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RANCHI, THURSDAY JUNE 27, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

INDIA GETS ITS SPEAKER AND LOP Kejriwal incarcerated



OPINION 6

THE DARK DAYS OF

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets Om Birla after the latter was elected as the Speaker of the House during the first Session of the 18th Lok Sabha, in New Delhi, on Wednesday. Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi and Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju are also seen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

NDA nominee Om Birla was elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha for a second consecutive term by voice vote on Wednesday, facing a challenge from Opposition-backed

candidate, K Suresh. A few minutes later. Congress MP Rahul Gandhi was granted the position of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, a status the Lower House has not witnessed for two terms, as the Congress had previously failed to secure enough seats to be accorded the LoP

Both sides, Treasury and Opposition benches had reasons for celebrations on Wednesday and in this on Birla to announce the milieu the rare occasion on schedule for election of the Floor of Parliament was noticed when Birla, Rahul remained vacant for five Minister Prime Narendra Modi exchanged greetings among each other. While the constitution of the 18th Lok Sabha was completed on Wednesday, President Droupadi Murmu is scheduled to address the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on Thursday and both — the Lok Sabha and the Ràjya Sabha — will begin proceedings during

After fighting the Speaker's Several Opposition leaders,

election, the Congress-led INDIA Bloc is now turning its attention to put pressure Deputy Speaker, which years in the previous years. As a first step, sources said,

there are plans to submit a

asking him to immediately

initiate the process for

election of Deputy Speaker, a

'joint letter" to the Speaker

Constitutional position. Modi, who moved the motion for Birla's election as Speaker, lauded the balance he showed in maintaining decorum of the House during his previous term.

Akhilesh congratulated Birla too, stressing on "impartiality" and hoping he would allow them to raise the voice of the people and not apply his restraint orders only to Opposition benches.

Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab made the announcement of Birla's after election Opposition, which had forwarded the the name of had eight-term Congress MP Kodikunnil Suresh as its candidate, did not press for votes to the motion.

Pro-tem

This is the fifth time that a Speaker will serve beyond the tenure of one Lok Sabha. It is also among the few occasions that an election became necessary for a post conventionally decided by consensus.

As he assumed charge, Birla read out a resolution condemning the Emergency imposed by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975 and asked members to observe a moment's silence, triggering a wave of protests by the Opposition. His first day in the chair saw

the House being adjourned. While Opposition members vociferously protested inside, BJP members held a demonstration outside Parliament House, raising slogans and demanding an apology from the Congress for the Emergency.

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

am Aadmi Party (AAP) Aam Aaami rany (Line), Aconvener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was remanded to three-day custody of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), hours after he was arrested by the Central probe agency in connection with the money laundering probe into nowscrapped excise policy.

Special Judge Amitabh Rawat passed the order on an application moved by the CBI which formally arrested Kejriwal after obtaining permission from the court.

The CBI's application is allowed for three days. The accused be produced before 7 pm," the judge said while passing the order on the CBI application. Kejriwal will be produced before the court on

The CBI, earlier on Wednesday, formally arrested Kejriwal in the said case and had sought five-day custody. During the remand period the court has also allowed Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal and his Lawyer to meet him for 30 minutes carry his prescribed medicines and home-cook food during the remand period.

Shortly after the arrest, withdrew the Kejriwal petition filed in the Supreme



Rouse Avenue Court in connection with a money laundering case related to the Delhi liquor policy, in New Delhi, on Wednesday

money laundering case. Appearing for the Delhi Chief Minister, senior advocate A M Singhvi made the request to withdraw the plea before a vacation bench of Justices Manoj Misra and S V N Bhatti and the bench allowed it and dismissed the plea as withdrawn.

Notably, the Enforcement (ED) case the alleged Directorate investigated money trail, the CBI case will have to prove corruption and every day. Furthermore, the bribe-taking by public court also allowed them to servants. The probe agency on Tuesday examined the AAP supremo in Tihar Jail and recorded his statement related to the Excise Policy

Kejriwal will remain in the CBI's custody until his Court challenging the order passed by the Delhi High corruption case comes to an Court staying his bail in the end, which can go on for a case). He has to be confronted.

fails to secure bail in both the cases being probed by the CBI and ED, he will go back to judicial custody once his police remand ends in the present case. The CBI in its application, seeking his remand for five

days told the court that he

maximum of 15 days. If he

was required to be guizzed to unearth the larger conspiracy in the matter. It also said the Delhi Chief Minister was required to be confronted with evidence and other people accused in the case. We need his custodial interrogation... He is not even recognising that (co-accused) Vijay Nair was working under him. He says Nair was working under Atishi Marlena and Saurabh Bharadwaj. He puts

Sisodia (also accused in the

agency claimed that the "south lobby" visited Delhi when the COVID-19 wave was at its peak. The CBI counsel, however, said they had argued on facts and that no agency source had stated anything. To this, the judge said the media picks up one line. "It is very difficult to control media that way," he added. The CBI also of Kejriwal making "unnecessary allegation of malice". "Unnecessary malice". allegation of malice are being made. We could have conducted these proceedings

documents," the CBI said. The

before the elections. I (CBI) am doing my job, satisfying every court," the counsel representing the CBI said. When the court asked why was Kejriwal being arrested now, the CBI counsel said the probe agency refrained from arresting him while the elections were going on. "The court was considering his interim bail for elections. If at that time, I (CBI) would have arrested... That shows my restraint that I did not arrest when he was campaigning," the counsel said. During the hearing, Kejriwal's lawyers argued that the agency's move to arrest the AAP boss at this point showed it had acted "in a most biased manner". The reference was to the fact the CBI had already quizzed him in connection with this case - for nine hours

in April last year.



WikiLeaks founder **Assange returns to** Australia a free man

AP CANBERRA

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange returned to his homeland Australia aboard a charter jet on Wednesday, hours after pleading guilty to obtaining and publishing US military secrets in a deal with Justice Department prosecutors that concludes a drawn-out legal saga.

The criminal case of international intrigue, which had played out for years, came to a surprise end in a most unusual setting with Assange, 52, entering his plea in a US district court in Saipan, the capital of the Northern Mariana Islands. The American commonwealth in the Pacific is relatively close to Assange's native Australia and accommodated his desire to avoid entering the continental United States.

Assange was accused of receiving and publishing hundreds of thousands of war logs and diplomatic cables that included details of US military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan. His activities drew an outpouring of support from press freedom advocates, who heralded his role in bringing to light military conduct that might otherwise have been concealed from view and warned of a chilling effect on journalists. Among the files published by WikiLeaks was a video of a 2007 Apache helicopter attack by American forces in Baghdad that killed 11 people,

including two Reuters journalists.

Assange raised his right fist as he emerged from the plane and his supporters at the Canberra airport cheered from a distance. Dressed in the same suit and tie he wore during his earlier court appearance, he embraced his wife Stella Assange and father John Shipton who were waiting on the tarmac. "He described it as a surreal and happy moment, his landing here in our national capital, Canberra," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told reporters in Parliament House.

3 ultras killed ahead of Amarnath Yatra

MOHIT KANDHARI JAMMU

The entire security grid has L been kept on a state of high across Jammu and Kashmir after Punjab police late Tuesday night noticed the movement of two armed suspects moving closer to the forward areas bordering Kathua beginning of the 52-day-long Amarnath Yatra on June 29.

Meanwhile, one terrorist was killed by the joint team of security forces in an ongoing encounter in a forest area of Gandoh in Doda district.
According to ADGP, Anand

Jain,"Two more terrorists have been neutralised in an ongoing joint operation in the Gandoh, Bhaderwah sector of district Doda. Arms and ammunition have been recovered from their possession?

Separate searches were also conducted in the Reasi district after some locals reported the suspected movement of three armed persons in the Kanda area on Tuesday evening, prompting the Army, CRPF, and police to launch the search operation.

Though elaborate security

arrangements have been made in Lakhanpur — the gateway to Jammu and Kashmir and along the yatra route to prevent the movement of any suspected persons, the security forces are taking no chances to allow the Pakistan-based terrorists to target the Amarnath yatra.

Quick Reaction Teams have stationed highway at vantage locations while separate security checkpoints have been established along the border

suspected persons high-powered CCTV cameras have suspected route. Security has been beefed up across the base camp in Jammu, Pahalgam and Baltal in the Kashmir valley to ensure an

Jammu, Romesh Kumar, along with ADGP, Anand Jain Wednesday supervised the Dry Run of Shri Amarnathji Yatra 2024 amidst tight security and complete protocol from Yatri Niwas Bhagwati Nagar to Yatra camp Lamber at Banihal. Sharing information about the

roads connecting the Jammu-Pathankot highway. To check the movement of been installed along the yatra

incident-free yatra. Divisional Commissioner



Security personnel stand guard as vehicles leave the Amarnath yatra base camp Bhagwati Nagar during a 'dry run' conducted by the authorities ahead of annual Amarnath Yatra, in Jammu, on Wednesday

Doda encounter, Additional Director General of Police, Jammu Anand Jain in a post on X said one terrorist had been gunned down while the operation was still going on in the Bhaderwah area of Doda.

Jain said the operation was launched in the Gandoh, Bhaderwah Sector of district Doda after receiving intelligence reports about the presence of terrorists in the

Six security personnel were injured when terrorists attacked a joint check post at Chattargalla on June 11, while a policeman was injured in a gunfight with terrorists at Kota top in Gandoh area the next day.

operations and announced a cash reward of Rs 5 lakhs each for four Pakistani terrorists believed to have infiltrated and operated in the district. In addition, Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar visited Iammu and Reasi district and reviewed the security situation of the region

After the twin attacks, security

forces intensified their anti-

terrorist

on Tuesday.
His visit to the area along with General Officer Commanding (GOC) of 16 Corps Lieutenant General Navin Sachdeva and GoC Romeo Force became important to review the security setup in the wake of the terror attack on a bus carrying pilgrims in the area on June 9. Nine persons, including seven pilgrims from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, were killed and 41 injured in the attack when the terrorists opened fire on the bus carrying pilgrims returning from Shiv Khori shrine near Teryath village in the Pouni area.

He was briefed on the prevailing security situation and the actions of the security forces, it

Nagaland holds local polls after 20 yrs



A round 80 per cent of the over 2.23 lakh electorate on Sunday exercised their franchise in the Nagaland civic polls, held after a gap of 20 years, a senior official said. Voting for 25 urban local bodies (ULBs) in 10 districts began at 7:30 am amid tight security and continued till The turnout 4 pm, he said. figure is likely to increase as

voters were still in queue at

official said

"Voting has been peaceful... A three-tier security arrangement was put in place in 214 polling stations across the 10 districts," a State Election Commission (SEC) official told reporters here. Instead of EVMs, voting took place through ballot papers in the 420 polling stations, he said. This is a historic election for the

northeastern state, as the polling

to three municipalities and 36

town councils were conducted after a gap of 20 years. The urban local body polls were also held for the first time with

33 per cent women reservation, the official said. The votes will be counted on June 29. Over 2.23 lakh voters, including 1,13,521 women, will decide the electoral fate of 523 candidates from 11 political parties. Government

announced elections to urban local bodies several times in the past, but objections from tribal bodies and civil society organisations against reservation for women, and tax on land and properties, created hurdles in conducting the polls. Among the parties contesting the elections are the NDPP, BJP,

Congress, Naga Peoples' Front (NPF), Rising Peoples' Party, RPI (Athawale), JD(U), LJP, NCP and the NPP. The Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO), however, had declared that six districts in

the region would not participate

in the elections.

TAJ ON A RAINY DAY



Tourists enjoy rain at the Taj Mahal in Agra

PTI Photo

Chief Minister gifts Rs 383.70 Cr projects to Dhanbad

Hands over appointment letters assets to beneficiaries

PANKAJ: DHANBAD

Minister Champai Soren laid inaugurated schemes worth Rs 383.70 crore and distributed assets among beneficiaries at the Mega Sports Complex near Airport Dhanbad Wednesday

The Chief Minister distributed assets worth Rs. 6973.99011 lakhs among a total of 23,540 beneficiaries. He also laid the foundation stone of 167 schemes of various departments, the construction of which will cost Rs. 16,550 lakhs, and inaugurated a total of 166 schemes constructed at a cost of Rs. 14846 lakhs. The district administration had made extensive arrangements for



Chief Minister Champai Soren distributed assets among the beneficiaries during inauguration and laid the foundation stone of development schemes of various departments at a program at Mega Sports Complex in Dhanbad on Wednesday. PNS

Addressing the gathering CM announced loan up to Rs 25 lakhs to unemployed youth with a subsidy of 40%, appointment of 40, 000 assistant teachers, excise and police constables in next three months time in Jharkhand. He also announced implementation of CM Bahan-Beti scheme under which pension would be provided to women in between 25 to fifty years of age and construction of 15 lakh Abua Awas for poor homeless people of state.He also announced construction of 15,000 km of roads in Jharkhand to ensure better connectivity to rural areas from nearest town besides setting up 325 model school in state for providing quality education to poor and meritorious

students at nominal cost CM vehemently criticised BJP for its policies that kept Jharkhand a poor state despite being rich in minerals.

The gathering was also by minister addressed Satyanand Bhogta, Badal Patralekh besides MLAs Poornima N Singh and Mathura Prasad Mahto.

The Chief Minister reached Dhanbad from Ranchi by helicopter at around 1 pm and after attending this program, he left for Ranchi at around 4 pm. On his arrival he was Deputy greeted Commissioner Madhavi Mishra and Senior Superintendent of Police HP Janardhanan at Dhanbad air strip besides DIG Bokaro range Surendar Jha and others.

R SHARMA: BOKARO

SAIL Chairman to Speak at 5th Edition of "Engaging India at Almedalen" in Sweden

PNS: BOKARO

NEW DELHI: $A\ m\ a\ r\ e\ n\ d\ u$ Prakash Chairman Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), has been invited as a dis-



tinguished speaker at the 5th edition of "Engaging India at Almedalen" in Sweden. This prestigious platform brings together influential voices to discuss collaborative pathways and innovative solutions for climate action. The theme for this year's edition is "Samband for Climate," combining the Hindi and Swedish words for "connection." This theme underscores the necessity of a collaborative approach to tackling global challenges, particularly in the realm of climate change. The event will feature discussions on various strategies to enhance global cooperation in addressing climate issues. Prakash's participation highlights India's commitment to sustainable practices in the steel industry and its efforts to contribute to global climate goals.

Chairman Amarendu Prakash's presence at "Engaging India at Almedalen" will not only showcase SAIL's initiatives but also reinforce India's role in fostering international cooperation for a greener and more sustainable future.

XITE College: Session on Active Living for International Day against Drug Abuse



PNS: JAMSHEDPUR

In a significant observance of the International Day Against Drug Abuse, XITE College (Autonomous) organized an impactful session on Active Living. The event featured Jhumpa Mukherjee, a distinguished marketing professional, writer, and health educator, currently serving as Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) at an Ed-tech startup in Bangalore

This initiative was a collaborative effort between College and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Young Indians Jamshedpur Yuva Chapter Yi Health Cell. The session aimed to promote healthy lifestyle choices among students, providing them with practical strategies to incorporate more physical activity into their daily routines.

Mukherjee shared valuable insights and practical tips on maintaining an active lifestyle, addressing common challenges faced by students. Kev takeaways from her session included: Maintaining a

14-Hour Gap Between Dinner and Breakfast: Emphasizing the benefits of intermittent fasting for overall health. Consuming Whole Foods Over Processed Products: Advocating for a diet rich in natural, unprocessed foods.

Ensuring a 2-Hour Gap Between Screen Time and Highlighting the importance of reducing screen exposure before bedtime for better sleep quality. Engaging in 30 Minutes of Rigorous Activity Daily: Encouraging activities such as dance, yoga, or brisk walking to maintain physical fitness. Living with Reason and Purpose: Encouraging students to find purpose and meaning in their daily activities. The session was organized with the efforts of Ashish Singh from the Branding and Communication Department Naval Narayan Chowdhury from the NSS Department. Their initiative was supported by the XITE Yi Yuva Executive Committee Members. Faculty members, including Prof. Chaturvedi, Prof. Sushmita Chowdhury Sen, Prof. Swati Singh, and Prof. Anjali Jha, were present, along with Ankit Lodha from Yi.

The event underscored the critical role of leading a healthy lifestyle in combating drug abuse. Mukherjee's session provided the students with actionable advice to incorporate active living practices into their daily lives, fostering a culture of health and well-being.

This initiative aligns with the broader objectives of the International Day Against Drug Abuse, highlighting the importance of preventive measures and healthy living to deter substance abuse. Through such efforts, XITE College continues to promote the overall well-being of its students, encouraging them to lead active and purposeful

Woman commits suicide in Sonari, husband arrested

PNS: JAMSHEDPUR

In a tragic incident, a 28year-old woman named Priya Dhibar, a resident of Khutadih Harijan Basti in the Sonari police station area of Jamshedpur, committed suicide by hanging herself. The incident has sent shockwaves through the community, revealing a deeply troubling case of alleged domestic abuse.

Priya Dhibar left behind a suicide note, written in Bengali, in which she accused her husband of being the reason for her drastic decision. In the note, she detailed the sexual and physical abuse she had endured at the hands of her husband, Krishna Dhibar. The note explicitly mentioned her desperation and inability to continue living under such conditions, ultimately leading to her decision to end her life. The Sonari police took

swift action upon discovering the suicide note and arrested Krishna Dhibar. According to available information, Priya Dhibar hailed from Bandkudra in West Bengal and had married Krishna Dhibar, an auto driver in Sonari. The couple lived in a rented house belonging to Siva Ram Sahu in Khutadih Harijan Basti. Their relationship was reportedly fraught with disputes and conflict.

Priya Dhibar is survived by a daughter, who is currently being raised at her maternal uncle's house. On Wednesday morning, Priya was found hanging in her home. The tragic discovery was made when the house owner noticed that Priya had not opened the door for an unusually long time. Upon realizing something was amiss, the owner promptly notified the police, who then uncovered the distressing

Following the discovery, the police arrested Krishna Dhibar and charged him with abetment to suicide. The arrest was made immediately, and Krishna Dhibar was taken into custody and subsequently sent to jail.



towards a drug-free Jharkhand with the "Run for Drug-Free Jharkhand' which marathon, menced at Bokaro Airport and concluded at Amrit Park Garga Bridge. The event saw participation from key administrative officials, administrative including DPLR Menka, SDO Chas Om Prakash Gupta, Civil Surgeon Dr. Dinesh Kumar, and other district-level officers, school students, and the general public. Drug abuse has become a

grave issue, affecting not just individuals but families and society at large. The Jharkhand government is committed to eradicating this menace. The increasing prevalence of drug use among the youth is alarming, and public awareness is the only way to curb this societal problem. To promote a drugfree Bokaro, Jharkhand, and India, $_{
m the}$ District Information and Public Relations Department organized the "Run for Drug-Free

Jharkhand" marathon, which

saw significant public participation. The marathon began at

Bokaro Runs for a Drug-Free Jharkhand

Bokaro Airport and ended at Amrit Park Garga Bridge. Speaking at the event, DPLR Menka emphasized the importance of saying no to drugs and yes to life. She highlighted the week-long awareness campaign from June 19 to June 26, during which various departments are organizing activities to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse.

SDO Om Prakash Gupta called drug abuse a global challenge. He stressed the importance of such initiatives to educate potential victims about the destructive impact of drug use. He mentioned

that statewide campaigns are underway to inform people about the dangers of drug abuse, helping them protect themselves from falling into this trap.

Saket Kumar Pandey noted the severe physical and mental effects of drug abuse, which can affect individuals of any age group. He urged everyone to stay away from drugs.

APRO Avinash Kumar Singh stated that the marathon was organized to raise public awareness about the dangers of drug abuse. He administered a pledge to the participants to make every effort to achieve a drug-free Jharkhand, and India.

The Jharkhand government organized a district-level workshop themed "Say No to Nyay Sadan Auditorium on International Day Against Drug Abuse. The event was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Vijava Jadhav, Deputy Development Commissioner (DDC) Sandeep Kumar, AMC Chas Bhuvania, and nal Collector Saurav Additional Mohammad Mumtaz Ansari, among other district-level officials

In her address, DC Vijaya Jadhav emphasized the critical role of parents and civil society in preventing drug abuse. She urged parents to spend quality time with their children and be attentive to their activities and associations. Additionally, she highlighted the need for civil society to monitor their surroundings, particularly in slum areas, to prevent drugrelated activities. "Raising awareness about the adverse effects of drug use is the only way to curb this menace," she said. The workshop also



from various departments, school students, and members of the public. Jadhav stressed the importance of community vigilance and proactive measures to keep the youth away from drugs.

DDC Sandeep Kumar addressed the harmful effects of drug use, urging participants to report any instances of drug trafficking or consumption to the authorities for immediate action. AMC

cautioned the Bhuvania youth against engaging in activities that could lead to legal consequences, emphasizing the importance of reallife lessons over fictional portrayals.

Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Ranchi representative Kumar Manohar Manjul provided an overview of various types of drugs, the rising cases in the country, and the legal provisions in place.

Kamendra Kushwaha from CIP Ranchi discussed the treatment and rehabilitation of individuals affected by drug abuse.

highlighted that approximately 146 new children fall victim to addiction daily. He outlined the awareness programs conducted across all blocks, community health centers, and schools from June 19. The workshop also included a street play conveying the message "Say No to Drugs, Yes to Life," followed by participants taking an oath to abstain from drugs. Additionally, successful participants of recent drawing and speech competitions were awarded.

The event saw the presence of various officials, including District Transport Officer Vandana Shejwalkar, Traffic DSP Ashish Mahli, District Social Welfare Officer Purnima, Assistant Director of Social Security Piyush, Officer-in-Charge of General Branch Kumar Kanishk, DPRO Saket Kumar Pandey, and APRO Avinash Kumar Singh, alongside members of the social welfare and health departments.

International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking observed at ULC

PNS: HAZARIBAG

Γoday, the International Da against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking was celebrated at University Law College. On this occasion, the Acting Principal, Rashmi Pradhan, said that World Drug Day is celebrated every year on June 26 to strengthen action and cooperation to achieve the goal of a drug-free world. The UNODC continues to provide facts and practical solutions to address the current world drug problem and is committed to achieving health for all based on science. Dr. Jaydeep Sanyal mentioned that in India, the Rajiv Gandhi government finally enacted a law against all types of narcotics and psychotropic substances in 1985, known as the NDPS Act. Advocate and Guest Faculty Shubham Kishore discussed the NDPS Act in detail. Until 1985, cannabis and its derivatives, including bhang, charas, and marijuana, were not banned in India. In 1961, the United States the adopted Narcotic Convention on



This was the first Drugs. international treaty against drugs that categorized hard drugs along with cannabis and completely banned their use except for research and medical purposes. The chief guest, Advocate Amarnath Mishra, discussed all the laws and provisions related to the regulation of the possession and use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The vote of thanks was given by Bharat Mishra. On this occasion, students Dheeraj and Tushar also shared their thoughts. The students Chittaranjan Kispotta and Suman Kumar were present A quiz competition was also organized which Amardeep, Muskan, and Rishi were awarded. In the painting competition, Shalini, Chahat, and Khushi were awarded. The event was hosted by Prabhakar.

arrives post BJP Govt formation PNS: JAMSHEDPUR

Odisha Guv

Jharkhand and Governor Raghubar Das, arrived at Jamshedpur's Airport on Wednesday. This marks his first visit to Jamshedpur following the formation of the BJP government in Odisha. He was warmly welcomed at the airport by Kulwant Singh Bunty, a member of the BJP State Working Committee and former Khadi Board member, who presented him with a bouquet of flowers. The welcome ceremony was attended by several BJP workers and senior officials of the district administration. Police personnel honored Governor Raghubar Das with a guard of honor at the airport. Bunty highlighted the significance of this visit, noting that Governor Das will be staying in Jamshedpur for two days. This visit is seen as an important event for the local BJP cadre and supporters.

