



OPINION 6
RELIGION AND POLITICS
IN MODERN INDIA

WORLD 8
STARMER BEGINS POST-BREXIT
'RESET' WITH EU

MONEY 10
CYBERSECURITY PLAYERS SEEK
DIGITAL SECURITY PUSH IN BUDGET

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

Late City Vol.17 Issue 196
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

RANCHI, FRIDAY JULY 19, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

Established 1864

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



F1 DRIVER MAGNUSSEN
TO LEAVE HAAS AT END
OF THIS SEASON
11 SPORTS

SC directs NTA to upload NEET UG results on its portal by July 20th



Students display placards in the precinct of the Supreme Court during a hearing on the NEET paper leak case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the National Testing Agency (NTA) to publish the city and centre-wise results of this year's NEET-UG exam on their website, masking the identity of the candidates, by 12 noon of July 20 (Saturday). The top court will resume hearing the arguments on July 22 on a batch of pleas seeking cancellation, re-test and a court-monitored probe into

the allegations of large-scale malpractices in the prestigious test held on May 5. "We direct the NTA to publish the marks obtained by students at the UG-2024 NEET examination, while, at the same time, without disclosing the identity of the students. The result should be declared city and centre wise by 12 noon on July 20, 2024 and shall be uploaded on the website of the NTA," the bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said in its

order. "We want the identity of students be masked. You can have dummy roll numbers. But let us see it centre-wise what is the marks pattern," the bench said.

The call for city-and centre-wise results underlines the focus this hearing has taken a deep-dive into data about the precise number of students who sat for the exam and passed, as well as the number who have asked for a re-test or for results to be scrapped, and those opposing any intervention. The bench noted the counsel for the petitioners have submitted that it would be appropriate if the result of NEET-UG 2024 examination was published on the NTA website so as to bring about transparency with regard to centre-wise marks obtained by candidates.

It also said material collected by the Bihar Police and the report of its Economic Offences Wing (EOW), before the investigation was taken over by the CBI, shall be filed in the court by 5 pm on July 20. At the outset, the bench said it has prioritised the hearing on the pleas over other cases as these have "social ramifications" and lakhs of students are waiting for the outcome.



Local residents gather after Chandigarh-Dibrugarh Express derails in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday

Express coach derailment in UP leaves two dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GONDA/NEW DELHI

Two passengers were killed and 20 injured when eight coaches of the Chandigarh-Dibrugarh Express derailed near Gonda in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday. A railway bulletin said in the wake of the accident, three trains were being run on diverted route. The diverted trains are 15707 Katihar-Amritsar Amrapali Express, 15603 Guwahati-Jammu Tawi Amarnath Express and 15910 Lalgarh-Dibrugarh Avadh Assam Express.

Gonda District Magistrate Neha Sharma, who reached the spot, said eight coaches of the train got derailed. He said the injured are being rushed to hospital and relief operations are on at the site. A 40-member medical team and 15 ambulances are at the spot and more medical teams and ambulances are being

rushed there, Relief Commissioner Kumar said. Eyewitnesses said the loud noise of the coaches leaving the track and toppling over to the left was followed by loud cries of the passengers, especially children. The passengers started coming out of the emergency windows and doors of the tilted sleeper coaches, and some went back to pull out their belongings. In the AC coaches, passengers helped each other break the window panes and pull out those injured or stuck. Passengers had to wade through knee-deep water in the fields on either side of the track to reach the nearby approach road. Others, shocked by the accident or injured, sat on the track itself, waiting to be rescued. When police teams reached the spot, officials made announcements asking people to stay away from the damaged coaches.

Army prepares for long haul in Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU/NEW DELHI

While gradually inducting more troops on ground zero, the Indian Army is preparing for the long haul ahead of flushing out Pakistani terrorists occupying 'Jammu Heights'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also reviewed the current security situation in Jammu in the wake of number of terrorist attacks in the past weeks. He chaired a meeting of Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which includes Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah.

Adopting offensive posturing the Indian Army has already rushed additional troops to be deployed along the higher reaches of the Kathua district bordering Himachal Pradesh to plug the gaps and block the escape routes of infiltrating terrorists. Troop deployment is also being reviewed across the frontier districts of Rajouri and Poonch as the region has witnessed repeated ambushes on army trucks and patrol parties since October 2021. The security forces are also contemplating setting up additional posts in the upper reaches of the Doda and Kishtwar districts to block the traditional routes of crossing into the Kashmir valley. As per the preliminary assessment made by the different agencies, part of the multi-layered security grid in Jammu and Kashmir, the involvement of ex-Pak army



Army personnel during an encounter with terrorists in a forest village in Doda district on Thursday

regulars along with a well-trained cadre of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist outfit cannot be ruled out behind these attacks. Most of these ambushes were planned and executed under the same command structure and the desired objective was to inflict maximum casualties on the Indian security forces to spread the 'Arc of terror' across the peaceful Jammu region. Before the four soldiers were martyred in the Dessa forest area of Doda, five soldiers were ambushed by Pakistani terrorists in the Badnota area of Machhedhi in the Billawar tehsil of Kathua on July 8. The security grid along the International border has been kept in a state of high alert to prevent fresh infiltration attempts from across the border. Meanwhile, two terrorists were killed as security forces foiled a fresh infiltration bid

along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district on Thursday. In a post on X, the Srinagar-based Chinara Corps said, "An infiltration attempt has been successfully prevented with the elimination of two terrorists today on the LoC in Keran Sector, Kupwara. Anti Infiltration Operations are continuing". In Doda, two Army personnel were injured when a group of terrorists lobbed a grenade and opened indiscriminate firing on the Government school building where these soldiers had taken a temporary shelter during the night. According to official sources, the information about the presence of soldiers in the school complex may have been shared by the local associates of the terrorists in the Kastigarh area of Doda.

India issues advisory after shocking Bangladesh quota protests

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/DHAKA

India on Thursday issued an advisory to its nationals and students in Bangladesh, urging them to restrict movement outside their living premises. The advisory comes in the wake of the ongoing quota violence across parts of the country claiming six lives. India also issued some 24-hour emergency numbers.

"In view of the ongoing situation in Bangladesh, the Indian community members and the Indian students residing in Bangladesh are advised to avoid travel and minimise their movement outside their living premises," the advisory read.

"In case of any urgency or need for assistance, please reach out to the High Commission and our Assistant High

PM Modi boosts Party cadre confidence post elections



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed by Union Minister and BJP President JP Nadda as he arrives to meet party workers at the BJP headquarters, in New Delhi, on Thursday

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A day after political activities were reported from Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday reached out to the party workers to boost the sagging morale after not so good performance in the just concluded general elections in which BJP could not secure majority on its own to form the Government just like it did comfortably in 2014 and then in 2019.

Sources said Modi reached the BJP headquarters in the evening and moved around the party's huge complex on DDU Marg and chatted impromptu with many of the workers. The

PM also visited a few offices of party workers and then moved on to interact with the party workers and volunteers in a conference hall.

Modi interacted with them in what is being seen as his appreciation for their work following his return to power for a third straight term. Hailing their contributions, Modi said he will continue to meet them in future. Modi was greeted by BJP president J P Nadda as he arrived at its headquarters.

"He was too glad to meet us and personally identified many of us to whom he said he has been knowing several of the dedicated workers for more than five decades now. He

reminded some of the chit chats and also cracked jokes while recalling some of the events that happened in the closed premises of the party headquarters which was earlier at Ashoka Road in Lutyens," said a worker attached to a party General Secretary while quoting the PM.

He mentioned that Modi told them to continue working with the same zeal as it is their sole contribution for making BJP the largest political party of the world, another worker said, quoting the PM.

This gesture is not unprecedented, as Modi has similarly met and thanked party workers following the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, aiming to boost morale and recognise their contributions. The BJP, known for its robust cadre-based structure, upholds a tradition of top leadership engaging directly with ground-level workers to bolster their efforts.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the party lost its parliamentary majority, securing 240 seats, a decrease of 63 seats compared to their 2019 performance. Notably, in the crucial State of Uttar Pradesh, the party's seat count dropped from 61 in the previous term to 33 in this election.



Religion display on stalls on UP highways to help Kanwars eat right

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/MUZAFFARNAGAR

After drawing fire from various quarters, including politicians, over display of owners' names over the eateries enroute Kanwar Yatra, the Muzaffarnagar Police on Thursday issued fresh advisory making it a "voluntary" measure to put a board of names of their owners. The Muzaffarnagar Police said its intention was not to create any kind of religious discrimination but only to facilitate the devotees passing through Muzaffarnagar district and prevent any untoward situation. "During the holy month of Shrawan, many people, especially Kanwariyas, abstain from certain food items in their diet," the Muzaffarnagar Police stated through its

social media posts.

"In the past, such instances have come to light where some shopkeepers selling all types of food items on Kanwar Marg named their shops in such a way that it created confusion among the Kanwariyas and created a law and order situation.

To prevent such a recurrence, hotels, dhabas and shopkeepers selling food items on Kanwar Marg have been requested to voluntarily display the names of their owners and employees... This system has been prevalent in the past, too," the advisory further said.

The fresh advisory came after the administration's earlier order asking eateries, including roadside carts, to display the names of their owners in front of their shops faced severe criticism. Police personnel had also started to enforce the order.

Disgraced daughter Puja Khedkar leads mother into remand, father on the run

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Within days after controversial probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar was shunted back to her Mussoorie-based alma mater on disciplinary grounds, the police arrested her mother Manorama Khedkar on Thursday for allegedly threatening some farmers at gunpoint to grab their land at Mulshi taluka in Pune district.

Manorama — who had been absconding for nearly a week after a video showing her threatening farmers at Mulshi in a bid to usurp their land went viral — was traced to a small lodge, Parvati Niwas, near Mahad town in Raigad district where the visiting Pune rural police reached and arrested her.

Manorama was later brought back to Pune where a court Judicial Magistrate First Class SG Barde remanded her in police custody till July 20. A former Sarpanch (village headwoman) of Bhalgaon in Pune district, Manorama had been staying at the lodge under a fake name of 'Indu Dnyandev Dhakane' with another person identified as 'Dadasaheb Dnyandev Dhakane'. Acting on a complaint lodged by farmer Pandharinath Pasalkar (65), the Paud police had registered a complaint against Manorama and her husband Diliprao Khedkar, both residents of National Housing Society in Baner, and one Ambadas Khedkar of Ambi village in Haveli, and other unidentified persons.



Commissions," it stated. There were approximately 7,000 Indians in Bangladesh, according to the High Commission's website.

On Wednesday, student protesters demanding reforms in the quota system in government jobs announced plans to enforce a complete nationwide shutdown on Thursday in response to the actions of the security forces. The clashes left at least six people, including four students, dead across the country.

A key coordinator of the movement, Asif Mahmud, in a Facebook post, said all establishments, barring hospitals and emergency services, will remain closed, and only ambulance services will be permitted to operate.

The movement urges students from all educational institutions to participate and calls on guardians to support their cause, a newspaper reported. Meanwhile, authorities called out the paramilitary Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) troops in four major cities after hundreds of policemen in riot gear fanned out in public university campuses across the country.

Insult to India's dhoti kurta forces a Mall to shut shop in Bengaluru

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

In an interesting development, the Karnataka Government on Thursday ordered closure of a mall for seven days after a farmer was allegedly denied entry owing to his attire — a 'dhoti' and a white shirt — an incident which drew strong condemnation from members cutting across party lines in the Legislative Assembly. The Government also termed the alleged insult to the farmer as an infringement on "dignity and self respect", and said it cannot be tolerated.

"I checked with the BBMP (Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike) commissioner as to what can be done. The Government has the powers. Action will be taken against the (G T World)

mall in accordance with law immediately and we will ensure that the mall is closed for seven days," Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh told the House.

Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa said the incident is condemnable. "For every individual self respect and dignity are important, this has been violated, and the Government will take action," said the Minister. The incident reportedly happened on Tuesday when septuagenarian Fakeerappa from Haveri district visited the mall, along with his wife and son to watch a movie at a multiplex. Fakeerappa was reportedly wearing white shirt and 'panche' (dhoti), and the security staffer at the mall allegedly told him and his son that he won't be allowed



Photo: Screengrab

inside in a 'panche', and asked him to "wear trousers and come." Earlier, Assembly Speaker U T Khader raised the issue and asked the Government to take action. "I saw in the media that a youth from the rural area, who is

studying here in Bengaluru, when he took his father wearing 'panche' — which is the traditional attire of Karnataka — to show him the mall, he was not let in because of the attire. This is highly condemnable and strict

action should be taken by the government, which becomes a lesson for all malls," he said. "Merciless action should be taken, however big the mall owner or management is," the Speaker said. "We have nothing to do with them, we have to show that the super rich owning malls are not important for us, and it is the common man, poor and last person of the society who are leading a life with self esteem are important," he said.

Congress MLA Laxman Savadi, stating that mere condemnation won't help, urged the Government to at least cut the power supply to the mall for a week. Ranabennur Congress MLA Prakash Koliwad, noting that the farmer belongs to a village in his constituency, said, "The farmer

has given education to all his nine children, one of his son is studying MBA here in Bengaluru and the son wanted to take his father to show him the mall. The farmer was disrespected for his attire and the mall should be closed down."

Congress MLA and chief whip from the ruling side Ashok Pattan suggested that action should also be taken on private clubs in Bengaluru, which impose dress code.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka said such issues have been discussed in the House earlier too, "but what's the result?" The Speaker or the Government will have to issue some orders, which should be implemented strictly by the secretaries and bureaucrats.

Strict attendance rules enforced for teachers and students

Instructions given to fill vacant seats in residential schools

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Deputy Commissioner, Ananya Mittal, conducted a comprehensive review meeting of the education department at the Collectorate Auditorium. Key officials in attendance included Project Director ITDA, Dipankar Chaudhary, District Education Superintendent, Ashish Pandey, District Education Officer, Manoj Kumar, along with other departmental officials and staff.

During the meeting, emphasis was placed on forming eco clubs and planting trees to raise environ-

mental awareness among students in government schools. Currently, 1519 out of 1597 schools have established eco clubs, with instructions given to form clubs in the remaining schools promptly.

In the review of the Chief Minister's School of Excellence, it was reported that 2350 of the 2818 available seats have been filled. The remaining 468 seats are to be filled by July 31. Additionally, all teachers are required to register their attendance daily in the E Vidyavahini system. A recent attendance check on July 15 revealed that 1097 teachers



from 1546 schools failed to register, prompting strict instructions to withhold their

salaries for unregistered days. Similarly, only 844 schools submitted student

attendance, necessitating daily updates from all school principals.

For KGBV schools, the meeting mandated the completion of compulsory enrollment from the waiting list by July 31 for 42 seats in classes 9 and 11 at Dumaria KGBV and 11 seats in class 11 at Bahragora KGBV.

Aadhar cards for 97.11% of students in government schools have been issued, with 5000 still pending. Camps will be organized to complete this task. Additionally, 45,511 students from private schools have not submitted their Aadhar numbers. Principals have been

given a 15-day deadline to comply.

In the review of student bank accounts, it was found that 12,782 out of 1,71,244 students do not have a bank account. Instructions were issued to open accounts for all students by the end of the month, ensuring they receive scholarship funds and other benefits.

The Savitribai Phule Kishori Samridhi Yojana aims to benefit 30,218 girl students, with 11,500 forms received so far. BEEOs were directed to collect and submit forms to the District Social Welfare Office promptly to ensure timely benefits.

All blocks were instructed to send their bicycle demands for the 2024-25 financial year to the District Welfare Office. The distribution of textbooks is to be reviewed and recorded in e-Vidyavahini. Immediate arrangements for solar panels in 10 remote schools without electricity were ordered, along with coordination with the Electricity Department for a full-time solution. Rainwater harvesting systems are to be installed in all government schools, with 329 already completed. BDOs were directed to expedite the remaining installations

through convergence with MNREGA.

A district-level workshop under the Ruar program is scheduled for July 20, 2024, at Ravindra Bhavan Auditorium, Sakchi. All principals were instructed to ensure class-wise transition, with invitations extended to honorable MPs, MLAs, and panchayat heads.

The meeting concluded with the attendance of BEEOs, BPOs, KGBV wardens, and other education department officials and employees. Dr. Vikram Sharma, Head of the Placement Department, proposed a vote of thanks.

EFFECTS OF ONLINE REVIEWS ON RESTAURANTS' REPUTATION



BY CHEF ASHUTOSH TIWARI

In today's digital age, online reviews wield significant influence over consumers' decisions, particularly in the realm of dining experiences. Restaurants, big or small, find themselves at the mercy of platforms like Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Google Reviews, where patrons freely express their opinions and rate their experiences. These reviews not only shape public perception but also directly impact a restaurant's reputation and ultimately, its bottom line.

The Power of Online Reviews: Online reviews have democratized the process of restaurant feedback, giving every diner a platform to voice their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. A

study has revealed that 87% of consumers read online reviews for local businesses, with 76% stating that they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. For restaurants, this means that positive reviews can attract new customers and enhance credibility, while negative reviews can deter potential patrons and damage reputation.

Impact on Consumer Decision Making: Before visiting a restaurant, prospective customers often turn to online reviews to gauge the quality of food, service, ambiance, and overall dining experience. Reviews provide insights into what to expect, helping consumers make informed choices. Positive reviews can create a buzz around a restaurant, driving foot traffic and boosting reservations. Conversely, negative reviews can lead to decreased patronage, as diners opt for establishments with better ratings and feedback.

Managing Reputation in the Digital Era: For restaurant owners and managers, monitoring and managing online reviews have become crucial tasks. Responding promptly and professionally to both positive and negative reviews demonstrates atten-

tiveness and a commitment to customer satisfaction. Studies show that 53% of customers expect businesses to respond to their online reviews within a week. Addressing negative feedback publicly shows transparency and a willingness to rectify any shortcomings, potentially turning dissatisfied customers into loyal advocates.

The Role of Social Proof: Online reviews also serve as social proof, influencing potential customers by showcasing the opinions and experiences of others. A restaurant with a large number of positive reviews and high ratings can build trust and credibility, attracting more diners through word-of-mouth marketing facilitated by online platforms.

Challenges Faced by Restaurants: Despite their benefits, online reviews pose challenges for restaurants. Negative reviews, whether justified or not, can spread quickly and tarnish reputation. Restaurants must navigate the fine line between addressing criticism constructively and avoiding confrontational responses that could escalate the situation. Moreover, the authenticity of reviews can sometimes be questioned, as fake reviews

or biased ratings may skew perceptions.

Future Trends and Strategies: Looking ahead, the influence of online reviews is expected to grow further. Restaurants will need to invest in strategies that enhance their online presence and reputation management. This includes encouraging satisfied customers to leave reviews, leveraging social media to engage with patrons, and continuously improving service quality to generate positive feedback organically. In conclusion, online reviews have revolutionized how consumers evaluate restaurants and make dining decisions. They can propel a restaurant to success or hinder its growth depending on the sentiments expressed by patrons online. By understanding the impact of online reviews and implementing effective reputation management strategies, restaurants can navigate the digital landscape successfully and cultivate a positive brand image that attracts and retains loyal customers.

THE WRITER IS AN ACCLAIMED INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE CHEF & FNB CONSULTANT.

DISNEY LAND MELA PUT ON AUCTION FOR 61L PLUS IN DALTONGANJ

PNS : DALTONGANJ

It's a whopping 61.52 lakh rupees worth auctioning to the Disney Land Mela here in Daltonganj. Sadar SDO Anurag Kumar Tiwari said that in all 5 people had submitted the tender papers.

However, just 3 of the 5 took part in the bidding, said Tiwari. Two backed out from the bidding. One of the three bidders Pawan Kumar Gupta finally bagged the contract for 61.52 lakhs of rupees.

