

OPINION 6
FREEDOM OF SPEECH &
EXPRESSION IS ALIVE

WORLD 9
1/6 PANEL TO HEAR OF TRUMP'S
PRESSURE ON JUSTICE DEPT

MONEY 10
STATES TO PUSH FOR CONTINUING
GST COMPENSATION BEYOND JUNE

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INDIA WOMEN'S
BEAT SRI LANKA
IN FIRST T20I
12 SPORT



Shinde camp swells but Pawar hopes MVA will pull through

Shinde releases a group photo of 42 MLAs backing him

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The political crisis arising out of a massive rebellion within the ruling Shiv Sena that has brought the MVA Government to the brink of collapse deepened on Thursday as the rebel Eknath Shinde camp claimed that it enjoyed the support of 42 MLAs. But NCP chief Sharad Pawar has said the MVA Government will survive and the situation will change dramatically when the rebel MLAs return to Mumbai.

A day after Uddhav Thackeray offered to quit both as the Chief Minister and party chief if the rebel party MLAs were to meet him personally and ask him to put in his papers and moved out of CM's official residence, the Sena rebel faction leader and minister Eknath Shinde — in a show of strength — released a group photograph of 42 MLAs supporting him taken at Radisson Blu Hotel at Guwahati, where they are camping currently.

The video that the Eknath Shinde camp circulated in the media showed the rebel MLAs sitting together and raising slogans like "Shinde Saab Tum Aage Badho, Hum Tumhare

Saath Hain."

On a day when Uddhav Thackeray appeared reconciled to the prospect of the fall of his Government, NCP chief Sharad Pawar — who is the architect of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government — expressed optimism that the MVA dispensation would survive the current crisis facing the Shiv Sena. "Let the MLAs come back from Guwahati. The situation will change drastically. The MVA Government will survive the floor test in the State Assembly," Pawar said.

Reiterating his party's support to Uddhav Thackeray, Pawar said it was the responsibility of all the three constituents — Shiv Sena, NCP, and Congress — to "save" the Uddhav Thackeray Government.

Without taking the name of the BJP, Pawar slammed the BJP for the manner it fuelled rebellion within the Shiv Sena. "Everyone knows how the rebel Shiv Sena MLAs were taken to Gujarat and then to Assam. We don't have to take the names of all those assisting them. The Assam Government is helping them. I don't need to take any names further," he said.

The rebel MLAs will have to come back to Mumbai and face the Assembly, he said, adding that BJP leaders "from Gujarat and Assam will not be coming here to guide them."

Pawar also refuted allegations by rebel Shiv Sena MLAs that they faced difficulties in getting funds for their constituencies as the Finance Ministry, which is controlled by NCP's Ajit Pawar, discriminated against them, and the Sena has given up its Hindutva ideology.



Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar addresses the media after a party meeting, at Yashwantrao Chavan Centre in Mumbai on Thursday

PTI

tions by rebel Shiv Sena MLAs that they faced difficulties in getting funds for their constituencies as the Finance Ministry, which is controlled by NCP's Ajit Pawar, discriminated against them, and the Sena has given up its Hindutva ideology.

"All these are excuses, some of these MLAs are facing a probe by Central agencies," he

said. The NCP chief also said that the rebels will have to face consequences, recalling that when Chhagan Bhujbal defected from the Shiv Sena to join the Congress in the 1990s, all his supporters except one lost the Assembly election.

"These rebels will face the same fate," Pawar said.

Informed sources in the Shinde camp said that of the

42 MLAs camping at the Radisson Blu Hotel, 35 are Sena MLAs, while the remaining seven are Independents supporting the rebel Sena leader. The number mustered by Shinde is nearly two-thirds of the Sena's strength of the 55 MLAs in the Assembly, a thing that will help Shinde to escape the wrath of the anti-defection law.

In Koraput 4 kids drown in rainwater-filled pit

PNS ■ KORAPUT

As many as four minors, including three girls, lost their lives when they drowned in a rainwater-filled pit that was dug up for road construction work in Koraput district on

Thursday.

The tragedy occurred near Majhiguda village under the Sadar police station in the afternoon when the children were playing in the pit that was filled with rainwater following heavy rains. All the deceased,

between five to seven years old, were the residents of Majhiguda. On being informed, the Sadar police reached the spot and initiated a probe into the incident. A pall of gloom descended on the area following the tragedy.

In Sambalpur 'Tusker death due to bullet injuries'

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Sambalpur DFO Viswanth on Thursday cleared the air on the elephant's death in Saplahara village under Jujumura block on Tuesday.

He told reporters that poach-

ers had shot the tusker and it has been confirmed after post-mortem. "Their intention was to kill the animal and take away its tusks, but they couldn't be successful," he said.

Due to the bullet injuries, the vital parts of the elephants

became nonfunctional. Even no medicine worked on it leading to its death, he said.

"We have detained three suspected persons in this connection and detailed investigations are going on," the DFO added.

Accountant held taking Rs 1 L bribe

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Vigilance police on Thursday caught Bikash Sana, Accountant-cum-Programmer, office of District Education Officer, Nabarangpur, while accepting a bribe of Rs 1 lakh from person.

Sana had demanded the money from a complainant (Contractor) in order to process transport bills of MDM rice to be distributed at the school points and to facilitate release of security deposit in his favour.

Following the trap, simultaneous searches were carried out on the rented residential house of S Sana at Sadasiba Lane, Nabarangpur, office room and his house at native village Umarkote. Later, he was arrested and forwarded to court.

China biggest security threat: Australia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Australia on Thursday said China is the "biggest security anxiety" as it is seeking to shape the world in a way that was not seen before. It also slammed China for its "appalling behaviour" towards Indian soldiers two years ago in the Galwan valley in Ladakh.

Twenty Indian Army personnel, including the commanding officer, were killed in a bloody brawl with the Chinese troops on June 15, 2020. These remarks by visiting Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles here came against the backdrop of China flexing its muscles in the Indo-Pacific, the South China Sea and the ongoing tension at the border in Ladakh.

Sounding this note of caution, Marles said India too has similar security concerns and that Australia stands in soli-

arity with New Delhi over its border row with China.

He also expressed concern over growing defence and security cooperation between China and Russia, suggesting that it could have implications for the region. The visiting dignitary made these observations during an interaction with journalists.

Marles said New Delhi and Canberra are strongly committed to expand defence and security ties as his country sees India as "completely central" to its world view.

"For Australia, China is our largest trading partner and so is for India. For Australia, China is our largest security concern, that is also the same for India," he said.

India and Australia are working closely together to build our relationship economically but also in the context of defence so that together we are engaging more deeply to enhance the defence and

security of both our nations, Marles said.

In an apparent reference to the Galwan Valley clashes in eastern Ladakh over two years back, Marles said his country stands in solidarity with India in respect of that incident. Twenty Indian Army personnel, including the commanding officer, were killed in a bloody brawl with the Chinese troops on June 15, 2020. More than 40 Chinese soldiers were also killed in the clash.

China is seeking to "shape the world around it in a way that we have not seen before", and that has resulted in "more assertive Chinese behaviour", especially in the last couple of years, Marles said.

"We've seen it in respect of the Line of Actual Control (LAC)... the incident that occurred a couple of years ago, where there was an appalling behaviour towards Indian soldiers, and we stand in solidarity with India in

respect of that incident," he said.

China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea is aimed at deterring Australia's activities to protect the rules-based order in that region, including the freedom of navigation and overflight, Marles said. Greater cooperation between Australia and India in the face of such Chinese assertiveness is "absolutely imperative," he said.

"It is really important that we live in a world where there is a rules-based order, where disputes between countries are resolved as per a set of rules and in a peaceful way," Marles said. On the Ukraine crisis, Marles said, "What we are seeing in Ukraine is having an impact on global food supply and that is a real concern."

He said a large country was seeking to overpower a smaller neighbor and this principle was there too in the Indo-Pacific.



Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat meets Chinese Foreign Minister State Councilor and Wang Yi, at Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing on Wednesday

PTI

on Thursday.

"Wang Yi conveyed that at the highest level of leadership of the two countries, there is consensus on the importance of bilateral relations for Asia and the world," the release said.

"Wang Yi said the border issue is important and we should stay committed to peacefully addressing it through consultation and coordination," it said.

The meeting between Wang Yi and Rawat came ahead of the virtual meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with President Xi Jinping and other heads of states of the BRICS combine on

Thursday.

Incidentally, Wang Yi was the first Chinese minister to visit India this March since the stand-offs erupted at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh in May 2020 leading to major flare up. He held talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to find ways for early disengagement of troops from the friction points.

In the first meeting between Wang Yi and Rawat, the Chinese foreign minister said the two countries should support rather than undermine each other and enhance trust rather than be suspicious.

2 BJD Mins sign for Murmu's nomination

Naveen asks them also to be present during paper filling

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

At the instance of Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik, two of his Cabinet colleagues, Jagannath Saraka and Tukuni Sahu, signed in the nomination papers on behalf of the BJD in favour of NDA candidate Draupadi Murmu in New Delhi on Thursday.

State ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Class Welfare Minister Saraka and Commerce and Transport Minister Sahu were also asked to be present at Murmu's nomination filing event along with other BJD leaders.

In a tweet, Patnaik said BJP



president JP Nadha had spoken to him in this regard.

Murmu, who arrived in New Delhi on Thursday, straight went to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official residence and conveyed her thanks to him. She also met Home Minister Amit Shah and BIP president JP Nadha.

'Congress can't support Murmu'

As she represents BJP ideology

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Congress Legislature Party (CLP) Leader Narasingha Mishra on Thursday made it clear that his party is not going to support Draupadi Murmu as the NDA's

Presidential candidate because she represents the BJP ideology. "The Congress has already finalised the candidature and Yeswant Sinha is the candidate of the united Opposition, of which the Congress is part. So, question doesn't arise to support a candidate who believes in the BJP ideology," he said.

Mishra said that though he

knows Murmu well as a legislator and a good human being, she believes in an ideology that killed Mahatma Gandhi and represents the BJP and Sangh Parival ideals. How can he or his party support the BJP candidate, the announcement of which came after the united Opposition finalised Sinha's candidature, he questioned.

Daily Covid cases surge to 73 in State

Max 41 cases in Khordha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Covid-19 positive cases are suddenly on the increase again in the State and a majority of them are being contributed by Khordha district.

As many as 73 infections were reported on Thursday in seven districts and the State pool. With this, the total tally

surged to 12,89,068.

Among those infected were 11 children in the age group of 0 to 18 years. On Wednesday, the State had reported 45 cases. Out of new cases, 44 were reported from quarantine and 29 local contact cases.

Khordha district reported the day's maximum 41 cases followed by Nuapada and Puri with six each, Cuttack four, Balangir, Kendrapada and Sambalpur one each. Besides,

four cases were reported from the State pool.

The number of active cases was 354. So far, 12,79,535 patients have recovered from the disease in the State.

Earlier, the Health Department had warned of a rise in cases and appealed to people to abide by the Covid protocols like maintaining physical distance and wearing masks at crowded public places to prevent transmission of the virus.

Co-op can help post-Covid eco recovery, says Modi at BRICS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/BEIJING

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the members of the BRICS combine have a similar approach to the governance of global economy and mutual cooperation can make useful contributions to the post-Covid economic recovery.

Underlining this key factor at the 14th BRICS annual summit of heads of states, he also said in his opening remarks: "Our cooperation in several sectors has benefited our citizens."

Brazil, China, Russia, India and South Africa form the BRICS grouping. China is hosting the current summit as the Chair for this year in the virtual format. India hosted the 13th summit last year.

The two-day event starting Thursday saw the participation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prime



Prime Minister Narendra Modi attends the 14th BRICS Summit through a video conference, in New Delhi, on Thursday

PTI

Minister Modi, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro.

In his remarks, Modi also said the structural changes undertaken in the BRICS in

the last few years increased the influence of the grouping.

"It is a matter of happiness that membership of the New Development Bank (NDB) has increased," the Prime Minister said.

CRUT gets United Nations award for Mo Bus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ BHUBANESWAR

The Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT) won the 2022 United Nations Public Service Award in the category of 'Promoting gender-responsive public services to achieve the SDGs' for its initiative 'Mo Bus'.

This award is a prestigious international recognition of excellence in public service. The CRUT bagged the award for its contribution and development of public transport, achieving sustainable development goals and promoting gender-responsive public services.

Through the Mo Bus service, the CRUT has demonstrated excellence in serving the public



interest of not only its commuters but also paved way for creation of employment opportunities, especially for women. Citizens are eagerly looking forward to a full-fledged service of CRUT's one-of-its-kind initiative 'Mo E-Ride' where women and transgenders drive the e-

rickshaws and the launch of electric Mo Buses. "It's a matter of pride to receive an international award and achieving various milestones in urban mobility sector of not only the State but the nation," said CRUT General Manager (P&A) Dipti Mahapatro.

Newly-appointed CRUT MD Vijay Amruta Kulange congratulated the CRUT team on receiving the award and envisioned to strengthen the Mo Bus Services in the coming days. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik congratulated the CRUT on this achievement.

WB girl goes missing from city rly station

Family suspects kidnapping

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A girl student has gone mysteriously missing from the Bhubaneswar railway station. The family members said that Sweetie Roy (20) had boarded the Jan Shatabdi Express from Howrah on Wednesday.

Sweetie, a resident of North 24 Parganas in West Bengal, was studying at the Utkal Aerospace and Engineering College in Khandagiri in Bhubaneswar. Her father works with the BSF in Tripura. Sweetie reportedly had called her mother after de-boarding at the Bhubaneswar railway

station. However, the family could not contact her subsequently as her mobile phone was switched off.

On the request of the family members, her local guardian Suresh Panda lodged a complaint with the GRP in connection with the incident. "The girl had arrived at platform no 6 at Bhubaneswar railway station at around 8 pm yesterday. But nobody knows where she went subsequently," said Panda.

According to Panda, the family suspects that some miscreant might have kidnapped her by drugging her. "The girl had spoken with her mother after arriving at Bhubaneswar," he added.

Maoist camp busted in Kalahandi



IEDs, detonators seized

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA

Security forces on Thursday busted a Maoist camp following an exchange of fire in the Lubengarh Reserve Forest under the Madanpur Rampur police station in Kalahandi district.

Acting on a tipoff, District Voluntary Force (DVF) and Special Operations Group (SOG) jawans were combing in the jungle from Wednesday night. But around 11 am on Thursday, they were fired at the rebels of the KKBN

Division. Due to the difficult terrain, the police had to face difficulties but they retaliated in self-defence, said Kalahandi SP Abilash G.

The ultras fled from the spot. The police during search seized three IEDs, a booby trap, detonators, daily use items and Maoist literature.

Police said around 30 Maoist were present in the camp and it was suspected that senior cadres like Nikhil, Bunt, Dasru and Mamta were among them.

The SP said the combing operation has been further intensified to flush out the rebels from the region.

Cuttack lad 2nd in Chamba mountain driving



--Brings laurels for State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Baibhav Choudhury from Cuttack was felicitated as the best driver in the Mountain Rally of Chamba-2022 as he stood second in all-India level.

The Chamba Mountain Rally in Himachal Pradesh is an annual mountaineer event that brings together drivers from national and international level to ride in difficult sloppy mountain roads with height of 15,000 feet from the sea level.

This time, it was difficult for drivers to drive cars as the

temperature was minus 18 degree centigrade. Ice balls were everywhere and the drivers were not introduced to the roads. There was uncertainty over the temperature conditions.

With all these unfavorable conditions Baibhav won the race with the help of navigator, route guide book and computerized navigation route guide and his navigator friend Saswat Swain assisted him to crack the adventurers mountaineering driving game. Baibhav is son of Cuttack District Congress Committee president Manas Chaudhury.

In Cuttack dist

Man critical in immolation bid before PS

PNS ■ CUTTACK

A man sustained critical burn injuries after attempting to immolate himself in front of the Kishannagar police station in Salepur of Cuttack district on Thursday.

As per reports, the victim, Gunanidhi Bisoi, set himself on fire by pouring petrol on his body.

Though the exact reason behind the incident was yet to be ascertained, it was

suspected that Bisoi had approached the police in connection with a land dispute. He sought police assistance a week back. It is suspected that Bisoi might have resorted to the extreme step after failing to get the desired cooperation from the police officials.

Meanwhile, Bisoi has been rushed to SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack and his condition is said to be critical. Police officials are yet to comment on the issue.

Demands ignored, Kirtan artists take to streets



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Thousands of Kirtan Kalakars led by their association State president Er Debashisha Hota again demonstrated at Bhubaneswar demanding extension of "Mukhyamantri Kalakar

Sahayata Yojana" benefits to 4,000 each from Dhenkanal and Angul districts.

They also demanded CM Naveen Patnaik for a hike in monthly monetary assistance to Rs 5,000 and for lowering the age limit to 30 years.

On March 28, the Kirtan

Kalakars had demonstrated at Bhubaneswar pressing these demands. But till now, their demands have not been fulfilled.

A total of 7,897 Kirtan artists of Dhenkanal district and 7,600 of Angul district have applied for

"Mukhyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Yojana". But, the quota is only limited to 200 each for both the districts.

"This is too less than the number of total applicants. I request the CM to fulfil all our demands by today without any further delay," Er Hota told.

'Ahe Nilashaila' to be staged again

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

On popular demand, the much-hyped historical drama 'Ahe Nilashaila' will be showcased once again in the State capital.

The Chocolate Productions has decided to host the play, which is dedicated to Lord Jagannath, for three days during the upcoming Rath Yatra. It will be staged at the Rabindra Mandap here from July 8 to July 10 (6 pm onwards each day). Online tickets for it are available on 'Book My Show'. This time, the ticket price has been fixed at Rs 300. Besides, offline tickets can be purchased by dialing a phone number.

Notably, the debut show of the play staged from April 7 to



April 10 this year had garnered huge audience support. As many theatre lovers and connoisseurs could not watch it, the production house received innumerable requests for showcasing the play one more time.

The play depicts how the then Gajapati King Ramchandra Dev

had to undergo untold miseries for protecting Lord Jagannath from the evil eyes of Naib Nazim. Its story is partially inspired by Sahitya Akademi Award-winning Odia author Surendra Mohanty's famous novel 'Nila Shaila'.

Directed by Lala Biren Ray, the play features actors

Lawrence (Gajapati Ramchandra Dev), Sofia Alam (Maharani), Prakash Jena (Mohammed Taqi Khan), Shradha Panigrahi (Rezia) and Manisha Rath (Sardei), among others. The script has been written by eminent playwrights Shankar Tripathi and Dr Pratima Hota.

SOCIAL CANVAS

Landless poor still struggle to avail housing benefits

Govt not serious about resolving woes of large population



MANAS JENA

After 75 years of Constitutional governance, the housing problem of the landless rural poor in the country still remains unresolved as the benefits of the much hyped rural housing schemes such as PMAY (G) have virtually failed to reach to millions of the most deserving poor people due to lack of homestead land.

In spite of land distribution schemes of the Government for the landless, the problem of landlessness exists for a long time. Though there is provision of land to the landless within the scheme but the fact is a very small number of landless families among the identified landless beneficiaries of housing projects have been provided land.

The slow process will further delay the scope of achieving the target of housing for all rural poor.

As land is a State subject, the responsibility of ensuring land is the primary duty of the State Government, but many State Governments including Odisha have miserably failed to complete the historic task. The rural housing scheme was started in 1985 as the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) was primarily targeting SCs, STs, freed bonded

labourers and other rural poor. The new scheme in 2015 PMAY (G), also targeting 60 percent SCs and STs and 15 percent minorities, with preferential treatment for IAP districts, was launched in 2016 targeting 2.95 crore houses with basic amenities by the year 2022. During the last five years Rs 1, 47,218 crore has been released to the States for the purpose but it seems the target will not be completed.

The SCs, STs and minorities population constitute nearly half of the total population of Odisha and 14 districts of the State are identified as IAP (Integrated Action Plan for selected tribal and backward districts of the country); so Odisha deserves all kinds of support to make the mission of housing for all a reality. Added to the Central housing schemes, the Government of Odisha also has developed its own State specific housing schemes for the rural poor and others.

The Government of Odisha's ru-

ral housing schemes such as Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana, Pucca Ghara Yojana (Mining) out of OMBADC fund and Nirman Shramik Pucca Ghar Yojana out of OBOWWB fund also face the same problem with the landless families. The housing projects are being implemented in 691 mining affected villages of eight districts including Koraput, Angul, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, and Sundargarh. The Biju Pucca Ghara Yojana targets a set of beneficiaries such as household affected by natural calamities, fire, flood, cyclone, earthquake, elephant menace, communal violence, victims of river, sea inundation, relocation due to Government projects, beneficiaries of FRA, person affected by silicosis and overuse of pesticides and extremely poor and vulnerable households who are not selected under other housing schemes. The Odisha Building and other Construction Workers Wel-

fare Board is funding the housing projects for construction workers having registration for one year.

