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Centre to take crucial step on simultaneous polls

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping with its commitment, the Centre is all set to table the report of the former President Ram Nath Kovind led high-level committee on "one nation, one election" soon in the Cabinet to decide the future course of action. After the approval of the Cabinet, a Bill in this regard is likely to be tabled in Parliament during the Monsoon Session in July which will be a full-fledged first Session of Narendra Modi's third tenure as the Prime Minister in the BJP-led NDA regime. The annual Budget is also to be brought in beginning of the Monsoon session. Sources said the Union Law Ministry is working "overtime" on it which is also part of the 100-day agenda of the Legislative Affairs Department which was set ahead of the Lok Sabha elections by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Before going to polls in its last Cabinet of the second tenure in March, Modi had directed all Union Ministries and departments to draw up a 100-day agenda for the next Government. In the midst of election campaign in May, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the NDA, if voted to power for the third term, will



Former President Ram Nath Kovind with President Droupadi Murmu
File Photo

implement the "one nation-one election" policy. "The elections for the Lok Sabha and Assembly seats are being held simultaneously in Andhra Pradesh. We will fulfill our commitment of one nation one election in the next five years. One nation, one election will save a lot of time and money," Singh had said. The Kovind Committee has recommended a two-step approach to lead to the simultaneous elections. As the first step, simultaneous elections will be held for the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies. In the second step, elections to the Municipalities and the Panchayats will be synchronised with the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies in such a way that Municipalities and

Panchayats elections are held within 100 days of holding elections to the House of the People and the State Legislative Assemblies. Separately, the Law Commission is also likely to come up soon with its own report on simultaneous polls, of which Modi has been a strong votary. Sources said the Law Commission is likely to recommend holding simultaneous polls for all three tiers of Government — Lok Sabha, State Assemblies and local bodies — starting from 2029 and a provision for a unity Government in cases like hung house or no-confidence motion. The Kovind panel had also proposed setting up an 'Implementation Group' to look into the execution of the recommendations made by the committee. "Simultaneous polls will help save resources, spur development and social cohesion, deepen 'foundations of democratic rubric' and help realise the aspirations of 'India, that is Bharat', the panel had said. It has also recommended the preparation of a common electoral roll and voter ID cards by the Election Commission of India in consultation with state election authorities.



Students' organisations protest at Shastri Bhawan on Friday against NEET exam, demanding for the exam to be held again
Photo: Pankaj Kumar / The Pioneer

SC seeks NTA, Centre reply on NEET issue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A mid a raging row over the irregularities in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate, 2024 (NEET-UG), the Supreme Court on Friday asked the National Testing Agency and the Centre to respond to pleas seeking a probe by a committee chaired by a retired Supreme Court or High Court judge or an investigation agency into allegations of question paper leak and discrepancies in the NEET-UG 2024 examination. Petitioners appearing before a Vacation Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta urged the "imminent need for a CBI investigation". The bench which was hearing a batch of pleas,

including a PIL filed by Hiten Singh Kashyap, also sought responses from the CBI and the Bihar Government within two weeks. It said the pleas will be taken up with other pending ones on July 8, when the top court will start functioning after the summer vacation. During brief hearing, the bench got irked when a lawyer referred to the students committing suicides at Kota, a hub of coaching centres, in Rajasthan as an argument to buttress his case for a CBI probe. "Don't make unnecessary emotional arguments here," Justice Nath said. Responding to the submission for ordering a CBI probe, the bench said the reply of the NTA was necessary before an order could be passed.

Arundhati to face music for provocative speech

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lt Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena has sanctioned the prosecution of writer Arundhati Roy and former Professor of International Law in Central University of Kashmir, Dr Sheikh Showkat Hussain, u/s 45 (1) of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in case FIR No. 258/2010 dated 29.11.2010 u/s 124-A/153A/153B/504 and 505 of IPC and 13 UA (P) Act, officials said here on Friday. The FIR against Roy and former Central University of Kashmir Professor Sheikh Showkat Hussain was registered following the orders of the court of Metropolitan Magistrate, New Delhi, they added. There was no immediate reaction from Roy and Hussain. The FIR in the matter was registered on a complaint made by Sushil Pandit, a social activist from Kashmir, on October 28, 2010. "Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena has sanctioned the prosecution of Arundhati Roy and former Professor of International Law in Central University of Kashmir, Dr Sheikh Showkat Hussain, under section 45 (1) of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in the case," a Raj Niwas official said on Friday.



Arundhati Roy PTI

Last October, the LG had granted sanction to prosecute them under section 196 of CrPC for commission of offences punishable under different sections of the Indian Penal Code: 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony), 153B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national-integration) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief). Under Section 196 of CrPC, the central or state government is required to grant a sanction before courts can take cognisance of certain offences under the IPC. Section 13 of the UAPA deals

with punishment for unlawful activities for advocating, abetting or inciting any unlawful activity and is punishable with imprisonment for up to seven years. Section 153A IPC deals with "promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony", while Section 153B with "imputations, assertions prejudicial to national-integration". Section 505 deals with intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace. Roy and Hussain had allegedly made provocative speeches at a conference organised under the banner of 'Azadi — The Only Way' on October 21, 2010 at LTG Auditorium, Copernicus Marg, here. "The issues discussed and spoken about at the conference propagated the separation of Kashmir from India," said the official. Those who delivered speeches at the conference included Syed Ali Shah Geelani, SAR Geelani (anchor of the conference and prime accused in Parliament attack case), Arundhati Roy, Dr Sheikh Showkat Hussain and Varavara Rao.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, left, is welcomed by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at the G7 in Borgo Egnazia, near Bari in southern Italy
PTI

Modi meets world leaders at G7

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/BARI(ITALY)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held bilateral meetings with several world leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in the southern resort town of Italy. It is Modi's first foreign visit after assuming office this month. He is also likely to meet Pope Francis on the sidelines of the meet. In his talks with Zelenskyy, Modi conveyed to him that India believes in a "human-centric" approach and that the way to peace is through "dialogue and diplomacy". "Regarding the ongoing hostilities, reiterated that India believes in a human-centric approach and believes that the way to peace is through dialogue and diplomacy," he said. The Prime Minister described the meeting with the Ukrainian President as "very productive" and said India is eager to "further cement" bilateral relations with Ukraine. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the two leaders reviewed bilateral relationship and exchanged views on the situation in Ukraine. "Furthering India-Ukraine partnership! PM @narendramodi met President @ZelenskyyUa of Ukraine on the sidelines of the 50th G7 Summit in Apulia, Italy," he said in a

social media post. "The leaders reviewed bilateral relationship and exchanged views on situation in Ukraine. The PM conveyed that India continues to encourage peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy," he said. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra were part of Modi's delegation at the talks. It is learnt that Zelenskyy briefed Modi on various aspects of the conflict. Modi had met Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the previous G7 summit in Hiroshima in May last year as well. India has been maintaining that the conflict in Ukraine must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. The meeting between Modi and Zelenskyy came ahead of the Swiss Peace Summit. India on Wednesday said it will participate in the upcoming peace summit on the Ukraine conflict at an "appropriate level". The Peace Summit will take place at Borgenstock in Lucerne on June 15 and 16. Switzerland has invited Modi to attend it. However, it is learnt that a senior diplomat will represent India at the summit. Modi and Macron discussed ways to further strengthen the strategic partnership including in areas of defence, nuclear and space, and global and regional issues. The two leaders met on the sidelines of the G7 summit in the southern resort town of Italy.

Heavy rains in State from June 17

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Relief is on cards from the hot and humid weather as conditions are now favourable for further advancement of south-west monsoon into parts of Odisha, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday.

There is a possibility of increase in the rainfall activities

in the State from June 17, said IMD Regional Director Manorama Mohanty. According to Mohanty, heavy rainfall is likely in the districts of Nayagarh, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Ganjam and Gajapati on June 17.

On Saturday, thunderstorm with lightning accompanied by gusty surface wind speed

reaching 30 to 40 kmph is likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Baleswar, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Nuapada and Balangir, said the weather office issuing a Yellow warning.

Raja Parb at Rashtrapati Bhavan



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu attended a Raja Parb celebration at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Friday. She witnessed the cultural performances which included Raja Geet and dance performances such as

Mayurbhanj Chhau dance, Sambalpuri dance and Karma dance. As part of the celebrations, swings decorated with flowers were set up. Mehndi artists were invited and Odia cuisine such as various types of Pitha apart from sherbet and paan were arranged for

the participants. This was the first occasion when the Raja Parb, an agriculture-based festival of Odisha, was celebrated at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The Raja Parb, a three-day-long agriculture-based festival, is celebrated during the onset of monsoons.



Biometric to speed up immigration at airports

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

You could soon be whizzing past immigration at Indian airports starting with Delhi with the Government going to introduce biometric-based immigration complete with e-gates. Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) on Friday announced the launch of innovative biometric registration kiosks at the international arrival pier of the airport. This expansion will further expedite the immigration process for arriving passengers. According to DIAL, before implementing this new mechanism, visa-holding passengers arriving in Delhi without biometric registration were required to utilise the designated immigration counters, resulting in an average wait time of 4-5 minutes per passenger. During peak hours, these queues could lead to even longer delays. DIAL said five kiosks are currently operational at the international arrival pier of the airport and it plans to add five more soon. The

kiosks would be operated under direct supervision of the Bureau of Immigration (BOI). The specially-designed kiosks for foreign nationals arriving in India with a visa where biometric information was not collected during the application process, have been set up for the first time at any airport in the country, DIAL said. During peak hours, these queues could lead to even longer delays, it said. DIAL said after registering biometric at the kiosk, time taken by immigration agent/officer at the counter will be minimised by more than half, as the passengers entering India with an e-visa can now complete their biometric registration upon arrival at the kiosks and then proceed to any immigration counter for entry. The kiosks provide a more convenient and time-saving experience for arriving passengers, especially those who were unable to complete biometric registration during the visa application process.

Shock, grief as bodies arrive from Kuwait



IAF aircraft brings back mortal remains of Indian fire victims from Kuwait on Friday
PTI

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Mortal remains of 45 Indians, who perished in the inferno that swallowed a labour camp in Kuwait on Wednesday, were brought back to Kochi by a special Indian Air Force aircraft on Friday. Meanwhile, a separate IAF aircraft carrying the mortal remains of 14 Indians landed in Palam Technical Airport in the national Capital from Kochi in the evening. The newly elected BJP MPs, including Northwest Delhi's Yogender Chandolia, New Delhi's Bansuri Swaraj and South Delhi's Kamaljeet Sethrawat received the body at the airport. The coffins carrying dead bodies of 23 persons from Kerala were accorded homage by the State Government at the goods terminal of Cochin International Airport Ltd where Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his Council of Ministers had lined up to pay the last respect to the victims. Kirti Vardhan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs, accompanied the bodies from Kuwait to Kochi. The bodies of 23 expatriates from Kerala were taken to their native places by special ambulances arranged by the Government. Heartrending scenes were seen at the cargo terminal where the bodies were deplaned while the rest of the bodies were taken to New Delhi. Thirty one bodies were flown to Kerala in the special IAF aircraft and this included seven from Karnataka and one from Tamil Nadu. The bodies of deceased from other States were received at Kochi airport by the official representatives of the concerned States.

CM shocked over administrative dysfunctions

Asks CS for report on re-engagement of retired officials

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

New Chief Minister Mohan Majhi has expressed his shock over the functioning system of the administration in the State. The sorry state of affairs in the functioning came to light during a recent review



by the Chief Minister. Surprisingly, several officers have been rehabilitated in various government departments after their retirement.

To make matters worse, nobody knows who is to be made accountable department wise. The CM asked Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena to

furnish details on the officers who have been re-engaged after their retirement. Apart from this, Majhi noted that the administration and management responsibility has also been allegedly outsourced in the State.

The crux of the matter is that the entire power was hijacked by a coterie group in Odisha. Moreover, the Chief Minister's Office was also defunct. It has been learnt that no official could clearly pro-

vide any satisfactory answer to the Chief Minister during the review meeting with various departments.

The Chief Minister has also taken the officials to task for such lapses and inefficient administrative mechanism and functioning and he has sought a clarification, sources said.

Under such circumstances, it is speculated that there could be a major bureaucratic reshuffle in the State to set things right.

Pandian dented govt machinery: Ex-CS Patnaik

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Former Chief Secretary Bijay Kumar Patnaik, who was once considered a powerful figure in the Naveen Patnaik dispensation, has levelled a series of allegations against VK Pandian, who retired from active politics after the BJD's debacle in the recent elections. Bijay Patnaik on Friday said the elections in Odisha were a fight against the BJD's misgovernance, corruption, anarchy and the atmosphere of fear in the State. "As a former administrator, I would like to say that the administration should always be devoid of biases. When we work as a bureaucrat, we should



never have any inclination towards any political party. After the introduction of 5T in Odisha under the supervision of Pandian, it was witnessed that the administrative machinery no longer worked the way it should have," said Patnaik, adding that even though the State Chief Secretary is the head of this administration, he couldn't utilise his position, was sidelined and power was given to a handful of people. "Several good officers were sidelined while those who bowed down to VK Pandian were bestowed with more responsibilities. Besides, many

officers remained in their positions and continued even after retirement. Importance was also given to some people against whom there were legal cases. Due to this system, the administrative system lost its efficiency and it further led to widespread corruption which people couldn't tolerate," alleged Patnaik. The entire administrative system turned into a "Police Raj". Those who were opposing and not bowing down to Pandian were facing police action, Vigilance raids and getting harassed, he further alleged. No comment could be obtained from Pandian or the BJD over the allegations of Patnaik.

3 new criminal laws to be in force from July 1

DGP shares details
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
In a landmark move, the three newly-enacted laws, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA), will come into effect across the country from July 1. In a bid to reform the criminal justice system, the three laws will replace the colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, which existed since 1860. The Ministry of Home held a meeting



with the DGPs of all States in this regard and directed to ensure proper implementation of the three new laws. Odisha DGP Arun Sarangi, who attended the virtual meet-

ing, informed the media about the meeting and said that steps would be taken to implement the new laws in the State with effect from July 1. Sarangi said, "In December 2023, three major criminal laws, IPC, CrPC, and Indian Evidence Act, were replaced by BNS, BNSS and BSA. The government had notified about it in February that the laws would be implemented from July 1, 2024." "With this, it's the end of the 150-year-old colonial laws. There is a lot of difference between the new and old laws. Earlier, crime was important, but now justice will be given more importance. Steps will be taken to use more technology in investigation processes," he said. "Due to the elections, we could not spread awareness among the people. But steps will be taken to spread the word among every common man," Sarangi added.



New Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi garlands the statues of eminent freedom fighters Baxi Jagabandhu at Museum Square, Chakhi Khuntia at Kalpana Square, Jayi Rajguru and BR Ambedkar at AG Square and former Chief Minister Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo at 120 Battalion Square in Bhubaneswar on Friday. Majhi says that 'Odia Asmita' would have pride of place in all programmes of his government.

Police Commissioner donates blood

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Indian Red Cross Society's Police Commissionerate Regional Branch observed the World Blood Donor Day on Friday. On the occasion, a voluntary blood donation camp was inaugurated by Commissioner of Police Sanjeeb Panda. Cuttack DCP Prakash R, along with Police Commissionerate and Red Cross executive committee head Dillip Dashsharma donated blood. Total 65 units of blood were collected.



The Police Commissioner appreciated the initiative and thanked all the donors. The programme was conducted under the supervision of Police Commissionerate DC Lalitendu Mohanty in the presence of ACP Umashankar Pradhan and Barang police station officer Biswaranjan Nayak.

Ranendra takes oath as Pro-tem Speaker

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Governor Raghuraj Das administered the oath of office to eight-time BJD MLA from Athagarh, Ranendra Pratap Swain as Pro-tem Speaker of the 17th State Legislative Assembly at the Raj Bhavan here on Friday. Chief Minister Mohan



Charan Majhi attended the ceremony. Swain will administer oaths to the newly-elected MLAs on June 18 and 19 in the Assembly hall. The election for the Speaker would be held on June 20. Swain has been elected to the Assembly for the highest time from the Athagarh constituency. Pro-tem Speaker is the temporary Speaker who presides over the first meeting of the House after the general elections besides presiding over the sitting in which the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are elected for the newly-constituted House.

Bad weather BBSR-bound flight diverted to Kolkata

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Bhubaneswar-bound Air India Express flight made an emergency landing in Kolkata due to bad weather conditions on Thursday night. All the passengers were allegedly asked to fly back to their respective locations on their own. With children and elderly parents, the passengers were left in the lurch after the flight management asked them to fly back to Bhubaneswar at their own expense. With no help from the airline, several passengers were left helpless throughout the night, leading to tension in the Kolkata airport.

According to sources, the Delhi-Bhubaneswar Air India Express flight had taken off from the Delhi airport in the evening. Later, the pilot announced the 'bad weather conditions' and said he was landing the flight in Kolkata. The flight then landed at the Kolkata airport with no help from the management for the passengers. Dozens of passengers were stranded at the Kolkata airport, triggering their deep resentment. Following a ruckus created by the passengers, the management later arranged a flight for the passengers and flew them back to Bhubaneswar. The concerned airline was yet to issue any comment on the incident.

In Cuttack Havildar dies while defusing 'bomb'

PNS ■ CUTTACK
A Havildar died when a bomb exploded when it was being defused on the Kathajodi river embankment in Cuttack city on Friday. The deceased was identified as Pradip Mallick. Two other police personnel also suffered minor injuries in the incident.

As per reports, the exact reason leading to the mishap was yet to be ascertained. After the explosion, Mallick had been rushed to the SCB Medical College Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries. "An unnatural death case has been registered and further investigation is underway. It was not a bomb; rather, it was firecrackers which were being disposed off as per normal procedure," said Cuttack Additional DCP Anil Mishra. Mishra said all the SOPs were followed during the defusing of firecrackers and Mallick had been trained to undertake such tasks. "The firecrackers were seized and brought to be disposed of when the incident occurred," Mishra said, adding that a detailed investigation would be conducted in this connection.

Red Cross celebrates World Blood Donor Day

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
To observe the birth anniversary of Karl Landsteiner, the World Blood Donor Day was celebrated on Friday. The aim was to raise awareness about the need of safe blood, blood components and also to thank the voluntary blood donors for their donation to save precious lives. The Indian Red Cross Society, Odisha State Branch celebrated World Blood Donor Day with the theme "20 Years of Celebrating Giving: Thank You Blood Donors". The event was observed with a meeting to draw attention to the role of voluntary blood donors in saving lives and enhancing solidarity within communities. Honor-



ary Secretary of Indian Red Cross Society Odisha State Branch Bibhuti Bhusan Patnaik motivated the donors for their noble job and appealed to the public for donating blood to attain 100% VBD and to bridge the gap between the blood donors and blood receivers. A voluntary blood donation camp was also organised at the Red Cross Bhavan. Volunteers from different organisations like Orissa Blind Association and Marwari Yuva Manch, Red Cross staff members donated blood. Dr CVN Rao, Director of SBTC, joined as the chief guest and Pranjal, Advisor of WHO, as the guest of honour. Dr Raghunath Beura, Medical Officer, coordinated the programme. About fifty units of blood were collected.

Art exhibition 'Boy Dancer' in city

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The archival travelling art exhibition titled "Boy Dancer: Convergence and Continuum- A Revisiting" with art works by Birendra Pani and with artistic direction of Rajashree Biswal organised by the New Bridge India in collaboration with the Odisha State Museum and supported by the Ila Panda Centre for Arts was inaugurated here on Friday. The exhibition would continue till June 29 at the State Museum (Art Gallery), in Bhubaneswar. Eminent linguists Padma Shri Debi Prasanna Pattanayak and Dilip Kumar Rouray, eminent historian



Nibedita Mohanty, INTACH Odisha's Anil Dhir, Gotipua Guru Gobinda Pal, eminent critic Prof Jatindra Kumar Nayak, Ila Panda Centre for Arts (IPCA) founder trustee Paramita Panda, State Museum Superintendent Bhagyalipi Malla and New Bridge India artistic and curatorial director Rajashree Biswal were the guests.

Locals worried as B'kanika ESZ extended to 205 villages

RAJESH BEHERA
KENDRAPADA

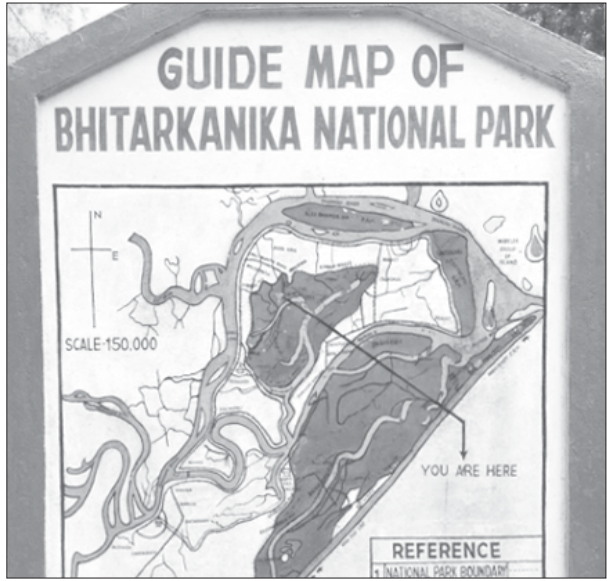
The locals, who are living on the fringes of the Bhitarkanika National Park, Bhitarkanika Sanctuary and Gahirmatha Marine sanctuary, are now spending sleepless nights, after the gazette notification was published for extending the Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) to their villages.