Sadar SDO said last year this Disney Land Mela was auctioned for little over 55 lakhs. However this financial year there is a jump of straight 6 lakhs of rupees for the state exchequer.

According to the public relation office the duration of the Disney Land Mela is authorised from 20 July to 20 September.

Disney Land Mela is very popular with the masses here. It has in fact uprooted the charm of the circus. Close to the venue of the DisneyLand Mela here is held a magic show which is also a good spectator puller.

BGH launches CT Coronary angiogram services

PNS : BOKARO

In a landmark development for medical services in Bokaro, the Bokaro General Hospital (BGH), operating under the aegis of Bokaro Steel Limited (BSL), has commenced CT Coronary Angiogram (CTCAG) services in its Radiology Department. This advanced diagnostic procedure marks a significant step forward in the hospital's capabilities. CTCAG is a non-invasive procedure performed on an outpatient basis. It is pivotal in diagnosing blockages, plaques, or congenital anomalies in the coronary vessels that supply blood to the heart. The availability of this test at BGH is expected to greatly enhance the diagnosis and treatment of coronary heart disease, benefiting a large number of patients. On this occasion, the Chief Medical Officer of the hospital, Dr. B.B. Karunamay, explained that the CT Coronary Angiogram is a



non-invasive procedure that allows for the detailed examination of any blockages in the heart, as well as a thorough assessment of the arteries connected to the heart.

Commenting on this development, M.K. Dhan, the Chief of Communications at BSL, expressed optimism about the impact of this new service. "The introduction of CTCAG at BGH represents a substantial boost to our medical infrastructure. It aligns with our ongoing efforts to provide

state-of-the-art medical facilities to our community," he said. The implementation of CTCAG services at BGH underscores the hospital's commitment to adopting advanced medical technologies, ensuring that patients receive the best possible care without the need for invasive procedures. This initiative is expected to significantly improve patient outcomes and reinforce BGH's position as a leading healthcare provider in the region.

Bokaro BJP unit holds meeting ahead of Ranchi meet

PNS : BOKARO

A preparatory meeting was held at Bokaro Parishad with BJP workers from Bokaro Assembly for the July 20 meeting at Morabadi Ground in Ranchi. The event will be graced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah as the chief guest, with the meeting chaired by BJP State President Babulal Marandi.

The meeting was attended by Bokaro MLA and Chief Whip of the opposition, Biranchi Narayan, along with state officials, state working committee members, district officials, mandal presidents, and mandal in-charges residing in Bokaro Assembly.

Bokaro MLA Biranchi Narayan highlighted that under the leadership of State President Babulal Marandi, the major meeting on July 20 will witness the presence of Amit Shah as the chief guest. Key figures such as Jharkhand in-charge Laxmikant Vajpayee, election in-



charge Shivraj Singh Chauhan, and co-in-charge Himanta Biswa Sarma will be specially attending.

The Bokaro meeting aimed to prepare for this significant event, with expected participation from workers of all nine mandals of Bokaro Assembly. The strategy for the upcoming assembly elections will be discussed during the meeting, with 500 officials from Bokaro Assembly set to attend.

LMV Driving Training completed at PVUNL Limited

AVINASH ANJAN : HAZARIBAG

As part of the Community Development (CD) activities, a Light Motor Vehicle Driving training program was conducted, resulting in the successful completion of the course by 30 participants, including 7 female participants. The training was designed to equip participants with essential driving skills and knowledge required to operate light motor vehicles safely and confidently. A certification ceremony was held to acknowledge the achievements of the participants. During this event, the President, Swarnrekha Mahila Samiti presented training completion certificates and driving licenses to all participants.



Rubaroo Program Held at BSL

R SHARMA : BOKARO

A "Rubaroo" interactive program was organized today in the Human Resources Learning and Development Department at Bokaro Steel Limited (BSL), under the guidance of Director-in-Charge Birendra Kumar Tiwari. The program saw the participation of around fifty officers from BSL.

The event commenced with a safety pledge led by the Director-in-Charge. Assistant General Manager (Safety and Fire Services) Kumar Rajneesh delivered a presentation on the theme "Safety Culture Transformation: The Way Forward." Senior Manager (Safety) Pramod Kumar Singh provided a detailed overview of the Kavach portal. Through these presentations, the aim was to enhance the sense of safety and responsibility among all BSL employees, create a safer work environment, identify potential hazards, and implement effective safety measures.

DIC Tiwari emphasized how incorporating safety behaviors into daily life can bring about a positive change. He stressed the importance of fostering a culture of safety and responsibility within the organization to ensure a secure and productive working environment.



VITAL TRAINING SESSION AT XITE GAMHARIA

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Xaviers Institute of Technical Education (XITE) Gamharia hosted a crucial training session titled "Fariشتهy - Accident First Responders," aimed at bolstering road safety and emergency response capabilities among students. Organized by CII Yi XITE and CII Yi Yuva Jamshedpur Chapter Road Safety Vertical in collaboration with EMRI Green Health Services, the session focused on equipping participants with life-saving skills.

The training, held at the college conference hall, drew enthusiastic participation from over 55 students eager to enhance their readiness to respond effectively in accident scenarios. Leading the session were esteemed trainers Dr. Pankaj Sachan, Senior Clinical Educator from Emergency Management and Research Institute (EMRI) Hyderabad, and Akash, an Advanced Emergency Medical



Technician from EMRI Hyderabad. Their expertise in emergency management provided invaluable guidance to the students through various aspects of accident response. The presence of Shruti Jhujhunwala, Chair of the Road Safety Vertical, Yi Yuva Jamshedpur Chapter, alongside Sakshi Gupta, Co-Chair, and Anupama Gupta, highlighted the initiative's

significance in promoting road safety and community well-being.

The training underscored not only technical proficiency but also the critical mindset required to act swiftly and decisively during emergencies. Dr. Pankaj Sachan and Akash emphasized quick assessment, first aid administration, and ensuring victim safety until professional

help arrives. Interactive sessions and practical demonstrations made the training engaging and impactful.

Shruti Jhujhunwala and the organizing team, including Ashish Singh, Nodal Officer of CII Yi XITE, played pivotal roles in planning and executing the session, ensuring a seamless and enriching learning experience for all participants.

CAIT delegation meets Agriculture Minister

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

A delegation from the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) met with the Agriculture Minister, Deepika Pandey Singh, to discuss various issues affecting traders in the state. The meeting was marked by an in-depth discussion on key challenges faced by the trading community.

The delegation comprised Suresh Sonthalia, National Secretary, Jharkhand State Chief Patron, Prabhat Sharma, Patron Bharat Vasani and Kolhan Incharge, S N Agarwal. The representatives presented a range of concerns, highlighting the need for policy adjustments and supportive measures to enhance the business environment for traders.

Minister Singh assured the delegation that their concerns would be taken into serious consideration. She emphasized that future decisions would be made in consultation with the traders to ensure that all stakeholders benefit from the outcomes. Her commitment to a collaborative approach was well-received by the delegation, who expressed optimism about the positive impact on the trading community.

"We are grateful for the Minister's time and her willingness to engage with us on these important issues. This meeting marks a significant step towards addressing the challenges faced by traders in Jharkhand," said Suresh Sonthalia. The CAIT delegation left the meeting with a renewed sense of confidence, hopeful that their issues would be resolved through continued dialogue and cooperation with the state government.



CM takes detailed information on RIMS redevelopment plan

PNS : Ranchi

Principal Secretary, Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department, Ajay Kumar Singh met Chief Minister Hemant Soren today in the Jharkhand Ministry and apprised the Chief Minister of the proposed action plan related to the redevelopment and expansion of Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) Ranchi (Redevelopment and Augmentation of RIMS Ranchi). Renovation of old OPD, IPD & Academic Block, New Residence Bungalows for Director, MS, Addl. Director & Dean, New Forensic Medicine Dept. Detailed discussions were held on Building, Construction of New OPD Block, Covered Pathways, Drainage Supply, Boundary Wall & Gates, Electrical Work,



Chief Minister Hemant Soren with Principal Secretary, Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department Ajay Kumar Singh and Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Avinash Kumar during a meeting at Project building in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

ILO's one-day workshop today

PNS : RANCHI

In order to promote decent work in the state, the Department of Labour, Employment Training and Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand is organizing a one-day consultation-workshop (CON-CLAVE) under the aegis of International Labour Organization (ILO) on social security and minimum wage of workers engaged in the gig economy on Friday, 19 July 2024 at Radisson Blu Hotel, Ranchi. The program will be inaugurated by the hands of Satyanand Bhokta, Minister, Department of Labour, Employment,

Training and Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand.

It is noteworthy that with the objective of fixing fair and minimum wages for gig workers, a committee was constituted under the aegis of the Labour Commissioner, Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Skill Development to submit a report on the challenges faced by gig workers. The Minimum Wage Advisory Board is already working with the technical assistance of the National Labour Organization to fix a fair minimum wage as per the National Labour Standards

and meetings have been organized towards ensuring fair minimum wages for gig workers.

The objective of this consultation workshop is to accelerate state-centric policy making through discussions on fair minimum wage and social security for gig workers. This workshop is an opportunity for all stakeholders of the gig economy to share opportunities and challenges based on their work and experiences at the state / national / global level, as well as a golden opportunity to become aware of the knowledge available on dignified work in the gig economy.

Proposed Works, Road Development etc. The Chief Minister took point-wise information of the action plan and also gave many important guidelines to the departmental Principal Secretary. Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Avinash Kumar was present on this occasion. Meanwhile, the CM has given his approval to the proposal for granting administrative approval of a total of Rs 1503.62 lakh (fifteen crore three lakh sixty two thousand rupees) for the development of sites located near Rankini Temple, Jadugoda under the "Tree Plantation and Land Conservation on Notified Forest Land" Scheme (Tribal Area Sub-Plan) to be implemented from the financial year 2024-25 to 2025-26 and the draft document for the related scheme authorized committee.

More infiltration in BJP ruled States, says JMM



JMM General Secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya addresses media persons at the party office in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), on Thursday, attacked Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on issues like infiltrators and madrasas. The party said, BJP leaders come to Jharkhand and talk about only two issues. One is infiltrators and the other is madrasa. But according to the report of the Home Ministry, most attempts of infiltration are made in Tripura and they are also successful.

Addressing a press meet, JMM General Secretary cum Spokesperson Supriyo Bhattacharya said, BJP has ruled Tripura for the last 8 years and BJP has been responsible for border security for 10 years. He said, Assam Chief Minister (CM) Himanta Biswa Sarma also accepts that most infiltration has happened in Assam after this, Babul Marandi makes a new tweet every day. He said, even BJP leaders will not be able to tell what the truth is and what is not.

The party General Secretary said that the same leaders come here and say that madrasas should be closed. He said, the education given inside madrasas is religious education and this is not hidden from anyone. "There are 16513 madrasas in UP. All these madrasas are recognized. The number of unrecognized madrasas is 449. Similarly, the number of Government madrasas in UP is 558. While there has been a BJP Government there before and it is still there. There are 20650 madrasas in Madhya Pradesh which run with the support of the State Government. Similarly, there are 1600 madrasas which are given financial support by the BJP's Central Government," he added.

Bhattacharya further said that there are 1130 madrasas in Gujarat. "BJP

has been ruling Gujarat for 30 years. The State Government is running 88 madrasas in Bihar. Similarly, 2059 madrasas are registered with the Madrasa Board here. There are 186 paid madrasas in Jharkhand. These madrasas in the whole Country are a joint program of the Ministry of Minority Welfare, State Government, Central Government and Education Department. Now they have a problem with the madrasas. There is no problem in BJP ruled States. They come to Jharkhand and say that madrasas should be closed," he added.

The party Spokesperson said that the kind of language BJP leaders are using these days, smells of poison. He said, BJP which is issues these days, its true thinking is now coming to the fore. "PM Narendra Modi talks about Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas but a BJP leader says that it is not Sabka Saath, but the development of those who are with us. He was referring to the recent statement of BJP leader of opposition in West Bengal Assembly Shubhendu Adhikari. In which he has said that the talk of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas has now become meaningless. BJP's Minority Front should be closed," he added.

Bhattacharya further said that BJP has hardly fielded a single Muslim candidate in the Lok Sabha elections. He said, BJP hesitates to give tickets to Muslim candidates even in Vidhan Sabha. "In Rajasthan, it gives tickets to Muslim candidates on only one seat. BJP does not give representation to a large Muslim population anywhere. This perception of BJP is already established. He said, saying straight away that there is no need for Minority Morcha in BJP now, it should be closed, this shows the real thinking of BJP," he added.

City journalist fighting lung cancer to undergo CAR T cell Therapy for free

'I have found God in the form of Dr. Vijay Patil and Dr. Kumar Prabhash'



DIVYA MODI : RANCHI

For senior journalist Ravi Prakash (48) who has been battling fourth stage lung cancer for over three years now, there is a new ray of hope. Ranchi based Prakash has been suffering from lung cancer since January 2021 when the disease was detected in the advanced stage.

After undergoing 68 sessions of chemotherapy, the next line of treatment as suggested by doctors is CAR T-cell Therapy. Prakash happens to be the sixth patient in the country to receive this treatment and will be treated by Dr. Kumar Prabhash, Professor and HOD of Medical Oncology at Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai and his colleague Professor Dr. Vijay Patil.

"The lung cancer when diagnosed was non-small which has now changed to small cell, thereby limiting the treatment options. The global cost of this treatment is about 4.5 lakh US dollars which is approximately Rs 3.75 crore. It is a blessing for me that Dr Vijay Patil has taken the initiative to do this therapy for me free of cost. The two doctors are an absolute God send for me. It is said that you never know in which form you will find Narayan. I have found Narayan in the form of Dr. Vijay Patil and Dr. Kumar Prabhash," said Prakash.

Prakash is scheduled to leave for Mumbai to receive the treatment around the fourth week of July and is hoping to return home cancer free in the first week of August.

"In the initial days of the diagnosis Ravi Prakash underwent targeted therapy plus chemotherapy at our

during the World Conference on Lung Cancer (WCLC) to be held in San Diego city in America.

"My journey with cancer began in January 2021 when the disease was diagnosed at an advanced stage. I began reading books, surfing the internet and interacting with other patients and care givers to understand the emotional and financial challenges faced by them. It was then that I decided to come out in the open and talk



Dr. Kumar Prabhash

centre. It benefitted him a lot and was also cost effective. His journey has been good till recently and he has tolerated it well. Unfortunately the treatment is not effective anymore and he is exploring other options and that is how he got in touch with Dr. Vijay Patil. In-spite of being a patient himself, he has done phenomenal work for other lung cancer patients. His group Lung Connect India- a lung cancer advocacy group is one of the first of its kind in the country. His journey so far has been phenomenal and very inspiring," said Dr. Kumar Prabhash.

Ever since his battle with cancer began in January 2021, apart from undergoing intensive treatment, Prakash has also been tirelessly advocating for cancer patients on various forums. Even on social media he has been raising his voice regarding their struggles, the cost of the treatment, medication and the various problems faced by the patients.

Prakash is also due to receive the Patient Advocate Education Award by the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC)- a prestigious organization working in the field of lung cancer on September 7

about it and also make people aware about cancer through social media platforms," recalls Prakash.

Prakash in his quest to educate and inspire others is also the director of Lung Connect India, a voluntary organisation working for cancer patients. Last year he also addressed the conference of SAARC Federation of Oncologists held in Kahmandu where he highlighted the obstacles faced by cancer patients.



Dr Vijay Patil

AS A PART OF LUNG CONNECT INDIA, PRAKASH AND HIS TEAM REGULARLY ORGANISE ONLINE MEETINGS FOR OTHER PATIENTS FROM INDIA AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES WHERE THEY SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND ALSO SEEK ADVICE FROM DOCTORS.

Urban Development and Housing Dept bags National Award

PNS : RANCHI

An award distribution ceremony "Excellence Ki Aur Badhe Kadam" organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India was organized at India Habitat Center, New Delhi on Thursday.

On this occasion, Union Minister, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal Khattar awarded the second prize at the national level to the state of Jharkhand under the Best Social Infrastructure category in Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Urban Livelihood Mission under the 'Systematic Progressive Analytical Real Time Ranking' (SPARK-2023-24).

Along with this, Medininagar Municipal Corporation was awarded the second prize at the national level for doing excellent work in the category of empowerment of street vendors under the financial mandate in Performance Recognition for Access to Financial Inclusion and



Street Vendor empowerment (PRAISE-AWARD-2023-24). On this occasion, Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, Tokhan Sahu, Secretary Anurag Jain, Rahul Kapoor, Joint Secretary and Shalini Pandey, Director PM Swanidhi were present.

On behalf of the state government, Arwa Rajkamal, Secretary, Urban Development and Housing Department, Javed Hasan, Municipal Commissioner, Medininagar Municipal Corporation, Anshu Kumari,

Assistant Director, Abhilasha Kumari, Assistant Director, Santoshni Murmu, Assistant Administrator, Dhanbad Municipal Corporation, City Mission Manager Satish Kumar and Abhishek Kumar and representatives of women self-help groups and street vendors of Dhanbad Municipal Corporation were also present to receive the above award. The Urban Development and Housing Department has congratulated the entire Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Urban Livelihood Mission team for this honour.

ED raids at Jamshedpur in Rs 1392 crore Haryana bank scam

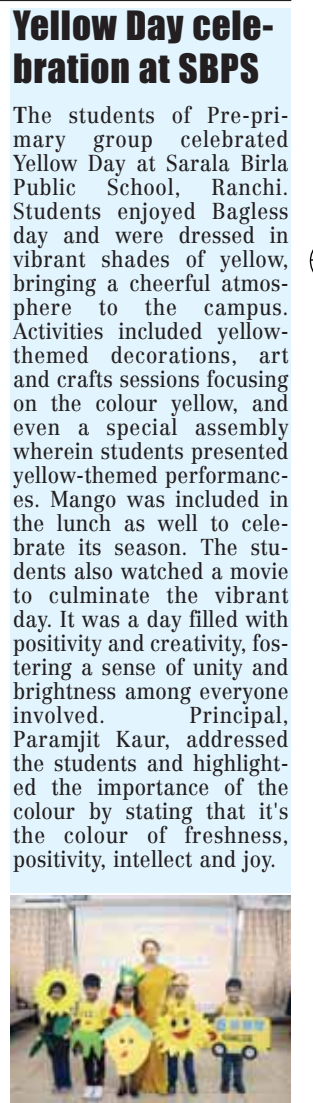
PNS : RANCHI/JAMSHEDPUR

In the Haryana bank scam case, Central probe agency Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday conducted raids in cities of many states of the country. ED action was in Delhi, Haryana and Jamshedpur of Jharkhand. ED has conducted a search operation in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand. At the same time, ED has raided the place of Haryana MLA. The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday searched the premises of Mahendragarh Congress MLA Rao Dan Singh, a metal fabricating company and its promoters as part of a money-laundering probe linked to an alleged Rs1,392-crore worth bank loan fraud case, official sources said. About 15 locations, including those in Mahendragarh, Bahadurgarh and Gurugram in Haryana, Delhi and Jamshedpur in Jharkhand, were being searched by the central agency's Gurugram zonal office. A team of central armed police force (CAPF) personnel accompanied the search teams. The premises of the 65-year-old MLA, including a farm house in Rewari, locations of his son

Yellow Day celebration at SBPS

The students of Pre-primary group celebrated Yellow Day at Sarala Birla Public School, Ranchi. Students enjoyed Bagless day and were dressed in vibrant shades of yellow, bringing a cheerful atmosphere to the campus. Activities included yellow-themed decorations, art and crafts sessions focusing on the colour yellow, and even a special assembly wherein students presented yellow-themed performances. Mango was included in the lunch as well to celebrate its season. The students also watched a movie to culminate the vibrant day. It was a day filled with positivity and creativity, fostering a sense of unity and brightness among everyone involved.

