

OPINION 6

PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL FALLS FROM GRACE

WORLD 9

PUTIN MEETS SYRIAN PREZ IN KREMLIN

MONEY 10

MARKETS EXTEND LOSSES FOR 5TH SESSION

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

Late City Vol. 34 Issue 206
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY JULY 26, 2024; PAGES 12 & 4

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J&K on high alert ahead of PM visit

MOHIT KANDHARI ■
JAMMU/NEW DELHI

The security forces have been kept in a state of high alert ahead of the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the 25th Kargil Vijay Diwas on Friday in Drass. This will be the PM's first visit to the region after recent spate of terror attacks and also a few high-level review meetings in this regard held in the national Capital with two of them chaired by Modi himself. Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi who landed in Srinagar early Thursday morning visited forward areas along the Line of Control in Kashmir valley to review the preparedness of the forces involved in counter-infiltration and counter-terror operations. The Army Chief later flew to Kargil to supervise the arrangements. Vital security installations were also kept on high-alert along the Jammu-Pathankot National Highway following the sighting of seven suspected terrorists in a village of the Pathankot district of the neighbouring State, Punjab. Several schools at Army installations in the Jammu region and along the highway



Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi during his visit at the forward locations of Chinara Corps. Dwivedi also reviewed the security situation along the Line of Control during his visit

were directed to remain closed till July 29 as a precautionary measure. Massive search operations were also launched by the Army, police, and paramilitary forces in the border areas of Kathua

(Jammu) and Pathankot to track down the suspects. During his brief stay, the Prime Minister will also carry out the first blast of the Shinkun La Tunnel Project, virtually.

Continued on Page 2

Modi meets Maha NDA partners to smoothen ties

RAJESH KUMAR ■
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

With a lot of complications due to the breakaway factions of two important constituents — NCP and Shiv Sena — in Maharashtra, the Central leadership of BJP, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has personally started taking stock of the situation. The State is to go to Assembly elections soon. A day after Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar demanded nearly 90 seats for the NCP faction led by him during his meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah, the PM on Thursday met MPs of NDA allies in Maharashtra and discussed the political situation ahead of the upcoming Assembly polls in the state. Among those whom the Prime Minister met included Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari, Piyush Goyal, and others. The BJP won just nine of the 28 seats it contested in the Lok Sabha polls, down from 23 it won in 2019. Besides the loss of Lok Sabha seats, BJP's vote percentage decline in the State this elections has caused a huge worry. In 2024, BJP got 27.84 per cent votes which has been reduced to 26.1 per cent this time.

Continued on Page 2

Rain-ravaged Maharashtra seeks Army, Navy help

TN RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI/PUNE

At least three people were electrocuted in Pune and three others feared trapped under the debris of three collapsed villas in a hill slide at Lavasa, even as the heavy rains wreaked havoc in Pune, Mumbai and various parts of Maharashtra, prompting the Maharashtra Government to seek the assistance of the Army and Navy to deal with the monsoon-related incidents. Many parts of Pune lay thick sheets of water as the heavy rains ravaged the city since Wednesday night, while intense rains battered Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and other surrounding areas resulting in heavy flooding in low-lying areas and disruption in train and flight operations. As a precautionary measure, the authorities declared holidays for schools and colleges in Pune, Mumbai and Thane. Three mobile snacks stall owners were electrocuted when they tried to move their handcarts to safety through the flood waters near Z bridge at around 3.30 am in Pune, while three others were feared trapped nearby Lavasa city after a hill-slide buried three villas. A Nepali boy Shiv Jidbahadur Pariyar (18) was among three persons killed in Pune, while two others killed in an electrocution incident were identified Akash Mane (21) and Abhishek Ghanekar (25). The State's cultural, academic



A commuter makes his way through a waterlogged road after rain, in Mumbai, on Thursday

and IT capital has been clobbered by torrential rain since last night leaving a trail of destruction, paralysing normal life as the district administration ordered all educational institutions to remain shut for the day. Several parts of Pune, neighbouring twin towns of Pimpri and Chinchwad and dams around Pune have recorded very high rainfall. Since the midnight Wednesday-Thursday, heavy rainfall was recorded in Lavasa (454 mm), Lonavala (323 mm), Nimgiri (233 mm), Malin (181 mm), Chinchwad (175 mm), Talegaon and Khadakwasla (168 mm) and Lavale (167 mm). Pune received an average rainfall of 115 mm. After taking stock of the

situation arising out of heavy rains in Pune, Mumbai Raigad, Thane and other parts of the State, Maharashtra chief Minister Eknath Shinde said, "The units of NDRF, SDRF, Army, Navy, Police, Fire Brigade, Health System have been directed to coordinate with each other and lend help." "These agencies need to work as a team and shift the flood affected people safely, provide them with food packets, arrange medicines and water. Instructions have been given to take the help of NDRF, Army, and Navy," Shinde said. "Around 40,000 cusecs was discharged from the Khadakwasla Dam," Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol who is an MP from Pune, said.

"There is also heavy rain in Mumbai city and suburbs. The administration is fully alert to deal with any calamity in Mumbai and I am in touch with Pune, Raigad, Mumbai Collectors and Municipal Commissioners," Shinde said. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar also coordinated with authorities in rushing help to the people affected by rains in Pune and various parts of the State. On a day when scores of trees were uprooted and two-wheelers and four-wheelers remained stranded in flood waters, personnel from various agencies deployed to ferry the people in the marooned areas of Pune. More than 500 people were evacuated from the low-lying areas during the day.

SC ruling a shot in arm for States rich in minerals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The legislative power to tax mineral rights vests with the States and the royalty paid on minerals is not a tax, the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday in a landmark judgement which will give a huge revenue boost to mineral-rich States. A nine-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, in a majority 8:1 verdict, said Parliament does not have the legislative competence to tax mineral rights under Entry 54 of List I of the Constitution which pertains to regulation of mines and mineral development by the Centre. The pronouncement, which came as a setback to the Centre, however, said



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday hit out at Opposition leaders, contending that they had resorted to abusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the debate on the Union Budget in Parliament instead of speaking on the finer aspects of the document. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the manner in which some Opposition leaders made their speeches amounted to insulting the House and lowering the dignity of the Budget Session. "Let us respect the mandate of the people. They have given the mandate to Prime Minister

Modi for the third consecutive term. If anybody tries to insult the verdict of the people, they will be punished in the elections," Rijiju said at a Press conference. His remarks came a day after the Opposition claimed the Union Budget was "discriminatory" against non-NDA-ruled States and accused the Prime Minister of running a "shaky and vulnerable" coalition Government. During the general discussion on the budget for 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, various Opposition members accused the government of doling out sops to key allies JD(U) and TDP, which rule Bihar and Andhra Pradesh respectively, to ensure that the government faces no hurdles from its coalition partners. Rijiju said elections were over and now the focus should be to work towards a developed India (Viksit Bharat) and hold constructive discussion on the Union Budget. "The Prime Minister has said that elections were over and now was the time to rise above political lines and work together for the nation," Rijiju said.

Continued on Page 2

UPSC to curb cheating with tech

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

With a series of controversies related to the UPSC and the exams conducted by it including the topmost Civil Services Examinations, the commission is now preparing to enhance its examination security measures by incorporating advanced technological solutions such as Aadhaar-based fingerprint authentication, facial recognition systems, and AI-driven closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance, several media outlets reported. This overhaul, intended to maintain the integrity of UPSC exams, follows widespread allegations of cheating in certain national level exams like the recent NEET. The commission has proposed a real-time attendance monitoring system that includes GPS coordinates to confirm that enrolment occurs within the designated shift. The UPSC specifies that the QR code on the Admit Card, which includes the candidate's roll number, should be scanned to automatically retrieve the candidate's information from



the Application Database. If the QR code cannot be scanned, the candidate's roll number must be entered manually from the Admit Card. The UPSC also plans to implement CCTV/video surveillance with recording and live broadcast capabilities to monitor the activities of candidates and exam personnel across various centres and venues nationwide. The service provider will be required to install an adequate number of CCTV colour cameras in every classroom, ensuring at least one camera for every 24 candidates. Cameras will also be placed at the entry and exit gates and in control rooms where sensitive pre

and post-examination materials are handled. Additionally, the service provider must arrange for remote live viewing of the CCTV footage at the UPSC's control room, ensuring real-time monitoring and enhancing overall security during the examinations. The UPSC has sought bids from public sector undertakings (PSUs) to revamp its examination process. This move also follows a controversy involving trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar, who is alleged to have forged documents to appear for the CSE 12 times, exceeding the allowed number of attempts. The UPSC has filed a criminal case against Khedkar.

Continued on Page 2

Dhaka takes umbrage at Didi remark, complains to India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday confirmed receiving a note from Dhaka that conveyed its objection to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks offering shelter to people affected by violent-clashes in that country. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud has earlier objected to Mamata's recent remark of offering "shelter" to people from Bangladesh amid ongoing protests in the country. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, appearing to disapprove of Mamata's comments, said matters that bring "the Union into relation with any foreign country, are the sole prerogative" of the Central Government. In an address at a public event in Kolkata, Mamata, referring to violence-hit Bangladesh, said she would keep the doors of West Bengal open for people in distress from the neighbouring country and offer them shelter. There were reports in the Bangladeshi media that said Dhaka has communicated to



Protesters in Bangladesh File PTI photo

New Delhi through diplomatic channels its displeasure over the West Bengal Chief Minister's comments. "I can confirm that we have received such a communication from the Bangladesh side. It is essentially on the lines described in the reports," Jaiswal said during his weekly media briefing while replying to a question. "I would underline that under the Seventh schedule — List one — Union List — item 10 of our Constitution, the conduct of foreign affairs and all matters which bring the Union into relation with any foreign country, are the sole prerogative of the Union Government," he said.

Continued on Page 2

Reel makers face DMRC heat

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Metro, often referred to as the city's lifeline, has become a hotspot for "reelers" and "Instagrammers" using the trains as backdrops for their social media content. This trend has not only caused discomfort among fellow passengers but has also led to a significant increase in prosecutions for creating nuisances. Between April and June, over 1,600 commuters were booked for making reels and other disruptive activities on metro premises, marking a three per cent rise from the same period last year. Be it two girls indulging in obscene activities in the metro of making videos while putting colours on each other or a girl dancing to a Bollywood song and shooting it with people visibly



uncomfortable around, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has taken a strict approach to curb such nuisance from happening in the metros. According to the data, 1,647 penalties were issued for creating nuisance in three months under Section 59 of the Metro Railways

(Operations and Maintenance) Act. The corresponding number for the same period last year was 1,600. A senior DMRC official on Thursday said creating nuisance may also include offences such as sitting on the floor of the train and eating inside the train, among others. The DMRC issued 610, 518 and 519 penalties in April, May and June, respectively while the corresponding numbers for the previous year were 528, 485 and 587, the data showed. DMRC Managing Director Vikas Kumar said they penalised people for creating nuisance in the metro area. "We use our machinery so that such kind of incidents should not happen on the metro premises.

Continued on Page 2

Rashtrapati Bhawan sheds trace of colonial past

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A year after renaming the famous Mughal Gardens as "Amrit Udyan" on the premises of Rashtrapati Bhawan, efforts continue to align the iconic building with India's status as a Republic and underscore democratic principles deeply ingrained in Indian society since ancient times. On Thursday, 'Durbar Hall' and 'Ashok Hall', two historic halls of this historic residence and workplace of the President, have been rechristened as 'Ganantra Mandap' and 'Ashok Mandap' respectively. "Rashtrapati Bhawan, the office and the residence of the President of India, is a symbol of the nation, and an invaluable heritage of the people. Continuous efforts are being made to make it more accessible to people. There



In these pictures Rashtrapati Bhawan's iconic 'Durbar Hall' (left) and 'Ashok Hall' (right) have been renamed as 'Ganantra Mandap' and 'Ashok Mandap' respectively, in New Delhi

has been a consistent endeavour to make the ambience of the Rashtrapati Bhawan reflective of the Indian cultural values and ethos," a statement issued by the President's Secretariat said. Accordingly, President Droupadi Murmu is pleased to rename two of the important halls of Rashtrapati

Bhawan — 'Durbar Hall' and 'Ashok Hall' — as 'Ganantra Mandap' and 'Ashok Mandap', respectively, it said on a day Murmu completed two years of her presidency. "Renaming 'Ashok Hall' as 'Ashok Mandap' brings uniformity in language and removes the traces of anglicisation while upholding the key values associated with

the word 'Ashok,'" it added. 'Durbar Hall', located under the central dome of Rashtrapati Bhawan, is the venue of important ceremonies and celebrations such as the presentation of national awards. "The term 'Durbar' refers to courts and assemblies of Indian rulers and the British.

Continued on Page 2

No systemic breach in NEET-UG: SC junks plea for retest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Trashing pleas for re-test on grounds of paper leak and other malpractices, the Supreme Court has said there is no evidence to conclude that the entire result of NEET-UG, 2024 was vitiated and there was a "systemic breach" in the sanctity of the examination. On July 23, the top court dismissed the pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the controversy-ridden exam and the order was uploaded on Wednesday night.

"At the present stage, there is an absence of material on the record to lead to the conclusion that the entire result of the examination stands vitiated or that there was a systemic breach in the sanctity of the examination," said the 14-page interim order penned by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud. The detailed and reasoned judgement on as many as 40 petitions would be delivered later. The bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said, "The data which has been produced on the record city-wise and centre-wise and the comparison of data for the years 2022, 2023 and 2024 are not indicative of a systemic leak of the question paper impacting the sanctity of the examination."



It said ordering a re-test this year "would be replete with serious consequences for over two million students who have appeared in the examination." The order said adopting such a course of action would lead to a disruption of admission schedule, setting back the entire process by several months, and would lead to a cascading effect on the course of medical education. It said the order of re-test would also impact the availability of qualified medical professionals in the future and "cause a serious element of disadvantage to students belonging to marginalized communities and weaker sections for whom reservation has been



made in the allocation of seats." The top court also asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) to revise its merit list by treating the answer suggested by a panel of three experts of IIT Delhi to a controversial physics question as correct. It scrutinised issues like whether the alleged breach took place at a systemic level and if the breach was of a nature which affected the integrity of the entire examination process. It also examined whether it was possible to segregate beneficiaries of the fraud from the untainted students. As per earlier judgements, a re-test can be ordered if segregation of beneficiaries of fraud

from genuinely successful candidates is not possible. It said an interim order was needed for providing certainty and finality to a dispute which affected the careers of over two million students.

"The fact that a leak of the NEET (UG) 2024 paper took place at Hazaribagh in the state of Jharkhand and at Patna in the state of Bihar is not in dispute," the order said. Referring to the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) status report, the order said the probe is continuing and as per the evidence, which emerged during the probe so far, there were about 155 students, who took up tests at examination centres in Hazaribagh and Patna, are prima facie beneficiaries of the fraud.

While refusing to order a re-test, the bench said it was guided by the well-settled test of whether it is possible to segregate tainted students from those whose candidature does not suffer from any taint. "If the investigation reveals the involvement of an increased number of beneficiaries over and above those who are suspects at the present stage, action shall be pursued against every student found to be involved in wrongdoing at any stage, notwithstanding the completion of the counselling process," it said. No student,

who is revealed to have engaged in fraud, would be entitled to claim a vested right in continuation of the admission in the future by virtue of the findings in this judgment, it said.

It took note of the submissions of the Centre that it has constituted a seven-member expert committee chaired by K Radhakrishnan, former Chairman, ISRO to suggest measures to strengthen the examination mechanism to ensure fair play. "The Committee will abide by such further directions as may be issued by this Court in its final judgment and order in regard to the areas which should be enquired into by it so as to ensure that (i) the process of conducting the NEET (UG) and other examinations falling within the remit of the NTA is duly strengthened; and (ii) the instances which came to light during the course of the present year are not repeated in the future," it said. Doubts about the sanctity of the exam arose when a total of 67 students scored a perfect 720, unprecedented in the NTA's history, with six from a Haryana centre figuring in the list. The number of candidates sharing the top rank came down to 61 from 67 after the NTA announced the revised results on July 1.

