Mandir was vandalised with paint, displaying hateful rhetoric on the walls of what should be a place of refuge. Hate has no part in Canada — much less in places of worship & prayer. This incident is wrong & goes against the values of our city," said Randy Boissonnault, Member of Parliament /Depute — Edmonton Centre.

A statement from the Canadian Hindu Chamber of Commerce (CHCC), dedicated to promoting the interests of the Hindu business community in Canada, said, "The act of vandalism is not only an attack on a physical structure but also an affront to the sentiments of the Hindu community and the principles of respect and tolerance that our society holds dear." It condemned the "senseless act of hate" and the "rising tide of Hinduophobia" across Canada and said, "These incidents are deeply troubling and

have no place in our multicultural and inclusive society."

The CHCC urged the Canadian government and local authorities to take immediate and effective measures to combat Hinduophobia and protect religious institutions and communities from such acts of violence and intolerance, the statement said and called for united efforts.

Last year, there were at least three incidents of attacks on Hindu temples, including at Mississauga, Brampton and Windsor, and some saw Khalistani referendum posters with veiled threats to Hindus.

The latest vandalism in Edmonton also invoked strong reactions from all quarters, including from elected public representatives.

Chandra Arya, a member of Parliament from Nepean in the House of Commons said, "During the last few years, Hindu

temples in the Greater Toronto Area, British Columbia and other places in Canada are being vandalised with hateful graffiti. Gurpatwant Singh Pannun of Sikhs for Justice last year publicly called for Hindus to go back to India."

"Khalistani supporters publicly celebrated in Brampton and Vancouver the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and brandishing images of deadly weapons," he said in a post on X and added, "As I have always been saying, Khalistani extremists seems to get away with ease with their public rhetoric of hate and violence." "Again, let me put it on record. Hindu-Canadians are legitimately concerned. Like a broken record, I again call on Canadian law enforcement agencies to take this issue seriously before these rhetorics get translated into physical action against Hindu-Canadians," he said.

Death toll in Ethiopia mudslides rises to 157

AP ■ ADDIS ABABA

At least 157 people were killed in mudslides in a remote part of Ethiopia that has been hit with heavy rainfall, many of them as they tried to rescue survivors of an earlier mudslide, local authorities said Tuesday. Young children and pregnant women were among the victims of the mudslides in the Kencho Shacha Gozdi district of southern Ethiopia, said Dagmawi Ayele, a local administrator. The death toll rose from 55 late Monday to 157 on Tuesday as search operations continued in the area, said Kassahun Abayneh, head of the Gofa Zone communications office. Gofa Zone is the administrative area where the mudslides occurred. Most of the victims were buried in a mudslide on Monday morning as rescue workers searched the steep terrain for survivors of another mudslide the previous day. At least five people have been pulled alive from the mud, Ayele said. Another official in Gofa, Markos Melese, said many people remained unaccounted for among the group that was covered by mud while trying to rescue others.



In this handout photo released by Gofa Zone Government Communication Affairs Department, hundreds of people gather at the site of a mudslide in the Kencho Shacha Gozdi district, Gofa Zone, southern Ethiopia, Monday, July 22, 2024. At least 146 people were killed in mudslides in a remote part of Ethiopia that has been hit with heavy rainfall, according to local authorities. AP/PTI

"We are still searching for the missing," said Melese, director of the disaster response agency in Gofa Zone. "There are children who are hugging corpses, having lost their entire family, including mother, father, brother and sister, due to the accident," he said. Landslides are common during Ethiopia's rainy season, which started in July and is expected to last until mid-September.

Imran & wife seek int'l standard jail amenities

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed Pakistan prime minister has moved a top court here to get jail amenities in line with international standards for him and his wife, according to a media report on Tuesday. Geo News reported that Khan and Bushra Bibi filed the petition at Islamabad High Court on Monday to seek "high-quality facilities" at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail where they are lodged. The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician, who was ousted from his office via a no-confidence motion in 2022, has been in prison for more than a year after his arrest in various cases, including the Toshakhana, cipher, and the un-Islamic marriage cases. Bushra, 49, has also been behind bars for months in the Un-Islamic marriage case as well as the Toshakhana corruption case. In the plea filed by their lawyer Azhar Siddique, the secretaries of cabinet, interior and law have been made parties. It was also prayed that the Punjab chief secretary, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), and Islamabad Inspector General are also made parties in the case, Geo News reported. Additionally, the IHC was urged to order the Adiala Jail administration to

Imran's residence was used as 'terrorist training hub'

Lahore (PTI): Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's residence here became a "training hub for terrorists", where petrol bombs were made and attacks on the state were planned, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz claimed on Tuesday. Maryam claimed that during a four-month period when the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader feigned leg injuries, they orchestrated the May 9, 2023, attacks on government buildings and key military installations. In a statement, Maryam condemned the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as a group focused on creating chaos and damaging the state. The Express Tribune newspaper reported. The daughter of former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party supreme Nawaz Sharif claimed that the cricketer-turned-politician's residence in Lahore, Zaman Park, had become a "training hub for terrorists",

where petrol bombs were made, and attacks on the state were planned, the report added. The May 9 riots were triggered across the country after 71-year-old Khan was arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in a 190-million-pound corruption case. He faces over 200 cases and has been in jail since August last year. Hundreds of PTI workers and senior leaders were put behind bars for their involvement in violence and attacks on military installations, including the Jinnah House, ISI building in Faisalabad and General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, last year on May 9. The Punjab Chief Minister also accused PTI of conspiring to default the country, writing letters to the International Monetary Fund, waving cipher messages (diplomatic cables), and disrespecting memorials as part of a larger plot. Maryam called for strict action against the PTI under the Constitution and law, citing national security and interests.

ensure the implementation of international conventions, constitutional sections and jail rules for the political inmates.

The plea also requested that a complete list of those persons who wanted to meet the jailed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI

founder at the Rawalpindi jail should be summoned, as well as a report on the duration of their meetings. The lawyer, in his petition, also pleaded with the court to ascertain the reasons from relevant authorities if the ex-premier was kept in solitary confinement. The fresh petition was filed after Khan claimed in an interview with British newspaper The Sunday Times through his lawyers that he was imprisoned in a death cell, where "terrorists" are kept to ensure "they have no contact with anyone". The federal cabinet rejected Khan's claims on Monday and termed his prison cell a presidential suite which is "better than a middle-class person's house". The former prime minister has claimed many times that he's not being provided several facilities, however, the government submitted documentary evidence of facilities being provided to the PTI founder in Adiala Jail, rebutting his claims that he was being kept in solitary confinement. The photos shared with the court showed that the PTI founder was provided with several facilities, such as an exercise bike and stretching belt for physical fitness, books, a separate kitchen, a special menu, an exclusive gallery for walking, LED, a room cooler and a study table since he's a

former prime minister. Earlier this month, there was hope that the former couple would be released from prison after a court suspended their sentence in the Toshakhana corruption case, while other courts overturned his convictions in the cipher and iddat cases, respectively. However, their hopes were dashed when NAB arrested them on fresh charges related to the sale of state gifts. The chances of Khan's release from jail further dimmed after the Lahore police declared his arrest in several cases related to the May 9, 2023, riots that erupted after his detainment from the IHC premises last year in which protesters targeted government and military installations. In the new Toshakhana corruption case, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the anti-corruption watchdog, accused the couple of purchasing a jewellery set from the Toshakhana and selling it by violating the laws. Toshakhana is a repository where presents handed to government officials from foreign officials are kept. According to Toshakhana rules, gifts/presents and other such materials received by persons to whom these rules apply shall be reported to the Cabinet Division. Earlier, the two were arrested on July 13 following their acquittal in the un-Islamic marriage case.

