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आपके लिए करेंगे,
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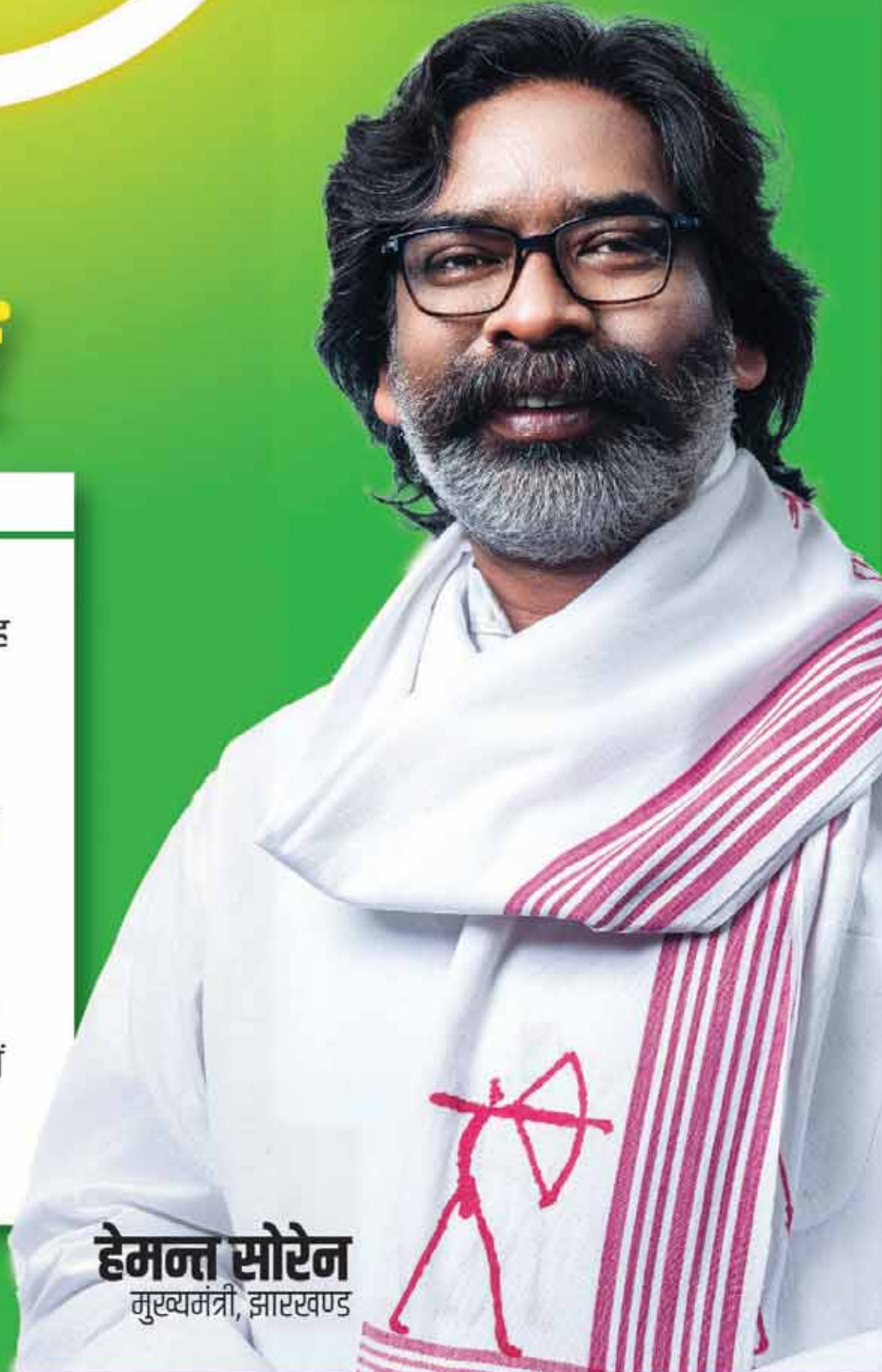
यूनिट बिजली मुफ्त देंगे

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बिजली की बचत करें, झारखण्ड को उन्नत करें

मुख्य बिन्दु

- ⚡ आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर घरेलू उपभोक्ताओं को इस योजना का लाभ मिलेगा।
- ⚡ यह योजना जुलाई 2024 के बिलिंग माह से लागू किया जाएगा।
- ⚡ इस योजना के तहत कुल 45.77 लाख उपभोक्ताओं में से लगभग 41.44 लाख घरेलू उपभोक्ता आच्छादित होंगे।
- ⚡ 200 यूनिट प्रति माह मुफ्त बिजली योजना के तहत सभी तरह के शुल्क यथा Energy Charge, Fixed Charge, Electric Duty, FPPPA Charge आदि की छूट 200 यूनिट तक मासिक खपत करने वाले घरेलू उपभोक्ताओं को प्रदान की जाएगी।
- ⚡ 200 यूनिट प्रति माह मुफ्त बिजली योजना हेतु झारखण्ड सरकार प्रतिमाह लगभग ₹350 करोड़ सब्सिडी के रूप में झारखण्ड बिजली वितरण निगम लिमिटेड को उपलब्ध करायेगी।



हेमन्त सोरेन
मुख्यमंत्री, झारखण्ड

Poor air quality plagues Jamshedpur, Vayu Veer releases report

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a groundbreaking effort to tackle air pollution, Clean Air Jharkhand today launched its Vayu Veer program, a unique initiative empowering youth and women from marginalized communities to lead the fight for cleaner air in Jamshedpur. The program, focused on those most affected by air pollution but often excluded from the discourse, marks a significant shift towards community-driven solutions for cleaner air.

The initiative was highlighted by the release of a community-driven citizen science report, "Month in My Life," which involved personal air quality monitoring by

four dedicated Vayu Veers—Rinki Pal, Arpita Soren, Som Kansari, and Varsha. These individuals, hailing from families engaged in rag picking, domestic work, and other forms of labor, recorded their air quality data over a month from December 12, 2023, to January 10, 2024. The findings from this period revealed alarming levels of air pollution.

Throughout the month, all four Vayu Veers consistently encountered air quality levels that exceeded national standards for 24-hour PM2.5 (60 µg/m³) and PM10 (100 µg/m³). The highest daily concentration of PM2.5 recorded was a staggering 607 µg/m³, nearly 10 times the permissible limit, observed by Som



Kansari in Sidu Kanu Basti on December 22. Arpita Soren recorded a maximum concentration of 267.69

µg/m³ on January 10. Rinki Pal noted 291.39 µg/m³ on December 20, and Varsha's highest was 309.90 µg/m³ on

December 18. The report further analyzed air quality data using the Central Pollution Control

Board's (CPCB) Air Quality Index (AQI) categories, revealing that none of the Vayu Veers experienced "Good" or "Satisfactory" air quality. Most days fell into "Poor," "Very Poor," "Severe," or even "Beyond Limit" categories, underscoring the severe health impacts on these vulnerable populations and the urgent need for localized pollution reduction strategies.

Dr. Nirmal Shukla, a member of Clean Air Jharkhand and Secretary of Mahila Kalyan Samiti, emphasized the importance of community involvement, stating, "It's crucial to engage and involve communities most affected by air pollution. The Vayu Veer

program focuses on this, highlighting the need for a comprehensive plan to address pollution sources and public participation."

Anjali Bose, founder of Mahila Kalyan Samiti, reiterated the program's goals, stating, "The 'Vayu Veers' will continue to share their experiences and demands with a broader audience. Our goal is to raise awareness about air pollution and prioritize clean air initiatives." Rinki Pal, one of the Vayu Veers, expressed a newfound awareness of pollution sources in her environment, while Arpita Soren shared how the program had changed her family's habits to reduce indoor pollution. Som Kansari highlighted the

importance of raising awareness in his community about the severe impact of air pollution on health.

The Vayu Veer program represents a significant step towards empowering marginalized communities to take the lead in addressing air pollution. By providing tools and training for air quality monitoring and advocacy, the program aims to elevate the voices of these communities in the air pollution discourse.

Clean Air Jharkhand, alongside the Vayu Veers, remains committed to this vital work, engaging with communities, policymakers, and authorities to ensure a cleaner, healthier future for all.

Allegations of caste-based conspiracy in recruitment at NIT Jamshedpur

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Serious allegations have surfaced regarding caste-based favoritism and corruption in the recruitment process at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Jamshedpur. In a letter addressed to T. Krishna Prasad, Chairman of the Board of Governors (BoG) at NIT Jamshedpur, Santosh Mandal, District Secretary of BJP OBC Morcha, has demanded a thorough investigation into the alleged manipulation of recruitment rules to favor a candidate from the same caste as key administrative figures at the institute.



the recruitment rules of 2019, 75% of these positions should be filled through direct recruitment, and 25% through promotion or deputation. However, all three positions are currently filled through direct recruitment, and the fourth, reserved for promotion, was allegedly advertised as a general category post in August 2023, indicating a possible breach of the rules.

The letter claims that the reserved position is being manipulated to favor Sumit

Kumar Pandey, a Superintendent at the institution and reportedly a close associate of Dr. Rai. Allegations suggest that Mr. Pandey is being positioned for promotion to Assistant Registrar through unlawful means. Mandal accuses Dr. Rai of bypassing senior officers and delegating crucial establishment-related tasks to Mr. Pandey to ensure selections align with his preferences.

Mandal points out that despite a 2022 advertise-

ment for filling the reserved position through a short-term contract, the same position was re-advertised in August 2023 for a regular post without any changes in the status of existing positions. Additionally, the recruitment process decided to use the National Testing Agency (NTA) exam for screening purposes only, sidelining the merit list prepared based on NTA scores. Mr. Pandey, who ranked 21st in the NTA merit list, would have otherwise found it difficult to secure the position due to his low ranking.

The examination method adopted by the institute includes a descriptive exam and a personal interview, with the descriptive exam carrying 70% weightage. Mandal alleges that this format allows for easier manipulation and speculates that exam questions might have been leaked to Mr. Pandey, ensuring his high scores and

subsequent appointment.

Highlighting a history of alleged irregularities and corruption involving Dr. Rai, Mandal references Dr. Rai's dismissal from Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga, for various irregularities, which was upheld by the Patna High Court.

The letter calls for an immediate suspension of the interview and appointment process for the Assistant Registrar position and demands a comprehensive investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the matter to prevent ongoing corruption and illegal appointments.

NIT Jamshedpur's administration has yet to respond to these allegations. The situation raises significant concerns about governance, transparency, and accountability within the institution, particularly in the recruitment process.

ONGC-CIL Consortium awarded Petroleum Mining Lease in Bokaro

Jharkhand's First Petroleum Mining Lease Executed in Bokaro District

R SHARMA : BOKARO



Bokaro district marked a historic day on Wednesday as it became the first district in Jharkhand to execute a petroleum mining lease contract. The contract was awarded to the ONGC-CIL Consortium for the Jharia CBM Block, covering an area of 39.48 square kilometers.

The lease agreement was executed by Deputy Commissioner Vijaya Jadhav in the presence of officials at the district collectorate's office. This lease, granted for the extraction of Coal Bed Methane (CBM), a natural gas, has been approved by the Jharkhand government for a period of 20 years.

The event saw the participation of Additional Collector Md. Mumtaz Ansari, District Mining Officer Ravi Kumar Singh,

used industrially and extracted by drilling wells to 1000-1200 meters, assessing target zones, and using perforation and hydro-fracturing to enhance gas flow. Initially, wells produce water, followed by gas. If gas flow is consistent, a development plan is implemented, involving additional drilling, pipeline installation, and gas collection facilities.

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DIC BSL highlights budget's Infrastructure focus, predicts Steel Sector Surge



PNS : BOKARO

B.K. Tiwari, Director Incharge of Bokaro Steel Plant, praised the recently announced budget, emphasizing its focus on infrastructure development and its positive implications for the steel sector. Tiwari noted that the budget's strong emphasis on infrastructure projects is set to significantly boost the demand for steel, benefiting the sector as a whole.

Highlighting the budget's potential impact on Bokaro Steel Plant's expansion plans,

Tiwari expressed confidence that the budget will serve as a catalyst for the plant's growth initiatives. He stated that the increased investment in infrastructure will drive demand for steel products, thus supporting the plant's strategic expansion objectives.

DIC Tiwari also welcomed the reduction in custom duties on ferro alloys and scrap, describing it as a significant move that will aid the steel industry's growth. The budget's provisions, according to Tiwari, are well-aligned with the steel industry's needs, providing the necessary impetus for both production and technological advancements. He emphasized that the infrastructural focus will not only boost steel demand but also contribute to the broader economic development of the region.

Tiwari's optimistic outlook reflects the broader industry sentiment that the budget's infrastructure push and duty reductions will create a conducive environment for growth. He reiterated that the Bokaro Steel Plant is well-positioned to leverage these opportunities, furthering its expansion and contributing to the economic progress of the region.

The DIC BSL commended the government's budgetary measures, stating that they provide a robust framework for the steel industry's advancement. He affirmed that the Bokaro Steel Plant is ready to capitalize on these favorable conditions, driving forward its ambitious expansion plans and supporting the nation's infrastructure development goals.

