OPINION 6

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NIKKY HALEY 'STRONGLY

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CORPORATE FUNDING IN SOLAR

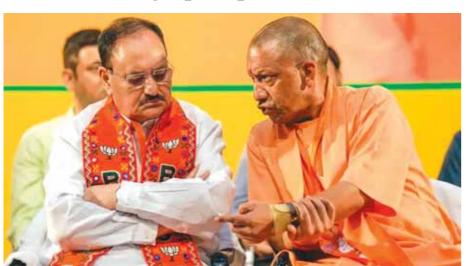
Late City Vol.18 Issue 197 *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

ENDORSES' TRUMP" SECTOR GLOBALLY DIPS: MERCOM OVER DISRUPTION DEHRADUN, THURSDAY JULY 18, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3 Established 1864 the pioneer

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UP CM Yogi prepares for critical bypolls



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with BJP leader JP Nadda

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT

Uttar Pradesh Chiet Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday entrusted Ministers with responsibility of supervising the bypolls to 10 Assembly seats and to stay for two nights in a week in the respective

constituencies The Chief Minister also asked the Ministers and leaders of party organisations to be active on social media to counter the negative campaign of the Opposition and the false narrative spread by INDIA Bloc parties.

The Chief Minister has constituted a team of 30 Cabinet Ministers and of State to

Deputy CM fends off Akhilesh Yadav

PNS LUCKNOW

Amid the buzz over possible changes in the Yogi Adityanath Government, the Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and main Opposition Samajwadi Party's leader Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday engaged in a verbal duel after which the latter said the people of UP are fed up with infighting within the BJP Government. In a sharp response, Maurya stressed that the BJP has strong Governments and organisation at the Centre polls," he posted on X.

and in UP and the Samajwadi Party has no chance of a comeback.

"There is infighting in the Government. BJP leaders are fighting among themselves. The people know about the corruption and are fed up with the game of thrones, Yadav said at a party event. Responding to the SP chief, Maurya tweeted this that the Governments and organisation in the country and the State are strong. "The return of SP's reign of goons in UP is impossible. BJP will repeat 2017 in the 2027 state supervise the bypolls to 10 UP Assembly seats. The Ministers are from the Bharatiya Janata Party and allies Rashtriya Lok Dal and NISHAD Party.

The Chief Minister presided over a meeting of the Ministers and leaders of the party organisation. Three Ministers each have been given the responsibility of supervising the elections in the 10 Assembly seats going to bypolls. Yogi has specifically directed

the Ministers to focus the attention on the preparations at the polling booth level and be in constant touch with the cadre and grassroot party workers. He said the party worker was the top priority and asked the Ministers incharge of the poll bound 10 Assembly seats to meet the party workers, ascertain their problems and facilitate them in discharging their responsibility during the elections.

The CM said the party workers should feel assured that both the government and the party organisation was solidly behind them.

The meeting also discussed the measures to be taken for busting the false narrative of inflation, unemployment, abrogation of Constitution and caste-based reservation for the SC, ST and OBCs. He said the false narrative of amendment to Constitution for abrogating the reservations need to be particularly busted.



Iconic Gulati eatery gutted, Delhiites left heartbroken

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

A fire in the iconic Gulati restaurant, a favourite haunt of foodies, in the wee hours of Wednesday in the heart of the national Capital left its patrons broken-hearted. Serving the gourmet since 1959, this famous eatery has had among its clients a number of dignitaries regularly visiting the eating joint to savour the delicacies on offer. As the disheartening news of the fire that gutted a good portion of the restaurant spread by word of mouth, many Delhiites got nostalgic reminiscing about their times at the eatery which is etched in their memories forever.

The restaurant that had a humble beginning as a small "dhaba" with simple wooden benches and tables, transformed into a fine dine restaurant in 2013, giving a perfect dining experience to the visitors. The restaurant was also known for its great ambience. The fire broke out at 2.48 am in the sitting area of Veg Gulati

restaurant adjacent restaurant, and is a vegetarian alternative to the same. The leaping flames soon spread to the first floor and caused extensive damage.

Sharing their sense of loss, many fans of the restaurant told The Pioneer that the place was part of many family gatherings. Twenty-six-year-old Aditya Ahuja, who works as a content writer at Prasar Bharti, reminisced how he visited the place with his father as a toddler.

According to an official of Delhi Fire Services (DFS), it took one hour for four fire tenders to bring the blaze under control. The cause of fire is suspected to be a short circuit. Police has said a probe is underway in the matter. Over the years, the restaurant has emerged as one of the best serving North Indian cuisine in the city. Long queues outside the place are a usual sight. However, this doesn't deter foodies from visiting the restaurant to savour their favourites dishes which include dal makhni, naan and dahi

NCP's Ajit Pawar suffers setback



T N RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

Still to recover from the Opposition MahaYuti's poor performance in the recent Lok Sabha polls, the Ajit Pawarled ruling NCP suffered another jolt on Wednesday, as its Pimpri unit chief Ajit Gavahane and three other leaders quit the party, ahead of their joining the rival

NCP (Sharad Pawar) on July 20.

Apart from Gavahane, three other leaders who quit the ruling NCP (AP) and announced their decision to join the rival Sharad Pawar-led NCP are NCP's Pimpri-Chinchwad Students' Wing chief Yash Sane, former corporators Rahul Bhosale and Pankaj Bhalekar.

Gavahane, Rahul and Pankaj submitted their resignations to NCP state President Sunil Tatkare. Sane had sent in his papers to the NCP Student Wing President Prashant Kadam earlier this week.

The resignations by four NCP (AP) leaders come a year after Ajit Pawar rebelled against Sharad Pawar, brought about a dramatic split in the parent party and joined the BJP-led MahaYuti Government in the State.

Karnataka Government pushes pause button on job quota Bill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

The Congress-led Karnataka Government on Wednesday landed in soup after the Cabinet first approved a controversial Bill mandating first 100 per cent then revising it to two slabs for Kannadigas and finally "put on hold" facing backlash for 48 hours.

The reservation in private firms for Group C and Group D posts was made public by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and later he deleted it, sharing another rectified post clarifying that the Cabinet approved the Bill to fix 50 per cent reservation for administrative posts and 75 per cent for nonadministrative posts for Kannadigas in private industries and other organisations in the State. The decision was taken in the Cabinet meeting held on

The move, however, did not gone down well with industry leaders and late evening Government sources said the Bill which was to be tabled in the Karnataka Assembly on Thursday has been put on hold now. Sources said the Congress high command from New Delhi had to

Monday



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with leaders

intervene given the "sensitivity" of the matter in intervene the Bill as the State including the silicon city Bengaluru has a population from north India and else part of the country

"The Cabinet meeting held yesterday approved a Bill to make recruitment of 100 per cent Kannadigas mandatory for 'C and D' grade posts in all private industries in the state. We are a pro-Kannada Government. Our priority is to look after the welfare of the Kannadigas," the CM said in a social media post and then deleted it and replaced with another message.

"It is our Government's wish that Kannadigas should be given an opportunity to lead

the a comfortable life in the motherland. We are a pro-Kannada Government, Our priority is to look after the welfare of Kannadigas," he said.

> Karnataka's move is similar to a Bill introduced by the Harvana Government, mandating 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs to the residents of the State. It was, however, struck down the Punjab and Haryana High Court on November 17, 2023.

According to sources, the 'Karnataka State Employment Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories and Other Establishments Bill, 2024' will be tabled on Thursday in the Assembly.

Haryana Govt announces quota for **Agniveers**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Haryana Government Wednesday announced a ten per cent recruitment constables, forest guards and jail wardens along with quotas in other posts. This decision came ahead of the Assembly polls in the State. Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini also said the Government will provide interest-free loans of up to ₹5

lakh if any Agniveer wishes to

set up their own business. "In direct recruitment to posts of constable, mining guard, forest guard, jail warden and special police officer made by the State Government, there will be a 10 per cent horizontal reservation for Agniveers," he said at a press conference in Chandigarh. He said in Group C and D posts, an age relaxation of three years will also be given. "However, for the first batch of Agniveers, this age relaxation will be five years," Saini added.

In direct recruitment for Group C civil posts, there will be a five per cent horizontal reservation for Agniveers, the Chief Minister said.



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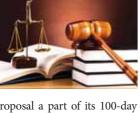
Law Ministry advocates sunset clause in key Bills

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

The Ministry of Law and Justice has pitched for the incorporation of a "sunset" clause or automatic repeal provision in certain type of bills to de-clutter statute books and has put it in its 100-day agenda.

The sunset clause applies primarily to laws of temporary nature or those dealing with dynamic situations. Once their utility ends, they stand removed from the statute books. Sunset clauses have been widely used in the US, the UK and Germany for more than 20 years now.

The legislative department in the Ministry has made "sunset clause" in new legislative



proposal a part of its 100-day agenda, saying steps will be taken in this regard in consultation with concerned ministries. Ahead of the Lok elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had directed all Union Ministries and departments to draw up a 100-day agenda for the next Government.

Former Union Law Secretary P K Malhotra explained that departments concerned. As whenever the legislature and when the proposals in this

 want to restrict the life of a legislation being passed by it, it may as a matter of policy provide a sunset clause providing that after a lapse of a certain period — five or 10 years depending on the requirement — the law will come to an end. The legislature can pass a fresh law giving the statute, which has become inoperative due to the sunset clause, a fresh lease of life,

Parliament or State legislature

Malhotra said According to the legislative department, it seeks to incorporate sunset clause or automatic repealing clause in

new legislative proposal in

administrative Ministries and

with

clause.

consultation

behalf are received by it, necessary action will be taken up, it noted.

"This is a long-pending demand. This practice is prevalent in some other countries also. I think there are many legislations where this kind of clause can be put so that Parliament or State legislature is also vigilant that with the passage of time, if a legislation needs to continue, then they will give it a fresh look. "And if they do not want to continue, then on the day provided in the law, it will automatically come to an end," Malhotra explained. In the recent past, some commissions set up to look into legal reforms have also pressed or such a

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Tehri DM orders prompt completion of Kanwad Yatra arrangements

PNS NEW TEHRI

With the Kanwad Yatra drawing near, the Tehri district magistrate Mayur Dixit directed while chairing a highlevel meeting on Wednesday a string of measures to facilitate a peaceful and safe Yatra. This vear, the Yatra is commencing on July 22 and will end on August 19.

Dixit later said he had ordered the officers concerned to make all essential preparations by drawing on their past experiences to ensure that the barefoot religious journey remains smooth and safe even during those days when the number peaks.

He instructed the departmental nodal officers to provide daily updates to the subdivisional magistrates (SDM) overseeing the Kawad Yatra in Narendra Nagar to guarantee seamless operations. He stressed on perfect coordination among the district administration, departments and police for a hassle-free Yatra. The SDM is also mandated to share all information to be received with all the sector and zonal officials.

The DM requested the block education officers to consider declaring a holiday in the schools under them when the number of devotees peaks in

PNS DEHRADUN

low-up maintenance.

Several prominent individuals based in Dehradun have

stressed the importance of

maintaining the saplings plant-ed during the Harela celebra-

tion instead of the festival

being reduced to acts of sym-

bolic tree plantation sans fol-

Every year, the Harela is

celebrated throughout the State

with ministers and govern-

large-scale tree plantation activ-

But, as the eminent citizens

argue, the focus is merely on

commemorative planting and

not on seeing to it that the

saplings planted flourish into

full-grown trees by taking lit-

tle care in the form of installing

tree guards and watering the



schoolgirls.

Prioritise maintenance of

plants over plantation on

The Irrigation department has been asked to assign personnel to the ghats and install security chains and signages there while the electricity department has been asked to conduct a joint inspection with the executive officer of the Nagar Palika to stop incidence of short circuits. This aside, the drinking water department has been instructed to make proper arrangements to ensure uninterrupted water supply in their respective areas, keeping in mind the safety of the parking areas and toilets.

Harela, say prominent citizens

The founder of Maiti

Andoldan and prominent envi-

ronmentalist Kalyan Singh said

that he is baffled by the plum-

meting number of trees despite

huge tree plantation drives

being launched by the high and mighty aside from institutions,

clubs and individuals to mark

the Harela festival. "So, the per-

tinent question is: what is hap-

pening to the saplings planted? The answer is: most of such

The executive officer of Muni Ki Reti municipality has been directed to conduct area cleaning works in two shifts aside from deploying additional sanitation staffers and setting sound and lighting systems. Besides, the Animal Husbandry department has been instructed to collaborate with Muni Ki Reti civic body to relocate the stray cattle in Kanji House or a gaushala.

Dixit also conducted an onsite inspection of the Kanwad

play them for the people to see

what has happened to the com-

memorative saplings-whether they are alive or have withered,"

Speaking of this matter, a

senior member of the Citizens

For Green Doon (CFGD) Ira

Chauhan said that there was

less awareness in the past

among the people and the gov-

ernment regarding the importance of trees. "The recent

searing heat spell in Doon has

made the previously indifferent

people to sit up and think of the

significance of trees," she said.

She further pointed out that

every year, commemorative

tree plantation campaigns are

carried out by ministers on the

day of Harela festival to be fol-

lowed by the mission sinking

into oblivion. "What happens

is that a day after the festival,

people forget that it is their duty

to ensure that these saplings-

planted with great pomp and

show- grow up into trees. They

must be protected by putting

up guards; they must be

watered; they must be inspect-

ed regularly by those who planted them. Things are gen-

erally restricted to paying lip

service to tree plantations on

the Harela day and conve-

niently forgetting it the fol-

lowing day. Who will care to

take pains to help them survive

and grow?" she lamented.

arrangements. During this visit he emphasised on the completion of the sewerage line construction by the Irrigation department at Nagar Palika Chowk. He also ordered immediate repair of potholes near Omkarananda Ghat, removal of tents in front of the shops and relocation of rickshaws.

Apart from this, he ordered installation of view-cutters on Ram Jhula bridge and signs prohibiting mobile phone usage and entry of stray ani-

to hawkers in Doon soon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

 ${
m F}$ ollowing the direction of the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, the directorate of urban development has written to all the municipal commissioners and officials concerned to collect details of hawkers and cart vendors before issuing identity cards

Informing this, the urban development director Nitin Singh Bhadauria stated that in accordance with the CM's directives, they have written to all the municipal commissioners and executive officers on Wednesday. "In these letters, we directed the officials to collect details of the urban hawkers working he said.

in their areas and provide them with identity cards to be displayed on their carts,'

Commenting on the details to be provided for making the hawker identity cards, he said that the identity cards should include the hawker's code, name, address, photo, name of a family member, category (fixed or movable), hawking area and the permit's validity. "It has been directed to the officials that all the city hawkers must be issued identity cards and on receiving the identity cards, these must be displayed on their carts,"

Mahant Indiresh Hospital gears up to treat dengue patients

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

onsidering the possibility of an increase in the number of Dengue patients, the administration of Shri Mahant Indiresh Hospital appointed Dr Jaskaran Bazad as the dengue nodal officer of the hospital on Wednesday. Besides this, 125 beds have also been reserved for the dengue patients, the chief medical superintendent of the hospital Dr Prerak Mittal said. He informed

that the hospital has made all arrangements to tackle dengue cases. Both ELISA and Rapid tests are also available for dengue testing in the hospital.

The hospital has also directed the emergency ward and the blood banks to stay on high alert in case the city experiences dengue in near future, the CMS

Identity cards to be issued | Natural herb 'Chhoti Kateli' prevents Tuberculosis effectively: Acharya **Balkrishna**

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

While addressing a programme here on Acharya Balkrishna said that a recent study conducted at Patanjali has highlighted the potential of Solanum virginianum Extract (SVE) or 'Čhhoti Kateli' as anti-tubercular therapy. "This research is part of an initiative aimed at developing herbal therapies that can either stand alone or complement existing anti-TB drugs with defined mechanisms of action and herb-drug synergism," he said. He further said that that this Patanjali research has been published in the renowned peer-reviewed Frontiers in Microbiology', adding that this groundbreaking research has laid the foundation for future studies on the anti-mycobacterial properties of Chhoti Kateli extract, offering new hope in combating tuberculosis. Invoking the WHO, he said that over one crore people had been affected across the world in 2022 by this deadly disease. "Despite being a preventable and curable disease, many people die from TB each year, making it the world's one of the top infec-

tious killers," he said. "Worryingly, the current

treatment modalities include the limited bio availability of anti-tubercular drugs and the propensity of the bacteria to develop single or multi-drug resistant. Besides, the long treatment period of anti-tubercular drugs induces drug-associated hepatotoxicity. All this makes it apparent that there is a desperate need for new TB drugs or adjunct therapy that makes the existing line of treatment more effective," he said and added that as per the current study, an investigation of Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb) showed that the bacteria when treated with SVE exhibited reduced growth and viability, indicating the extract's anti-tubercular effects.

Reiterating Patanjali's commitment to spreading the knowledge and science of Ayurveda globally to liberate people from curable and incurable diseases, he said that all the scientists and employees at Patanjali are driven by the goal of reviving the golden era of Ayurveda and ensuring that India's ancient heritage resonates worldwide.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIED **PUBLIC NOTICE**

I Bhajani Kaur my son, army no 2516746P L/NK Harpreet Singh Unit 3 Punjab C/o 56 APO, my name Bhajani Kaur has been wrongly entered in my son military recorded.correct name is. Bhajani Kour. it should be updated

My son Akshansh Dobhal who is a student of Carmel School, Chamba(UT-086) and is studying in class 11th, his father's name is Misspelled as Shri Shailendra Dobhal in his ICSE result unique ID 8281769 while his father's name is Shailendra Dutt Dobhal. Let it be considered true and correct for all future purposes.

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Poor sexual hygiene & ignorance causing cervical cancer in women

MANSI BHAMBRI ■ DEHRADUN

Several factors including an that cervical cancer is often sexual hygiene and lack of caused by factors awareness contribute to the prevalence of cervical cancer among women, doctors said. They have noted that the risk of developing cervical cancer is becoming more common among women aged 30 to 40 years and those aged 60 years and above. To reduce the likelihood of cervical cancer in older age groups, which typically occurs in the late 60s, doctors emphasised the significant role that sexual behaviour and hygiene habits play.

The head of the department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital, Dr Chitra Joshi said that the prevalence of cervical cancer among women is increasing. However, before making any claims about it, raising awareness about cervical cancer among women and girls is crucial. She said

caused by factors including infections, particularly the human papillomavirus (HPV), poor sexual hygiene, lack of awareness about sexual behaviour and engaging in multiple sexual part-

nerships. She further said that cervical cancer is more common among lower-income groups who may not have sufficient knowledge or resources to maintain sexual hygiene. Stressing the importance of early detection, she highlighted symptoms like irregular bleeding apart of the menstruation cycle, lower abdominal pain, backache, abnormal discharge and foul odour during discharge. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should seek medical advice promptly, she said.

CERVICAL CANCER AWARENESS "Preventing cervical cancer

> behavior, maintaining sexual hygiene, remaining in committed relationships and seeking immediate medical attention for any infections," said She further emphasised that all women undergo regular

Sanjay emphasised that multiple births and an increased incidence of infections are crucial factors contributing to the higher risk of cervical cancer among women. Common symptoms of cervical cancer include white discharge, irregular

Further, a gynae-cologist Dr Sujata

that women over the age of 60 are more susceptible to this ailment. To prevent this, parents ensure that they should take their daughters to the hospital to inject the cervical cancer vaccine when they are in class IX or XII. In addition, practicing good sexual hygiene and seeking proper treatment can help prevent the progression of cervical cancer, she added.

bleeding, spotting and lower abdominal pain. She noted includes improving sexual

screenings with a gynaecologist to prevent cervical cancer. Being aware of these factors can also aid in preventing the disease, she said.

PNS DEHRADUN

of Missouri, the University

of Tennessee, Mahindra

University, SRM University

and GITAM Deemed

Anganwadi workers raise concerns over online attendance system

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Anganwadi workers have raised concerns about the mandatory online attendance system impacting their salaries. The president of the Anganwadi Workers Association Rekha Negi informed that in 2018, the State government distributed smartphones to Anganwadi workers for updating monthly data. Negi said that while about 20,000 smartphones were provided for this purpose, the regular updation of attendance was not obligatory back then.

Negi further added that that over time, smartphones belonging to numerous State Anganwadi workers have become damaged and are not functioning properly. Additionally, the State government has recently mandated that Anganwadi workers must now regularly mark their attendance online using smartphones. She emphasised that many of these workers hail from mountainous regions where network connectivity is a major issue. Further, a significant portion of them are over 50 years old and lack proficiency in handling smartthat due to insufficient understanding of smartphones and network issues, many Anganwadi workers struggle to mark their attendance on time, resulting in potential deductions from their salaries. She further emphasised the importance of the hard copy requirement for attendance instead of utilising the online method for submitting attendance. She expressed concern that the government is exploiting Anganwadi workers. Negi further highlighted the inadequate amount provided by the Women Empowerment and Child Development (WECD) department for internet recharge, stating that the allocated Rs 200 for six months per worker is insufficient as internet recharge costs are rising. She emphasised the difficulty of marking attendance online daily due to this limitation and suggested that the government request updates on

UPES, a multidisciplinary university in Dehradun, has appointed Professor Vijaysekhar Chellaboina as the new dean of the UPES School of Computer Science. Professor Chellaboina is also an adjunct professor at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras. Before joining UPES, he was associated with a string the UPES spokesperson, of universities- University

Provision of Electronic Interlocking in place of Mechanica

Signaling at QSR station in HW-DDN section of Moradaba

UPES appoints Vijaysekhar

School of Computer Science

Chellaboina as dean of

Chellaboina with 25 years of experience across disciplines will oversee the academic and administrative functions of the

University. According to NORTHERN RAILWAY Azadi _{Ka} **TENDER NOTICE** Sr. Divisional Signal and Telecom enginee loradabad for and on behalf of President of India invites Open tenders through E Tendering system for the following works Tender No. & Description of work Cost Rs. Tender submission of tender Rs. form Rs. and opening of tender SNT-Sig-QSR-EI-Umbrella

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Madarsa under Waqf Board's guidance PNS ■ DEHRADUN ple sans discrimination on heritage should be incor-

they are not taken care of," he

He stressed that the govern-

ment should prioritise main-

tenance over formality during

plantation programmes. "We

may make it a rule that those

who plant saplings during

Harela this year must take self-

ies with the plants on the fes-

tival day the next year and dis-

Tree plantation conducted at Modern

ment officials participating in saplings wither away because

A tree plantation programme was conducted at the Modern Madarsa to mark Harela here on Wednesday under the guidance of Waqf Board chairman Shadab Shams. Many officers present at the event took part in the tree plan-

Speaking on the occasion, Rajya Sabha MP Naresh Bansal said he was happy to see a Modern Madarsa. He also highlighted the achievements of the Narendra Modi government in myriad fields, mentioning in particular tection of women's dignity

religious lines and stressed on the need to eradicate social evils from the societal

The mayor Sunil Uniyal Gama while focusing on the importance of tree plantation lauded the initiative of Shadab Shams.