Along with persistent social discrimination, poverty, unemployment and frequent visits of natural calamities, a sizeable portion of rural households have been struggling for generations to possess a land for their family and build a permanent house to live with dignity. Though the State has made land reforms laws to ensure homestead land for all, the question remains unanswered as to why has this not been implemented to change the traditional face of rural villages? The dream of the freedom movement and anti-feudal struggle was to make available land resources to all sections of people and recognize people's right over land but unfortunately many of our countrymen still are called landless in a civilized independent country. Their identity is being questioned in the absence of a record of rights over the

land they have been living in for generations.

The Government of Odisha has settled the refugees of Bangladesh and Tibet with land but the original natives are still landless even without a record of rights over their forefathers land. When they are being asked for caste, tribe and residential proofs by the local revenue authorities, they are clueless. In recent times, people living in coast, river banks, forest and mining areas are facing difficulties out of climate change impact, displacement and natural and man-made disasters, animal attack, caste and communal conflicts, urbanisations, and distress migration. They are in search of livelihood that has been demanding rehabilitation of new kind of refugees in their own State.

The State Government is not much interested in resolving the historical structural issues relating to land. Most unfortunate is that the land once demarcated /assigned

for distribution among the landless is again taken back by the Government to hand it over to corporates by creating a land bank. When the corporates and politically and economically powerful people are offered land on lease and subsidised price in urban areas for private business and residential purposes such as GA plots why the landless poor should not be offered 4 decimal of land to construct a house is not understood. The Central Government scheme to purchase private land for landless people in the absence of Government land is also not being implemented by the State Government. The OGLS, OPLE Act and OLR Act have become largely non-implemented thanks to legal and administrative complications being deliberately created by the revenue officials in the absence of political will and people's movement.

(manasbbsr15@gmail.com)

In Kalahandi

Contractors appeal to Maoists to support projects

BIKASH KHEMKA
■ BHAWANIPATNA

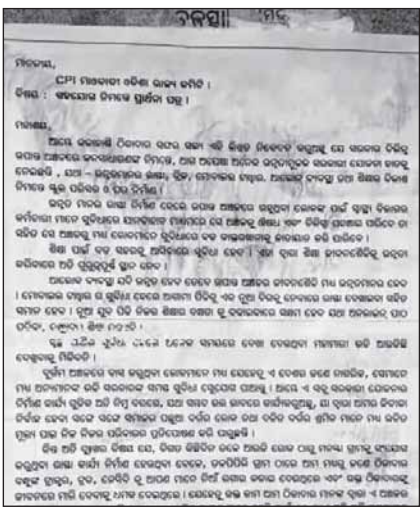
A day after three Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed during an exchange of fire with Maoists in Nuapada district, the Contractors' Association of Kalahandi on Wednesday put up posters in Manikera of M.Rampur block in Kalahandi pleading with the ultras to support them in road construction works.

The leaflets were addressed to the CPI(Maoists) Odisha State Committee requesting the Red rebels not to make any disturbances in the ongoing projects citing that the

road works along with all the amenities would develop the locals' lives.

Besides, the association has mentioned that students will get better education with the installation of telecom towers in remote pockets. It has also stated that tribals have a right to live a better life which should not be hampered by Maoists and only development in the region could improve their next generation.

Notably, in the last month, protesting the road works, Maoists of the KKBN Division had set on fire five vehicles of a



contractor, Pramod Pattnaik, at Tal Pipli village under the Sadar PS of Bhawanipatna. They had also threatened to kill the contractor asking him to refrain from the construction works.

In 2018, a super class contractor, Siba Shankar Das, of Kalahandi district had been shot dead by suspected Maoists under the Bijepur police station limits. While constructing a road from Bijepur to Pajibahali under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in Lanjigarh block, Das had gone to his project site to pay the labourers when the ultras attacked him.

ABEO held for bid to rape schoolgirl

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

The Rajnagar police on Thursday arrested local ABEO Subash Chandra Mohanty on the charge of attempting to rape a Class-VI girl of the Sailendra Narayan ME school during class hour while he paid a visit to the school on Wednesday.

Rajnagar PS IIC Tapan Nayak said the ABEO allegedly outraged the girl's modesty and made an attempt to rape her. The girl's mother lodged an FIR in this regard on Thursday Police registered a case under the POCSO Act against the ABEO and later arrested him. The ABEO would be produced before court on Friday, added Nayak.

INBRIEF

SAMANTA DISCUSSES POPULARISING VOLLEYBALL AT MANILA MEET

Bhubaneswar: Volleyball Federation of India (VFI) president Dr Achyuta Samanta on Thursday met top officials of the federation in Manila and discussed measures to popularise the game in India in a big way. Dr Samanta represented India as the VFI president at the invitation of the Philippine National Volleyball Federation. Dr Samanta met Federation of International Volleyball president Ary Graça and discussed the initiatives to develop a country-wide passion for the game. He was assured of all support to popularise volleyball in India.



SBI CGM CONGRATULATES DRAUPADI MURMU

Bhubaneswar: State Bank of India Bhubaneswar Circle CGM ChanderShekhar Sharma has greeted DraupadiMurmum on her nomination as the Presidential candidate. Team SBI has conveyed good wishes and congratulations to Murmu for being nominated for the country's highest office.



SBI AIMS TO BE STATE'S FIRST CHOICE BANK

Bhubaneswar: The Regional Business Office, Angul, of State Bank of India conducted a mega SHG Mela on Wednesday. SBI Bhubaneswar Circle CGM ChanderShekhar Sharma disbursed 389 loans of Rs 7.06 crore to various SHG and donated an ambulance to the Utkal Pradesh Marwari Sammelan. The CGM emphasised to make the SBI the first choice bank in the State.

IRRI FARMERS TRAINING HELD IN BALANGIR

Balangir: The Farmer Field and Business School is a training programme for farmers to boost seed production in the State. A different method is implemented by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) to impart better management and seed-to-seed production practices embedded with business aspects under the programme which was held at Deogaon in Balangir on Wednesday. Former Principal Scientist, ICAR-NRRI Dr RK Sahoo, Block Agriculture Officer Loisingha Dr Umashankar Mishra and IRRI officials besides Dillip Kumar Rout and Shaktiprasad Nayak, officer agricultural research development, imparted the training. The collaborative programme of the IRRI and Odisha Government will help member farmers learn improved methods of quality seed production.



BALANGIR PVT BUSES TO PLY FROM NEW TERMINAL

Balangir: All the private buses of Balangir would run from the newly-constructed terminal near the BSNL office from July 1. This was announced by president of Private Bus Owners' Association Hemanta Panda on Thursday. Although the new bus terminal had been inaugurated by the Chief Minister months ago, it was not fully functional.

ARMY HOLDS YOGA DAY IN ODISHA, C'GARH

Bhubaneswar: The Indian Army under the aegis of the Chhattisgarh Headquarters and Odisha Sub-Area organised yoga at various locations in Chhattisgarh and Odisha to mark the 8th International Yoga Day. At Raipur, the event was organised at the iconic Saubhagyam Meditation Centre on the banks of Sindh lake. Over 250 officers, Jawans and Civil Defence employees actively participated with their families. The events were led by Kirti Gupta, an expert yoga instructor. A talk on "The Benefits of Yoga" was organised followed by a demo of easy-to-do Yogasanas.



NDRF CELEBRATES YOGA DAY

Cuttack: The NDRF 3rd Battalion at Mundali celebrated the International Yoga Day with the enthusiastic participation all NDRF personnel, including officers. The event was chaired by Senior Commandant Jacob Kispotta. Keeping in view the merits of yoga for better physical and mental impact, the personnel were asked to practise it regularly.



NEW KANDHAMAL COLLECTOR TAKES CHARGE

Phulbani: Ashis Iswar Patil has taken charge from Dr Brundha D as the district Collector of Kandhamal. Earlier, Patil was the Sub-Collector of Baleswar. On Thursday, he made a surprise visit to the District Headquarters Hospital here.



FIRE-BOLTT PLANS RAPID EXPANSION IN ODISHA

Bhubaneswar: Homegrown wearable and audio brand Fire-Boltt has surpassed the frontrunners by being adjudged as the undisputed leader in the wearable watches market, according to the latest International Data Corporation (IDC) report. To celebrate the milestone, the brand organised a meet and greet session here with its top retail partners in the presence of Amit Srivastava, product manager and Kunal Bose, FireBoltt, Sujit Das, DGM, Savex Technologies and Jay Sadany, MD of regional distributor RJS Enterprises.

CHILD DIES OF SNAKEBITE IN KALAHANDI

Bhawanipatna: A four-year-old child of Dadpur village under the Sadar PS of Bhawanipatna died of snakebite on Thursday. He had been taken to the District Headquarters Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead.

7 Ganjam labourers rescued from China border

By efforts of activist

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Thanks to the efforts of a rights defender here, seven migrant labourers from Ganjam district could be saved from human traffickers.

All the seven workers hailing from Hinjilicut were subjected to inhuman torture and exploitation as they were taken to Tamang along India-China border promising high wages and job security.

It was learnt that a labour agency based in Mumbai had first taken them to Assam border with an allure ment of providing jobs. After

reaching there, they were forcibly taken to Tamang bordering China. They were engaged in hard work. They were not given food and assaulted.

After knowing they were holed up by human traffickers, somehow they established contact with the villagers back home and took help rights defender Pramod Roul, who in turn established contact with the company officials in Mumbai and rescued the labourers from the human traffickers.

The labourers have been identified as Gangadhar Sethi, Nabaghana Gauda, Susant Sethi, Sisir Gauda, Seem a Das, Luna Nayak and Vijaya Sethi.

Arms, ammos seized in Ganjam

2 gunrunners held

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Police busted an arms racket by arresting two persons and in the Jagannath Prasad police station area in Ganjam district on Thursday.

The cops seized two country-made guns and large quantities of ammunition from the possession of the accused duo. The two arrested gunrunners were identified as Ullas Sahu of Chidiapali village and

Satrughna Nayak of Ekagharia village.

Reports said a team of police, acting on a tipoff, conducted a raid on the house of Ullas and seized the ammunition. During interrogation, Ullas revealed that he had bought the ammunition from Satrugna. Based on his revelations, police arrested Satrugna and seized the guns. The police have registered a case under the relevant sections of the Arms Act and forwarded the accused to court.

Int'l Yoga Day held at Paradip Port



PNS ■ PARADIP

The Paradip Port Authority observed the 8th International Day of Yoga with the theme "Yoga for Humanity". Chairman, PPA PL Haranadh inaugurated the event at Biju Convention Centre in presence of Deputy Chairman, PPA AK Bose. Tapas Ranjan Pati, experienced faculty of the Art of Living, conducted an Yoga session.

A large number of participants in Paradip also virtually joined live streaming of IDY 2022 observations from Mysuru Palace ground led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The CISF Unit of PPA, volunteers of Paradip Sakshyarata Samiti, local school students along

with PPA employees also joined the Yoga demonstration. Banners, hoardings and electronic display boards highlighted the significance of the observation of International Day of Yoga to build awareness among the local populace.

It is to be noted that Paradip Ladies Club is daily conducting evening Yoga classes for the physical and mental well being of women folk of PPA. Similarly, Gopabandhu Kreedha Sansad from time to time conducts Yoga sessions for PPA employees and their families to contribute a healthy workforce to the nation. Yoga has been incorporated in the education curriculum of the students in Port Trust UP School and High School.

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

A district-level electricity committee meeting was held here on Tuesday, where Jagatsinghpur MP Dr Rajashree Mallick chaired.

The district-level electricity committee aims to ensure the involvement of people in the process under the Government of India-funded schemes of electrifying villages and hamlets.

Recently, the Union Government has approved a new scheme of Rs 3 lakh crore for strengthening the distribution systems and

modernizing the electrification process to meet emerging challenges in the power sector. So the committee has been mandated to verify the impact of the works on the quality and reliability of power supply, performance of consumer services and grievance redressal system.

MP Dr Mallick lamented that the committee was not holding regular meetings and asked the Energy department to present their action plan and activities.

Superintendent Engineer Amarjit Patnaik revealed that two electric divisions function in

Dreaded gangster held in Baleswar

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Dreaded antisocial and gangster, Papa alias Chinmay Panda (42), a resident of Sovarampur under the Sahadevkhunta police station in Baleswar district was arrested and forwarded to court by local police.

Papa while has over 30 criminal cases, including murder, loot and extortion, pending against him in different police stations in Baleswar

and West Bengal, he had been arrested in 2019 before. A few months ago he had been out of jail on bail. In the latest case, he was apprehended while attempting to commit a robbery.

He had also terrorised a woman at gun point not to depose evidence against him who was a prime witness in a case registered against him in the Sahadevkhunta PS. He was charged under IPC and Arms

Act for attempting to murder her son.

Papa and his associates were operating a gang in and around Baleswar town and were a menace to peace and public order.

As many 10 cases are pending against Papa under Sahadevkhunta PS; eight cases under the Town PS, seven cases under the Industrial PS and one case is under the Muhana Coastal PS, Digha, West Bengal.

Odisha Govt owns a Kho Kho team

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government has taken ownership of a team in the soon-to-be-launched professional league, Ultimate Kho Kho (UKK). It is the second direct sports venture for the State Government which also owned team Kalinga Lancers in the Hockey India League in 2013. The announcement came soon after Odisha won silver medals in both boys and girls categories in Kho Kho during the Khelo India Youth Games 2022.

The Odisha Government, in the last decade, has not only hosted some major sports events in the country but developed a world-class multi sport infrastructure.

"Sports Odisha has been one of the key factors in the sporting revolution of India. They have created an environment that has encouraged many corporate investments to create access for grassroots development and future champions," said Ultimate Kho Kho CEO Tenzing Niyogi.

Ganjam schools to adopt waste-to-wealth practice

Students, teachers to be trained at Brahmapur ITI

KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA
■ BRAHMAPUR

A workshop on "Waste to Wealth" for 622 school headmasters of Ganjam district was organised by the Government ITI, Brahmapur on Wednesday.

BeMC Commissioner J Sonal and PD, DRDA Keerthivasan V jointly inaugurated the event as guests. Among other dignitaries, DEO, Ganjam Binita Senapati and Principal of Government ITI Dr Rajat Panigrahy were present. Six HMs from different schools of the district spread over 22 blocks participated. Keerthivasan in his address said that under the leadership of the Scrap Man of Odisha, Dr Rajat Kumar Panigrahy, all the 600 schools will adopt the waste to wealth strategy. The students from 600 schools will shortly visit the ITI

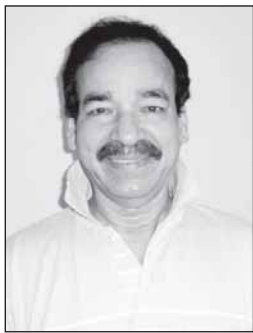
campus to acquire technical know-how. They will be trained at ITI, Brahmapur on installing various beautiful sculptures and models at their respective schools under 5T initiatives of school. The ITI is one of the leading technical institutes in the country that believes in innovative measures and new inventions. The role played by the institute during the time of need more particularly during last pandemic is quite commendable, he added.

Commissioner, BeMC, Sonal appreciated the initiative in innovative measures taken by the ITI, Brahmapur and advised all the headmasters to take various initiatives at school level. Principal Panigrahy vividly explained why the waste wealth is essential even in this current digital regime and what will happen to the environment and how the trainees will be benefitted. Dr. Panigrahi promised to extend supporting hand to high school to develop their innovative skill and required technical knowhow.

Attitude of gratitude: Wife's moral support at old age

A brilliant scientist and an excellent teacher of Chemistry, Prof Sasanka Sekhar was losing his eyesight fast due to macular degeneration on the left eye. On the other eye, the visibility was only thirty per cent. Sekhar was thinking how the world would be if he loses the other eye too.

Gradually, things became worse. He was a voracious reader of scientific magazines, novels in Bengali and English and loved to watch films both in cinema halls and on TV screen. He now finds himself in a lonely dark world of his own. During his childhood days, he would cling to his mother's saree if the power went off, mortally afraid of the darkness. There is no mother for a moral support except faithful old partner Charulata, his wife. Sasanka did not dare go for a second surgery on the good eye for



SANJOY KUMAR SATPATHY

the fear of becoming completely blind. He had a passion for car driving, sightseeing, reading, computer and repair work of electronic goods of friends for free but all that gradually came to a standstill with the fast progressive cataract and macular degeneration. He was left with only one eye through which he could see and watch the world

partially. He was a depressed and a dejected man.

But due to his positive attitude in life, no one could know, not even his dear Charulata the inner sufferings of a man who would become blind. Charulata used to read letters, emails and newspapers for her husband, her eyes reflections were his.

When Charulata would go out for her Kitty Party leaving behind her husband alone, she would be a much worried person to return as early as possible. The professor was like a toddler to her, needed constant care.

When Sasanka would be looking blankly at a distance his pet dog Sophie could know the feelings of her master and would quietly come to him and lie down near his feet. Sasanka would talk and shed tears with her as if she

understood what he said and what he felt like in the lonely dark night with a power cut. Gradually, lights or no lights became immaterial for him. At times Sophie would go inside the house to fetch the ball and request her master to throw the ball so that she could fetch it without realising that her master has grown fifteen years older. After all, she was with him for last eighty-five years of a dog's life!

One day, Sophie left the elderly couple in a state of shock. They became lonelier, still then the news paper boy, the electrician and the driver all would request Charulata to tie a huge Alsatian. With children and grand children staying far and wide, life became more difficult and emotional for the two senior citizens. The eye sight deteriorated further. With a shoe string budget Professor Sasanka decided

to take a risk and consulted an ophthalmologist, the best available in the town. He did not want to be a financial burden on his children and used up all of Charulata's savings. The doctor assured him that with newer technology chances are bright that he may be able to have a good vision on that eye. The other eye was as bad as dead only serving as a cosmetic part on the face.

Finally, the cataract was removed. No one not even his near and dear ones were near his bed side except the old lady Charulata, 'this is a selfish world Sekhar', she would say.

Sasanka was very sceptical about getting back his eye sight following surgery. At times in the darkness of nights, he would repent for his smoking habits and tobacco chewing habits which contributed

to his macular degeneration. Every one told him about the bad effect of tobacco on lungs, mouth and throat but no one said a word about the dangerous effect on the eye. Millions of people who are addicted to smoking and tobacco chewing fall a prey to this macular injury and need medical help as they become older. These points of injurious effects on eyes are not highlighted to the young, even in the twenty first century. He would speak out his bad habits of youth to his wife Charulata who would console him with nonstop dialogues and advice: "What has happened is past no point in brooding over it. Thank God, it's your good luck that your other systems are in good shape for a person of your age. I am your eyes, you could see through them. There is nothing more to see or watch in this

world for you. No good movies like Mencken's Gold, Fistful of dollars, Cleopatra or Where Eagles Dare nor Madhumati, Devdas or Pather panchali. You have seen the best of the world in your youth time so also me. The photographs and memories are all in safe custody of your hard disk, close your eyes and you see them all for free. Do not think too much about what would happen if the surgery fails?"

Meanwhile, Sasanka had lapsed to a deep sleep. Charulata could not know how much her husband heard what she said. The surgery was over and the bandage has been removed and the final verdict would be known after the 'Hud-Hud' cyclonic fear slowly disappears in the minds of Professor Sasanka Sekhar.

(The write is an ex-Joint Director, SAIL, M: 8847821535)

CONGRESS DARES ED TO PROBE ADANI GROUP

Why is ED sitting over allegations that Modi was pushing its case for a project in Lanka: Gourav Vallabh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's five-day grilling by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the Congress on Thursday asked when the probe agency would question the Adani Group over allegations that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was pushing its case for a project in Sri Lanka. The party accused the ED of taking "enforced directives" from the Modi Government.

The Sri Lanka issue was reported in a section of the media, but has been denied by the Lankan Government as well as the Adani Group. At an AICC press conference, Congress spokesperson Gourav Vallabh cited reports of the chairperson of the State-owned Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) in Sri Lanka making claims before a parliamentary panel that the Indian Prime Minister had allegedly "pressurised" Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to award a wind power project to the Adani Group.

"What was his compulsion? Why are ED and other agencies sleeping on this information?" the Congress leader asked.

"Is this not a case of corruption worth investigating? Which bureaucrats or Ministers is the ED



planning to call for an investigation? Has the ED ever called anyone from the Adani Group, or is it planning to call to investigate these serious allegations? What credibility does an agency like the ED have... (it) is on a political witch-hunt but failing on its duty of investigating severe allegations

and crimes," he said.

CEB Chairperson MMC Ferdinando, who claimed before a parliamentary panel that Modi allegedly influenced Gotabaya Rajapaksa to award a wind power project to the Adani Group in the island nation, resigned a day after retracting his statement.

During a hearing of the Committee On Public Enterprises (COPE), Ferdinando had said Rajapaksa summoned him after a meeting in November last year and told him that the wind power project must be awarded to Adani Group's Gautam Adani as Modi had urged that it be so. Rajapaksa

had categorically denied Ferdinando's statement before the parliamentary panel.

The Adani Group earlier issued a statement on the controversy. "Our intent in investing in Sri Lanka is to address the needs of a valued neighbour. As a responsible corporate, we see this as a necessary part of the partnership that our two nations have always shared," it said

During the press conference, Vallabh also spoke on Rahul Gandhi's questioning by the ED over the last few days and said it was a clear case of maligning his reputation and a "mere political stunt".

