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GST MOP-UP CROSSES ₹1.5 LAKH  
CR FOR THIRD MONTH IN A ROW

BHUBANESWAR, FRIDAY JUNE 2, 2023; PAGES 12 & 3



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## Judicial probe to resolve Manipur violence: Shah

HM emphasises need for dialogue as sole solution to ongoing crisis

PNS ■ IMPHAL

In a significant development aimed at resolving the recent clashes in Manipur, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Thursday to set up a judicial probe led by a retired Chief Justice of a High Court. Shah announced this during a Press conference, stressing the imperative need for dialogue as the sole solution to the ongoing crisis.

Furthermore, Shah unveiled plans to establish a peace committee under the leadership of Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uikey. This committee will consist of representatives from all political parties, as well as members from the Kuki and Meitei communities and various social organisations.

Its primary objective is to facilitate constructive discussions and foster peace-building efforts in the region.

During the Press conference, Shah declared, "We will soon announce a judicial probe headed by a retired High Court Chief Justice and set up a



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses a Press conference in Imphal on Thursday

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peace committee."

In an additional endeavour to address the situation comprehensively, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will launch an investigation into multiple FIRs alleging criminal conspiracies behind the violence in Manipur.

Despite the recent outbreaks of violence, Shah expressed optimism regarding the state of affairs, affirming that violence is merely a temporary phase and that misunderstandings will eventually be resolved.

He revealed that he personally visited relief camps, met with representatives from the Kuki and Meitei civil groups, and engaged in discussions pertaining to the peace process. Leaders from both the Meitei and Kuki communities, along with other civil

society representatives, assured Shah of their unwavering commitment to easing tensions and addressing misunderstandings. Shah also disclosed plans to establish an Inter-Agency Unified Command to enhance coordination among various security agencies operating in Manipur. Presently, approximately 10,000 personnel from the Army and Assam rifles have been deployed in the State, in addition to the Central and State police forces.

In response to concerns regarding the Indo-Myanmar border, Shah emphasised the criticality of completing the border fencing between the two countries.

The porous nature of the border has raised apprehensions about drug smuggling and the movement of militants. Additionally, biometric data

of individuals arriving from neighbouring countries is being collected to monitor the influx of refugees from Myanmar.

Addressing the origins of the clashes, Shah clarified that the ethnic riots were triggered by the Manipur High Court's request to the State Government for its opinion on granting Scheduled Tribe status to a particular community.

When questioned about the Kuki community's demand for a separate administrative unit, the Minister refrained from making any sensational statements, reiterating the central government's unwavering commitment to preserving Manipur's territorial integrity.

Shah proudly highlighted the accomplishments of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government in Manipur over the past six years, underscoring that the State has remained free from strikes, curfews, and blockades, experiencing substantial growth and harmony.

Shah assured the public that the Government would soon announce a relief and rehabilitation package.

This package aims to provide financial assistance to families who have suffered losses, injuries, or property damage as a result of the violence. The funds will be directly transferred to the bank accounts of the victims and their relatives, serving as a crucial step toward recovery and restoration.

## In Joda IT raid on BJD man's minerals firm

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

Income Tax raids were conducted on Thursday in the offices, mines and factories of the Patnaik Minerals Private Limited, a Joda-based mining company under the Joda Mining Circle.

The raids were carried out in the company's office at Baneikala near Joda, mines at Koira, BIL (Bansapani Iron Ltd) office and residences of officers and directors of the company. Former Champua Independent MLA Jitu Patnaik is the Managing Director of Patnaik Minerals Pvt Ltd. Patnaik is now in the BJD.

Sources revealed that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had also made a similar raid in the office and firms of Patnaik.

Mediapersons were not allowed to witness the IT raids and there was also no communique from the IT.

## All must resolve to fight terror, its financing: EAM at BRICS meet

**Jaishankar urges BRICS nations to show sincerity in reforming UNSC**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/CAPE TOWN

In a veiled attack on Pakistan, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday described terrorism as the key threat to international peace and security and said all nations must take resolute measures against this menace, including its financing and propaganda. In his opening remarks at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting here, Jaishankar also said that terrorism must be combated in all its forms and manifestations, and never be condoned under any circumstances.

"Among the key threats to international peace and security is that of terrorism. All nations must take resolute measures against this menace,



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar shake hands with Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan at BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, in Cape Town on Thursday

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including its financing and propaganda," the Minister said at the forum attended by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor among others.

Jaishankar has in the past described Pakistan as the "epicentre of terrorism" where terrorists like Hafiz Saeed, Masood Azhar, Sajid Mir and Dawood Ibrahim are sheltered.

He also called on BRICS nations to demonstrate their

sincerity in reforming multilateral institutions, including that of the UN Security Council. "For two decades, we have heard calls for reform of multilateral institutions, only to be continuously disappointed. It is, therefore, imperative that BRICS members demonstrate sincerity in regard to reforming global decision-making, including that of the UN Security Council," he said in his opening remarks at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting here.

## Ties with Nepal 'super hit': Modi

### Nepal PM hails Modi's 'neighbourhood first policy'

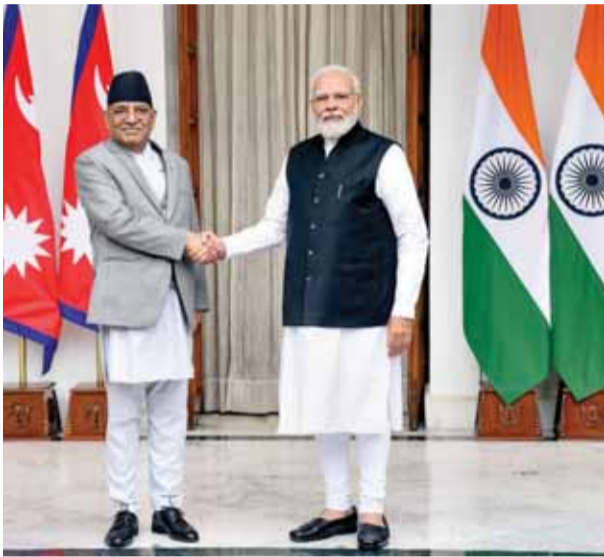
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Nepal on Thursday reviewed their historic bilateral ties during talks here between Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda," and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He described the relationship between the two countries a "hit" and said the two sides will strive to take their relationship to "Himalayan heights."

The two Prime Ministers also jointly unveiled the e-plaque of the Kurtha-Bijalpura section of the Railway. Both leaders jointly flagged off the Indian Railway cargo train from Bathnaha in Bihar to Nepal Custom yard.

The two sides also signed seven agreements to boost cooperation in a range of areas, including extension of cross-border petroleum pipeline, development of integrated check posts and boosting cooperation in hydroelectric power. One of the key pacts signed was the revised India-Nepal treaty of transit.

Prachanda arrived here on Wednesday on a four-day visit. It is his first bilateral visit



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Nepali counterpart Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' during their joint press statement after a meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Thursday

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to a foreign country since he assumed office in December last year.

The Nepalese PM said he appreciated Modi's "neighbourhood first policy."

In his media statement after the talks, Modi said he and Prachanda took many important decisions to make

issues, be it boundary related or any other issue," Modi said in the presence of Prachanda.

Modi also referred to his priority in strengthening ties with Nepal after he took charge as Prime Minister nine years back. "I remember, nine years ago, in 2014, within three months of taking office, I made my first visit to Nepal. At that time I had given a 'hit' formula for India-Nepal relations — Highways, I-ways, and Trans-ways," Modi said.

"I had said that we will establish such a relationship between India and Nepal that our borders do not become barriers between us," he said.

Modi said he was feeling proud to say after nine years that "our partnership has been really a 'hit'."

Following the talks, the two leaders virtually inaugurated integrated check posts at Rupaidiha in India and Nepalgunj in Nepal. They also virtually flagged off a cargo train from Bathnaha in Bihar to Nepal custom yard.

To further strengthen cultural and religious ties, "PM Prachanda and I decided that projects related to Ramayana circuit should be expedited," Modi said.

## IAF aircraft crashes in K'taka field, pilots hurt



PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/CHAMARAJANAGAR (KARNATAKA)

A Kiran trainer aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) on Thursday crashed in an open field at a village in Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka. The two pilots, including a woman, managed to eject safely from the plane before the mishap. A mandatory court of inquiry was initiated by the IAF to find out the cause of the crash.

The training aircraft, which took off from the air force station in Bengaluru, crashed in the morning at Bhogapura village. It was good fortune that aircraft hit the ground on barren land and not in the nearby village, a villager said.

District officials said the pilots, identified only as Tejpal and Bhumika, sustained minor injuries. No casualties were reported. According to the IAF, the pilots were on a routine training sortie when the incident occurred. A court of inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the cause of accident.

## Khap to take up with Prez wrestlers' fight for justice

PNS ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR

In a significant development, a Khap Mahapanchayat held in Muzaffarnagar on Thursday announced its decision to form a delegation to meet President Droupadi Murmu to seek justice for wrestlers who have bravely come forward with allegations of sexual abuse against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the BJP MP and outgoing chief of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI).

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday came out in support of protesting wrestlers who have been seeking arrest of WFI chief stating that she will fight till they get justice.

"I will request the wrestlers to continue their movement. This fight is for life, for independence, for humanitarian justice," she said.

But Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur maintained that the Government is handling the issue "sensitively," and has agreed to the wrestlers' earlier demands.

Security was tightened at Delhi's border points on Thursday in view of a call for nationwide demonstrations given by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) in support of wrestlers protesting against WFI chief.

Security personnel are maintaining strict vigil at the



Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait addresses a Khap 'Mahapanchayat' organised over the ongoing protest by wrestlers against WFI President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, at Soram village, in Muzaffarnagar on Thursday

PTI

border points and extra pickets have been put up to prevent any untoward incident, Delhi Police officials said.

Led by farmer leader Rakesh Tikait, the mahapanchayat was convened by Bhartiya Kisan Union

leader Naresh Tikait, a day after they successfully dissuaded several prominent wrestlers from discarding their hard-earned medals into the Ganga river as a mark of protest against the alleged inaction of the police regarding the accused.

## Diesel found from well in Pattamundai



RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

Diesel was found in a well at Chunadhia Biswassahi under Ward No. 19 of Belatala under Pattamundai Municipality.

According to sources, three months back, Urmila Biswas, wife of Sudarshan Biswas, while drawing water from their well discovered diesel like substance in the water. The water smelt like kerosene. Urmila thought that some mischief mongers might have poured kerosene in their well. They drained all the water and kept the well covered by not using the water. But a few days later, when they drew water from the well, they again

found diesel in the water. When the family members lit match stick, the water caught fire.

The family members then suspected that diesel might have leaked from the ground tank of the IOCL petrol pump that was located in a hand shaking distance. The family members later conducted a query but the pump owner denied any such leakage.

The family members later brought the matter to Gopiballav Nayak, the local ward councillor. Nayak informed the matter to the Pattamundai Tehsildar and the district Collector. He urged the administration to take steps for collecting water sample for testing.

## Baramunda Inter-State bus terminal work in progress

5T Secy directs firm to complete work by July

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

5T secretary VK Pandian on Thursday visited the under-construction Baramunda Inter-State Bus Terminal here and reviewed the progress of the work. The bus terminal is being constructed under the 5T initiative and 85% of the work is completed

Pandian, who was shown a presentation on the construction of the project, directed the construction firm to complete the work by July.

Notably, the Bermuda Bus



Terminal is Odisha's first global transit system. It has a capacity of handling 2,000 buses per day with all modern facilities. The terminal is being built on 11 acres of land at a cost of Rs 180 crore while there is another four acres for future expansion.

It will have a food court, an excavator, an elevator, ample car parking facility and pickup and drop-off facility for passengers. There will also be facilities for prepaid autorickshaws, taxis, taxi aggregators like Ola, Uber, etc.

The entire terminal will be powered by solar energy. It also has Wi-Fi and waste wa-

ter treatment systems. An Ahaar Plus center will also be set up for the convenience of emergency passengers. Steps will also be taken for the relocation of the vendors who have been displaced for the conversion of the bus terminal.

During this review, Transport Commissioner Amitabh Thakur, BDA Vice-Chairman Balbant Singh, BMC Commissioner Vijay Amritraj Kulange and Bhubaneswar DCP Prateek Singh were present. From here, buses will be operated to many important places in the country including Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Raipur, Ranchi,

# Builder firm director held for embezzling Rs 9 cr

# State Govt employees go on mass leave

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch arrested Saroj Kumar Panda, one of the directors of Odysa Homes & Commercials Pvt Ltd, on Wednesday for allegedly misappropriating Rs 9 crore on the pretext of providing commercial units.

Panda was apprehended from Jeypore, Koraput while a case has been registered against him under Sections 420, 467, 468, 471, 120-B of IPC and Section 6 of the OPID Act.

A case had previously been registered against the directors of the firm on the basis of a complaint filed by one Kalyan

Mishra of IRC Village, Bhubaneswar.

The matter pertains to misappropriation of crores of rupees by the real estate company on the pretext of providing commercial units at Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar.

"There are five land owners who entered into agreement and registered power of attorney with 'Maa Basudha Homes', Kharavel Nagar, Bhubaneswar represented by its proprietor Snigdha Pradhan for development and construction of commercial complex during the year 2012 on sharing basis. Subsequently, Maa Basudha Homes made a collaboration agreement with Odysa Homes &

Commercials Pvt Ltd represented by its directors including the present accused Saroj Kumar Panda to develop, construct, market and to accept the booking amounts for sale of commercial units excluding the share of land owners," the EOW said in a release.

"During the period 2013-20, Odysa Homes & Commercials represented by its directors accepted the deposits to the tune of Rs 9 crore approx. from different prospective buyers for the sale of 129 commercial units of 'Basudha Homes Project' but failed to hand over the units till date and also did not return the booking amounts. It was also found that the company

has made multiple transactions in respect of most of the commercial units. Again, without BDA approval, the company has constructed the third floor in the said complex and has also received booking amounts from different prospective buyers to provide the commercial units in that floor. The company has also deceived the five land owners in giving the commercial units of their share and rather has received the booking amount against their share of units also," the release said.

During investigation, many incriminating documents pertaining to the Basudha Homes Project have been seized, the EOW said.

## Demand grade pay hike

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The public services are likely to be affected in Odisha as employees went on mass leave from Thursday for an indefinite period demanding a hike in grade pay.

As many as 50,000 employees sat on dharna in front of the Collectorates in all 30 districts of the State to mount pressure on the Government to increase their grade pay from Rs 1,900 to Rs 4,200.

The Government offices in many districts remained shut after the employees went on leave. The strike is spearheaded



by the Odisha Ministerial Officers' Association (OMOA), which has been demanding hike in grade pay as per Level 9 under the Odisha Revised Scales of Pay (ORSP) Rules, 2017.

The association had placed its demand before the Government in April this year. Later, the employees staged

demonstrations by wearing black badges. As it did not yield any positive result, the officers' body threatened to launch a State-wide strike by boycotting office work from June 1.

"We will not cooperate with the Government in functioning of offices till our demand is met. The mass

leave and peaceful protest will continue till that period," said an OMOA member.

The association threatened to intensify the strike in upcoming days to press their demand. "We will hit the streets in Bhubaneswar if the Government does not accept our longstanding demand," said the member.

# Transgenders to manage city cesspool service



**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

In yet another step to provide livelihood support to the transgender community, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has signed an agreement with the TG Swikruti SHG for operation and maintenance of cesspool vehicles in the capital city.

The agreement was signed in the presence of Mayor Sulochana Das and BMC Commissioner Vijaya Amruta Kulange.

The BMC has already been involving the TG community in different responsibilities, including management of parking lots, collection of taxes and sanitation activities.

At present, the BMC has a fleet of nine cesspool vehicles to address the citizens'

requirement for emptying of septic tank and transporting the sludge to the faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs) at Rokat and Basuaghai.

Seven of the cesspool vehicles will be handed over to the TG Swikruti group for operation and maintenance while the civic body will retain two vehicles for emptying the leachate tanks of Micro Composting Centres (MCCs) and meeting other urgencies.

"The BMC will not collect any performance security or monthly fee from the TG group. TG Swikruti group will engage one authorised driver and two helpers in each vehicle and pay the minimum applicable wages as notified for the core sanitation workers under Garima scheme," said a BMC official.

# MoU signed between OUAT, IFPRI

## To develop bio-fortified zinc rice

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), Bhubaneswar, signed an MoU with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), New Delhi for collaborative research programmes in the areas of crop development, varietal release, intensification of bio-fortified zinc rice and policy advocacy for scaling up bio-fortified crops in Odisha.

The IFPRI-HarvestPlus along with OUAT envisions to develop bio fortified rice varieties with high zinc content, that are high-yielding, locally adopted possessing at least 50% of the



target zinc. In this collaboration, it will be helpful for eradication of malnutrition and food scarcity, said by Vice Chancellor, OUAT Prof Pravat Kumar Roul.

By virtue of the MoU, the university will be supported for import of quality germplasm from abroad.

Further, after testing and validation, the promising

varieties will be commercialised and promoted in Odisha for consumption.