BJP leaders push for improved Rail connectivity in State industrial hubs

PNS : BOKARO

Leader of Opposition Amar Bahui and Dhanbad MP Dhullu Mahto met Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw at Rail Bhavan, New Delhi on Wednesday to discuss the improvement of railway operations in the Dhanbad-Bokaro Lok Sabha and Chandankiyari Assembly constituencies. The BJP



leaders highlighted issues pertaining to Dhanbad and Bokaro districts of Jharkhand, which are key industrial regions. Notably Coal from the mines in these areas is sent to several states, and thousands of workers from Bokaro and Dhanbad travel daily to the mines and factories established there. Currently, rail lines and railway stations are established at Bhojudih and Gaurinath Dham. However, even after 75 years of independence, Chandankiyari and Barmasia remain untouched by the railway line. During the meeting it was suggested that if the Bhojudih-Gaurinath Dham via Chandankiyari-Barmasia rail section is established, it would not only generate crores of rupees in revenue for the railways but also provide convenient rail travel for millions of workers. This would significantly reduce the heavy burden on road transport. The entire discussion took place in a cordial environment, and the railway minister assured to review the matter positively.

BSL to distribute Anti-TB Kits under CSR Initiative



PNS : BOKARO

Bokaro Steel Limited (BSL) will distribute free anti-TB kits to over 400 tuberculosis patients in the surrounding villages of Bokaro as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. On July 24, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed between BSL and Piramal Swasthya at Ispat Bhavan to facilitate this campaign.

The MoA was signed by Dr. R.K. Gautam, ACMO of BSL, and Nitin Pathnam Rebba, Senior Program Director of Piramal Swasthya. The event was

attended by BSL's Executive Director (HR) Rajan Prasad, Chief Medical Officer Dr. B.B. Karunamay, Chief General Manager (HR) Hari Mohan Jha, General Manager (Communication and Administration) C.R.K. Sudhanshu, senior doctors from BSH, Senior Manager (CSR) Neeraj Tripathi, and Deputy Manager (CSR) Ashok Kumar. Representatives from Piramal Swasthya, including Senior Program Director Nitin Pathnam Rebba and Manager (Operations) Shalendra Sahay, were also present. Additionally, District TB Officer Dr. Zafrullah, Dr. A.K. Jha, Hemant Kumar

Jha, District Program Officer Nitin, R. Ranjan, and Nitin Kumar Singh attended the event.

Under this MoA, BSL will provide free anti-TB kits to more than 400 TB patients in the identified villages over the next six months through Piramal Swasthya. It is noteworthy that Piramal Swasthya's team has been providing healthcare services in the surrounding villages through the mobile medical unit Ispat Sanjeevani under BSL's CSR initiatives.

Speaking on the occasion, Executive Director (HR) Rajan Prasad emphasized BSL's active contribution to the health sector through its CSR initiatives and expressed optimism about the positive outcomes of this new initiative. Dr. Karunamay highlighted the importance of high-protein anti-TB kits for the health of TB patients. Representatives from Piramal Swasthya also shared their thoughts and provided information about the anti-TB kits.

Three-Day cultural event kicks off at DPS Chas

PNS : BOKARO

The vibrant Cultural Week 'Aavirbhav' commenced at DPS Chas on July 25, 2024, with an exhilarating inter-house vocal competition. The Bharat Muni Assembly Arena, adorned with lamps and vibrant lights, set the festive tone. The event was graced by Chief Mentor Dr. Hemlata S Mohan, Officiating Principal Deepali Bhuskute, and Headmistress Sudeshna Sinha. Special judges included Ranju Singh from Samvawana NGO, Ranjeet Kumar from GGPS Chas, and Professor Amit Sarkar from Bokaro Sangeet Kala Academy.

The inaugural ceremony featured a lamp-lighting ritu-

al and a cultural showcase celebrating India's diversity. The Senior Wing's Sutlej House and the Junior Wing's Jamuna House emerged victorious in the vocal competition, impressing both judges and audience alike.

Dr. Mohan praised the students' performances, highlighting their potential to face future challenges and bring about change. Pro-Vice Chairman Mr. N. Muralidharan and Headmistress Ms. Sudeshna Sinha commended the event's role in fostering unity and cultural understanding. Officiating Principal Ms. Deepali Bhuskute emphasized the school's commitment to empowering students in innovative ways.



Insightful Session on budget analysis and GST clarification for industries

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Jharkhand organized an in-depth session on Budget Analysis and GST Clarification, providing an invaluable platform for industry stakeholders to discuss the recent budgetary allocations and GST reforms. The event aimed to offer clarity on new policies, helping businesses understand their implications and strategize for economic growth and fiscal efficiency.

The session dissected the budgetary announcements, offering nuanced insights into their impact on various industries. It served as a crucial forum for businesses to gain clarity on new tax provisions, ensuring they are well-prepared to navigate the evolving fiscal landscape. Detailed insights were provided into leveraging new policies to remain competitive and resilient in a dynamic economic environment.

Ritu Raj Sinha, Vice Chairman of CII Jharkhand State Council and Managing



Director of Tata Steel UISL, commended the Union Budget 2024-25 for its comprehensive approach. "The Union Budget for 2024-25 has something for everyone, balancing the diverse needs of MSMEs, heavy industries, and agriculture. It sets a solid foundation for sustainable growth and prosperity," he said.

Ranjot Singh, Chairman of CII Jharkhand State Council and Managing Director of Emdet Jharkhand Pvt Ltd, highlighted the budget's significance in shaping the Indian economy. "The budget is a milestone propelling India towards becoming a developed nation. It supports

MSMEs and generates employment, particularly through internships for 1 crore youth in the top 500 companies over the next five years," he stated.

Arun Prakash, Convenor of the CII Jharkhand Economic Affairs, Finance & Taxation Panel, and Senior General Manager (Finance) at Tata Cummins Pvt Ltd, expressed pride in India's economic journey. "India's progress to the 5th largest economy is remarkable, and we aspire to become the 3rd largest. Key factors like reducing fiscal deficit, enhancing tax collections, and infrastructure development are central to our sustained growth," he noted.

Avisekh Jaiswal, Partner in Indirect Tax at Ernst & Young, provided a comprehensive briefing on the Union Budget, emphasizing the critical role of GST in revenue generation. "The average GST collection stands at INR 1.81 crore and is projected to increase by 15% soon, bolstering our fiscal strength," he explained.

Chetan Mehta, Partner in Direct Tax at Ernst & Young, shed light on the new corporate tax regime, noting that two-thirds of individuals have opted for the new personal income tax regime. He praised the 2024 'Vivad se Vishwas' transformation scheme for its potential to resolve tax disputes efficiently, promoting a more amicable tax environment.

Jayesh Taunk, Mentor of the CII Jharkhand Economic Affairs, Finance & Taxation Panel, remarked, "The Union Budget outlines the government's financial planning and policy directions, reflecting its commitment to fostering economic growth and social progress."

Man with counterfeit currency notes held in Palamu

PNS : DALTONGANJ

A 60 year old man identified as Nandoo Sahu was intercepted on a tip off on Panki Balumath road last evening and police recovered counterfeit currency notes in the denomination of 500 rupees, worth 1,29,500.

SP Reeshma Ramesan has confirmed the recovery of the counterfeit currency notes worth 1,29,500 rupees.

She said there was a precise input on this man and our police made no mistake about it. The man with counterfeit currency notes was caught.

The man was carrying the counterfeit currency notes in his pajama and was walking down alone when caught at night around 8pm last night.

He was booked under sections 179, 180 (3) of the Bhartiya Nayaya Sanhita 2024.

The man was remanded in judicial custody today in the CJM court Daltonganj.

Ramesan said the man tried to hoodwink the police by spinning a story that a man in Ranchi gave him the cash asking him to keep it and once that man would reach here then this cash would change hands.

"It's simply disbelievable. The man tried to mislead the police," reiterated the SP.

The man is of Palamu having permanent residence in Tarhassi while his present address is under the Chainpur police station limits. This is the first biggest recovery for the counterfeit currency notes in Palamu in the last 5 years.





OPINION 6

PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL FALLS FROM GRACE

WORLD 9

PUTIN MEETS SYRIAN PREZ IN KREMLIN

MONEY 10

MARKETS EXTEND LOSSES FOR 5TH SESSION

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J&K on high alert ahead of PM visit

MOHIT KANDHARI ■
JAMMU/NEW DELHI

The security forces have been kept in a state of high alert ahead of the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the 25th Kargil Vijay Diwas on Friday in Drass. This will be the PM's first visit to the region after recent spate of terror attacks and also a few high-level review meetings in this regard held in the national Capital with two of them chaired by Modi himself.

Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi who landed in Srinagar early Thursday morning visited forward areas along the Line of Control in Kashmir valley to review the preparedness of the forces involved in counter-infiltration and counter-terror operations.

The Army Chief later flew to Kargil to supervise the arrangements. Vital security installations were also kept on high-alert along the Jammu-Pathankot National Highway following the sighting of seven suspected terrorists in a village of the Pathankot district of the neighbouring State, Punjab.

Several schools at Army installations in the Jammu region and along the highway



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

were directed to remain closed till July 29 as a precautionary measure. Massive search operations were also launched by the Army, police, and paramilitary forces in the border areas of Kathua (Jammu) and Pathankot to track down the suspects. During his brief stay, the Prime Minister will also carry out the first blast of the Shinkun La Tunnel Project, virtually.

Modi meets Maha NDA partners to smoothen ties

RAJESH KUMAR ■
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

With a lot of complications due to the breakaway factions of two important constituents — NCP and Shiv Sena — in Maharashtra, the Central leadership of BJP, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has personally started taking stock of the situation. The State is to go to Assembly elections soon.

A day after Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar demanded nearly 90 seats for the NCP faction led by him during his meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah, the PM on Thursday met MPs of NDA allies in Maharashtra and discussed the political situation ahead of the upcoming Assembly polls in the state. Among those whom the Prime Minister met included Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari, Piyush Goyal, and others.

The BJP won just nine of the 28 seats it contested in the Lok Sabha polls, down from 23 it won in 2019. Besides the loss of Lok Sabha seats, BJP's vote percentage decline in the State this elections has caused a huge worry. In 2024, BJP got 27.84 per cent votes which has been reduced to 26.1 per cent this time.

Rain-ravaged Maharashtra seeks Army, Navy help

TN RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI/PUNE

At least three people were electrocuted in Pune and three others feared trapped under the debris of three collapsed villas in a hill slide at Lavasa, even as the heavy rains wreaked havoc in Pune, Mumbai and various parts of Maharashtra, prompting the Maharashtra Government to seek the assistance of the Army and Navy to deal with the monsoon-related incidents.

Many parts of Pune lay thick sheets of water as the heavy rains ravaged the city since Wednesday night, while intense rains battered Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and other surrounding areas resulting in heavy flooding in low-lying areas and disruption in train and flight operations.

As a precautionary measure, the authorities declared holidays for schools and colleges in Pune, Mumbai and Thane. Three mobile snacks stall owners were electrocuted when they tried to move their handcarts to safety through the flood waters near Z bridge at around 3.30 am in Pune, while three others were feared trapped nearby Lavasa city after a hill-slide buried three villas.

A Nepali boy Shiv Jidbahadur Pariyar (18) was among three persons killed in Pune, while two others killed in an electrocution incident were identified Akash Mane (21) and Abhishek Ghanekar (25). The State's cultural, academic



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

and IT capital has been clobbered by torrential rain since last night leaving a trail of destruction, paralysing normal life as the district administration ordered all educational institutions to remain shut for the day.

Several parts of Pune, neighbouring twin towns of Pimpri and Chinchwad and dams around Pune have recorded very high rainfall. Since the midnight Wednesday-Thursday, heavy rainfall was recorded in Lavasa (454 mm), Lonavala (323 mm), Nimgiri (233 mm), Malin (181 mm), Chinchwad (175 mm), Talegaon and Khadakwasla (168 mm) and Lavale (167 mm). Pune received an average rainfall of 115 mm. After taking stock of the

situation arising out of heavy rains in Pune, Mumbai Raigad, Thane and other parts of the State, Maharashtra chief Minister Eknath Shinde said, "The units of NDRF, SDRF, Army, Navy, Police, Fire Brigade, Health System have been directed to coordinate with each other and lend help."

"These agencies need to work as a team and shift the flood affected people safely, provide them with food packets, arrange medicines and water. Instructions have been given to take the help of NDRF, Army, and Navy," Shinde said. "Around 40,000 cusecs was discharged from the Khadakwasla Dam," Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol who is an MP from Pune, said.

"There is also heavy rain in Mumbai city and suburbs. The administration is fully alert to deal with any calamity in Mumbai and I am in touch with Pune, Raigad, Mumbai Collectors and Municipal Commissioners," Shinde said. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar also coordinated with authorities in rushing help to the people affected by rains in Pune and various parts of the State.

On a day when scores of trees were uprooted and two-wheelers and four-wheelers remained stranded in flood waters, personnel from various agencies deployed to ferry the people in the marooned areas of Pune. More than 500 people were evacuated from the low-lying areas during the day.

SC ruling a shot in arm for States rich in minerals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The legislative power to tax mineral rights vests with the States and the royalty paid on minerals is not a tax, the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday in a landmark judgement which will give a huge revenue boost to mineral-rich States.