Every second complaint is about land and its dispute: SP Palamu

PNS: DALTONGANJ

Cases of land disputes and consequential fight for it by both the sides keep Palamu police overworked and busy.

"Every second petition or complaint is invariably about land and its disputes here in the Palamu" said Reeshma Ramesan.

SP went on to say Imagine a land dispute case is given a garb of an episode of pocso act. There used to come a mother and her class 10 daughter and one day the daughter argued with me telling me that she is a minor, she has been teased by the opponent of the land.'

We know from where the wisdom comes to frame a land dispute case as under



Ramesan photo by PNS

the Pocso act." reiterated the

Police tread cautiously as matters to land dispute if settled by the court go either way then the police role or action comes under scrutiny Reeshma Ramesan reminded. Parties in land disputes try to pressure police to be partisan which is spurned by

the police, added the SP. Police have virtually no locus standi in land disputes except where public tranquillity is under threat and to enforce public order police prohibitory orders under section 107 to restrain both the sides from taking law into their hands. Cases are of pathways,

encroachment, possession by foul means. Attempts to steal rights to hold land are also enormous.

Reeshma Ramesan said property division is a major triggering point of escalation to family feud. There is no division where property peace has not become fragile or broken down

Again marital discord is plaguing the family most here opined the SP. Husband and wife are at loggerheads.

Review meeting of Supply Department, instructions given for timely and regular ration distribution PNS: JAMSHEDPUR issues, dealer changes, memdelivered to beneficiaries'

A review meeting of the Supply Department was held under the chairmanship of Magistrate cum District Deputy Commissioner Mittal Ananya in the Auditorium. Collectorate Jamshedpur. During the meeting, it was highlighted that under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), only 73.19 percent of food grains had been delivered at the doorstep against the target for June 2024. The Deputy Commissioner directed that this figure be brought up to 100 percent within two days. Additionally, the distribution of food grains for June 2024,



currently at 57.10 percent, is to be completed by the prescribed date of 15 July 2024.

Marketing Officers (MOs) were instructed to ensure that doorstep delivery of food grains is completed by the 15th of every month under the NFSA. Similarly, green rice is to be delivered to public distribution system (PDS) shops by the 5th of every month under the Jharkhand State Food Security Scheme (JSFSS). The District Supply Officer was also directed to issue show-cause notices to PDS vendors with low distribution rates

Mittal emphasized that under the Postman Scheme, foodgrain packets must be

homes in the first week of each month. He also mandated that online entry of foodgrains be completed on the same day they arrive at the warehouse and that the Warehouse Assistant

Manager ensures the lifting of foodgrains from the truck on the same day. Under the Sona-Sobran Dhoti Saree Scheme, all beneficiaries are to receive 100 percent of their clothes within a week, and equivalent amounts should be deposited through challan. The meeting also addressed pending cases in the BSO and DSO logins on the ERCMS portal, instructing that further action should be taken only after physical verification for new ration card

ber deletions, and ration card surrenders. Pending cases on the PGMS portal are to be resolved within 48 hours wherever possible instructions Additionally, were given to complete the pending payments of farmers under Procurement Scheme for the Kharif marketing season 2023-24 without Special Distribution Officer Mahendra Kumar, District Supply Officer Salman Zafar Khijri, all Block Supply Officers, Marketing Officers, Assistant Warehouse Managers, Computer Operators, and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

CM gifts schemes worth Rs 313.96 Cr to Dhanbad residents

Distributes assets worth Rs 65.73 crore among 23540 beneficiaries ing every family. Many

government is working with the thought and commitment to move Jharkhand forward at a fast pace on every front of development. In the last four and a half years, amidst all the adverse circumstances and challenges, our government has been doing the work of grooming the state and giving it a new direction. Today, the government's schemes are reaching the last person of the society said. Chief Minister Champai Soren while addressing the inauguration, foundation stone laying and asset distribution ceremony among the beneficiaries of various

schemes in Dhanbad today. The Chief Minister said that the people here will get the gift of a new health scheme next month. Under this scheme, people deprived of Ayushman card will get free treatment facility up to Rs 15 lakh. People will be able to take advantage of this health scheme only on the

The Chief Minister said that in the next three months, 40 thousand youth will have government jobs in the state. For this, the concerned commission has been instructed to complete the appointment process. A campaign will be run to provide jobs to local vouth in private sector companies. He said that the youth who are interested in selfemployment are being given financial help under the Chief Minister's Employment Generation Scheme. The Chief Minister said

that for the all-round development of the state, it is necessary for every link of the system to be strong. Our government is strengthening the economic-social system here. We are improving education and health facilities. Work is being done to connect the youth with employment. Our government is trying to take forward every class and section including tribals, natives, farmers, laborers, poor, women, elderly, disabled, backward and minorities, so that the state can get a new direction with the participa-



Chief Minister Champai Soren distributed assets among the beneficiaries during inauguration and laid the foundation stone of development schemes of various departments at a program at Mega Sports Complex in Dhanbad on Wednesday. PNS

tion of all these.

The CM said that our government is making schemes in accordance with the sentiments and expectations of the public. There is no discrimination in giving benefits of

every person are taken care of. He said that through the program "Aapki Yojana Aapki Sarkar Aapke Dwar" we came to know your problems and along with solving them, we came among you

with such schemes, due to

which the people here are getting empowered.

The CM stressed that today there is no family in the state where some or the other scheme of the government has not reached. Today pension and ration are reach

schemes are being run to empower the farmers. Loans up to two lakh rupees of farmers will also be waived off. The state government has decided to give 200 units of electricity free of cost so that the houses of the poor living in the far-flung areas of the state and in the jungles and foothills of rivers and plateaus also remain illuminated. Now the government is going to provide financial assistance to sisters and daughters above 25 years and below 50 years of age. There are many more such

society into the mainstream.

The CM said that
Jharkhand is a state where displacement still remains a big challenge. Here, in the name of various projects and mining operations, the land of tribals and natives was acquired on a large scale, but the peasants could not get proper benefits from it. Even today the displaced are facing many problems. Our gov-

schemes which have been

started to bring the people

sitting on the margins of the

ernment will soon formulate a policy for the welfare and interest of the displaced people so that they can get their

rights.
The CM said that the government is committed to improving the education system of the state. Model schools are being opened in the blocks, where children will get quality education on the lines of private schools. Savitribai Phule Kishori Samridhi Yojana is being run with a threefold increase in the scholarship amount so that no child is deprived of education due to lack of money. Guruji Credit Card Scheme has been started so that financial constraints do not become an obstacle in obtaining higher education. The government is bearing the full expenses of studying abroad for the children of tribal, Dalit, minority and backward classes here. Poor children here are being given financial assistance for coaching and studies so that they become engineers, doctors and officers. We will light such a lamp of educaguished.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 333 schemes worth Rs 313 crore 96 lakh 24 thousand 500. In this, the foundation stone of 167 schemes worth 165 crore 50 lakh 22 thousand 800 rupees was laid and the foundation stone of 166 schemes worth 148 crore 46 lakh 01 thousand 700 rupees was laid. At the same time, assets worth 69 crore 73 lakh 99 thousand 11 rupees were distributed among 23540 beneficiaries.

In this program, Minister Satvanand Bhokta, Minister Badal, MLA Mathura Prasad Mahato, MLA Purnima Neeraj Singh, District 20-Vice President Brajendra Prasad Singh, District Council President Sharda Singh, Inspector General of Police Surendra Kumar Jha and many officials including the Deputy Commissioner and Senior Superintendent of Police of the district were

Drug free society will ensure an effluent State: CM

Participates in State level programme against intoxicating items

Chief Minister Champai Soren today participated in the "State Level Awareness Against Drugs" program organized at Morhabadi Ground. On this occasion, the Chief Minister said in his address that the State Government is committed to creating a dru Jharkhand. The drug-free Government is running special awareness campaigns to inform the people about the ill effects of drugs. People are being appealed to stay away from drugs by doing extensive publicity through various means at village, mohalla, panchavat, block, district and state level. The Chief Minister said that at present, drugs are being widely spread. Especially drug smugglers are making the youth addicted to drugs in schools, col-

The Chief Minister said that the State Government is continuously taking action against drug smugglers. On the basis of information, the police administration has destroyed opium cultivation at many places. Brown sugar, ganja, doda etc. drugs have recovered.



Satyanand Bhokta, Chief Secretary L Khyantey and others during the "State Level Awareness Against Drugs" program at Morabadi Ground in Ranchi on Wednesday. Pix by Ratan Lal

Hundreds of accused have been sent to judicial custody. The district police has busted an interstate gang involved in drug smuggling and action is being taken by identifying the supply chain.

The CM said that youth are the future of our state and country. A prosperous state can be built only by keeping the youth drug-free. The Chief Minister said that any family or society can

move forward on the path of progress only by staying drug-free. Drug addiction causes destruction in human life. Drug addiction is a physdamages the body.

The CM said that if the youth remain in the grip of drugs, it will have a negative impact on their lives as well as the future of the state and the country. Under no circumstances will the youth of

Phabhat Pheri across the

State while on June 25 they

gave a strong message

the state be allowed to fall into the grip of drugs. The Chief Minister said that today is the day for all of us to take a pledge and pledge that we will inspire ourselves as well as others to stay away from drugs and will play our important role in building a drug-free society. On this occasion, the book Jharkhand Government is fully committed to stop drugs' was also unveiled by the Chief Minister and other dignitaries.

In the state level awareness program against drugs, human chain, bicycle race, children's marathon race etc. programs were organ-On this occasion, Minister

Satyanand Bhokta, Chief

Secretary L. Khiangte, DGP Ajay Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary Vandana Dadel, Secretary of Women, Child Development and Social Welfare Department Manoj Kumar, Secretary of Tourism Department Manoj Kumar, DG CID Anurag Gupta, IG CID, DIG Ranchi, Deputy Commissioner Ranchi. Senior Superintendent of Police Ranchi along with other dignitaries and school students were present.

SBPS observes **No Tobacco Day**

On this No Tobacco Day, Sarala Birla Public School,

Ranchi united to raise awareness about the devastating health impacts of tobacco use and to advocate for stronger regulations to protect public health. To support those striving to quit and to promote healthy living, an array of activities was conducted in the premises of SBPS, Ranchi. Essay writing, poster making, slogan writing, and speech competitions were conducted on the theme 'Plant the seeds of Good Health, Prevent Cancer and Preserve Life' as the power of words towards promoting a tobacco-free future is very impactful. SBPS, Ranchi believes in the fact that every effort counts in reducing the prevalence of tobacco-related illnesses and ensuring a healthier and cleaner environment for generations to come. In order to ensure that the message reached every individual, a Prabhat Pheri was organised for the students and teachers and they went around the neighbourhood promoting the same. Principal Paramjit Kaur, made everyone aware of the harmful effects of tobacco consumption and encouraged everyone to live a sustainable and healthy life so they will understand the true meaning of happiness and serenity.

NEET PAPER LEAK -Hazaribagh Oasis school principal in CBI net

PNS: RANCHI

Investigation (CBI), probing the NEET question paper leak case, has taken Hazaribagh's School principal Ehsanul Haque into custody. The arrest was made after the Central Bureau Investigation (CBI) Wednesday, reached Oasis School which is alleged to be the origin of the NEET-UG paper leak. As per sources, the CBI team conducted a raid at the principal's residence after the investigation was officially handed over to the agency on Monday, June 24. After taking him into custody after four hours of interrogation, CBI sleuths brought him to the guest house of the Central Coalfields Ltd in

The Central Bureau of

Hazaribagh's Oasis School principal Ehsanul Haque was allegedly involved in the NEET paper leak where a question paper was found tampered with. The tampering evidence was submitted in a report to the Union Education Ministry, it is Économic The Offences Unit (EOU) team reached Jharkhand initially went to the SBI bank following which they discussed the case with Dr Ěhsanul Haque, the principal of Oasis School and the district coordinator for the NEET exam. This report contained complete information the investigation

Charhi located along the

Hazaribagh-Ranchi highway.



progress till June 21. The report mentions the evidence and facts as well as the confessional statements of the accused. This prompted the to involve the Testing Agency (NTA) and hand over the matter to the CBI for further investigation. On Tuesday, the CBI submitted a copy of the FIR to the special court in Patna and sought the remand of the accused arrested by the Economic Offences Unit (EOU) of Bihar Police. Eight accused have been named in the FIR, including Sanjeev Mukhiya, Sikandar Yadavendu, Amit Anand, Ayush Raj, Nitish Kumar, Rakhi, Akhilesh, and Bittu. The CBI is investigating six cases related to the NEET paper leak. Of the six cases, one each is from Bihar, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, while three are from Rajasthan. However, Monday the principal of the Hazaribagh school, where investigators suspect the NEET-UG leak originated from, has told media persons that a digital lock on two boxes containing question papers did not open at 1.15

pm on May 5 as it was sup-

posed to, because of which

they had to use a cutter.

Scientists should develop strategies for higher production: Guv

Governor CP Radhakrishnan said that the existence of all cultures depends upon agriculture therefore, all should join hands for betterment of farmers, farming and villages. In the face of shrinking availability of land, water and other natural resources for agriculture, scientists have to gird up their loins for devising strategies for higher production with lesser resources to meet the future food requirement.

Addressing the 44th Foundation Day Ceremony of Birsa Agricultural University (BAU) on Wednesday, the Governor said that all our efforts should be dedicated to the nation. "Don't think that you are working for any specific institution, state, region or group, rather country should be in your mind while accomplishing any task," he

Radhakrishnan said that be positive always and try to overcome adversities because nobody is free from problems. "One should try to sibilities taken even under limited infrastructure and resources. Governor said he was in favour of giving maximum powers and autonomy to universities so that vice chancellors could give shape to their plans and goals," he

Director and CEO of Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Ranchi Dr Raj Kumar said according to WHO study heart ailments, road accidents, cancer and food adulteration including pesticide residue in vegetables, fruits and grains have

Governor CP Radhakrishnan releases BAU Annual Report (2023-24) during the 44th Foundation Day Ceremony of Birsa Agricultural University (BAU), at Kanke in Ranchi on Wednesday. BAU Vice Chancellor Dr SC Dubey. **Director and CEO of Rajendra Institute of Medical** Sciences (RIMS), Ranchi Dr Raj Kumar and others are also seen in the picture. PNS

emerged as major killers. Risk of developing cancer can be reduced by healthy life style consisting of regular exercise, keeping ideal body weight and adequate consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, he said.

Dr Sujay Rakshit, Director. Institute Agricultural Biotechnology, Ranchi stressed on promottem with proper utilization of water. Welcoming the guests, BAU Vice Chancellor Dr SC Dubey said institution's future focus of research will be on development of heat tolerant climate resilient biofortified crop varieties, sustainable water and nutrient management, integrated farming system, need based natural farming and conservation of indigenous animal breeds and plants. He outlined the recent achievements of the university in teaching, research, extension education, seed production

The Governor released BAU Annual Report (2023-24) and book entitled 'Entrepreneurial designs for start ups' penned by Prof NC Das, retired Head, Dept of Agricultural Statistics. He honoured six octogenarian retired employees of BAU- Dr DK Thakur, Dr Mukherjee, Dr DK Jha, Dhruv and Arjun Prasad. Four innofarmers Kapildeo Thakur, Palamu; Amit Kumar Mahto, East Singhbhum, Birendra Kumar, Chatra and Sangeeta Devi of Bokaro were also felicitated on the occasion. Winners of essay competitions organized of teaching and non teaching employees and students were awarded. BAU Director of Students' Welfare and organising secretary of the event Dr BK Agrawal proposed a vote of thanks and Shashi Singh anchored the pro-

and placement of students.

Seminar on climate change crisis and its impact on tribals

PNS: RANCHI

Community

Governance,

Uttarakhand,

A two-day seminar on the topic of climate change crisis and its impact on tribals and other traditional forestdependent communities is being held on 27 and 28 June 2024 at Dr. Ramdayal Munda Janjati Kalyan Sansthan Morabadi, Ranchi under the aegis of Institute of Ranchi, Jharkhand. The inaugural session on the first day will start at 10 am. After that, the first session will discuss the understanding of climate crisis and its ill effects. In this session, representatives from Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Himachal. Maharashtra, Gujarat and Delhi will share their experiences of climate crisis in their state and region. After lunch, in the afternoon session, there will be discussion mainly on the actions, programs and policies being taken at the government level on climate crisis. In this sequence, knowledgeable representatives will present their views on the government's response to the climate crisis, government's initiative to reduce climate crisis and climate justice.

Champai rules out ministerial role for Kalpana

Chief Minister Champai Soren today ruled out that newly elected Gandey (Giridih) MLA and wife of former chief minister Hemant Soren will be

inducted into the ministry. While talking with media persons here at Dhanbad circuit house in a query over whether Kalpna Soren would be inducted in the expansion of ministry likely to be held soon, the chief minister said that he has no information about it. The Chief Minister's remarks assume importance as on Tuesday, the Chief Minister met former Chief Minister and her husband Hemant Soren at Birsa Munda Hotwar jail. Congress Chief Gulam Mohamamed Mir accompanied her. Prior to Tuesday's meeting, she had also met Hemant Soren with Chief Minister Hemant Soren at Hotwar jail. Also there was speculation that five months ahead of assembly polls, the Champai Sorenled coalition government in Jharkhand may witness a cabinet expansion in July.

Soren's wife Kalpana could be one of the inductees.There are two vacancies in the Champai's Cabinet and both may be filled to send a political message before assembly polls. Kalpana had won Gandey assembly by-election in May. In the runup to parliamentary elections, she emerged as the party's star campaigner in the absence of Hemant, who has been lodged in jail since January in connection with a money laundering scam linked with an alleged land grab. On the induction of new ministers in government, Champai Soren said that there is no plan of ministry expansion at hand so far. If the ministry will be expanded he will inform it duly. However, the chief minister said that all (expansion of ministry and induction of new ministers) will be cleared in two or three days. The CM claimed that his Mahagathbandhan government is strong and is engaged in development work after the Lok Sabha

School children take pledge against Drug Abuse in State JEPC instructs setting up Tobacco Prohibition Complex in all schools

22 the children took out a



PNS: RANCHI

On the occasion of World Prevention observed on June 26, pledge taking and prize distribution ceremony was held on the last day of 'A War Against Drugs' campaign in all the schools across the State.

As a part of the Sankalp Sabha, the children took a pledge against the use and consumption of intoxicants and narcotics. A prize distribution ceremony was also held where district level officials rewarded the children.

against Jharkhand Education Project Jharkhand on June 18. As a rally in the neighbouring areas around the schools to create awareness against drug abuse. On June 18 school children showcased their

drugs was started by the Council under the School Education and Literacy Department Government of part of the campaign, the children participated in a

consumption of

mega

ideological talent through various activities and competitions. On June

against drug abuse through a cycle rally. As per the instructions received by the Central School build

Education and Literacy Department, the Jharkhand Education Project Council has issued directives 'Tobacco Prohibition Complex' in all the schools across the State and also within a radius of 100 meters. Under this, it will be prohibited to set up any kind of tobacco shop in the school premises and also in a radius of 110 meters while messages against drug abuse will also be painted on the walls. In this, selling of tobacco products near educational institutions will also be prohibited

Women's Cong prepares action plan for assembly polls

After the upcoming assembly elections and the instructions received from the national leaders, the Mahila Congress has prepared its action plan. Under which the women's organization wing will work in the coming days. This information was given by State Women Congress President Gunjan Singh during a press conference held at Congress Bhawan on Wednesday.

Singh told that in a high-level meeting held with National President Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and KC Venugopal in Delhi on June 24, the Mahila Congress Committee has been entrusted with the responsibility of working under an action plan for the preparation of Jharkhand Assembly Elections-2024. The party women wing State Chief said that under the action plan, the Mahila Committee will first convene a meeting of the State Executive Committee in the coming month of August. "In which National President of Mahila Congress Alka Lamba, Jharkhand State Incharge Ghulam Ahmed Mir State Congress President Rajesh Thakur ji will be present. A training program will be organized for three days for the Block Mahila Congress Presidents. In the next link of the action plan, Mahila Congress will work on local issues, will take the party's manifesto to the people," she added.

Modi lauds Birla for condemning Emergency

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for his condemnation of the Emergency in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday and said it was a wonderful gesture to stand in silence in honour of all those who suffered during those days.

Birla read out a resolution condemning the Emergency in the Lok Sabha, shortly after he was elected speaker, and flayed the then-government headed by prime minister Indira Gandhi.

A large number of MPs stood in silence for a few moments amid protests by Congress MPs and some other opposition members. Modi said in a social media post, "I

am glad that the Honourable Speaker strongly condemned the Emergency, highlighted the excesses committed during that time and also mentioned the manner in which democracy was

The Emergency was imposed 50 years ago but it is important for today's youth to know about it because it remains a fitting example of what happens when the Constitution is trampled over, public opinion is stifled and institutions are destroyed, he added. The happenings during the Emergency exemplified what a dictatorship looks like, Modi said.

termed the decision by then prime minister Indira Gandhi an attack on the Constitution, triggering a wave of protests by the opposition in the House.

Birla's reference to the Emergency, shortly after his election as Lok Sabha speaker, also saw a face-off between the government and the opposition in the first session of the lower house.

This House strongly condemns the decision to impose Emergency in 1975. We appreciate the determination of all those people who opposed the Emergency, fought and fulfilled the responsibility of protecting India's democracy," Birla said amid vociferous protests by opposition parties. Opposition MPs, including from the Congress, were on their feet, raising slogans against the reference to the Emergency.

"June 25, 1975 will always be known as a black chapter in the history of India. On this day, then prime minister Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency in the country and attacked the Constitution made by Babasaheb Ambedkar," the speaker said.

Birla said India was known all over the world as the mother of democracy. "Democratic values and debate have always been supported in India. Democratic values have always been protected, Speaker Om Birla read out the they have always been encouraged.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Speaker Om Birla during a meeting at the Parliament House in New Delhi

dictatorship on such an India. The democratic values of India were crushed and freedom of expression was strangled," Birla said.