The MoU was signed by Director, PME, OUAT Dr Dayanidhi Mishra and Country Manager, IFPRI Binu Cherian in presence of VC Prof Roul.

In this session members of IFPRI and all Deans, Directors, Staff of OUAT were present.

# Cyber fraud: 4 arrested for duping man of Rs 14L

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

Amid rising cases of cyber fraud, police arrested four persons on the charge of duping a man of lakhs of rupees on the pretext of cryptocurrency trading in Baleswar district on Thursday.

The accused are Vivekananda Mallick, Sapan Kumar Dalei, Sunil Kumar Das and Bijan Kumar Panda, all from Baleswar district. They were nabbed on the basis of a complaint by one Pramod Sahu of Chintamaniswar in Bhubaneswar who alleged that he was cheated of Rs 14 lakh in the name of online trading of Bitcoin.

Police also seized Rs 39 lakh from their bank accounts along with 10 ATM cards, five passbooks, seven cheque books, a laptop, four mobile phones and a SIM card from their possession.

According to the victim, the

accused reached out to him and lured him to earn easy money up to lakhs by just liking and sharing videos on social media platform Telegram. Convinced, Sahu paid Rs 1,000 and became a member and started liking and sharing videos. The scamsters then asked him to pay Rs 50,000 and gave Rs 60,000 in return in order to gain his trust. They then convinced him to invest Rs 5 lakh in Bitcoin with the assurance of Rs 7 lakh in return. However, Sahu did not get the amount. When he contacted the accused, they asked him to deposit Rs 14 lakh and cited some procedure for money withdrawal. Realising that he had been defrauded after he was unable to withdraw the money even after depositing Rs 14 lakh, Sahu approached the cyber police and filed a complaint after which investigation started and the accused nabbed.

Following the arrest, ACP

(Zone 5) Sanjiv Satpathy confirmed the fraud and said the victim was manipulated to invest in cryptocurrency with the false assurance of high returns. "Cyber fraudsters have been devising new methods to dupe people of late. In this case, the victim was duped of Rs 14 lakh in the lure of earning quick money through online trading in cryptocurrency. He received a link on WhatsApp which assured high returns."

"We arrested four persons including prime accused Vivekananda Mallick," he said, adding that it also came to the fore that all the accused were opening fake bank accounts by taking credentials of poor people. While one of the accused Sunil Das was a sales manager in bank, his accomplice Sapan Dalei was helping him create fake bank accounts. Police have stepped up efforts to trace involvement of other people.

# Illegal mining: Nayagarh leaseholder arrested

**PNS ■ NAYAGARH**

Police on Wednesday night arrested Nayagarh district's Mayurjhalia mines leaseholder Sushant Kumar Barad near Khandagiri in Bhubaneswar over his alleged involvement in illegal mining. He was apprehended following a raid by a special team of police.

Nayagarh Collector Rabindra Nath Sahu had earlier placed six revenue officials under suspension for their alleged involvement in a laterite stone mining scam

previously carried out under Ranpur tehsil's Mayurjhalia mouza.

Criminal cases had earlier been registered and a probe was initiated against the six officials and five others including leaseholder Sushant Barad and another lessee and director of Agarwal Infra Builders Sashank Agarwal.

Notably, acting on a directive of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the district administration had registered a police case against the 11 persons in connection



with the scam on May 3, 2023. Allegedly, the two lessees had

carried out excess mining of laterite stone and murrum than the accorded quantity in unholy nexus with some officials and staffers of the Ranpur tehsil. A complainant named Dillip Kumar Samantaray had moved the NGT seeking justice and action against the wrongdoers.

Subsequently, a probe was conducted by a joint team comprising some senior officials and geologists of the Odisha Mining Corporation and the Nayagarh Collector. Collector Sahu had filed an

affidavit with the NGT on December 6, 2022, reporting about the probe findings.

In the court's final verdict, the NGT instructed for registering a case. Accordingly, the Collector ordered the Ranpur tehsildar to lodge an FIR with police.

Key accused Sushant Barad was accorded the lease for mining laterite stone and murrum from four acres of land on plot Number-1689 under Mayurjhalia mouza for a period of five years. Besides, the Agarwal Infra Builder was

given a temporary permit to quarry and transport soil from two acres of land on the same plot.

Barad was fined Rs 2,81,59,945 on January 10 this year for the excess mining. However, he did not pay the hefty fine amount. He rather brought a bribe allegation against Collector Sahu. He had cited in his appeal that the Collector asked him for a bribe of Rs 25 lakh to set aside the case. On the contrary, the allegation was rejected by the NGT.

# BJD Govt about to complete 5th term

# Bare amenities still a pipedream for lakhs of poor

As a regional ruling party, the BJD is going to complete its 5th term. The party has been consistently getting the support of the people of Odisha with a favourable vote share and also with a comfortable majority in the State Assembly, though its first and second terms were coalition Governments with the BJP. Usually, it was expected by the people of the State that as a regional party, the BJD would fulfill the minimum aspirations of the common people by ensuring some of the non-negotiable basic needs of the people for a dignified standard of living comparable to developed States of India. But most unfortunately, it has not even achieved some of the easily possible goals.



**MANAS JENA**

rural population is a precondition for growth and development. The universal access to basic amenities can create a huge market of housing materials, water and sanitation appliances and electrical gadget in manufacturing sector and generate employment.

Way back when Gandhi Ji had first visited Odisha in 1921, he wrote in the Harijan magazine "Odisha is the epitome of India's poverty". The statement made then still stands valid after 100 years while we witness the present condition of the rural poor of Odisha.

For many historical reasons the underdevelopment still persists

which prevents a vast section of our population from getting basic requirements. This gap needs to be addressed through affirmative actions by the State and non-State actors engaged in social development. It is time to introspect many of our promises relating to basic amenities and our failures in reaching out to the rural poor households.

## SOCIAL CANVAS

While there was a coalition Government of BJP-BJD with Manmohan Samal of BJP as Revenue Minister, the Government made a promise to make the State landless free within a year. But still in 2023 there are thousands of households in rural and tribal areas who have not got a piece of homestead land with a legal deed to securely construct a house of their own. For the last two decades, the landless people who largely belong to the socially marginalised sections are routinely visiting Tehsil offices, holding protest meetings,

rallies and Dharnas but their genuine demands are not fulfilled by the local revenue administration.

The State Government is busy in creating land banks for the corporates and evicting people for so-called development projects while systematically ignoring the rural landless poor. Land being a State subject the Centre has no role

a major issue with majority of the rural poor who can not afford to construct a house with minimum facilities to meet the need of family members. The commercial banks in rural areas are mostly comfortable with the salaried groups having regular income but a vast majority of rural poor have no regular income specially the farmers, agricultural workers, small and marginal farmers, artisans and wage labourers who are not in a position to construct a house. These people must be supported by banks without collateral security and the Government must give subsidy to housing projects while purchasing building materials and support wage component in convergence with MGNREGA and other such employment oriented schemes, MP and MLA LAD funds, DMF and CAMPA funds available for rural, tribal and mineral bearing areas.

Every rural landless household must have a full package that includes homestead land, house, functional household tap connection (FHTC), toilet and electricity. All these entitlements are made free under different

national schemes with lower ratio of State matching and also under State's own schemes. It is declared by the Jal Jiban Mission that the State Government must ensure to provide 55 liters of potable water per person per day to every rural household through FHTC by 2025. The 15th Finance Commission has allocated 60 percent of its fund for drinking water and sanitation purposes and made provision of convergence from a host of other schemes/funds available for rural development. Odisha is featured among States that have not covered 50 percent of rural households under FHTC.

The 76th NSO survey conducted in 2018 found that over 50 percent of rural households in Odisha have no access to any kind of toilets. With an objective to make the State open defecation free, there must be toilets in every rural household with water facilities. It is found in many villages that there are toilets built under Government schemes but they remain unused due to non-availability of water in household premises.

The Energy Ministry source

disclosed that till 2017 out of total 86.60 lakh rural households in Odisha only 53.98 lakh households are electrified and 32.62 lakh are not covered. On the contrary, States such as TN, Kerala, Gujarat, Goa and AP are 100 percent electrified. The Ministry has formulated schemes such as SAUBHAGYA -PMHGBY towards achieving 100 percent village electrification through last mile connections. It is one of the biggest universal electrification initiatives with free metered connections for all economically poor households. The scheme has provision to organise camps in villages for on the spot registration and focusing on the most vulnerable sections such as the landless poor.

It is most unfortunate that the Odisha lags behind in fulfilling the basic needs of the rural poor households to bring qualitative change in their quality of life even though all these basic entitlements are being implemented as free schemes of Central assistance for a long time.

(manasbbsr15@gmail.com)

## Balangir royal family row Now, case under Atrocity Act against Adrija, father

SUDHIR MISHRA ■ BALANGIR

The domestic violence case of the Balangir royal family took a new turn after Adrija Manjari Singh Deo, the wife of Arkesh Narayan Singh Deo who had filed a dowry harassment case against her in-laws, herself was alleged to have perpetrated violence against her female worker.

A case was registered against Adrija, her father Ajaya Singh, and driver

Sonu on the basis of a complaint made by Rabita Jha, a female worker, who worked at Arkesh's house at Deharadun under the SC/ ST Atrocity Act 1989 in Rajpur police station in Deharadun district on May 28.

Earlier, Adrija had filed a complaint against Arkesh, AU Singh Deo, Kalikesh Singh Deo and two other members of the royal family alleging domestic violence, dowry harassment and

others, on May 15 and she had met Uttarakhand DG police seeking justice. Following the complaint, a case was registered against them.

"They abused me through their staffers and installed a camera which was pointed towards my room which is an invasion of my privacy. I have also lodged a domestic violence case against them," said Adrija had clarified media in Dehardun.

However, Arkesh refuting all the allegations vehemently said, "The matter is currently sub-judice in a Dehradun court. I have complete faith on the judiciary. The truth will come to the fore soon." Adrija is the granddaughter of former PM Vishwanath Pratap Singh. Whereas, Arkesh is the younger son of AU Singh Deo. She got married into the royal family's prince Arkesh in 2017.

## 5 girls swept away in sea in Ganjam

One dead, another missing

PNS ■ CHHATRAPUR

As many as five girls swept away by a strong current in sea; and out of them, one died and another went missing in Ganjam district on Thursday morning.

The deceased girl was identified as Swapna Rani Pandit from the Kanisi area. The girl, who was still missing, was Goodly Mishra of the

Seragarh area.

According to reports, the five friends had gone to the sea at 7 am to take bath near Aryapalli village. While enjoying together in the seawater, they were swept away by a strong sea tide.

Local villagers managed to rescue four girls from the water, but one of them was declared dead at the Chhatrapur Sub-Divisional Hospital.

The rescue operation was underway to trace another girl, who went missing in the sea.

## INBRIEF

### KISS ACHIEVES 100% RESULTS in +2 EXAMS

Bhubaneswar, May 31: The Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) has once again demonstrated its outstanding performance by achieving a flawless pass percentage of 100% in the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) +2



Examinations, the results of which were announced on Wednesday. Smitarani Mallick (Kandha) from Kandhamal district emerged as the top scorer in the Commerce stream, securing an impressive 83%. Kajal Mardi (Santal) from Jharkhand excelled in the Science stream achieving 82%. Several students from the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) passed in both streams.

### SBI HOLDS JANSURAKSHA SATURATION DRIVE

Bhubaneswar: A Jansuraksha Saturation Drive was organised by the State Bank of India Jatni branch and Regional Business office, Khordha on May 30 at Panchupalli GP, Khordha being presided over by SBI, Bhubaneswar Circle General Manager Pannambalam M. Villagers, farmers, SHG members, entrepreneurs, social workers, borrowers, teachers, students and SBI officials were present. Ponnambalam M sensitised them regarding the importance of insurance in life and made them aware of various social security schemes like PMJJBY, PMSBY, APY.



### SAMITEE HOLDS BLOOD CAMP IN TALCHER; 50 UNITS COLLECTED

Talcher: A voluntary blood donation camp was organised at the Talcher Municipal High School by the Satya Sai Seva Samitee. A total of 50 units blood were collected. Samitee district president Durgaprasanna Rath, convenor, Kishore Chandra Samant, senior advisor Pankajlochan Pati, Kisaka



Mishra, Bishnupriya Pati, Biranchinarayan Das, Mamali Das and Renubala Mishra joined and encouraged the blood donors, while social workers Khirod Sahu, Bapi Mohanty, Akshay Maharana assisted. Staff members of Talcher blood bank collected the blood.

## In Mayurbhanj Tudu launches mobile ambulance service



PNS ■ BARIPADA

Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti and Mayurbhanj MP Bishweswar Tudu on Thursday launched a mobile ambulance service in Mayurbhanj district. There are two ambulances with all modern facilities meant for the consolation, comfort, treatment and recovery of patients.

The project has been possible because of the collaboration of the philanthropic organisation Vishwa Kalyan Seva Trust. A function was held here to

mark the ambulance service launching. Besides Minister Tudu, others who were present on the occasion included Vishwa Kalyan Seva Trust chief Swami Rup Kumar, district Collector Vineet Bhardwaj, CDMO Rupbhanu Mishra, veteran doctor Arya Mishra, BJP district president Kandra Soren and MLAs Bhaskar Madhei, Prakash Soren, Budhan Murmu and Sanatan Bijuli.

The mobile ambulances are to move from one block to another. This healthcare project is the first of its kind in this district.

## Drunk Puri man hacks father to death



### For opposing his liquor consumption

PNS ■ PURI

A man allegedly hacked his father to death after the latter objected to his regular liquor consumption. The shocking incident took place at Sanakanti village under the Pipili police limits in Puri district on Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified as Hrushikesh Pradhan (60). Police detained accused Jeetu Pradhan for questioning.

According to reports, Jeetu used to harass and assault his parents as he had been demanding money from them to buy liquor. On the fateful night, Jeetu came in an inebriated state and had a feud with his parents. The matter turned violent as he lost his cool and hacked his father to death with an axe.

On being informed by villagers, police reached the spot, recovered the body for postmortem and initiated an investigation. A murder case was registered in this connection.

## In Kalahandi Ambulance suffers flat tyre; patient dies

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA

In an incident that has challenged the tall claims of the State Government regarding healthcare services, a patient died as an '108' ambulance carrying him suffered flat tyre in Kalahandi district on Thursday.

According to reports, the ambulance was carrying one Tikemani Naik of Deobhog area in Chhattisgarh district from Dharmagarh to the Kalahandi District Headquarters Hospital here. The vehicle suffered flat tyre on the Hati river bridge near

Junagarh. As the driver of the ambulance took out the stepney in order to replace it with the damaged one, the spare tyre was also found in a punctured state.

The driver then contacted the concerned authorities for another ambulance, which arrived at the scene after around 30 minutes.

Though the patient was rushed to the hospital in the ambulance, he was declared dead by doctors. The incident has raised serious questions over the quality of ambulance service being provided by the Government.

## Jajpur scribe is ESI WhatsApp Admin

PNS ■ JAJPUR ROAD

The Employees State Insurance Corporation, ESIC, Regional Director Partha Sarathi Panda on Wednesday created a WhatsApp Group 'ESI Odisha Social Worker'.

Trade union leader, social worker and scribe Dushmanta Kumar Rout has been included as Admin of the group. Rout said the ESIC Regional Director wants to enhance the infrastructure development in the State and recently four Branch Offices at Nayagarh,

Kendrapada, Bhadrak and Subarnapur were opened by his effort. Many medicals for the insured persons (IPs) are under construction and under approval of Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, Rout informed.

He said he has requested for a 100 bedded hospital at Kalinganagar which has been also approved due to strong effort of Panda. The required five acres of land has already been acquired and the hospital's plan has already been approved by the CPWD.

## In Sambalpur Tripartite talks on NLC blasting for mining fail

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU

■ SAMBALPUR

A tripartite discussion among villagers, local administration and NLC officials has virtually failed since no concrete decision could be made. More so, the demand of the villagers to hold the discussion in presence of the Collector couldn't be fulfilled that further

dissatisfied them.

The NLC has bagged licence for coal exploration in Talabira of Rengali block. But it is using high-power blasting for the purpose allegedly damaging houses of nearby people. Recently, the roof of one Gunasagar Buddhia was badly damaged.

Residents of Nuakhinda, Budhiapali, Mundapada, Khatupada had held an

agitation in front of the main gate of the company, after which the local administration proposed a tripartite discussion.

During the discussion, villagers demanded before the company not to do blasting till total completion of eviction is made. "Because we are living in the villages close to mines, the company should refrain from high

power blasting till we are shifted to other places," said the villagers. But no concrete decision could be made.

NLC officials, police and the Rengali Tehsildar also visited some villages and found the allegations to be true. But they didn't give any specific instruction to the company, for which the villagers are dissatisfied.

## Anti-tobacco awareness rally held in B'pur

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

An awareness workshop and rally against tobacco was conducted at Brahmapur with more than 800 youngsters under the leadership of Prof Dr Narayan Mishra, eminent chest physician.