He alleged that all central agencies have been reduced to pawns in the hands of the Government. "All these agencies have been queuing up to collect their blindfolds only to make a mockery of themselves," Vallabh said, adding that the BJP Government's claims have been exposed in the last eight years and it has all been about "antics and substance".

"A once-reputed agency such as the ED can no longer be called the Enforcement Directorate... (it) is busy taking 'Enforced Directives' from the Modi Government," he alleged.



Sangrur by-election polling time extension

EC seeks explanation from Punjab's Chief Secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Thursday sought an explanation from Punjab's Chief Secretary and the Deputy Commissioner of Sangrur to explain why they sought extension of polling time towards closing hours at 4 P.M. without any new facts appearing on the day of polling, thereby attempting to influence a section of voters.

It said the letter of the Returning Officer and a subsequent request by the Chief Secretary at 4:05 P.M. amounted to "attempt to unduly interfere in the election process and influence a certain class of voters by conveying them to expedite voting or wait for time extension." The commission condemns such behaviour by the officers during the election process, it said.

In a strongly-worded letter to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Punjab, the EC expressed "displeasure" on the "unwarranted communication making

request for extension of poll timing on polling day for reasons which pre-existed even during notification of the by-election."

Officials said the plea taken to extend time was that people were still working in the paddy fields. It was a fact which was already known when the notification was issued.

"I have been directed to state that a detailed explanation from the Chief Secretary and Returning Officer shall be called regarding reasons and circumstances and new facts that arose on the afternoon of polling day, necessitating writing of such a letter so as to reach the Commission by Friday 1.00 P.M. to take a further decision on initiating disciplinary proceedings," the letter by an EC Secretary said.

The Sangrur Lok Sabha bypoll was necessitated after Bhagwant Mann won a seat in the Punjab Assembly elections recently and became the State's Chief Minister.

NDA's Prez candidate Murmu meets PM, Naidu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NDA's presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu who is expected to file her nomination papers on Friday called on Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Thursday. Naidu's wife Usha received Murmu at the portico of the Upa-Rashtrapati Nivas. Accompanied by Union Minister Virendra Singh, Minister with the Naidus for nearly 30 minutes.

After arriving from Odisha on Thursday morning, she met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Modi said her nomination has been appreciated across all sections of society.

"Met Smt. Droupadi Murmu ji. Her presidential nomination has been appreciated by all sections of society. Her understanding of grassroots problems and vision for India's



Photo: Ranjan Dimri

development is outstanding," the Prime Minister said in a tweet.

Murmu (64) is expected to file her nomination papers on Friday for the July 18 poll. The Opposition has fielded former Union Minister Yashwant Sinha as its joint candidate for the post. Murmu is expected to visit different States to canvas for votes after her nomination.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan asked people to celebrate on

Friday when she filed her nomination papers in Delhi for the post. "A new revolution is taking place. Those who were last in society in the development race are being honoured and lifted up to shape the country's future," Chouhan said.

Chouhan and State BJP president VD Sharma, both of whom were wearing tribal outfits, danced with a large group of tribal people at the party office here on the occasion. "The move honours the entire tribal community, not just Droupadi Murmuji," Chouhan said, noting that the State's population includes around two crore tribal people. "A tribal sister will be occupying the country's highest constitutional post. It is a matter of pride," he said.

Kids as young as 3 also suffer from long Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Children as young as three-years-old also suffer from long Covid that can last at least two months, according to a study published in The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health. The most commonly reported symptoms among these children were mood swings, rashes and stomach aches. In one of the largest studies, researchers from Copenhagen University Hospital, Denmark analysed data from a survey of 11,000 children aged 0-14 with a positive Covid-19 test result between January 2020 and July 2021.

The data were then matched by age and sex to over 33,000 children who had never tested positive for Covid.

Among 4 to 11-year-olds the most commonly reported symptoms were mood swings, trouble remembering or concentrating, rashes, and among 12 to 14-year-olds it was fatigue, mood swings and trouble remembering or concentrating. The results of the study

found children diagnosed with Covid-19 in all age groups to be more likely to experience at least one symptom for two months or longer than the control group.

In the 0 to 3-year age group 40 per cent of children diagnosed with Covid-19 (478 of 1,194 children) experienced symptoms for longer than two months, compared to 27 per cent of controls (1,049 of 3,855 children).

For the 4 to 11-year age group, the ratio was 38 per cent of cases (1,912 of 5,023 children) compared to 34 per cent of controls (6,189 of 18,372 children), and for the 12 to 14-year age group, 46 per cent of cases (1,313 of 2,857 children) compared to 41 per cent of controls (4,454 of 10,789 children) experienced long-lasting symptoms.

"Our findings align with previous studies of long Covid in adolescents showing that, although the chances of children experiencing long Covid is low, especially compared to control groups, it must be recognised and treated seriously," said Professor Selina Kikkenborg Berg from the hospital.

BJP using agencies to topple Maha Govt: CPI(M)

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau on Thursday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of utilising central agencies and Gujarat and Assam State Governments for destabilising the Maharashtra Government.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said central agencies were being misused by the BJP to topple the State Governments run by other parties.

"The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the manner in which MLAs belonging to the Shiv Sena have been spirited away to Surat and then to Guwahati, both of which are BJP-ruled States. This has been done by

the BJP utilising the State machinery in both the States. The Central agencies have also been utilised to target the Ministers and Legislators of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government with the aim of destabilising the Maharashtra Government. This shameful use of State power is in line with the BJP's earlier efforts to target Opposition-ruled State Governments with a view to topple them," said the CPI(M) Polit Bureau in a statement.

"Condemn gross misuse of Central agencies and BJP State Government machinery to destabilise Maharashtra MVA Government. Strongly protest this misuse of State power to undermine democracy," said Yechury.

NIA arrests 3 in CPI (Maoist) recruitment case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday conducted searches at three locations in Ranga Reddy, Medak and Secunderabad districts of Telangana and arrested three accused persons in a CPI (Maoist) recruitment case. The case relates to the conspiracy and recruitment of one college student, into the fold of the proscribed terrorist organisation CPI (Maoist) by the leaders/members of the Chaitanya Mahila Sangham (CMS), a frontal organisation of the outfit.

The arrested include Chukka Shilpa, one Dongari Devendra and Dubasi Swapna.

NIA gets new D-G

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday appointed senior IPS officer Dinkar Gupta (1987 batch officer of the Punjab Cadre) as the Director General of the anti-terror probe agency National Investigation Agency (NIA). Meanwhile, Swagat Das (1987-batch officer, Chattisgarh cadre) was appointed Special Secretary (Internal Security) in the Union Home Ministry.

He is currently Special Director in the Intelligence Bureau (IB).

Conman can only be moved to Mandoli jail, Centre tells SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday proposed to the Supreme Court that if at all the conman Sukesh Chandrashekar and his wife Leena are to be shifted outside the Tihar Jail, then they should be lodged only in Mandoli prison, which is guarded by paramilitary forces.

The conman is presently in jail for impersonating as Law Secretary and PMO officials by calling jailed Ranbaxy promoter's wife and offering bail and extorting more than ₹.200 crore.

Detailing the notorious activities of Chandrasekhar, the Centre's counsel said conspiring with some Tihar Jail officials, he even called Supreme Court Judges, impersonating as the Law Minister and sought favourable orders.

He was first caught for promising to get a favorable decision from the Election Commission in the AIADMK factions' case for election symbol. Chandrasekhar was accused of lobbying for AIADMK rebel leader Dinakaran to get the party's symbol. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) opposed the transfer of Chandrashekar and his wife to any other jail outside Delhi on the alleged ground of a threat to their life and added that they will be protected by police personnel from Tamil Nadu Special Police Force and would be observed through CCTV cameras. A vacation bench of Justices CT Ravi Kumar and Sudhanshu Dhulia asked senior advocate R Basant, appearing for Chandrashekar, to file his objections to the Centre's proposal to shift the accused to Mandoli Jail and posted the matter for further hearing on



June 30. The bench observed that a person who is lodged in prison cannot choose which jail he is to be lodged in. The top court recorded the submission of Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the Centre of shifting Chandrashekar to Mandoli jail, and said since the court had on June 17 asked the Government to suggest a name of the jail, where he could be transferred, the matter could proceed only after the compliance of the order.

"The ED call it a bribe and I call it extortion by the jail staff. I along with my wife are facing a threat to life. Kindly transfer me to some other prison outside Delhi", said Advocate Basanth appearing for the conman, adding that impleadment of ED has still not been allowed and the agency has nothing to do with the transfer of the prisoner

ASG Raju on other hand submitted that Chandrashekar is a 'conman' and is accused in nearly three dozen cases and in one of the incidents he has impersonated a Supreme Court judge and called up a trial court judge to pass orders in his favour.

Unitech assets worth ₹257 crore attached provisionally, says ED

pns ■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has provisionally attached movable and immovable assets worth ₹257 crore in Gurugram, Goa, Chennai and other places in a money laundering case against Unitech Limited.

The total proceeds of crime detected by the ED in the case is ₹6,452 crore.

"The provisionally attached properties include residential/commercial units, land parcels, demand drafts, equity shares and bank account balances. The properties are owned by CIG (Chandra Investment Group) Realty Fund and Authentic Group. Two Separate Provisional attachment orders were issued for attaching these assets, the ED said in a statement.

The ED had registered a money laundering case against Unitech Group on June 6, 2018 following a directive of the Supreme Court.

The money laundering case was registered on the basis of FIRs registered by Economic

Offences Wing (EOW), Delhi Police and Saket police station here under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and relevant provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

For purchasing these properties, homebuyers' funds of Rs 244 crore were illegally diverted by the Unitech promoters to CIG Realty Fund.

The diverted funds were used to purchase land-owning companies of Unitech Group, the agency said.

Aurum Asset Management Private Limited was one of the companies controlled by the Chandra family, the promoters of the Unitech Group, which was used to manage the affairs of CIG Realty Fund. This company was also used by Chandras' to siphon-off the investors' funds from the accounts of CIG Realty Fund, it said.

"The misappropriated funds were used to finance the illegal activities of Chandras such as bribing certain Tihar Jail officials and other personal expenses of Ajay Chandra and Sanjay Chandra," it said.

In 2007, instead of building

houses, homebuyers' funds to the tune of Rs 60.25 crore were illegally diverted by Chandras to Authentic Group with an intention to build a seven-star resort in South Goa. On the basis of money trail in this matter, the ED has attached the southern Goa land for the benefit of homebuyers, it further said.

During the money laundering investigation, the ED has arrested five individuals namely Sanjay Chandra, Ajay Chandra, Ramesh Chandra, Preeti Chandra and Rajesh Malik.

Presently, all of them are in judicial custody. As many as 45 search operations have been conducted in this matter and 14 provisional attachment orders including the current attachments of various domestic and overseas assets worth a total value of Rs 1,059.52 crore have been attached.

The attachment orders include the attachment of assets of Carnoustie Group, Shivalik Group, Trikar Group, CIG Realty Fund, Authentic Group and the assets of shell and personal companies of Chandras.



Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries Ministry, Prahlad Singh Patel (fourth from right) on Thursday inaugurated the National Conference on Millets on the theme 'The Future Super Food for India' in New Delhi, organised by ASSOCHAM.

EPS emerges as AIADMK's next leader as OPS shunned

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The battle in the AIADMK for control of the party reached a new phase as coordinator and former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam and his associates walked out of the General Council meeting held on Thursday at Chennai.

Though Paneerselvam wanted to move 23 resolutions as part of his bid to take over the party, Edappadi Palaniswamy, the co-coordinator supported by more than 69 party district secretaries out of 75, succeeded in ensuring the move. “Let us appoint Edappadi Palaniswami as the general secretary and then we will see whether to move the 23 resolutions,” said C V Shanmugham, MP and former Law Minister in the Edappadi Palaniswami Cabinet.

The general body meeting saw many former supporters of Panneerselvam jumping fences and joining hands with Palaniswamy. The Panneerselvam faction tried its best to get the general body meeting stayed but the Madras High Court which heard the plea by faction for staying the Thursday meeting refused to grant any stay to the meeting but restrained the leadership from going ahead with the move to elevate Palaniswamy as



the general secretary of the party.

Since the demise of Jayalalithaa on December 5, 2016, the AIADMK was disintegrating slowly. Earlier, Sasikala, the live-in aide to the former tried to take control of the party but without any luck. The Madras High Court in a late evening hearing on Wednesday refused to stay the general council meeting convened for Thursday but asked the Palaniswamy faction not to tamper with the existing dual-leadership of the party.

Thursday's meeting saw the entire general council meeting condemning and shouting

down the resolutions introduced by Panneerselvam. In a sudden turn of events, K P Munusamy, a hitherto trusted aide of Panneerselvam made a turn around and declared that the party should follow the single leadership pattern which was in vogue since the AIADMK was launched by party founder M G Ramachandran.

The General Council of the party would be held on July 11 and that meeting would decide the fate of Panneerselvam. If the kind of reception accorded to Palaniswami on Thursday is any indication, stage is set for his coronation as the general

Secretary. “Panneerselvam has nowhere to go now. His son P Raveendranath's meetings with Chief Minister M K Stalin have not been accepted by the AIADMK members. Moreover he is seen as a Sasikala acolyte,” said Kolahala Srenivasan, a political observer based in Chennai.

Besides Munusamy, Dr V Mythreyan, another camp follower of Panneerselvam too switched over to Palaniswami faction leaving Panneerselvam gasping. “It is certain that Palaniswamy would be the unitary leader the party is waiting for,” said Doraisamy Raveendran.

Administration, security agencies gear up for Amarnath Yatra

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the beginning of the 42-day long Amarnath yatra from June 30, the Union Territory administration has geared up its entire machinery along with different security agencies to ensure peaceful conduct of the yatra.

A mock drill was organized under the supervision of Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd) and Major Gen Sudhir Bahl (Retd) to test the disaster preparedness and improvise the response strategy where required.

The mock Drill was conducted by the Department of Disaster Management in collaboration with National Disaster Management Authority and District Disaster Management Authorities from June 22 to 23rd.

The exercise was conducted to assess the overall preparedness and response measures taken at critical sites to deal with any untoward incident by all the concerned government and private agencies on both the routes of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra from Sonamarg to Holy Cave and Pahalgam to Chandanwari route.

During the mock drill, several scenarios including fire incidents, terrorist attacks, vehicular accidents and stampede were simulated. The sim-



ulations were held at Nunwan Base camp and in adjacent areas.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Anantnag, Ghulam Hassan Sheikh who was present on the occasion said that response strategies for these mock scenarios have been discussed threadbare and any gap areas identified have been addressed.

He said that the mock exercise has been very fruitful in ensuring that all stakeholders are well versed with their responsibilities. He said that the exercise has been instrumental in ensuring interdepartmental

coordination.

Officials from National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Rashtriya Rifles, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Army, Police, Health Dept, Civil Defence, Transport, Fire & Emergency Services and other emergency services attended the mock exercises.

MS Bhatia, IG Kashmir OPS, Sector CRPF also took stock of the security deployment to ensure peaceful pilgrimage. Briefing the media, IG CRPF said, “Amarnath Yatra is going to resume after a gap of

2 years. CRPF has an important role to play in the security of the devotees.

All security measures have been taken in order to conduct the Amarnath Yatra peacefully. The Union Home Ministry had earlier rushed around 350 companies of the central paramilitary forces for yatra duty. In Jammu, Divisional Commissioner Ramesh Kumar Thursday visited the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway near Samrolti to take stock of the ongoing restoration work to clear the massive landslides/mudslides. Due to disruption of traffic on the highway, a large number of supply trucks and passenger vehicles have been stranded.

Meanwhile, Additional Director General of BSF (Western Command) PV Ramasastry also reviewed preparations of Shri Amarnathji yatra. He was briefed by IG Jammu frontier DK Boora about the prevailing security scenario in the region. ADG BSF also visited Samba and Kathua borders to review the operational preparedness of field formations.

During his interactions with the officers of the Jammu frontier the BSF officer laid emphasis on the threat posed by the cross border tunnel and Pakistani drones abetting smuggling of weapons/ narcotics.

10 pilgrims among 20 killed in separate mishaps in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Road mishaps claimed 20 lives, including 10 in Pilibhit and eight in Hamirpur districts respectively since Wednesday night.

In the first tragic road accident reported from Pilibhit district, 10 devotees were killed while six others were injured when their vehicle rammmed into a tree in the early hours of Thursday.

Two of the injured were in critical condition and were shifted to Bareilly.

Police reached the spot and started an investigation.

According to reports, a speeding pickup overturned on the highway after ramming into a tree in the Gajraula police station area of Pilibhit.

The pickup was full of devotees returning to Gola after taking a bath in the Ganga in Haridwar. The injured said that the accident happened as the driver dozed off. While eight died on the spot, two more were pronounced dead at the hospital.

District Magistrate Pulkrit Khare and Superintendent of Police Dinesh Kumar P reached the district hospital as soon as they got information about the incident. The district magistrate said that while returning to Gola from Haridwar, the pickup met with an accident near Gajraula.

There were 17 people in the vehicle.

The deceased were identified as Laxmi (28), Rachna (28), Sarla Devi (60), Harsh

(16), Khushi (2), Sushant (14), Anand (3), Lalman (65), Shyamsundar (55) and driver Dilshad (35), all hailing from Gola.

Those injured in the mishap were identified as Sheelam Shukla (35), Sanjeev Shukla (35), Praveen (19), Prashant (17), Krishnapal Shukla (33), Poonam Devi (42) and Rishu alias Yash Trivedi (16).

In another mishap in Hamirpur district, eight people were killed and seven injured after a loader truck collided with an auto-rickshaw on Wednesday evening.

Police said the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment.

According to the police, the accident took place on the

National Highway in the Maudaha Kotwali area of Hamirpur district.

“Eight people were killed and seven injured in the collision between a loader truck and an auto-rickshaw on the National Highway in Maudaha Kotwali area of Hamirpur. The injured have been shifted to a hospital,” Circle Officer of Maudaha, Vivek Yadav, said.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the Hamirpur accident.

“The accident in Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh is very painful. I express my deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives, as well as to the

injured for a speedy recovery. The state government and the local administration are doing all they can to help the injured,” Prime Minister Modi tweeted. In the another mishap on Fatehpur-Lucknow highway, two cousins riding bicycles were crushed by a dumper coming from behind when they were returning from a wedding ceremony.

Reports said that Shyamu Paswan (14) and Rinku (20) were cousins hailing from Manpur Majre Bhadar village. They had gone to attend the marriage of their cousin Jitendra in Mishramau village. When they were returning home by bicycle early in the morning on Thursday, a speeding dumper crushed their bicycle and killed both of



them. The driver fled from the spot with the dumper soon

after the mishap. The local police sent the bodies for

autopsy and launched a hunt for the absconding driver.

Govt working on strategy to manufacture rare-disease drugs indigenously

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With no domestic manufacturers developing drugs for people ailing with rare genetic diseases in India which is home to 8 crore such patients, the Government is working on a strategy to indigenously manufacture the drugs or bring generic drugs which are off-patent here as well as develop process chemistry for drugs under patent to make it affordable once patent expires.

Presently drugs are very costly and many times out of the reach of the patients too.

A senior official from the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the Union Science and Technology has sought proposals from interested research groups for treatment of the rare genetic diseases.

“One-fifth of the global

population is in India. High-genetic disease prevalence has been noted in affected communities with high genetic relatedness between parents and the majority of rare diseases in India occur at birth due to recessive genetic defects. While many of the commonly occurring rare diseases have viable therapies, most of these therapeutic agents are patent protected and very expensive for the Indian user.

“Thus, there is a large unmet need for indigenously manufactured therapeutic agents for rare diseases. Currently, a few pharmaceutical companies are manufacturing drugs for rare diseases globally and there are no domestic manufacturers in India except for Food for Special Medical Purposes (FSMP) for small molecule inborn errors of metabolism.

The DST has sought proposals from the interested pharma manufacturers as to “to bring generic drugs which are off-patent or to develop process chemistry for drugs under patent to make it affordable once patent expires,” said the official. The last date for submitting applications is July 15, the official informed.

According to the official, the rare diseases which may be targeted for the proposals include Lysosomal storage disorders, Gaucher disease, Mucopolysaccharidoses (all types), Pompe disease, Fabry disease, Niemann Pick disease, Metachromatic Leukodystrophy, Krabbe disease, Small molecule diseases (Phenylketonuria, Maple Syrup Urine Disease (MSUD), Neuromuscular Disorders such as Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) and Dystrophinopathies

There are 7,000 different rare diseases known today, but many more still to be identified. Eighty-five to 90 percent of these are considered “serious or life threatening,” and for many, there are no known effective treatments – less than 10 percent of the known rare diseases have an approved treatment available. About 80 percent of rare diseases are caused by genetic abnormalities and half of these diseases impact children. Manufacturing of drugs for these categories of diseases are full of challenges.

According to the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development, it takes nearly four years longer to develop an orphan drug compared with medicines to treat more common conditions. Additionally, only about 6 percent of those drugs reach approval, compared with a 12 percent overall

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The sleuths of the Anti-Terrorists Squad (ATS) grilling Raj Mohammad who threatened to blow up the offices of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), claimed he has connection with the Popular Front of India (PFI).

