



OPINION 6 INDIA BACKS PHILIPPINES IN SOUTH CHINA SEA STANDOFF

BUDGET 2024-25

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ASALANKA TO LEAD LANKA IN T20I SERIES AGAINST INDIA 11 SPORTS



LESS TAX, MORE JOBS

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

Reaching out to the middle class, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday announced major income tax relief from which four crore salaried individuals and pensioners stand to benefit. She also made it known that the Government will undertake a comprehensive review of the Income Tax Act. Presenting Modi 3.0 Government's primary focus is on employment generation, skilling, MSMEs, and the middle class," stated Sitharaman, the first FM to have presented seventh consecutive Budget.



Graphic: Satish C. Jakhmola

ahead." "In this Budget, our primary focus is on employment generation, skilling, MSMEs, and the middle class," stated Sitharaman, the first FM to have presented seventh consecutive Budget.

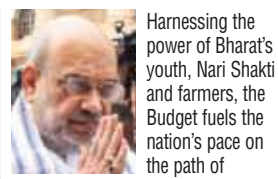
Elaborating upon the relief for the middle class, Sitharaman pointed to the hike in standard deduction — a flat deduction from total salary earned by an employee in a year before calculating applicable



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

— RAHUL GANDHI

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



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

— AMIT SHAH

The Home Minister wrote on X with hashtag #BudgetForViksitBharat

Big push to job creation

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Modi terms Budget visionary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

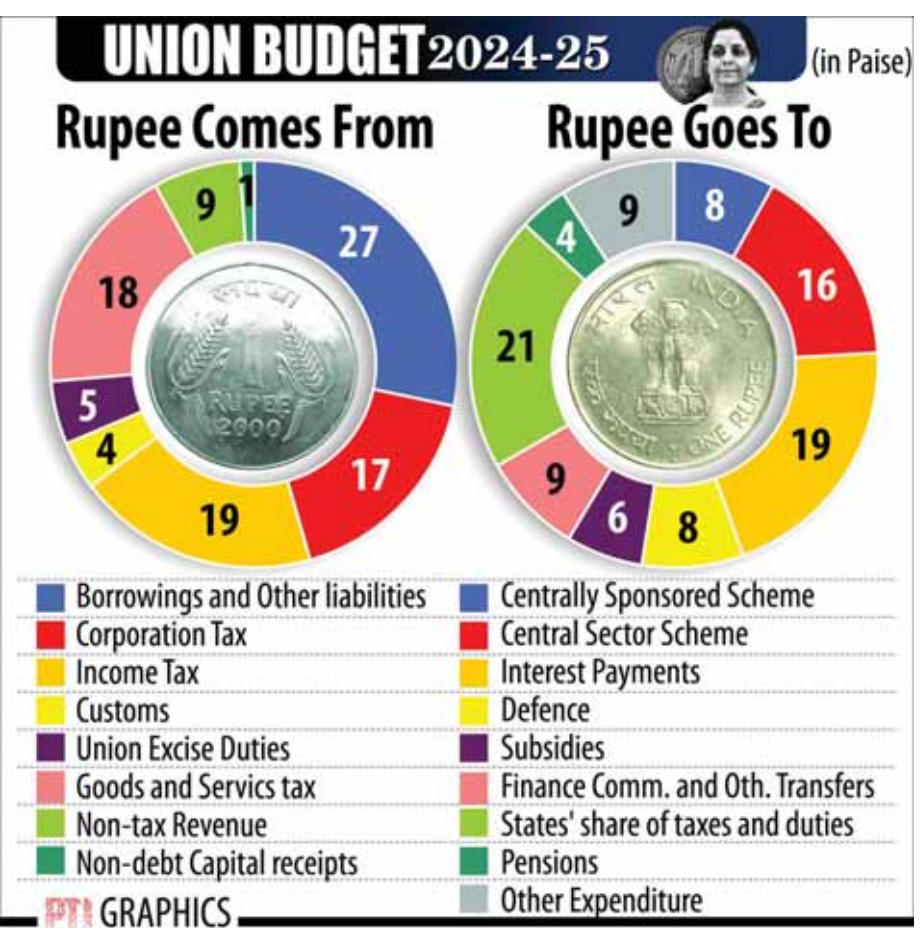
Parliament. Modi lauded the Budget's sharp focus on the youth, backward sections, women and middle class as also on manufacturing and infrastructure sectors, and asserted that the proposed employment-linked incentive schemes will create crores of new jobs. "This visionary Budget will uplift and empower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



SC rejects plea for NEET retest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



Bihar, Andhra get special package

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

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



Bihar Chief Minister NITISH KUMAR



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister CHANDRABABU NAIDU

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

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

Advertisement for LIC's Amritbaal insurance plan for children. Features: BADE SAPNO KA RAKHE KHAYAL LICKI AMRITBAAL. Insurance Plan for Children. Product's Key Features: Attractive Guaranteed Addition throughout the Policy Term, Maturity age between 18-25 Years, Option to choose Single/Limited premium payments. Plan is also available online for sale. A Non-Linked, Non-Participating, Individual, Savings, Life Insurance Plan. Download LIC Mobile App, Visit: licindia.in, Call Centre Services (022) 6827 6827. For details, contact your Agent/Nearest LIC Branch or SMS YOUR CITY NAME to 56767474. Our WhatsApp No. 8976862090. Har Pal Aapke Saath. LIC India Forever | IRDAI Regn No.: 512. BEWARE OF SPIRITOUS PHONE CALLS AND FICTITIOUS/FRAUDULENT OFFERS. IRDAI is not involved in activities like selling insurance policies, announcing bonus or investment of premiums. Public receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint. For more details on risk factors, terms and conditions, please read sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale.

CII welcomes Union Budget 2024-25, emphasizing Rural Development and MSMEs

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has lauded the Union Budget 2024-25 as a growth-oriented and inclusive budget. Addressing key sectors such as MSMEs, agriculture, infrastructure, skills, technology, and ease of doing business, the budget has been praised for its comprehensive approach to fostering economic resilience and growth.

The initiatives for MSMEs are expected to drive innovation, job creation, and sustainable growth, reinforcing the backbone of the economy. The industry body has also commended the government for its plans for the holistic development of states like Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh. The four expressway and bridge projects, with a combined worth of ₹26,000 crores for Bihar, are seen as crucial investments that will spur regional growth. Additionally, the budget's emphasis on tourism, including the development of the Vishwanath and Mahabodhi temples in Gaya and the rejuvenation of Nalanda as a tourist destination, is expected to significantly boost the sector.

The abolition of the Angel Tax and the rationalization of taxation for charitable organizations, TDS, reassessment and search cases, and the capital gains tax regime were welcomed by CII. The three schemes under the Prime Minister's package, focusing on employment-linked incentives through EPFO enrollment, are anticipated to benefit first-time employees and support employers.

CII has also expressed appreciation for the budget's provision for reconstruction and rehabilitation support to states affected by extreme weather events. The launch of the Critical Minerals Mission, aimed at enhancing domestic production and recycling of critical minerals, has been another noteworthy highlight.

In a significant move for youth employment, the budget introduces a new initiative to provide internship opportunities for 1 crore youth over the next five years in 500 leading companies, enhancing skill development and employability in the manufacturing sector.

S.K. Behera, Chairman of CII Eastern Region and Vice Chairman and MD of RSB Transmission Pvt Ltd, praised the government's Purvodaya initiative, which focuses on the all-round development of eastern states. He also acknowledged the budget's emphasis on tourism development in the eastern region's heritage sites and appreciated the allocation of ₹1.48 lakh crore for education, employment, and skill development, which aims to elevate opportunities for the youth and improve workforce capabilities.

SAIL-CET celebrates 43rd Foundation Day with Community Initiatives

PNS : RANCHI

Centre for Engineering and Technology (CET) of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) celebrated its 43rd Foundation Day with a series of vibrant celebrations and community-focused initiatives.