The Rotary Club, IMA, NCCP, ICS, MKCG Medical College, Union Club and Physical Academy of Berhampur supported.

Prof Dr Santosh Kumar Mishra, Principal and Dean of MKCG Medical College, Brahmapur, flagged off the rally.

Prof Narayan Mishra stated that every year globally 1 crore



people are killed due to the consumption of tobacco, causing cancer at any part of the body, lung diseases, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and brain stroke etc. The theme of the year 2023 is "We need food, not tobacco".

Globally, 25 lakh hectares

of land is destroyed annually in cultivating tobacco crops which generates more than 80 crore kg of toxic substances releasing thousands of chemicals into the air, water and soil. Now, the time has come to stop tobacco cultivation and grow alternative crops like maize

and soybean etc. which is as highly essential as our food, he said.

Other participating leaders also addressed the workshop. The programme was moderated by eminent educationist Asha Mishra and vote of thanks was given by Er Saroj Prusty.

## FMU Population Studies Dept, Census India ink pact

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ BALESWAR

The PG Department of Population Studies at Fakir Mohan University (FMU) took a significant step towards advancing research and data analysis with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Census India.

The momentous occasion was marked by the establishment of a Census Data Research Workstation, the first of its kind in the State. The MoU signing ceremony took place on Tuesday in the presence of dignitaries, including Vice-Chancellor of Fakir Mohan University Prof Santosh Kumar Tripathy, Director of Census Operations, Odisha, Uday



Narayan Das and HK Singh and H Kurmi, both Deputy Directors of Census India.

Chairman of the Post Graduate Council Prof Munesh C Adhikary and Kukumina Das, the university's registrar were also present on the occasion.

"The establishment of the Census Data Research Workstation in the university is a joint effort between the PG Department of Population Studies and Census India. This collaborative

initiative aims to provide a dedicated research space equipped with the necessary tools and resources for conducting census data analysis and research. This workstation is the 23rd of its kind established by the Directorate of Census Operations, Ministry of Home Affairs, across the entire country. Its inauguration marks a significant milestone in the field of population studies and data analysis in Odisha," observed Tripathy.

The workstation will enable researchers and students to delve into census data, unravel population trends, and gain valuable insights into demographic patterns. The meeting, coordinated by Dr Jagannath Behera, Dr Moatulla Ao, and Dr Grace Bahlen Mundu, served as a platform to discuss the modalities of the collaboration and the future activities to be undertaken at the newly established Census Workstation.

## Hindalco's healthcare drive benefits 14K in Hirakud

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Aditya Birla Group company Hindalco at Sambalpur has taken several healthcare initiatives to ensure better and meaningful lives for the locals. During last year, around 14,000 people from five wards of Hirakud availed its healthcare facilities.

Through its Mobile Health Unit (MHU) under the 'Healthcare at Doorsteps' initiative, Hindalco is providing primary healthcare services to the community at their doorsteps.

Hindalco, Hirakud, Cluster Head Kailash Pandey said, "Under its 'Health Care at Doorsteps' programme (Mobile Health Units), the company is operating one Mobile Health Care Unit which goes around the peripheral villages at a fixed



time on a given day. Altogether, Hirakud and its periphery area is covered under this programme at 10 strategic locations. The healthcare initiatives are actively monitored by our HR Head Krishna Padhi. We are keen to extend this service to reach the maximum number of people in and around

Hirakud." Furthermore, Hindalco has touched the lives of 1,838 people through specialised mega health camps. Over 1,000 persons availed of its OPD service at CHC-Hirakud. Further, mega specialist health camps are organised on a quarterly basis which witness record footfalls - over 1,000

patients on an average.

Going in line with the advice of the Distt. Administration, Hindalco had conducted three mega health camps recently in the remotest parts of Sambalpur. Additionally, a homeopathy centre is providing healthcare facility at Dengimachha village.

## Debasmruti Festival Odishi dancers leave audiences mesmerised

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In remembrance of Guru Debaprasad, the Tridhara, organised the Debasmruti Festival 2023 (an evening of Odishi dance) at Bhanja Kala Mandap here.

The esteemed guests on the occasion were Bhubaneswar Central MLA Ananta Narayan Jena; Bhandaripokhari MLA Prafulla Samal; Hemraj Films producer Laxminarayan Agarwal; Tridhara working president Simanchala Panda and Tridhara director Guru Gajendra Panda.

The first Odishi presentation in the evening was Mangalacharan - Laxmi Nrusingha Dhyana, presented by G Nageswari, Prabhutosh, Dipika, Rithika, Vidhi, Mokshada, Rutuja and Anwesha followed by Odia Abhinaya - Manaudharana



presented by Monalisha, Sushree, Muskaan and Priyadarshini.

The next item was 'Kede Chandajane Lo Sahi' presented by Sai Durga, Dibyashree, Saloni, Laxmipriya and Shivani followed by Dasavatar presented by Tanisha, Subhashree Pradhan, Disha, Subhashree Paikaray, Pratigyan, Sonakshi, Simran, Ankita and Priyanshi.

'Uthulu Ede Begi' followed next presented by Aradhya Pati, Siddiksha, Aradhya Priyadarsini, Sreejita and Aradhya Lal. Duet Odishi dance Ardhanariswar was presented by Sanghamitra and Vidhi.

Ram Bhajan was presented by Padmini Lal, Rithika, Mokshada, Sonakshi, Sushree and Muskaan. The last item of the evening was Mokshyam

presented by Prabhutosh, Rithika, Mokshada and Vidhi.

The dances were choreographed by Guru Gajendra Kumar Panda. The dancers were marked by fluid grace, immaculate body movements with amazing precision, charming gestures and postures which mesmerized the audiences till the end.

# Centre's panel refuses to keep Cheetahs fenced in

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajesh Gopal, the head of the Centre's high-level committee set up to monitor the cheetah reintroduction project and country's top tiger expert on Thursday dismissed the South Africa and Namibia suggestions that the imported predators should be kept in a fenced habitat to save them from poaching and minimize human-animal conflict. He said that it is against India's basic tenets of wildlife conservation.

"India does not want fenced habitats for cheetahs like the ones in South Africa and Namibia as it is against the basic tenets of wildlife conservation," he said amid flak the Government has been drawing following death of three predators that were brought to India from Africa for Project Cheetah in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno Palpur Sanctuary over the past couple of months.

Over the last week, three cubs too have died.

He echoed views of many wildlife experts in the country that fences can disrupt natural animal movements and impede genetic exchange between populations.

"We have our own socio-cultural issues. We have been handling tigers for the last 50 years and we know what the human-wildlife interface is. We can handle cheetahs too," Gopal said, adding that seven more cheetahs, including two females, will be released into the wild by the third week of June.

The Union Ministry has already made clear that the cheetahs will be allowed to move out of KNP and will not necessarily be "recaptured unless they venture into areas where they are in significant danger". All the predators are fitted with satellite collars.

Experts from South Africa and Namibia, who are helping reintroduce cheetahs in India, have recommended fencing their habitats to prevent poaching, habitat fragmentation and minimise human-animal conflict. However, experts in India say fences can disrupt natural animal movements and impede genetic exchange between populations.

"It's absolutely bogus to think of fencing the habitats. It goes against the basic tenets of wildlife conservation. What happened in a fenced park there (in Africa) will not happen here. Our understanding is that regional networks of protected areas should merge into a national network of protected areas so that there is porosity for wildlife gene flow," said Gopal, chairman of the 11-member cheetah steering committee.

"We have our own socio-cultural issues. We have been handling tigers for



the last 50 years and we know what the human-wildlife interface is. We can han-

dle cheetahs too," he said, adding that seven more cheetahs, including two females, will be released into the wild by the third week of June.

South African wildlife expert Vincent van der Merwe, who is closely involved with the project, had earlier said, "There has never been a successful reintroduction (of cheetahs) into an unfenced reserve in recorded history. It has been attempted 15 times in Africa and it failed every time.

"We are not advocating that India must fence all of its cheetah reserves, we are saying that just fence two or three and create source reserves to top up sink reserves."

Source reserves are habitats that provide optimal conditions for reproduction of a particular species. These areas have abundant resources and favourable environmental conditions. They can support self-sustaining populations that produce a surplus of individuals, which can then dis-

perse to other areas.

Sink reserves, on the other hand, are habitats that have limited resources or environmental conditions that are less favourable for the survival or reproduction of a species. Sink reserves rely on dispersing individuals from source reserves to maintain their population numbers.

Officials said the Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh, is being prepared as an alternative habitat for cheetahs by November.

To address the issue of cheetah-people interface, Gopal said a GIS-based landscape fragmentation analysis will be conducted to help the state authorities identify vulnerable areas.

"We cannot say the cheetahs will spend their entire lives in Kuno. They will enter human settlements and there will be some issues. We have to foresee and be ready for it," he said.



Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar greets Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' during a meeting, in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

## ED grills J'khand Cong MLA Pradeep Yadav in money laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday interrogated Jharkhand Congress MLA Pradeep Yadav as part of its investigation into a money laundering case.

On Tuesday, the agency had conducted searches at a dozen locations in Jharkhand linked to Yadav, a five-time legislator from the Poraiyahat seat and deputy leader of the Congress in the Assembly, officials said.

After the questioning on Wednesday, the MLA said he will soon approach the court over the ED action. He claimed the ED found nothing objectionable in its raids so far.

Yadav alleged that the BJP was using Central agencies to target the Opposition leaders.

Fifty-seven-year-old Yadav and another MLA's premises were searched by the Income Tax Department last year as part of a tax evasion probe against some business groups engaged in coal trading and transportation, extraction of iron ore and production of sponge iron in Jharkhand.

The money laundering investigation is based on this tax evasion case as the violation of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act is a predicate offence.

## PM SVANidhi seeing fastest rollout, says Hardeep Puri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday said the PM SVANidhi scheme, launched to help street vendors get easy loans, is witnessing one of the fastest roll-outs among all Government schemes.

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister was speaking at an event on the completion of three years of the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi, also known as PM SVANidhi.

According to a statement, the minister at the event said the PM SVANidhi has led to an unparalleled wave of financial inclusion and digital literacy in the countries cities and small towns. The scheme, launched on June 1, 2020, with an aim to instil 'Swarozgar, Svavlamban, Swabhimaan' (Self Employment, Self-Sustenance, and Self-Confidence) in street vendors has become one of the fastest growing microcredit schemes of the central government and has given people access to credit and social security schemes, the statement said.

Puri on Thursday also launched a PM SVANidhi mobile app to ease the loan application process for street vendors. He also interacted with the beneficiaries of the scheme.

## NCPCR launches drug, tobacco-free India drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Welcoming the Centre's move of bringing tobacco regulation on OTT (over-the-top) platforms which have seen nearly 100% increase in viewership on kids' content during the pandemic, health experts and child rights activists led by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) feel that proposed amendments to the COTPA Act is an urgent necessity in creating a tobacco-free environment for impressionable minds.

On its part, the NCPCR launched a nationwide campaign 'Addiction Free Amrit Kaal', an initiative aimed at promoting a tobacco and drug-free India with the help of children. The children rights body Chairperson Priyanka Kanoongo said that under this unique drive, children, who are the most affected by indirect tobacco use, have been made members of 'Prahari Clubs' established in schools. They will serve as the government's eyes and ears, sharing information if any tobacco-selling shops exist near their schools,



he said. Highlighting the link between tobacco products and drug addiction, Kanoongo noted that the entertainment industry plays a significant role in enticing children into tobacco use. While there are rules requiring warnings on tobacco product scenes in films, there was a pressing need for regulations regarding OTT platforms which have gained popularity in recent times and were being misused, he said, informing that the NCPCR had been seeking regulation of tobacco use on OTT platforms.

At the same time, he battled for a robust Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), which, he said, can serve as an important tool in curbing tobacco use, especially among children. "This legislation encompasses stringent

measures to restrict all forms of tobacco advertising at the point of sale and put an end to the practice of designated smoking zones in public places. These smoking zones pose significant harm to children who are exposed to tobacco smoke in these areas," Kanoongo said during the event organised in technical partnership with Tobacco Free India, a citizens' group..

Dr Uma Kumar, Head of Rheumatology at AIIMS, Delhi, highlighted the health risks associated with drug and tobacco addiction as over 13 lakh people succumb to the toxic product. "The COTPA Amendment Bill will not only save lives but also reduce the burden on the healthcare system, she added. Dr Jagdish Kaur, regional advisor, Tobacco Free Initiative, WHO echoed the same views as she gave insight into the global perspective on addiction prevention and control. She warned that as people are becoming more aware about the tobacco menace, the industry is adopting innovative ways to trap the youth. "We are glad that a move has been initiated to regulate OTT contents," she said.

## Zero vehicular movement during Covid lockdown barely affected GHGs: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The shutdown of vehicular movement on roads induced by Covid-19 lockdowns greatly reduced the concentration of short-lived cooling particles in the air, but barely affected the levels of long-lived greenhouse gases, leading to stronger climate warming, a study has said. It is published in the journal NPJ Climate and Atmospheric Science.

It is well known that emissions of sulfur and nitrogen oxides and other air pollutants lead to the formation of aerosols (particles) in the air that can offset, or mask, the full climate warming caused by greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. But there has been a lack of knowledge about this 'masking effect'. In order to determine the size, large-scale experiments involving huge regions would be required - this is infeasible.

The Covid pandemic became such a 'natural' experiment. In the spring of 2020, the activity of many industries and transportation worldwide decreased due to pandemic restrictions. This created a unique opportu-



nity to study what happens to the climate if emissions of gases and aerosols are rapidly reduced.

At Hanimaadhoo, a measuring station in the northernmost Maldives off the coast of India, researchers have been measuring the atmospheric composition and radiation for soon two decades. (Measurements reveal the impact of air pollution on climate and health in southern Asia) The measuring station is strategically placed to capture air masses from the Asian subcontinent and located in an area with few regional emission sources. When emissions suddenly decreased during the pandemic in South Asia (mainly Pakistan, India and Bangladesh), an

opportunity was created to see what impact this had on the climate. The study shows that the concentrations of polluting short-lived air particles decreased significantly, while the concentrations of longer-lived greenhouse gases were barely affected in the air mass over South Asia. The cooling effect of the aerosols comes from the fact that they reflect incoming solar radiation back into space. With a lower aerosol content, there is less cooling, and thus less 'masking' of the warming effect of the significantly longer-lived climate gases. Measurements taken at the same time over the northern Indian Ocean revealed a seven percent increase in solar radiation reaching the Earth's surface, thus increasing temperatures.

"Through this large-scale geophysical experiment, we were able to demonstrate that while the sky became bluer and the air cleaner, climate warming increased when these cooling air particles were removed," says Professor Örjan Gustafsson at Stockholm University, who is responsible for the measurements in the Maldives and who led the study.

## Doesn't sound real: Sibal on WFI chief's 'will hang self if allegation proved' remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Thursday took a swipe at Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's remarks that he will hang himself even if a single allegation is proved against him, saying it does not sound real. The swipe by Sibal, a senior advocate who represented the protesting wrestlers in the Supreme Court, came a day after Singh, who is facing sexual harassment charges levelled by female wrestlers, said all wrestlers are like his children and he will not blame them as his blood and sweat have also gone into their success.

"I am once again saying that even if a single allegation is proven against me, I will hang myself," Singh had said while addressing a programme in Uttar Pradesh's Barabanki. In a tweet, Sibal said, "Brij Bhushan: 'Ready to hang myself if single allegation proved'. Suicide? Doesn't sound real!"

"Sounds familiar: PM on notebandi said wait...for just 50 days...if shortcomings ready to accept any punishment...After 50 days nothing



happened then, nothing will happen now!" Sibal said. The wrestlers, including Olympic medallists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia and Asian Games gold medallist Vinesh Phogat, who were protesting at Delhi's Jantar Mantar since April 23 demanding Singh's arrest, were removed from the site by police on Sunday after

they tried to march towards the new Parliament building following its inauguration. They were detained and were released later.

The Delhi Police has registered two FIRs against Singh. The first FIR pertains to the allegations levelled by a minor and it has been lodged under the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act along with the sections of the Indian Penal Code concerning outraging modesty. The other FIR has been registered over complaints from women wrestlers pertaining to outraging modesty.

## India, Russia review ties, discuss issues of global interest



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Cape Town

PTI

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/CAPETOWN

India and Russia on Thursday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties and issues of global interest during talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Capetown. Both the ministers are there to participate in the foreign ministers' conclave of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Jaishankar is also likely to hold bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Qin Gang.

After holding talks with the Russian Foreign Minister on the sidelines of the conclave, Jaishankar said in a tweet "Good to meet FM Sergey Lavrov of Russia in Cape Town

this morning on BRICS FMM sidelines. Our discussions covered bilateral matters, BRICS, G20 and SCO."

India will hold the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and G-20 summits in July and September respectively.

In the last few months, India has become a leading importer of discounted crude oil from Russia notwithstanding increasing disquiet in the West over the procurement in view of Russian invasion of Ukraine. India's economic engagement with Russia has been on a major upswing in the last one year, largely due to its procurement of discounted Russian oil.