Kejriwal allowed two additional meetings with legal team in jail

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has allowed a plea filed by jailed Delhi Chief Minister (CM) Arvind Kejriwal to hold two additional meetings with his legal team while he is lodged in Tihar Jail, saying 'special situations call for special remedies'. Kejriwal, was hitherto entitled to two meetings with his lawyers a week, in accordance with prison rules. Justice Neena Bansal Krishna granted the relief to Kejriwal in recognition of his fundamental right to fair trial and effective legal representation. "Special situations call for special remedies. In view of the foregoing discussion, it is held that in recognition of fundamental right of fair trial and effective legal representation, the petitioner be granted two additional legal meetings with the Counsel through video conferencing in a week, till he is confined to Jail. The petition, is accordingly, allowed," the Court said. In its order, the court said, "It can also not be ignored that similar relief of additional legal meetings has been allowed to co-accused/Sanjay Singh. While the Learned special

counsel for the respondent No. 2 has explained that the said Order was essentially ex parte, is not tenable since the respondents had appeared in the end while the Order was being passed and even thereafter, it has not been challenged by the State". However, the High Court has now opined that Kejriwal is only seeking the enforcement of his fundamental right to a fair trial and legal consultation while he is confined to Tihar Jail as he has 30-40 cases in various States against him. "To confine this fundamental right to a particular case and to insist on an independent application in each case is not only taking a myopic view but would result in a multiplicity of similar relief being asserted in different cases; in fact it can lead to utter confusion if such relief is considered a pertaining to individual case and not individual person. To ask the petitioner to move independent Application in each case would lead to delay but may indirectly be denying him the right of effective legal help," the Court said. The Court concluded that any objections on such aspects are only technical objections that hold no merit.

"It is pertinent to observe that the Jail policy has been enacted by the concerned Jail Authority after having due regard to all the modalities and the infrastructural capacity and number of the inmates of the jail. Therefore, generally, the courts are slow to interfere in the matters of policy," reads the order.

However, when balancing the policy with the fundamental rights of the jail inmate, the request of the petitioner for two additional legal meetings with his Lawyers through video conferencing, in the given circumstance of huge number of cases pending against him, cannot be termed unreasonable," reads the order. The AAP leader's counsel had submitted he was facing around 35 cases across the country, and for a fair trial, he required two additional meetings with his lawyers via video conference.

The plea was vehemently opposed by the counsel for the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Tihar jail authorities. The AAP leader was arrested by the CBI on June 26 from Tihar Jail, where he was lodged in judicial custody in a connected money laundering case filed by the ED.

IN BRIEF

AUGUST 4 DEADLINE FOR B ARCH APPLICATION IN GNDU
Amritsar: B.Arch. a five-year programme, is run in Department of Architecture of the Guru Nanak Dev University. A few seats are lying vacant in the above-mentioned programme for the academic session 2024-25. Dr Pankaj Chhabra, head of the department said candidates willing to take admission against these vacant seats are required to apply on the university website gnduadmissions.org. Last date to deposit the application fee and online application form is 4.8.2024 counselling will be held on 6.8.2024.

SANJAY NEW DIRECTOR (PROJECTS), NHPC
Fraidabad: Sanjay Kumar Singh has taken over as director (Projects), NHPC Limited, India's premier hydropower company and a Schedule 'A' enterprise of Government of India. Singh holds a degree in Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) and has more than 32 years of vast and varied experience in Power and Infrastructure sector in respect of execution of mega and prestigious projects in India and Bhutan.



MINISTER OF RAILWAYS INTERACTS WITH MEDIA
New Delhi: Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw held an interaction with media persons of Northeast virtually from New Delhi in connection with the allocation for the Railway Ministry in the General Budget 2024-25. While addressing the media persons, the Minister of Railways informed that a record allocation for capital investment of Rs 2.62 lakh crores have been provided for the Railways.



PROUD MOMENT FOR JAMIA HAMDARD
New Delhi: Jamia Hamdard's global ranking has been boosted with the top place in the field of Drug Delivery (number 1 in Global Lifetime Ranking) by ScholarGPS. ScholarGPS International Institutional Rankings in Fields, Disciplines, and Specialties are based on the quality and quantity of active scholars in each institution who are highly productive (number of publications) and have generated outstanding work of meaningful impact (citations) and excellent quality (h-index).

Rashtrapati Bhawan...

From Page 1
"It lost relevance after India became a Republic, that is, 'Ganatantra'. The concept of 'Ganatantra' is deeply rooted in Indian society since the ancient times, making 'Ganatantra Mandap' an apt name for the venue," the statement said. Its corridor displays the busts of former Indian presidents, carved by noted sculptors from across the country. Six tall banners in deep red with the national emblem of India in gold also adorn the hall. Against the wall is placed a fifth century AD statue of Lord Buddha on a crimson velvet background. In front of this statue is placed the president's chair. Earlier, two thrones for the viceroy and the vicereine were placed at this spot. On renaming the 'Ashok Hall', the president's office said it was originally a ballroom. 'Ashok Mandap' pays homage to Emperor Ashok, known for promoting peace and unity, reflecting values deeply rooted in Indian traditions.

by heads of missions of foreign countries and as a formal place of introductions for the visiting and Indian delegations prior to the commencement of the state banquets hosted by the president. While the floor is wooden and has springs beneath the surface, the ceilings are decorated with oil paintings. With the glow of six Belgium glass chandeliers, the hall provides a fascinating sight to visitors. A loft was also designed in the state ballroom as a space for the orchestra. However, it is now used for playing the national anthem during important functions, according to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Remarkable art pieces adorn the hall. These include a long case clock that was made in England and has a marking of British Clock Enfield by Cooke & Kelvey Limited, Calcutta. The Persian style carpet, measuring 32 metres by 20 metres, was designed especially for the hall, keeping in mind its grandeur. The carpets were said to have engaged five hundred weavers for two years, according to its official descri This renaming initiative reflects a commitment to align these spaces with India's cultural values and ethos.

UPSC to... BJP slams...

From Page 1
"The Commission intends to make use of the latest digital technology to match and cross-check the biometric details of the candidates and to monitor various activities of the candidates during the examination to prevent cheating, fraud, unfair means and impersonation," said UPSC. The UPSC will provide the data and images submitted by applicants during the online registration process to the service provider to prevent impersonation. This data will be used for Aadhaar-based fingerprint authentication and facial recognition systems to verify candidates on the exam day. Fingerprint scanners and facial recognition devices will be deployed at examination centres to ensure candidates' identities are accurately verified. UPSC conducts 14 examinations annually, including the prestigious Civil Services Examination (CSE), along with various recruitment tests and interviews for induction to Group 'A' and Group 'B' posts within the Government of India.

From Page 1
Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla too asked members to maintain respect and not make remarks that would hurt the dignity of the House. With the opposition members protesting, Birla said there was a lot of respect for the House and also the Parliamentary tradition. Rijju said opposition leaders did not say anything on the budget, they just indulged in politics during the discussion on the Budget which began on Wednesday. "They have insulted the mandate of the people. The opposition leaders have abused the prime minister," Rijju said. He said the floor leaders of political parties should direct the members not to create ruckus in Parliament and have a civilised and sensitive debate during the Budget session. Birla on his part said members can express their views, participate in discussions but should also ensure the respect and dignity of the House and that they should not be doing things that would hurt its dignity.

J&K on high...

From Page 1
The Shinkun La Tunnel Project consists of a 4.1 km long Twin-Tube tunnel which will be constructed at an altitude of around 15,800 feet on the Nimu — Padum — Darcha Road to provide all-weather connectivity to Leh. Once completed, it will be the highest tunnel in the world. The Shinkun La tunnel will not only ensure swift and efficient movement of our armed forces and equipment but also foster economic and social development in Ladakh. Former Army Chief Gen VP Malik along with several other army veterans, Veer Naris, and the next of kin of fallen soldiers have assembled at the Kargil

War Memorial to pay their homage to mark the occasion. Meanwhile Punjab police have also released a sketch of one of the suspects based on the description of a woman who spotted the seven 'suspicious' men in the Phangtoli. A joint team of the security forces has also launched an operation along the International Border (IB) in the Samba sector to detect underground and cross-border tunnels. "A comprehensive anti-tunnel exercise has commenced to ascertain the presence of any cross-border tunnels," said a police officer involved in the operation. The search operations also involve the deployment of drones and are being conducted daily in response to the ongoing security threats posed by potential terrorist infiltrations, he said. "Security forces are clearing dense bushy

areas to eliminate the possibility of the existence of tunnels," the officer added. Reports also indicate that between 50 to 60 foreign terrorists have infiltrated Jammu via the International Border and Line of Control over the past few months, according to police. In Kathua, two alleged overground workers (OGWs) were arrested for their involvement in a terror attack on an army patrol party in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, police said. According to a police spokesperson, "two OGWs were apprehended for their involvement in supporting terror-related actions". On July 8, five army personnel, including a junior commissioned officer, were martyred and five others were injured in the attack by heavily armed terrorists in the remote Machedi area of the district.

Reel makers face DMRC...

From Page 1
We have a provision of penalising if someone creates nuisance on the metro premises and we do penalise them. It is an ongoing process and the more you keep doing it, the more people will get discouraged," he said. "But the issue is that we do not have enough manpower

to check every corner. If we have 67 lakh passengers a day, then monitoring such a huge number of people is not easy. We have CCTV surveillance through which we get to know if anything happened on the premises," he added. The DMRC has also put up posters at several metro stations, dissuading

passengers from making reels and causing discomfort. In April, the DMRC asked the Delhi Police to conduct a thorough investigation after a video emerged online of two women applying colours on each other inside a train. The video, which surfaced ahead of Holi, drew criticism from a large section of commuters.

The DMRC had said at the time that it was running various campaigns, both online and offline, to discourage passengers from indulging in any activity that might cause inconvenience to fellow commuters. Mobile checking squads are also deployed at times to check activities considered inappropriate.

Dhaka...

From Page 1
Mahmud, in a video shared widely on X, was heard saying, "With all due respect to Mamata

Banerjee, with whom we share a relationship of mutual interests... However, her statement has created confusion and has the potential to create confusion among people. Therefore, we have sent a

note to the Indian government on her statement." Mahmud communicated with the Indian government through diplomatic channels. West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose has also urged

Banerjee not to make any "politically-motivated populist remarks" on the current situation in neighbouring Bangladesh that could affect the nation's external affairs. In her remarks on Sunday,

Banerjee also referred to the UN Resolution on refugees as justification for her stand over the possible humanitarian crisis that may emerge on account of the severe law and order breakdown that gripped

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Government leveraging AI power to finalise Mohalla bus routes: Gahlot

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Thursday announced that the city government is leveraging the power of artificial intelligence (AI) to finalise the routes for Mohalla buses in the national capital in collaboration with IIT-Delhi.

He added that the Kejriwal government will employ advanced Big Data analytics and AI-driven solutions to pinpoint key areas and design efficient bus routes. A team of 32 Assistant Traffic Inspectors (ATIs) have been formed, divided into four zones, with each zone having two teams of four ATIs. They will identify routes and assess the feasibility of operating Mohalla buses in the area.

"Their mission is to go on-site to understand the practical challenges of operating nine meter Mohalla buses on these routes in Delhi. The team will also gather input from the public on initiating new routes in these areas," a statement stated.

Commenting on this, Gahlot stated, "The use of AI and Big Data analytics in public transportation is a game-changer for Delhi. We are also taking help of ATIs in finalising the Mohalla Bus routes. By identifying under-served and high-footfall areas, we can ensure that our Mohalla bus network not only enhances connectivity but also operates efficiently and sustainably. This initiative is a significant step towards making Delhi's public transport system more accessible and user-friendly."

Further, the statement added that this will help design an optimised route network that maximises coverage of transport demand, offering better intra-region and last-mile connectivity to the Delhi Metro. "The focus will also be on cost-effectiveness and environmen-



tal sustainability through the use of electric vehicles and strategic route planning," it stated.

This will be done with the help of IIT-Delhi which will develop a model to identify Origin-Destination pairs and will utilise real-world travel time data to evaluate the health and connectivity of the current transit network, creating a comprehensive supply model. It will also capture transit and travel time data from passenger information platforms, including transport agencies and Google Maps, to determine the ease of travel between locations and identify under-served regions, the statement added.

The model will aggregate trip data from location-based services and GPS-enabled apps, converting it into an Origin-Destination matrix format. It will also incorporate demographic information to gain insights into potential source and sink regions, analyze travel patterns, and leverage ridership data from the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) to identify high-footfall areas.

Using the developed model, IIT-Delhi will design an efficient route network for the Mohalla buses and post the report it will support the Delhi Transport Department in monitoring and optimizing the routes.

In addition to leveraging AI, the Delhi government is incorporating inputs from area MLAs, locals, and data collected during a 30-day comprehensive ground assessment exercise by the Transport Department's technical team. The Kejriwal government has recently initiated a trial of the Mohalla Bus services, currently running on two routes: Pradhan Enclave Pusta to Majlis Park Metro Station, and Akshardham Metro Station to Mayur Vihar Phase-III Paper Market. The trial will last for seven days.

Transport Minister directs enquiry into DTC bus accident that killed woman

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Thursday directed an enquiry to be conducted by the Special Commissioner of Transport following an accident of the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus which killed a woman and left 23 injured.

The report is to be submitted within seven days and may include the reasons for such incidents as well as measures required to prevent future occurrences. "The safety of our commuters is of utmost priority. We are committed to identifying the root causes of these accidents and implementing effective solutions to ensure such incidents do not happen again. Immediate action will be taken based on the findings of the enquiry. Lives getting lost either due to mechanical failure or negligence of drivers cannot be condoned," Gahlot stated.

The order for the enquiry follows a tragic incident on July 22, 2024, where a 45-year-old woman was killed and several others injured when a DTC electric bus collided with a metro pillar in the Punjabi Bagh area. The sudden braking of the bus also caused an auto rickshaw to collide with it from behind, resulting in injuries to its occupants.

The Delhi government is also considering procuring driving simulators for driver training, implementing an Aadhaar-based attendance system for drivers, and conducting breathalyzer tests before the start of duty in light of such accidents. Additionally, drivers will be allowed to work with only one concessionaire. The Transport Department will also engage NGOs to provide proper training and sensitization for drivers.

DU hikes fees for first-year UG, PG, PhD students

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi University has hiked fees for students enrolled in first-year undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD programmes as well as foreign students seeking admission from the 2024-2025 academic session. The new fee structure for the academic calendar that begins in August was approved by Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh in June.

According to the new fee structure, the course fee for first-year B.Tech students has been raised by 3.70 per cent, i.e. from Rs 2.16 lakh to Rs 2.24 lakh. "The hike has been affected only for the first year students currently in accordance with university guidelines," a senior official at the Faculty of Technology said.

The varsity has raised several components of the fee structure, including tuition fees, students' welfare fund, development fee, facilities and services charges, and economically weaker section support fund.

The contribution share for the Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) has been removed from the fee structure of the department. The DUSU contribution has also been removed from the LLB and MBA fee structure while for the rest of the UG and PG courses, the contribution has been increased from Rs 20 to Rs 40. Similarly, fees for the five-year Integrated Law Programmes for the academic have been hiked by 5 per cent, i.e. from Rs 1.90 lakh to Rs 1.99 lakh. The fees of the four-year Integrated Teachers Education Programme (ITEP), which replaced B.EL.ED under the Faculty of Education, has been increased to Rs 57,400.



The revision in the components of the fee structure of PhD courses, has resulted in a 60.22 per cent hike in the overall fees with scholars required to pay Rs 7,130 from the upcoming session as compared to the previous fees of Rs 4,450.

The fee has also been raised for foreign students seeking admissions in various programmes of the varsity, DU Dean Admissions, Haneeet Gandhi confirmed.

Meanwhile, foreign nationals seeking admission in MA Hindu Studies at Delhi University will have to pay a reduced course fee. The fees for students from SAARC countries has been reduced from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 50,000 and Rs 1 lakh from Rs 2 lakh for students from non-SAARC countries.

The Tibetan applicants will, however, be exempted from paying university registration fees and additional fee payable to colleges and departments as foreign students.

The DUSU vice president Abhi Dahiya criticised the DU's fee hike, stating that it would hinder access to quality higher education. Dahiya said, "We (NSUI) strongly oppose the fee hike in DU. It is a blatant attack on publicly funded education institutions... The move limits opportunities and exacerbates financial stress on students and their families."

Sachdeva urges BJP workers to start Gram Parikrama Abhiyan

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Thursday appealed to the party workers during an executive meeting of the state Kisan Morcha to start Gram Parikrama Abhiyan and go to every booth in every village talking about the schemes by the Central Government ahead of the state assembly in 2025.

Sachdeva said, "If we have won the rural areas in 23 assembly constituencies in Delhi, then all of you Kisan Morcha workers and officers should start the Gram Parikrama Abhiyan and go to every booth in every village and do public relations and the schemes for public welfare by the Central Government need to be taken to the people."

He added that as soon as BJP comes to power, the development schemes which have come to a standstill in Delhi, have to be run smoothly again and the people of Delhi should get the benefits of development.