Principal, Paramjit Kaur, addressed the students and highlighted the importance of the colour by stating that it's the colour of freshness, positivity, intellect and joy.



BJP targets JMM Govt over Bangladeshi inflators

PNS : RANCHI

BJP state spokesperson Pratul Shahdev today said that Bangladeshi Muslim infiltrators have gained the status of Jamai (son-in-law) in the JMM/Congress alliance government headed by Chief Minister Hemant Soren. Despite the directive of the High Court, the state government is not taking concrete steps to identify and expel these infiltrators. On this issue, junior officers are giving affidavits in the High Court instead of the Deputy Commissioner. It is clearly visible that the state government has become blind in the fire of appeasement on the issue of infiltrators.



Bharatiya Janata Party is determined to protect roti, maati and beti. On coming to power, it will make every effort to ensure that these Bangladeshi infiltrators are not able to do love jihad, land jihad and political jihad by marrying these tribal daughters by cheating them. The Special Branch of the state government itself had written a letter on June 2, 2023 and admitted that Muslim infiltrators are lodged on a large

scale in the madrasas of Santal. Their documents are also prepared. Then they are settled. Pratul said that only because of appeasement and vote bank politics, the Hemant government is continuously allowing Muslim intruders to rob the rights of the tribals.

Pratul said that the Bharatiya Janata Party works on the formula of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas. It does not believe in the politics of vote bank and appeasement. Pratul said that now the time has come to do a reality check on how much Muslim children are actually benefiting from these madrasas. If these children are given good education, then they will be

able to contribute better to society. But Jharkhand Mukti Morcha does not want the development of these Muslim children just because of vote bank politics.

Pratul said that now Jharkhand Mukti Morcha is getting scared of the collective leadership of Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Himanta Biswa Sarma and Babul Marandi. They know that they are sure to be wiped out in the next elections. That is why they are making baseless statements by targeting these leaders every day. The entire Jharkhand Mukti Morcha is suffering from Babul Marandi's phobia. Forget about his tours. Even one of his tweets makes the JMM leaders nervous.

Heavy rains likely in State for 3 days from July 22

PNS : RANCHI

The weather of Jharkhand is changing every moment. Sometimes dense clouds and sometimes bright sunshine are seen. Meanwhile, there is a possibility of heavy rain for three days from July 22 in many areas of the state including Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand.

The Meteorological Department informed that the low pressure area forming in the Bay of Bengal will be responsible for this. Its effect will be seen in the entire Jharkhand and rain is expected to continue till July 24. Although the monsoon remained weak in the last 24 hours, but from July 22, the monsoon will pick up speed



again. In fact, as soon as the process of formation of low pressure in the Bay is completed by July 19, there will be heavy rain in the entire state including Ranchi along with the coastal areas of Bengal and Odisha.

Meteorologist Abhishek Anand said, there is a possi-

bility of good rain in most parts of the State including Ranchi from July 22. Monsoon will pick up speed due to the low pressure forming in the Bay of Bengal. The effect of low pressure will remain in the entire state till July 24. In such a situation, there may be heavy rain for

three days. The Meteorological Department, the effect of this low pressure will remain in the entire State till July 24. At the same time, the monsoon remained weak in the state during the last 24 hours. 29.6 mm of rain fell in Dhalbhumgarh of East Singhbhum. 26.6 mm rain was recorded in Giridih, 12.2 in Ramgarh and 10.0 mm in Dhanbad. 3.4 mm of rain fell in Ranchi in the last 24 hours. From June 21 till now, 187.2 mm of rain has fallen in Ranchi. This is 50 less than normal. However, till now 371.0 mm of rain should have fallen. Till now 188.1 mm of rain has fallen in the entire state. But the average rainfall should be 359.8 mm. This is 48 less than normal.

Congress remarks often incite violence against Modi: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday accused the Congress of often using remarks, which incite violence, against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said words like 'maut' and 'hinsa' should not be used in speeches to target political rivals. Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Opposition should maintain decorum and seriousness in its political discourse as the use of such inciteful words have a psychological impact in society, promoting violence and raising unnecessary tensions. "The choice of words is very important in public life. The kind of comments used by the



Opposition for PM Modi is a matter of grave concern," he said. The Minister and BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi cited a write-up of a

former IPS officer to highlight that rhetoric used for short-term political benefits at times incites violence. Trivedi referred to the killing of former Japanese Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe and the recent assassination attempt on Donald Trump to make the point. Targeting the Congress, Trivedi said its leader Rahul Gandhi used words like vio-

lence and murder in Parliament and had rationalised as throwing of some article at Modi's convoy during the poll campaign as an evidence of people's fear of the Prime Minister ending. Modi's security was endangered in Punjab when the Congress ruled the state, he said, contrasting this with the security provided to Rahul Gandhi in sensitive places like Kashmir and Manipur. Someone who spoke of cutting Modi into pieces in a Congress MP now, and it was the Congress leader Sonia Gandhi who had used "maut ka saudagar" barb against him in 2007 when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat, Trivedi said. The BJP never wished death to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi

even after she imposed Emergency, he said. Trivedi said Rahul Gandhi, as the Leader of Opposition, should show maturity in his speeches, and anyone not doing so is not fit for politics. In this context, Trivedi referred to the Ishrat Jahan case, saying the CBI, which reports to the central government, changed its first affidavit that called her a terrorist for political reasons as she was targeting Modi. She along with her accomplices were killed in an encounter in 2004 by the Gujarat police. The Congress-led UPA was in power at the Centre at that time. The Congress has often supported separatists and terrorists but it is now speaking their language as well, he alleged..

Foreign Secretary Misri's first foreign trip to Bhutan today



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will pay a two-day visit to Bhutan beginning Friday, in his first trip abroad after assuming charge of the top post. In Bhutanese capital Thimphu, Misri will meet Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, Foreign Minister DN Dhungyel and Foreign Secretary Pema Choden among others, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said while announcing the visit. The foreign secretary's visit underscores the "highest priority" the government of India attaches to its 'Neighbourhood First' policy, it said. Misri will also receive an audience with Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, according to the MEA. In their talks, Misri and Choden are expected to carry out a comprehensive review of the bilateral ties, including issues having mutual security interests, people familiar with the visit said. "Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will pay an official visit to Bhutan from July 19-20, which will be his first visit abroad after taking over as the foreign secretary," the MEA said. "During the visit, Foreign Secretary Misri will receive an audience with His Majesty The King of Bhutan. He will call on the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, and meet the foreign secretary and other senior officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan," it said. The MEA said the two foreign secretaries will also co-chair the India-Bhutan development cooperation talks. "The visit is in keeping with the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between India and Bhutan, and underscores the highest priority Government of India attaches to its 'Neighbourhood First' Policy," it said in a statement. Last month, the Bhutanese

Prime Minister was among the leaders of seven countries from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union council of Ministers. Misri's visit to Thimphu also comes against the backdrop of China and Bhutan looking at an expeditious resolution of their festering boundary row that could have implications for India's security interests. Around 10 months back, Bhutan's then Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji held talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing. A Chinese readout on the talks said Bhutan firmly abides by the one-China principle and stands ready to work with China for an early settlement of the boundary issue. New Delhi has been keeping a close eye on the negotiations between Bhutan and China on their boundary row as it could have implications for New Delhi's security interests, especially in the Doklam tri-junction. In August last year, China and Bhutan agreed to expedite and take simultaneous steps to implement a "three-step roadmap to resolve their festering boundary dispute. In October 2021, Bhutan and China signed an agreement on the "three-step roadmap" to expedite negotiations to resolve their boundary dispute. The signing of the pact came four years after the Indian and Chinese armies were locked in a 73-day stand-off at the Doklam tri-junction after China tried to extend a road in the area that Bhutan claimed belonged to it. The India-China stand-off in the Doklam plateau in 2017 even triggered fears of larger conflict between the two neighbours. Bhutan had said the area belonged to it and India supported the Bhutanese claim.

CDS hails soldiers heroism in Kargil



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Thursday hailed the heroism of soldiers in the Kargil conflict and said besides recalling memories of a war, it is also important to look at its aftermath and draw the "right lessons" for the future. Speaking at an event held here to mark the 25th anniversary of the Kargil war, he also said "We must not repeat the same mistakes". War and warfare are evolving at a very, very rapid pace. Their character and nature are changing rapidly because of transformation in technology and ongoing geopolitical flux, he said. "The memories of sacrifices made by our soldiers must become a part of our national folklore, as indeed it has become with the Kargil war," General Chauhan said. Saga, bravery and fortitude must continue to inspire future generations of the youth as well as soldiers who join the Indian armed forces, the CDS said. Besides recalling memories of war, it is also important to look at its aftermath and draw useful lessons for the future, he said. He also said multiple initiatives are being taken by the Indian Armed Forces to maintain an edge over our adversaries, and improvements in our war fighting doctrines, strategy and concepts as per perceived threat have been enunciated. Presenting the Kargil Honours, CDS thanked the Veterans and Veer Naris for their immense contributions and sacrifices during the Kargil War. He also lauded the Indian Defence Industry for supporting the national effort. General Chauhan said capability development to include infrastructure and robust opera-

tional logistics is being attempted in a progressive manner through indigenous means to build future ready Armed Forces. Multiple re-organisation and re-structuring initiatives are ongoing to enhance war fighting efficiency and effectiveness, he added. The CDS highlighted that the nature of future military and non-military security challenges brings to fore the imperative need for the Armed Forces to be prepared for multi-domain and multi-spectrum challenges. "There is an inescapable requirement of seamless integration across all domains - land, sea, air, space, info and cyberspace, and infusion of inter-operable systems among various branches of Armed Forces," he said. Kargil was a conflict that underscored the need for a robust and responsive defense strategy. "The Kargil conflict highlighted the significance of maintaining vigilance and preparedness for safeguarding our borders. It also emphasised the importance of public and international diplomacy, a strategy which was used effectively to maintain the neutrality of inimical nations and gain global support," said CDS. Highlighting the steps taken towards integration of the Armed Forces, Chief of Defence Staff said, moving beyond jointness, the three services are now working towards promoting joint culture and integrating themselves in a number of domains. Mentioning Kargil War as the first televised war in India where free and open media exist, CDS stressed that with constant battle of narratives attempting to shape perceptions across the world, 'Information domain' has emerged as another key battle zone.

Withdraw order for eateries on Kanwar route, says Tyagi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Janata Dal (United) leader KC Tyagi on Thursday said the Muzaffarnagar Police order asking eateries on the Kanwar Yatra route to display their owners' names should be withdrawn as it may cause communal tension and there should not be any discrimination on the basis of religion or caste. Police in Muzaffarnagar have reportedly ordered all eateries on the Kanwar Yatra route to display the names of their owners to avoid any "confusion". Asked about the order which has drawn flak from the politicians and members of the civil society, Tyagi said the 'Kanwar Yatra', a pilgrimage undertaken by the Hindus during the month of Sawan of the Hindu calendar, has been crossing different areas of western Uttar Pradesh for ages and communal tension has not been reported.



The JD (U) leader said such discrimination on the basis of religion is wrong and will only widen the communal divide. "Kanwar Yatra has been crossing through the areas of western Uttar Pradesh for ages and communal tension has not been reported," Tyagi said. "Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as well welcome the pilgrims by setting up stalls. Muslim artisans are also involved in making the Kanwar... Such orders can increase communal tension," he added. In the yatra, devotees, who are called 'Kanwaris', carry pitchers of holy water on their shoulders, balanced on deco-

rated slings known as Kanwars. Tyagi said the district administration should review its decision and take it back. "Police should investigate that no anti-social elements should be running any shops, but there should not be any discrimination on the basis of religion or caste. It increases the divide in the society," he said. "Such directives can increase communal tension. It should not be implemented," he added. Muzaffarnagar Police chief Abhishek Singh earlier on Monday said, "About 240 km of Kanwar Yatra route falls in the district. All the eateries, including hotels, dhabas and carts, on the route have been asked to display the names of their proprietors or those working on these shops." "This has been done to ensure that there should be no confusion among kanwaris and no law and order situation arises. All are following this voluntarily," he told reporters.

Statistics show workers can buy less today than 10 years ago: Ramesh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Flagging the issue of "decline in real wages", the Congress on Thursday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been delivered a "stinging rebuke by voters" in his efforts to reach "400 paar" in the Lok Sabha but the Budget offers him the chance to achieve "Asli 400 paar" of a nationwide minimum wage of Rs 400 per day. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said multiple data sources, including the government's own official statistics, are unanimous in showing that workers can buy less today than they could 10 years ago. "A combination of slow wage growth and back-breaking inflation has caused an unprecedented decline in real wages (wages adjusted for price rise)," he said in a statement. Citing the government data of labour bureau's wage rate index, Ramesh said real wages for labourers stagnated between 2014 and 2023, and in fact declined between 2019 and 2024. He further cited the Ministry of Agriculture's Agricultural Statistics to claim that under Manmohan Singh, real wages for agricultural labourers grew at 6.8 per cent each year, while under Modi, real wages for agricultural labourers declined by minus 1.3 per cent each year. Citing Periodic Labour Force Survey Series, Ramesh said the average real earnings over time have stagnated between 2017 and 2022 across all employment types - salaried workers, casu-



al workers, and self-employed workers. He further cited data from Centre for Labour Research and Action to claim that real wages of brick kiln workers have stagnated or declined between 2014 and 2022. "Brick kilns involve intensive labour and are a low-paying work of last resort for India's poorest," he said. To deliver justice to 'Shramiks', and to dispel this cycle of stagnant wages, the Congress had guaranteed a nationwide minimum wage of Rs 400 per day of work in its 'Nyay Patra' manifesto, he said. "The self-anointed non-biological PM has been delivered a stinging rebuke by voters in his efforts to reach 400 paar in the Lok Sabha. The Union Budget offers him the chance to achieve what the INC has called Asli 400 paar. A nationwide minimum wage of Rs 400 per day is an idea whose time has come," Ramesh said.

India, Malaysia to deepen cooperation in oil palm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Malaysia have decided to increase cooperation between the two countries in the field of Oil Palm and other sectors. This was discussed here on Thursday during the meeting of the Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Minister of Plantations and Commodities of Malaysia Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani. The Malaysian Minister is on a visit to India from 16-19 July and met Chouhan at Krishi Bhawan here to discuss opportunities to deepen the bilateral agriculture cooperation between India and Malaysia. The sides expressed the desire to collaborate on the National Mission on Edible Oil Palm, discussed the market access issues related to agriculture and allied products, institutionalization of the cooperation in agriculture, and application of digital technology in the plantation sector. The meeting concluded with Chouhan thanking Minister Johari Abdul Ghani for a fruitful visit to India and expressing optimism for continued cooperation in Agriculture and other areas.

Conviction in child marriage cases still low, says report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The conviction rate under the Prevention of Child Marriage Act stands at 11 per cent while for all other crimes against children it is 34 per cent, according to a new report. In 2022, out of the total 3,563 child marriage cases listed for trial in courts under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, a mere 181 cases were successfully concluded in terms of trial completion. Despite the fact that there are 3,365 cases pending, with the current rate of disposal, the country may take 19 years to clear the backlog as of 2022, according to a report by the India Child Protection (ICP) research team which was released by child rights body the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR). The total number of child marriage cases registered during the last five years was less than the number of girl child marriages taking place in a single day in the country, according to a new study. On an average, only one case of child marriage per district was registered for prosecution in 2022. The report said the official data has shown that out of 63,513 children of kidnapping and abduction who were recovered in 2022, 15,748 (25%) were kidnapped and abducted for the purpose of either 'marriage' or 'illicit intercourse'. Of this, 15,142 children recovered in 2022 were kidnapped solely for the purpose of marriage. This report used a multi-faceted approach, combining primary data gathered at the village level through engagement with key stakeholders, including Panchayati Raj Institution functionaries and NGO activists involved in child protection initiatives. Secondary data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) and the Crime in India Reports published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) from 2018 to 2022 were analysed, along with an extensive literature review to enhance understanding of the barriers to child marriage elimination efforts and their impact on children, particularly girls. The primary data was collected from a sample of 1,132 random villages across 20 districts of Assam, encompassing a total population of 21 lakhs and a child population of 8 lakhs. The report said 81 per cent reduction in the instances of child marriage between 2021-22 and 2023-24 in the state. In absolute numbers, the incidence of child marriages in the study villages has declined from 3,225 cases in 2021-22 to 627 cases in 2023-24. In 30 per cent of the villages surveyed in Assam, child marriage has been completely eradicated. Additionally, 40 per cent of villages reported a significant decline in the occurrence of child marriage. The study said 98 per cent of the respondents believed that the Assam government's strict law enforcement initiatives in 2023 had a substantial and striking influence on the reduction of child marriages within their communities. The overwhelming majority of respondents acknowledged the effectiveness of stringent enforcement measures in curbing child marriage. In 12 districts, out of 20, over 90 per cent of respondents believe that taking legal action such as arresting individuals and filing FIRs in cases related to child marriage can effectively address the occurrence of such cases. Overall, the same percentage for all 20 districts stands at 72 per cent.

SC orders release of YouTuber jailed in TN

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the release of YouTuber 'Savukku' Shankar who was detained under the Goondas Act in May by the Tamil Nadu Police. Granting the interim relief to Shankar currently lodged in the Coimbatore Central Prison, a bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Abhanuddin Amanullah said it would not decide the case on merit as Madras High Court is seized of the matter. The bench recorded the submission of lawyers appearing for the parties that they will mention the matter before the Chief Justice of the High Court or before the appropriate bench on Monday or Tuesday seeking to expedite the hearing in the matter. "We are definitely of the view that the petitioner has no hands in the delay caused in the matter. In the peculiar facts, the petitioner be released



till the case against detention is decided by the high court," the bench said while clarifying that its order pertains only to the preventive detention matters. If the petitioner is in jail in any other case, this order will not affect that, the bench said. The top court was hearing an appeal challenging the Madras High Court order adjourning the habeas corpus petition that was filed by Shankar's mother challenging his detention under the Goondas Act. At the outset, the apex court

asked senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for Tamil Nadu government, to explain need of preventive detention against Shankar. Luthra submitted that the YouTuber has been accused of forging documents, and indulging in mala fide acts. The bench then asked, "How can he be put in detention? Is he a threat to the security of this country? This is not an ordinary civil dispute but a preventive detention matter. Somebody's liberty is at stake. He is in preven-

tive detention for over two months." Senior advocate Siddhartha Dave, appearing for Shankar's mother, submitted that the YouTuber was detained only on the basis of apprehension that he would come out on bail in criminal cases. Based on the orders of Commissioner of Police, Greater Chennai, Sandeep Rai Rathore, the detention order under the Goondas Act was served on Shankar by a cyber crime (Chennai) police inspector on May 12. There are seven cases pending against Shankar in Chennai police's central crime branch/cyber crime out of which three are under investigation, charge sheets have been filed in two and the remaining are pending trial, according to a Chennai police press note. Shankar, 48, was arrested by Coimbatore police on May 4 for alleged derogatory statements about women police personnel/police officials in

an interview to a YouTube channel. Other cases Shankar faces include one for possession of ganja, which was registered by Thenni police. The YouTuber had submitted in court that he was assaulted in Coimbatore prison. A detainee under the Goondas Act may be imprisoned for one year, subject to scrutiny by an advisory board and the validity of such detentions is also examined by the High Court based on petitions filed by the affected persons. Shankar, who has been accused by a number of people of making personal attacks and uncivil remarks is also a strong critic of the DMK regime and Chief Minister MK Stalin. A former special assistant in the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, the YouTuber was accused in 2008 of leaking sensitive conversations between officials and a court had years later acquitted him in that case.