Sources said that Raj Mohammed, arrested from Tamil Nadu on June 7 last, has revealed during the interrogation by UP ATS that he had worked for the PFI and SDPI for three years.

At present, the ATS is interrogating Mohammad on remand.

Raj Mohammad, who threatened to bomb six RSS offices in the country, disclosed that he was an active member of the Popular Front of India (PFI) and the Socialist

Democratic Party of India (SDPI) between 2018 and 2021.

However, what he did after 2021, he has not yet disclosed.

It may be mentioned that Dr Neelkanth Mani Pujari, associated with the Sangh, was threatened on his WhatsApp number that the RSS offices would be blown up with bombs. The threat was to blow up RSS offices in Lucknow, Nawabganj in Unnao and four places in Karnataka. This threat was sent in three languages. After getting the threat, Neelkanth lodged an FIR at Madaion police station.

Taking the threat seriously, UP ATS started investigating and later alerted the Tamil Nadu police and after tracking the address of the alleged accused, he was taken into custody by Thirukokarnam police station, Pudhukottai.

The ATS brought

Mohammad the Lucknow and took his police custody remand to grill him further.

Meanwhile, sleuths of the National Investigation Agency raided a house in Deoband and arrested an accused, identified as Majidullah, hailing from Myanmar. The arrest was made in connection with the involvement of the accused in human trafficking racket. Majidullah is accused of settling illegal Rohingya Bangladeshi Muslims in India. Mobiles, laptops, SIM cards were recovered from him. Sources confirmed that the NIA team raided Deoband in Saharanpur district on Wednesday night and arrested a Myanmar national for alleged illegal smuggling of Rohingyas into India and Muslims from Bangladesh.

An NIA spokesperson said that the case related to illegal smuggling of Rohingya and

Muslims from Bangladesh into India and settling them in different parts of the country on the basis of fake documents.

The NIA said that taking cognisance in this matter, a case was registered in December last year. The agency had filed a charge-sheet against six accused in this case on June 4. During the searches, digital devices, mobile phones, SIM cards, laptops, memory cards and other documents indicating involvement in the crime were also seized, a spokesman said.

The spokesman said that during the investigation, the involvement of the arrested Myanmar national Majidullah in the conspiracy to smuggle people to different parts of India was revealed. He said that the accused was arrested from Deoband and further investigation was on.

Two RPF personnel suspended for assaulting four AMU students

PNS ■ ALIGARH

One RPF Inspector and Constable were accused of assaulting four students of the Aligarh Muslim University at the railway station, after which they were suspended.

On Thursday, AMU students created a ruckus for several hours. It is alleged that the RPF Inspector and Constable beat up the three students who had come to see off a fellow student and the student who was supposed to travel by the Farakka Express. Hundreds of students came to the station on the news of assault on the students. They were demanding action against the culprits.

Proctorial team also arrived. Seeing the anger of the students, the accused Inspector and Constable have been suspended. It was only after that, that the matter could be settled.

Shahid, a student of West Bengal, had to go to his home by Farakka Express. Three fellow students had reached the station to see off Shahid in the train. The train reached the station at around 12:30 P.M. The train was very crowded. Somehow fellow students made Shahid board the train.

It is alleged that then RPF's ASI Prempal and constable Kuldeep, who were present on the platform, stopped them while they were coming back.

He asked for platform tickets from all three. The students introduced themselves and told that they were students of AMU, had come to board the fellow student. It is alleged that on this matter, the RPF personnel first started abusing them than they also beat them up.

Along with informing his colleagues in this matter, the aggrieved student informed the AMU management.

On information, a large number of students came to the station and started creating ruckus demanding action against the guilty RPF personnel.

The proctorial team



reached the station. Talks were held with railway officials on the phone itself. After this, the announcement of suspension

of accused ASI Prempal and constable Kuldeep was made. Then somewhere the commotion calmed down.

Vrindavan widows plant trees to mark Int'l Widows' Day

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Thursday was a special day for the elderly widows of Vrindavan when they observed International Widows' Day by participating in plantation drives.

The widows living in the widows' ashram in Vrindavan planted many saplings in Krishna Kutir Mahila Sadan on Thursday afternoon to mark the International Widows' Day. In the light of the 75th year of India's Independence 75 saplings were planted by them



on Thursday.

Sulabh International took the initiative to observe International Widows' Day for the widows living in Maa Sharda Ashram and Krishna Kutir in Vrindavan.

Chhavi Dasi, one of the widows, said it was the first time they planted saplings to mark this day and this showed their resolve towards nature.

Sulabh International has been taking care of hundreds of widows living in various ashrams in Vrindavan and Varanasi since 2012. Under the initiative of Dr Bindeshwar Pathak, widows take part in festivals like Holi, Diwali and other rituals whereas earlier they were not allowed to take part in festivals and auspicious functions.



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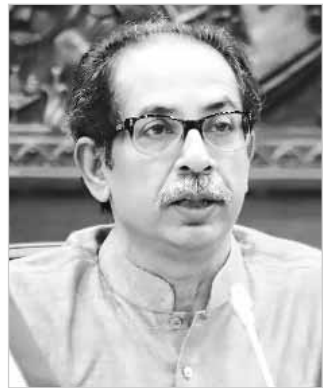
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Down, but not out

Uddhav's precarious position in Maharashtra may be a setback but doesn't mean the end of the road

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's departure from his official residence 'Varsha' on Wednesday night to his family home 'Matoshree' may seem to be a decline, if not the end, of his family's hold over the party that his father, Bal Thackeray, built. It was quite emotional, with a large number of Shiv Sainiks showing solidarity with him. As emotional as his (farewell?) speech: "Will quit as Chief Minister and leave official residence if even one of the disgruntled MLAs says he doesn't want me as Chief Minister." His speech was on Facebook, as he has been infected with the Coronavirus. He made three main points that need to be highlighted. One, he presented himself as an atypical politician; he is not among those for whom power is to be grabbed at any cost: "I have kept letter of my resignation as Chief Minister ready, willing to resign this very moment." Two, his party is still with him: "Getting calls from MLAs who have gone with Eknath Shinde; they are claiming that they were forcibly taken away." And, finally, he has reiterated his adherence to Hindu nationalism: "Shiv Sena can't be separated from Hindutva." His followers and sympathisers will agree with him, but others may like to raise a few questions. The Shiv Sena fought and won the 2019 Assembly election in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party,



with the BJP's Devendra Fadnis as the chief ministerial candidate. Then why did Shiv Sena ditch the BJP, the only other Hindutva force in the country, for the parties that are inherently anti-Hindutva?

Further, are Shiv Sena legislators calves and cubs that could be forcibly taken away to a State hundreds of miles away? And if that is the case, Thackeray cannot be absolved of the blame of having given tickets to so many weaklings, for he also happens to be the supreme leader of the party. One can still sympathise with a leader who has been abandoned by his followers, but his competence in running the party and Government leaves a lot to be desired. He obviously failed to gauge the intensity of resentment in his own party, as is evident from the fact that two out of three of his MLAs were with Shinde. The exodus continues. On Thursday morning, three more Sena MLAs — Deepak Keskar, Mangesh Kudalkar and Sada Sarvankar — flew to Assam where the rebels are camping. So, is the party over for Uddhav, indeed for the Thackeray family? If that is the case, it may imply that a political party has been able to shrug off the shackles of the family that birthed it. It would, however, be premature to reach the conclusion that the Thackeray family's political career has ended; it is down but it may not be out. Like Chirag Paswan, who lost control over the LJP but claims to be the inheritor of Ram Vilas Paswan's legacy. Let's wait and watch.

PICTALK



A man rides a bicycle as monsoon clouds hover in the sky in Nadia district, West Bengal

PTI

Vendetta?

The UP Govt's action of bulldozing illegal houses in the State has raised a lot of heat and dust

The Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh Government has been brazening out the allegations of 'bulldozer politics', which is basically a euphemism for targeting those people who have been speaking out against the ruling BJP Government. The issue snowballed into a major controversy after the properties of certain people accused of participating in violent protests against remarks by two former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders on Prophet Muhammad were demolished to allegedly punish them for raising their voice against the establishment. In fact, the issue has reached even the Supreme Court, where the State Government submitted that "no property in the State was demolished to punish" people. Though the State has clarified that bulldozers were pressed into service to raze illegal constructions in accordance with municipal laws and after providing due opportunity to the violators, it is too much of a coincidence that the action came about soon after protests broke out in Kanpur and Prayagraj in the first fortnight of June against now-suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma and expelled party leader Naveen Jindal for their remarks against Prophet Muhammad. Subsequently, the UP Government demolished three properties in these cities.

The Government took the stand that these demolitions "had no relation to the riots", and that the actions were taken as part of the ongoing demolition drive against encroachment and illegal construction. Though it sounds like the first plausible excuse that the State Government took the stringent steps in accordance with statutes, the two applications filed by Muslim body Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind asked for restrictions on the State Government on further action. However, the Government's contention was that the organisation "deliberately obfuscated the true facts to paint a nefarious picture of alleged mala fide on the part of the administration". Referring to the two properties partly demolished in Kanpur, the Government claimed that proceedings were initiated under municipal law long before the riots in June — in one case, in August 2020 and, in another, in February 2020. The violators are said to have even admitted to the illegality of the buildings and moved applications for compounding the acts by payment of appropriate charges. But we, the people, don't really know which side the truth stands on. Suffice to say, it's the public's duty to respect the maintenance of law and order and the Government's to not take revengeful action against its own citizens.

Freedom of speech & expression is alive

Contrary to claims that the situation in present-day India is worse than in the days of Emergency, press at the time was throttled and dissenters jailed



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

In Latin, 'Ut est rerum omnium magister usus' means "Experience is the best teacher". The term was popularised by management gurus with sufficient evidence and proof. This is a phrase attributed to the great Roman General Julius Caesar and finds mention in *De Bello Civili*, his war memoirs.

A major reason for opposition to war, which is common among the Europeans, could be their shocking experiences from the two World Wars in which millions perished and many more were maimed. There are accounts by authors like Winston Churchill (the former British Prime Minister who had covered the First World War for *The Pioneer*) about the post-WWII Europe totally devastated. The sights were unbearable and the generation that grew up experiencing the economic hardship and poverty became strong critics of any kind of war. Late MKK Nair, a former bureaucrat, had given first-hand information about England in the aftermath of WWII. Nair, who was undergoing professional training in Plymouth, has written in his autobiography 'With No Ill-Feeling Against Anybody' that only kids were eligible for sugar and chocolates: "Since there was severe shortage of power, only limited quantity of water could be heated for bathing as the winter was at its peak."

When maverick musician TM Krishna (born in 1976) declared in a public function sometime back that there was no freedom of expression or right to speak one's mind, the media highlighted his speech as if he was disclosing something new. What the musician forgot was that his statement reminded one of the term 'oxymoron' as his disclosure was poles apart from the reality. If there is no freedom of speech or right to dissent, would the media highlight the claim as a major report?

The comedy lies in the truth that Krishna and his generation, born in the post-internal Emergency phase, do not know the seriousness of freedom of expression. There was a time



when the Indian subcontinent was under the spell of dictatorship as well as despotism. The generation that grew up in that period stood silently when human rights, civil rights and freedom of speech and expression were crushed to powder by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, her younger son Sanjay and a cartel of persons who were members of their court. That was the era when the Prime Minister had the audacity to defend corruption in high places by describing it as "a global phenomenon".

What led to the declaration of Emergency and suspension of Constitution was a verdict by the Allahabad Bench of the Lucknow High Court on a petition filed by Raj Narain, the socialist leader who had challenged Indira's election from Rae Bareilly in the 1971 general election. Raj Narain, an unusual politician, had alleged that Indira had utilised the services of Yashpal Kapoor, her personal secretary, for campaign-related works. Being a Government servant, Kapoor was not supposed to do Indira's political bidding. It was gross violation of the Representation of People's

THE GENERATION THAT GREW UP IN THAT PERIOD STOOD SILENTLY WHEN HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION WERE CRUSHED TO POWDER BY THEN PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI, HER YOUNGER SON SANJAY GANDHI AND THEIR COTERIE

Act, argued lawyer Shanti Bhushan who appeared for Raj Narain.

On June 12, 1975, Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha set aside Indira's election and disqualified her from contesting any election for six years. Justice Sinha was kind enough to stay his own judgment to enable Indira to appeal in the Supreme Court. By the time of the verdict, there had been widespread resentment against Indira. Members of her 'kitchen cabinet' advised her to proclaim Emergency, arrest the Opposition leaders and throw them behind bars. Thankfully, there were no satellite TV channels while All India Radio and Doordarshan had the monopoly over public broadcast. Gandhi declared press censorship which made the newspapers to seek permission from censor officers for publishing news. All India Radio was labelled 'All Indira Radio' globally as the world's largest radio network started airing only the speeches and songs eulogising 'Madam Indira'. People who now allege that there is no freedom of expression and speech in India should take out some time and read the archived newspaper copies!

There are some political

greenhorns who allege that the situation in present-day India is worse than in the days of Emergency. They should not forget that thousands across the country were jailed, assaulted and tortured by the police for criticising Indira. Musicians should focus on *raagas* and *thaalas* instead of commenting about freedom of expression. And the fact that such allegations hogged the limelight makes it oxymoronic! It is good to see in newspapers and news channels criticism levelled against the Narendra Modi Government for its omissions and commissions. If there is no freedom of expression, how come these reports and news get published? The sad thing is that while Indira and her men and women bulldozed the media, the Modi regime is ignoring it. The bosses may be under the impression that the best way to insult the critics is to ignore them (it is also true that many of them deserve to be ignored!) But freedom of expression is sacred and it is a sin to spread falsehoods about it.

(The writer is a senior journalist with *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TRAGEDY IN AFGHANISTAN

Sir — It's heartbreaking! A powerful earthquake (5.9 magnitude) struck a remote border region of Afghanistan killing at least 1,000 people and injured more than 1,500, reminiscent of 1998 when a 6.1 magnitude quake in the north-east of Afghanistan killed at least 4,500 people and injured more than 10,000. The scenario is so tragic that every street one goes to, he/she hears people mourning the deaths of their beloved ones. It's a pity that the isolated Afghanistan regime may face struggle for aid after the earthquake, because humanitarian appeals for Taliban-ruled countries have had poor responses and there are sanctions.

The Taliban's supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzadah, pleaded with the international community to help the Afghan people affected by this tragedy and to spare no effort. Reacting to the request made by the Taliban leaders, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India stands by the people of Afghanistan in their difficult times and is ready to provide all possible disaster relief material at the earliest. But with such a huge disaster, the said relief material is peanuts. Due to the Taliban Government's rigidity in the name of Islam, many peoples are not ready to help the poor Afghans.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

COVID SCARE BACK TO HAUNT INDIA

Sir — Under pressure, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya chaired the high-level review meeting with the core team of experts over alarming increasing cases of COVID-19 in the country. India has been witnessing an increase in Coronavirus infections over the last couple of weeks. As per reports, Maharashtra, Kerala, Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Gujarat have over 1,000 active cases. India saw a single-day rise of 13,313 new Coronavirus infections, tak-

Murmu set to create history



By fielding Droupadi Murmu, a tribal leader from Odisha as the NDA's presidential candidate, the BJP has revealed its trump card. If she wins the July 18 poll, Murmu will become the first person from the tribal (Adivasi) community, the first native of Odisha and the second woman ever after Pratibha Patil to occupy the top post. She is set to follow in the footsteps of KR Narayanan and Ram Nath Kovind, who

both rose from the poor and downtrodden stratum to become the President. At the same time, the Opposition pick, Yashwant Sinha, would do well not to act wiser than Sharad Pawar or Farooq Abdullah or Gopalkrishna Gandhi, who refused to contest in the losing game.

As far the post of President is concerned, political parties should not have missed the opportunity to strike a cordial note and work out a national consensus when the outcome of the presidential election is a foregone conclusion. As the NDA headed by the BJP has the required numbers to go it alone, the Opposition should have fallen in line to support a non-controversial lesser known tribal woman who has risen from the ranks to a creditable political career. In a bid to put up a show of notional fight, the Opposition has only ended up showing fissures. The NDA, too, can't escape the blame for its disdain for consensus.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

ing the infection tally to 4,33,44,958, while the active cases have increased to 83,990, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday June 23.

The death toll has climbed to 5,24,941. In a review meeting of INSACOG, States/UTs were asked to submit "larger number" of samples for whole genome sequencing from districts and areas which have seen a surge in COVID-19 cases over a period of seven days. According to the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) experts, Omicron and its sub-lineages, primarily BA.2 and BA.2.38, as of now, seem to be behind the current rise in COVID cases. With this, the matter related to COVID in India is very serious and dangerous.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

GUIDELINES FOR LOWER JUDICIARY

Sir — The Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court has set a good precedent by issuing a circular according to which no judicial officer shall receive, see off and

visit the visiting Chief Justice or judges during court hours. The significance of this circular is better understood by the clients. If the judicial officers visit the visiting Chief Justice or other judges of High Court, the cases listed for that day stand adjourned for one or two months. If at least the Chief Justice and other judges visit once in a year, and in all it will be at least three or four times a year.

In each case, if the case listed for that day is not heard for one or two months, the case stands prolonged for about a year. This is one of the reasons for delayed delivery of justice. This may not be the case in any other department. If a judge leaves his seat, no one else can discharge his duties. Hence the importance of this circular is high. Another point is that if the visiting Chief Justice or other judges want to hold a meeting, it will be done before or after court hours.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

This year, we are expecting 7.5 per cent growth, which makes us the fastest growing major economy.

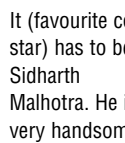


Prime Minister —Narendra Modi



We are now seeing signs of a possible fall to rock bottom.

Sri Lanka PM —Ranil Wickremesinghe



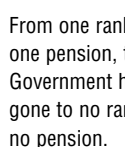
It (favourite co-star) has to be Sidharth Malhotra. He is very handsome.

Actor —Kiara Advani



When you want to get back into form, you want to find your rhythm.

India batter —Cheteshwar Pujara



From one rank, one pension, this Government has gone to no rank, no pension.

Congress leader —Rahul Gandhi

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA AT BRICS AND G7:
TOUGH BALANCING ACT

Navigating through China's assertiveness, Putin's Ukraine war



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India's diplomatic and foreign policy calendar has been swinging between a diverse bunch of power blocks. India had a tough challenge to attend the 14th BRICS summit held virtually under the chairmanship of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

It was a tough call, given India's frosty relationship with China over the border tensions and sharing a platform (virtually) with Russian President Vladimir Putin, now considered a global outlaw. The BRICS summit was themed on Global Development; it's actually a message China wants to send across, placing itself at the centre of economic prosperity for the globe. This position has traditionally been claimed by the US and its Western allies.

It is interesting to note how the Chinese communist party's foreign policy propaganda newspaper, the Global Times, reported on the significance of the BRICS summit. In one of its recent reports, it mentioned the most novel proposition of this summit, BRICS expansion. The presence of Putin and several new invitees is also open to various interpretations. The Ukraine crisis has seen fissures emerge in the G20; and adding new members to BRICS could make it an alternative minus US and its allies.



This could also mean an expanded BRICS overtaking G7 earlier than imagined. In some of the other paragraphs the report lays emphasis on the "Global South cooperation," the presence of India in both the US-led Quad framework and BRICS, India's exit from the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), while accepting to be a founding member of US-led Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

While China's foreign policy department officially stuck to "high-quality partnership amongst BRICS, usher in new era for global development," as the core agenda, its allied arms such as the newspaper report mentioned above was setting the real agenda for the summit.

India moves away from the BRICS summit to another important multilateral, the Commonwealth Summit which is taking place in Rwanda's capital Kigali over the weekend. Leaders of 54 countries from Asia, Africa, South America, and Europe participate in the commonwealth summit which most often has been described as a club of erstwhile UK colonies, discussing their internal affairs, rather than coming out with a significant outcome-driven agenda for world affairs.

However, this diverse group of nations also represents the confluence of developing and the developed world, the former rulers meeting the former colonies, to indulge in some creative solutions for existing and emerging problems. It is a different matter that much of the commonwealth nations except the larger and more prosperous ones have been denied access to vaccines and therapeutic remedies to counter the Covid pandemic by the powerful nations. India will be represented at the summit by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

However, one of the most eyeball-grabbing meetings will be the G7 in Schloss Elmau, against the backdrop of the Bavarian Alps in Germany next week. India has been invited for this meeting as a guest and will be represented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in person. This is the fourth consecutive time India has been invited for this prestigious global policy leaders meeting.

The G7, which is a group of most prosperous nations of the world which are some of the largest donors to international bodies, together make the most influential voice for global policy directions. This year, the G7 presidency has been taken over by Germany, which will push for some coordinated policy actions on the ongoing war in Ukraine, its impact on food inflation, particularly in the developing nations, the climate crisis, the Covid pandemic, and its impact.