The executive meeting of the Delhi State Kisan Morcha of BJP was organized at Khatu Shyam Delhi Dham in Alipur and was chaired by State President Kisan Morcha Vinod Sehrawat. It was also attended by Minister of State Harsh Malhotra and North West Delhi MP Yogendra Chandolia.

The Delhi BJP chief said that since 1961, there is a policy of giving alternative plots and shops in lieu of land acquisition to farmers but in 2016, the Kejriwal government cancelled the orders for allotment of alternative plots to farmers. "Because of this 16,500 farmers of Delhi were deprived of getting alternative plots. Not only this, it is quite shameful for the country's capital that there is a government here which does not even give



farmers the status of farmers," he alleged.

He claimed that the farmer status of farmers in Delhi was taken away by the Sheila Dikshit government of Congress, due to which they are deprived of the benefits being given to farmers across the country by the Central Government. "As soon as BJP comes to power, it will restore the farmer status, due to which the farmers of Delhi will be able to get the benefits being provided by the Central Government and along with this, problems of the farmers of Delhi like amendment in land laws, electricity connection, expensive agricultural fertilizers, unavailability of tractors will also be solved," Sachdeva claimed.

North west MP said that Kejriwal's government has ruined Delhi, all development work has come to a standstill here. "Now the public wants freedom from the Kejriwal government. We have to fight the upcoming assembly elections with full preparation," he appealed.

Further, Malhotra also addressed the executive meeting and threw light on the history of BJP in detail. "All of you will fight the upcoming assembly elections with strength by becoming disciplined workers of BJP by binding yourself in the thread of unity. Go to every booth, go to every village and make people aware of all the schemes of the central government," he stated.

Kejriwal Government has murdered Constitution by not forming Finance Commission: BJP MLA Vijender

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Addressing a press conference, former BJP state president and MLA Vijender Gupta said that by not forming the Sixth Delhi Finance Commission, the Kejriwal government has murdered the constitution and shattered the Panchayati Raj system. Gupta demanded the immediate dismissal of the anarchist Kejriwal government, which repeatedly violates the constitution and harms Delhi's interests. MLAs OP Sharma, Jitendra Mahajan, and Abhay Verma were also present at the press conference. Gupta stated that since coming to power, the Kejriwal government has been continuously violating the constitution. In 2015, despite accepting the Fourth Finance



Commission report in the assembly, it was not implemented, openly flouting the constitution. Gupta mentioned that the recommendations of the Fifth Delhi Finance Commission were based on the three divided municipal corporations, whose tenure ended in March 2021. The recommendations of the Sixth Finance Commission, based on the unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi, were to be implemented from April 1, 2021.

INDIA Bloc to hold rally at Jantar Mantar on July 30: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Thursday said the INDIA bloc of opposition parties will hold a rally on July 30 at the Jantar Mantar to raise the issue of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's declining health inside the Tihar jail. "The INDIA bloc will hold a big rally at Jantar Mantar on July 30 to raise the issue of Kejriwal's falling health," the AAP said. The Aam Aadmi Party has been accusing the BJP of "conspiring to kill" Kejriwal in jail and cited his medical report to show that his sugar levels had fallen 26 times between June 3 and July 7.

In a related development, a city court has extended the judicial custody Kejriwal in money laundering and corruption cases scammed. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja extended

Kejriwal's custody in a money laundering case, being probed by the Enforcement Directorate, till July 31, while his judicial custody in a corruption case, lodged by the CBI, was extended till August 8.

The judge also extended the judicial custody of Aam Aadmi Party leader and former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, Bharat Rashtra Samithi leader K Kavitha and other accused till July 31 in the money laundering case. Kejriwal were produced before the court through video conference. The party, a constituent of the INDIA bloc, has been accusing the BJP-led central government and Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena of playing with Kejriwal's life. During a press conference, Atishi was asked about the rally and she hit out at the BJP over the chief minister's declining health.

DMRC removes concrete structures, installs steel railings on five Pink line stations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In the aftermath of a man being killed following the collapse of a portion of a wall at Gokulpuri metro station on the Pink Line, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has removed concrete structures and installed stainless steel railings in five elevated stations on the line. A senior DMRC official said they inspected all the elevated stations on the line and identified five, including Gokulpuri, Jafrabad, Welcome, East Azad Nagar and Krishna Nagar, for further action. "The concrete structure near the platform called parapets installed at all elevated stations of the Pink Line were inspected. We removed the concrete structure from the five stations and replaced it with stainless steel



railings," the official said. He added that they have also installed rainwater down pipes at the stations to bring the rainwater from the roof to the ground. "We also installed saucer drains to dispose of the extra stormwater," the official added.

A portion of a wall of the elevated Gokulpuri metro station in northeast Delhi collapsed on February 8, killing a 53-year-old man and injur-

ing four. The DMRC official said waterproofing of the drains was also done in stations where required. Waterproofing ensures that there is no leakage and the water can easily drain out, the official said and added that regular inspection and monitoring was being conducted. DMRC Managing Director Vikas Kumar said that they had repaired the safety angle of all the metro stations.

"The lifespan of civil structures of the metro is 100 years. We have repaired the safety angle of all the metro stations and some finishing work is to be done. It was a very unfortunate incident and such things should not be repeated. There was some technical issue that led to the incident," Kumar said.

The Pink Line connects Majlis Park to Shiv Vihar. Vinod Kumar Pandey was on his scooter to deliver rice to a shopkeeper when he was struck by debris from the collapsed wall. Following the incident, the DMRC ordered safety checks across its entire network.

The DMRC had suspended a manager and a junior engineer from its civil department, pending an inquiry, and ordered a probe into the incident.

ABVP delegation meets chairperson of panel on NTA reforms with suggestions

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A delegation of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) on Thursday presented a detailed letter of suggestions to Dr. K Radhakrishnan, Chairman of the high-level committee constituted for reforming the National Testing Agency (NTA). The delegation highlighted the need for enhancements in the functioning of NTA and its examinations like JEE, NEET, UGC-NET etc. In its suggestion letter, ABVP suggested administrative reforms within NTA, measures to ensure examination transparency, development of advanced infrastructure for conducting examinations, adequate staffing of permanent employees at NTA, establishment of government institutions as exam centers, and adoption of a two-phase NEET-UG examination format akin to JEE. Additional recommendations included the uploading of OMR sheets on the NTA website. The ABVP also addressed concerns regarding internet secu-



rity for computer-based exams (CBT), adoption of AI-based proctoring algorithms, quality translation, strict implementation of anti-leak measures, accuracy in answer key releases, timely grievance resolution, and the formation of subject expert teams to curate exam question banks. The ABVP emphasized the urgent need of restoring student confidence in NTA exams by immediately addressing these issues.

National General Secretary of ABVP Yagywalkya Shukla said "Over the past two weeks,

ABVP has consulted students from diverse disciplines such as humanities, medical sciences, engineering, and others, and compiled 42 suggestions for reforming the National Testing Agency (NTA). These suggestions have now been submitted to the High-Level Committee overseeing NTA reforms. It is crucial to promptly resolve the issues plaguing NTA to restore trust in its examination processes. We hope that the committee will take decisive action based on ABVP's recommendations."

AAP gets new office address

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Estates, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has allotted a new office to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) following the orders of the Delhi High Court. Bungalow No. 1 on Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane will be the new office of the AAP in Delhi. The headquarters of the AAP is currently located at 206, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, in the Capital. It was not immediately clear when would the AAP shift its headquarters to the new location, which is also centrally located at walking distance from the Mandi House roundabout.

AAP's new office was earlier occupied by the Nationalist Congress Party, which vacated it after losing its national party status. Interestingly, this will be the fifth address of the AAP's headquarters. In the initial days of its inception, the party was operating from Ghaziabad and later moved to a bungalow near Hanuman Mandir. From that office, the party shifted its base to Patel Nagar and then to 206, Rouse Avenue. Delhi cabinet minister Atishi said, "It has been few hours



since we have been allotted the office. We will take the keys from the Directorate of Estates and inspect the space and then talk about it."

The Delhi high court on June 5 held that the AAP was entitled to space for a party office in the national capital like other parties. It asked the Union government to decide on the matter within six weeks. The direction came on an AAP plea. Senior Advocate Rahul Mehra appearing for AAP had told the high court that a national party is entitled to a temporary office until the land is allotted to it for construction of a permanent office.

In April 2023, the AAP got the status of a national party. The AAP has formed full-majority

governments in Delhi and Punjab and won five assembly seats in Gujarat and two in Goa. It has 10 Rajya Sabha and three Lok Sabha members. The Chandigarh mayor is from the AAP.

The AAP had told the top court the said plot had been allotted to it in 2015, and it was earmarked for the judiciary only subsequently in 2020. The AAP also said that since it has a national party status now, it was entitled to a plot in Central Delhi at par with other national parties.

Minor girl raped at gunpoint, thrown from terrace in Dwarka

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A minor girl was allegedly raped on gunpoint and thrown from the terrace of a building in Delhi's Dwarka area.

According to the police on Thursday, the information was received at Police Station Dwarka North that a minor girl jumped from terrace. DCP Dwarka Ankit Singh said, "Police staff reached at hospital where victim was admitted and stated that she was raped and thrown. Then the victim was referred to one stop center, Gynae, Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital where the victim was medically examined and treated."

A senior police officer stated that the accused lived in the same building as the victim and while her parents were away on Monday, the boy entered the house and threatened the girl at gun point. Later, he took her to the roof of another building where he allegedly raped her.

He further added that when the girl resisted, he threw her off the terrace. Meanwhile, the girl was allegedly gang raped and had registered the complaint against four people in February. Singh added, "Counseling of victim was done by CIC Counsellor. Statement of victim got recorded wherein she levelled allegations against Yash, alias kala."

An FIR under section 127(2) (wrongful confinement), 65(1) (punishment of rape on a woman under sixteen years of age) and 109(1) (Attempt to murder) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and sections under POCSO Act has been registered. During the investigation, the crime team and FSL team was called at the place of incident for inspection.

Statement of the victim was recorded under section 183 Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). "Dedicated search of accused is being made and investigation is on," the DCP said.

LS adjourned twice

The Lok Sabha has adjourned twice in the post-lunch period on Thursday as a war of words broke out between the treasury and Opposition benches, triggered by Congress MP Charanjit Singh Channi's spat with BJP's Ranveer Singh Bittu.



House, adding that ministers especially should not break the rules. Channi then proceeded to conclude his speech. He mentioned the meeting of Rahul Gandhi with some farmer leaders on Wednesday, adding that they had also sought time to meet the prime minister.

against protesting farmers, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Channi should authenticate the allegations and accused him of misleading the House. Rijiju also urged the chair to move a privilege motion against Channi.

Naidu promises enquiry into MPs charges of abrupt airfare hike

Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu on Thursday promised to conduct an enquiry into allegations of abrupt fare hike when MPs try to book tickets on Air Vistara airline, following complaints by MPs and a nudge by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.



been trying make air travel affordable for the common people. However, he said, the air fare is market driven and lots of factors come into play while deciding the fare of any sector. "Customer is king and that is the priority of the ministry. We will do whatever we can to make the air travel affordable," he said.

fare pricing, the tickets bought in advance are much cheaper than those purchased near the travel date. He said under the provisions of Rule 135(1) of the Aircraft Rules, 1937, the airlines are free to fix tariffs, having regard to all relevant factors, including cost of operation, characteristics of services, generally prevailing tariff etc.



Shekhar new IFFI festival director

Veteran filmmaker Shekhar Kapur, known for films such as "Mr India", "Bandit Queen" and "Elizabeth", has been appointed festival director for the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). Kapur will head the festival, held annually in Goa, for the 55th and 56th editions, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry said in a notification.

INDAG RUBBER LIMITED (CIN: L74899DL1978PLC009038) Regd. Office: Khemka House, 11, Community Centre, Saket, New Delhi -110017.

NOTICE OF THE 45TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND REMOTE E-VOTING INFORMATION Notice is hereby given that the Forty-Fifth Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Members of Indag Rubber Limited ("the Company") will be held on Friday, August 16, 2024 at 03:00 P.M.

PUBLIC NOTICE ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd., Plot No. 23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005. The following borrower(s) has/have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest towards the Loan facility(ies) availed from ICICI Bank.

PUBLIC NOTICE ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd., Plot No. 23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005. The following borrower(s) has/have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest towards the Loan facility(ies) availed from ICICI Bank.

PUBLIC NOTICE Lost original English DDA ALLOTMENT LETTER Vide Doc. No. F1815831185 HBM/NP Dated 05/06/1986 Of Flat no 77-C, Pocket A, 2nd Floor, Vikaspuri Puri EXTN, Vikaspuri, West Delhi-110018 on the name of Harindra Partap Singh. Finder contact at Flat No 1039, Plot no 23 Apna Villa Apartment sector-10 Dwarka New Delhi-110075.

PUBLIC NOTICE It is inform to the Public Notice at large that Chandan Kumar is Purchasing the 3rd Floor with Roof rights out of Property No-73, area measuring 200 Sqyds out of Kharsa No-15/24/1 Area village Dabri, Colony known as Raghu Nagar New Delhi. The owner of the floor is Vinod Kumar, he is the owner from GPA (Notarized), ATS and will dated 18/10/2011 and he was Purchased from Mrs. Dimble Kumar and Mr. Laxmi Narain from GPA/ATS will. I am aware that in this Property the CTC of the Khatoni is not available and I Purchase this Property from GPA Holder. I am giving the news Paper Publication regarding this paper. If any person having any type of Claim/rights/title interest over the said property may inform in writing within 7 days, said property is free from all type of Encumbrance lien etc.

PUBLIC NOTICE Public Notice in respect of Property bearing No. I-4/1V, First Floor, situated at Old Double Storey, Nirmal Pur, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi-110024, measuring 255.5sq. ft. That my client Shri Suresh Matmani son of Shri Nenuamal Thakurdas Matmani resident of House No. B-604, Plot No. 21, Dwarika Apartments, Dwarika Phase-I, Sector-7, Dwarika, New Delhi-110024, is the sole and absolute owner and in physical possession of the Property bearing No. I-4/1V, First Floor, situated at Old Double Storey, Nirmal Pur, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi-110024, measuring 255.5 sq. ft. on the basis of Will dated: 20.05.2013, executed by his sister Late Ms. Jaya Matmani daughter of Late Shri Nenuamal Thakurdas Matmani resident of I-4/1V, First Floor, Old Double Storey, Nirmal Pur, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi-110024 during her life time which is duly registered as Document No. 1740, in Additional Book No. II, Volume No. 354, on pages 53 to 56, on 20.05.2013, in the office of Sub-Registrar-VII, New Delhi and she died on 25.04.2021. Further, declare that the said property is free from all disputes, litigations, charges, liens, prior sale, gift, mortgage, will, prior agreement, HUF, acquisition, attachments in the decree of any court, court injunction and other encumbrances whatsoever. If anybody has any claim, against, into or upon the said property or any part thereof by virtue of sale, gift, will, inheritance, agreement, contract, mortgage, HUF, lien, charges etc. or otherwise howsoever and whatsoever nature is hereby required to notify the same in writing along with supporting documents, if any, evidencing to the undersigned within 15 days, from the date of publication of this Notice, failing which my client shall conclude the ownership of the said property, thereafter, the objections/claims, if any, shall be considered as waived and abandoned and shall not be binding upon my client.

Govt committed to free, fair recruitment tests, Minister assures RS



There has been no incident of paper leak reported in the recruitment examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS), during the last two years, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Thursday. "Recently, National Testing Agency (NTA) conducted NEET(UG) examination on May 5, 2024 in OMR (Pen and paper) mode. Certain cases of alleged irregularities/cheating/impersonation/malpractices were reported," Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said in a written reply.

subsequently rules under this law have also been notified, he added. The Minister also informed the Upper House that the National Recruitment Agency (NRA) is conducting a detailed study of the prevalent recruitment systems in central and State Governments to conduct a free and fair examination. The NRA, mandated to conduct online examinations to screen Government job aspirants, was given an approval in 2020 by the Union cabinet. "NRA is conducting a detailed study of the prevalent recruitment systems in central and State Governments and the procedure followed by various Public Examination Authorities (PEAs) for conduct of examination and also examining the issues which are likely to arise in the new examination system and address them ab initio so as to conduct a free and fair examination," Singh said in a written reply. The Minister was responding to a query whether the NRA has conducted any recruitment tests since its inception. Singh said the NRA is also in the process of developing protocols and policy frameworks to address various issues associated with conduct of the new examination system as well as evolving effective means for ensuring compliance of normative standards and guidelines by all concerned. He said four Governing Body meetings have been held since the inception of the NRA, which functions from its headquarters at New Delhi.

कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, खटीमा, ऊधमसिंह नगर ई-निविदा सूचना दिनांक : 25.07.2024 एतद्वारा मुख्य महाप्रबन्धक उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, देहरादून की ओर से अधोस्तक्षरी द्वारा निम्न कार्यो हेतु उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम एंव उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान में पंजीकृत फर्मो / ठेकेदारों से ई-निविदा (दू बिड प्राकृष में) आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा से संबंधित सभी सूचना www.uktenders.gov.in पर दिनांक 27.07.2024 को सायं 05:00 बजे से उपलब्ध होगी।

कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, खटीमा, ऊधमसिंह नगर ई-निविदा सूचना दिनांक : 25.07.2024 एतद्वारा मुख्य महाप्रबन्धक उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, देहरादून की ओर से अधोस्तक्षरी द्वारा निम्न कार्यो हेतु उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम एंव उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान में पंजीकृत फर्मो / ठेकेदारों से ई-निविदा (दू बिड प्राकृष में) आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा से संबंधित सभी सूचना www.uktenders.gov.in पर दिनांक 27.07.2024 को सायं 05:00 बजे से उपलब्ध होगी।

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd. 4/10, Mythree Tower, Bommanhalli Hosur/Main Road Bangalore- 560068. The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE Public Notice in respect of Property bearing No. I-4/1V, First Floor, situated at Old Double Storey, Nirmal Pur, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi-110024, measuring 255.5sq. ft. That my client Shri Suresh Matmani son of Shri Nenuamal Thakurdas Matmani resident of House No. B-604, Plot No. 21, Dwarika Apartments, Dwarika Phase-I, Sector-7, Dwarika, New Delhi-110024, is the sole and absolute owner and in physical possession of the Property bearing No. I-4/1V, First Floor, situated at Old Double Storey, Nirmal Pur, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi-110024, measuring 255.5 sq. ft. on the basis of Will dated: 20.05.2013, executed by his sister Late Ms. Jaya Matmani daughter of Late Shri Nenuamal Thakurdas Matmani resident of I-4/1V, First Floor, Old Double Storey, Nirmal Pur, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi-110024 during her life time which is duly registered as Document No. 1740, in Additional Book No. II, Volume No. 354, on pages 53 to 56, on 20.05.2013, in the office of Sub-Registrar-VII, New Delhi and she died on 25.04.2021. Further, declare that the said property is free from all disputes, litigations, charges, liens, prior sale, gift, mortgage, will, prior agreement, HUF, acquisition, attachments in the decree of any court, court injunction and other encumbrances whatsoever. If anybody has any claim, against, into or upon the said property or any part thereof by virtue of sale, gift, will, inheritance, agreement, contract, mortgage, HUF, lien, charges etc. or otherwise howsoever and whatsoever nature is hereby required to notify the same in writing along with supporting documents, if any, evidencing to the undersigned within 15 days, from the date of publication of this Notice, failing which my client shall conclude the ownership of the said property, thereafter, the objections/claims, if any, shall be considered as waived and abandoned and shall not be binding upon my client.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd. 4/10, Mythree Tower, Bommanhalli Hosur/Main Road Bangalore- 560068. The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.

Pandemonium in K'taka House over MUDA scam

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Acrimonious scenes marked proceedings in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Thursday with opposition BJP and JD(S) protesting from the well of the House, demanding a discussion on the alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), including to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi.



"cover up and shut" the case. "There seems to be a fear that if discussion happens the truth will come out. Chair (Speaker's post) is being used for it. Please reconsider your decision and allow discussion. Where should we discuss if not in the House?"

in power even for a second," he said. "Fourteen sites were given to CM and registered to his family in a single day," Ashoka claimed. Amid protest and sloganeering, the Speaker transacted the business of the House that saw several Ministers and heads of several House committees laying papers and reports on the table of the Assembly, and six bills being passed without any discussion.

Bengal Assembly Speaker asks MLAs to behave responsibly



PTI ■ KOLKATA

A day after senior BJP Leader Asuvendu Adhikari was involved in a verbal spat with Trinamool Congress MLA Tapan Chatterjee on the assembly premises, Speaker Biman Bandyopadhyay on Thursday asked legislators to behave responsibly.

with dire consequences when he wanted his explanation at the assembly lobby for the comments. Taking a serious view of the incident, the Speaker said, "What happened in the assembly premises yesterday is unfortunate, unexpected and inappropriate."

Women in Goa village tap Govt scheme to weave secure future

PTI ■ SURLA (GOA)

When a mining ban was imposed in Goa in 2012, the women in Surla village in Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's Sanguel assembly constituency were the first to face its economic impact.

building for the project in 2020. Kanekar told PTI that the women from Surla requested him to procure machines to weave Kunbi sarees. The department also trained the women to operate the machines. Since then, they have been weaving sarees, shawls and other Kunbi products.

High drama inside Bihar Assembly



PTI ■ PATNA

There was high drama inside the Bihar assembly on Thursday as opposition members conducted parallel "proceedings" in the well, expressing their lack of confidence in the ruling dispensation led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Hour concluded, opposition MLAs staged a walkout, alleging their voices were being ignored. The Speaker read out a number of adjournment motions, moved by members of various opposition parties, and quipped "it is strange that those who moved these motions did not even bother to remain present."

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sumit Sharma S/O Sh. Satbir Sharma R/O 63-A, J and K Pocket, Dilshad Garden Delhi-110095 declares that I have changed my name from Sumit Kumar Sharma to Sumit Sharma for all future purposes.

I, Prince S/o Shri Bablu Kumar, R/o House-No. J-664, 5/35, Kirti Nagar Industrial Area, New Delhi-110015, that I have changed my name from Prince Kumar to Prince for all future purposes.

I, Satbir Sharma S/o Sh. Ram Kishan Sharma R/O 63-A, J and K Pocket, Dilshad Garden Delhi-110095 declares that I have changed my name from Satbir Singh Sharma to Satbir Sharma for all future purposes.

LOST & FOUND

I, Lost my original Registered Sale Deed dated 02/09/2015 of house No E837, of entire 2nd floor Chitranjan Park ND-19 executed by Suprakas Bhattacharjya in favour of Prashant Mallick and Maya Mallick has been lost at Market No 2 CR Park area. Finder may contact Gitaanjali Jayantimal Mahida 9818111168

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large, on behalf of our client, Mr. Prameet Kumar S/O Mr. Kishan Lal R/O 154, Newada Bazaar, Chakrasenpur, Gurgaon, Haryana.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large, on behalf of our client, Mr. Prameet Kumar S/O Mr. Kishan Lal R/O 154, Newada Bazaar, Chakrasenpur, Gurgaon, Haryana.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large, on behalf of our client, Mr. Prameet Kumar S/O Mr. Kishan Lal R/O 154, Newada Bazaar, Chakrasenpur, Gurgaon, Haryana.

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that Mr. Ravinder Kumar Pahuja & Ms. Subhash Chandra alias Subhash Chandra were the owner of Estate No. 10/1999, Sector-14, Block-1, Condo-1, Phase-I, Gurgaon, Haryana.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed that my client Sanjay Rana S/O Sh. Amar Pal Singh & his wife Pushpa Rana R/O H-17/121, Ratiya Marg, Sangam Vihar, New Delhi-110080 have disowned and debarred their son Kamal Rana R/O above address, from their all movable & immovable properties.

सार्वजनिक सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि दिनांक 09. 07. 1999 को राजेश सिंह एवं एडवोकेट नि. शर्मा द्वारा कानूनी कार्यवाही के अन्तर्गत सूर्य लॉन्ग सी विलियम सिंह यादव नि. नजफगढ़ जिले के साथ मिलकर एक 100 वर्गमीटर का प्लॉट खरसा नम्बरान 30/3 उ 31/23/2 नाम नजफगढ़ के दोहराव कालोनी एस्टेटमेंट में स्थित है।

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby brought to the notice of general public that my clients (i) Kater Khan S/O Brij Kumar, R/O M-17, Guru Harikrishan Nagar, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110087 and (ii) Varun Mehta S/O. Late Naveen Mehta, R/O 9/308, Sunder Vihar, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110087, intends to purchase the Entire First Floor with undivided one-half share in Roof/Terrace Rights (over and above first floor), being Part of Entire Property Bearing No. 92, Measuring 200 Square Yards, at Block-J, in the Layout Plan of the Reserve Bank Staff Co-operative House Building Society Ltd., also known as Reserve Bank Enclave (R.B.E. Colony), Situated at Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110053, with undivided one-half share in the land underneath (which at present is leasehold property) from (i) Aaliya Sharma Late B.S. Sharma, R/O. B-101, Sanamati Kunj, Plot No. 19A, Dwarika Sector-6, Delhi-110075 and (ii) Smt. Namita Sharma W/o Late Shyam, R/O G-75, Harsh Path, Shyam Nagar Extension, New Sangar Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan-302019, who have represented themselves to be absolute and exclusive owners of the said property and have assured that the said property is free from all sorts of encumbrances (registered or un-registered) including but not limited to prior sale, gift, mortgage, charges, lien, claims, disputes etc. Therefore any persons having any claim in respect of the above referred property or part thereof by way of sale, exchange, mortgage, charge, gift, maintenance, inheritance, possession, lease, tenancy, sub tenancy, license, hypothecation/transfer of title or beneficial interest under any just right of prescription or preemption or under any Agreement or other disposition or under any decree, order or Award or otherwise claiming, however, are hereby requested to make the same known in writing together with supporting documents to the undersigned at their office within Fifteen (15) days from the publication of this notice, failing which my client shall conduct the purchase and any claim and/or objection if any shall be considered as waived & abandoned and shall not be binding upon my client. Date: 22/07/24, Archit Singh Tomar, Place-New Delhi

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION BHOPAL. NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER. Online Tender are invited on website https://mptenders.gov.in for following works. Document can be purchased on website from 24.07.2024 and online submission till 23.07.2024.

Karnataka Bank Ltd. Your Family Bank. Across India. Asset Recovery Management Branch 8-B-First Floor, Rajender Park, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110060. Phone : 011-40591567(Ext-240) E-Mail : delhiarm@kbank.com Website : www.karnatakabank.com

ICICI Bank. The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Reaching out

Netanyahu seeks support for Gaza war during US Congress speech, despite many senators skipping it

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called for US solidarity in his address to Congress, despite declining popularity and increasing opposition in his own country. In an address to the United States Congress, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought to rally American lawmakers behind Israel's ongoing military operations in Gaza. The speech, delivered amidst a backdrop of escalating violence and rising civilian casualties, underscored Netanyahu's determination to secure unwavering support from Israel's most powerful ally. He emphasised the existential threats faced by Israel from militant groups operating in Gaza, particularly Hamas. The Prime Minister framed the military actions as a necessary response to ongoing rocket attacks and acts of terrorism that have plagued Israeli communities. However, Netanyahu's speech did not address the mounting international concerns regarding human rights violations in the Palestinian territories. Reports from various human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have highlighted a range of human rights violations.



The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has been further exacerbated by a blockade that severely restricts the movement of people and goods, leading to shortages of essential supplies such as food, water, and medical care. The present Gaza offensive, which has gone over 250 days, has left a spree of death and destruction. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, at least 34,000 people have been killed, and more than 77,000 have been wounded in Israeli attacks. About 72 per cent of those killed are women and children. United Nations human rights chief Volker Turk has gone on record saying that a child in Gaza is killed or wounded 'every 10 minutes.'

Israel's actions violate international law and constitute collective punishment, disproportionately affecting innocent civilians and deepening the humanitarian crisis. The United States, as Israel's primary ally, plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This support has also placed the US under scrutiny, with calls for it to leverage its influence to promote peace and uphold human rights. The very weaponry provided by the US is being used by Israel against the civilian population in Palestine which is undergoing a horrendous time. There is growing advocacy within the US, both among the public and some members of Congress, for a more balanced approach. The US is urged to take a firm stand against human rights violations and to support diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a sustainable and just resolution to the conflict. A sustainable peace can only be achieved through a comprehensive and inclusive approach that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties. The US has a moral and strategic responsibility to advocate for human rights and justice in the region. The US can play a pivotal role in paving the lasting peace in the region by telling Netanyahu to comply with the UN directives on Gaza and stop bombing the civilian targets to minimise civilian casualties.

PICTALK



Members of the State Disaster Management Authority perform rescue operation during a mock drill, in Prayagraj

Pushpa Kamal Dahal falls from grace



K S TOMAR

The new coalition, dominated by the pro-India Nepali Congress, will now be led by the communist leader Oli who will have a daunting task of ensuring political stability

Politicians have been grabbing the power by following Machiavellian principle of showing complete disrespect to means, the morality and values. This is true of Pushpa Kamal Dahal who fell from the grace after facing humiliating defeat while seeking trust vote in Nepal parliament. While seeking trust vote in Nepal parliament, Prachanda faced the worst type of humiliating defeat as he got 63 votes (Rashtriya Swatantra Party-21, CPN(US)-10 and his party-32) as against 194 votes of new coalition combination of Nepali Congress (89 MPs) and Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (78 MPs) which also got support from other smaller parties like Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Janata Samajwadi Party (Uppendra faction) etc. in the house of 275 where majority mark was 138 only. Oli has staked claim after president Ram Chandra Poedel invited the political parties having strength to form the government.



Kamal Dahal, Prachanda. In this manner, yet another coalition of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Nepali Congress came into existence today following the humiliating defeat of Prachanda, a diehard loyalist of China' on the floor of house. New regime will be headed by Ex PM, Oli which had preceded withdrawal of the support to current PM, on July 3, 2024 thereby reducing it to minority. The Janata Samajwadi party led by Ashok Rai having 7 MPs also withdrew the support and recalled three ministers from Prachanda government. The coalition government will be dominated by Pro India, Nepali Congress, though a die-hard communist leader, former PM, Oli will be heading it for a term of one half year which will be followed by a takeover by former PM, Deuba of Nepali congress as agreed by two coalition partners. Foreign policy experts say that major factors responsible for the collapse of coalition of Prachanda-Oli, duo, included Power Struggle, style of functioning of prime minister, Policy Differences, Coalition Dynamics and Coalition Dynamics which may lead to more stable dispensation comprising of Nepali Congress, Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and Janata Samajwadi party. Amidst the toppling game,



OLI AND DEUBA COMBINE WILL BE UNDER COMPULSION TO KEEP EQUI-DISTANCE WITH TWO REGIONAL POWERS VIZ INDIA AND CHINA WHICH HAVE GOT GEO-POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE AFFAIRS OF NEPAL

midnight power sharing agreement between two former Prime ministers, viz. Sher Bahadur Deuba, and Nepali Congress and K.P.S.Oli chairman of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) was signed on July 5, 2024 thereby leading to a sudden change of regime in Nepal. New coalition government of Oli and Deuba is bound to face multiple challenges which will be key to success otherwise its fallout could be midterm polls. The fragile nature of the new government consisting of the communists (Pro China) and Nepali Congress (Pro India) having opposing ideologies could pose a major challenge to keep them in unison and amalgamated. Oli and Deuba combine will be under compulsion to keep equi-distance with two regional powers viz. India and China which have got geo-political and strategic interests in the affairs of Nepal. Oli's previous stint as PM was marked by his extreme Anti India action of redrawing the map which had shown Indian territories including Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani as part of Nepal. It had exasperated India which rejected this misadventure thereby terming it as baseless besides being an attempt to spoil ties. Now, as dominant partner in the coalition, the onus of checking this tendency will lie on Deuba to prevail upon Oli to come

out of Anti-India mentality and protect age-old relations between two nations. The communists regimes led by Prachanda always gave clear indications about the commitment to China which will expect new government to go ahead with Belt and Road (BRI) initiative especially when outgoing PM has approved the proposal which had been signed between two countries on May 12, 2017. It will be an uphill task for Oli to stick to his predecessors' resolve to toe China's line about BRI as Nepali congress is totally opposed to it hence chances of any progress seem to be remote. It will be a test of the new government to deal with India's Agnipath scheme which is one of the major irritants so far. Nepal's border issues with India, including disputes over territories require a multifaceted approach. Strengthening the Nepal-India Joint Boundary Commission to expedite the resolution of boundary issues through technical and diplomatic means may yield positive results. The survival of the coalition will depend solely on mutual trust of partners and balanced diplomatic strategy and refrain from offending two regional giants which had been lacking in the past. (Writer is a senior journalist and a political analyst; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BUDGET REACTIONS