As many as 205 villages, including 52 villages under Rajnagar block, 8 villages under Pattamundai block, 38 villages under Mahakalapada block, 32 villages under Aul block, 30 villages under

Rajkanika block and 45 villages under Chandabali, Tihidi and Bansada blocks under Bhadrak district, will be coming under the specified ESZ.

By demarcating the ESZ covering from 0.10 km to 8.7 km around the sanctuaries, encompassing an area of 497.67 sqkm, the government aims to protect critical habitats, migration routes, and nesting sites. The Zonal Master Plan for the Eco-sensitive Zone shall be prepared by the State Government.

The locals have been invited to submit their complaint, advice and proposal



within 60 days of issue of the notification, else it would become legalised after 60 days, said forest official sources.

The concerns expressed by the people are related to the restrictions to be imposed on them. They alleged that on the plea of noise and air pollution, development activities may be restricted in their villages.

For the smooth implementation of the Gazette notification of ESZ, the Central Government will make a monitoring committee comprising the district Collector, his representative, the Superintendent of Police, his rep-

resentative, members from the Forest department and Pollution Control Board etc.

The committee will scrutinize the actual site-specific conditions of the Eco-sensitive zones and refer sites for environmental clearance. The activities that are not covered in the schedule to the notification will also be scrutinised by the committee. The Member Secretary/Collector/Deputy Collector is competent to file complaints against a person who contravenes the provisions of this notification. They could also invite representatives and experts depending on the requirement.

IN BRIEF

2 DIE, 14 INJURED AS VAN OVERTURNS IN NAYAGARH
Nayagarh: Two persons died and 14 others sustained critical injuries when the vehicle by which they were travelling overturned near Jagannathpur in Nayagarh district on Friday. The deceased were identified as Jogendra Swain of Chatiana village under the Astaranga police station and Sarat Sahoo of Kendrapati village. The betel leaves-laden pickup van carrying betel farmers was on its way to the betel market at Nayahata when the driver lost control over the wheels and the vehicle turned turtle. Later, eight of the critically injured were shifted to Bhubaneswar after their conditions deteriorated.

BERHAMPUR VARSITY HOLDS COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
Brahmapur: Keeping in view the heat wave, the School of Education of Berhampur University organised a series of community activities on Tuesday at Monarch Chowk. The activ-



ity was inaugurated by SOE coordinator Bibhuti Bhushan Parida and Sanjit Kumar Sahu. Among others, the school Principal, faculty members, students of the department participated in the programme actively. To mark the event, Dahi Sharbaat was distributed among the locals. The students spoke about the series of measures to be taken to prevent one from the sunstrokes during the ongoing unprecedented heat wave.

PROF PANDA CONGRATULATES CABINET MIN JENA
Brahmapur: Gandhinagar Residents' Forum (GRF) president and senior scribe Prof Krishna Chandra Panda has congratulated Gopalpur BJP MLA Bibhuti Bhushan Jena for getting a berth in the State Cabinet of the newly-formed first BJP government in the State. Prof Panda said Jena deserves the position. He hoped that Ganjam district in general and Gopalpur and the Brahmapur Assembly segment in particular would witness further development in diverse domains. Panda urged Jena to take up the issue of building a greenfield airport and an ultramodern large cold storage at Brahmapur on a priority basis.

TPSODL BAGS ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD
Brahmapur: The Tata Power Southern Odisha Distribution Limited (TPSODL) has been honoured with the prestigious Kalinga Environment Excellence Award. The accolade was presented during the 9th National Conclave on Environment, Energy, and Climate Change-2024 held in Bhubaneswar recently.

ARYABHATTA SABUJA RATHS FLAGGED OFF IN B'PUR
Brahmapur: The 'Aryabhata Sabuja Raths' were flagged off by Brahmapur DFO Sony Khokkar in the presence of AC Manikeswari Hansda here on Thursday. The Sabuja Raths would move throughout Ganjam district for a month. The Raths would be used to appeal to the people to plant trees in large numbers, give up the habit of using polythene, single use plastic, and to conserve and save water from pollution. It would be also used to plant trees, said environmentalist Sudhir Rout.

'SAVE ENVIRONMENT' EMPHASISED AT IMFA
Rayagada, June 12: Indian Metals & Ferro Alloys Ltd at Therubali showcased a series of impactful events aimed at promoting environmental awareness and sustainability. The event commenced with a vibrant speech competition, inviting employees to share their perspectives on this year's theme "Land Restoration, Desertification, Drought Resilience".

DASH JOINS AS HEAD, CORPORATE AFFAIRS IN ADANI DHAMRA PORT
Bhubaneswar: Ashish Dash has recently joined as Head, Corporate Affairs, in the Adani Dhamra Port. With a career spanning over 25 years of experience, Dash has worked in Reliance, Tata, Essar, ACMI, Jindal, JSW, etc. Prior to joining the DPCL, he was working with JSW Steel Limited.

YASHITA ROUT STATE WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPION
Bhubaneswar: Yashita Rout has been crowned the State Women's Chess Champion after a thrilling final round. She triumphed over tournament leader Pratyasha Jena, finishing with 6 points. Smaraki Mohanty also ended with 6 points but was edged out by Yashita in the tiebreak.

4 held for job fraud in Baleswar

PNS ■ BALESWAR

The Baleswar Cyber police have busted a job fraud racket by arresting four persons, including a juvenile, who have duped several persons on the pretext of providing them opportunity to work from home online.

The police, after receiving a complaint, began investigation and ascertained that the accused have collected around Rs 2.36 crore from several persons.

The modus operandi was

that they used to offer online job work from home and offer commission instantly. Once the person was lured, they sent a link and asked to operate as per the instructors.

The complainant, after getting initial commission, deposited Rs 50,000 twice each in a current account, and after losing Rs 1 lakh, ascertained that he was duped.

The police said that the accused belonged to Keonjhar, Bhadrak and Baleswar districts. Further investigation was in progress, said police.

In Balangir Cop murder: 2 from J'khand among 6 arrested

2 suspected others on the run
SUDHIR MISHRA ■ BALANGIR

Two persons from Jharkhand were arrested among the total six involved in the murder of a constable working in the Sonepur Town Police station. The body of the deceased was seized from a hotel in Balangir. At least 3 police teams from Balangir had visited WB, Jharkhand and Punjab in this connection.

The accused persons were identified as Pankaj Kumar (25) and Suraj Kumar

Barnawal (25) of Jharkhand, Krushna Meher (42) of Angul, Manoranjan Sathua (48) of Boudh, Nitai Kara (59) of Sonepur and Rohit Sa (37) of Barpadar of Patnagarh in Balangir district, informed Balangir SP Rishikesh Khilari speaking to mediapersons here on Thursday.

On May 17, the body of constable Shankar was found in one of the rooms of hotel Indraprastha in Balangir town. The police seized two cars, three two wheelers, four mobile phones and a diamond stone, added the SP.

According to reports, ac-

cused Pankaj, Suraj and two others of Bihar and Jharkhand area with the help of the local accused persons namely Krushna, Manoranjan, Nitai and Rohit were involved in illegal trade of precious stones. They were purchasing diamonds and other precious stones from the local suppliers of Sonepur area which were actually brought from Surat but they were showing it to be found in the Mahanadi basin to sell it at higher prices and thus duping the buyers.

Deceased constable, Shankar is also suspected to be involved in the trade and a

dispute had arisen between the accused and him over financial transactions. "The accused persons committed a pre-planned murder by hatching a conspiracy with their local associates. Involvement of two other accused persons has also been revealed and steps are being taken to apprehend them," informed SP Khilari.

The accused in custody have been found to be involved in multiple heinous crimes in their respective States and the police are verifying this aspect, the SP further said.

In Birmaharajpur MLA vows to end irregularities in govt schemes



BJP's Raghunath Jagdala who won Birmaharajpur Assembly seat, defeating BJD's Padmanabha Behera said he is determined to bring positive changes in his constituency, even if he has been elected to the Assembly for the first time.

Even after 78 years of Independence, residents of Birmaharajpur and Ullunda blocks are deprived of basic facilities like housing, toilets, drinking water, ration cards, roads, and electricity, he said.

Jagdala plans to form a team with the help of BDOs to identify and support eligible beneficiaries of welfare schemes by visiting each panchayat in his constituency. He emphasised that it is crucial to fight corruption at the grassroots and ensure proper implementation of government programmes for the benefit of the poor.

Jagdala contested in 2019 from the same seat and lost. This time he emerged victorious by defeating BJD's Padmanav. Jagdala said Birmaharajpur has traditionally been a stronghold of BJD. The defeat of BJD signifies people's mandate against outsider politics and corruption.

10-bed ICU in MKCG Cardiology Dept opens

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati (MKCG) Medical College has inaugurated a new 10-bed special ICU (Intensive Care Unit) in its Cardiology Department. The ICU, which is located on the 5th floor of the Super Specialty (PMSSY) Block, was officially opened on Thursday by Superintendent of MKCG Professor Dr Sachitra Das.

The newly opened ICU aims

to provide optimal treatment to critical patients in the department, addressing a significant need. Previously, critically ill patients had to be transferred to the Central ICU at MKCG Medical or to SCB Medical in Cuttack due to bed shortages, making it challenging to save many serious cases. With this new ICU, such transfers will be minimized, offering substantial benefits to the patients.

The ICU will be staffed by

a team including one Professor, one Associate Professor, and six DM (Doctorate of Medicine) doctors, supported by four nursing officers and attendants, ensuring adequate care for patients. The medical administration has assured that all necessary resources and materials will be provided for the efficient functioning of the ICU.

"With the ICU now operational, there will be no need for transferring patients else-

where. The Cardiology Department, which has 20 beds, receives about 230 to 250 heart patients daily for treatment. The new ICU will enhance the level of care provided to these patients," Cardiology Head of the Department Professor Dr Chhabhi Satpathy said.

The event was attended by Professor Dr Trinath Mishra, along with other doctors, in-charge nursing officer Signdharani Panda, and various medical staff.

Neighbour's attack Woman, daughter critically injured in Sambalpur

Property feud suspected behind crime
PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

A woman and her daughter were critically injured after being attacked allegedly by their neighbour at Danipalli village under the Ainthapalli police station in Sambalpur

district on Friday.

The victims, who run a ladies' tailoring shop, were admitted to the VIMSAR in Burla. They were identified as Indu Das and her daughter Payal while the accused is their neighbour Suraj Hati.

According to sources, a dispute prevails between the Das family and Suraj over some land. As usual, the mother-daughter duo was on

their way to their tailoring shop when Suraj attacked them with a knife, leaving them critically injured.

"The girl can speak, but her mother is very critical and is not able to say anything. Due to the attack by the miscreant using a knife, they have sustained injuries in their chests, bellies and other body parts," said Sambalpur Sadar SDPO Tofan Bag.

Bag said, "Following instructions from the SP, we have already formed a special team to nab the accused who is currently absconding. But efforts are on to nab him as soon as possible. Further investigation is also going on."

"Only after a detailed investigation, we will be able to ascertain the exact reason for the attack," he added.

Day against Child Labour Hundreds participate in rally, human chain in B'pur

PRASANT DAS
BRAHMAPUR

The Ganjam district administration along with the ISRD conducted a mass rally to celebrate the "World Day against Child Labour" in Brahmapur. The rally started from Brahmapur Railway Station, raising slogans against child labour and finally reached at the Khallikote University.

Former MLA of Brahmapur Dr Ramesh Chandra Chaupatnaik officially inaugurated the event by waiving a green flag. On the occasion, he called for a society without child labour. He urged the businessmen to refrain from en-



gaging children.

ISRD director Sudhir Sabata, State Cashew Development Corporation Chairman Subash Moharana, Brahmapur Railway Station Manager Durga Prasad Brahma, Mahanagar Sangha president Sushanta Sabata, director Aryabhata Sudhir Rauto, Gayatri Shakti Peeth president Prafula Chandra Das, director of Samantara Academy Debasish Samantara and administrator of State Sports Centre Mahasweta Pady attended as guests of the function.

They advised all not to engage children as labourers in any man-

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Shah reviews JK security situation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took stock of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday reviewed the security situation there in the wake of several terror incidents there, including an attack on a bus ferrying pilgrims, sources said. He also called a high-level meeting on June 16, to be attended by National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval, Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, top officials of the Army and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and others. The home minister was briefed here about the prevailing situation in Jammu and Kashmir and the steps taken following the terror incidents, sources said. Terrorists struck at four places in Reasi, Kathua and Doda districts of Jammu and Kashmir over the past four days, killing nine pilgrims and a CRPF jawan and leaving seven security personnel and several others injured.



Two suspected Pakistani terrorists were also killed in an encounter with security forces in Kathua district and a large quantity of arms and ammunition were recovered from them. On Thursday Prime Minister Modi directed officials to deploy full spectrum of counter-terror measures in Jammu and Kashmir in a high level meeting attended by National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval and other senior officials. The review was held in the backdrop of four terror attacks in as many days in Reasi, Kathua and Doda. Given this development, Prime Minister Modi also spoke to Home Minister Amit Shah and Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and discussed the deployment of security forces and anti-terror operations. Sinha briefed Modi on the efforts being undertaken by local administration. The meeting, meanwhile, also took stock of deployment of

security forces and counter-terror operations and Prime Minister Modi was given a comprehensive overview of the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, including the ongoing counter-terrorism efforts. The Prime Minister directed officials present at the meeting to deploy the full spectrum of the country's counter-terror capabilities to restore peace in the region. Terrorists struck at four places in Reasi, Kathua and Doda districts over the past four days, killing nine pilgrims and a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan and leaving seven security personnel and several others injured. Massive search operations were launched by security forces in forest belts of different districts of Jammu and Kashmir to track down and neutralise the ultras involved in the recent terror attacks in the Union Territory. Jammu and Kashmir Police has also released sketches of four terrorists involved in two attacks in Doda district and announced a reward of Rs 20 lakh for information leading to their arrest.

Rajnath credits Navy for playing crucial role in country's growth

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday visited the Eastern Naval Command at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh to review the operational readiness of the Indian Navy, and embarked on INS Jalashwa for a 'Day at Sea'. It was his first outstation visit after assuming charge as defence minister for the second consecutive term. During the 'Day at Sea', Rajnath witnessed the dynamic operations by various ships, submarine and aircraft of the Command, showcasing the combat capability and preparedness of the Indian Navy. He was accompanied by Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi and Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar. Interacting with the officers and sailors of the Eastern Fleet, Rajnath commended the Indian Navy for being operationally ready, and emerging as the first responder in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). "Our Navy ensures that no nation suppresses another in the Indo-Pacific region or endangers its strategic autonomy on the basis of economic strength or military power. This is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) wherein our friendly countries in the region remain safe and move forward together on the



path of mutual progress," he said. The defence minister credited the Indian Navy for playing a crucial role in the country's growth and raising its stature on the international stage. He made special mention of the Navy's daring rescue operation in the Arabian Sea in March 2024, when it freed 23 Pakistani nationals from Somali pirates. This operation, he said, was a demonstration of humanity as well as the values imbibed in the Naval personnel, who come to

the aid of everyone, irrespective of their nationality. "It is a matter of great pride that our Navy is ensuring safe trade and promoting peace and prosperity in IOR. Securing free navigation, rule-based world order, anti-piracy and peace and stability in the region are our biggest objectives. The Navy is playing a crucial role in fulfilling them. India, with its increasing power, is committed to making the region as well as the entire world peaceful and prosperous," said Rajnath. Elaborating further, he highlighted the Navy's growing strength which is ensuring the security of India's maritime borders. He also underlined the fact that India's commercial interests are linked with the IOR, and the Navy is a means of securing the maritime borders while achieving the wider national objectives. He said national interest is of paramount importance to the Government, assuring that all possible steps will be taken to safeguard them.

Government has started covering up NEET scam, alleges Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Friday stepped up its attack on the government over the NEET exam issue and questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on the matter and asserted that only a Supreme Court-monitored forensic probe can safeguard the future of lakhs of young students. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge claimed that the Modi government has started "covering up the NEET scam" through Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and the National Testing Agency (NTA). "If the paper was not leaked in NEET then — why were 13 accused arrested in Bihar due to paper leak? Did the Economic Offences Unit (EOU) of Patna police not expose the payment of Rs 30 lakh-Rs 50 lakh to the education mafia and organised gangs involved in the racket in exchange for papers?" he said in a social media post in Hindi.

"Has NEET-UG cheating racket not been busted in Godhra, Gujarat? In which three people are involved including a person running a coaching centre, a teacher and another person and according to Gujarat Police, transactions of more than Rs 12 crore have come to light between the accused?" Kharge said. If according to the Modi government, no paper was leaked in NEET, then why were these arrests made, he asked. "What conclusion is drawn from this? Was the Modi government trying to fool the people of the country earlier or now? The Modi government has crushed the aspirations of 24 lakh youth," Kharge said. Twenty four lakh youth appear in NEET exam to become doctors, and work hard day and night for one lakh medical seats, he said. "Out of these 1 lakh seats, around 55,000 are in government colleges where seats are reserved for SC, ST, OBC, EWS categories. This time the Modi government has misused the

NTA and has massively rigged the marks and ranks, due to which the cut-off for reserved seats has also increased," the Congress chief alleged. It appears that a game of grace marks, paper leaks and rigging was played to deprive meritorious students from getting government admission at concessional rates, Kharge said. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also hit out at the government over the issue. "As soon as the new BJP government took oath, it has again started attacking the dreams of the youth. The arrogant response of the education minister on the irregularities in the NEET exam results completely ignores the cries of 24 lakh students and their parents," she said in a social media post in Hindi. Does the education minister not see the facts available in the public domain, she asked. "Does the government also consider the police actions in Bihar and Gujarat and the rackets busted as false? Is it all a lie that 67 toppers got full



marks? The question is, whom does the government want to save in the system by ignoring lakhs of youth and their parents?" Priyanka said. Shouldn't the dreams of the youth stop being sacrificed at the altar of this corrupt examination system, she asked. Addressing a press conference on the issue at the AICC headquarters here, Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khara claimed that the "NEET scam is Vyapam 2.0"

and the Modi government wants to whitewash it. The scam in Vyapam or Madhya Pradesh Professional Examination Board broke out in 2013, wherein candidates had bribed officials and rigged exams by deploying imposters to write their answer sheets. Pradhan's brazen statement of calling widespread protests, multiple court cases and tremendous outrage by students as "motivated" is like rubbing salt on the wounds of 24

lakh aspirants, whose future is being destroyed by the BJP, Khara said. Posing questions to Prime Minister Modi and Pradhan, Khara asked is it not true that the Economic Offences Unit (EOU) of the Patna Police (Bihar) which is probing the NEET-UG 2024 paper leak, has found medical aspirants paid huge sums ranging from Rs 30 lakh to Rs 50 lakh each to 'brokers' involved in the racket, to get access to question papers ahead of the examination on May 5. "Can the Education Minister deny that a NEET-UG cheating racket has been busted in Gujarat's Godhra involving three people including a person who runs coaching centre, a teacher and one another, wherein the investigation in the case has revealed transaction worth over Rs 12 crore between students, their parents and the accused?" he said. Is it not a fact that this year, in 2024, there were 67 toppers who were given a perfect score of 720, while in 2023, the

number was just two, Khara said. Is it not true that this year saw an abnormal increase in the students getting scores above 690, he asked. "Is it not true that multiple NEET-UG 2024 toppers belong to the same state and have similar roll numbers? Were they from the same examination centres?" he said. Is it not true that the results of the NEET Examination were declared 10 days earlier, Khara further asked. "PM Modi cannot always remain a mute spectator. Why is he silent when the future of 24 lakh youngsters is at stake?" he said. Khara asked why did the Modi government and the NTA "inflate" marks versus ranks, this year. "The complete result of last year and this year of students scoring 580 plus should be made public by NTA if the Modi government claims that the entire examination process is transparent. The centres of students scoring 580 plus should also be made public to see how many students

travelled far off from their place to take NEET exam," he said. Khara said the board marks should also be correlated with NEET marks for last year and this year to see how much the data correlates. "The videos of centres where there are major high scorers must be released so that this scam can be identified as OMR was filled after exam or at NTA office or some impersonation happened so that the truth comes out," he said. Only a Supreme Court-monitored forensic probe is a solution to safeguard the future of lakhs of young students, Khara asserted. The Centre and the NTA had on Thursday told the Supreme Court they had cancelled the grace marks given to 1,563 candidates who took the examination for admission to MBBS and other such courses. They will have the option to either take a re-test or forgo the compensatory marks awarded to them for loss of time, the Centre had said.