In the spirit of community engagement, CET organized a fortnight-long series of activities focusing on artistic skill sets of children and ladies of CET family and also on health & environmental awareness. Notable highlight was the blood donation camp held in collaboration with Sadar Hospital, Ranchi. The mission garnered overwhelming response from CET family & Ranchi based units of SAIL. During this august celebration, National flag hoisting ceremony was held on the roof-top of CET office in Ispat Bhawan by A.K. Singh, Director (Technical, Projects & Raw materials) with participation of Executive Directors, Chief General Managers & collective of Ranchi based units of SAIL. CET also organized a tree plantation drive at Ispat Executives Hostel, which was inaugurated by the Director (Technical, Projects and Raw materials) in the presence of EDs & senior officials of Ranchi based units of SAIL, furthering CET's commitment to a greener future.

From Runway to Boardroom: Indian Models turned Entrepreneurs

BY RACHNA TIWARI



The dazzling world of fashion has long been a launchpad for careers, but increasingly, Indian models are stepping off the runway and into the boardroom. These former faces of brands are leveraging their experience, fame, and business acumen to become successful entrepreneurs.

One such example is the vivacious actress and former model, Priyanka Chopra Jonas. Her production company, Purple Pebble Pictures, focuses on empowering female-driven narratives and has already made a splash in the Indian film industry. Purple Pebble Pictures has produced several critically acclaimed films and web series that highlight diverse stories and underrepresented voices, cementing Chopra Jonas's position as a formidable force in both Bollywood and Hollywood.

Another entrepreneur making waves is Anusha Dandekar, who has transformed her fashion background into a successful career in sustainable clothing with her brand, 'House of Nomad'. Dandekar's brand is known for its chic, eco-friendly designs that appeal to the modern, environmentally-conscious consumer, blending style with sustainability in an innovative way.

Models aren't just venturing into fashion. Former Miss India Neha Dhupia co-founded a social networking app for mothers, 'Freedom to Feed,' aimed at creating a supportive community for new moms navigating the challenges of motherhood. The app provides resources, advice, and a platform for mothers to share their experiences, making it a valuable tool for its users. Meanwhile, Lara Dutta, another Miss India titleholder, has launched a production company focused on creating digital content. Her company, Bheegi Basanti Entertainment, has produced a range of content from web series to short films, showcasing her versatility and keen understanding of the digital entertainment landscape.

These diverse ventures highlight the range of industries attracting model-turned-entrepreneurs, from tech startups to media production, and underscore the multifaceted talents of these women. So what's behind this trend? Experts point to several factors. The modelling industry equips individuals with skills like brand building, communication, and audience engagement – all crucial for entrepreneurial success. Models learn to represent brands and connect with audiences effectively, which translates into a keen understanding of market dynamics and consumer behavior. Furthermore, models often cultivate a strong work ethic and the discipline required to navigate the demanding world of fashion, which translates well to the challenges of launching a business. The rigorous schedules, constant travel, and high-pressure environments of the fashion world instill resilience and adaptability, qualities essential for any entrepreneur.

Social media also plays a significant role. Models often have established online followings, providing a ready-made customer base and platform to promote their ventures. Actresses like Alia Bhatt, who leveraged her social media presence to launch her own line of eco-friendly clothing, 'Ed-a-Mamma,' exemplify this strategy. Bhatt's brand focuses on sustainable children's clothing, combining her passion for the environment with her influence as a celebrity to drive business success. Social media allows these entrepreneurs to maintain a direct connection with their audience, receive immediate feedback, and create a loyal customer base from the outset.

DC holds Tourism Committee meeting

VINOD PRASAD: LOHARDAGA

The meeting of the executive body of the District Tourism Promotion Committee was held in the Collectorate Auditorium on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Dr. Waghmare Prasad Krishna. Meanwhile, various points were discussed in the meeting and necessary instructions were given. While giving instructions, DC Dr. Waghmare Prasad Krishna said that applications for vacancies for sanitation workers and security personnel at notified tourist places should be received within a week. Besides, instructions were given to prepare estimates and work on information boards related to I Love Lohardaga and other signages at tourist places.

Similarly, instructions were given to notify the Runia-Jhunia martyrdom site in Tiko tourist spot of Kudu block and the Buddhist monastery of Kairo block. In

Corporate Training at NML to revolutionise mineral processing sector

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The Mineral Processing Department at CSIR - National Metallurgical Laboratory (NML) inaugurated a four-day corporate training program on Mineral Characterization, Beneficiation, and Agglomeration (MCBA-2024). The event brought together executive trainees from various plants of the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL).



In his welcome address, Sandip Ghosh Chowdhury, Director of CSIR-NML, emphasized the significance of such training programs in fostering innovation and enhancing quality in both the industry and environmental sectors. He highlighted the critical role of mineral processing in India's industrial landscape and the importance of adopting new technologies for improved recovery and sustainability in the mineral sector.

S. Sivaprasad, Head of Human Resources, also welcomed the participants and underscored the potential for new technical collaborations and industrial partnerships to drive technological advancements in mineral processing. He expressed optimism about the future direction of technological cooperation through such cooperative efforts. Shobhana De, Head of

the Mineral Processing Department, reiterated the essential synergy between science and industry. She stated, "Corporate training programs bridge the gap between science and industry, as neither can progress effectively without the other." Ranjit Kumar Singh, the program coordinator, outlined the schedule of the training, which runs from July 23 to July 26. Each day will feature two sessions: the morning session will consist

of lectures by scientists on relevant topics, while the afternoon session will include practical demonstrations at a large-scale experimental plant (pilot plant). The successful organization of the training program involved significant contributions from the Mineral Processing Department's scientists, including Manoj Kumar Mohanta, Rajendra Kumar Rath, Ari Vidyadhar, Ajit Swain, Ganesh Chavadi, Abhishek Kumar, Kalicharan Hembram, and Abhijeet Manasingh, along with all the technical officers. The MCBA-2024 training program promises to enhance the technical skills of the participants and foster a deeper understanding of the latest advancements in mineral processing, ultimately contributing to the growth and development of the industry.

Sanskar Bharti Ranchi honours teachers at their doorsteps

PNS : RANCHI

On behalf of the Ranchi Mahanagar unit of Sanskar Bharti, an all India institution of art and literature, the Gurus were honoured at their doorsteps in Ranchi.



On this occasion, Ranchi's famous theatre director Kedar Pandey, senior litterateur and poet Hareram Tripathi Chetan and the famous artist of Ghazal and light singing in the world of music Sujan Pandit were worshiped with Rori, sandalwood and lamps and were honoured with shawls, flowers, coconuts and fruits after performing aarti.

The three Gurus described this initiative of Sanskar Bharti Ranchi Mahanagar to keep the Guru-Shishya tradition intact as a praiseworthy work and also said that such works by Sanskar Bharti Ranchi, the carrier of values, will help in establishing social harmony. They gave their best wishes to the members of Sanskar Bharti.

On this occasion, on behalf of Sanskar Bharti Ranchi, President of Sanskar Bharti Jharkhand Province Sushil Ankan, Drama Coordinator Rakesh Raman, and Vice

President of Sanskar Bharti Ranchi Mahanagar Ashutosh Prasad, Secretary Shashikala Pauranik, Treasurer Anup Kumar Majumdar and Managing Committee Member Kumkum Gaur were present. On the request of the members, music guru Sujan Pandit gave voice to ghazals and songs and brought alive the colours of his singing in the seventies. Even today, the same elasticity, flow, resonance and continuity of practice were visible in his voice, which was there in his initial singing.

Orientation Program launched for new batch of Bokaro Diksha

PNS : BOKARO



The orientation program for a new batch of 120 trainees has commenced at the "Bokaro Diksha" center, a joint venture between Bokaro Steel Plant's CSR and Dalmia Bharat Foundation. The initiative aims to develop the skills of youth from the peripheral villages of Bokaro, preparing them for dignified employment and self-employment opportunities.