He said the rights of Indian citizens were crushed and their freedom snatched away. "Those were the times when opposition leaders were jailed, the entire nation was turned into a prison. The then dictatorial government had put several restrictions on the media

and there was restraint on the autonomy of judiciary," Birla said. The Speaker urged members to observe silence for a while and later adjourned the proceedings for the day. Soon after the House was adjourned for the day, BJP members staged protests by waving placards and raising slogans outside Parliament.

BJP MPs, including Union ministers demanded an apology from Congress over the imposition of Emergency in 1975 and violating the Constitution.

With the Congress and its allies in the INDIA bloc persistently targeting the Narendra Modi government for its alleged attack on constitutional values, the ruling alliance has sought to turn the tables by launching a frontal counterattack over the Emergency issue against the backdrop of its 49th anniversary on June 25. Soon after Lok Sabha Speaker Om

condemning the imposition of Emergency and flaying then prime minister Índira Gandhi for her attack on the Constitution, a large number of BJP-led NDA MPs assembled outside, carrying placards and raising slogans.
"Emergency ke liye Congress

sharm karo" and "emergency ke live maafi mango" were among the slogans raised by them. Union ministers Ashwini Vaishnaw, Pralhad Joshi, Kiren Rijiju and Lalan Singh joined other MPs in attacking the Congress.

BJP MP and the party's national spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "It is necessary to show the mirror to those who are talking about saving the Constitution and holding its copies in their hands. They were those who tried to erase the Constitution." "That's why we are hearing the slogan: Rahul Gandhi 'maafi mango' (apologise)," Patra JD(U) MP and Union Minister

Lalan Singh slammed the Congress, saying the party, which had "ripped" the Constitution to shreds by imposing Emergency, does not have the right to talk about protecting its values.

Indira Ğandhi, grandmother of the Leader of Opposition (Rahul Gandhi), had imposed the Emergency. What is their right today to talk about the Constitution? Do they have the Constitution," he asked. Union ministers Arjun Ram Meghwal and Gajendra Singh Sekhawat also joined the protest.

BJP MP and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad hailed Birla for bringing the resolution on Emergency, saying The Congress necessary". government under then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had imposed Emergency just to hold on to power, he said.

Union minister Giriraj Singh took a swipe at the Congress' allies such as the Samajwadi Party, saying Akhilesh Yadav's father and socialist stalwart Mulayam Singh Yadav was among the leaders arrested during the Emergency. BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj said the

Congress should apologise to the country for "murdering" democracy 50 years ago. "How bizarre it is that the Congress flashes the Constitution in Parliament but never looks within. The Congress has forgotten its own history that 50 years ago it had murdered democracy by imposing Emergency to serve its selfish political motive and lust for power," she said. Thousands of people were arrested overnight, the BJP MP

Since Tuesday, the BJP held a large number of events across the country to mark the Emergency's anniversary and the exercise will continue for a week.

Not enough internal demand for satellite launch market in India yet: ISRO chairman



PNS NEW DELHI

 $I_{
m on~Wednesday~said~there}^{
m SRO~Chairman~S~Somanath}$ not enough internal demand for the satellite launch market in India but it can be created through more work on the application of satellite technology.

Addressing the India Space Congress 2024, he said big companies are willing to enter concerned about the timeline for breaking even and securing orders.

"When I talk to many of those industries who are willing to come and set up facilities, they are all very ready to do it. But they are asking when they are going to break even and where the orders are so that they can safely invest in this. I think this is a big question.

"It is the bigger challenge of convincing investors to come in a big way in big state projects," the leading space scientist said.

At a press conference on the sidelines of the Space Congress, he said, "We need

create more internal That implies internal demand is not enough. All of us are working towards that. The demand will come from the user side, from the communication segment, which, of course, includes big satellite builders."
"We would like to find orbital slots and frequencies which can be given to industry to build satellites and launchers. This is the first step towards creating internal demand. InSpace already has announced a funding plan to create a new earth observation constellation. That's again another step towards creating internal demand." Somanath also said although

the cost of accessing space has decreased significantly globally, largely due to ŠpaceX, India's rocket costs have not seen similar reductions.

small satellite launches and attract new participants in the space sector, he said.

Somanath mentioned that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for Amrit Kaal includes extending human space activity beyond the Gaganyaan mission, with the goal of landing on the moon

However, he said India's current rockets are not sufficient for round trips to the moon. Developing rockets with higher payload capacity is essential for both bringing back samples and future human missions, the ISRO chairman said.

Three new criminal laws to be rolled out from next week

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Union Home Ministry is gearing up to roll out the three new criminal laws from next week with 40 lakh grassroots level functionaries trained to ensure that people are aware about the legislations and the impact these will have on everyone, particularly women and children, official sources said Wednesday. Over 5.65 lakh police, prison,

forensics, judicial and prosecution officials have also been trained about the new laws — the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 — enacted last year. These laws, which will come into effect from July 1, are set to replace the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian

As the new criminal laws laid emphasis on technology in investigation, trial and court proceedings, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has made 23 functional modifications in the existing Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems (CCTNS) application under which all cases are registered now in every police station in the country, the sources said. The NCRB is also providing technical assistance to the states and Union territories for seamless transition to the new system.

Further, the NCRB formed 36



for constant review and handholding of the states and territories implementation of the new criminal laws. For capacity building, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has developed training modules and shared with all the stakeholders. The BPR&D also conducted

training courses, seminars in which 40,317 officers and personnel have been trained.

Under its handholding, the states and Union territories have also undertaken capacity building of 5,84,174, including 5,65,746 police officers and personnel from prison, forensics, judicial and prosecution, the sources said. IGOT- Karmayogi Bharat and BPR&D are offering three training courses each on the new criminal laws for which officials have 2,17,985 enrolled so far.

In order to ensure that citizens are aware about the transformative reforms and

the positive impact it will have on the citizens particularly women and children, the ministries of women and child development, rural development and panchayati have undertaken dissemination of the new laws through webinars in which nearly 40 lakh grassroots level functionaries participated, the sources said. The Department of Legal

four conferences in state capitals in which delegates from diverse array of fields, including the Chief Justice of India, judges of the Supreme Court and high courts and domain experts have taken

Under the guidance of Department of Higher Education, the UGC has circulated informative flyers on new laws to 1,200 universities and 40,000 colleges and AICTE to approximately institutions for sensitisation among faculties and students about the new laws.

The National Informatics

Centre (NIC) has developed Applications, eSakshya, NyayShruti & eSummon Apps, for facilitating videography and photography of crime scenes, judicial facilitating hearings and delivery court electronically under the new criminal laws. In order to give wider publicity and spread awareness among the public about three new criminal laws, the Ministry of Information Broadcasting has taken up various initiatives. The Press Information Bureau

(PIB) has conducted 17 nationwide 'Vartalaps', media workshop, primarily with the regional media, in states capitals about the benefits of new criminal laws. Public broadcasters Doordarshan and Akashvani have also organised special programmes across the country to highlight significant provisions and

MyGov has uploaded the informative flyers on the new criminal laws on MyGov social media handles and sent an e-mailer to over seven crore citizens on February 19 through eSampark.

The sources said the states and Union territories are fully geared up in terms of technology, capacity building and awareness generation to implement the new laws. The legislations were passed

by Parliament in its winter session in 2023. They were assented to by the

President and notified in the Gazette of India on December

Hope suspension of MPs will not be repeated in LS: Rahul

ongratulating Om Birla Cfor being elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha for a second term, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and other Opposition MPs Wednesday hoped they would be allowed to raise the voice of people in the House and incidents like the suspension of MPs will not be repeated. They also urged Speaker to ensure impartiality.

Rahul Gandhi said the Opposition wanted the House to function "often and well" and added that it was very important that cooperation happened with trust. Countering the government's

claim that the previous Lok Sabha clocked high productivity, the Congress high leader also said running the opposition is an undemocratic

"I'd like to congratulate you for your successful election... I congratulate you on behalf of the entire INDIA alliance.

'This House represents the voice of people of India... Of course, the government has political power, but the opposition also represents the voice of India's people," Rahul Gandhi said.

He said the opposition would like to assist the Speaker in his work. "I am confident you will allow us to speak in House," he

Pointing out that this time the opposition

significantly more voices of the Indian people than last time, Rahul Gandhi stressed that it is very important that

the voice of opposition is allowed to be represented in the House "I am confident that you will allow us to represent our voice, allow us to speak, to

represent voice of people of India," the leader of

The question, he said, is not how efficiently the House is run, but the question is how much of India's voice is allowed to be heard in the

"The idea that you can run the House efficiently by silencing the voice of opposition is a non-democratic idea. "This election has shown that the people of India expect the opposition to defend the Constitution of this country and we are confident that by allowing opposition to speak, you will do your duty of defending the Constitution of

India," the Congress MP said.

Division of votes not allowed in Speaker's election: TMC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

¬rinamool Congress (TMC) leader ▲ Abhishek Banerjee said on Wednesday the pro-tem speaker did not allow voting in the election for the Lok Sabha speaker even as several opposition MPs sought a division of votes, adding that it showed the government did not have the numbers.

He told reporters outside Parliament that, according to the rules, division of votes has to be allowed even if a single member demands it. "The rule says that if any member of the House asks for division, the pro-tem Speaker has to allow it. You can clearly see and hear from the footage of the Lok Sabha that several members of the Opposition sought and asked for a

division," Banerjee said. "The motion was adopted without putting it to vote. This is a clear testament to the fact that the ruling dispensation, the BJP, does not have the numbers... This Government is running without the numbers. It's illegal, immoral, unethical and unconstitutional and the people of the country have already shown them the door. It's just a matter of time before they're shown the door again," the Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP said.

National Democratic Alliance (NDA) nominee Om Birla was elected Lok Sabha speaker after a motion moved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was adopted through voice vote, capping intense debate on the issue with the opposition



Pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab made the announcement after the Opposition, which had forwarded the name of eight-term Congress MP Kodikunnil Suresh as its candidate, did not press for votes to the

Responding to a question that the Opposition did not press for a division of votes, Banerjee said, "The question is not about how strongly the division (of votes) was sought. The rule says that even if one out of 500 people ask for division, it has to be allowed."

Only the Pro-tem Speaker can clarify why the division wasn't allowed. He was sitting in the chair and hence he can answer," he added. Another TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee also said the Speaker's election was not conducted in accordance with the law.

Self-reliance in defence manufacturing gets boost

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

viving a boost to self-reliance Uin defence manufacturing, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday here handed over the Medium Range-Microwave Obscurant Chaff Rocket (MR-MOCR) to the Indian Navy, Defence Ministry said.

Giving details, officials said Microwave Obscurant Chaff (MOC), a niche technology developed by DRDO's Defence Laboratory, Jodhpur, obscures radar signals and creates a microwave shield around platforms and assets, thus reducing radar detection. Special type of fibres, with

diameter of few microns and unique microwave obscuration properties, has been assembled in the medium range chaff rocket. The rocket, when fired, forms microwave obscurant cloud in space spreading over a sufficient area, with adequate persistence time, thus creating an effective shield against hostile threats having Radio Frequency The Phase-I trials of MR-

MOCR were successfully conducted from Indian Navy ships, demonstrating the MOC cloud blooming and being persistent in space. In Phase-II trials, the Radar Cross Section (RCS) reduction of an aerial target to the extent of 90 per cent has been demonstrated and cleared by the Indian Navy. The number of MR-MOCR, meeting the qualification requirements, has been successfully handed over to the Indian Navy. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh complimented DRDO and the Indian Navy on the successful development of MR-MOCR. He termed the MOC technology as another step towards achieving Aatmanirbharta in defence.

The MR-MOCR was handed over by DRDO chief Samir V Kamat to Director General of Naval Armament Inspection, Indian Navy Rear Admiral Brijesh Vashistha. The DRDO Chairman congratulated the Defence Laboratory, Jodhpur team for this significant achievement.

Trainees of King Fahad Naval Academy join 1TS of Indian Navy PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

n an effort to further Lenhance bilateral ties with Saudi Arabia, 76 trainees of King Fahad Naval Academy of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) joined the First Training Squadron, 1TS of the Indian Navy at Southern Naval Command, Kochi on Monday, navy said here on Wednesday.
Giving details, officials said

this is the second batch of trainees who would be undergoing training with 1TS, the first batch having undergone similar training in May – June 2023.

The trainees were extended a warm welcome by Senior Officer 1TS, Captain Anshul Kishore during the inaugural address outlining the four weeks long training programme. The training training curriculum ranges from basic seamanship activities to

during the harbour phase, whereas the sea phase focuses on practical exposure to nuances of life at sea.

The trainees would also be familiarised with sail training onboard sail training ship of

The afloat attachment of RSNF trainees is being conducted alongside Indian Naval trainees of 107 Integrated Officers Training Course (IOTC) fostering camaraderie and mutual understanding between the trainees of both maritime nations.

It may be recalled that Admiral Fahad Abdullah S Al-Ghofaily, Chief of Staff, RSNF had visited Southern Naval Command in January during his official visit to India. The bilateral training cooperation between the two Navies is a testimony to longstanding friendship and shared commitment between India

and Saudi Arabia.

Ex-Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey dies

PNS NEW DELHI

Former foreign secretary Muchkund Dubey died at a hospital here on Wednesday due to health complications. He was 90.

He was not keeping well for the past few weeks and had been admitted to hospital in Delhi earlier this month. Dubey is survived by his wife and two daughters. His funeral is planned for Thursday at Lodhi Road crematorium, it was learnt. The veteran diplomat served

as India's foreign secretary during 1990-91. He was also India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh and Permanent Representative to UN Organisations in Geneva. After retirement from foreign service, Dubey also served as the president of New Delhibased Council for Social Development (CSD), he said. The former foreign secretary was also considered an expert on disarmament.

Congress-led UDF slams Kerala Govt in Assembly over price rise

The Congress-led UDF opposition in Kerala on Wednesday slammed the ruling Left in the assembly over the issue of rise in prices of vegetables, fish and poultry in the state, accusing it of being 'oblivious' to the plight of the common people.

The Opposition made the allegation in its motion seeking adjournment of the House proceedings to discuss the issue of rise in prices of vegetables and other food items in the state. UDF MLA Roji M John said

that last week the government said in the House that it was not aware about the rise in prices, which indicates that it was oblivious to what was happening and how people were being affected.

The allegations by the UDF were rejected by state Minister for Food and Civil Supplies G R Anil claiming that the government has carried out effective market interventions to control the rise in prices.

The minister also contended that the rise in prices of such items and inflation were higher in the neighbouring states than in

He also said that adverse weather conditions and reduced supply of vegetables from neighbouring states also



contributed to a decrease in their availability and a resultant rise in prices. Besides that, the financial restrictions imposed on Kerala by the Centre were also a reason for the rise in prices of commodities in the state, he claimed.

Anil said the government was carrying out effective market interventions and therefore, there was no need to adjourn the House to discuss the

In view of the explanation given by the minister, this is where you should Speaker A N Shamseer correct yourself. In view of denied permission for the notice to adjourn the House. In response, Leader of Opposition in the state

that government appeared to have no answers as to what steps it has taken to address the issue of price rise as the minister primarily spoke about the public distribution system and ration shops.

alleged that the government, its agencies and departments have seriously failed to address the issue of price rise.

When you (government) talk of making corrections, the serious failure on the part the government, its agencies and departments to address the issue of price rise,

we are staging a walkout," he said. The prices of vegetables and fish are soaring in Kerala, with vendors attributing it to the extreme summer and untimely rains in Tamil Nadu, the major vegetable supplier to Kerala.

Fish prices are skyrocketing due to the shortage of landings caused by the 52-day annual trawling ban which came into effect from lune 9. Scatters and it. June 9. Sardines, which are considered the common man's fish and usually sold at Rs 100 and below, are now sold for Rs 300 to 400 per kg, a point which was also raised in the House by UDF MLA John during the proceedings.

Assam flood situation improves, nearly 1.5 lakh still affected



Assam's flood situation improved on Wednesday with the water level of major rivers and their tributaries receding even as nearly 1.50 lakh people in seven districts were reeling under the deluge, a bulletin said.

flood-hit districts witnessed light to moderate rainfall, leading to a fall in the water level of all major rivers flowing below the danger mark, except the Kushiyara river in Karimganj, according to the Assam State Disaster Management (ASDMA). Authority

(ASDMA).
Nearly 1.50 lakh people were reeling under the deluge in Barpeta, Cachar, Darrang, Dhemaji, Goalpara, Kamrup and Karimganj.

The number of affected people was 1.53 lakh on Tuesday.

The toll in this year's flood,

to 41 with one death due to drowning reported from Cachar district on Tuesday, the bulletin said. Karimganj is the worst hit with nearly 84,000 people suffering, followed by Cachar with 52,400 and Darrang with 6,500, it said.

Altogether, 149 camps and relief distribution centres have been set up by the district administrations with over 26,000 people taking shelter there.

At present, 556 villages are currently underwater and 1,547.35 hectares of crop areas have been damaged, according to the bulletin of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority. Embankments, roads, bridges

and other infrastructure have been damaged by floodwater in Chirang, Darrang, Goalpara, Golaghat, Kamrup, Kokrajhar, Nagaon, Nalbari, Tamulpur, Udalguri, Tamulpur,



Incessant rain causes extensive damage in Kerala

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Houses were damaged, trees uprooted, and water levels rose steadily in rivers and dams across Kerala after heavy rains accompanied by strong winds continued to lash several parts of the state on Wednesday.

High tides and sea incursions were reported in districts like Thrissur and Ernakulam, and landslides wrecked havoc in the high ranges of Kozhikode. Several houses have were damaged in Alappuzha, Kannur and Idukki districts following heavy downpour and winds since on Tuesday night, authorities said. Á portion of the "annadana mandapam" (dining hall) at the famed Ochira Parabrahma Temple in Kollam district collapsed in incessant rains. A number of trees reportedly got uprooted on the banks of Periyar River in Aluva near Ernakulam. Shutters at a number of dams,

like Malankara, Pambla, and

release excess water. The District Administration of Ernakulam urged people living on the banks of the Muvattupuzha Thodupuzha rivers to maintain extra vigil as three shutters of Malankara Dam were raised by one metre each. In view of continuing rains, a holiday was declared for educational institutions in for educational institutions in

Kallarkutty, were raised to

Kottayam district Wednesday. As per the latest radar imagery, moderate to intense rainfall with winds gusting up to 40 kmph is expected in Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, and Thrissur districts in the coming hours. The state Management Authority warned that water logging on major roads and poor visibility may lead to congestion. suggested regulating traffic effectively and restricting

non-essential movements of



Drug trafficking has declined in Manipur with people's support: CM

Wednesday said trafficking cases declined in the state to some extent as people from the hills and valley and security forces supported administration in its effort to address the issue.

He also claimed that poppy plantations in the state have also decreased by 50-60 per cent as per satellite data mapping. Singh called for the eradication of drug menace in the state.

"With the active support of the hill village chiefs, valley-based civil societies and security personnel, drug trafficking in the state has declined to some extent..Even poppy plantations have decreased by 50-60 per cent as per satellite data mapping," he said at an event organised here on the occasion of International Day against Drug Abuse and Illegal

Manipur in the 1990s was Manipur Chief Minister N badly affected by the drug positive cases was then one of the highest in the country, he

Singh also said his government had launched a war against drug abuse, and many smugglers and individuals associated with international cartels were arrested.

The chief minister flagged off a bike rally to observe the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illegal Trafficking from

secretariat. "More than a hundred officers and security personnel, who are taking part in the rally, will carry the message of the importance of war against cross-border trafficking in the state. With support from the masses, the government will remain committed to uproot the drug menace from the state," he

No order from Raj Thackeray to support any party in council polls: MNS leader

MNS leader Sandeep Deshpande on Wednesday said there was no order for them from party chief Raj Thackeray to vote for any particular party in the polls underway on Wednesday for four seats of the Maharashtra legislative

Notably, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) supported the ruling Sena (MNS) supported the ruling Mahayuti in the state, comprising the BJP, Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the NCP headed by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, in the recently-concluded Lok Sabha elections. Polling was being held on Wednesday in the Mumbai Graduates, Mumbai Teachers, Nashik Teachers and Konkan Craduates, constituencies of the state.

Graduates constituencies of the state



legislative council, as the terms of their sitting members are expiring in July. In the Konkan Graduates constituency, there is a direct fight between sitting BJP MLC Niranjan Davkhare and Congress candidate Ramesh Keer. Last month, the MNS fielded filmmaker Abhijit Panse from the Konkan Graduates seat but he later withdrew from the fray.

Asked about the MNS stand for the MLC polls after it supported the Mahayuti in the Lok Sabha elections, Deshpande told reporters here, "We are free to vote today for any candidate of the same free to the same f of our choice. There is no order from our leader Raj Thackeray to vote for a

particular party or candidate." The MNS electors will vote as per their individual choice, he added.

4.37 lakh girl students enroll for 2 financial aid schemes in Gujarat **PTI** ■ ITANAGAR

Nearly 4.37 lakh girls have registered to avail benefits under two schemes launched by the Gujarat government in March to provide financial assistance to eligible female students from Classes 9 to 12, officials

While 4.03 lakh girl students have registered for the 'Namo Lakshmi Yojana', nearly 37,000 have enrolled for the 'Namo Saraswati Vigyan Sadhana Yojana' as part of Kanya Kelavni Mahotsav 2024', an annual drive to enlist students in Class 1 in Gujarat, an official release said on Tuesday.

Under the 'Namo Lakshmi Yojana', the government will provide Rs 50,000 over a period of four years to girls wanting to take admission in Classes 9 to 12 for the academic year 2024-25.

This scheme is applicable to girls whose family income is less than Rs 6 lakh per annum, said the release.

The beneficiary students, after securing admission in Class 9, will receive Rs 500 per month for 10 months each year, and the remaining Rs 10,000 will be disbursed after they pass the Class 10 board exam, it said.

Students in Classes 11 and 12 will receive Rs 750 per month for 10 months each year, and Rs 15,000 will be given after



they clear the Class 12 board exam, the release said. The scheme will cover girls studying in government,

aided and private schools. The 'Namo Saraswati Vigyan Sadhana Yojana' aims to encourage students to opt for the science stream and excel in it, said the release.

Students in Classes 11 and 12 who have opted for science will receive Rs 1,000 per month for 10 months, totalling Rs 20,000 over two years, and the remaining Rs 5,000 will be disbursed after they pass the Class 12 board

The aid amount under both the schemes for June and July months will be credited to the bank account of the student's mother or the pupil's own account through (Direct Transfer), said the release.

Impasse over swearing-in: 2 newly elected TMC MLAs on sit-in, awaiting Guv's arrival in House

A mid an impasse over their swearing-in, two newly elected Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLAs started a sit-in on Wednesday on the premises of the West Bengal assembly, awaiting Governor C V Ananda Bose's arrival by 4 pm to administer their oath of office or

authorise the Speaker to do it.
The two MLAs, Sayantika
Bandyopadhyay and Rayat Hossain Sarkar were elected from Baranagar near Kolkata and Bhagwangola in

Murshidabad district, respectively.
Raj Bhavan has maintained that the oathtaking ceremony should occur before Bose at the Governor's House.