A nine-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, in a majority 8:1 verdict, said Parliament does not have the legislative competence to tax mineral rights under Entry 54 of List I of the Constitution which pertains to regulation of mines and mineral development by the Centre.

The pronouncement, which came as a setback to the Centre, however, said

BJP slams Opp for abusing Modi in Parliament debate



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Modi for the third consecutive term. If anybody tries to insult the verdict of the people, they will be punished in the elections," Rishi Sunak said at a Press conference.

His remarks came a day after the Opposition claimed the Union Budget was "discriminatory" against non-NDA-ruled States and accused the Prime Minister of running a "shaky and vulnerable" coalition Government.

During the general discussion on the budget for 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, various Opposition members accused the government of doling out sops to key allies JD(U) and TDP, which rule Bihar and Andhra Pradesh respectively, to ensure that the government faces no hurdles from its coalition partners.

Rishi said elections were over and now the focus should be to work towards a developed India (Viksit Bharat) and hold constructive discussion on the Union Budget. "The Prime Minister has said that elections were over and now was the time to rise above political lines and work together for the nation," Rishi said.

UPSC to curb cheating with tech

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

With a series of controversies related to the UPSC and the exams conducted by it including the topmost Civil Services Examinations, the commission is now preparing to enhance its examination security measures by incorporating advanced technological solutions such as Aadhaar-based fingerprint authentication, facial recognition systems, and AI-driven closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance, several media outlets reported.

This overhaul, intended to maintain the integrity of UPSC exams, follows widespread allegations of cheating in certain national level exams like the recent NEET. The commission has proposed a real-time attendance monitoring system that includes GPS coordinates to confirm that enrolment occurs within the designated shift.

The UPSC specifies that the QR code on the Admit Card, which includes the candidate's roll number, should be scanned to automatically retrieve the candidate's information from



the Application Database. If the QR code cannot be scanned, the candidate's roll number must be entered manually from the Admit Card.

The UPSC also plans to implement CCTV/video surveillance with recording and live broadcast capabilities to monitor the activities of candidates and exam personnel across various centres and venues nationwide.

The service provider will be required to install an adequate number of CCTV colour cameras in every classroom, ensuring at least one camera for every 24 candidates. Cameras will also be placed at the entry and exit gates and in control rooms where sensitive pre

and post-examination materials are handled. Additionally, the service provider must arrange for remote live viewing of the CCTV footage at the UPSC's control room, ensuring real-time monitoring and enhancing overall security during the examinations.

The UPSC has sought bids from public sector undertakings (PSUs) to revamp its examination process. This move also follows a controversy involving trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar, who is alleged to have forged documents to appear for the CSE 12 times, exceeding the allowed number of attempts. The UPSC has filed a criminal case against Khedkar.

Dhaka takes umbrage at Didi remark, complains to India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday confirmed receiving a note from Dhaka that conveyed its objection to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks offering shelter to people affected by violent-clashes in that country. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud has earlier objected to Mamata's recent remark of offering "shelter" to people from Bangladesh amid ongoing protests in the country.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, appearing to disapprove of Mamata's comments, said matters that bring "the Union into relation with any foreign country, are the sole prerogative" of the Central Government.

In an address at a public event in Kolkata, Mamata, referring to violence-hit Bangladesh, said she would keep the doors of West Bengal open for people in distress from the neighbouring country and offer them shelter.

There were reports in the Bangladeshi media that said Dhaka has communicated to



Protesters in Bangladesh

New Delhi through diplomatic channels its displeasure over the West Bengal Chief Minister's comments. "I can confirm that we have received such a communication from the Bangladesh side. It is essentially on the lines described in the reports," Jaiswal said during his weekly media briefing while replying to a question.

"I would underline that under the Seventh schedule — List one — Union List — item 10 of our Constitution, the conduct of foreign affairs and all matters which bring the Union into relation with any foreign country, are the sole prerogative of the Union Government," he said.



Parliament can still legislate to impose "any limitations" on States' power to levy tax on mineral rights.

It referred to the term "any limitations" under Entry 50 of List II and said its scope is wide enough to include imposition of "restrictions, conditions, principles, as well as a prohibition".

Entry 50 of List II pertains to taxes on mineral rights subject to any limitations imposed by Parliament by law relating to mineral development.

Justice B V Nagarathna, in her dissenting verdict, said royalty is in the nature of a tax or an exaction and the Centre does have the power to levy it. After the bench pronounced its verdict, the counsel appearing for various States urged it to decide on recovery of taxes worth thousands of crores of rupees levied by the Centre on mines and minerals till now.

Reel makers face DMRC heat

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■
NEW DELHI

Delhi Metro, often referred to as the city's lifeline, has become a hotspot for "reelers" and "Instagrammers" using the trains as backdrops for their social media content. This trend has not only caused discomfort among fellow passengers but has also led to a significant increase in prosecutions for creating nuisances.

Between April and June, over 1,600 commuters were booked for making reels and other disruptive activities on metro premises, marking a three per cent rise from the same period last year.

Be it two girls indulging in obscene activities in the metro of making videos while putting colours on each other or a girl dancing to a Bollywood song and shooting it with people visibly



uncomfortable around, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has taken a strict approach to curb such nuisance from happening in the metros.

According to the data, 1,647 penalties were issued for creating nuisance in three months under Section 59 of the Metro Railways

(Operations and Maintenance) Act. The corresponding number for the same period last year was 1,600.

A senior DMRC official on Thursday said creating nuisance may also include offences such as sitting on the floor of the train and eating inside the train, among others.

The DMRC issued 610, 518 and 519 penalties in April, May and June, respectively while the corresponding numbers for the previous year were 528, 485 and 587, the data showed.

DMRC Managing Director Vikas Kumar said they penalised people for creating nuisance in the metro area. "We use our machinery so that such kind of incidents should not happen on the metro premises.

Rashtrapati Bhawan sheds trace of colonial past

ARCHANA JYOTI ■
NEW DELHI

A year after renaming the famous Mughal Gardens as "Amrit Udyan" on the premises of Rashtrapati Bhawan, efforts continue to align the iconic building with India's status as a Republic and underscore democratic principles deeply ingrained in Indian society since ancient times. On Thursday, 'Durbar Hall' and 'Ashok Hall', two historic halls of this historic residence and workplace of the President, have been rechristened as 'Ganantra Mandap' and 'Ashok Mandap' respectively.

"Rashtrapati Bhawan, the office and the residence of the President of India, is a symbol of the nation, and an invaluable heritage of the people. Continuous efforts are being made to make it more accessible to people. There



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

has been a consistent endeavour to make the ambience of the Rashtrapati Bhawan reflective of the Indian cultural values and ethos," a statement issued by the President's Secretariat said.

Accordingly, President Droupadi Murmu is pleased to rename two of the important halls of Rashtrapati

Bhawan — 'Durbar Hall' and 'Ashok Hall' — as 'Ganantra Mandap' and 'Ashok Mandap', respectively, it said on a day Murmu completed two years of her presidency.

"Renaming 'Ashok Hall' as 'Ashok Mandap' brings uniformity in language and removes the traces of anglicisation while upholding the key values associated with

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

Speaker disqualifies Lobin Hembrom, JP Patel under anti-defection law

8-day-long Monsoon Session of Assembly begins today

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand Assembly Speaker Rabindranath Mahto on Thursday disqualified two MLAs-Lobin Hembrom and JP Patel- under the Anti-defection law for 'shifting loyalties to other parties.'

The Speaker who is head of the speaker tribunal issued the order after hearing the petitions against them for merely two days, comes a day ahead of the Budget session of the Assembly.

The JMM petitioned against Lobin Hembrom after he fought the Lok Sabha election from Raajmahal as an independent against the party's official nominee Vijay Hansda.

The BJP complained against Patel after he joined the Congress and fought the Lok Sabha election from Hazaribagh. Incidentally, both lost the Lok Sabha elections.

The chief of the tribunal of the Jharkhand Assembly is Speaker passed the verdict disqualifying JMM MLA Lobin Hembrom from Boro and BJP MLA turned Congress leader JP Patel from Mandu.

Hembrom is three times JMM's member of the Jharkhand Legislative Assembly from the Boro constituency in Sahibganj district in 2000 - 2004, 2009 - 2013, and 2019 - 2023.

He has been critical of Chief Minister Hemant Soren. Another disqualified



Assembly Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahto along with Chief Minister Hemant Soren during the all party meeting on the eve of 'Monsoon Session' of Jharkhand Assembly in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

MLA is JP Patel. He was elected to the Jharkhand

Legislative Assembly from Mandu as a member of the

Bharatiya Janta Party in 2019.

However, Patel, a son of late MLA, Tek Lal Mahto, had left Bharatiya Janata Party and joined Indian National Congress on March 20, 2024. The Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahto made public the Tribunal's verdict was made public on Thursday, July 25.

Both MLAs were facing the charge for defection under the 10th Schedule of the Constitution. Speaker Rabindranath Mahto delivered the verdict, canceling the membership of both MLAs under the anti-defection law.

Meanwhile, in other development Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahto on



July 25 convened an all-party meeting to ensure the smooth functioning of the House during the upcoming Monsoon session, scheduled to commence on July 26 and conclude on August 2.

This session marks the final assembly gathering before the state heads into

elections later this year. This session marks the final assembly gathering before the state heads into elections later this year.

Present at the meeting were Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Minister Rameshwar Oraon, AJSU Party legislator Lambodar Mahto, and

CPI(ML) Liberation legislator Vinod Singh.

However, the BJP was notably absent, with Speaker Mahto mentioning that Ranchi MLA CP Singh arrived late, speculating that he might have been designated as the party's representative.

The speaker also said that the last session of the ongoing assembly will have smooth conduct of the proceedings. "I expect smooth conduct of the proceedings in the last session of the ongoing assembly," he said. Regarding frequent disruptions in the House, Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahto remarked that such incidents are a regular part of proceedings," added the Speaker.

CM visits RIMS to inquire well-being of party leader



Chief Minister Hemant Soren meets JMM Girdih District Secretary Mahalal Soren admitted for treatment in RIMS Trauma Centre in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren today reached the Trauma Centre and Central Emergency Ward of Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) and met JMM Girdih District Secretary Mahalal Soren, who was admitted there for treatment, and inquired about his health and well-being. Chief Minister Hemant Soren wished Mahalal Soren a speedy recovery. The Chief Minister talked to the doctors providing medical services to Mahalal Soren regarding his better treatment.

On the occasion, Chief Minister Hemant Soren also met other patients undergo-

ing treatment at the Trauma Centre and Central Emergency Ward and inquired about their well-being and directed the doctors to provide better health medical benefits to all the patients undergoing treatment. The Chief Minister said that the RIMS management should provide quality medical services to the patients with commitment.

It is notable that JMM Girdih District Secretary Mahalal Soren has been unwell for the past few days and is undergoing treatment under the supervision of specialist doctors at Trauma Centre and Central Emergency Ward of RIMS for better treatment.

Govt trains HMs, teachers for excellent results in SoEs, Model Schools



PNS : RANCHI

A five-day orientation workshop started from July 25 at Jharkhand Academic Council (JAC), Namkum for the teachers and HMs of 80 Chief Minister Schools of Excellence and 325 Block Level Model Schools running in the State. The workshop was inaugurated by the Secretary of the State Government's School Education and Literacy Department Umashankar Singh. Jharkhand Education Project Director Aditya Ranjan and Secondary Education Director Utkarsh Gupta were also present for the inaugural session.

Addressing the orientation workshop, Singh said that SA 1 and SA 2 will be conducted twice a year through JAC and that the State will get its formal data. Singh also said that the aim of the education department is to increase the learning outcome of children. NEP talks about holistic development. It is necessary to work on every aspect of professional and skill education. Along with teachers, officials are also responsible for improving the educational environment of schools. If the results are not satisfactory,

then strict action will be taken against both teachers and officials.

Singh also stated that there should be 100 percent result in ideal schools. Many schools have also achieved the target of 100 percent result this year. Teachers of such schools will be rewarded. He gave a strict warning to the officials and teachers that formality in the name of education will not be tolerated at any cost. The Education Secretary said that before taking action against teachers, training will be given but after that, if the situation does not improve, the department will definitely take action. Addressing all the HMs, Singh said that the excuse of shortage of teachers in schools will not work and efforts are being made to appoint teachers continuously in the State. If the HM is not interested in the management of the school and its studies, then inform us and further work will be done. Discipline is necessary in the school and HM should ensure that there is better coordination among the teachers. Singh also directed JEPC Director Aditya Ranjan to develop a mechanism for data collection of RAIL SA 1 and SA2.

Use of technology in education will bring positive change: Champai Soren

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand's Higher and Technical Education Minister, Champai Soren said that the education world of the State is standing at the threshold of a change and with the use of technology it will be able to prepare students to face the global challenges in the future.

Soren said that by connecting educational institutions to CSC through digital initiative, we will be able to make various processes faster and transparent. He was addressing the workshop on the topic "Digital Initiatives for Higher Education in Jharkhand" organized by the Department of Higher and Technical Education at Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University today.