The vice-chairman of higher education up-gradation committee Devendra Bhasin emphasised the continuation of the 'Ek Pedh Maa Ke Naam' campaign. He further said that proporated in modern educa-

Commenting on the education system, the chairperson of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) Geeta Khanna said that although she has noted improvements in govern-ment schools, further efforts should be made to enhance the quality of education. She stressed on the students becoming inquisitive and argumentative. Inculcating an ability in the students to ask questions is

centre activities at the end of each month instead. Negi warned that if the govern-

ment fails to address their

concerns, they will resort to

the distribution of free and environment besides an important part of edu-foodgrains to 80 crore peo- preservation of cultural cation, she added. staging a protest on the phones. Negi also pointed out Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication for binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of loas, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements



15,000 govt jobs given to youth in last 3 years: CM Dhami

PNS DEHRADUN

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has said that jobs to more than 15,000 youths were provided in the last three years in different departments of the State government. He was addressing a programme at his residence on Wednesday in which appointment letters were handed over to 212 candidates selected from the government polytechnic institutes of the State. The programme was organised by the technical education depart-

Congratulating the young-sters who got appointment letters, the CM said that their hard work and dedication has been rewarded. He expressed hope that all the candidates will work with dedication to discharge the duties assigned to them. The CM said that the State government is striving to ensure that the youth get job opportunities in every sector. He said that the private sector is also playing a key role in generating employment in the State. The private industrial units are strong pillars of the economic development of the State. Dhami averred that Uttarakhand has no dearth of talent and the State government is working to give right direction and opportunities to the talented youngsters.

Dhami said that creating employment opportunities is



Uttarakhand. He claimed that many historic works in the fields of technology, employ-ment and skill development have occurred in the last ten years under the leadership of rime Minister Narendra Modi. The CM said that the youth have got opportunities to move forward in all sectors and under the leadership of PM Modi, priority has been accorded to innovation and technol-

A new industrial revolution has started in the country by the schemes such as Start-up key for attaining the targets of Viksit Bharat and Viksit CM said that the State govern-India, and Make in India. The

ment has set up an online training and placement centre for the students of technical education. He said that the State government has made the recruitment process transparent and the examinations and appointments are taking place within the stipulated time peri-

The CM further said that the transparency in recruitment examinations has increased the faith of youth in the system. This transparency is possible only when both intent and plan are clear, he said. He said that Uttarakhand has got first position in achieving the targets of sustainable develop-ment goals (SDG) released by the NITI Ayog.

Technical education minister Subodh Uniyal said that special emphasis is being given on imparting quality education in the field of technical education. He claimed that 2303 out of 3500 students in the final year of the polytechnic insti-

The Rajya Sabha MP Kalpana Saini, chairperson of Gau Sewa Ayog Rajendra Anthwal, additional secretary Swati Bhadauria and others attended the programme.

tutes have got employment.

Education department | Municipal commissioners suspends BEO of Khanpur in Haridwar

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Taking stern note of the accepting a bribe of Rs case in which the block 10,000 on Friday. He said education officer (BEO) of Khanpur in Haridwar was caught red handed while pension period he will accepting a bribe from a remain attached with the teacher, the education chief education officer department has suspended the officer. The action against the BEO was taken on the orders of the education minister Dhan Singh Rawat.

on one hand the State gov- tant teacher of Upper ernment is doing every pos- Primary School (UPS) sible effort to strengthen Ranakot, Suresh Kumar the education system and Nautiyal in the Kot block. some employees of the In the video the teacher department are bent on appeared drunk. Rawat defaming the department. said that both cases will be He said that BEO of investigated by the depart-Khanpur, Ayazuddin was ment and stern action will caught red handed by a be taken against the culvigilance team while prits.

10,000 on Friday. He said that the BEO has been suspended and during the suschief education officer (CEO) office in Haridwar.

The minister added that taking cognizance of a viral video; he has asked the district education officer (DEO) primary of the Pauri The minister said that district to suspend an assis-

and executive officers to make daily visits for dengue prevention

PNS DEHRADUN

n view of the risk of vector borne diseases like malaria and dengue during monsoon season, the director of the Urban Development Directorate (UDD) Nitin Singh Bhadauria instructed all the municipal commissioners and executive officers to visit their respective municipal bodies twice a day and send the report to the directorate daily. These daily visits are expected to ensure all works are being done appropriately under the respective municipal body. Bhadauria said that these instructions were issued as per the orders of the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami who is very serious about cleanliness and prevention of diseases

like dengue-malaria during the monsoon season. Bhadauria has also issued a letter to all municipal commissioners and executive officers to take effective measures against the spread of dengue and malaria and regularly monitor work being done in their respective areas.

They were also instructed to ensure no water logging on roads during monsoon while ensuring cleanliness and prevention dengue, malaria and other diseases. Bhadauria directed the officials concerned to take all possible measures to minimise the risk of waterlogging and prevent the breeding of dengue mosquitoes.

Congress objects to Ajay's comment on Avimukteshwaranand

Taking strong exception to the statement of the chairman of the Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) Ajendra Ajay in which he had referred to the Shankaracharya Avimukteshwaranand as an agent of Congress party, the Uttarakhand Congress has said that Ajay has hurt the sentiments of crores of followers of the Shankaracharya.

The chief spokesperson of State Congress Garima Dasauni said that Ajay's comment in which he has questioned the status of Avimukteshwaranand as Shankaracharya is unfortunate, deplorable and intolerable. She said that the Shankaracharya is touring the country for protecting the cow and propagating Hinduism and in the recent marriage of Mukesh Ambani, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sought his blessing by touching his feet. Dasauni said that Ajay

has stoked controversies ever since he became the chairman of the BKTC. She said that his role in seeking donation from QR code, master plan of Badri Kedar and rights of Teerth Purohits has always been under scanner. Dasauni added that Ajay's comment referring Shankaracharya as an agent of Congress party shows his mental level. "Ajay should understand that Avimukteshwarnand is one among the four Shankaracharyas and he is a respected Shankaracharya of the Jyotish peeth. He is not a self professed Shankaracharya of RSS or any ancillary organisations of BJP," she said.

Dasauni added that the BJP should clear its stand on the statement of Ajay.

She appealed to the Teerth Purohits, Shankaracharyas and religious leaders to get united to teach such elements a lesson insult Shankaracharya.

Congress Kedarnath Bachao Yatra politically motivated: Bhatt

PNS DEHRADUN

Terming the proposed Kedarnath Bachao Yatra of Uttarakhand Congress as politically motivated, the president of State unit of BJP Mahendra Bhatt has said that the Congress party is spreading lies and confusion in the public. He said that no one has the courage to undermine the revered Dhams. Bhatt said that Yatra of the Congress is part of the conspiracy of the Congress party to spread confusion in order to get political mileage in the upcoming by-election of the Kedarnath assembly. He said that the people of the State and Kedar valley are aware of the anti- Sanatan face of the Congress party and will snatch their mask of Hindutva soon. Bhatt said that Congress is unable to digest the success of the Char Dham Yatra and increasing prosperity of the party on the issue.

local shopkeepers so it is planning to disrupt the

He said that the trust constructing the Kedarnath temple in Buradi have decided to the change the name of the temple and on the assurance of chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, the Teerth Purohits have suspended their agitation but the Congress party is continuing to engage in politics on the issue.

Bhatt added that the only objective of the proposed Yatra of Congress is to influence the by-election and it is very unfortunate that the party is trying to make the Dham of Lord Shiva as an election issue.

He claimed that the people will expose the hypocrisy of the Congress

AICC'S fact -finding committee to discuss Cong debacle in LS polls

PNS DEHRADUN

The two member fact finding committee Haridwar constituency will be on July 20. India Congress Committee (AICC) to analyse the defeat of Congress party in all the five Lok Sabha seats of Uttarakhand will arrive in Dehradun on Thursday. The members of the committee, senior leaders PL Poonia and Rajini Patil will hold deliberations with the Congress leaders and officials of the State on July 18, 19 and 20.

The State vice president (organization) Mathura Dutt Joshi said that the members of the fact finding committee will hold Lok Sabha wise review meetings with the party leaders and workers.

He said that on July 18, Pithoragarh parliamentary constituency in the morning session while the review of Nainital parliamentary constituency will be held in afternoon ses-

the Garhwal and Tehri Lok the party president. Sabha will be held on July

The members of the fact finding committee will meet with former MPs, MP candidates, MLAs and former MLAs in the review sessions. They will also hold discussions and take feedback from the members of AICC, PCC, district and block committees during the visit.

Joshi added that after meeting with senior party leaders on July 20, the committee will hold a meeting with the presidents of frontal organizations, departments and

In Uttarakhand the Congress party faced a the committee will hold a third consecutive defeat in the recent Lok Sabha elections. The Congress party has lost all the five seats in the State in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014, 2019 and 2024. After holding discussions with senior leaders and various functionaries the commit-Ioshi said that review of tee will submit its report to

Police arrests crash barrier thieves in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

 $P^{\text{olice arrested two men on}}_{\text{charges of stealing parts of}}$ crash barriers installed on about three kilometres stretch on Sahastradhara Road in Dehradun. The police also recovered two pieces of iron channels, 78 nuts, 65 washers, bolts and other items from the possession of the both accused worth about Rs 25,0000, the Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh. He said that the additional assistant engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD) Sudarshan Singh registered a complaint at Rajpur police station on Monday that some unknown persons damaged the crash barriers installed on the roadside on a stretch of about three kilometres from Krishali

said that the police team checked 162 CCTV cameras at the crime scene and its surroundings to identify the culprits. The team also conducted the physical verification of about 19 accused and gathered information about the current status of those accused who were previously jailed on charges of theft. During checking late on Tuesday, the police arrested the two accused Shatrughan Mehta (52) and Pawan Kumar (19) near a barrier on Sahastradhara Road, Singh said. He informed that according to the accused, they stole all parts of the crash barriers installed on the stretch of the Sahastradhara road within the past eight to 10 days. They told the police that no street



Chowk to Sahastradhara Road. The thieves stole the parts of the crash barriers making their installation useless on roadside areas. Considering this, the police registered a complaint against unknown accused under relevant sections and started investigation. Singh

lights on that route and negligent movement of people at night made it easier for them to steal the parts of crash barriers. They used to steal parts in small amounts every day to avoid any suspicion on them. They will be soon presented in court, the SSP added.

Resentment brewing in Uttarakhand on exploitation of devotion & religious sentiments

PURNIMA BISHT ■ DEHRADUN

 $The proposed construction \\ of the Kedarnath temple at \\ Buradi in Delhi and the alleged \\ ter after local villagers \\ expressed their anger over the \\ encroachment. The Teerth$ illegal construction of a shrine in the Sunderdhunga Glacier in Bageshwar district highlight a troubling trend of exploiting the people of Uttarakhand under the guise of religious activities. These actions not only threaten the environmental sanctity of Uttarakhand but also undermine the deeprooted spiritual and cultural values held by the locals since ages. Both instances reveal a broader pattern of disregarding the authentic religious and cultural significance of Uttarakhand, taking advantage of its people's devotion and faith for personal or com-mercial gain. This was stated by locals, Teerth Purohits and stakeholders of Char Dham temples in Uttarakhand. A self-proclaimed godman Baba Yogi Chaitanya Akash, alleged-ly built an unauthorised temple at a height of 16,500 feet near Devi Kund on Bageshwar's Sunderdhunga glacier. According to the authorities, he claimed that the goddess asked him to build that temple and the villagers possibly helped him to build it. The district administration formed a joint team consisting of officers from the departments of Revenue, Forest and Police to investigate the mat-

Purohits said that nobody should be allowed to build or replicate temples anywhere just for personal or financial gains and the government should act strictly on such issues. The general secretary of Uttarakhand Char Dham Teerth Purohit Mahapanchayat Brijesh Sati said that constructing Kedarnath Dham and associating it with the Char Dham temples goes against the traditional and religious values of Sanatana Dharma. The unique sanctity and cultural significance of the original Kedarnath temple are rooted in its specific location and historical context, which cannot be authentically reproduced elsewhere. He said,

'There are innumerable names of Lord Shiva under which temples can be built. The Shri Kedarnath Dham Delhi Trust that has proposed the construction of Kedarnath temple in Delhi can do the same. Kedarnath is not just the name but holds a unique sanctity that cannot not be created anywhere else." Another member of Uttarakhand Char Dham Teerth Purohit Mahapanchayat, Rajnikant Semwal also drew a powerful

parallel of construction of

Kedarnath temple in Delhi to

the ancient tale of Ravana attempting to bring Mount Kailash to Lanka. He said, "Just as Ravana's endeavor was deemed wrong and ultimately failed, building another Kedarnath temple outside its original and sacred location is similarly inappropriate. People should understand that the sanctity and uniqueness of the original Kedarnath temple are intrinsically tied to its specific location and cannot be authentically replicated elsewhere." He further said, "They are saying that the new Kedarnath temple will remain

open throughout the year unlike in Uttarakhand. The

Kedarnath temple here

remains closed for six months

during winter because it is

believed that other deities offer prayers to lord Kedarnath during this period. This has been a religious tradition for hundreds of years. One cannot construct another temple just because the original one is not functioning as per their wish."

Former Dharmadhikari of Badrinath Dham, Uniyal Bhuwan Chandra also questioned the construction of the new Kedarnath temple. He said, "Kedarnath is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas which even Pandavas visited in their time. While people might replicate the structure of Kedarnath, can they truly replicate the majestic Himalayas in Delhi, or the sacred Gaurikund? Can they recreate the rich religious his-

nificance of Kedarnath? heard that the Shri Kedarnath Dham Delhi Trust is even offering lifetime memberships for the new temple. I heard people seeking donations in the name of the new Kedarnath temple. Such things suggest that this project might be driven more by personal gain than by genuine religious devotion. This raises concerns that some individuals are exploiting the deep-seated religious sentiments of devo-

tory and spiritual sig-

tees for their own benefit." Some Teerth Purohits also quipped that people have already migrated from the mountains of Uttarakhand and now it seems that the government also wants to relocate lord Kedarnath to Delhi. Sati also said that all Purohits suspended agitation after the assurance of chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami. However, if the name and picture of Kedarnath will be used for the temple proposed in Delhi, all will resume agitation. 'We will also demand the government to ensure outsiders cannot construct temples which are sacred and cultural heritage of Uttarakhand," he

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Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interes Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited(PCHFL) under Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Asset: And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Deman Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the mounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to PCHFL, within 60 days from the publication o this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to PCHFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Sr. No.		Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date	Description of secured asset (immovable property)
1.	(LC No. 28600000116 of Haridwar Branch) Mandeep Singh (Borrower) Sharda Devi (Co Borrower 1)	(Ten lakh Fifty Five Thousand	A Plot No.3 Block C Khatoni Khata No.578 Khasra No.1371 Situated At Nehru Colony Vill Salempur Mehdood li Parga Roorkee Haridwar Uttaranchal:- 247666
2.	(LC No. HLSA00000F23 of Haridwar Branch) Praveen Kashyap (Borrower) Urmeela Devi (Co Borrower 1)	25-06-2024/ Rs.16,48,044/- (Sixteen lakh Forty Eight Thousand Forty Four Rupees) NPA (04-06-2024)	Khasra No. 61 Village Laksar Pargana Manglour Haridwar Khasra No. 61 Laksar Haridwar Pargana-Lakshar Haridwar:- 247663
3.	(LC No. BLSA0000809A of Dehradun Branch) Kamaleshvar Painyuly (Borrower) Sangeeta Devi (Co Borrower 1)	25-06-2024/ Rs. 6,54,839/- (Six lakh Fifty Four Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty Nine Rupees) NPA (04-06-2024)	Khatan Khatauni No. 303 (Fasli year 1429 to 1434) Kharsa No. 2 Min, Garhimaichak Gali No 26, Pargana Parwadoon, Tehsil Rishekesh, Distt. Dehradun 249204
4.	(LC No. 19100041144 of Chandigarh - Madhya Margh Branch) Madhu Gupta (Co-Borrower) (W/o and Legal Heir of Borrower late Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Gupta), Raghav Gupta (S/o and Legal Heir of Borrower late Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Gupta), Ayushman Gupta (S/o Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Gupta Minor though his natural guardian/ real mother Mrs. Madhu Gupta and Legal Heir of late Co-Borrower Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Gupta)	25-06-2024/ Rs.6,47,73,012/- (Six Crore Forty Seven lakh Seventy Three Thousand Twelve Rupees) NPA (10-12-2018)	Khasra Number 593, 594, 595, H No. 9/1, Anand Vihar, Jakhan Rajpur Road Dehradun- 248001.

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the cost: and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of PCHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as

Date: 18-07-2024 Sd/- (Authorised Officer) lace: Uttaranchal **Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited**

RPF rescues 84,119 kids at risk of falling into wrong hands

PNS NEW DELHI

The RPF has during last seven years rescued 84,119 children, who were at risk in stations and trains, preventing them from falling into wrong hands, a press statement from the Railway Ministry said.

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) has over the past seven years been at the forefront of an operation named "Nanhe" Faristey" – a mission dedicated to rescuing children in need of care and protection across various Indian Railway Zones, according to the Ministry. "During last seven years (2018-May 2024), the RPF has rescued 84,119 children who were at risk in stations and trains, preventing them from falling into harm's way," the Ministry

"Nanhe Farishtey is more than just an operation; it is a lifeline for thousands of children who find themselves in precarious

The data from 2018 to 2024 illustrates a story of unwavering dedication, adaptability,

guarding the most vulnerable members of society," it added. Giving year wise data, the Ministry said the year 2018 marked a significant start for "Operation Nanhe Farishtey" and in this year, the RPF rescued a total of 17,112 children, including both boys and girls. "Out of 17,112 children rescued, 13,187 were identified as runaway children, an alarming number of 2105 were found to be missing, 1091 children as left behind, 400 as destitute, 87 as kidnapped, 78 as mentally challenged and 131 as street chil-

This year 2018 set a strong foundation for the operation, highlighting the urgent need such an initiative," the Ministry said. "During 2019, the RPF's efforts continued to bear fruit, with a total of 15,932 children, including both boys and girls were rescued.

Out of 15,932 children rescued, 12,708 as runaway children, 1454 as missing, 1036 children as left behind, 350 as destitute, 56 as kidnapped, 123 as mentally challenged and 171 as

street children. The consistent numbers showcased the persistent issue of children run-

ning away and needing protection," it added. According to the Ministry, the year 2020 was challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted normal life and significantly impacted the

Despite these challenges, the RPF managed to rescue 5,011 children, it added. "During 2021, the RPF saw resurgence in their rescue operations, saving 11,907 children. This year saw a notable increase in the number of children found and protected, with 9601 children identified as runaways, 961 as missing, 648 as left behind, 370 as destitute, 78 as kidnapped, 82 as mentally challenged and 123 as street children," the Ministry said. Lauding the RPF, the Ministry stated that during 2022, the

RPF's unwavering commit-

ment was evident as they res-

est in the recorded period. It said, "This year saw a significant number of runaways and missing children being found and given the necessary care and protection.

14,603 children were identified as runaways, 1156 as missing, 1035 as left behind, 384 as destitute, 161 as kidnapped, 86 as mentally challenged and 212 as street children. The efforts were bolstered by increased awareness and more coordi-nated operations across the railway zones."

"During the year 2023, RPF managed to rescue 11,794 chil-

With 8916 children rescued as runaways, 986 as missing, 1055 as left behind, 236 as destitute, 156 as kidnapped, 112 as mentally challenged and 237 children as street children, the RPF continued to play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable children," it added.

Highlighting the persistent issues of child runaways and the dedicated efforts of the RPF to address them, the Ministry maintained that in the first five

already rescued 4,607 children. "With 3430 children rescued as runaways, the early trends suggest a continued commitment to the operation "Nanhe Farishtey" the Ministry said. It added, "Through their efforts, the RPF has not only rescued children but also raised awareness about the plight of runaway and missing children, prompting further action and support from various stake-

The operation continues to evolve, adapting to new challenges and striving to create a safer environment for children across India's vast railway net-

holders.

Informing the initiatives of the Indian Railways, the Ministry said, "Track Child Portal con tains comprehensive details aggrieved children.Indian Railway has

established child helpdesks at over 135 railway stations. When a child is rescued by the Railway Protection Force (RPF), they are handed over to the District Child Welfare Committee which hands over



Indian CAPF, special commando dogs to secure Paris Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

den specially-trained Indian L CAPF and special commando force dogs are in France to provide a counter-terrorist and anti-sabotage security cover to various venues of the Paris Olympics slated to open next week, official sources said on Wednesday.
The ten Indian K9 (canine)

teams will undertake sniffing and patrolling duties at various venues that will hold events for the Paris Olympics.

They have been given special 10-week training for this first-ever kind of collaboration of canine squads between the Indian and the French government, a security officer told PTI.

The teams along with their handlers are drawn from the central armed police forces (CAPFs) like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) force apart from the federal contingency commando force National Security Guard (NSG) and the Assam Rifles. The dogs are from the ferocious-looking Belgian Malinois breed which undertake infantry patrol and anti-sabotage sniffer tasks to detect bombs, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and trouble makers in various internal security theatres of the country like anti-Naxal operations and counter-terrorist operations, he said. A second officer said the handlers of these ten canine teams have undertaken refresher physical training apart from a special capsule of basics of the French language for the Olympics task.The squad includes five-year-old CRPF canine Vast and

They have been chosen for

breeding and training school located on Taralu near Bengaluru, Karnataka, the second officer said. 'The Belgian Malinois breed is

considered to be the most preferred combat dog by security forces across the globe," he said. The Malinois, a litter of an Israeli male Malinois crossed with an American bitch, shot to fame when it was reported that the dogs assisted US Special Forces in sniffing out Osama Bin Laden's hideout in Abbottabad in Pakistan in 2011. The dog, which has a heavy snout and a big head, can detect suspicious human presence and IEDs with precision and it is intelligent enough to communicate these signals through a nod of its head and not by barking which could lead to alerting of the target.

The Indian dog teams will be depleted as yet the require

deployed as per the requirements of the French Police and security agencies and this deployment is part of the security cooperation between the two countries, the first officer said. The handlers are donning their regular combat uniform with a special patch of the Indian flag on their chest and another on the shoulder provided to the security agencies deployed for the mega games event, he said.