'We have requested the Honourable Governor to come to the assembly and administer the oath of office or delegate it to the Speaker. However, he has



declined both options. Therefore, we are waiting on the assembly staircase," Sarkar told reporters

Sarkar and Bandyopadhyay were seen carrying placards requesting the governor to allow them to fulfil their duties as elected representatives.

"Until we take the oath, we cannot function as MLAs. The people of our constituencies are suffering," Bandyopadhyay said.

Sarkar also mentioned that he and Bandyopadhyay will wait until 4 pm for

the Governor to conduct the oath-taking ceremony or give his consent for the swearing-in to take place in the presence of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. Speaker Biman Banerjee stated, "The

oath-taking ceremony is a constitutional protocol, and it is very unfortunate that we are facing this situation. If the Governor is willing, he can come to the Assembly and administer the oath. We will make all necessary arrangements. We have no objection. But there should not be an impasse.

The Governor had invited both MLAs to attend the oath-taking ceremony at Raj Bhavan on June 26.

According to constitutional norms, the Governor can administer the oath to an MLA. However, conventionally in the case of by-polls, he assigns the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker to perform this duty in the Assembly.

HC refuses to interfere in hijab ban decision of Mumbai college

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday refused to interfere in a decision taken by a city-based college to impose a ban on hijab, burka and naqab in its premises.

A division bench of Justices A S Chandurkar and Rajesh Patil said it was not inclined to interfere in the decision taken by the college and dismissed a petition filed against it by nine girl students, who are in the second and third year of a science degree course.

The students moved the HC this month, challenging a directive issued by the Chembur Trombay Éducation Society's NG Acharya and DK Marathe College imposing a dress code under which students cannot



wear a hijab, naqab, burka, stoles, caps and badges inside the premises.

The petitioners claimed such a directive was against their fundamental rights practice their religion, right to privacy and right to choice. The plea termed the college action as "arbitrary, action unreasonable, bad-in-law and

perverse".

The petitioner's advocate, Altaf Khan, last week submitted before the HC certain verses from the Quran to support their claim that wearing hijab was an essential part of Islam. Apart from the right to

practice their religion, the petitioners were also relying on their right to choice and privacy while opposing the college's decision, he said.

The college had claimed the decision to ban hijab, naqab and burka in its premises \bar{was} merely a disciplinary action for uniform dress code and was not against the Muslim

community. Senior counsel Anil Anturkar, appearing for the college management, said the dress code was for all students belonging to every religion and caste.

The girls, however, claimed in their plea that such a directive was "nothing but colourable exercise of power". They initially requested the college management and principal to withdraw the restriction on naqab, burka and hijab and allow it "as a matter of right of choice, dignity and privacy in the classroom". The girls also raised their

grievance against the notice with the chancellor, vice chancellor of the Mumbai University and the University Grants Commission, requesting their intervention "to upkeep the spirit of imparting education to all citizens

discrimination". However, when the students did not get any response, they filed a petition in the HC.

CM Sawant orders high-level probe PTI PANAJI family, Sawant told reporters that the state government will AGoa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has met rebuild the house and all the expenses would be recovered from the accused in the case. the family whose house in

House partially razed in Goa village:

Assagao village has been partially demolished by some persons allegedly over a property dispute and ordered a high-level inquiry into the incident. After meeting the Agarwadekar family late Tuesday night, Sawant also

assured them the government would rebuild their house and the expenses would be recovered from the culprits. The incident took place at the one-storey house in Assagao village of North Goa at around 11.30 am Saturday.

Some persons allegedly

kidnapped a man and his son

living in the house and later

dumped them in the village, an official said on Tuesday. Police have arrested two persons, including one who claims to be the property owner, and are searching for more suspects in connection

with incident, he said. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Tuesday said no After meeting the affected

one would be spared. He along with a team of government officials visited the spot and met the affected

Local MLA Delilah Lobo and Calangute legislator Michael Lobo were also present during the CM's visit.

family

Prinsha Agarwadekar, a member of the affected family, told the chief minister that police were reluctant to act against the accused though she personally rushed to a local police station on Saturday when the demolition was being carried out and her husband and son were kidnapped. Sawant assured that a high-

level inquiry committee led by state Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel would conduct a probe into the incident and all those found guilty of shielding the offenders would be taken to

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Optimistic outlook

Indian economy continues to grow despite facing hurdles like inflation and unemployment

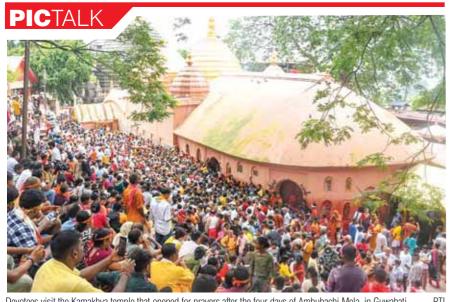
■ n his second term, Prime Minister Modi had given a call to make India a 'five trillion economy.' Though the dream is still to be realised, it gave a sense of direction and I hope to India's entrepreneurs and stakeholders. But every goal has a meandering path one must negotiate to reach it. Indeed, as the world's fifth-largest economy, India continues to capture the attention of global investors and economists alike. It is a key player in the global economic landscape. However, several impediments need to be done away with to reach the goal. Recently, Shaktikanta Das, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), expressed confidence in India achieving a 7.2 per cent GDP growth rate for the current fiscal year. This assertion is significant from the policy point of view and needs scrutiny of the factors contributing to this optimistic outlook. No doubt, India's economy has shown resilience in the face of various challenges, including the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and global geopolitical tensions. Several economic



indicators reveal a mixed yet promising picture. In recent years, the Indian economy has been touted as the fastest-growing economy in the world. The Indian economy has demonstrated robust growth in recent years, recovering from the pandemic. Its GDP grew by 7.8 per cent in the first quarter of FY 2023-24, indicating a strong economic momentum.

But on the downside, price rise and Inflation are a big cause of concern. Right now, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation stood at 4.6 per cent in May 2024, within the RBI's comfort zone of 4% ±2% which could be counted as a positive indication for the growth. Another grey area of the economy has been unem-

ployment. The unemployment rate remains a critical issue, with urban unemployment at 7.8 per cent and rural unemployment at 7.4 per cent in June 2024. Despite improvements, job creation in key sectors like manufacturing and services remains low. Jobs are essential for sustaining growth which is a red flag for growth right now. Sincere efforts need to be made to tackle this menace as it can mitigate all the positive indicators. On positive side, India continues to attract significant FDI, which totalled \$55.3 billion in the first half of 2024. Besides, the growth of the digital economy has had a good impact on the ease of doing business. India's digital economy is booming, with a projected value of \$1 trillion by 2025. Not to forget the contribution of India's young population which presents a significant demographic advantage. With over 50 per cent of its population under the age of 25, India has a large and dynamic workforce that can drive consumption and innovation. The confidence expressed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das in achieving a 7.2 per cent growth rate this year highlights the resilience and potential of the Indian economy. However, addressing the challenges of inflation, global economic uncertainties, and climate change will be crucial in ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth.



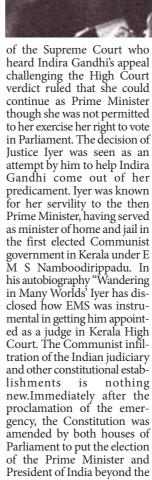
Devotees visit the Kamakhya temple that opened for prayers after the four days of Ambubachi Mela, in Guwahati

The dark days of India's Emergency



This period saw the suspension of civil liberties and the censoring of the press leaving an indelible mark on the nation's political landscape

inashakale Viparith Budhi (Sanskrit for 'as doom approaches mind reverses') is what Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan told his friends when he was arrested and was being led off by the cops on 25th June 1975 after the proclamation of internal emergency across the nation by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Even members of her cabinet came to know about the proclamation of emergency from the next day's newspapers and the Akashwani bulletins.Jagmohan Lal Sinha, a judge of Allahabad High Court heard the election petition filed by socialist party leader Raj Narayan against Indira Gandhi alleging that she had violated all rules specified in the statute book while fighting the 1971 Lok Sabha election from Rae Barelli. There was a nationwide belief among the leaders of the opposition parties that chemically treated ballot papers were used in the election. These ballot papers were supplied by the then USSR and they bore the symbol of Congress(Indira) but remained invisible at the time of voting. It was said that the voter's original mark would disappear after voting, and the Congress mark would appear. (Ref: Courting Destiny, A Memoir by Shanti Bhushan, who appeared for Raj Narayan in the case). But Shanti Bhushan decided not to go ahead with the charge of the fake ballot paper and preferred the allegation that Indira had misused government machinery in fighting the poll. The court was convinced of the charge that she had misused her position and power while fighting the poll. Justice Sinha set aside Indira's election and disqualified her for six years. But Sinha stayed his judgment to enable Indira Gandhi to appeal to the Supreme Court. Shanti Bhushan powers of Courts with retrosays in his memoirs that there had spective effect. been several precedents before in which the election of sitting chief ministers had been set aside and they stood disqualified for the and the Courts had never grant-happened during the



This was the infamous 39th Amendment of the Constitution (which was later declared unconstitutional by Emergency is known to most ed a stay to them during the pendency of their appeals. V R

Emergency is known to most of the literate people. State Krishna Iyer, the vacation judge Governments not friendly to



NOT EXPERIENCED THE KIND OF DICTATORSHIP THAT WAS IN FORCE **DURING THE DAYS** OF INTERNAL **EMERGENCY. THE CONSTITUTION WAS DISTORTED AND MISINTERPRETED** WHILE COURTS OF LAW WERE

TO DATE, INDIA HAS

the Centre were summarily dismissed making use of the provisions under Article 356 of the Constitution. Press Censorship was imposed which made newspapers get prior sanction from censoring officers to publish news. To date, India has not experienced the kind of dictatorship that was in force during the days of internal emergency. The Constitution was distorted and misinterpreted while Courts of law were sterilized. The Preamble of the Constitution itself was amended unconstitutionally and terms like Socialism, sécularism and unity of the Nation were inserted in it.

This was done after putting all opposition members of parliament in prison under the DIR (Defense of India Rule 1962) and the Maintenance of Internal Security Act 1974, the statutes that gave power to the government to jail anyone daring to question Indira Gandhi's superiority. Lalu Prasad Yadav named his daughter Misa Bharati to commemorate his arrest under the said Act during the emer-

members are singing a paean to the Nehru-Gandhi clan!Indira Gandhi and the congress falled to learn any thing from the drubbing they got for subverting the Constitution. In 1984, the Congress again derailed peo-

Now Lalu and his family

ple's mandate by getting the N T Rama Rao-led TDP government in Andhra Pradesh dismissed and anointing a faction led by Bhaskara Rao as chief minister. But NTR succeeded in getting his chair back thanks to the initiative by the opposition parties that included Janata Party, BJP and anti-Indira forces. Rajiv Gandhi during his tenure as Prime Minister tried in vain to muzzle the media by attempting to enact a legislation "Defamation Bill" to curb any kind of reports against the Government. This had to be dropped midway through due to massive protests against

ber of times State governments were dismissed by the Congress-led Government at the Centre misusing the provisions of the Constitutions. B R Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, was against the terms socialism and secularism for obvious reasons. Though we claim in the preamble of the Constitution that it was adopted on 26th November 1949, what we cover-up is the date on which it was amended by including the terms socialism and secularism in 1976. Congress pontificating the Constitution could be described as the devi quoting the scripture.

One has lost count of the num-

(The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

India will be a true welfare state when it eliminates discrimination



India's genuine progress will be reflected in its dedication to inclusivity, especially in upholding the dignity of individuals with disabilities

n the vibrant tapestry of India's democracy, the **▲**concept of a welfare state has been a cornerstone since its establishment. Embedded in the Constitution, the commitment to justice, equality, and the promotion of general welfare forms the foundation of India's identity. However, within this grand vision lies a harsh truth often neglected - the challenges faced by persons with disabil-

Despite the existence of legal frameworks like the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and international obligations such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the everyday experiences of disabled individuals paint a different pic-

In India, disability is not merely a physical or mental condition; it is a complex barrier that impedes access to basic rights and opportunities. From systemic discrimination to inadequate infrastructure, persons with disabilities face obstacles in every aspect of life. Essential areas like edu-



cation, employment, and healthcare - the pillars of a welfare state - often remain inaccessible dreams for them. Education is frequently highlighted as a key to progress and empowerment. However, for many disabled students in India, quality education is an elusive reality. Despite the National Education Policy and the Right to Education Act, educational institutions often lack the necessary support systems and infrastructure to accommodate diverse needs. The disparity in the national enrolment average between disabled and nondisabled students is stark, with the national average for non-disabled students at 28.4% and less than 2% for disabled students. Government data from UDISE+ shows a dropout rate exceeding 75% for students with disabilities in highSimilarly, the employment scenario for persons with disabilities is bleak. Despite efforts to promote inclusivity, the private sector remains largely indifferent, often citing concerns about productivity, costs, and a perceived lack of talented resources. Consequently, unemployment rates among the disabled population are disproportionately high, exacerbating their economic vulnerability and reliance on social welfare schemes.

Healthcare, another critical aspect of a welfare state, presents its own set of challenges for persons with disabilities. Limited access to specialized care, the high cost of assistive devices, and stigma within healthcare settings contribute to their marginalized status. Amidst these challenges, the notion of India as a welfare state falls short for millions of disabled citizens. The true measure of a welfare state lies not in lofty ideals or legislative frameworks alone but in tangible improvements in the lives of its most vulnerable members. It is crucial for the government, civil society, and

the private sector to bridge the

gap between rhetoric and

reality and ensure the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities. Firstly, disability should be viewed not as a deficit but as a diversity that enriches the social fabric. Secondly, significant investment is needed in accessible infrastructure and services across sectors. From barrier-free buildings to inclusive technology, creating an

environment that accommodates diverse abilities is essential for fostering equal participation. Proactive measures such as affirmative action policies, vocational training programs, and sensitization initiatives for employers are necessary.

To achieve a truly inclusive society, concerted efforts are needed on multiple fronts. India's journey towards becoming a welfare state must prioritize the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Disability should not be an afterthought but an integral part of policy and decision-making processes.

(The writer is the assistant program manager at the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People; views are personal)

SUBSTANCE OVER SPECTACLE

Madam — The Prime Minister's call for consensus underscores his commitment to respecting the people's mandate. It is now imperative for the Opposition, especially the INDIA bloc, to collaborate with the Prime Minister. In the previous Lok Sabha, minimal opposition hindered effective governance due to disarray among opposing parties. The unity demonstrated by the INDIA alliance resonated with voters, who expect them to serve as a robust check-and-balance in Parliament. Despite ideological differences and occasional conflicts, their parliamentary performance should mirror the electorate's expectations. The Prime Minister rightly stresses the need for decisive actions over theatrics, aligning with the public's demand for effective governance amidst concerns like unemployment and inflation. Despite ambitious promises such as curbing black money and promoting initiatives like Make-in-India and Viksit Bharat, tangible improvements in people's lives remain scarce. The central government must prioritize substance over spectacle to effectively address these pressing chal-

Vijaykumar H K | Raichur

THE MENACE OF DRUG ABUSE Madam — Drug abuse and the illegal drug trade have grown into serious, intractable problems. Substance use disorder affects all age groups, but it is particularly prevalent among the youth. The United Nations observes the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (IDADAIT) on June 26 to highlight the grave dangers posed by drugs. Drug awareness campaigns are central to addressing these issues. A society's socioeconomic status cannot be improved with unhealthy and unproductive members, which is why

the dangers of drug abuse are numer-

Record crop but prices rising

THE EDITOR



very year, food grain production in India reaches new record levels, yet retail prices continue to climb. In the 2023-24 period, rice production reached a record high of 1,367 lakh tonnes, and wheat production also hit a record

with 1,129 lakh tonnes. Despite these increases, the government's Department of Consumer Affairs reports that retail wheat prices have risen by about 6%, with rice prices increasing even more sharply. Additionally, the prices of pulses have seen a significant spike over the past year. This paradox of high production and rising prices is largely due to low procurement. As of June 2024, the wheat stock in the central pool stood at 299.05 lakh tonnes, a 5% decrease from June 2023, when it was 313.88 lakh tonnes. This year, the wheat procurement target was set at 310 lakh tonnes, but only 260.71 lakh tonnes were procured. This shortfall threatens to destabilize the entire government-run procurement system, which could lead to cascading effects on the Public Distribution System (PDS) and ultimately cause further

escalation in market prices of food items. SK Khosla | Chandigarh

often linked to crime. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) monitors global drug addiction trends. Making healthy choices and valuing oneself can significantly reduce the risk of drug abuse, which has been a recurring theme of the UN on IDADAIT. Unfortunately, substances like cannabis, cocaine, and heroin are easily accessible in many countries due to lax laws, and their medicinal and recreational benefits are often overstated, overshadowing the harmful consequences of their use. A strong bond between parents and children can help mitigate the risk of drug abuse in the younger generation.

Ganpathi Bhat | Akola

ROOF LEAKAGE AT RAM TEMPLE

Madam — It's disheartening to note that just five months after the inauguration of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya, the newly constructed Ram Mandir experienced leaking from its roof following heavy rainfall. Head Drugs bring hazardous diseases and are priest Acharya Satyendra Das men-

tioned that the temple's roof lacks adequate drainage, exacerbating the issue.It raises questions about the rush to inaugurate the temple before completion, possibly driven by electoral considera-

This incident echoes a trend where everything, from examination papers to infrastructure like the Pragati Maidan underpass, seems to suffer under the Modi-led NDA government. Unlike ancient Indian temples that stood for centuries due to devotion rather than political expediency, the Modi government's haste in inaugurating the temple without ensuring its readiness for the monsoon season is evident. The leaking roof of a globally renowned temple raises serious concerns. Fortunately, after senior officials were alerted, Nripendra Mishra, chairman of the temple construction committee, promptly instructed repairs.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

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FIRST COLUMN

BENEFITS OF REMAINING IN SHELTER OF GOD

By seeking refuge in the divine, we can navigate the complexities of life with ease



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Il of us wish for a pleasant life ('theek chale'). But we don't know how. We try different things, but something or other keeps on going wrong. Is it an impossible dream? No, it is not. God, being very merciful, has indicated how this can be alone. Lord Krishna guides, "This 'maya' (illusory energy) of Mine is divine and very difficult to overcome. Only those, who take shelter in Me, they are able to transcend this maya." (7.14) We get in trouble repeatedly because we are naturally attracted to harmful sense objects. Useful sense objections are fine but how do you know which these are? God gives this intelligence if we remain in His shelter, just like a mother stops her little child from harming himself.God is that eternal mother for us.

Lord Krishna informs, "After efforts of many births, a yogi in the end becomes wise, and he takes My shelter. A great soul, who considers Lord Vasudeva thus everything is very rare." (7.19) We can get started on this journey beginning from now and God will begin to protect us. We must allow some time for it as instructed by Lord Krishna, "Steadfast in yoga, such people while always glorifying Me and endeavouring, having firm vows worship Me with devotion, offering obeisance." (9.17) Then, what happens? God promises, "These people, who worship Me with undivided attention, meditating on Me, for these practitioners of yoga, I help in getting what one does not have and provide security of what one has." (9.22) We get started and God gets started. It is that simple. Then, what happens? Lord Krishna states, "Fix your mind in Me only; engage your intelligence in Me; thus hereafter you will remain in Me only; there is no doubt about this." (12.8) We get to live in God.

What does this mean? God takes care of us as our mother. Our lives will be micromanaged. One will benefit like one can never imagine, because, as indicated earlier, God is everything, not helpless like our bio-



logical mother. Over some time our consciousness will change, as detailed by Lord Krishna, "Through consciousness offering all activities to Me; practising buddhi-yoga, having taken My shelter be always in My consciousness." (18.57) Our consciousness, which otherwise is essentially material will change to God consciousness; it will turn spiritual. When this happens, a big change will take place in our lives, as explained by Lord Krishna, "Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My 'kripa' (grace)." (18.58) In the same verse, Lord Krishna warns, "If you will not heed on account of feeling of being the doer, you will

This is what normally happens to us human beings. We must curb our egos; God and ego do not go together. Can you imagine what privileged status we would have achieved if we heed God's instructions? Life will become smooth (theek chalegi). We will wholeheartedly take shelter in God, as instructed by God. In all respects take shelter of God only. We neither get any peace nor liberation at some stage in our eternal journey due to our refusal to surrender to God. We will do so now. What will we do then? We will follow God's instructions as detailed in verse #18.65, which is, "Develop My consciousness; become My devotee; make sacrifices for Me; and offer obeisance to Me. You will attain Me only. This I truly promise to you, because you are dear to Me.'

The last verse sheds light on the biggest benefit of all, in which the Lord promises, "Take My shelter only; I shall release you from all sins. Do not worry." (18.66) Why do we get repeatedly in trouble? Why are we always worried? Because our bad karmaphalas keep on manifesting. Now what will happen? They will make their appearance and God will forgive us, and we will not be troubled much. This is like being liberated while still in our material bodies. This is simply unbelievable to even think about. I won't stop trying to remain in the shelter of God as much as possible as fast as convenient

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

A young mother becomes a symbol of hope



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

Arti, a child bride whose education was cut short, now shines as a local hero, transitioning from e-rickshaw driver to Amal Clooney Award winner, embodying resilience and empowerment



er face is bathed in sweat and her hair is dishevelled. But neither the scorching June heat nor the humidity can wear down the wide smile on Arti's face. Even the power cut at the Aga Khan Foundation's Project Lehar Centre, where she has been coming for entrepreneurial training, cannot dim her joy. She has just admitted her young daughter to one of the top English medium schools in Bahraich district in Uttar Pradesh

This is a dream come true for the 19year-old single mother whose own education came to an end after being married off as a child. What has made this feat even more special for her is that it was the school that expressed keenness to admit her four-year-old daughter. The telephone call from its founder inviting her to fill out the form came soon after Arti was returning from the school having been told admissions for the session were closed. While the call and offer to waive all tuition fees came as a big surprise to Arti, it was not totally unexpect-

Ever since Arti, an e-rickshaw driver, hit the national headlines for winning the prestigious Amal Clooney Women's Empowerment Award in May this year, she has become a celebrity in Bahraich. Given to young women around the world in recognition of their determination and ability to overcome challenges and make a difference, the international award has catapulted Arti from being just another pink e-rickshaw driver to the official brand ambassador for women's empowerment in Bahraich, an aspirational district with low socioeconomic indicators

The buzz around her has been non-stop since her return from London where she went to receive the award from the King's Trust International founded by King Charles. There has been unrelenting attention by local and national media to



WHEN THE TEAM

MET ARTI. SHE WAS LIVING WITH HER MOTHER IN BAHARAICH'S RISIA BLOCK HAVING LEFT AN ABUSIVE MARRIAGE, ARTI WAS DIRECTIONLESS. MARRIED AT 13 AND A MOTHER AT 14, ARTI LACKED **BOTH SKILLS AND** CONFIDENCE

ney, including her ride in a pickrickshaw to meet King Charles at the award reception in Buckingham Palace. She has also been publicly felicitated by top leaders and officials of the district. But all this would have never been possible had Arti not met the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) Project Lehar team. Instituted to provide vocational training, entrepreneurship, and life skills courses to marginalised young women, Project Lehar run by AKF in partnership with The King's Trust International, enables girls and young women from disadvantaged backgrounds to learn, earn, and thrive. When the team met Arti, she was living with her mother in Baharaich's Risia block Having left an abusive marriage, Arti was directionless. Married at 13 and a mother at 14, arti lacked both skills and confidence. On her mother's insistence, she agreed to join Project Lehar. Little did she know that her life was about to change.Not far away, in Lauki, another village in the same block a young widow with three children was struggling to make two ends meet after the death of her husband. She was only 20 when she came in touch with the Lehar team.