NIA raids hideouts of Maoist outfit in Chhattisgarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted searches at multiple locations linked to suspected overground workers (OGWs) of banned outfit CPI (Maoist) in Chhattisgarh, an official statement said on Friday. The searches were conducted on Thursday in connection with a CPI (Maoist)-led IED attack on a poll party convoy during the 2023 Chhattisgarh Assembly elections in the left-wing extremism-affected state. "Several mobile phones and Rs 2,98,000 in cash were seized during the searches from the premises of suspects believed to be working as overground workers (OGWs)/supporters of the Mainpur-Nuapada division of the banned CPI (Maoist) outfit," the statement issued by the NIA said. NIA teams conducted extensive searches on the premises of six suspects in the Maoist-affected area of Baidagobra village under the Mainpur police station area in Gariyaband district as part of the agency's investigation into the case, it said.



A head constable of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police's (ITBP) ADHOC 615 Battalion was injured in the attack that took place in November 2023, the statement said. The NIA, which took over the case in February 2024, had identified CPI (Maoist) cadres as perpetrators of the attack.

Priyanka seeks urgent steps to prevent Uttarakhand forest fires

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday urged the Centre and the Uttarakhand Government to take steps to prevent forest fire incidents and make effective efforts with everyone's cooperation to save the Himalayas. Her remarks came after four forest workers were killed and four others injured while extinguishing a fire at the Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary under the Civil Soyam Forest Division in Almora district of Uttarakhand. In a social media post in Hindi, Priyanka said, "The news of the death of four employees who went to extinguish the forest fire in Almora, Uttarakhand and many others getting injured is extremely saddening. I pray to God for everyone. I request the state government to provide compensation and assistance at every possible level to the affected families."



The forests of Uttarakhand have been burning continuously for the past several months and hundreds of hectares of forest have been destroyed, she noted. There are reports of forest fires in Himachal Pradesh as well, she added. She also cited a study that said that the incidence of forest fires in the Himalayan region has

increased manifold. "Climate change has had the greatest impact on our Himalayas and mountain environment. I appeal to the central and state governments to take measures to prevent incidents of fire and to make effective efforts on a large scale with everyone's cooperation to save the Himalayas," she said. Last month, a resin factory in

Almora district was engulfed in forest fire and three workers trying to extinguish the fire were killed. Due to hot and dry weather, forest fires have started raging again in Uttarakhand. The Hilly State has reported 1,213 forest fire incidents after November 1 till date as compared to 663 incidents reported during the corresponding period last year, said Nishant

Verma, Uttarakhand's additional principal chief conservator of forests and state nodal officer for forest fires. On Wednesday, the state reported 7 forest fire incidents, including 4 in Garhwal, 1 in Kumaon and 1 in the wildlife administrative area. Over 13 hectares of forest land were damaged in the seven fires. "Of 1653 hectares of forest land damaged in forest fires this year, 687 hectares have been damaged in Garhwal region, 833 hectares in Kumaon region and 132 hectares in wildlife administrative regions," Verma said adding that the forest department is keeping a tab on satellite alerts with ground verification and ensuring quick action when forest fires are reported anywhere. Since 2000, when the state was carved out of Uttar Pradesh, over 54,800 hectares of forest land have been damaged till now in forest fires.

Prioritise widow welfare, NHRC tells Government officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a detailed advisory, urging government authorities at all levels to prioritise protection and welfare of widows in India, highlighting their ongoing marginalization despite economic advancements. Widows, who constitute 78 per cent of the 5.6 crore widowed population, often endure severe hardships, including lack of familial support, financial independence, and basic necessities. They represent 9% of India's female population, about 34 million women, yet they remain largely overlooked and vulnerable. The top human rights body noted that without adequate familial support or financial independence, widowed



women often find themselves marginalised, isolated from their communities, and even forced to seek refuge in shelter homes or ashrams. The prevalence of illiteracy and the challenges of aging only exacerbate their already dire situation, noted the rights body. The NHRC's advisory focuses on key areas such as ensuring proper identification documents for widows, developing and maintaining shelter homes for them, granting equal access to property, preventing their forced eviction, and protecting them from exploitation.

It also emphasises the importance of providing skill development opportunities, access to sustainable livelihoods, easy banking services, healthcare, mental health support, and community-based networks for widows. Additionally, the NHRC has highlighted the need to review existing legislation such as the Widows (Protection and Maintenance) Bill, 2015, and the recommendations of a Supreme Court directed panel from 2017. The advisory suggests creating a centralised database of government-run homes for widows, deploying monitoring teams to ensure their well-being, holding local authorities accountable for implementing welfare schemes, and establishing dedicated "Widows' Cells" in each district, as per a statement here.

Furthermore, the human rights commission recommends encouraging widows' participation in education programs, self-help groups, and entrepreneurial activities, as well as providing mental health support, facilitating remarriage, and ensuring dignified last rites. Jagdish Kaur, President of WILGA, an NGO advocating for marginalized women, welcomed the advisory, noting that "despite economic growth, widows in India are deprived of basic rights and dignity." She pointed to Vrindavan, known as the city of widows, where over 20,000 women live in neglect. "Widows in India, often married off young, face severe social exclusion and obstacles in inheriting property," Kaur said. "They endure abuse and lack of support, which perpetuates their marginalization."

Automated rainfall monitoring system adopted to ensure safe operations of bullet trains: Vaishnav

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An automated rainfall monitoring system has been adopted to ensure the safe operations of bullet train service, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said on Friday. "To ensure the safe operations of #BulletTrain services, an automated Rainfall Monitoring System has been adopted. This system will provide real-time data on the rainfall using rain gauges, equipped with advanced instrumentation system," Vaishnav posted on social media. According to the National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL), which is constructing the bullet train project corridor, a track maintenance centre will monitor the data generated by a rain



gauge installed near the track. "This data is then shared with the train traffic controller to advise the implementation of necessary procedures for train speed restrictions or relaxation," an NHSRCL official said. He added, "As the train will run at 320 km speed, every minute precaution is being taken to ensure its safety."

The Railways Ministry has officially announced the completion of the first phase, a 50-km long stretch between Surat and Bilimora, by August 2026. According to the NHSRCL, the bullet train will run at its maximum speed of 320 km to cover the 508 km distance in two hours and 58 minutes which includes its stoppage time at all 10 stations.

Over 1,200 tourists stranded as landslides, rain hit Sikkim

PTI ■ GANGTOK

More than 1,200 tourists, including 15 foreigners, were stranded as massive landslides triggered by incessant rainfall caused devastation in northern Sikkim's Mangan district, an official said on Friday. The office of the chief secretary has already initiated talks with the Centre for airlifting of all the tourists, depending on the weather conditions, Sikkim Tourism & Civil Aviation Department's Principal Secretary C S Rao said in a statement.



Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang chaired a high-level meeting in Mintokgang to take stock of the situation after landslides triggered by heavy rain impacted the Himalayan state severely, damaging properties and disrupting road connectivity, power and food supplies, and mobile networks in several areas.

"As per the ground report, around 1,200 domestic and 15 foreign tourists (Thailand:2, Nepal:3, Bangladesh:10) are stranded in Lachung, Mangan district due to road blockages caused by heavy rainfall and landslides," Rao said in the statement.

The stranded tourists are all safe and sound, and the local authorities have requested them to stay put in their respective places and avoid taking risks, he said. There is adequate stock of food supplies and rations to cater to all the stranded tourists, the official said.

If required, the tourists will be evacuated by road, and the department is "working in close coordination with the district administration, police and tourism officials in Mangan" along with the local tourism stakeholders for the safe evacuation of those stranded there, he said. He assured the tourists of extending all possible support and assistance to them during this period of distress due to natural calamity.

Only Lachung is cut off from the rest of the state and all other parts of Sikkim are open and safe for travel, Rao said. Landslides blocked stretches of roads and several houses were inundated or damaged due to heavy rain in the district, while electricity poles were swept away, another official said.

The chief minister's meeting was "crucial for

strategising and coordinating our response to restore normalcy and ensure the safety and well-being of our residents", he said. During the meeting, officials concerned provided details on the extent of damages on critical roads and the immediate challenges for affected people.

They apprised the chief minister of the damaged infrastructure, especially roads and bridges vital for transportation, and relief operations.

They also briefed the CM about immediate relief measures, including the deployment of emergency service personnel, and the supplies of essential commodities.

Tamang directed the officials to monitor the situation closely and expedite the process of reestablishing connectivity and relief efforts. He also urged them to carry out a continuous assessment of the affected areas to identify the most critical issues and prioritise the response. The chief minister also appealed to the public to stay alert, follow safety guidelines and cooperate with the authorities in order to overcome this calamity and restore normalcy in the state.

Incessant rain triggered landslides at several places in Mangan district on Thursday, and a newly-constructed bailey bridge at Sangkalang collapsed leaving a large number of tourists stranded in North Sikkim. A bamboo bridge has been destroyed too, the officials said. The bailey bridge at Sangkalang was constructed after the flash flood in the Teesra river in October last year. According to the local officials, efforts were underway to construct a bridge at Phidang to restore connectivity there.

Pawan Kalyan named Deputy CM

PTI ■ AMARAVATI (ANDHRA PRADESH)

The Andhra Pradesh government on Friday designated Janasena chief Pawan Kalyan as Deputy Chief Minister. The actor-turned-politician has been allotted Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, Environment, Forests, and Science and Technology portfolios. Rural Water Supply department would also be handled by Kalyan. "Congratulations to Pawan Kalyan on becoming the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. I congratulate all my colleagues in the cabinet on being assigned their portfolios," said Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in a post on X.

Noting that the new ministers have taken a solemn oath to serve the people of Andhra Pradesh and usher in an era of people's governance, Naidu expressed confidence that all the ministers will strive to deliver and meet people's

expectations. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's son Nara Lokesh was given Human Resources Development, Information Technology and Communication portfolios. During the erstwhile TDP government between 2014 and 2019, Lokesh had worked as the IT Minister.

Along with Naidu, as many as 24 ministers were sworn in on Wednesday. Anitha Vangalapudi was given Home Affairs and Disaster Management portfolios while K Atchannaaidu, Andhra Pradesh TDP president, has been allotted Agriculture, Co-operation, Marketing, Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development & Fisheries departments. P Narayana was allotted one of the key departments - Municipal Administration - which would be responsible for the development of the Amaravati capital region.

K Ravinda was named Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise.



Janasena leader N Manohar has been entrusted with the Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs portfolios. BJP's Satya Kumar Yadav has been Minister for Health and Family Welfare & Medical Education. Nasyam Mohammed Farook is Minister for Law & Justice and Minority Welfare while P Keshav is Finance, Planning and Commercial Taxes & Legislative Minister. A Satya Prasad was given the portfolios of Revenue and Registration & Stamps. K Parthasarathy would be the Minister for Housing and

Information & Public Relations.

D Bala Veeranjanya Swamy has been allocated Social Welfare, Disabled and Senior Citizen Welfare and Sachivalayam & Village Volunteer Minister. Gottipati Ravi Kumar is the Energy Minister.

Janasena's K Durgesh will be Tourism and Culture & Cinematography Minister. G Sandhya Rani has been entrusted with Women & Child Welfare and Tribal Welfare portfolios while BC Janardhan Reddy will be Minister in charge of Roads & Buildings and Infrastructure & Investments.

TG Bharat is the Industries & Commerce and Food Processing Minister. S Savitha has been named Minister for BC Welfare, Economically Weaker Sections Welfare and Handlooms & Textiles while V Subash has been allocated the Labour, Factories, Boilers & Insurance Medical Services portfolios. K Srinivas is the Minister for

MSMEs, Society for the Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) and NRI Empowerment & Relations and M Ramprasad Reddy will handle the Transport and Youth & Sports portfolios.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu will hold the portfolios of General Administration Department (GAD), Public Enterprises and all other portfolios not allocated to any minister. "My best wishes to you (ministers) all as you embark on this journey of service and devotion," Naidu added. Along with Naidu, the Cabinet is 25-member strong and includes those from the Janasena and BJP. It is an amalgamation of 17 freshers and eight experienced ministers. Eight ministers come from BC communities, one Muslim, two SCs and an ST, among others.

Besides Naidu, 20 ministers belong to TDP, three are from Janasena and one from BJP. The age bracket of the new ministers ranged between 41 and 74.

Rajkot fire: Game zone co-owner held; arrests in case rise to ten

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Police have arrested a co-owner of the Rajkot game zone, where a fire claimed 27 lives last month, taking the number of arrests in the case to ten, an official said on Friday. Ashoksinh Jadeja, one of the six owners of the TRP game zone, surrendered before the police on Thursday evening, the official said.

Jadeja, who owns the land on which the game zone had come up, had been absconding after a fire devastated the recreation facility on May 25 in Gujarat's Rajkot city. Rajkot Police Commissioner Brajesh Kumar Jha confirmed on Friday that Jadeja is in the custody of the crime branch after his surrender. Earlier, police had arrested five



inside the facility when it was gutted.

CCTV camera footage showed the fire started after sparks fell on thermocol (polystyrene) sheets during welding work on the ground floor. Though workers present there tried to douse the fire with fire extinguishers, it spread quickly and eventually engulfed the game zone.

According to the police, the game zone was being operated without any objection certificate (NOC) from the fire department of the Rajkot Municipal Corporation. Several game zones and other recreation hubs were sealed across the state after the Rajkot incident and FIRs were also filed against the owners for running such facilities without any permissions.

Monsoon likely to hit Jharkhand around June 19; rain deficiency rises to 54 per cent

PTI ■ RANCHI

Heatwave conditions and delayed monsoon have aggravated Jharkhand's rainfall deficiency to 54 per cent and it may rise further as monsoon onset over the state is expected around June 19, a weather official said on Friday.

Most parts of Jharkhand have been simmering over 40 degrees Celsius with Daltonganj recording the state's highest maximum temperature at 46.5 deg C on Thursday.

"The current progress of the monsoon is tardy. It is likely to get momentum after June 16 and we are expecting the

onset of monsoon over Jharkhand around June 19," Abhishek Anand, in charge of Ranchi Meteorological Centre, told PTI.

The normal date for monsoon onset in Jharkhand is June 10. However, it has been reaching Jharkhand between June 12 and June 25 since 2010, according to the monsoon onset record at the Met office.

Anand said the current situation suggests that rainfall might be deficient in June and it might increase in July. Jharkhand has received a mere 20.2 mm rainfall from June 1 to June 13 against the normal rainfall of 43.4 mm, which is 54 per cent deficient.

Karnataka Deputy CM rubbishes reports of pressure on Govt to favour actor Darshan in murder case

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Friday rubbished reports that the government is under pressure from "influential people" to favour Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, who has been arrested in connection with a murder case.

He also refuted BJP's allegations against the Congress government of indulging in "hate politics", following the arrest warrant against its leader and former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa in a POCSO case. "There is no pressure from anyone....Neither our Home Minister or anyone else is involved (interfering) in it (investigation), we are not recommending anything, we don't know anything," Shivakumar said in response to a question that some influential people are exerting pressure on the government in the Darshan case.



His statement comes in the wake of some reports about a state minister's alleged efforts to "shield" Darshan.

Regarding allegations that "royal treatment" was being given to Darshan at the police station where he is held and pandals were erected there to maintain "secrecy", Shivakumar said: "I inquired with the police. There are 13 accused there (at the police station), as you (media) stand with your cameras there from morning till evening, they (police) need an opportunity to work freely, so they have put

(erected a pandal) there." Darshan, popularly known as "Challenging Star", and his associates were arrested on Tuesday for the murder of 33-year-old Renukaswamy, a fan of the actor.

Renukaswamy, a resident of district headquarters town of Chitradurga, allegedly commented on the social media account of Pavithra Gowda, a friend of Darshan and small-time actress, accusing her of creating a rift between the actor and his wife. He also allegedly used "indecent language" and

posted offensive messages, according to police sources. On BJP alleging "hate politics", with respect to a case and arrest warrant against Yediyurappa, Shivakumar questioned about the saffron party's case against its leader Rahul Gandhi in connection with which he had to appear before a court here recently.

"I have not gone into details about it (case). The Congress party doesn't hate anyone. If I speak about hate politics it will go somewhere else, so I don't want to speak...I feel pity (for Yediyurappa), because I too have suffered from it. I know the pain," he said.

Yediyurappa has been booked under the POCSO Act and Section 354 A (Sexual harassment) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl who alleged that he molested her daughter during a meeting on February two this year, at his residence in Dollars Colony here. "Case against Rahul Gandhi (filed by BJP) is what kind of

politics" he asked. "It is the BJP that is doing hate politics. Did Rahul Gandhi give the advertisement? Is Rahul Gandhi AICC or KPCC President? He did not give any advertisement. It was given by our KPCC, based on Yatnal (BJP MLA) statement which appeared in newspapers. Didn't the BJP file a case against us? Didn't we go to court? What is it called? Didn't Vijayendra (state BJP chief) have commonsense for filing a case?". Rahul Gandhi had appeared before a special court here on June 7 in connection with a defamation case filed by the Karnataka BJP for issuing "defamatory" advertisements in mainstream newspapers. The advertisement ahead of Assembly polls last year had accused the then BJP government in the state of indulging in large-scale corruption during its 2019-2023 rule. On June one, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar too had appeared before the court, in connection with the case.

Akhilesh asks SP workers to prepare for 2027 UP Assembly elections

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Friday appealed to party workers and leaders to prepare for the state polls and said the public has ended the politics of hatred with the victory of SP's Awadhesh Prasad from Faizabad Lok Sabha seat.

The Faizabad parliamentary constituency falls under the Ayodhya district and Prasad defeated BJP's Lallu Singh by a margin of about 55,000 votes in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls. Uttar Pradesh (UP) will go to polls in 2027.

According to a statement issued by the Samajwadi Party (SP), Yadav said, "The 2024 Lok Sabha elections have worked to change the politics of India. With the victory of Awadhesh Prasad, MP from Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency of Ayodhya district, the public has put an end to the politics of hatred." The SP supremo was addressing a large number of party workers, leaders, MLAs



and newly elected Lok Sabha members at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Auditorium in the party's state headquarters here.

Singh had won the Lok Sabha polls from Faizabad for two consecutive times since 2014. He was prevented by Prasad from scoring a hat-trick. His defeat also became a topic of discussion because on January 22, the consecration of Shri Ram Lalla took place in the grand Ayodhya temple under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Yadav said, "We have got a historic victory. But this victory has increased our responsibility even more. We have to start preparing for the 2027 assembly elections from

now itself.

In the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, the SP won the highest number of 37 seats out of 80 in UP, giving a record performance since its inception. The SP's ally Congress also won six seats, while the BJP won 33, its ally Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) won two and Apna Dal (S) won one seat.

The Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) also won one seat.

The SP chief said, "The historic victory of the Samajwadi Party in this Lok Sabha election has increased the strength of Samajwadi Party and leaders and workers have been infused with new energy."

"To achieve the goal of victory in the upcoming assembly elections, while we all have to keep our language right, we also have to learn to respect everyone," he said. He asked the party leaders and workers to stay connected with the public and added that the blessings of the public are with them.

Tailor-made success story: Latur man cracks four competitive exams at 24

PTI ■ LATUR

In an extraordinary display of talent and determination, a 24-year-old man from Latur, a tailor's son, has cracked four competitive examinations in Maharashtra in a short span of time, but he is not yet stopping and wants to fulfil his dream of becoming a Class 1 officer.

Hailing from a poor family background, Narsing Vishwanath Jadhav, a resident of Nilanga town in central Maharashtra's Latur district, achieved this feat through sheer hard work and unwavering commitment to his goals. His father, Vishwanath Jadhav, works as a tailor. After clearing CEA (Civil Engineer Assistant)



examination in his first attempt, Narsing Jadhav joined as CEA in the Public Works Department at Selu in Parbhani district. The result of the exam was declared on March 16, 2024.

His other achievements included cracking examinations for junior engineers (a Group 2 post) in the Palghar Zilla Parishad

(ZP), where he secured first rank in March, and for CEA in the Water Resources Department (WRD). Narsing Jadhav also cleared the exam for CEA in the Palghar ZP, the result of which was declared on Wednesday. The post of CEA falls under Group 3. He had appeared for all the competitive examinations in December 2023.

Since these posts do not fall under the category of Class 1 (Group A) officer, Narsing Jadhav is determined to keep studying and appear in more examinations to fulfil his dream of becoming a gazetted officer. "I began my journey with the ambition to secure a position as a Class 1 officer and continuously studied hard. Though I have joined as CEA

in the PWD, I will not stop my studies and continue to strive to achieve my goal of becoming a Class 1 officer. I was motivated by my uncle Dr Satish Jadhav, a teacher," Narsing Jadhav told PTI. Narsing Jadhav completed his schooling at Maharashtra Vidyalaya, Nilanga. Further, he studied in Puranmal Lahoti Polytechnic, Latur, and then completed his engineering from the Sinhgad College of Engineering, Pune. Despite facing numerous challenges and financial constraints, he remained determined in his pursuit of excellence. As news of his remarkable achievement spread, Narsing Jadhav has become a role model for students aspiring to excel in competitive examinations.

Army, Navy join efforts to rescue excavator operator at soil cave-in site in Palghar

PTI ■ PALGHAR

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Friday said the Army, Navy and Coast Guard have joined the efforts to rescue the excavator operator who remains trapped with the equipment after a cave-in at a water project in Palghar 17 days ago.