According to international media reports, France is deploying around 30,000 police officers each day for the Olympics, which will be held between July 26 and August 11, with a peak of 45,000 for the opening cer-

About 18,000 members of the military are also helping ensure security, including thousands housed in a huge, special camp erected on the edge of Paris, the reports said. India will be represented by 117 athletes at the Olympics apart from 140 support staff and officials.

Childhood obesity may lead to weakened heart, says UCL research

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In the midst of a rapid increase in childhood obesity both in India and globally, researchers from University College London have issued a stark warning: individuals who gain excessive weight from their 20s onwards may face weakened hearts by the time they reach their 60s. The study, published in the

European Heart Journal, underscores that early weight gain has lasting implications on heart health, separate from the effects of later-life obesity. Alun Hughes, Professor of Cardiovascular Physiology and Pharmacology at UCL, emphasised that while the adverse

effects of being overweight on heart health are known, the long-term impact of weight gain across adulthood remains less understood. He said that while it is known

that "being overweight is associated with poorer heart health, we know little about the longterm relationship between being overweight over the adult life course and subsequent

The study holds importance for countries across the globe including in India, given that obesity is one of the major symptoms of diseases like type 2 diabetes, kidney problems, hypertension (high blood pressure), gut issues and even liver diseases. A person is considered obese when their body mass index (BMI, a measure of body fat based on an individual's weight and height) is more than 30. Statistics reveal a concerning trend, with over 1.25 crore children aged 5 to 19 in India now classified as overweight, a significant rise from 40 lakh in 1990.

Hughes noted that the research



aimed "to look at whether being overweight at earlier stages of adult life showed lasting associations with poorer heart health irrespective of people's weight in later life". The study included 1,690 people born in England, Scotland, and Wales in 1946. The participants were examined based

on their body mass index

(BMI), waist-to-hip ratio, and Researchers found that elevated BMI from age 20 onwards led to higher left ventricular mass in individuals in their 60s, indicating poor heart health and increased mortality risk. A five-unit higher BMI at age 43 correlated with a 15 per cent or 27-gram increase in left ven-

tricular mass. They added that the study European people, so it may not apply to the global population, although Professor Hughes

said there is a close link. With alarm bells ringing, particularly for the young, these findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address the obesity epidemic in India, aiming to safeguard future generations from serious cardiovascular health

World over too, the picture is not very encouraging. A recent World Health Organisation (WHO) study reported that over one billion people have been struggling with obesity across the globe.

Compensation for IAF soldier infected with HIV after blood transfusion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An Indian Air Force (IAF) soldier, who contracted AIDS due to transfusion of contaminated blood at a military hospital in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba in 2002, has received Rs 18 lakh and the residual amount from over Rs 1.41 crore awarded to him as compensation has been deposited with the apex court registry, the IAF has informed the Supreme Court.

The apex court, in a judgement delivered on September 26 last year on a plea by the veteran, had directed the IAF to pay him around Rs 1.5 crore as compensation. The former soldier had taken ill during "Operation Parakram", launched in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001, and was admitted to the hospital where he had to be administered one unit of blood

The top court had in April this year dismissed a plea seeking review of its September 2023 judgement in the matter. The veteran's petition alleging con-



tempt of the directions issued by the top court in its 2023 verdict came up for hearing before the bench on Tuesday.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Vikramjit Banerjee said they have filed a compliance affidavit in the matter.

The bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Karol and K V Viswanathan, observed that the amount deposited in the court registry be released to the veteran. An advocate, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in the matter, spoke about the soldier's regular medical check-up and said the bench can consider referring him to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, for it. The bench said since the man resides in Ajmer, a good medical facility can be found in

venienced. It asked the amicus to discuss the issue with the ASG so that it can be sorted out and posted the matter for hearing after

Jaipur to ensure he is not incon-

two weeks. On March 5, the apex court had directed that an amount of Rs 18 lakh towards attendant expenses be paid to the man and the remainder be deposited in the court's registry within two weeks.

The bench had also directed that his disability be considered as 100 per cent for paying him

the disability pension. In its 2023 verdict, the apex court had said, "It is held that the appellant is entitled to compensation, calculated at Rs 1,54,73,000 towards compensation on account of medical negligence of the respondents, who are held liable for the injury suffered by the appellant."

It had said since individual liability cannot be assigned, the respondent organisations (IAF and Indian Army) are held vicariously liable, jointly and

'The amount shall be paid to the appellant within six weeks by the IAF, his employer; it is open to the IAF to seek reimbursement, to the extent of half the sum, from the Indian Army. All arrears related to disability pension too shall be disbursed to the appellant within the said six weeks period," the apex court had said. The top court had passed the verdict on an appeal by the IAF veteran who challenged an order of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) rejecting his claim for compensation.

three-vear-old Denby. this task after stringent tests conducted at the CRPF dog

emony on the Seine river.

Country needs new liberalised approach to political economy: Ramesh

The Congress on Wednesday L claimed that India has been locked into a cycle of low investment since 2014 due to a combination of "erratic policy, rampant cronyism, and the ED/IT/CBI raid raj", and asserted that the country needs a new liberalised approach to political economy.

Ahead of the presentation of the Union Budget next week, Congress General Secretary in charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said the single most important statistic that explains India's inability to grow faster since 2014 is the sluggish investment rate".

"India has been locked into a cycle of low investment since 2014, due to a combination of erratic policy, rampant cronyism, and the ED/IT/CBI raid raj," Ramesh said in a statement. Low investment drags down the medium and long-term GDP growth rates, which in turn drags down wages and consumption growth, he said.

"The biggest component of investment - private domestic



investment - has been in the doldrums since 2014. It was solidly in the 25-30% of GDP range during Dr Manmohan Singh's tenure. Under the self-declared divinity, it has been squarely in the 20-25% of GDP range," Ramesh said. He said gross FDI as a percentage of GDP has also more or less stayed constant since 2014. "This is, however, only part of

the story. Since at least 2016, multinational companies across the world have been looking to divest from China and invest in other developing countries.

"India, with a large and growing labour pool, was at the right place at the right time - but this generational opportunity to garner FDI and become a manufacturing and export-oriented economy has been squandered," Ramesh said. Countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam have walked away with the benefits, he said.

"Sops like corporate tax cuts

a freer society, polity, and economy one that is free from demonetization-like masterstrokes, cronyism, and Raid Raj," Ramesh said, hitting out at the Modi government.'What India needs is not marginal policy tinkering, but a new, liberalised approach to political economy," the Congress leader

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Budget for 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha on

JP Nadda for global regulatory standards

PNS NEW DELHI

Amid recent scrutiny of several drug companies over product issues such as cough syrup, Union Health Minister JP Nadda on Wednesday stressed the critical need for the Central Drugs Standard Örganisation (CDSCO) to draw a roadmap with timelines of adopting global standards in its regulatory functions.

His directives came while reviewing the regulation of drugs, cosmetics and medical devices here where he underscored India's aspiration to reaffirm its status as the 'pharmacy of the world' by aligning its drug regulatory framework with international norms.

Nadda emphasised the necessity for a robust regulatory structure that matches India's extensive pharmaceutical industry and meets global expectations effectively.

He stated that the upscaling needs to be systems-based, focusing on the highest standards of uniformity, technical upgrade and futuristic

For export of drugs and phar-



maceuticals, the system should be designed for proper intervention to maintain the quality of drugs being exported, he emphasised amid the backdrop of a few Indian-made drugs in regions as far afield as North America, Africa and Central Asia were found to be toxic and causing deaths.

Nadda also underscored the importance of transparency in the working of CDSCO. "In order to achieve global standards, our focus needs to be on transparency of procedures at CDSCO and within the drugs and medical devices industry,"

"Both the drugs regulatory body and the industry should work on highest principles of transparency to ensure that the products manufactured and sold by India meet the highest indices of global quality standards," he said.
The Health Minister stated

that it is important for CDSCO to be in continuous dialogue with the drugs' and medical devices' industry to understand their issues and support them to fulfill the quality expectations and standards of CDSCO. "Our focus should be on developing mechanisms that ensure easy of doing business for the drugs industry within the regulatory requirements. For this, CDSCO needs

to be a user-friendly organiza-

tion with state-of-the-art facilities matching global standards," he said.

On the topic of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector in drugs manufacturing and the issues faced by the small scale industries to meet quality standards, Nadda said, "Let us understand the issues faced by MSME sector and support them to strengthen their capacity and quality of products on the one hand, and encourage them to meet the regulatory requirements on the

Nadda was briefed about the mandated activities of CDSCO, its achievements, future plans and various issues and challenges faced by CDSCO according to a statement issued here. He was also updated on the progress of the scheme for strengthening the state drug regulatory system with a budget of Rs 850 crore which was launched in 2016 during his earlier tenure.

Nadda was also apprised of the roles and responsibilities of the central and state drugs regulatory bodies, and some of the challenges faced in align ment between them

Indian Embassy, **OMSC** working to rescue cargo vessel crew

PNS NEW DELHI

Comoros-flagged cargo Avessel that capsized off the Oman coast has 13 Indians seafarers and the Indian embassy in the Gulf nation is in contact with the concerned authorities, official sources said on Wednesday. The vessel, MT Falcon Prestige, transmitted a distress call around 2200 hours on July 14 off the coast of Oman, they said. The merchant vessel has a crew of 16, of which 13 are Indian seafarers, the sources said, adding the vessel seems to have capsized.

"Our embassy in Oman is in constant touch with the Omani authorities. A search and rescue operation for the seafarers, coordinated by the Oman Maritime Security Center (OMSC), is on," one of the sources said. "The Indian Navy has also joined the search and rescue operations," the source

90 per cent drop in water-borne diseases in Andaman Nicobar

PNS NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Dr Jitendra Singh on Wednesday said that after installation of Kavaratti plant in Andaman Nicobar has cut down the incidence of water borne diseases by 90 per cent highlighting the health benefits and impact of provision of potable water.

Administrator Lakshadweep, Daman Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli Praful Patel who had called on Dr Singh to express gratification for initiatives such as installing world's first of its

"Desalination Plant" for drinking water by National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai, said that it has brought huge relief by providing clean drinking water to people of drinking water to people of

the Union Territory.3 'Total nine desalination plants are approved of which seven are operational and one more will be opera-



weeks.

The capacity of each of these LTTD units is around 1 Lakh litre of potable water per day which will be increased to 1.5 lakh litres per day in the coming time," he said.
The LTTD technology uses the naturally available temperature différence in oceans, evaporating the surface water at low pressure and con-

densing the resultant vapour

with deep sea cold water at

12oC, obtained from about

The technology is indigenous, environmentally

friendly and easy to operate. Dr. Singh also informed Patel that two re-mineralization plants are being made operational which will add the essential salts evaporated during the desalination

Other desalination units/plants will also be provided with similar re-mineralization facilities in course of time, he added.

Bihar: Four detained in connection with murder of VIP chief's father

Bihar Police have detained persons for persons questioning in connection with its probe into the murder of Jitan Sahni, father of Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) chief Mukesh Sahni.

A statement issued by Darbhanga Police said, "Analysis of the CCTV footage has revealed that these four persons entered the house of Jitan Sahni around 10.30 pm on July 15 and 10.30 pm on July 15 and stayed there for half an hour." Former state minister Mukesh Sahni's 70-year-old father was found stabbed to death at his home in Darbhanga district on July 16.

"Investigators are analysing call detail records of all the four detained persons, their history and also the purpose of visiting the victim's house on Monday night. Other information about detained persons is also being collected from the villagers," the statement added.

Preliminary investigation and examination of the detained persons have revealed that two of them had previously



borrowed money at interest from the deceased, it said.

"It has also been found that these two persons had been involved in a heated argument with the deceased two days before the latter's murder. It has also been found that these two people had threatened the victim to teach him a lesson following the heated argument," the statement

One of the detained persons is believed to have pledged his motorcycle as collateral for a loan from the victim," it said. The case is being investigated

from all angles, it added. All crucial evidence collected from the spot is being forensically examined, a senior police officer said,

offence. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the district police has been formed to investigate the murder case.

adding investigators are also

trying to recover 'weapon of

'Investigators financial examining transactions between the detained persons and the deceased," the officer said. Jitan Sahni's last rites were

performed on Tuesday. After the incident, many

After the incident, many leaders, including Union minister and chief of Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) Chirag Paswan, former chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and state BJP chief Samrat Choudhary, and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav among others, condemned the murder of Sahni's father. Sahni's father.

Talking to reporters in Patna on Wednesday, Union Minister of State (MoS) for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai, said, "The matter is being investigated by Bihar Police in a highly professional manner. Killers are probably in the police net. This is the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government in Bihar where killers cannot roam freely.

Rai hit back at the RJD-led opposition which alleged that the law and order situation has collapsed in the state. When tĥe RJD was in power,

the CM's residence had turned into the headquarters of all criminal gangs. Now, it's not possible under the Nitish Kumar-led government," he

Fresh arrest in Rajasthan's Jal Jeevan Mission case

Enforcement The Enforcement Directorate has made a fresh arrest in connection with its money laundering investigation into alleged irregularities in the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme being implemented in Rajasthan, officials said on Wednesday. Sanjay Badaya, an alleged middleman, was taken into custody on Tuesday after questioning at the agency office here, they said.

The central government's Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) aims to provide safe and adequate drinking water through household tap connections and is being implemented in Rajasthan by the state's Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department.

This is the fourth arrest in the

The central agency had earlier arrested three people --Mahesh Mittal, proprietor of Shree Ganpati Tubewell Company, Padamchand Jain, proprietor of Shree Shyam Tubewell Company, and Pivush Jain.

The agency's investigation found that Padamchand Jain,



involved in giving bribes to public servants to obtain illegal protection, tenders, getting bills sanctioned and covering up irregularities in works executed by them in respect of various tenders they received from the PHED. The suspects were also involved in the purchase of stolen goods from Haryana for using them in their tenders and had also submitted "fake" work submitted completion letters from IRCON to get PHED contracts, the agency claimed. The ED's money laundering Mittal and others were case stems from an FIR

registered by Rajasthan's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in which Padamchand Jain, Mahesh Mittal, Piyush Jain and others were charged.

Premises in Jaipur and including Dausa, residential and official premises of senior PHE Department officials, former Rajasthan minister Mahesh Joshi and former additional chief secretary Subodh Agarwal, have been searched by the ED in connection with the probe. Assets worth Rs 11.03 crore have been attached in the case so far.

TN Governor calls on Shah, discusses security 'situations' in State

PTI CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi on Wednesday called on Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi and said he had a "very productive meeting" with the central minister on and related security situations in the state.

"Had a very productive meeting with the Hon'ble Home Minister Shri Amit Shah Ji on the prevailing security and related situations in Tamil Nadu and their implications for the peace, progress and safety of the people of the state," Tamil Nadu Raj Bhavan said on social media platform X,

quoting Ravi.
Shah "has amazing insight into the issues affecting our people and immense concern for their wellbeing," the governor further said.

Ravi is camping in the national capital and had earlier met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union ministers Kiren Rijiju, who holds the Parliamentary Affairs portfolio, and Dharmendra Pradhan, who heads the Ministry of

Nagaland BJP appeals for early solution to Naga political issue

PTI ■ KOHIMA

The BJP's Nagaland unit appealed to the Centre and the Naga groups to expedite the process of finalising the Naga political solution for lasting peace and all-round development of the

A resolution in this regard was adopted on Tuesday at the party's extended state executive meeting held in Dimapur in the presence of Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

Supporting an early, inclusive and honourable solution to the decades-old Naga political issue, the state BJP appealed to the Centre and the expedite the process of finalisation so that there can be lasting peace in Nagaland which will positively facilitate the process of all-round development and economic upliftment of the state in the near future".

The Centre inked the Framework Agreement with NSCN-IM in 2015 and also



signed the Agreed Position with the Working Committee of Naga National Political Groups in 2017.

However, with NSCN-IM remaining adamant on its demand for a separate flag and constitution for the Nagas, the final solution could not be arrived at.

resolved to support the demand for appointment of deputy chairpersons in urban local bodies in the state. To strengthen the party at the grassroots level, it resolved to complete the formation of booth-level committees in the state before the next executive meeting in Tuensang district

Prakash Ambedkar to launch yatra over quota issue from July 25

PTI ■ CHHATRAPATI

The Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) will hold the 'Aarakshan Bachao Janyatra' on the reservation issue in parts of Maharashtra from July 25, party chief Prakash Ambedkar said.

Talking to reporters here on Talking to reporters here on

Tuesday, Ambedkar demanded that the Kunbi caste certificates issued without the people applying for it be cancelled and political parties clear their stand on the reservation issue. He also claimed the demand for the implementation of the "sage sovare" (blood relatives) notification amounted to "adulteration" of the quota and courts have given decisions against it earlier. Activist Manoj Jarange has

implementation government's draft notification that recognises Kunbis as "sage soyare" of community Maratha members. He has been demanding that Kunbi certificates be issued to all Marathas, thus making them eligible for quota benefits.



part of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. However, some OBC activists in villages. launched demanding agitation,

scrapping of the draft notification and an assurance that their quota would not be diluted.

"There are two groups in the state in the form of OBCs versus Marathas. The OBC outcome of this issue. A way out is not possible till parties rich Maratha community like the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, NCP (Sharad Pawar) and also BJP (UBT), do not clear their stand," Ambedkar said.

He said the OBC leaders have endorsed the VBA's stand on Kunbi, an agrarian group, is the quota matter and stressed the need to create awareness about the issue among people

The VBA chief said the 'Aarakshan Bachao Janyatra', which will traverse through different villages, will begin on July 25 after his visit to his grandfather Dr B R Ambedkar's memorial 'Chaityabhoomi' in Mumbai and social reformer Jyotiba

'This yatra will head to Kolhapur (on July 26), Sangli, Solapur, Dharashiv, Beed, Latur, Nanded, Yavatmal, Amravati, Akola, Buldhana, Washim, Jalna district. It will culminate in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar on August 7 or 8," he said.

We will create awareness about the demand for

doubling the SC/ST students scholarship, giving the same scholarship to OBC students, promotion in jobs for SC/ST and OBCs. We will also put pressure on the parties which have not taken any stand on the reservation issue through the janyatra," Prakash Ambedkar said.

On the protest by activist Jarange, he said though people had been attending his rallies, it was not clear in which direction the agitation would be headed.

"Jarange has to take a stand on whether he is with the rich Maratha community or the poor Marathas," he said. Prakash Ambedkar claimed

the demand for the implementation of the "sage sovare" notification amounted to "adulteration" of the quota and courts have given decisions against it

"The reservation of Kunbis is intact. The demand of reservation to others through a different way is the disputed issue now. The Kunbi certificates are now given without applications and should be cancelled," he said, adding those who need them should apply for it and obtain

Body of former Sikkim Minister found in West Bengal canal

PTI ■ GANGTOK

The body of former Sikkim Minister RC Poudyal was found in a canal near Siliguri in West Bengal nine days after he went missing, police said on Wednesday.

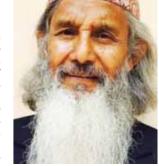
The body of Poudval, 80, was found floating in the Teesta Canal at Fulbari on Tuesday, thev said.

"Prima facie, it is suspected that the body might have been brought down by the Teesta river from upstream. The identification was made through the watch and the clothes he was wearing," a police officer said.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) was constituted to search for the veteran politician after missing on July 7 from his hometown of Chota Singtam in Pakyong district, police said.

"The investigation into the death will continue," the officer said.

Poudyal was the deputy speaker in the first Sikkim assembly and later became the state's forest minister.



He was considered a pivotal figure in the Himalayan state's political landscape during the late '70s and '80s, founding the Rising Sun Party. He was also known for his profound understanding of Sikkim's cultural and social dynamics. "I am deeply saddened by the Shri RC Poudval Ivu. statesman and distinguished senior political leader who had served the Sikkim Government in various capacities, including as a minister, and was the leader of the Jhulke Gham Party," Chief Minister PS Tamang

Gujarat's 'Cooperation among Cooperatives' initiative to be rolled out in all 33 districts

PTI AHMEDABAD

 $A^{\rm fter}_{\rm launching}$ the "Cooperation among Cooperatives" initiative in two districts on a pilot basis, the Gujarat government has decided to implement it across all 33 districts of the state, officials said Wednesday.

The initiative aims to enhance the cooperation among Gujarat's thousands cooperative societies by centralising their bank accounts and deposits in various district and state cooperative banks. initiative was envisioned by Union Cooperation Minister Amit Shah and launched on a pilot basis in Banaskantha and Panchmahal districts of Gujarat, the state government said in a statement.

Gujarat Cooperation Minister Jagdish Vishwakarma said the success of the pilot project has led the government to decide on implementing the initiative across all 33 districts of Gujarat. As part of the pilot project in these two districts, over 4 lakh new accounts were opened by cooperative societies and their active members in the district cooperative banks, resulting in a jump of over Rs 966 crore in the bank deposits, it said.



more than 1,700 micro ATMs were installed at cooperative societies in these two districts, it said.

"The district cooperative banks will be able to extend their services on the village level and ensure that the capital and funds of Gujarat cooperatives' stay within the community and come to the aid of other cooperative societies," Vishwakarma said. "The initiative consolidates the existing bank accounts of cooperatives and their members operating in various commercial banks and brings

them under a centralised

district/state

cooperative societies under centralised resulting in enhanced deposit pool for loans and increased financial liquidity among cooperatives. This helps address the credit

needs of the cooperative societies and ensure that the collective capital cooperatives comes to the dedicated use of other cooperatives,

Vishwakarma said. "In this way, the capital and deposit of one successful cooperative society comes to the use of other societies, benefiting the entire cooperative sector of Gujarat," he said.

cooperative The pilot project was banks," the government said. This helps consolidate the launched between June 2023

to January 2024 in two districts, the government said

in its statement. During the pilot project period, the existing bank accounts held by 1,048 milk societies were consolidated into the district co-operative banks along with the complete transfer of surplus funds into their new bank accounts.

The two districts saw the opening of over 4.7 lakh new savings accounts cooperative banks, enhancing

the existing deposits of these banks by a whopping Rs 966 crore, it said. A total of 3.32 lakh RuPay debit cards were also issued to the societies and their active members, i said.

In order to enhance banking facilities and financial liquidity at village level, a total of 1,736 societies in these districts, including prominent milk societies affiliated with dairy unions, were also equipped with micro-ATMs and affiliated as "Bank Mitra".