Left to fend for her children alone, Bitti wanted to do something other than supporting her family as a daily wager and registered for the project. Here she would meet Megha, Saira Bano and Bhagyalakshmi, all young widows with similar backgrounds and living in difficult circumstances. Fate was about to give these four and Arti a collective second chance at life.In June

manager Sudhir and the AKF team were mulling over the possibility of teaching them to drive and using this skill as a means of livelihood on the lines of the popular Sakha cabs driven by only women, it was Monika Rani, the dynamic Bahraich district magistrate, who turned this idea into reality. "We were considering how to

make the girls economically self sufficient and hit upon the idea of launching the pink e-rickshaw initiative under the government Mission Shakti scheme to empower women and expand their income earning opportunities. We wanted to give single mothers, widows and women separated from their husbands the first chance to come out of the house, increase their mobility and regain their confidence," says Monika Kani. So on October 2, 2023, these five girls were chosen as the first recipients of a batch of 10 girls from Project Lehar to be given the pink e-rickshaws under this innovative scheme. A loan of Rs 1.66 lakh was provided and repayable in 38 months at an EMI of Rs 4500. Since then, there has been no looking back. Not only have the women paid eight instalments already, but they are also transforming their lives. From eating just one meal a day, Saira Bano can now give her children proper nutritious

Now I earn enough to fulfill every need of my children. I want to do better so that I can build my own house and get an electric connection so that my children 2023, when Seema Shukla Project don't have to study under a lamp Coordinator, state programme and I don't have to pay to charge

food. "I have seen days where my

two children and I até just namak

and roti.

confidence Bitti has gained has given her the courage to demand her right to the family land. She has filed a case in the civil court and wants her father-in-law to put her deceased husband's share in her son's name. "I am paying the fees for the lawyer from the money I earn as a e-rickshaw driver. I never thought I would be able to take such a big step," reveals Bitti. Bhagyalakshmihas opened a tiny kiosk selling biscuits, sweets and pencils for her mother from her earnings. "I want to expand my business. My dream is to make my elder daughter a doctor and the younger one a policewoman. When my income increases I will shift them to an English medium school. I want my children to have a bright future,' she says. For Megha too, the e-rickshaw has been life-changing. "I am happy because my economic situation has changed for the better. Now I can give my children better food. I have admitted the two children to private English medium school and can the monthly fee of Rs 250 for both of them Education will ensure they never have to live on charity like I did." While association with Project Lehar and the opportunity to become self-reliant thanks to the pink e-rickshaws has turned their

my e-rickshaw," shares Saira. The

dominated profession. This is inspiring other village women to step out of their homes and fulfil their dreams.

lives around, it has been their

confidence that has helped them

hold their heads high in a male-

(Swapna Majumdar is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views are expressed are personal)

Battling the heat and hatred: The ongoing fight for LGBTQIA+ rights

There is widespread violence against women and LGBTQIA+ individuals, fueled by a deeply ingrained prejudices against 'transgressive' love

Be-Loved - Celebrating Pride Month through TheatreKhushi Pahuja In the scorching heat of June 2024, I, along with a lesbian couple, have been shuttling from police station to police station, all to protect their fundamental rights to life and equality. The constant torment for the three of us stems from society's disdain for 'transgressive' love and an unquestioned acceptance of violence against women by family members. Familial and domestic violence is perpetuated and reinforced each time someone scrutinizes and polices one's queerness through one's body. Hope often dwindles with seemingly unending cycles of individual, systemic, and systematic violence. Especially, when



community members like Prerna (name changed), a 23year-old lesbian woman says, "We are investing so much money, time, and energy for protecting my rights, is it even worth it? Will things ever change?" In the face of such questions, social workers not only provide a safe listening space and support in bureaucratic procedures; but also share the responsibility of this, the movement for holding on to the beacon of LGBTQIA+ rights has cal drama directed by Sapan

hope. History reminds us that hope, and perseverance lay the foundational stones for advocacy, action, and change. One history of hope is that of Pride Month. Each Year, June is celebrated as pride month around the globe, commemorating the Stonewall Uprising.

On June 28, 1969, like many other days in New York City, the police raided a small bar called the Stonewall Inn. Taking advantage of the laws against crossdressing, the police would raid bars to arrest queer and transgender persons. When the same happened at Stonewall Inn, the people protested. Days of riots against police brutality acted as a catalyst for the LGBTQIA+ rights movement. Following expanded, bringing relief to many within the community. Various events like theatre, music, poetry, sensitisation programs, etc. happen during June all over the world, including India. Such programs are particular-

ly important as they present possibilities for intersectional dialogue through non-conventional sensitisation methods. An example of this approach is 'Be-Loved', a theatre play by Mumbai-based Theatre Group 'Tamaasha', which was recently co-organized by Nazariya Foundation and SAATHII (Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India) on June 9 at the Bipin Chandra Pal Auditorium in Delhi. Be-Loved is a musical and satiri-



prominent writers, including artist Bhupen Khakhar, poet Josh Malihabadi, and LGBTQIA+ rights activists Maya Sharma and Saleem Kidwai. Recalling the journey

of making this play, Sapan shares, "Be-Loved is a collaborative effort. It took us about three months to put it together. We opened the play last year in June after rigorous rehearsal for 45 days?

"The play dealt with a very sensitive issue with a lot of care, especially in a context where talking about sex and sexuality is a taboo. They emphasize, You cannot forget about the issue once you have seen this play. It forces you to think and reflect when you come out of the theater hall." Resonating with this perspective, Urvashi Butalia, feminist publisher and writer says, "The play took stories on queerness by many writers and connected them with real life cases. People can dismiss stories, but it is difficult to dismiss lived realities."

Rituparna Borah (she/they), Director, Nazariya Foundation pens, "Events like this are the best ways to show to the world that advocacy can be done in various ways either through UN mechanisms, through the government, or plays like this. With collective power we can challenge any hate, discrimination, and violence against the queer-trans community." Such events help us to reach an audience that is generally not approachable for training sessions, or for whom training sessions are not accessible. Therefore, when we engage with allies through well-accepted mediums like theater, music, etc., the muchneeded information gets conveyed to a huge audience," adds Randhoni Lairikyengbam, Assistant Director, SAATHII.

The echoing sentiments of audience members about how the play moved them to highlight the importance of collective efforts toward sensitization using multiple advocacy mediums. It restores hope that change is possible when we create spaces where people can critically reflect on their actions, thoughts, and behaviour, and feel part of the collective. Pride Month, therefore, is not only a time to celebrate queerness and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights but also an opportunity to look back into history and remind ourselves of the perseverance of those who fought for the rights and then move into the future with hope, care, and kindness. (The author is a social worker and a sexuality educator; views are personal. Charkha Features)

France bans extreme-right and radical Islamic groups ahead of polarising poll

 $F^{\text{rance's government on}}_{\text{Wednesday ordered the dis-}}$ solution of extreme right and radical Muslim groups, four days before the first round of high-stakes legislative elections that may see a surge in support for political extremes. Snap national elections called by

moderate pro-business President Emmanuel Macron have plunged the country into a hasty and disorderly electoral race. Immigration, France's retirement age and taxes emerged as top points of contention as the prime minister and two potential challengers for his job held a televised debate Tuesday night. Interior Minister Gerald

announced Wednesday that the govern-

multiple extreme-right and "radical Islamist' groups. A series of decrees announcing the shutdown cited the risk of violence. The groups affected include the GUD, a group known for violence and antisemitism whose members have provided support for far-right political leader Marine Le Pen in the past.

Le Pen's National Rally party is leading all polls ahead of the two-round elections June 30 and July 7, and Macron's centrist alliance is lagging badly. However, the outcome remains highly uncertain due to the complex, two-stage voting system and potential political alliances.

In the TV debate, young and fast-rising National Rally president Jordan Bardella renewed his proposal to abolish free health care for foreigners and toughen regulations around the acquisition of French national-

But his proposal to prevent dual citizens from accessing certain "strategic" state jobs in particular attracted the ire of Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, who said it revealed the true objectives of a party that has long been tied to xenophobia and racism.

The message you are sending is that when we are dual citizens, we are half-citizens, we are not real French people," Attal said. Attal suggested the real targets of this measure are not dual citizens with high-level positions, when he said Bardella had a Franco-Russian representative in the European Parliament, who sits at the Committee on

Foreign Affairs on security and defense issues.

Bardella has softened many of the party's hard-line positions, and was put on the spot during the debate over another key issue, the age of retirement, which Macron's highly contested reform last year raised from 62 to 64, prompting months of protests and weakening his government. The National Rally backs the

idea of setting back the retirement age to 62, but Bardella said 42 years of work would be needed to for entitlement to a full pension, de facto raising the retirement age for those who started working later in their

This is the first time since the Nazi occupation during World War II that France could elect far-right government.

Opposition parties on both sides of the political spectrum have been scrambling to form alliances and field candidates. The elections were called by Macron earlier this month after his party suffered a crushing defeat by the far right in the European Parliament election. Eric Bompard, of the France Unbowed party, part of a new coalition of far-to-center left parties, also came after Bardella's economic program and his proposal to lift taxes for people under 30 years of age. Citing economists, Bompard said the National Rally's program would contribute to making the rich richer, at the expense of the poorest 30% share of the population, while Attal accused the 28-year-old Bardella of personally benefit-

ICC convicts al-Qaida-linked leader of atrocities in Mali

The International Criminal L Court has convicted an al-Qaida-linked Islamic extremist leader of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Mali's Timbuktu. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud was accused of playing a key role in a reign of terror unleashed by insurgents on the historic desert city in northern Mali in 2012. He was accused of involvement in crimes including rape, torture, persecution, enforced marriages and sexual slavery. Prosecutors say he was a key member of Ansar Dine, an Islamic extremist group with links to al-Qaida that held power in northern Mali at the time. Al Hassan faces up to life imprisonment when a sentence is handed down at a later date. Prosecutors say he was a key member of Ansar Dine, an Islamic extremist group with

links to al-Qaida that held power in northern Mali at the

Women and girls suffered in particular under Ansar Dine's repressive regime, facing corporal punishment and imprisonment, the court's then-chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said at the start of Al Hassan's trial nearly four years ago.

"Many were forced into mar-riage," Bensouda said. Bensouda said. "Confined against their will and repeatedly raped by members of the armed group." Al Hassan was involved in organizing such marriages, the prosecutor told judges.

She cited one rape victim as saying, "All that was left of me was a corpse."

Defence lawyer Melinda Taylor told judges that Al Hassan was a member of the Islamic police force who was "obliged to respect and execute the decisions of the Islamic tribunal. This is what

the police around the world

In Timbuktu, victims of Ansar Dine crimes were awaiting the verdicts and possible compen-

We are waiting and hoping for a judgment that will give us justice," said Yehia Hamma Cissé, president of a group of victims' associations in the Timbuktu region.

'Members of our associations have been raped, had their hands cut off, been whipped, and we would like to be compensated," he said.

The court made a reparation order following the 2016 conviction of an Ansar Dine member, Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi. He was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment for attacking nine mausoleums and a mosque door in

A French-led military operation in 2013 forced Al Hassan and others from power.

Timbuktu in 2012.

UN tells Israel it will suspend aid operations across Gaza

Senior U.N. officials have warned Israel that they will suspend the world body's aid operations across Gaza unless Israel acts urgently to better protect humanitarian workers, two U.N. officials said Tuesday. The ultimatum is the latest in a series of U.N. steps demanding Israel do more to safeguard aid operations from strikes by its forces and to curb growing lawlessness hindering humanitarian work-

A U.N. letter sent to Israeli officials this month said Israel must provide U.N. workers with a way to communicate directly with Israeli forces on the ground in Gaza, among other steps, the officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing negotiations with Israeli officials

The U.N. officials said there has been no final decision on suspending operations across Gaza and that talks with the Israelis were ongoing.

U.N. spokesman Stéphane Dujarric told reporters in New York that U.N. humanitarian coordinator Muhannad Hadi had written to the Israeli military on June 17 and the U.N.'s undersecretary for security, Gilles Michaud, spoke with Israeli military officials Monday. Dujarric called conditions for aid workers in the territory said the U.N. was "pushing all its contacts" with the Israelis to resolve the problems and noted that "the U.N. will not turn its

back on the people of Gaza." U.S. officials are talking with the U.N. and Israeli military to try to help resolve U.N. concerns, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters Tuesday. Asked if the U.S. had received any commitments from Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who is visiting this week to speak with Biden administration officials, Miller said, "we went through a number of specific things that we want to see resolved when it comes to the humanitarian situation and got an assurance to continue to work on those.

The Israeli army declined to comment on the U.N. warning, and the Israeli defense ministry did not respond to requests for

'Palestinian who was shot, tied to army jeep posed no threat'

Abadi stepped outside to see if Israeli forces had entered his uncle's neighbourhood, he was shot in the arm and the foot. That was only the start of his ordeal. Hours later, beaten and bloodied, he found himself strapped to the searing hood of an Israeli military jeep driving down a road.

The army initially said Abadi was a suspected militant, but later acknowledged he had not posed a threat to Israeli forces and was caught in crossfire with militants.

Video showing the 24-year-old strapped to the jeep circulated on social media, sparking widespread condemnation, including from the United States. Many said it showed that Israeli soldiers were using him as a human shield — a charge Israel has frequently levelled at Hamas as it battles the group in Gaza. The military said it was investigating the incident and that it did not reflect its values. But Palestinians saw it as yet anoth-

comment. The army claims it is usual procedures — known as trying to facilitate aid shipments and accuses Hamas of conflict zones globally to protect Tuesday that the militant group fired a projectile at the humanitarian route near a UNICEF aid

Israel has previously acknowledged some military strikes on humanitarian workers, including an April attack that killed seven workers with the World Central Kitchen, and has denied allegations of others.

Citing security concerns, the U.N. World Food Program has already suspended aid delivery from a U.S.-built pier designed to bring food and other emergency supplies to Palestinians who are facing starvation amid more than eight months of war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. U.N. and other aid officials have complained for months that they have no way to communicate quickly and directly with Israeli forces on the ground, in contrast with the

Jenin (AP): When Mujahid er act of brutality in Israel's hospital bed. "Suddenly, the Abadi stepped outside to see if crackdown on the occupied call was disconnected." Raed West Bank, where violence has surged since Hamas' October 7 attack triggered the war in

> Abadi, speaking to The Associated Press from a hospital bed on Tuesday, said he stepped outside his uncle's house in the volatile West Bank city of Jenin on Saturday after he heard a commotion.

> "I went outside to see what was happening, and looked towards the neighbours' houses, where I saw the army," he said. "When I tried to return to the house, heavy and indiscriminate gunfire was suddenly directed at me. My cousin who was near me was also hit.

> After he was shot in the arm, he hid behind his family's car. Then he was shot again, in the foot. Unable to move, he called his father and told him he was about to die."I told him to try not to lose consciousness and to keep talking to me," Raed Abadi said as he stood over his son's

"deconfliction" — employed in combatants. Relief groups say Israel's procedure for coordinating aid work requires them to

within the military In its letter to Israeli officials, the U.N. cited communication and protective equipment for aid workers as among the commitments that it wanted Israel to make good on for its aid operations in Gaza to continue, the two U.N. officials say

peak instead with an agency

Miller said taking aid from trucks and other criminal attacks were the biggest problems blocking aid delivery within Gaza right now, rather than strikes on aid workers by Israeli forces or commandeering of aid convoys by Hamas.

"And so we have been working with the U.N. and Israel to try to find a solution to that problem," including trying to ensure that aid workers "have radios

areas where he had been shot. Then they dragged him by his legs, lifted him by his hands and feet and threw him onto the hood of the military jeep."I screamed because of the heat," he said. "Then, one of the soldiers started cursing at me and told me to be quiet." The military said its forces had tied Abadi to the hood of the jeep to transport him to paramedics. But Nebal Farsakh, a spokesperson for the Palestinian Red Crescent rescue service, said the army had sealed off the area and prevented paramedics from tending to the wounded for at and other communications

later saw false reports on social media that a Palestinian had

been killed in the raid. "I col-

lapsed, because I was 90 per cent

sure it was my son," he said.

Abadi was not dead, but his suf-

fering had just begun. After a

couple of hours, Israeli soldiers

found him. He says they struck

his head and face and in the

equipment so they can communicate with each other and safetold reporters.
The U.N. and other humanitar-

ian organizations also complain of increasing crime in Gaza and have urged Israel to do more to improve overall security from attack and theft. The lawlessness has stymied what Israel said was a daily pause in fighting to allow aid into southern Gaza, with humanitarian officials saying groups of gunmen are regularly blocking convoys, holding drivers at gun-point and rifling through their

On top of that, "missiles hit our premises, despite being deconflicted," said Steve Taravella, a spokesman for the World Food Program, one of the main organizations working on humanitarian delivery in Gaza. He was not one of those confirming the U.N. threat to suspend operations across the territory.

Kenya clears debris after protests in which 6 died

ing from the measure

Kenyans woke up to the acrid smell of tear gas still lingering in the capital on Wednesday, a day after protesters stormed parliament and burned part of the building over a controversial tax plan. As the day began, there were no reports of violence, but more protests were expected in coming days. Police and soldiers patrolled the streets as city workers began cleaning up debris. Parliament, the city hall and the supreme court were cordoned off with tape reading 'Crime Scene Do Not Enter.' The military was deployed overnight to support police as President William Ruto called the events treasonous and vowed to quash the unrest "at whatever cost."

Kenya has been rocked by massive protests for over a week in opposition to a proposed finance bill that would

raise taxes as frustrations over the cost of living are simmering. Many young people who helped vote Ruto into power with cheers for his promises of economic relief have taken to the streets to object to the pain

of reforms. Thousands of protesters stormed Kenya's parliament Tuesday, burning parts of the building while legislators fled. Police responded with gunfire and journalists counted three bodies at the gates of parliament. The Kenya Human Rights Commission, a nongovernment organization, said that at least 22 people have died. The commission chairperson, Roseline Odede, told journalists that 300 people were injured in the protests and 50 people were arrested. Herman Manyora, a professor

at the University of Nairobi, said that the youth-driven protests could escalate further if the president does not adopt a more conciliatory approach. "We expected him to appreciate the gravity of the issue and empathize with the young people," Manyora said. "Instead, people saw an angry president who is reading a riot act to the nation."Authorities said police fired over 700 blanks to disperse protesters in the suburb of Githurai, east of the capital Nairobi. Videos of gunfire piercing the night air were shared online.UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said he was deeply saddened by reports of deaths and injuries. 'I urge the Kenyan authorities to exercise restraint, and call for all demonstrations to take place peacefully," he wrote on the social media platform X. In Nairobi, a regional hub for expatriates and home to a United Nations complex inequality among Kenyans has sharpened along with longheld frustrations over state

Paris court upholds validity of arrest warrant for Syrian Prez

Paris (AP): The Paris appeals court ruled on Wednesday that an international arrest warrant for Syrian President Bashar Assad issued by France for alleged complicity in war crimes during Syria's civil war is valid and remains in place. Jeanne Sulzer and Clemence Witt, lawyers who represented the plaintiffs, and non-governmental organizations behind the complaint hailed the decision as a historic judgment. In May, French anti-terrorism prosecutors asked the Paris appeals court to rule on lifting the arrest warrant for Assad saying he has absolute immunity as a serving head of state. 'It's the first time that a national court has recognized that the personal immunity of a serving head of state is not absolute," the lawyers said in a

UK betting scandal now engulfs Opp Labour Party London (PTI): The escalating here with the intention of giv-

scandal of candidates placing ing any winnings to local general election-related bets charities," said the now-sus-Prime Minister Rishi Sunakled Conservative Party to engulf the Opposition Labour Party after its leader, Keir Starmer, suspended one of his candidates for betting against himself ahead of the July 4 Kevin Craig is running to

become Labour's member of Parliament for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich in eastern England, considered a safe Conservative seat. It was previously held by Dan Poulter, who defected from the Tories to Labour ahead of the election before exiting politics. On Tuesday, Craig took to social media to confirm his "huge mistake" of betting in favour of the Tories holding on to their stronghold. "A few weeks ago when I thought I would never win this seat I put a bet on the Tories to win

While I did not place this bet with any prior knowledge of the outcome, this was a huge mistake, for which I apologise unreservedly," he

As in the case of any suspended Tory MPs, the party symbol will appear beside his name in the ballot papers at this late stage in the campaign but he would be considered an Independent MP if elected. Meanwhile, he has said he will "comply fully" with a Gambling Commission's investigation into this bet and "will take the consequences of this stupid error of judgement on the chin." For the Labour Party, having pressured Sunak in the past few days to suspend his betting party colleagues, it was seen as somewhat of an unavoidable move.

Suspected Houthi attack targets ship in Gulf of Aden

Dubai (AP): Suspected attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels early Wednesday targeted a ship in the Gulf of Aden, while a separate attack claimed by Iraqi targeted the southern Israeli port city of Eilat, authorities said.

The attacks follow the departure of the USS Dwight D Eisenhower after an eightmonth deployment in which the aircraft carrier led the American response to the Houthi assaults. Those attacks have reduced shipping drastically through the route crucial to Asian, Middle East and European markets in a campaign the Houthis say will continue as long as the Israel-Hamas war rages in the Gaza

Meanwhile, the Houthis faced allegations they seized com-mercial aircraft that brought back pilgrims from the Hajj amid a widening economic dispute between the rebels and the country's exiled govern-ment. The ship attack hap-

pened off the coast of Aden, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) center said. The captain "of a merimpacted the water in close proximity to the vessel," the UKMTO said. "The crew are reported safe and the vessel is proceeding to its next port of

The UKMTO did not say if the ship had been damaged. Meanwhile, the Israeli military said early Wednesday that a drone "fell off the coast of Eilat." The military activated air raid sirens in the area.

The drone "was monitored by (Israeli) soldiers throughout the incident and it did not cross into Israeli territory," the Israeli military said. "During the incident, an interceptor was launched toward the" drone. The Houthis have targeted Eilat before with drones and missiles. However, an Iranianbacked umbrella group known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed the attack.