An excavator operator was trapped after the soil and wall structure collapsed during work on a tunnel shaft at the Surya water supply project site in Sasun Navghar village, some 50 km from Mumbai, on the night of May 29. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and other rescue teams have been working at the site, but neither the man nor the machine has been spotted. The chief minister,



accompanied by MMRDA Commissioner Dr Sanjay Mukherjee and Palghar Collector Govind Bodke, visited the site on Friday and reviewed the rescue efforts.

Talking to reporters, Shinde said, "Excavator operator Rakesh Yadav was involved in an accident while working on the Surya pipeline project. Despite extensive rescue operations involving local teams and NDRF, he remains trapped. The Indian Army, Navy, and Coast Guard now have joined the search. We are

committed to his rescue." The chief minister announced compensation of Rs 50 lakh to Yadav's family in the event of his death and assured a job to a member.

He further said that considering the complexity of the situation, professors from the Veermata Jijabai Technological Institute (VJTI) will oversee the rescue. The experts will also conduct a thorough inquiry to ascertain the cause of the incident and prevent future occurrences, Shinde said.

JD(U) announces Bihar bypoll candidate

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) on Friday announced its candidate for the Rupauli assembly constituency, where the resignation of multiple-term MLA Bima Bharti has necessitated a bypoll. State JD(U) president Umesh Singh Kushwaha gave the party ticket to Kaladhar Prasad Mandal, who had contested the 2020 assembly polls, against Bharti, as an independent. Bharti, who had won the seat for JD(U) for the third time in a row, quit the party ahead of the Lok Sabha polls to contest from Purnea as the RJD candidate. However, the seat was won by independent candidate Pappu Yadav, while Bharti lost deposit and finished a distant third, way behind the JD(U) runners-up Santosh Kushwaha, who was defeated after two consecutive victories. PTI



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Growing clout

The G7 Summit provides India with a significant platform to contribute to critical global discussions

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Italy on Friday for the G7 Summit's Outreach session. This visit marks PM Modi's first foreign trip since the beginning his third term in office. India has been invited to the Summit by Italy. The Group of Seven, or G7, a coalition of the world's most happening economies --- Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US --- makes the world go round. India has emerged as one of the most trusted G7 partners over the years. This forum is instrumental in shaping global economic policies and addressing critical issues such as climate change, trade and geopolitical stability; in nutshell a force to reckon with. The G7 Summit is an annual gathering where the member nations discuss these pressing matters and seek collaborative solutions. India, while not a member, has a significant interest in the G7's activities and decisions due to its expanding global influence and economic aspirations. The G7 holds substantial sway over global economic and political affairs. Collectively, these nations represent about 40 per cent of global GDP and wield considerable influence over international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. The group's decisions can impact global markets, set economic trends and influence international policies. However, the biggest cementing factor is geopolitics. India happens to be in the frontline in G7's economic and political tussle with China. The G7 often discusses security issues, including those related to regional stability and counterterrorism with India as Indian inputs are taken seriously.

India has had a long relationship with the G7. The country's engagement with the G7 is driven by several strategic national interests. India aims to bolster its economic growth through increased trade and investment. The G7 economies are significant trading partners and sources of foreign direct investment. Engaging with the G7 helps India to advocate for fairer trade practices, access to advanced technologies and support for its economic initiatives. Besides, India is deeply invested in the global climate agenda. As a developing nation facing the dual challenges of economic growth and environmental sustainability, India's participation in G7 discussions on climate change is crucial. The G7's commitments to carbon neutrality, renewable energy and financial support for developing nations align with India's goals of transitioning to a green economy. India's participation in these dialogues is vital for addressing security concerns, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region where China's assertive actions have raised alarms. Moreover, as a country aspiring to become a global technology hub, India seeks collaboration with G7 countries on innovation and technological development. Participation in G7 initiatives can help India gain access to cutting-edge technologies, foster research and development partnerships, and support its digital economy.

PICTALK



Spotted deer drink water inside their zoo enclosure on a hot summer day, in Patna

PTI

Dogs that save human lives with devotion

On the one side is canine unconditional love and care; on the other, human beings are indifferent or cruel to animals, hurting and exploiting them



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

From Oregon in the United States comes the report of a dog saving the life of his owner through a combination of devotion, will and intelligence. As reported by several newspapers, a gentleman by the name of Brendan Garrett, who was driving a truck, failed to negotiate a curve in the road, went through the embankment and fell into a deep ravine. He was injured, as were two of the four dogs travelling with him. One the four, Blue, a whippet, who was obviously not injured, ran through the dense forest covering the ravine and, travelling a distance of nearly four miles, reached a campsite where a friend of Garrett was waiting for him.

On Blue's arrival, the friend, who had been worrying because of the delay in Garrett's arrival, feared that that something terrible had happened and alerted Garrett's brother, Tyree. The family mounted a search of the area and Tyree Brandon managed to see the truck lying deep inside the ravine. Brendan Garrett and the dog were rescued and treated.

Needless to say, this was one of the numerous accounts of the loyalty and devotion the canines harbour towards humans who love and care for them, going to the extent of even dying for them. In this case, Blue has survived. He, however, ran the risk of being attacked by wild animals and run over by speeding vehicles, as he raced to the campsite. Recognition of the deep and loving ties with which dogs attach themselves with humans who care for them, is one side of the story. The other is how humans treat them. There are doubtless those who care deeply for their dogs and other animals kept as pets, regarding them as family members and even dying for them. There are others who believe that all animals have to be treated with dignity and consideration. There, however, are others who are indifferent or cruel to animals, killing, injuring, enslaving and exploiting them at will.

The belief that animals are inferior to humans and are meant



for their benefit, has emerged from the Judeo-Christian theological tradition and the anthropocentric world view rooted in the Humanist philosophy of the classical Greeks. Aristotle wrote in *Politics* that nature made all animals for the sake of man and that it was permissible to enslave people who did not possess reason as it was to enslave animals. Saint Augustine wrote in *The City of God*, "When we read 'Thou shalt not kill', we do not understand this phrase to apply to bushes, because they have no sensation, nor to unreasoning animals that fly, walk or crawl, because they are not associated in a community with us by reason... Hence it is by a very just ordinance of the Creator that their life and death is subordinated to us." This attitude continued through history. In *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*, Charles Patterson points out that like Aristotle, whose work he incorporated in his theology, Saint Thomas Aquinas, perhaps the greatest exponent of medieval Scholasticism, believed that only the reasoning part of the soul survived after death.



THERE ARE DOUBTLESS THOSE WHO CARE DEEPLY FOR THEIR DOGS AND OTHER ANIMALS KEPT AS PETS, REGARDING THEM AS FAMILY MEMBERS AND EVEN DYING FOR THEM

Since animals lacked the capacity to reason, he claimed that "their souls, unlike human souls, did not survive their death". The European Renaissance, which lasted from the late 14th century to the first half of the 16th century, and the Enlightenment, which flourished in the salons of Paris in the 18th, revived the full tradition of Greek humanism, parts of which were marginalised by scholasticism because these were not deemed compatible with Christian faith. The result was a new emphasis on rationality as the species attribute of humans as well as the affirmation of the latter's supreme position in the universe as expressed in the Greek sophist Protagoras's famous aphorism, "Man is the measure of all things." This led to a further relegation of the status of animals who are treated with unprecedented savagery in animal food processing industries, avoidable medical research, cosmetic products testing, savage torture during bullfighting and holding of jallikattu, and mindless displays of sadism. One sees the same process at work in India though its predominant spiritual heritage as

expressed in the Vedas, Upanishads, the great epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and the Puranas, give an exalted position to non-human living beings and give them the same rights as humans. Swami Vivekananda summed up the essence of this heritage when he said in his seminal speech on Vedantism in Jaffna in January 1897. "In every man and in every animal, however weak or wicked, great or small, resides the same omnipresent, omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul, but in the manifestation. Between me and the smallest animal, the difference is only in manifestation, but as a principle he is the same as I am, he is my brother, he has the same soul as I have. This is the greatest principle that India has preached. The talk of the brotherhood of man becomes in India the brotherhood of universal life, of animals, and of all life down to the little ants - all these are our bodies as our scripture says, "Thus the sage, knowing that the same Lord inhabits all bodies, will worship everybody as such." (The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DELHI'S TULIP MAKEOVER

Madam — Apropos the news story "Capital to plant over 9 lakh tulips to transform it into 'City of Flowers'", published on June 13, this is my response. As a daily newspaper reader, the initiative to plant over nine lakh exotic Tulips across Delhi is truly inspiring. This ambitious project aligns with Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena's vision of transforming Delhi into a "City of Flowers," reflecting a significant commitment to enhancing the city's aesthetic appeal. It's fascinating to note the rapid increase in the number of Tulips—from 1.5 lakh in 2022 to an impressive nine lakh this year. The widespread enthusiasm for these vibrant flowers, which will now adorn key areas such as the Parliament House and popular parks along the Yamuna riverbed, is heartening. Moreover, the decision to sell potted Tulips through various nurseries will allow more residents to participate in this beautification effort. This initiative not only promises to uplift the city's landscape but also fosters a sense of community and pride among Delhi's citizens. It's a beautiful step towards a greener and more colourful urban environment.

Reyansh Tiwari | Tirupati

MIFF'S GLOBAL FILM IMPACT

Madam — Regarding the news article "Spotlight on reality: MIFF's role in documentary cinema," released on June 12, here is my feedback. As an avid newspaper reader, I find the role of documentary film festivals incredibly significant in today's cinema landscape. Events like the Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF) offer a vital platform for non-fiction storytelling, highlighting real-life events, societal issues and diverse cultures. MIFF, one of Asia's oldest and most respected festivals, has evolved since its inception in 1990, now featuring global talent and embracing technological advancements. The upcoming 18th edition, with the innovative 'Documentary Film Bazaar', promises to connect filmmakers with international

Challenges of biannual admissions



Regarding the news article "DU, other institutions mull implementing biannual admission system from next year," released on June 13th, here is my reply. The proposal to implement a biannual admission system by the UGC is a promising step forward, though it comes with challenges. Delhi University and other institutions in the capital are considering this change, aiming

for a full roll-out in the future. While DU will start with a pilot project for a few courses in the next academic year, logistical constraints like additional infrastructure need addressing. Jamia Millia Islamia and Jawaharlal Nehru University show cautious optimism but await necessary approvals from statutory bodies. State universities like IP University and Ambedkar University see potential benefits, including increased opportunities for students and better utilisation of resources. However, they acknowledge the need for more space, staff and faculty. Private universities like Lovely Professional University also support this initiative, highlighting its flexibility and accessibility for students. Overall, this move aligns Indian universities with international standards, potentially enhancing the educational landscape but requiring careful, phased implementation.

Siya Bhatia | Mangaluru

producers, enhancing the creation and distribution of documentaries. MIFF's educational workshops, discussions and masterclasses foster professional growth and provide audiences with deeper insights into documentary filmmaking. Such initiatives ensure MIFF's enduring relevance and influence, showcasing its commitment to promoting creativity and meaningful social discussions in the ever-changing global film landscape.

Khirabdi | Noida

MOBILE PHONE USAGE CONCERNS

Madam — Apropos the news story "The impact of mobile radiation on children," published on June 13, this is my response. Smartphones are incredibly versatile and indispensable in modern life, keeping us constantly connected. However, the impact of mobile phone usage on children raises growing concerns among parents, educators and health professionals. While these devices offer numerous benefits— instant communication, access to information and social connectivity—they pose significant risks, particularly for children.

Children's dependency on mobile phones can lead to addiction-like behaviours, impairing their engagement in other vital activities. The risks: eye strain, disrupted sleep from blue light, affecting melatonin. Excessive screen time can harm health. The mental and emotional toll is substantial, with high mobile phone usage linked to increased anxiety, depression and loneliness. It also hampers attention spans and academic performance while reducing face-to-face interactions essential for social skills and emotional intelligence development. To mitigate these risks, parents and guardians should encourage moderate and supervised use of mobile devices, employ hands-free options, limit screen time before bed and choose devices with lower SAR values to reduce radiation exposure. Balancing technology use is crucial to safeguard children's health and development.

Ananya Gupta | Amravati

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Addressing misinformation about health supplements

Online misinformation about health supplements exploits trust and evades scientific scrutiny, posing dangerous consequences



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

In this digital age, people believe online resources more than fellow human beings. It's a common practice during our travel; we unthinkingly follow whatever is told by Google map rather than asking a commoner. Even if a local person gives the correct direction, we look at him with scepticism. For the present generation, Google and WhatsApp are like libraries and teachers. Even in health care, people believe in using Internet sources rather than a physical doctor.



Health supplements, ranging from vitamins and minerals to herbal extracts and dietary supplements, have become increasingly popular in recent years. Marketed as natural remedies to improve health, boost immunity and enhance performance, these products often attract consumers seeking quick fixes or alternative treatments for various health conditions. One of the primary drivers of online misinformation about health supplements is the commercial interests of manufacturers and distributors. Profit-driven motives often precede scientific evidence and consumer safety in an industry valued at billions of dollars globally. Misleading advertisements, exaggerated claims and cherry-picked testimonials are commonly used tactics to promote supplements and exploit consumer vulnerabilities. The consequences of online

misinformation about health supplements can be far-reaching and profound. Individuals misled by false or exaggerated claims may forgo evidence-based treatments, delay seeking medical advice, or experience adverse reactions due to improper use or dosage of supplements. Recent studies have shown significant repercussions for young people who consume dietary supplements that are marketed to reduce body fat or increase muscle mass. Consuming excessive fat-soluble vitamins, such as vitamins A, D, E and K, can cause the body to accumulate these vitamins, which can lead to toxicity. Toxic quantities of vitamin A, for instance, can induce symptoms such as lightheadedness, nausea and changes in the skin. In more severe situations, vitamin A poisoning can also cause damage to organs, such as the liver and bone discomfort. To counter the spread of misinformation about health supplements, it is essential to promote critical thinking skills and scientific literacy among consumers. Education and awareness campaigns can empower

individuals to question and evaluate the credibility of online sources, distinguishing between reliable information and pseudoscience and make informed decisions about their health and wellness. People who share misinformation on social media should also be made accountable and dealt with severely. Social media platforms should invest in better content moderation tools, including AI and human moderators, to quickly detect and remove false information. Furthermore, stringent regulatory measures should be enforced against manufacturers propagating such misinformation. The manufacturers propagating such misinformations should be heavily penalised. The recent Supreme Court ruling against a prominent manufacturer to halt misleading advertisements claiming false cures is a positive step in this direction, but enforcement agencies must ensure proper implementation. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

GOD'S VARIED INTEREST IN HUMANITY

Performing welfare acts ensures no downfall in this or next world



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Is God interested in us? Yes, very much so. Because we, souls, are His parts. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7) But it depends on where we are placed in the human hierarchy. From what I have learnt, we can classify all humans into six main categories. Starting from the top, devotees of God are most dear to God. Lord Krishna States, "I am similarly inclined towards all beings; no one is hateful for me and no one is dear. However, those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me and I am also in them." (9.29) This means that devotees of God have God in their hearts and similarly, God keeps them in His heart. Good examples of great devotees of God are Adi Shankaracharya and Vivekananda. What does God do for them? He liberates them. Such persons preach what they have learnt and realised. Lord Krishna States, "No one other than him among men pleases Me more and there will be no one other than him who is dear to Me on the earth. (18.68-69)

The next category is God's 'nimitta' (instruments), as Arjuna was. What do they do? They carry out God's instructions, as Arjuna did, by fighting to uphold dharma. What does God do for them? He becomes 'karta' (doer) in their lives. (11.33) And they are rewarded with heaven after death. But they must return to earth after exhausting their pious karmas (acts). (9.21) The third category of human beings is social workers, those engaged in the welfare of others. Lord Krishna has cited the example of King Janaka in the Bhagavad-Geeta in this connection. (3.20) There are many in the recent past like Hanuman Prasad Poddar.



The fourth category is good people, those mostly in the mode of goodness. Such persons have brightness and knowledge in all their senses; they are always doing what is right with their minds and senses. (14.11) Then come philanthropists, who are kind enough to donate. What they feel they should do is help others, who are not so blessed. Such people not only bring up the deprived but also in some ways follow Lord Krishna's instruction to not be so attached to the fruits of action. (18.9) Such actions ensure good karmaphalas in their next birth, which help them to be pleasant. The fifth category comprises common people, primarily driven by passion, living to survive. They constitute the foundational fabric of society, reincarnating repeatedly. God is very interested in the first three categories, as detailed in the Geeta. Highly advanced devotees are freed from the painful cycle of birth and death. (12.7) Imagine being in the womb of a mother for nine long months where there is hardly any movement and of course no interaction. Exalted individuals embody God consciousness, dedicating themselves primarily to spiritual acts and preaching. God selects those inclined to serve humanity, nurturing them from youth. Such souls are protected from self-destructive behaviors, guided onto virtuous paths. Social workers follow, benefiting humanity, assured by God: "Performing welfare acts ensures no downfall in this or the next world." God empowers all those who are good and mean well. For example, if someone wishes to invent something, which will benefit mankind, God helps him, because the source is God only. Preachers are helped by providing the needed knowledge. Many famous writers have admitted that God dictates and they write. Help is extended to those aiding others, akin to 'Siddha purushas' (exalted beings). Spiritual fundraisers also gain empowerment. How else can mortals amass billions? God, impartial yet partial to surrendered devotees, keeps them in mind. Then, dharma is very dear to God, because dharma is the bedrock upon which His creation rests. The conclusion is: you start taking shelter from God or at least be desirous to help others. God will take note of you. Then, the sky is the limit, as detailed herein.

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

The robustness of India's political system



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The recent Indian parliamentary elections underscore the resilience and maturity of the country's democratic processes, reflecting the electorate's nuanced choices



Civil society requires an acceptance of rules, regulations and practices for the orderly conduct of affairs. These rules, regulations and practices may or may not be documented but they are generally composed of items which everyone agrees to confirm. A commonly referred example is the fact that the United Kingdom does not have a written constitution, yet it manages to conduct its affairs in a fairly orderly fashion. This requires a great deal of self-regulation and the ability to allow matters to function together, even in disagreement. This enables the orderly conduct of affairs with or without agreement and with mutual respect. It is a significant achievement. Compared to this, there are some countries with written constitutions that find it difficult to conduct their affairs in an orderly manner and often have to resort to courts. Appealing to the courts itself is an acceptable method of conflict resolution, even though it may be seen as a less evolved order than working with mutual agreement. The ability to manage oneself and manage disagreements is a significant constituent trait of civil society. In extreme cases, withdrawal from participation is known to happen, but this needs to be an exception rather than the rule. Put simply, agreeing to disagree is a gentlemanly art which only the evolved can practice. Together with this, the use of temperate language and polite methods of disagree-



CIVIL SOCIETY REQUIRES ACCEPTANCE OF RULES, REGULATIONS AND PRACTICES FOR ORDERLY CONDUCT, EVEN WITHOUT WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION, SHOWCASING SELF-REGULATION AND MUTUAL RESPECT

ment are inherent parts of civil society. Loose talk and abrasive postures can, of course, happen, but they do credit to nobody and become an indicator of a lower level of evolution. The recent elections for the parliament are a tell-tale story of the State of health of Indian political processes. On one hand, it is a resounding testimony to the fairness of the Indian electoral process and the sheer maturity of political choices. It truly reflects the thinking of the electorate, who went to record one's views in a matter most consistent with the individual's judgement and inclination. Such large-scale observance of the peaceful exercise of political choices can and should fill with joy any one's thinking and observation. That being said and done, there are other actions which need thought and some better understanding of the causative factors. That some victors of the electoral process, even if they otherwise had the credentials, did not make it to the cabinet is an understandable aberration. There is no one's 'right' to be in the cabinet and if the Prime Minister, in his inherent prerogative, did not deem it so, he exercised a conscious choice. Similarly, the inclusion of some

who lost the election in the cabinet is also justifiable under prime-ministerial prerogative. An example being cited is a former Congressman who lost the election, under the BJP ticket, taking oath as a minister. Another interesting case is of a BJP functionary in Kerala (the General Secretary of the BJP there) without being a member of any of the two houses of Parliament, taking oath as a minister. From a particular State, eight ministers were chosen, but two veterans, former members of the different era cabinets of the party, notwithstanding their success in the election, lost out for a cabinet berth. Examples are many, but they all carry the stamp of prime-ministerial prerogative. A gentleman who was a minister in the outgoing Government has found a place in Modi 3.0 despite losing the election. This particular gentleman, as noted above, was not only a minister in the outgoing Government and lost the election (he has at least the redeeming feature of being a member of the Rajya Sabha). There have been some negative press reports and commentaries on such examples. It does not help a cause. Mounting a telescope on a micro-

scope to detect departures and deviations from what one believes should be the norm of cabinet-making in a parliamentary system, cannot be accepted as an algorithm of decision-making. No rule or regulation can be followed 100 per cent in all exceptions and this is what judgment and prerogatives are all about. By and large, the ministry formation of 70+ has been a remarkable achievement of balance and poise. Whether it be the case of Ravi Shankar Prasad/Rajiv Pratap Rudy/L Murugan/Rajiv Chandrasekhar, whether for inclusion in the cabinet or exclusion, not too much can be made out of such decisions. A case can be cited of a veteran BJP leader from Gujarat who took the oath in the first and second Modi's Government and won this election but did not make it to the cabinet. Such decisions are to be taken in stride and accepted for what they are worth. It can be rightly claimed that constituting a 70+ ministerial house is a major feat and it has been achieved with consummate artistry. It is one more testimony, if any, be needed to the maturity of the Indian political process. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