India has, so far, refrained from voting against Russia in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) regarding its military action in Ukraine. New Delhi has all along called for resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

On Wednesday, Jaishankar said these are still "early days" for conflict resolution between Ukraine and Russia as presently, the focus is on problems such as a grain corridor, nuclear issues and matters related to the exchange of prisoners of war.

In an interview to DD India, Jaishankar noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing 41 per cent of the global population, 24 per cent of the global GDP and 16 per cent of the global trade. Jaishankar is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with his other BRICS counterparts including Chinese foreign Qin Gang.

## NIA Special Court declares SFJ's Multani proclaimed offender

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA Special Court, Chandigarh, on Wednesday declared accused Jaswinder Singh alias Multani a Proclaimed Offender (PO) in the Model Jail Tiffin Bomb case of April 2022. Multani, a member of the banned 'unlawful association' Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), is currently based in Germany and has a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against him. The NIA Court had issued the NBW against him on January 5, 2023.

The NIA had also declared a reward of Rs 10 lakh and opened an LOC (Look Out Circular) against Multani.

"Multani has been identified as the mastermind behind planting of the IED bomb outside the wall of Model Jail, Buraill, Chandigarh with the intention of spreading terror and causing violence. The tiffin bomb, along with a detonator, was found in a black bag outside the Jail on April

22, last year," the NIA said in a statement. The case was originally registered against unknown persons by Chandigarh Police as FIR Number 33 under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908. The NIA subsequently took over the case in May 2022, and re-registered it with additional provisions under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

The NIA probe revealed that Multani had masterminded the crime from Germany. "He was in touch with pro-Khalistan operatives based in India, Pakistan and other countries, and was using them to promote violence and terror.

He was identifying, recruiting, motivating and radicalising youth of Punjab through social media, as per the investigations. He was also sending/raising funds and coordinating the movement of arms and ammunition, as well as explosives from Pakistan into India," the agency said.

## ICG, DRI seize ₹20 cr gold from fishing boats in Gulf of Mannar in TN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in a joint with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and Customs seized 32.689 Kgs of gold valued at approximately ₹20.2 Crores from two fishing boats at Gulf of Mannar area in Tamil Nadu. The consignment was being smuggled into India from Sri Lanka.

Giving details here, Coast Guard officials said on Thursday based on a specific input from the DRI regarding illegal smuggling of contraband from Sri Lanka to India, a joint operation was launched by Indian Coast Guard and DRI on May 30.

The joint teams deployed by both agencies kept a close surveillance on fishing vessels



operating in the Gulf of Mannar, especially near Indo-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

On the morning of May 30, the joint team from Indian Coast Guard and

DRI, detected a suspicious boat approaching Mandapam fishing harbour. When challenged, the boat tried to evade apprehension but was finally apprehended in north Gulf of Mannar.

While being chased, the suspects threw the consignment into water prior interception.

## 62 DT plants may be solution to food security worries

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid concerns that frequent A and extreme weather conditions are all set to threaten global food security, Indian researchers have stumbled upon at least 62 Desiccation-Tolerant (DT) Vascular Plant Species in the biodiversity hotspot, the Western Ghats which, they said, could have applications in agriculture, particularly in areas with scarcity of water. These plants can become so dry they crumble in the hand, but if remoistened, will begin making proteins within minutes.

In other words, said the researchers that the DT plants are able to withstand extreme dehydration, losing up to 95 per cent of their water content, and they revive themselves once water is available again,

said the research published in the Nordic Journal of Botany.

In the inventory of 62 species, 16 are Indian endemic, and 12 are exclusive to the Western Ghats outcrops, highlighting the biodiversity region's importance as a global DT hotspot. In addition to rock outcrops, tree trunks in the partially shaded forests were found to be crucial habitats for DT species, the study said.

"This unique ability allows them to survive in harsh, arid environments that would be uninhabitable for most other plants. DT plants have been studied for their possible applications in agriculture, particularly in areas with limited water resources. In tropical regions, they are the predominant occupants of rock outcrops," said the study by scientists from ARI, Pune.

# UPSC comes to aid of Manipur candidates

## Offers alternative centres to people from strife-hit State to appear for recruitment tests for Govt jobs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has offered alternative centres to candidates from Imphal, Manipur to appear for Enforcement Officer/Accounts Officer and Assistant Provident Fund Commissioner examination, scheduled to be held on July 2, an official statement issued on Thursday said.

Manipur, which has been hit by ethnic conflict for nearly a month, witnessed a sudden spurt in clashes and firing between militants and security forces on Sunday, after a relative lull for over a fortnight. The death toll from the clashes since the ethnic violence began on May 3 has gone up to 80, officials said.

For the prevalent situation in the State of Manipur, the Commission has decided to offer alternative centres to the candidates of Imphal (Manipur) centre of the Enforcement Officer/Accounts Officer and Assistant Provident Fund Commissioner Examination, 2023, which is to be held on July 2, 2023, said the statement issued by the personnel ministry.

These candidates will be offered Aizawl (Mizoram), Kohima (Nagaland), Shillong



(Meghalaya), Dispur (Assam), Jorhat (Assam), Kolkata (West Bengal) and Delhi, it said.

The centre change option will be available to the candidates of Imphal centre through the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) facility, the statement said.

A message in this regard will be sent to each candidate on his/her registered mobile number with the Commission. The candidates must use their said registered mobile number to avail this facility through IVRS.

Alternatively, a candidate may also contact the UPSC through telephone numbers 011-23070641, 23381073, 23384508 and 23387876 from 12 noon of June 2 till 5 pm of June 12.

Moreover, the option of

change of centres for such candidates will also be available on the website of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) from 12 noon of June 2, 2023 to 5 pm of June 12, 2023 on round-the-clock basis, the statement said.

On receipt of centre change options from the willing candidates through any of the above modes, they will be allocated to the venues of their chosen centres and accordingly, their e-admit cards will be released, it said.

A message confirming the change of centres shall be sent to each such candidate on his/her registered mobile number, the statement said, adding that the e-admit cards will be available for downloading from the UPSC's website.

# Pawar calls on Shinde; sparks speculation

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that sparked fierce speculation in the State's political circles, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar on Thursday called on Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde at the latter's official residence 'Varsha' at Malabar Hills in south Mumbai.

Though the purpose of the meeting was not immediately known, 82-year-old Pawar spent more than half an hour with Shinde.

Incidentally, this was the first meeting between the two leaders after the transfer of power that took place under most dramatic circumstances in June last year.

Shinde, then a senior Shiv Sena leader, had rebelled against the then Chief Minister



and Sena president Uddhav Thackeray, walked out of the party along with 40-odd MLAs leading to the collapse of the Government Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), a grand alliance comprising Shiv Sena, the

NCP and the Congress. Shinde later teamed up the then Opposition BJP to form a new Government in the State.

Pawar's meeting with Shinde came at a time when Uddhav Thackeray was out of the country.

Informed sources said that Pawar had gone to meet Shinde to invite the latter for the 75th anniversary function of the Maratha Mandir group.

Later in the night, Shinde - speaking to a leading Marathi television channel - said that his meeting with Pawar he and the NCP supremo did not discuss any political matters. He said that the NCP chief had come to meet him for a function. "Don't read too much into this meeting," the Chief Minister told the TV channel.



# Pak intruder shot by BSF in Samba

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A Pakistani intruder was shot dead by BSF troops along the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's (J&K's) Samba district in the early hours of Thursday.

The incident took place near Mangu Chak border outpost (BoP) in Samba sector around 3.00 AM.

A Jammu-based BSF spokesman in a statement said, "In the early hours of Thursday, alert BSF troops noticed suspicious movement of a person, who crossed the IB from Pakistan's side, in Samba area. He was challenged by the troops but the intruder kept advancing towards the border fencing. The troops opened fire, killing him."

The BSF has launched a search operation along the IB in Samba sector as the intruder's body is lying in the forward area.

This is the second such incident of infiltration in Jammu division in the last two days.

On Wednesday, the Army foiled an infiltration bid with the arrest of three terrorists along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district.

The terrorists, from whom a huge consignment of arms and narcotics was recovered, were arrested after an exchange of fire near the border fence, according to a Defence spokesperson.

Meanwhile, continuing its crackdown on harbouring terrorists and providing logistic support to them, the State Intelligence Unit (SIU) Anantnag, on Thursday attached an under-construction residential house of a terrorist associate in Danwathpora Kokernag area of Anantnag district used for terrorist activities after obtaining necessary sanctions from the competent authority.

During the course of investigation in case FIR No. 103/2022 of Police Station Kokernag under UA(P) Act, one under-construction residential house belonging to terrorist associate namely Mohammad Ishaq Malik son of Mohammad Saifullah Malik resident of Danwathpora Kokernag has been found used by terrorists of proscribed terrorist outfit HM.

# Major blaze averted by alert Rly staff



## Fire in Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express compartment stopped from spreading to BP fuel depot close by

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A major tragedy was averted by alert Railway staff who stopped a blaze in the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express compartment from spreading to a Bharat Petroleum fuel depot located a few meters away.

The fire broke out in the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express in the wee hours of Thursday as the train was getting ready for its journey to Alappuzha. A general compartment was gutted in the fire but fortunately no casualty has been reported. Later in the day, a migrant labourer from West Bengal was taken into custody by the police. Further investigations were on at the time of going to Press.

This is the second such incident to take place in Kerala during the last two months. Interestingly, on April 1 this year the same train met with arson as a Delhi youth set the train on fire that led to the death of three persons, including an infant.

The recurrence of the mishap has shocked police officers as well as the people of the State despite the fact that no untoward incidents took place. But what is intriguing is the fact that a Bharat Petroleum fuel depot was hardly a few meters away from the ill-fated compartment and had it not been for the alertness of the Railway staff, the fire would have led to an inferno.

While police officers remained tight-lipped, Dr Jacob Thomas, former Director General, Kerala Police told The Pioneer that it was a matter of concern. "The Inspector-General of Police, P Vijayan, who led the investigation into the April 1 fire was unceremoniously removed as the head of the anti-terrorism squad. It was his expertise and quick actions that led to the arrest of the Delhi youth within days of the incident from Maharashtra. But what he got in return was brickbats, and that does not augur well for the Service," said Dr Thomas.

# Mekedatu project: We won't trouble you, be generous, says Shivakumar to TN Govt

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday raised a pitch for the contentious Mekedatu balancing reservoir across Cauvery river near Kanakapura and appealed to the Tamil Nadu Government to be generous.

Shivakumar, who hails from Kanakapura and is an MLA from there, said the Karnataka Government will have to make preparations required for the project. He also insisted that it will benefit not only Bengaluru but also the farmers of Tamil Nadu.

"With regard to Mekedatu, we had marched for water (in 2021). Tamil Nadu will not have any problem. After our march, (the then) Chief Minister (Basavaraj Bommai) had earmarked Rs 1,000 crore for the project. It has been proposed but has not been spent yet. We have to make the requisite preparations," Shivakumar told reporters here.

He said, "It's not that we have any hatred for Tamil Nadu or wage a war against it. Those residing there are our brethren and their brethren are here as well. So, there is no scope for hatred or jealousy. It is our project. It will benefit them as well. We have to help all the farmers in the Cauvery basin."

Stating that the key to unlock the Mekedatu issue is with the Centre, Shivakumar said there were orders on how much water Karnataka has to release. He wondered how Tamil Nadu will be at loss if Karnataka sets up a power plant there.

"We will store water and supply it to Bengaluru. It has been approved in the Cauvery Tribunal award. So there is no need to panic," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

He appealed to the Tamil Nadu Government to consider the project as it will not affect their interest.

"I request you (Tamil Nadu Government) that we will not trouble you. Be generous. We



too are generous. We are neighbouring States. We have fought enough and seen enough legal battles. It never helps. May we deal with it harmoniously. It will help in providing drinking water and benefit your farmers as well," Shivakumar said.

The Mekedatu multi-purpose (drinking and power) project involves building a balancing reservoir near Kanakapura in Ramanagara district. The estimated Rs 9,000-crore project, once completed, is aimed at ensuring drinking water to Bengaluru and neighbouring areas (4.75 TMC) and it can also generate 400 MW of power.

Karnataka has maintained that the project within its territory will benefit both States as the surplus water stored can be managed between the two during a distress year, and its implementation will in no way affect the interests of Tamil Nadu's farming communities, as there will be no impact on its share of water.

However, the neighbouring state is of the view that the project would "impound and divert" the uncontrolled water flow due to Tamil Nadu from Kabini sub-basin, the catchment area below Krishnarajasagara, and also from Simsha, Arkavathy and Suvarnavathi sub-basins besides other small streams.

# Gujarat Govt to challenge acquittal of six people in 2013 rape case against Asaram

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat Government will move the High Court to challenge the acquittal of self-styled godman Asaram's wife, their daughter and his four disciples in a 2013 rape case in which he was sentenced to life imprisonment, an official said on Thursday. A court in Gandhinagar on January 31 sentenced Asaram to life imprisonment in the rape case filed by his former woman disciple in 2013.

Asaram's wife Laxmiben, their daughter Bharati, and his four disciples, who were accused by the prosecution of aiding and abetting the crime, were acquitted by the court for want of evidence. "The State's legal department passed a resolution on May 6 and directed the prosecution to file an appeal against the acquittal of six accused by a Gandhinagar court in the 2013 rape case against self-styled godman Asaram," special public prosecutor in the case, RC



Kodekar said.

The prosecution has also sought the Government's consent to challenge the Gandhinagar court's January 31 order, in which it suggested that life sentences for Asaram in Jodhpur and Ahmedabad cases should run concurrently. The Government's consent for the same is awaited, Kodekar said. The octogenarian godman is currently serving a life term in a Jodhpur jail in another case of raping a minor girl at his ashram in Rajasthan in 2013. The Gandhinagar court sentenced Asaram in the case for raping a woman disciple, who hailed from Surat, on several occasions from 2001 to 2007 at his ashram at Motera near Ahmedabad before her escape.

# HC allows girl to reappear for NEET-UG exam being held specially for Manipur students

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday permitted a 18-year-old girl to reappear for the National Entrance Examination Test Under Graduate (NEET-UG) to be held for the second time for students of strife-torn Manipur as she could not complete the exam paper the first time due to a broken wrist.

A vacation Bench of Justices Manish Pitale and Neela Gokhale heard a plea filed by Dhanashree Jagatap seeking permission to reappear for the exam.

According to Jagatap, she arrived at the NEET-UG examination centre on May 7 but fell on the ground due to rush in the queue, resulting in dislocation of her right wrist joint.

She was taken to a nearby hospital and was later brought back to the centre where she was



allotted a writer, Jagatap said in the plea.

However, while the time period for the exam was three hours and 20 minutes, she started the exam late but was not given extra time to finish her paper, due to which she could not attempt the last part pertaining to Physics subject, Jagatap's plea said.

Seeking a direction to the National Testing Agency to permit her to reappear, Jagatap, in her plea, said although the NEET-UG examination is conducted only once every year, this

year due to sudden outbreak of violence in Manipur, NEET-UG 2023 examination is being held separately for students of that state.

The re-examination for students from Manipur is to be held in Bengaluru in Karnataka on June 6.

When the plea came up for hearing on Thursday, the Union government said it was willing to permit Jagatap to reappear for the exam on June 6 but on the condition that she shall not rely on the marks obtained by her in the May 7 examination.

# Gujarat: Dalit man thrashed for wearing good clothes, sunglasses; seven booked

PTI ■ PALANPUR

A Dalit man was allegedly beaten up by a group of people from an upper caste community at a village in Banaskantha district of Gujarat as the accused were upset with him for wearing good clothes and sunglasses, police said on Thursday. The incident occurred at Mota Village in Palanpur taluka on Tuesday night, they said, adding that the victim and his mother, who was also attacked by them, were undergoing treatment at a hospital at present.

A FIR was filed against seven people on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim, Jigar Shekhia. The complaint said that when the victim was standing outside his house on Tuesday morning, one of the seven accused approached him. He abused the victim and threatened to kill him saying he was "flying too high these days". The same night, when the complainant



was standing outside a village temple six accused from the community with Rajput surname came towards him. Armed with sticks, they asked him why he was dressed up and wore sunglasses. They then thrashed and dragged him. When his mother tried to save him, they assaulted her, threatened to kill her and tore her clothes.

The FIR against the accused was registered under IPC sections pertaining to rioting, outraging the modesty of a woman, voluntarily causing hurt. They were also booked under relevant sections of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. No arrest has been made so far.