Suspected N Korean hypersonic missile exploded in flight, South Korea says

AP ■ SEOUL

suspected hypersonic mis-Asile launched by North Korea exploded in flight on Wednesday, South Korea's military said, as North Korea protests the regional deployment of a US aircraft carrier for a military drill with South Korea and Japan.

Later Wednesday, South Korea conducted live-fire drills along its disputed western sea boundary with North Korea, its first since it suspended a 2018 agreement with the North aimed at reducing front-line military tensions in early June. The North Korean missile was launched at about 5:30 am and was aimed toward the North's eastern waters before the failure, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Missile fragments were scattered in the water up to 250 kilometres from the launch site near North Korea's capital, it said. No damage was

immediately reported. The Joint Chiefs of Staff said it believes the weapon was a solid-fuelled hypersonic missile. The launch generated more smoke than normal launches, possibly because of an engine fault, it told South Korean reporters at a background briefing. The contents of the briefing were shared with foreign media. In a three-way phone call, senior diplomats from South Korea, the US and Japan condemned the missile launch as a violation of UN resolutions and agreed to maintain close coordination in response to North Korean threats, according to South Korea's Foreign Ministry. North Korea has performed a series of hypersonic missile tests since 2021 in an apparent effort to acquire an ability to penetrate its rivals' missile defence

shields. Foreign experts ques-

tion whether the missiles have achieved their desired speed and maneuverability during the test flights. In recent years, North Korea has also been developing more missiles that use solid propellants, Launches of such missiles are harder to detect than liquid-propellant missiles, which must be fuelled before liftoff. Wednesday's missile test came

as the rival Koreas are engaged in Cold War-style psychological warfare using balloons and loudspeaker broadcasts. South Korea said North Korea

launched large balloons carrying trash across their border Tuesday night for the sixth time since late May. About 100 balloons with bags of paper waste reportedly fell in South Korean

The balloons resulted in the suspension of takeoffs and landings at South Korea's Incheon International Airport, about an hour's drive from the border, for three hours early Wednesday, in the second such disruption since the North's balloon launches began on May 28, according to South Korean aviation authorities. North Korea says it is responding to balloons launched by South Korean activists that carried political leaflets into the

North. On June 9, South Korea briefly conducted propaganda broadcasts from loudspeakers along the border for the first time in years in response to the North Korean balloons. South Korea's military said Monday it is ready to turn on its loud speakers again. On Wednesday, South Korean forces on frontline islands fired 290 artillery and missile rounds into the waters near the Koreas' western sea boundary, the site of several bloody naval skirmishes

since 1999, the South Korean

marine corps said.

AP ■ HONG KONG Ten same-sex couples got married in the United States

over the internet from Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous southern Chinese city that does not formally recognize such unions but offers them legal protections.

The event Tuesday was timed to mark Pride Month, with a registered officiant from the American state of Utah making their marriages official. Most states require the couple to appear in person to fill out paperwork and present identification, but Utah does not, and its digital application process has made it a go-to for online weddings since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Family members gathered in a hotel wedding hall in Hong Kong's Kowloon district as couples exchanged rings, then raised their glasses in a toast. "I hope one day that everybody would accept the fact that love is not just between a man and



US officiant marries 10 same-sex couples in HK

a woman. It's between two people who love each other," said Lucas Peng, a 66-year-old Singaporean businessperson living in Hong Kong, and one of the 20 people tying the knot in Tuesday's semi-virtual event. "It's just two humans who love each other. That's the key. That's the important part. And to be able to publicly declare our love for each other today is a very important step for us, definitely," Peng said. Wedding organizer Kurt Tung

said he hoped the event would send a message to the public. "In Hong Kong, there's not yet a way to go to a marriage registry to get married, but there's still this way we can offer for them to realize their dreams of getting married," Tung said. Keeping with cultural and religious traditions, Hong Kong only recognizes weddings between a man and a woman. Self-governing Taiwan is the

closest place that issues same-

sex marriages, and Hong Kong

rights, though the city doesn't call them marriages. It has no laws banning same-sex relation In September, the Hong Kong's top court ruled that the local government should provide a

recognizes those couples' legal

legal framework for recogniz-ing same-sex partnerships, including rights to inheritance, joint custody of children, taxation, spousal visas and benefits from employment with the local government. That came after LGBTQ+ rights

activist Jimmy Sham, who married his husband in New York in 2013, raised a challenge at the city's Court of Final Appeal that Hong Kong's laws violated the constitutional right to equality. That contrasts with the increasingly conservative political tone in the Asian financial hub, where edicts from the author itarian Communist Party leadership in Beijing have led to criticism from around the world that it's squashing democratic rights and free speech.

US journalist goes on trial in Russia for 'espionage'

Wall Street Journal Evan Gershkovich went on trial behind closed doors in Yekaterinburg on Wednesday, 15 months after his arrest in the Russian city on espionage charges that he, his employer and the US government vehemently deny.

The 32-year-old journalist appeared in the court in a glass defendants' cage, his head shaved and wearing a blackand-blue plaid shirt. A yellow padlock was attached to the cage. Journalists were allowed into the courtroom for a few minutes before the proceedings were closed. Also briefly permitted in court were two consular officers from the US Embassy in Moscow, according to the embassy.

The next hearing for Gershkovich was set for August 13, court officials said. Jay Conti, executive vice president and general counsel for Dow Jones, publisher of the Journal, described the trial as a sham in an interview with The Associated Press

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sig-

naled Wednesday that he is get-

ting tough on officials he suspects are shirking their duties in the war with Russia that is now in its third area.

Zelenskyy and Commander in

Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi visited

troops in the eastern Donetsk region who have weathered

fierce Russian ground and air assaults in recent months. They

also discussed with local officials

the drinking water supply, social issues, evacuation plans and the rebuilding of local homes,

Zelenskyy said. He added that back in Kyiv he

would speak to "officials who

must be here and in other areas

near the front line — in difficult

communities where people

some relevant officials have not

need immediate solutions? "I was surprised to learn that

in its third year.

President

ist doing journalism, and this is a sham trial, bogus charges that are completely trumped up," Conti said.

The American-born son of immigrants from the USSR, Gershkovich is the first Western journalist arrested on espionage charges in post-Soviet Russia. Authorities arrested Gershkovich when he was on a reporting trip to Yekaterinburg, in the Ural Mountains, and claimed he was gathering secret information for the US The State Department has declared him "wrongfully detained," thereby committing the govern-ment to assertively seek his

The Journal has worked diligently to keep the case in the public eye and it has become an issue in the combative months leading up to the US presidential election.

After his arrest on March 29, 2023, Gershkovich was held in Moscow's notoriously dismal Lefortovo Prison. He has appeared healthy during court hearings in which his appeals for release have been rejected.

Zelenskyy scolds officials who shirk their duties

will be a serious conversation,

and I will draw appropriate conclusions regarding them."

Zelenskyy has frequently visit-

ed front-line areas during the

war. His said his trip to the

Donetsk region was to intro-

duce the new commander of the

Joint Forces Command, Andrii

Hnatov replaced Yurii Sodol,

who had held the position since

Zelenskyy didn't give a reason

for the change, but it came after

the widely admired chief of staff

of the Azov regiment, Bohdan

February 2023

"Evan has displayed remarkable resilience and strength in the face of this grim situation," US Ambassador Lynne Tracy said on the first anniversary of

Gershkovich faces up to 20 years in prison if the court finds him guilty, which is almost certain. Russian courts convict more than 99 per cent of the defendants who come before them, and prosecutors can appeal sentences that they regard as too lenient, and they even can appeal acquittals. In addition, Russia's interpretation of what constitutes high crimes like espionage and treason is broad, with authorities

mation with foreigners and accusing them of divulging state secrets. Paul Whelan, an American corporate security executive, was arrested in Moscow for espionage in 2018 and is serv-

often going after people who share publicly available infor-

ing a 16-year sentence. Gershkovich's arrest came about a year after President Vladimir Putin pushed through laws that chilled journalists, criminalising criticism

rebuking an unnamed general for having "killed more Ukrainian soldiers than any

Russian general," in what was

seen as a reference to incompe-

sources in the armed forces, said he was referring to Sodol.

Ahead of Zelenskyy's visit,

Russian forces dropped a powerful glide bomb on the Donetsk

city of Selydove, causing extensive damage to 37 homes, six

multi-story buildings and

regional authorities said

Wednesday. They reported no

Over the previous 24 hours, the Russian military shelled 20 Donetsk region settlements,

killing one person and injuring at least nine, regional head Vadym Filashkin said. About

250 people have been evacuat-

ed from their homes in the Donetsk region since Tuesday,

injuries.

administrative infrastructure,

tent management of troops. Several Ukrainian media outlets, quoting unidentified of what the Kremlin calls a "special military operation" in Ukraine and statements seen as discrediting the military. Foreign journalists largely left the country after the laws' passage; many trickled back in subsequent months, but there were concerns about whether Russian authorities would act against them.

rose that Russia was targeting Americans as animosity between Moscow and Washington grew. Last year, Alsu Kurmasheva, a reporter with dual American-Russian citizenship for the US government-funded Liberty/Radio Free Europe was arrested for alleged violation of the law requiring socalled "foreign agents" to reg-

After he was detained, fears

Another dual national, Los Angeles resident Ksenia Karelina, is on trial, also in Yekaterinburg, on treason charges for allegedly raising money for a Ukrainian organisation that supplied arms and ammunition to Kyiv. Several Western reporters have been forced to leave after

NATO picks outgoing

Brussels (AP): NATO appointed Mark Rutte as its

next secretary-general on

Wednesday, putting the outgoing Dutch prime minister in charge of the world's biggest

security organisation at a crit-

ical time for European secu-

rity as war rages in Ukraine.

Rutte's appointment was sealed by NATO ambassadors

during a meeting at the 32-

nation alliance's headquarters in Brussels. US President Joe

Biden and his counterparts

will formally welcome him to their table at a summit in Washington on

The outgoing Dutch premier

will take over from the current

secretary general, Norway's

Jens Stoltenberg, on October

1. Stoltenberg spent more than a decade at the helm. His

mandate was repeatedly

ed Ukraine in 2022.

July 9-11.

Dutch PM Mark

Rutte as its next

secy-general

Russia refused to renew their visas. With Gershkovich's trial being closed, few details of his case may become public. But the Russian Prosecutor General's office said this month that he is accused of "gathering secret information" on orders from the CIA about Uralvagonzavod, a plant about 150 kilometres north of Yekaterinburg that produces and repairs tanks and other

military equipment. Not only is Uralvagonzavod strategically sensitive, it's also been a nest of vehement pro-Putin sentiment where an inquisitive American could offend and alarm.

In 2011, a plant manager, Igor Kholmanskikh, attracted national attention on Putin's annual call-in program by denouncing mass protests in Moscow at the time. Putin later appointed him as his regional envoy and as a member of the National Security Council.

'Evan Gershkovich is facing a false and baseless charge. ... The Russian regime's smearing of Evan is repugnant, disgust-

and transparent lies. Journalism is not a crime," Íournal publisher Almar Latour and chief editor Emma Tucker said in a statement after his trial date was announced.

"We had hoped to avoid this moment and now expect the U.S. government to redouble efforts to get Evan released," they said. Russia has not ruled out a pris-

oner exchange involving Gershkovich but says that's not possible before a verdict in his case. That could be months away, because Russian trials often adjourn for weeks. The post-verdict prospects are mixed. Although Russia-US relations are highly troubled because of the conflict in Ukraine, the Kremlin and Washington did work out a swap in 2022 that freed WNBA star Brittney Griner who was serving a 9 1/2-year sentence for cannabis possession. But that exchange also freed the highest-value Russian prisoner in the United States, arms dealer Viktor Bout, and the US may not hold

has alluded to interest in freeing Vadim Krasikov, a Russian imprisoned in Germany for assassinating a Chechen rebel leader in Berlin, but Germany's willingness to aid in a Russia-US dispute is uncertain.

The Biden administration would also be sensitive to appearing to be giving away too much after coming under substantial criticism in trading Bout, widely called "the Merchant of Death," for a sports figure.

But Biden may feel an incentive to secure Gershkovich's release because of boasts by former President Donald Trump, who is his main challenger in this year's election, that he can easily get the journalist freed. Putin "will do that for me, but not for anyone else," Trump claimed in May. The Kremlin, however, says it has not been in touch with Trump, and Putin's spokesman Dmitry Pekov bristled at the attention given to a possible exchange, saying "these contacts must be carried out in total secrecy.

Suspect kills self after shootings near Las Vegas leave 5 people dead, teen hurt

AP ■ LAS VEGAS

A man who fatally shot five people and critically injured a 13-year-old girl at apartments near Las Vegas has killed himself, authorities said on Tuesday. The North Las Vegas Police Department said the suspect-

Department said the suspected shooter, 57-year-old Eric Adams, killed himself Tuesday morning as he was confronted by officers in a neighborhood. Authorities had been searching for him since Monday night's shootings in separate apartment

Efforts to locate relatives of Adams for comment weren't immediately successful. Police said initially they found

two women dead while investigating reports of a shooting late Monday at an apartment in North Las Vegas. One of them was in her early 40s and the other in her late 50s, according to the department. While officers were investi-gating, the department said, they learned a teen girl had been taken to a hospital with critical gunshot wounds and that there could be more victims in a nearby apartment. Officers then found the bod ies of two women in their mid-20s and a man in his early 20s. All five victims had been shot, police said. They weren't immediately identified

The discovery led to an overnight search for Adams, who authorities had described as "armed and dangerous." Just after 10 a.m. Tuesday, police learned that the suspect had been seen at a business in

As officers arrived in the area, they saw the suspect with a firearm, running into the backyard of a nearby home. The department said officers followed him, but the suspect refused to drop his weapon and died by suicide. Police haven't disclosed a motive for the shootings, which they described as an "isolated incident." A spokesperson for the police department didn't respond Tuesday to phone and emailed requests for more

information.

identified. North Las Vegas.

extended, in part to provide continuity after Russia invad-A helicopter drops water on the Apache Fire as it burns in Palermo, Calif., on Tuesday, Jun. 25, 2024. According to Cal Fire

been here for six months or more," Zelenskyy said. "There Krotevych, released a statement **Sri Lanka finalises debt** restructuring agreement

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Cri Lanka's government said On Wednesday it has finalised a long-delayed debt restructuring agreement for USD 5.8 billion with its bilateral lenders, including India and China, in Paris to meet a key condition of an IMF bailout.

This was announced by President Rani Wickremesinghe's office, which said the agreement grants significant debt relief allowing Sri Lanka to allocate funds to essential public services and secure concessional financing for its development needs.

"Sri Lanka reached a final restructuring agreement for 5.8 billion US dollars with its bilateral lenders' official creditor committee in Paris," the President's office said in a statement.

The statement came ahead of a

televised address to the nation later tonight by President Wickremesinghe, who has steered the effort to take the island out of the economic crisis since Sri Lanka declared its first-ever sovereign default in 2022.

President Wickremesinghe, who also holds the portfolio as the finance minister, is expected to contest the presidential election in the coming months. is understood that Wickremesinghe, 75, will 'declare an end to bankruptcy' following the agreement reached with bilateral creditors and private bondholders on external debt restructuring.

State Finance Minister Shehan Semasinghe announced that the Sri Lankan authorities are also in the process of signing bilateral debt treatment agreements between Sri Lanka and the Export-Import Bank of

"On behalf of Sri Lanka, I would like to sincerely thank the OCC chairs - France, India, and Japan - as well as the Export-Import Bank of China for their leadership in this process, as well as all OCC members for their unwavering support," he said.

He also commended the OCC Secretariat for their dedication to finding a resolution to our debt crisis and achieving this significant milestone, which will enhance confidence in Sri Lanka's economy and foster growth. This agreement means that half of the government's external debt by creditor countries and organisations has been restructured. The details of the restructuring are yet to be announced.

According to the Treasury figures, as of the end of March 2024, the debt stock outstanding remained at USD 10,588.6

Heatwave kills 450 in Karachi region in 4 days

wave that has hit Pakistan's biggest city has led to the death of at least 450 people over the last four days, a leading NGO claimed on Wednesday. The Edhi Foundation said it received at least 427 bodies in the last four days excluding Wednesday while the Sindh government had on Tuesday released 23 bodies in three government hospitals.

Karachi, Pakistan's port city, has been hit by extreme hot weather since Saturday with soaring mercury crossing 40 degrees Celsius for the third consecutive day on Wednesday, temperatures that are too high for a coastal areas.

"We have four mortuaries operating in Karachi and we have reached a stage where there is no more space to keep more bodies in our mortuaries," Faisal Edhi, who heads the Foundation, said.

Edhi Trust is the largest welfare foundation in Pakistan and provides various free or subsidised orphan street children, discarded babies and battered women 'The sad fact is that many of these bodies have come from areas where a lot of load shedding is going on even in this harshest weather," he said.

Edhi said most of the bodies

belonged to homeless people and drug addicts on the streets. The extreme heat wave got to them as these people spend their entire day out in the open searching for fixes," he said only to add: "But only the government hospitals or where they

were initially taken to can tell you the real cause of death." He said on Tuesday itself they had received 135 bodies at their morgues and 128 on Monday. Karachites also have to brave long hours of load shedding in many areas with the electricity supplier, Karachi Electric, now claiming it has to resort to power cuts because the Sindh government still has to clear dues of Rs 10 billion.

olive branch to Imran Khan The Nawaz Sharif-led

PTI ISLAMABAD

 $P_{\text{Shehbaz}}^{\text{akistan Prime Minister}}_{\text{Shehbaz}}$ Wednesday extended an olive branch to his predecessor and political rival Imran Khan, offering to hold talks with him if was facing "troubles" in jail. Khan, the founder of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, has been in jail since August last year after being convicted in some of the nearly 200 cases slapped on the 71vear-old cricketer-turnedpolitician since his ouster from power in April 2022. "If their [PTI] founder is facing troubles [in jail], then I

reiterate: come, let's sit down and talk," Sharif said while addressing the National Assembly.

"Let us sit together to take the country ahead. Let us talk for the betterment of the country. There is no other way for ward," he said.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have been at loggerheads for years, particularly after the February 8 elections, which Khan's party claims it had won.

Pakistan PM Shehbaz extends

Commenting on the 2018 elections won by Khan's PTI, Sharif said: "We joined Parliament despite the [rigged] polls. The sort of slogans that were raised during my first speech will always be remembered as a dark chapter in the history books. "If someone is facing any injustice, then I believe that the scales of justice should be in favour of those [being victimised], there is no difference over it - whether it be any politician or anyone from any walk of life," Geo News quot-

ed Sharif as saying. Sharif lamented that he had once again, while he was in the opposition, proposed to Khan to sit for a dialogue but such slogans were raised

So who is responsible for this bitterness [between politicians]. We don't even shake hands now," he said.

Sharif, 72, also recounted his ordeal of facing victimisation by Khan's government and that he was in jail when his

mother passed away. He said that despite being a cancer survivor and with a backbone issue, he used to be taken to courts on the ordinary prison van just to exacerbate the condition, but he never complained.

In response to Prime Minister Sharif's remarks, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub reiterated that the PTI would talk with the government only when Khan and other incarcerated leaders and workers are released from jail.

As Iran's prez vote looms, tensions boil over renewed headscarf crackdown

Seemingly every afternoon in Iran's capital, police vans rush to major Tehran squares and intersections to search for women with loose headscarves and those who dare not to wear them at all. The renewed crackdown comes not quite two years since mass protests over the death Mahsa Amini after she was detained for not wearing a scarf to the authorities' liking. A United Nations panel has found that the 22year-old died as a result of "physical violence" wrought upon her by the state.

Amini's death set off months of unrest that ended in a bloody crackdown, and for a time morality police disappeared from the streets.

But now videos are emerging of women being physically forced into vans by police as lawmakers continue to push

for harsher penalties. Meanwhile, authorities have seized thousands of cars over women having their hair uncovered while also targeting businesses that serve them. The renewed hijab push, which police are calling the Noor — or "Light" — Plan, began before President Ebrahim Raisi died in a helicopter crash, and whoever wins a vote to replace the hard-line cleric on Friday will have an influence over just how intense it becomes and how Iran responds to any further unrest.

"An intervention ... under the Noor Plan will take us into darkness," reformist presidencandidate Masoud Pezeshkian recently told a group of female supporters Enforcement began ramping up in April, with videos

spreading online showing women having violent encoundressed in the all-encompass ing black chador alongside uniformed police officers.

While police haven't published arrest numbers about the crackdown and media haven't given it major attention, it's widely discussed in Iran. But still, many women continue to wear their hijabs loosely or leave them draped around their shoulders while walking in Tehran. On a recent afternoon in northern Tehran, women sat in cafes and other public places, as a police officer in his 50s told those passing by: "Please cover yourselves, ladies," and then muttered audibly: "My God, I am fed up repeating this without

getting any attention." We know the police are not eager to fight women, but they are under pressure to," said Fatemeh, a 34-year-old math teacher who gave only her ters with female enforcers first name for fear of reprisal.

"Sooner or later, the authorities will realise that it would serve their interests better to pull back." Iran and neighbouring Taliban-controlled Afghanistan are the only countries where the hijab remains mandatory — even conservative Saudi Arabia has dialled back on its morality patrols. While women attend school, work and can manage their own lives in Iran, hard-liners insist that the hijab must be enforced. The garment has long has been entwined with politics in Iran. Former ruler Reza Shah Pahlavi banned it in 1936, part of his efforts to mirror the West. The ban lasted only five years, but many middle and upper-class Iranian women chose not to wear it. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, some of the women who helped overthrow the shah embraced the even

more conservative chador. But

others protested a decision by Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to order women to wear hijabs in public. In 1983, it became law, enforced with penalties including fines and up to two months in prison. Amini's death in September 2022 sparked months of

protests and a security crackdown that killed more than 500 people and saw over 22,000 detained. But less than two years later, hard-liners within Iran's theocracy have pressed forward with a crackdown.

The government's insistence on enforcing the hijab also reflects its conspiratorial view of the world. Iran's national police chief, Gen. Ahmad Reza Radan, has alleged without providing evidence that the country's enemies plan to transform the nation's culture by encouraging women to

avoid the veil. Already, "tens of thousands of

women have had their cars arbitrarily confiscated as punishment for defying Iran's veillaws," Amnesty International said in March.

"Others have been prosecuted and sentenced to flogging or prison terms or faced other penalties such as fines or being forced to attend 'morality classes." On Saturday, police said they would release some 8,000 vehicles held over women not wearing the hijab in them for the Eid al-Ghadir holiday marked by Shiites.

There's also been a push to close down businesses that serve women who aren't wearing hijabs. "The Islamic Republic is using the distraction of its presidential election' to go after its women activists and cow them into silence through imprisonment and abuse," said Ĥadi Ghaemi, the executive director of the New York-based Centre for Human

Rights in Iran. The centre said at least 12 women activists have been sentenced to prison since Raisi's deaths for their work. But there are signs that

Iran's government, and 85 year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, know there are risks to escalating enforcement.