Pak PM sets ambitious goal to increase exports to \$60 bn within 3 years

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday set an ambitious goal to increase the cash-strapped country's exports to USD 60 billion within three years. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader was chairing the National Export Development Board meeting in Islamabad, where he directed the Ministry of Commerce and relevant agencies to implement practical measures to achieve this target. According to state-run Radio Pakistan, Sharif "directed the Ministry of Commerce and other relevant departments to take practical steps to achieve the export target of sixty billion dollars in the next three years". He said the country's exports exceeded USD 30 billion last fiscal year, and IT exports surpassed USD 3.2 billion, terming it a positive sign. He also instructed that the issues highlighted by exporters should be resolved within the next two weeks, with a report to be submitted. "I will personally chair the National Export Development Board meetings every month and a half. We must all work hard for Pakistan's progress. Despite challenging circumstances, I salute the business personalities and investors who

have played their part in increasing Pakistan's exports," he said. The prime minister also instructed the Ministry of Commerce to finalise policy proposals in collaboration with representatives from export-capable sectors. He also tasked the Ministry of National Food Security to work with provinces to improve extension services, ensuring high-quality seeds and further processing of agricultural products for export. Sharif emphasised the importance of introducing high-yielding varieties of agricultural products and resolving shipping issues to reduce delivery times to Europe and the US. "To boost exports and create a unique identity for Pakistani products, focus on research and development, innovation, and brand development," he said. The premier said that any delay in exporters' refunds by the Federal Bureau of Revenue will not be tolerated while trade officers in Pakistani embassies worldwide should facilitate exports and guide Pakistani exporters. The prime minister asked for a comprehensive plan from the Ministry of Power to reduce electricity costs for industries, highlighting that the private sector plays a crucial role in a country's development and should be included in policy formation to address their issues.

China agrees to bolster coop with Maldives in infrastructure projects

PTI ■ BEIJING/ MALE

China has agreed to strengthen its collaboration in key infrastructure and renewable energy projects that are vital for the sustainable development of the Maldives, Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer said on Tuesday. Zameer said that he held a "fruitful meeting" with Luo Zhaohui, chairman of China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) where they discussed key infrastructure projects. Zameer further said that he was "delighted" to have witnessed the signing of the Letter of Exchange on the feasibility study for the redevelopment of Malé and Villimalé Roads Project, a key pledge of President Mohamed Muizzu's government. The discussions focused on strengthening collaboration in key infrastructure projects that are vital for the sustainable development of the Maldives, the Maldivian foreign ministry said in a press release. Zameer emphasised the importance of the partnership between the Maldives and CIDCA, highlighting ongoing initiatives and exploring new opportunities for cooperation. Both sides agreed on the importance of timely implementation of projects that will improve infrastructure and

enhance economic growth in the Maldives, thus providing substantial benefits for the Maldivian people, the release said. The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to collaborate closely, ensuring the successful execution of future initiatives that benefit both nations, it said. Earlier, Zameer shared photos from his meeting with Jin Lique, president and chair of the Board of Directors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). "Greatly appreciate AIIB's support over the years in promoting and protecting our interests through deeper partnerships and innovation, notably the Greater Malé Waste-to-Energy Project," he wrote. Zameer said they also discussed potential funding avenues for President Muizzu's ambitious development agenda, especially for infrastructure investments in connectivity projects and renewable energy. The Maldives foreign minister also met with the chairman of China EXIM Bank Wu Fulin. Zameer said he briefed him on the latest fiscal and economic updates and also on the reform programme announced by President Dr Muizzu. He said the discussion was focused on financing key development projects and potential future collaborations. On Monday,

Zameer met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi and briefed him on the economic and fiscal situation in the Maldives, emphasising the importance of carrying out diligently, the fiscal reforms announced by President Muizzu. Zameer also requested China's support in carrying out the reform programme that will foster consumer and investor confidence in the Maldivian economy, thereby positively impacting the island nation's economic resilience. Foreign Minister Zameer was accompanied by Mohamed Shafeeq, Minister of Finance, Abdulla Muththalib, Minister of Construction and Infrastructure and senior officials. China has scaled up its relations with Maldives, since Muzuz, widely regarded as a pro-Beijing leader, took over power last year. In May, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned the Maldives that it faces a high risk of debt distress without significant policy changes. The IMF noted that the Maldives' current account deficit is expected to remain large and that its overall fiscal deficits and public debt are projected to stay elevated. Subsequently, the Muizzu government sought restructuring of loans from China. The Maldives' debt to China reportedly amounted to over USD 1.3 billion.

PPP challenges SC verdict allocating reserved seats to Imran Khan's party

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Bilawal Bhutto Zardari-led Pakistan Peoples Party on Tuesday challenged the Supreme Court verdict allocating reserved seats to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party a week after its ruling coalition partner Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) submitted a review petition, according to a media report. On July 12, a 13-member full bench of the apex court ruled that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was eligible for the seats reserved for women and minorities in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies, which would make Imran Khan's party the largest in Parliament. Although several leaders from the ruling coalition were apprehensive of the Supreme Court's judgment, it was Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, the daughter of PML-N party supreme Nawaz Sharif, who launched a salvo against the Supreme Court verdict saying, "I would like to ask the SC judges to let the country function." Maryam expressed her surprise and questioned the legitimacy of reinstating individuals she described as "criminals of the nation", The Express Tribune newspaper

reported. The PPP's review petition seeks to overturn the July 12 decision that previously annulled the decisions of the Peshawar High Court and the Election Commission of Pakistan directing that the reserved seats be allocated to PTI. This ruling affirmed PTI's status as a legitimate party within Parliament and provincial assemblies and if implemented in letter and spirit, the party will become the largest in the National Assembly as its seats will soar from 86 to 109 after it gains 23 seats reserved for women and minorities. The ruling PML-N party-led government on July 15 already filed a review petition in the Supreme Court against its decision to allocate reserved seats to PTI. The Supreme Court has scheduled the hearing of the review petitions after the September holidays. However, Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, dissenting from the majority decision, argued that the summer holidays should be cancelled to address the review petitions promptly, the report said. Isa emphasised that the Constitution should take precedence over the convenience of judges, stating that delaying the hearing would be unjust, the newspaper said.

Qureshi seeks open trial in May 9 riots case

Lahore (PTI): Former Pakistan foreign minister and veteran opposition politician Shah Mahmood Qureshi has sought an open trial instead of an in-camera trial in connection with the May 9 riots case. Qureshi, a senior leader of jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, is accused of abetment to the attack on Shadman police station here following Khan's arrest on May 9 last year. He has denied all charges against him but was indicted in this case. Punjab police shifted Qureshi, 68, to Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Jail from Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi last week and was on Monday presented before the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC), a hearing for which was held at the Kot Lakhpat Jail. During the hearing, the ATC-1 Lahore Judge Khalid Arshad directed the lawyers of Qureshi and other suspects to cross-examine the prosecution witnesses in the Shadman police station attack case. Most of the prosecution witnesses are policemen. During the hearing, Qureshi, who is the PTI party's vice-chairman, requested the court to hold an open trial in the case. "Open trial is my fundamental right. The public should know about the allegations and evidence against me and other suspects in the fake cases of May 9," he pleaded.

Maduro strengthens Venezuela military support ahead of critical vote

AP ■ AGUA CALIENTE

At a crossroads not far from a gas station overgrown with weeds, young men and women in faded green fatigues stop vehicles returning from a rally for opponents of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, ask passengers for their identifications, and inspect their cars, trucks and motorcycles. Such checkpoints have proliferated across the country's vast tropical plains, forested highlands and beach fronts in the run-up to Sunday's presidential election, aiming to intimidate and occasionally detain government critics. They often involve a request for a ride, bananas or "collaboration" — Venezuela's euphemism for a small bribe. But the power play frequently falls flat. When their superiors slip away from the scorching sun, the grunts betray their displeasure with Maduro and openness to a new commander in chief. "Did the lady arrive? Were there a lot people?" one giddy soldier asks about opposition leader Maria Corina Machado. We wanted to watch, but there is no Wi-Fi here," whispers another. Since taking power in 2013, Maduro hasn't hesitated to deploy troops to crush protests



while rewarding senior officers with lucrative government jobs and control of key industries. But days away from a hotly disputed vote that threatens Maduro's hold on power, the self-proclaimed socialist is working harder than ever to shore up the loyalty of the armed forces — the traditional arbiter of political disputes in Venezuela — and keep top commanders in line. In recent days, the president has appeared on state TV attending a graduation ceremony for 25,000 police officers, praising them as the first line of defense against what he called attempts by rightwing hardliners to provoke a tragedy. He also promoted dozens of officers and bestowed a new title on his longtime defense minister, Vladimir Padrino Lopez: "General of the Sovereign