Past batches of "Bokaro Diksha" have seen students secure promising employment opportunities in reputable institutions after completing their short-term courses. During the orientation program, alumni shared detailed accounts of their placements.

The curriculum at Bokaro Diksha aligns with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) standards. The courses offered include Sewing Machine Operator, Assistant Electrician, Solar Technician, Customer Relationship Management, and General Duty Assistant. Additionally, Bokaro Diksha is inviting applications from new students for trades in Electronics, Mechanical, and Fitter.

The 2024 budget has garnered positive reactions from key industry leaders. Amarendra Prakash, Chairman of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL),

SAIL Chairman praises Budget's focus on infrastructure Focus

'Budget to propel steel sector to forefront of India's infrastructure growth'



PNS : BOKARO

Reflecting on the government's strategic financial allocations, Chairman Prakash lauded the decision to maintain robust capital expenditure (capex) for infrastructure development, consistent with the interim budget. Prakash emphasized that the government's commitment to enhancing urban housing, rural infrastructure, and road connectivity, along with developing various economic corridors, is expected to significantly boost domestic steel consumption. He highlighted that these initiatives would create a ripple effect, benefiting multiple sectors and contributing to

the nation's overall economic prosperity.

The SAIL Chairman underscored that the focus on building resilient infrastructure aligns with the steel industry's growth trajectory, ensuring sustained demand for steel products. This, according to Prakash, will not only drive steel consumption but also create a multiplier effect across various sectors, thereby reinforcing the country's economic framework.

Industry stakeholders have echoed Prakash's sentiments, acknowledging that the budget's infrastructure thrust is pivotal for economic recovery and growth.

Analysts predict that the emphasis on infrastructure will generate employment, stimulate investment, and catalyze advancements in allied industries. The budget's strategic allocations underscore the government's commitment to long-term economic resilience and development, fostering a conducive environment for industrial growth and innovation. As the country navigates its path to economic recovery, the steel industry, buoyed by the government's policies, is set to play a critical role in shaping India's future infrastructure landscape.

Deputy Development Commissioner Manish Kumar highlighted the critical need for expeditious completion of pending schemes to ensure that benefits reach the intended beneficiaries. He stressed that any schemes hindered by site disputes should be fast-tracked through coordination with local MLAs for prompt site selection. The meeting was attended by various departmental officers, reflecting a collaborative effort to streamline the implementation of these vital schemes. The officers were reminded of the strict timelines and the necessity for adherence to ensure efficient governance and optimal use of resources.

In conclusion, today's review meeting underscores the administration's unwavering commitment to the effective and timely execution of developmental schemes. The directives issued aim to resolve existing bottlenecks and accelerate progress, enhancing public welfare initiatives and improving the quality of life for residents in the region. Continuous monitoring and follow-ups by the district administration will be essential in achieving these objectives efficiently.

Administration ramps up efforts to clear pending schemes

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a significant development, a review meeting was convened today to assess the progress of schemes funded by the MLA head and DC bill, following directives from District Magistrate cum Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal. The meeting, chaired by Deputy Development Commissioner Manish Kumar, was aimed at addressing delays and ensuring the timely execution of essential projects. The discussion centered on reviewing

pending schemes from the fiscal years 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23. Kumar emphasized the urgency of completing these schemes and submitting the necessary DC bills without further delay. For the fiscal year 2024-25, he set a deadline of July 31, 2024, for the submission of estimates for recommended schemes to the District Office. Among the key issues addressed was the completion of pending schemes. For the Baharagora Assembly Constituency, the immediate completion of two schemes from FY 2021-22

was mandated. In the Ghatasila Assembly Constituency, four schemes from the same fiscal year are to be finalized promptly. The Jugsalai Assembly Constituency was instructed to complete one scheme from FY 2021-22, with a required site change. In Jamshedpur East, the Junior Engineer reported that sites for two schemes from FY 2021-22 have been selected, with work expected to be completed soon. The meeting also focused on resolving site disputes that have caused



delays. Schemes affected by these disputes must be expedited by obtaining recommendations from local MLAs and selecting alternative sites. In terms of municipal and block-level responsibilities, Mango Municipal Corporation has been directed to submit DC bills for seven schemes from FY 2021-22. The JNAC was given a deadline of two days

to submit DC bills for eight out of ten pending schemes. The Block Development Officer in Musabani has been instructed to refund the amount for one scheme, while Potka is also required to refund the amount for one scheme. Furthermore, the Executive Engineers for both the Rural Development Special Division and NREP in Jamshedpur were directed to complete 50% of the Parliament Fund schemes. Deputy Development Commissioner Manish Kumar highlighted the critical need for expeditious completion of pending schemes to ensure that benefits reach the intended beneficiaries. He stressed that any schemes hindered by site disputes should be fast-tracked through coordination with local MLAs for prompt site selection. The meeting was attended by various departmental officers, reflecting a collaborative effort to streamline the implementation of these vital schemes. The officers were reminded of the strict timelines and the necessity for adherence to ensure efficient governance and optimal use of resources.

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CM distributes appointment letters among 183 newly recruited employees

PNS : RANCHI
Chief Minister Hemant Soren today attended the appointment letter distribution ceremony of 183 candidates selected in various departments of the State government for the posts of Assistant Town Planner, Junior Engineer (Mechanical), Motor Vehicle Inspector, Mining Inspector, Junior Engineer (Electrical), Street Light Inspector, Pipeline Inspector under the state-sponsored PMAY (Urban) scheme as the chief guest here.

various departments with the aim of accelerating the development of the state. The CM said that some appointments have been made by Jharkhand Public Service Commission and some by Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission. The state government has already provided appointment letters to various posts and the candidates who were left out are being given appointment letters today.

On the occasion, the CM said that today again with the same positive energy and enthusiasm, appointment letters are being provided by the state government to 183 newly appointed candidates selected in

"I am confident that the newly appointed candidates who are taking appointment letters today will become an important link in the all-round development of the state. Today the Town Planner has been appointed. His effort should be to ensure the all-round development of the city. Based on



Chief Minister Hemant Soren gives an appointment letter to a selected candidate during a programme at Project building in Ranchi on Tuesday. PNS

your wisdom and experience, the cities of the state will get a new direction. You

should work honestly and demonstrate your ability by doing better work. If you do

better work in the development of the state, the government will honour you.

The state government will honour not only those selected from UPSC but also those selected from JPSC and JSSC for good work," he said. The CM said that the mining activity in Jharkhand is different from other states. The role of the Mining Inspector in the state will prove to be important. Mining activities take place in more than half of the 24 districts of the state. It is the moral responsibility of all of us that mining work should be done in a systematic manner and not in a chaotic manner. There is a need to take the subject of mining work seriously. Certainly, in the coming times, we should do mining work in a systematic manner, so that there is no danger to life and property here and the people of the state

can get the benefit of mineral wealth.

The CM told the candidates selected in the Water Resources Department that Jharkhand is a hilly area. The geographical structure here is completely different. I have been insisting that water should be delivered to every farm. The state government is moving forward with new technology and new schemes, but its speed will have to be increased further. Only then will we be able to deliver water to all the farms. He said that migration from the state will stop only when the target of delivering water to every farm is achieved. The state government is constantly trying to make the farmers here self-reliant through farming.

appointed junior engineers, light inspectors and pipeline inspectors that roads are built every day and during the construction of the road, the pipes of the water supply line burst. Thousands of gallons of water are wasted unnecessarily due to bursting of pipelines on the roads. Traffic is also disrupted. The government has to face criticism through various newspapers and social sites.

On this occasion, Ministers Champai Soren, Rameshwar Oraon, Satyanand Bhokta, Hafizul Hasan, Deepak Birua, Chief Secretary of the State L. Kiangte, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Avinash Kumar along with other senior officials and candidates who received appointment letters were present.