India has some tough balancing acts to do on multilateral platforms. *(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)*

India emerges as leader at WTO ministerial meet

India defended its right to extend subsidies to Indian fishermen, with contentious clauses removed



PK VASUDEVA

(The writer is former Senior Professor, International Trade and Member, Vivekananda International Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)

COVID crisis led to distress employment

There is an urgent need to generate more decent and productive employment for the increasing labour force in the country

The National Statistical Office (NSO) released the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2020-21 report on June 14. At a first glance, the annual survey report shows an improvement in the employment situation with rise in employment and decline in the unemployment rate during the pandemic years compared to the previous years (PLFS survey years correspond to the agriculture year July to June).

This is quite unexpected, keeping in mind the severe economic disruption after the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey results differ from several other reports, which suggest that the employment situation in the country has worsened after the pandemic. This survey report has evoked heightened interest in the findings. It calls for further investigation as to whether these results are survey anomalies or indicate the changing employment situation in the country.

This article attempts to interpret the findings from the last three annual PLFS (2018-19, 2020-21 and 2020-21) reports, and try to understand the impact of Covid-19 pandemic by analysing some key labour market indicators.

The labour force participation rate as per usual status (reference period of last 365 days preceding the survey), which is the sum of those working and those available for work or unemployed, reported highest in the four years at 41.6 per cent in 2020-21. The worker population ratio (WPR) has increased from 35.3 per cent in 2018-19 to 39.8 per cent in 2020-21, which is the percentage of employed persons in the population.

On the other hand, the unemployment rate which is the percentage of unemployed in the labour force has eased from 5.8 per cent in 2018-19 to 4.2 per cent in 2020-21. The rural-urban division shows that the rise in WPR is in rural areas, which is almost 2.5 times higher than urban areas. It is well documented that the impact of Covid-19 in the rural economy was far less than urban, which is also reflected from the survey results.

A lot of people, particularly migrants engaged in the informal sector, lost their employment during the pandemic at the urban destinations. With no means of employment in urban areas, a large number of them have returned to their native places in rural areas, where they, along with their family members especially women, are engaged in locally available activities such as agriculture and related work for survival.

The survey results further reveal that the rise in WPR is largely credited to female than male, where WPR of the former has increased by 2.54 times more than the latter. This phenomenon is more pronounced in rural areas, where the female WPR has increased almost 3.2 times more (19.0 per cent to 27.1 per cent) than their urban counterparts (15 per cent to 17 per cent) during the pandemic years.

So, the rise in employment during the



WITH NO MEANS OF EMPLOYMENT IN URBAN AREAS, A LARGE NUMBER OF MIGRANTS RETURNED TO THEIR NATIVE PLACES IN RURAL AREAS WHERE THEY, ALONG WITH THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS, ARE ENGAGED IN LOCALLY AVAILABLE ACTIVITIES

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pandemic years is overwhelmingly of females in rural areas.

The industrial structure provides broad employment trends, where the employment in agriculture in developing countries like India is considered as subsistence and less productive, while employment in non-farm industrial and services is regarded as more productive. It is well documented that as the country progresses, the people move away from the less productive agriculture sector in rural areas to more productive non-farm industrial and services sectors in urban areas.

However, the industrial distribution of employment in India shows a reversal of the decades-long decline in agriculture share in recent years with more and more people moving into the farm sector in rural areas. The share of employment in agriculture has increased by 3 percentage points from 57.8 per cent in 2018-19 to 60.8 per cent in 2020-21.

This trend indicates that people are finding it difficult to get employment in non-farm sectors, and they are compelled to engage in subsistence farm activities due to the lack of other employment avenues. In rural areas, almost three-fourth (75.4 per cent) of the females are engaged in farm activities compared to around half of the male (53.8 per cent).

Thus, the rise in employment in rural areas has a huge implication on women's work, which is also reflected from increasing female's WPR. This reveals that the rise in share of employment in agriculture reflected the impact of economic slowdown and the pandemic.

The reverse migration from cities to rural areas would have only

increased the pressure on the farm sector to absorb the workers, especially females, leading to the distress employment.

The status of employment broadly indicates the quality of employment, where a regular salary is considered better quality of work than self-employed and casual labour. Regularity of work and social security benefits are associated with regular salaries, while social security provisions are generally not available for self-employed and casual labourer.

The PLFS survey reports show that the share self-employed has increased from 52.1 per cent in 2018-19 to 55.6 per cent in 2019-20, while the share of regular salaried (23.8 per cent to 21.1 per cent) and casual labour (24.1 per cent to 23.3 per cent) has declined during the last three years. This phenomenon is more pronounced in rural areas, where the share of the self-employed has increased relatively more (3.3 percentage points) than urban areas (1.7 percentage points).

However, the increase in share of the self-employed in rural areas is largely attributed to the rise in unpaid helpers in household enterprises (4.6 percentage points), while the share of own account workers and employer category has declined (-1.4 percentage points).

This indicates that the jump in female WPR in rural areas is contributed most by the increase in employment of helpers or unpaid family workers in household enterprises. A recent Niti Aayog report highlighted that the rise in 'disguised employment' or unpaid family workers is a more serious issue than unemployment in India. The decline in the share of regular salaried workers is another serious

concern, reflecting the worsening employment conditions with rise in low quality employment in recent pandemic years.

The above analysis reveals that the increase in employment in pandemic years is distress-driven and not necessarily any improvement in the overall employment in the country. This is shown in the report as an increase in terms of labour force participation rate, the worker-population ratio, and decline in the unemployment rate. It is also important to note that the share of employment in agriculture and allied activities, and especially employment of rural women, has gone up in recent years, which is mostly of distress type not productive or decent employment.

Further, the report also reveals that employment in the informal sector has increased during the pandemic years from 68.4 per cent to 71.4 per cent in 2020-21. Workers in the informal sector are for the most part not covered by any social security benefits and also not covered by the national labour laws and regulations. Such workers are most affected by any economic shocks such as the economic downturn after Covid-19.

In sum, the PLFS survey report (2020-21) indicates generation of new employment in the country during the pandemic years, but most of the new jobs are of distress or informal type, especially for females in rural areas.

In this context, there is an urgent need to generate or provide more decent and productive employment for the increasing labour force in the country, which is must to meet the SDG goal 8 targets of 'decent or productive employment for all' by 2030.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

IF ANY OF THE REBEL MLAS SAYS THEY DON'T WANT ME AS CM, I'M READY TO RESIGN. I'M PREPARING MY RESIGNATION LETTER.
—MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER
UDDHAV THACKERAY



FORTY SENA MLAS ARE PRESENT WITH ME IN GUWAHATI. WE WILL TAKE BALASAHEB'S HINDUTVA AND LEGACY FORWARD.
—SHIV SENA REBEL FACTION LEADER
EKNATH SHINDE



PK VASUDEVA

(The writer is former Senior Professor, International Trade and Member, Vivekananda International Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)

On the trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS) waiver, an agreement could be reached only on vaccines. The official said negotiations for diagnostics and therapeutics would start in six months as demanded by developed countries.

This means India's demand to include diagnostics and therapeutics in the agreement did not find favour with developed countries. In October 2020, India, South Africa, and 63 co-sponsors had made the TRIPS waiver proposal to help middle- and low-income nations get access to Covid-19 vaccines and drugs. However, the discussions reached a deadlock in the TRIPS Council, the body responsible for monitoring the operation of the agreement. The draft agreement fell short of the original proposal and includes only vaccines.

India had called for a TRIPS waiver for vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics to fight Covid-19 and future pandemics. India had held it was too late in the day if only vaccines were included because the pandemic had run its initial course. On a moratorium on customs duty on e-commerce transactions, countries agreed to extend it by another two years.

India put forth aggressive draft texts in all pillars of WTO negotiations rather than being reactive, as in the past. India brought the members together to a unanimous agreement on fisheries, health, and the future of WTO reforms, digital technology, food, and environment. India's principled stand at the WTO strengthened the voice of the poor and the vulnerable globally.

An agreement at Geneva makes it the first trade deal since the 2013 Bali Ministerial, where members signed the WTO's first trade deal on a peace clause on public stockholding for food security purposes and a trade facilitation agreement. The consensus-driven, rule-making process at the multilateral trade organisation means even one member could thwart a deal at the last moment. After negotiations spilled over to the sixth day, 164 countries of the World Trade Organisation finally sealed a package deal in the wee hours on 18 June in Geneva with India leading the course.

In a first major agreement in nine years, the deal includes six major issues of importance for developing countries including food security, balanced outcome fisheries subsidies, response to pandemic, and patents waiver on Covid-19 vaccines.

The deal that tested Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal's negotiation skills saw several trade-offs between developed and developing countries during the two nights of marathon talks, going well past the June 16 afternoon deadline. "There is a good outcome on the issues that were long pending," Goyal said, adding that India completely protected the interests of fishermen and farmers. "All in all, it is a good package. Today there is no issue on which we have to be concerned, whether it is related to agriculture such as MSP [minimum support price], reinforcing the relevance of the public stock-

holding programme towards fulfilling the national food safety programme or PM Garib Kalyan Scheme, TRIPS waiver, e-commerce moratorium, response to Covid and fisheries," Goyal said after the deal.

India defended its right to extend subsidies to Indian fishermen, with contentious clauses removed from the text at the last minute. In turn, India agreed to an 18-month extension of the moratorium on customs duty on electronic imports that it argues favours rich nations. However, subsidies on overfishing, deep-sea fishing; and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing has been addressed through the proposed pact.

"On India's insistence, sovereign rights on EEZ [exclusive economic zones] have been firmly established. It is really a big achievement," said Goyal, adding that principal stakeholders who have benefited from these "historic decisions" taken by the 12th Ministerial Conference of the WTO are fishermen, farmers, food security, multilateralism, and trade and business, particularly digital economy and MSMEs.

Through the joint efforts of all WTO members, the MC12 has made breakthroughs on a number of key issues, demonstrating that the multilateral trading system can play a key role in addressing global challenges, she said.

Goyal said India today battled on the front foot rather than being fearful on various issues, be it environment, startups, MSMEs or gender equality. This was a result of the confidence of 'New India.'

RUSSIANS FOCUS FIREPOWER TO SEIZE 2 VILLAGES IN EAST UKRAINE

AP ■ KYIV

The Russian military expanded its grab of territory in eastern Ukraine on Thursday, capturing two villages and vying for control of a key highway in an offensive that could cut supply lines and encircle some frontline Ukrainian forces, British and Ukrainian military chiefs said.

Britain's defense ministry said that Ukrainian forces had withdrawn from some areas near the city of Lysychansk, the latest major battlefield in Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine, to avoid the possibility of being encircled as Russians sent in reinforcements and concentrated their firepower in the area.

Ukraine's General Staff said Russian forces took control of the villages of Loskutivka and Rai-Oleksandrivka, and were trying to capture Syrotyne outside Sievierodonetsk.

For weeks, Russian forces have pummeled Sievierodonetsk, the administrative center of the Luhansk region, with artillery and air raids, and fought the Ukrainian army house-to-house. Ukrainian forces remain holed up at the Azot chemical plant on the city's edge, where about 500 civilians were also sheltering.

The Russians were also pressing their offensive on Lysychansk, which is located on a steep river bank facing Sievierodonetsk.

The U.K. Ministry of Defense noted in its intelligence assessment Thursday that Russian forces have likely advanced more than five kilometers (three miles) towards the southern approaches of Lysychansk since Sunday.

"Some Ukrainian units have withdrawn, probably to avoid being encircled," the statement said.

"Russia's improved performance in this sector is likely a result of recent unit reinforcement and heavy concentration of fire."



Ukraine's military said the Russians were also moving to overtake the hills overlooking a highway linking Lysychansk with Bakhmut, to the southwest, in an attempt to cut the supply lines of Ukrainian forces.

Following a botched attempt to capture the Ukrainian capital in the early stage of the invasion on Feb. 24, Russian forces have shifted focus to Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas, where the Ukrainian forces

have fought Moscow-backed separatists since 2014.

The Russian military currently controls about 95% of the Luhansk region, and about half of the neighbouring Donetsk region of Donbas.

12-year-old to pen journey from war-torn Kharkiv to Dublin

PTI ■ LONDON

Bloomsbury on Thursday announced that it will publish a moving diary of a 12-year-old Ukrainian girl, charting her journey from war-torn Kharkiv to eventual safety in Dublin.

"You Don't Know What War Is: The Diary of a Young Girl From Ukraine" is scheduled to hit bookstores in October.

On February 24, Yeva Skalietska was woken by the sound of explosions. She grew up living with her granny in Kharkiv, near the Russian border. Though there have been rumblings and rumours, few truly believed that war will break out between Russia and Ukraine.

And yet it had. What follows are 12 days in Ukraine that change Yeva's life forever. She and her grandmother rush to take shelter from the missile attacks in a dusty, crowded basement. When the situation worsens, they need to find somewhere safer to stay, so they make their way to a friend's house in a different area of the city. But the conflict rages all around them and Yeva struggles to keep calm over the continual sound of explosions and shelling.

Eventually they take the difficult decision to head to Western Ukraine. It's there, in

a makeshift shelter in a school hall, that Yeva meets the team of UK journalists. She tells them she is writing a diary.

The poise and maturity of Yeva's account are striking, and the crew features her in several news articles. They help Yeva and her granny cross the border into Hungary and, ultimately, to find a place to live in Dublin, where they are welcomed and cared for by their host, school teacher Catherine Flannagan.

Lara Hancock, head of Illustrated Publishing, with Commissioning Editor Sally Beets, acquired UK and Commonwealth Rights in auction from literary agent Marianne Gunn O'Connor of Marianne Gunn O'Connor Literary, Film/TV Agency.

"You Don't Know What War Is" has cover illustrations inspired by Ukrainian folk art by Anastasia Stefurak and illustrated maps of Kharkiv, Ukraine and Europe by Olga Shtonda, displaced Kharkiv-native.

"In 'You Don't Know What War Is', we read about Yeva's experience of the war in Ukraine in real time. Each diary entry is interspersed with personal photos Yeva took during her journey. Compelling and urgent, this book is a powerful document of a conflict few thought could happen, seen through the eyes of a child," says Hancock.

European Union leaders set to grant Ukraine candidate status

AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union leaders on Thursday are set to grant Ukraine candidate status to join the 27-nation bloc, a first step in a long and unpredictable journey toward full membership that could take many years to achieve.

Making the war-torn country a contender now seems to be a done deal after leaders were initially divided on how fast they could move to embrace the war-torn country's bid that was launched only a few days after Russia launched its invasion on Feb. 24.

According to several EU diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity before the summit in Brussels, Ukraine



will receive the unanimous approval that is required for the launch of discussions.

The EU's 27 nations have been united in backing Ukraine's resistance to Russia's

invasion, adopting unprecedented economic sanctions against Moscow. However, leaders were initially divided on how quickly the EU should move to accept Ukraine as a member,

with the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark among the most skeptical.

But Ukraine's bid got a boost last week when the EU's executive arm, the European Commission, gave its seal of approval based on Ukraine's answers to a questionnaire received in April and early May.

Ukraine received another shot in the arm when the leaders of France, Germany, Italy and Romania visited the country and vowed to back its candidacy. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he spoke with a total of 11 EU leaders on Wednesday, following calls with nine the day before, in another indication of how important EU candidacy is for Ukraine.

GERMANY FACES GAS SUPPLY 'CRISIS', DECLARES ALARM LEVEL

AP ■ BERLIN

Germany activated the second phase of its three-stage emergency plan for natural gas supplies Thursday, saying the country faces a "crisis" and warning that storage targets for the winter are at risk due to dwindling deliveries from Russia.

The government said the decision to raise the level to "alarm" follows the cuts to Russian deliveries made since June 14 and the continued high market price for gas. The third and highest stage is the "emergency" level.

It said that while gas storage facilities are currently filled to 58%

capacity - higher than at this time last year - the goal of reaching 90% by December won't be achievable without further measures.

Economy Minister Robert Habeck said in a statement that "the situation is serious and winter will come."



"The reduction in gas supplies is an economic attack on us by (Russian President Vladimir) Putin," he said. "We will defend ourselves against this. But our country is going to have to go down a stony path now."

"Even if we can't feel it yet: we are in a gas crisis," Habeck added.

Bulgarian political crisis casts shadow over Balkans summit



AP ■ BRUSSELS

A Bulgarian government crisis Thursday threatened to tarnish a European Union summit that was intended to bolster the EU membership hopes of Balkan countries and to show Western resolve in the face of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Bulgaria's parliament voted no-confidence Wednesday in the coalition government of Prime Minister Kiril Petkov, presenting an obstacle to the long-delayed start of the EU's accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania.

All three countries belong to NATO, but Bulgaria has used its status as an EU member to block the other two from proceeding on the path to join the 27-nation European bloc. Bulgaria has a dispute with North Macedonia over ethnicity and language, and its stance has also stalled Albania's progress the EU is treating the pair as a political package.

"It's a disgrace that a NATO country - Bulgaria - kidnaps two other NATO countries, namely Albania and North Macedonia, in the midst of the hot war at Europe's backyard," Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama said as he arrived for the EU-Western Balkans summit in Brussels. "It's not good to see that 26 other countries sit still in a scary show of impotence."

The EU, a political and economic club that boasts the world's biggest single market, wants to reassure countries in the Balkans that have waited years for admission that the bloc's doors remain open.

Russia's war in Ukraine has added to the list of aspiring EU members. The governments of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia rushed in membership applications after Russia invaded its neighbor.

EU heads of state and government meeting in Brussels for a two-day summit starting Thursday plan to consider whether to make Ukraine a candidate for membership, the first step in the accession process. The EU last admitted a new member - Croatia - in 2013. The enlargement process slowed as euroskeptical voices grew in member nations such as Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands - all founding members of the bloc in the 1950s.

The eurozone debt crisis 10 years ago, a 2015 migration wave into Europe and the U.K.'s 2016 referendum decision to pull out of the EU also contributed to political unease with the bloc's further expansion.

Russian cyber spying targets 42 Ukraine allies: Microsoft

AP ■ CLEVELAND

Coinciding with unrelenting cyberattacks against Ukraine, state-backed Russian hackers have engaged in "strategic espionage" against governments, think tanks, businesses and aid groups in 42 countries supporting Kyiv, Microsoft said in a report on Wednesday.

"Since the start of the war, the Russian targeting (of Ukraine's allies) has been successful 29 percent of the time," Microsoft President Brad Smith wrote, with data stolen in at least one-quarter of the successful network intrusions.

Nearly two-thirds of the cyberespionage targets involved NATO members.

The United States was the prime target and Poland, the main conduit for military assistance flowing to Ukraine, was No. 2.

In the past two months, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Turkey have seen stepped-up targeting.

A striking exception is Estonia, where Microsoft said it has detected no Russian cyber intrusions since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24.

The company credited Estonia's adoption of cloud computing, where

it's easier to detect intruders. "Significant collective defensive weaknesses remain" among some other European governments, Microsoft said, without identifying them.

Half of the 128 organisations targeted are government agencies and 12 per cent are nongovernmental agencies, typically think tanks or humanitarian groups, according to the 28-page report. Other targets include telecommunications, energy and defence companies.

Microsoft said Ukraine's cyber defences "have proven stronger" overall than Russia's capabilities in "waves of destructive cyberattacks against 48 distinct Ukrainian agencies and enterprises".

Moscow's military hackers have been cautious not to unleash destructive data-destroying worms that could spread outside Ukraine, as the NotPetty virus did in 2017, the report noted.

"During the past month, as the Russian military moved to concentrate its attacks in the Donbas region, the number of destructive attacks has fallen," according to the report. "Defending Ukraine: Early Lessons from the Cyber War."

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Time & last date of opening of bids : 13:00 Hrs. of 15.07.2022

For any Technical details and assistance please Contact:

Mr. Musaib Farooq **Jammu & Kashmir Address:**
Contact No. :- +91 7006947516 IST Floor, Nawa-i-SubhComplex near All India Radio J&K, Srinagar 190001.

Email: o22hydelprojects@gmail.com

SBFC
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PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the Public that Auction of pledged Gold Ornaments will be conducted by SBFC Finance Pvt. Ltd. on **28th June'22** at Delhi District Branch O-7, 1 st Floor, 'above Look Saloon, Lajpat Nagar 2, New Delhi -110024, District : Gautam Budh Nagar : Branch add-Plot No. 5, Ground Floor, Opposite White Castle Hotel/Main Dada Road, Safarpur, Bhangoli, Sector-101, District Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida-201304 (UP),Ghaziabad District : branch add-B2, Basement, RDC Raj Nagar, Ghaziabad -201002, Hapur District : add- First Floor, Above PC Jewellers, Garah Pargana, Garah Road, Tehsil & District Hapur - 245101, (U.P)

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Delhi: AP00023706, AP00070503, AP00096630, AP00145957, AP00167955, AP00171848, AP00175976, AP00181404, AP00182226, AP00182435, AP00183054, AP00189637, AP00194699, AP00195948, AP00196968, AP00198128, AP00270260, AP00272539, AP00277958, AP00282120, AP00313712, AP00319446, AP00327245, AP00330139, AP00332491, AP00345128, AP00346427, AP00346948, AP00352686, AP00352836, AP00354692, AP00357049, AP00357146, AP00358539, AP00363381, AP00364755, AP00365340, AP00369260, AP00378292, AP00384012, AP00393797, AP00398293, AP00406745, AP00413248, AP00413725, AP00414632, AP00415032, AP00415034, AP00415166, AP00415167, AP00415168, AP00415169, AP00415170, AP00415171, AP00415172, AP00415173, AP00415174, AP00415175, AP00415176, AP00415177, AP00415178, AP00415179, AP00415180, AP00415181, AP00415182, AP00415183, AP00415184, AP00415185, AP00415186, AP00415187, AP00415188, AP00415189, AP00415190, AP00415191, AP00415192, AP00415193, AP00415194, AP00415195, AP00415196, AP00415197, AP00415198, AP00415199, 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Ready to help Lanka's quick eco recovery through promoting investments: India

PTI ■ COLOMBO

India on Thursday assured Sri Lanka that it stands ready to help the island nation's quick economic recovery through promoting investments, connectivity and strengthening economic linkage as a four-member delegation led by Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra met the country's top leadership, including President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, here.