Karnataka CM to go slow on private sector job quota Bill

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said his government has decided to withhold the bill mandating job reservation for Kannadigas in private sector due to "certain confusion." He said the bill will be taken up for discussion in the next cabinet meeting to clear the doubts. "On Monday, complete discussion (on the topic) could not take place in the cabinet meeting. By then reports had appeared in the media," he told the Karnataka assembly. "There was some confusion. We will clear those confusions in the next cabinet meeting. Let's have a detailed discussion." The CM was replying to Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka's demand to clarify the state government's stand on the bill. He said the Chief Minister changed his message on 'X' thrice. Ashoka recalled that Siddaramaiah in his first post said that the cabinet has decided 100 per cent reservation for Kannadigas in the private sector and then deleted it. The Chief Minister then posted another message saying that there will be 50 per cent reservation in the management category and 70 per cent in non-management category for Kannadigas. "Finally, you



other establishments shall appoint fifty per cent of local candidates in management categories and seventy per cent in non-management categories," the bill read. If the candidates do not possess secondary school certificates with Kannada as a language, they should pass a Kannada proficiency test as specified by the 'Nodal Agency,' it added. The nodal agency will have powers to call for any records information or documents in the possession of an employer or occupier or manager of an establishment for the purpose of verifying the report.

The government may appoint an officer not below the rank of Assistant Labour Commissioner as the authorised officer for the purposes of compliance of the provisions of the Act. Any Employer or Occupier or Manager of an Establishment, who contravenes the provisions of this Act should be liable for a penalty between Rs 10,000 to Rs 25,000. The move drew flak from the industry. NASSCOM even cautioned that the companies will move out of Karnataka. Ministers quickly issued a statement assuring the companies that their interest will be protected.

any industry, factory or on hold. There appears to be a Tughlaq government in Karnataka," he said. In his reply, the Chief Minister said, "There is no Tughlaq government, but Siddaramaiah government. We will take up the bill in the next cabinet meeting." The state cabinet had on Monday cleared the Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories and Other Establishments Bill, 2024, which makes it compulsory for private firms to reserve jobs for Kannadigas. "Any industry, factory or

Post-Covid, world came to know India has roadmap to happiness: RSS chief

PTI ■ GUMLA (JHARKHAND)

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday asserted that after the Covid-19 pandemic, the entire world came to know that India has the roadmap to peace and happiness. He also stated that 'Sanatan Dharma' believed in the welfare of mankind. "Various experiments were made in the past 2,000 years, but they failed to provide happiness and peace that are ingrained in India's traditional way (of life). After corona, the world came to know that India has the roadmap to peace and happiness," Bhagwat said. He was addressing a village-level workers meeting organised by Vikas Bharti, a not-for-profit organisation. "The Sanatan Sanskriti and Dharma did not come from royal palaces but from Ashrams and forests. With changing times, our clothes may change but our nature will never change," said the RSS head. "To continue our work and services in the changing times, we need to adapt to new ways and methods. Those who keep their nature intact are called developed," he said. Bhagwat asserted that everyone should work relentlessly towards the welfare of society. He also said the tribals have remained backward and a lot of work is needed in the area



of education and health for them. "In forest areas where the tribals traditionally live, the people are peaceful and simple in nature which is not found in big cities. Here I can trust villagers with closed eyes but in cities, we have to be careful with whom we are talking," he added. Bhagwat added that he was never worried about the country's future as many people were working collectively for its betterment which was bound to show results. "There has been no doubt about the country's future. Good things should happen, as all are working for it. We are also making efforts," he said. The RSS head said people of India have their own nature and many are working for the welfare of the country without a desire for name or fame.

"We have different styles of worship as we have 33 crore Gods and Goddesses and more than 3,800 languages are spoken here and even the food habits are different. Despite the difference, our mind is one and cannot be found in other countries," he said. "When we work for the betterment of anyone, our development also takes place. Human beings never live alone and they are not scared of death. If he is made to live alone in a closed room, he will get mad in a few months. If humans live together they have sentiments attached to them," the RSS chief said. Bhagwat added that these days so called progressive people believe in giving back to society which was ingrained in Indian culture. "It is nowhere written in the scriptures but generation by generation it is there in our nature," he said.

Red alert issued for Nilgiris district following incessant rain

PTI ■ UDHAGAMANDALAM (TAMIL NADU)

The Regional Meteorological Centre in Chennai on Thursday issued a red alert for Nilgiris district following incessant rains. The RMC has predicted isolated heavy to very heavy rain with extremely heavy rain at one or two places in the district. The movement of vehicles from the Nilgiris to Kerala is likely to be affected as the road linking the neighbouring state is damaged at Nadugani. Traffic between Gudalur and Karnataka was affected at Thorapalli area in the district for nearly five hours as the gusty winds accompanying the rain uprooted bamboo trees and tossed them on the road. Over one hundred houses and agricultural lands were inundated by rainwater in Pandalur and Uppatti areas near Gudalur. People affected by inundation have been shifted to safe places, a senior district official said. Landslide occurred at Avalanche-Upper Bhavani road. State Tourism Minister K R a m a c h a n d r a n , accompanied by Additional Collector H R Koushik and other officials, visited the affected places and directed the authorities to take appropriate action.

Rivals TDP and YSRCP spar over young man's murder in Andhra

PTI ■ PALNADU

The ruling TDP and opposition YSRCP on Thursday accused each other over the party affiliation of the person who murdered a 25-year-old man in this district. According to police, Sheik Jilani (25), hacked Sheik Rashid to death in the middle of a road at Mundlamuru bus station at Vinukonda in Palnadu district around 9 pm on Wednesday. However, the local police noted that there "was nothing that is incident but only personal enmity between the two." "There was no political issue. There were only personal issues between the two persons (Rashid and Jilani). Rumours are being circulated and some people are projecting it as a political murder," a police official told PTI on Thursday. Palnadu superintendent of



police K Srinivas Rao noted that the crime scene will be reconstructed today, followed by the arrest of Jilani under Section 103 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Reacting to the murder, former Andhra Pradesh chief minister and YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy alleged that a "demonic reign" is prevailing in the southern state, bereft of law and order. "My deepest condolences to

the family of Rashid, who was murdered by TDP cadres in Vinukonda," said Reddy, adding that there is no safety to people's lives under the TDP government. According to the opposition leader, Andhra Pradesh has turned into a den for murderers, rapes, political vendetta and attacks in just 45 days of the new government assuming power. Terming the Vinukonda

murder as a shame to the TDP-led government, Reddy alleged that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and other persons are perpetrating these atrocities. Rebutting Reddy, the TDP claimed that Jilani was a follower of the YSRCP chief and called on the former CM to 'stop supporting' the murderer. It asserted that Palnadu's superintendent of police had 'denied any political connection to the cold blooded murder' that took place in Vinukonda. "The killing is purely on personal issues and no political party is involved in the murder," said the TDP in a release, quoting Srinivasa Rao. According to the ruling party, prohibitory orders were clamped down in Vinukonda, while the SP warned of serious action on anyone resorting to law and order violations in the town.

Vishalgad violence: Cong demands action against local authorities

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar on Thursday demanded a high-level inquiry into the violence during an anti-encroachment drive at Vishalgad Fort in Kolhapur as well as action against the collector and superintendent of police. In a letter to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, the leader of opposition in the state assembly claimed anti-social elements targeted a particular community in the name of removing encroachment in Vishalgad. "The violence at Gazapur in Vishalgad was government-sponsored," Wadettiwar alleged and said the main culprit should be unmasked. "The unfortunate incident happened in the presence of the collector and superintendent of police. The collector should be transferred and the

superintendent of police should be suspended," he said. The anti-encroachment drive at Vishalgad Fort turned violent on Sunday as a mob hurled stones at police personnel and damaged properties, leading to the arrest of 21 persons, according to police. he situation turned tense after some right-wing activists led by Maratha royal and former MP Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati, who had come from Pune, were stopped at the base of the fort in view of prohibitory orders. Addressing a press conference here, Wadettiwar claimed the ground was slipping under the feet of communal forces after the victory of a candidate upholding progressive values in the Lok Sabha polls in Kolhapur. "The violence was engineered keeping in mind the upcoming assembly elections. Those indulging in violence



cannot be followers of Chhatrapati Shivaji. Hence, the government must find out who are the culprits," he said. The Congress leader accused the police of inaction while the violence was on. The issue of encroachment could have been resolved through dialogue, but the government did not want that to happen, he claimed. On Tuesday, Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders, including Kolhapur MP Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and MLC

Satej Patil, both from Congress, visited Vishalgad. Shahu appealed to the government to ensure peace at the site. Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday underlined the government's commitment to legally address the issue of encroachments at the Vishalgad Fort. The Deputy CM has urged Opposition leaders to clarify their position on the Vishalgad issue, emphasising the need to preserve historical sites while dealing with illegal constructions. Vishalgad Fort holds profound significance in Maratha history as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj escaped to it after being besieged at Panhala Fort in 1660. In 1844, Vishalgad was ruled by the Kolhapur State when a rebellion was led against a Brahmin regent installed by the British as the natural heir to the throne was underage.

Telangana Govt to launch farm loan waiver scheme

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana government will launch a farm loan waiver programme, part of its poll promise benefitting 70 lakh farmers, on Thursday, official sources said. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had earlier announced that the government would implement the loan waiver up to Rs 2 lakh by August 15. The loan waiver funds up to Rs one lakh will be deposited in the farmers' accounts at 4 pm on Thursday. The chief minister said Rs 7,000 crore in total would be credited to the accounts of farmers whose loans of up to Rs one lakh are being waived. Crop loans of up to Rs 1.5 lakh would be waived by the end of July, and the loan waiver process would be completed in August when loans of up to Rs two lakh are dispensed with. Reddy also suggested organising a gathering of farm loan waiver scheme beneficiaries at "Rythu Vedikas" and Ministers, MLAs and other public representatives of the respective districts should also attend and share the joy with the farmers. Ahead of the launching of the flagship programme, Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka will hold a meeting with



bankers this morning. A senior level officer will be made available for two districts (undivided old district) in the Secretariat to clarify the doubts, if any, raised by the Collectors on loan waiver scheme and resolve them immediately. The state government has clarified that ration cards are used only for family identification. The total number of ration cards in the state is 90 lakh and the number of farmer accounts with bank loans is only 70 lakh. The chief minister clarified that 6.36 lakh farmers who do not possess ration cards and took farm loans are also eligible to avail the farm loan waiver benefit.

If RJD comes to power in Bihar, quotas will be diverted to Muslims: BJP leader

PTI ■ PATNA

BJP national general secretary Vinod Tawde on Thursday cautioned the people of Bihar that if the RJD is voted to power, they might redirect the quotas from backward classes to Muslims. Tawde, who also serves as the party's Bihar in-charge, made this remark during his address to the state executive meeting. "The Congress robbed OBCs of their reservation benefits in Karnataka where the facility has been extended to

Muslims. If Tejaswi Yadav wins the next assembly polls, the same thing could happen in Bihar. Workers of our party must explain this to the people," the BJP leader said. He further added, "People must also be informed that the false campaign during the Lok Sabha polls, alleging that BJP aimed to amend the Constitution, was part of an international conspiracy to prevent Narendra Modi's return to power. Billionaire George Soros had splurged about Rs 6,000 crore for the purpose."

"No wonder, the amount of unaccounted cash recovered by Election Commission in raids during the polls was more than Rs 9,000 crore. Despite all this, the number of seats won by the BJP alone is more than the combined tally of the entire INDIA bloc. That is some cause for celebration," Tawde added. In his more than 30 minutes long speech, the BJP leader lambasted the Congress and RJD for opposing "tribal woman" Droupadi Murmu in the Presidential polls. He also expressed confidence

that the BJP-led NDA will win handsomely in next year's Bihar assembly polls, notching up "more than 200 seats" of the 243-strong House. The state executive meeting was attended, among others, by Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Choudhary, who is also the Bihar BJP president, and Vijay Kumar Sinha. Also present on the occasion were former state BJP chiefs Nityanand Rai, currently the Union Minister of State for Home, and Sanjay Jaiswal, Lok Sabha member.

ATS seizes ₹51.4 cr drugs, raw materials from Surat unit; 3 held



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) has busted a mephedrone manufacturing unit on the outskirts of Surat city and seized drugs and raw materials of Rs 51.4 crore, an official said on Thursday. Three persons — Sunil Yadav, Vijay Gajera and Hareesh Korat — have been arrested in this connection, an ATS release said. It was found that the three persons had hired an industrial shed at Kareli village in Palsana taluka of Surat district on a monthly rent of Rs 20,000 to manufacture mephedrone, also known as MD drugs, using various materials, it said. The ATS officials recently received a tip off that Yadav, Gajera and Korat were involved in manufacturing mephedrone at the shed in Kareli and selling it to

Mumbai resident Salim Saiyad, the release said. Based on the information, a team of ATS raided the shed in Darshan Industrial Area of Kareli on Wednesday night and apprehended Yadav and Gajera from the spot while Korat was nabbed from a place in Junagadh in the early hours, it said. The ATS recovered 4 kilograms of mephedrone and 31.4 kg of raw materials valued at Rs 51.4 crore from the unit, which was sealed after the raid, the release said. A preliminary probe indicated Yadav was into chemical trading business and learnt the technique of manufacturing mephedrone from the Internet. The three persons came together and started manufacturing the drug at the shed and had already delivered 4 kg of mephedrone to Saiyad some time back, the release said, adding further probe was on into the case.

Landslide disrupts traffic on Goa-Karnataka route

PTI ■ PANAJI

A landslide occurred in a ghat section of Goa in the wee hours of Thursday following incessant rains, disrupting vehicular traffic movement from the state to neighbouring Karnataka, police said. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an 'orange alert' for Goa, predicting heavy rains in the next 24 hours. In the last one day, both North Goa and South Goa districts received heavy showers, Ponda taluka in South Goa received the highest 190 mm rainfall, according to the IMD. The landslide occurred near Dudhsagar Temple at Anmod Ghat, located on the southern boundary of Goa, leading to Karnataka, a police official said. "Traffic movement from the ghat section to

areas like Belgaum and Khanapur in Karnataka was disrupted, he said. "A huge pile of mud was seen on the road near Shree Dudhsagar Temple in the ghat region. Personnel of the fire and emergency services rushed to the spot to clear it, but it could not be removed till morning," he said. Traffic movement through the Anmod Ghat will remain closed at least till the afternoon, the official said. Anmod Ghat is an important link between Goa and Karnataka, used for going to Belgaum and Khanapur in Karnataka and Kolhapur in Maharashtra. Several vehicles were seen lined up in the ghat section after the incident, as per sources. Police were stopping the vehicles at Mollem check post, alerting travellers about the landslide. Many vehicles carrying essential items like

milk and vegetables pass through this route. Goa continued to receive heavy rains on Thursday amid the 'orange' alert. The IMD bulletin said heavy rains at scattered places with very heavy showers at isolated places are expected along with strong surface winds over North Goa and South Goa districts. The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Service (INCOIS) has issued a high wave warning for the North Goa coast from Chapora to Panaji (Malim), as per the IMD. "High waves in the range of 3.7-4.0 meters are forecast from 17:30 hours on 16-07-2024 to 23:30 hours on 18-07-2024. It is advised that small vessels should not ply and nearshore recreation activities be totally suspended as erosion/wave surges are possible," it said.



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

Bill of woes

Karnataka Govt puts local job quota bill on hold after the State's IT industry reacts strongly

The Karnataka government has put on hold a bill requiring reservations for locals in the private sector following significant backlash from the industry. The Government will reconsider the bill before presenting it to the state Assembly. This decision came just hours after the state cabinet approved the bill, which proposed reserving 50 per cent of management positions and 75 per cent of non-management positions for Kannadigas in the private sector. The Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories, and Other Establishments Bill, 2024, was to be presented in the Assembly on Thursday. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, along with his ministers, praised the bill, emphasising their "pro-Kannada" stance and stating that their main priority is to "ensure the welfare of Kannadigas." However, the bill met with tough resistance from the IT industry that criticised the bill, arguing that it would hinder the growth of the tech sector in Bengaluru and negatively affect the IT industry in Karnataka. The

rationale behind the bill was to address the high unemployment rates among the state's residents and to ensure that local talent is given priority in job opportunities within Karnataka.

But industry leaders felt that a quota system for locals would hinder the ability of companies to hire the best talent available, potentially compromising their competitiveness and productivity. Besides, if implemented this bill would have legal and constitutional issues. The bill could violate the right to equality and freedom of movement, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution and could face significant hurdles in courts, leading to prolonged legal battles. Furthermore, the proposed



bill raised concerns about increasing regionalism and social tensions. It was feared that such a policy could create divisions between locals and non-locals, leading to a less cohesive society and potential conflicts. According to a report by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (FICCI), Karnataka's overall unemployment rate is 2.7%, which is lower than the national average of 4.2%. But these figures hide the low employability of the local populace. But to correct it with populist measures is not the best solution. Instead of mandating job reservations, the Government should focus on improving education and skill development programs for locals. Enhancing the quality of education and providing better vocational training could empower local youth to compete effectively in the job market. Now that the bill has been withdrawn it could come back later in a different form. The decision to put the bill on hold has significant political implications. The Karnataka Government has averted a standoff with the IT industry and other businesses but it may disappoint its support base which was expecting job opportunities. Nonetheless, suspending the bill will likely reassure businesses and investors. But the Government will have to focus on providing employable skills to locals, so that they could get employment in Karnataka's IT industry.

PICTALK



Shia Muslim mourners participate in an Ashura (10th Muharram) procession, in Mirzapur

PTI

Religion and politics in modern India



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Today, as memories of Partition fade with each passing generation, the intertwining of religion and politics continues to shape the nation's discourse

A community is also known for the issues it raises and seeks to debate. The national narrative over the last 100 years or more has been severely overloaded with religious contention. India is probably the only country in the world that got its independence with conditions in which the imperial power worked assiduously to debate/impose decisions in areas that were subjected to be tackled with the investiture of independence. The open threat and use of bloodshed in many parts of the sub-continent while sorting out such issues in the days preceding independence made the matter particularly gory. It was in many ways reminiscent of a civil war instigated for various reasons. Perhaps it will take still more time to coolly reflect on what happened, where and how, and indeed if it was at all avoidable. Interpersonal relationships, intertwined with religious overtones spilt over the streets and private homes in a matter which still makes one wonder how a noble cause of independence could so inextricably get mixed up with pre-disposed religious zeal and interpretation. Experience showed that partition did not solve the problem but only split the problem into two pieces. The two independent states of India and Pakistan are still to rise beyond the echoes of what happened. The price paid at the human level cannot be comprehended through the aid of books, cinematography, or visuals. As the generation that experiences it gradually passes away, the tremors of partition remain. This cannot be done well as a method of problem-solving for contentious issues. One wonders if the realization is sufficiently around to the effect that 'enough is enough'. The hatchet needs to be buried before the agony continues to reign with many real forms of misery. The subject is not just one of emotions, but how it has affected the very concept of nation-building in many ways, big and small. This cannot be the place to hope



for some permanent therapies or solutions. That may well prove to be more than a lifetime and generational effort. However, what can be done is to create certain awareness, which helps to restore a greater sense of balance and strengthen sanity all around. Election after election and contention after contention somehow veers around to undertones of communal issues. This is avoidable if a consensus can be built up not to go public with statements and actions on issues that are essentially communal. Many countries of the Third World broke away from the yoke of imperialism through the 20th century and beyond. In many cases, there was an undertone of violence that persisted. There was violence over race, there was violence over ideology, there was violence over the protagonist of the Cold War, but nowhere in the world was the post-independence issue so intertwined as an undercurrent with communalism as in the case of the sub-continent. Even a casual look at much of the media and listening to much of the media's drumming up of concerns shows how much of communication time is spent on overtones of communal concern. This is



A LEGITIMATE QUESTION THAT NEEDS TO BE UNDERSTOOD IS WHETHER ANYONE GAINING BY BRINGING RELIGION SO WIDELY INTO THE POLITICAL PROCESSES. IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE RELIGION BE A MATTER OF FAITH AND POLITICS A MATTER OF CONTROL OVER GOVERNANCE?

avoidable because it does not help development and it does not strengthen equity. Indians are known to be bright, intelligent, and have long traditions of intellectual excellence, which many parts of the world have not only recognized but gained strength from. To put it simply, a broad question can be asked: is it possible to freeze all talk from communal concerns as a public issue and let the concerns embedded in it be tackled only at the inter-community level? This needs to be done without blowing it up as a regional or national issue which begs support from communities that may not have even understood what was being debated. Whether Faizabad election results were determined by the nature and quantum of compensation to the communities is something on which the jury is still out. This issue needs to be understood in greater depth. However, one can avoid converting these concerns into fanning communally backed political support. In other words, can one simply delink religion from politics so that religion remains a matter of faith and politics deals with the struggle for control of the decision-making process?