Dark clouds cover the skyline above the under-construction Tirupati Balaji temple ahead of its inauguration, in Jammu, on Thursday. PTI Photo

## Too bullish to be true

Morgan Stanley has painted a rosy picture of the economy, but it omits some key indicators

Government and Bharatiya Janata Party supporters must be happy over the recent report by Morgan Stanley, the global financial services firm. “This India is different from what it was in 2013. In a short span of 10 years, India has gained positions in the world order with significant positive consequences for the macro and market outlook,” it said. “India has transformed in less than a decade.” This is surely a vote of confidence for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his economic policies. The report has highlighted 10 big changes that have taken place since 2014. Bringing down the corporate tax rate at par with the same in other major economies and heavy infrastructure investment are among the top supply-side policy reforms, Morgan Stanley said. The soaring collection of goods and services tax (GST) and the growing share of digital transactions as a percentage of GDP indicate the formalisation of the economy, it added. Other pluses, according to Morgan Stanley, are direct transfer of subsidies to accounts of beneficiaries, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, flexible inflation targeting, focus on foreign direct investment (FDI), Government support for corporate profits, a new law for the realty sector, and MNC sentiment at multi-year high. Manufacturing and capital spending as a percentage of GDP has continuously risen, Morgan Stanley said, adding export market share is projected to more than double to 4.5 per cent by 2031.



Much of what Morgan Stanley has said is correct, but at places optimism seems a bit excessive. It seems to have overlooked a few facts. For instance, FDI inflows into the country fell by 16 per cent to \$71 billion on a gross basis in the last fiscal, though the decline has been attributed to weak global factors. Similarly, manufacturing remains a laggard; its share continues to languish at 16-17 per cent of the country's GDP. The Government has made big claims about the potential of industrial growth; it launched ambitious programmes like Make in India and the production-linked incentive or PLI scheme for several sectors. And yet, manufacturing's share in GDP is no different than it was in 2011, the year in which the National Manufacturing Policy was announced with the target to make the share go up by 2022. Then there is the issue of jobs; the economy is not able to generate quality employment. This reflects in consumption patterns. The sales of luxury products are zooming, whereas the items used by common people like kitchen appliances are not doing as well. Growth accelerated to 6.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2022-23, and for the entire fiscal it was upwardly revised to 7.2 per cent. For 2023-24 too, India is likely to grow by over 6 per cent, and will be the fastest growing big economy. The Government must persist with reforms and ensure the more supply-side bottlenecks are removed so that the fruits of growth and development are equitably distributed.

### PICTALK



Burqa-clad students play cricket in the J J Hospital premises at Byculla in Mumbai

PTI

## The nuisance that is convocation ceremony

Ceremonies get value only if they are conducted appropriately. Mimicking an auspicious ceremony only demeans its value

Does education have any value in life? Does a degree guarantee a job? These questions always rhyme in our society.

Of course, these questions need detailed discussion. But the root cause of these questions is the declining value of education in today's society, due to the mockeries shown by education institutions. Even from kindergarten onwards, many private educational institutions conduct graduation ceremonies, making a mockery of our education system. We are demeaning the value of actual degree certificates through these ceremonies.

According to UGC, “Convocation” means a ceremonial assembly of a university, normally held for conferring Degrees and other awards to its eligible candidates. Usually, it is the universities that conduct convocation ceremonies in India. But in recent times, many colleges conduct convocation ceremonies or graduation ceremonies. The programme is conducted in a grand manner inviting eminent personalities; in some cases, even the vice-chancellors of universities



attend the function. The funny thing is that even students who failed university examinations also get a certificate at these graduation ceremonies. Some college authorities make poor students and parents believe that these certificates have more value than the ones issued by the universities. The ceremony itself is a huge business involving many event managers. A photo in graduation attire can convince the public that the particular person is a degree holder. This can fetch them status and demand in the marriage market. It's like what we see in the movie ‘Three Idiots.’

After attending the graduation ceremony conducted by their colleges, students post on social media stating that they have officially become graduates. During earlier times, the convocation

ceremonies are performed only by universities where the university authority hand over graduation certificates. Every student dreams of wearing the ceremonial convocation dress and taking a photo with the degree certificate. There was a time, before the 1990s, when every household used to hang pictures of their graduating family members. During that time, students from every stream and every level, undergraduate to higher degrees, had the privilege to attend convocation ceremonies conducted at universities. Society viewed a university graduate with awe and much respect. With the increase in the number of graduates passing out from our universities, the convocation ceremonies are limited to professional courses and higher degrees like PhD.

The value given to original degree certificates issued by good universities is slowly diminishing because of ceremonies conducted by these private institutions. The students and society at large are finding it challenging to understand which is genuine and which is fake. There are many people with “Dr.” affil-

iation in our community, whose degree is awarded by private institutions. These institutions, which are mostly registered societies, provide honorary doctoral degrees by charging hefty fees. They even give professional awards after taking huge fees from the nominees. Ceremonies get value only if it is conducted appropriately by the appropriate agency concerned. Mimicking an auspicious ceremony will demean its value. Can we mimic our marriage ceremony to show it to someone? All educational institutions should respect the value associated with various ceremonies and show the correct path to the students and society. Otherwise, our students shall carry certificates that have only a paper's value and have value only on social media platforms. We need to build quality graduates in every domain of knowledge in nation-building. For this, educational institutions should stay away from such gimmicks that make a mockery of our education system and should show the true path to our youngsters.

(The writer is a columnist))



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

FIRST COLUMN

IMPORTANCE OF PM MODI'S US STATE VISIT

Domestic politics aside, there is much at stake for PM Modi's upcoming state visit to the US



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be on a high-profile visit to the United States later this month. The state visit would be the first for the PM, and for the president of the USA and the second during his current tenure, as a host. This visit is happening against the backdrop of many high-profile visits by Indian and American diplomats, secretaries and ministers setting the ground, plank by plank, in what could be one of the most significant milestones in the India US bilateral relationship. The last such fillip to the relationship came in the period from 2005 to 2009 when India went nuclear and, US keeping aside its domestic political reservations and ally concerns (read Pakistan), eased India into the nuclear club, finally culminating in, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's state visit to the US. A state visit is the highest level of honour and prestige accorded bilaterally, and is considered to be the top-notch level in diplomatic relationships.

Prime Minister Modi's scheduled state visit was supposed to have been preceded, by his meeting with US President Joe Biden, at least thrice in less than a month. These included bilateral meetings during G7, to which India was invited, a meeting in Papua New Guinea and a QUAD leaders' summit before culminating in a state visit. However, President Biden had to cut short his trip to the Pacific Ocean Island nation and Australia, due to domestic issues, leading to a few hurried meetings on the sidelines of the G7 in Japan.

The domestic environment for both India and the US is just warming up, to what would be an extremely hot and noisy space for the world's oldest and largest democracy. India and the US face general elections next year and the domestic political climate, if not decibels, are already exceeding tolerable limits. Moving forward it would be unbearable and rough. This casts the dice for these leaders, both of whom are seeking re-election (PM Modi for the third term and President Biden second term), to make it worthwhile for their respective constituencies, which will send them back to the top posts. The US president would have to ensure that his voters, if not the congress and some of his colleagues, see the value of upgrading the India-US bilateral relationship, despite, India's conspicuous silence on Ukraine ( except for It is not a time for War statement), close relations and dependencies on Russia and some uncomfortable questions regarding human rights, religious freedom etc.

Indian Prime Minister on his part would like to take the spectacle quotient a tad higher than the Howdy Modi, grand concerts event, when



PM Mod and then President Donald Trump, jointly addressed thousands of Indian Americans in Houston. The PM would expect a significant outcome from the state visit, albeit the cheering crowds, public events would definitely be a part of the package. The PM who was recently on a visit to Australia and Pacific island countries, where he got a rock stars welcome, addressed large cheering crowds in packed arenas and was even called "the boss" by the Australian PM. The Indian American groups are also prepping up for PM Modi's visit, as many of them are expected to participate in some key official ceremonies at the white house, including witnessing the 21-gun salute and perhaps yoga sessions led by Indian PM on International World yoga day on June 21st.

It would be worth remembering that PM Modi's visit would also follow opposition leader Rahul Gandhi's ten days trip to the US, where he interacted with a wide array of stakeholders, civil society, think tanks etc on questions surrounding Indian democracy. The larger questions regarding shrinking space for democratic manoeuvre and political opposition in India, which have been brought out by the opposition leader during his earlier visits to UK etc and which have led to some influencer groups doubting Indian democratic credentials, could have been contained, by the time PM Modi lands in the US. Domestic politics aside there is much at stake for PM Modis' upcoming state visit to the US.

*(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal)*

# Judgement, education and effective action

Whether one is the top man or the so-called bottom man, there is always an element of decision-making vested in the role



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM



One of the critical components of decision-making is the ability to decipher decision spaces. Consider the example of a doorkeeper. By any standards, it is a lowly rank and humble in many ways. Yet, in times of knocking at the door, that position becomes more important than that of the Chairman himself. It is the doorkeeper's decision to let somebody in or keep him out. It is a power loaded with security concerns and at times with grave implications of time, life and death. Consider a situation where somebody is ill, and a doctor has been summoned in the late hours of the evening to the building to take care of the ailing person.

The doctor does not get a security clearance, but his entry into the building is critical. Like anything else, there is a risk involved, and somebody may be impersonating the doctor; there may be a rogue doctor or the doctor himself may be very impatient—the possibilities are several. The judgement of the gatekeeper and the judgement to be exercised on the spot make him the kingpin, not only for the moment of the act but indeed for much else, besides.

The derivation is obvious: everyone needs to have effective decision-making skills. The story goes that King Shivaji approached his Rajgad Fort near Pune, in the early hours of the morning after



THE PRIME MINISTER HAS TO NOT ONLY LEAD BUT ALSO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KEY DECISIONS. HIS ABILITY TO JUDGE AND DECIDE WHO TO CONSENT TO, AND TO WHAT EXTENT IS CRUCIAL.

*(The writer is a policy analyst)*

a long long ride and wanted to enter the Rajgad Fort. He had enemies at his heels. The head of security of the fort had it from the king (Maharaj) himself (in this case, Shivaji Maharaj) that no exceptions would be allowed for entry into the fort before dawn.

Shivaji Maharaj had some enemies in his hot pursuit, which he had evaded. The Head of Security took the call that the order of the Maharaj was sacred and Shivaji would not be let into the fort. Shivaji tried to explain to him that his life may be at risk and that he had been exercising his supreme powers by ordering a gate to be opened. The Head of Security refused to comply. When Shivaji asked him who would be responsible for his security, the Head of Security responded, "I am the head of security, and I shall be responsible. We shall make preparations for your comfort outside the fort, and you will be absolutely safe. Our full force will protect you and protect you successfully." The story concludes that Shivaji was finally allowed entry into the fort only at dawn. One of his first acts after his entry was to elevate the rank to the Head of Security.

The narrative, as it is, needs no comment. The larger part of the story is that it makes a point. In the ultimate analysis of the making of the human being: health and judgement are the two most important things. Judgement cannot be taught; it cannot be 'given.' It has to grow from within. It is a judgement that makes a person.

Judgement is both subtle and growing. In a parliamentary system, the Prime Minister is the head of the Executive. He has to not only lead but also be responsible for the key decisions. His ability to judge and decide who to consent to, and to what extent is crucial. He has also to assess to what extent amalgamate the various strands of advice received.

This brings us to the essence of training of the mind and education. The current rollout of the National Education Policy raises these questions in many ways. With increasing frequency, it is being asked many, how so many people, who do not even finish their school education become such original thinkers and make such brilliant contributions. Rabintra Nath Thakur is a common reference.

Indeed, many formally educated people do not get very far and flounder in the race of life in a worse-than-mediocre pattern. This appears as an enigma when it is actually it is not so. The truth is that creativity and judgement propelled even those who had not completed their formal education to higher levels of achievement. Higher levels of achievement do not necessarily follow high degrees. In the case of the educated, the natural achievements which would have followed creativity were sharpened and results were better than if they had not been educated at all.

It is soulful to remember this and use it as a compass to navigate one's own career and those dependent on one. The meaning, the content, the delivery, and the keeping alive of the educational processes are important phenomena. The whys and wherefores of this process need to be understood and developed more fruitfully as a part of any project related to the educational process. Hopefully, as the National Education Policy makes its rollout, these questions will not only surface but get addressed.

# Caribbean medical degree can lead to a career in the West

Pursuing medical education in a Caribbean university is a viable route to a career in medicine in the West, although it is not without its challenges

In recent years, there has been a significant surge in the demand for doctors and the aspirations to pursue a medical career. However, the available resources and facilities have struggled to match the pace of this demand, resulting in a considerable gap. Consequently, numerous students have opted to relocate to different countries in search of admission to medical courses, as the distribution of requirements and available facilities remains imbalanced.

To pursue a medical career in the USA or Canada, students typically follow a structured path. Upon finishing their undergraduate degree, students are required to clear the MCAT exam as a prerequisite for admission to medical school. Once a student enters



MAMTA PURBEY

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medical school, they spend another 4-5 years in a medical school which would include their pre-clinical and clinical. Once the student is done with clinical rotations and graduates from medical school, s/he applies for residency. Students submit applications through the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP). Depending on the specialisation they opt for, many doctors complete their residency programs in 3 to 7 years.

To become a doctor in the US/Canada, students have the option to pursue a Caribbean medical college route. This involves selecting a reputable and accredited medical school in the Caribbean and completing a 2-year pre-med program, followed by 2 years of pre-clinical studies. The stu-

dents then continue their clinical rotations in the USA/Canada. Studying medicine in the Caribbean region offers a multitude of benefits for aspiring medical students aiming to become practising doctors in the USA, UK, and Canada.

These advantages make Caribbean medical schools an appealing choice for those seeking a top-tier education, practical exposure, and a unique cultural experience. Additionally, these medical schools hold recognition from esteemed international organizations like the World Health Organization and the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, ensuring that graduates can practice medicine across all 50 states in the US or in the UK,

and Canada, among other various countries worldwide.

**Lower Financial Burden:** Studying MBBS at leading Caribbean medical colleges generally comes at a lower cost compared to US medical colleges, including both public and private institutions. While certain Caribbean colleges may have costs that approach those of US medical colleges, the overall expenses remain significantly more affordable.

**Hassle-free Admission:** Unlike other foreign medical universities, getting admission to top Caribbean medical colleges is less complex. Apart from decent credentials at the school level, you need to clear the country-specific medical entrance exam such as NEET in India. Most Caribbean colleges have rolling admissions

with three intakes- January, May and September.

**Diverse Learning:** Caribbean medical universities attract a diverse student population from various countries and cultural backgrounds. This multicultural environment fosters a rich learning experience, promoting cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

**Gateway to the US:** The Caribbean region is globally recognized for its esteemed medical schools. These institutions hold accreditation from prominent international organizations including the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and Other Health Professions (CAAM-HP), World Health Organization (WHO), and the Educational

Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). Such recognition empowers graduates to pursue medical practice in diverse countries across the globe. International medical graduates (IMGs) have a vital role in the American healthcare system, making up 25 per cent of the existing U.S. physician workforce. Among these IMGs, 18 per cent are graduates of Caribbean medical schools, indicating that approximately 4.5 per cent of licensed doctors in the U.S. obtained their MD degrees from Caribbean institutions.

**Accredited Medical Schools:** While choosing a Caribbean medical school, it's very important to check the recognitions and accreditations to ensure quality edu-

cation. Only schools that are recognized by CAAM-HP and accredited by the US Dept of Education, New York State Education Department and other US & Canadian medical education-related departments/bodies should be chosen to ensure a smooth transition into USA / Canada.

Pursuing a medical education at a Caribbean medical school offers a viable route to a rewarding career in medicine, although it is not without its challenges. While the entry requirements may be less stringent compared to those in the US, achieving exceptional grades and excelling in USMLE exams are still essential for securing a position in an American residency program.

# NATO presses Turkiye to approve Sweden’s membership

AP ■ OSLO/NORWAY

NATO on Thursday ramped up pressure on member nation Turkiye to drop its objections to Sweden’s membership as the military organisation seeks to deal with the issue by the time US President Joe Biden and his counterparts meet next month. The 31-member alliance is also looking at boosting Ukraine’s non-member status in NATO and preparing a framework for security commitments that it can offer once the war with Russia is over. Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time allied leaders meet in Lithuania on July 11-12. The allies also hope to make progress on long-term funding and the security plan for Ukraine at the same event, Stoletenberg said. He said the allies continue to agree that Ukraine will become a NATO member but that in the meantime the

alliance should provide it with security commitments and substantial new funding. “Our focus today was on how we can bring Ukraine closer to NATO where it belongs,” he said. “No one knows when the war will end, but we must ensure that when it does we have credible arrangements in place to guarantee Ukraine’s security in the future and break Russia’s cycle of aggression,” Stoltenberg said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the allies were “focused on helping Ukraine to build up its medium- and long-term security capacity so that if and when the current aggression settles, Ukraine has the full capacity to deter future aggression”. “NATO has a role in that in terms of the work it can do to bring Ukraine up to NATO standards,” he said. He did not elaborate. Fearing they might be targeted by Moscow after Russia invaded Ukraine last year,



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, listens as he gives a statement to the media, at Oslo City Hall, during a meeting of NATO's foreign ministers in Oslo on Thursday. AP/PTI

Sweden and Finland abandoned their traditional positions of military nonalignment to seek protection under NATO’s security umbrella. Finland became NATO’s 31st member country in April.