On this occasion, while listing the priorities of the Jharkhand Government in the field of higher education, Champai said that many schemes including Gurujit Student Credit Card, Manki Munda Scholarship have been started to encourage students for higher education. "The main objective of these schemes is to connect the poor tribals, natives and common people of this mineral-rich state with educa-



Higher and Technical Education Minister Champai Soren addressing the workshop on the topic "Digital Initiatives for Higher Education in Jharkhand" organized by the Department of Higher and Technical Education at Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

tion, so that they can get educated and work for the betterment of their family, society and State," he added. The Minister said that to promote research in the State, the Government has come up with the Chief Minister Fellowship Scheme, under which students doing PhD will be given incentives up to Rs 25,000 every month. Along with this, the department is taking the initiative to open the first Divyang University of

Eastern India in Ranchi. "To fulfill our social responsibility, we are bringing the "Navothan Chhatravriti Yojana" to bear the entire cost of higher education of the Divyang and orphan students of the State," he added. "Jharkhand Grass Root Innovation Internship Scheme" is being started to promote innovation in the rural areas of the State, under which 4 trainee students will be sent to all the panchayats to understand

the local needs and find solutions to them. Through this innovative experiment of innovation in rural areas, not only will we be able to make the life of the villagers easier, but on the basis of the feedback received in this process, the government will make plans to improve the future of the villagers," said Champai.

During this workshop, an agreement was signed between various government and private universities of the state and CSC-SPV in the presence of the Director of the Department, Ramniwas Yadav, under which CSC will provide various facilities related to e-governance and information technology to these educational institutions.

In this program, Principal Secretary of Higher and Technical Education Department Rahul Kumar Purwar, MD of CSC-SPV Sanjay Kumar Rakesh and Director of the Department Ramniwas Yadav, along with Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Principals of Colleges, Directors of Engineering Colleges, Principals of Polytechnic Institutes and officials of government and private universities operating in the State were present.



Vehicles move through water-logged roads after heavy rain in Ranchi on Thursday. Pix by Vinay Murmu

Draft electoral roll published in State, voters check their names in list

PNS : RANCHI

As per the pre-scheduled programme, the draft of the voter list was published on Thursday. On the occasion of publication of the draft voter list, Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar went to his polling booth located at Madhya Vidyalaya Doranda, Ranchi and checked his name and the names of his family members.

Apart from him, all the special and common people including District Electoral Officers, Superintendents of Police from across the state checked their names in the voter list. In fact, it was already widely publicised by the Chief Electoral Officer's office that the draft of the voter list is to be published on Thursday.

After publication, between 12.00 and 1:00 pm, in the social media campaign 'Naam Chacho', a large number of people posted related posts on their respective social media platforms while checking their names. As a result, the said "Naam Chacho" hashtag campaign dominated social media throughout the day.

The draft of the voter list was shown by BLOs at all the



CEO K Ravi Kumar inspects a polling booth in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

polling stations in the state. Voters went to the polling station and matched their names in the list. Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar appealed to the voters that those who could not come to the polling station on Thursday to check their name in the list can also check their name online, if any kind of correction is required then inform in time because work is being done to improve the format. He said that at the time of voting, no voter should be deprived of his voting rights, so that he must check his name in the voter list.

After checking his name in the voter list, the Chief

Electoral Officer also planted a tree in his polling station BMP Madhya Vidyalaya Doranda campus.

It was pre-determined to run the #NaamJancho social media hashtag campaign on the day of publication i.e. Thursday itself. As a result, a large number of voters participated enthusiastically in this campaign. They checked their names, as well as worked to make other voters aware through their social media posts.

On this occasion, Deputy Election Officer Headquarters Sanjay Kumar along with senior officials related to the election of Ranchi district were present.

BJP upset with Speaker's remarks on Santhal 'demographic' changes

PNS : RANCHI

BJP today cornered Speaker Ravindra Nath Mahto over his statement denying any change in demography of Santhal Pargana region. State spokesperson Pratul Shahdev said that the matter of change in demography is currently pending in the High Court. The High Court has asked the Deputy Commissioners of the six border districts to file affidavits on this issue and tell how many infiltrators are living in their districts and how to remove them. The Speaker's interference in this matter even before the High Court has given any decision is a direct contempt of the High Court.

Pratul said that on one hand the Speaker is denying any change in demography, while according to the official census data of the country, the population of tribals in the Santhal region has decreased by 16% and the Muslim population has increased by 13% between 1951 and 2011. This is a direct case of infiltration. In the 60-year tenure from 1951 to 2011, the Congress government was in power at the Centre for 85% of the time. The then Congress governments are directly responsible for this infiltration. Pratul said that on June 2, 2023, by writing a letter to the Deputy Commissioner of all the districts, the Special Branch had clearly stated that the infiltrators are lodged in the madrasas of Santhal Paragana and their government documents are prepared. Pratul wanted to know whether the Speaker does not agree with the Special Branch of the state government.

Pratul said that the post of Speaker is a constitutional post and is considered above



CCL organises free medical camp in Deoghar

PNS : RANCHI

Coal India Limited (CIL)'s subsidiary company Central Coalfield Limited (CIL) has organized a free medical camp on the occasion of Shrawani Mela at Dumma, located near the border of Bihar and Jharkhand. So far about 8000 people have benefited from this one month camp.

In this camp, free medical consultation, blood pressure, blood sugar etc. a checkup along with physiotherapy and free medicines are being provided by the team of CCL doctors for the villagers, stakeholders and workers. A dedicated team of two senior doctors of CCL and 7 other medical personnel are providing services in the camp, which is diagnosing and treating various health problems.

This camp started from 22.07.2024 and will run till 20.08.2024. Under the guidance of CCL CMD Nilendu Kumar Singh and in furtherance of his social welfare initiatives, the Company regularly organizes health camps. CCL is committed to the energy security of the country as well as inclusive growth of its stakeholders, he added.

CCL has been playing a vital role in addressing the health related problems of the local community by organizing health camps during Shrawani Mela for the past several years. This year too, the Company, being dedicated to its social responsibility, is serving the people and stakeholders of the area through this free medical camp. This effort of the Company is being highly appreciated by the people.

Parents' Day celebration at SCS

Class I of Surendranath Centenary School celebrated Parents' Day with great enthusiasm and fervour on Thursday. The programme commenced with a traditional welcome, followed by a beautiful Saraswati Vandana. The students then took to the stage, showcasing India's rich culture through a ramp walk and entertaining the audience with mashup rhymes and a dance performance. Unnati Mishra delivered a thought-provoking speech, while a heartwarming PPT presentation highlighted the special bond between parents and children. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Utkarsh Kumar. Principal Samita Sinha said that the reason for celebrating the day was to thank and acknowledge parents for all that they are doing for their children.



AFFIDAVIT
I, Taren Kispotta, W/o Panchu Oraon, R/o Village & P.O.-Bargari, P.S.-Mandar, Ranchi, Jharkhand. My name Taren Hemanti Kispotta has been mentioned in my husband's service book which is wrong. Vide Affidavit Series No.23-24/GI-27124, dated-09.02.2024. My correct name is Taren Kispotta & date of birth is 06.03.1977, which is recorded in my Aadhar Card (6673 4326 2945) & Pan Card (JEFFPK6737E).

Pandemonium in K'taka House over MUDA scam

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Acrimonious scenes marked proceedings in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Thursday with opposition BJP and JD(S) protesting from the well of the House, demanding a discussion on the alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), including to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi. Citing rules, Speaker U T Khader on Wednesday rejected the Opposition's notice for an adjournment motion on the MUDA case, causing a setback to their plans to corner Siddaramaiah and the Congress government. The opposition thereafter had announced that they would stage "day-and-night" dharna in both Legislative Assembly and Council demanding discussion on the issue. The legislators of the two parties stayed back after the Assembly and Council were adjourned for the day on Wednesday and spent the night in the two Houses, continuing their protest. As the House met for the day on Thursday, BJP and JD(S) members trooped into the well of the House, holding placards and shouting slogans. Senior BJP MLA Sunil Kumar said: "Sites were taken in MUDA scam by violating all rules, but you (the Speaker) cite rules (while rejecting our demand for discussion). You don't take up the issue for



discussion. Were sites taken in accordance with rules?" He alleged that the government was trying to cover up and shut the case. "There seems to be a fear that if discussion happens the truth will come out. Chair (Speaker's post) is being used for it. Please reconsider your decision and allow discussion. Where should we discuss if not in the House?" As Sunil Kumar and Leader of Opposition R Ashoka accused the government of running away from debate and trying to misuse the Chair for it, Congress MLAs including Ministers H K Patil and Cheluvrasyam took strong exception to this, resulting in some argument. Alleging that it was a case of Rs 3000-4000 crore scam, Ashoka sought to know about the Chief Minister meeting the Governor Thaaarchand

Gehlot on Wednesday, and asked: "Has the Governor asked for an explanation on the MUDA scam?" The Speaker then adjourned the House for some time. When the House met again, BJP and JD(S) MLAs continued their protest from the well. Ashoka, Sunil Kumar and other opposition leaders once again urged Speaker Khader to allow discussion on the MUDA scam. Ashoka said a Dalit family's land has been illegally taken away by obtaining the signature of one of their family members and without the consent of others, and alleged that the Chief Minister himself was involved in the scam. "The CM who should protect things, is himself involved in the scam. This scam needs to be probed by CBI, CM should

not remain in power even for a second," he said. "Fourteen sites were given to CM and registered to his family in a single day," Ashoka claimed. Amid protest and sloganeering, the Speaker transacted the business of the House that saw several Ministers and heads of several House committees laying papers and reports on the table of the Assembly, and six bills being passed without any discussion. Also, resolutions against the delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies based on the coming census, "One Nation, One Election" proposal and National Entrance cum Eligibility Test (NEET) were adopted amid protest by opposition parties, without any discussion. It is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA. Several supporters of Siddaramaiah too have allegedly "benefited this way," BJP leaders alleged. The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where MUDA developed a residential layout. The controversial scheme envisages allotting 50 per cent of developed land to the land loser in lieu of undeveloped land acquired for forming layouts.

Bengal Assembly Speaker asks MLAs to behave responsibly

PTI ■ KOLKATA



A day after senior BJP Leader Suvendu Adhikari was involved in a verbal spat with Trinamool Congress MLA Tapan Chatterjee on the assembly premises, Speaker Biman Bandyopadhyay on Thursday asked legislators to behave responsibly. Adhikari had alleged that the TMC legislator abused him verbally and tried to assault him on the premises of the assembly. In a letter to the Speaker, the BJP leader said he was feeling "insecure" in the assembly and demanded action against Chatterjee. The TMC MLA, however, had claimed he did not threaten or assault Adhikari but merely confronted him over some comments by the BJP leader against him and his daughter during an election meeting at his constituency. On the contrary, Chatterjee alleged, Adhikari had threatened him with dire consequences when he wanted his explanation at the assembly lobby for the comments. Taking a serious view of the

incident, the Speaker said, "What happened in the assembly premises yesterday is unfortunate, unexpected and inappropriate." "We need to behave with restraint. We need to conduct ourselves appropriately as stakeholders of the Assembly," he said addressing both treasury and opposition benches. Referring to Adhikari's claim that he and other opposition MLAs were feeling insecure in the House, Bandyopadhyay said, "Adequate security arrangements are in place in the House but people's representatives should not act in a provocative manner." Adhikari was not present in the House when the Speaker made the observation, but Chatterjee was around. The Speaker had said on Wednesday he has initiated an investigation into the allegations of Adhikari. Adhikari, the BJP MLA of Nandigram, in his letter also held the Speaker somehow responsible for the incident since he disallowed entry of personal bodyguards of MLAs inside the assembly.

Women in Goa village tap Govt scheme to weave secure future

PTI ■ SURLA (GOA)

When a mining ban was imposed in Goa in 2012, the women in Surla village in Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's Sanquelim assembly constituency were the first to face its economic impact. Surrounded by iron ore mines, the village with a population of about 4,000 saw its men become jobless after the ban. Their families faced hardships for years until the state government's Swayampurna Goa scheme triggered an agricultural and micro-business revolution. The scheme, launched in 2020, aims at making villages self-reliant. Former sarpanch Vishranti Surlakar, who took up the initiative of creating awareness among the women in the village, brought them together under one roof to start a handloom centre, where traditional 'Kunbi sarees' are weaved. Subraj Kanekar, the Swayampurna Mitra for Surla, ensured that the Department of Handicraft, Textile and Coir took over an abandoned school building for the project in 2020. Kanekar told PTI that the women from Surla requested him to procure machines to weave Kunbi sarees. The department also trained the women to operate the machines. Since then, they have been weaving sarees, shawls and other Kunbi products. "There is a huge market for these products," he said. When he met the residents,



Kanekar said he realised there was a need to revive five square kilometres of paddy fields that had been left abandoned by the men from the village who had become mining workers. "There was a need to revive the water table to facilitate farming. During the first monsoon, we dug trenches on a hill which charged the water table," he said. Farmer Vishnu Natekar's cashew plantation on a hilllock has become a laboratory for water harvesting under the Swayampurna Mitra scheme. "In the first year, we dug trenches which revived the water table. We dug around 1,200 trenches on the hill," said a beaming Natekar. Swayampurna Mitra Kanekar said the villagers did not face any water scarcity this year. "There was enough water even in the summer month of May. The experiment has worked," he said. Under the scheme, Santosh Maulingkar has taken to pearl farming. Maulingkar said he underwent training in Pune before taking up this project.