A legitimate question that needs to be understood is whether anyone gaining by bringing religion so widely into the political processes. Is it possible to have religion be a matter of faith and politics a matter of control over governance? All political talk needs to avoid reference to religion, if for nothing better than avoiding emotiveness and irrelevant dissipation of energy. Political discourse can deal with economics, sociology, even history, and more, anthropology can be brought in, and so can industrialization and agriculture, but avoid drawing in religious loyalties, and emotions. Attempts to draw upon eschewed fervour with self-defeating orientation need to be stopped. An attempt to eliminate communalized political narratives and contentions may be an option worth considering. Some nations have successfully achieved this, and while they may be experiencing various forms of violence, violence stemming from religious loyalties is not their failing. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

The harsh reality of child labour in rural Bihar



NISHA SAHANI

Despite Government efforts, the economic realities force families to make children work, often resulting in their exploitation

Baiju (name changed), an 11-year-old boy from Telia village in Kudhni block, 22 km from Muzaffarpur in Bihar, wakes up every morning like other children. However, instead of going to school, he heads off to work as a labourer, a burden he has borne for the past three years. Baiju, who belongs to the Mahadalit community, used to attend school. Life changed after his father's death, as he was forced to drop out of school and start working to support his family. He explains that his mother's meagre income is not enough to sustain the six members of their family. Consequently, he had to give up his education and begin working. She does not have enough money to educate her children, forcing her to send Baiju to work.



Children can be found working in domestic services, tea shops, and brick kilns. In India, child labour is more prevalent in rural areas compared to urban ones. Children from socially and economically disadvantaged communities are often compelled to work in these areas, stripping them of their fundamental right to education and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. This not only obstructs their education but also hampers their overall development. Children should be in school and playing, not toiling as labourers. Pinki Devi (name changed), a 45-year-old resident of Telia village, has two children who have left school to work as labourers. She explains that her husband, a daily wage labourer, is often ill. In such a situation, it became impossible to support the family with his income

alone, forcing her to send her children to work. Social worker Phuldev Patel points out that children from the most economically vulnerable Dalit and Mahadalit communities are predominantly involved in child labour. The dire economic conditions of their households compel them to abandon their education and start working. He asserts that the actual number of child labourers is significantly higher than what official statistics reveal. The government provides free books, notebooks, uniforms, and mid-day meals under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education to encourage children to attend school. However, the harsh economic realities overshadow these provisions, pushing children into labour. He further notes that human traffickers exploit this vulnerability, selling children as labourers in other states. Local journalist Amritanjali observes that, like Telia village, there are numerous remote rural areas in Muzaffarpur where children work as labourers. He notes that the government may not have official statistics

on this issue because it is carried out in a highly systematic manner. Although the strict child labour laws and the vigilance of the local administration have reduced the rate of child labourers in recent years, it has not been entirely eradicated. Even today, children can be seen working in brick kilns, tea shops, grocery stores, construction sites, and as domestic helpers. As in previous years, this year too, the World Day Against Child Labor was observed on June 12 in India and around the world. When children in a society begin working as labourers at a young age instead of attending school, it prompts deep introspection within that nation and its society. They must confront why a child is forced to abandon books for labour. When a child's right to childhood, is denied, and they are thrust into labour, they endure physical, mental, and social exploitation, transforming their childhood into one marred by labour—an ordeal known as child labour. (The author is a grassroots writer from Bihar. Views expressed are personal. Charkha Features)

A CALL FOR ACTION

Madam — It is disheartening to note that four army personnel sacrificed their lives fighting terrorists in Doda district, Jammu. This cowardly attack must be condemned in the strongest terms. Our intelligence sources seem unable to effectively address the challenges in Jammu & Kashmir, leading to repeated attacks on our army. Despite the brave efforts of the army in counterinsurgency operations, the situation is worsening, with increasing casualties. This raises serious questions about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's abrogation of Article 370, which was intended to bring peace to the valley.

There is a clear lack of coordination between the State and Central governments, and a trust deficit between local people and the army, contributing to these escalating attacks. It is high time for Prime Minister Modi to act decisively rather than relying on empty assurances, as ground realities are more precarious than they appear. This failure is not only an intelligence issue but also deeply demoralizing for our armed forces, who are currently engaged in counterinsurgency operations while also keeping vigil over Ladakh's sovereignty. The increasing attacks are eroding the morale of the troops and causing immense grief to their families. The government must prioritize tangible actions over rhetoric to ensure the safety and security of our soldiers and restore faith among the local population.

Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Japaiguri

DO NOT IGNORE ENGLISH

Madam — Encouraging the use of one's mother tongue and regional languages is important, but it's equally crucial to ensure that English education is not neglected from childhood. English provides citizens, regardless of age, gender, or profession, with global opportunities in education, employment, business, and services. No state should impose any regional language on

Age-defying sportspeople



If technology is rapidly transforming our lives, can we overlook the role of competitive sports? Uncertainty is the only constant in world-class sporting events. Recent years have shown that age is no barrier to success.

Athletes like Serena Williams, Novak Djokovic, MS Dhoni, Tiger Woods, Rohan Bopanna, James Anderson, and recently, Lionel Messi, continue to outperform younger competitors. Their success can be attributed to advancements in medical science, financial support, rest, temperament, a balanced diet, exercise, a positive attitude, and a relentless passion for their sport. Lionel Messi, despite participating in four major tournaments including the 2016 Copa America without victory, finally triumphed in this year's final, proving his skill and defying age. He has recreated the magic that Diego Maradona brought to soccer. We hope he continues to adapt and maintain his enthusiasm and spirit.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

SC'S BENCH FOR MONEY BILLS

Madam — It's good that the Supreme Court has accepted to form a constitutional bench to look into the controversial issue of money bills in parliament. The money bills do not need to get approval of Rajya Sabha as they may be connected to urgent financial affairs of the country. Of late, it has become a practice for the Government which doesn't have majority in Rajya Sabha to introduce and get passed some bills as financial bills in parliament in order to bypass the close vetting by Rajya Sabha. The Aadhaar Act and Prevention of Money Laundering Act have been passed in that manner, attracting criticism from many. Now the highest judiciary would step in to clear the air in this regard. The executive should respect the constitutionally mandated role of the legislature in true spirit. This move is essential for maintaining the delicate balance of power.

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

students. Instead, offer alternatives such as arts, computers, and English literature. This approach is especially considerate for students from families frequently relocated due to transfers, sparing them the burden of learning multiple new languages. Prioritizing scientific subjects will benefit both the nation and the world in the future. Moreover, emotional ties to language should not lead to interstate conflicts or frequent changes in the names of streets, villages, towns, cities, and states, as this results in unnecessary expenditures and administrative confusion. Language should serve as a tool for communication, fostering a civilized, scientifically advanced, and happy society characterized by excellent health, peace, prosperity, progress, and success. An inclusive and optimistic outlook, embracing the principle of "live and let live," is essential for universal development. By prioritizing practical education and unity, we can ensure a brighter future for all.

PV Srinivas Sreelekha | Secunderabad



FIRST COLUMN

FALLOUT OF TRUMP'S ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

It could have far reaching implications for the US presidential elections and the US politics



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

A week is a long time on the volatile chessboard of global affairs, however, the recent assassination attempt of former United States of America President Donald Trump would leave a deep impact on future courses of action. While several European leaders and some in the Middle East have been subjected to violent life-threatening attempts in the recent past, the bullet grazing past former president Trump's ears has left a shrill range of questions for world leaders. It may be too early to predict whether the assassination attempt would translate into a landslide victory for Donald Trump who is facing a rematch with current President Joe Biden in the November polls.

The Democrats in the US are a divided lot, with many leaders, internally questioning President Joe Biden's pitch for a second shot to the Oval Office, given his several public gaffes related to his age. Most of the public debates in the US and several other think tank zones across the world, have been debating President Biden's mental alertness and, if elected for a second time he would be able to complete his full four-year term. Any midway change due to a severe illness, which is being anticipated, would be a dampener for the US President's bid for a second run. Much like in every significant democracy, including India, the electorate in the US is a divided lot, with a deep gorge running right through the middle of the supporters of Trump and Joe Biden. The Democrat's attack on Trump and his supporters has been on the lines similar to what the opposition parties in India rallied around, during the recently concluded parliamentary elections.

The key message to their voters is to save the country from dictatorial forces (Trump/PM Modi), who will upend the constitution under their larger-than-life cult status leaders. This created a rift in the electorate, in an already ruptured society, constantly fed with an ocean of information primarily on social media, sending conflicting versions of the same events. Politics and rhetoric apart, it would be an interesting prism to watch the social messaging playing out with Trump coming back to the battlefield (election campaigns), after, he left the stage in Pennsylvania, with an iconic raised fist, and the US flag flying in the background. The pic-



ture is likely to define the resilience of the US democracy for a long time to come. Mr Trump in his few interviews, seems to have humbled down from the life-altering event, where he almost ended up being in the coffin rather than the Oval Office. It would be worthwhile to watch out if the former President sobers down on some of his key manifesto items such as immigration and freedom to choose (including the right to possess firearms for self-protection).

Immigration would be a closely watched topic from a global perspective, including India, where the largest chunk of immigrants land on US shores through legal or illegal routes. Donald Trump's Vice President choice JD Vance has a spouse who is a PIO. His wife's parents are immigrants from Andhra Pradesh and in a way, the choice defines the pluralistic nature of American Society. It would be a long shot to assume that if Trump gets a second term, his views and policies on immigration would be sobered due to his VP. Similarly, a Trump comeback could have a far-reaching impact on bilateral trade relations especially with India.

One may argue that India has bipartisan support in Washington DC on several defence and technology partnerships, carefully nurtured over a decade by PM Modi. PM Modi is perhaps the only PM, who has worked with three US Presidents in the last decade and is likely to see one of his former friends either Trump or Biden coming back in November. It may be uncertain times, however, the past relationships and promise for securing the future of the Indo-Pacific should be a super glue to hold India's US relationship under a new regime.

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

Rising political violence and struggles in the US



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

The attack on Donald Trump underscores the nation's turbulent political climate raising concerns about the stability of American democracy and society.

Is the United States hurtling towards an internal civil war? Alex Garland's recent film 'Civil War', which premiered earlier this year, depicts a fictional yet chillingly plausible scenario of such a conflict. This leads us to consider whether the repercussions of US-initiated wars in recent decades, aimed at maintaining supremacy, now echo ominously at home, haunted by the spectres of those who perished globally. That is the inexorable wheel of karma. The shocking assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, thrusts this issue into stark relief. In the aftermath, numerous conspiracy theories swirled around the incident, casting a spotlight on secret agencies whose heads have publicly voiced criticism against Trump. A police sniper had photographed the shooter, Thomas Matthew Crooks, just half an hour before the 20-year-old opened fire on Trump during the rally, suggesting multiple missed opportunities to prevent the attempted assassination, as reported. Despite the attack, Trump's political stature has only strengthened, evidenced by his selection of Republican Senator JD Vance as his running mate for the 2024 presidential election. Once a vocal critic of Trump, Vance now stands as a staunch ally, vigorously defending him and endorsing his policies. The incident, which reshaped Trump's political narrative—where a bullet grazed his ear—left him wounded but resolute. This assault, though shocking, accentuates a longstanding history of political violence in the United States, a phenomenon entrenched since the nation's inception. Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president, was the first to be assassinated, shot by John Wilkes Booth in 1865. Lincoln's support for Black rights during the Civil War, marked by the Emancipation Proclamation, has been cited as a motive for his assassination. Subsequent presidents, including James Garfield, William McKinley, and John F. Kennedy, also fell victim to such violence, with Garfield being shot in 1881, McKinley in 1901, and Kennedy in 1963.

Each of these assassinations profoundly impacted the nation and its political structure. Political violence has not been confined to presidents alone. Presidential candidates like Robert F. Kennedy and George C. Wallace were also targeted, with Kennedy being killed in 1968 and Wallace being left paralyzed in 1972. Presidents like Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan survived assassination attempts, highlighting the persistent threat of violence in American politics. The United States today exemplifies how a state structure can deteriorate when policymakers focus more on external affairs, neglecting internal issues. For instance, the fentanyl crisis devastates U.S. communities, with toddlers and infants increasingly falling victim to the potent opioid, which is 50 times stronger than heroin, according to public health experts. While adults account for the majority of fentanyl-related deaths, more children under 5 are either dying or ending up in emergency rooms after testing positive for the drug, due to accidental ingestion or exposure at home. The number of child overdoses has surged even as overall drug overdose rates in the country have declined recently. California leads in total fentanyl deaths, with 6,473 reported in 2022, while West Virginia has



the highest death rate per capita. This is a prime example to understand how the internal structure is falling apart. This cannot be stopped by exporting ammunition stocks and advanced weaponry to Ukraine and Israel through front channels while to other proxy wars in Africa and elsewhere through back channels. In societies, the root issue often isn't just institutions but the erosion of core values. Without a cohesive value system, managing politics becomes daunting.

This dilemma arises: while progress demands new values, preserving core societal values is crucial for stability and harmony. Neglecting this balance risks societal chaos and moral crisis. The inevitable decline, akin to the setting sun, cannot be halted by force alone. The political climate in the United States reflects the consequences of its global actions, suggesting a looming downfall through unpredictable events. Trump is a product of long-standing policies that have often ignored domestic ramifications.

He represents a symptom, not the cause, of the systemic issues within American politics, stemming from a history of exploiting other nations at the expense of the American public. Needless to say, engaging in political violence is fundamentally misguided and counterproductive. What Americans are slowly leading into what American decision-makers have executed throughout the world in recent history at the expense of unarmed civilians. Taking someone's life, regardless of their role or perceived wrongs, is morally indefensible. Whether it's a political adversary, a troublesome neighbour who's pushed you to the edge, a stranger evoking fear, or anyone else who has crossed your path, resorting to violence only perpetuates harm and suffering without resolution.

However, the Trump assassination attempt raises numerous unanswered questions. There is no indication that gunshot detectors were in use at the rally, although

such detectors can rapidly triangulate and locate a shooter. The shooter, Thomas Matthew Crooks, used a gun that was legally purchased by his father, which he had access to at a gun range the previous Friday. Questions arise about whether the gun was bought specifically for him, as Pennsylvania law allows 20-year-olds to buy guns. Reports state the shooter was identified by DNA, suggesting family members provided samples. Additionally, the reports suggested that no effort was made to obscure the gun's serial number, and the shooter had recently purchased 50 rounds of 5.56mm ammunition.

Preliminary acoustic evidence suggests the potential involvement of multiple shooters in the incident aimed at Trump. Initial gunfire originated from the shooter's position, with subsequent bursts detected from unidentified sources, as reported by news sources. Despite Secret Service snipers reportedly firing a single shot to neutralise the threat, discrepancies with acoustic evidence persist, necessitating further scrutiny of ballistic recordings for clarity. Questions arise over security failures allowing a 20-year-old to breach measures and reach a rooftop near Trump, firing multiple shots. Thomas Matthew Crooks, identified as the primary shooter, raises speculation about a potential second shooter. Described as a loner without a social media presence, Crooks' unexpected role and the presence of explosives in his vehicle suggest possible exploitation.

Criticism of rally security focuses on inadequate building coverage, allowing the shooter an unimpeded view of Trump, and exposing significant security vulnerabilities. These shortcomings emphasise systemic flaws in pre-event security protocols and the need for rigorous reforms. Political violence, however, has rarely solved the issues it aims to address, often creating a climate of fear and leading to further crackdowns on dissent. Historically, such violence

has only resulted in cycles of disaster, undermining the causes it purported to support. What we can see is that nihilism pervades American culture, dealing a fatal blow to its cultural and spiritual development. This decline in values undermines democracy itself. Democracy, while liberating individuals from traditional constraints, necessitates self-judgement—a task hindered by the erosion of traditional Western values. Without a genuine guiding societal value system, the state structures of any nation inevitably falter in fulfilling their role in shaping individual decisions.

The collapse of collective ideas correlates closely with societal institutions and behaviours. As Wang Huning, a leading Chinese political theorist, argued in his book "America Against America," "The American spirit confronts profound challenges, compounded by the younger generation's unfamiliarity with traditional Western values. This spiritual shift raises critical questions about its impact on societal development and governance." The viability of any social system hinges not solely on legal frameworks but on collective belief in fundamental values guiding behaviour. If these values falter, the sustainability of the social order is called into question. The attempt on Trump's life demands a reevaluation of rhetoric and policies that normalise political violence. The incident calls for a reevaluation of gun laws and the broader societal acceptance of violence as a means to resolve conflicts. All sides of the political divide must recognise the danger of escalating violent rhetoric and its potential to incite further violence. This incident serves as a wake-up call to address the deeper issues within American society and politics, emphasizing the need for a shift towards reasoned discourse and humane policies. Ironically, America has been compelled to a point where it can't afford to lose Trump.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views are personal)



THE ATTEMPT ON TRUMP'S LIFE DEMANDS A REEVALUATION OF RHETORIC AND POLICIES THAT NORMALISE POLITICAL VIOLENCE. THE INCIDENT CALLS FOR A REEVALUATION OF GUN LAWS AND THE BROADER SOCIETAL ACCEPTANCE OF VIOLENCE AS A MEANS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS

RTI implementation faces challenges as the CIC is short of staff

Despite the formation of a new government, vacancies remain unfilled, exacerbating delays and overwhelming the few remaining commissioners

On September 13 last year, the Central Information Commission (CIC) admitted a second appeal from this columnist under Section 19(3) of the RTI Act, 2005. The appeal, apart from seeking imposition of penalty on the CPIO, for denial of information, also contained a few relevant suggestions for better implementation of the Act. However, on November 6, Ms Saroj Punhani, the Information Commissioner who dealt with cases for that particular ministry retired at the end of her tenure. On the same day Uday Mahurkar, another Information Commissioner retired, whereas their colleague Suresh Chandra had retired two days earlier. Several other



PRIYADARSHI DATTA

Information Commissioners like Ms. Vanjana N. Sarna, Neeraj Kumar Gupta and Dr. Amita Pandove had retired earlier last year at the end of their respective tenures. Y. K. Sinha, the Chief Information Commissioner, retired on October 3 whereupon Heeralal Samariya, the Information Commissioner was elevated to the position of Chief Information Commissioner. The total strength of the

Commission plummeted to a mere three by the end of 2023, from the maximum permissible ten at the beginning of the year. Even after the formation of the new government last month, little interest has been shown in filling up the vacancies that exist.