CM inaugurates Mudma Leprosy Asylum project under PMAY

Gifts houses to 256 special families, reiterates commitment to serve all sections of society



Chief Minister Hemant Soren felicitates people with Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY) scheme during inauguration of Mudma Leprosy Asylum project in Ranchi on Tuesday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI
Chief Minister Hemant Soren today formally inaugurated the newly constructed Mudma Kuchshram Project located near Sai City, Ranchi, state-sponsored under PMAY (Urban) scheme. On this occasion, the CM said that special families are getting the benefit of this project being launched today. This shelter has been built for a special group. The Chief Minister said that I would like this complex to be known as "Nirmal Awas". All the people present here today are already aware of this project. The CM said that it has always been the endeavour of our government that the voice of the government reaches every needy person, irrespective of the class or

community they belong to, whatever situation or circumstances they are living in, the public welfare schemes run by the government reach them. The CM said that his government constantly listens to the common people, understands them and also works for their development. He said that the state government will continue to do public welfare work with commitment in future also.

Soren said that today is a historic day. The state government has made a better effort. Hundreds of people are becoming owners of their homes today. They will live with their entire family in these newly built houses from today. The Chief Minister said that such welfare schemes are being started in different districts for



Chief Minister Hemant Soren addresses during the inauguration of Mudma Leprosy Asylum Project in Ranchi on Tuesday. PNS

special groups of families like you. With the hope that in the coming time, our government will be able to reduce the sufferings of people like you who are struggling to make a living.

The CM said that his government is responsible and sensitive towards the poor and the needy. Despite adverse challenges, public welfare works are being done continuously and will continue in the coming days. The CM said that the state government is working to give all classes and communities their rights.

The CM said that today is an auspicious day. It is raining heavily today. Till a few days ago, the farmers of the state were looking towards the sky as to when it would rain. They were looking worried about the abnormal

rain. The way the environment is indicating change, it seems that the coming time will be more challenging. He congratulated and wished all those who received the keys to their homes. The CM said that in the coming time, we will try to add more dimensions to this complex. Also, we will all try together to make the complex the most beautiful complex of the city.

On this occasion, Minister of Urban Development and Housing Department Hafizul Hasan, MLA Naveen Jaiswal, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Avinash Kumar, Urban Development Secretary Arwa Rajkumar, JG Ranchi Akhilesh Jha, City Administrator Ranchi Amit Kumar along with other senior officials and a large number of members of beneficiary families were present.

Assistant police personnel to continue agitation

PNS : RANCHI

The agitation of Assistant police personnel will continue, they announced on Friday. They said that if the demands agreed upon in the talks held with the Government on Monday are accepted in the Cabinet meeting to be held on July 24, then only they will end their agitation. Till the time the Government does not bring their demands to the cabinet, their agitation will continue. The Assistant police personnel, who were protesting in Morhabadi ground demanding adjustment in Jharkhand Police had gone out to surround the Chief Minister's residence on July 19. During this, Jharkhand Police had lathicharged them. The Assistant policemen were reinstated in 12 districts of the State, Garhwa, Palamu, Latehar, Chatra, Lohardaga, Gumla, Simdega, Khunti, East and West Singhbhum, Dumka and Giridih on an honorarium of Rs 10,000. Just a day ago on Monday the Assistant policemen, who were on strike for 22 days, had announced to end their protest. The meeting of MLAs with the police personnel was successful on Monday.

During the 6-hour long talks, an agreement was reached on a 30 percent increase in honorarium. Along with this, an agreement has been reached on a 1-year extension. An agreement has also been reached on reservation for the recruitment of Home Guards and Forest Guards.

'PM Janjati Unnat Gram Abhiyan for socio-economic condition of tribals'

Scheme will adopt saturation coverage for tribal families in tribal-dominated villages and aspiring districts of Jharkhand

PNS : RANCHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Union Budget in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday (July 23), announced comprehensive development plans for Eastern States.

Announcing the 'Purvodaya' scheme for enhancing the all-round development of the eastern region including Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, the FM said that the Centre will focus on human resource development, infrastructure growth and create generations of economic opportunity to fasten the government's aim of 'Viksit Bharat'. The finance minister told the House that the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Unnat Gram Abhiyan will be launched to improve the socio-economic condition of tribal communities. States such as Jharkhand which has large population of tribals will be benefited from the scheme. Jharkhand has nearly 26 per cent of tribal population along with five ST reserved LS seats and 28 Assembly seats reserved for tribals.

Sources said that as BJP has failed to win any ST seats in last general election and has also performed poorly in last Assembly election the announcement of new schemes is a step to woo tribals by BJP.

The Finance Minister told the House that the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Unnat Gram Abhiyan will be launched to improve the socio-economic condition of tribal communities. The scheme will adopt saturation coverage for tribal families in tribal-dominated villages and aspiring districts. This will cover 63,000 villages benefiting 5 crore tribal people. This will benefit the tribal community of Jharkhand. Also as the scheme aims at improving infrastructural development in aspirational districts, Jharkhand will be benefited as Jharkhand has nineteen aspirational districts.

On the other hand, proposals for land-related reforms and action have been made in the Union Budget 2023-25. This will benefit tribal-dominated states like Jharkhand. At the same time, land administration, urban planning, use and building bylaws will be improved in both rural and urban areas. All lands in rural areas will be assigned unique land parcel identification numbers. Land registry will be established in rural areas.

Apart from government announcing the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Unnat Gram Abhiyan to improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in the country it also increased the budgetary

allocation for the ministry concerned by nearly 70 per cent. The government has allocated Rs 13,000 crore to the tribal affairs ministry in the budget, up from Rs 7,605 crore in the previous financial year. An amount of Rs 6,399 crore has been set aside for establishing Eklavya model residential schools to provide quality education to tribal students in remote areas. However, the budgetary allocation for the "National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students" has decreased from Rs 230 crore in 2023-24 to Rs 165 crore in 2024-25.

The allocation for the "Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Minorities" has been increased from Rs 2,959.43 crore in 2023-24 to Rs 6,611.69 crore in 2024-25.

Financial support for the Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY) has been increased from Rs 300 crore in 2023-24 to Rs 1,000 crore in 2024-25. Under the PMAAGY, funds are provided to states and Union territories with notified ST populations for the development and welfare of tribal people to bridge gaps in sectors such as education, health, agriculture, skill development and employment-cum-income generation.

JMM terms Union Budget as 'Budget for Special Class'

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), on Tuesday, said that the general budget presented by Finance Minister Sitharaman is not made for the common people, but for the special people.

JMM Spokesperson Supriyo Bhattacharya said that this budget has come under the Prime Minister's chair bachao or power bachao scheme. "This budget is not for the Country at all. This budget shows how scared the Central Government is from itself. Due to this fear, special attention has been given to Andhra Pradesh. Along with this, the budget has also been focused on Bihar. Some attention has also been given to Odisha. This makes it seem as if the remaining 27 States are not even in this Country. BJP fought the recent elections without any issue only talked about communal things. The budget is also a reflection of that," he added. Bhattacharya said that the agriculture sector comes first in the budget. "In the previous budget, agriculture used to have 6.5 percent of the total amount. Today it has come down to 3.9 percent. There is no discussion of MSP in the budget. There was no discussion on this very important sector which fills the stomach. Only fruits and vegetables were discussed. The second important issue in the budget is employment. The Center presented the economic survey yesterday and said that the unemployment rate in the country is 3.2 percent.



But CMIE is an associate organization of the Government. This agency also reports to the Reserve Bank of India. This agency estimates that the unemployment rate in the Country has reached 9.2. This is a big confusion. No new job or Government job was even announced," he added.