Telangana Govt presents Budget of ₹2.91 lakh cr

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government on Thursday presented a Rs 2.91 lakh crore state budget for 2024-25, with the total revenue expenditure expected to be Rs 2.21 lakh crore and capital expenditure Rs 33,487 crore. In the past 10 years, the state has racked up an overall debt of Rs 6.71 lakh crore, according to Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Ministry In-charge Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka who tabled the budget in the assembly. The total revenue has been estimated at Rs 2,90,814 crore, including Open Market Loans of over Rs 57,000 crore. Of the total revenue expenditure, Rs 1,73,730 crore would go towards interest payments during the fiscal. The state's fiscal deficit has been pegged at Rs 49,255.41 crore in the 2024-25 budget, while it showed a revenue surplus of Rs 297.42 crore. The substantial rise in debt relative to income growth suggests heavy dependence on borrowings to fund expenditure, potentially endangering fiscal sustainability, Bhatti said. The persistent rise in debt far out-stripping income gains suggests that without stringent fiscal reforms, Telangana's economic health



could be at risk, necessitating measures to balance expenditure with revenue generation and reduce dependence on borrowing, he added. "Telangana's debt has reached Rs 6.71 lakh crore mark. In the last 10 years, the state government debt has increased by 10 times without any development proportionate to that," the minister said. The state government estimates that it will make Rs 1,38,181.26 crore revenue on its own and get Rs 35,208.44 in non-tax revenue and Rs 26,216.38 crore in tax revenue from Telangana's central share. Among allocations, Telangana has proposed to set apart Rs 72,659 crore for agriculture, Rs 21,292 crore for on education and Rs 22,301 crore for irrigation. Rs 29,816 crore has been set apart for the Panchayath Raj

and Rural Development department. The budget has also allocated Rs 10,000 crore for the development of the capital city of Hyderabad and Rs 11,468 crore for the health department. After the Congress government took over, Rs 35,118 crore debt has been raised and loans of Rs 42,892 crore — including principal and interest — have been repaid, Bhatti said. "It was a huge challenge for the newly-formed Congress government to manage the state which was in a financial shambles. However, we started our administration by controlling frivolous expenditure and with a sense of financial discipline," the minister said. He said the state government has made an attempt to streamline the system and to pay salaries and pensions in a timely manner to 3.69 lakh government employees and 2.87 lakh pensioners from March 2024. At current prices, Telangana's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in 2023-24 stands at Rs 14,63,963 crore, which is 11.9 per cent. Meanwhile, BRS chief and former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao attended the assembly today for the first time in the capacity of leader of Opposition, according to party sources.

High drama inside Bihar Assembly

PTI ■ PATNA

There was high drama inside the Bihar assembly on Thursday as opposition members conducted parallel "proceedings" in the well, expressing their lack of confidence in the ruling dispensation led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Several legislators wore black scarves in protest against the CM's disrespectful behaviour towards women MLAs the previous day, as well as the lathi-charge on Congress workers marching towards the Vidhan Sabha to highlight

alleged failures of the NDA government. Despite the commotion, Speaker Nand Kishore Yadav proceeded with the Question Hour, cautioning unruly members against disrupting the assembly's decorum. "These are staff members of the Vidhan Sabha. If anyone gets hurt due to your actions, I will have to take strict action," warned the Speaker to the opposition members seated in protest in the well. Mahboob Alam, the CPI(M) Liberation legislature party leader, sat in a chair and mockingly assumed the role of



"Speaker" in the parallel assembly. After the Question Hour concluded, opposition MLAs staged a walkout, alleging their voices were being ignored. The Speaker read out a number of adjournment

motions, moved by members of various opposition parties, and quipped "it is strange that those who moved these motions did not even bother to remain present". The Zero Hour was conducted with the opposition in abstentia until the House was adjourned for lunch. Meanwhile, the issue of the Chief Minister's conduct towards women MLAs was raised in the Upper House of the state legislature, which adjourned shortly after the session began. Emerging from the legislative

council, the leader of the opposition Rabri Devi lambasted the Chief Minister and his close aide Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan, the Union minister for fisheries, animal husbandry and dairying. "Nitish Kumar alleges women MLAs in the opposition do not know or understand anything. Lalan accuses me of inability to understand the budget and claims I cannot sign a paper. Both should apologise for such misogynistic remarks," said Rabri Devi, who is also a former Chief Minister.

16 out of 102 Vande Bharat trains catering to needs of Maharashtra: Railway Minister

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Out of 102 Vande Bharat trains operating in the country at present, 16 are catering to the needs of the people of Maharashtra, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said in a written reply in Lok Sabha. The minister was responding on Wednesday to the questions raised by Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Omprakash Bhupalsinh alias Pavan Rajenimbalkar, who wanted to know the details of the proposed number of "Vande Bharat Express" trains and their routes for Maharashtra. "As on 19th July, 2024, 102 Vande Bharat Express services



are operating on the Indian Railways network. Of these, 16 Vande Bharat Services are catering to the needs of the stations located in the State of Maharashtra," Vaishnav said. "Besides, introduction of new train services, including Vande Bharat Express services, is an ongoing process on Indian Railways subject to traffic justification, operational feasibility, resource availability, etc," the minister added. Rajenimbalkar also asked the

number of trains proposed to be launched by the government in the current financial year, particularly to connect the tourist destinations of Maharashtra with other states, and the details of the coach factories set up in the country along with the total production capacity of Vande Bharat Express trains from these coach factories. "Indian Railways (IR) have issued 'Bharat Gaurav Trains' policy in November 2021 with the objective to showcase India's rich cultural heritage and magnificent historical places through Bharat Gaurav Trains. These are theme-based tourist circuits trains," Vaishnav said.

Indo-Bangla border centre in Assam's Salmara reopens after 4 years

PTI ■ MANKACHAR (ASSAM)

The border trade and immigration centre along the India-Bangladesh boundary, closed for the last four years since the outbreak of COVID-19, reopened formally on Thursday in Assam's South Salmara district, an official said. Mankachar's AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam along with senior district officials were present on the occasion. Islam said the closure of the centre had led to great difficulties for students, traders and even

patients coming for medical treatment from the neighbouring country to the State. During the last four years, the people from the lower and central part of Assam had to go to Bangladesh either via Meghalaya's Dawki or through Kolkata, which caused immense inconvenience to them, he said. Assam has two immigration centres for Bangladesh - one at Sutarkandi in Karimganj district, which was also closed during the pandemic but later reopened, and the other at Mankachar.

Maharashtra Govt asks Karnataka to release more water from Almatti dam to avoid flooding

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In view of heavy rainfall in parts of western Maharashtra, the state government has urged Karnataka to release more water from Almatti dam to avoid flooding in Sangli and Kolhapur districts, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said on Thursday. Almatti dam, officially known as Lal Bahadur Shastri dam, is a hydroelectric project on the Krishna river in north Karnataka. Speaking to reporters, he said, "The Maharashtra government has asked Karnataka to increase the water discharge from Almatti dam to three lakh cusec from the current



outflow of 2.5 lakh cusec." The water storage of Koyna dam in Maharashtra's Satara district increased by six thousand million cubic feet (TMC) in a very short period, and it is already 75 per cent filled, he said. "It means, we need to discharge water from Koyna dam, which will increase the water levels of Krishna river," he said. Koyna dam is built on the Koyna river and its storage capacity is 105 TMC. The Koyna river

is the biggest tributary of the Krishna river, which flows to the south and enters Karnataka, crossing Sangli city and Kolhapur district. Mahabaleshwar, one of the highest points in the Western Ghats in Satara, has witnessed very heavy rainfall over the last few days. In the last 24 hours, the region has received more than 400 mm of rainfall, an India Meteorological Department (IMD) official said. The rainfall in Mahabaleshwar contributes to the storage of the Koyna dam. "If water discharge is not increased from Almatti dam, then Sangli and parts of Kolhapur district will experience flooding, which will affect the

citizens and incur heavy agricultural losses," he said. "The water resources department also needs to release around 11,000 cusec water from Warna dam in Kolhapur that will further reach the Krishna river, increasing the chances of flooding. Hence, we requested the Almatti dam authorities to increase their discharge," Pawar said. In the last few years, flooding in Sangli and Kolhapur districts have led to the death of people. The agricultural losses incurred from flooding have run into thousands of crores in recent years, revealed data from the state relief and disaster management department.

All acts of violence should be condemned: Manipur CM

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Thursday said all acts of violence should be universally condemned and efforts must be made to prevent them. Singh made these comments at the launch of a book programme by the Department of Sericulture and Manipur Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board. He said, "Peace has gradually returned to the state and we must collectively strive to maintain it. All our demands, including the identification of illegal immigrants and the

implementation of the NRC, should strictly adhere to constitutional and legal frameworks. We must denounce acts of violence and work actively to prevent them." Singh also responded to allegations by the Congress that no aid was mentioned for Manipur in the Union Budget. Without directly naming the grand old party, Singh said, "The central government has consistently supported relief efforts since the beginning, regardless of whether the state was mentioned in Parliament or not. Let us refrain from indulging in petty politics. The Centre has provided

assistance for constructing prefabricated homes and daily food provisions. A total of Rs 145 crore has been allocated for managing relief camps." He added, "Rs 3 crore was spent on distributing television sets in relief camps, and Rs 23 crore was distributed in Rs 1,000 installments to each person residing in relief camps, on at least four occasions. Additionally, Rs 44 crore was utilised for children's nutrition and personal hygiene, while Rs 19 crore was allocated as compensatory packages for agricultural and related activities."

Singh added, "Rs 25,000 has been disbursed as the first installment to 6,000 families under the special assistance package for violence-affected families, with each family set to receive Rs 1 lakh." He addressed criticisms, stating, "Those engaging in petty politics have misrepresented the government's efforts for relief camp residents." Singh continued, "Even amidst the disastrous hailstorms and floods in recent months, Rs 80 crore was allocated for flood relief, and Rs 45 crore was spent on distributing GI sheets to 42,000 people whose homes were damaged by hailstorms."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Reaching out

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

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



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

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

PICTALK



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

Pushpa Kamal Dahal falls from grace



K S TOMAR

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

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



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



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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BUDGET REACTIONS

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

Tragedy at Tribhuvan International Airport



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

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

CONTROVERSIAL REMARKS

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

BIDEN WITHDRAWS FROM THE RACE

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

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

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Union budget 2024: A major thrust on agriculture



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

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

Union budget 2024 - a thrust on agriculture for a visit by Biju Dharmapalan. In the Union Budget 2024 presented by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, great emphasis has been placed on agriculture and space. Both are essential pillars for transforming our country into a developed nation.



The latter is futuristic, and the former is the lifeline of the present generation. No nation can survive without the farming community, and they are the 'Annadata'. In the changing global climate and environmental conditions, the traditional farming sector would not be sufficient to feed the population. The government has allocated Rs. 1,51,851 crores for the agricultural and allied sectors. Stress has been given to agricultural research to increase productivity and release 109 new high-yielding and climate-resilient crops have become essential under the prevailing global climate conditions. During the past few years, we have noticed changes in the climate in

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

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

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

BUDGET BALANCES FISCAL DISCIPLINE AND EMPLOYMENT

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



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

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

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

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



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

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

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

Budget 2024: A blueprint for long-term growth

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



DEEPAK SOOD



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

A booster for MSMEs

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

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

Skilling and Job Creation

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

The rural economy

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

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

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

Start-ups and E-Commerce

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

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

Energy security

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

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

Digitization of Land Records

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



RAHUL KAMBLE

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

(The author is freelance writer; views are personal)

Biden says he quit re-election bid to save US democracy

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden said his decision to quit the 2024 presidential race and endorse Kamala Harris as the Democratic presidential nominee was aimed at unifying the nation and passing the torch to a new generation. In an emotional prime-time televised address to the nation on Wednesday, Biden told Americans that he decided to end his faltering 2024 re-election campaign in a bid to save US democracy. "So I've decided the best way forward is to pass the torch to a new generation. That's the best way to unite our nation. I know there is a time and a place for long years of experience in public life, but there's also a time and a place for new voices, fresh voices, yes, younger voices, and that time and place is now," Biden said in his rare address from the Oval Office.



Biden, 81, said he revered the President's Office but he loved his country more. "It's been the honour of my life to

serve as president but in the defence of democracy, which is at stake, I think it's more important than any title," he said. "I believe my record as president, my leadership in the world, my vision for America's future all merited a second term," Biden said, three days after he withdrew from the November 5 presidential election. "But nothing, nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy. That includes per-

sonal ambition, so I've decided the best way forward is to pass the torch to a new generation," Biden said in a speech which lasted about 11 minutes. It also marked the beginning of the closing chapter of his presidency and half-century in public service.