People." "The destiny of Venezuela depends on our victory," Maduro said at a rally this month. "If we want to avoid a bloodbath, or a fratricidal civil war triggered by the fascists, then we must guarantee the biggest electoral victory ever." The top brass has stood fast with Maduro, delving deep into political mudslinging instead of sticking to its traditional role safeguarding the vote. Gen Domingo Hernandez Larez, the head of the joint chiefs of staff, posted a photo on social media purportedly showing Machado speaking in front of a white board scribbled with notes calling for the "elimination" of the armed forces. Machado, who was banned from running and is backing stand-in candidate Edmundo Gonzalez, has called the accusation "fake news." A media watchdog group said the image was manipulated. Maduro's opponents have long struggled to win over doubters in the military. The armed forces have been an integral part of Maduro's grip on power ever since his mentor and predecessor, former tank commander Hugo Chavez, led an uprising against an unpopular austerity government in 1992. When Chavez was elected president in 1998, he purged offi-

cers indoctrinated in the US to fight communism, placed fellow coup plotters in top positions and poured the country's oil wealth into fighter jets and expensive military hardware. Maduro, without Chavez's military pedigree, has nonetheless empowered his own crop of uniformed allies, many of whom, like the president, face allegations of corruption and human rights abuses. The National Guard has also quietly imported anti-riot gear and refurbished armored vehicles that could be used to quell protests, according to retired Gen Rodolfo Camacho, a Maduro opponent who writes a report on military affairs. Meanwhile, the government hasn't hesitated to punish soldiers who step out of line. Members of the armed forces make up about half of the 301 Maduro opponents currently imprisoned and classified as political prisoners by Caracas-based legal assistance cooperative Foro Penal. The Defense Ministry did not respond to an emailed request for comment. While nobody is predicting a barracks revolt, discontent among the rank and file is widespread, said William Brownfield, a former US Ambassador to Venezuela and senior fellow at the Wilson Center in Washington.

Lankan govt to apologise to Muslims on forced cremation of Covid victims

Colombo (PTI): The Sri Lankan government on Tuesday said it would formally apologise to the island nation's Muslim minority community for its controversial cremation policy adopted during the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. The mandatory order taken in 2020 to cremate the bodies of COVID-19 victims, which denied minority communities, including Muslims, their religious rights, was later revoked in February 2021 amid mounting international criticism. The Sri Lankan Cabinet in a meeting on Monday approved the proposal to tender an apology to the Muslim community for the enforced decision made in March 2020, according to a Cabinet note. The Cabinet has decided "to plead the apology on behalf of the Government, from all the communities", it said. The Cabinet also decided to introduce legislation to prevent a repetition of such controversial moves. The note said the Cabinet also gave nod to a proposed legislation on the burial or cremation of dead bodies based on religious discretion. Attention has been drawn to introducing a law,

which allows a certain person or relations to select the burial or cremation of the dead person at their discretion. The Muslim community had opposed the policy of forced cremation, and some even left the bodies of their loved ones in hospital mortuaries. The community members had said that either they were coerced into allowing cremations or that occurred without their knowledge. The cremation of bodies is forbidden in Islam. Accordingly, 276 corpses of Muslim persons were cremated, until the order was revoked in February 2021. The Sri Lankan government was resisting calls to allow burials citing health concerns. It cited the opinion of some experts who claimed that the burial of COVID-19 victims would contaminate the water table thereby spreading the pandemic further. The country had also come under intense criticism from UN groups, including the UN Human Rights Council, over the cremation order. The rights groups said it failed to respect the religious feelings of the victims and their family members, especially the Muslims, Catholics and some Buddhists.

S Korean tech giant Kakao's founder held

Seoul (AP): South Korean prosecutors said Tuesday they have arrested the founder of technology giant Kakao Corp. for alleged stock price rigging during his company's takeover of a major K-pop agency last year. Kim's arrest came after the Seoul Southern District Court approved an arrest warrant, citing concerns that he could flee or destroy evidence. Prosecutors have up to 20 days to investigate Kim and determine whether to indict him, according to a senior prosecutor at a Seoul district prosecutors' office. He requested anonymity because an investigation was under way. Kim faces allegations that he orchestrated and approved schemes to collaborate with the operator of a private equity fund to deliberately inflate the stock price of K-pop agency SM Entertainment to prevent Hybe Corp., the parent company of another K-pop powerhouse behind global sensation BTS, from buying SM Entertainment, according to the prosecutor. Kim, 58, denied the allegations, according to the Seoul prosecutors' office. He was not immediately available for comment. Another Kakao executive and the head of the equity fund had already been indicted in the case, according to the prosecutors' office. Kakao Corp. is best known for its hugely popular free mobile chat app, called

Kakao Talk. It reportedly had about 41 million active users in South Korea, a country with 52 million people, as of December. The company has used the popularity of its mobile messenger to branch into banking, online shopping, gaming and other services in recent years. Kakao Corp. said in a statement Tuesday that "the current situation is regrettable." It said it will strive to minimise the management gap but didn't directly address Kim's arrest. Kakao's stock price fell more than 5 per cent on Tuesday. SM Entertainment's top executives had objected to Hybe's attempt to increase ownership of the company, describing it as a hostile takeover attempt and saying it would lead to monopolisation of the industry, pushing up costs for fans.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
HARBOUR WORKS DIVISION No.1
e-ENDER CALL NOTICE
e-TCN No. CE/ARW/ACC/TS/2023/231,
dttd. 17.07.2024.
Name of the Work: Supply & installation of Ladders & Bollards along with installation of Cell & Super-M Fenders in various Berths of Paradip Port for two years".
Put to tender value: Rs.1,16,88,795.32 plus GST as applicable. Last date & time of submission of tender through online bidding is 08.07.2024 up to 17:15 Hrs. For details, please log on to the Website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.
Sd/- Executive Engineer,
Harbour Works Division No.-1
Paradip Port Authority
PPA/PR/24/2024-25 dtg.22.07.2024



Sensex, Nifty tumble

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stock market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty tanked after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a hike in STT (Securities Transaction Tax) on F&O (Futures and Options) securities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped as soon as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman began presenting the Budget for 2024-25. But, within minutes it slipped in the red and later plummeted 1,266.17 points to 79,235.91 during the afternoon trade.

The NSE Nifty also tumbled higher as the finance minister began the presentation of the 7th Union Budget in the Lok Sabha. However, volatile trends soon came in and the benchmark later tanked 435.05 points to 24,074.20.

The BSE benchmark had climbed 264.33 points to 80,766.41 in early trade. The Nifty went up 73.3 points to



24,582.55.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the government plans to raise the capital gains exemption limit on certain financial assets to Rs 1.25 lakh per year for the middle and upper middle class.

Presenting the Budget for 2024-25, she announced a hike in STT (Securities Transaction Tax) on F&O (futures and options) securities by 0.02 per cent and

0.1 per cent.

This is the first Budget during Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's third term in office.

India's economic growth continues to shine while the global economy is still in the grip of policy uncertainty, Sitharaman said.

The country's inflation continues to be stable and is moving towards 4 per cent, and core inflation stands at 3.1 per cent.

Among the Sensex pack, Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, State Bank of India and Bajaj Finserv were the major laggards.

Titan, ITC, Hindustan Unilever and Adani Ports were among the biggest gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 3,444.06 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo traded higher while Shanghai and Hong Kong quoted lower.

The US markets ended in positive territory on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.12 per cent to USD 82.40 a barrel.

Falling for the second day in a row, the BSE benchmark fell 102.57 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 80,502.08 on Monday.

The NSE Nifty dipped 21.65 points or 0.09 per cent to 24,509.25.

₹1.28 lakh cr for telecom projects; BSNL gets lion's share of ₹82,916 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has proposed the allocation of Rs 1.28 lakh crore for telecom projects and public sector firms under the telecom ministry with a majority of funds earmarked for state-owned BSNL.

Of the total proposed allocation, over Rs 1 lakh crore is meant for BSNL and MTNL-related expenses, including Rs 82,916 crore infusion in BSNL for technology upgradation and restructuring at BSNL.

"The total net allocation for this demand in BE (Budget Estimate) 2024-25 is Rs 1,28,915.43 crore (Rs 1,11,915.43 crore plus Rs 17,000 crore). The additional provision of Rs 17,000 crore is met from the balances available under Universal Service Obligation Fund and will be utilised for schemes viz., Compensation to Telecom



Service Providers, Bharatnet and Research and Development," the budget document said.

The budget has proposed to allocate Rs 17,510 crore for pensionary benefits of the employees of the Department of Telecommunications, including employees absorbed in Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd and employees of Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd with effect from April 1, 2014.