Sri Lanka is facing the worst economic crisis since independence in 1948 which has led to an acute shortage of essential items like food, medicine, cooking gas and fuel across the country.

The delegation, which also included Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, V Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Advisor, and Kartik Pande, Joint Secretary, Indian Ocean Region, first met President Rajapaksa.

During the call on President Rajapaksa, the Indian side thanked him for his commitment to the development of



India-Sri Lanka bilateral relations.

"Both sides had a productive exchange of views on the current economic situation in Sri Lanka as well as India's ongoing support," the High Commission of India said in a press release here.

During the meeting, Kwatra told Rajapaksa that India, as a close friend, will extend its fullest support to Sri Lanka in overcoming the difficult situation, the newsfirst.lk website reported.

The delegation reviewed the already provided assistance in terms of fuel, medicine, fertiliser and other essentials and said the Indian government is committed to support Sri Lanka, the report said.

The delegation later met with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and the two sides had an in-depth discussion on the Sri Lankan economy and efforts undertaken by the Government of Sri Lanka towards achieving economic

recovery.

"In this context, both sides highlighted the importance of promoting India-Sri Lanka investment partnership including in the fields of infrastructure, connectivity, renewable energy and deepening economic linkages between the two countries," the release said.

During the meetings, the Indian delegation underscored that the unprecedented recent economic, financial and humanitarian assistance of over USD 3.5 billion to the people of Sri Lanka was guided by 'Neighbourhood First' policy and Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The talks between the two sides were held in a frank, cordial and constructive manner," the release said.

In a tweet, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe said he had "a productive discussion" with the Indian delegation led by Foreign Secretary Kwatra.

"I look forward to stronger bilateral ties with India," he tweeted. The Foreign Secretary

also had a separate meeting with his Sri Lankan counterpart,

Ambassador Wijewardena.

Aruni

Truck driver dies after waiting for 5 days in queue at fuel station

PTI ■ COLOMBO

A 63-year-old truck driver has died in Sri Lanka after standing for five days in a queue at a filling station in the country's Western Province, the 10th death reported due to prolonged waiting for fuel procurement in the debt-ridden island nation grappling with the worst economic crisis since its independence, according to a media report on Thursday.

The man was found dead inside his vehicle after waiting in the queue at the filling station in Anguruwatota, police said.

The death toll in queues now stands at 10 and all the victims have been men aged between 43 and 84 years. Majority of the deaths reported in queues have been due to

cardiac arrests, the Daily Mirror newspaper reported.

A week ago, a 53-year-old man died while waiting in a queue for several hours at a fuel station in Panadura in Colombo.

The man was reported to have died of a heart attack while waiting in the queue in his three-wheeler.

Sri Lanka, home to around 22 million, is currently facing its worst economic crisis in more than 70 years.

Sri Lanka's economy is experiencing extreme fuel shortages, soaring food prices and a lack of medicines.

The current shortages were made worse by the government's inability to get the state-owned Bank of Ceylon to open Letters of Credit for fuel imports.

Australian leader to visit France to fix damaged relations

AP ■ CANBERRA

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Thursday he will meet President Emmanuel Macron in France next week to reset a bilateral relationship that was damaged when the previous Australian government canceled a submarine contract.

Albanese said Macron had invited him to visit France while he is in Europe to attend a NATO summit in Spain.

"We do need to reset. We've already had very constructive discussions. We've brought to a close the arrangements that were in place over submarines," Albanese told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

France responded with fury when former PM Scott Morrison announced in September that Australia was cancelling a 90 billion Australian dollar (\$62 billion) contract for a French state-owned company to build a fleet of 12 conventional diesel-electric submarines.

Instead, Australia had struck a deal with the US and Britain to provide submarines powered by U.S. Nuclear technology.

France temporarily withdrew its ambassadors from the U.S. and Australia. Macron accused Morrison of lying to him over the French contract that was awarded in 2016.



India, China discuss return of stranded students

PTI ■ BEIJING

India and China have discussed the return of thousands of Indian students stranded at home for two years due to Beijing's COVID-19 bans and resumption of direct flights disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, the Indian embassy here said on Thursday.

The vexed issue of the return of the Indian students figured in the talks between Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Wednesday.

Wang recalled his meeting with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar during his visit to New Delhi in March this year and mentioned that the "Chinese side attached importance to the Indian side's concerns regarding the return of Indian students and that he hoped to see early progress on this", a press release from the Indian Embassy quoted Wang as saying.

Foreign Minister Wang also referred to discussions on the resumption of direct flight connectivity between the two sides, it said.

"Ambassador Rawat conveyed that the

relevant agencies in India are seized of the matter and we may see progress in the matter soon", it said.

China, in recent months, began permitting "some" foreign students to return to the country. On June 20, the first batch of 90 Pakistani students, stuck back home for about two years due to China's strict visa restrictions, arrived in the Chinese city of Xian.

They are part of 250 Pakistani students China has agreed to permit to return based on their requirements while thousands more are awaiting Beijing's nod, according to the media reports from Pakistan.

1/6 panel to hear of Trump's pressure on Justice Department

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Jan. 6 committee will hear from former Justice Department officials who faced down a relentless pressure campaign from Donald Trump over the 2020 presidential election results while suppressing a bizarre challenge from within their own ranks.

The hearing Thursday will bring attention to a memorably turbulent stretch at the department as Trump in his final days in office sought to bend to his will a law enforcement agency that has long cherished its independence from the White House.

The testimony is aimed at showing how Trump not only relied on outside advisers to press his false claims of election fraud but also tried to leverage the



powers of federal executive branch agencies.

The witnesses will include Jeffrey Rosen, who was acting attorney general during the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol. Three days earlier, Rosen was part of a tense Oval Office showdown in which Trump contemplated replacing him with a

lower-level official, Jeffrey Clark, who wanted to champion Trump's bogus election fraud claims.

In a written statement prepared for the committee and obtained by The Associated Press, Rosen says the Justice Department had been presented with no evidence of fraud that could have affected the outcome of the election and therefore did not participate in any Trump campaign efforts to overturn the results, instead insisting on an orderly transfer of power.

"Some argued to the former president and public that the election was corrupt and stolen," Rosen's statement says. "That view was wrong then and it is wrong today, and I hope our presence here today helps reaffirm that fact."

Two other former department officials, Rosen's top deputy, Richard Donoghue, and Steven Engel, are also scheduled to testify. Both warned Trump at the White House meeting that they'd resign and that many of the department's lawyers would follow if he replaced Rosen with Clark.

"You could have a situation here, within 24 hours, you have hundreds of people resigning from the Justice Department," Donoghue has said he told Trump.

"Is that good for anyone? Is it good for the department? Is it good for the country? Is it good for you. It's not."

Only then did Trump relent. The night, and later his Republican administration, ended with Rosen still in power.

Tension in Iraq as cleric accuses Iran's allies of meddling

AP ■ BAGHDAD

Iraq's Parliament is set to hold a session Thursday to vote in replacements for 73 lawmakers who resigned earlier this month. The collective walkout by followers of Iraq's most influential Shiite politician threw Iraq into further uncertainty, deepening a months-long political crisis over government formation.

It was not clear whether the

extraordinary session requested by 50 members of parliament during a recess would go through. A simple majority of the legislature's 329 members is required for an electoral session, and al-Sadr urged parliamentary blocs not to succumb to "pressures" from Iranian-backed factions.

Al-Sadr, a maverick politician with a large following, emerged as the biggest winner in general elections held in October, but has been

unable to cobble together a coalition that can form a majority government. He has been locked in a power struggle with internal Shiite rivals backed by Iran, preventing the formation of a new government.

Two weeks ago, he ordered lawmakers from his parliamentary bloc to resign in a bid to break the eight-month impasse. The unprecedented move threw Iraq's political landscape into disarray.

Afghans bury dead, dig for survivors after quake kills 1,000

AP ■ GAYAN (AFGHANISTAN)

Villagers rushed to bury the dead Thursday and dug by hand through the rubble of their homes in search of survivors of a powerful earthquake in eastern Afghanistan that killed at least 1,000 people. The Taliban and the international community that fled their takeover struggled to bring help to the disaster's victims.

Under a leaden sky in Paktika province, which was the epicentre of Wednesday's magnitude 6 earthquake, men dug a line of graves in one village, as they tried to lay the dead to rest quickly in line with Muslim tradition. In one courtyard, bodies lay wrapped in plastic to protect them from the rains that are hampering relief efforts for the living.

The quake was Afghanistan's deadliest in two decades, and, with the full extent of the destruction among the villages tucked in the mountains only slowly

coming to light, officials said the toll could rise. An estimated 1,500 others were reported injured, the state-run Bakhtar News Agency said.

"They don't have anything to eat, they are wondering what they can have to eat, and it is also raining," a Bakhtar reporter said in footage from the quake zone. "Their houses are destroyed. Please help them, don't leave them alone."

The disaster heaps more misery on a country where millions already faced increasing hunger and poverty and the health system has crumbled since the Taliban retook power nearly 10 months ago amid the US and NATO withdrawal.

How the international humanitarian community, which has pulled back significant resources from the country, will be able to offer aid and to what extent the Taliban government will allow it to remain in question. The Taliban's takeover led to a cutoff of vital international

Iran orders US to pay compensation for slain nuke scientists

AP ■ TEHRAN

A court in Iran on Thursday ordered the United States government to pay over \$4 billion to the families of Iranian nuclear scientists who have been killed in targeted attacks in recent years, state-run media reported.

The largely symbolic ruling underscores the escalating tensions between Iran and the West over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme, with negotiations to restore the tattered atomic accord at a standstill.

Although Tehran has blamed Israel in the past for slayings targeting Iranian nuclear scientists since a decade ago, Iran did not directly accuse its arch-foe Israel in its announcement.

Iran has not recognised Israel since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that ousted the pro-West monarchy and brought Islamists to power. The court mentioned Israel only in saying the US supported the "Zionist regime" in its "organised crime" against the victims.

Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact Number 96461-08405)
Tender Inquiry No.: 36/CE/Thermal (D)/ 2022-23 Dated: 22-06-2022
Dy. CE/ Projects under THERMAL DESIGNS ORGANISATION PSPCL Patiala Shed No. T-2, Thermal (D), Shakti Vihar, Patiala invites tender notice for Utilization of 35,00,000 MT of Pond Ash at GNDPT, Bathinda. For detailed NIT & tender specification, please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 24-06-2022 (11:00 AM) onwards.
Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in
76155/12/948/2021/15164 C-243

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
The Sr.DME/Diesel, Northern Railway, Diesel Loco Shed, Tughlakabad for and on behalf of President of India invites e-tenders for the following work. The tender will be accepted online only in the prescribed tender document.

Subject	Description
Name of Work	"Comprehensive AMC of MASTER CONTROLLER unit in various schedules (Yearly, 3 Yearly and 6 Yearly) fitted in HHP Locomotives."
Place of Work	Diesel Shed, Tughlakabad, New Delhi-110044.
Completion period	24 months
Approximate cost of Work	Rs. 69,49,519.14/- including GST @18% (Rs. Sixty Nine Lakh Forty Nine Thousand Five Hundred Nineteen and Fourteen Paise only including GST @18 %)
Earnest Money	Rs.1,39,000/- (Rs. One Lakh Thirty Nine Thousand only)
Description of Similar Service Contract	The approved definition of similar nature of work is- "The Tenderer should be either an OEM of Master Controller or Authorized dealer of any OEM for Master Controller or Sources approved by RDSO for related work"
Technical Eligibility Criteria	As per clause 10 of tender form (second sheet) of Tender Document.
Financial Eligibility Criteria	As per clause 10 of tender form (second sheet) of Tender Document.
Website to download and upload e-tender document	www.ireps.gov.in
Due date & time of uploading of Tender by tenderer	15.07.2022 upto 12:00 Hrs.
Place of opening of tender	Divisional Railway Manager office, State Entry Road, New Delhi.
Date & Time of Tender opening	15.07.2022 after 12:00 hrs.
Validity of offer	45 days from opening of tender.
Allocation	05-312-32

Tender Document can be downloaded from Indian Railway website www.ireps.gov.in. For details of work experience, scope of work and terms & conditions please see Tender document.
TENDER NOTICE NO.: DSL-TKD-AMC-MC-2022 dated 22.06.2022 1535/2022
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Office of the S.E. 3rd Circle, P.W.D. PITHORAGARH GOVERNMENT OF UTTARAKHAND

E-mail: sepwdp@rediffmail.com Dated:-22.06.2022

Notice Inviting Bid

RFP for the following works on EPC mode:-
The Public Work Department through S.E., 3rd Circle Public Works Department, Pithoragarh, Government of Uttarakhand, is engaged in the construction of following work along Indo Nepal border in Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand state "Through An Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) Contract".

State	Name of work	Estimated cost	Completion period	Maintenance period
Uttarakhand	"Design & Construction of 110m Long 2 lane motor bridge with footpath over Sharda (Kali) river near Charchum in Indo Nepal border in Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand state" in EPC mode.	28.47 Cr	18 (Eighteen Month)	60 Month (Sixty Month)

The complete BID document can be viewed / downloaded from official portal of the Uttarakhand website <https://uktenders.gov.in> from 25.06.2022 to 21.07.2022 (upto 11.00 Hrs. IST). Bidder must submit its Financial Bid and Technical Bid at <https://uktenders.gov.in> on or before 20-07-2022 (upto 15.00 Hrs. IST). Bids received online shall be opened on 21-07-2022 (at 11.00 Hrs. IST).

Bid through any other mode shall not be entertained. However, Bid Security, document fee, Power of Attorney and Joint Bidding Agreement etc. shall be submitted physically by the Bidder on before 20-07-2022 (at 15.00 Hrs. IST) in the office of Superintending Engineer, Third Circle PWD Pithoragarh. Please note that the Superintending Engineer Third circle Public Work Department Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand reserves the right to accept or reject any of the BIDs without assigning any reason whatsoever.
Superintending Engineer

SRF LIMITED
Regd. Office: The Galleria, DLF Mayur Vihar, Unit No. 236 & 237, 2nd Floor, Mayur Vihar Phase, Noida Link Road, Mayur Vihar Phase I Extn, Delhi-110091
Corporate Office: Block-C, Sector 45, Gurugram, Haryana-122 003
Tel. No (Regd office) : (+91-11) 49482870; Fax : (+91-11) 49482900
E-mail: cs@srf.com, Website: www.srf.com; CIN: L18101DL1970PLC005197
NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that Certificates pertaining to Shares of the Company detailed below have been reported lost and request(s) for issue of duplicate Certificates in lieu thereof have been received by the Company :-

Sl. No.	Folio No.	Name of the Share Holder / Legal Heir (Claimant)	Cert-No.	Dist-No.	Lost Shares
1	K 0006536	KASHI PRASAD BAJAJ	320944-7 469944-7 90008697 90008697 90008697-8 90162433	16129125-83 24148917-75 2353176-200 3386145-154 5252101-17 12221585-634	59 59 50 50 52 50
2	SRF0104826	DAYA SHANKER SARIN SHANKER SARIN	1126819	308744786-45145	360
3	SRF0029322	VARUN PAWHA	434200-1 583191 583193-8 583200	21489909-90008 29509251-300 29509351-650 29509701-50	100 50 300 50
4	S 0001552	SATISH CHUNILAL MEHTA	1128738	309563670-4173	504
5	N 0003581	NIRA NATH	3747 4263 94898 133435-7 150714 328565 477561-6 976361	1240566-95 1259421-70 4081166-215 5514848-997 5972100-14 16284826-7 24304448-620 18583374-423	30 50 50 150 15 2 173 50
6	SRF0024059	LAKSHMI SUNDARAM C S KRISHNAN	358234-6 507234-6 90054134-5 90054161 90184425	16688559-648 24888351-440 8335394-473 8336202-37 14521925-74	90 90 80 36 50
7	S 0013660	S P KUMAR SMT PROMILLA KUMAR	1125247 90177872-3	308217814-8213 13244425-524	400 100
8	SRF0133817	ALOK VIRAJ GUPTA VIDYA AGGARWAL RAJINDER KUMAR GUPTA	590593-4 590594 1125931	7145190-269 16905900-19 308400806-1205	80 20 400
9	S 0006652	SHOBHA RANI JAIN	1126797	308737922-8317	396
10	O 0000296	OM PARKASH SINGAL	41243 72150 136562 328928-30 477928-30 90031406 90167275	2467401-25 3497593-603 561367-84 16291449-523 24311241-315 7291606-41 12801780-819	25 11 18 75 75 36 40
11	SRF0137059	SHUBHRA PAUL CHAUDHURY ANITA GHOSE	644671 644671 644672 644672 644672-4 644674	1756276-300 2402026-50 4090237-48 4148679-90 6140486-565 6238198-237	25 25 12 12 80 40

Any person having any claim / objection in respect of the above requests should lodge such claim/objection with the company at its Corporate Office within 15 days of the publication of this notice, failing which the company will consider to give effect to the above requests.
Public is hereby cautioned against dealing with the aforesaid share certificates.
for SRF LIMITED
Sd/-
RAJAT LAKHANPAL
Vice President (Corporate Compliance)
& Company Secretary
Place: Gurugram
Date: 23-06-2022

States to push for continuing GST compensation beyond June

Centre to cite tight revenue position

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Council at its meeting next week is likely to be a stormy affair with Opposition-ruled States aggressively pushing for continuation of compensation for revenue loss, while Centre will defend such a move citing a tight revenue position.

To meet the shortfall in the GST compensation fund, the Centre has borrowed and released to states ₹1.1 lakh crore in 2020-21 and ₹1.59 lakh crore in 2021-22 as back-to-back loans to meet a part of the shortfall in cess collection.

In addition, the Centre has also been releasing regular GST compensation from fund to meet shortfall. "Last year, out of the compensation cess collection, the Centre has repaid ₹7,500 crore towards interest cost for borrowing and ₹14,000 crore is to be paid this fiscal.



From next fiscal, the repayment of principal amount will start, which will continue till March 2026," an official said. The 47th meeting of GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister and comprising state Finance Ministers, in Chandigarh scheduled on June 28-29 is likely to see discussion veer around compensation mechanism and revenue position of the Centre and states.

As per estimates, some northeastern states do not require GST compensation. After 45th GST Council meeting in Lucknow, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

had said regime of paying compensation to states for revenue shortfall, resulting from subsuming their taxes, such as VAT in uniform national tax GST will end in June next year.

However, the compensation cess levied on luxury and demerit goods, will continue to be collected till March 2026 to repay the borrowings that were done in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to compensate states for GST revenue loss. Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced in country with effect on July 1, 2017, and states were assured of compensation for loss of any revenue arising on account of

implementation of GST for five years. Though states' protected revenue has been growing at 14% compounded growth, the cess collection did not increase in same proportion.

The pandemic hiked gap between projected revenue and actual revenue receipt, including a reduction in cess collection. To meet resource gap of states due to short release of compensation, Centre has borrowed and released ₹1.1 lakh crore in 2020-21 and ₹1.59 lakh crore in 2021-22 as back-to-back loans to meet a part of shortfall in cess collection.

'Govt can meet fiscal deficit target if rising oil prices don't force more excise cuts on fuels'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Centre can meet the fiscal deficit target of 6.4 per cent for 2022-23 if there are no excise duty cuts to lower high oil prices and additional spending on subsidies, a German brokerage said on Thursday.

Meeting the budgeted target will be possible if there is no further cut on excise duties, Deutsche Bank's chief economist Kaushik Das said.

The note said that the recent cuts in excise duties, coupled with the higher spending on fertiliser, food and fuel subsidies have led to "upside risks" on the fiscal deficit target.

"...Our analysis of the fiscal arithmetic at this juncture suggests that the central government can still potentially hold the FY23 fiscal deficit

close to the target of 6.4 per cent of GDP, assuming no further excise duty cuts or/and additional spending on subsidies over and above what has already been announced," it said.

However, it will be a "different story" if crude oil prices rise to over USD 150 per barrel during the course of the year, it said, hinting that the fiscal deficit can expand beyond the targeted levels otherwise.

The brokerage said its house view is for the fiscal deficit number to come at 6.5 per cent of GDP.