On Vice President Harris, Biden said she is "experienced, she's tough, she's capable" and called her an "incredible partner" during their three-and-a-

half years together. "I've made my choice. I've made my views known ... Now, the choice is up to you, the American people," he said. Biden continued to emphasise what he believes is at risk this election, which he's repeatedly cast as an "inflection point" to save the nation's founding principles. While Biden did not mention Donald Trump by name, he tried to draw a clear contrast with the former president, whose ambition led him to claim victory in an election he did not win in 2020. "The great thing about America is, here, kings and dictators do not rule," Biden said. "The people do. History is in your hands, the idea of America lies in your hands." "I ran for president four years ago because I believed, and still do, that the soul of America was at stake, the very nature of who we are was at stake," he said. "And that's still the case." "I've made it clear that I believe America is at an inflection point, one of those rare moments in history when the decisions we make

now will determine the fate of our nation and the world for decades to come," he said.

Harris, 59, who is of Indian and African origin, has now emerged as the presumptive presidential nominee of the Democratic Party. He was surrounded by First Lady Jill Biden, his son Hunter Biden and several family members. Toward the end of remarks, Ashley Biden reached for the hand of her mother, Jill Biden, who was seated next to her.

After the president concluded his remarks, Jill Biden walked to the Resolute Desk and stood next to her husband. Harris watched Biden's Address to the Nation from Houston.

Biden in his remarks said that America is going to have to choose between moving forward or backward, between hope and hate, between unity and division. "We have to decide, do we still believe in honesty, decency, respect, freedom, justice and democracy. In this moment, we can see those we disagree with not as ene-

mies, but as fellow Americans," he said.

Biden also looked ahead to what he still hopes to do in these final six months. He zeroed in on the need to address gun violence, and climate change, continuing to improve the economy and reforming the US Supreme Court.

"That means I'll continue to lower costs for hard-working families, grow our economy, and I'll keep defending our personal freedoms and our civil rights from the right to vote to the right to choose. I'll keep calling out hate and extremism, and make it clear there is no place, no place in America for political violence or any violence ever, period. I'm going to keep speaking out to protect our kids from gun violence, our planet from climate crisis, is the existential threat," he said.

Biden said he was the first president in this century to report to the American people that the United States is not at war anywhere in the

world. "We'll keep rallying a coalition of proud nations to stop Putin from taking over Ukraine and doing more damage. We'll keep NATO stronger, and I'll make it more powerful and more united than at any time in all of our history," he said.

"I'll keep doing the same for allies in the Pacific. When I came to office, the conventional wisdom was that China would inevitably surpass the United States. That's not the case anymore. I'm going to keep working to end the war in Gaza, bring home all the hostages and bring peace and security to the Middle East and end this war," said the president. Biden said in just a few months, the American people will choose the course of America's future. Biden, who initially resisted calls to step aside and insisted he was the best person to take on Donald Trump, said he now believes a new path is necessary. The president did not address ongoing Republican criticisms about his fitness to serve.

Netanyahu will meet with Biden and Harris

Washington (AP): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to make a long-awaited White House visit Thursday to meet with President Joe Biden and likely Democratic nominee Vice President Kamala Harris at an important moment for all three politicians.

Netanyahu's White House visit, his first since before President Donald Trump left office in 2020, comes at a time of growing pressure on all three to find an endgame to the nine-month war that's left more than 39,000 dead in Gaza. What's more, dozens of Israeli hostages and the remains of others who have died are still languishing in Hamas captivity. Biden is pressing to get Israel and Hamas to seal his proposal to release remaining hostages in Gaza over three phases — something that would be a legacy-affirming achievement for the 81-year-old Democrat, who abandoned his reelection bid and endorsed Harris. It could also be a boon for Harris in her bid to succeed him. White House officials say that the negotiations are in the closing stages but there are issues that need to be resolved.

Following their midday talks, Biden and Netanyahu will meet the families of American hostages. Harris, who will meet separately with Netanyahu later, is trying to demonstrate that she has the mettle to serve as commander in chief. She's also being scrutinized by those on the political left who say Biden hasn't done enough to force Netanyahu to end the war and by Republicans looking to brand her as insufficient in her support for Israel.

A senior administration official, who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said there is "no daylight" between the president and vice president on Israel. Harris' last one-on-one engagement with Netanyahu was in March 2021, but she's taken part in more than 20 calls between Biden and Netanyahu.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, is trying to navigate his own delicate political moment. He faces pressure from the families of hostages demanding a cease-fire agreement to bring their loved ones home and from far-right members of his governing coalition who demand he resist any deal that could keep Israeli forces from eliminating Hamas.

Protestors burn US flag near Congress

Washington (PTI): Pro Palestinian-protestors on Wednesday lowered an American flag and burned it down a few blocks away from the US Congress and hoisted a Palestine flag in its place. The incident happened in front of the Union Station, near the US Congress, where Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed a Joint Session of the US Congress.

The protesters in several hundreds were protesting against the US policy in the Middle East and the bombing of innocent civilians by Israelis in Gaza and parts of Palestine. Six people were arrested by the local police. Videos posted online showed that the protesters were shouting pro-Hamas and anti-Israeli slogans. They lowered a huge American flag in front of the busy Union Station and burned it down, then they raised the flag of Palestine which was much smaller.

The protests were also held in several parts of the city as Netanyahu addressed the Congress.

Cease-fire talks face delays after Netanyahu's fiery speech

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Officials from Egypt, Israel, the United States and Qatar were expected to meet Thursday in Doha with the aim of resuming talks for a proposed three-phase cease-fire to end the war between Israel and Hamas and free the remaining hostages. But an Israeli official said Israel's negotiating team was delayed and would likely be dispatched next week. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed Congress in Washington on Wednesday as thousands of protesters gathered near the U.S. Capitol to denounce the war. Hamas slammed the speech Thursday and accused Netanyahu of obstructing efforts to end the war and return the hostages. Netanyahu has signaled that a cease-fire deal could be taking shape after nine months of war, but during his fiery speech to Congress, he vowed to press forward with Israel's war until he achieves "total victory." Palestinians displaced by the Israeli military's latest order to leave parts of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis say



Relatives and supporters of the hostages held captive by Hamas in the Gaza Strip take part in a protest to demand their immediate release outside of the U.S. Embassy Branch Office in Tel Aviv, Israel, Wednesday.

they are sleeping in the streets. The Health Ministry in Gaza says more than 39,100 Palestinians have been killed in the war. Hamas slams Netanyahu's speech to Congress. The Palestinian Hamas group slammed Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's fiery speech to the United States Congress, accusing him Thursday of obstructing efforts to end the war and return the hostages. In his high profile visit to Washington, Netanyahu pledged to achieve "total vic-

tory" against the militant group in his nearly one-hour address in Congress, and derided protests against the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, now in its ninth month. Hamas said Netanyahu's Washington visit was an address to improve his image

after the International Criminal Court requested to issue arrest warrants against him for war crimes. The ICC also requested warrants for his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Hamas officials Mohammed Deif, Yehya Sinwar, and Ismail Haniyeh. "He (Netanyahu) is the one who thwarted all efforts aimed at ending the war and concluding a deal to release the prisoners, despite the continuous efforts of mediators from the brothers in Egypt and Qatar despite the flexibility and positivity shown by the movement," the militant group said in a written statement, adding that the Israeli prime minister talking about intensified efforts to free the hostages is a "complete lie" to mislead public opinion.

They also rejected Netanyahu's vision for Gaza's future — which would consist of a demilitarized civilian administration in the enclave — and accused Netanyahu of being dishonest about aid delivery into the Gaza Strip and downplaying the number of Palestinians killed in the ongoing war. 6 hostage relatives are released

after being detained in Washington during Netanyahu's visit to Israel. A group representing the families of Israeli hostages held in Gaza said Thursday that six hostage relatives have been released after they were briefly detained during Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to the joint session of Congress. The family members stood in the hall silently during the address Wednesday and wore yellow shirts that read "Seal the Deal Now," referring to a cease-fire deal to free the hostages, before they were removed from the White House chamber by security officers. They were released a number of hours later, the Hostages Family Forum said. "Benjamin Netanyahu spoke for 54 minutes and he did not mention once the need to seal the deal and to sign the deal now," said Gil Dickmann, whose cousin, Carmel Gat, is being held in Gaza. The six said they were invited by members of Congress to attend the speech. Netanyahu brought to the speech rescued hostage Noa Argamani and a number of family members of the hostages as part of his official delegation.

Kamala Harris unfit to rule: Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Unleashing a volley of attacks against his new campaign opponent Vice President Kamala Harris, former president and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has said she is "unfit to rule" and described her as a "radical left lunatic" whom voters will reject in November. Trump, 78, launched a scathing attack on Harris as he took the stage for the first time to address an election rally on Wednesday after Harris became the presumptive nominee of the Democratic Party. Over the weekend, President Joe Biden, 81, announced that he was dropping out of the race and named Harris as his successor.



Harris, 59, will be officially announced as the party's presidential candidate at its Democratic National Convention in August. "For three and a half years, Kamala Harris has been the ultra-liberal driving force behind every single Biden catastrophe. She is a radical left lunatic who will destroy our country if she ever gets the chance to get into office. We're not going to let that happen," Trump said.

Trump, who has previously called Biden "Sleepy Joe," gave Harris the nickname "Lyn Kamala."

"I was supposed to be nice. They say something happened to me when I got shot. I became nice," Trump said, referring to his brief call for national unity after the July 13 assassination attempt on him. "And when you're dealing with these people, they're very dan-

gerous people. When you're dealing with them, you can't be too nice. You really can't be. So if you don't mind, I'm not going to be nice. Is that okay?" he asked his supporters amidst huge applause from the audience. Harris is the most liberal elected politician in American history, he said.

This November, the American people are going to tell her, no thanks, Kamala, Trump said. "You've done a terrible job. You've been terrible at everything you've done. You're ultra-liberal. We don't want you here. We don't want you anywhere. Kamala, you're fired. Get out of here. You're fired," Trump said. Trump continued linking Harris to Biden and his policies and argued that both worked to cover up the president's physical decline while in office. She was appointed by this horrible president, this horrible guy... what they've done to our country is unthinkable," he alleged. Trump told his cheering supporters that Harris lies. A vote for Harris is a vote for

British officer suspended over ill-treating man

London (AP): A British police officer was suspended from his duties Thursday after a video was posted on social media that appeared to show an officer kicking and stamping on the head of a man lying on the floor of a terminal at Manchester Airport.

Greater Manchester Police said the incident occurred while police were trying to break up a fight at the airport's Terminal Two on Wednesday. Three officers were assaulted, with one suffering a broken nose and another requiring hospital treatment, the force said. "We understand the deep concerns that have been widely raised with us, and will continue to meet and discuss these feelings with Greater Manchester residents and elected representatives, whilst this independent investigation takes place," Police said in a statement. The incident comes amid rising distrust of police in Britain following allegations of excessive force used against ethnic minorities and scandals involving two serving police officers who were arrested for rape and murder.

NORAD tracks Chinese and Russian bombers near Alaska

AP ■ BEIJING

Defense Ministry said the joint patrol also flew over the Chukchi Sea, which is on the north side of the Bering Strait. Russian fighter jets and strategic bombers were joined by Chinese strategic bombers in the exercises, which lasted more than five hours, the ministry said. The joint patrol tested and improved coordination between the two air forces, said Zhang Xiaogang, a spokesperson for China's Defense Ministry. He said it was the eighth joint strategic air patrol since 2019. He declined to comment when asked if it was the first such patrol over the Bering Sea. NORAD said it had detected the two Chinese H-6 and two Russian Tupolev Tu-95 bombers in the North American Air Defense Identification Zone, an area beyond US and Canadian airspace in which those countries require aircraft to be identified for national security reasons. A photo released by the Russian Defense Ministry showed a Russian Su-30 fighter

jet escorting a Chinese bomber. Another photo posted online by the military channel of China's state broadcaster CCTV showed Russian and Chinese long-winged bombers flying in parallel formation against mostly blue skies. The Japanese military has grown increasingly concerned about joint China-Russia drills and the potential threat they represent to the security of Japan and the region. A fleet of Russian and Chinese warplanes including Tu-95s and H-6s was seen flying together last December over the waters between Japan and Korea, Japan's Defense Ministry said. At the time, China's Defense Ministry called it the seventh joint strategic air patrol with Russia. Chinese naval ships have showed up in international waters near Alaska, most recently in mid-July when the Coast Guard spotted four ships in the US Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) from the shore.

Nepal: Black box of crashed aircraft found, probe committee formed

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepalese authorities on Thursday recovered the black box of the aircraft that crashed here a day before and handed it over to a probe team formed to inquire into the tragic accident that killed 18 people, including a child. A Pokhara-bound Bombardier CRJ-200 aircraft of Saurya Airlines, carrying 19 people, crashed and caught fire shortly after taking off from the Tribhuvan International Airport here on Wednesday, killing 18 people aboard, and seriously injuring the pilot. The deceased included two crew members, technical staff of the airline, and a family of three, including a four-year-old boy. Hansa Raj Pandey, deputy



director general of the Civil Aviation Authority, said the black box of the crashed aircraft has been recovered and handed over to a probe team for necessary action. The probe team is headed by Ratish Chandra Lal, former director general of the Civil Aviation Authority, and

includes four other experts. The team has to submit its probe report along with recommendations within 45 days. The dead bodies are in the process of identification after conducting a post mortem and they will be handed over to the family members by Friday, Pandey said.