Madam — Apropos the news headline "Less Tax, More Jobs" (July 24). Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman's 2024 Union budget should be the budget of the whole country, but the FM has presented it as if it is the NDA's budget. To make matters worse, taxpayers have to foot the bill for the NDA government's political survival. There is nothing wrong when the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi criticizes the NDA government's Union Budget, claiming it undermines India's federal structure. He highlights neglect towards other states and vows to advocate for equal justice. INDIA protests against the 'Kursi Bachao' Budget in Parliament. Interestingly, FM Sitharaman, elected from Karnataka, provided nothing in the budget for her state, which is ruled by the Congress. In her Purvodaya scheme for the all-round development of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh, only Bihar and Andhra Pradesh benefit significantly. For instance, Rs 11,500 crore was allocated to Bihar for flood mitigation, while West Bengal, one of the worst flood-affected states, is crying for help. Salaried employees in the new tax regime will save up to Rs 17,500 in income tax. Corporate tax rates on foreign companies were reduced to 25%. Family pensions were enhanced from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000. However, nearly 60 lakh EPF pensioners have been receiving Rs 920 to Rs 1000 per month since 1995 without any increase. The government deserves praise for exempting three cancer medicines from custom duties and allocating Rs 2.2 lakh crore to make housing more affordable. It's also commendable that FM Sitharaman has introduced an internship program similar to Congress' Nyay Patra. Overall it is a mix bag but could have addressed the pressing issues on priority. Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Tragedy at Tribhuvan International Airport



It is deeply shocking that eighteen people have lost their lives in a deadly plane crash at Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu. The plane, a twenty-year-old Bombardier CRJ-200 regional jet owned by the

private airline company Saurya Airlines, skidded off the runway and crashed. It seems that the aviation industry in Nepal has fallen short of both standards and expectations, failing to keep pace with other countries in terms of modernization and sophistication. It is a pity that Nepal has not learned any lessons from past incidents, leading to a continuing series of plane crashes. The aviation sector is crucial for Nepal's tourism and businesses. It is high time that the government of Nepal, along with private airline owners, collaborate to revamp the deteriorating aviation sector. They must pay due attention to improving passenger safety, modernizing logistics and infrastructure, and introducing new jets to avoid future accidents. Path-breaking reforms are essential. Janga Bahadur Sunuwar, Bagrakote

CONTROVERSIAL REMARKS

Madam — The Telangana-cadre IAS officer Smita Sabharwal is being criticized for questioning the need for a disability quota in civil services. She asked the "rights activists" to examine why the policy was yet to be implemented in police services, foreign services, and the defense sector. By raising such questions, she violated the code of conduct for civil servants and is punishable under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and other relevant laws. Prominent coach and mentor of civil services aspirants in Hyderabad, Bala Latha Mallavarapu, challenged Smita to sit for the UPSC examination again and beat her score. The Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of Pankaj Kumar Srivastava, a 100 percent visually impaired candidate who cleared the Civil Services Examination in 2009 but was denied an appointment. This ruling marks a significant milestone in the fight for disability rights in India. inappropriate remarks. Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

BIDEN WITHDRAWS FROM THE RACE

Madam — Joe Biden Withdraws from Presidential Race. Madam, Accepting the views of prominent Democratic leaders, including former President Barack Obama, President Joe Biden has announced his withdrawal from the presidential race. Age is not on his side, and Donald Trump, after surviving an assassination attempt, has gained momentum. Vice President Kamala Harris is likely to take on the aging Donald Trump. In India, Kamala Harris' presumptive nomination elicited only lukewarm enthusiasm. During the 2019 election campaign, she criticised Prime Minister Modi's policies on Kashmir, saying, "We have to remind Kashmiris that they are not alone in the world." The possibility of tension in relations between the two countries, despite statements of warm friendship, cannot be ignored. Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

Union budget 2024: A major thrust on agriculture



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

The budget's focus on sustainable agriculture and innovation highlights the Government's commitment to support the farmers and ensuring food security

Union budget 2024 - a thrust on agriculture for a visit by Biju Dharmapalan. In the Union Budget 2024 presented by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, great emphasis has been placed on agriculture and space. Both are essential pillars for transforming our country into a developed nation. The latter is futuristic, and the former is the lifeline of the present generation. No nation can survive without the farming community, and they are the 'Annadata'. In the changing global climate and environmental conditions, the traditional farming sector would not be sufficient to feed the population. The government has allocated Rs. 1,51,851 crores for the agricultural and allied sectors. Stress has been given to agricultural research to increase productivity and release 109 new high-yielding and climate-resilient crops have become essential under the prevailing global climate conditions. During the past few years, we have noticed changes in the climate in



various parts of the country. We had severe summers even in high altitudes of the Himalayas and a deficit in rain during the monsoons. This has badly affected the agricultural sector, where most of our crop cultivation is based on climatic patterns. Farmers are forced to grow temperate plants like apples and grapes in plains. People are even trying to grow rain-fed crops like paddy in garden pots. Change in agricultural patterns is inevitable. Climate change affects agriculture in numerous ways. Heat stress triggers alterations in respiration and photosynthesis, resulting in a reduced life cycle and decreased plant yield. Additionally, higher temperatures can lead to increased evapotranspiration, necessitating more water for crops when water resources

are scarcer. Experiencing drought-like situations in several parts of the country due to climate changes has badly affected the soil health, making the farmland unhealthy for future farming. Moreover, the frequency and severity of droughts are expected to rise, particularly in regions that are already water-stressed. Drought conditions reduce crop yields and affect soil health, making it more difficult for future crops to grow. On the other hand, excessive rainfall and flooding, becoming more common, can destroy crops, erode soil, and wash away essential nutrients. Extreme weather patterns will not only affect crop productivity and microbial biodiversity, which keeps our planet healthy. In addition, it will expedite the emergence of new pests and diseases that may affect crop growth and productivity. The emergence of new diseases may even lead to a pandemic affecting several crop species across the globe. This may jeopardise our food security. Developing resilient crops for the next century is a challenging task. It requires significant investment in research and devel-

opment. Our laboratories in the agricultural universities need thorough transformation. They need to be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities that can handle molecular breeding programmes and large crop phenomics facilities that can speed up the development of new crop varieties. Our scientific community should acknowledge the farmers and share the benefits of the genes taken from traditional varieties for developing resilient crops. By promoting healthy soils, biodiversity, and resilience, natural farming has the potential to support long-term food security and environmental health. Agriculture is not merely an occupation; it is the bedrock of our food supply and a critical component in balancing the health of our planet. So, we need to promote and incentivise our farmers who take up new technologies so that farming remains a viable and respected profession for youngsters. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

BUDGET BALANCES FISCAL DISCIPLINE AND EMPLOYMENT

Union budget takes definitive steps to create jobs for India's youth



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The eleventh full-term budget under Modi 3.0 walks the fiscal discipline path, despite being a coalition government, he is heading. The surprise results from June 4th, which threw in a coalition government for Prime Minister Modi, perhaps for the first time in his career, did not stop his budget proposals, political with sound economics in the background. In the run-up to the budget, many had expected, that the Finance Act would be populist keeping in mind the state elections of Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand scheduled later this year. However what came out from Nirmala Sitharaman's tab, was a document that chose to focus on core areas of long-term growth and decent infrastructure spending, without giving in to populist demands. The key theme as highlighted by Government is Employment.

Questions have been raised in post-budget analysis regarding the feasibility of the schemes announced for creating lakhs of jobs for the youth of the country. The apprentice scheme promising a government stipend for lakhs of youth per year, in some of the largest companies of India, may only be a game changer if these young interns are attentively skilled to be formally absorbed into jobs, once their tenure is over. There are serious concerns regarding the abundant availability of a relatively unskilled workforce, hanging around in large offices, without learning any meaningful skills.

Similar questions have been raised regarding the EPFO-linked new job incentivisation scheme, which has various blindspots, possibly pushing a well-thought-out policy push into a dark corner. It may be said that the policy push is primarily to bring more youth employed in the informal sector within a formal standard workforce and instil a financial literacy discipline in them early on. However, this financial literacy falls flat when one looks at the changes made in the tax structures for any investor punting in the speculative equities market. The increased rate of capital gains tax and a general push to the new income tax regime, seem to be at cross purposes of the financial literacy programme, the government wants youth to undertake to avail of full benefits of INR 15,000, as a first month's salary subsidy. The earlier tax regimes instilled a sense



of financial responsibility for any youth entering the formal job sector, with several choosing at least one product, as a means to save and claim tax rebates in the future. This set them off for a long financial discipline path during their tenure as working professionals, which now seems to be slowly being eased out. The counter-argument the government may have is, that they want the consumer economy to grow first, led by the youth, who may be more willing to spend on food items, entertainment etc, with the monthly salaries they would be drawing in their new jobs. However, it prevents them from getting into habit of savings, which are useful during rainy days or Covid type crises. Yes, the government, did well to maintain the fiscal discipline glide path, buoyed by a better than expected GDP growth, and lumpy dividend payouts from the central bank. Overall inflations, except for food are also within tolerable levels, giving the government, a cushion for spending on welfare projects, it feels are essential. Union budget 24-25 is an attempt woo back disgruntled voters.

The lesson BJP appears to have taken from the June 4 results is, that the youth are excited about huge temples, few smart glitzy trains, and cheap mobile data in their 'Made in India' phones, but they are increasingly getting anxious to earn money, have an engaging occupation, which feeds into their aspirational upwardly mobile lifestyle. Then there are pulls and pressures of coalition politics, with NDA's two partners TDP and JD(U) having their wish lists for catering to their core constituencies. A long-term dice has been rolled, perhaps NDA 3.0 with this budget has achieved the goldilocks balance.

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

Budget 2024: A blueprint for long-term growth



DEEPAK SOOD

The Union Budget 2024-25 reaffirms the Govt's dedication to long-term growth. India is well-positioned to harness its immense potential for rapid development



In a pivotal move aimed at strengthening India's economic prowess, the Union Budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 has made significant strides in assuring continuity of progressive reforms. There is cheer in the MSME, E-commerce and start-up worlds, which have been extended additional support as the country progresses on the road towards a Viksit Bharat. The Finance Minister made various announcements to empower the Garib, Mahila, Yuva and Kissan. The announcements made under this budget are timely and set to propel the Indian economy to new heights during the Amrit Kaal, enhancing its resilience in an ever-evolving global landscape.

A booster for MSMEs

The budget rightfully supports the bottom of the industrial pyramid by offering much-needed ease of credit for the MSME segment. India has 633.9 lakh MSMEs, where over 99% of them qualify as micro-enterprises that make up 630.5 lakh enterprises. One of the critical reasons why micro enterprises (with investments up to INR 10 million) do not graduate to being small or medium enterprises is the lack of access to formal credit. By doubling the MUDRA loan amounts and setting up new SIDBI branches, credit will now be more accessible to these organizations. Other steps (mandatory Trade Receivables Discounting System) have improved liquidity, while Industrial parks will provide the much-needed digital support that MSMEs usually cannot afford for growth. Additionally, the new credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs offers term loans without collateral or third-party guarantees, significantly easing the financial burden on small business owners and fos-

tering entrepreneurship. Such positive support for this crucial sector is bound to give it the confidence to shed its risk-averse nature and grow with ambition on the road to 2047.

Skilling and Job Creation

With this budget, the Government has responded positively to the need for job opportunities and skill development among youth in our country. The continued emphasis on skilling will allow training institutions and large corporations to participate in creating a pool of professionally trained manpower that would be readily absorbed by them and the larger MSME ecosystem, which is often strained for funds for training purposes. Meticulous implementation will, however, be key to setting the ball rolling in the right direction of creating jobs. Rural Economy

The rural economy

continued to receive support from the government, as strengthening this segment will be crucial for the sustained economic growth of the country. Budget 2024 had some big announcements for them that would increase productivity and food security in grains and oilseeds. Such measures will go a long way in creating new economic clusters that will support sustained growth.

With 1 crore farmers to be trained in natural farming, marketing, certification, and brand-

ing, organic farming is all set to receive a big stimulus. The focus on addressing the impact of climate on our food basket showcases the government's long-term vision towards building resilience in the ecosystem.

Start-ups and E-Commerce

There is general cheer in the start-up ecosystem across India over the abolition of the angle tax, proposed in the budget. Angel tax, introduced in 2012, was imposed on the capital raised by unlisted companies through the issue of shares to Indian investors if the share price exceeded the fair market value (FMV) of the company. Traders and artisans using e-commerce sites got a lift up in this budget when TDS was not just reduced but TDS delays were decriminalized.

E-commerce exports, \$2 billion now, are expected to be \$350 billion by 2030. With revised custom duties, the Government hopes to give the required fillip to these artisans/traders who sell their wares using websites, in line with its Make in India strategy.

Energy security

India is a fast-developing economy and our energy needs are rising rapidly. By encouraging private investment in setting up small nuclear energy reactors and encouraging R&D into newer forms of nuclear energy, the budget aims to achieve India's goals of energy security. With regular energy audits across

clusters, larger commercial thermal plants and a pumped storage policy, the budget aims to help India cope with the rising demand without missing a step. However, our green economy targets are very ambitious and much more needs to be done to ensure our transition to green fuels.

Digitization of Land Records

This one step is perhaps the most impactful step the budget has outlined for the growth of India's economy. Vast tracts of our land, especially in rural India, are often embroiled in disputes with no proper documentation. This is a key hurdle in land acquisition for major projects. By digitising these records across India, the Government will end middlemen and reduce the number of land cases in the legal system. Overall, the Union Budget 2024-25 reinforces the Government's commitment to sustained long-term growth.

With strategic investments and forward-looking policies, India is poised to navigate global challenges while harnessing its immense potential for socio-economic development. The road towards Viksit Bharat could have its set of challenges, especially given the global dynamics, but the sustained vision and progressive policy support will help realise the dream of a Viksit Bharat.

(The writer is secretary general of ASSOCHAM; views expressed are personal)



THERE IS GENERAL CHEER IN THE START-UP ECOSYSTEM ACROSS INDIA OVER THE ABOLITION OF THE ANGEL TAX, PROPOSED IN THE BUDGET

Commemorating 25 years of Kargil victory: A tribute to India's bravehearts

As we remember the 527 soldiers who laid down their lives, we celebrate the enduring legacy of their heroism and dedication to the nation

Visitors to Drass, a town situated at an altitude of 10,760 feet (3,279 metres) in India-administered Kashmir, are greeted with a signboard that says at -60 degrees Celsius on January 9, 1995, it was the second-coldest inhabited place on the planet. Drass, located in Kargil district, has an additional claim to fame. In the summer of 1999, it was on its western edge with rocky and barren Himalayan peaks that India and Pakistan fought their last war.

That year, Pakistan's military and Kashmiri rebels occupied strategic positions on the Indian side of the de facto border between them (known as the Line of Control or LoC), prompting a counter-offensive by India. While



RAHUL KAMBLE

Pakistan had named its move to take over the control of Indian posts along the LoC as 'Operation Badr', India called its offensive 'Operation Vijay'. It was a war fought in the era of satellite news channels. The battles were broadcast directly to homes in both countries, making Drass and Kargil as a whole, a symbol of India's nationalism, inspiring a raft of jingoistic Bollywood movies. This July 26 is the 25th Kargil Vijay Divas. On this day in

1999, the Indian forces threw out the Pakistanis from the incursion points in the general area of Kargil, which they had illegally occupied, bringing to a close a two-month war. It was a tough war, fought on sheer grit and courage, as gutsy young officers, most of them in their twenties, led equally brave soldiers up naked rock faces and managed to evict the enemy within weeks. Names such as Tiger Hill, Tololing, Point 5140, Point 4700, Three Pimples, Chorbat La, Point 5203, Point 4875, Khalubar, and Jubar Top became household names across the country. On 26 July 1999, the Kargil conflict officially came to an end. The Indian Army announced the complete eviction of Pakistani intruders, but a price was paid

for it in blood and tears. We lost 527 of our brave soldiers; 1363 came back wounded. The Indian army has marked July 26 - the day the Kargil war ended - as 'Vijay Diwas' (Victory Day).