The government has proposed to allocate Rs 3,668.97 crore for

Budget 2024-25 to boost domestic telecom gear manufacturing.

"To incentivise domestic manufacturing, I propose to increase the BCD (Basic Customs Duty) from 10 per cent to 15 per cent on PCBA (printed circuit board assembly) of specified telecom equipment," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

The increase in basic customs duty for telecom PCB assembly comes with the exemption of critical minerals that are used in the manufacturing of communication equipment.

The finance minister proposed to fully exempt 25 minerals, such as lithium, copper, cobalt and rare earth elements, which are critical for sectors like nuclear energy, renewable energy, space, defence, telecommunications and high-tech electronics from customs duties and reduce basic customs duty on two of them.

Gold, silver, mobiles to become cheaper

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold, silver and other precious metals along with imported mobile phones, certain cancer drugs and medical devices are set to become cheaper with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announcing cuts in customs duty in the Union Budget 2024-25.

However, certain items such as imported garden umbrellas and laboratory chemicals are set to become costlier due to an increase in basic customs duty.

Sitharaman in her Budget speech on Tuesday proposed reducing "customs duties on gold and silver to 6 per cent and that on platinum to 6.4 per cent" to enhance domestic value addition for jewellery in the country.

Moreover, to provide relief to cancer patients, the finance minister proposed to fully exempt three more medicines from customs duties -- Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib and Duralumab.

She also proposed "changes in the BCD (basic customs duty) on x-ray tubes & flat panel



detectors for use in medical x-ray machines under the Phased Manufacturing Programme, so as to synchronise them with domestic capacity addition."

Earlier X-ray tubes used in manufacturing of X-ray machines for medical, surgical, dental or veterinary use attracted 15 per cent BCD, which has been proposed to reduce to 5 per cent.

The government also proposed slashing import duty on mobile phones, chargers and some components that are used for manufacturing of handsets.

Sitharaman said with a three-

fold increase in domestic production and almost 100-fold jump in exports of mobile phones over the last six years, the Indian mobile phone industry has matured.

"In the interest of consumers, I now propose to reduce the BCD (basic customs duty) on mobile phone, mobile PCBA and mobile charger to 15 per cent," Sitharaman said.

Earlier BCD on mobile phones, chargers and motherboard was 20 per cent. The government has proposed to exempt specified goods for use in manufacturing of connectors in mobile phones and oxygen-free copper for

use in manufacturing of resistors (an electronic component) from BCD levy.

The BCD on specified goods for use in manufacturing of connectors was in the range of 5 to 7.5 per cent and oxygen-free copper for use in manufacturing of resistors attracted 5 per cent BCD.

Similarly, customs duty on 25 critical minerals such as lithium, copper, cobalt and rare earth elements, which are critical for sectors like nuclear energy, space, defence, telecommunications, and high-tech electronics either got fully exemption or reduced.

"This will provide a major fillip to the processing and refining of such minerals and help secure their availability for these strategic and important sectors," she said.

The finance minister also proposed removing BCD on specified capital goods for use in manufacturing of solar cells or solar modules and said this will "support energy transition".

However, she withdrew customs duty exemption on import of solar glass and

tinned copper interconnect "in view of sufficient domestic manufacturing capacity".

Similarly, Sitharaman also proposed reducing BCD on certain broodstock, polychaete worms, shrimp and fish feed to 5 per cent to promote India's seafood exports, which has touched an all-time high of more than Rs 60,000 crore in the last financial year.

For leather and textile sectors, she proposed to remove duty on import of wet white, crust and finished leather for manufacturing of textile or leather garments, footwear or other leather products for export.

"...To enhance the competitiveness of exports, I propose to reduce BCD on real down filling material from duck or goose. I am also making additions to the list of exempted goods for manufacture of leather and textile garments, footwear and other leather articles for export," she added.

Sitharaman proposed to increase BCD on garden umbrella from 20 per cent to 25 per cent or Rs 60 per piece, whichever is higher.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has scrapped the Rs 30,000 crore equity infusion it had planned in state-owned fuel retailers after they made record profits in the fiscal year ended March 31, according to the Budget Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented on Tuesday.

Sitharaman had on February 1 last year, while presenting the annual Budget for the 2023-24 fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024), announced an equity infusion of Rs 30,000 crore in Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) to support the three state-owned firms' energy transition plans.

Alongside, she had also proposed Rs 5,000 crore for buying crude oil to fill strategic underground storages at Mangalore in Karnataka and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh that India has built to guard against any supply disruptions.

In the interim budget, the



finance minister presented in February this year ahead of the general elections, the capital support to the three oil companies was halved to Rs 15,000 crore and the plan for filling strategic underground storage was deferred.

In the full budget for 2024-25, both plans have been scrapped.

The budget documents showed nil allocation for capital support to the three oil marketing companies (OMCs) in 2024-25 against Rs 30,000 crore that was provisioned in the 2023-24 budget. While the interim budget in February this year showed the amount against this entry at Rs 15,000 crore,

the revised allocation in the full budget presented today showed Rs 0.01 crore as the expenditure for 2023-24 and nil in the 2024-25 budget provision.

While other state-owned oil companies like Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and GAIL (India) Ltd too have lined up billions of dollars of investment to achieve net-zero carbon emissions, the equity support was limited to the three fuel retailers, which had suffered huge losses in 2022 when they held retail petrol, diesel and cooking gas (LPG) prices despite a spike in raw material (crude oil) prices, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Mixed response from tea industry

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The budget for 2024-25 presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament on Tuesday evoked mixed reactions from the tea industry.

The Tea Association of India (TAI), a leading producer's body, said that the scheme "Pradhan Mantri Shramik Proteksha Yojana (PMCSKY) devised for the welfare of tea workers, especially women and their children in Assam and West Bengal, is a welcome move.

Secretary of the Association of Tea Auctioneers (ATA) Sujit Patra, however, said apparently there is nothing for the tea industry in the budget for 2024-25.

The government has earmarked Rs 1000 crore for implementing the scheme,



which the tea industry will benefit immensely, the association said.

Development of digital and banking infrastructure in the tea growing areas has been a consistent demand of the industry for several years.

"Announcement of setting up bank branches in the northeastern region is a positive step towards that direction" TAI said.

The continuation of PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) and PMGSY (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana) will surely benefit the rural population including those residing within the tea gardens, the association said.

ATA Secretary Sujit Patra, however, said that the industry expected some assistance in boosting exports by providing higher RoDTEP rates, which did not find a place in the budget.

Startup and venture funds on Tuesday cheered the Budget decision on the abolition of angel tax for all investor classes, terming it a "game-changer" that would remove significant barriers in growth and foster a vibrant and dynamic ecosystem.

Angel tax refers to the tax that the government imposes on funding raised by unlisted companies, or startups if their valuation exceeds the company's fair market value.

"To bolster the Indian startup eco-system, boost the entrepreneurial spirit and support innovation, I propose to abolish the so-called angel tax for all classes of investors," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her Budget speech.

The angel tax issue has been a thorn on the side of startup founders and investors, and

Announcement on abolition of angel tax cheers startups, investors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



ecosystem, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship across the country," Prateek Jain, Associate Director-Startup and Alliances, Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF) said.

Shyam Menon, Co-Founder and Partner, Bharat Innovation Fund dubbed the move as "a significant and positive step" towards

alleviating a longstanding issue in startup investing.

"For some time, angel tax has been a notable point of friction, creating challenges for investors and startups, alike. By eliminating this tax, the government is addressing a key barrier that has hindered investment in emerging businesses," Menon said.

According to the industry, the decision would stimulate an increase in capital inflow, and foster more supportive environment for the formation and growth of startups within the country.

It will lead to a cessation of fresh litigation, noted Brijesh Damodaran, Partner at Auxano Capital.

"Furthermore, funds that would have been tied up in deposits for cases involving notice issuance cease. This redirection of cash flow will enable businesses to allocate

resources more effectively towards their core operations, thus enhancing their overall operational efficiency and growth prospects," Damodaran pointed out.

Arjun Malhotra, General Partner of Good Capital described the development as a huge win for the Indian startup ecosystem.

"It's heartening to see the government not only listening but taking decisive action to support innovation. As an investor, I've seen firsthand how this tax has been a thorn in the side of founders and investors alike, creating unnecessary friction in the funding process," Malhotra noted.