NATO must agree unanimously for countries to join. Turkiye’s government accuses Sweden of being too lenient on terrorist organisations and security threats, including militant Kurdish groups and people

associated with a 2016 coup attempt. Hungary has also delayed its approval, but the reasons why have not been made publicly clear. Stoltenberg said that he would travel to Ankara “in the near future to continue to address how we can ensure the fastest possible accession of Sweden.” He said his and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s staffs were working on dates for the trip. “My message is that Sweden has delivered, and the time has come to ratify Sweden,” he told reporters at the conclusion of two days of informal talks between alliance foreign ministers to prepare for the summit in Lithuania. Others echoed his comments. Its time for Sweden to join now,” Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt told reporters. “I’m confident that also Hungary will ratify the accession protocol,” Stoltenberg said.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said that “it is essential that we can finally welcome Sweden as the 32nd member.” She stressed that the Swedish government has Berlin’s “full support”. Sweden’s foreign minister, Tobias Billström, said that “it is time for Turkey and Hungary to start the ratification of the Swedish membership to NATO”. He said that “everything (that) bars Sweden joining NATO will be seen as wine for (Russian president Vladimir) Putin”. For months, Sweden, Finland and Turkiye held talks to try to address Ankara’s concerns. Billstrom said he expected things to be made clear at a new meeting of this “permanent joint mechanism” in coming weeks. He noted that as of Thursday, Sweden had tightened its anti-terrorism laws. It is now it illegal to finance, recruit for or publicly encourage “a terrorist organisation”, or to travel abroad with the inten-

tion of joining such groups. The time may be ripe for movement. Sweden’s membership became embroiled in campaigning for elections in Turkiye, which Erdogan won on Sunday. Erdogan has also been seeking upgraded US fighter jets, and Washington signalled this week that they might be delivered. “I spoke to Erdogan and he still wants to work on something on the F-16s. I told him we wanted a deal with Sweden. So let’s get that done,” Biden said on Monday. On Tuesday, Blinken insisted that the issues of Sweden’s membership and the fighter jets were distinct. However, he stressed that the completion of both would dramatically strengthen European security. “Both of these are vital, in our judgement, to European security,” Blinken told reporters. “We believe that both should go forward as quickly as possible; that is to say Sweden’s accession and moving forward on the F-16 package more broadly.”

## N Korean leader’s sister slams US for criticising failed satellite launch

AP ■ SEOUL

The powerful sister of North Korean Kim Jong Un on Thursday accused the United States of “gangster-like” hypocrisy for criticizing her country’s failed launch of a military spy satellite and insisted a successful launch will be made soon. Kim Yo Jong said North Korea’s efforts to acquire space-based reconnaissance capabilities were a legitimate exercise of its sovereign right and restated the country’s rejection of UN Security Council resolutions that ban it from conducting any launch involving ballistic missile technology. Her comments on state media came a day after the rocket carrying the satellite failed. North Korea said the rocket lost thrust after a stage separation and crashed in waters off the Korean Peninsula’s western coast. Washington, South Korea and Japan had quickly criticized the launch. Adam Hodge, a



spokesperson at the US National Security Council, said Washington strongly condemns the North Korean launch because it used banned ballistic missile technology, raised tensions and risked destabilizing security in the region and beyond. In her statement, Kim Yo Jong briefly mentioned Hodge’s comments before saying the United States “is letting loose a hackneyed gibberish prompted by its brigandish and abnormal thinking.” “If the DPRK’s satellite launch should be particularly censured, the US and all other

countries, which have already launched thousands of satellites, should be denounced. This is nothing but sophism of self-contradiction,” she said, using the initials of North Korea’s formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. She noted how the United States closely monitors the North through its own reconnaissance satellites and other aerial assets, calling the Americans a “group of gangsters” who would deem it as “illegal and threatening” had North Korea attempted to send a satellite into space by balloon. “The far-fetched logic that only the DPRK should not be allowed to do so according to the (UN Security Council’s) resolution’ which bans the use of ballistic rocket technology irrespective of its purpose, though other countries are doing so, is clearly a gangster-like and wrong one of seriously violating the DPRK’s right to use space and illegally oppressing it,” she said.

## Bombing kills 3 in Kyiv

AP ■ KYIV

Russia launched a pre-dawn missile barrage on Ukraine’s capital Thursday, killing 3 people including a 9-year-old and her mother, officials said, and damaging apartment buildings, schools and a children’s hospital. It was the highest casualty toll from a single attack on Kyiv over the past month. A 33-year-old woman died as she and others waited to enter a locked Kyiv air raid shelter, leaving her and others at the mercy of falling missile fragments, according to her husband. Officials ordered an investigation into what happened. The latest Russian attack, using what Ukrainian officials said were short-range Iskander ground-launched missiles, coincided with events scheduled in Kyiv to celebrate International Children’s Day. Those events were cancelled. Ukrainian air defences shot down all 10 cruise and ballistic missiles launched by the Kremlin’s forces, but falling debris caused damage and casualties on the ground, wounding 16 people, according to author-



Police inspect a building damaged by a Russian night attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Thursday. AP/PTI

ities. Russia has kept up a steady barrage on the Ukrainian capital and other parts of the country in recent weeks as Kyiv readies what it says is a counteroffensive to push back Moscow’s troops, 15 months after their full-scale invasion. Kyiv was the target of drone and missile attacks on 17 days last month. Ukraine’s first lady, Olena Zelenska, said one child was in hospital after the attack. “Children’s Day has to be about safe childhood, summer, life,” she tweeted. “But today it is about new crimes of (Russia) against children.” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba tweeted that the dead included a 9-year-old girl, her mother and another woman. At the Kyiv air raid shelter that was locked, Yaroslav Riabchuk said he and his wife of 17 years, Natalia, were outside with others when he ran around the back of the building to summon the guard in charge.

## Russian court prepares way for new trial against jailed Kremlin foe

Moscow (AP): A Moscow court on Wednesday set a new date for a hearing paving the way for another trial of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny that could keep him in prison for decades. The Moscow City Court initially scheduled for Wednesday a preliminary hearing to discuss technical issues related to the trial of the Kremlin’s arch foe but moved it to June 6 without giving a reason. The court rejected a request by Navalny’s lawyers for more time to examine voluminous case materials. Navalny has said that the new extremism charges which he rejected as “absurd” could keep him in prison for another 30 years. He said an investigator told him that he would also face a separate military court trial on terrorism charges that could potentially carry a life sentence.

## Court charges 5 men for Irish peacekeeper’s killing

Beirut (AP): Lebanon’s military tribunal on Thursday charged five men with the killing of an Irish UN peacekeeper in December, a senior judicial official said. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, alleged all five are linked with Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The indictment followed a half-year probe after an attack on a UN peacekeeping convoy near the town of Al-Aqbiya in Lebanon’s south, a stronghold of Hezbollah. The shooting resulted in the death of Pvt. Seán Rooney, 24, of Newtown Cunningham, Ireland, and seriously wounded Pvt. Shane Kearney, 22. The wounded peacekeeper was medically evacuated to Ireland. Two other Irish soldiers sustained light injuries. The indictment includes evidence from bystanders’ testimonies, as well as audio recordings and video footage from surveillance cameras, the Lebanese official said.

## Turkish election body confirms Erdogan’s victory in runoff vote

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkiye’s election board certified the results of the May 28 presidential runoff election on Thursday, confirming that Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been a dominant force in Turkish politics for the past two decades, has won a third term as president. Ahmet Yener, the head of the Supreme Electoral Council said Erdogan won 52.18 per cent of the votes, while main opposition party leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu garnered 47.82 per cent. According to these results, it is understood that Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been elected president and the results were sent to the Official Gazette for publication,” Yener announced. He said turnout was 85.72 per cent. Already Turkiye’s longest serving leader, Erdogan, 69, can now govern until 2028. Unconfirmed reports say he is scheduled to take the oath of office on Saturday, after which he is expected to announce the lineup of his new



Cabinet. Erdogan faces a host of domestic challenges, from a battered economy to pressure for the repatriation of millions of Syrian refugees and the need to rebuild after a devastating earthquake in February that killed 50,000 and leveled cities. Investors will be watching closely to see if Mehmet Simsek, a respected former finance minister and deputy prime minister, is reappointed to head the economy portfolio, for signs of a return by Erdogan to more conventional econom-

ic policies. Inflation in Turkiye hit a staggering 85 per cent in October before easing to 44 per cent last month, according to official figures, although independent experts say the true rate is much higher. Critics blame the turmoil on Erdogan’s policy of keeping interest rates low to promote growth. Economists generally recommend raising rates to combat inflation. The Turkish lira has lost around 10 per cent of its value since the start of the year.

## European summit opens in Moldova

AP ■ BULBOACA

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived at a sprawling summit of some 50 European leaders in Moldova on Thursday, becoming the focal point of an event that seeks to quell regional conflicts and shore up unity in the face of Russia’s war. The meeting of the European Political Community, a pan-continental gathering of heads of state and government from 47 countries, brings together leaders from European Union nations and others to the 27-member bloc’s south and east — a region pushed to a turning point in its relationship with Moscow by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine last year. The EU, represented at the summit by the bloc’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel, wants to use the summit to reach out to many Eastern European countries that spent decades either within the Soviet Union or under its immediate sphere of influence, and to bolster the conti-



Moldova’s President Maia Sandu, right, greets Italy’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during arrivals for the European Political Community Summit at the Mimi Castle in Bulboaca, Moldova on Thursday. AP/PTI

nent’s unified response to Russian aggression. The choice to hold the summit in Moldova, a former Soviet republic of around 2.6 million people, is seen as a message to the Kremlin both from the EU and the pro-Western Moldovan government, which received EU candidate status in June of last year at the same time as Ukraine. Moldova, Europe’s poorest country which is cradled by Ukraine on three sides, aspires to join the EU by the end of the decade, and has consistently

signalled its support for Ukraine and taken in refugees fleeing the war. Speaking from the summit venue, a 19th-century castle and vineyard around 35 kilometers (21 miles) from the capital, Chisinau, Moldovan President Maia Sandu said a major aim of the summit was “restoring peace on the continent” and protecting democracy in Moldova and Ukraine from threats posed by Russia. “We need to reconfirm our support for Ukraine as it resists Russian

## China accuses US of interfering in training exercise

Beijing (AP): China’s Defence Ministry accused the US of “interference and surveillance” of a naval exercise in the South China Sea ahead of an incident in which a Chinese fighter pilot flew at high speed in front of a US Air Force reconnaissance plane, underscoring the rupture in contacts between their militaries. A statement issued late Wednesday by the Chinese military’s Southern Theater Command said it had “organized air forces to track and monitor the whole process, dealt with it according to laws and regulations, and operated professionally.” The US Indo-Pacific Command said the pilot of a Chinese J-16 fighter had “performed an unnecessarily aggressive maneuver” while intercepting a US Air Force RC-135 aircraft on May 26, flying directly in front of the plane’s nose. “The RC-135 was conducting safe and routine operations over the South China Sea in international airspace, in accordance with international law,” the US. side said. “We expect all countries in the Indo-Pacific region to use international airspace safely and in accordance with international law.” Southern Theater Command spokesperson Senior Col. Zhang Nandong was quoted in the statement accusing the U.S. of “mixing up black and white and making false accusations in an attempt to confuse the international audience.” “We solemnly urge the U.S. to conscientiously restrain the actions of front-line naval and air forces, strictly abide by relevant international laws and relevant agreements, and prevent accidents at sea and in the air,” Zhang said. “If not, the US will bear all consequences,” he said. Zhang did not say what international laws he was referring to. China’s claim to virtually the entire South China Sea is not recognized by the US and strongly contested by other countries bordering on the strategic waterway, through which an estimated \$5 trillion of international trade passes each year.

## Amazon workers protest return-to-office mandate

Seattle (AP): Telling executives to “strive harder,” hundreds of corporate Amazon workers protested what they decried as the company’s lack of progress on climate goals and an inequitable return-to-office mandate during a lunchtime demonstration at its Seattle headquarters Wednesday. The protest came a week after Amazon’s annual shareholder meeting and a month after a policy took effect returning workers to the office three days per week. Previously, team leaders were allowed to determine how their charges worked. The employees chanted their disappointment with the pace of



the company’s efforts to reduce its carbon footprint — “Emissions climbing, time to act” — and urged Amazon to return authority to team leaders when it comes to work location. Wearing a black pirate hat and red coat, Church Hindley, a quality assurance engineer, said

working from home allowed him to live a better, healthier life. “I’m out here because I refuse to just sit idly by while mandates are dictated from above down that don’t make sense and hurt the planet, hurt families and individual lives,” Hindley said.

## Technology radically changing sleep pattern

Loveborough: From sleep trackers to wakefulness drugs, the 21st century has seen an influx of new technology that could radically alter the way we sleep. Many of these new technologies chase the dream of optimised slumber. They promise to help tailor our sleep schedules to fit around our social lives, help us sleep for longer or even skip a night’s sleep altogether. Here’s how technology is permeating our sleep, and what the future holds. TIME TO WAKE UP Sleeping pills have recently been joined by a wave of wakefulness drugs, purportedly safer and more powerful alternatives to caffeine.



It seems that they work best on people who are already sleep deprived and don’t have a huge effect on those who are already well rested. Modafinil is touted for its cognition enhancing effects (especially in sleep-deprived people) and can supposedly keep people awake and alert for several days at a time. Some scientific studies are showing that

this may indeed be the case, although results are mixed, with other research showing the effects are similar to caffeine. The drug was developed to help people with narcolepsy but some have started using it for its focus-enhancing effects. It is a controlled drug (prescription only) in most countries. People who use it for cognitive enhancement or wakefulness are buying it on the black market or getting it from friends who have a prescription. Modafinil is popular with students — in 2020, Loughborough University researchers found that, of 506 students surveyed at 54 UK universities, 19% had taken cognitive enhancement sub-

stances. But people who take them for non-medical purposes are risking their health. Studies of the safety of these drugs do not consider this type of use. We don’t know what using these drugs to stay awake for long periods of time does to people’s bodies. But we do know that disrupting your sleep pattern (for example, shift work) is linked to health problems such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Recent studies suggest some people are combining sleep and wakefulness pills to manage their body rhythms and optimise their sleep or unwind after a day of hard work. The effects of taking wakefulness pills with other drugs is largely unknown. In the UK sale or supply of

a prescription-only or unlicensed medicine is a criminal offence. Whereas in the US, even possession of stimulants without a prescription is a crime. SMART SLEEP Many people already use smart watches, smart jewellery and fitness bands to track their sleep — for example, alarms that wake people up at the optimal point in their sleep cycle and motion sensor apps that analyse sleep patterns. New ways of tracking sleep could soon include donning a pair of pyjamas embedded with sensors to track changes in posture, and heart rate, whose algorithm creates a breathing pattern to mimic and help you fall asleep.

# White House announces curbs in Sudan

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The White House announced on Thursday that it will levy sanctions against people “who are perpetuating the violence” in Sudan as warring sides fail to abide by a cease-fire agreement.

The United States is imposing visa restrictions on specific people in Sudan, including officials from the warring Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces and leaders from the former Omar al-Bashir regime, who are “responsible for, or complicit in, undermining Sudan’s democratic transition,” according to the State Department.

President Joe Biden on May 4 laid the groundwork for the sanctions when he issued an executive order that expanded US authorities to respond to the violence and help bring an end to the conflict.

“These measures are intended to hold accountable those responsible for undermining the peace, security, and stability of Sudan,” White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a statement.

The Treasury Department said in a statement that four companies are being designated: Al Junaid Multi Activities Co. Ltd, which is controlled by

RSF Commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo and his brother, RSF Deputy Commander Abdul Rahim Dagalo; Tradive General Trading LLC, a front company controlled by RSF Major Algoney Hamdan Dagalo, who also is a brother of the RSF commander; Sudan’s largest defense company, Defense Industries System; and the arms company Sudan Master Technology, which is linked to the SAF.

“Through sanctions, we are cutting off key financial flows to both the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces, depriving them of resources needed to pay soldiers, rearm, resupply, and wage war in Sudan,” Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said. “The United States stands on the side of civilians against those who perpetuate violence towards the people of Sudan.”

The United States urged Sudan’s warring sides on Thursday to return to cease-fire talks and make a concerted effort to abide by a lasting truce after peace efforts collapsed yet again.

The appeal from the U.S. State Department came after Sudan’s military on Wednesday suspended its participation in the talks, hosted in Saudi Arabia, with a rival paramili-



tary force.

The fighting between the Sudanese military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Dagalo, broke out in mid-April. The violence has killed at least 866 civilians, according to a Sudanese doctors group, though the actual toll is likely much higher.

On Wednesday, heavy shelling near a market in a neighborhood in the south of the Sudanese capital of Khartoum killed at least 17 civilians, the Sudan Doctor’s Syndicate said. “The scope and scale of the bloodshed in

Khartoum and Darfur, in particular, is appalling,” Sullivan said. “And, the failure of the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces to abide by the cease-fire only further deepens our concern that the people of Sudan will once again face a protracted conflict and widespread suffering at the hands of the security forces.”

The Sudanese military’s withdrawal from the talks is a setback for Washington and Riyadh, which have been mediating between the two sides.