The party Spokesperson also said that 30 lakh Government job positions are vacant in the Country. "There was no discussion regarding appointments on these. It was said in the budget that in the next 5 years, 1 lakh youth of the Country will be given permanent jobs in the big companies of the country and the salary will be Rs 5000. These will be permanent jobs. This means that every year only 20000 people will be given jobs and that too of Rs 5000. Those who have studied from IIT will also get jobs of Rs 5000. Those who have studied from ITI will also get jobs of Rs 5000. A lot of jobs can be created in the

tourism sector. But no discussion was held on this sector. This budget is like telling a cancer patient to wear a bandage whereas cancer can be cured through surgery," he added.

"When Finance Minister Sitharaman was reading the budget, she too was not able to understand what this budget was. There was no discussion on education. There was no discussion on health. If there was any discussion, it was on the fact that treatment will be expensive and gold will be cheap. People were told to buy as many mobiles as possible because its price has been reduced. There was no discussion on topics like inflation," said Bhattacharya.

The JMM leader said that this budget is just a document prepared without any thought and without any proper idea. He said that this will increase unemployment in the Country. The difficulties faced by farmers will increase, he added.

Publication of draft voter list on 25th July

CEO appeals to voters to check their names in the list

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Electoral Officer K. Ravi Kumar addressed a press conference organised for media representatives in the Election House in relation to the publication of the draft voter list to be held on 25th July under the second special summary revision program of the voter list going on in the state. He said that on the occasion of publication of the draft voter list on 25th July in the state, the draft of this voter list will be displayed by BLO at all polling

stations. Therefore, he appealed to all the voters to go to their polling stations on the morning of 25th July and check their names in this draft voter list, if there is any discrepancy, then immediately inform your BLO.

The CEO said that if people want, they can check their name from home through the online mediums of Election Commission like Voter Helpline App or Voter Service Portal.

He said that voters can also check their name in the voter list through SMS from their mobile. For this, by

writing ECI with your number, then giving a space, write your voter identity card (EPIC) number and send a message to 1950, information related to voter registration will be available through the message itself.

The CEO said that if we check our name in the voter list from now on, then there will be no uncomfortable situation at the time of elections, otherwise at the time of elections, such complaints are also received that they have voter identity card but their name is not in the voter list.



CEO K Ravi Kumar addresses media persons at his office in Ranchi on Tuesday. PNS

State BJP unit hails Union Budget 2023-24

BJP leaders claim the budget is an all-inclusive, youth-centric and development-oriented budget

PNS : RANCHI

BJP State President and former Chief Minister Babul Marandi today praised the first budget presented in the House by Modi Government 3.0 and congratulated and wished Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Marandi said that this budget is an all-inclusive, youth-centric and development-oriented budget.

He said that this budget is a budget that will realize the resolutions of developed India. This budget will also provide momentum to the all-round development of all sections of the society in accordance with the hopes and aspirations of 140 crore countrymen.

He said that this budget has brought a golden opportunity for the youth. Along with skill development, the provision of 4 crore jobs in 5 years will ensure the role of youth in the development of the country.



He said that the budget is based on four pillars - poor, youth, farmers and women. Along with this, the Northeast is a development-centric region, which includes Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Assam. Modi government is working towards bringing a new dawn to India by ensuring the development of the Northeast. Echoing the views of Marandi, Leader of Opposition Amar Kumar Bauri praised the budget and said that Jharkhand has got the gift of many schemes. Purvodaya Yojana is being



brought for the all-round development of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. Under this, special scheme for infrastructure development.

He said that the government will support and cooperate with the industrial corridor in every way in these areas. He said that the tribal-dominated villages of Jharkhand will be benefited. "Pradhan Mantri Janjati Unnat Gram Abhiyan" will be started to improve the socio-economic condition of the tribals. The scheme will adopt saturation coverage

for tribal families in tribal-dominated villages-aspirational districts. This will cover 63,000 villages, benefiting 5 crore tribal people.

Today, the budget speech was heard by the Economic Cell with experts from various fields in the Jharkhand BJP State Office. In which the chief guest senior BJP leader MLA CP Singh participated. While addressing the media, he said that this budget is a welfare budget in which emphasis has been laid on Sabka Saath and Sabka Vikas. Said that connecting the states of the Northeast with development

schemes at a fast pace is the priority of the Modi government. The program organized under the aegis of the Economic Cell was addressed by State Treasurer Deepak Banka, State Convenor JP Sharma along with CA Rajkumar, Dr. Sandeep of Sarala Birla University, Dr. Gautam, Dr. Yash Garg, Dr. Tanya of Medical Cell and others. All the experts praised the budget and called it public welfare development oriented. Meanwhile, State BJP spokesperson Pratul Shahdev described the budget as inclusive and taking care of all sections. He said that Jharkhand will directly benefit from the road map for the development of Purvodaya Yojana. Eastern India will also catch the pace of development like the rest of the country. Apart from this, with the continuation of funding of the Aspirational District Scheme, 19 districts of Jharkhand will continue to receive central funds directly.



Home Ministry gets ₹2.19 lakh cr

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated Rs 2,19,643.31 crore for 2024-25 to the Ministry of Home Affairs with the majority of it — Rs 1,43,275.90 crore — being given to central police forces like the CRPF, BSF, and CISF which are responsible for internal security, border guarding, and security of vital installations. The interim budget 2024-25 had allocated Rs 2,02,868.70 crore to the home ministry, helmed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Finance Minister Sitharaman has allocated Rs 42,277.74 crore to Jammu and Kashmir which is currently under the direct control of the central government after the abrogation of Article 370. In the budget, Rs 5,985.82 crore

has been given to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Rs 5,862.62 crore to Chandigarh, Rs 5,958 crore to Ladakh, Rs 2,648.97 crore to Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu and Rs 1,490.10 crore to Lakshadweep. The budget also allocated Rs 1,309.46 crore (Rs 578.29 crore in 2023-24) towards work related to census and Rs 1,606.95 crore to the National Disaster Response Force (Rs 1,666.38 crore in 2023-24). Among the paramilitary forces, the CRPF got Rs 31,543.20 crore, up from a revised estimate of Rs 31,389.04 in 2023-24, the BSF got Rs 25,472.44 crore (Rs 25,038.68 crore in 2023-24), the CISF was allotted Rs 14,331.89 crore (Rs 12,929.85 crore in 2023-24), the ITBP got Rs 8,634.21 crore (Rs 8,203.68 crore in 2023-24), the SSB was given Rs 8,881.81 crore (Rs 8,435.68 crore in 2023-24) and the Assam



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

India and the insurgents in the Northeast. The Border Security Force (BSF) guards India's borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh and it is also deployed for internal security duties. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) guards vital instal-

lations like nuclear plants, airports, and metro networks. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) guards the Sino-Indian border, the Shashastra Seema Bal (SSB) guards the India-Nepal and India-Bhutan borders, while the Assam Rifles protects India's border with Myanmar. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) has been allocated Rs 3,823.83 crore (Rs 3,268.94 crore in 2023-24), the Delhi Police got Rs 11,180.33 crore (Rs 11,940.33 crore in 2023-24), the Special Protection Group got Rs 506.32 crore (Rs 446.82 crore in 2023-24). The IB is India's internal intelligence agency, the Delhi Police guards the national capital and the SPG provides security to the prime minister. Meanwhile, Rs 3,756.51 crore has been allocated to the Border Infrastructure and Management, Rs 3,152.36 crore has been given for developing police infra-