Clarity on whether the fiscal target can be met or not, and if market borrowing needs to be increased from the present target of Rs 14.31 lakh crore will become clearer only in the second half of the fiscal,

when the government has sufficient data on the revenue and expenditure front, it said. Listing out the factors which are leading to concerns over the fiscal situation, it said the government reduced central excise duty on petrol by Rs 8 per litre and diesel by Rs 6 per litre, expenditure allocation on fertiliser subsidies was raised by Rs 1.1 lakh crore and a Rs 61,000 crore scheme on cooking gas was also announced.

The note said the actual revenue collection turned out to be higher than the revised estimates in FY22, which will make it easier to achieve the revenue estimates for FY23 in absolute terms, but added that the actual expenditure also turned out to be higher than estimates. In FY23, total rev-

enue collections can be lower by around Rs 24,500 crore, given impact of measures enlisted above, it said, adding the expenditure compression is still likely to fall short of the additional increase in subsidy bill of Rs 2 lakh crore, which means that we should expect an overall expenditure overshoot of at least Rs 1.3 lakh crore, it said.

FY23 fiscal deficit could be potentially higher by Rs 1.5 lakh crore or 7 per cent of GDP, when calculated using the lower nominal GDP base provided in budget (which assumes only 11.1 per cent growth), but fiscal deficit works out to 6.54 per cent, when using a larger nominal GDP base, based on a realistic 17-18 per cent YoY (Year-on-Year) growth assumption, it said.



Sensex, Nifty rebound nearly 1 pc on gains in auto, IT stocks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty bounced back on Thursday to close higher by nearly 1 per cent on gains in banking, IT and auto shares amid mixed global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 443.19 points or 0.86 per cent to settle at 52,265.72. During the day, it rallied 694.26 points or 1.33 per cent to 52,516.79. The NSE Nifty advanced 143.35 points or 0.93 per cent to 15,556.65. From the Sensex pack, Maruti, M&M, Asian Paints, Bharti Airtel, TCS, Sun Pharma, Wipro, ICICI Bank and Hindustan Unilever were major gainers.

On other hand, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Power Grid and UltraTech Cement were laggards. Elsewhere in Asia, stock markets in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo ended with gains while Seoul settled lower. European markets were trading in red in mid-session deals. The US markets ended

marginally lower on Wednesday.

"The Indian markets opened on a positive note following Asian market peers which were trading mostly in the green led by China. During the afternoon session markets trimmed some of their gains as European markets struggled to shrug-off recession fears but managed to trade in the green," said Narendra Solanki, Head- Equity Research (Fundamental), Anand Rathi Shares & Stock Brokers.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 709.54 points or 1.35 per cent to settle at 51,822.53 on Wednesday. The NSE Nifty fell 225.50 points or 1.44 per cent to end at 15,413.30.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.92 per cent to USD 109.60 per barrel. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net sellers in capital market, as they sold shares worth ₹2,920.61 crore on Wednesday, as per exchange data.

Tomar to take up industry's demand on reducing GST on pesticides with FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Thursday assured the agrochemicals industry that he would take up the industry's demand to reduce GST on pesticides to 5 per cent from 18 per cent with the finance minister.

Addressing the '11th Agrochemicals Conference 2022' organised by FICCI, the minister stressed on the need for crop diversification and said farmers should grow more



horticulture and costly crops.

On the industry's demand to reduce GST on pesticides, Tomar said the matter related to this subject is being dealt by the GST Council. "I will meet and apprise the Finance

Minister about your demand," he said. Tomar said he would take up the issue with the finance ministry on behalf of the industry but a final decision on this would be taken by the GST Council.

The minister was responding to the demand made by FICCI Crop Protection Committee Chairman R G Agarwal that the GST should be reduced to 5 per cent from 18 per cent, as it is in the case of fertilisers. This will bring down the cost and promote usage of crop-protection chem-

icals. Tomar also emphasised on making agriculture profitable by increasing production and crop productivity, besides reducing input cost as well as post-harvest crop losses.

He highlighted that the Centre has launched many programmes in the last eight years to boost agriculture sector and double farmers income. Tomar said the Centre, along with States, is making efforts to provide new technologies to farmers. The government is in the process to set up 10,000 FPOs (farmers producer organ-

isations) to improve income of farming community, he added.

The minister said country is self-sufficient in foodgrains production while the government is making efforts to boost oilseeds and pulses output in a mission mode. He spoke about the need to undertake research in agriculture sector in the field of new seed varieties to improve crop yield.

Talking about fertilisers and pesticides, Tomar said there is a need to promote balanced use of these crop protection products. He agreed

that there is no unjudicious use of fertilisers and pesticides in India but asked industry to work on alternative products as farmers are also taking interest in organic as well as natural farming.

Tomar said government and the industry should work together to create awareness among small and marginal farmers about benefits of agrochemicals. The minister said Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) are working in this direction but there is a need to make concerted efforts.

Rupee settles at all-time low of 78.32 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee on Thursday closed at its all-time low of 78.32 (provisional) against the US dollar as strong American currency and persistent foreign fund outflows weighed on investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 78.26 and finally settled at its all-time low 78.32, unchanged from its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee declined by 19 paise to settle at an all-time low level of 78.32 against the US dollar. The Indian rupee erased early morning gains as safe-haven demand drove the greenback ahead of quarter-end adjustments, said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities. Parmar further said that there is a high chance of a near bounce amid a fall in commodities, strength in regional currencies and recovery in risk assets. "Spot USD-



INR is expected to be in the narrow range of 78.10 to 78.50 before heading towards 79 odd levels," Parmar said. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.41 per cent to 104.62. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.99 per cent to USD 110.63 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 443.19 points or 0.86 per cent higher at 52,265.72, while the broader NSE Nifty gained 143.35 points or 0.93 per cent to 15,556.65. Foreign institutional investors remained net sellers in the capital market on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,920.61 crore, as per stock exchange data.

Bank unions postpone June 27 strike

New Delhi: Bank unions on Thursday deferred their proposed June 27 strike as Indian Banks' Association (IBA) agreed to initiate negotiation talks on their demands.

The United Forum of Bank Union (UFBU), an umbrella body of nine bank unions, including All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC), All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA) and National Organisation of Bank Workers (NOBW) had threaten to go on strike to press for issues related to pension and demand for five-days-a-week work.

As per agreement with IBA, the negotiation talks on various pending issues would begin on July 1, AIBEA general secretary C H Venkatachalam said after a meeting held under chairmanship of Chief Labour Commissioner.

Other demands included an updation and revision of pension for all pensioners and doing away with national pension scheme and restoring old pension scheme for all bank employees. PTI

RBI proposes norms for outsourcing of IT services by banks, NBFCs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Thursday proposed norms for the outsourcing of IT services to ring-fence banks and other regulated entities from financial, operational and reputational risks.

Regulated entities (REs) will not require prior approval from the central bank for the outsourcing of IT and IT-enabled services, according to RBI's draft Master Direction on Outsourcing of Information Technology (IT) Services.

"The underlying principle of these Directions is that the RE should ensure that outsourcing arrangements neither diminish its ability to fulfil its obligations to customers nor impede effective supervision by the supervising authority," said the draft, on which the RBI has invited comments from stakeholders by July 22.

Banks, payment banks, cooperative banks, credit information companies, NBFCs and other regulated entities, would be required to put in place a comprehensive board-

approved IT outsourcing policy. "Outsourcing of any activity of the RE shall not diminish its obligations as also of its Board and senior management, who shall be ultimately responsible for the outsourced activity."

"RE shall take steps to ensure that the service provider employs the same high standard of care in performing the services as would have been employed by the RE if the same activity was not outsourced," the draft said.

The draft specifies the role of the board and senior management, besides norms pertaining to the usage of cloud computing services and outsourcing of the Security Operations Center (SOC).

The RBI has also proposed that the REs should set up a robust grievance redressal mechanism, "which in no way shall be compromised on account of outsourcing", meaning responsibility for redressal of customers' grievances related to outsourced services would rest with them.

As per the draft, a risk

management framework for the outsourcing of IT services should comprehensively deal with the processes and responsibilities for the identification, measurement, mitigation/management and reporting of risks associated with outsourcing.

Entities regulated by the RBI should also require their service providers to develop and establish a robust framework for documenting, maintaining and testing Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP).

Also, a RE could outsource any IT activity/IT-enabled service within its business group/conglomerate, provided that such an arrangement is backed by the Board-approved policy and appropriate service level arrangements/agreements with its group entities are in place, the draft said.

It has also proposed additional requirements for cross-border outsourcing. In February this year, the RBI had proposed to issue a guideline on outsourcing.

Govt-appointed committee on EVs fire cases to submit report this month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An expert committee set up by the road transport ministry to investigate cases of electric two-wheelers catching fire and suggest remedial measures is likely to submit its report this month, a senior government official said on Friday. Recently, there have been multiple incidents of electric vehicles (EVs) catching fire and resulting in death and causing severe injuries to people.

"The expert committee (formed on battery standards and certification) is likely to submit its report this month," the official told PTI.

Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari had recently said companies found negligent will be penalised and a recall of all defective vehicles will be ordered after the expert panel submits its report. The government had ordered a probe in April after an e-scooter launched by ride-hailing operator Ola's electric mobility arm engulfed in fire in Pune.

Indian economy to grow by 7-7.8 pc in FY23 despite global headwinds: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy can grow by 7-7.8 per cent this fiscal on the back of better agriculture production and a revitalised rural economy amid global headwinds mainly due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, eminent economists said.

Eminent economist and BR Ambedkar School of Economics (BASE) Vice-Chancellor NR Bhanumurthy said at present Indian economy is facing multiple headwinds largely from external sources.

Noting that global inflationary pressures and the Russia-Ukraine war have brought in risks to the economy, which is otherwise strong with all the domestic macro fundamentals being well managed, he said unlike advanced economies, India's Covid stimulus measures, especially the fiscal policy interventions, are less inflationary and rather growth-enhancing.

"With better agricultural production and revitalised rural economy India should touch 7 per cent growth in the current year despite global headwinds," Bhanumurthy told

PTI. Echoing similar views, eminent economist and Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID) director Nagesh Kumar said the high-frequency indicators point to a robust growth momentum carrying through 2022-23 with a real GDP growth somewhere between 7-7.8 per cent.

French economist Guy Sorman said India could be severely impacted by the high cost of energy and fertiliser imports. "However, because India is still, largely an agricultural economy, the social impact of slower growth will be tempered by city workers going back to their village."

"This could increase agricultural production and grain exports," Sorman added. The World Bank has cut India's economic growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7.5 per cent as rising inflation, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical tensions taper recovery.

India's economy grew 8.7 per cent in the last fiscal (2021-22) against a 6.6 per cent contraction in the previous year. In its third monetary policy of 2022-23, the Reserve Bank

retained its GDP growth forecast at 7.2 per cent for the current fiscal, but cautioned against negative spillovers of geopolitical tensions and a slowdown in the global economy.

On high inflation, Bhanumurthy said, CPI inflation peaked in March 2022 and a large part of the CPI inflation in the last three months is driven by fuel prices.

"Delayed transmission of domestic fuel prices and rise in global fuel and other commodity prices appears to have led to a sudden spurt in CPI inflation," he said, adding that recent policy measures, such as reduction in fuel taxes and hike in policy interest rates, should smoothen inflation and inflation expectations in the coming quarters.

Kumar noted that the global headwinds of rising commodity prices do pose downside risks for the Indian economic outlook as the CPI levels are elevated.

"Yet, I do not think that India is heading towards stagnation, given that the growth momentum seems quite robust," Kumar argued.

BIS issues performance standards for electric vehicle batteries

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has come out with performance standards for electric vehicle batteries in order to ensure the safety of consumers, a senior consumer affairs ministry official said on Thursday.

BIS, the national standards-setting body that functions under the consumer affairs ministry, has published the "performance standards for electronic vehicle batteries", the official said.

The standard "IS 17855: 2022" has been formulated for lithium-ion traction battery packs and systems of electrically-propelled road vehicles and it has been harmonized with ISO 12405-4: 2018, the official added.

According to the official, the new EV batteries' standard incorporates the test procedure for the basic characteristic of performance, reliability and electrical functionality for the battery packs and system for

either high power or high energy application.

This standard is formulated considering real-life scenarios for an electric vehicle such as vehicle in parking (battery is not used for an extended period of time), the battery system is being shipped (stored), operating battery at low and high temperature etc., accordingly various tests are incorporated in this standard.

Electric vehicles operate on an electric motor and rechargeable batteries. Over the past decade, electric vehicles have grown in terms of visibility and availability in the market. Most electric vehicles use lithium-ion batteries because of their high power-to-weight ratio.

Considering the safety aspect of batteries for electronic vehicles, the BIS is in the process of publishing two more standards related to batteries for various passenger and goods carrying vehicles (L, M and N categories), the official said.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

HIRA NAND TAKES OVER AS DIR (FINANCE) OF NFL

Hira Nand has taken over as Director (Finance) of National Fertilizers Limited (NFL). Prior to this, Nand was Executive Director (F&A) in company. Nand is also on the board of NFL's JV Ramagundam Fertilizers and Chemicals Ltd. (RFCL). A cost and management accountant professional with degrees of M.Com, LL.B., Nand has a rich professional experience of more than 30 years in Accounts and Financial Management. He started his career with NFL in 1986 and gained rich experience in various aspects of Financial Management in Company. He has also worked with ONGC Petro additions Ltd. (OPaL), KRIBHCO and Model Economic Township Ltd in various capacities.

अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय योग दिवस 2022
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA 2022
मानवता के लिए योग
YOGA FOR HUMANITY
24 JUNE 2022

POWERGRID OBSERVES INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna CPSU under Ministry of Power, in association with Ministry of Ayush, celebrated the 8th International Day of Yoga-2022, with fervour and enthusiasm at Rakhigarhi, Hissar, Haryana. Hundreds of students and local public participated in this mega effort of practicing yoga together in the presence of Chief Guest, Krishan Pal Gurjar, Minister of State for Power & Heavy Industries, Govt. of India apart from Jaideep Arya, Chairman, Haryana Yoga Commission, Dr. Priyanka Soni, Deputy Commissioner, Hissar, Haryana, Vikas Yadav, SDM, Narnaud and V. K. Singh, Director (Personnel), POWERGRID.

Serena comeback cut short by Jabeur injury

AP ■ EASTBOURNE

Serena Williams' return to tennis action has been cut short after doubles partner Ons Jabeur withdrew from the Eastbourne tournament because of a knee injury.

The WTA event had seen tennis great Williams, 40, play her first two competitive matches since she limped out of last year's Wimbledon in tears with a hamstring problem.

The American and Tunisian partner Jabeur made it through to the semi-finals with a narrow last 16 win over Maria Bouzkova and Sara Sorribes Tormo, before a more convincing quarter-final victory in straight sets against Shuko Aoyama and Chan Hao-ching.

Williams will now focus on Wimbledon where she has accepted a wild card into the women's singles in a bid to win a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title.

She will find out who she faces in the first round when the draw is made on Friday.

Earlier on Wednesday, Serena stepped up her comeback as the American star powered to a second successive victory.

Williams and Tunisia's Jabeur defeated Shuko Aoyama and Chan Hao-ching 6-2, 6-4 in the quarter-finals of the Wimbledon warm-up event at Devonshire Park.

Williams, 40, had initially looked rusty on her first appearance for 12 months in Tuesday's victory over Sara Sorribes Tormo and Marie Bouzkova.

But she grew into that match and was more like her old self in the second step on her comeback trail.



Williams will now focus on Wimbledon where she has accepted a wild card into the women's singles in a bid to win a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title

It took only two minutes for the American to send down an ace before several clinical volleys provided the first break.

The opening set was wrapped up in 25 minutes and another break inspired by Serena in the ninth game of the second set put them on the brink of victory.

One more ace for Williams' tally helped get her and Jabeur over the line and they are now just two victories away from securing the title.

"I think we played together much better today, although I felt we played really well together yesterday. Ons really helped me out playing so good," Williams said.

Quizzed on how she celebrated yesterday, Serena she went for a dip in the nearby sea on the south-coast.

"I went to the beach and for a swim like everyone here in the cold water, no, no way! I didn't do much. I just played with my baby (Olympia). She is so fun," she said.

Williams is one Grand Slam crown away from equalling Australian

Margaret Court's record of 24 singles titles at the majors.

The last of her 23 Grand Slam singles titles came at the Australian Open in 2017.

Since then she has lost four Grand Slam finals, including at Wimbledon in 2018 and 2019.

Williams won the seventh and most recent of her seven Wimbledon singles titles in 2016.

Serena, who became a mother in 2017, has plummeted to 1,204th in the WTA rankings due to her period out of action.

Earlier Wednesday, Petra Kvitova battled into the Eastbourne women's singles quarter-finals as the former Wimbledon champion fought back to beat Britain's Katie Boulter 5-7, 6-0, 7-5.

Kvitova, who won Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014, was in danger of a shock defeat against Boulter after the world number 127 took the first set of their last-16 clash.

Boulter had knocked out last year's Wimbledon runner-up Karolina Pliskova in the previous round.

But former world number two Kvitova showed her class as she took the second set at a canter.

The Czech, who last reached a Grand Slam final in Australia in 2019, held her nerve in a tense decider to win in two hours and 23 minutes.

In the men's singles, Cameron Norrie defeated Brandon Nakashima 6-4, 6-2 for his first win on grass this season.

Indian women's U17 team suffer 0-7 defeat against Italy



PTI ■ UDINE

India's Under-17 women's football team suffered a humiliating 0-7 defeat against Italy in the opening match of a four-nation tournament at Grandiseco D'Isenzo stadium here.

The Thomas Dennerby-coached side started off the match by trying to press the opposition high up the pitch and entice mistakes from them.

Italy almost took the lead in the 10th minute as Dragoni had just Indian goalkeeper Monalisa to beat but the latter stretched and produced a wonderful save to deny the Italian.

However, India's resistance soon lay in tatters as just one minute later, Maria Rossi put the ball into the back of the net.

India came the closest to scoring on the half-hour mark when Anita tried a long-range effort to catch the Italian defence off-guard but her shot missed the target by a whisker.

The floodgates opened after that as Anna Longobardi and Giulia Dragoni scored in the

India jump two places to 104 in FIFA ranking

NEW DELHI: The Indian football team reaped a good harvest of its impressive Asian Cup qualification campaign as it gained two places to jump to 104th in the latest FIFA world rankings released on Thursday.

The Blue Tigers are placed just below New Zealand (103rd), who missed out on a 2022 FIFA World Cup spot after losing to Costa Rica 0-1 in the intercontinental play-off earlier this month.

India's ranking among Asian Football Confederation members, however, still remained static at 19th place. Iran retained the top spot among AFC countries at 23rd place. In the overall rankings, Brazil remained on top, three months after taking the top spot from Belgium (2nd).

Argentina jumped one place to third at the expense of France (4th) who paid the price for four winless games in the UEFA Nations League.

England, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and Denmark complete the top-10. The next FIFA world ranking will be out on August 25. **PTI**

31st and 33rd minutes, respectively, to give the Italians some much-needed cushion.

Italy picked up right from where they left off in the first half as Manuela Scibica scored in the 48th minute.

Couple of quick-fire goals followed after that and within 15 minutes of the second half, Italy had extended their lead to six goals.

Dennerby made some changes in the 60th minute as Neha, Rejiya, Babina and Pinku came on for Nitu, Lynda, Kajol and Shelja, respectively.

Marta Zamboni scored the final goal of the game in the 67th minute as she stretched Italy's lead to 7 goals.

On an exposure tour, the Indian team will compete in two tournaments to gear up for the U-17 women's World Cup in India during October-November.



Back with a bang: Indian women's team storms into final

PTI ■ PARIS

India's recurve archers, who had a nightmarish qualification round in the women's event, bounced back strongly to storm into the final, confirming their first medal at the ongoing World Cup Stage 3 here on Thursday.

A day after all of them slipped out of top-30 in the qualifying round to get a lowly 13th seed, the trio of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Simranjeet Kaur beat Ukraine, Britain and Turkey en route the summit clash.

They will be against Chinese Taipei on Sunday.

The Indian women's recurve trio started off by eliminating fourth-seed Ukraine 5-1 (57-53, 57-54, 55-55).

Against Great Britain in the quarterfinals, they dropped just four points to down their opponents 6-0 (59-51, 59-51,

58-50).

In the semifinals, they had a slow start, aggregating 56 in the first set but their eighth-seeded Turkish rivals Gulnaz Coskun, Ezgi Basaran and Yasemin Anagoz shot a poor 51 to concede the first set by five points.

The Indians stepped up in the second set to edge out their rivals by one-point before they went on to lose their first set of the day when the Turkish team won the third 55-54 to make it 2-4.

Needing a tie in the fourth set to confirm their passage to the final, the Indians held their nerve and stood to their task for a 5-3 (56-51, 57-56, 54-55, 55-55) win.

Luck also was on their side as they did not have to face their nemesis Koreans as the top-seeds were upset by eighth-seeded Turkish team in the quarters.

Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia pulls out of CWG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former All England champion Lee Zii Jia has pulled out of the upcoming Commonwealth Games to manage his workload, keeping in mind the World Championships in August.

The world number five Malaysian's withdrawal will make it a bit easier for the Indian duo of Kidambi Srikanth and Lakshya Sen to go for the coveted Gold at the Birmingham event with Singapore's first ever badminton world champion Loh Kean Yew emerging as one of the favourites.