To help members access financial services, over 1,631 employees associated with the cooperative societies were given a comprehensive training on including transactions, micro-ATM operations, cash withdrawals, and deposits, it

Tezpur Airport in Assam to be shut for maintenance work

 $\begin{array}{cccc} F_{the} & \text{services will be shut at} \\ F_{the} & \text{Tezpur airport in} \\ Assam & \text{in October for one-} \\ and-half & \text{years} & \text{for} \end{array}$ and-half years for maintenance works, a senior official said on Wednesday. Tezpur Airport Director G Shiva Kumar said passenger flights will be suspended from October 1, 2024, to March 31,

"This is due to the resurfacing works of the runway along with other projects to



improve the facilities at the terminal," he said. The Tezpur Airport is

adjacent to the Tezpur Base of the Indian Air Force, and the commercial and fighter aircraft. The Tezpur Air Force Base

had earlier informed the Tezpur Salonibari Passenger Airport Authority about the maintenance work, for which passenger aircraft services will be temporarily halted. Kumar said that during this time, the authority is considering providing considering helicopter services from Tezpur to Guwahati, but it is yet to be finalised.

SpiceJet flight fly directly from Tezpur to Kolkata daily. In addition, two airlines operate daily flights to Kolkata via Pasighat and Tezpur. The airport is located on the north bank of the

Brahmaputra river and is 12 km from Tezpur town, the capital of Sonitpur district. Established at Salonibari in 1942, the airport terminal can accommodate a total of 400 passengers at a time.

ED questions ex-K'taka Min Nagendra's wife in Valmiki Corporation scam case

PTI BENGALURU

Enforcement The Directorate (ED) on Questioned Wednesday questioned former minister B Nagendra's wife in connection with the Rs 187 crore scam in a stateowned corporation here. The ED sleuths summoned Manjula for interrogation in the alleged financial

alleged irregularities in the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. Nagendra, a Congress MLA, is already in the ED custody. The alleged illegal money transfer scam involving the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki



Development Corporation transfer of Rs 187 crore Ltd came to light after its belonging to the Corporation accounts superintendent, Chandrashekhar P, died by from its bank account, and said that out of the sum, Rs suicide on May 26, leaving 88.62 crore was illegally behind a note. The note moved to various accounts

Hyderabad-based cooperative bank among others. Scheduled Tribes Welfare Minister B Nagendra tendered his resignation on June 6 after allegations were made against him in connection with the scam. The ED, which joined the probe after the Union Bank of India lodged a complaint with the Central Bureau of Investigation, had previously raided Nagendra and Valmiki Corporation Basanagouda Chairman Daddal, who is Raichur Rural Congress MLA.

allegedly belonging to 'well-known' IT companies and a

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PAPER WITH PASSION-

A new lease of life

The Govt reconstitutes NITI Aayog, inducts union ministers and NDA allies to enhance strategic planning

n a significant move to bolster its policy-making prowess, the Indian Government has reconstituted the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog. This reconstitution includes 15 Union Ministers and notable allies from the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), marking a strategic shift in the country's planning and development framework. This underscores the Government's commitment to integrating diverse ministerial insights into the policy-making process. These ministers come from various portfolios, ensuring that a broad spectrum of expertise and perspectives is brought to the table. This comprehensive approach aims to address multifaceted national challenges more effectively. The reconstitution also sees the induction of key NDA allies, signalling a collaborative effort to drive the nation's development agenda. By involving NDA allies, the Government aims to foster a more inclusive and cooperative environment within the Aayog. Among the notable ministers included are Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Home



Minister Amit Shah, and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh. Their presence is anticipated to significantly influence the economic, internal security, and defence policies of the country. The inclusion of ministers from portfolios such as Health, Education, and Rural Development indicates a holistic approach to addressing India's development needs.

This reconstitution is seen as a strategic shift from the traditional Planning Commission model to a more dynamic and inclusive NITI Aayog framework. It reflects the government's intention to leverage the collective wisdom of its senior ministers and allies to drive forward its vision of a 'New India'. The Aayog's recon-

stitution aims to facilitate better coordination between the central and state governments, ensuring that policies are effectively implemented at the grassroots level. One of the primary goals of this reconstitution is to enhance the implementation of policies. The government hopes to streamline the execution of key initiatives and programs. This is expected to result in more efficient policy delivery and improved outcomes on the ground. NITI Aayog was established on January 1, 2015, as a replacement for the Planning Commission. Its primary purpose is to promote cooperative federalism by involving state governments in the policymaking process. However gradually it lost its importance. The Indian government has increasingly favoured a centralised approach, leading to reduced involvement of states in planning and decision-making processes, undermining NITI Aayog's role. It lacks financial powers and direct allocation of funds, limiting its influence on actual policy implementation. Besides, there has been a tendency to prioritize immediate economic and political goals over long-term strategic planning, diminishing NITI Aayog's relevance in sustainable development. As the NITI Aayog embarks on this new phase, there is a sense of optimism about its potential to drive substantial progress. It is anticipated that the Government's latest move will lead to more robust policy frameworks.



Shia mourners participate in the 9th Muharram procession, on boats, at Dal Lake, in Srinaga

Parliament: Duty over disruption



The opposition can leverage parliament debates to engage with their constituencies but they often waste this opportunity by walkouts and protests

t is difficult to understand, especially since parliamentarians, appeared to overlook an essential of their vocation. That is, that the legislature usually does not take much time. The rest of the session is the opportunity for the opposition to demonstrate their talent and commitment through television. The ruling party or parties do not need the legislature except to have bills passed and enacted into law. If there are no laws that need to be passed urgently, the government and ruling party can do without the legislature virtually for an entire year. Of course, there remains the presenting and passing of the Budget, which can be legitimized only by the legislature, particularly the Lok Sabha. What has been stated hitherto

has been well demonstrated by the state assemblies in India. They pass the odd bill once in a while, and the annual budget is the other essential item of business during the year. Most state legislative assemblies meet for three or four days at a time. Otherwise, for the few times they have to statutorily meet, each session is seldom for more than three or four days. However, the members of the legislative assemblies (MLAs) draw their pay and perks for the entire term of the legislative

This applies to Parliament too, although it has the budget, monsoon and winter sessions, which are long enough. In short, to restate, most of the time the legislatures can work for the benefit of the opposition members, who can display their skills, knowledge, familiarity and touch with their constituencies. With the advent of full-time coverage by television channels—Sansad TV being a prominent one—a great advanage has fallen into the hands of the Opposition. This is a boon for them; it is a free and constant medium to, as it were, communicate with their con-

This institution was introduced around the time I was in Parliament. Back then, most Members who spoke made full sloganeering.

use of the television channels by speaking for as long as possible. During the question hour between 11 am and 12 pm, only five or six questions and their answers could be completed, instead of all twenty. The reason was that those who had asked the questions spent as long a time as possible over asking their supplementary question, which was a privilege to the Member(s).

The ruling party/parties have a better opportunity of exposure than opposition parties generally get. Yet, the opposition mindlessly throws away a lot of the session time by walking out, protesting otherwise, compelling the Speaker to adjourn the House for several hours or even the rest of the day. July 2 was another example when the Prime Minister rose to thank the President for her inaugural speech. For well over two hours, groups of opposition members took turns shouting slogans in an attempt to drown the Prime Minister's address to Parliament, or perhaps even to prevent him from speaking. Little do they realize that most television channels were telecasting his speech live, duly cutting out the



THE OPPOSITION **MINDLESSLY THROWS** AWAY A LOT OF THE SESSION TIME BY WALKING OUT, **PROTESTING** OTHERWISE, **COMPELLING** THE SPEAKER TO ADJOURN THE HOUSE FOR SEVERAL **HOURS** OR EVEN OF THE DAY

The only people who could hear the PM's speech being disturbed by slogans were the Members of the Lok Sabha. All that the sloganshouting Members gained was a reputation of being wasters, as members who cost the taxpayer a lot, merely to put in negative effort to try and prevent the Prime Minister from being heard.Each session and day of Parliament cost several crores of rupees. Each Member of Parliament costs several lakh rupees a year to serve the country and its people, and not to prevent Parliament from functioning. There are many better ways of protesting, such as, such as wearing black bends on one's sleeves, sometimes wearing black caps, or sometimes, dressed fully in black. Members can also refuse to take their seats for the entire day, instead, occupying the adjacent aisles for the duration of the session, as a mark of protest, but let the work go on. This would assure all the people, including their constituents that they are spending money on the functioning of Parliament with its thousands of employees con-structively and in the interests of the nation.

British departed from India long ago, and such negative activities have no place in our country anymore. Let it be borne in mind that being elected to Parliament (or the state legislative assemblies) is a national duty more than the privilege it has come to be mistakenly understood. What we have witnessed over the two days of July 2 and 3 portends ill for the institution of democracy, which everyone, from the opposition parties to the media and academia, not to forget their cheerleaders overseas, keeps shouting is "under threat in India". But where is the real threat to democracy coming from? This needs to be clearly understood.No democracy can be threatened because its electorate gives a clear mandate for stable governance for a developed economy and a better future. It is the cavalier fashion in which certain parties—and political families living in a sense of entitlement-treat Parliament and its protocols and rules that are emerging as the real threat to democracy.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

THE EDITOR

Defying the Western pressure, India prioritises national interests



Prime Minister Modi's visit to Moscow highlights significant gains for India on strategic, economic, and diplomatic fronts, despite Western reservations

espite a concerted campaign by the US and Western countries to isolate Russia following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, several nations, including India, have prioritized their national interests. This has allowed President Putin to bolster Russia's economy, with India's \$65 billion worth of crude oil imports playing a crucial role in mitigating the impact of US-imposed sanctions.

India maintains close strategic ties with the United States, yet it has become the second-largest importer of Russian crude oil after China. This alignment with Russia serves as a counterbalance to US influence. In recognition of this support, President Putin awarded Prime Minister Modi the Order of St. Andrew.

The US, as expected, reacted by urging India to ensure that any resolution to the Ukraine conflict respects the UN charter and Ukraine's territorial integrity. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller emphasised the importance of these principles in international engagements with China.

In this context, experts view Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Moscow through multiple lenses, highlighting significant gains for India on strategic, economic, and diplomatic

India's geopolitical strategy significantly revolves around balancing China's rising influence. Strengthening ties with Russia serves as a counterbalance to China's aggressive posturing in the region. The visit underscored mutual interests in ensuring a multipolar world order, acting as a strategic buffer against unilateral actions by any major power, including

A key highlight of Modi's visit was the reinforcement of India-Russia defense ties. Historically, Russia has been

Strategic Gains:

one of India's most reliable defense partners. Discussions around the S-400 missile defense system and potential future collaborations in defense technology were central to the visit, enhancing India's military capabilities and contributing to regional stability.

Western sanctions against Russia have led it to seek stronger ties with non-Western countries, including India. Both India and Russia advocate for a multipolar world order, balancing US influence. Modi's visit reflects India's independent foreign policy, maintaining strong ties with both the US and Russia.

Energy security is a cornerstone of India's economic policy, and Russia plays a critical role with its vast oil and natural gas reserves. Modi's visit focused on longterm supply agreements, investments in energy infra-structure, and collaboration in nuclear energy projects, ensuring a stable and diver-

sified energy supply for India. Boosting bilateral trade and investment was another focal point. Despite historical ties, trade volumes between India and Russia have not reached their full potential. The visit aimed to address this by exploring new trade avenues in sectors like pharmaceuticals, information technology, and agriculture, promising long-term benefits for both economies. Modi's visit signifies a reaf-firmation of traditional alliances. Reinforcing ties with Russia offers India a more balanced foreign policy amidst the US's increasingly transactional approach. The visit likely included discussions on expanding cooperation in space exploration and nuclear technology, fostering innovations that benefit both nations. Cybersecurity is crucial in the digital age. Modi's visit likely explored collaboration in these fields, ensuring both nations can safeguard their digital infrastructures and harness economic ben-(Writer is a political ana-

lyst; views expressed are

RBI'S NEW GUIDELINES FOR BANKS

Madam — According to a report, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has mandated that banks cannot label borrowers as frauds without giving them a hearing. Banks must now issue a 21-day show-cause notice before classifying an account as fraudulent. This decision follows a Supreme Court order. The RBI has instructed banks to develop a fraud risk management policy, approved by at least three board members, including one full-time director and two independent or non-executive directors, to ensure compliance with the principles of natural justice. Additionally, banks are required to update their Early Warning Signal (EWS) systems within six months, integrating data analytics to detect unusual patterns. The RBI has set a threshold of Rs. 1 crore for reporting frauds to the state police, with private banks also reporting to the Serious Fraud Investigation Office and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, while public sector banks report frauds above

Rs. 6 crore to the CBI, as usual. In consortium lending, if separate offenses are committed, each member may file separate complaints; otherwise, one member can file a complaint with support from the others.In summary, the new RBI rule mandating a 21-day notice before classifying borrowers as frauds enhances borrowers' rights by allowing them to present their cases and defend against allegations, ensuring fair treatment. This rule will improve transparency, foster trust between borrowers and financial institutions, strengthen governance through boardapproved risk management policies, and regulate and streamline the processes of

borrowing and lending. **Bhagwan Thadani** | Mumbai

THE PLIGHT OF GIG WORKERS

Madam — This letter addresses the plight of gig workers in our country. Gig workers are a pitiable lot. Regardless of the weather, they must fulfill their cus- but the abolition of the monarchy in

Defeating global warming

They should realize that the



well-defined quadrilateral encompassing solar, wind, green hydrogen, and nuclear clean energies as its four vertices is essential to effectively combat global warming and related weather catastrophes, which lead to loss of lives, assets, and properties."Well-defined" means urgently establishing both global and national annual

tomers' demands.

I used to wonder how much they earn by zipping and zapping on their bikes, risking their lives in India's urban jungle. My curiosity was answered when I saw a delivery boy working on a rainy day. The bags on his bike were covered with a plastic sheet, but he was drenched to the bone. Since then, I have made it a point to order via the "Cash on Delivery" mode, so that I can tip gig workers generously. Surprisingly, most of the time my tip is politely declined ("Arre sir, yeh to humara kaam hai") or accepted with reluctant embarrass-

Avinash Godboley | Dewas

STRENGTHENING INDIA-NEPAL RELATIONS Madam — In the neighboring country of Nepal, which borders India to the east, west, and south, KP Sharma Oli's appointment as Prime Minister was met with congratulations from PM Modi. India and Nepal have shared a deep bilateral relationship since early days,

targets for each of the four clean energy sources. What percentage should be allocated to solar energy? What percentage should be allocated to nuclear energy? And similar-

ly, for wind and green hydrogen? Currently, the world lacks direction, resulting in slow progress towards achieving 100% clean energy and 0% carbon emissions. The "greater capacity" and "economic power" of nuclear energy, compared to the other three clean energies, cannot be ignored. Increasing the capacity of existing nuclear reactors is more economical than constructing new ones.It would be much better and safer if all nations signed a pact to use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes, such as generating clean energy and electricity, rather than for making bombs, weapons, and war para-

PV Madhu Nivriti | Secunderabad

2008 introduced challenges.

Enhancing trade, investment, and infrastructure development can provide mutual economic benefits. Joint ventures in hydropower projects and tourism can foster economic interdependence. Promoting cultural and educational exchanges can strengthen people-to-people connections, building a stronger foundation for bilateral ties. Short-sighted and selfish politicians sought to please China, which exploited the situation.

The Modi government must provide aid to Nepal and invigorate the relationship more than ever before, ensuring that Nepal does not feel the need to turn towards China, which would harm India's interests. India must infuse new energy into its relationship with Nepal, ensuring that both nations work together for mutual growth and regional sta-

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneér@gmail.com



TAKE THINGS AS THEY COME

Accepting events as they happen brings a great sense of calmness



RAVI VALLURI

Aeons ago in ancient China lived an old farmer who worked on his land for several years. One day his horse ran away. Upon hearing the news, a group of neighbours came to commiserate with him. "Such misfortune," the agitated group of villagers reacted. "Maybe," the farmer replied nonchalantly. A few days later the horse returned, accompanied by three wild horses. Another group of villagers approached the house of the agriculturist to sympathise. "Maybe," replied the aged farmer.

The following day, the farmer's son tried to mount one of the untamed horses and was thrown off. The strapping youngster broke his leg. The overwrought neighbours once again queued up to offer their sympathies at this misadventure. "Maybe," was the desultory answer yet again.A few days later some military personnel swooped on the village to draft young men. Looking at the incapacitated stripling, he was disqualified from being recruited. The exuberant neighbours congratulated the old grazier on the turn of events. "Maybe," was the laconic reply yet again. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has succinctly elucidated the significance of the aphorism, 'to accept people and situations as they are' in his teachings. The 4 Ds of Abnormal Behaviour

Abnormal behaviour can be construed as behaviour that is disturbing (socially unacceptable), distressing, maladaptive (or self-defeating) and often the result of distorted thoughts (cognitions) as per Wikipedia. There are four strains in this abnormal behaviour. These are deviance, dysfunction, distress, and danger. Deviant behaviour is usually different, extreme, and unusual and could even include bizarre behavioural patterns. The second in the series is distressing behaviour.

People who are related to such individuals feel unpleasant and unsettled in their presence. Dysfunctional behaviour discommodes the patient to such an extent that it acts as a deterrent in his day-to-day functioning and behaviour and interferes with his range of activities. Five specific patterns of anxiety disorders fall into this category. The first is termed General Anxiety Disorder. This is a prolonged, vague, quite inexplicable fear having no objective basis, accompanied by hypervigilance, and attached motor tension of the brain. Next is what in quotidian parlance



is called panic disorder. These are none other than perpetual and frequent anxiety attacks which are accompanied by psychological symptoms such as breathlessness, palpitations, a trembling feeling, dizziness and even a sense of total loss of control over the self.

Next in the line of mental disorders are phobias. Humans have irrational

phobias such as Acrophobia (fear of heights), Glossophobia (fear of addressing an audience), Claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces), and Aviophobia (fear of flying). In such situations, a human being is preoccupied with a wide range of thoughts, which are normally irrational. Last, but no less distressing – on this ill-fated checklist is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These individuals suffer repeated and recurrent nightmares, flashbacks, impaired concentration, and emotional numbing which invariably follows traumatic or stressful events. Our country is plagued by three major issues namely, addictions, women's issues, and psychological disorders. Generally, citizens approach tantriks, babas, and quacks hoping for a miraculous cure. It is paramount to meet a qualified medical practitioner. The first step to recovery is medication under the expert guidance of a doctor. Next, after a period of treatment, it would be prudent to contact self-help groups, which sustain the treatment. For instance, undergoing the Happiness Course of the Art of Living, where one learns the Sudarshan Kriya breathing technique which harmonises

begin again," said Gautama Buddha. (The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

the body and thought. "No matter how hard the past, you can always

Focus on employment, innovation and skill



DINESH SOOD

The Union Budget 2024 must factor in rising unemployment and need for innovation for boosting the economy and sustaining economic growth



he upcoming Union Budget on July 23 will shed light on initiatives that may reshape economic priorities under the Modi3.0 government. Amid various expectations and commitments, the government's focus on skills, employment, and innovation emerges as a key strategy in addressing current challenges and shaping future opportunities. The decision to rename the Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development to include livelihood emphasizes a shift to provide employable skills to the most vulnerable 67 per cent of the country's underprivileged popu-

Placing skill development ahead of employment underscores a proactive approach to addressing the issue of a shortage of skilled workforce, especially in the health & wellness, manufacturing, and technology sectors. This not only recognizes the immediate need for a trained workforce but also positions skill development as a key driver for su

tainable employment generation.
As the Budget approaches, stakeholders across sectors eagerly await concrete measures that go beyond mere promises and lead to tangible outcomes. The effectiveness of these initiatives in translating into job creation, technological innovation, and sustainable economic growth will be carefully scrutinized.

The government's steadfast commitment to enhancing skills holds the promise of unleashing India's potential as a global economic powerhouse in the

The rebranding and revitalization of the 15-year-old National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) as the Skill India Mission under PM Narendra Modi has sparked concerns about the effectiveness of the ambitious Skill India program. This program has received support from two governments over 15 years — first the UPA and then the NDA. India is in the midst of an urgent unemployment crisis due to an employment



SKILL INDIA WAS DESIGNED TO ATTRACT UNSKILLED YOUNG PEOPLE AND EQUIP THEM FOR THE JOB MARKET. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES REMAIN

deficit. Issues such as the delayed implementation of PMKVY 3.0 and lack of placement support are exacerbating this problem. The latest data underlines the severity of India's unemployment crisis, making it crucial to prioritize employment generation to con-front the challenges facing the Indian economy, especially with a significant number of young people entering the working age each month.

In July 2015, PM Modi stated that "Skill India aims to build salf con

"Skill India aims to build self-confidence among the underprivi-leged, rather than just providing jobs". However, nearly a decade later, the youth's interest in the program seems to be waning. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has implemented strict attendance monitoring and centralized student information. Unfortunately, this has led to a decline in student retention, with many dropping out due to the rigid attendance requirements. Skill India was designed to attract unskilled young people and equip them for the job market, but unemployment rates remain high. Data from the International Labour Organization reveals that the proportion of educated unemployed individuals has risen sharply from 35.2% in 2000 to 65.7% in 2023.Established in 2014, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship absorbed the NSDC and other programs to train 300 million people by 2024. Despite partnering with various organizations and raising awareness, the programs have not been as effective as envisioned.

Experts argue that even traditional degrees do not guarantee employment, and the education system is outdated and not jobfocused. Only a small percentage

of candidates certified by the PMKVY program have found jobs, indicating a fundamental challenge with the current skilling initiatives. Boosting skilling programs and industry partnerships is an urgent necessity to create ongoing skilling avenues and improve employability for school dropouts, and unskilled, or semiskilled workers who need to

skilled workers who need to secure a livelihood.
Although the announcement of setting up 75 skilling e-labs for simulated learning in the 2022-23 Union Budget is a positive move, we must recognize that our problem is far-reaching. API-based trusted skill credentials and discovery layers to find relevant jobs covery layers to find relevant jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities won't suffice beyond a certain point, necessitating an urgent need to skill the masses and empower the country's youths.We must acknowledge that over 40% of Indians aged 15 to 24 are neither in education, employment, or training, which is significantly higher than the South Asian (30%) and global (24%) averages. Indian firms report substantial skill shortages compared to other countries, and they assess only about 46% of graduates as employable.