Attempt to enhance woman participation in work force



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

For promoting women-led development, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the budget carries an allocation of more than Rs 3 lakh crore for schemes benefitting women and girls. Presenting the Union Budget for 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said this signals the government's commitment in enhancing women's role in economic development. "For promoting women-led development, the budget carries an allocation of more than Rs 3 lakh crore for schemes benefitting women and girls," she said. Sitharaman said the government will set up working women hostels to promote their participation in the workforce. "We will facilitate higher participation of women in the workforce by setting up of working women hostels in collaboration with industries and establishment of creches in addition the partnership will seek to organise women specific skilling programmes and promotion of market access for women SHG enterprises," she said. These initiatives are aimed at enhancing work-home balance for women, thus encouraging their greater participation in the workforce. As mentioned in the interim budget, there is a need to focus on the poor, women, youth and farmers, she said. Additionally, the budget outlines the launch of women-specific skilling programmes designed to boost female workforce participation, which has

increased to 24 per cent in Q2FY24. The budget showed that the recent payroll data shows a notable rise in female workforce participation. However, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has seen a marginal increase of 2.5 per cent in its Budget allocation for the fiscal year 2024-2025. The total budget for the ministry stands at Rs 26,092 crore, up from the previous year's revised allocation of Rs 25,448 crore. The SAMARTHYA sub-scheme, supporting projects such as Women Hostels, Swadhar Greh and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, has been allocated Rs 2,516 crore, a slight increase from the previous Revised Budget when Rs 2,325 crore was allocated. A significant portion of this budget of the WCD ministry is directed towards the centrally sponsored schemes, which received Rs 25,848 crore. The flagship schemes under the ministry, such as Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0, Mission VATSALYA, and Mission Shakti, have been given substantial funds to continue their efforts in improving nutrition, child protection, and women's empowerment. Specifically, Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 have been allocated Rs 21,200 crore, aiming to combat malnutrition and support early childhood care. Other key allocations include Rs 5.60 crore as India's contribution to UNICEF and continued funding of Rs 500 crore for the Nirbhaya Fund, which supports initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women.

Defence outlay hiked 4.79%

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of sustaining the ongoing modernisation and ensure operational readiness, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated Rs 6,21,940 crore to the defence sector for 2024-25. The grant for 2023-24 was Rs 5.94 lakh crore and the hike is 4.79 per cent. In an effort to keep up the momentum of acquisition of modern weapon systems for the armed forces, the capital outlay is pegged at Rs 1,72,000 crore. The total allocation to the defence sector is 12.9 per cent of the total budget of the government of India for the financial year 2024-25. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the allocation of Rs 1,05,518 crore for domestic capital procurement will provide further impetus to atmanirbharta (self-reliance) in the defence sector. "As far as the allocation to the Ministry of Defence is concerned, I thank Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for giving the highest allocation to the tune of Rs 6,21,940.85 crore, which is 12.9 per cent of the total budget of the govern-



ment for 2024-25," he said in a social media post. "The capital outlay of Rs 1,72,000 crore will further strengthen the capabilities of Armed Forces. Earmarking of Rs 1,05,518.43 crore for domestic capital procurement will provide further impetus to atmanirbharta," he said. "I am pleased that Border Roads have been given 30 per cent increase in allocation over the last budget under the capital head. This allocation of Rs 6,500 crore to BRO will further accelerate our border infrastructure," he said. To boost the startup ecosystem in defence industries, Rs 518

crore has been allocated to the iDEX scheme to fund technological solutions given by startups, MSMEs and innovators, Rajnath said. In the interim budget presented on February 1, the defence allocation was Rs 6.21 lakh crore. While maintaining the allocation made to defence ministry during interim budget, the government has made an additional allocation to the tune of Rs 400 crore on innovation in defence through the Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI) scheme. Through this scheme, MoD is engaging with startups/MSMEs and innovators to develop Def-Tech solutions and supply the Indian military with innovative and indigenous technological solutions. A grant of upto 50% of Product Development Budget with enhanced limit (Max) of Rs 25 crore per applicant will be awarded as per extant iDEX guidelines. The allocation for 2024-25 is higher by approximately Rs one lakh crore (18.43%) over the allocation for FY 2022-23 and 4.79% more than allocation of FY 2023-24.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The budgetary allocation for the civil aviation ministry has been reduced to Rs 2,357.14 crore for the current fiscal ending next March, with regional air connectivity scheme set to get Rs 502 crore during the same period. In the revised budgetary allocation for 2023-24, the amount for the ministry was at Rs 2,922.12 crore. As per documents of the Union Budget 2024-25 the ministry will get an allocation of Rs 2,357.14 crore. The money set aside for the regional air connectivity scheme has been cut to Rs 502 crore from Rs 850 crore in the revised budgetary allocation for 2023-24. The amount is for revival of 22 airports as well as commencement of 124 RCS routes and Viability Gap Funding for North East Connectivity. To improve connectivity in the northeast region, a new scheme has also been formulated for providing air connectivity and aviation infrastructure, as per a document. However, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for drone and drone component will receive a higher allocation of Rs 57 crore this fiscal compared to Rs 33 crore in the 2023-24 revised estimates. For 2024-25, the allocations for the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) have been cut to Rs 302.64 crore and Rs 89 crore, respectively.



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

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



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday brought back interest subsidy under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) 2.0 and set aside Rs 4,000 crore for Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS). In the 2024-25 Union Budget, PMAY-U has been allocated Rs 30,170 crore, an increase of 20.19 per cent from the 2023-2024 budgetary allocation. According to the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, the interest subsidy scheme can soon be availed by the economically weaker section (EWS), lower income group (LIG) and middle income group. Nearly two years ago, the government did not extend the time period of CLSS under PMAY, which provided subsidised home loans based on income. At present, the scheme is being implemented through three verticals -- Beneficiary Led Construction/Enhancement, Affordable Housing in Partnership and In-situ Slum Redevelopment.

Presenting the Budget 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that three crore additional houses under the PM Awas Yojana in rural and urban areas will be constructed, for which the necessary allocations are being made. According to budgetary document, Rs 3,000 crore has been allocated for EWS and LIG groups to construct houses under CLSS in urban areas while the middle income group will be provided Rs 1,000 crore. Sitharaman announced central assistance of Rs 2.2 lakh crore over the next five years to meet housing requirement of one crore urban poor and middle class families under the PMAY-U and proposed interest subsidy to provide loans at affordable rates. She said, "Under the PM Awas Yojana Urban 2.0, housing needs of one crore urban poor and middle-class families will be addressed with an investment of Rs 10 lakh crore." "This will include the central assistance of Rs 2.2 lakh crore in the next five years," she added.

Cancer drugs exempted from customs duty

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Exemption of customs duties on three additional cancer medications essential for treating prevalent types like lung, liver, and endometrial cancers and Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on X-ray tubes and flat panel detectors used in medical X-ray machines under the Phased Manufacturing Programme to "bolster domestic production capacity" were the key highlights of the Budget 2024 announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for the Health sector. Overall, the Union health ministry has been allocated Rs 90,958.63 crore in the 2024-

2025 budget, an increase of 12.96 per cent over the Rs 80,517.62 crore 2023-24 revised estimates. Addressing the Budget speech here, Sitharaman said, "To provide relief to cancer patients, I propose to fully exempt three more medicines from customs duties. I also propose changes in the BCD on x-ray tubes & flat panel detectors for use in medical x-ray machines..." Given the high expense of cancer treatment, which often makes them inaccessible to many, this exemption of custom duty on the additional cancer drugs is a crucial step. The three cancer drugs exempted from customs duty are Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib and Durlumab.



Welcoming the move, DS Negi, CEO, Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre called it a significant step towards making essential cancer treatments more accessible and affordable for patients

across the country. "The high cost of cancer medication has been a major barrier for many patients, and this exemption will undoubtedly provide much-needed financial relief to those battling the disease."