The reduction in the strength of the Commission has led to a proportionate overload of second appeals and complaints at CIC Bhawan. The second appeal of this columnist, already pending for ten months, is likely to see an indefinite waiting period. The outcome could hardly be compared with a long wait in the judiciary. Information is fragile, and prone to obsolescence faster than justice. This is where this columnist's suggestions would have helped. In his

limited experience as an RTI activist since 2010, he has found the CPIOs (Central Public Information Officers) generally share the information dutifully. However, where they do not, the Appellate Authority, who are generally their senior officers in the department/ministry is of little help.

They collude with their juniors to suppress the information, apparently in exchange for favours/obligations in office politics. Uday Mahurkar, as Information Commissioner, reportedly disposed of 5056 RTI appeals in 2021-22, the highest since the year of enactment of the RTI Act, 2005. However, it is equally a reflection of the utter non-performance of the Appellate Authority. Had those cases

been satisfactorily disposed at the stage of the first appeal, within the department itself, there was little need for approaching CIC with a second appeal. Information could be suppressed for a variety of reasons. In rare cases, it could be that the CPIO has committed some action in his substantive capacity (as Section Officer or Under Secretary) which he wants to be probed. In the instant case, a person has been blacklisted, on trumped-up charges, despite not having any financial dealing with the ministry.

The blacklisting order was signed, though with approval of competent authority, by the CPIO in his substantive capacity as Under Secretary. When asked to provide the file notes, complaints if any, rules posi-

tion violated he deflected the matter saying the file was under submission (there is no such ground for denying information under the RTI Act, 2005 even if the file is submitted with the PMO or Rashtrapati Bhawan).

This columnist requested the same information after the lapse of a year (thanks to the appeal pending for months in CIC) only to find that the file was still "under submission"! The conclusions are obvious. On both occasions, the First Appellate Authority, who is an IAS officer, helped the cause of suppression rather than transparency. Under Section 20(1) of the RTI Act, 2005 there is a provision for a penalty on the CPIO not exceeding Rs.25,000 for unjustified denial of information to the applicant. There

is, however, no penalty for the First Appellate Authority recognizably failing in his duty or acting in a mala fide manner. Endowing a member of the executive with quasi-judicial power without any scope of disciplinary proceedings is bait for misuse of power.

The CIC notice for hearing of appeal is sent only to the CPIO and not the First Appellate Authority. The fear of dressing down by the Information Commissioner, in front of the CPIO, who is a junior officer, will ensure the integrity of action on the part of the First Appellate Authority.

Disciplining the First Appellate Authority is the key to reducing the load of pendency at the Central Information Commission's desk. The gov-

ernment has recently decided to commemorate June 25 as "Samvidhan Hatya Divas", a queer-sounding name, in memory declaration of Emergency in 1975.

Whereas the Emergency might have been anti-democratic, it was in itself not unconstitutional being declared under Article 352. If the government is interested in deepening democracy in the 21st century then rhetoric like "Samvidhan Hatya Divas" or even "India Mother of Democracy" will not work if the CIC's strength is curtailed. The RTI Act, of 2005 was a major tool for transparency, accountability and governance. (The writer is an author, independent researcher and RTI activist based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

Vance promises to fight for working-class Americans

PTI ■ MILWAUKEE

US Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance praised former president Donald Trump and promised to fight for working-class Americans "cast aside and forgotten" by the Democrats...

path, he chose to endure abuse, slander, and persecution," he said. The author of the best-selling memoir Hillbilly Elegy...

heart trade deal that destroyed even more good middle-class jobs. And when I was a senior in high school, Joe Biden supported the disastrous invasion of Iraq...

'Next American pres has heart of lion'

Milwaukee (PTI): Donald Trump Jr has asserted that his father's instinct in the face of an assassination attempt has shown the world that the "next American president has the heart of a lion"...



the November 5 presidential election. He said the world saw a spirit that could "never be broken". "In that moment, my father didn't just show his character, he showed America's character when he stood up with blood on his face and the flag at his back..."

idential candidate "may have moved to the ground, but he stood back up." And when he did, my father raised his fist into the air. He looked out at the crowd, and what did he say?

party's nomination for the president's post, CNN reported, citing sources. Donald Trump takes the stage Thursday at the Republican National Convention to accept his party's nomination again...

'Biden tests positive for COVID-19'

Milwaukee (PTI): US President Joe Biden has tested positive for COVID-19, halting his campaign at a critical juncture in the presidential election...

Far-right Israeli minister visits sensitive Jerusalem holy site

AP ■ JERUSALEM/CAIRO

Israel's far-right national security minister visited Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site on Thursday morning, threatening to disrupt Gaza cease-fire talks...

holiest site for Jews. Palestinians consider the mosque a national symbol and view such visits as provocative, though Ben-Gvir has frequently visited the site...

distinguish between combatants and civilians in its court. Two international courts have accused Israel of war crimes and genocide - charges Israel denies...

equipment to AP several hours later. A bill that would make the emergency legislation permanent is currently making its way through the Israeli parliament...

Public failed by UK govt, finds damning COVID inquiry

London (PTI): The British public was failed by the government's planning and processes when the COVID pandemic hit the country in early 2020...

Court: Closing arguments in espionage trial of WSJ reporter will be Friday

Yekaterinburg (Russia) (AP): Closing arguments in the espionage trial of US journalist Evan Gershkovich will be held Friday, a Russian court said...

detained," thereby committing the government to assertively seek his release. Gershkovich faces up to 20 years in prison if found guilty...

S Korea's top court recognises some rights for LGBT community

Seoul (AP): South Korea's top court ruled Thursday that same-sex couples are eligible to receive the same health insurance benefits as heterosexual couples...

Starmer begins post-Brexit 'reset' with EU

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer welcomed leaders from the European Union to Oxfordshire in south-east England to initiate a "reset" with the 27-member economic bloc...



the Labour Leader reiterated that the "unworkable" scheme of deporting illegal migrants to Rwanda had been "scrapped" and that the UK will never withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)...

ting the people smuggling webs trafficking people across Europe to standing up to [Russian President] Putin's barbaric actions in Ukraine and destabilising activity across Europe...

Netherlands and Slovakia. Downing Street said the government is redeploying more than 100 Home Office staff from the Migration and Economic Development Partnership (MEDP) to a new rapid returns unit...

supplying materials to facilitate organised immigration crime. "Dangerous small boat crossings are undermining our border security and putting lives at risk. Criminal smuggling gangs are making millions out of small boat crossings..."

Seattle police fire officer who said Indian student killed had 'limited value' fired

New York/Seattle (PTI): A US police officer, whose insensitive comments and laughter following the horrific death of a 23-year-old Indian student had caused outrage, has been fired from the Seattle Police Department...

Auderer claimed he was "ridiculing the city attorneys who would be tasked with litigating a potential wrongful death lawsuit". Interim Chief Sue Rahr at the Seattle Police Department said in an internal email, seen by PTI Wednesday, that the hurt Auderer's words have inflicted on Kandula's family "cannot be erased..."

NASA cancels its moon rover mission

Washington (AP): NASA has said that it is cancelling its water-seeking moon rover, citing cost overruns and launch delays.



The Viper rover was supposed to launch in late 2023 aboard a lander provided by Astrobotic Technology, but extra testing and increased costs kept delaying the mission...

NASA said. The announcement comes days before the 55th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission, which landed Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon on July 20, 1969...

Astrobotic still plans to fly its Griffin moon lander - minus a rover - by the end of next year. The company's first moonshot ended in failure in January with a fiery plunge over the South Pacific.

Ursula von der Leyen re-elected as European Commission pres

PTI ■ STRASBOURG



Lawmakers at the European Parliament on Thursday re-elected Ursula von der Leyen to a second 5-year term as president of the European Union's executive commission, giving her a comfortable majority and heading off a possible leadership vacuum.

stand here today ready to lead the fight with all the Democratic forces in this house," von der Leyen said in her final pitch. If lawmakers had rejected her candidacy, it would leave leaders of the 27-nation bloc scrambling to find a replacement as Europe grapples with crises ranging from the war in Ukraine to climate change.

recent visit to Russia shortly after his country took over the rotating six-month EU presidency. "This so-called peace mission was nothing but an appeasement mission," von der Leyen said as she vowed that Europe would remain shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukraine.

ers signed off on the conservative German von der Leyen at a summit meeting late last month. The 65-year-old von der Leyen's bid was boosted when the European People's Party, which includes von der Leyen's Christian Democratic Union, remained the largest group at the EU Parliament after the elections.

Bangladesh govt says ready to hold talks with quota protesters; Army deployed

PTI ■ DHAKA

The Bangladesh government on Thursday expressed willingness to hold talks with the students protesting against the quota system in jobs after fresh violence erupted across the country as they attempted to enforce a nationwide shutdown over the issue.

the initiative on this, and the AG will file an appeal with the Supreme Court on Sunday seeking an early hearing of the case. The government has decided to form a judicial probe committee led by High Court Justice Khandaker Diluruzzaman to investigate the violent incidents that have claimed at least seven lives, including four students.

streets with bricks and bamboo sticks. Witnesses said the protesters laid a siege on the state-run Bangladesh Television Bhawan in the Rampura area in Dhaka and damaged its front side while some 1,200 staff, including journalists, were stranded inside.

seen standing idle in queues at the terminal, our correspondent reports from the spot. Local markets and shopping malls had limited entry points open. Some roadside shops were open, while others remained closed.

CCP endorses reforms to halt economic slowdown; emphasizes Xi's leadership

PTI ■ BEIJING



A crucial meeting of China's ruling Communist Party on Thursday adopted a resolution for comprehensive reforms to lift the sluggish growth of the world's second-largest economy by achieving socialist modernisation by 2035 and re-emphasised President Xi Jinping's "core" leadership position.

He mostly focused on building a high-standard socialist market economy. "The overall objectives of further deepening reform comprehensively are to continue improving and developing the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and modernise China's system and capacity for governance," the communique said.

position of Xi, who is in his unprecedented third five-year term in power and called for improving national security institutions and the CPC's control over the military "to effectively safeguard the country's stability and security over the long term," the communique said.

Shopping mall fire in China kills 16 people

Beijing (PTI): At least 16 people were killed after a fire broke out at a shopping mall in southwest China's Sichuan Province.

The incident occurred on Wednesday around 6 pm at the 14-story building, located in a high-tech zone in the city of Zigong, Sichuan province, according to Chinese state media. Dramatic images and videos showed a huge column of black smoke billowing from the building.

North Korea launches balloons likely carrying trash toward South Korea

AP ■ SEOUL



North Korea resumed flying balloons likely carrying trash toward South Korea on Thursday, the South's military said, days after it vowed to respond to what it called repeated South Korean civilian leafleting campaigns in the North.

ties if they spot balloons on the ground. Beginning in late May, North Korea has floated numerous balloons carrying newspaper, scraps of cloth, cigarette butts

and even manure toward South Korea, saying they were in response to South Korean activists sending political leaflets to the North via their own balloons. No hazardous materials were found.

Korean balloons have been found frequently at the North Korea border and other areas. In her statement Tuesday, Kim Yo Jong threatened new retaliatory steps, saying South Korean "scum" must be ready to pay "a gruesome and dear price."

Nepal's future is bright: Oli

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Newly-appointed Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on Thursday said that Nepal's future is "bright," but its current scenario needs to be changed, amidst frequent political turmoil in the Himalayan nation.

be changed," he said. He underscored that the need of the hour was to take the country towards betterment from the present deteriorated condition, Nepal's state-run RSS news agency reported.

reached between the top leaders and the two countries in the past to collaborate under the China-Nepal Belt and Road Cooperation and also to promote collaboration in other areas as well. Nepal and China signed a memorandum of understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a flagship initiative of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Pak govt targets more social media platforms; FB, Insta restricted across multiple service providers

Lahore (PTI): After successfully blocking X for over six months, the Pakistan government has targeted more social media platforms — Facebook and Instagram — and restricted their access to the people, a step seen as a plan to impose a complete ban on social media.

material, misinformation to avoid sectarian violence" during the holy month. Nayatel, a telecommunication company, said on X on Thursday: "Facebook and Instagram services have been disrupted with all service providers across the country for the last two days.

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar who also has the portfolio of foreign minister has also called for placing a complete ban on social media. Both the military and the government have been receiving backlash on social media since the ouster of former prime minister Imran Khan through a no-confidence motion in April 2022.

being employed to blindside the most popular party of the country, thwarting freedom of speech even after oppression, now sounds like freedom to discriminate, by the power hub. PTI

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY MARINE DEPARTMENT. No. MDS/SHS/TECH-27/2024/786. Date: 10.07.2024. e-Tender Call Notice (e-TCN)

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD. (Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001) Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SCG033813 (Contact No. 96461-17606)

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD. (Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001) Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SCG033813 (Contact No. 9646117609 E-mail: sefet-ghtp@pspcpl.in)

FTA to boost India-Russia commerce

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Steps such as increasing exports, making local currency trading workable and a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union will help boost trade between India and Russia, think tank GTRI said on Thursday.

India should not worry over the trade deficit, as it is getting crude petroleum oil at cheaper than market rates from Russia and it is also cutting India's overall oil import bill, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

Since the Ukraine war began in February 2022 and the US imposed sanctions on Russia, the trade relationship between India and Russia has shifted significantly.

Exports during the financial year 2020-21 and 2023-24 grew by 59 per cent, while imports surged by about 8,300 per cent, the report said, adding the trade deficit rose from USD 2.8 billion before the war in 2020-21 to USD 57.2 billion at present. It said that the import surge is solely due to India's



strategic procurement of crude oil from Russia influenced by favourable trade terms and Russia's need to find new markets amidst Western sanctions. During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Russia visit on July 8-9, India and Russia have set an ambitious bilateral trade target of USD 100 billion by 2030.

With current bilateral trade at USD 65.7 billion in 2023-24, the target seems achievable, GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said. In 2023-24, India's exports to Russia were 4.3 billion, while imports driven by crude oil stood at USD 61.4

billion. Share of crude oil and petroleum products in imports was 88 per cent. India exports a diverse range of products to Russia including smartphones, shrimp, medicine, meat, tiles, coffee, parts of airplanes and helicopters, chemicals, computers, and fruits. "India has competitive advantage in these products and hence the potential to export more to Russia. India should prepare a product-level strategy to promote exports," Srivastava said. On local currency trade, the report said that trade

cannot be settled in rupee due to limited international use of the Indian rupee and Russia's reluctance to accumulate it beyond a limit.

After the Ukraine war, the US put sanctions on Russia, not allowing it to use SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) pipeline for dollar transactions.

The key question for India is finding the best way to pay Russia the amount equal to USD 60 billion in trade deficit.

"Local currency trading would be the best solution. To facilitate this, India needs to establish a transparent and open currency exchange. This exchange would provide clear, market-determined exchange rates between local currencies like Indian rupee and other currencies such as the Russian rouble, Malaysian ringgit, Thai baht, or Chinese yuan," it said.

It added that this would not only give banks a reliable reference for issuing letters of credit but also help businesses understand currency volatility better. "Countries with currency surpluses, like Russia with

its Indian rupee surplus from oil exports to India, could exchange their surplus for other currencies more efficiently in such a multi-currency exchange platform," it said.

It also suggested making the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) functional. The INSTC is a 7,200-kilometer multi-modal route linking India with Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe. "When functional, it would reduce transit time between India and western Russian ports from 45 to 25 days and cut freight costs by 30 per cent compared to the Suez Canal route. INSTC, despite these advantages, has limited use due to underinvestment in infrastructure," it said.

The frequent loading and unloading of cargo along the INSTC and the involvement of sanctioned Iran also pose logistical challenges. Chabahar is a key part of this corridor. India is negotiating the 'India-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Trade Agreement' with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Belarus. Formal talks for the agreement have not yet started.

Toshiba Group to invest 10 billion Japanese yen in India to expand capacity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Toshiba Group on Thursday said it will invest 10 billion Japanese yen (over Rs 500 crore) to increase the capacity of producing power transmission and distribution equipment in India.

Toshiba Transmission & Distribution Systems (India) Pvt Ltd (TTDI) will increase its capacity of manufacturing power transformers and distribution transformers by about 1.5 times compared to FY2023, over a three-year period from FY2024 to FY2026, it stated. Toshiba Group has positioned power T&D as a focus business and will invest about JPY 10 billion (over Rs 500 crore) in TTDI to expand its capacity.

Hiroshi Furuta, Chairperson and Managing Director, TTDI, said in the statement, "Furthering our commitment to make-in-India and export-from-India, the new investment will improve operational efficiency, increase speed-to-market, and support in expanding our business in India and overseas." With this investment, TTDI will increase its assembly and test line capacity for distribution transformers and



power transformers for the transmission grids and distribution networks.

Enhanced testing capacity for power transformers will represent a significant upgrade, specifically geared towards expanding exports as well as meeting the high demand for 400kV/765kV transformers in the Indian market. Distribution transformer expansion is aimed at creating a dedicated facility for CRGO (Cold Rolled Grain Oriented) steel processing centre in order to enhance the vertical integration facility, which would help the company reduce the process lead time and enhance quality and safety, the company said. Besides, TTDI will also build a new manufacturing facility

for surge arresters during the first half of FY24 and the products will be commercially available in the market by the second half of the year.

TTDI offers a range of innovative and reliable technologies for the renewable energy sector, including photovoltaic (PV) inverters, power transformers, gas-insulated switchgear (GIS), and inverter duty transformers. TTDI is also focusing on enhancement of GIS, transformers, control relay & substation automation system solutions to applications in energy (renewable sector), data centre for smart cities, and for industry segments like petro chemical plants, refineries and railway.

Cybersecurity players seek digital security push in Budget for Viksit Bharat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With India looking to embrace artificial intelligence rapidly, cybersecurity players expect that the upcoming Union Budget will include measures to boost safety of the country's digital space through further allocation of funds and incentives.

Innefu Labs, CEO and Co-founder Tarun Wig said the global focus on AI presents a critical juncture for India. "The AI and ML (machine learning) models can be trained to identify and prevent 'zero-day' attacks. But this will require support from the government (in) nurturing and retaining top cyber talent, and empowering companies to invest in training AI models for cybersecurity," Wig said. He added that while other nations are busy building their AI infrastructure, India must prioritise on optimum use of AI which could include training AI and ML models for improving our defence and intelligence posture, and to reduce cyber crimes which are on the rise, to identify money laundering networks or using AI to take governance to the far flung villages of the country. "Adding government support for research and development



initiatives to proven companies in the private sector and not just academia would create a win-win situation. It would attract and retain talent while enabling companies, large and small, to innovate. This, in turn, would foster a digital environment that can support future advancements in AI and other emerging technologies," Wig said. The government had announced a fund worth Rs 1 lakh crore for R&D in sunrise technologies in the interim budget for financial year 2024-25.

IIT Kanpur's Artificial Intelligence and Innovation-Driven Entrepreneurship Centre of Excellence (AIIDE-CoE) incubated Future Crime Research Foundation (FCRF), Co-Founder Shashank Shekhar said investment on cybersecurity is similar to

insurance for digital economies. He said India faces one of the highest number of cyber attacks globally every year. "While the government is making an effort to digitally empower every citizen of the country, it becomes imperative to secure them as well. We request the government to consider building Indian champions in the cybersecurity space to meet the aspiration of Viksit Bharat by 2047," Shekhar said. Futurex, South Asia-Vice President, Ruchin Kumar said it is important to increase funding for cybersecurity training programs to address the workforce skill gap. "To achieve this, collaborations with educational institutions to develop specialized cybersecurity courses and certifications must be

fostered. We strongly recommend fund allocation specifically for protecting critical infrastructure, such as power grids, transportation networks, and healthcare systems, from cyber threats," he said.