Indira Gandhi University Meerpur, Rewari



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Employment Notice (Advt. No. 66/2024 & 67/2024) Indira Gandhi University invites online applications from the

eligible candidates for recruitment of various Non-Teaching posts against sanctioned vacant posts. Category-wise number of vacant non-teaching posts along with Advt. Nos. detailed instructions, requisite qualifications, pay scales and modalities for selection are given on the University Website www.igu.ac.in. The link for submission of online application shall be available on the University Website w.e.f. 22.06.2024.

RO 27208 Dated 26-06-2024

Sensex, Nifty settle at new all-time high levels

Stock market benchmark Mindices Sensex and Nifty rallied for the third straight session and ended at their fresh all-time high levels on Wednesday in tandem with Asian peers and buying in

Reliance Industries.
The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 620.73 points or 0.80 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 78,674.25. During the day, it rallied 705.88 points or 0.90 per cent to hit a fresh all-time high of 78,759.40. The Nifty went up by 147.50 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at a record closing peak of 23,868.80. Intra-day, it surged 168.6 points or 0.71 per cent to hit the fresh lifetime high of



In the past three days of rally, investors' wealth have risen by Rs 2.53 lakh crore. 30 Sensex Among the

companies, Reliance Bharti Airtel, Industries, UltraTech Cement, Sun Pharma, Adani Ports, Axis Bank, NTPC and Bajaj Finance were the biggest gainers. Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata

Steel, Tech Mahindra and JSW

"The domestic market hit a new peak, bolstered by a rally in large-cap stocks, where the valuation is relatively fair. In contrast, mid and smallcap stocks saw profit-taking due to valuation concerns. Currently, the financials & consumption stocks are catching up driven by improved balance sheets, a strong GDP growth forecast,

and softening inflation. "Global market sentiments reflected similar trends, with a consensus on imminent rate cuts," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.15 per cent while midcap index declined 0.29 per cent. indices, Among the

telecommunication jumped

cent), teck (0.78 per cent) bankex (0.58 per cent) and

services (0.46 per cent). Commodities. discretionary, IT and auto were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo,

Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with gains. European markets were trading on a mixed note. US markets ended mostly higher on

Tuesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.80 per cent to USD 85.69 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1.175.91 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark jumped 712.44 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at 78,053.52 on

SEZ developers can install solar power panels under existing norms after DCs approval

The Commerce Ministry has asked development commissioners of SEZs to consider requests of developers of these special economic zones for installation of solar power panels under the existing SEZ guidelines for power generation, transmission and distribution norms.

In a communication to the Development Commissioners (DCs) of all special economic zones (SEZs), the Department of Commerce said that various requests have been received from EPCES (Export Promotion Council for EOUs and SEZs) as well as SEZ developers for installation of solar power panels as capital goods in these zones for solar power generation for captive use.

"The matter has been examined in consultation with DGEP, CBIC. Accordingly, the DCs are requested to consider such requests from developers/co-developers" under the power guidelines issued on February 16, 2016 by the department, the

The Directorate General of Export Promotion (DGEP) is an extended arm of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

Under those guidelines, a power plant, including non-conventional energy power plant, to be set up by developer/co-developer in an SEZ as part of an infrastructure facility will be in the non-processing area of the SEZ only. It will be entitled to fiscal benefits only for

its initial setting up and no fiscal benefit would be admissible for its operation and maintenance. Such a power plant can supply power to DTA (domestic tariff area) after meeting the power requirement of the SEZ subject to payment of customs duty. SEZs are key export hubs which contributed over one-third of the country's total outbound shipments in the last fiscal. These zones are enclosures that are treated as foreign territories for trade and customs duties, with restrictions on duty-free sales outside these zones in the domestic market.



SBI raises ₹10,000 cr via bonds to fund infra projects

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ctate Bank of India (SBI) on Wednesday raised Rs 10,000 crore through its fifth infrastructure bond

The country's largest lender raised the funds at a coupon rate of 7.36 per cent. The issue attracted overwhelming response from investors with bids in excess of Rs 19,884 crore and was oversubscribed by around four times against the base issue size of Rs 5,000 crore, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

The total number of bids received was 143, indicating wider participation with heterogeneity of bids, it said. The investors were across provident funds, pension funds, insurance companies, mutual funds, corporates etc, it said.

The proceeds of bonds will be utilized in enhancing long-term resources for funding infrastructure and affordable housing segments, it said.

"Based on the response, the bank has decided to accept Rs 10,000 crore at a coupon rate of 7.36 per cent payable annually. This representation of the response to the same annually. annually. This represents a spread of 21 bps over the corresponding FBIL G-Sec

par curve," it said.
With the current issuance, the total outstanding long-term bonds issued by the Bank is at Rs 49,718 crore.

This issuance is also very significant as the Bank has been successful in raising long-duration bonds successively.

SBI Chairman Dinesh Khara said that this issuance will help in developing a long-term bond curve and encourage other banks to issue bonds of longer



FHRAI seeks infra status for hotels, convention centres

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Federation of Hotel and Restant Associations of India has asked the government to grant infrastructure status for hotels across all categories and convention centres built at a project cost of Rs 10 crore and above to give a fillip to budget segment in the hotel industry.

In its pre-budget recommendation, the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) also sought rationalisation proposing a 12 per cent GST rate across all hotels. "Granting infrastructure status to hotels and all cities is crucial for attracting investments and accelerating growth in the hospitality sector," FHRAI President Pradeep Shetty

FHRAI said one of the key requests put forward by the hospitality federation to the Finance Ministry "grant infrastructure status for hotels across all categories and convention centres built at a project cost of Rs 10 crore and above to give fillip to the budget segment in the hotel

said in a statement

Besides, the federation requested a 12 per cent GST rate across all hotels and also demanded the delinking of restaurant tariffs from room tariffs as the current system of GST shifting to different slabs in the same hotel creates compliance issues and confusion among the public.
"Although there is no

evasion and avoidance of tax, but the said confusion has become a bone of contention for the hotels across the country due to notices and demands from the GST department," FHRAI said.

Shetty said, "We are confident in the ministry's commitment rationalisation for the hospitality sector.

The federation said in its pre-budget recommendations, highlighted significance of efforts under the 'Incredible India' campaign recommended enhancement of budget tourism and branding also requested specific measures to promote MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism in the country.

Juniper Green Energy secures renewable PPAs in Gujarat, Rajasthan

PTI NEW DELHI

Tuniper Green Energy on Wednesday said it has signed two separate power purchase agreements for renewable energy projects in Gujarat and Rajasthan. It has secured an agreement with Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Limited (GUVNL) under wind phase VI for a standalone 90 MW wind project in Gujarat, the company said in a statement.

The project is expected to generate nearly 293 million units (MUs) of electricity annually, offsetting approximately 2,66,002 tonne of Co2 emissions. The electricity generated is estimated to electrify

56,539 households in Gujarat.

The company has signed another PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) with the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) under hybrid tranche VII for the development of a 150 MW wind-solar hybrid power project in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The project is aimed to generate about 477 MU of electricity annually, offsetting 445,796 tonne of Co2 emissions each year and support the electrification of around 95,079 households.

Naresh Mansukhani, CEO, Juniper Green Energy, said, "Partnering with SECI and GUVNL on these projects embodies our forward-



commitment to harnessing the synergy of wind and solar energy. These initiatives not only leverage the strengths of both wind and solar energy but also reinforce our commitment to delivering green energy solutions that are both reliable and environmentally responsible." responsible."

Juniper Green Energy is an independent renewable energy power producer and operator of solar, wind and hybrid power significant projects with experience in conceptualising, building, and d̄ renewable energy assets. developing

US transport security body seeks one-stop pact with India to end rescreening of passengers

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US transport security body has sought a unique "one-stop agreement" with India to end the rescreening of passengers, asserting that the "really powerful" concept will raise global aviation security standards.

Addressing the India US Aviation Summit here on Tuesday, David Pekoske, Administrator of the US Transportation Security Administration (USTSA) said that the one-stop security concept is "very reachable" between the com "I think very tangible and very

reachable between India and the United States is one-stop security," he said. "It's a concept that expedites

the flow of passengers and baggage to their destinations by eliminating the duplication of security controls at transfer points," Pekoske said.

He said in the case of a onestop agreement, passengers who reach an airport in another country and have a connecting domestic flight would not need to be rescreened and their checked bags would go from aircraft to

PTI ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Tata Steel aims at having a minimum of 25 per cent

of its workforce made up of

diverse groups, including

marginalised communities, persons with disabilities and

within the next few years, a

It is one of the first companies

company official said.

minorities,

individuals,

Terming it a "really powerful" concept, Pekoske said it raises global aviation security standards. "Flights inbound to the United

States are more secure. If there's a reverse agreement between the United States and India where US screening satisfies Indian requirements, that means that flights to India would also be more secure. It does require the regular exchange of information," he said

"It requires improvements to security processes to maintain the agreement. It yields a v costs through better allocation of resources, reduces flight connection times and missed connections, and improves the passenger experience," he

Pekoske said the two countries should consider signing a memorandum of agreement to share sensitive security information.

'We have a category of classification of information that is not classified in the true sense of classified material, but it is sensitive enough that it needs additional protections," he

He said that whenever there is



-- there is a need to have a memorandum of agreement which covers the aspects of that sharing arrangement. He noted that both the TSA and India's transportation security posture were born of

cruel tragedy. For India, it was the bombing of Air India 'Kanishka' Flight 182 in 1985, while for the TSA, it was the 9-11 attacks in

"These tragic events were paradigm shifts in how we both thought about transportation security that continues today," he said.

the United States need to work together on issues like aviation safety. Asserting that safety is a team

sport, he said that sharing data between the two countries can allow better identification and mitigation of risks in the 'Our (US and India's) nation-

al systems of aviation are inextricably linked into a single global network," he said, adding that the two counties have adjoining air spaces, integrated supply chains, and international services that connect their economies and Meanwhile, addressing the people.

"We need to work together on issues like safety, we need to share ideas and share innovations, especially in how to safely incorporate some of these new technologies into our airspace," he said.

Noting that the two countries have different systems that will take different approaches to solving challenges, he said, "We can and should work together to share best practices and learn from one another.

'We all have an interest in increasing safety within our respective countries, but we increase the level of safety in the global aviation system," he added.

"This means sharing data. Sharing information allows us to better identify and mitigate risks before those risks become accidents and even before they become failures to the safety layers in our system," he added.

"When I started in aviation, accidents were unfortunately not uncommon. They were almost annual events, and safety regulators learned from those accidents and made the system safer," he said.

"For the past couple of

decades, we've moved beyond that model, and accidents are now extremely rare, and they are simply unacceptable as an outcome," Whitaker said.

"Our challenge is to bring safety to the next level, and that means we need to proactively analyse data and find those risks of failure and mitigate those risks before they happen," he said.

Asserting that all the job categories in the aviation sector are highly sought after, he said that "for regulators, it means new questions about how we oversee those operations".

nimble way to regulate these new entrants who are operating at the speed of a startup while we are operating at the speed of government, he said. He added that there is a need to figure out how to close the gap, identify these risks and leverage technology to incorporate them safely into the air-

"In the US, we've seen the public perception of safety and risk in the system evolve over time. As more people have access to aviation, the expectation grows that the system will be completely safe," he asserted.

evaluation of technical

proposals. The tendering

process began in May 2023,

with the technical bid opening in October 2023. The highly competitive

prominent industry leaders

BHEL, L&T, and MEIL.

MEIL emerged as the lowest

bidder, demonstrating its

capabilities and cost-

efficiency by submitting the lowest bid of Rs.12,799.92

This contract represents the

most significant project for

technical

process

expertise

bidding

participation

exceptional

effectiveness

and

Deccan Gold Mines gets investment commitment of ₹60 crore for key projects

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $D_{(\mathrm{DGML})}^{\mathrm{eccan}}$ Gold Mines Ltd (DGML) on Wednesday ithas received an investment commitment of Rs 60 crore for developing its key projects -- Jonnagiri Gold Project in India and Altyn Tor Gold Project in Kyrgyzstan.

The investment commitment has been received from Ardent Steel, Hira Infra Tek Pvt Ltd and Med Edu Care Marketing Management, Dubai, the company said in a

filing to BSE. The funds are likely to be received over the next couple of months, it said.

"DGML has secured investment commitment of Rs 60 crore...To cater to the development of its key projects viz., Jonnagiri Gold Project, India and Altyn Tor Gold Project, Kyrgyzstan," the

filing said. DGML, the first and only gold exploration company listed on BSE, has a significant stake of 40 per cent in Geomysore Services initiated merger India Ltd, which is acquisition activities.



developing the first private sector gold mine at Jonnagiri. DGML was established in 2003 by promoters with deep roots in the exploration and mining sector. DGML for a long period of time has been involved in gold exploration activities in India and

DGML's exploration in India, particularly in Karnataka, led to the discovery of open pittable gold deposits in the Archaean greenstone belts of Dharwar Craton.

These deposits are in Hutti and Dharwar - Shimoga belts. Since 2021, as part of expansion diversification, DGML has

in the country to roll out a special recruitment drive for transgender talent, having recruited over 100 members from the community for various roles across different locations, the official claimed. Continuing this drive, we aim to have 25 per cent of our workforce from diverse groups in the next couple of years," the official said.

LGBTQIA+

A total of 113 transgender been individuals have onboarded and posted at various locations, including manufacturing, operations and maintenance, mining, and services. These employees are stationed in Noamundi, West Bokaro, Kolkata, Kharagpur, Kalinganagar,



Gender minorities, marginalised groups to comprise

25 per cent of Tata Steel workforce, says official

Jamshedpur.

pioneering

Some of these employees work all three shifts and operate Heavy Earth Moving Machinery (HEMM) at the Noamundi iron ore mine in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum and West Bokaro coal mine in Ramgarh district.

"Tata Steel appreciates the potential of diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) and has a tremendous organisational focus on it," the official said. "In line with this, we renewed commitment refocused our approach to DE&I in 2015 by setting up MOSAIC - a platform for

initiatives,

employee-friendly policies conceptualised and executed from the apex level," he added.

The official admitted that the initial planning stage was challenging due to inadequate knowledge about transgender community.

"However, we made a detailed plan and implemented it without any difficulty. To date, we have not received any complaint from either side of the employees since the first of transgender individuals was inducted following proper training in 2019," the official said.

On the productivity of these employees compared to the general workforce, he said transgender individuals perform better in some

Jaya Singh Panda, Chief Diversity Officer at Tata Steel, said, "We believe in nurturing a workplace where every person, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, feels valued, respected, and empowered. Diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and and continuing this practice is key to long-term success and innovation.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a transgender employee at the company's Jamshedpur plant said, "We feel very safe inside the company as coworkers are friendly, supportive, and cooperative. The company developed also including infrastructure,

separate toilets for us." trans-female Another employee from Noamundi lamented that her parents never used to care about whether she ate or came home on time.

MEIL bags ₹12,800 cr tender by Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited

PNS NEW DELHI

India's engineering major Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Ltd (MEIL) is happy to announce that it has emerged the lowest bidder for the Engineering, Procurement, Construction (EPC) contract by the Nuclear Power

Corporation of Limited (NPCIL) under the Department of Atomic Energy

It is the highest value tender ever rolled out by the NPCIL. This prestigious project involves construction of two 700 MW electrical reactors at Kaiga in Karnataka and represents a significant milestone in India's journey towards clean and reliable nuclear energy.

The project marks a ground breaking moment with the introduction of the Quality cum Cost-Based Selection (QCBS) methodology. This rigorous

ensures a

MEIL and our strategic entry into the nuclear energy sector," said Ch Subbaiah, Director, MEIL. "MEIL's unwavering commitment to excellence

and innovation has been recognised through this landmark achievement. The company is excited to contribute to India's selfreliance in clean energy metīculous solutions.

INDIA'S TOP ATHLETICS STARS VIE FOR OLYMPICS BERTHS AT NATIONAL INTER-STATE C'SHIPS

PTI ■ PANCHKULA (HARYANA)

The absence of Olympic javelin throw champion Neeraj Chopra notwithstanding, there will be no lack of star power as the country's remaining top track and field athletes vie for Paris Olympics berths during the National Inter-State Champion shipsbeginning here Thursday.

The championships will serve as the final qualifying event for the upcoming Paris Games where the athletics events begin on August 1. Incidentally, the final day of the four-day championships --June 30 -- also coincides with

the Olympics qualifying window deadline.
Chopra will skip the championships as there is only a few days gap before the Paris Diamond League on July 7, in which he is set to compete. He competed in the Federation Cup in Bhubaneswar last month, winning a gold.

Last month, Athletics Federation of India (AFI) Athletics president Adille Sumariwalla had made it clear that except for Chopra, it will be mandatory for all the other athletes to participate in the National Inter-State Championships to get selected for the Paris Olympics.

AP ■ COLOGNE (GERMANY)

stage of the tournament.

Slovenia at Cologne Stadium.

in Germany has been fierce.

Southgate said.

Top of the group, unbeaten and on the favorable side of the draw for the knockout phase of Euro 2024. It's

a case of job done for England at this

Try telling that to the fans who jeered

loudly and threw beer cups as the final whistle blew on a 0-0 draw with

Criticism of England's performances

"I've not seen any team qualify and receive similar," manager Gareth

Southgate believes he and his England team could be paying the price for its success under his

leadership. Safe passage through to the round of 16 maintains his

personal record of advancing from

the group stage of every major tournament he's taken charge of, dating back to the World Cup in 2018.

"I think probably expectation (is different). We've made England over

the last six or seven years fun again. I



AFI rules state that all the athletes will have to participate in the National Inter-State Championships if they have to get selected for major multisport events like the Olympics, Asian Games or Games, Commonwealth unless the federation gives exemption on the request of particular athletes or their

England haven't been fun to watch at

these Euros with a 1-0 win against

Serbia, their only victory in Group C. That was followed by a 1-1 draw with

Denmark and the scoreless draw with

Three games, two goals and a whole lot of underwhelmed fans.

The performance against Denmark

was apparently so uninspired that

former captain and now BBC presenter Gary Lineker used an

expletive to describe it. And despite claiming he was "oblivious" to Lineker's stinging critique, it contributed to the "unusual environment" Southgate said he was working in at this tournament.

The atmosphere was hardly helped by

plastic beer cups being thrown on the field as Southgate and his players went to applaud England supporters after the match.

"I'm not going to back down from going over and thanking the fans who

working in at this tournament.

In the absence of Chopra, the likes of Avinash Sable (men's 3000m steeplechase), Kishore Jena (men's javelin throw), Ram Baboo (men's 20km race walk) and Parul Chaudhary (women's 3000m steeplechase) -- all of whom have booked Paris Games berths by breaching the qualifying standards -- will headline the qualifying championships.

Other athletes who can book Paris ticket through world ranking quota like Jyothi Yarraji (women's hurdles), Annu Rani (women's javelin throw), DP Manu throw), (men's javelin Tajinderpal Singh Toor (men's shot put), Jeswin Aldrin (men's long jump), Praveen Chitravel and Abdulla Aboobacker (both men's triple jump) have also

entered their names Toor, an Asian record holder till a few days back, told PTI on Tuesday that he is dealing with a slight ankle pain and his doctor told him not to throw for three-four weeks. But his

name figured in Wednesday's updated entry list of the AFI. Some of rising stars like sprinter Animesh Kujur, 110m hurdler Tejas Shirse -- who

recently set the national record -- and long jumper Shaili Singh are also set to be seen in action. National record holder Manikanta Hoblidhar is also set to be back in action after missing the Federation Cup and his 100m dash duel with and his 100m dash duel with Kujur, Amlan Borgohain and Gurindervir Singh for the tag of the country's fastest man will be interesting to watch though none of them are likely to make it to Paris.

Federation Cup 200m gold medallist Kujur will also be up against national record holder Borgohain in another duel.

Almost all the members of the

Almost all the members of the Indian men's and women's 4x400m relay teams that had booked Paris berths will feature in the individual quarter-mile events.

National record holder 20km race walker Akshdeep Singh, who has also breached the Paris Games qualifying mark, is missing from the entry list. Women's 20km race walk national record holder Priyanka Goswami, who has also qualified for Paris

Olympics, is not in the list. The opening day will see just three finals -- women's hammer throw, men's and women's 500m races.

A few athletes from Sri Lanka and Maldives are also taking part in the championships.g

such a big heart and mental strength.

That's why I'm very proud of my team," coach Matjaz Kek said. "This is

only the beginning for a new and beautiful era for Slovenian football."

While it was a proud night for

Slovenians, it was another performance that highlighted

England's attacking issues, with

substitute Cole Palmer coming

closest to scoring a winner in

"You can't go into every game with

such pressure and score four goals. Football doesn't work like that,"

Southgate said. "It is important to win the group to control your own

A masked Kylian Mbappe scored his first goal of the Euros, but France drew 1-1 with Poland to finish runner-up in Group D behind Austria, which beat the Netherlands

Mbappe wore a protective mask after

breaking his nose in France's opening

game against Austria and scored from

the penalty spot. But Robert

stoppage time.



Harmanpreet named captain as Hockey India announces 16 members squad for Paris Olympics

Harmanpreet Singh was on Wednesday named captain and Hardik Singh his deputy as Hockey India announced a 16-member squad for next month's Paris Olympics, featuring five Games debutants and a handful of seniors from the previous edition.

India, who won a bronze medal in the Tokyo Olympics 2020, are placed in Pool B alongside defending champions Belgium, Australia, Argentina, New Zealand and Ireland.

Teams finishing in the top four in the pool's points table will advance to the quarter-finals.

The Indian players are currently busy preparing for the Olympics in their national camp at the SAI Centre in Bengaluru.

The venerable goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and midfielder Manpreet Singh are set for Olympic their fourth appearance while skipper Harmanpreet is bracing up for his third Games.

The five players who will make their Olympics debut for India in Paris are Jarmanpreet Singh, Sanjay, Raj Kumar Pal, Abhishek and Sukhjeet Singh. Since their historic show in Tokyo, where the team won an Olympic medal after a gap of 41 years, Indian defenders Rupinderpal Singh and Birendra Lakra have retired whereas Surender Kumar has been out of favour.

Nilkanta Sharma, who was part of the main squad in Tokyo has been kept among the alternative players but Dilpreet Singh missed out. Goalkeeper Krishan Pathak will continue to be an alternate player in second successive Olympics.

Sumit and Sanjay, while the midfield will have Pal, Shamsher Singh, Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, and Vivek Sagar Prasad.
Abhishek, Sukhjeet, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh and Guriant Singh will

Singh and Gurjant Singh will be among India's forwards. Defender Jugraj Singh is India's third alternative player apart from Pathak and Nilkanta.

Nilkanta. Head coach Craig Fulton was saving, "The quoted as saying, "The selection process for the Paris Olympics squad was incredibly competitive due to the depth of talent within our ranks, however, I am confident that every player chosen will bring their best to

"Each player selected has demonstrated exceptional skill, dedication, and resilience throughout our rigorous preparation phase.'