Similarly, Dr Shyam Aggarwal, Chairman, Medical Oncology at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, was of the view that slashing the custom duty on medical devices in the cancer sector will lead to "spurring of indigenous manufacturing of digital X-ray machines in India." "The reduction in GST and Import Duty on APIs will help in stabilising the Pharma prices in the country, boost the domestic manufacturing and make the medicines available for the common people at lower prices. This is in alignment with the Government's mandate of providing accessible health for all," said Dr Pradeep Multani, Former President, PHDCCI and Chairman, Multani

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

Development push to key heritage sites in Bihar, Odisha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In her address unveiling the Union Budget 2024-25, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman placed a spotlight on Bihar and Odisha's rich cultural heritage, announcing ambitious plans for the development of key spiritual and historical sites. Among these, the Vishnupad Temple corridor at Gaya and the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhi Gaya are slated for comprehensive transformation, modeled after the successful Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor. Sitharaman emphasised that these initiatives aim to elevate these revered sites into world-class pilgrim and tourist destinations, as a part of broader



efforts to position India as a global tourist hub, creating jobs and stimulating investments across various sectors. Sitharaman also outlined plans for Rajgir and Nalanda in Bihar. Rajgir, known for its religious significance among Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains, will undergo comprehensive development, highlighting its cultural heritage and natural attractions like the Saptarishi hot springs. Nalanda, home to the ancient Nalanda University, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, will be revitalised as a tourist center, with efforts to restore the university to its former glory, she said. "Rajgir holds immense religious significance for Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. The 20th

Tirthankara Munisuvrat temple in the Jain temple complex is ancient. The Saptarishi or the seven hot springs form a warm water Brahm Kund that is sacred. A comprehensive development initiative for Rajgir will be undertaken. Furthermore, Sitharaman emphasised the rich cultural traditions and natural endowments of the eastern states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh. The government plans to launch 'Purvodaya', a development initiative encompassing human resource development, infrastructure enhancement, and economic opportunities to foster growth in the region. However, stakeholders in the tourism sector have expressed

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



Substantial allocation for Maharashtra: Fadnavis

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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



Speaking to reporters in Mumbai, Fadnavis claimed the Opposition parties had prepared their reaction against the Budget in advance to build a negative narrative against the Central government. "The Budget includes substantial allocations for Maharashtra. It is advisable for the opposition to thoroughly examine the Budget before reacting," he said. Fadnavis' response came soon after Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray alleged anti-Maharashtra bias in the Budget despite the state being the largest taxpayer. The senior BJP leader took a dig at Congress leaders P Chidambaram and Maharashtra opposition leader Vijay Wadetiwar who alleged the apprenticeship programme in the Budget is copied from the Congress manifesto. "If this is the case, then both leaders should welcome the Budget instead of criticising," Fadnavis added. He also took potshots at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his "khatakat" (being swift) remark which went viral during the Lok Sabha poll campaign. Gandhi had purportedly promised a transfer of Rs 1 lakh in the bank account of one woman from every poor household in the country if the Congress won the elections. "Where is their (Congress) Khatakat Khatakat scheme? They are in power in some states, but we do not see it being implemented in any of those states," Fadnavis added. He also addressed allegations on Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, led by BJP allies and part of the Modi-led NDA government, receiving more funds than Maharashtra. "Maharashtra will receive Rs 908 crore under MUP-3 which will strengthen the

Industries hail Budget, welcome provisions for MSMEs, skilling

PTI ■ INDORE

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

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



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

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

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

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

PTI ■ PUDDUCHERRY

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



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

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

Slight rise in fund for disability sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Public welfare Budget, says Yogi; Mayawati terms it disappointing

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

TMC slams absence of allocations for flood control in West Bengal

PTI ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

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



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

Budget looks after farmers' interest: Shivraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Optimistic outlook

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

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



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

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PICTALK



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

India backs Philippines in South China Sea standoff



ASHOK K MEHTA

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

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

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

Like pirates, the Chinese Coast Guard are even poaching in EEZ of Asian countries. Chinese have unilaterally promulgated law in the South China Sea laws that allow them to seize for 60 days without trial, foreign vessels and even fire at them -if necessary. Chinese Coast Guard is employing lethal weapons short of firearms like picks, axes, spears and rods to inflict casualties with medieval warfare equipment that the PLA used to surprise Indian troops in Galwan. Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam and Indonesia have quietly accepted Chinese bullying while the Philippines



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THAT GOOD MORNING THUD

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

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

MAMATA'S GOODWILL GESTURE

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

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

Joe Bide backs Kamala Harris



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

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

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

Srinivas Madhav | Hyderabad

BANGLADESH BLUES

Madam — Apropos, "Trouble in Bangladesh," Jul 22. The tragic death of about 100 people in violence triggered by the students' protest demanding a roll-back of 30 percent job reservation for relatives of veterans who fought in the 1971 war in Bangladesh, has shown the Sheikh Hasina government in poor light. The quota provision has been under fire as it apparently benefits the supporters of PM Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement. She had defended it on the grounds that veterans deserved the highest respect for their contribution to the liberation, regardless of their political affiliation. However, the PM cannot afford to ignore the present realities. A merit-based system for jobs will help Bangladesh sustain its impressive economic march. Hopefully, the government will implement the apex court's order in letter and spirit. And there is also a lesson here for India, where unemployment is a major issue and sev-

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

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

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

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

To mitigate heatwave effects we must prioritise innovations in RE

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



RATUL PURI

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

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



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

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

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

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



FIRST COLUMN

HARNESSING THE POWER OF OPTIMISM

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



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

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

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

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



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

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

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

(The writer is a motivator; views are personal)

Income tax amendment promises relief for MSMEs



UTTAM GUPTA

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yet, industries and businesses have asked Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to defer the implementation of the clause in the IT Act by a year to April 2025. At the same time, we see reports of large enterprises arm-twisting small firms by deciding not to buy from MSMEs; instead deal with those MSMEs that are not registered with the Udyam portal (It's an online system for registering MSMEs, launched by the Union MSME ministry) or from non-MSMEs. This must be avoided. Section 43B(h) of the IT Act should be given a fair chance to succeed.

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



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

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

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

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



MANOJ VARGHESE

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Palestinian factions unite after China-brokered talks

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Israeli govt quietly funds West Bank settler outposts

AP ■ JERUSALEM

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

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

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

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

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

Rights groups say the expanding network of remote farms atop



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

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

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

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

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

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

Rishi Sunak to remain interim UK Opposition leader until Nov 2

PTI ■ LONDON

Rishi Sunak will remain in place as the UK's interim Opposition Leader for over three months after the Conservative Party set out the timetable to elect his successor by November, with nominations opening on Wednesday. The 1922 Committee of backbench members of Parliament responsible for the Tory leadership race on Monday evening unveiled a two-phase election process that will see the new leader being installed on November 2. The 44-year-old British Indian leader, who had announced his resignation on July 5 after the party's worst general election defeat, had said he would remain in place as interim Tory leader until his successor has been elected.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

called "beauty contest" when the four finalists will be given key speaking slots to address the wider Conservative membership and make their pitch. The parliamentary party will get a second-round vote to further whittle down candidates to the final two by October 10, who will go ahead for a head-to-head clash in an online ballot by the entire Tory membership.

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

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

Taiwan cancels air force drills due to approaching typhoon

AP ■ TAIPEI

An approaching typhoon prompted the cancellation of air force drills off Taiwan's east coast on Tuesday, although naval and land exercises were set to continue in other parts of the self-governing island democracy, which China threatens to invade. The Air Force 5th Tactical Mixed Wing announced the cancellation, citing adverse weather conditions. According to the Central Weather Bureau, Typhoon Gaemi was heading westward toward the island with sustained winds of 144 km (about 90 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 180 kph (110 mph). Ferries and some domestic flights were cancelled Tuesday, Taiwan's Central News Agency said. Military spokesperson Sun Li-fang said the annual Han Kuang military exercises are on track to continue with adjustments to ensure the safety of personnel and equipment, although some sea and air exercises would be altered due to the weather.

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



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

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

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

afternoon, with sirens sounding, vehicles parking and pedestrians clearing the streets to enter buildings and metro stations as they would in the event of an air attack from China or a natural disaster. Troops were also deployed to the port of Tamsui, a key entryway to Taipei's river system which a motor boat from China entered last month. The boat apparently went undetected by radar and other security systems in what was seen as a test of Taiwan's capacity to respond to covert missions by the Chinese military.