He said that the government should also mandate and fund regular security audits and vulnerability assessments for critical infrastructure sectors. Zeron, Founder, Sanket Sarkar said the government has consistently demonstrated its commitment to this critical industry through strategic investments and supportive policies.

"Reflecting on the past years, it's clear that our digital defenses have been significantly strengthened. I am optimistic that this year's budget will further amplify this focus, with substantial allocations to enhance our cybersecurity infrastructure," he said.

Sarkar said continued prioritisation of cyber resilience and innovation is crucial for defending against evolving threats and driving economic growth. "This budget will not be merely a financial planning; it'll be a bold declaration of India's intent to become a global cybersecurity leader," he said.

Markets turn negative after hitting fresh record-high levels

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices turned negative soon after hitting new record-high levels in a highly volatile trade on Thursday.

The 30-share BSE Sensex opened on a weak note, but bounced back later and climbed 193.9 points to hit a new record peak of 80,910.45. However, the benchmark failed to hold on to the gains and traded 151.38 points lower at 80,550.97 at 11:22 hours. Similarly, the NSE Nifty after a weak beginning recovered the early lost ground and climbed 65.9 points to hit a fresh lifetime high of 24,678.90. The Nifty also gave up all the gains and quoted 66,535 points down at 24,546.65.

Among the Sensex pack, Adani Ports, Asian Paints, Tata Steel, NTPC, Power Grid and UltraTech Cement were the biggest laggards. On the contrary, Tata Consultancy Services, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra and State Bank of India were trading in the positive territory.



In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai were trading lower, while Hong Kong quoted higher. The US markets ended mostly lower on Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.45 per cent to USD 85.45 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,271.45 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Stock markets were closed on Wednesday on account of Muharram. The BSE benchmark climbed 51.69 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a new lifetime high of 80,716.55 on Tuesday. The NSE Nifty went up by 26.30 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 24,613.

Nokia sees double-digit fall in Q2 profit, sales in weak 5G market but sees improved 2nd half

AP ■ HELSINKI

Wireless and fixed-network equipment maker Nokia Thursday reported a double-digit fall in profit and sales in the second quarter due to a continuing weak market as clients are holding off investments in 5G technology.

The Espoo, Finland-based company reported a net profit of 328 million euros (USD 359 million) for the April-June period, down 20 per cent from 409 million euros (USD 447 million) a year earlier. Net income attributable to shareholders was 325 million euros (USD 355 million), down from 410 million euros a year earlier. Similarly to its Nordic rival Ericsson of Sweden, Nokia has suffered in the past year from operators cutting back on investments into 5G and other telecom technology because of economic uncertainty and high financing costs. "Our financial performance in the second quarter continued to be impacted by the ongoing market weakness with net sales declining 18 per cent year-on-year in constant currency," Nokia CEO Pekka Lundmark said in a statement. Nokia's sales were down 18 per cent at 4.5 billion euros (USD 4.9 billion)



compared with 5.4 billion euros (USD 5.9 billion) a year earlier.

The Finnish company is one of the world's main suppliers of 5G, the latest generation of broadband technology along with Ericsson, China's Huawei and South Korea's Samsung. Lundmark said that the company's sales would improve in the second half of this year, particularly in its network infrastructure business unit. "Looking forward, we believe the industry is stabilizing and given the order intake seen in recent quarters we expect a significant acceleration in net sales growth in the second half," he said.

However, in Nokia's mobile network unit, the biggest business entity during the quarter by sales, "the market dynamic remains challenging as operators continue to be cautious" of spending in 5G technology and equipment, Lundmark said.

Recycling industry body demands zero duty on aluminium scrap imports

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the budget, recycling industry body MRAI has urged the government to remove the import duty on aluminium scrap, saying it will help promote sustainability in the industry.

According to the Material Recycling Association of India (MRAI), the recycling process of aluminium scrap emits only 0.3 million tonnes (MT) of Co2 on per tonne of production compared to 14 tonnes of carbon emissions on the production of 1 MT of aluminium through smelters route which involves maintaining of coal-based capacities for power supply. "Among the key challenges faced by the Indian aluminium recycling industry is 2.5 per cent import duty on aluminium scrap. It is a key raw material for aluminium recycling and the government should make it to zero until the quality material (scrap) is available in sufficient quantity in the domestic market," AI said in a letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the full Union Budget for the



financial year 2024-25 in Parliament on July 23. Many countries have realized the importance of scrap that it is sustainable because of recyclable in nature.

The demand driver for aluminium in the next few years is going to be substantially higher due to India's projected higher growth of GDP and ambitious infrastructure development. The production of primary aluminium metal is also associated with the consumption of large volumes of natural resources, bauxite ore and coal and the generation of large quantities of solid wastes, it noted. "Aluminium recycling has become an important part of aluminium production in India because it is much less energy intensive than the production of primary aluminium," AI said. Lower per capita aluminium consumption of 2.5 kg in India is also a challenge against a world average of 11

kg, as the recycling industry has to rely more on imports for quality aluminium scrap to meet the shortfall.

"India's aluminium recycling industry plays a pivotal role in harmonising efforts to combat climate change and bolster environmental sustainability. Recycling helps to combat the climate crisis by limiting the use of raw materials, protecting natural resources like bauxite and reducing the waste going into landfills," AI President Sanjay Mehta said. "We need to take decisive steps here when it comes to its goals towards sustainability and low carbon ecosystem. World over metal scrap, especially Aluminium is considered as the greenest raw material to be used for metal production. "Having import duties on Aluminium scrap could be retrograde and would decelerate our efforts in reaching sustainability goals," said Dhawal Shah, Senior Vice President, of AI. The association has also sought zero duty on copper scrap and brass scrap which attract 2.5 per cent duty at present, and zinc and lead which have 5 per cent import duty.

Sales of luxury homes up 27% to 8,500 units in 7 cities in January-June: CBRE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sales of luxury housing units, each costing Rs 4 crore and above, rose 27 per cent to around 8,500 units during the January-June period across seven major cities in high demand, according to real estate consultant CBRE.

In its report 'India Market Monitor Q2 2024' released on Thursday, CBRE said that India's luxury housing (units priced Rs 4 crore and above) segment maintained strong sales momentum, registering a 27 per cent annual increase in January-June 2024. "Total sales of luxury units during the January-June period stood at around 8,500 units compared to about 6,700 units during the same period last year," the consultant said. Delhi-NCR, Mumbai and Hyderabad emerged as prominent markets, accounting for nearly 84 per cent of the total luxury housing sales across the top seven cities. Further, Pune recorded a noteworthy increase in luxury sales activity with demand growing nearly six-fold on an annual basis to touch around 1,100



units. Sales in Delhi-NCR rose 14 per cent annually to 3,300 units. Mumbai saw a growth of 14 per cent to 2,500 units. Housing sales in Hyderabad stood at 1,300 units, up 44 per cent annually. Pune registered sales of 1,100 units, marking a 450 per cent year-on-year increase during this period. In Chennai and Kolkata, sales of luxury housing units, each priced at Rs 4 crore and above, remained flat at 100 units and 200 units, respectively.

CBRE data showed that Bengaluru did not witness any sale in this price category during the January-June 2024 period as against 200 units in the year-ago period. Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, the Middle East & Africa at CBRE, said, "We foresee a strong momentum in the housing market for the remainder of the year. This optimism is driven by favourable home buying sentiments, festive season promotions, and

significant land acquisitions by developers." These elements are expected to balance supply and demand dynamics and invigorate market activity, he added. "The luxury housing segment, particularly for properties priced at INR 4 crore and above, is set to thrive as buyers seek homes that align with their affluent lifestyles. Capital value growth in this segment is projected to stabilise, with an increasing focus on core project fundamentals such as quality, location, and access to essential infrastructure," Magazine said. Moreover, he said the ongoing mega infrastructure projects across the country, including transportation networks, highways, airports and metro systems, are poised to bolster real estate growth. "These developments are likely to unlock new markets, establish satellite cities, and stimulate growth in peripheral areas, making luxury housing an attractive investment," Magazine said.

Ceat net profit rises 7% in Q1; revenue increases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

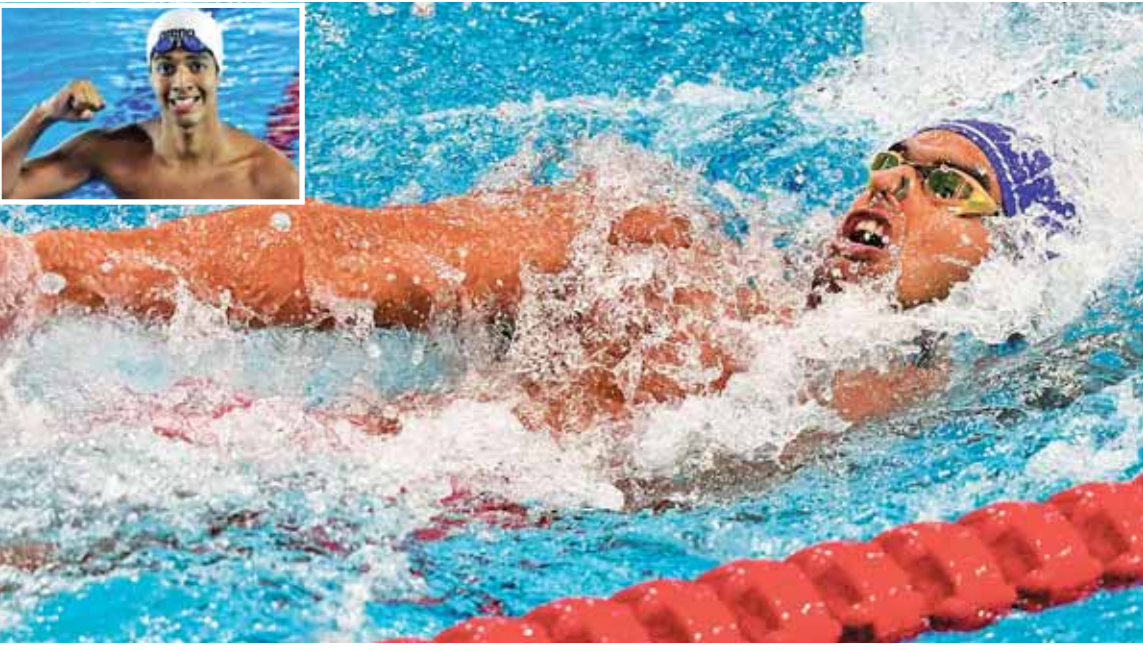
Tyre maker Ceat on Thursday said its consolidated net profit increased by 7 per cent to Rs 154 crore in the first quarter ended June 2024.

The company had reported a net profit of Rs 144 crore in the April-June period of last fiscal. Revenue increased to Rs 3,193 crore in the first quarter as against Rs 2,935 crore in the year-ago period. Ceat Ltd said in a regulatory filing. "We are encouraged by the strong growth we've had in the replacement and export segments across all categories during the quarter," Ceat MD & CEO Arnab Banerjee said. Despite facing margin pressure from significant increases in raw material costs and ocean freight, the company is actively mitigating these challenges through strategic price adjustments, he added. "Our strategic focus on premiumising passenger car tyres has begun to yield positive results. Looking ahead, we anticipate continued momentum in volume throughout Q2 and beyond," Banerjee stated.

FROM EXHAUSTION TO EXUBERANCE: SWIMMER NATARAJ EYES SEMIFINALS IN PARIS OLYMPICS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Standing on the 2023 National Games podium adorned with 10 medals, eight of them gold, ace Indian swimmer Srihari Nataraj was utterly exhausted. After all, he had been competing non-stop at major events since 2017 when he was just 16, and the relentless competitive grind, coupled with the rigours of training had finally taken a toll on his body. "I just needed time off to rest because my 2023 season was crazy and so hectic with so many races. I think if I didn't take any time off, my body would have broken down by now," Nataraj told PTI in an interview. "And it could have led to an injury or I would have lost the drive to train. My body was under so much stress. I kind of just needed a few weeks off just to let my body rest," he added. Refreshed after the much-needed break, the 23-year-old is ready for his second Olympics, where he will compete in the 100m backstroke event. Nataraj qualified for the Paris Games via the Universality Quota, which allows countries to recommend their two highest-ranked swimmers for the showpiece if no one makes the cut through the regulation process. Having secured direct qualification for the previous Tokyo Olympics, the entry to the Paris Games through the Universality Quota was not ideal by Nataraj's own admission. But he has opted not to dwell on the disappointment. "It was annoying and disappointing that I didn't get the qualifying time because I had been training really well. But I'm not really bothered about what



happened," he asserted. "I got the quota spot. It might be a step back, but I still got the spot. And now I can spend the coming weeks either thinking 'oh, this is not the way I wanted it'. Or I can focus on what I want to do in Paris. So, I'm taking it as motivation." Since returning from the break, Nataraj has been training better, which resulted in two silver medals at the Mare Nostrum meet in Spain and France in May. "This season, the training's been so much better than last season. It's so good. I think it's all because of that break," he said. There have been times when Nataraj

has come close to a podium finish but missed out by a fraction of a second. Some other times, his best performance has not come at the right time. "I think it just hasn't clicked on race day yet," he conceded. Nataraj has not been able to improve his best time in the 100m backstroke since 2021, when he clocked 53.77s. However, he and his coach Nihar Ameen have been able to identify where exactly the Bengaluru swimmer has been lacking. "I think it's just race execution. I am working on having a little more speed - front end speed and a little more natural speed so that I don't have to put in as much effort on the first 50," he

explained. He has been able to improve his first 50m and claims to have gone "fastest I've ever been" in training. "We're doing a lot more high intensity explosive short sprints. And we're just hoping that it converts in time and I can open the first 50 a little more effortlessly. "I've always had good capacity in good second 50m." Nataraj, who has a season's best of 54.68s, aims to better his personal best time which would put him in semifinal contention at the Paris Games. "I just have a goal towards trying to get a personal best. And I think if I make a personal best, it puts me in a good spot to be in the semifinals."

Odisha FC pitted against Jordan and Singapore clubs

AFC WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian club Odisha FC were drawn alongside Ethihad Club (Jordan) and Lion City Sailors FC (Singapore) in Group B of the preliminary stage of the 2024-25 AFC Women's Champions League, following the draw conducted in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday. Odisha FC, the champions of the 2023-24 Indian Women's League, will travel to Jordan to play in the preliminary stage, which will be held in a centralised league format from August 25 to 31. Thirteen sides will contest the preliminary stage, which features four groups - one group of four teams and three groups of three. The four

group winners will qualify for the 12-team group stage, joining the other eight clubs that have qualified directly. Should Odisha FC top their preliminary stage group and qualify for the next group stage, they will be placed in Group C alongside Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies (Japan), Taichung Blue Whale Women's Football Team (Chinese Taipei), and hosts Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC (Vietnam). The group stage comprises three groups of four teams and will also be contested in a centralised league format from October 6 to 12. Clubs were seeded and placed in pots for the draw according to their respective member

association rankings, based on the FIFA women's world ranking (as of March 15, 2024). The top two finishers of each group and the two best third-placed sides will progress to the quarterfinals, to be played on March 22 and 23, 2025. A knockout stage draw will be conducted prior to the quarterfinals to determine the four pairings, which will be contested in a single-leg format, with the higher-ranked team of each tie to serve as the home side. This will be followed by a centralised finals, which will see the semi-finals and final - all single-leg ties - being played out from May 21 to 24, 2025, to determine the first ever champions of the tournament.



F1 driver Magnussen to leave Haas at end of this season

AP ■ KANNAPOLIS (US)

Formula 1 driver Kevin Magnussen will leave Haas at the end of the season when his contract expires, the team said on Thursday. The 31-year-old Magnussen is competing in his seventh season with the American team, starting 135 grand prix across two spells, from 2017-20 and 2022-24. The former McLaren and Renault driver achieved a career-high ninth in the drivers' standings for Haas in 2018. He has five points this season. Haas did not say who is going to replace Magnussen. "I'm proud to have raced for such a great team of people

these last few years," he said. "While I'm looking forward to the next chapter of my racing career, I remain fully focused on giving everything I've got for the rest of 2024." On the eve of the Hungarian Grand Prix, team principal Ayao Komatsu said he hopes they can "find a way to keep working together in some capacity." News of Magnussen's departure came after Oliver Bearman signed a multiyear deal with Haas from 2025 onward. The 19-year old British driver will take the seat vacated by German driver Nico Hulkenberg, who is joining Sauber at the end of the year ahead of its rebranding to Audi for 2026.

Argentina tops FIFA men's rankings as Govt hits back at critics of team's racist France song

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES (ARGENTINA)

Argentina was confirmed as the world's No. 1 team in the FIFA men's rankings on Thursday, as the national government doubled down on defending the players who celebrated winning the Copa America by singing a racist song targeting No. 2-ranked France. The fallout of the chant sung late on Sunday in Miami - which mocked the African heritage of some France players - continued four days later, including a rebuke to Argentina's critics by the vice president in its far-right government. Argentina's government on Wednesday fired one of its leading sports officials who urged Lionel Messi and the president of the Argentine Football Association to apologize. The sports under-secretary, Julio Garro, spoke after FIFA said it was looking into the incident and English club Chelsea started a disciplinary process



against its midfielder Enzo Fernandez. He broadcast the footage on social media from the Argentina team bus in Florida. Fernandez later published an apology on his Instagram account, which disappeared by Thursday, saying he was "truly sorry. That video, that moment,

those words, do not reflect my beliefs or my character." However, a defiant post by the vice president of Argentina, Victoria Villarruel, on social media hit back at the country's critics. "No country with a colonial history is going to put us down for a song sung on

a field nor for speaking a truth that nobody wants to admit," Villarruel wrote. "Enough of pretending to be offended, hypocrites. Enzo I am with you, Messi thanks for everything! Argentines always keep your heads high! Long live Argentina!" Villarruel said Argentina's history had been forged by people of all races: "We never forced our way of life on anyone, nor will we tolerate that someone tries to do the same to us." The song refers to France players being "all from Angola," having parents from Nigeria and Cameroon, and also includes an offensive reference to Kylian Mbappé. One of Fernandez's French teammates at Chelsea, Wesley Fofana, who is Black, described the video as "uninhibited racism." France players Jules Koundé and Mike Maignan also posted critical comments about the Argentina incident.

Hockey men's and women's sub junior South Zone championship from today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

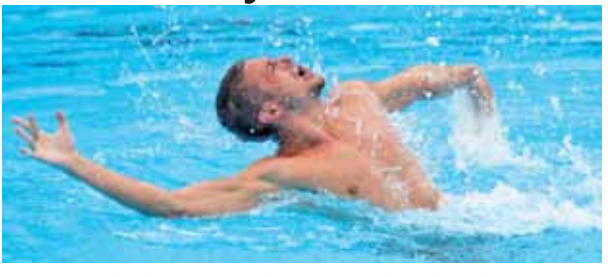
The second edition of Hockey India's sub junior men's and women's South Zone championship involving six teams will be held at Kollam in Kerala from Friday. Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Puducherry and Kerala are the six teams in men's and women's categories in the competition. The format of the tournament will be round-robin wherein all teams will play against each other once. The top two teams will advance to the final after the end of the first round whereas the third and fourth placed sides will battle for third-place finish. "This championship is not only about winning but also about learning and growing as players. It provides a crucial platform for young players to showcase their skills and gain valuable experience," HI president Dilip Tirkey said in a statement. On the first day, Andhra Pradesh will take on Puducherry, Karnataka will face Telangana, while Tamil Nadu will lock horns with Kerala in the men's category. In the women's section, Telangana will compete with Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu will face Puducherry, and Kerala will take on Karnataka.