Fulton continued, "Our focus has been on building a cohesive team that can adapt to different playing styles and situations, and I believe we

have achieved that."
"As we head to Paris, our goal is clear - to play with heart, skill, and determination. We are prepared to face the world's best teams and strive for the highest podium. This squad is ready to seize the opportunity and bring glory to India," he added.

India will begin their campaign against New Zealand on July 27 followed by a clash against Argentina on July 29. India will then take on Ireland on July 30, Belgium on August 1 and face Australia on

August 2. India have a total of 12 Olympic medals, including eight gold, one silver and three

Pool A comprises the Netherlands Germany

were brilliant during the game," he said. "They might feel differently twice-taken spot kick time and Croatia was eliminated. "We are such a small country, with gave already eliminated Poland its first point of the tournament. players," Southgate said. "We've got to France, Germany and Portugal and time and Croatia was eliminated. Harmanpreet succeed if we are together.' Britain, Spain, South Africa, will play one of the best third-place be very, very careful that it stays that Southgate led England to the Jarmanpreet, Amit Rohidas, and host nation France Tennis Hall of Fame to get facelift in time for Argentina advances to Copa America quarterfinals,

golden era inductees like Federer, Serena Williams with plans to make the exhibits



The International Tennis Hall of Fame is getting all dolled up for some extra special visitors. The Newport shrine on Tuesday unveiled plans for a \$3 million renovation that will double the museum's exhibit space and redesign the plaque gallery in time for the enshrinement of alltime greats such as Roger Federer and Serena Williams. "When you think about this

golden era of who's going to be inducted coming up in the next five to 10 years, (it's) perfect timing," Hall CEO Dan Faber said in a news conference to announce the plans.

Most visible among the upgrades will be a new display for the inductees, replacing plaques on the wall with a lineup of markers, each including a golden tennis racket that mirrors the Hall's logo. A replica of the racket will be given to the inductee as part of the enshrinement ceremony.

"It truly represents the prestige that that honor is for those inductees, for both players and contributors," said Reese Stevens, who helped design the new displays. "The golden-cast rackets are going to be the new manifestation of what it means

to be a Hall of Famer."

The gallery of inductees will move from the beginning of the exhibits to the end of the meandering tour through the 19th Century building that surrounds the only grass courts in the United States regularly available to the public. A new retail store will be added at the end of the exhibits.

Previously, because of the building's layout, visitors would start at the plaque gallery and walk through the exhibits, then need to double back to get out.

We want to be very respectful

of the fact that this is a historic building, and we know that," said Mindy Ward, who also worked on the plans for the Nashville, Tennessee-based design firm Advent. "Part of our challenge - and one that we embraced with gusto - was making sure that what we were developing, while fresh and new and modern, blended seamlessly with some of the historic displays in the historic art and architecture that we didn't want

to just get rid of." It is the first major upgrade to the Hall since 2015; the plaque gallery had not been updated since 2008. About 30,000 visitors tour the Hall in person each year - a number it hopes to double - more accessible online to those who can't make the trip to this well-heeled home of mansions and marinas on Narragansett

The Hall will close during the renovation, which is scheduled to begin in November and end by next May.

Players are eligible for Hall of Fame induction five years after they were last a "significant factor" on the ATP or WTA tours. Federer retired in 2021 and Williams a year later, meaning they will be eligible for induction in 2026 and '27. The golden era of tennis is per-

haps retiring, but it's upon us," Hall vice president Julianna Barbieri said. "Roger Federer, Serena Williams, Rafael Nadal, Andy Murray and Venus Williams are going to become Hall of Famers, and it was time for us to take what was in the current gallery and modernize that, modernize that to the present day, modernize that for the evolution of the sport and make that fit more within who and what the game has evolved to from 2008.

President Patrick McEnroe also said that the organization is planning new events after the Hall of Fame Open lost its spot on the ATP calendar after this season. The tournament has been played for almost 50 years in July in conjunction with the induction ceremonies, but the date the week after Wimbledon led many top players to skip the tournament and rest.

The specifics will be announced next month.

You know the phrase, Today is the first day of the rest of your life?" McEnroe said. "Next year is the first year of the rest of our



team will likely need a sharp upturn in form if it is to live up to its pretournament billing as one of the favorites for the European title.

England coach Southgate targeted after 0-0 draw with Slovenia

That was the aim before the start of the tournament. Come top of the group and control our destiny,"

AP ■ EAST RUTHERFORD (USA)

After nearly 90 minutes of total domination, Lionel

to the Copa America

quarterfinals after the ball ricocheted in front of the net

during a frantic scramble that led to the breakthrough.

Lautaro Martínez scored off

the last in a series of rebounds

in the 88th minute, lifting the

Albiceleste over Chile 1-0 on

Tuesday night and into the

quarterfinals with a game to

"The ball ended up right at me

and I was able to convert it,"

said Martínez, who scored the

second goal in last week's opening 2-0 win over Canada.

Messi started the leadup to the

goal with a corner kick that

was sent sent toward goal with

a glancing header by defender

Lisandro Martínez. The ball

landed in front of goalkeeper

and champion Argentina advanced

Messi

defending

captain Harry Kane said. Still, England has at least ended up on The result 'also meant Slovenia ed the round of 16 for the first

Claudio Bravo, where Argentina's Giovani Lo Celso and Chile's Nicolás Fernández were wrestling. Lo Celso kicked the ball off Bravo and it rebounded to Chile's Igor Lichnovsky, who tried to poke

it wide. Lautaro Martínez, entered in the 73rd, calmly one-timed that rebound into the roof of the net on Argentina's 21st shot. Players stood and waited for three minutes while the goal, Martínez's 26th for the national team, was confirmed in a video review.

"We deserved the win. It was not an easy match," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "We managed to win at the moment least expected." Argentina leads Group A with six points, followed by Canada with three, and Chile and Peru with one each. The Albiceleste finish the first round against Peru at Miami Gardens,



Florida, on Saturday, when Canada meets Orlando, Florida. Chile in

Playing a day after his 37th birthday, Messi frequently flaunted his talent to spin around and slalom through defenders before an adoring sellout crowd of 81,106 at MetLife Stadium, site of the 2026 World Cup final. Argentina dominated 22-3 in shots and 11-0 in corner kicks.

Chile didn't take its first attempt until the 72nd minute. Messi came the closest to scoring before Martínez with a 30-yard shot that glanced off the post to Bravo's left in the 36th minute. Messi had received treatment on the

thigh area of his right leg for nearly two minutes after getting kicked by Gabriel Suazo in the 24th. Nicolás González's shot from

another Messi pass in the 62nd was parried off the crossbar by

Argentina outshot Chile 17-0 before Rodrigo Echeverría's 72nd-minute effort following a turnover was saved by Emiliano Martínez, who blocked the ball while falling after it deflected off Alexis Mac Allister. The goalkeeper then used his right hand to bat another Echeverría shot in the 76th that deflected off a toe of defender Cristian Romero. 'I always have to save one or

two every match. And I'm lucky to keep doing it," Martínez said.

On the 46th anniversary of Argentina's first World Cup title, the teams returned to the stadium where Chile beat Argentina on penalty kicks in the 2016 Copa America final. That defeat prompted Messi to announce his international retirement only to reverse his decision seven weeks later.

AP KANSAS CITY (USA)

Tonathan David scored in the 74th minute as Canada beat Peru 1-0 in the Copa America for their first victory over a South American opponent in 24 years.

Peru played a man short after Miguel Araujo was given a red card in the 59th minute for a studs-up tackle on Jacob Shaffelburg, a call made after a video review.

Canada got their first win in four matches under Jesse Marsch, the American hired as coach last month, and beat

a South American team for the first time since a 2-0 victory over Colombia in the 2000 CONCACAF Gold Cup final

David's goal, his 27th for Canada, ended the national team's 391-minute scoreless streak. Twenty-six of his goals have come in competitive matches.

The game was paused in firsthalf stoppage time when an assistant referee running on the non-shaded part of the stadium collapsed and needed medical attention. He got to his feet briefly and was taken



off the field in a stretcher. He had been running down the line on the non-shaded part of the stadium.

Canada (1-1), in its first Copa America, rebounded from an opening 2-0 loss to defending champion Argentina, and Peru began with a 0-0 draw against Čhile.

The Canadians close Group A on Saturday against Chile at Orlando, Florida, the same day Peru (0-1-1) face Argentina at Miami Gardens, Florida. The top two teams advance to the quarterfinals. Peru reached the semifinals in

They had failed to score in nine of its last 12 matches. David scored after Cyle Larin made a long outlet pass to Shaffelburg, who crossed. David took two touches and beat goalkeeper Pedro Gallese from near the penalty spot, sending the ball in off the far

2021 before losing to Brazil.

scoring leader. Canada goalkeeper Maxime Crepeau made a diving save in second-half stoppage time,

post. David is two behind

Larin,

Canada's career

then punched away a free

INDIA LOOK TO BEAT KNOCKOUT STAGE NERVES

ith a refreshingly aggressive batting approach, India would look to avoid the knockout stage jitters plaguing them for over a decade when they take on defending champions England in the semifinals of the T20 World Cup here on Thursday.

The last time these two teams met at this stage, it turned out to be a no contest as England outplayed an outdated India in the 2022 edition's semifinal.

However, India have finally been able to shed their conservative approach at the top of the order since that 10wicket hammering in Adelaide and have become the team to beat in this competition.

On paper, Rohit Sharma and his men look the stronger bunch for the conditions expected at the Providence Stadium and look primed for

The spinners have enjoyed bowling here since the opening game and the likes of India's Kuldeep Yadav and England's Adil Rashid would be itching to flaunt their skills in the knock-out fixture.

Spinners are not the only ones who will come into play, the pacers too have got success at the venue with Afghanistan producing a match-winning spell against New Zealand at the start of the competition.

Interestingly, no match has been staged here since June 8 when the West Indies breezed past Uganda in a day game, giving the curators extra time to prepare a suitable pitch for the high-profile game.

India were clinical in the Super stage but the extreme pressure of a semi-final tends to produce unforced errors. At the top of the order, India

will be hoping for runs from the bat of Virat Kohli, who has an underwhelming tournament by his high standards.

On the contrary, his opening partner and skipper Rohit has set the benchmark for other batters when it comes to fearless cricket.

His blazing 41-ball 92 against Australia is the sort of knock that won't be easily forgotten for some time to come.

For both Rohit and Kohli, it is probably their last shot at winning the T20 world title in India colours and the two would be desperate to leave a

Rohit has already made it clear that he intends to go ballistic in the powerplays without a care for personal milestones, which was evident in the game



against Australia.

Shivam Dube has not batted as per expectations in the middleorder and it will be interesting to see how he fares against wily leg-spinner Rashid.

unchanged into the game even though they have Yuzvendra Chahal in the squad who can handy come in against right-handers including Phil Salt, Jos Buttler, Harry Brook and Jonny

Chahal is yet to get a game in this competition and it is set to remain that way with India expected to continue the trio of Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel Hardik and Kuldeep, who was the show

team's trump card in Super 8s. Jasprit Bumrah is in a league of his own and England will need to do something special to score off him.

Hardik Pandya's all-round show has helped India

immensely thus far and the management will be hoping it

England, on the other hand, have not had the smoothest of campaigns. They stuttered into Super 8s where they lost to South Africa before turning things around

things around.
Skipper Buttler was back among the runs against USA in England's final Super 8 game and considering the familiarity with the Indian attack, he is well-placed to come up with a game-changing knock.

His opening partner Phil Salt can take the game away from opposition very quickly and India will need to dismiss him in the research. in the powerplay.

More runs are expected from Bairstow and Moeen Ali, whose off-spin could be useful against India's left-handers. Liam Livingstone, who bowls both leg and off spin, too can bowl his full quota of overs like

he did against USA the other Rashid's four overs can also prove decisive in the all-

important fixture.
In his first high-profile event

since returning from injury, pacer Jofra Archer has done well in the seven games so far and would be backing himself to trouble Rohit and Kohli with the new ball.

Having taken a hat-trick in the

Chris Jordan too will be sky

"Obviously, when we left England a few weeks ago, we left to come and obviously try and defend the title. There's been a few bumps in the road along the way, but I think you kind of described them as good bumps because they've really narrowed down our focus and really made our direction really clear," said Jordan after the win over USA. There is also a likelihood of rain impacting the game with chances of showers in the lead up to the semi-final and also on match day.

India: Rohit Sharma (c), Hardik Pandya, Yashasyi Virat Jaiswal, Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Kuldeep Patel, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Bumrah, Jasprit Moĥammed Siraj.

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, Mark Wood.

SA, Afghanistan look to rise above deep scars to seal T20 WC final berth

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

Tournament story-makers Afghanistan will be up against perennial dark horses South Africa in the first semifinal of the T20 World Cup here, a much-anticipated showdown that will be historic irrespective of the outcome.

Without belittling the poised run of the Proteas, Afghanistan have been the revelation of this ICC showpiece.

They found life and fighting spirit to rise above the ravages of war back in their country, best exemplified by an astounding win over 2021 winners Australia, whom they had never beaten before.

There were multiple heroes -- skipper Rashid Khan has been immense throughout, pacers Fazalhaq Farooqi and Naveen-ul-Haq have given early breakthroughs, Gulbadin Naib conjured a miraculous spell against the Aussies while Mohammad Nabi remained perseverant.

Opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz leads the batting chart with 281 runs, while Farooqi is on top of the bowling list with 16 scalps. It is a story in itself as how two Afghanistan players have raced past some marquee names to the top of the stats table.

But all of it can come to nothing if they falter at the Brian Lara Academy, a venue supported Afghanistan to the hilt.

The Afghans are a skilled set of cricketers, on whose back the team rose brilliantly from the low-tier obscurity of the early 2000s. So, they are not unfamiliar to intense competition and T20, more than any other format, offers them the chance to challenge the big brothers.

But they have never competed in the semi-final of a World Cup, and the Afghans now need to control their nerves to overcome a fancied opponent.

Head coach Jonathan Trott affirmed his side was not perturbed by the big occasion. "We go into the semifinal with no scarring or no history. This is uncharted territory for us. But, by no means, do we feel like we're going into the semifinal just to compete. "We're there to win the semifinal. We've beaten some major teams," Trott said after the

win over Bangladesh. South Africa's scars also run deep but they are purely of cricketing nature.



In the past, the Proteas have assembled some high-velocity squads but never managed to enter the title round of a T20 or 50-over World Cup after their re-admission into world cricket in 1991

To change that long-running show of misfortune, South Africa need to tame not just Afghanistan but also the demons in their own minds.

The signs have so far have given hope. ty to win the clutch moments, their Achilles Heel in previous global tournaments, that

often prop up without any warning. But here, they have notched up victories as close as one-run (vs Nepal), four-run (vs Bangladesh) and three wickets (vs West Indies). South Africa of old could have bungled in those situations, but Aiden Markram's side has displayed remarkable fortitude. They seem to have escaped the hackneved C-Word.

Experienced left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj explained his team's run in this World Ćup.

"If you look at previous World Cups, the small moments, we haven't really won. It's good to see that all the games have come really close and we've found a way, so it's building the character within the team. "It prepares us for certain opportunities that

we could get and cross over the line in those small moments. These are things that we've never done before. So, it's good to see us getting into that," said Maharaj.

His words offer a true reflection of the collective effort South Africa have made here There is only one South African player in top-10 batters' list. Quinton de Kock is placed sixth with 199 runs from seven matches, while none of their bowlers feature inside the first 10.

But here they are, playing in the semifinal and they will have to negate those small, key the next match too.

For once, South Africa might not feel overwhelmed by that thought.

If Afghanistan too can keep their heartbeats in check, a classic for the ages seems well on the cards.

SQUADS:

Afghanistan: Rashid Khan (c), Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran, Azmatullah Omarzai, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Ishaq, Mohammad Nabi, Gulbadin Naib, Karim Janat, Nangyal Kharoti, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Naveen-ul-Ĥaq, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Fareed Ahmad Malik. Reserves: Sediq Atal, Hazratullah Zazai, Saleem Safi.

South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Ottniel Baartman, 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, Tristan Stubbs.

I was in tears laughing, Australia skipper Marsh sees the funny side of Naib's theatrics Marsh said the 2021 champions have only

A ustralia captain Mitchell Marsh saw the funny side of Afghanistan all-rounder Gulbadin Naib's theatrical complaining of cramps in a 720 World Cup match against Bangladesh, terming it as "one of the funniet things" he has a way soon on a cricket niest things" he has ever seen on a cricket

Naib, who was fielding in the slip, fell on his back while clutching his thighs during the 12th over, just after coach Jonathan Trott signalled to leave the research of the state of the s nalled to slow down the proceedings as rain was imminent with Afghanistan ahead in the proceedings in the must-win Super "I was almost in tears laughing and at the

end of the day it had no bearing on the game. So, we can laugh about it now - but, gee, it was funny. It was outstanding," Marsh told cricket.Com.Au.

Bangladesh were chasing 115 for a win then, and fell behind the DLS par score of 83 at the end of the 12th over at 81 for seven.



However, Naib later bowled two overs and participated with vigour in Afghanistan's victory celebrations without showing any hint of 'cramps.'
The ICC's playing conditions stipulate that

a player can get up to two-match ban for "deliberate or repetitive" time wasting tactics, but that Naib might just escape with a first and final warning by the match refer-

With the win, Afghanistan knocked Australia out of the T20 World Cup, and

themselves to blame for the exit. "We watched it (the match) as a group. It was

obviously a pretty amazing game, wasn't it? A lot of twists and turns. "Obviously, you want to keep playing this tournament and that was our only way of

doing it. But there's also the element that it was completely out of our control and we only had ourselves to blame for that," said Marsh. The all-rounder said the team was dejected after the fall of the final Bangladesh

Pacer Naveen-ul-Haq trapped Mustafizur Rahman in front of the wicket to signal a famous win for the Afghans. 'We were all flat (when the final wicket fell)

We were desperate to continue on in the tournament. But fair play to Afghanistan they beat us and they beat Bangladesh and they deserve to be in the semifinals," added Marsh. Afghanistan will face South Africa in the first semifinal of the T20 World Cup

I can't see India losing this time, England will need something extraordinary: Collingwood

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

England will have to come up with an extraordinary performance to beat an an inform India in the T20 World Cup semifinal, according to former all-rounder Paul Collingwood, who feels that the 'Men in Blue' are unlikely to lose the grudge match defending against champions.

India and England are set to clash on Thursday in a repeat of the 2022 last four stage match in Adelaide which Jos Buttler and his men won by 10 wickets.

"Honestly, I can't see India losing this time. England will need something extraordinary to beat them," Collingwood said on Star Sports Press Room.

Jasprit Bumrah has been in sensational form with teams including the likes of former champions Australia and Pakistan struggling to score against him. Collingwood reckons the pacer's four overs would decide the complexion of the game.

"India, with their well-rounded squad, stands out particularly for Jasprit Bumrah's current form. He's fit, accurate, fast, and highly skilled. No team seems to have an answer for

"In a 120-ball game, having someone like Bumrah with his pace for 24 balls makes a huge difference. India has looked confident even in tough



situations and on difficult pitches in America. Their batters, like Rohit

Sharma who played magnificent innings against Australia, seem to be back in form," he added. The pitch in Guyana has

favoured the bowlers in the past by slowing down as the game goes on.

Spinners have dominated at this venue, and the pacers get some help early on but teams have reached scores of 170-180 in the ongoing World Cup.
"The match-up will be magnificent, with both sides

adopting an ultra-aggressive approach. The surface in Guyana will be crucial. On a flat pitch, England has the upper hand with their ability to overpower teams. However, a overpower teams. However, a slow, turning pitch would

favour India.

Collingwood feels India have moved on from their conservative approach, which led to their downfall at the

We still haven't played our best game yet: SA coach Rob Walter

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

sserting that their best is yet to Acome, South Africa coach Rob Walter said the team is not bogged down by near misses of the past and will "take confidence" from its performance in crunch moments on way to the ongoing T20 World Cup semifinals.

In the first semifinal of the tournament here on Thursday, perennial dark horses South Africa will take on an Afghanistan team that has caused a flutter with its heroics in the tournament, the highlight of which has been the sensational win over heavyweights Australia.

In the press-match press conference, Walter was asked if this could be South Africa's time after having battled their way past tricky opponents in testing conditions over the last few weeks

"Definitely it's always great to dream

and I think everyone in South Africa dreams of the time when a trophy gets lifted. No doubt that will happen. Whether it's going to be this week, that remains to be seen. 'We're just going to try and play the best game of cricket that we can.

South Africa's success in prevailing in tricky situations, their Achilles Heel in the past, bodes well for the side chasing a maiden World Cup title triumph. "From the closeness point of view,

And we still haven't played our best

game yet," Walter told reporters.

yeah, we've managed to get over the line in quite a number of close games in the lead up to the semifinal, which for a team has been great for us. 'We've potentially missed out on a

few of those moments in the past, and this time around we managed to get over the line. So, we certainly take confidence out of that.

"We still want to play our best

cricket in the key moments of the game tomorrow." Right from the 1992 World Cup,

their first since readmission into international cricket after the apartheid ban, South Africa have either chocked in those big semifinals of ICC tournaments or luck deserted them.

Needless to say, the subject was broached during the interaction.

"Look, I said, the near misses in the past, they belong to the people who missed them. To be honest, this team is a different team. We own whatever is ours to own. And so, our nearest reflection point is this tournament where we've managed to get over the line. So that's what we think about. Walter made no effort to play down

the pressure and excitement of

It's never just another game. I think

that sort of rhetoric around

semifinals is always untrue, or

playing in a World Cup semifinal.

people trying to downplay the occasion. Certainly, we don't do that. It is a semifinal of a World Cup, and we appreciate that and we're

looking forward to it."

"I don't think you can win a cricket game because of luck. I think potentially a few things can go your way but there's a few things that Instead, he played down the luck might not. So, skill will always

trump luck, that's for sure. So, I'd like to think that." He lavished praise on Afghanistan's

incredible run to the semifinals, the war-ravaged nation's first in a World Cup. "We're seeing Afghanistan in a T20

semifinal. It's awesome for the game of cricket. I love the way they play the game and the way they support it." How well does he know the Afghanistan team? Walter said, it's not difficult to study

teams in modern cricket, with plenty of technology at its disposal. Look, I mean, a number of their players play in a number of the leagues around the world. In this day and age, there's not too many players where there's no footage or no information about.

"So, from an Afghanistan player point of view, we do have that sort of information. We've also got an entire World Cup, which they've also played seven games in.

had the opportunity to watch games of cricket as near as last night and then also in the different leagues that the guys have played and played together. So, we're comfortable with our knowledge in it." Walter is wary of the threats Afghanistan could pose in the semifinal. "I think you, yeah, you would have

"So, from that point of view, we've

seen it all in the last two days. I think they are a well-rounded team. Gone are the days where there is an area of the team that is not strong. They wouldn't be in a semi-final if that was the case.

'You're talking about some worldclass spinners. Everyone knows about the world-class spinners led by Rashid Khan. I mean, he's a topclass T20 spinner anywhere in the world. So, we know about that. But as I said, it's not a one-man show anymore. That's for sure," Walter

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