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

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

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

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

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

British Pakistani radical preacher faces life term

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP ■ NEW YORK

Fresh off victories in other legal cases, Donald Trump on Monday pressed a New York appeals court to overturn the nearly USD 500 million New York civil fraud judgment that threatens to drain his personal cash reserves as he campaigns to retake the White House. In paperwork filed with the state's mid-level appeals court, the former president's lawyers said Manhattan Judge Arthur Engoron's Feb. 16 finding that Trump lied to banks, insurers and others about his wealth was "erroneous" and "egregious."

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

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

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

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

now.

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

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

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

Harris visits battleground Wisconsin in first rally

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Vice President Kamala Harris is making her first visit to a battleground state Tuesday after locking up enough support from Democratic delegates to win her party's nomination to challenge Republican former President Donald Trump, two days after President Joe Biden dropped his reelection bid. As the Democratic Party continues to coalesce around her, Harris is travelling to Milwaukee, where she will hold her first campaign rally since she launched her campaign on Sunday with Biden's endorsement. Harris has raised more than USD 100 million since Sunday afternoon and has scored the backing of Democratic officials and political groups.

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

against Trump and looks to project calm and confidence after weeks of Democratic Party confusion over Biden's political future. The visit comes a week after the Republican National Convention wrapped up in the city and as Harris works to sharpen her message against the GOP nominee with just over 100 days until Election Day. Wisconsin is part of the Democrats' "blue wall" of Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania that is critical to their 2024 plans.

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

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

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

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

Nearly 40 mn had HIV in 2023: UN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BAPS Hindu temple vandalised in Canada

PTI ■ OTTAWA

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

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

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

have no place in our multicultural and inclusive society."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Death toll in Ethiopia mudslides rises to 157

AP ■ ADDIS ABABA

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



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

"We are still searching for the missing," said Melese, director of the disaster response agency in Gofa Zone. "There are children who are hugging corpses, having lost their entire family, including

mother, father, brother and sister, due to the accident," he said. Landslides are common during Ethiopia's rainy season, which started in July and is expected to last until mid-September.

Imran & wife seek int'l standard jail amenities

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

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

China agrees to bolster coop with Maldives in infrastructure projects

PTI ■ BEIJING/ MALE

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

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

Qureshi seeks open trial in May 9 riots case

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

Maduro strengthens Venezuela military support ahead of critical vote

AP ■ AGUA CALIENTE

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

S Korean tech giant Kakao's founder held

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

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

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



Sensex, Nifty tumble

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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



24,582.55.

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

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

0.1 per cent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

Budget 2024-25 to boost domestic telecom gear manufacturing.

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

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

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

Gold, silver, mobiles to become cheaper

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

After bumper profits, Govt scraps ₹30,000 cr capital support to oil firms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

In the interim budget, the



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

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

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

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

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

Mixed response from tea industry

PTI ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Announcement on abolition of angel tax cheers startups, investors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

alleviating a longstanding issue in startup investing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

"This will provide a major fillip to the processing and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

base for the auto sector, Aggarwal said.

Auto component body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

enhancing competitiveness, he added.

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

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

AP ■ PARIS

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



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

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

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

AP ■ PARIS

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

ASALANKA TO LEAD SRI LANKA IN T20I SERIES AGAINST INDIA

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

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



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

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

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

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

SRI LANKA SQUAD:

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



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

PTI ■ CHENNAI

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

"My moment was when Virat Kohli called Rahul Dravid and gave the cup and cry," he said in a video on his YouTube channel. "Rahul Dravid screamed and cried. I saw him enjoy it. I felt that a lot." Ashwin also reckoned that Dravid was scared being at the helm of another campaign in the Caribbean, for the team under his captaincy had made a group-stage exit in the 2007 ODI World Cup. "I want to talk about a sacred person. (In) 2007, (the) 50-over World Cup. India gets knocked out. Rahul Dravid (was) the captain then. He does not captain the one-day side after that," he said. "He has been with the Indian team. If something does not go well, if the Indian team goes out, or if they lose a match, immediately they ask what Dravid is doing." Ashwin also acknowledged the hard work done by Dravid during his stint as India coach, saying he brought balance to the team and changed in approach. "I know what he has been doing with this team for the past two to three years. I know how balanced he has been. I know how hard he has worked to change this approach," Ashwin said. "I know what he has given each of his players. Even when he is just sitting at home, he has been planning how to do this and that," he added. Under Dravid, India reached the finals of the World Test Championship and the ODI World Cup but lost to Australia on both occasions.



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

AP ■ PARIS

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

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

Purnima's sacrifices for elusive archery medal

PTI ■ PARIS

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



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

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

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



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

PTI ■ BENGALURU

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

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

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

AP ■ BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP (MICHIGAN)

Charlie Woods, the 15-year-old son of Tiger Woods, covered his face with his cap after shaking hands with his playing partners on the 18th green at the Oakland Hills North Course. Woods shot a 12-over 82 on Monday in the U.S. Junior Amateur, a tournament he played his way into. "He still qualified," Tiger Woods said to his son's caddie after the rough round. "That's what I keep telling him," caddie Luke Wise said. Woods earned a spot in the field of top juniors from around the world when he shot a 1-under 71 to win his qualifier last month in Coral Springs, Florida. He will have to have quite a

turnaround Tuesday on the Oakland Hills South Course, which Ben Hogan called "The Monster," to be among the low 64 scorers from a field of 264 players from 40 states and 35 countries. Charlie Woods is the only one in the world who knows what it's like to be the son of Tiger Woods, and now he's fully aware of what it's like to compete with all eyes on him. At an event that usually draws a few hundred people for the championship match, about 100 were waiting on the first tee to see Charlie play while his dad watched, and at least that many spectators followed them for hours. Oakland Hills had six members assigned to assist with crowd control. That wasn't enough, and 10 more men were dispatched to hold

ropes to give the players - and Tiger - some space. After Charlie hit his tee shot on the seventh hole and left behind his tee, adorned with a palm tree, a fan took it out of the ground to keep as a memento. "I feel like he's feeling pressure," said 35-year-old John Pinch of Warren, Michigan. "If his dad could talk to him, he would probably try to get him to settle down. "You can tell he's really down on himself." Charlie was frustrated and let it show, slamming and swinging clubs into the ground after errant shots and shaking his head from side to side. His father was relatively helpless because rules prevent parents from coaching their children during the



US JUNIOR AMATEUR AT OAKLAND HILLS

tournament. After a brief exchange prior to the round on the practice green, Tiger didn't say a word to his son and didn't appear to even make eye contact as he watched from afar while surrounded by police officers - at least one of whom snapped photos - and security personnel. Without a doubt, Tiger wished his son could hear him on the 181-yard, par-3 fourth. A rules official gave Charlie relief because his ball landed on a metal cap on the right side of the green. "He gets a club length," Tiger said, standing out of earshot of his son. Tiger wanted his son to place his ball to the left, but Charlie elected to take relief to the right. "No, no, no," Tiger muttered to

himself. "Go the other way." Charlie ended up with his first of five double bogeys at No. 4 to go with four bogeys and two birdies - on both of the par 5s. He was wild off the tee - often missing to the right - came up short on a series of flop shots out of thick rough and sailed some approaches over greens.

AFFIDAVIT
I, Rohita Oraon, wife of Kameshwar Oraon, Village - Kundagadi Nava Toli, Post - Arru, Thana - Senha, Lohardaga, Jharkhand. My name is Rohita Tarki in the State Bank of India, Lohardaga passbook. (Account number - 32764249064). Affidavit No. 7826 / 23.07.2024, my correct name is Rohita Oraon, which is recorded in my Aadhaar number 712953642649.