Modi's third term to drive India's global diplomacy

Modi 3.0 advances India's global presence with robust diplomacy, strategic alliances and a renewed national identity focus

On June 4, the results for the Indian Lok Sabha elections 2024 started coming in. For many, the results came with an element of surprise, amidst the euphoria created by our Exit polls and expectations of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Despite no single party getting the majority, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the BJP is set to form the next Government. Modi 3, as we may call it, led by Narendra Modi is well prepared to lead the nation once again. In the last decade, India has well-positioned itself as an influential global player. Led by the pro-active diplomacy of the Narendra Modi Government, India has made a shift from being a 'strategically reticent' State to a 'balancing power' in



ABHISHEK PRATAP SINGH

global politics. As an "aspirational power", India has refused to be drawn into any great power rivalries and has remained focussed on strengthening neighbourhood relations, soft power expansion, promoting humanitarian aid, building economic cooperation, fighting global terrorism and climate change, adherence to international laws and seeking UN security council

reforms. In an editorial written by the Prime Minister himself, he reiterated that India is being "acknowledged as a strong and important voice of the Global South." Modi 3.0 is likely to build on these continuities and achievements of foreign policy. In a complex world, Modi's third term faces new diplomatic challenges and opportunities. Alliance partners may influence policy, but key trends will shape India's foreign policy under the NDA Government. Firstly, the direction of India's Foreign policy cannot be understood without any reference to the question of our national identity which remains well aligned with our ancient past and glory. In the last ten years, our diplomacy

has invested its intellectual energy and political strength embracing the importance of our civilizational identity. And this identity is well shaped by the values and culture of the glorious Hindu past. Against the backdrop of coalition partners, it would be interesting to see if this question of civilizational identity has to emulate any sub-national diplomacy chore given the TDP's role in the Government and its style of politics and pride in Telugu identity. For the BJP and Narendra Modi, the call for a resurgent India is well shaped and defined by our core and united civilizational identity. Secondly, the role of foreign policy will be critical in Modi 3 in terms of building political alliances and economic part-



nerships, that may well align with our major policy goals as we drive towards 'building Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047. Diplomacy is crucial for achieving Government goals in the global world. Market reforms, free trade agreements, digital infrastructure upgrades and energy security are essential for our economic resilience

and global relevance. Thirdly, it would be interesting to see India's diplomatic manoeuvring and great power engagements as we keep pushing for a multipolar world order. India's relationship with the United States is likely to deepen further, shaped by strategic convergence between both on concerns over China's assertiveness and developments in the Indo-Pacific region. Modi 3 will focus on strong India-US ties, people-to-people connections, business, science/tech and strategic cooperation. India will assert national interests confidently, as seen with Ukraine and Doklam. Emphasising 'neighbourhood policy', India seeks to improve regional connectivity and trade, shown by its \$4

billion aid to Sri Lanka during the 2022 crisis. Leaders from neighbouring countries are invited to the NDA Government's oath ceremony, underscoring regional partnerships despite challenges. Lastly, managing relations with China is not going to be an easy cakewalk for foreign policy under Modi 3. BJP's election manifesto very clearly pledged to "accelerate the development of robust infrastructure" along the two countries' border. Amidst the growing trust deficit, India fully recognises the potential threat of aggressive and resurgent China. The electoral campaign also witnessed the use of a 'China card' by the opposition against the BJP. How diplomacy comes out of this pause in bilateral

relations will be an enquiring concern under the new Government. We need to find a new equilibrium in its ties with China while building our defence capabilities and strengthening strategic with like-minded States. In the given scenario, diplomacy under Modi 3 is poised for continuity and comprehensive foreign policy reforms, strengthening strategic alliances and India's leading role in the Global South. Moreover, India's role in global politics is set to expand and evolve, as India strives to be a pivotal player on the world stage. (The author is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Delhi; his views are personal)

Putin pledges truce if Ukraine exits occupied areas, drops NATO bid

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin promised Friday to “immediately” order a cease-fire in Ukraine and begin negotiations if Kyiv started withdrawing troops from the four regions annexed by Moscow in 2022 and renounced plans to join NATO. Such a deal appears a nonstarter for Kyiv, which wants to join the military alliance and has demanded that Russia withdraw its troops from all of its territory. There was no immediate comment from Ukraine on Putin’s proposal. “We will do it immediately,” Putin said

in a speech at the Russian Foreign Ministry in Moscow. His remarks came as leaders of the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations met in Italy and as Switzerland prepared to host scores of world leaders — but not from Moscow — this weekend to try to map out first steps toward peace in Ukraine. Putin said his proposal is aimed at a “final resolution” of the conflict in Ukraine rather than “freezing it,” and stressed that the Kremlin is “ready to start negotiations without delay.” Broader demands for peace that the Russian leader listed included Ukraine’s non-nuclear status, restrictions on its

military force and protecting the interests of the Russian-speaking population in the country. All of these should become part of “fundamental international agreements,” and all Western sanctions against Russia should be lifted, Putin said. “We’re urging to turn this tragic page of history and to begin restoring, step-by-step, restore the unity between Russia and Ukraine and in Europe in general,” he said. Putin’s remarks represented a rare occasion in which he clearly laid out his conditions for ending the war in Ukraine, but it didn’t include any new demands. The Kremlin has said before

that Kyiv should recognise its territorial gains and drop its bid to join NATO. Russia doesn’t fully control neither of the four regions it illegally annexed in 2022, but Putin insisted Friday that Kyiv should withdraw from them entirely and essentially cede them to Moscow within their administrative borders. In Zaporizhzhia in the south-east, Russia still doesn’t control the region’s namesake administrative capital of 700,000 people, and in the neighbouring Kherson region, Moscow withdrew from Kherson’s biggest city and capital of the same name in November 2022.

G7 leaders tackle issue of migration

AP ■ BARI (ITALY)

Leaders of the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations are turning their attention to migration on the second day of their summit Friday, seeking ways to combat trafficking and increase investment in countries from where migrants start out on often life-threatening journeys. The gathering in a luxury resort in Italy’s southern Puglia region is also discussing other major topics, such as financial support for Ukraine, the war in Gaza, artificial intelligence and climate change, as well as China’s industrial policy and economic security. But some divisions also appeared to emerge over the wording of the summit’s final declaration, with disagreement reported over the inclusion of a reference to abortion. Migration is of particular interest to summit host Italy, which lies on one of the major routes into the European Union for people fleeing war and poverty in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Right-wing Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, known for her hard-line stance on the issue, has been keen to increase investment and funding for African nations as a means of reducing migratory pressure on Europe. Italy “wanted to dedicate ample space to another continent that is fundamental to the future of all of us, which is Africa, with its difficulties, its opportunities,” Meloni said at the summit opening Thursday. “Linked to Africa, and not only to Africa, there is another fundamental issue that Italy has placed at the center of the

presidency, which is the issue of migration, the increasingly worrying role that trafficking organizations are assuming, clearly exploiting the desperation of human beings,” she said. Meloni has a controversial five-year deal with neighboring Albania for the Balkan country to host thousands of asylum-seekers while Italy processes their claims. She has also spearheaded the “Mattei Plan” for Africa, a continentwide strategy to increase economic opportunities at home and so discourage migration to Europe. More than 22,000 people have arrived in Italy by sea so far in 2024, according to UNHCR figures. In 2023, more than 157,000 arrived, and nearly 2,000 died or went missing while attempting the perilous Mediterranean crossing. The United States has also been struggling with a growing number of migrants at its southern border. President Joe Biden introduced new policies to curb migration after a bill he tried to get through Congress failed to pass. However, immigrant rights advocates filed lawsuits on Thursday over the new policies, and it is unclear whether they will be able to withstand the legal challenges in the US courts. Tackling migration “is a common challenge,” European Council President Charles Michel said after arriving at the summit. “This is the route that we intend, together with our partners, to put in place: this coalition to fight against the smugglers, these criminal groups which are abusing (vulnerable

people) to make money and to destabilize regions and countries across the world,” he added. Apart from the G7 nations of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the U.S., the Italian hosts have also invited several African leaders — Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, Kenyan President William Ruto and Tunisian President Kais Saied — to press Meloni’s migration and development initiatives. Pope Francis will also become the first pontiff to address a G7 summit when he delivers a speech on artificial intelligence Friday. Other invitees include Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The summit opened Thursday with a strong show of support for Kyiv: an agreement reached on a U.S. proposal to back a \$50 billion loan to Ukraine using frozen Russian assets as collateral. Biden also signed a bilateral security agreement with Zelenskyy on Thursday evening, aiming to send a signal to Russia of American resolve in supporting Kyiv. Describing it as a “truly historic day,” Zelenskyy said the agreement was “on security and thus on the protection of human life.” But some cracks appeared among the G7 leaders, with French President Emmanuel Macron deploring a lack of reference to abortion in the draft of the summit’s final document.

Explosions in Swiss garage leave 2 dead

AP ■ BERLIN

Two people have been found dead after explosions in an underground parking garage at an apartment building in northern Switzerland and 11 others sustained minor injuries, authorities said Friday. Swiss media reported that the explosions created a large cloud of smoke that was visible from afar and the explosions were heard from well outside the town. Police said that the fire at one point spread to several floors of the building. Several buildings were evacuated. The explosions rocked the Nussbaumen neighbourhood of the small town of Obersiggenthal, northwest of Zurich, at about 7 pm Thursday. Police in Aargau canton (state) said they appeared to have been caused by an accident, but didn’t give more details.



US President Joe Biden and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, right, meet for bilateral talks at the G7 on Friday in Borgo Egnazia, near Bari, southern Italy. AP/PTI

Kuwait building blaze caused by electrical short circuit

PTI ■ DUBAI/KUWAIT CITY

The death toll of Indians killed in the massive fire in Kuwait has risen to 46 with one more person succumbing to injuries as authorities said that an electrical short circuit in the room of the guard on the ground floor of the building caused the blaze that killed 50 people. Most deaths were due to smoke inhalation while residents in the six-storey building were sleeping when the fire broke out early Wednesday in Kuwait’s southern Ahmadi Governorate. The building was home to 196 migrant workers, mostly Indians. “One of the injured died” overnight, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya told reporters, raising the death toll of Indians to 46. Three other deceased are Filipinos and the identity of one of the victims has not been established, the Kuwait Times newspaper reported on Friday. The investigation team of the fire department said on Thursday that the fire was caused by an electric short circuit in the room of the build-

ing guard and spread to other places. The guard’s room is located on the ground floor. Citing security sources, the paper said that there were 179 workers inside the building when the fire broke out, while 17 were outside. Of the 196 residents, 175 are Indians, 11 are Filipinos and the rest are from Thailand, Pakistan and Egypt. According to an official, many of the victims suffocated while trying to run down the stairs because they were filled with smoke. He added that the victims could not go to the rooftop because the door was locked. The Accident Investigation Department’s teams concluded their technical inspections, which included analyzing samples of fire debris and conducting interviews with witnesses present during the incident, English language daily Arab Times reported, citing a press statement. Their investigation determined that the fire originated in the security guard’s room located on the ground floor of the six-storey building, the paper said. The specialists from the Investigations Department

meticulously examined the site to ascertain the exact cause of the fire. Their findings unequivocally pointed to an electrical short circuit as the root cause, the statement said. This discovery underscores the importance of adhering to electrical safety protocols to prevent such tragic incidents in the future, it added. Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah, serving as the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defence, on Thursday headed an overall inspection campaign on illegal properties in many areas in Kuwait. The minister, accompanied by the Minister of Public Works and Minister of Municipality Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan began their inspection campaign in Al-Mangaf, Al-Mahboubah, Khaitan, and Jileeb Al-Shuyoukh, the paper said. The Interior Ministry, Kuwait Municipality, Kuwait Fire Force, Ministry of Electricity and Water and the Public Authority for Manpower took part in the campaign. Kuwait Municipality said on Thursday its teams had shut

down 568 irregular basements of residential and commercial buildings in the past ten months. The personnel issued 1,639 citations and “blocked” 596 properties. Moreover, up to 189 basements packed with various unlicensed items had been evacuated. Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti citizen and several foreigners have been arrested in connection with charges of manslaughter and causing injuries due to negligence in security and safety measures following the fire incident. “The Public Prosecution has mandated the provisional detention of a Kuwaiti citizen and several expats in connection with charges of manslaughter and causing injuries due to negligence in security and safety measures, following a fire incident in the Al-Mangaf area,” the paper reported. Kuwait’s public prosecutor has launched an investigation into the incident. The probe aims to uncover the circumstances behind the incident and what might have triggered the deadly fire, the public prosecutor said on X.

South Africa’s Parliament is choosing president in a vote with unprecedented uncertainty

AP ■ CAPE TOWN

For the first time in 30 years, South African lawmakers will elect a president on Friday with the outcome not a mere formality. Cyril Ramaphosa is seeking a second term as leader of Africa’s most industrialised economy but his African National Congress party has been weakened after losing its long-held majority in an election last month and he will need the support of other parties if he is to return as president. The ANC is hoping that a general coalition agreement with others — particularly the main opposition Democratic Alliance — will hold and they will back Ramaphosa’s reelection. The ANC needs lawmakers from parties that were once its main political foes to now vote for Ramaphosa and continue the ANC’s three-decade hold on the presidency. The ANC announced late Thursday night that it had a coalition agreement in principle with the DA and other smaller parties, but ANC Secretary-General Fikile



South African president Cyril Ramaphosa raises his hand as he is sworn in as a member of Parliament ahead of an expected vote by lawmakers to decide if he is reelected as leader of the country in Cape Town, South Africa on Friday. At right is Pemmy Majodina, an ANC lawmaker. AP/PTI

Mbalula said the final details of the agreement were still being worked out. Crucially, he did not say there was an agreement among those coalition partners for their lawmakers to vote for Ramaphosa in Parliament, even if he said that’s what the ANC hoped would happen. The DA, the second largest party in Parliament behind the ANC and which has a potentially decisive number of lawmakers, said talks on the

exact details had continued through the night and into early Friday and there was no signed agreement just hours before Parliament was due to convene at 10 am local time. The 71-year-old Ramaphosa is expected to be reelected given no other candidate has been put forward, but the country was on a political knife-edge ahead of the first sitting of Parliament since the landmark May 29 election. He could

have a smooth passage to a second term if he is the only candidate nominated, in which case he would be elected automatically. But if other candidates are nominated by other parties, a vote follows. The ANC was also facing a deadline to cobble together a coalition agreement of some sort given Parliament must sit for the first time and vote for the president within 14 days of the election results being declared. The deadline is Sunday, and Parliament was sitting on Friday to meet that deadline. South Africa has not faced this level of political uncertainty since the ANC swept to power in the first all-race election in 1994 that ended nearly a half-century of white minority rule under the apartheid system of racial segregation. The ANC had held a clear majority in Parliament ever since then, meaning elections for president were formalities and every South African leader since has been from the ANC, starting with Nelson Mandela. Last month’s election changed that as the ANC’s share of the vote slumped to 40 per cent.

Muslims start Hajj against backdrop of destructive Israel-Hamas war

AP ■ MINA (SAUDI ARABIA)

In sweltering temperatures, Muslim pilgrims in Mecca converged on a vast tent camp in the desert on Friday, officially opening the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Ahead of their trip, they circled the cube-shaped Kaaba in the Grand Mosque, Islam’s holiest site. More than 1.5 million pilgrims from around the world have already amassed in and around Mecca for the Hajj, and the number was still growing as more pilgrims from inside Saudi Arabia joined. Saudi authorities expected the number of pilgrims to exceed 2 million this year. This year’s Hajj came against the backdrop of the raging war in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Palestinian militants, which pushed the entire Middle East to the brink of a regional war between Israel and its allies on one side and Iran-backed militant groups on the other. Palestinians in the coastal enclave of Gaza were not able to travel to Mecca for Hajj this year because of the closure of the Rafah crossing in May when Israel extended its

ground offensive to the strips southern city of Rafah on the border with Egypt. Palestinian authorities said 4,200 pilgrims from the occupied West Bank arrived in Mecca for Hajj. Saudi authorities said 1,000 more from the families of Palestinians killed or wounded in the war in Gaza also arrived to perform Hajj at the invitation of King Salman of Saudi Arabia. The 1,000 invitees were already outside Gaza — mostly in Egypt — before closure of the Rafah crossing. “We are deprived of (performing) Hajj because the crossing is closed, and because of the raging wars and destruction,” said Amna Abu Mutlaq, a 75-year-old Palestinian woman from Gaza’s southern city of Khan Younis who had planned to perform Hajj this year. “They (Israel) deprived us from everything.” This year’s Hajj also saw Syrian pilgrims travelling to Mecca on direct flights from Damascus for the first time in more than a decade. The move was part of an ongoing thaw in relations between Saudi Arabia and conflict-stricken Syria. Syrians in rebel-held areas used to cross



the border into neighbouring Turkey in their exhausting trip to Mecca for Hajj. “This is the natural thing: Pilgrims go to Hajj directly from their home countries,” said Abdel-Aziz al-Ashqar, a Syrian coordinator of the group

of pilgrims who left Damascus this year for Hajj. The pilgrimage is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and all Muslims are required to make the five-day Hajj at least once in their lives if they are physically and financially able to do

it. It is a moving spiritual experience for pilgrims who believe it absolves sins and brings them closer to God, while uniting the world’s more than 2 billion Muslims. It’s also a chance to pray for peace in

many conflict-stricken Arab and Muslim countries, including Yemen and Sudan, where more than a year of war between rival generals created the world’s largest displacement crisis. For many Muslims, the Hajj is the only major journey that they made in their life. Some spend years saving up money and waiting for a permit to embark on the journey in their 50s and 60s after they raised their children. The rituals during the Hajj largely commemorate the Quran’s accounts of Prophet Ibrahim, his son Prophet Ismail and Ismail’s mother Hajar — or Abraham and Ismael as they are named in the Bible. Male pilgrims wear an ihram, two unstitched sheets of white cloth that resemble a shroud, while women dress conservatively, loose-fitting clothing with headscarves, and forgo makeup and perfume. They have been doing the ritual circuit around the cube-shaped Kaaba, counter-clockwise in the seven-minaret Grand Mosque since arriving in Mecca over recent days. Saudi authorities have adopted security restrictions in and

around Mecca, with checkpoints set up on roads leading to the city to prevent those who don’t have Hajj permits from reaching the holy sites. Security authorities arrested many people who attempted to take pilgrims to Mecca who didn’t have Hajj permits, said Lt. Gen. Muhammad al-Bassami, head of Hajj Security Committee. Most of them were expelled from the country, while travel agents faced jail for up to six months, according to the Interior Ministry. On Friday, the pilgrims made their way to Mina, officially opening the Hajj. They then will move for a daylong vigil Saturday on Mount Arafat, a desert hill where the Prophet Muhammad is said to have delivered his final speech, known as the Farewell Sermon. Healthy pilgrims make the trip on foot, others use bus or train. The time of year when the Hajj takes place varies, given that Hajj is set for five days in the second week of Dhu al-Hijjah, the last month in the Islamic lunar calendar. Most of the Hajj rituals are held outdoors with little if any shade. When it falls in the sum-

mer months, temperatures can soar to over 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). The Health Ministry has cautioned that temperatures in the holy sites could reach 48 Celsius (118 Fahrenheit). Many pilgrims carried umbrellas against the burning sun. After Saturday’s warship in Arafat, pilgrims will travel a few kilometers (miles) to a site known as Muzdalifa to collect pebbles that they will use in the symbolic stoning of pillars representing the devil back in Mina. Pilgrims then return to Mina for three days, coinciding with the festive Eid al-Adha holiday, when financially able Muslims around the world slaughter livestock and distribute the meat to the poor. Afterwards, they return to Mecca for final circumambulation, known as Farewell Tawaf. In recent years, the annual pilgrimage has returned to its monumental scale after three years of heavy restrictions because of the coronavirus pandemic. Last year, more than 1.8 million pilgrims performed Hajj, approaching the 2019 level when more than 2.4 million pilgrims participated in the pilgrimage.