Tech Entrepreneurs Association of Mumbai believes that startups will now be better positioned to scale operations, invest in technologies, and create high-quality jobs.

Customs duty exemption on lithium, cobalt to aid growth of EV sector: Auto Inc

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The proposed exemption in customs duty on import of lithium, cobalt and other rare minerals in the Union Budget 2024-25 is likely to lower the battery production cost and help in making electric vehicles more affordable for the buyers, auto industry leaders said on Tuesday.

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Union Budget for 2024-25 proposed to fully exempt customs duties on 25 critical minerals and reduce Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on two of them.

"This will provide a major fillip to the processing and

refining of such minerals and help secure their availability for these strategic and important sectors," she noted.

Minerals such as lithium, copper, cobalt and rare earth elements are critical for sectors like nuclear energy, renewable energy, space, defence, telecommunications, and high-tech electronics, Sitharaman stated.

Auto industry body SIAM President Vinod Aggarwal said the exemption of customs duty on import of lithium, cobalt and other rare minerals and extension of concessional customs duty on Li-Ion cells till March 2026 and withdrawal of equalisation levy of 2 per cent

on e-transactions is expected to propel the growth of the Indian auto industry.

"The Indian automobile industry welcomes the continued emphasis on economic growth with several announcements, especially the strong fiscal support for infrastructure in the next five years," Aggarwal stated.

Liberal allocation for rural development and infrastructure of Rs 2.66 lakh crore is a welcome step that will boost the rural economy, he added.

SIAM also welcomes several proposals in the Budget such as measures for skilling and upskilling and support to manufacturing and



employment generation and support to MSMEs, many of whom form the large supplier

base for the auto sector, Aggarwal said.

Auto component body

ACMA President Shradha Suri Marwah stated that the reduction in customs duty on critical minerals will encourage cell manufacturing in the country and add to the evolving EV ecosystem in the country.

Deloitte India Partner Rajat Mahajan said the move is likely to encourage few players to indigenise battery production in India.

He, however, noted that the Budget has been silent on direct benefits to the automotive sector.

"The industry was not expecting a lot but was definitely looking for some announcements with respect to FAME III subsidies, and

other direct benefits for EV/NEV (New Electric Vehicle). We may have to wait to see if there are any further relaxations in the future by the FM or by the GST Council," Mahajan said.

BatX Energies Co-Founder & CEO Utkarsh Singh said the reduction of BCD and exemption of 25 essential minerals from custom charges is set to lower production costs for battery manufacturing and recycling, enhancing the affordability and accessibility of electric vehicles in India.

The strategic move will significantly impact India's EV market by lowering production costs and

enhancing competitiveness, he added.

Hero MotoCorp Executive Chairman Pawan Munjal said the Budget positions India as a technology-driven and knowledge-driven economy, reaffirming commitment to sustainable development.

Ashok Leyland Executive Chairman Dheeraj Hinduja said reduction in duties on rare earth minerals will help in promoting sustainable mobility.

Mercedes-Benz India MD & CEO Santosh Iyer said the Budget clearly underlines the government's priorities on creating a robust foundation for a developed Indian economy.

PERSONAL, NATIONAL COACHES PIVOTAL IN ATHLETE'S CAREER: VIJAY

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic medallist shooter Vijay Kumar feels both the personal and national coaches play an equal role in the growth of an athlete as the debate over the role of the two continues to intensify with the Paris Games around the corner. Several Indian athletes have opted for personal coaches in Paris and Vijay feels there is nothing wrong with it and that due "weightage" should be given to them. India's medal hopeful in pistol shooting Manu Bhaker has opted for pistol legend Jaspal Rana as her coach in Paris, while rifle marksman Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar trains with former Olympian Joydeep Karmakar, though the veteran hasn't accompanied his ward to the Games. Athletes in several other disciplines are also taking help of personal coaches as they eye Olympic dream. Vijay, who was a surprise medal-winner in the 2012 London when he stepped out of the shadow of the likes of Abhinav Bindra and Gagan Narang to clinch silver in rapid-fire pistol, said personal coaches should get due "weightage" as they have played a pivotal role in

bringing up the athlete to this level. "Well, it's a complicated issue. Personal coaches should also get due weightage. Suppose I become a national coach some day, the shooter who comes to me, he would have been trained by someone to come up to that level by a personal coach," Vijay, an ex-serviceman now serving as DSP with Himachal Police, told PTI. "So, the contribution of both the coaches is equal. The national coaches give that extra push... That 1-2 point bump in scores, how to handle pressure in international competition," said Vijay, who got enrolled in the Army early and was able to harness his talent in shooting to bring several accolades for the country. The 38-year-old, however, feels that the shooting federation should appoint coaches with good credentials and those who have faced challenging situations in some of the toughest competitions in the world. "The federation should only appoint those coaches who have performed at the international level and won medals, so they can teach their wards how to handle those circumstances, what thoughts



to keep in mind while shooting or relaxing, the techniques to follow," added Vijay. He feels that the Indian shooting team's preparations have been far from ideal and that a clear roadmap should have been in place for Paris-bound shooters six months before the mega event.

"Observing from the outside, I feel it is the planning of players in the last six months where we are lacking. The federation, I feel, should have had a crystal clear roadmap on what all competitions the shooters should take part in and the kind of training they should get and under whom.

"So the focus should have been on that. The last six months the focus should be on how to make the players more focused, how much to train them, how much foreign exposure needs to be given, all that needs to be worked to the 'T'," he added. "This year also, I've heard that

the team was announced three (two) months before the Olympics. The trials were very late and the team announcement too was late. This exercise should have been completed in January-February, to be very frank," he added. "The federations policy to have

Olympic Selection Trials was fair but the execution was a bit late. The process should have been completed 2-3 months before it actually happened. The last 5-6 months (before Olympics) are crucial. I must say, if the competition at the Olympics is in July-end, then January or maximum February the trials should have ended. Here trials were going on till April-end I suppose." Vijay felt that the team should have been given a month's rest before they embarked on rigorous specialised training. Unfortunately, due to the Olympic Selection Trials taking place late and the late announcement of the team, Indian shooters didn't have that luxury. "The (federation) should have been given proper rest to the shooter of about a month and then rigorous training should have started after that, plus foreign exposure, plus technical training. That would have been ideal as per my understanding," he added. With fitness and mental trainers now becoming an integral part of every athlete competing in major international competitions, Vijay feels he isn't fully convinced about their importance. "Even today, I am 50:50

convinced that there should be fitness trainer and mental trainer. No doubt these things help, but if your upbringing is in a particular environment, it gives you that competitive edge. That was given to me by the Army, my family upbringing. "You cannot say you can teach (mental training) to someone at 20 or 30 years of age, because the environment a kid grows up in has a profound effect on his mind. All these things weren't there when I was shooting... The Army army atmosphere was good and had I good players for company because of which I excelled. "We imbibed everything our coaches told us with a clear mind. We blindly followed them. For me it was Army coach Pavel Smirnov and other senior coaches. While coaches and all the trainers can lead one to a point, Vijay feels being in the company of some of the best shooters in his time at the Army Marksmanship Unit in Mhow helped him grow as a shooter. "Pemba Tamang, Jitu Rai... It gives you inspiration and also gives you a push that others are doing well, so you don't go into that relaxed zone. So, good players are a must for your growth."