Every year for the past 25 years, the whole nation celebrates proudly on this day. Army also undertakes commemorative treks on the icy features, where our Braves became invincibles. What seemed an impossible task to the world, was accomplished in a mere 50 days, with all the features lost, back under our control. The '50 Day War' as it is fondly called, was a record in itself. Whenever the story of Kargil is told, it shall be incomplete without paying homage to the steely resolve and cold



courage of these young men who went to fight for their nation knowing that they might never return. Barely out of the academy, they fought against all odds, with single-minded devotion, and set new benchmarks in heroism. Their spirit and daring will be difficult to replicate. The war will always be remembered for its strategic and tac-

tical surprise, the self-imposed national strategy of restraint in keeping the war limited to the Kargil-Siachen sector, military strategy and planning, and the dedication, determination and daring junior leadership at the tactical level. In fiercely fought combat actions, on the most difficult terrain that gave immense advantage to the enemy, we were able to evict Pakistani troops from most of their surreptitiously occupied positions. The Pakistani leadership was forced to sue for a ceasefire and seek the withdrawal of its troops from the remaining areas. Operation Vijay - the Indian codename for the war - was a blend of strong and determined political, military and diplomatic actions, which enabled us to transform an

adverse situation into a military and diplomatic victory. As two prime ministers of Pakistan later acknowledged, 'Kargil war was Pakistan's biggest blunder and disaster.' A reflection on the Kargil War can never be complete without a mention of the brilliant junior leadership that we witnessed during battles. Such acts by young officers and men can never be forgotten. They make us proud. Commanding officers of many infantry battalions displayed steely resilience and single-minded devotion to duty. There were actions by young artillery forward observation officers and battery commanders who took over infantry companies when their company commander colleagues were killed. A victory in war is

achieved when battles are won. Battles are won when soldiers put duty before themselves. Soldiers who put their lives at stake in wars and war-like situations and expect nothing in return. But what the nation owes to them is recognition and gratitude. For every single brave deed noticed and recognized, many went unnoticed in the fog of war. These legendary tales deserve mention not only in our military history books but also in school textbooks to serve as inspiration for young people. This success shall not be taken for granted. With heights averaging 15000 feet, bone-chilling temperatures and a dominating hostility, the Kargil war in itself is a global legend.

(The author is freelance writer; views are personal)



Govt. of Haryana



Mhara Haryana

Non-Stop Haryana

We Haryanvis

Get drinking water from taps in every household

Clean drinking water from tap delivered to every rural household in the state

5164 tube wells and 1557 boosting pumps were installed at a cost of ₹1664 crore

24,177 km long drinking water pipelines were laid at a cost of ₹4149 crore

Various development works of ₹7569 crore have been completed

Clean and pure water is being continuously supplied to the citizens



Court sets aside physical remand of Pak ex-PM Imran in 12 cases

MAY 9 RIOTS



EC notifies 39 successful MPs as PTI lawmakers

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's Election Commission has notified 39 successful MPs as lawmakers of Imran Khan's party after the Supreme Court ordered the top electoral body to do so in its verdict on the reserved seats case, a media report said on Thursday. The notification for the 39 MNAs (Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan) was issued on Wednesday, the Dawn newspaper reported. On July 12, the Supreme Court declared jailed former prime minister Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) eligible to receive reserved seats for women and non-Muslims in the national and provincial assemblies, giving the party a new lease on life in the legislature by declaring it to be a parliamentary party.

what kind of evidence the probing team want to get from the suspect (Khan). The court asked the Punjab prosecutor general to read out the transcript of Khan under which police have registered multiple cases against for inciting the public to attack the state and military installations. "Physical remand is a serious matter. It is not acceptable if you say a girl is not a girl but a boy," Justice Pannu remarked and further noted "judges are being given more threats these days." "The court official further said the LHC observed that if Imran Khan was not leading the violent protest no case could be instituted against him. On this the prosecutor general argued that Khan incited the public," the court official said. After hearing the arguments of the prosecutor general and Khan's counsel, the LHC set aside the anti-terrorism court's decision to grant his physical remand noting that he will remain in judicial custody in these cases. Khan is facing over 200 cases mostly of which he is on bail. He has been in jail since August last year. The PTI believes he is being arrested in more cases on the behest of the powerful military establishment to make sure that he does not come out of jail. Separately, Khan filed a petition against his potential handover to military custody in connection with the May 9 riot cases, arguing that detainees involved in the events should remain

under the jurisdiction of civilian courts. The petition was submitted by Khan's lawyer, Uzair Karamat, to the Lahore High Court. The federal government and the Inspector Generals (IGs) of all four provinces have been made respondents in the case, the Express Tribune newspaper reported. Khan said that a false narrative had been constructed, accusing him of inciting protests at the General Headquarters (GHQ). He described the May 9 incident as a "false flag operation," asserting that those who stole the CCTV footage of the events were the true culprits. He criticised the comparison of the May 9 incident to the US Capitol Hill protests on January 6, 2021, highlighting that a thorough and transparent investigation was conducted in the case, leading to the punishment of only the involved individuals, without implicating the entire Republican Party of Doland Trump. The former premier urged the court to order that custody in the May 9 cases remain with civilian courts and to issue a stay

Publisher Jimmy Lai will testify in his defence at HK national security trial

Hong Kong (AP): A defence lawyer said on Thursday that prominent publisher Jimmy Lai will testify in his defence in the landmark national security trial brought under a Beijing-imposed law that has all but wiped out public dissent. Lai, the 76-year-old founder of the now-defunct Apple Daily newspaper, was arrested in 2020 during a crackdown on the mass pro-democracy protests that rocked Hong Kong in 2019. He was charged with colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring with others to put out seditious publications. If convicted, he faces up to life in prison. On Wednesday, Lai's lawyer Robert Pang argued his client had no case to answer because the prosecutors' evidence was insufficient. Pang said the prosecution had failed to prove Lai's intent after the introduction of the 2020 law and stressed the importance of freedom of speech. But judges Esther Toh, Susana D'Almada Remedios and Alex Lee ruled against him on Thursday. "Having considered all the submission, we ruled that the first defendant has a case to answer on all charges," Toh said, without elaborating. Pang later said in court that Lai would testify in his defense, but when he would do so was not immediately settled. Observers said Lai's high-profile case, which has already stretched over 90 days, is a trial of press freedom and a test for judicial independence in the Asian financial hub. When Britain handed back Hong Kong to China in 1997, the city was promised to have its Western-style civil liberties kept intact for 50 years. However, the freedoms that once set Hong Kong apart from mainland China, including freedoms of press and assembly, have drastically shrunk since the enactment of the 2020 security law. Beijing and Hong Kong governments insist that the law brought back stability to the city following the social unrest.

More than hundred flights cancelled in Germany

Environmental activists target airports across Europe

Germany's busiest airport canceled more than 100 flights Thursday as environmental activists launched a coordinated effort to disrupt air travel across Europe at the height of the summer holiday season to highlight the threat posed by climate change. Frankfurt Airport said flights were halted for safety reasons after climate activists breached security fences, triggering a response from police, firefighters and airport security officers. All runways were back in operation by 7:50 am local time, it said. About 140 flights have been cancelled so far, but further disruptions are expected throughout the day, the airport said.



Emergency vehicles from the police, fire department and airport security are parked on the apron of Frankfurt Airport, where a few activists have taped themselves up, in Frankfurt, Germany, on Thursday

Environmental groups said they planned to target airports around Europe this summer to remind people about the link between fossil fuels, such as those used by airliners, and climate change. The groups are calling for governments around the world to end the extraction and burning of fossil fuels by 2030. "We sharply condemn these unauthorized demonstrations, and we reserve the right to take legal action against the participants," Frankfurt Airport said. "Their activities pose severe danger to flight operations - possibly putting human life at risk." Climate data showed that Monday was the hottest day ever recorded as human-caused climate change continues to drive unprecedented heat and growing weather extremes. Global investments in planet-warming oil and gas are expected to increase by 7 per cent this year, according to the International Energy Agency, despite global promises to slash fossil fuel use. Flying is considered one of the most carbon-intensive activities, but the aviation industry is expected to grow steadily over the coming decades despite efforts to contain the climate crisis. The Last Generation group, which organized the Frankfurt

demonstration, said six protesters cut holes in the perimeter fence and headed toward the runways on foot, bicycles and skateboards. It was the second time in as many days that a protest by Last Generation caused disruption at a German airport. On Wednesday, five protesters glued themselves to a taxiway at Cologne-Bonn Airport, forcing a roughly three-hour halt to flights. That protest resulted in 31 flights being canceled. There were other protests or attempted protests in other European countries. Climate activists staged similar actions in Finland, Norway, Switzerland and Spain on Wednesday. At Helsinki Airport, a handful of protesters blocked the main check-in area for about 30 minutes, but police said the demonstration caused no delays to flights or other disruption. At Oslo's main Gardermoen airport, three activists managed to enter the runway area early Wednesday, waving banners and disrupting air traffic for about half an hour. Police said there were no major flight delays. Police in London said Wednesday that they prevented a planned protest at Heathrow Airport that could have had a significant impact on Europe's largest airport. Seven members of the group known as Just Stop Oil were arrested at Heathrow and three others were taken into custody at other locations as part of an "intelligence-led" operation, the Metropolitan Police Service said in a statement. "I'm taking action at airports this summer because it is impossible for me to see a way in which we can inspire and enthuse students about the future of our planet," Callaghan said in a video posted on social media. Last week, the German Cabinet approved legislation that would impose tougher penalties on people who break through airport perimeters. The bill, which still requires approval by lawmakers, foresees punishment ranging up to a two-year prison sentence for people who intentionally intrude on airside areas of airports such as taxiways or runways, endanger civil aviation, or enable someone else to. Currently such intrusions only draw a fine.

China past in terms of investments in Pak, US future, says official

Washington (AP): Days of China investing in Pakistan is now a thing of the past, a senior administration official has told the lawmakers noting that the United States is the future. "China is the past in terms of investments in Pakistan, we are the future," Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu told lawmakers during a Congressional hearing on Tuesday. Lu was responding to questions from the Congressmen, who expressed concerns over the Chinese investment in Pakistan and other countries in South and Central Asia, including Sri Lanka and Maldives. "I would argue the Chinese plan is to have a military base in every country and every infrastructure project is made with high interest Chinese loans and low paid Chinese workers. We just see this model all throughout the region," he said. The Chinese bring in their own workers.

They don't actually train local workers to do their enterprises. They extract minerals, literally take gold and copper from the ground and just ship it back for processing in China. "They don't spend any money in local communities. This is going to have a boomerang effect for Chinese businesses and their interests. We talked about Pakistan and the investments there, USD26 billion. They put a huge amount of money in Pakistan. I actually don't see them putting a dime in there right now because they're really worried about whether they're going to get their money back there," he said. "Their really terrible investment strategy is biting them in the ass and we have an opportunity to do a better job to make sure countries know there are options and they don't have to be beholden to one," Lu said. Congressman Rich McCormick said China has vastly outspent the United States throughout the entire

region, especially in Pakistan since 2012. They are making solid progress in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor known as CPAC. This gives China a significant leverage over Pakistan, he noted. "I'm really worried about the future as we invest, how do we leverage our position with Pakistan, our historic relationship given also our relationship with India and that's developing very quickly. How do we balance that and keep that in our advantage?" he asked. Lu said the US is facing ongoing challenges and opportunities in Pakistan. "The president's budget requests a straight lining of our USD101 million Pakistan budget. That money will be used to strengthen democracy and civil society, fight terrorism and extremism and to support economic reforms and debt management to help stabilize Pakistan's economy and prevent further overreliance on China," he said.

Putin meets Syrian Prez in Kremlin

Moscow (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin met President Bashar Assad of Syria in the Kremlin, video distributed by the Kremlin press service on Thursday showed. "I am very interested in your opinion on how the situation in the region as a whole is developing," Putin said to Assad. "Unfortunately, there is a tendency towards escalation, we can see that. This also applies directly to Syria." The Kremlin said Putin and Assad's meeting took place Wednesday. Putin and Assad last met in March 2023 in the Kremlin on the anniversary of Syria's 12-year uprising-turned-civil war. At that meeting, Putin emphasized the Russian military's role in stabilizing the country. Russia has waged a military campaign in Syria since September 2015, teaming up with Iran to allow Assad's government to fight armed opposition groups and reclaim control over most of the country. While Russia now concentrates the bulk of its military resources in Ukraine, it has maintained a military foothold in Syria and keeps troops at its bases there.

Possibility of 'growing' Chinese presence in Bangladesh concerns United States

Washington (AP): The United States is concerned about the possibility of growing Chinese presence in Bangladesh, a senior administration official has told the lawmakers. "We are concerned about the possibility of a growing Chinese presence in Bangladesh. But I would say the Bangladeshis have been pretty careful about not overextending quickly," Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia told the lawmakers during a Congressional hearing on Tuesday. "In terms of Russia, Chinese influence in Bangladesh in that area, have you seen any things that are concerning in that regard as well?" Congressman Bill Keating asked. "I would say the most influential country in Bangladesh is actually not Russia or China, it's India. And we have a really active dialogue with India about our policies in Bangladesh and

throughout the wider region," Lu said in response to the question. Congresswoman Young Kim said the Chinese Communist Party is a top trading partner for Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Afghanistan, which is around America's strategic partner India. "The PLA's presence is also intensifying both along the Indian border and in the Indian Ocean. Aid and cooperation play a pivotal role not only in advancing US interests in South Asia, but also in enhancing their prosperity and keeping the region free and open," she said. Responding to another question from Congressman Andy Kim, Lu said that the recently held elections in Bangladesh had less violence than the previous two. "We believe that these elections were less violent than the last two in Bangladesh, in part due to both government and opposition taking a step back because of the threat of sanctions," he said.

Lu told the lawmakers that the United States has been following very closely this past week the violence in Bangladesh. "We've condemned that violence we've called on the government to respect freedom of assembly and freedom of speech. We've called upon the government to restore internet to the country, which has been off now for several days," he said. "You will be aware that there is a curfew that has been put in place by the government as a response to some of the violence that's happened. Some in police have said there's a shoot on sight

order for anyone involved in. That's what I heard. So we have condemned from the spokesperson of the State Department uh the shoot on sight order and ask them to roll that back," Lu said. "It's a very tense moment in Bangladesh between protesters and the government. We hope that calm is restored. I have been in touch with senior leaders in Bangladesh. We remain in touch with them now to try to encourage them to find a peaceful way to resolve this crisis," said the Assistant Secretary of State.

Japan's population falls for 15th year in row

Tokyo (AP): Japan's total population marked the 15th straight year of decline, according to government data released Wednesday, dropping by more than a half-million people as the population ages and births remain low. Births in Japan hit a record low of 730,000 last year. The 1.58 million deaths last year were also a record high. Japan's population was 124.9 million as of January 1. The data released by the Internal Affairs Ministry also showed that the 11% increase in foreign residents helped their population surpass 3 million for the first time. They now make up nearly 3% of the total population and are mostly of working age from 15 to 64. Surveys show that younger Japanese are increasingly reluc-

tant to marry or have children, discouraged by bleak job prospects, the high cost of living — which rises at a faster pace than salaries — and a gender-biased corporate culture that adds a burden only on women and working mothers. The government earmarked 5.3 trillion yen (\$34 billion) as part of the 2024 budget to fund incentives for young couples to have more children, such as increasing subsidies for childcare and education, and is expected to spend 3.6 trillion yen (\$23 billion) in tax money annually over the next three years. Experts say the measures are largely meant for married couples who plan to have or who already have children, and don't address the growing number of young people reluctant to get married.

Romania says more Russian drone debris from Ukraine war has landed on its territory

Bucharest (AP): Debris from what is believed to be a Russian drone landed in a rural area of Romania, the country's Defense Ministry said on Thursday, in the latest apparent incident of drone wreckage from the war in neighboring Ukraine falling onto the NATO member's soil. Since the war started in February 2022, Romania has confirmed drone fragments on its territory on several occasions. The debris of what the Defense Ministry called a "Russia origin" drone were found following Russian attacks on Ukraine's port infrastructure near the border. The fragments were discovered by a team of specialists in an uninhabited area near the village of Plauru in Tulcea county.