UN leaders, aid groups seek release of 17 staffers held by Yemen's rebels

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The heads of six UN agencies and three international humanitarian organisations issued a joint appeal Thursday to Yemen's Houthi rebels for the immediate release of 17 members of their staff who were recently detained along with many others also being held by the Iranian-backed group. Their appeal was echoed by a statement from several dozen nations and the European Union ahead of a UN Security Council meeting on Yemen where UN special envoy Hans Grundberg said the Houthis were holding all those detained in the crackdown incommunicado. The Houthis said Monday they had arrested members of an "American-Israeli spy network," days after detaining the staffers from the UN and aid organisations. Major General Abdulhakim al-Khaywani, head of the Houthis' intelligence agency, announced the arrests, saying the spy network had first operated out of the US Embassy in the capital Sanaa. After it was closed in 2015 following the

Houthi takeover of Sanaa and northern Yemen, he said, they continued "their subversive agenda under the cover of international and UN organisations." He did not say how many people were arrested. Houthi authorities issued what they purported to be videotaped confessions by 10 Yemenis, several of whom said they were recruited by the US Embassy. They did not include any of the UN employees who were arrested. The Houthis' claims could not be independently verified. The statement from the heads of the UN and aid organisations whose staffers are being held called their detentions "unprecedented — not only in Yemen but globally." They asked the Houthis to confirm the exact whereabouts of those detained and for immediate access, citing international humanitarian law which requires all parties to armed conflict to respect and protect humanitarian personnel. "The targeting of humanitarian, human rights, and develop-

ment workers in Yemen must stop," the joint statement said. "All those detained must be immediately released." The statement from UN member nations, read by British Ambassador Barbara Woodward outside the Security Council chamber, strongly condemned the detentions since June 7, demanded the release of all those being held, and expressed grave concern at the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The countries expressed deep concern at the risk of delivering humanitarian aid in Yemen, and called for unimpeded access for all humanitarian workers. The Houthis have been engaged in a civil war with Yemen's internationally recognized government, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, since 2014, when they took control of Sanaa and most of the north. Grundberg, the UN envoy who has been trying to get both sides back to the negotiating table to end the conflict, appealed not only for the release of the 13 recently detained U.N. personnel —

including one from his staff — but for four other U.N. staffers being held incommunicado — two since 2021 and two since 2023. "The United Nations is present to serve Yemenis," he told the Security Council. "Such arbitrary detentions are not the expected signal of an actor who is seeking a mediated solution to the conflict." The detentions came as the Houthis have been targeting shipping throughout the Red Sea corridor over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. At the same time, their administration has faced increased financial pressure, and the group has cracked down on dissent at home, including the recent sentencing of 45 people to death. Grundberg expressed concern at the 45 death sentences, reiterating the United Nations' opposition to the death penalty. It's unclear what exactly sparked the latest detentions. Former employees of the US Embassy in Sanaa, which shuttered in 2015, also have been detained and held by the Houthis.



People wade through a flooded road after storms overflowed the Pichilo River in Arauco province of Chile

AP/PTI

Chinese journalist who promoted #MeToo movement sentenced

AP ■ BEIJING

Supporters say a Chinese journalist who promoted women's rights as part of the country's nascent #MeToo movement has been sentenced to five years in prison on charges of incitement to subvert state authority, almost three years after she and an activist were detained. The verdict provided to The Associated Press stated that Huang Xueqin would also face a fine of 100,000 yuan (USD 14,000), underscoring the ruling Communist Party's intolerance of any activism outside its control in a system whose upper echelons are dominated by men. China's #MeToo movement flourished briefly before being snuffed out by the government. China often silences activists by holding them incommunicado for a long time and then sentencing them to prison. Huang's release date was listed as September 18, 2026, accounting for her earlier detention. Co-defendant Wang Jianbing was sentenced to three years and six

months on the same charge. Wang is more known for his labour rights activity but also helped women report sexual harassment. Huang and Wang's cases appear to have become intertwined as part of the most recent wave of a general crackdown on rights advocates, a trend that predates the #MeToo movement and includes previous incidents such as the 2015 detentions of women distributing pamphlets against sexual harassment on public transport. Working as a freelance journalist, Huang helped spark China's first #MeToo case in 2018 when she publicised allegations of sexual harassment made by a graduate student against her Ph.D. supervisor at one of China's most prestigious universities. Friends say that Huang and Wang disappeared on September 19, 2021, a day before Huang was scheduled to fly to the United Kingdom to start a master's degree program on gender violence and conflict at the University of Sussex.

They went on trial in September 2023. The International Women's Media Foundation earlier gave Huang its Wallis Annenberg Justice for Women Journalists Award. Supporters of Huang and Wang created a GitHub webpage to post case updates and share their thoughts. China is routinely listed by monitoring groups as among the top imprisoning nations of journalists. Amnesty International's China Director Sarah Brooks issued a statement condemning Huang's conviction as an attack on women's advocacy in the People's Republic of China, which has long promoted the concept that "women hold up half the sky," but whose institutions remain dominated by men. "These convictions will prolong their deeply unjust detention and have a further chilling effect on human rights and social advocacy in a country where activists face increasing state crackdowns," Brooks said in an emailed statement.

Niger's court lifts immunity of deposed Pres

AP ■ NIAMEY (NIGER)

Niger's highest court lifted the immunity of the country's democratically elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, nearly a year after he was overthrown by mutinous soldiers, his lawyer said Friday, opening the door for the military junta to prosecute him for alleged high treason. Bazoum's lawyer, Reed Brody, made the announcement on Friday. Bazoum and his family have been under house arrest since a military coup that overthrew his rule last summer. The junta authorities said they planned to prosecute him for "high treason" and for undermining national security, and earlier this year initiated legal proceedings to lift his immunity in a newly created State Court, which became the country's highest judicial authority. Before Bazoum was forcibly removed from power, Niger was the West's last major security partner in the Sahel, the vast region south of the Sahara Desert that Islamic extremist groups have turned into a global terror hot spot.

Putin ratifies plan to jointly build lunar base with China

PTI ■ BEIJING

Russian President Vladimir Putin has approved a plan to jointly build the International Lunar Research Station with China, an ambitious space project which was announced previously by the two close neighbours. The document connected with the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) was published on a Russian official legal information portal on Wednesday, Russia's state-run Sputnik news agency reported. The ILRS will consist of sec-

tions on the lunar surface, sections in lunar orbit and sections on Earth, and it will be built in two phases. Wu Weiren, chief designer of China's lunar exploration programme said in April this year. According to Wu, the first phase of the ILRS construction project will see a basic station built by 2035 in the lunar south pole region. The second phase will see the expansion of the station, set for completion by 2045, the official Xinhua news agency quoted Wu as saying. Some 12 more countries and

international organisations have signed on to the ambitious initiative, Sergey Savelyev, deputy general director for International Cooperation at the Russian state space agency Roscosmos said, according to a report in China's state-run Global Times. Earlier in March, the Russian government submitted to parliament's lower house a bill to ratify the agreement with China. The ratification comes days after the ascender of China's Change-6 probe took off from the lunar surface

carrying samples collected from the moon's far side earlier this month. This was the first endeavour of its kind to collect the soil from this rarely explored terrain and is currently on its way back to the earth with the samples. The Change-6 probe, comprising an orbiter, a lander, an ascender and a returner — like its predecessor Change-5 — was launched on May 3. During his visit to China last month, Putin spoke of 'very interesting' plans for joint moon exploration with China.

Pak PM invites former ally JUI-F chief to join ruling coalition

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has invited his former ally JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to become a part of the ruling coalition led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and play a role in resolving the political tensions in the country, according to a media report on Friday. Sharif, who is heading a coalition government supported by Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party and other smaller parties, visited the residence of the Chief Ulema-e-Islam (F) Jamiat, to enquire about his well-being on

Thursday, the Dawn newspaper reported. The 72-year-old premier also proposed the formation of a committee to address the prevailing political issues and asked Maulana Rehman to join the ruling coalition. Quoting a source in the PM Office, the newspaper said the JUI-F leader was asked to join the ruling alliance and play a role in a proposed committee to resolve political tension prevailing in the country. However, Maulana Rehman refused to join the government, a JUI-F spokesperson said. "I don't think it's true (that the JUI-F will join the government). Seeking power is not a

part of our politics. We already had a better offer before the formation of the present government," the spokesperson claimed. Maulana Rehman led an opposition alliance, namely the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government of Imran Khan. The PDM later formed a government at the Centre, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, after the ouster of Imran Khan's government in a vote of no-confidence in April 2022. The fissures within Pakistan's ruling coalition government have surfaced in recent days with the PPP, a key ally,

accusing the ruling PML-N of sidelining its inputs in the preparation of the annual budget and questioning if the Shehbaz Sharif-led government still values its support. The PPP expressed its reservations in its parliamentary committee meeting presided over by the party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Tuesday, ahead of the presentation of the budget for the financial year 2024-25 in Parliament. The PPP has blamed the PML-N government for not taking any inputs from the party while preparing the annual budget and wondered if it still wanted the ally's support.

PTI-picked negotiator willing to hold talks with Sharif, Zardari

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Mahmood Khan Achakzai, the chairman of the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), who was picked by Imran Khan's party to lead the negotiations with Pakistan's ruling coalition, on Friday expressed willingness to hold talks with PML-N president Nawaz Sharif and PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, according to a media report on Friday. Earlier this week, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of jailed former premier Khan picked Achakzai to lead the negotiations via the opposition alliance's platform Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Ayeen (TTAP), the Geo News reported. Achakzai, while speaking on a news programme, said Pakistan needs a "strong army" and clarified that his movement is not against the military. "We have raised the banner for the supremacy of democracy and the Constitution," he added. The 75-year-old, who also stood in the presidential elections in March as a candidate of the Sunni Ittehad Council against Asif Ali

Zardari, warned that if "Zardari and Nawaz Sharif do not join us, a time will come when they will not be able to step out of their homes". The PKMAP chief talked about the growing public frustration over the rising cost of living and said, "People are angry. They are facing trouble to make both ends meet." Achakzai enjoys the full authority from the PTI to lead the talks with the government which will reportedly centre around releasing incarcerated leaders and workers, electoral transparency, and the constitutional boundaries of the judiciary, parliament and other state institutions, Geo News reported. Earlier this week, PTI chairman Gohar Khan said Imran Khan has given a green signal for talks with the government and is "ready to forgive" what has happened to him. "We told the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder that dialogue is necessary, as the distance is widening. He agreed with us (on this)," Gohar told the media outside the Adiala jail in Rawalpindi.

Lahore HC Chief Justice rues 'interference' in judiciary

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani high court chief justice on Friday claimed that he received written and verbal complaints about interference in the judiciary by a "few institutions" of the country, in an oblique reference to the powerful spy agencies. Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad, while addressing a local bar association event in Rawalpindi, said it was a misfortune that the interference in judicial affairs began from the Moulvi Tamuzuddin case and was still ongoing. The judge was referring to the famous 1955 case when the top court ruled in favour of the then governor-general by rejecting a petition of the speaker of the Moulvi Tamuzuddin against the dissolution of the then Constituent Assembly by the governor-general. "We receive letters, complaints and oral complaints that interference is being done in the judi-

ciary in which a few institutions — naming them is not appropriate — are involved," the chief justice said. But he expressed confidence that the interference would soon come to an end. "I have full faith that this interference of the establishment in the judiciary will come to its end very soon," Justice Ahmad asserted. The chief justice explained that he was making the claims because it was "part of my faith but also includes my experience" that such interference finally ends. He also said that he was glad that the judiciary was "fulfilling its responsibilities without any fear or greed" and referred to a recent claim of a sessions judge of an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Sargodha about interference by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's intelligence agency. He said that the ATC judge in his complaint declared that he was not afraid of any of the incidents he allegedly faced.

Shareholders approve USD 44.9b pay pack for Musk

AP ■ DETROIT

Tesla shareholders voted on Thursday to restore CEO Elon Musk's record USD 44.9 billion pay package that was thrown out by a Delaware judge earlier this year, sending a strong vote of confidence in his leadership of the world's largest electric vehicle maker. The favourable vote doesn't necessarily mean that Musk will get the all-stock compensation anytime soon. The package is likely to remain tied up in the Delaware Chancery Court and Supreme Court for months as Tesla tries to overturn the Delaware judge's rejection. Musk has raised doubts about his future with Tesla this year, writing on X, the social media platform he owns, that he wanted a 25 per cent stake in the company in order to stop him from taking artificial intelligence development elsewhere. The higher stake is needed to control the use of AI, he has said. Tesla also has struggled with falling sales and profit margins as demand for electric vehicles slows worldwide. But at the company's annual meeting Thursday in Austin, Texas, Musk reassured shareholders that he will stick around, telling them he can't sell any stock in the compensation package for five years. "It's not actually cash, and I can't cut and run, nor would I want to," he said. The company said late Thursday that shareholders had voted for Musk's compensation plan, which initially was approved by the board and stockholders six years ago. Tesla last valued the package at USD 44.9 billion in an April regulatory filing. It was once as much as USD 56 billion but has declined in value in tandem with Tesla's stock, which has dropped about 25 per cent so far this year. Chancellor Kathleen St. Jude McCormick ruled in January in a shareholder's lawsuit that Musk essentially controlled the Tesla board when it ratified the package in 2018, and that it failed to fully inform shareholders who approved it the same year.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
e-Tender Call Notice
No.-MD/SP6/H/2/2022/639 Date:11/06/2024
Name of the work: Supply of 01 no. Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) (Drone) System for Paradip Port Authority including Installation, Commissioning, Certification, Test, Trial and Training for a period of five years (Comprehensive Warranty of 02 Years + Annual Maintenance Contract for 03 Years) including Buy Back. Estimated cost: Rs.1,36,15,000/- Plus GST. Last date & time of submission of tender through on-line bidding is 17:00 hours on 04/07/2024. Technical Bids shall be opened at 12:00 hours on 04/07/2024. For further details, please log on to the Website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.
Sd/- Deputy Conservator, Paradip Port Authority
PPA/PR/14/2024-2025 dtd.12.06.2024

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences
Sadiq Road, Faridkot -151203
Ph. 01639-256232, 256236

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 08.07.2024
1) Providing 04 nos. 4 Tr. Tower Indoor Unit with 2 numbers 10 HP VRV Cold/Hot AC units in Senate Hall of BFUHS, Faridkot 2) Extension of Committee Hall of Senate Block at both floors of BFUHS, Faridkot 3) Construction of 4 check post in GGS Medical Campus and fixing of aluminium partition in room No.102 at Baba Farid University of Health Sciences Faridkot 4) Repair & Painting of House No.71-A, 75 and 82, Painting & laying kota stone flooring in Multipurpose Hall of UCON and providing MS Gate, Missing etc. in washroom of NELS Building in GGS Medical College & Hospital, Faridkot 5) Providing flood lights & mission wiring, switches, fan and LED batten of NELS Centre and providing & installing of New electric LT Panel for CSSD department in GGS Medical College & Hospital, Faridkot
Terms and conditions can be downloaded from <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. The tenders will be accepted in E-Tender mode only. Bidder can also download tender notification and document from the University website i.e. www.bfuhs.ac.in
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nil/12/186/2023/34596 Dated CHD :- 6/14/2024

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Notice Inviting Tender www.verka.coop

e tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh a) Construction of 2 nd floor of Main store at Verka Mohali Dairy. b) Manual tender for hiring the service of Professional agency for registration of trademark in Canada & USA in Class 29.	Half yearly/ 69 Lac
2.	For Verka Chandigarh Dairy Supply, Installation and Commissioning of machinery & equipment for sweets manufacturing, at Verka Chandigarh Dairy as per our Terms & conditions and specification.	01 Set (as per BOQ-Scope of supply)
3.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy Hiring of- a) Diesel Cars (Swift Dzire or Equivalent) at Milk Union, Bathinda for Procurement and Marketing Section. b) Mahindra Pickup/Maxi Pickup/ Tata Ace/ etc. to lift the milk from various societies/ farms to Milk chilling Centre, Rampura, Bhikhi and Talwandi sabo on Annual Rate Contract Basis.	02 No's 06 No's
4.	For Verka Patiala Dairy Double Bucket Milking Machine.	50 Pcs
5.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy a) E-Tenders are invited for sale of the unserviceable material on annual rate contract basis. b) E-Tenders are invited for sale of the unserviceable material for one time sale basis. c) Supply, Installation and Commissioning of • GLC Machine • RP-HPLC Machine d) Transportation of LSHS/HPS (Heavy Petroleum Stock) from Panipat/ Mathura Refinery to Verka Ludhiana Dairy. e) Supply of printed laminated film for packing SMP in 500gm and 1kg. f) Supply of Food Grade Aluminium foil lids for dahimatka for 450gm/500gm, 5kg & 15kg. g) Supply of PVC Material for packing 8gm Table Butter. h) Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of- • Biogas Utilization System for Biogas Capacity 1000 M ³ day. • Lorry Weigh Bridge (Cap. 50 MT) including civil works. • Reciprocatory Ammonia Compressor at Milk Chilling Centre Bija & Raikot. i) Supply of Data Logger for BMC's. j) Hiring of insulated vehicles for supply of packed milk and fresh milk products in Ludhiana city and adjoining towns. k) Outsourcing of Verka Milk Bar at:- • Macchiwara. • Kamalpur. • Park Back Side Main Shopping Centre sector 32A, Chandigarh Road, Ludhiana.	Annual One Time basis One time purchase 01No. 01 No. Annual Annual Annual Half Yearly One time purchase One time purchase One time purchase /02No's One time purchase One year with extension up to one year Two year with extension up to one year -do-
6.	For Verka Amritsar Dairy Sealed Tenders for :- a) Outsourcing of Milk Bar at MCC Mehta and MCC Fatehgarh Churian. b) Allotment of Verka Milk Bar through Draw system at Civil Hospital Ajnala and Milk Booth at Primary Health Centre, Naushera Pannuan.	02 No's 02 No's
7.	For Verka CFP, Bhattian, Khanna a) Engaging of outsource agency for providing Unskilled/ Skilled/ Highly skilled & other man power. b) Labour job contract for different activities related with production, store & mktg. sections.	Annual Annual

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

NA/12/23432/2023/34609 **Dy. General Manager (Purchase)**

Sensex, Nifty hit fresh lifetime highs on buying in blue chips HDFC Bank, Reliance

PTI ■ MUMBAI
 Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty hit their new closing lifetime highs on Friday, following buying in market heavyweights HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and Mahindra & Mahindra amid encouraging export data. However, foreign capital outflows amid lack of fresh triggers capped sharp gains, traders said. Rising for the third straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 181.87 points or 0.24 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 76,992.77. During the day, it jumped 270.4 points or 0.35 per cent to 77,081.30. The NSE Nifty rallied 66.70 points or 0.29 per cent to hit a record closing high of 23,465.60. Intra-day, it rose 91.5 points or 0.39 per cent to hit a fresh all-time high of 23,490.40. On a weekly basis, the BSE benchmark climbed 299.41 points or 0.39 per cent, while the Nifty advanced 175.45



points or 0.75 per cent. "There is a temporary blip in the market momentum, due to a lack of fresh triggers after the hawkish commentary from the US Fed, lowering the plausibility of a rate cut in the short-term. A near-term consolidation seems probable as domestic investors await cues from the upcoming union budget," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. Among the 30 Sensex companies, Mahindra &

Mahindra, Titan, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank, Tata Motors and Asian Paints were the biggest gainers. On the other hand, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were among the major laggards. India's merchandise exports in May 2024 rose by 9 per cent to USD 38.13 billion, from USD 34.95 billion in the year-ago month, according to

government data released on Friday. Imports also increased by 7.7 per cent to USD 61.91 billion from USD 57.48 billion in May 2023. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.18 per cent, and smallcap index climbed 1.03 per cent. Among indices, industrials jumped 1.68 per cent, capital goods (1.62 per cent), telecommunication (1.31 per cent), auto (1.26 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.15 per cent) and realty (0.94 per cent). In contrast, IT and tech were the laggards. "Asian stocks were mixed on Friday as Japanese shares rose after the Bank of Japan surprised markets by signalling no near-term changes to its bond-buying programme, while Chinese markets were the worst performers for the day, hit by new European Union tariffs against the country's major electric vehicle makers," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities, said.

NSE chief cautions retail investors against derivatives trading

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National Stock Exchange (NSE) chief Ashishkumar Chauhan on Friday cautioned retail investors against trading in derivatives and suggested them to invest in equities through mutual fund route. He emphasised that trading in Futures & Options (F&O) derivatives should be limited to informed investors who can manage risk and comprehend the market. Recently, Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran flagged the growing risk of F&O trading for retail investors. In November 2023, Sebi chief Madhabi Puri Buch also cautioned investors against heavy bets on F&O. "Retail investors should not participate in F&O trading. They should invest in equities through mutual fund route," Chauhan, MD and CEO of NSE, said at an event here. He cautioned that while derivatives have their utility, it should only be traded by those



who fully understand the risks and have the capacity to manage them. Those lacking this understanding or risk appetite should avoid derivatives trading. Despite this, F&O trading continues to grow in popularity, driven by the potential for profit and the rising trading volumes. The segment's popularity is evident from its massive growth, with the monthly turnover in the F&O segment reaching Rs 8,740 lakh crore in

March 2024, compared to Rs 217 lakh crore in March 2019. At the same time, the average daily turnover in the equity cash segment was Rs 1 lakh crore, while the F&O segment saw an average daily turnover of about Rs 330 lakh crore. F&O trading involves contracts that derive their value from an underlying asset, such as stocks or commodities. Futures contracts obligate the buyer and seller to transact at a predetermined future date and price, while options give the holder the right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell the asset at a set price within a specific period. These financial instruments are used for hedging risks, speculating on price movements, and arbitrage price differences. However, they come with significant risks, including leverage risk and market volatility, which can lead to substantial losses. F&O trading is largely being utilized as a speculative tool for quick profits in the stock market. However, the reality is that most retail investors are losing money. A study by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) revealed that 89 per cent of individual traders in the equity F&O segment suffered losses, with average losses of Rs 1.1 lakh in FY22. Additionally, there was an exponential increase in the F&O segment participation during the pandemic, with the total number of unique individual traders increasing from 7.1 lakh in FY19 to 45.24 lakh in FY21, the study noted. Earlier this month, Sebi proposed stricter norms for the entry of individual stocks in the derivatives segment. The new proposal is aimed at weeding out stocks with consistently low turnover from the F&O segment of the bourses. Moreover, Chauhan noted the growing participation of retail investors in the stock market. Asked about the much-awaited NSE IPO, he declined to comment on the matter. On the wishlist for the upcoming Union Budget, he said that Budget should be growth-oriented.