Pilot miraculously survived deadly crash

Kathmandu (PTI): Captain Manish Raj Shakya, the lone survivor of a deadly plane crash in Nepal that killed 18 other people on board, was saved after the cockpit of the aircraft was sheared off by a freight container seconds before the rest of the aircraft went up in flames, a media report said on Thursday. The Bombardier CRJ-200 aircraft of Saurya Airlines, carrying 19 people, including two crew members, technical staff of the airline and a child and his mother caught fire shortly after taking off from the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) here on Wednesday. The aircraft was bound for the

Pokhara International Airport for regular maintenance service. Of the deceased, 15 died on the spot while three died during treatment at a local hospital, authorities said. Airport security personnel said when the plane hit the container, the front part of the cockpit got stuck in it, while the rest of the plane fell to the ground reaching another side of the ground. According to Deputy Inspector General and Chief of TIA Airport Security Office Ram Dutt Joshi, Captain Shakya, 37, was rescued from inside the container which was on the TIA premises.

"We rescued Captain Shakya from inside the container," The Rising Nepal newspaper quoted DIG Joshi as saying. Doctors have initiated an investigation into the brain scars of Shakya. Shakya is currently receiving treatment at Kathmandu Medical College (KMC). According to the doctors involved in treatment, although the injuries in different parts of the body and the broken bones at two places of the backbone have not caused serious problems, the doctors are investigating to find out the cause of the scars on Shakya's brain. Neurosurgeon Dr Amit Thapa said that he could provide fur-

ther information only after the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan of Shakya's brain scars. Captain Shakya's health condition showed improvement on Thursday as compared to Wednesday. The doctors said he is "free from danger" and can speak. He can also consume liquid food. According to KMC sources, Captain Shakya sustained several internal injuries despite not being burnt in the fire. The doctors are preparing for surgery to address his broken bones. In solemn tribute to the 18 lives lost, the Nepal government has decreed that the national flag will be flown at half-mast

on Thursday. In response to the tragedy, a five-member probe commission has been formed to investigate the incident. The commission will be led by Ratish Chandra Lal Suman, former Director General of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN). The commission is tasked with delivering its report and recommendations within 45 days to prevent similar accidents in the future. Authorities are conducting an autopsy on the 18 people who lost their lives in the accident. The postmortem of the deceased began on Wednesday evening at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH).

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

MAY 9 RIOTS

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD



A Pakistani court on Thursday set aside the physical remand of Imran Khan in connection with 12 cases linked to last year's May 9 riots, in a major relief to the jailed former prime minister who has been imprisoned for almost a year.

what kind of evidence the probing team want to get from the suspect (Khan). The court asked the Punjab prosecutor general to read out the transcript of Khan under which police have registered multiple cases against for inciting the public to attack the state and military installations.

“Physical remand is a serious matter. It is not acceptable if you say a girl is not a girl but a boy,” Justice Pannu remarked and further noted “judges are being given more threats these days.” The court official further said the LHC observed that if Imran Khan was not leading the violent protest no case could be instituted against him. On this the prosecutor general argued that Khan incited the public,” the court official said.

EC notifies 39 successful MPs as PTI lawmakers

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's Election Commission has notified 39 successful MPs as lawmakers of Imran Khan's party after the Supreme Court ordered the top electoral body to do so in its verdict on the reserved seats case, a media report said on Thursday.

Despite an 8-5 split, all 13 judges declared the PTI a parliamentary party. The majority judgement explained that 39 out of the 80 MNAs, shown by the ECP as PTI candidates, belonged to the party. The rest of the 41 independents would have to file duly signed and notarised statements before the commission within 15 days, explaining that they contested the February 8 general elections as a candidate of a particular political party, the paper said.

under the jurisdiction of civilian courts. The petition was submitted by Khan's lawyer, Uzair Karamat, to the Lahore High Court. The federal government and the Inspector Generals (IGs) of all four provinces have been made respondents in the case, the Express Tribune newspaper reported.

order preventing his handover to military authorities. On Monday, the cricket-turned-politician expressed concerns that he and his wife, Bushra Bibi, might be sent to a military jail in connection with the May 9 riot cases.

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

Hong Kong (AP): A defence lawyer said on Thursday that prominent publisher Jimmy Lai will testify in his defence in the landmark national security trial brought under a Beijing-imposed law that has all but wiped out public dissent.

Lai, the 76-year-old founder of the now-defunct Apple Daily newspaper, was arrested in 2020 during a crackdown on the mass pro-democracy protests that rocked Hong Kong in 2019. He was charged with colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring with others to put out seditious publications. If convicted, he faces up to life in prison.

More than hundred flights cancelled in Germany

Environmental activists target airports across Europe

AP ■ FRANKFURT



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

Germany's busiest airport canceled more than 100 flights Thursday as environmental activists launched a coordinated effort to disrupt air travel across Europe at the height of the summer holiday season to highlight the threat posed by climate change.

Frankfurt Airport said flights were halted for safety reasons after climate activists breached security fences, triggering a response from police, firefighters and airport security officers. All runways were back in operation by 7:50 am local time, it said. About 140 flights have been cancelled so far, but further disruptions are expected throughout the day, the airport said.

Heathrow Airport that could have had a significant impact on Europe's largest airport. Seven members of the group known as Just Stop Oil were arrested at Heathrow and three others were taken into custody at other locations as part of an "intelligence-led" operation, the Metropolitan Police Service said in a statement.

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

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Days of China investing in Pakistan is now a thing of the past, a senior administration official has told the lawmakers noting that the United States is the future.

They don't actually train local workers to do their enterprises. They extract minerals, literally take gold and copper from the ground and just ship it back for processing in China.

region, especially in Pakistan since 2012. They are making solid progress in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor known as CPAK.

Putin meets Syrian Prez in Kremlin

Moscow (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin met President Bashar Assad of Syria in the Kremlin, video distributed by the Kremlin press service on Thursday showed.

"I am very interested in your opinion on how the situation in the region as a whole is developing," Putin said to Assad. "Unfortunately, there is a tendency towards escalation, we can see that. This also applies directly to Syria."

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

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States is concerned about the possibility of growing Chinese presence in Bangladesh, a senior administration official has told the lawmakers.

throughout the wider region," Lu said in response to the question. Congresswoman Young Kim said the Chinese Communist Party is a top trading partner for Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Afghanistan, which is around America's strategic partner India.

Lu told the lawmakers that the United States has been following very closely this past week the violence in Bangladesh. "We've condemned that violence we've called on the government to respect freedom of assembly and freedom of speech. We've called upon the government to restore internet to the country, which has been off now for several days," he said.

order for anyone involved in. That's what I heard. So we have condemned from the spokesperson of the State Department uh the shoot on sight order and ask them to roll that back," Lu said.

Japan's population falls for 15th year in row

Tokyo (AP): Japan's total population marked the 15th straight year of decline, according to government data released Wednesday, dropping by more than a half-million people as the population ages and births remain low.

tant to marry or have children, discouraged by bleak job prospects, the high cost of living — which rises at a faster pace than salaries — and a gender-biased corporate culture that adds a burden only on women and working mothers.

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

Bucharest (AP): Debris from what is believed to be a Russian drone landed in a rural area of Romania, the country's Defense Ministry said on Thursday, in the latest apparent incident of drone wreckage from the war in neighboring Ukraine falling onto the NATO member's soil.

Oil tanker sinks in Manila Bay

AP ■ MANILA

A Philippine oil tanker sank in Manila Bay early on Thursday after encountering huge waves, and the coast guard was working to determine whether the vessel was leaking oil — in what could be a major spill — after it rescued 16 of 17 crew members in a nighttime operation, officials said.

Armando Balilo said, citing statements from surviving crew members. The sinking followed days of monsoon rains, exacerbated by a passing offshore typhoon, that caused landslides and floodings across the archipelago, leaving at least 22 people dead and displacing more than half a million people.

coast, to search for the last missing crewman and to carry out an initial assessment of the tanker's fuel oil cargo, Balilo told an online news conference. He added that the coast guard was bracing to contain a possible major oil spill.

Advertisements for UPSIDA, Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd., and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

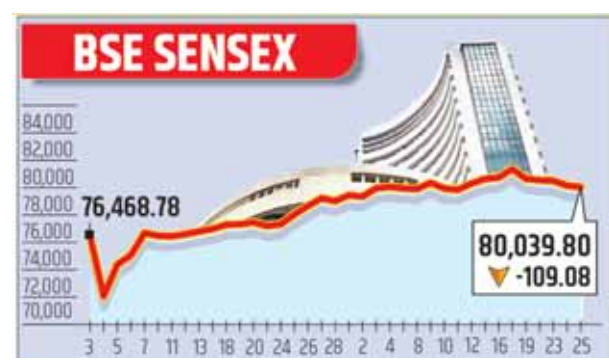
presenting the Union Budget for 2024-25 on Tuesday, announced a "comprehensive" review of the Income Tax Act of 1961. "The purpose is to make the Act concise, lucid, easy to read and understand. This will reduce disputes and litigation, thereby providing tax certainty to the taxpayers. It will also bring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

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

Markets extend losses for 5th session

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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



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

after the company's June quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. Nestle, Titan, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank, ITC, JSW Steel and State Bank of India were the other laggards. Sun Pharma, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance and Power Grid also ended in the positive territory. "After a volatile session, the Indian market concluded on a flat note, influenced by lower-than-expected earnings growth from major banks. Global indices also reacted pessimistically due to the disappointing results from top US tech companies. "However, the government's commitment to improving consumption and bridging the gap for energy transition in the budget buoyed sectoral sentiments," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.22 per cent, and smallcap index dipped 0.14 per cent. Among the indices, metal lost 1.19 per cent, bankex (1.10 per cent), realty (0.80 per cent), telecommunication (0.65 per cent) and financial services (0.60 per cent). On the other hand, energy, healthcare, industrials, utilities, auto and oil & gas were among the gainers. "Global stocks tumbled on Thursday after a tech-fuelled sell-off on Wall Street last night. A slew of disappointing results caused traders to panic that the artificial-intelligence frenzy that has powered the bull market this year may have been overdone," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities, said. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading in the negative territory in the mid-session deals. US markets ended significantly lower on Wednesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,130.90 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.73 per cent to USD 80.31 a barrel.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

narrow roads when driving four-wheelers. "To address this, we've developed an AI model specifically for Indian roads that incorporates multiple signals satellite imagery, Street View and other information like road types, distance between buildings, paved sections, etc. To estimate road widths at scale. Using these road width estimates, we've fine-tuned our existing AI routing algorithms to help four-wheelers avoid narrow roads whenever possible, without significantly impacting travel time or distance," the blogpost said. This means four-wheeler drivers can enjoy a less stressful driving experience, and it also benefits bikers, pedestrians and other commuters who can now use these narrow roads more safely and confidently, it added. Google Maps is starting to roll out this feature on Android devices this week in eight cities - Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Coimbatore, Indore, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Guwahati, and has promised to bring the feature to iOS and more cities soon. Another new feature on Google Maps is call-out flyovers along the recommended route. This feature helps users anticipate upcoming flyovers and prepare ahead of time to get onto the flyover. "Starting this week, you'll see these flyover callouts in 40 cities across India for both four-wheeler and two-wheeler active navigation on Android apps and Android Auto. iOS and CarPlay support will be coming soon," it said. Both Narrow Roads and Flyover features have been pioneered in India, tailored to the unique navigation needs of users, it said. To ensure EV drivers have the tools they need to confidently hit the road, the company has also announced the availability of information about EV charging stations on both Google Maps and Google Search in India. "To achieve this, we're collaborating with leading EV charging providers in India ElectricPe, Ather, Kazam, and Statiq to add authoritative information for over 8,000 charging stations, representing a significant portion of available charging stations in India," it said.

Sugar industry body proposes bio-refinery transition plan to Govt



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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

PTI ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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

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



the medal round.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE BIG PICTURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

into the Olympics.

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

For instance, steeplechaser Sable has been consistently bettering his own national record. His best stands at 8:09.94 but there are seven international runners who have achieved better timing than that in the run-up to the Games.

Given this, Even making the finals will be considered a huge achievement.

BEST CHANCE

India's hopes for podium finishes largely hinge on Neeraj, despite concerns around his adductor niggle, and the in-form badminton duo of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy.

The coveted 90m mark has eluded Neeraj from Tokyo to Paris but the ace javelin thrower seems to be doing just enough, and most importantly, consistently, to land global titles.

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

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

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

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

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

Ankita best-placed Indian at 11th in individual event

PTI ■ PARIS

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

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

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

India will face the winner of the contest between France and Netherlands in the quarterfinals.

If they clear the quarters, India could be headed for a



semifinal showdown with heavyweights Korea.

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

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

Ankita, who hails from Bengal and represents Tata

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

PTI ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

"I couldn't go to the high

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

"I am not feeling any pressure



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

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

India and Australia have clashed on the hockey field a

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On our day, we really have a very good chance of beating any team: Harmmeet

PTI ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

for the development of the sport.