Indian badminton at Paris Games: Role of supportive parents in making an Olympian

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Six summers ago, Clifford Crasto left his daughter Tanisha at the Pulella Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad on her 15th birthday, hoping it would give wings to her nascent badminton dreams even if it meant being far away from the comfort of her home in Dubai. It was a cultural change for Tanisha, who was born in Dubai. But she waddled through that and will now represent India at the Paris Olympics along with her senior women's doubles partner Ashwini Ponnappa. While there is no guidebook to raise an Olympian, for parents, it's a journey filled with sacrifices, and emotional upheaval. Yet firm decisions have to be taken to help their children grow in sports and life. "I took her to India on her birthday. It was a very brave decision, an emotional decision to leave her alone in a different country," the Goa-born Clifford, who shifted base to work in Dubai, told PTI over phone. "She was born and brought up in Dubai. So, it was hard for both of us. But we knew that she had taken the right path and we supported her. We are happy with that decision and happy with where she has reached now," he said. Tanisha showed early promise and emerged as a top player in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. She represented Bahrain and won the women's doubles title at the 2016 Bahrain International Challenge before becoming the youngest singles winner at the UAE Open at 14. Then Tanisha decided to compete in India, representing Goa from 2017, and won the junior and senior nationals multiple times. Clifford, who worked at Intel



distributors in Dubai for 18 years, had to leave his job to accompany Tanisha in tournaments. "It was quite tough for me. I had to travel with her for national, state and international tournaments. "I would not get so many leaves as she was playing around 25-30 tournaments in a year. So, I had to quit my job," said the Margao-born Clifford. Clifford and his family have already booked their Paris tickets and will be cheering Tanisha from the stands. While Tanisha will be plying her trade in women's doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will be leading India's charge for gold in men's doubles. Kasi Vishwanatham, Satwik's father, found a way to make his son comfortable ahead of the big event -- recreate a home-like atmosphere at his Hyderabad training base before their Paris departure. "Before every big tournament like the Asian Games and world championships, we try to stay for a few days with him in Hyderabad. "His mother (teacher) took a break from work and was here (in

Hyderabad) for three weeks now," Vishwanatham, a retired physical education teacher, said. While Satwik's parents will not travel to Paris, his elder brother Ramcharan will be in the City of Lights. Chief national coach Pulella Gopichand noticed Satwik when he reached the U-15 men's doubles final of the Nani Prasad Memorial tournament in Hyderabad. "Gopichand told me that we need a men's doubles player for India's team championships," said Vishwanatham, a state level player and international umpire, who officiated during the 2009 World Championships at Hyderabad. "It was tough financially for the first few years but my friends and family supported me and once he did well at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, there was no looking back," he recalled. Satwik and Chirag won the men's doubles silver at the 2018 CWG. Satwik also played a pivotal role in India winning their maiden gold in the mixed team championships at Gold Coast. The duo bettered that doubles silver with a maiden gold at the 2022 CWG in Birmingham. Now,

they are hot favourites to win gold at the Paris Games. They had done well in their debut Olympics in Tokyo but failed to enter the knockout stage despite winning two of the three group matches. "He was quite sad after the Tokyo Games because they had done well and had beaten the gold medallist pair. But according to rules they couldn't make it (knockouts)," said Vishwanatham. "He is not someone who gets too low after a loss. He is pretty honest in his assessment about the reason behind the defeat. Whenever he calls me after a loss, he would point out how they lost, and where the opponents played better," he added. Here, DK Sen is a bit different. Unlike other parents, who generally support their children off the field, Sen has seen the progress of Lakshya from close quarters as his co-coach. In fact, both of Sen's sons - Lakshya and Chirag - are international players and they have learnt the ropes from him at the SAI Almora Centre before he joined the duo at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy in Bengaluru.

Dupont's Olympic debut to boost France's rugby sevens chances

AP ■ PARIS

Antoine Dupont had one ambition when he switched his focus to what he described as the French Olympic project: a gold medal for the host nation. The world's premier rugby player will get France's Olympic medal campaign underway Wednesday, two days before the official opening ceremony of the Paris Games, when his team takes on the United States in the first Pool B game of the rugby sevens competition. Stade de France will be at capacity and most of the attention will be on Dupont when the French kick off in the third game of a three-day men's tournament. It'll be the same on Day 2 when the French meet two-time Olympic champion Fiji, the most formidable force in rugby's condensed sevens format. The U.S. Men face France and Fiji on Wednesday, giving them a unique view of a pair of title favorites. "When we get in that environment, besides maybe 14 players, give or take 50 friends and family coming in supporting us, the staff and the people watching on TV - we know it's going to be us versus 69,000 people," U.S. Captain Kevon Williams said of facing the French. "We're OK with that, we've been preparing for that, we've honed in and said, it's just us." "All we'll see is the French jersey, so we'll be ready." France hosted the Rugby World Cup last year and the national team again failed to lift the title. It has been a finalist three times at the sport's biggest tournament. With undisputed star of the 15-a-side game joining its ranks, France has peaked in the rugby sevens format in 2024. Dupont helped the French win a spot on the world series for the first time in 19 years, and then capped it with a victory in the series finale in Madrid. The French evolution has coincided



with an unusually lean season for Fiji. Although Fiji head coach Osea Kolinisau is confident the team's bid for an Olympic three-peat will overshadow the inconsistent world series run by the time the men's sevens medals are awarded Saturday, "We plan to keep that legacy going," Kolinisau said. "We can claim it solely." Kolinisau led Fiji to its first ever Olympic gold medal as captain in 2016 at Rio de Janeiro, where rugby sevens was featured on the Olympic program for the first time. Kolinisau was rushed into the coaching role earlier this year to resurrect Fiji's men's program, and he reinstated what he calls the "Fijian way" - or instinct - for sevens rugby: "High tempo, high risk." In the series finale, the Fijians posted wins over Ireland, South Africa and New Zealand before losing to France in the semifinals. For Argentina, a grand final loss to France in Madrid was a setback after it topped the league stage of the world series, winning three of the seven stops. For the Olympic tournament, Argentina is grouped with Australia,

Samoa and Kenya in Pool B. No. 2-ranked Ireland, Tokyo silver medallist New Zealand, Rio bronze medallist South Africa and Japan are in a tough Pool A. Uruguay joins France, Fiji and the U.S. In Pool C. The top two teams in each group and the two best third-place teams advance to the quarterfinals, meaning two-thirds of the 12 starters are still in medal contention when the knockout phase starts. That's the stage where the Fijians have come into their own at the two previous Olympics. Jerry Tuwai has been integral in Fiji's first two Olympic runs and the 35-year-old playmaker was recalled by Kolinisau two months ago after almost a year out of the team. A two-time Olympic champion, Sevens World Cup winner and player of the decade, Tuwai has embraced Kolinisau's approach ahead of the Paris Games. "Our style of play has been opened up and our teamwork and communication. Our decision making - that's another thing that opened up, too," Tuwai said. "After two Olympic gold medals, these boys have shown they always show up in very big tournaments."

Tarzan at Olympics: Johnny won 3 gold medals at 1924 Paris Games

AP ■ PARIS

Before there was Michael Phelps or Mark Spitz winning Olympic gold medals for the United States - there was Tarzan. Yes Tarzan, the fictional literary and film character who was raised by apes in the African jungle. This of course was Johnny Weissmuller, who played Tarzan in the films but was also a swimming superstar 100 years ago. He won three gold medals at the 1924 Paris Olympics: the 100-meter freestyle, the 400 free, and the 4x200 relay. Weissmuller also won bronze in water polo in an Olympics that featured many stars including Paavo Nurmi. Weissmuller defeated Duke Kahanamoku in the 100 final after the famous Hawaiian - often called the "father of surfing" - had won gold in 1912 in Stockholm and in 1920 in Antwerp. The 1916 Olympics were set for Berlin but canceled because of World War I. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis hosted the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where the torch relay originated. Weissmuller's swimming brought fame, and his virile image got him cast in the "Tarzan the Ape Man" film in 1932 - the first of his 12 Tarzan films.

There was, of course, the signature Tarzan yell - akin to a yodel - and what the character's creator Edgar Rice Burroughs described as "the victory cry of the bull ape." Weissmuller won two more golds in the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics and could have won a third had he not been pulled from the 400 to play for the water polo team. He set a world record in the 100 of 57.4 seconds prior to the 1924 Olympics that stood for a decade. The world record now is 46.80. He was also the first to go under 5 minutes for 400 meters, setting a world record of 4:57.0 in 1923. He was a trailblazer, the first to swim 100 meters under 60 seconds. He is regarded as the first athlete to sign an endorsement deal with a sportswear line. He was among the first members inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame. Weissmuller was selected in 1950 by The Associated Press as the "Greatest Swimmer of the Half Century" and made famous the American crawl stroke with his chest high out of the water. **TARZAN THE SEX SYMBOL:** Hollywood producer Bernard Hyman thought Weissmuller's name was too long, but was told he



was famous as an Olympian. The name shouldn't be changed, he was warned. "All right then," he said. "We'll just lengthen the marquee. And put lots of water in the film." The writer Cyril Hume, who worked on the Tarzan script, tells a widely published story about taking Weissmuller in front of Hyman and others for his "screen test." Weissmuller was told to take off his