Sebi bats for tax benefits to firms investing in zero coupon zero principal bonds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To encourage social sector spending, markets regulator Sebi has suggested that the government should allow tax benefits to companies investing in zero coupon zero principal bonds issued by not-for-profit organisations listed at the social stock exchange. Talking to reporters here on Friday, Sebi's Whole Time Member Kamlesh Chandra Varshney said the regulator has already sent a proposal to the finance ministry and is hopeful of getting the approval. "We have given the proposal to the government that corporate entities who invest in ZCZPs should get the benefits of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). We are hopeful that the government will soon approve the proposal," Varshney said at an event organised by NSE on Friday. Moreover, the CBDT has already clarified that investors or donors buying such bonds will get the tax benefits under section 80G of Income Tax rules, he added. These measures will be pertinent towards inclusive growth of the social sector and will help build trust and



expand the donor base for the organisations, he said. The 'zero-coupon, zero-principal' are instruments for donating money to non-profit organisations listed on the SSE. The Social Stock Exchange (SSE) is a novel concept in India and such a bourse is meant to serve private and non-profit sector providers by channelling greater capital to them. The idea was floated by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Union Budget 2019-20 speech. SSE is a separate segment of the existing stock exchanges that bring together social enterprises and donors, facilitates funding and growth of social enterprises and enables mechanisms to ensure robust standards of social

impact and financial reporting. At present, 8-9 NPOs are listed on the SSE with a collective fundraising of close to Rs 11 crore and now one NPO is soon going to raise Rs 14 crore alone through the platform, NSE MD and CEO Ashishkumar Chauhan said here. "We believe that SSE has a great future ahead in India as the government is committed to supporting the platform, as this will help in the democratisation of investments," he said. Moreover, Sebi has been taking measures to widen the participation of subscribers at the social stock exchange. In November, the regulator reduced the issue size of ZCZP from Rs 1 crore to Rs 50 lakh. It has also reduced the minimum application size for donors to Rs 10,000 from Rs 2 lakh. Last month, Sebi asked social enterprises, which have registered or mobilised funds through SSE, to submit an 'annual impact report' for the financial year 2023-24 to such bourse by October-end. The annual impact report to SSE captures the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the social impact generated by the social enterprise.

Rupee falls 2 paise to close at 83.56 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled 2 paise lower at 83.56 (provisional) against US dollar on Friday, as positive domestic markets and a decline in crude oil prices supported the rupee, while strong US Dollar and FII outflows capped sharp gains. Forex traders said rupee was seen resilient against the dollar, on hawkish Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting and commentary by the Fed Chair. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.54 and finally settled for the day lower by 2 paise at 83.56 (provisional) against the American currency. On Thursday, the rupee settled for the day lower by 6 paise at 83.54 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on the strong US Dollar and weak global markets. However, a positive tone in the domestic markets and expectations of fresh foreign inflows may support the



rupee at lower levels," Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas — said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 105.61, higher by 0.40 per cent. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.12 per cent to USD 82.65 per barrel. On the domestic macroeconomic front, India's merchandise exports in May 2024 rose 9 per cent to USD 38.13 billion, and imports too increased 7.7 per cent to USD 61.91 billion, from USD 57.48

billion in May 2023, according to government data released on Friday. Trade deficit, or the gap between imports and exports, during the month under review stood at USD 23.78 billion. Meanwhile, the wholesale inflation rose for the third consecutive month in May at 2.61 per cent on account of rise in prices of food articles, especially vegetables, and manufactured items. On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 181.87 points, or 0.24 per cent, to close at a new peak of 76,992.77 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 66.70 points, or 0.29 per cent, higher to close at all-time high of 23,465.60 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 3,033.00 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, Moody's Ratings on Thursday said India will remain the Asia-Pacific region's fastest-growing economy in 2024, sustaining last year's domestically-driven momentum.

Hyundai may file draft IPO papers with Sebi to raise about ₹25,000 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

South Korean automaker Hyundai's Indian arm is likely to file preliminary papers with Sebi shortly to raise at least USD 3 billion (around Rs 25,000 crore) through an initial public offering, sources close to the development said on Friday. The company's initial public offering (IPO), if it goes through, would be the largest in India, surpassing LIC's share sale of Rs 21,000 crore. This development marks a significant milestone for the Indian industry, as it is the first automaker to go for an initial share sale in over two decades, after Japanese automaker Maruti Suzuki's listing in 2003. Earlier this week, electric two-wheeler company Ola Electric received capital markets regulator Sebi's clearance to raise funds through an IPO. Under the proposed IPO, Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL), which is the second largest carmaker in India after Maruti Suzuki India, may dilute 15-20 per cent stake to raise funds in the range of USD 3.3-5.6 billion, sources said. They said the company is likely to file its papers with the regulatory body Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) soon. When contacted over the issue, HMIL company declined to comment. HMIL commenced operations in India in 1996 and currently, sells 13 models across segments. HMIL reported a 7 per cent year-on-year increase in total sales at 63,551 units in May 2024 against 59,601 units in the corresponding month last year. Domestic dispatch of vehicles to dealers saw a 1 per cent rise to 49,151 units last month from 48,601 units in the year-ago period. Exports of the vehicles grew 31 per cent in May to 14,400 units compared to 11,000 units a year ago.

Union Minister Kishan Reddy holds first review meeting of coal, mines ministries

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy has reviewed both the coal and mines ministries after taking charge. "Held a detailed review meeting of the Ministry of Mines (@MinesMinIndia) in New Delhi," he said on Friday in a post on X (formerly known as twitter). Reddy on Thursday took charge as coal and mines minister and said that India should increase domestic production of the fossil-fuel and reduce coal imports. The minister of state for coal and mines Satish Chandra Dubey and other officials of the mines ministry were also present during the meeting. In another post, the minister



said, "Chaired 1st review meeting of the Ministry of Coal after taking charge in New Delhi." Reddy on Thursday told reporters that India should increase domestic coal production and reduce import of fossil fuel. India's coal import rose by 7.7 per

cent to 268.24 million tonnes (MT) in FY '24. Reddy further said 10 years ago there was a coal shortage in the country and due to this there was also a shortage of electricity. But in the last 10 years there has been sufficient power availability. When asked what will be the

priority of his government for the mines sector, he had said "I have just taken charge and I will review the department... First I want to see my officers then only I can say something. I want to review first." In order to strengthen India, both the coal ministry and the mines ministry will be at the forefront, he had said, and added in the coming five years, "we will work with determination, dedication, discipline and devotion. Both the ministries, he said, will work as a team. Reddy retained the Secunderabad Lok Sabha constituency with a margin of over 49,000 votes in the recent Lok Sabha polls, defeating his nearest Congress rival Danam

Nagender. Born to middle-class farmer-parents in Ranga Reddy district of Telangana near Hyderabad, he started his political career as an ordinary worker in 1977. He has held important party positions, including the president of the BJP's state unit and national president of BJP's Yuva Morcha (BJYM). As the Union Minister, the leader has held the portfolios of home, tourism, culture and development of the northeast region. He is also a three-time MLA. Satish Chandra Dubey, who is considered a strong Brahmin leader of the BJP in Bihar, also took the charge as the Minister of State for Coal and Mines Ministries.

Prices of tur, chana, urad dals likely to soften from July on good monsoon, higher imports: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prices of tur, chana and urad dals are likely to soften from next month helped by expectations of a good monsoon and increased imports, Union Consumers Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare said on Friday, stressing there is no need for panic. Imports of these three pulses will also increase from next month, she said adding this would help augment domestic supply. "Prices of tur, chana and urad dals have been stable in the last six months but at a high level. The price situation in moong and masoor dals is comfortable," Khare told reporters here. On June 13, the average retail price of chana dal was Rs 87.74 per kg, tur (arhar) Rs

160.75 per kg, urad Rs 126.67 per kg, moong Rs 118.9 per kg and masoor Rs 94.34 per kg. The consumer affairs department collects retail prices from 550 major consuming centres. "From July onwards, prices of tur, urad and chana are likely to soften," Khare said. The secretary noted that weather office has forecast normal monsoon rains. "We are expecting good monsoon, more than average rainfall. We expect area under pulses to improve significantly. Farmers will put more area under crops considering high market prices. Market sentiments will also improve," she said, adding that the government is making efforts to provide better seeds to farmers. Khare asserted that the

government would take all necessary measures to boost domestic availability and keep retail prices under check. She highlighted that the government's scheme to sell Bharat chana dal at Rs 60 per kg is providing relief to the common man. "We are not leaving any stone unturned to boost domestic availability," she emphasised. India imported nearly 8 lakh tonne of tur and 6 lakh tonne of urad in the last financial year. Myanmar and African countries are major exporters to India. The secretary said her department is in constant touch with global suppliers to boost imports as well as domestic retailers, wholesalers and big retail chains to ensure there is no hoardings.

Biden Admin urged to take urgent action to protect over 250K Documented Dreamers

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A bipartisan group of 43 lawmakers has urged the Biden administration to take urgent action to protect more than 250,000 Documented Dreamers, a significantly large number of whom are Indians, who will be forced to self-deport after ageing out of the temporary legal status derived through their parents' visas. Documented Dreamers are foreign nationals who entered the United States as dependents under their

parents' temporary, nonimmigrant visa status, usually a work visa. Despite growing up in the US with legal status, children of long-term visa holders age out of their dependent status when they turn 21 and are often left with no choice but to leave the United States if they cannot transition to a new status, the lawmakers said in a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Ur M Jaddou.



"This is because, in part, their families' adjustment of status applications face extensive backlogs, preventing them from securing permanent resident status," the letter said. The campaign was led by Senator Alex Padilla, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety, and Representative Deborah Ross, who have introduced a bipartisan legislative push to protect over 250,000 Documented Dreamers

through America's CHILDREN Act. "These young people grow up in the United States, complete their education in the American school system, and graduate with degrees from American institutions," wrote the lawmakers. "However, due to the long green-card backlog, families with approved immigrant petitions are often stuck waiting decades for permanent resident status." "While we continue to pursue legislative solutions to permanently protect these

individuals, such as the bipartisan and bicameral America's Children Act of 2023, we urge you to take administrative action to protect the thousands of children who may be forced to self-deport each year," continued the lawmakers. Specifically, the lawmakers made three recommendations to help address the ongoing threats Documented Dreamers face. This includes clarifying the use of deferred action on a case-by-case basis, where discretion is warranted, for

children of long-term visa holders who age out of status; and expanding eligibility for Employment Authorization to child dependents of visa holders and those with approved I-140 petitions (for a noncitizen worker to become a permanent resident in the United States). It also called for creating a process to allow long-term visa holders who age out to seek parole, on a case-by-case basis, if warranted for urgent humanitarian reasons or to advance a significant public benefit.

Euro 2024: Home fans anxious to see if Germany can fire up in opener

AP ■ MUNICH

The sound of bagpipes, and men in kilts on the streets of Munich - Scotland is in town and the excitement is ramping up ahead of the European Championship curtain-raiser on Friday.

Host nation Germany plays Scotland at Allianz Arena in the opener of the monthlong tournament.

The final is in Berlin on July 14 and Germany is even keener to get there after three straight fiascos at major tournaments that has forced its fans to readjust their expectations of the men's national team.

"We are not here just to say hello but we still have to be humble," Germany defender Antonio Rüdiger said. "We don't have to talk about past tournaments, we all know what happened there. It's been up and down for us all the way here and that's why we have to be humble. The first match is very important and then we'll see what happens during the rest of the tournament."

A good first match and group stage would set off a new wave

of excitement in Germany, even though scenes similar to when it brilliantly hosted the 2006 World Cup (and reached the semifinals) are hard to imagine in a changed political landscape.

While the Scots are out in droves in Munich, proudly wearing their team jerseys (many combined with kilts), there is hardly a sighting of a Germany shirt or flag. Political extremists are flourishing, anxiety pervades the country, and the national team has under-performed. It is understandable the home fans are going about their daily life in contrast to the partying visitors.

The anticipation might still be simmering but Germany captain Ilkay Gündogan believes a convincing start could change the picture.

"I think the atmosphere will be positive but then they will look at how we're playing, how much will we'll show. So we have to then pass it on to the fans," he said on the eve of the match. "At the end no one remembers how you won a game, they just remember that you won."

"No other game is like the first one because after that you can



use the momentum, use the euphoria for the next few games. That's why the most important objective is to win the game."

While the Germans are bemused by their raucous Scottish counterparts, there should still be plenty of more colors on matchday. And plenty of pressure on the home nation which is the clear favorite.

"We are the team with a little more pressure, and they will certainly want to take advantage of that," Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann said on Thursday. "We can beat the pressure and we can beat

Scotland."

Germany went out at the group stage of both previous World Cups and was eliminated by England in the round of 16 at Euro 2020. But defeat to Scotland would be a shock, even though the Scots have improved significantly in recent years.

"It's going to be an amazing experience ... being part of that kind of opening ceremony," Scotland forward Ryan Christie said when asked about playing the opening match.

"Germany, an amazing team. All the international teams go through peaks and drops in form. But when these big tournaments come up, the big teams normally show up most of the time. So it will be a really tough game."

Hungary and Switzerland are also in Group A.

Having failed to reach the Euros from 2000-16, Scotland has qualified for back-to-back tournaments and the next aim is to reach the knockout stage for the first time.

"Qualifying for the first Euros was massive for us, and then to get two in a row was incredible. But now we want to compete ... we don't want

to have any regrets this time," Scotland captain Andy Robertson said on Thursday. "What's the worst that can happen? We go into a long list of (Scotland) teams that have failed to make it out of the group. And that's the worst that can happen. So let's start from that point and move on from it. And we believe that we can be the team that can create history."

Scotland showed during the qualifying campaign it can surprise, in beating Spain and Norway.

However, Scotland has won only one of its last 13 matches against Germany and that was more than 25 years ago, 1-0 in a friendly in April 1999.

Plus, Germany has another, rather more unusual motivation to win the trophy on its own turf.

Deniz Undav has said he will shave the head of fellow Germany forward Thomas Müller if the team becomes European champion.

"Thomas Müller bald? Then we have to do everything we can to make this happen. I don't think he will look so beautiful with a shaved head," defender Rüdiger said with a laugh.



HI begins registration process for revived league

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hockey India on Friday said it has started the registration process for its flagship national league, which is set to be revived after a gap of eight years and will feature both the men's and women's teams.

The Hockey India League (HIL) will feature eight men's and six women's teams and the registration deadline for it is June 30. HI has also invited applications for players and support staff to register their interest in featuring in the league, which is set to run between December 2024 and February 2025.

The window has been approved by the International Hockey Federation (FIH).

"This step signifies that we are close to restarting the HIL, a league that was loved by hockey players and fans across the world," HI President Dilip Tirkey said in a media release.

"We are confident that budding Indian hockey players will snatch the opportunity to play

with and against some of the best players in the world."

The HIL was first started in 2013, and its last edition was played in 2017, won by Kalinga Lancers. All five editions were won by five different sides.

Ranchi has won two titles. The inaugural edition was won by Ranchi Rhinos before the franchise was discontinued.

Later, a new Ranchi franchise was created -- Ranchi Rays -- owned by the legendary Indian cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni, which won in its debut season in 2015.

Commenting on the upcoming revamped new season, HI Secretary General Bhola Nath Singh stated, "The HIL played a pivotal role in the resurgence of the Indian Hockey Teams, and it is a matter of great joy and pride that we are on the verge of restarting it."

"The league will help improve the standard of young players and propagate a culture of hockey across the nation. We look forward to receiving heaps of applications from India and abroad," he added.

Street in The Hague gets all encompassing orange facelift for Euro 2024

AP ■ THE HAGUE (NETHERLANDS)

The fluttering of 64 kilometres (40 miles) of orange bunting and a hammer driving a nail into a wall to hold up orange tarps are the sounds of a Dutch summer of soccer in a normally drab suburban street in The Hague.

The Marktweg is one of several streets in the Netherlands that get an all-encompassing orange facelift during European Championships and World Cups when the national team - known as Oranje after the Dutch royal family and the colour of their shirts - are looking to add to the Euro it won 36 years ago.

For two months leading up to Euro 2024, which starts on Friday in Germany, a dedicated team of up to 10 volunteers - more at the weekends - has been decorating their street, creating not just an orange overload, but also a sense of

community.

Houses are plastered with orange tarps and banners, street lights and trees are wrapped in orange, garbage containers are - you guessed it - orange, while litter bins are red, white and blue, the equally patriotic colours of the Dutch flag.

Even a crew of municipal workers fits in, decked out in uniforms of orange high-visibility clothes.

Macho Vink, a 35-year-old truck driver, is on a cherry picker banging nails into houses' walls to secure tarps covering the entire street.

"It's time for a big party," he said. "Get some positivity back," he added as the driver of a passing car tooted his horn and gave a thumbs up.

The decorations appeared in the street for the first time during Euro 1988 - where the Netherlands won its only major soccer tournament - in West Germany.

Danny van Dijk, one of the driving



forces behind the decorations, said it's been getting bigger and better ever since, with sponsorship from local businesses now helping to foot

the bill.

"It started as a joke - hang a ball sprayed with text in a tree," Van Dijk told The Associated Press.

But, the ball idea quickly snowballed into arguably the orangest place on the planet. However, some other equally lavishly decorated Dutch streets also seek to claim that honour.

"The neighbours liked it, we liked it and now every two years we're up in the scaffolding and cherry pickers to decorate the street," Van Dijk said.

The decorations draw visitors to the street and allow neighbours to get to know one another.

"You meet other people, have a chat. The children like it, the people like it. It really brings people together," he added.

And, once the tournament ends for the Dutch team, Van Dijk is hoping this year it will be with captain Virgil van Dijk, who has no relation, lifting the trophy. The team of decorators gets back to work in the Marktweg.

"We wait for two or three days to recover from the hangover," he said.

Paris Olympics organisers say swimming events still set for cleaned up Seine after heavy rain

AP ■ LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND)

Despite the complication of recent heavy rain, swimming in the River Seine is still the plan at the Paris Olympics after a \$1.5 billion investment to improve the water quality. "No reasons to doubt," International Olympic Committee executive Christophe Dubi said Thursday at an online briefing after hearing from city officials and Summer Games organizers. "We are confident that we will swim in the Seine this summer."

Marathon swimmers and triathletes are scheduled to plunge into the cleaned-up waters after the Olympics open July 26.

French President Emmanuel Macron and Paris Mayor Anne

Hidalgo have promised to take a dip and show their citizens and visiting athletes all is well. Key to the cleaning up has been digging a huge reservoir next to Austerlitz train station to collect excess rainwater and prevent bacteria-laden waste entering the river.

Heavy rains that overwhelmed old sewers in Paris prevented some test events for the Olympics from taking place last August. Organizers also have not been lucky with the weather so far this summer.

Those downpours have complicated the issue, Dubi acknowledged, though said the update Thursday was "very reassuring."

In other Paris Olympics news - from 124 years ago - the IOC awarded France an extra medal Thursday from the 1900



Summer Games and took it from Britain.

The silver medal won by Lloyd Hildebrand in men's 25-kilometer cycling has now been credited to France because, the IOC executive board decided, "even though Hildebrand was a British citizen, he was born and

and Ankit Bhakat qualified as fifth seed in the Final Olympic Qualifiers here on Friday and now stands two victories away from securing quota for the Paris Games.

The Indian team aggregated 1978 points to finish behind leaders China (1996), second-placed Japan (1991), Spain (1990) and Chinese Taipei (1982) in the qualifying standings.

By qualifying as fifth seeds, India will start from the round of 16 in the 24-team draw against 21st seeds Ukraine and may have to overcome Chinese Taipei in the quarters to grab the Paris quota.

The semifinalists will land Paris Olympic quota places. The elimination rounds are slated later in the day.

India had an incredible

qualifying round, shooting 90 perfect scores of 10 and X (the closest to the centre arrow).

It was second behind the Taiwanese archers who shot 91 10+X scores. But it did not matter as they fell behind in the overall scores.

To put things in perspective, Chinese team had a share of 88, while Japan and Spain shot 89 and 76 10+X scores.