The majority of students lack the necessary skills, and the skills they do possess are not aligned with the needs of their employers. Every year, more than 12 million young people in India become employable, yet we are unable to absorb them into the workforce. Many of these individuals hold higher education degrees, but they lack the

necessary employable skills. The India Skills Report (ISR) 2024 highlights that only 50.3% of graduates from higher educational institutions are deemed employable. A skill gap study conducted

by the NSDC during 2010-14 indicates that by 2025, India will need nearly 109.7 million additional skilled workers across various sectors. While the government's interventions in promoting skill development are commendable, more needs to be done to bridge the skill gaps. Wish List: In the 2024-25 Union Budget, it is crucial to prioritize upskilling initiatives for gig workers, due to the eight-fold increase in young people's participation in the gig economy from 2019 to 2023, the majority of these youth come from Tier-I and Tier-II cities and rural areas.

While the government is working to make employable skills more accessible through public-private partnerships, there is a need to facilitate and incentivize the establishment of more skill development universities to steer the youth, especially undergraduates towards skills. This will help align the skill courses with global standards and significantly enhance the youth's skills, contributing to the nation's workforce development.I strongly urge a significant budget allocation to provide employable skills, particularly to school dropouts on a priority basis. This will not only empower them but also significantly contribute to the growth of the Indian economy, aiming to reach \$7 trillion by 2030 and position India as the world's third-largest economy.
(The writer is Co-Founder and

MD, of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and a Network Member of India International Skill Centres,; Views expressed are

Kerala: Beyond the well-crafted image of a tidy, literate State

Behind its progressive facades lies a struggle with industrial stagnation, healthcare shortcomings, and a surprising reliance on superstition

¬he assumption among the people outside Kerala is that it is the most literate, intelligent and hygienic State in the country. The ruling CPI(M) leaves no stone unturned to portray it as the land of people with a scientific temper and is the numero uno in all spheres of life. There are no countries in the world where you will not find expatriate Malayalees. S K Pottekkadu, the best travel writer the State has produced in the last 150 years has written articulately about the Keralites whom he met in South Africa and Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) even in the days when there were no diplomatic ties between India and these countries. The modern-day reality of Kerala is entirely different and far from



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN what is projected by the CPI(M). Malayalees are leaving en masse from Kerala to Europe, Australia, the USA, Canada, Latin America, Africa and of course the West Asian countries in search of livelihood and for higher studies. There are no major industries worth their names in the State other than some public sector companies like FACT, Cochin Refineries and Cochin Shipyard. Industrialists and entrepreneurs have translocated their enterprises to neighbouring States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The claim by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his minister of health Veena George that the State is a role model in health care and wellbeing for the rest of the country and the world is a great joke. The chief minister boards the first available flight to the USA whenever he is afflicted with the common cold. Recently, a four-year-old girl was admitted to Government Medical College Hospital in Kozhikode for the removal of her sixth finger.

However, the doctor who performed the surgery operated on her tongue while leaving the finger untouched. Though her parents alerted the hospital authorities, the initial reaction was denial of the faux pas by the latter.

Kemember, the Kozhikode Medical College and Hospital is a most sought-after institution by prospective medical students! This is not an isolated incident as such things happen quite regularly in the State's government hospitals. The doctors have their justification for such mistakes. Most of them say they are overworked and underpaid. When they work under pressure, such errors are bound to happen, claim the doctors!

The aim of this column is not to embarrass the doctors or their minister of health who was a mere news reader in one of the many TV news channels that have mushroomed in the State over the last two decades. The recent controversy about sorcerers digging out (or mining?) copper plates, miniature artefacts and bones of some birds like hens or ducks from the residence and office of K Sudhakaran MP who is president of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee is an issue that shows the large scale obscurantism prevailing among the descendants of Jawaharlal Nehru, the wholesale dealer of scientific temper. According to sources close to Sudhakaran, the sorcery was the handiwork of people in the party itself who wanted to see the KPCC chief remain in bed for the rest of his life.

There are black magicians across Kerala who have the "expertise" to neutralize one's enemies or help you to become a minister or even chief min-

ister! This is not an exaggerated statement as this writer himself has spoken to a sorcerer who was into this kind of business for decades.

When Oommen Chandi was the chief minister (2011-2016), there was this Congress leader who felt left out during the formation of the UDF Government. When his efforts to become a minister failed, he approached a sorcerer from Malabar who offered the former to make him a minister and that too with a plum portfolio by performing puja. The sorcerer said that witchcraft had to be done and it would cost the politician Rs 12 lakh and the latter accepted the proposal with glee.

The magician rang up this writer and said that the puja would begin the next morning

and the politician would become the minister in three months. Presto, in three months, the politician was sworn in as a minister with a coveted portfolio!The story did not end there. The sorcerer was not paid the promised money and he had to warn the politician that he had the know-how to get the minister dismissed from the govern-

Last heard, the politician (nay, minister) hushed up the issue by paying half the amount he had agreed to pay earlier. Politicians cheating the electorate is quite common but hoodwinking even wizards and warlocks is new information.Sorcery and black magic are not confined to Kerala. They are a global phenomenon with even our Dravidian politicians who swear by rationalism seeking guidance from astrologers, wizards and sorcerers for survival.

Some of the countries that played in the World Cup football championship in the 1970s and 1980s used to have an official sorcerer for the team. His mission is to perform witchcraft near the rival team's goalposts to ensure that the ball enters the post without failure! If you feel that sorcery is restricted to politics, business and sports, you are mistaken, Sir. There are many instances of it being used by scientific researchers in the US and Russia. Wait for another occa-

(The writer is special correspondent with the Pioneer; views expressed are personal) the pioneer

Nikky Haley 'strongly endorses' Trump

n dian - A merican Republican leader Nikky Haley has endorsed her former boss Donald Trump as the party's candidate for the presidential election, delivering the message of unity after their bitter rivalry during the pri-

Haley, 52, unsuccessfully challenged Trump for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination and spent months sparring with the former president. But last week, she instructed her 97 delegates to vote for Trump at the convention as she called for unity in the party.

"I'll start by making one thing perfectly clear: Donald Trump has my strong endorsement, period," Haley said Tuesday as she addressed the Republican National Convention here during which the party will nominate Trump as its presidential candidate

Haley, who was the only Republican leader to have seriously challenged Trump during the bruising campaign pri-maries, told thousands of delegates and party leaders that Trump is the best bet for the country and that the Republicans are united to defeat incumbent President Joe Biden.

"Let us join together as a party. Let us come together as a people — as one country – strong and proud. Let us show our children and the world that



even on our worst day, we are blessed to live in America," said the former South Carolina governor and the US Ambassador to the United Nations

As Trump, 78, watched on from the convention centre's VIP suite, Haley used her speech to defend the former president's foreign policy record and speak directly to voters who disagree with him on certain issues.

'There are some Americans who don't agree with Donald Trump 100% of the time," she said. "My message to them is simple: You don't have to agree with Trump 100% of the time to vote for him."

"Our country is at a critical moment. We have a choice to make. For more than a year, I said a vote for Joe Biden is a vote for President Kamala Harris. After seeing the debate, everyone knows it's true," Haley

said. "If we have four more years of Biden . . . or a single day of Harris . . . our country will be badly worse off. For the sake of our nation, we have to go with Donald Trump," Haley

Trump was present at the convention centre when she spoke. Trump and his running mate Senator J D Vance gave a standing ovation to Haley when she started her speech and endorsed him.

'Our foreign enemies win when they see Americans hate each other. They see that today, whether it's on college campuses or in a field in Butler, Pennsylvania. But we can conquer those fears with strength and unity," she said.

'Our fellow Americans are fearful right now. Families are suffering from inflation and wages that don't keep up with prices. Young people are being

indoctrinated to think our country is racist and evil. The Jewish community is facing an obscene rise in antisemitism. Too many minorities are trapped in communities devastated by crime," she said. She said no president can fix all problems alone.

We have to do this together. America has an amazing ability to self-correct. At this moment, we have a chance to put aside our differences and focus on what unites us and strengthens our country," Haley 'We must not only be a unified

party. We must also expand our party. We are so much better when we are bigger. We are stronger when we welcome people into our party who have different backgrounds and experiences. And right now, we need to be strong, to save America. This is a defining moment, not only for our party but for our country," said the popular Indian-American leader.

Haley said under Donald Trump, the US didn't have the border disaster being faced

"And we won't when he is president again," she said. Under Joe Biden, migrants are coming into our country by the thousands every day. We have no idea who they are, where they end up, or what they plan to do," she said. Biden, she alleged, lifted the

sanctions on Iran

Iran rejects accusations AP TEHRAN

ran has rejected accusations Tregarding plots to assassinate former US President Donald Trump, while citing legal action for the 2020 assassination of a revered general by US drone, the state-run IRNA news agency reported Wednesday. IRNA quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani as saying Iran "strongly rejects any involvement in the recent armed attack on Trump or claims about Iran's intention for such an action.

Kanaani added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to pursue legal action against Trump for his direct role in the crime of assassinating Martyr Genera Soleimani. Qassem Soleimani was the commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force and was killed in U.S. drone attack in Baghdad in January 2020. A threat on Trump's life from Iran prompted additional secu-rity in the days before Saturday's campaign rally, but it was unrelated to the assassination attempt on the

Republican presidential nom-inee, two US officials said

Traces of cyanide in blood of 6 dead Bangkok hotel guests

Doctors who performed autopsies on the six Bangkok hotel guests who died mysteriously confirmed Wednesday that they had traces of cyanide in their blood.

Dr. Kornkiat Vongpaisarnsin, head of the forensic medicine department at Chulalongkorn University's medical school, said at a news conference that a CAT scan showed no signs of blunt force trauma on the dead, reinforcing the hypothesis that they had been poisoned.

Police found traces of cyanide in the cups of six Vietnamese and American guests at a central Bangkok luxury hotel and one of them is believed to have poisoned the others over a bad investment, Thai authorities said Wednesday.

The bodies were found Tuesdav in the Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok, a landmark at a central intersection in the capital busy with malls, government buildings and public transit. The six had last been seen alive when food was delivered to the room Monday afternoon. The staff saw one woman receive the food, and security footage showed the rest arriving one by one shortly after. There were no other visitors, no one was seen leaving and the door was locked. A maid found them Tuesday afternoon when they failed to check out of the room.

Lt. Gen. Trairong Piwpan, chief of the Thai police force's forensic division, said there were traces of cyanide in the cups and thermoses that police found in the room, but initial results of an autopsy were expected later Wednesday.

Bangkok police chief Lt. Gen. Thiti Sangsawang identified the dead as two Vietnamese and Americans Vietnamese nationals, and said they were three men and three women. Their ages ranged from 37 to 56, according to Noppasin Punsawat, Bangkok deputy police chief. He said the

case appeared to be personal

and would not impact the safe-

ty of tourists.

A husband and wife among the dead had invested money with two of the others, suggesting that money could be a motive. said Noppasin, citing information obtained from relatives of the victims. The investment was meant to build a hospital in Japan and the group might have been meeting to settle the matter. Bangkok police chief Lt. Gen. Thiti Sangsawang said Tuesday that four bodies were in the living room and two in the bedroom. He said two of them appeared to try to reach for the door but collapsed

before they could. Noppasin said Wednesday that a seventh person whose name was part of the hotel booking was a sibling of one of the six

Police believe the seventh person had no involvement in the deaths.

The Vietnamese and United States embassies have been

contacted over the deaths, and the American FBI was en route, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said. He said the case would likely

not affect a conference with Russian Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilev at the hotel later Wednesday. "This wasn't an act of terrorism or a breach in security. Everything is fine," he Trairong said a mass suicide

was unlikely because some of the victims had arranged future parts of their trip, such as guides and drivers. He added that the bodies being in differ-ent parts of the hotel room suggested they did not knowingly consume poison and wait for their deaths together.

US State Dept. spokesman Matthew Miller in Washington offered condolences to the families of the victims. He said the US is closely monitoring the situation and would communicate with local authorities US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with his Thai counterpart on Tuesday, but Miller said he thought that call happened before the deaths were reported and he didn't know if it came up in their con-

Won't stop telling the truth about Trump: Biden female justice, Ketanji Brown The president made indirectly the president made

President Joe Biden returned to the campaign trail Tuesday for the first time since the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump, continuing his call to calm the divisive rhetoric on both sides, but also arguing that doing so "doesn't mean we should stop telling the truth" as he tore into his Republican

Addressing the NAACP convention in Las Vegas, Biden said addressing political violence in the country should mean curbing all kinds of bloodshed — including better combating police brutality and banning weapons like the AR-style rifle used in the weekend attack on Trump. "It's time for an important

conversation in this country. Our politics have become too heated," Biden said. That didn't stop him from list-

tion was "hell" for Black Americans, including the former president's mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic, skyrocketing unemployment amid early lockdowns and attempts to, as Biden put it, erase Black history.

"Just because we must lower the temperature in our politics as it relates to violence doesn't mean we should stop telling the truth," Biden told the crowd that often broke into chants of "Four more years!"

The president is aiming to showcase his administration's support for Black voters who are a tentpole of the Democratic coalition and of his personal political support. As part of his swing in Nevada, he'll also participate in an interview with BET and address the Hispanic advocacy group UnidosUS, another crucial Democratic-leaning bloc. For the NAACP crowd, Biden



seized on Trump recently referencing "Black jobs," drawing big applause by joking, "I love the phrase."

"I know what a Black job is. It's the vice president of the United Biden said of Vice President Kamala Harris, who he added "could be president." He also referenced Barack Obama as the nation's first Black president, and his own appointment to the Supreme Court of its first Black and Biden's trip comes as

Democrats have been engaged in a weeks-long crisis of confidence over his candidacy after his devastating debate with Trump last month. The president's shaky performance inflamed voter concerns about his age, fitness for office and capacity to defeat Trump once again.

Republicans, for their part, are demonstrating that they are more coalesced than ever around Trump amid their national convention in Milwaukee The 81-year-old Biden has

rejected a flurry of calls from within his party to step aside, restating his belief that he is the best-positioned Democrat to beat Trump. He has relied heavily on his support among Black and Latino elected officials, and was set to appear with many of them in Nevada.

The president made indirect reference to unrest in his own party on Tuesday, recalling President Harry S Truman famously saying, "If you want a friend in Washington, get a

dog."
"After the last couple of weeks, I know what he means," Biden said. He said later, "hopefully, with age, comes a little bit of

Biden also promised that in the first 100 days of a second term he would oversee congressional approval of a dramatic expansion of voting rights something he's been unable to do as president so far. He also renewed earlier promises to "end medical debt," saying he was working with states to settle outstanding bills for care for pennies on the dollar."

'I know the good Lord hasn't brought us this far to leave us now," Biden told the convention, offering overtly religious

Two attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels strike ships in Red Sea

AP DUBAI

Two attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted ships in the Red Sea on Monday as a new US aircraft carrier approached the region to provide security for the key international trade route that has been under assault since the Israel-Hamas war erupted nine months ago. Three small Houthi vessels, two

of which were crewed and another uncrewed, attacked the Panama-flagged and Israeli-owned MT Bently I off the coast of Al Hudaydah, Yemen, according to British and American authorities. The "reported unmanned small

craft collided with the vessel twice and the 2 manned small craft fired at the vessel," the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade

The vessel conducted selfprotection measures, after 15 minutes the small craft aborted the attack. The captain later reported three

Operations centre reported.

separate waves of missile attacks that exploded in close proximity to the vessel. Later on Monday, in a separate

incident off the same coast, the MT Chios Lion, a Liberianflagged and Marshall Islandsowned oil tanker, was attacked by an uncrewed Houthi aerial vehicle, which "impacted on the port side causing some damage and light smoke," the UKMTO said.

Both ships and all crew were reported safe, the UKMTO said in a warning to mariners. Late Monday, the Houthis claimed responsibility for the attacks on Bently I and Chios Command confirmed the attacks and identified the names and flags of the ship. This continued reckless

Early Tuesday, the US Central

behaviour by the Iranianbacked Houthis threatens regional stability and endangers the lives of mariners across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden," a Central Command statement "The Houthis claim to be act-

ing on behalf of Palestinians in Gaza and yet they are targeting and threatening the lives of third country nationals who have nothing to do with the conflict in Gaza."

Also on Monday, the Central Command said US forces destroyed five uncrewed Houthi aerial vehicles, three over the Red Sea and two in Houthi-controlled areas of

Israel's military will begin drafting ultra-Orthodox men on Sunday

AP JERUSALEM

The Israeli military on Tuesday said it would begin sending draft notices to Jewish ultra-Orthodox men on Sunday — a step that could destabilise Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's govern-

The announcement followed a landmark Supreme Court order for young religious men to begin enlisting for military service. Under long-standing political arrangements, ultra-Orthodox men had been exempt from the draft, which is compulsory for most Jewish

The exemptions created resentment among the general public in Israel, especially

of war against Hamas militants in Gaza. The army summons is the beginning of a monthslong enlistment process that could be difficult to enforce if there is large-scale refusal to comply. The army did not say when it expects ultra-Orthodox men to begin serving or how many it expects to

The court ruled that the system of exemptions, which allow religious men to study in Jewish seminaries while others are forced to serve in the army, was discriminatory. Ultra-Orthodox leaders say religious study is equally important for the country's future and that their genera-tions-old way of life will be

after more than nine months threatened if their followers serve in the army.

Netanyahu's government relies on the support of ultra-Orthodox parties that oppose changes to the system. Religious leaders have not said what steps they will take. If they leave the ruling coalition, the government would likely topple and the country would be plunged into early elections two years ahead of schedule. Past attempts to enlist ultra-Orthodox men have triggered mass protests in ultra-Orthodox communities. Hundreds of ultra-Orthodox men blocked a main highway in central Israel for several hours on Tuesday in the ultra-Orthodox city of Bnei Brak, near Tel Aviv. Police on horse-

back pushed the crowd back, and officers dragged protesters away. Police said nine peo-

ple were arrested. The army is not an army for fighting. It's an army with indoctrination" against religion, said Yona Kay, a protest-er. "Therefore our children, our boys — and I have a son over here — will not go to the army, not for one minute." On Monday night, dozens of the cars of senior military

ultra-Orthodox surrounded commanders who were meeting with local rabbis in Bnei Brak to discuss an ultra-Orthodox unit in the army The crowd threatened the officers, calling them "murderers" and throwing bottles, according to Israeli media

Not enough info on Covid-19 vaccine deals shared with public: EU court

AP BRUSSELS

The European Commission did not allow the public enough access to information about COVID-19 vaccine purchase agreements it secured with pharmaceutical companies during the pandemic, the general court said Wednesday.

The decision came a day ahead of a vote at the European Parliament at which European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is seeking reelec-

A group of EU lawmakers had taken legal action after the Commission refused to grant them complete access to COVID-19 vaccine contracts secured between the EU's executive arm and manufacturers. The pandemic shed light on the

which have led to profound

Charlottesville Circuit Court

Judge Claude Worrell last May

vacated Mast's adoption order,

and unnecessary suffering."

issue of transparency surround- behalf of all 27 member states ing the negotiations for vac-cines between the EU and big pharmaceutical groups. The EU Commission was mandated by member countries to organize the joint procure-



ment of vaccines during the pandemic and led negotiations with manufacturers.

According to the court, the procurement of vaccines on

allowed the bloc to quickly gather 2.7 billion euros (\$2.95 billion) to place an order for more than a billion doses of vaccines.

In 2021, some members of the European Parliament asked for the full details of the agreements, but the Commission only agreed to provide partial access to certain contracts and documents, which were placed online in redacted versions. It also refused to say how much it paid for the billions of doses it secured, arguing that contracts were protected for confidentiality reasons.

In a statement, the court said that "the Commission did not take sufficient account of all the relevant circumstances in order to weigh up correctly the interests at issue.

conduct a hearing on the

Afghan couple's adoption peti-

Post violence. Bangladesh asks all universities to close down

AP BRUSSELS

Authorities in Bangladesh urged all universities to close on Wednesday, after at least six people died in violent protests over the allocation of government jobs.

Some universities quickly moved to comply, but others, including the major university at the center of the violence, were still deciding how

to respond. The University Grants Commission asked all public and private universities to suspend classes and empty their dormitories until further notice, in order to protect students. The country's universities are run autonomously and the request did not have legal

Authorities said that at least six people were killed on Tuesday in violence across the country as student protesters clashed with pro-government student activists and with police, and violence was reported around the capital of

Dhaka, the southeastern city of Chattogram and the northern city of Rangpur. On Wednesday, stray protests took place at Dhaka University and elsewhere in the country. Police were deployed on the campus, while paramilitary border forces patrolled the streets in

Dhaka and other big cities. The protests began late last month, demanding an end to a quota that reserves 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans of Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence in 1971, but turned violent on Monday as protesters clashed with counter-protests and police at Dhaka University, leaving 100 people injured.

Court voids US Marine's adoption of Afghan orphan their unlawful actions - actions that Mast failed to inform the adoption proceedings and

AP WASHINGTON

Virginia appellate court Aruled Tuesday that a US Marine should never have been granted an adoption of an Afghan war orphan and voided the custody order he's relied on to raise the girl for nearly three years. The decision marked a major turning point in a bitter custody battle that has international ramifications far greater than the fate of one

The appeals court decision dealt a significant blow in Marine Maj. Joshua Mast's yearslong legal quest to keep the child, who was orphaned on the battlefield in Afghanistan in 2019.

Mast and his wife, Stephanie, convinced the courts in his hometown, rural Fluvanna County, Virginia, to grant him an adoption of the child, even though she remained in Afghanistan as the government there tracked down her with the Mast family for now. extended family and reunited her with them. The family fled Afghanistan

with thousands of other evacuees when the Taliban took over in the summer of 2021. Once she arrived in the United States, Mast used the Fluvanna County documents to convince federal government officials to take the child from her Afghan relatives and give her to him. She turns five years old this month. The Masts have insisted they are her legal parents and "acted admirably" to save a child in a desperate and dangerous situation. The Afghan family, who challenged Mast's adoption, have not seen

her for nearly three years. The child's fate is still in limbo: The decision by the appellate her identicular tuesday does not clarify respond.

No government agencies involved would clarify Tuesday what the next steps might entail, or what their role might be in determining where the child should live as the remaining legal fight unfolds.