clothes. "I didn't realize what was going on," Weissmuller was quoted as saying. "They asked me if I could climb trees and I said yes. And they asked me could I pick up a girl and walk away with her, and I said yes. And that's all there was to the test. I had the part." Tarzan's love interest was Jane Parker, played by Maureen O'Sullivan, an Ireland-born actress

who was Jane in the first six Tarzan films made by MGM. Her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame faces Weissmuller's. Buster Crabbe, who won Olympic gold in swimming in 1932, played Tarzan in one film for Paramount - "Tarzan the Fearless" - as it unsuccessfully challenged MGM's series. A hero on the screen, Weissmuller was also a real-life hero. He and his

brother, Peter, are credited with saving the lives of 11 people in a boating accident on Lake Michigan in 1927. He was married five times and died in Acapulco, Mexico, in 1984 and is buried there. **WEISSMULLER'S ROOTS:** Weissmuller was born Janos (Johann) Peter Weissmuller on June 2, 1904, to German parents in Freidorf, which is now a district of the Romanian city of Timisoara. At the time it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The family immigrated to the United States when he was an infant and eventually settled in Chicago in 1908. He contracted polio as a 9-year-old and took up swimming as a remedy. Some of his first swimming lessons were in Lake Michigan. He was discovered by famed coach Bill Bachrach and, in an official biography of Weissmuller, Bachrach recalled an early meeting. "He had the gawking of an adolescent puppy. Also the stroke he used was the oddest I ever saw," Bachrach said. "But the stopwatch told it all. Nearly record time." Weissmuller became a symbol of American culture in the early part of the 20th century, popularized

swimming and often bragged that he never lost a race. "That is not true, but it's close," said Olympic historian Dr. Bill Mallon. Mallon said Weissmuller was defeated in a backstroke race - not Weissmuller's primary stroke - by Ludy Langer. And likely in another race against Langer, also an Olympian. "He definitely stands out," Mallon added. "Don't know if he was overshadowed by (Paavo) Nurmi - at least not in the USA." **BETTER THAN SPITZ?:** In a 1972 interview with the New York Times, Weissmuller compared himself to Spitz, who won seven gold medals that year in the Munich Olympics. He won two more on relays in 1968 in Mexico City. "I was better than Mark Spitz is," Weissmuller said. And he explained why. "It's easier to go faster now," he said. "On a turn, they don't have to touch with their hands, they just flip and push off; that's a split second. The platform is higher and the pool is deeper so when you enter the water that's a couple strokes. And the water's smoother. We didn't have the lane ropes, we had to get up higher in the water to avoid the little waves."

ASALANKA TO LEAD SRI LANKA IN T20I SERIES AGAINST INDIA

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

Charith Asalanka was on Tuesday named captain of the Sri Lankan T20 team for the three-match series against India, starting here on July 27, replacing spin all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga, who stepped down after the team's early exit from last month's T20 World Cup. The 27-year-old comes with considerable captaincy experience. In the absence of Hasaranga, who was facing suspension due to ICC code of conduct violations, Asalanka had captained Sri Lanka in two T20Is on the tour of Bangladesh earlier this year. A former Sri Lankan U-19 captain, he also led Jaffna Kings to the Lanka Premier League title last week. Sri Lanka Cricket Selection Committee opted for several changes following the team's dismal show at the T20 World Cup, where the island nation managed to win only one game and made an early exit. Overall, the 16-member squad is a good mix of experience and youth. The seasoned pair of all-rounders Angelo Mathews and Dhananjaya de Silva, wicketkeeper Sadeera Samarawickrama and left-arm pacer Dilshan Madushanka have been left out of the squad. Returning to the squad are 34-year-old Dinesh Chandimal, who last played a T20I in



February 2022, and Kusal Janith Perera. Uncapped all-rounder Chamindu Wickramasinghe has earned a maiden call up. Right-arm seamer, who had been training at the MRF Pace Academy in India, has been rewarded for his breakout IPL season.

Pacers Binura Fernando and Avishka Fernando also find themselves back in the national fold. Sri Lanka will play the first of the three T20Is on July 27 here, followed by games on July 28 and 30. The Indian team, which will be led by a new captain in

Suryakumar Yadav as well, landed here on Monday night for the series, which also features three ODIs scheduled next month.

Fernando, Kusal Mendis (wk), Dinesh Chandimal, Kamindu Mendis, Dasun Shanaka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Duniya Wellalage, Maheesh Theekshana, Chamindu Wickramasinghe, Matheesha Pathirana, Nuwan Thushara, Dushmantha Chameera, Binura Fernando.

SRI LANKA SQUAD:

Charith Asalanka (capt), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Janith Perera (wk), Avishka



Rahul Dravid screamed and cried, recalls Ashwin on India's T20 World Cup celebrations

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Virat Kohli handing over the T20 World Cup trophy to former coach Rahul Dravid after India's title triumph in Barbados and the much revered coach 'screaming and crying' in joy is something that will remain etched in his memory, Ravichandran Ashwin has expressed. After India pipped South Africa in a tense final last month to win their second T20 World Cup, former coach Dravid was seen letting out his emotions in a rare show while holding the trophy aloft. Ashwin admitted it was indeed a special moment for the 51-year-old Dravid, who could not win an ICC title as a player but finally redeemed it as a coach.

"My moment was when Virat Kohli called Rahul Dravid and gave the cup and cry," he said in a video on his YouTube channel. "Rahul Dravid screamed and cried. I saw him enjoy it. I felt that a lot." Ashwin also reckoned that Dravid was scared being at the helm of another campaign in the Caribbean, for the team under his captaincy had made a group-stage exit in the 2007 ODI World Cup. "I want to talk about a sacred person. (In) 2007, (the) 50-over World Cup. India gets knocked out. Rahul Dravid (was) the captain then. He does not captain the one-day side after that," he said. "He has been with the Indian team. If something does not go well, if the Indian team goes out, or if they lose a match,

immediately they ask what Dravid is doing." Ashwin also acknowledged the hard work done by Dravid during his stint as India coach, saying he brought balance to the team and changed in approach. "I know what he has been doing with this team for the past two to three years. I know how balanced he has been. I know how hard he has worked to change this approach," Ashwin said. "I know what he has given each of his players. Even when he is just sitting at home, he has been planning how to do this and that," he added. Under Dravid, India reached the finals of the World Test Championship and the ODI World Cup but lost to Australia on both occasions.



Bernard dubbed Olympics' godfather; here's how he built LVMH's fortune

AP ■ PARIS

For decades, France's LVMH has been the face of luxury for the wealthy who tote Louis Vuitton bags, don Christian Dior clothing, spritz Bulgari perfume and sip Veuve Clicquot Champagne. This week, the world's dominant luxury group - home to 75 high-end brands across fashion, jewellery, watches and alcohol - will be the face of a global event for the masses: the Paris Olympics, with its billions of viewers around the planet. With a major sponsorship role aimed at burnishing the image of the Games and the French capital, it's a new chapter in LVMH's speciality of selling exclusivity at a grand scale under its chair and CEO, Bernard Arnault. Assembling and growing dozens of exclusive labels under one powerhouse roof has put Arnault, 75, at the very top of Forbes' list of the world's richest people. As recently as June 3, Forbes

estimated his wealth at USD 207 billion, narrowly ahead of Tesla's Elon Musk and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. With ever-shifting stock-market prices, the three men often trade places (according to Forbes' real-time billionaires list on Tuesday, Arnault and his family are currently No. 3). LVMH's cosmetics brand Sephora sponsored the Olympic torch relay. Berluti designed France's opening ceremony uniforms. Jeweler Chaumet crafted the Olympic medals. Those will rest in cases designed by Louis Vuitton, whose headquarters at 2 Rue Pont Neuf will be hard to miss as the opening ceremony parade floats by on the Seine River. "We tried to find a way to do it, to do something else than just signing a check and getting billboards on the side of the streets," Antoine Arnault - LVMH's head of environment and image and Arnault's eldest son - told The Associated Press on Monday.