Oil tanker sinks in Manila Bay

Manila (AP): A Philippine oil tanker sank in Manila Bay early on Thursday after encountering huge waves, and the coast guard was working to determine whether the vessel was leaking oil — in what could be a major spill — after it rescued 16 of 17 crew members in a nighttime operation, officials said. The tanker Terra Nova left Bataan province en route to the central province of Iloilo with about 1.4 million liters (370,000 gallons) of industrial fuel oil stored in watertight tanks when it got buffeted by huge waves and took on water. The crew struggled to steer the tanker back to port but it eventually sank shortly after midnight, coast guard spokesperson Rear Admiral

Armando Balilo said, citing statements from surviving crew members. The sinking followed days of monsoon rains, exacerbated by a passing offshore typhoon, that caused landslides and floodings across the archipelago, leaving at least 22 people dead and displacing more than half a million people. An aerial survey spotted an oil spill about 3.7 kilometers (2.3 miles) long near the rough waters where the tanker sank but that may have come from the fuel intended to power the tanker's engine, not the much greater amount of fuel the Terra Nova was carrying as cargo, Balilo said. A coast guard ship, the BRP Melchora Aquino, was in the waters where the tanker sank, more than 6 kilometers (about 4 miles) from Bataan province's

coast, to search for the last missing crewman and to carry out an initial assessment of the tanker's fuel oil cargo, Balilo told an online news conference. He added that the coast guard was bracing to contain a possible major oil spill. "There's a big danger that Manila would be affected, its shorelines, if the fuel leaks because this happened within Manila Bay. It's part of the contingency we're preparing for," Balilo said. "The effect on the marine environment would not be good." Balilo later said the oil tanker sank at a relatively shallow depth of 34 meters (111 feet), based on an initial assessment, and raised the possibility that its fuel oil cargo could be siphoned off by special ships in a delicate operation that could take about a week.

कार्यालय प्रधान महाप्रबन्धक (आर) **UPS/DA** उ.प्र. राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण, पृ-1/6, बाराबंकी, कानपुर-208024

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E-Tender (Short Term) Enq. No. 542/P-2/EMPV-12733 Dated 17.07.2024
Dy.Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Purchase Cell-2) GGSSTP, Rupnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2024_POWER_124109_1 for Annual Contract for Rewinding/ Re-caging/Re-staggering and other repairs of HT Motors of GGSSTP, Rupnagar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 18.07.2024 onwards. Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in RTP-67/24

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SHORT TERM E-TENDER NOTICE FOR SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENTS
Short Term E-Tenders are invited for purchase Fluorescence Spectrophotometer, CAD software for Fabric Design, Garment Design Software, Socks Knitting Machine, Single Color Roti Flat Printing Machine, Universal Testing Machine (UTM), Narrow Fabric Weaving, Lab Coating Machine, Package Dyeing Machines, Printing Screen making and Exposure Unit, Pad Thermal Fixation Range, Calendaring Machines, Digital Tear Tester, Air Permeability Tester, UV Penetration Tester, Automatic Hydrostatic Head Tester, Computer Color Matching System and Computer be submitted online latest by 09/08/2024 upto 4:00 p.m. Detailed information can be obtained from website www.eproc.punjab.gov.in Any corrigendum/Addendum related to these e-tender will be uploaded, if required, on Punjab Govt. website: eproc.punjab.gov.in
Director of Research
Guru Nanak Dev University,
Amritsar
NA/12/24361/2023/36011 Dated CHD :- 7/25/2024

I-T Act review attempt to make it simpler for taxpayers: CBDT chief

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Budget announcement about a comprehensive review of the Income Tax Act, 1961, is an attempt to make the “bulky” law “simpler” to understand and comfortable to use for taxpayers along with aligning new technology processes with it, CBDT Chairman Ravi Agrawal has said. The Act that started its journey in 1922 contains 298 sections, 23 chapters and other provisions in its current form of 1961. Speaking to PTI during a post-budget interview on Wednesday, Agrawal said the Act has seen “redundancies” over a period of time making it “thick and bulky.” “The taxpayers also feel that the Act is not so simple, as it ought to be...It is cumbersome...So the attempt is if we can make this Act simpler, simpler to comprehend, simpler in terms of language, simpler in terms of presentation, then that hitch of the taxpayer to actually not see the Act and take the help of a tax practitioner or someone (maybe eased)...”



“We are working towards how can we make it (Income Tax Act) simple so that the taxpayer feels comfortable seeing the provisions himself or herself and that it is more user friendly,” the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) head said. It is also important to review the law as technology has become an integral part of tax administration and “we have to see where the gaps are and how we actually can align technology with the provisions of the Act,” Agrawal said. We are looking to undertake further improvements (in the law), he added. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while

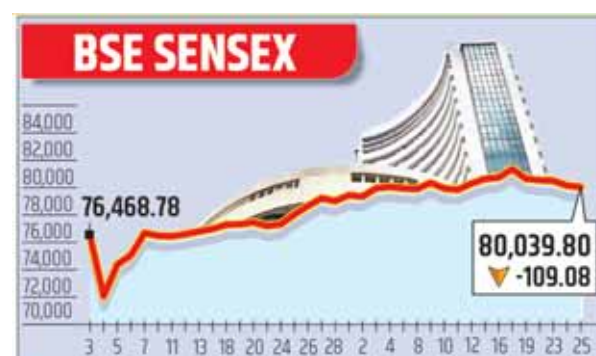
presenting the Union Budget for 2024-25 on Tuesday, announced a “comprehensive” review of the Income Tax Act of 1961. “The purpose is to make the Act concise, lucid, easy to read and understand. This will reduce disputes and litigation, thereby providing tax certainty to the taxpayers. It will also bring down the demand embroiled in litigation. It is proposed to be completed in six months,” she said. Sitharaman added that a beginning was being made in the Finance Bill by simplifying the tax regime for charities, TDS rate structure, provisions for reassessment, search

provisions and capital gains taxation. Asked about the budget proposal of granting immunity from penalty and prosecution to a ‘benamidar’ (in whose name a benami asset is standing) under the Benami Transactions Prohibition Act, the CBDT chief said this was aimed to make the act “effective”. The minister said the move was intended to “improve conviction” under this law, which was enacted in 1988 but implemented in November 2016 by the Modi government. A convict under this law can be sentenced to a rigorous imprisonment of up to seven years and a fine of up to 25 per cent of the fair market value of the property. Benami properties are those in which the real beneficiary is not the one in whose name the property has been purchased. Agrawal also said that the Income Tax Department has completed about 6.5 lakh assessment cases and about 2 lakh appeals under the faceless assessment regime that was launched by the government in 2019-20.

Markets extend losses for 5th session

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty stayed on the back foot for the fifth straight session on Thursday as investors offloaded metal, banking and finance stocks amid a lacklustre trend in global markets. Heavy foreign fund outflows after a hike in securities transaction tax and short-term capital gains tax also impacted markets’ sentiment negatively, traders said. However, strong buying in oil & stocks, energy and auto shares helped the indices offset some losses, they added. After a sharp fall in intra-day trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex managed to recover some of the lost ground to settle 109.08 points or 0.14 per cent lower at 80,039.80, as a sharp rally in Tata Motors and Larsen & Toubro restricted its fall. During the day, it tanked 671 points or 0.83 per cent to 79,477.83. Shares of Larsen & Toubro ended nearly 3 per cent higher after the company posted a 12 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax (PAT) in the June quarter. Tata Motors jumped nearly 6 per cent. The NSE Nifty dipped 7.40 points or 0.03 per cent to 24,406.10. Intra-day, it tumbled 202.7 points or 0.83



per cent to 24,210.80. In five days, the BSE benchmark has tumbled 1,303.66 points or 1.60 per cent, while the Nifty declined 394.75 points or 1.59 per cent. “Overnight slump in US equities caused a major slump in domestic markets in early trade due to heavy profit-taking in banking, IT, metals and realty stocks. “However, markets recouped most of its losses towards the end, with Sensex managing to close above the crucial 80k-mark amid buying in oil & gas and automobile stocks, indicating that investors are willing to bet on good fundamental sectoral stocks despite rising concerns of the stretched valuations of the Indian markets,” Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. From the Sensex pack, Axis Bank declined over 5 per cent

after the company’s June quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. Nestle, Titan, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank, ITC, JSW Steel and State Bank of India were the other laggards. Sun Pharma, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance and Power Grid also ended in the positive territory. “After a volatile session, the Indian market concluded on a flat note, influenced by lower-than-expected earnings growth from major banks. Global indices also reacted pessimistically due to the disappointing results from top US tech companies. “However, the government’s commitment to improving consumption and bridging the gap for energy transition in the budget buoyed sectoral sentiments,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit

Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.22 per cent, and smallcap index dipped 0.14 per cent. Among the indices, metal lost 1.19 per cent, bankex (1.10 per cent), realty (0.80 per cent), telecommunication (0.65 per cent) and financial services (0.60 per cent). On the other hand, energy, healthcare, industrials, utilities, auto and oil & gas were among the gainers. “Global stocks tumbled on Thursday after a tech-fuelled sell-off on Wall Street last night. A slew of disappointing results caused traders to panic that the artificial-intelligence frenzy that has powered the bull market this year may have been overdone,” Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities, said. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading in the negative territory in the mid-session deals. US markets ended significantly lower on Wednesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,130.90 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.73 per cent to USD 80.31 a barrel.

Rationalisation of duties on leather sector to help create more jobs, push exports: CLE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rationalisation of customs duties in the Budget on leather sector will help create more jobs and push exports, CLE said on Thursday. The Council for Leather Exports (CLE) said that the Budget announcement of support for setting up working women hostels, establishing creches and women-specific skilling programmes will further enhance the women workforce in the sector. The employment linked incentive scheme is a major support measure for the leather and footwear sector, as this is a labour-intensive sector, CLE Chairman Rajendra Kumar Jan said. “Two major measures have been announced for the leather and footwear sector in the Union Budget. One is the rationalisation of export duties on leathers and the other is the inclusion of more inputs including wet blue chrome tanned leather, wet white leather, crust leather and finished leather under the Duty Free Scheme for leather garments, leather



products and footwear exporters,” he said. Janan added on the export duty front, the levy on wet blue and crust leather has been brought down from 40 per cent to 20 per cent. This will facilitate the export of value-added processed leathers from the country as there is a huge demand for these leathers in the global market, he said. “We hope that the government will further reduce this export duty for crust leathers from 20 per cent to nil in future, so as to achieve our objective of enhancing the export of

value-added leathers by USD 1 billion in the next 2-3 years,” Janan said. He added that allowing duty free imports of critical raw materials and inputs, including wet blue, crust and finished leathers, will help facilitate the export of value-added products from the country. “This will be a major step in realising our ambition of achieving the exporter target of USD 13.7 billion by 2029-30 by the leather and footwear sector, from the export value of USD 4.69 billion during 2023-24,” he said.

Map war intensifies, Google announces new features to woo users in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising competition from homegrown challenger Ola Maps, Google on Thursday announced a slew of new features on Google Maps to woo users in India, including EV charging station information, flyover callouts and AI-driven routing capability to reduce narrow road usage for four-wheeler drivers. It is “an exciting time in mapping,” Google Maps said announcing its lineup of new features, which comes in the backdrop of a pitched battle with Ola. Google recently decided to cut the pricing of Google Maps platform for developers by up to 70 per cent from August 1, just weeks after Ola Founder and CEO Bhavish Aggarwal openly nudged Indian developers to shun Google Maps and offered them sweeteners like one-year free access to Ola Maps. Replying to a question on the timing of Google Maps’ price cuts - coming right after an offensive from Ola - Google Maps senior executives said that while “it’s tempting to think that way, but we actually do not focus on competitors”.



“We’re very focused on making sure we’re serving our user base and our partner community, which is our developer partners. And to be honest, we timed it with our IO Connect event in Bengaluru,” Miriam Daniel, VP and GM at Google Maps, said at a briefing. Daniel added: “...This is something our partners have been requesting of us for a while, and we’ve been working on it for quite some time to make sure our infrastructure, our pricing systems are localised and adapted to the needs of our partners in India.” On Thursday, the company announced six ways it is enabling more efficient and sustainable journeys on

Google Maps in India, powered by AI and local partners. “These new features reaffirm our commitment to making digital mapping even more helpful for users, businesses, developers and society at large. “We’re excited to continue our journey of innovation and build the future of Google Maps right here in India,” a blogpost by Daniel and Lalitha Ramani, GM at Google Maps, India, read. Stating that navigating narrow or congested roads in unfamiliar areas can be a challenge for four-wheeler drivers, Google Maps announced it is introducing a new feature for users in India designed to reduce the use of

narrow roads when driving four-wheelers. “To address this, we’ve developed an AI model specifically for Indian roads that incorporates multiple signals satellite imagery, Street View and other information like road types, distance between buildings, paved sections, etc. To estimate road widths at scale. Using these road width estimates, we’ve fine-tuned our existing AI routing algorithms to help four-wheelers avoid narrow roads whenever possible, without significantly impacting travel time or distance,” the blogpost said. This means four-wheeler drivers can enjoy a less stressful driving experience, and it also benefits bikers, pedestrians and other commuters who can now use these narrow roads more safely and confidently, it added. Google Maps is starting to roll out this feature on Android devices this week in eight cities - Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Coimbatore, Indore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Guwahati, and has promised to bring the feature to iOS and more cities soon.

Another new feature on Google Maps is call-out flyovers along the recommended route. This feature helps users anticipate upcoming flyovers and prepare ahead of time to get onto the flyover. “Starting this week, you’ll see these flyover callouts in 40 cities across India for both four-wheeler and two-wheeler active navigation on Android apps and Android Auto. iOS and CarPlay support will be coming soon,” it said. Both Narrow Roads and Flyover features have been pioneered in India, tailored to the unique navigation needs of users, it said. To ensure EV drivers have the tools they need to confidently hit the road, the company has also announced the availability of information about EV charging stations on both Google Maps and Google Search in India. “To achieve this, we’re collaborating with leading EV charging providers in India ElectricPe, Ather, Kazam, and Statiq to add authoritative information for over 8,000 charging stations, representing a significant portion of available charging stations in India,” it said.

Sugar industry body proposes bio-refinery transition plan to Govt



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sugar industry body ISMA on Thursday said it has presented a plan to the government to transform sugar mills into bio-refineries, aiming to boost production of sustainable aviation fuel and other green energy sources. The representatives of the Indian Sugar & Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) met with Food Minister Pralhad Joshi to discuss a policy framework for the transition, which would expand beyond current ethanol, bioelectricity, and biogas production, a statement said. ISMA Director General Deepak Ballani said the initiative would help India meet international aviation blending targets set to take effect in 2027 under CORSIA mandates while supporting the country’s net-zero and

self-reliance goals. “We see a future where local resources drive national development,” Ballani said in the statement adding that “This aligns with the government’s vision for a self-reliant India.” The plan aims to create alternative markets for India’s estimated 55 million sugarcane farmers, building on the success of the current ethanol blending programme in increasing farmer incomes. The government launched 400 E-100 fuel pumps last year. Joshi stressed the need to promote E-100 use, particularly given India’s leadership of the Global Biofuels Alliance. ISMA pledged to work closely with the government on the swift implementation of the bio-refinery plan, which is expected to set new benchmarks in the sector and strengthen India’s energy security.

Indian cybersecurity startups poised for strong growth amid rising global spend, says Accel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India’s cybersecurity market has posted a compounded annual growth rate of 25 per cent since 2019, crossing the USD 6 billion mark in 2023, and is projected to expand further with global spending touching USD 200 billion this year, Prayank Swaroop, partner at global VC fund Accel, said on Thursday. Cybersecurity startups in the country are poised to see a steady growth on the back of higher spending in the domestic market, he said at the Accel Cybersecurity Summit 2024 in Bengaluru. Highlighting the potential of the country’s cybersecurity market, Swaroop said Indian cybersecurity startups are poised to make a global impact, and continue their growth momentum amid a sharp rise in spending for cybersecurity globally. The Accel Cybersecurity Summit 2024, India’s largest cybersecurity summit, saw participation from across the world. The gathering included prominent founders, global cybersecurity experts and CISOs (chief information security officer) of major enterprises. “Our mission with this summit is to elevate the ecosystem of cybersecurity founders and operators by bringing together some of the best minds in the domain,” said Swaroop. Data available with IDC, Gartner, and other leading



research firms suggest that global spending in cybersecurity is expected to cross USD 200 billion in 2024. “Indian cybersecurity startups will impact the global landscape as the market proliferates significantly,” he said, adding that the country’s cybersecurity market witnessed a 25 per cent CAGR since 2019 and crossed USD 6 billion in 2023. Indian cybersecurity startups received USD 157 million funding in the past two years. Multiple reports attest to the spike in global spending for cybersecurity, with an IDC report projecting spends upwards of USD 36 billion in the Asia Pacific alone. This spike in spending, the growing importance of security awareness, a need to foster a robust security system and looking for solutions to the rising spectre of cybersecurity threats were the crux of Swaroop’s inaugural address at the summit. Despite growing interest, data

management, and reporting, thereby allowing cybersecurity practitioners to dedicate more time to strategic initiatives and strengthening defences against cyberthreats. The growing importance of AI in cyber defence, especially in areas such as early vulnerability detection, automated threat modelling, and real-time threat detection, was also emphasised. According to Swaroop, generative AI has emerged an indispensable tool in the war against cyber threats. “In the future, AI will play an increasingly pivotal role in cyber defence. It is reshaping the industry by enhancing key areas such as early vulnerability detection, automated threat modelling, and real-time threat detection. “Moreover, it improves vendor risk management, penetration testing, and addressing new attack surfaces created by AI technologies,” he said. The evolution of AI solidifies its status as an indispensable tool in the ongoing war against cyber threats. “We think it is important to secure the AI stack against threats like data poisoning and supply chain vulnerabilities while ensuring compliance and security,” Swaroop said. The Accel partner concluded his address by highlighting the importance of integrating AI technologies to create new opportunities and face more formidable challenges as the broader cybersecurity market expands.