The Masts could appeal to the Virginia Supreme Court and ask that Tuesday's decision not be enforced through that All the parties involved have

been forbidden by the court to speak to the press about this case. Attorneys for the Masts and the Afghan couple did not return phone calls. A lawyer appointed by the court to represent the interests of the child, who is referred to in court records as Baby Doe to protect her identity, also did not



Several legal organisations supporting the Afghan couple said they were encouraged. National Centre for Youth

Law senior attorney Becky Wolozin said that by "clearly

stating that the Masts have no

legal rights over Baby Doe, the Court refused to legitimise

which was granted by another judge in 2020, but left in place a custody order that allowed the child to stay with the Masts. A three-judge appellate panel heard arguments in the fall, and issued a 23-page order Tuesday that dissolved Mast's legal guardianship over the girl. Appellate Judge Daniel E Ortiz wrote in Tuesday's order that Mast's adoption "did not fit into any" of the criteria required by state law He said required by state law. He said the "procedural errors" that led to it were "so outside the scope of the adoption code that the circuit court lacked the power" to sign the adoption. He also acknowledged

court of key developments, including that the government of Afghanistan never gave up its claim to the girl, that she had been given to Afghan relatives and that a federal court had already rebuffed his efforts to stop that reunification How exactly the court justified granting the Marine the adoption in the first place remains

shrouded in secrecy. The Associated Press filed in court to get the case unsealed. In January 2023, Worrell granted that request, ordering the case opened to the public. But more than 18 months later, the court continues to keep the entire file hidden despite numerous letters sent by lawyers representing The Associated Press

The appellate panel directed the circuit court to dismiss all

tion, which is currently pending before the court. The Masts may file their own petition as well, Ortiz wrote.

Retired Circuit Court Judge

rity pacts to endangering troops stationed abroad by feeding Islamic extremist propaganda.

Richard Moore, who issued the original adoption order, declined to comment on the case. The US government has insisted in court that Mast never had any claim to this child, and that she be returned immediately to her Afghan family. Justice Department lawyers have written that allowing the child to remain with the Marine could have broad consequences for American foreign policy: from threatening international secu-

Pak delivers strong demarche to Afghanistan over terror attack

Pakistan on Wednesday lodged a strong protest with the Afghan interim government over the deadly terrorist attack this week at a key military cantonment, reiterating its call for "decisive action" against militants hiding in the neighbouring nation.

The terror attack on the Bannu Cantonment in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province on Monday killed eight soldiers and injured many others. Security forces also killed all 10 terrorists who launched the attack at the major military cantonment.

The terrorists' failed attempt to attack the facility forced them to ram an explosive-laden vehicle into the perimeter wall of the cantonment, leading to the collapse of a portion of the wall and damaging the adjoining infrastructure

The Deputy Head of Mission of the Afghan embassy, Sardar Muhammad Shakib, was sum-

moned to the Ministry of and effective action against Foreign Affairs to "deliver" the perpetrators of the Bannu Pakistan's strong demarche over the deadly terrorist attack", the Foreign Office said in a statement on Wednesday.

"The Bannu Cantonment attack is yet another reminder of the serious threat posed by terrorism to regional peace and security," it said.

"Pakistan reiterates the call for decisive action against terrorism and remains steadfast in its commitment to combat this menace and to uphold its security against all threats," it said. The Foreign Office said the terrorist attack was carried out by the Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group based in Afghanistan, which, along with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of civilians and law enforcement officials in multi-

It urged the interim Afghan government to fully investigate and take immediate, robust

ple terrorist attacks inside

attack and prevent the recurrence of such attacks against Pakistan using the territory of Afghanistan.

The Foreign Office said such incidents also go against the spirit of bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.

It also reiterated serious concerns over the presence of terror outfits inside Afghanistan that continue to threaten Pakistan's security.

Pakistan has consistently raised its concerns with the interim Afghan government, asking them to deny the persistent use of Afghan soil by the terrorists and take effective action against such elements.

But so far, little has been done as Kabul rejects the presence of terrorists on its soil.

Pakistan has witnessed an increase in terrorist activities over the past year, particularly in regions like Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan,

following the cessation of a ceasefire between the government and the banned TTP militant group in November

Last week, Islamabad reiterated its stance against engaging in talks with the TTP and called for Kabul's action against terrorists operating from Afghan territory

According to the Centre for Research and Security Studies' annual security report, violence and casual ties in Pakistan saw a notable decline in the second quarter of 2024. The report said there was a 12 per cent reduction in overall violence, with 380 fatalities reported compared to 432 in the preceding quar-

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan were identified as the epicentres of violence, accounting for over 90 per cent of fatalities and 84 per cent of all attacks involving both terrorist incidents and security force responses.

attack on Oman mosque

PTI DUBAI/MUSCAT

n Indian national was Among six people killed in a rare shooting attack by Islamic State militant group near a Shia Muslim mosque in Oman's capital. The shooting on Monday night

near the Imam Ali Mosque also claimed the lives of one policeman and four Pakistan nation als, while injuring 28 others. "Following the shooting incident reported in Muscat city on July 15, Foreign Ministry of Sultanate of Oman has informed that one Indian national has lost his life & another is injured," Embassy of India in Muscat posted on X Tuesday. "Embassy offers its sincere condolences & stands ready to offer all assistance to the families," it said.

The three attackers were also killed by security forces during the incident in the al-Wadi al-Kabir area on Monday night, according to a statement.

Pakistan said four Pakistanis were among those killed.

Indian killed in Alberta PM Oli to seek vote of confidence on Sunday

PTI KATHMANDU

epal's newly appointed Nepals newly are R P Sharma Oli will take a vote of confidence in Parliament on July 21, as required by the Constitution, a media report quoted the chief whip of his party as saying on Wednesday. The 72-year-old veteran leader was sworn in on Monday as the Himalayan nation's prime minister for the fourth time.

Prime Minister Oli decided to take a vote of confidence on Sunday, MyRepublica news portal reported, quoting Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) Chief Whip Mahesh Bertaula.

Nepal's According to Constitution, Oli needs to secure a vote of confidence from Parliament within 30 days of appointment, which he is likely to secure easily, as the minimum number to form a government in the 275-strong House of Representatives

The leader of Nepal's largest communist party was appointed as prime minister on Sunday by President Ram Chandra Paudel to lead the coalition government with the Nepali Congress (NC), the largest party in Parliament, apart from

other smaller parties. Oli succeeds Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' who lost the vote of confidence in the HoR last week, leading to the formation of the new government. The CPN-UML Chairman now leads the new coalition government that faces the daunting challenge of providing political stability in the Himalayan

Nepal has faced frequent political turmoil as the country has seen 14 governments in the past 16 years after the introduction of the Republican system. Within hours of Oli's swearing in, three advocates — Deepak Adhikari, Khagendra Prasad Chapagain and Shailendra Kumar Gupta – filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court of Nepal challenging his appointment arguing that it was unconstitutional and

sought its annulment. The advocates argued that the president should call for forming a new government under Article 76 (3) if a government formed as per Article 76 (2) fails the floor test in the House of Representatives.

The apex court has set July 21 as the date for a preliminary hearing in the case — the same day Oli will take the floor

UK's new govt announces legislation for 'national renewal'

AP LONDON

 $B^{\mbox{\scriptsize ritain's}}$ new Labour Party government promised to calm the country's febrile politics and ease its cost-of-living crisis as it set out its plans for "national renewal" at the grand State Opening of Parliament on Wednesday

Stabilising the UK's public finances and spurring economic growth were at the center of Prime Minister Keir Starmer 's legislative agenda, announced in a speech delivered by King Charles III.

"My government will seek a new partnership with both business and working people and help the country move on from the recent cost of living challenges by prioritising wealth creation for all communities," the king said in a speech to hundreds of lawmakers and scarletrobed members of the House of

Starmer campaigned on a promise to bring bold change to Britain at modest cost to taxpayers. He aims to be both pro-worker and pro-business, in favour of vast new construcenvironment. The risk is he may end up pleasing no one.

In a written introduction to the speech, Starmer urged patience, saying change would require "determined, patient work and serious solutions" rather than easy answers and "the snake oil charm of populism.

The King's Speech is the centrepiece of the State Opening, an occasion where royal pomp meets hard-nosed politics, as the king donned a diamond-studded crown, sat on a gilded throne and announced the laws his government intends to

pass in the coming year. Labour won a landslide election victory on July 4 as voters turned on the Conservatives after years of high inflation, ethics scandals and a revolving door of prime ministers. Starmer has promised to patch up the country's aging infrastructure and frayed public services, but says he won't raise personal taxes and insists change must be bound by "unbreakable fiscal rules."

Wednesday's speech included 40 bills - the Conservatives' last speech tion projects and protective of the had just 21 - ranging from house-

building to nationalising Britain's railways and decarbonizing the nation's power supply with a publicly-owned green energy firm, Great British Energy.

The government said it would "get Britain building," setting up a National Wealth Fund and rewriting planning rules that stop new homes and infrastructure being

Economic measures included tighter rules governing corporations and a law to ensure all government budgets get advance independent scrutiny. That aims to avoid a repetition of the chaos sparked in 2022 by then-Prime Minister Liz Truss, whose package of uncosted tax cuts rocked the British economy and ended her brief term in office. The government promised stronger

protections for workers, with a ban on some "zero-hours" contracts and a higher minimum wage for many employees. Also announced were protections for renters against shoddy housing, sudden eviction and landlords who won't let them have

a pet. The government promised more



Britain's King Charles wears the Imperial State Crown on the day of the State Opening of Parliament at the Palace of Westminster in London, on Wednesday. AP/PTI

power for local governments and better bus and railway services keys to the "levelling up" of Britain's London-centric economy that former Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised but large-reforming the House of Lords. The ly failed to deliver.

Though Starmer eschewed largescale nationalization of industries, the government plans to take the delay-plagued train operators into

public ownership.
The speech said the government "recognises the urgency of the global climate challenge" — a change in tone from the Conservative government's emphasis on oil and gas exploration. As well as increasing renewable energy, it pledged tougher penalties for water companies that dump sewage into rivers, lakes and

The speech included new measures to strengthen border security, creating a beefed-up Border Security Command with counter-terrorism powers to tackle people-smuggling

It follows Starmer's decision to scrap the Conservatives' contentious and unrealised plan to send people arriving in the UK across the English Channel on a one-way trip to Rwanda.

The speech also tackled an issue that

unelected upper chamber of Parliament is packed with almost 800 members - largely lifetime political appointees, with a smattering of judges, bishops and almost 100 hereditary aristocrats. The government said it would remove the hereditary nobles, though there was no mention of Starmer's past proposal of setting a Lords retirement age of 80.

There was no mention of lowering the voting age from 18 to 16, though that was one of Labour's election promises.

While much of Starmer's agenda marks a break with the defeated Conservative government of former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Starmer revived Sunak's plan to stop future generations from smoking by gradually raising the minimum age for buying tobacco.

The speech confirmed that the government wants to "reset the relationship with European partners" roiled by Britain's exit from the European Union in 2020. It said there would be no change to Britain's strong support for Ukraine and promised to "play a leading role in providing Ukraine with a clear path to NATO membership.

Wednesday's address was the second such speech delivered by Charles since the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, in September

He travelled from Buckingham Palace to Parliament in a horsedrawn carriage - past a small group of anti-monarchy protesters with signs reading "Down with the Crown" - before donning ceremonial robes and the Imperial State Crown to deliver his speech. Police said 10 members of an environmental activist group were arrested near Parliament over alleged plans to disrupt the ceremony.

For all its royal trappings, it is the King's Speech in name only. The words are written by government officials, and the monarch betrayed no flicker of emotion as he read them out.

"The king has zero agency in this," said Jill Rutter, senior research fellow at the Institute for Government think tank.

Islamic State attacks on track | Floods could sweep N Korean landmines to double in Iraq and Syria: US | across border, warns South Korea

The US Central Command I said Wednesday that the Islamic State group is trying "to reconstitute" as the number of attacks in Syria and Iraq is on track to double those of the previous vear

ĪS has claimed 153 attacks in both countries in the first six months of 2024, CENTCOM said in a statement. According to a US defence official, who spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn't allowed to speak publicly on the matter, the group was behind 121 attacks in Syria and Iraq in

"The increase in attacks indicates ISIS is attempting to reconstitute following several years of decreased capability," CENTCOM said.

The announcement comes just after the 10-year mark since the militant group declared its caliphate in large parts of Iraq and Syria. At its peak, the group ruled an area half the size extreme interpretation of Islam, which included attacks on religious minority groups and harsh punishment of Muslims deemed to be apostates.

Militants also killed thousands of members of the Yazidi religious minority and kidnapped thousands of women and children, many of whom were subjected to sexual abuse and human trafficking. A coalition of more than 80

countries, led by the United

States, was formed to fight IS, which lost its hold on the territory it controlled in Iraq and 2017 and in Syria in 2019, although sleeper cells remain in both countries and abroad. Iraqi officials say that they can keep the IS threat under control with their own forces and have entered into talks with the US aimed at winding down the mission of the US-led military

coalition in Iraq. The talks come at a time of increased domestic tensions requests for comment.

of the United Kingdom where over the US military presence. umbrella group of Iran-backed militias calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq launched regular drone attacks on bases housing US troops in Iraq and Syria, which they said was in retaliation for Washington's support of Israel in the ongoing war in Gaza and were aimed at forcing U.S. forces to

withdraw from Iraq. Those attacks largely halted after three U.S. soldiers were killed in a strike on a base in Jordan, near the Syrian border in late January, prompting US

retaliatory strikes in Iraq. On Tuesday, two Iraqi militia officials said they had launched a new drone attack targeting the Ain al-Asad air base in Iraq. The officials spoke on condi tion of anonymity because they were not authorised to com ment publicly. It was unclear whether the attack had hit its target. US officials did not immediately respond to

North Korean landmines could be swept into South Korea by flooding, South Korea's military warned Wednesday, after the North has recently placed tens of thousands of additional deadly explosives along the rivals heavily fortified border.

North Korea's minelaying is part of construction at the border that's been going on since April, which also includes adding anti-tank barriers and reinforcing roads. South Korea officials believe North Korea aims to boost its frontline security posture and prevent its soldiers and citizens from defecting to South Korea

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff told local reporters that flooding caused by summer rainfall could wash the mines over the border, adding that North Korea might also deliberately float mines downriver as a provocation. The contents of the briefing

Concerns about possible North Korean provocation have deepened after Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, threatened new countermeasures Tuesday against South Korean civilian activists' efforts to drop leaflets over the north by balloon. North Korea has earlier responded by flying trash-carrying balloons toward South Korea, which have not caused major damage.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that North Korea's military has suffered "many casualties" from about 10 mine explosions and heat exposure during the intense border

works. An estimated 2 million mines are believed to be strewn in and around the Koreas' 248 kilometer (154 miles)- long and 4 kilometers (2.5 miles)-wide land border. Experts say both Koreas have poorly managed their mines and don't know exactly

were shared with The how many they have planted or

It's not unusual for wooden North Korean mine boxes to wash downriver in summer, causing deadly incidents in South Korea. A 2015 mine explosion blamed on North Korea maimed two South Korean soldiers and pushed the rivals to the brink of an armed conflict.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said it's it's also looking at other possible provocations by North Korea, such as firing across the border at incoming South Korean balloons. It said the South Korean military is strengthening its readiness to repel any potential aggression by North Korea.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to South Korean activists' efforts to scatter anti-Pyongyang leaflets, seeing them as a threat its political system and a challenge to its ban on access to foreign news for most of its 26 million people, experts say.

Russia, Ukraine swap 95 prisoners of war each

T Thraine and Russia U exchanged 95 prisoners of war each, officials in both countries said Wednesday, three weeks after their last swap and as part of what have been occasional agreements to send captured troops home. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the

reported the exchange. The POW swap was the 54th since Russia launched a fullscale invasion of its neighbour in February 2022.

Russian Defence Ministry

Officials from the warring countries meet only when they swap their dead and POWs, after lengthy preparation and diplomacy. Neither Ukraine nor Russia discloses how many POWs there are in

Zelenskyy said in a post on the Telegram messaging service that the United Arab Emirates had again brokered the agreements. The UAE has said it maintains friendly relations with both Moscow and Kyiv. Zelenskyy posted photos of shaven heads and wrapped in Ukrainian flags standing in what appeared to be an open

area of countryside. "No matter how difficult it may be, we are looking for everyone who may be in captivity. We have to return everyone, Zelenskyy wrote in the post. Among the released Ukrainians were some who had spent more than two years in captivity. They were captured in Mariupol, during Russia's early offensive in the Kyiv region and battles in the eastern Luhansk region, the country's Coordination Headquarters for

POWs said. It said just over 3,400 people, both civilians and military, have returned from Russian captivity since the outbreak of the war.

The Russian Defence Ministry said the freed Russian soldiers will be flown to Moscow for medical treatment and rehabil-

Kin of those killed in MH17 tragedy mark 10th anniversary

 $R^{\text{elatives of passengers killed}}_{\text{when Malaysia Airlines}}$ Flight 17 was shot down over Ukraine gathered with officials at Australia's Parliament House on Wednesday to mark the 10th anniversary of the tragedy

that claimed 298 lives. One of those relatives, Paul Guard, mostly blames the conflict raging in eastern Ukraine a decade ago for the missile attack that killed 38 Australian citizens and permanent residents including his parents, Toowoomba doctors Roger and Jill Guard

"I don't think anyone intended to bring down a passenger plane. So in that sense, I'm heartbroken that the conflict continues," Paul Guard told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "But I think that a lot of families would really have just liked an acknowledgement that what

happened was wrong and that Russia should not have been waging war," the son added. The conflict has since escalated into a full-scale war with Russia's invasion of its smaller

neighbour in February 2022. The pro-Russia rebel-held border region from where a Sovietera Buk surface-to-air missile was fatefully launched and the fields where much of the debris landed after the Boeing 777 disintegrated is now territory controlled by the Russian military. Moscow has repeatedly denied responsibility for MH17's destruction and refused to hand over two Russians and a Ukrainian convicted by a

Dutch court in absentia in 2022 of murder. Russia continues to be pursued under international law by the Netherlands through in the European Court of Human Rights and by Australia and the Netherlands jointly through the International Civil Aviation Organization Council, or ICAO, over its alleged role in bringing down MH17.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong told Wednesday's service she was "appalled" that Russia had withdrawn from the ICAO proceedings in June. The case will continue and we

will not be deterred in our commitment to hold Russia to account," Wong told the gathering that included foreign diplomats. Today, on behalf of the Australian government, I

recommit again to our collec-

tive pursuit of truth, justice and

accountability for the outrages

perpetrated on 17th July, 2014,

he added. A commemoration is also planned in the Netherlands later Wednesday at a monument near Schiphol Airport, from where MH17 left on its way to the Malaysian city of Kuala Lumpur. Australian Attorney-General Mark Drevfus will represent Australia at that monument, were 298 trees were planted to commemorate each victim and sunflowers like those that grew at the crash site. He expected the Netherlands-

Australia case against Russia would be back before the ICAO in October despite Moscow's withdrawal. "We won't let this go until we've brought Russia to account," Drevfus said The Netherlands was home to

196 victims. As well as Australia, victims also came from Malaysia, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, the Philippines, Canada, New Zealand, Vietnam, Israel, Italy, Romania, the United States and South An international investigation

initiated in the UN Security

Council by the Netherlands,

Malaysia and Australia concluded that the Buk missile system that destroyed MH17 belonged to the Russian 53rd Anti-Ăircraft Missile Brigade. The investigation concluded the missile was driven into Ukraine from a Russian military base near the city of Kursk and returned there after the plane was shot down.

Tony Abbott was Australia's prime minister when MH17 was shot down. Abbott recalled on Wednesday that Russian President Vladimir Putin became physically aggressive when the Australian raised MH17 and the Ukraine conflict on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders' summit in Beijing in

Putin said through an interpreter that Ukrainians were all fascists, had brought down MH17 themselves and that Ukraine had no right to exist, Abbott said

Then as we were going back into the conference — and this was really quite an extraordinary thing — he suddenly turned, grabbed the elbows and tried to shake me and then pushed me away. And he said in English, where he's quite fluent: Look, you are not a native Australian but I am a native Russian,' and pushed me away," Abbott told ABC.

"I think what he was trying to say to me in his own rather blunt and brutal way was that how could I as a citizen of a settler society understand the blood and soil and mystical attachment that he had to every last inch of Mother Russia?" Abbott said.

So it was pretty obvious to me right back then what he was on about. I just think it's a pity that more wasn't done to arm up the Ukrainians in the meantime. Abbott added.

Setback for TikTok

London (AP) TikTok owner ByteDance can't avoid the bloc's crackdown on digital giants, a European Union court said Wednesday in a decision that found the video sharing platform falls under a new law that also covers Apple, Google and Microsoft.

The EU's General Court rejected ByteDance's legal challenge against being classed as an online "gatekeeper" that has to comply with extra obligations under the 27-nation bloc's Digital Markets Act.

The rulebook, also known as the DMA, took effect this year and seeks to counter the dominance of Big Tech companies and make online competition fairer by giving consumers more choice.



E-tender for the Procurement of Lighting Spares (Year 2024-2025) Quantity as per NIT. For detailed NIT & tender Specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 16-07-2024 from 17:00 Hrs Note: Corrigendum and Addendum, if any will be published online

76155/12/3123/2023/35762 Dated CHD :- 7/17/2024

at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in

GHTP-57/24

ADB retains India's growth forecast at 7% for FY'25

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on (ADB) maintained Wednesday India's GDP growth forecast at 7 per cent for the current financial year, citing that a rebound in agriculture is expected given above-normal monsoon projections. The ADB forecast comes a

day after the International Monetary Fund revised upward its GDP growth projections for India to 7 per cent compared to 6.8 per cent projected in April.

Last month, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) revised upward its growth forecast to 7.2 per cent, from 7 per cent estimated earlier.

The Indian economy is on track to grow by 7 per cent in FY2024 (ending 31 March 2025) and 7.2 per cent in FY2025 (next financial year), as projected in ADO April 2024, said the July edition of the Asian Development Outlook (ADO).

The Indian economy logged a growth rate of 8.2 per cent for the financial year ended March 2024, as against 7 per cent in the previous fiscal



Services continued to expand robustly in Q4 of FY24, and the forward-looking services

PMI is well above its longterm average, it said, adding, industry is also expected to grow robustly, driven by manufacturing and strong demand for construction led by housing, it said.

"After muted growth in FY2023 (previous fiscal), a rebound in agriculture is expected given the abovenormal monsoon projections. This is notwithstanding the slower advance of monsoon in June. A rebound in in rural areas," it said.

Investment continues to be strong, led by public investments and bank credit is fueling robust housing demand improving private investment demand, it said.

However, it said, export growth will continue to be led by services, with merchandise exports showing relatively weaker growth.

The stronger-than-expected fiscal position of the central government could provide a further boost to growth, it However, the report said, this

agriculture will be important must be weighed against to sustain growth momentum downside risks arising from

geopolitical shocks.