Purnima's sacrifices for elusive archery medal

PTI ■ PARIS

Purnima Mahato didn't even know when her son Siddharth and daughter Archisa turned 17 and 10 as she would often feel guilty of being a perennially absentee mother. But in her three-decade career as an archery coach, the myriad desire to see one of her wards stand on the Olympic podium allowed her to make sacrifices and also demand a bit of it from her children. "We have everything but an Olympic medal. Archery has become life for me. My children grew up on their own and I didn't even realise," the Dronacharya Awardee coach told PTI in an exclusive interaction. "I hardly got to spend any time back home all these years with my kids. I left my son (Siddharth) at home when he was not even a year old. He is now all grown up and 17 years old, preparing for his 12th standard board exams. My daughter (Archisa) is 10 years old. It seems they have sacrificed way more than me for this Olympic medal," she gets a touch emotional. She has not even stayed at home for a week in 2024. "I went home for four days this year busy with the trials and camp, this has been the story so far. We have got all the medals but the Olympic medal is still a work in progress," she rued. **BETTER EQUIPPED TO KEEP EMOTIONS UNDER**



CHECK: The heartbreak of missing the 'Inner 10' when it matters is way too familiar a feeling for Purnima, who is again in charge of the women's team at the Paris Games where she wants veteran Deepika Kumari and her compatriots to focus on process rather than thinking about the end result. "Medal layenge, medal layenge yeh baat tum dimaag se nikal do (a medal will never come if you chase after a medal, just focus on the processes)," she has told the trio of Deepika, Anika Bhakat and Bhajan Kaur. "They are now better placed to control their emotions and overcome the nervousness in big matches. It's (an Olympic medal) just a matter of time now." A CWG medallist, Mahato took up coaching at Tata Academy after leaving the sport in late 90s. She first coached the national team in an Olympics during the Beijing

edition where Dola Banerjee and V Praneetha were part of the squad. It was a 10-team draw and India got a bye to quarters as they needed to win two matches for their maiden Olympic medal. They were pitted against China, where they lost by big five-point margin and their story of heartbreaks continued since then. Every time the Olympic approaches, the expectation reaches its peak for the archers. And this time, it is no different. The women's team, who finished the Olympic cycle as World No. 8, topped the rankings among the non-qualified nations to earn the team quota. The men also made it on rankings by finishing the Olympic cycle as world No. 2. Paris, as a venue, has also been lucky for the Indian team. The women's team had won a silver and bronze medal in the World Cup Stage 3 in 2022 and

2023 in Paris, while senior archer Deepika Kumari has an individual gold here from World Cup Stage 3 in 2021. "The Koreans and the Chinese also have hearts that beat faster but they know how to control it by being mentally strong," Mahato said. "It's about following the process, stay engaged and relaxed without looking at scoring a perfect 10." "I don't want them to focus on the opponent's team, it's about keeping the atmosphere relaxed, by humming a song or focusing on the breath when your turn comes," she said. **STRATEGY AND CODE WORDS:** In the team event, Anika will shoot first followed by Bhajan while Deepika with all her experience has the responsibility to play the role of the finisher. "Whenever one archer goes to the shooting line, the other has the job to keep the mood light by using their respective code words," Mahato said. This time the women's coach has the added responsibility after being awarded the Padma Shri three months back. "It's not a burden but an added responsibility, whenever you get a recognition you have an extra responsibility. I've been coaching for the last 28 years now and our players also do well but never got a medal. "But everyone in this team comes into the Olympics after doing well in the World Cups held during the current Games cycle. We have medals across all categories," she signed off.



Vidhatri eyes back-to-back wins on Hero Women's Pro Tour

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Talented golfer Vidhatri Urs, who captured her first title as a professional on the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour last week, will look to make it two in a row as she tees up at the 10th Leg of the tournament at the par-72 Prestige Golfshire here on Wednesday. The field is once again very strong in the presence of the current Hero OOM leader Hitaashee Bakshi and last year OOM winner Sneha Singh, who have won twice each this year. The field also has Anvitha Narender, winner of the eighth leg, the experienced Amandeep Drall, winner of the fifth leg, and Neha Tripathi. While Amandeep seeks greater consistency, Neha is trying to make a comeback from a back injury.

Vidhatri, who is related to one of India's top pros Pranavi Urs, has been in excellent form. She was third in her first two appearances and then grabbed a win last week. Some of the other young pros waiting to make a mark include Durga Nikkar, Jasmine Shekar, Gourabi Bhowmick and Karishma Govind. The amateurs have also shown a lot of promise with the prominent ones being Saanvi Somu and Mannat Brar, who have also played for India in international teams chosen by the Indian Golf Union. Apart from the in-form Saanvi Somu and Mannat Brar, the other amateurs are Aaradhya Shetty, Anuradha Chaudhuri, Keerthana Rajeev and Kaya Daluwatte of Sri Lanka. The event carries a purse of Rs 13 lakhs and will have a total 38 players including six amateurs.

Woods watches 15-year-old son Charlie shoot a 12-over 82

AP ■ BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP (MICHIGAN)

US JUNIOR AMATEUR AT OAKLAND HILLS

Charlie Woods, the 15-year-old son of Tiger Woods, covered his face with his cap after shaking hands with his playing partners on the 18th green at the Oakland Hills North Course. Woods shot a 12-over 82 on Monday in the U.S. Junior Amateur, a tournament he played his way into. "He still qualified," Tiger Woods said to his son's caddie after the rough round. "That's what I keep telling him," caddie Luke Wise said. Woods earned a spot in the field of top juniors from around the world when he shot a 1-under 71 to win his qualifier last month in Coral Springs, Florida. He will have to have quite a turnaround Tuesday on the Oakland Hills South Course, which Ben Hogan called "The Monster," to be among the low 64 scorers from a field of 264 players from 40 states and 35 countries. Charlie Woods is the only



one in the world who knows what it's like to be the son of Tiger Woods, and now he's fully aware of what it's like to compete with all eyes on him. On an event that usually draws a few hundred people for the championship match,

about 100 were waiting on the first tee to see Charlie play while his dad watched, and at least that many spectators followed them for hours. Oakland Hills had six members assigned to assist with crowd control. That

wasn't enough, and 10 more men were dispatched to hold ropes to give the players - and Tiger - some space. After Charlie hit his tee shot on the seventh hole and left behind his tee, adorned with a palm tree, a fan took it out of the ground to keep as a

memento. "I feel like he's feeling pressure," said 35-year-old John Pinch of Warren, Michigan. "If his dad could talk to him, he would probably try to get him to settle down. "You can tell he's really down on himself." Charlie was frustrated and let it show, slamming and swinging clubs into the ground after errant shots and shaking his head from side to side. His father was relatively helpless because rules prevent parents from coaching their children during the tournament. After a brief exchange prior to the round on the practice green, Tiger didn't say a word to his son and didn't appear to even make eye contact as he watched from afar while surrounded by police officers - at least one of whom snapped photos - and security personnel. Without a doubt, Tiger wished his son could hear

him on the 181-yard, par-3 fourth. A rules official gave Charlie relief because his ball landed on a metal cap on the right side of the green. "He gets a club length," Tiger said, standing out of earshot of his son. Tiger wanted his son to place his ball to the left, but Charlie elected to take relief to the right. "No, no, no," Tiger muttered to himself. "Go the other way." Charlie ended up with his first of five double bogeys at No. 4 to go with four bogeys and two birdies - on both of the par 5s. He was wild off the tee - often missing to the right - came up short on a series of flop shots out of thick rough and sailed some approaches over greens. Tiger was 14 when he qualified for his first U.S. Junior and reached the semifinals. He won his first U.S. Junior a year later and went on to become the only player to win the tournament

three times in a row. Tiger traveled to suburban Detroit from Scotland after matching his highest 36-hole

score as a professional at the British Open, missing the cut for the third straight time in a major.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BALASORE
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Work

O-136
 Identification No. - Online Tender- Road N.C.B. No. 05 for 2024-25

Letter No. 2647 /WE, Date: 22.07.2024

- Name of the work :- Road under MMSY-TRIP
- Total No. of work :- 1 Nos. of Roads.
- Estimated Cost :- Rs. 696.28 lakhs (Approximately)
- Eligible Class of Contractor :- As per Annexure
- Period of Completion :- As per Annexure.
- Other details :-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Technical Bid	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/S E.R.W. Circle, Balasore	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
Chief Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Balasore	NCB No.-05 of 2024-25	29.07.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	13.08.2024 Up to 5.00 P.M.	12.08.2024 Up to 5.00 P.M.	14.08.2024 at 11.00 P.M.	Will be intimated later

Further details can be seen from the website: tendersnodisha.gov.in

OIPR-25105/11/0007/2425

Sd/- N.V Harihar Rao
 Chief Engineer,
 R.W. Circle, Balasore.