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

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

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

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

GAMBHIR'S FIRST HEADACHE: PANT OR SAMSON FOR T20I SERIES

PTI ■ COLOMBO

New India head coach Gautam Gambhir will have the onerous task of choosing between Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson during the three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka starting from Saturday. While most of the key stars of the T20 World Cup winning side sans the retiring duo of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are in the Island nation, the choice between two flamboyant wicketkeeper batters Pant and Samson won't be an easy one. Worse, even with two slots vacant, one can't fit in both the hard-hitting batters. Pant with 171 runs was the third highest run-getter for India in the T20 World Cup in the Americas but Samson, though was part of the team, didn't get into any game. A bilateral series against Sri Lanka, of late, has become a low-stakes affair with the two countries often engaged in inconsequential series, some of which India plays to help other international cricket boards stay afloat. One such series was supposed to be the upcoming one against Sri Lanka but it has



assumed greater significance after Gambhir took over as the coach and Hardik Pandya, a sure-shot candidate for captaincy was surpassed by Suryakumar Yadav. In this backdrop, the presence of Gambhir, a fiercely opinionated former India opener and a successful franchise-level mentor, will certainly have a broader say in the team composition, something that will be built over two years in the run-up to the next T20 World Cup. The choice of a keeper-batter

in T20Is hasn't exactly been a straight forward one for India, especially during the time Pant was out of action due to a horrific car accident in December, 2022. Ishan Kishan was around for some time before he fell out of favour after leaving the tour of South Africa midway. Samson has featured in some games, so has Jitesh Sharma and Dhruv Jurel in the interim. Samson, one of Pant's contemporaries, has so far played 28 T20I games with a

what the new team management feels. When it came to Rohit Sharma, he has blind faith in Pant's capabilities and Samson despite being in the squad wasn't even up for discussion during the T20 World Cup. However, in the next four following the T20 World Cup when most first XI boys were rested, Samson played the last three games in Zimbabwe and was also appointed vice-captain to Shubman Gill. In terms of keeping, Pant is a far better keeper to spinners like Ravi Bishnoi but in T20Is, keeping skills aren't that important as there are very few balls that would pose trouble for the glovesmen. Gambhir was Pant's first first-class captain and has seen him as an 18-year-old even before he played for the India U-19s. But he has also been a big advocate of Samson's T20 prowess and vocal about his inclusion during his days as a TV pundit. It will be a very tough choice and even if Pant is picked for the series, he knows that he would have to not only score quick but also play a few big innings to stack up the numbers and keep Samson at bay.



F1 driver Esteban to join American Haas team from next season

AP ■ KANNAPOLIS (US)

Frenchman Esteban Ocon will drive for Haas from next season as a replacement for Kevin Magnussen, the American Formula 1 team said on Thursday. Details of the deal were not announced, with Haas only saying that the 27-year-old driver committed to a "multi-year contract starting with the 2025 FIA Formula 1 World Championship." Ocon, the only driver to win a race for Alpine since it rebranded from Renault at the end of 2020, has picked up just three points this season and had already announced he was leaving the French-owned team. His Alpine contract is expiring at the end of the season. Ocon made his F1 debut in 2016 with Manor and joined the then-Renault team for 2020. His sole career win

came at the Hungarian Grand Prix in 2021 for Alpine after a crash in wet conditions took out much of the field. "I am thrilled to embark on this new chapter in my Formula 1 career," Ocon said. "I'll be joining a very ambitious racing team, whose spirit, work ethic, and undeniable upward trajectory has really impressed me." Haas announced last week that Magnussen would leave Haas at the end of the season when his contract expires.

AFFIDAVIT
I Divya Rani D/o Shashi Bhushan Sharma, R/o Rio Adarsh Colony Po & Ps Chas, Dist Bokaro (Jharkhand), That in the Aadhar Card (4192 8857 4860) and my name is mentioned as DIVYA RANI. That my correct name is DIVYA SHARMA. After this affidavit I will be known as DIVYA SHARMA for all purposes. Vide Affidavit No. 556, dated - 16 July 2024.

WOMEN'S ASIA CUP SEMI-FINAL

India start firm favourites against Bangladesh

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

Shafali Verma will be aiming to come out all guns blazing while Smriti Mandhana will be more than motivated to get a big one as India start overwhelming favourites against Bangladesh in the semi-final of the women's Asia Cup here on Friday. Shafali, with 158 runs, has been the second highest run-scorer in the tournament so far and against Nigar Sultana's team, which has a host of slow bowlers, she will have to give India a good start. The 'Women In Blue' pummeled the opposition in all three games -- winning by seven wickets against Pakistan, 78 runs against UAE and by an 82-run margin against Nepal. However, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur knows that in Asia Cup, it is only the semi-final and final matter the most and they would not miss the fact that Bangladesh on select days can be a dangerous side. The start will be very important for India and



Shafali will want her senior opening partner Mandhana to also fire in unison. The elegant left-hander was in great nick during her 45 against Pakistan, which could have been a bigger one in terms of volume. With UAE and Nepal being two of the three opponents during the group league stage, the Indian team would certainly face a sterner test against a bunch of decent slow bowlers in the Bangladesh ranks. Slow left-arm orthodox Nahida Akhter and young leg-spinner Rabeya Khan have

Radha Yadav, who has been on the slightly expensive side. The Indian new ball duo of Renuka Singh Thakur and Vastrakar have been on target during the games. For Bangladesh, they haven't had too many impactful batters and if India can post anything in the range of 140-plus, it could well be enough for a place in the final.

TEAMS
INDIA: Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Richa Ghosh (WK), Uma Chetry (WK), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Jemimah Rodrigues, Renuka Thakur, Dayalan Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil, Sajana Sajeevan.
BANGLADESH: Nigar Sultana Joty (C), Shorna Akter, Nahida Akter, Murshida Khatun, Shorifa Khatun, Ritu Moni, Rubya Haider Jhelik, Sultana Khatun, Jahanara Alam, Dilara Akter, Ishma Tanjim, Rabeya Khan, Rumana Ahmed, Marufa Akter, Sabikun Nahar Jesmin.

Djokovic, Nadal could meet in 2nd round at Paris Olympics, Swiatek faces Begu first

AP ■ PARIS



Top-seeded Novak Djokovic could meet his longtime rival Rafael Nadal in the second round of the Paris Olympic tennis tournament. Djokovic was drawn Thursday against Australian Matthew Ebden and Nadal faces Hungary's Marton Fucsovics, with the winners of those matches meeting in Round 2. The 38-year-old Nadal won a record 14 of his 22 major trophies at the French Open. He won gold in singles at Beijing in 2008, and in doubles with Marc López at Rio de Janeiro in 2016. "Roland Garros as everybody knows is the most special place in tennis for me. I am enjoying the fact I am back for the Olympics," Nadal said on stage after the draw. "I am just trying to enjoy every single moment." French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz takes on Lebanese player Hady Habib.

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek of Poland faces Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania in the opening round of the women's draw with second-seeded American Coco Gauff taking on Australian Ajla Tomljanovic. Gauff is the reigning US Open champion and is making her Olympic debut. She is a flag bearer for the US team at Friday's opening ceremony along with basketball star LeBron James. She will be the first tennis athlete to carry the US flag. Djokovic and Swiatek have not won Olympic gold. Djokovic owns 24 Grand Slam trophies, more than anyone else in tennis apart from Margaret Court, but his only Olympic medal was a bronze in Beijing in 2008.

Former AICF chief Sanjay Kapoor elected FIDE India zone president

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former All India Chess Federation (AICF) chief Sanjay Kapoor has been unanimously elected the president of FIDE India Zone, the sport's apex body in the country said on Thursday. The announcement was made during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of AICF in Ahmedabad. Kapoor has been elected as the zone president for four years, and FIDE president

Arkady Dvorkovich congratulated the Indian administrator. Kapoor's new role marks a pivotal moment for chess governance in India, entrusting him with the responsibility of overseeing the game's growth and development across the globe. Speaking on his appointment, Kapoor said, "It is an immense honour to be elected as the FIDE India Zone President. I am committed to the growth of chess in every corner of our country and ensuring that we produce Grandmasters from each and every state." "My experience with the 44th Chess Olympiad has shown me the incredible potential we have, and I am excited to work towards a bright future for chess in India and internationally," he added. Kapoor has been at the forefront of successfully staging the 44th edition of the Chess Olympiad in India. He was the AICF president when India hosted the event.

Indian athletes' confidence has reached new high: Gagan

PTI ■ PARIS

Olympic medallist shooter Gagan Narang said Indian athletes' mindset has changed over the years and their confidence has touched unprecedented levels, encouraging them to set their sights on a gold medal. The London Games bronze medallist, who is serving as India's Chef-de-Mission at

the Paris Olympics, felt the Indian athletes are now not intimidated by their counterparts from other countries. "There is a huge change in the motivation and the level of thinking our athletes have today. We used to feel scared, under-confident because other countries were better. But slowly that's changed, the mindset (has) changed," Narang told reporters here. "People started watching sports, playing it, then we had great performances. The confidence is at a new high. Today's athletes don't go just to participate, they go to perform." "Someone in the top 8 or 5 wants to win a medal today and not just any medal but a gold. That's the difference in thinking of the athletes today.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER
JHARKHAND POLICE HOUSING CORPORATION LIMITED
(Jharkhand Govt. Undertaking)
Line Tank Road, Ranchi, Contact Tel. No. 0651-2214712
(CIN: U45200JH2002SGC012154)

e-Procurement Notice No. 06 / 2024-25
Letter No.- CE/3730/688 Date: 25.07.2024
JPHCL, Ranchi invites Percentage rate / item rate bids on approved Bill of Quantity from contractors registered before the publication date of this NIT (For F2) interested in registration with JPHCL (For SBD) in appropriate class for the works mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Tender Reference No.	Name of Work	Approximate value of work (in Rs.)	Cost of BOQ (in Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (in Rs.)	Period of Completion	For	Type of Bid
1	JPHCL/GR01/NIT06/2024-25	Renovation of Jail Superintendent Residence in Sub Jail at Tenughat in the district of Bokaro	3056804.00	5000.00	62000.00	60 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
2	JPHCL/GR02/NIT06/2024-25	Renovation of Assistant Jailor Residence in Sub Jail at Tenughat in the district of Bokaro	1597290.00	5000.00	32000.00	60 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
3	JPHCL/GR03/NIT06/2024-25	Renovation of Jail Kakshpal Residence (4 Unit) in Sub Jail at Tenughat in the district of Bokaro	3131656.00	5000.00	63000.00	60 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
4	JPHCL/GR04/NIT06/2024-25	Repairing work of Adheekshak, Karapal, Lipik residence at Mandal Kara, Chatra in the district of Chatra	4113140.00	5000.00	83000.00	90 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
5	JPHCL/GR05/NIT06/2024-25	Repair of "C" Type Quarter at Sub Jail, Ramgarh in the district of Ramgarh	4054487.00	5000.00	82000.00	90 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
6	JPHCL/GR06/NIT06/2024-25	Repair work of Superintendent Residence at Sub Jail, Ramgarh in the district of Ramgarh	1883877.00	5000.00	38000.00	60 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
7	JPHCL/GR07/NIT06/2024-25	Repair of Doctor Residence at Sub Jail, Ramgarh in the district of Ramgarh	1884941.00	5000.00	38000.00	60 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
8	JPHCL/GR08/NIT06/2024-25	Repair of "A" Type Quarter at Sub Jail, Ramgarh in the district of Ramgarh	7200887.00	10000.00	145000.00	120 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
9	JPHCL/GR09/NIT06/2024-25	Repair of "B" Type Quarter at Sub Jail, Ramgarh in the district of Ramgarh	7206820.00	10000.00	145000.00	120 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
10	JPHCL/GR10/NIT06/2024-25	Construction of Hospital Building for High Security Jail at Hazaribagh in the district of Hazaribagh	14575160.00	10000.00	292000.00	270 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
11	JPHCL/GR11/NIT06/2024-25	Construction of Jail Superintendent Residence for High Security Jail at Hazaribagh in the district of Hazaribagh	18085982.00	10000.00	362000.00	270 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
12	JPHCL/GR12/NIT06/2024-25	Construction of Jailor Residence for High Security Jail at Hazaribagh in the district of Hazaribagh	18085982.00	10000.00	362000.00	270 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
13	JPHCL/GR13/NIT06/2024-25	Construction of Assistant Jailor Quarter for High Security Jail at Hazaribagh in the district of Hazaribagh	17795277.00	10000.00	356000.00	270 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
14	JPHCL/GR14/NIT06/2024-25	Construction of Doctor Residence for High Security Jail at Hazaribagh in the district of Hazaribagh	17795277.00	10000.00	356000.00	270 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2
15	JPHCL/GR15/NIT06/2024-25	Construction of Ward Prisoners for High Security Jail at Hazaribagh in the district of Hazaribagh	8188285.00	10000.00	164000.00	180 Days	Only registered Contractors	Percentage rate/F2

2. Bid document with detailed terms and conditions will be available online on e-tendering portal <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> from 30.07.2024 at 11:00 AM to 09.08.2024 up to 5:00 PM. Bids must be submitted online only at the e-tendering portal <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> on or before 5:00 PM on 09.08.2024. Bids received online will be opened at 17:00 PM on 10.08.2024.
3. Estimated Cost may vary.
4. Bids of contractors registered / working with JPHCL, who have delayed start / execution / completions of any construction work for reasons of delay attributable to them, will be rejected at the time of evaluation of technical bid.
5. Corrigendum/Addendum, if any, will be published only on the above mentioned Website.
Sd/- Chief Engineer, JPHCL, Ranchi