The 10+X shots are counted to determine the placings in case of a tie.

The men's team qualifying event will be held on Saturday and will see stiff competition among 46 teams for just three available quotas. More than 300 recurve archers from 80-plus nations are competing in the final qualifying event for the Paris Olympics, beginning on July 26.

Tank Davis makes long awaited return to ring to defend WBA lightweight title vs Martin

AP ■ LAS VEGAS

Even when others had the microphone at their news conference, Gervonta "Tank" Davis and Frank Martin couldn't help themselves.

They carried on a seemingly endless conversation Wednesday that ended only when Davis pretended to take a swing at Martin as they posed side by side for photos. Martin flinched and Davis left the podium laughing.

Whether Davis has the last laugh Saturday night will be determined when the undefeated fighters, both 29, face each other for Tank's WBA lightweight championship belt.

That bout highlights the 100th championship fight night at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, which has been replaced by T-Mobile Arena as Las Vegas' prime spot for combat sports. But the MGM has a rich history, and the co-main event will feature the interim WBC light heavyweight title fight between



David Benavidez and Oleksandr Gvozdyk. Davis (29-0, 27 KOs) hopes to create more MGM memories by putting on a show similar to the last time he was in a ring more than a year ago. He delivered a devastating left uppercut that floored Ryan Garcia for a seventh-round knockout in the April 22, 2023, fight at T-Mobile.

"I've been locked in for a long time now," Davis said. "My give-back is going to be a great performance on Saturday night." As Davis noted, the Baltimore native and resident

anyone's guess, but Tank make sure to play the familiar role of taunting his opponent.

"He's shaking up there," Davis said of Martin. "He was talking tough (Tuesday) when it was just him. It's going to show. He's a frontrunner."

"He's just worried about not getting knocked out. He's not worrying about winning," Martin, who lives in Indianapolis, has done nothing but win in building an 18-0 record with 12 knockouts. This is his first shot at a championship belt, though there were arguably better and more marketable opponents for Davis in Devin Haney and Shakur Stevenson.

Those fighters could still be waiting for Davis, but Martin can put a damper on such plans with an upset victory. Davis a -700 favorite at BetMGM Sportsbook, meaning a \$700 wager would pay \$100 if he wins.

"I appreciate Tank giving me the opportunity to whoop his (butt)," Martin said. "He just hasn't been in there with

anybody like me."

Unlike with Davis and Martin, Benavidez (28-0, 24 KOs) and Gvozdyk (20-1, 16 KOs) praised each other in the lead-up to their match, including at Thursday's news conference.

"I'm excited to face the best version of David Benavidez," said Gvozdyk, a Ukraine native who trains in Oxnard, California. "This is a great opportunity to face a tough fighter like David Benavidez. He's representing boxing really well. We're going to show everyone a great fight."

Gvozdyk, 37, is 10 years older than Benavidez. The younger fighter is moving up a weight class from super middleweight, so this could be quite a test for BetMGM.

"This is the easiest weight cut I've had in my life," said Benavidez, who lives in Las Vegas. "My speed, strength and endurance are all going to be better. I left no stone unturned for this training camp. I'm facing a great fighter and we've put together a great gameplan.

Chennayin FC sign Kiyan Nassiri from Mohun Bagan



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Former champions Chennayin FC on Friday announced the signing of rising Indian forward Kiyan Nassiri from Kolkata heavyweights Mohun Bagan.

Son of East Bengal great Jamshid Nassiri, the 23-year-old made his senior professional debut with the Mariners in 2019.

The youngster has signed a three-year contract keeping

him at the Chennai-based club until 2027, the club said.

"I am extremely excited and grateful to be a part of this amazing sea of blue. Bringing all my humility and respect for the management, coaches and fans."

"Looking forward to bringing with me, my endless passion for the beautiful game and my spirit to win with and for my team."

CFC head coach Owen Coyle added, "When you score a hat

trick on your debut against your biggest rivals, it says everything there is to be said. He's a great boy and we have no doubt he will quickly become a fan favourite."

Kiyan had begun his youth career with Calcutta Cricket and Football Club (CC&FC) and Mohammedan Sporting Club before moving to Mohun Bagan.

Since making his senior debut, Kiyan has scored nine goals in 69 appearances and had two assists.

He has won four titles to date, including the ISL Cup (2022-23) and the ISL League Shield (2023-24), besides also winning the I-League (2019-20) and the Durand Cup (2023).

Additionally, Kiyan also won the Mohun Bagan Best Forward Award in 2022.

He happens to be CFC's sixth signing of the season after Jitendra Singh (midfielder), Elsinho (defender), Laldinpuia (defender), Daniel Chima Chukwu (striker) and Wilmar Jordan (striker).

KOHLI'S FORM A BOTHERING POINT AS INDIA FACE CANADA AMID RAIN THREAT

PTI ■ LAUDERHILL (USA)

Star batter Virat Kohli's string of low scores would be a concern for India when they square off against Canada in their final group match of the T20 World Cup on Saturday, hoping that the sky remains clear in this city even as several parts of Florida are ravaged by torrential rain. With three consecutive wins, India are through to the Super Eight stage, which will be held entirely in the West Indies. Kohli came into the T20 World Cup after setting the IPL ablaze, scoring upwards of 700 runs at a strike-rate of over 150 for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Therefore, it wasn't an entirely misplaced expectation that he will continue to fire in the ICC showpiece, which is perhaps his final chance to earn India an ICC World Cup after 13 years. But three matches have gone by, and Kohli has five runs at an average of 1.66, including a 'Golden Duck' against the USA. His form has provided an interesting subplot to the game against tournament-debutants Canada, which is otherwise inconsequential, at least for India. Perhaps, an 1850km trip from New York to Florida might bring with it a turnaround in fortunes for Kohli,

who must be hurting after those ordinary outings. The pitch at the Broward County stadium might not be as spiteful as the one in New York, where the uneven bounce of the tracks and the slow nature of the outfield became bigger talking points than the cricket that was played. What would ease some pressure on him is the fact that the lean run has not really affected the team's fortunes. However, the premier batter's low scores, particularly since he is opening alongside skipper Rohit Sharma, has put some pressure on the subsequent batters to take the India board forward. Creditably, Rishabh Pant and Suryakumar Yadav have more than made up for Kohli. Pant made 36 and 42 against Ireland and Pakistan, good enough contributions for India to emerge victors. Suryakumar overcame a diffident start to the tournament just at the right time, making a crucial fifty against the USA. 'Spin Basher' Shivam Dube has been on a tailspin since his arrival in the US, but a laboured 31 off 35 balls against the co-hosts might just have fetched him another game ahead of the waiting Sanju Samson and Yashasvi Jaiswal. If India want to bring in Jaiswal,



then it has to be as an opener and Kohli will have to return to his No.3 slot. While India's batting might, just as other teams, has been neutralised by the drop-in pitches in New York, their bowling worked like a well-oiled machine on those very tracks.

The trio of Jasprit Bumrah (five wickets), Hardik Pandya (seven wickets), Arshdeep Singh (seven wickets) have not given anything to the rival batters. The performance of Pandya and Arshdeep would be particularly pleasing to the management. Both of them had a torrid time in the IPL on various counts and were heavily criticised. But here, they have put all that behind them to lead India's attack along with the ever-reliable Bumrah. The think-tank will also hope that at some stage Mohammed Siraj (one wicket) and Ravindra Jadeja, who is yet to pick up a wicket, will join their colleagues, even though both of them have not leaked runs. It can also help the bowling unit prepare ahead of the Super Eights in the Caribbean, where the pitches are expected to be more spin-friendly. On the other hand, Canada are a

bit green behind the ears but not short of determination, as they had manifested during their 12-run win over Ireland. Players such as opener Aaron Johnson can spring a surprise on their day. But stopping this superior quality Indian side on its tracks could be a task beyond the Canadians, who might be banking more on the predicted spell of disruptive rains for that. Lauderdale is about 50km from Miami, which has been battling flash floods caused by a tropical storm, a worrisome situation for the organisers of the showpiece who are hoping to make space for cricket in the American market. **SQUADS:** **India:** Rohit Sharma (c), Hardik Pandya, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Siraj. **Canada:** Saad Bin Zafar (c), Aaron Johnson, Dillon Heyliger, Dilpreet Bajwa, Rishiv Joshi, Jeremy Gordon, Junaid Siddiqui, Kalem Sana, Kanwarpal Tathgur (wk), Navneet Dhaliwal, Nicholas Kirton, Pargat Singh, Ravinderpal Singh, Rayankhan Pathan, Shreyas Movva (wk).

England eye dominant show to stay in Super 8 contention; ousted Kiwis search elusive win

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Defending champions England will be eager to brush aside Namibia ruthlessly here on Saturday and stay relevant in the race to the T20 World Cup Super Eight stage. England were living on the edge after a washout against Scotland and a loss against Australia, but the Jos Buttler-led side turned it around in style with an eight-wicket win over Oman. After bundling out Oman for 47, England raced past the target in just 3.1 overs, a record margin of 101 balls to spare. The result has also done wonders to England's net run rate (NRR), the crucial separating factor between them and Scotland in Group B. The Three Lions' NRR leapt from -1.8 to +3.08, going past Scotland's +2.16. However, Scotland have five points to England's three. Hence, the former two-time champions will need to defeat Namibia to go equal with Scotland and then hope that the latter will lose to Australia, who have already qualified for Super Eight. In that scenario, England will enter Super Eight with better NRR, but an upset win over Australia by Scotland or a washout at Gros Islet will eliminate Buttler and his wards. But skipper Buttler sounded confident after their massive win over Oman. "I've been around long enough to know how it works," Buttler said after their win over Oman. "We know what's going on in the dressing room. We have lots of confidence in our team and we have another huge match to come," he added. The pitch at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium here has



offered steep bounce and turn. England bowlers such as leg-spinner Adil Rashid (4/11) and the pace duo of Jofra Archer and Mark Wood, who claimed identical figures of 3/12, exploited it to their advantage while bowling out Oman for their lowest ever T20I total of 47 -- the overall fourth lowest in the T20 World Cup. Buttler will hope to win the toss again to unleash his bowlers against the inexperienced Namibia who had folded for 72 in their last match against Australia. **TEAMS (FROM):** **England:** Jos Buttler (c), Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonathan Bairstow, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Ben Duckett, Tom Hartley, Will Jacks, Chris Jordan, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Reece Topley and Mark Wood. **Namibia:** Gerhard Erasmus (c), Zane Green, Michael Van Lingen, Dylan Leicher, Ruben Trimpelman, Jack Brassell, Ben Shikongo, Tangeni Lungameni, Niko Davin, JJ Smit, Jan Frylinck, JP Kotze, David Wiese, Bernard Scholtz, Malan Kruger and PD

Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi and Tim Southee. **Uganda:** Brian Masaba (c), Simon Ssesazi, Roger Mukasa, Cosmas Kyewuta, Dinesh Nakrani, Fred Achelam, Kenneth Waiswa, Alpesh Ramjani, Frank Nsubuga, Henry Ssenyondo, Bilal Hassun, Robinson Obuya, Riazat Ali Shah, Juma Miyaji and Ronak Patel. **Match starts:** 6am IST.

SA FACE NEPAL, AIM FOUR IN FOUR: Having already stormed into the Super Eight, South Africa will take on Nepal in a clash between Group D table-toppers and wooden spooners at Kingstown. Anrich Nortje, who is the joint second leading wicket-taker with eight scalps, has been in splendid form, and he will look to make life tough for Nepal batters. The Proteas would also hope that their top-order in Quinton De Kock, Reeza Hendricks, skipper Aiden Markram and Tristan Stubbs to get back their mojo ahead of the Super Eight. **TEAMS (FROM):** **Nepal:** Rohit Paudel (c), Aasif Sheikh, Anil Kumar Sah, Kushal Bhurtel, Kushal Malla, Dipendra Singh Airee, Lalit Rajbanshi, Karan KC, Gulshan Jha, Sompal Kami, Pratis GC, Sundeep Jora, Abinash Bohara, Sagar Dhakal and Kamal Singh Airee. **South Africa:** Aiden Markram (c), Ott Niel Bartman, Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Bjorn Fortuin, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi and Tristan Stubbs.

Run rate manipulation would have been against Spirit of Cricket, says Cummins

PTI ■ GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA)

Insisting that Josh Hazlewood's remarks were not serious, Australia lead pacer Pat Cummins said they would have never tried to manipulate their net run rate to knock England out of the ongoing T20 World Cup, which would have been "against the Spirit of Cricket". Pacer Hazlewood had sparked a controversy when he said Aussies would try to eliminate England from the tournament if there was such an opportunity for them in their upcoming Group B match against Scotland. "I think when you go out and play you are trying your best every time and if you are not, that's probably against the spirit of cricket. We haven't really thought too deeply because it's (NRR manipulation) never really popped up," Cummins told reporters here. Cummins said he had a talk with Hazlewood about the latter's comments, and said the thought about NRR never really figured in anybody's thought process. "I was speaking to Joshy, who had a bit of a



joke about it the other day, and think it (his comments) got taken a little bit out of context. We'll go there and just try and play Scotland who have had a really good tournament so far and will be tough. "It's (NRR) something you kind of discuss as one of the quirks of the set-up but in terms of does it change the way we play, absolutely not," Cummins offered. "I've never stepped into the field without the mindset of trying to take the game on and be aggressive, like the guys have so far," he added. Cummins himself would know a fair bit about the Spirit of Cricket as he was in the

eye of a storm during the last Ashes as Alex Carey's stumping off Jonny Bairstow paved away for heated debates. However, the scenario of Australia manipulating their NRR does no longer exist after England's thumping eight-wicket over Oman on Friday at Antigua. The victory has boosted England's NRR to 3.08, well ahead of Scotland's 2.16. If England manage to go past Namibia on Saturday, and Australia beat Scotland, then the Three Lions can enter the Super Eight. However, if Scotland (5 points) beat Australia, then England (3 points) will have to pack their bags. Senior pacer Mitchell Starc will be available for selection after sitting out of the match against Namibia with a sore calf, but Cummins said the management has not taken any call towards the rotation of players. "I haven't spoken to the selectors, so, I don't know what they're thinking. But I wouldn't be surprised. I know going into the start of the tournament, in a perfect world, we'd get a game into just about all the squad members," he noted.

England spinner Adil Rashid relies on mixing up deliveries to return to form

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

England leg-spinner Adil Rashid feels the judicious use of his variations was the reason behind his excellent four-wicket burst against Oman after starting the T20 World Cup on a lukewarm note. Rashid's 4 for 11 helped the title holders bowl out Oman for 47, and then overhaul the target in 3.1 overs to stay in contention for a Super Eight berth from Group B. "It's always nice to get wickets three-four...whether it's against Oman or Australia or India. But I felt okay (today). I

just needed to get a few wickets, spin the ball, googlies, few leggies, whatever it is, mix it up well," Rashid said the post-match press conference after England's eight-wicket victory. Rashid had conceded 26 runs in two overs against Scotland in their tournament opener which was washed out, and gave away 41 runs in four overs against Australia in England's 36-run defeat. However, Rashid also gave credit to other England bowlers for supporting him. "I thought we needed a win and a comprehensive one. We set the tone upfront there with the ball. I thought the seamers

England needed to win big to leap over Scotland on net run rate, and Rashid did not deny that a few calculators were drawn out during the innings break in his camp. "There were talks about that (NRR). But we had to be positive and play that if you're going to a position to do that, we knew we had to take it on - to get the runs within five and a half overs (in Power Play). "But we also knew that we can't just go out there and be slow. That's what happened, we played the way and things just started unfolding. We've got the runs within the first three-four overs," said Rashid.

- Joff (Jofra Archer) and Woody (Mark Wood) set the tone there perfectly," said Rashid. Archer and Wood had similar figures of 3 for 12 and rocked Oman upfront with quick spells.



England needed to win big to leap over Scotland on net run rate, and Rashid did not deny that a few calculators were drawn out during the innings break in his camp. "There were talks about that (NRR). But we had to be positive and play that if you're going to a position to do that, we knew we had to take it on - to get the runs within five and a half overs (in Power Play). "But we also knew that we can't just go out there and be slow. That's what happened, we played the way and things just started unfolding. We've got the runs within the first three-four overs," said Rashid.

Fantastic Farooqi seals Afghanistan's maiden Super Eight berth with rout of PNG

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

The pace combination of Fazalgha Farooqi and Naveen-ul-Haq led Afghanistan's seven-wicket rout of Papua New Guinea here as the strife-torn country stormed into the T20 World Cup's Super Eight stage for the first time, knocking out group favourites New Zealand in the process. Gulbadin Naib scored an unbeaten 49 as Afghanistan gunned down the target of 96 in 15.1 overs overcoming early jitters. Put in to bat, PNG were bundled out for 95 with Farooqi and Naveen ripping through the line-up. The Afghans will face title favourites India in their first Super Eight clash on June 20 in Barbados. The result also meant that New Zealand, the 2021 finalists, were knocked out of the ICC showpiece. The Kiwis find themselves at the bottom of the table with two defeats from as many matches. Tournament co-hosts West Indies have already entered the Super Eight from Group C with six points, which is the same as the Afghans. New Zealand will face Uganda and PNG in their remaining two matches, which will now be of mere academic interest.

On Thursday, Farooqi took two wickets in two balls in his second over and finished with 3/16 from his four overs after Rashid Khan opted to bowl. He now has tournament figures of 11.2-0-42-12 to lead the bowling chart. His pace bowling partner Naveen provided the perfect assistance, returning with a miserly 2.5-0-4-2 as PNG were bowled out in 19.5 overs. Semo Kamea was run out in the penultimate delivery of their innings. It would have been much worse for PNG had Afghanistan not leaked 25 runs in extras, and 13 of them wides. This was yet another superlative display by the Afghanistan bowlers who are yet to concede 100 runs in this tournament -- Uganda (58; 16 overs), New Zealand (75; 15.2 overs). "Feeling great to qualify for the next round. First time for Afghanistan being in Super Eight in T20Is. The boys have done well, adjusting to the conditions very quickly and that is something very pleasing for me," said skipper Rashid Khan. Congratulating the team, Farooqi said: "I feel proud. Before the warm-up match, I was in the IPL. I did not get any chances there



Unfortunately, I played just one warm-up game. However, Afghanistan stuttered in their small chase as both their in-form openers -- Rahmanullah Gurbaz (11) and Ibrahim Zadran (0) -- were dismissed by the gritty PNG new-ball bowlers Alei Nao and Kamea inside three overs. But Gulbadin Naib ensured that there was no further disruption as he returned to form and anchored the chase with his 36-ball 49 not out. Naib took his time before coming

on his own, hitting four fours and two sixes. PNG kept chipping away with the wickets as Norman Vanua got rid of Azmutullah Omarzai (13, 18 balls) against the run of play, but Mohammed Nabi stayed calm and provided assistance to Naib who sealed it with a six over Chad Soper's head. But PNG started positively and showed intent while running between the wickets before Assad Vala found himself out of his crease. Farooqi affected the run out and he continued making impact with the ball in hand as well, picking up back-to-back wickets to commence his job of destruction. Naveen let the ball do the talking in the powerplay, claiming a pair of wickets including the crucial scalp of Tony Ura (11 off 18). Soper and Kipling Doriga went about rebuilding the total towards something defensible, but things went from bad to worse just before drinks. The pair had a moment of miscommunication, leading to the second run-out of the innings and it wasn't to be the last either. The inexperienced PNG have suffered six run outs in the tournament, the most by any team and only Doriga who went past 15.

कोर्ट नोटिस

ब अदालत,
प्रधान जिला एवं सत्र सगायाधीश-सह- मोटर वाहन दुर्घटना प्राधिकरण लोहरदगा
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अनुयाया प्रसाद दावाकर्ता

बनाम
अरविन्द कुमार वगैरहविपक्षीगण
नोटिस बनाम- विपक्षी लं. 2
अरविन्द कुमार पिता चन्द्रिका प्रसाद सिंह निवासी ग्राम जलदा ब्लॉक असुरछपाल सुन्दरगढ़ जलदा भीडिश। बजोरिए इस नोटिस, आपको सूचित किया जाता है कि वादी ने यह उपरोक्त वाद आप एवं बीमा कम्पनी के विरुद्ध दायर किया है जो मेरे न्यायालय में सुनवाई हेतु लंबित है जिसमे आप न्यायालय द्वारा जारी सम्मन बावजूद न्यायालय में हाजिर नहीं हो रहे है। इस नोटिस के माध्यम से आपको सूचित किया जाता है कि आप दिनांक-3.07.2024 को समय 10:30 बजे दिन में मेरे न्यायालय में स्वयं या अपने अधिका के माध्यम से उपस्थित होकर समुचित कार्रवाई करें अन्यथा आपकी अनुपस्थिति में वाद की एक्टरका सुनवाई आपके विरुद्ध की जायेगी। इसे सख्त ताकिद जानें। यह नोटिस आज दिनांक-21.02.2024 को मेरे अ एवं जलायालय की मुहर से जारी किया गया। प्रधान जिला एवं सत्र न्यायाधीश-सह मोटर वाहन दुर्घटना प्राधिकरण लोहरदगा।