With regard to inflation, ADO has also retained its forecast at 4.6 per cent for the current financial year and expects it to marginally decline to 4.5 per cent next

With regard to developing Asia's growth forecast, ADO said, it is revised up to 5 per cent in 2024 and maintained at 4.9 per cent in 2025. Growth projections remain

unchanged with respect to ADO April 2024, it said, adding, resilient domestic demand along with improved exports manufacturing will support growth this year. The region's 2024 growth

forecast has been marginally adjusted up by 0.1 percentage points due to upward revisions in the Caucasus and Central Asia along with East Asia, it said.

Meanwhile, the inflation forecast for the region has fallen to 2.9 per cent in 2024, largely due to downward revisions in China and the Caucasus and Central Asia, which offset a slight increase in South Asia, it said

Corporate funding in solar sector globally dips: Mercom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Total corporate funding in the solar sector globally fell by 10 per cent to USD 16.6 billion in January-June 2024 due to uncertainties in major markets including the ÚS, according to Mercom Capital. In the first half of 2023, the global solar energy sector attracted USD 18.5 billion of investment, the US-based research firm said in a report. 'Total corporate funding, including capital/private equity (VC)

funding, public market, and debt financing, in 1H 2024 totaled USD 16.6 billion compared to USD 18.5 billion raised in 1H 2023. The number of deals increased 9 per cent to 87 deals in 1H 2024 compared to 80 during the same period last year," the 'Solar Funding and M&A Report' said.

This has happened because of uncertainties in major markets. The financing activity in the solar sector remains restrained despite tailwinds from the Inflation Reduction Act and favourable global policies," said Raj Prabhu, CEO of Mercom Capital Group.



Besides, high interest rates, an uncertain rate trajectory and timeline, increasing trade chain supply challenges, concerns about the US presidential election's impact on the sector, and constantly evolving trade policies have created an unpredictable and uncertain climate. This has slowed down development, investments, and decision-

making, he added. In the first half of 2024, the global VC funding activity decreased 29 per cent with USD 2.7 billion raised in 29 deals compared to USD 3.8 billion from 33 deals in the first half of 2023.

In India, independent power producer AMPIN Energy

Transition secured funding of up to USD 35 million from responsAbility. While Ecozen and SolarSquare raised USD 30 million and 4.2 million in funding rounds to accelerate expansion and meet working capital needs

The global debt financing activity in the first half of 2024 reached USD 12.2 billion in 50 deals, a 53 per cent increase compared to 1H 2023 when USD 8 billion was raised in 33 deals.

In this space, Jakson Green in India obtained a sustainable trade facility of USD 7.1 million from HSBC India and Husk Power Systems secured a USD 4 million investment in debt financing from Electrifi.

Cabinet to soon decide on IPEF's clean, fair economy agreements

PTI NEW DELHI

 $T^{
m he}$ Union Cabinet will soon take a decision on the commerce ministry's proposal to seek approval for signing of 14-member IPEF (Indo-Pacific Framework for Prosperity) bloc's agreements on clean and fair economy, an official

Last month in Singapore, 13 IPEF bloc members signed these agreements, while India stated that it would ink the deals after getting domestic approval. The official said the commerce ministry has sent both pacts to the cabinet secretariat and soon the cabinet will take it up for approval.

Agreement on a clean economy intends to accelerate efforts of IPEF partners' towards energy security and transition resilience climate adaptation, (greenhouse gas) emissions mitigation; find/develop innovative ways of reducing dependence on fossil fue energy; promote technical cooperation, development, capacity building, and collaborations.

Exposure to India's infra sector helps LIC, SBI outshine peers

Shares of state-owned behemoth Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) have outperformed rivals like HDFC Life and ICICI Prudential Life as it placed bets on India's growth sectors, infrastructure, while the private sector concentrated bet on tech, consumer and consumerrelated BFSI companies.

LIC's stock has gained nearly 79 per cent from Rs 620 on June 18, 2023, to Rs 1,109.15 at the closing on Tuesday, according to stock exchange

In contrast, HDFC Life gave a negative return, if Tuesday's closing price of Rs 646.55 on the BSE is compared to Rs 666.55 a year back. Prudential

Insurance Co delivered a return of 12 per cent, considering its stock price rise from Rs 582 on June 18, 2023, to Rs 654.10 on June 16, 2024. Over



Life Insurance shares have 1,621.20, delivering a return of 23 per cent.

Capital market analysts said insurance companies make money in two ways - charging premiums for policies and then investing the premiums into assets. It is the latter that generates the bigger delta in profits, thus impacting value creation and managing risks. Global majors, including Buffet-owned Berkshire Hathaway, have been successful due to their ability to make superior investments.

capitalise on the emergence of risen from Rs 1,314 to Rs the country's infrastructure sector, analysts said.

Indian insurance companies concentrated investments in the BFSI, IT, and consumer sectors - all of have been underperformers recent past. Only 8-10 per cent of their investments are in the infrastructure sector. This is far less when compared to global standards. Large global insurance companies -- such as Allianz, Nippon Life Insurance, and Metlife, and other insurers like Berkshire Hathaway ---Most Indian insurance have much larger exposure all other sectors, according to ranging from

cent to the infrastructure sector, analysts noted. Over the past few years,

global insurers have been increasingly considering infrastructure investments as 'core' investments as the stable and long-term cash flows of infrastructure assets naturally align with the liabilities of Additionally, infrastructure

have defensive characteristics barriers to entry, strong pricing power, structural growth, and predictive cash and listed infrastructure can provide investors with inflationprotected income and solid capital growth.

India, government focus on the sector with large spending, supporting initiatives and encouraging policies, and improving governance, the infrastructure industry has come off-age. This has helped the infra sector to outperform

They said the high focus on retail loans, and the strategic reluctance to look infrastructure for growth opportunities is proving detrimental for the shareholderscompanies.

SBI, with its higher exposure to the infrastructure sector, has seen its stock gain 48 per cent in the year (from Rs 592 to Rs 880.95 on Tuesday), while those of its private counterparts HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank have gained only in the range of (-3 per cent to 24 per cent.

Kotak and HDFC Banks with negligible exposure to the infrastructure sector are the worst performing, with their shares giving a negative return, stock exchange data

Kotak Mahindra Bank shares were at Rs 1,895 on June 18, 2023, and closed at Rs 1,805.20 on Tuesday. HDFC Bank closed at Rs 1,619.20 on BSE on Tuesday, down from

Alphacorp to invest ₹350 cr to develop luxury housing project in Gurugram

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $\begin{array}{ccccc} R & \text{ealty firm Alphacorp will} \\ R & \text{invest Rs 350 crore to} \\ \text{develop a luxury housing} \end{array}$ project in Gurugram as part of its expansion plan amid strong consumer demand. Without divulging the name

of the partner, Alphacorp said it has tied up with an entity that owns two land parcels of nearly 2.4 acre each, located in Sector 15, Part 2, Gurugram.

"We will develop a total of 200 apartments on these two land parcels." said Santosh Agarwal, Executive Director and CFO of Alphacorp. On one parcel of 2.38 acre, the

company has launched luxury high-rise project 'Alphacorp SKY1' comprising 100 units. The price is Rs 5 crore per unit. The project on the second plot will also be launched in the next 2-3

When asked about the project



350 crore excluding land cost. He said the investment will be funded through internal accruals and bank loans, if necessary.

"Gurugram, regarded as the Millennium City, exemplifies rapid infrastructure growth dynamic development. This bustling hub attracts a diverse range of residents, businesses, and investors," Agarwal said. The demand for luxury

in Gurugram in the past two years, he said.

Since its inception, Alphacorp has developed integrated townships, luxurious condominiums, corporate hubs, retail centers, and industrial parks across the National Capital Region Punjab, Pradesh, and Gujarat.

Agarwal said the company has developed around 12 projects so far while six projects nstructe

Sebi's proposal on new asset class for high risk takers looks promising: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator proposal introducing a new asset class for high-risk profile investors can help them gain access to a newer set of strategies including long-short equity fund and inverse Exchangetraded Fund (ETF).

The new asset class is aimed at bridging the gap between mutual funds and Portfolio Management Services (PMS) in terms of flexibility in portfolio construction. The Sebi's consultation paper

floated on Tuesday on 'new asset class' and creating a structure for differentiated, higher risk strategies looks very promising, Radhika Gupta, MD and CEO of Edelweiss Mutual Fund said. "India is finally opening up to different investment styles products. approaches. Passive, factor, inverse ETFs, alts and more. There is no single way to invest," she added.

In its consultation paper, the regulator said the new asset class will provide a regulated product with features like SIP (Systematic Investment Plan), higher risk-taking capability, and a higher ticket size, to meet the needs of the emerging

category of investors. The regulator suggested a minimum investment of Rs 10 lakh for the new asset class, which could be permitted to invest in derivatives for purposes beyond just hedging

and rebalancing.
This higher threshold will deter retail investors from investing in this product, while attracting investors, with investible funds between



who are being drawn to unauthorised and portfolio unregistered management service providers," the regulator said. 'Sebi's consultation paper for introducing new product with higher investment minimum than mutual funds and more freedom to invest can help investors gain access to a newer set of strategies like Long-short equities, inverse ETFs, etc which can help them express specific views on the market," Kaustubh Belapurkar, Director Manager Research Manager Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Long-short equity fund seeks to deliver returns by taking long and short positions in equity and equity-related instruments. For example, the fund may be bullish on the automobile sector and bearish on the IT sector and may invest in both these sectors by going long on the automobile sector and short on the IT

Inverse ETF aims to generate returns that are negatively correlated to the returns of added.

the underlying index. Dezerv Co-Founder Sandeep Jethwani said higher-risk profile investors can now

regulated access opportunities without the high minimum thresholds of PMS and AIF or resorting to unregulated structures that bode really well for the protection of wealth that India creates.

This new asset class is poised to leverage the exponential growth expected in managed assets (MFs, PMSs and AIFs) in the next 5-7 years, he added. Sebi believes that over the years, a notable opportunity for a new asset class has emerged between mutual funds and PMS in terms of flexibility in portfolio construction.

"The absence of such an investment product appears inadvertently have propelled the investors of this segment towards unregistered and unauthorised investment schemes. Such schemes often promise unrealistically high returns and exploit the investors' expectations for better yields, leading to potential financial risks," it

Goa targeting new markets for tourism through global trade fairs, says Minister

Goa is looking forward to tap new and emerging participation in global trade fairs after international tourism was affected due to the Russia-Ukraine war and other problems, minister Rohan Khaunte said on

Wednesday.
During COVID-19, the international footfall in Goa was only 33,000, which has now increased to 4.5 lakh for this particular year (calendar year), Tourism Minister Khaunte said in the state assembly.

Responding to a question raised by Goa Forward Party MLA Vijai Sardesai in the assembly, he said after the COVID-19 pandemic, the perception about tourism in the state is changing, taking it away from beaches.

Sardesai said Goa spent Rs 63 crore in the last four years (on various events), including Rs 29.84 crore to promote the state within the country. Former chief minister late

Manohar Parrikar emphasised on the pre-audit of roadshows and that accountability parameters should be framed, he said. Khaunte said after the COVID-19 pandemic, the

tourism department in 2022 decided to change the perception of Goa "beyond beaches" as earlier the impression about the coastal state was only about its beaches and party life. "We needed to see that quality



and tapping of new markets, he said.

"Problems with the UK market and the Russia war international impacted tourism to a big extent," the minister said, adding the Israel military campaign (in Gaza) also resulted in a dip in the number of tourists from that country.

'We had to ensure that we tap the emerging markets like South East Asia, South Asia, the US, UAE and Germany," he said. The state tourism department

participated in the WTM (World Travel Mart) London, ITB, Berlin, IITF and other events, Khaunte said. "We are presenting ourselves to the world through these

events where players from the emerging markets also come, Earlier, only Goa used to participate in these events but now Ladakh and states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Karnataka are

"During the events, we have serious B2B and B2C trade meetings. The minutes are people come in. Since 2021-22, Goa tourism board headed by Chief Minister placed before an empowered committee before we decide the next course of action," he Pramod Sawant discussed

attending the international

Pradesh,

marts, he noted.

Govt should rationalise customs duty in Budget to boost domestic manufacturing, says ICC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has suggested the government to rationalise customs duties in various sectors including solar battery, aluminum, and lithium cells in a bid to boost domestic manufacturing.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget for financial year 2024-25 on July 23. ICC President Prabhu Ameya protective measures are needed for the growth of domestic industry in sectors including steel, solar battery, aluminum, and lithium cells. "There is a need for rationalization of customs

duty in these specific sectors in a holistic manner. Huge potential is there to boost domestic manufacturing and make India a global hub for manufacturing," Prabhu

He added that levies on raw materials impact domestic players particularly the downstream firms.
He also asked for correction

in inverted duty structure by cutting down duty on mixed petroleum gas from 5 per cent to 2.5 per cent. boost domestic

manufacturing, there is a need to increase duty on polyvinyl polyethylene polymers chloride, terephthalate, polypropylene and polyesters to 10 per cent. This will help in reducing import dependency and will drive India towards selfsufficiency in

petrochemical manufacturing segment," Prabhu said.

about Talking importance aluminium foil sector, the President said the domestic industry has been facing severe losses as there is antidumping duty on raw materials whereas the finished goods are not subject to any duties on imports from China.

'This dual effect has resulted in extensive net losses to the companies that have made significant investments into this industry," Prabhu noted. On the taxation side, the chamber has suggested setting up a commission to review the Income Tax Act 1961 in its entirety and simplify the provisions.

"This is an old Act. Every year in the Budget, amendments are made which has made this Act complex to understand. These amendments have resulted in many anomalies which in turn have given rise to a large number of legal cases," the chamber has said. Prabhu recommended government not to impose tax on dividends.

He added that during his tenure so far the ICC has spread its wings further nationally internationally and become a truly world-class chamber. "We have opened 25 chapters globally in countries including New Zealand, the US, Europe, Australia, Korea and Middle East nations," he said

PwC for extension of beneficial tax regime for new manufacturing firms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tax consultancy firm PWC has urged Finance

 ▲ has
 urged
 Finance

 Minister
 Nirmala
 Sitharman

 to extend the beneficial tax regime for new manufacturing companies and introduce a comprehensive tax amnesty scheme for cases related to Customs.

Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget for 2024-25 on July 23.

"I think the Make in India is the first thing which comes to mind, and you will recall that in 2019, the government introduced a 15 per cent rate for new manufacturing companies, which lapsed on March 31, 2024.

"I think that is one extension, which is being expected, and the expectation is also that instead of giving a year-onyear extension if we can look at the block period, say for the next five years because shifting a manufacturing is a big decision and the corporates may take time before making a decision and make it viable, feasible and that's the first bit," said Sandeep Puri, Partner, Price Waterhouse & Co LLP. Section 115BAB of the Income Tax Act offers a concessional tax rate of 15 per cent for new domestic manufacturing

Initially, this benefit was available for companies set up and registered after October 1, 2019, and commencing production by March 31, 2023, which was later extended to March 31, 2024, to account for delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

companies.

IOA chief PT Usha chides WFI ad-hoc panel for exclusion of Antim's coaches in long list

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

OA President P.T. Usha on Wednesday came down ▲ heavily on the ad-hoc panel that managed the suspended WFI, saying the committee did not do due diligence and missed out on giving the names of wrestler Antim Panghal's coaches in the long list, sent to the Paris Olympic Games organisers. The Indian Olympic

Association's reaction came in the wake of delay in visa clearance for Panghal's preferred coaches for the

The 19-year-old Panghal, who trains in Hisar, was the first Indian wrestler to qualify for the Paris Games when she won a bronze at the World Championship in 2023.

She wants her coaches Bhagat Singh and Vikas to travel with her along with physiotherapist Heera. The IOA has cleared all

the names but the support staff members attached with Panghal are still awaiting visa

"Antim won India an Olympic quota as early as in September 2023 by claiming a bronze medal in the World Wrestling Championships in Belgrade. In its wisdom the Ad Hoc Committee, administering wreetling chose not to include wrestling, chose not to include the names of Antim's coach or physiotherapist in the long list of names sent to the Olympic Organising Committee," Usha said in a statement.

The wrestlers are supposed to reach Paris on August 3 and the supports staff members have got appointment for biometrics for August 2 metrics for August 2. IOA had, in December 2023,

named its EC member Bhupendra Singh Bajwa as the head of the ad-hoc panel and made MM Somaya and Manjusha Kanwar as the other



The IOA President also took an indirect dig at SAI for not being attentive enough.

"It is strange that the responsible authorities, who approved the long list of athletes, coaching and support staff, did not deem it fit to recommend the inclusion of Bhagat Singh or Heera or

"It was only after Antim's father came to IOA a few days ago that I stepped in to have them cleared by the Ministry," Usha said.

Meanwhile, an IOA source told PTI that Panghal instead of going to VFS (Visa Facilitation Services), should have approached IOA for

intervention.
"If they had come to us, we would have requested the French Embassy and it would have been done easily since embassy supportive. We would have

solution but I think they were being misled by someone," the official said.

The IOA chief appreciated the French Embassy for its

'Many athletes will vouch that IOA has been proactive in

getting their coaches and support personnel accreditations or visas from the Embassy of France in

The Embassy in Delhi and its consulates elsewhere have extended the greatest support in processing visa requests not only from such personnel but also from journalists who do not have accreditation," she

We are confident that despite such misleading reports, IOA will be able to facilitate a speedy processing of visa requests of those coaches and support staff cleared by the Ministry," Usha said.



Express yourself in Paris: Kapil's advise to Olympics-bound **Indian athletes**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India skipper Kapil Dev, on Wednesday, advised Olympic-bound Indian athletes to express themselves fearlessly at the mega-event starting July 26 and hoped that the country would hit double digit mark on the medals tally.

India will be represented by a strong 117-member athlete contingent in Paris and the country hopes to better seven-medal count it logged in Tokyo.

"I can't really say for anybody but I can just wish them all the luck and hope we should win more medals this year and that's important," Kapil, who is also the president of Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) said here on the sidelines of the launch of second edition of the Trinity Golf Champions League

My advise to all (Indian athletes) would be to go and express yourself. I cross my finger and why not if we believe it (double digit medal haul) will happen." Kapil, however, refrained from commenting on Indian cricket and newly-appointed head coach Gautam Gambhir.

"If Gautam Gambhir is taking that position (of head coach of Indian cricket team), I wish good luck to him and the team. I hope they do better than what we have done previously. I want to wish the Indian players all the

Kapil, who played a lot of amateur event back in the day, hoped that the sport will continue to grow in the country.

"When I started playing crick-et, I never thought golf will reach this height. I hope to see golf reaching the heights of cricket one day," he said. "We just need good sponsors to

promote the game. Without sponsors nothing is possible. In years time we should reach there," added Kapil, who is the ambassador of TGCL and also plays in the league.

Buoyed by the resounding success of the inaugural season last year, which featured four teams, TGCL this year will feature eight teams -- seven from India and one from Sri Lanka. The event will be held in Bengaluru

from September 2 to 7. The league is a IPL kind of a venture and will be played in the Ryder Cup format with 20 playprofessional, celebrity and amateur golfers playing together. The winning team will be richer by Rs 30 lakh, while second and third placed sides will get Rs 15 and Rs 10 lakh respectively. "It's a unique concept, never seen something like this. I hope the prize money for the winners of TGCL will one million dollars in the next five years," Kapil

The eight teams participating in this year's TGCL are debutants Wave Riders, Mumbai Warriors, Chandigarh Titans, Chennai Hustlers, Dakshin Rangers, Lahari Lions, Golfism and Colombo Lions.

Chelsea begins disciplinary action after Fernandez's involvement in Argentina player chants

AP ■ LONDON

Chelsea has begun disciplinary Caction after midfielder Enzo Fernandez was involved in a video where members of Argentina's

where members of Argentina's Copa America-winning squad appeared to sing about French players with African heritage. FIFA also said it was also looking into the incident after the French soccer federation pledged to file a complaint with the sport's world governing body over "racist and discriminatory remarks."

Fernandez said he was "truly sorry" Fernandez said he was "truly sorry'

and Chelsea said discriminatory unacceptable." "completely 'We are proud to be a diverse,

inclusive club where people from all cultures, communities identities feel welcome," the Premier League club said in a statement Wednesday. "We acknowledge and appreciate our player's public apology and will use this as an opportunity to educate.

The Club has instigated an internal disciplinary procedure.'

Argentina beat Colombia 1-0 on Sunday at Miami Gardens, Florida. Afterwards a video posted on



Instagram appeared to show Fernandez and Argentina players chanting about France's team as they celebrated.

The same chants - by some Argentina fans - emerged before the team beat France in the World Cup

final in 2022.

The derogatory chants single out France players of African heritage, from several countries, and holding a French passport.

Fernandez apologized for "getting caught up in the euphoria of our

Copa America celebrations." "That video, that moment, those words, do not reflect my beliefs or my character," he said on Instagram.

'I am truly sorry." Fernandez became the most expensive player in British soccer history after joining Chelsea from Benfica for 106.7 million pounds (\$131.4 million) in 2023.

Chelsea's response comes after one of Fernandez's clubmates, France defender Wesley Fofana, posted the video on his social media accounts Tuesday and called it "uninhibited

racism."
Fofana has family ties to Ivory Coast and is among several French players who are Black in the Chelsea first-

team squad.
FIFA President Gianni Infantino
has said soccer and its 211 national federations must have a zero tolerance approach to racism and in May committed to relaunching a task force to monitor incidents.
"FIFA is aware of a video circulating

on social media and the incident is being looked into," the governing body said Wednesday. "FIFA strongly condemns any form of discrimination by anyone including players, fans and officials.

has over the incident on a team bus after a tournament, but the governing body likely could act if the Argentina federation's handling the case is considered

Īt is unclear what jurisdiction FIFA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's first woman Paralympic medallist Deepa Malik has been named subregional representative for South Asia by the Asian Paralympic Committee (APC). confirmed during the 34th Executive Board meeting of the APC, signifies a significant step forward for gender diversity and athlete-centric leadership in para-sports. She will take up her post immediately. Paralympic former

Committee of India chief's appointment brings the number of female representatives on the APC Executive Board to five, making it the highest female representation on the board in the history of the organization, according to a media release.
"Having more women during

our Executive Board meetings especially when one voice is of someone with the experience, skills and wisdom of Dr. Deepa Malik," APC President Majid Rashed said. "The APC acknowledges Dr.

Deepa's extensive experience and is confident that our members from the South Asia Sub Region will be excellently represented by you on the APC Executive Board," he added. Malik's role will involve representing South nations and advocating for the development and promotion of para-sports across the

region.
"It is an honor and an



Asian Paralympic Committee appoints Deepa Malik as representative for South Asia voice for our region. India for long is a flag bearer of "Vasudev Kutumbakam" and

now is also a right time to take a step forward in taking the lead in contributing to this one big family," Malik said "It's time for me to represent India at a bigger level and contribute in the collective growth of parasports and

inclusion through sports' at large," she added.