After no men picked for Olympics in artistic swimming, Italy's Minisini says he's ending career

AP ■ ROME

With no men picked to compete in artistic swimming at the Paris Olympics, where they are eligible for the first time, a former world champion is ending his career this week. At the Italian national championships, four-time worlds gold medalist Giorgio Minisini said he is competing for the last time at age 28. "Obsession is a young man's game," Minisini, who was left off the Italian Olympic team in April, wrote on his Instagram

account Tuesday. Minisini and Bill May of the United States were the two most likely Olympic pioneers aiming to be picked for Paris as the first men to compete in artistic swimming. The sport debuted at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics as synchronized swimming. However, the 96 athletes picked by 18 different nations for the Olympics were all women. "World Aquatics is very disappointed that no male artistic swimmers have been selected for Paris 2024," the



governing body said. "This should have been a landmark moment for the sport." The rules change by World Aquatics in December 2022 allowed up to two men to be selected in an eight-athlete

squad for the Olympic open team event. The only other medal event in Paris is women's duet. Minisini specializes in the mixed duet event which is not yet on the Olympic program, and missed selection to the team event. May was on the U.S. Team that won silver and bronze medals in team acrobatic routine at the past two world championships. At age 45, he did not make the Olympic team last month. "All of us in the artistic swimming community need to work even harder to progress opportunities for male athletes in the sport," said World Aquatics, which hopes to add a mixed duet event for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Even with restrictive rules, swimsuit wars heat up in an Olympic year

PTI ■ PARIS

The iconic LZR Racer, the swimsuit that Michael Phelps wore while winning eight gold medals at the Beijing Olympics, is still revered around Speedo's design center. It serves as a reminder of just how much a suit can push a swimmer to greater heights. "In so many ways, that was the golden era," said Coora Lavezzo, the head of innovation at Speedo's Aqualab in London. "We've got those suits upstairs, and even though I wasn't there at the time, I'm fascinated by them and just how we can get back to a smidge of that former glory." Of course, the rules these days are much more of a hindrance to swimsuit designers, the result of a wild summer 15 years ago in which rubberized attire was all the rage, leading

to 43 world records being set at the championships in Rome. The international governing body, now known as World Aquatics, decided the polyurethane suits - many of them covering nearly the entire body - were making a mockery of the sport. So the organization hastily imposed strict new rules requiring textile fabrics and limiting the amount of body coverage from the hip to just above the knees for men, while women's racing attire cannot extend past the shoulder or cover the neck. For coaches such as Bob Bowman, who worked with Phelps over his entire career and was on hand in Rome for a speed show that bordered on a farce, the rules are just fine the way they are. "Everybody is on a level playing field," he said. "We're still breaking world records in these suits. The sport is

moving forward." But major swimsuit designers such as Speedo, TYR and arena are pushing for the guidelines to be liberalized. They pump millions of dollars into the sport, and would love nothing more than to be allowed to come up with revolutionary new designs that lead to vastly improved performances. But as things stand now, their hands are largely tied. Faster times come in tiny increments. The suits remain an important element for any swimmer's performance, but the impact is nothing like it was during the rubber era. "I think a lot of our sport is just mental," U.S. Olympian Hunter Armstrong said. "It's just about feeling good in the water." The manufacturers are desperate to do more. "When the pushback came



after those world championships in Rome, (World Aquatics) freaked out and they said we need rules quickly, we need to do something," said Greg Steyger, the head of innovation and design at Italian-based arena. "Unfortunately, that was in such a hurry that those rules are not the right rules for sure. But they've stuck to them,

they've defended them, they've done everything to keep them." Rachel Ripley, the director of merchandising at TYR, said her company is constantly lobbying for an easing of the restrictions. "It's been pretty status quo for 15 years," she said. "There hasn't really been much push or shake-up. It's something that I think we constantly talk

about, but it requires more than just the manufacturers to make that change happen." Even with rules as they are, the swimsuit manufacturers say they are still able to come up with innovative creations that can make a crucial difference in a sport where races are often decided by mere hundredths of a second. For Speedo, the new Fastskin LZR Intent and LZR Valor suits were developed through a partnership with Lamora, a company better known for protective coatings that are used to extend the life of satellites in outer space. Then there's TYR's Vanzo suit, which is made with a frictionless yarn that evolved from military uses, most notably in socks worn by infantry soldiers who do a lot of marching. Not to be outdone, arena has come up with the

POWERSKIN Primo that it bills as the "world's first tensoelastic suit," made of a trademarked fabric known as Hyperforce that supposedly provides the maximum amount of body compression - a key element in buoyancy - but far more flexibility than previous designs. "You're talking about maybe a 1% difference in a race," said Olympic gold medalist Ryan Murphy, America's top men's backstroke swimmer and a longtime Speedo-endorsed athlete. "Any little thing we can get to improve times, improve body position in the water, assist your technique, you're really looking for that." Most swimmers seem content with the state of affairs, though everyone is looking for ways to go a bit faster to gain that little extra edge. "The innovation should be in other areas, like maybe the

starting blocks," Italian swimmer Nicolò Martinenghi said. Sarah Sjöström of Sweden certainly had no complaints about the polyurethane suits allowed back in 2009, which she wore while winning the 100-meter butterfly in a world-record time a few weeks before her 16th birthday. But she also remembers the downside. "The biggest stress for me back then and as well as other swimmers was like getting the suit on," Sjöström said. "It's a lot easier nowadays to put on the suit, but they still give a good compression, which is really important to have a good feeling in the water." She said the current guidelines also keep prices more affordable for a wider range of swimmers, though a high-tech female suit can still go for around \$650.

INDIA BEGIN WOMEN'S ASIA CUP DEFENCE WITH CLASH AGAINST PAK

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

The Women's Asia Cup is set for a blockbuster start when defending champions India take on arch-foes Pakistan in a prime-time clash here on Friday, with the eight competing teams hoping to firm up their combinations ahead of the T20 World Cup in October. Harmanpreet Kaur's India are the team to beat going into this iteration of the Asia Cup, having won the competition three out of four times in the T20 version and each of the four times in 50-overs format. Additionally, India are also the most successful team in the Women's Asia Cup T20 with 17 wins in 20 matches. They beat Bangladesh in the final of the last edition in 2022.



May when the hosts blanked them 3-0. Smriti Mandhana's rich form with the bat will be India's greatest weapon at the top of the order but the biggest gain from recent all-format outings has been the way their bowling has shaped up, with pacers and spinners putting on a combined show. India pacer Pooja Vastrakar's eight wickets across three outings against South Africa indicate her form but additionally, Radha Yadav's successful return to the mix of

spinners has been encouraging. The spin attack also includes Deepti Sharma, Sajeevan Sajana and the sprightly Shreyanka Patil. Even though Pakistan retained Nida Dar as skipper for the Asia Cup, the squad has undergone significant overhaul since the debacle in England. Three players, Iram Javed, Omaira Sohail, Syeda Aroob Shah, who have not played any matches so far this year, were included with the uncapped Tasnia Rubab

while six others were dropped. **Nepal, UAE look to make their mark** Also placed in Group A are Nepal and the United Arab Emirates who will face off here earlier in the day at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium. The top two teams from the group will play in the semifinals. While Nepal are returning to the competition for the first time since 2016, UAE are set

for their second consecutive appearance and will be high on confidence having won more than half of their matches this year. The lack of game-time will be a concern for Nepal whose last outing was in mid February when they lost to Malaysia in the Asian Cricket Council's Women's Premier Cup. UAE were last seen in action in May when they lost in the T20 World Cup Qualifier semifinal to Sri Lanka. Teams (from):

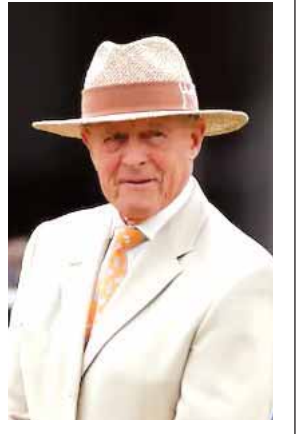
India: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Pooja Vastrakar, Deepti Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, D Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil, Sajeevan Sajana. **Pakistan:** Nida Dar (c), Aliya Riaz, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Gull Feroza, Iram Javed, Muneeba Ali, Najiha Alvi (wk), Nashra Sandhu, Omaira Sohail, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah, Tasnia Rubab, Tuba Hassan.

Match starts at 7pm (IST) **Nepal:** Indu Barma (capt), Sita Rana Magar, Rajmati Airee, Rubina Chhetry, Dolly Bhatta, Mamta Chaudhary, Kabita Joshi, Kabita Kunwar, Kritika Marasini, Puja Mahato, Bindu Rawal, Roma Thapa, Sabnam Rai, Samjana Khadka, Kajal Sreshtha (wk). **UAE:** Esha Oza (c), Theertha Satish (wk), Emily Thomas, Samaira Dharnidharka, Kavisha Egodage, Lavanya Keny, Khushi Sharma, Indhujha Nandakumar, Rinitha Rajith, Rishitha Rajith, Vaishnavi Mahesh, Suraksha Kotte, Heena Hotchandani, Mehak Thakur, Rithika Rajith.

Geoffrey Boycott undergoes successful surgery

PTI ■ LONDON

England cricketing great Sir Geoffrey Boycott has undergone a successful surgery to remove a tumour from his throat, his daughter Emma said. The former England batter had undergone extensive chemotherapy for the same in 2002. But in May, the 83-year-old learnt his cancer had returned. "Just to let everyone know my Father, Geoffrey, has successfully come out of surgery this evening after a 3 hour operation to remove his throat cancer. "Yet to see him but surgeon says it went well. He asked that I post an update," Boycott's daughter Emma tweeted from the cricketer's account on Wednesday. In his illustrious career spanning 1964 to 1982, Boycott scored 100 first-class hundreds while amassing over 8,000 runs in 108 Tests at an average of nearly 48. Former Australia player and head coach Darren Lehmann reacted to the news along with ex-England players Alan Butcher and Michael Vaughan, who posted a red heart on X. "Thanks for the update, please pass on our thoughts to the whole family and



glad the surgery went well," Lehmann wrote, while Butcher wrote, 'Great news'. While announcing his diagnosis last month Boycott had said, "In the last few weeks, I have had an MRI Scan, CT Scan, a PET Scan, and two biopsies, and it has now been confirmed I have throat cancer and will require an operation." "From past experience, I realize that to overcome cancer a second time I will need excellent medical treatment and quite a bit of luck, and even if the operation is successful, every cancer patient knows they have to live with the possibility of it returning. So I will just get on with it and hope for the best," he added.



Quintal becomes 1st Indian rider to compete at World Superbike

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Rider Kavin Quintal is all set to make a historic debut at the WorldSBK SSP300 competitions and become the first Indian rider to participate in a World Superbike Championship. Thanks to the opportunity provided by the Irish team, Team#109 Retro Traffic Kawasaki and its management company Gaman Racing Global Service, Quintal's entry was accepted for the SSP event in the fourth round which begins at Most, Czech Republic on Friday. SBK, founded in 1988, is an event for heavily modified production sports motorcycles and consists of a series of rounds held on permanent racing facilities. The 19-year Chennai star, Quintal, will be filling in for the Irish team's main rider, Spaniard Daniel Mokeda, who suffered an injury after leading the Supersport 300 class, in an unfortunate crash that paved the way for the Irish team to rope in the

Indian. Quintal, a world-class rider, is currently competing in the European Stock Championship within the FIM JuniorGP and in the Asia Road Racing Championship. In the three rounds of JuniorGP, Quintal had a top-10 finish. As a rider, who took his baby steps at 13, he was the youngest to earn points in the Indian National events. He went on to win the Talent Cup twice, in 2021 and 2023, in India. Later, after the Asia Talent Cup events, he soon blossomed into a mature rider, moving to Europe. "It is a great opportunity that I will try to learn and enjoy at the same time. I will be able to show my maximum level together with a great team that surrounds this structure. I would like to thank the team for this opportunity," Quintal said. The practice sessions will be on Friday followed by a race each on Saturday and Sunday at Most, Czech Republic.

Mandaviya to inaugurate phase 2 of talent identification programme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Making use of the buzz around the upcoming Paris Olympics, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya will inaugurate the second phase of the government's ambitious Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) programme here on Friday. The first phase of KIRTI was launched by Mandaviya's predecessor in the post, Anurag Thakur, in

Chandigarh on March 12. KIRTI aims to conduct 20 lakh assessments across the country throughout the year to identify promising athletes through notified Talent Assessment Centres. A scouting and assessment programme of this scale is a first in India. KIRTI's athlete-centric programme is conspicuous by its transparent selection methodology based on Information Technology, it



was stated in a press release. Data analytics based on Artificial Intelligence are being used to predict the sporting acumen of an aspiring athlete, the release said. In its first phase, out of 3,62,683 registrations across 70 centres, close to 51,000 assessments in 28 states and union territories have been made. Maharashtra and Haryana, two states which have always done well in Khelo India meets, have had the maximum

number of assessments - 9168 and 4820 -- respectively. Assam was third with 4703 assessments. Evaluation of aspiring athletes has happened in 11 disciplines - archery, athletics, badminton, boxing, football, hockey, kabaddi, kho-kho, volleyball, weightlifting and wrestling. Maximum assessments have happened in athletics (13804) and football (13483). Mandaviya will lay emphasis

on the project that aims to achieve 20 lakh assessment in the financial year 2024-25 by "onboarding all states and treating the district as a unit of assessment". The press release said this is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "vision to take sports to every child in the country through mass participation and ultimately achieve excellence through Khelo India's structured pyramidal programmes".

We are on way to making it to next Olympics: CFI secretary general Maninder Pal Singh

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Cycling Federation of India (CFI) secretary general Maninder Pal Singh on Thursday said the COVID-19 pandemic dashed their hopes of participation at Paris Olympics but asserted they "have plans in place" for 2028 Los Angeles Games. The country has won three medals in cycling at the Asian Games but is yet to see representation at the Olympics. When asked about India's failure to qualify for cycling at the Paris Games, Maninder said COVID-19 affected their plans during the qualification campaign. "Cycling is not a sport that you can equate to others when it comes to Olympic qualification. It takes two and a half years to qualify for the Games. Besides taking part in the qualifiers, one needs to



attain points from events of various classes," he told PTI in an interaction arranged by HCL. "This year, we were hopeful of our riders qualifying. But, because of COVID, events in Asia took a hit, unlike Europe, where the riders took the required points to qualify. "Nonetheless, we are well on our way to making it in the next Olympics (in Los

Angeles). We have our plans in place and are both hopeful and confident of qualifying for the first time." Maninder further explained the challenges faced by the sport in the country and said infrastructure has a massive role to play in preparing cyclists. "Cycling alone cannot thrive on its riders, but it is hugely dependent on its

infrastructure, not only the equipment but also the coaches. And, it's not easy to get since the infrastructure is very expensive. "About 4-5 years back, there were some velodromes that were not being utilised due to some problems. While Chennai already has one, there's one coming up in Kolkata and also one in the state of Odisha. Currently, we have about 16-17 velodromes in the country," Maninder was in the city on Thursday to launch a cyclothon event, an initiative of the CFI to promote the sport in the country. Besides the cyclothon, he affirmed that plans were in place to produce certified coaches along with some talent hunt programmes. "Other than cyclothon, we have a huge programme in place for the coaches' development.

FIFA RANKINGS

India remain on 124th position, toppers Argentina consolidate position

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Success-starved India held on to the 124th position in the FIFA men's rankings released on Thursday, even as reigning world champions and Copa America winners Argentina strengthened their grip at the top of the pecking order. In the FIFA rankings released in June, the Indian men's national football team dropped down three places in the list after its failure to qualify for the third round of the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers after losses to Qatar and Afghanistan. Since December last year, India have been sliding down. They had broken into the top 100 last year, with a best ranking of 99, but since then it has been a downward spiral. In Asia, India remained on the

22nd position, behind the likes of Lebanon, Palestine, and Vietnam. Having successfully defended their Copa America crown, Argentina (1st) tighten their grip at the top of the table. France (2nd) remained their closest challengers, after reaching the semi-finals of EURO 2024. Newly crowned European champions Spain (3rd, up 5) have yet more reason to celebrate after hauling themselves into the top three of the ranking, while beaten finalists England (4th, up 1) were just behind the leading pack, having leapfrogged Brazil (5th, down 1). Belgium (6th, down 3) now find themselves outside the top five, with the Netherlands (7th) and Portugal (8th, down 2) just behind them.

Prannoy focussed on increasing speed ahead of Paris Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

His body has been ravaged by a spate of illnesses, the most recent being a bout of chikungunya, but seasoned Indian badminton player H S Prannoy is unwilling to let it come in the way of a dream Olympic debut that is happening a tad late in his career. He is focussed on building his stamina for the grind that awaits him in Paris later this month and helping him is his coach and former player RMV Gurusaidutt. The 32-year-old Kerala shuttler, a 2022 Thomas Cup title winner and a world and Asian Games bronze-medallist, has battled past a chronic stomach

disorder, a nagging back injury, and more recently a week-long bout of the mosquito-borne viral disease. "The preparations that we started after the Australia Open, those are on point, we are on the right track," Gurusaidutt told PTI. "The best thing about Prannoy in this entire journey is that though he was struggling, he was showing up for training and giving his best. Of course now, since he had another rough patch, it is not easy to get into the winning momentum," he explained. But Gurusaidutt is confident nonetheless and does not feel that the latest illness will trigger "too many changes" in



Prannoy's training routine. "He has been that kind of a player who steps up on big occasions. He's done that multiple times over the last three or four years. So, as a coach, me and Gopi sir (national coach Pullela Gopichand) have that

confidence in him." Following the high of his world championship bronze in 2023, Prannoy was laid low by another stomach disorder, a condition which was similar to the chronic acid reflux problem that he had suffered in the past.

Such was complexity of his illness that it was difficult for him to have a meal without wanting to throw up later. The result was six first-round exits and a semifinal and a quarterfinal appearance this year. But he has persevered. Gurusaidutt said the coaching team has introduced some specific drills to address the minor issues, mainly related to speed and enduring long rallies. "We wanted to introduce a few programs. Gopi sir thought he needed to play longer matches...Based on the last 3-4 tournaments, I particularly felt people were trying to push him at the pace in terms of making him move quickly. "...There is not too much time

for him to get space between the shots. So that was something that we thought we could make it easier for him in training. Otherwise, it was about getting him confidence, and getting his fitness levels up. Those were the major aspects," he said.

Elaborating on the need to step up his pace, Gurusaidutt said, "...We wanted work on it to prepare him for somebody playing some sharp shots, and cross-courts. So, it was meant to make him feel comfortable for those things.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Raju Oraon, father-Birsa Oraon, Resident of village - Tuimu Banjari, Police Station - Serengdag, Lohardaga. My Army No. is 4289030M. That Birsa Oraon is my father whose actual date of birth is 01.01.1944. That Pyari Devi is my wife whose actual date of birth is 01.08.1995. That the date of birth of my father is recorded as 12.12.1952 in the service book which is wrong, it should be corrected to 01.01.1944. That the date of birth of my wife is recorded as 05.01.1993 in the service book instead of that, 01.08.1995 should be corrected, for this purpose I am editing this affidavit. Vide Affidavit No. 7529, dated -18 July 2024.

CCL Central Coalfields Limited
"A Miniratna Company"
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)
NOTICE
All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd. www.coalindia.in / respective Subsidiary Company (CCL, www.centralcoalfields.in). CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in> in addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in>