"This is a difficult decision to make because I have played so many back-to-back tournaments and I think my body condition lacks rest and (so) I have to choose between Commonwealth and the World Championships," Zii Jia said in a video posted on Twitter. "I have already spoken to my team members as well and we came out with a decision to focus more on World Championships instead."

The Commonwealth Games is scheduled in Birmingham from July 28 to Aug 8, while the world Championships will be held in Tokyo from August 22 to 28.

Zii Jia will compete at the Malaysian Open from June 28 to July 3, followed by the Malaysian Masters from July 5-10.

Cristiano could return to Juventus

AP ■ LONDON

Manchester United star Footballer Cristiano Ronaldo is planning to return back to Juventus after an underwhelming season with Premier League club.

According to reports, Ronaldo's manager Jorge Mendes has already made a move and offered the 37-year-old striker's service to Juventus.

An AS.com report suggests that Ronaldo's manager has offered the footballer to the Italian giants. It has been learned that Juventus have not totally ruled out having star footballer in their side, although there is some doubt over whether they would be able to complete a deal.

United have not won the Premier League title since 2013 and last won a trophy in 2017. They finished last season in sixth place, having sacked Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and replaced him with interim boss Ralf Rangnick.

The new manager of the club, Erik ten Hag has been tasked with a tricky rebuilding job in his first summer at Old Trafford and will need to get to work on replacing some of the star names who will leave when their contracts expire on June 30.

Ronaldo is reportedly 'worried' about United's current approach in the transfer win-



dow, according to a report from AS.com.

Along with Ronaldo, Pogba, who was bought by the club for a record \$112 million, could return to his former club Juventus.

The 37-year old found the back of the net 24 times in what was a forgetful season for Manchester United, as they failed to qualify for the Champions League, a result that leaves Ronaldo's future at the Old Trafford under doubts.

Ronaldo made 134 appearances for Juventus, scoring 101 goals and winning two league titles as well as two Coppa Italia.

No Rani in India's CWG team

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday named an 18-member women's hockey team for the upcoming Commonwealth Games, with star striker Rani Rampal left out yet again for failing to regain full fitness after an injury.

The CWG team is very similar to the one taking part in the World Cup next month.

The side will be captained by goalkeeper Savita Punia while experienced defender Deep Grace Ekka will be her deputy in the Birmingham CWG, to be held from July 28 to August 8. The duo will also take the same roles in the World Cup, to be co-hosted by the Netherlands and Spain from July 1 to 17.

There are only three changes in the CWG squad from the World Cup team. Rajani Etimarpu was named in place of Bichu Devi Kharibam as number two goalkeeper while World Cup team member Sonika (midfielder) was left out from the CWG squad. Forward Sangita Kumari, who was named as one of the replacement players for the World Cup, figured in the CWG team as a full member.

India have been placed in pool A along with England, Canada, Wales and Ghana. They will begin their campaign on July 29 against Ghana.

Rani, who led the Indian



women to a historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics, was picked for the recent FIH Pro League matches in Belgium and Netherlands after recovering from a hamstring injury.

She didn't feature in the first four games of the side's European leg of Pro League, raising doubts about her fitness. Eventually, it cost her a place in the World Cup-bound squad.

In the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, India had finished fourth after losing to England in the bronze medal match. However, after an impressive campaign in their

maiden FIH Pro League where they finished overall third behind Argentina and the Netherlands, the Indian team is looking for a podium finish in Birmingham.

INDIAN TEAM

Goalkeepers: Savita (c), Rajani Etimarpu

Defenders: Deep Grace Ekka (vc), Gurjit Kaur, Nikki Pradhan, Udit

Midfielders: Nisha, Sushila Chanu, Pukhrabam,

Monika, Neha, Jyoti, Navjot Kaur, Salima Tete

Forwards: Vandana Katariya, Lalremliami, Navneet Kaur, Sharmila Devi, Sangita Kumari.

Top-scorer Nkunku extends stay with Leipzig until 2026



AP ■ LEIPZIG

RB Leipzig have extended the contract of their top-scoring France forward Christopher Nkunku until 2026, it was announced Thursday.

The 24-year-old was in stellar form last season, banging in 35 goals, including 20 in the Bundesliga, plus 19 assists in 50 matches in all competitions.

His performances earned him a debut in the France team last March and attracted interest from his former club PSG and Manchester United.

Nkunku still had two years on his original contract, but RB Leipzig managing director Oliver Mintzlaff has secured his services for another four years.

The new deal reportedly includes a significant salary raise with magazine Kicker and German daily Bild claiming a release clause of around 60 million euros becomes active next summer.

"I was really impressed with

Löw tips Götze for Germany recall after Frankfurt move

AP ■ BERLIN

World Cup winner Mario Götze has been tipped for a Germany recall by former national team coach Joachim Löw after returning to the Bundesliga by signing for Champions League side Eintracht Frankfurt.

Götze completed his transfer from Dutch Eredivisie runners-up PSV Eindhoven by signing a three-year contract.

"I'm really looking forward to playing for Eintracht Frankfurt," said Götze, who scored an extra-time winner in Germany's victory over Argentina in the 2014 World

Cup final.

"The club has developed incredibly and embarked on an exciting, ambitious path which I am glad to be a part of."

Frankfurt have qualified for the Champions League for the first time since losing the 1960 European Cup final to Real Madrid after winning the Europa League last season.

Sporting director Markus Kroesche said Götze turned down "numerous offers" in order to join Frankfurt.

"We have lacked a type of player like him so far," said Kroesche.

Löw, who brought Götze



the club's efforts to keep me, so a big thanks to those responsible, especially Oliver Mintzlaff, with whom I was always in close contact," Nkunku said in a statement.

Red Bull-backed Leipzig

won the German Cup last season, a first title for the club which was only founded in 2009.

They have again qualified for the Champions League next season and Nkunku said the

club has big goals.

"RB Leipzig have made a name for themselves on the international stage in recent years and have shown we can compete for titles," he said. "We want to build on that

going forward and go one step further."

HALLER TO REPLACE HAALAND

Ajax forward Sebastian Haller flew to Germany on

Thursday to complete a medical check before signing with Borussia Dortmund as a replacement for Erling Haaland.

Haller was picked up by Dortmund officials after landing at the city's airport from where he was taken for his medical.

The 28-year-old Ivory Coast international is reportedly poised to ink a four-year deal with Dortmund to replace Haaland, who has joined Premier League champions Manchester City.

German daily Bild say Haller's transfer from Ajax is set to cost Bundesliga runners-up Dortmund around 31 million euros (\$32.5 million) including bonuses.

Haller was in superb form in the Champions League last season, scoring 11 goals in eight games including four in a 5-1 win over Sporting Lisbon in Ajax's opening group match.

The Dutch champions bowed out in the last 16, but Haller went on to score 21 goals in 31 games in the Eredivisie.

INDIA CHOKES SL, TAKE 1-0 LEAD

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

The Indian bowlers choked the Sri Lankan women's team after Jemimah Rodrigues's vital knock on return to secure a convincing 34-run victory in the first T20 International here on Thursday.

Defending a modest 139, left-arm spinner Radha Yadav (2/22) made her presence felt right after the powerplay by dismissing the dangerous-looking Sri Lankan captain Chamari Athapaththu (16) and Harsitha Madavi (10) in three balls.

Reduced to 27 for three inside seven overs, Sri Lanka never managed to get going in the run chase, which was further derailed by some tight bowling by seamer Deepti Pooja Vastrakar in the middle overs en route to a tidy spell of 4-1-13-1.

Deepti Sharma gave India a flying start, dismissing opener Vishmi Gunaratne (0) in the second over. The senior off-spinner was at her miserly best in the powerplay and returned with figures of 3-1-9-1 to stymie the Sri Lanka's progress early on.

Deepti also took a stunning catch running in from deep square leg to give Radha her second wicket of the day.

Kavisha Dilhari waged a lone battle for the hosts with a fighting 49-ball 47 (6x4), but the Indians' top-class bowling and fielding ensured their team emerged easy winners for a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

The hosts needed 78 runs in the last five overs and Kavisha got going with a flurry of boundaries against Harmanpreet Kaur and Radha.

But it proved insufficient as the Indians choked the home team's run rate while denying the Islanders any six in their innings.

Shafali Varma compounded Sri Lanka's misery by dismissing Ama Kanchana (11) in the death overs to leave them tottering at 104 for five.



The second match of the series is slated for Saturday.

Opting to bat, India lost opener Smriti Mandhana (1) in the third over of the game, the 25-year-old becoming the victim of veteran spinner Oshadi Ranasinghe while looking to free her arms. She hit a tossed-up delivery straight to Chamari Athapaththu at mid-on.

Sabbhineni Meghana was out for a golden duck, sent back to the dressing room by old warhorse Ranasinghe.

Losing two wickets early and under pressure in the hot and humid Dambulla, it was left to the duo of Harmanpreet and Shefali Verma to take control of the situation.

A well-settled Verma was the next to go, dismissed by Aththapattu on 31 while trying to go for a maximum.

Smart bowling by the Lankans ensured that they soon got their biggest breakthrough when Harmanpreet (22) was trapped in front of the wicket by spinner Inoka Ranaweera in the 11th over.

Ranaweera picked two more wickets to send back wicketkeeper batter Richa Ghosh (11) and Pooja Vastrakar (14) to reduce the visitors to 106 for six in 17 overs and leave Jemimah with the task of giving the Indian total a semblance of respectability.

Coming in at five, Rodrigues, who made her comeback to the side after a while, did not succumb to the pressure and scored some crucial runs, hitting three fours and a six, with Deepti Sharma playing the second fiddle with a 17 off 8 balls.

Blessed to have spoken to Rohit & Pant after being dropped: Jemimah

PTI ■ DAMBULLA

Words of encouragement from Rohit Sharma and Rishabh Pant lifted Jemimah Rodrigues' spirit while she tackled a difficult phase and worked on her comeback, which began right after being dropped from the Indian women's team.

The chirpy cricketer feels she is blessed to have spoken to the likes of Rohit and Pant.

Jemimah, who was not part of India's World Cup squad in New Zealand, marked her return to international cricket with a vital 27-ball 36 not out to give India enough runs to defend in the first T20 International here on Thursday.

"My journey since the last Sri Lanka tour has not been smooth, it had its ups and downs. I have spoken to Rohit Sharma and Rishabh Pant, they told me these moments will define your career, they told me not to take it (being dropped from the squad before the World Cup) in a negative way," Jemimah said at the post-match press conference.

"They told me I should take up the challenge and move ahead. I am blessed to have spoken to them."

Coming in at number five, Rodrigues did not succumb to the pressure created by the Sri Lankan bowlers and scored some crucial runs, hitting three fours and a six. India posted 138 for 6 and the visiting bowlers choked the Sri Lankans to secure a convincing 34-run victory.



"I have understood my game better in the four-five months, I have become calmer, I have changed though my height remains the same," said Jemimah. "I started preparing right after I was dropped."

Coming into the middle at a crucial juncture of the innings, Jemimah said she was nervous to start with.

"This innings means a lot, I was nervous initially but the late cut boundary helped me a lot in easing things up. I am back in the side after 4-5 months or maybe more than that. I was pumped up."

Asked about the pitch, she said, "I don't know, it is more like the pitch where I stay in Mumbai. The pitches are similar, so I am used to playing in these conditions. I love this country, it is a very beautiful country. It is a privilege to come here and the love we are getting from the board is great."

Bharat impresses, top-order fails in warm-up match against Leicestershire

PTI ■ LEICESTER

Wicketkeeper Srikanth Bharat impressed with an unbeaten 70, even as India's top-order failed to get batting practice on the first day of their warm-up match against Leicestershire here on Thursday.

Opting to bat after winning the toss, India's top guns failed to fire as the visitors slipped to 81 for five, before reaching 246 for eight at the close of play.

Bharat shone during his 158-minute stay in the middle before rain brought an early end to the day's proceedings at Grace Road.

In all, the 28-year-old batter from Andhra hit eight fours and a six while facing 111 balls. At stumps, Mohammed Shami was giving Bharat company on 18.

Skipper Rohit Sharma (25) and Shubman Gill (21) got out after getting starts. The opening duo, which is set to begin India's innings in the one-off 'fifth Test', added 35 runs for the first wicket before the latter was dismissed by fast-medium bowler Will Davis.



India's first-choice wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant, who was representing the English county side alongside Cheteshwar Pujara, Jasprit Bumrah and Prasidh Krishna, held on to the catch of Gill, who found the fence four times while lasting 38 minutes.

For the addition of another 15 runs, India lost the wicket of Rohit, who hit three fours during his 64-minute stay in the middle.

Rohit's departure paved the way for Virat Kohli's arrival, and the former India captain looked to take the onus upon himself to prop up India.

In between, Hanuma Vihari (3) came on to bat at number three but departed cheaply off the bowling of Roman Walker.

Shreyas Iyer failed to open his account and walked back to the dressing room after facing 11 balls, having nicked Prasidh to the waiting hands of Pant.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja too failed to make an impact as he was adjudged lbw off the bowling of Roman Walker, who finished the day with impressive figures of 5/24.

Ashwin joins team in Leicester

PTI ■ LEICESTER

Senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who did not travel to the United Kingdom along with his India team-mates for the one-off 'fifth Test' after testing positive for COVID-19, has joined the side in Leicester, according to sources.

Ashwin, who is in quarantine, joined his team-mates at Leicester where India



is playing a warm-up match.

The Indian team had left for the UK on June 16.

"Yes, Ashwin has joined the team but he is still recovering. He is not fit to play the warm-up game," a source said.

The team management is hopeful that he will recover in time for the Test against England, which starts on July 1.

After the IPL, Ashwin had played a Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) league red-ball match where he had bowled 20 overs to get some long-form game time.

Broad leaves Kiwis struggling in 3rd Test

AP ■ LEEDS

England's Stuart Broad was enclosing in on 550 Test wickets after striking in the first over of the match and then removing New Zealand captain Kane Williamson on the opening day of the series finale at Headingley on Thursday.

New Zealand, already 2-0 down in a three-match series, were 65 for three at lunch after winning the toss under blue skies and on a seemingly good pitch for batting in Leeds.

England were looking to make it three wins out of three under their new leadership duo of captain Ben Stokes and red-ball coach Brendon McCullum, a former New Zealand skipper.

They were without James Anderson, their all-time leading Test wicket-taker, because of an ankle injury.

But any disappointment at Anderson's absence was soon eased when his longtime new-ball partner Broad removed Tom Latham for a sixth-ball duck after he edged a delivery straight to Joe Root at first slip.

New Zealand were none for one at that stage, but Will Young and Williamson, back in action after missing the second Test in Nottingham with a bout of coronavirus, repaired some of the early damage.

Williamson, on a ground where he had played for Yorkshire, smashed Broad for four and Young cut a boundary off Test debutant Jamie



Overton, with the Surrey quick preferred to twin brother Craig as the replacement for Anderson.

Spin, however, ended a promising partnership, when left-arm Jack Leach struck with his first ball, turning and straightened a delivery past Young's bat to have the opener lbw for 20.

Young reviewed, more in hope than expectation, with replays indicating the ball would have hit the middle of middle stump and New Zealand were 35 for two inside 13 overs.

Broad then captured the key wicket of Williamson, whose fluent 31 had included five fours, when the star batsman edged a fine leg-cutter to wicketkeeper Ben Foakes as the seamer took his 548th Test wicket.

Williamson, in a rare show of emotion, ripped off his glove in disgust.

New Zealand almost lost a fourth wicket before lunch when left-hander Devon Conway, on 11, inside-edged Broad, only for Foakes to drop a difficult one-handed chance as he dived to his right.

Maxwell earns Test recall



AP ■ COLOMBO

Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has been added to the Test squad in Sri Lanka following a spate of injuries in the camp. The development comes after Travis Head was ruled out of the fifth ODI with a hamstring injury, with white-ball captain Aaron Finch "not sure" about how the batter will hold up for the upcoming Test series.

Head sustained a low-grade hamstring injury while fielding in the fourth ODI of the series. "It's a bit more of a precaution, especially with where he fields," Aaron Finch said in the presser ahead of the final ODI. "He fields in the outfield and the ground is quite heavy and he does a lot of Ks... I'm not sure what he'll be like for the Tests but he's definitely not available for tomorrow."

Maxwell last played a Test five years ago, against Bangladesh in Chattogram, and could make a return to the XI at Galle, especially given the side injury to Ashton Agar. Maxwell, though, will have to fight off challenges from Mitch Marsh and Josh Inglis to replace Head at No. 5, should the latter not get fit in time.

Sarfaraz's 134 propels Mumbai to 374, MP finish day 2 at 123/1

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Sarfaraz Khan completed his transformation from Mumbai cricket's resident 'enfant terrible' to 'Man Friday' with a superb hundred that kept his side ahead against Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy final, here on Thursday.

Courtesy Sarfaraz's fourth hundred of the season - 134 off 243 balls - the 41-time champions managed a fighting 374 in their first innings after beginning the day at 248 for five.

But Madhya Pradesh won't be too unhappy as they finished the second day at 123 for one with Yash Dubey (44 batting) and Shubham Sharma (41 batting) adding 76 runs for the unbroken second wicket.

The day belonged to none other than Sarfaraz, who has now scored an astounding 937 runs in Ranji



Trophy in just six games and could make it 1000 for the season if Mumbai bat again in this match.

His innings had 13 boundaries and two huge sixes - one over square leg off left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya and one down the ground off off-spinner Saransh Jain.

But what stood out was how he managed the innings after Shams Mulani was trapped leg before by Gourav Yadav (4/106) in the opening over of the second day.

His batting with the tail showed his new-found maturity, which is proving to be a boon for Mumbai cricket. He chose loose deliveries for boundary, forcing MP captain Aditya Shrivastava to open the field.

The manner in which Sarfaraz has turned a corner since the 2019-20 season (928 runs back then) is phenomenal as he had disciplinary issues early in his career, which also forced him to leave Mumbai for a season.

With father Naushad

Khan, who also doubles up as his coach, making him play 400 balls (nearly 67 overs including nets and knocking) a day at practice, Sarfaraz 2.0 is a battle-hardened man, the 'khadoos street fighter' that any captain would want to go to a war with.

Once he reached his fifty, he touched the lion's crest on his jersey, gesturing 'Don't worry, I am going nowhere'.

His batting isn't as pleasing to the eye as Prithvi Shaw's but highly effective. His batting is assuring. He knows how to score those runs on a track that is largely two-paced and in overcast conditions with the ball doing a fair bit.

When MP skipper spread the field to stop boundaries, he still found his way to play the controlled square cut off seamer Anubhav Agarwal, which bisected the two fielders stationed at deep extra cover

and deep point to the fence.

The Indian Test team's middle-order is still jam-packed but the manner in which Sarfaraz is batting, to put it in head coach Rahul Dravid's words, he is not just knocking but banging the selection door down.

Sarfaraz was involved in four small, but very effective, partnerships which could prove to be decisive if the match turns out to be an affair of one innings.

He added 40 for seventh wicket with Tanush Kotian (15), 26 for the eighth wicket with Dhawal Kulkarni (1), 39 for the ninth with Tushar Deshpande (6) and another 21 priceless runs for the final wicket with Mohit Avasthi (7).

By the time, he became Mumbai's last batter to be dismissed, he had ensured that the total is good enough for his bowlers to defend.

PTI ■ BENGALURU

"This hundred is because of my abbu (father), his sacrifices and holding my hand when I could have been down and out," a teary-eyed Sarfaraz Khan choked in front of scribes while dedicating his best century to father and coach Naushad Khan. Those who follow Mumbai cricket closely know how tough Naushad is on

AFFIDAVIT

I, Bhagyashree Mohapatra Spouse of No-15217309H, NK Sangram Kumar Mohapatra, Vill/Po-Panchagaon, Ps-Tigiria, Dist-Cuttack, Pin-754030, State - Odisha have changed my date of birth from 24th April 1993 to 7th March 1995 vide Affidavit Dt.17th June 2022 sworn before Executive Magistrate, Tigiria.

Ton for dad & celebration for late Sidhu Moosewala: Sarfaraz

his sons Sarfaraz and Mushir (also in Mumbai squad), who don't have a life beyond cricket. So is the dream India call-up on the cards now? His eyes welled up while answering the question after his century lifted Mumbai to 374 against Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy final here. "In our lives, it's about all those little dreams that we harbour. The dreams that we (he and his dad) have dreamt together."

Office of the Municipality, Kendrapara No 3192 Date 23.06.22

Notice inviting Expression of Interest (EOI)

The Executive Officer, Kendrapara Municipality on behalf of Municipal Council Kendrapara Municipality invites sealed Expression of Interest from reputed management agencies for operation and maintenance of Gym, near Kendrapara Govt High School, Ranapada, Kendrapara.

The proposal to be submitted along with requisite documents to the Office of the Municipality, Kendrapara in favour of Executive Officer through speed post/ courier/by hand by Dt 04/07/2022, 1 PM which will be opened on same day at 4 PM. Detailed of EOI may be downloaded from <https://kendrapara.nic.in/> or may be collected from cash counter of this office of the undersigned in working days.

Executive Officer
Kendrapara Municipality