Malik's appointment also aligns with the Paralympic Committee of India's broader mission to foster excellence and inclusivity in para-sports. "This is a defining moment for

development of sports in this region. I wholeheartedly welcome this announcement. We will collaborate with Dr. Deepa Malik and the APC to develop para-sports across the region. PCI is truly happy that APC has shown trust in our former president and our champion player," PCI champion player," president Devendra Jhajharia

This appointment marks a significant milestone in the history of the APC and the showcasing India's leadership and commitment to gl̄obal

Can Indian wrestlers deliver in Paris or medal-winning trend under risk

(Left to right): AMAN SEHRAWAT (Men's freestyle 50kg); VINESH PHOGAT (Women's 50kg); ANTIM PANGHAL (Women's 53kg); ANSHU MALIK (Women's 57kg); NISHA DAHIYA (Women's 68kg) and REETIKA HOODA (Women's 76kg)

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian wrestlers have delivered a medal every single time at the Olympics since the 2008 Beijing edition. Success in four consecutive editions has enhanced the status of wrestling as a prime Olympic sport in the country. There was success at junior level too.

The sport also produced U23 world champions. It raised hopes of big success in Paris. It was Sushil Kumar who changed the way wrestling was perceived in the country by winning a bronze in 2008. He bettered his medal four years

later in the London Games, where he fetched a silver. While Yogeshwar Dutt also won a bronze in the British Sakshi Malik carried forward

the trend by bagging a bronze in Rio in 2016 and Ravi Dahiya and Bajrang Punia made it a double delight in the delayed Tokyo Games (2021). However, the sport which was soaring high and was expected to reach even greater heights, was brought down to earth by the prolonged protests against then Wrestling Federation of India chief by the country's elite wrestlers.

National camps and domestic competitions came to a halt. Confusion prevailed. No one knew how or when normalcy would return. There were allegations and counter-arguments. WFI elections were held and the national body got suspended but finally when UWW lifted its suspension, things began

Only one male and five female wrestlers qualified for the upcoming edition. There is hope, but doubts too. PTI takes a look at the

strength and weakness of all the six contenders. AMAN SEHRAWAT (Men's

freestyle 50kg): With his steady progress, Aman did was unthinkable: replacing Olympic silver medallist Ravi Dahiya, the formidable Indian wrestler, in the men's 57kg weight division.

Aman's biggest strength is his stamina and endurance. If the bout lasts six minutes, it will be difficult to beat him.

However, what is lacking in his game is limited strategy and technique. It was evident when he was pitted against Rei Higuchi in the Ranking Series event in Hungary. He did not seem to have a plan B. At this stage, planing against each

His biggest threats are Higuchi and Uzbekistan's Gulomjon Abdullaev. VINESH **PHOGAT**

(Women's 50kg): Without doubt, Vinesh Phogat is one the best woman wrestlers that India has produced. A solid and defence equally impressive attack are her strengths.

However, what could trouble her is lack of quality mat time against top wrestlers in the last year or so. Lowering the weight class to 50kg means more stress on her

body. Cutting the weight cut

ahead of the bout is a painful

process, it sucks the energy

out of the body and hers is an

aging body. She is almost 30. Her natural body weight is about 55-56kg. Much would depend on how Vinesh copes with it. In the recent Grand Prix of

Spain, the weight relaxation was 2kg but that won't be the case in Paris. ANTIM **PANGHAL**

53kg): (Women's firebrand wrestler from Hisar was first to lock a Paris Olympics quota. She also challenged Vinesh for a trial with her when the protest controversy was at its peak.

trap her. She has the spark and However, she has not

competed since the Asian Games. A back injury forced her to miss the Asian Championship this year. The lack of mat time and competitive action could prove to be her bane.

ANSHU MALIK (Women's 57kg): Anshu's career graph has not really taken off the way it was expected after her exploits on the junior circuit and the smooth transition to senior events. Injuries have Her biggest strength is flexibility that allows her to wriggle out of her rivals' grip pretty easily. It's difficult to troubled her and et she is one of the best bets in Paris for India.

Quick movement on the mat

quietly made her way into Paris Games. She had shown

to go with an aggressive game style is Anshu's biggest strength. She also has the experience of competing at the Olympics. She was not ready for the big stage in Tokyo as a teenager but now has a fair idea what is required in such a highly competitive field.

Her fitness, though, is a worrying aspect as she enters the Olympics with a suspected shoulder injury. She claims it's not been tested

just a neck spasm but she has NISHA DAHIYA (Women's **68kg):** Away from the limelight, Nisha Dahiya has

promise early but injuries has halted her ascent. Reported dead wrongly in 2021, Nisha has managed to surprise quality rivals with her aggressive game style. She is seasoned and her fearless approach is her biggest strength. Not having the exposure of competing at big events consistently is her

of the bout. She tends to pour out everything in the first four minutes of her bouts and if an up-and-down bout lasts the distance, she gives away points easily. Handling nerves on

weakness apart from losing steam in the fifth-sixth minute

debut will also be key HOODA REETIKA (Women's 76kg): Reetika has the capability to surprise her rivals. She is not exactly unknown in the circuit but can prove to be a tough nut to crack even for experienced wrestlers due to her explosive strength.

She has power and technique but has the habit to concede points in the last 30 seconds of the bout. Even if she builds a lead, she can end up losing those points. Probably losing focus in the fag end of bouts is

Suryakumar holds 2nd spot, Jaiswal make gains in ICC T201 batting rankings

The big-hitting Suryakumar Yadav is the highest placed Indian at second spot, while young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal occupies the sixth position in the ICC T20I batting rankings issued on Wednesday. Ruturaj Gaikwad has dropped

a place to the eighth position in the T20 batters' list, which was updated following India's recent 4-1 series triumph over Zimbabwe.

Jaiswal was the big winner following his 141 runs in the series as he rose four places, behind No.1 ranked batter Travis Head of Australia and Survakumar.

Shubman Gill, who led India against Zimbabwe in the absence of senior players and was the leading run-scorer of the series with 170 runs from five innings, moved up a whopping 36 places to 37th.

No Indian features in the top 10 of the T20I bowlers rankings. Axar Patel, who was rested for the Zimbabwe series, dropped four places to 13th

Fast bowler Mukesh Kumar

Tiger Woods is playing all four majors for the first time since

2019, which at the start of the year

would have been cause for great

The results paint a different picture.

He set a Masters record by making

his 24th consecutive cut at Augusta

National. And then he was gone by the weekend at the PGA Championship and the U.S. Open.

He hasn't broken par since a 69 in the second round of the 2022 PGA

Championship, and he needed that

His performance is starting to raise questions of how much longer he

will play - how much longer he should play - to avoid lasting memories of a great champion

Leave it to Colin Montgomerie to

put those thoughts into words found

in a Times of London interview

ahead of the British Open, when he

said at one point, "What the hell is he

The entirety of what Montgomerie told the Times: "I_hope people

remember Tiger as Tiger was, the

passion and the charismatic aura

simply to make the cut.

slapping it around.

AP ■ TROON (SCOTLAND)

optimism.



and spinner Washington Sundar also made upward movements.

Mukesh, who scalped eight wickets from three games, has gained 36 places to rise to 46th spot. Washington, who picked eight wickets in five matches, has risen 21 spots to

it there, either.'

now. At Pinehurst he did not seem to

enjoy a single shot and you think, What the hell is he doing?' He's

coming to Troon and he won't enjoy

Woods already has enjoyed one

aspect of his stay at Royal Troon.

That came Tuesday when he was asked about Montgomerie's

comments. Woods relishes a chance

to push back on criticism,

particularly when the source is

someone known for never winning a

"Well, as a past champion, I'm exempt until I'm 60," Woods said, speaking to his time at the British

Open. "Colin's not. He's not a past

champion, so he's not exempt. So he

doesn't get the opportunity to make

It brought up memories of an Open

tradition some 20 years ago. Stewart

McDougal was the press officer at

the time, and he would ask Open

champions who came into the press center to sign the table. At the end of the week, McDougal auctioned off

Montgomerie came in one day, saw

all the signatures on the table and

reached for pen.
"I'm sorry, Colin," McDougal told

that decision. I do.

the table for charity.

around him. There is none of that him. "It's only for Open champions."

England's Adil Rashid is leading T20I bowlers' chart ahead of South Africa's Anrich Wanindu and Hasaranga of Sri Lanka.

In the T20I all-rounders' rankings, India's Hardik Pandya dropped four places to sixth while Axar slipped one rung to 13th.

Poor Monty.

The questions are fair enough, but

there is something to be said about

golfers being able to decide when

their time is done. And given all that

Woods has done in the game, it's

probably not the best idea to show

him the door no matter what

numbers he is posting.

Washington (41st) and Shivam Dube (43rd) have risen by eight and 35 places to 41st abd 43rd spots respectively.

Hasaranga Lanka's continues to top the all-rounders' list ahead os Australia's Marcus Stoinis and Zimbabwe skipper Sikandar



Roshni scores hat-trick as

Hockey Jharkhand thrashed Assam Hockey 13-0 in the women's category with the young Roshni Aind (24th, 32nd, 33rd) scoring a hat-trick in the 2nd Hockey India Junior Men & Women India Junior Men & Women East Zone Championship here

on Wednesday.
The other goal-scorers for the

too scored a lopsided 11-0

win against Hockey Bihar with Kachhap Rimjhim (20, 21, 31, 36) scoring four goals. Najiya Khatun (8, 34), Marandi Rajina (38), Khushi Kumari (44), Sugandha Sonam (49, 50), and Kumari Sharda (57) too were on target.

Hockey Bengal defeated Manipur Hockey 8-3 with Laltlanchhungi (4, 39, 49, 56), Shanti Horo (6, 33), and Lalpeksangi (23, 24) on target. For Manipur Hockey, Tanu Shorensangbam (26), Devi Mutum Priya (41) and Devi Laishram Ritu (48) scored the consolation goals.

In the men's section, Hockey Association of Odisha defeated Manipur Hockey 7-0

with Rohit Kullu (14, 60), Sunil Lakra (22), Deepak Pradhan (28, 50), Premdayal Giri (41) and Deonath Nanwar (47) on target.

Hockey Jharkhand crushed Hockey Bihar 9-0 with Abhishek Tigga (6), Jolen Topno (20, 59), Rohit Pradhan (21), Roshan Ekka (37), Ghuran Lohra (38), Adisan Minj (42), Faguwa Horo (44), and Dodray Sandeep (53) scoring the goals.

Hockey Bengal registered a 5-1 win over Assam Hockey. Karan Shaw (2, 23, 39) led the goal-scoring efforts for the winners while Prince Gabriyal Dhan (28) and Bishnu Paswan (34) too scored a goal each.

sleeve covering his right leg. That was a clear reminder that age isn't as big an issue as health. Woods has

been forthright in explaining his dilemma. His body won't allow him

to play a full schedule, and when he

shows up at the majors, he has to deal with competitive rust.

He could play more and risk not

playing where it matters. That's

something he will have to sort out.

And it was telling that the PGA Tour

created an exemption category

exclusively for him to play in the \$20

million signature events by adding

him to the field - he wouldn't be

taking a spot away from another player. How much he plays next year will be worth watching.

In the meantime, Woods has been at

Royal Troon since Sunday. He has

high hopes. Maybe they are unrealistic based on the scores he is

There is a time for all sportsmen to

say goodbye, but it's very difficult to

tell Tiger it's time to go," Montgomerie said. "Obviously, he

still feels he can win. We are more

positing, but they are his hopes.



England great from Barcelona

AP ■ LONDON

England defender Lucy joined Chelsea from Barcelona on Wednesday on a two-year deal.

winner Bronze completed her move to the Women's Super League (WSL) champion after

still feels a little bit surreal. It's obviously a club I know so much about and have done for such a long time," she said. 'I'm really excited to be back in

Bronze is one of the most successful players in the history of the women's game

clubs and country the European Championship with England in 2022 and was a losing finalist at last year's World Cup.

in England, France and Spain with Liverpool, Manchester

City, Lyon and Barcelona. She was runner-up for the Ballon d'Or award in 2019 and named FIFA Best Women's Player of the Year in 2020.

Lucy will bring leadership to the group. She is a serial winner and a versatile defender. She has lots of experience and a winning mentality which we feel will fit well into the squad," Chelsea general manager Paul Green

Chelsea

Hayes before she left for the Women's States National Team at the end of the

Lucy Bronze joins Chelsea

Five-time Champions League

two years with Barcelona.
"To know I'm a Chelsea player

England. My family are so excited as well to get to more of my games."

after winning major titles with The 32-year-old right-back

She won three Champions League titles with Lyon and two more with Barcelona. Bronze won eight league titles

has dominated women's soccer in England and is the five-time defending

United

Hockey Jharkhand wins

winners at the Netaji Subhas Eastern Centre were captain Rajni Kerketta (11, 27), Barwa Purnima (31, 46), Mundu Sukarmani (46, 56), Parwati Topno (21), Pinki Kumari (29), Hemrom Leoni (43) and Aupriya Soreng (59).

Hockey Association of Odisha

Analysis: Tiger Woods playing all the majors, but for how much longer? - the age of Tom Watson when he was an 8-foot par putt away from winning the British Open at Turnberry in 2009. The year before, Greg Norman was 53 when he had the 54-hole lead at Royal Birkdale. Courses for the U.S. Majors might be

getting too big for the 48-year-old Woods, whose body is held together by hardware. But there is something about links golf that is timeless. "The older you get, the less you can carry the golf ball," Woods said. "But

over here, you can run the golf ball 100 yards if you get the right wind and the right trajectory. ... You can play on the ground with a 1-iron, 2-iron, 2-wood whetever. 3-wood, whatever. "I think that's one of the reasons why you see older champions up there on the board because they're not forced to have to carry the ball 320 yards." Woods always will be linked with Augusta National because of his watershed win at age 21 when he won the 1997 Masters by 12 shots,

ideal for the links golf. It still is. Woods showed up Tuesday wearing

and it is the major he has won the

most times. But for all his power as a

younger man, no one hit irons like Woods. The flight of his shots was realistic.

shorts, with a black compression

The truth is probably somewhere in between. But perhaps Woods still feels he can win because unlike Montgomerie, he has done it before.

Jon hoping to ride Spanish

WSL champion. It was managed by Emma

Scottie is adjusting to links golf and his role as best player in the world

AP TROON (SCOTLAND)

The first stage of Scottie Scheffler's rise to the top of golf felt like warp speed. He went from No. 15 in the world to No. 1 in the span of five tournaments, and that was before he won the Masters for the first time.

Now he's on a level not seen since Tiger Woods was in his

Scheffler is not the biggest draw at the British Open, not with Woods in the field. Rory McIlroy remains a big attraction, especially in the U.K., and he comes into Royal Troon as a sentimental favorite from his sad collapse in the U.S. Open and going 10 years without a major.

But any conversation at the final major of the year starts with Scheffler, a heavy favorite as he has been in every major this year. And that has taken him time to fully appreciate his status in the game

"I never really thought of myself as anything but a golfer," Scheffler said Tuesday. "I was never trying to be famous. I didn't want to be a celebrity or whatever. I just wanted to become a good golfer and get the most out of myself. It's brought me this far, so I continue to just try to keep my head down and put in the work that got me here and just continue to practice and hopefully continue to get

His six PGA Tour victories before the calendar turned to July are the most since Arnold Palmer in 1962. Someone pointed out to Scheffler that Palmer's seventh victory that year was a claret jug he won at

Royal Troon. He wasn't sure how to react to



shoulders and say, "Yeah, that would be great.

"I love the history of the game, and there's certain things that I know and certain things that I don't. That was something that for some reason I just never stumbled across," he said, searching for the right answer. "So I had no idea that that was

The British Open figures to

present his biggest test. Scheffler is still relatively new to links golf - everything about his rise to No. 1 is new - having played this style in 2021 for the first time. He has learned to adjust the flight of his ball since links turf creates a little more spin on certain shots. The greens can be slower. Bunkers are to be avoided. He is a two-time Masters

champion, missed a U.S. Open playoff by one shot at The Country Club and was runnerup in the PGA Championship at Oak Hill. But he has never seriously contended in golf's oldest championship.

Even so, the love of the links is He went to the J.P. McManus McIlroy has far more

ago and took side trips to Lahinch and Ballybunion. He began this trip across the Atlantic Ocean by skipping the Scottish Open at The Renaissance Club - links style, but not links turf - and going to Turnberry with Sam Burns for a match with their caddies, both good players.

A tremendous amount of fun," he said. And then it was time for work at Royal Troon, the links

renowned for having the longest hole (the 623-yard sixth) and shortest hole (the 123-yard eighth) in the British Open rotation. Most peculiar about Troon is

that the outward nine typically with at least a wee breeze at the players' back - has two par 5s and measures 3,539 yards. The inward nine with the wind in the face has one par 5 and is 3,846 yards. "It's basically a tale of two nines

on this course," McIlroy said. 'You feel like you have to make your score on the way out and then sort of hang on coming

that except to shrug his Pro-Am in Ireland a few years experience on links golf - and a

claret jug to show for it from his victory at Royal Liverpool in 2014 - but it still takes time to adjust because "you play 11 months of your golf every year in very different conditions. Players also are preparing for weather described as "mixed,"

His 82 in the third round of the his 15th major at the Masters.

Masters was his highest in a major. Another number worth noting is 59

a gentle way of saying it probably won't be terribly pleasant for most of the week. Sunshine gave way to spells of rain on Tuesday, and that was before lunch was served.

PGA champion Xander Schauffele might be the second-most consistent player in golf behind Scheffler nothing but top 20s in his last 10 starts and 51 cuts in a row and has acquired a taste for less-than-pleasant conditions,

particularly in the Open.
"If the weather gets really bad, you just have to take the bunkers out of play and really try and plot your way around," he said. "It doesn't have to be super pretty. Just kind of place the ball around the property and really just try and get it in the hole in as few shots as possible

That's what Scheffler has been doing all year. Along with winning the Masters for the second time and The Players Championship, his other four wins have come in signature events against the strongest fields - on long courses and short, dry conditions and soft. And with that has come a level of notoriety - the bizarre arrest at the PGA Championship certainly contributed - he wasn't expecting but has come to appreciate.

"Being out here playing in front of great crowds and having them scream your name and holler when you make putts and be truly rooting for you is a great feeling," he said.

AP ■ TROON (SCOTLAND)

The 78 on the Old Course two years

ago in what likely will be his final

He still draws the biggest crowd and

generates the loudest buzz. And two

numbers worth remembering are four and 15. He had four surgeries

on his lower back, the last one to fuse

his spine, and two years later he won

time at St. Andrews.

Ton Rahm felt like one of the most popular players when he arrived at Royal Troon, even if it had nothing to do with him or with his golf.

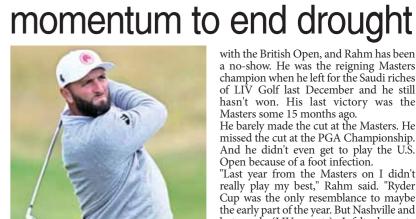
Spain is on quite the run at the moment. Carlos Alcaraz won Wimbledon on Sunday for his second Grand Slam title of the year, right before Spain defeated England in the European Championship final. It's the latter that made the Scottish fans celebrate the Spaniard.

No one in these parts likes to see England

win anything.
"Played all 18 holes, and I think I got more congratulations for something that I didn't do than I ever have in my life," Rahm said Tuesday. "I don't know what they've done, but anytime anybody plays against the English national team, every other country in Europe just unifies against

"I think because we've heard It's Coming Home' so many times the last few years that nobody wants to see it come home at this point.

Throw in Sergio Garcia winning his first LIV Golf event at Valderrama, and Rahm



would like nothing more than to extend Spain's run of winners

Mostly, he needs it for himself. The major championship season ends

with the British Open, and Rahm has been a no-show. He was the reigning Masters champion when he left for the Saudi riches of LIV Golf last December and he still hasn't won. His last victory was the

Masters some 15 months ago.

He barely made the cut at the Masters. He missed the cut at the PGA Championship.

And he didn't even get to play the U.S. Open because of a foot infection.

"Last year from the Masters on I didn't really play my best," Rahm said. "Ryder Cup was the only resemblance to maybe the early part of the year. But Nashville and last week (LIV events), I felt closer to getting to a higher level of golf where maybe there isn't as many thoughts on my process. Maybe I'm playing a little bit more freely and seeing the ball flight that I want to see more often.

"I'm getting much closer to what it might have been early last year.

US women's soccer team fights the heat, plays to a draw against Costa Rica in final Olympic tune-up

The heat was on for the U.S. Women's soccer team's final exhibition tune-up game before the Paris Olympics, with sweltering temperatures in the air and plenty of chances to

The goals did not come in a 0-0 draw against Costa Rica on Tuesday night, just the second time - and first since 2015 - the U.S. Did not win its last game Atlantic flight. "I feel like this is before a major tournament. But the match showed the Americans could handle the kind of high temperatures that could await later this month. "The last two games have been

Krueger said, referring to

back-to-back exhibition games

before the team's cross-

going to be even hotter, so if we can play in this, it gives us confidence going into France, for sure. insane," defender Casey

It was 98 degrees Fahrenheit (37 Celsius) at kickoff after Washington tied the hottest day on record in the nation's capital at 104 (40C) hours

earlier. It was still 94 (35C)

Coach Emma Hayes figured it would be a nice test for her players, given the forecast for nearly this level of heat during upcoming games in Marseilles later this month. "That's added value," Hayes said Monday. "It's perfect preparation. It's pretty hot down there, so this is a great opportunity for us to experience what we're going to

when the match was over.

It played a role in Rose Lavelle being a precautionary late scratch because of leg tightness in warmups.

"No risks," Hayes said afterward. "She was a bit tight in her groin and I took no risks. ... I want to go into the Olympics with everybody available.

Korbin Albert replaced Lavelle

game taking place on a worn down field torn up by recent football, soccer and rugby matches and attended by 18,972 fans. Players either criticized the field or offered up no comment. The corners, there's no secret that it was definitely like I was kicking into dirt," forward

in the starting lineup in the

Mallory Swanson said. "It was fine. Sometimes that's just the way it is going to be, and I think this team has always overcome adversity."
The U.S. Generated plenty of

chances throughout - 26 shots total and 12 on goal - and was repeatedly denied by Costa Rica goaltender Noelia Bermúdez, who was arguably one of the best players on the