Budget proposals for marine sector to boost India’s aquaculture, seafood exports: MPEDA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Budget announcements for the marine sector such as rationalisation of customs duties and financing facilities will help boost the country’s India’s aquaculture and seafood exports, MPEDA said on Thursday. The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) also said the Budget includes a range of strategic measures aimed at bolstering the competitiveness of marine products, with a particular focus on shrimp production and export. Various inputs used in the manufacture of shrimp and fish feed will now enjoy customs duty exemptions, it said adding a number of feed inputs such as mineral and vitamin pre-mixes, krill meal, fish lipid oil, crude fish oil, algal prime, algal oil are fully exempted from any import duty. Artemia and Artemia cysts which are key nutritional inputs in aqua hatchery were also fully exempted from any import duty. The Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on essential aquafarm/hatchery inputs such as Vannamei and black tiger broodstock, polychaete worms, and fish/shrimp feed has been



reduced to 5 per cent. Import duty for insect meal and single-cell protein has been cut down to 5 per cent. “These announcements made in the Union Budget 2024-25 are set to significantly enhance aquaculture and seafood export sectors,” the authority said. It also said that the government has committed to providing substantial financial support to establish a network of Nucleus Breeding Centres (NBCs) for shrimp broodstocks. “This initiative is anticipated to drastically reduce India’s reliance on imported broodstock, potentially saving the industry up to Rs 150 crore annually,” it said adding hatchery operators are expected to benefit significantly, with projected savings of 50 per cent on broodstock costs.

Indians eye double-digit medal haul as Paris Olympics set for grand start

PTI ■ PARIS

Some would be carrying a huge burden of expectations, some others would look to spring a surprise and a few more would be eyeing the perfect closure to their glittering careers as the 117-strong Indian contingent aims for a better-than-before performance in the Olympic Games, starting here on Friday.

India returned from Tokyo with seven medals, and it is only natural that a double-digit performance is now desired in Paris.

Except for wrestlers, who have waded through a highly controversial build-up, athletes in all disciplines have had no complaints about their preparations.

Whether it was training abroad or getting the best of facilities to sharpen their skills, there was planning in place.

But will the hard work, the strategies and the unbridled support translate into medals?

THE BIG PICTURE

It will be a Herculean task to match the Tokyo figures of seven medals, given that except for reigning Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra, not many are top contenders in their respective disciplines.

More than half of the 117-member contingent is from three sports -- athletics (29), shooting (21) and hockey (19). Of these 69 athletes, 40 are debutants.

In other sports too, there are debutants like tennis player N Sriram Balaji and wrestler Reetika Hooda. They are not exactly inexperienced, but largely, India's campaign will be driven by the



athletes, who will be competing on a stage this grand for the first time. Then there are the seasoned ones who would be expected to raise their game suitably.

Two-time medallist shuttler PV Sindhu, tennis player Rohan Bopanna, legendary table tennis player Sharath Kamal and hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh are certainly playing their last Olympics.

The hockey team has endured patchy form in the build-up to the Games, the boxers and wrestlers are lacking in real competition time. The shooters too have notched up mixed results heading

into the Olympics. The track and field athletes, especially Avinash Sable, have done well of late, but compared to their global rivals, their performances don't seem enough to put them in the bracket of medal hopefuls.

For instance, steeplechaser Sable has been consistently bettering his own national record. His best stands at 8:09.94 but there are seven international runners who have achieved better timing than that in the run-up to the Games. Given this, Even making the finals will be considered a huge achievement.

BEST CHANCE

India's hopes for podium finishes largely hinge on Neeraj, despite concerns around his adductor niggle, and the in-form badminton duo of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. The coveted 90m mark has eluded Neeraj from Tokyo to Paris but the ace javelin thrower seems to be doing just enough, and most importantly, consistently, to land global titles.

On big competition days, Neeraj has fared better than his other fancied rivals and if he is fit, the javelin thrower from Panipat will have a chance to become only the

third athlete in India's sports history to win back-to-back Olympic medals.

Only Sindhu (2016 Rio and 2012 Tokyo) and wrestler Sushil Kumar (2008 Beijing, 2012 London) have managed to win two consecutive medals.

Rankireddy and Chirag have grown into one of India's most formidable men's doubles teams and they are being seen as certain medal winners.

Talking about Sindhu, she is not in the best of form and has also got a tough draw but if she can come through the initial rounds, the vast experience could help her make

the medal round.

HOCKEY: The men's hockey team has been inconsistent. It lost all five games in Australia recently after a mixed run in the Pro League. It was a far cry from the Asian Games in Hangzhou where the team emerged champion.

Penalty Corner conversion and maintaining the tempo throughout a match remain a concern.

And if that's not enough, the Indian team has been clubbed with heavyweights Australia, Belgium, Argentina, New Zealand and Ireland. There is no room for error if the team has to make the top-four from this pool.

SHOOTING: It's been a quiet build-up for the 21-member shooting contingent, the biggest ever, compared to London and Tokyo where stars such as Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary had raised medal hopes with their exceptional performances in the run-up to the Games.

Even Divyansh Panwar and Elavenil Valarivan were hailed as future superstars but all of them have flattered to deceive.

There is hardly any spotlight on shooters but still Sift Kaur Samra (50m three position), Sandeep Singh (10m air rifle) and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar (men's 50 m rifle) have it in them to end the 12-year wait for a medal.

Gagan Narang, who is now India's Chef de Mission, was the last Indian shooter to climb the podium when he won the 10m air rifle bronze in the 2012 London Games.

WRESTLING: The sport has delivered a medal for India in the last four editions. The hopes of winning four to five medals were

raised for the Paris Games but the protest against the Wrestling Federation of India brought the sport to a standstill.

There was no national camp, and no competition for a long time. The qualified wrestlers have trained on their own at the centres of their choice -- both in India and abroad.

Fitness status of many is not known, but going into the Games, Anshu Malik, Antim Panghal and Aman Sehrawat are considered India's best bets. Reetika Hooda, the U-23 world champion, will be a dark horse.

OTHERS: The archers and TT players have qualified for the Games on the basis of their rankings. While it is a huge achievement for TT players, the same can't be said about the archers.

They have promised a lot in the past too but have not been able to deliver. The recent episode of their coach being denied the Games accreditation means the campaign has started on a negative note.

Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu, the Tokyo Games silver-medallist, has struggled with injury and form of late and is perhaps not in the best frame of mind. There are question marks if she will be able to repeat her success.

Experienced boxer Nikhat Zareen and Nishant Dev will be watched keenly as their latest results have been encouraging. So far, India have won 35 medals at the Olympics with shooter Abhinav Bindra (2008) and Neeraj Chopra (2021) being the only two individual gold medal winners.

It's time to turn aspirations into achievements. Let the Games begin.

Ankita best-placed Indian at 11th in individual event

PTI ■ PARIS

Debutant Ankita Bhakat left behind seasoned campaigners like Deepika Kumar to emerge as the best-placed Indian archer at 11th in the Paris Olympics' women's individual recurve qualifications as the country secured a quarterfinal spot in the team event by finishing fourth here on Thursday.

The 26-year-old Ankita was the top-ranked Indian woman with 666 points, followed by Bhajan Kaur (22nd with 559 points) and Deepika Kumari (23rd with 658 points).

In the team event, India grabbed the fourth spot by scoring 1983 points. South Korea topped the standings with 2046 points. China finished runners-up while Mexico grabbed the third spot. The top four in the team standings directly advance to the quarterfinals, while those ending between 5th to 12th play the Round of 16 fixtures.

India will face the winner of the contest between France and Netherlands in the quarterfinals. If they clear the quarters, India could be headed for a



semifinal showdown with heavyweights Korea. The Korean women's team has been invincible in the Olympics, winning a ninth straight medal in Tokyo three years ago.

In the individual section, Korea's Lim Sihyeon smashed a world record score of 694 to top the standings, while her compatriot Suhyeon Nam scored 688 points to finish second. China's Yang Xiaolei was third with 673.

Ankita, who hails from Bengal and represents Tata

Academy, was the surprise package on the day from the Indian perspective, even as four-time Olympian Deepika faltered to return her worst ever qualification result at the Games.

Deepika will, for the first time, miss out on the mixed team berth as Ankita topped among the Indians.

Ankita will partner the top Indian finisher in the men's qualification in the mixed team finals.

The men's qualifiers get underway in the afternoon session.

There's a lot of improvement, you will see that on court: Sindhu

PTI ■ PARIS

From spending time in a hypoxic chamber to sparring with a variety of partners to adapt to different styles, Indian badminton ace PV Sindhu has left no stones unturned to be battle-ready for the Paris Games, where she will be chasing an unprecedented third consecutive Olympic medal.

Sindhu's form has been patchy of late but she says the hat-trick of medals is very much possible because the last eight months spent with mentor Prakash Padukone has instilled confidence in her.

No Indian player has won three Olympic medals on the trot and a podium finish will make Sindhu arguably India's greatest athlete.

"I am aiming for a medal, definitely, yes. Whether it's one or two or three, it doesn't matter. I've won two medals and I don't want to take pressure by thinking that, oh, what is the third one," she said after a training session at Porte de la Chapelle Arena here.

"Every time I play Olympics, it's a new Olympics for me. So every time I go out there, I want to get a medal and hopefully, I will do that hat trick soon."



Sindhu had won silver and bronze in the last two Olympics at Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo respectively.

Before coming to Paris, Sindhu trained at Sportcampus Saar in Saarbrücken, Germany where the altitude, the weather, and the conditions are similar to the French capital.

There she created a hypoxic chamber (low oxygen) in her room and slept for a couple of days. Hypoxic chambers help prepare an athlete's body to function at higher-altitude places.

"I couldn't go to the high

altitude training center. I didn't have much time and obviously, there I couldn't have been playing. So I just thought, it would be good for me instead of going somewhere, getting it here and doing some changes and sleeping that way," she explained.

So, if the conditions demand the maximum from an athlete, with such training they feel ready to negotiate the challenge.

Sindhu said she has improved her strokes and is more consistent during the long rallies.

"Being much more confident in strokes," she replied when asked what difference she finds after training with Padukone.

"In women's singles now, there are a lot of long rallies and long matches, being consistent. I am confident in that now," she said.

"With every opponent, it's a different style and, you need to play the right stroke at the right time. And that's what Prakash sir also keeps saying. We've been working on that. And that's almost there. There's a lot of improvement. You will see that on court."

The 29-year-old also shared her training regime in Germany, where she sparred with all kinds of players and sometimes competed against two players at the same time.

"Saarbrücken training was really good. I was there for almost a couple of weeks and I got my own sparring partners as well. I got an opportunity to train with different people. One was like a left-hander and one was an attacking player, a rally player.

"And I had a Nigerian guy, who also was sparring with me. And one was a German singles player who was also playing with me for a couple of days."

Sindhu was an underdog in the 2016 Olympics, while she competed at Tokyo Games as an experienced player.

Talking about her journey, Sindhu said: "I've experienced two different kinds of Olympics where, in one, a lot of people shouted and cheered, but there was no pressure. In the second one, there were a lot of responsibilities and pressure, everybody wanted you to get a medal, but there was no crowd.

"But now it's a mixture of both (in Paris). I'm hoping for the best medal to come out there."

I watch clips of my goals to boost confidence ahead of Olympic debut: Hockey forward Sukhjeet

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian hockey forward Sukhjeet Singh is unfazed by the pressure of playing at the highest level and is watching the clips of his international goals to boost his confidence ahead of his Olympic debut at the Paris Games.

"I made my debut in the Indian team in 2022 and scored a goal in my debut match against Spain in the FIH Pro League. The journey so far has been good and I try to do my best in every match," he told PTI Bhasha in an interview before departing for Paris.

Having scored 22 goals in 70 international matches so far, Sukhjeet is prepared physically and mentally to face the pressure of the Olympics.

He is one of the five debutants -- Sanjay, Abhishek, Rajkumar Pal, and Jarmanpreet Singh -- who have joined the 11 members of Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist team for the Paris Games.

"I am not feeling any pressure



at all. We have played big tournaments, so we know how to handle pressure. We are confident of playing well against big teams in the pool as our preparation has been really good," said the 27-year-old.

The team will begin its campaign on July 27 against New Zealand, followed by matches against Argentina (July 29), Ireland (July 30), Belgium (August 1) and Australia (August 2).

India and Australia have clashed on the hockey field a

total of 43 times since 2013, according to data from the FIH Data Hub.

Australia have emerged victorious 33 times, while India have won 8 games and 7 matches ended in a draw. Similarly, India has 8 wins, 16 losses and 6 draws in 30 matches against Tokyo Olympic champion Belgium in the last 10 years.

Sukhjeet had scored six goals in his debut tournament -- FIH Pro League -- in 2022. After this, he scored three goals in the 2023 World Cup

held in India. He was also part of the Indian team that won the gold medal in the Asian Games in Hangzhou.

"I watch my clips of the matches in which I scored goals before big matches. This increases my confidence and I try to do better in the next match. My previous performance makes me mentally stronger," he said when asked about mental preparations for the Olympics.

"Apart from this, talking to a sports psychologist before the semi-finals or finals in the Asian Games and also during the Asian Champions Trophy has benefited a lot. They tell us how to handle pressure. The tips I get from them are very useful.

"Senior players in our team, Shree Bhai (PR Sreejesh), Manpreet, Harmanpreet have a lot of experience. They tell us about their experiences and motivate us to perform well. If we have any problem, we talk to them."

Sukhjeet was introduced to hockey by his father Ajit Singh when he was six years old. Former Punjab Police

hockey player Ajit could not play for the national team but he wanted his son to don the India jersey.

"My father used to play for Punjab Police and he always had a dream to see his son represent India. It is because of his support that I am at this stage. It will be a proud moment for him and my entire family when I step on the field in Paris," he said.

Asked which players he is eager to meet in the Olympic Games Village, Sukhjeet said that at present the focus is on his preparation.

"I am looking forward to meeting Australian hockey team forward Blake Grovers, against whom I have played many matches. But the focus is on our preparation, not on the glamour of Games Village.

"There is a good coordination between young and experienced players in the team and we are sure that the trend started in Tokyo will continue further in Paris," said Sukhjeet, who loves to listen to Punjabi songs to relax and unwind amid rigorous training.

PTI ■ PARIS

Experienced table tennis player Harmeet Desai believes the Indian men's TT team has "a very good chance" of reaching the optimum level of performance at the Paris Olympics and beat any side on its day, having prepared in earnest for the Games.

The Olympics will begin in the French capital on Friday with a grand opening ceremony in the iconic Seine river.

"On a given day, I think we really have a very good chance of beating any team. We have won against top teams in the world in the past and it is possible this time also if we give our best.

"In the Olympics, if all three of us can put on the best show then anything is possible," the 31-year-old said during an interview with Ultimate Table Tennis.

He played an important role in helping India clinch Commonwealth Games gold medals in 2018 and 2022.

Desai is part of the Indian men's team along with Achanta Sharath Kamal,



Manav Thakkar and Sathiyar Gnanasekaran. He will also be competing in the individual events.

Desai's confidence stems from the fact that the Indian men's team had defeated the mighty Japan in the quarter-finals to clinch the bronze medal at the 2018 Asian Games.

Speaking about the rise of Indian table tennis on the world stage, Desai credited the government's various schemes and the launch of Ultimate Table Tennis in 2017

for the development of the sport.

"UTT has helped us get more experience and exposure to play with international players and get guidance from foreign coaches. That was not the case before 2017.

"So, this kind of experience has helped the players get more self-belief and perform well in the international arena," he said.

The Indian table tennis contingent created history earlier this year when both the men's and women's teams qualified for the Olympics for the first time and the preparatory camps, in Bengaluru from June 7-16 and in Saarbrücken, Germany earlier this month, were focused on working out the perfect combinations for the team events.

The Indian men's team will face China in the opening round while the women's side will open their campaign against Romania. The individual events will be played from July 27 to August 4 whereas the team events are scheduled from August 5 to 10.



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