“Once the forces make clear by their actions that they are serious about complying

with the cease-fire, the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are prepared to resume facilitation of the suspended discussions,” the State Department said.

Washington and Riyadh brokered a cease-fire on May 21, to allow for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and restoration of vital services. There have been seven declared cease-fires since the conflict broke out and all have been violated.

Later Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters at a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Oslo, Norway, that both sides were continuing to violate the cease-fire agreement that was renewed last Monday.

“We will continue to be engaged. At the same time, we’re also looking at steps that we can take to make clear our views,” Blinken said.

In late May, Blinken threatened Sudan’s warring generals with possible sanctions in the event of cease-fire violations.

Last week, Riyadh and Washington accused the military of continuing to carry out airstrikes, while condemning the RSF for occupying people’s homes and seizing property. Theft was occurring in areas controlled by both forces, it added.

# PTI president arrested

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party president Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, a close aide to former prime minister Imran Khan, was arrested outside his residence here on Thursday, the party said. “Shameful how the regime doesn’t stop their fascism. The inflation has skyrocketed to 38%, and their response is arresting former CM Punjab Parvez Elahi. Absolutely ridiculous!” the party tweeted along with a video in which the 77-year-old leader was seen being dragged by security personnel from his residence, Zahoore Elahi. The former Punjab chief minister was arrested as he was leaving his house, the Dawn newspaper reported, quoting Elahi’s spokesperson Iqbal Chaudhry.

The spokesperson alleged that authorities also “misbehaved” with women accompanying Elahi, who had been evading arrest since May 9.

On May 26, a district court in Lahore issued a non-bailable arrest warrant for Elahi.

“The pre-arrest bail of the accused was dismissed due to non-prosecution vide order dated May 25 and he is not appearing before the court and also not joining the investigation. In view of the request of the IO, let non-bailable arrest warrants of accused Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi be issued for June 2, 2023,” the court order read.

Elahi, who was a close aide to military dictator General Pervez Musharraf, was appointed as the president of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in March this year after quitting his former party - the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q).

On May 9, violent protests erupted after the arrest of Khan, Chairman of PTI, by paramilitary Rangers in Islamabad. His party workers vandalised over 20 military installations and government buildings, including the Lahore Corps Commander House, Mianwali airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad. The Army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi was also attacked by the mob for the first time.

# ‘Pakistan interested in another loan from IMF to revive economy’

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed interest in securing a new loan from the IMF during his talks with its chief Kristalina Georgieva though there are slim chances for the revival of the ongoing bailout package from the global lender, a media report said on Thursday.

Sharif on last Saturday held a telephone conversation with the fund’s managing director and urged her to revive the USD 6.5 billion deal which was initially signed in 2019 and was set to expire by the end of this month.

However, the chances of revival are thin due to the limited time available to implement the tough conditions of the IMF, forcing Pakistan to look for a new deal to meet multiple economic challenges.

Prime Minister Sharif had revealed Pakistan’s intentions to sign a follow-up bailout package during his telephonic conversation with the IMF

head, The Express Tribune newspaper quoted sources as saying. The sources said the IMF chief reciprocated the premier’s views about the need for another package. Diplomatic corps and international financial institutions think that Pakistan cannot avoid default without securing a new IMF package.

In order to repay USD 25 billion debt in the next fiscal year, Pakistan must have an IMF umbrella, the report said.

The Ministry of Finance is also of the view that the follow-up programme is needed to reinforce and build upon the reforms initiated during the current programme, a senior official of the ministry said on the condition of anonymity. However, the prime minister’s latest initiative seeking a new deal runs counter to Finance Minister Ishaq Dar’s stance who, not long ago, had propagated the idea that Pakistan should stop living off the IMF.

Khan was later released on bail.

The violence elicited a strong reaction from the government and military with vows of taking action against the culprits, leading to an ongoing crackdown against those involved.

Law enforcement agencies have arrested over 10,000 workers of Khan’s Pakistan party across Pakistan, 4,000 of them from Punjab province.

Following the May 9 incidents, several senior leaders of Khan’s party were taken into custody. The leaders included Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Fawad Chaudhry, Asad Umar, Dr Yasmeen Rashid, Shireen Mazari, Maleeka Bukhari, and Fayyazul Hassan Chauhan.

A few days later, many prominent leaders including Fawad, Imran Ismail, Shireen Mazari, Fayyazul Hassan

Chauhan, Firdaus Ashiq Awan and others quit Khan’s party.

Khan, 70, who is facing more than 100 cases ranging from corruption to terrorism, said he sympathises with everyone who were forced to leave the party.

Earlier this month, the National Assembly, the lower house of Pakistan’s Parliament, passed a resolution vowing to try May 9 rioters under the existing laws including the stringent Army Act and the Official Secrets Act.

Khan, a cricketer-turned-politician, was ousted from power in April last year after losing a no-confidence vote in his leadership, which he alleged was part of a US-led conspiracy targeting him because of his independent foreign policy decisions on Russia, China and Afghanistan.

# Debt ceiling deal goes to Senate



House Speaker Kevin McCarthy of Calif along with other Republican members of the House, speaks at a news conference after the House passed the debt ceiling bill at the Capitol in Washington

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Veering away from a default crisis, the House overwhelmingly approved a debt ceiling and budget cuts package, sending the deal that President Joe Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy negotiated to the Senate for swift passage in a matter of days, before a fast-approaching deadline. The hard-fought compromise pleased few, but lawmakers assessed it was better than the alternative — a devastating economic upheaval if Congress failed to act. Tensions ran high as hard-right Republicans refused the deal, but Biden and McCarthy assembled a bipartisan coalition to push to passage on a robust 314-117 vote late Wednesday. “We did pretty dang good,” McCarthy, R-Calif, said afterward.

Amid deep discontent from Republicans who said the spending restrictions did not go far enough, McCarthy said it is only a “first step”. Biden, watching the tally from Colorado Springs where Thursday he is scheduled to deliver the commencement address at the US Air Force Academy, phoned McCarthy and the other congressional leaders after the vote. In a statement, he called the outcome “good news for the American people and the American economy”. Washington is rushing after a long slog of debate to

wrap up work on the package to ensure the government can keep paying its bills, and prevent financial upheaval at home and abroad. Next Monday is when the Treasury has said the US would run short of money and risk a dangerous default.

Biden had been calling lawmakers directly to shore up backing. McCarthy worked to sell sceptical fellow Republicans, even fending off challenges to his leadership. A similar bipartisan effort from Democrats and Republicans will be needed in the Senate to overcome objections.

Overall, the 99-page bill would make some inroads in curbing the nation’s deficits as Republicans demanded, without rolling back Trump-era tax breaks as Biden wanted. To pass it, Biden and McCarthy counted on support from the political centre, a rarity in divided Washington.

A compromise, the package restricts spending for the next two years, suspends the debt ceiling into January 2025 and changes some policies, including imposing new work requirements for older Americans receiving food aid and green-lighting an Appalachian natural gas line that many Democrats oppose. It bolsters funds for defence and veterans, and guts new money for Internal Revenue Service agents.

# China to set up secure def communications link with S’pore

Singapore (PTI): Singapore and China on Thursday agreed to work towards establishing a secure defence telephone link between the two countries to allow high-level communications between the defence leaders, amidst Beijing’s aggressive actions in the strategic Indo-Pacific region.

Under a memorandum of understanding signed here, the defence establishments in both countries will work towards setting up a secure line for high-level communications between their respective defence leaders, Singapore’s Ministry of Defence (Mindef) said in a statement.

Such high-level open lines of communication are important for strengthening mutual understanding and trust, it said. The MOU signing was witnessed by Singapore’s Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen and China’s Defence Minister Gen. Li Shangfu, who is visiting Singapore for the first time.

Gen Li is here from Thursday to Sunday and will attend the Shangri-La Dialogue, an annual defence summit, which is being held from Friday to Sunday. As part of his visit, Gen Li co-chaired the second Singapore-China Defence Ministers’ Dialogue (DMD) with Dr Ng on Thursday. Both the Defence Ministers’ Dialogue and the MOU are initiatives under the enhanced Agreement on Defence Exchanges and Security Cooperation signed in 2019. The Shangri-La Dialogue is run by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).

At the Shangri-La Dialogue, those attending typically debate the region’s security challenges, engage in bilateral talks, and come up with fresh approaches together at the dialogue, said the IISS on its website.

# China criticises US plan for trade deal with Taiwan

Beijing (AP): China’s government criticised the United States’ plans to sign a trade treaty with Taiwan and called on Washington on Thursday to stop official contact with the self-ruled island democracy claimed by Beijing as part of its territory. The agreement due to be signed on Thursday comes amid increased Chinese efforts to intimidate Taiwan by flying fighter jets and bombers near the island, a global centre for high-tech industry. American and European politicians have visited Taiwan in a show of support for its elected government.

The Chinese foreign ministry accused Washington of violating agreements on the status of Taiwan, which split with the mainland in 1949 after a civil war. The United States has no official relations with Taiwan but has extensive informal ties and multibillion-dollar annual trade. “The United States should stop any form of official exchanges with Taiwan, refrain from negotiating agreements with Taiwan that have sovereign connotations or official nature and refrain from sending wrong signals to the Taiwan independence secessionist forces,” said a ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning.

# US defence chief calls China’s refusal to meet unfortunate

AP ■ TOKYO

US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin stressed the importance of communication during a stopover Thursday in Tokyo, calling it unfortunate that his Chinese counterpart is refusing to meet him at an upcoming annual security conference in Singapore, which both men are attending.

On the way to the annual Shangri-La Dialogue Asian security summit this weekend, Austin held talks with Japanese Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada. Noting China’s increasingly assertive military actions in international airspace and waterways in the region, he told a joint news conference in Tokyo, “The provocative intercepts of our aircraft and also our allies’ aircraft, that’s very concerning, and we would hope that they would alter their action.”

The United States military said Tuesday that a Chinese fighter jet flew aggressively close to a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft over the South China

Sea, forcing the American pilot to fly through the turbulent wake.

“I’m concerned about at some point having an incident that could very, very quickly spiral out of control,” Austin said. “I would welcome any opportunity to engage with leadership. I think defence departments should be talking to each other on a routine basis or should have open channels for communication.”

Although Beijing said there will be no meeting between Austin and his Chinese counterpart at the security summit, Hamada is expected to attend and meet with Chinese Minister of National Defence Li Shangfu on the sidelines.

Japan and China set up a defence hotline in March to improve communication and avoid accidental encounters in the tense region, and Hamada and Li recently held their first telephone talks on the hotline.

Washington and Beijing have yet to hold such a talk, and when Austin phoned their crisis line in February, the call

went unanswered.

“We need to strengthen our cooperation of Japan-US, and Japan-US-South Korea,” Hamada said Thursday. The two criticized North Korea’s failed rocket launch Wednesday for using ballistic missile technology that’s prohibited under United Nations’ Security Council resolutions, and affirmed further cooperation between them and with South Korea in case of another launch attempt.

Ties between Japan and South Korea have improved rapidly in recent months under Washington’s pressure in the face of growing regional threats from China, North Korea and Russia. Tokyo and Seoul are also discussing real-time sharing of North Korea’s missile launch data.

Austin said the United States stands with Japan and South Korea in the face of Pyongyang’s provocations and that “the United States will take all necessary measures to secure to ensure the security of our homeland in the defence of our allies.”

# Jordan’s crown prince weds scion of Saudi family

AP ■ AMMAN

Jordan’s crown prince married the scion of a prominent Saudi family on Thursday in a palace celebration attended by royals and other VIPs from around the world as massive crowds gathered in a mood of excitement across the kingdom.

The marriage of Crown Prince Hussein, 28, and Saudi architect Rajwa Alseif, 29, drew a star-studded guest list headlined by Britain’s Prince William and his wife Kate and which also included U.S. First Lady Jill Biden.

The celebrations hold deep significance for the region, emphasizing continuity in an Arab state prized for its long-standing stability and refreshing the monarchy’s image after a palace feud. It even could help resource-poor Jordan forge a strategic bond with its oil-rich neighbor, Saudi Arabia.

The bride, wearing an elegant white dress, arrived at Zahran Palace in a 1968 Rolls-Royce Phantom V custom-made for the crown prince’s late great grandmother. The crown prince arrived earlier in full ceremonial military uniform with a gold-hilted saber.

The families and their guests gathered in an open-air gazebo surrounded by landscaped gardens for a traditional Muslim wedding ceremony known as “katb al-ketab.” The crowd erupted in applause after the signing of the marriage contract.

Several miles away, a jolt went through a crowd gathered at an ancient Roman amphitheater as they watched the couple seal their vows and exchange rings on a wide screen set up for the occasion. After several minutes of stillness, thousands were on their feet, waving flags and shrieking with excitement at one of sev-



eral viewing parties held across the nation.

Samara Aqrabawi, a 55-year-old mother watching the livestream with her young daughter, said the ceremony was more impressive than she imagined. “I wish for all mothers and fathers in Jordan and in the world to feel like they’re surely feeling,” she said of the king and queen.

“This is an important day because he is our future king,” said Ahmad al-Masri, an 18-year-old attending with his family. “All of Jordan is watching.”

On Thursday morning, Saudi wedding guests and tourists — the men wearing white dishdashas robes and the women in brightly colored abayas — filtered through the

sleek marbled lobby of the Four Seasons Hotel in Amman. Noura Al Sudairi, an aunt of the bride, was wearing sweatpants and sneakers on her way to breakfast.

“We are all so excited, so happy about this union,” she said. “Of course it’s a beautiful thing for our families, and for the relationship between Jordan and Saudi Arabia.”

Excitement over the nuptials — Jordan’s biggest royal event in years — has been building in the capital of Amman, where congratulatory banners of Hussein and his beaming bride adorn buses and hang over winding hillside streets. Shops had competing displays of royal regalia. Royal watchers speculated about which dress designer Alseif would select — still an official secret. “She looks like such a princess that I think she deserves him,” Suhair Afaneh, a 37-year-old businesswoman,

said of the bride, lingering in front of a portrait of Hussein in a dark suit. “But so what, I’ll still be in love with him.”

She contemplated buying Hussein’s portrait to hang in her bedroom but her nieces persuaded her that her husband might not approve.

Jordan’s 11 million citizens have watched the young crown prince rise in prominence in recent years, as he increasingly joined his father, Abdullah, in public appearances. Hussein has graduated from Georgetown University, joined the military and gained some global recognition speaking at the U.N. General Assembly. His wedding, experts say, marks his next crucial rite of passage.

“It’s not just a marriage, it’s the presentation of the future king of Jordan,” said political analyst Amer Sabailah. “The issue of the crown prince has been closed.”

**LOST & FOUND**  
Notice is hereby given that the Foreign Inward Remittance Certificate (FIRC) numbered 115421TT0002293 dated 18.11.2011 issued by Karnataka Bank limited has been misplaced and is not traceable. Lost document report was filed vide LR No. 501993/2023 on 31.05.2023. The Company is applying for a duplicate FIRC certificate. If found, please send it to 1011-B, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Indraprastha Building 21, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi-110001.

**FOR SPAL Automotive Technologies India Private Limited**  
(Formerly known as "Pee Aar Exim Private Limited")  
(Sd./) **Rahul Hanmant Gropadhyay**  
Place : New Delhi Managing Director  
Date : 01.06.2023 DIN : 09523131

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Be it known to all concerned that the original DDA POSSESSION LETTER NOC FOR WATER AND ELECTRIC CONNECTION AND SITE POSSESSION AND CORRESPONDENCE WITH DDA, in respect of DDA Janta Flat No. L-18H, Pkt. L Shokh Sarai Phase II, New Delhi, has been misplaced and is not traceable, and a report in this regard has also been filed online P.S. : Crime Branch, Delhi having LR No. 5024372023. Any person, Bank, Company, Financial Institution, Firm, Society, Government Sema - Government Organization, legal entity etc., knowing the whereabouts or having in their possession the above mentioned documents may inform Manohar K Vasandani at DDA Janta Flat No. L-18H, Shikhi Sarai Phase II, New Delhi, or my email address : [vasandanimanohar7@gmail.com](mailto:vasandanimanohar7@gmail.com) or my phone no at New Delhi, within 20 days of publication of this Public Notice.

**PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.**  
Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001  
Corporate Identification No. U40109PB2010SGC033813  
website: [www.pspcl.in](http://www.pspcl.in) (Contact No. 96461-20640)

**Tender Enquiry No. 1532/CHP&S/HMMC/O&M/PC-2379 Dated: 01-06-2023**  
Chief Engineer/ O&M (P&P Cell), GHPT, Lehra Mahababat, invites E-tender for the Procurement of Steel Section items, Quantity as per NIT. For detailed NIT and tender specification, please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 01-06-2023 till 17:00 Hrs. onwards.  
**Note:** Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>  
**GHPT-34/23**

**76155/12/1729/2023/24584**  
**Dated CHD - 6/1/2023**

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY**  
**KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND**  
**Corrigendum**

In continuation of the notice published in the various newspapers on 26.05.2023, it is to mention that, instead of walk-in-interview only on dated 14.06.2023 for the post of Clinical Psychology Tutor & Psychiatric Social Work Tutor, the selection process will be done on the basis of written exam (MCQ Based) to be held on 13.06.2023 from 11.30 A.M. onwards followed by Department Assessment on 14.06.2023 from 11.30 A.M. onwards. Details can be seen on the Institute website [www.cipranchi.nic.in](http://www.cipranchi.nic.in).  
**Sd/-Director**

| MY MONEY SECURITIES LTD.   |  |                                  |                                    |                                  |                               |                               |
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| Ph : 011-47087300, 23930655. E-MAIL ID : <a href="mailto:mymoneyviews@outlook.com">mymoneyviews@outlook.com</a>  |  |                                  |                                    |                                  |                               |                               |
| Extract of the Standalone Audited Financial Results for the Quarter and year ended 31st March, 2023 (Rs. in lacs)  |  |                                  |                                    |                                  |                               |                               |
| S. No  | Particulars  | Quarter Ended 31.03.2023 Audited | Quarter Ended 31.12.2022 Unaudited | Quarter Ended 31.03.2022 Audited | Year Ended 31.03.2022 Audited | Year Ended 31.03.2023 Audited |
| 1  | Total income from operations (net)   | 38.06                            | 17.73                              | 27.67                            | 101.51                        | 206.23                        |
| 2  | Net Profit/(Loss) for the period (Before Tax and after exceptional items)  | 16.11                            | (4.79)                             | (4.72)                           | 12.07                         | 100.72                        |
| 3  | Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax (after Extraordinary items)   | 30.38                            | (4.79)                             | 4.21                             | 26.34                         | 93.15                         |
| 4  | Total comprehensive Income for the period (comprising profit/(loss) for the period after tax and other comprehensive income after tax) | 30.38                            | (4.79)                             | 4.21                             | 26.34                         | 93.15                         |
| 5  | Equity Share Capital   | 1630.03                          | 1440.03                            | 1440.03                          | 1630.03                       | 1440.03                       |
| 6  | Earning per share (before extraordinary items) (of Rs. 10/- each)  | 0.186                            | (0.033)                            | 0.029                            | 0.162                         | 0.647                         |
|  | Basic Diluted  | 0.184                            | (0.029)                            | 0.025                            | 0.157                         | 0.554                         |
| 7  | Earning per share (after extraordinary items) (of Rs. 10/- each)   | 0.186                            | (0.033)                            | 0.029                            | 0.162                         | 0.647                         |
|  | Basic Diluted  | 0.184                            | (0.029)                            | 0.025                            | 0.157                         | 0.554                         |
| <b>Note:</b> The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly/Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/Annual Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange websites ( <a href="http://www.bseindia.com">www.bseindia.com</a> ) and company website <a href="http://www.mymoneyviews.com">www.mymoneyviews.com</a> For and on behalf of the Board of Directors |  |                                  |                                    |                                  |                               |                               |
| Place : Delhi  |  |                                  |                                    |                                  | Sanjay Seth                   |                               |
| Dated : 30/05/2023   |  |                                  |                                    |                                  | Whole Time Director           |                               |
|  |  |                                  |                                    |                                  | DIN : 00350518                |                               |

# GST mop-up crosses ₹1.5 lakh crore for third month in a row

Up 12% in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST collections crossed Rs 1.50 lakh crore for the third month in a row, recording a 12 per cent increase in May at over Rs 1.57 lakh crore, according to the official data released on Thursday.

The collections, tax experts said, reflects a continuation of the good economic performance across states witnessed since last year.

The gross Good & Services Tax (GST) revenue collected in the month of May, 2023 is Rs 1,57,090 crore of which Central GST is Rs 28,411 crore, State GST is Rs 35,828 crore, Integrated GST is Rs 81,363 crore (including Rs 41,772 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is Rs 11,489 crore (including Rs 1,057 crore collected on import of goods), a finance ministry statement said.

"The revenues for the month of May 2023 are 12 per



cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year," the ministry said.

During the month, revenue from import of goods was 12 per cent higher and the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) are 11 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month

last year.

May is the third month in a row that tax collections from goods sold and services rendered have crossed Rs 1.50 lakh crore. In April GST revenues had touched a record high of Rs 1.87 lakh crore, while in March it was Rs 1.60 lakh crore.

May is the 14th month in

a row when monthly GST revenues came in more than Rs 1.4 lakh crore. Collections have crossed the Rs 1.5 lakh crore-mark for the 5th time since the implementation of GST on July 1, 2017.

KPMG in India National Head (Indirect Taxes) Abhishek Jain said the GST collection matches with the government

budget estimates for this fiscal.

"With extensive department GST audits lined up before September 2023, these figures may likely go up from here in the months to come," Jain added.

Deloitte India Partner M S Mani said these collections, while being lower than the previous year-end month, pertain to supply transactions undertaken in April.

"While the collections in absolute terms are lower than the previous month -- which had an embedded year-end impact -- it reflects a continuation of the inherently good economic performance across states witnessed since last year," Mani added.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said GST revenues in May 2023 have modestly exceeded expectations.

"Over the next few months, we expect GST revenues to print at Rs 1.55-1.65 trillion and record an expansion of 10-11 per cent in YoY terms, broadly in line with the nominal GDP growth expected in FY2024," Nayar said.

EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said GST collection figures for May 2023 further strengthen the belief in India's macroeconomic stability and continued growth momentum as we see a 12 per cent YoY growth.

"While the figures are comparatively moderate as compared to collections of April, however that's primarily on account of last fiscal year closure activities getting accumulated and accounted for in the collections of last month," Agarwal said.

Tax Connect Advisory Partner Vivek Jalan said the budget 2023 has projected an uptick of 12 per cent in GST collections in FY23-24 vis-a-vis last financial year.

Although GST from import of goods and services has shown a growth of 12 per cent this month vis-a-vis last month, the collection from domestic transactions has shown a growth of 11 per cent which is below the budget expectations, which maybe a point for the GST Council to ponder upon, Jalan added.



## Sebi to auction properties of 7 business groups

### On June 28 to recover investors' money

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday said it will auction 17 properties belonging to seven business groups including MPS Group, Tower Infotech, and Vibgyor Group on June 28, with a total reserve price of Rs 51 crore, in a bid to recover investors' money.

Apart from these, the regulator has put on block properties of Prayag Group, Multipurpose BIOS India Group, Waris Finance International Group and Pailan Group of companies, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notice.

The 17 properties being auctioned include land parcels, storied buildings, flats, and a commercial space situated across West Bengal.

Inviting bids, Sebi said auction of the properties will be conducted through online mode between 11 am and 1 pm. Further, total reserve price has been pegged at Rs 51 crore for the assets and Quikr Realty has been engaged by Sebi to assist in the sale of these properties.

Of the total properties to be auctioned, five belong to MPS Group, four relate to Vibgyor, three pertain to Pailan Group of companies, two belong to Tower Infotech and one each to Multipurpose BIOS India Group, Prayag Group and Waris Finance.

The regulator said the bid-

ders should make their own independent enquiries regarding encumbrances, title of properties put on action and claims, among others prior to submitting their bids.

These firms had raised funds from investors without complying with regulatory norms, which prompted Sebi to take action.

Earlier, the regulator had attached some of their properties after directives asking them to refund investors' money along with interest did not materialise. In these matters, the markets regulator had also attached demat and bank accounts.

Going by the Sebi orders, MPS Group of companies includes MPS Greenery Developers that collected Rs 1,520 crore from investors through illegal Collective Investment Schemes (CIS).

Prayag Infotech had made an offer of redeemable preference shares between 2007-2008 and 2011-12 and mobilised at least Rs 131.37 crore from over 1.57 lakh investors.

Vibgyor Allied Infrastructure had issued optionally fully convertible debentures to 49,562 investors in 2009 and raised Rs 61.76 crore.

Tower Infotech had raised nearly Rs 46 crore from more than 49,000 investors through issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) and redeemable preference shares between 2005 and 2010.



## Markets extend losses for 2nd day in highly volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower in highly volatile trade on Thursday due to selling in banking, metal and energy counters amid a mixed trend in the global markets.

Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 193.70 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 62,428.54 even after a positive beginning. During the day, it fell 263.1 points or 0.42 per cent to 62,359.14.

The NSE Nifty fell 46.65 points or 0.25 per cent to finish at 18,487.75.

"Despite challenges in the global economies, the domestic market displayed better than estimated Q4 earnings growth, along with 7.2 per cent GDP growth in FY23, adding buoyancy to the market during the week.

"However, today the market closed with a marginal negative bias in which banks witnessed heavy profit-booking. Investors turned cautious in anticipation of inflationary pressure in the US after raising the US debt ceiling," said

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel fell 3.42 and Kotak Mahindra Bank declined 3.31 per cent. ICICI Bank, ITC, HDFC Bank, UltraTech Cement, HCL Technologies and Maruti were the other major laggards.

Tata Motors, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma, Nestle, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers.

Meanwhile, S&P Global Ratings said Reliance Industries Ltd's operating performance is likely to remain resilient over the next two years, as the firm's growing presence in the digital and retail segments will temper softer earnings in the energy business.

Reliance shares fell 0.51 per cent to close at Rs 2,462.05 apiece on BSE.

Institutional investors lapped up Coal India's share in the maiden government's stake sale this fiscal, with Rs 6,500 crore bids pouring in on the first day of the offer for sale.

## Coal India output grows 9.5% to record 60 MT in May; offtake rises 4% to 63.7 MT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) has reported a 9.5 per cent year-on-year rise in monthly production to a record 60 million tonne (MT) in May 2023. The miner, along with its subsidiaries, had produced 54.7 MT of coal in the same month last year, CIL said in a statement on Thursday.

"CIL's May 2023 production rose to a record 60 MT, logging 9.5 per cent growth over the same month last year with an increase of 5.2 MT. Considering the production for May generally hovers in the range of 40-



48 MT, the CIL output surge in the current fiscal's May was substantial. All the subsidiaries have listed positive growth," the statement said.

Progressive production in April-May 2023 was 117.5 MT, 8.6 per cent higher from 108.2 MT in the year-ago period.

## Rising risk appetite may affect some banks' intrinsic credit profiles: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A rise in risk appetite among Indian banks highlights the importance of assessing individual banks' ability to withstand expected and unexpected balance-sheet stress as part of the analysis of their intrinsic creditworthiness, said Fitch Ratings in a report.

Banks' loan growth over the financial year ended March 2023 (FY23) reached 15.4 per cent, the highest since FY12.

"We believe, this partly reflected pent-up credit demand following the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as strong nominal GDP growth, and we expect some normalisation in FY24," the global rating agency said on Thursday.



However, rapid loan growth and higher exposure to certain asset classes are also likely to indicate greater risk appetite and could affect risk profiles, it said, adding increasing risk appetite reflects in part banks' efforts to boost returns after funding costs rose over 2022, even as they manage asset growth relative to capital.

Notably, credit card lending and personal loans exposure rose to 10.2 per cent of system loans by FY23, from 7.5 per cent

in FY18, it said.

"We view such unsecured categories as most vulnerable to potential stress, though exposures among our rated entities remain manageable, and improvements in risk controls and loan-book granularity should help to reduce risks associated with any future asset-quality deterioration relative to previous cycles. We also expect tighter regulatory supervision to slow unsecured lending in the year ahead," it said.

## Shareholders to take call on listing: Future Generali India MD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Future Generali India Insurance has been profitable since 2014 but the decision to list the company on exchanges would be taken by shareholders, managing director Anup Rau said on Thursday.

Future Generali India Insurance Company Limited is a joint venture between the Generali Group with a majority 74 per cent stake, and remaining with the Future Group.

India continues to be most attractive market for insurance players and premium for general insurance segment is expected to grow at 20 per cent in the next few years, he said.

Meanwhile, private general insurer announced the launch of its new health insurance product - DIY Health - which offers flexibility and freedom to choose the coverage as per the customers' needs.

This comprehensive product celebrates the power of choice, offering a base plan with 17 base features, complemented with a wide array of 20 modular features.

This modular health insurance product would enable customers to not only choose the most relevant features as per their life needs but also enables them to further tweak or modify the policies annually, ensuring their health insurance remains as unique and special as they are, he said.



## TCS, Reliance, Jio top best Indian brands 2023 ranking

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Technology giant TCS and India's most valuable company Reliance Industries have topped the list of the country's most valuable brands, according to Interbrand, the renowned global brand consultancy.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) topped the 2023 50 Most Valuable Indian Brands list with a brand value of Rs 1.09 lakh crore.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd is at No.2 spot with a brand value of Rs 65,320 crore. His group's telecom and digital unit Jio is also in the top 5 with a brand value of Rs 49,027 crore. "Celebrating its 10th year, the Best Indian Brands report has become a definitive guide to the nation's brand landscape since its inaugural publication in 2014," Interbrand said.

This year's edition showcases remarkable growth, with a total list value of Rs 8.3 lakh crore (USD 100 billion), marking a significant 167 per cent increase over the past decade. This is the first time the total value of the table has surpassed the USD 100 billion mark.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa at CBRE, said, "As we look ahead, the intersection of real estate and the EV sector presents exciting opportunities and challenges.

### BUSINESS BRIEF

#### RDSS FOR NDMC APPROVED

**NEW DELHI:** Ministry of Power (MoP) has approved Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) for the NDMC area of New Delhi with a project cost of Rs 337 cr. The agreement was signed by Saurav Shah, ED-PFC and Dr. Ankita Chakravartty, Secretary, NDMC in the presence of senior officials of both PFC and NDMC.

#### NFL RECORDS HIGHEST-EVER PROFIT

**NOIDA:** National Fertilizers Limited (NFL) has achieved its best-ever operational performance by setting new records of Production, Sales, Turnover and Profit during the financial year 2022-23. The results of Company for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2023 were approved by the Board in its meeting on May 29, 2023.

#### PREVENTIVE VIGILANCE WORKSHOP HELD

**NEW DELHI:** A three-day Workshop on Preventive Vigilance was conducted at Mussoorie from May 24-26 for E2-E7 Level. The participants were from NRTS-I, NRTS-II and NR-III. The Workshop was inaugurated in a traditional manner by Dharmendra Kumar Madan, CVO, POWERGRID by lighting the Lamp. V K Singh, Director (Personnel), A K Mishra, ED (NR-1) and others were present.

#### DHILLON, CMD, PFC BAGS AWARD

**NEW DELHI:** Ravinder Singh Dhillon, Chairman & Managing Director of Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC), a Maharatna Company and India's leading NBFC in the power sector, was conferred with the prestigious "SKOCH INDIA ECONOMIC FORUM AWARD" in recognition of his stellar leadership, path-breaking energy transition initiatives, remarkable achievements and contribution to the accelerated development of the Power Sector.

#### POWERGRID DISTRIBUTES COTTON BAGS

**NEW DELHI:** As a part of Swachhhta Pakhwada action plan, and to contribute towards Swachh Bharat Mission launched by Prime Minister, POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED (POWERGRID) distributed cotton bags to the general public at Bahu Plaza, Jammu on May 31, 2023.

## Gold falls by ₹150 to ₹60,250; silver jumps ₹150

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices eased Rs 150 to Rs 60,250 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a fall in yellow metal price overseas, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had ended at Rs 60,400 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver, however, jumped Rs 150 to Rs 72,900 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 60,250/10 grams, down Rs 150 per 10 grams," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, gold was quoting lower



at USD 1,955 per ounce, while silver was marginally up at USD 23.27 per ounce.

Comex gold prices edged lower in Asian trading hours on Thursday as the dollar and bond yields rebounded from lows in Wednesday's session, Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities, said.

## Rupee rises 33 paise to close at 82.42 against US dollar

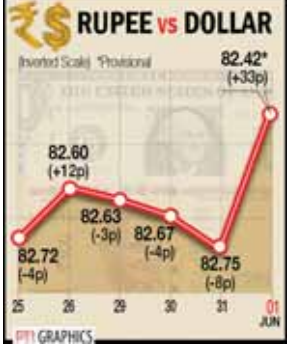
PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 33 paise to close at 82.42 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as positive macroeconomic data strengthened investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.54 against the US dollar and settled at 82.42 (provisional), up 33 paise over its previous close amid sustained foreign fund inflows.

During the day, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 82.36 and a low of 82.54.

On Wednesday, the rupee closed at 82.75 against the US currency.



The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.20 per cent to 104.12.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures advanced 0.17 per cent to USD 72.72 per

## E-vehicle makers require 13 mn sq ft real estate space by 2030

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Electric vehicle manufacturers will need around 13 million square feet of real estate space by 2030 to make targeted 23 million units of two-wheelers and 4 million units of four-wheelers, according to CBRE.

Real estate consultant

CBRE South Asia released a report, 'Electric Vehicles in India - New Wheels on the Roads', on Thursday that focuses on the trends, growth, and influence of electric vehicles (EVs) on the real estate sector in India.

"Real estate requirements of manufacturing facilities of 4-wheeler and 2-wheeler (4W

and 2W) electric vehicles is estimated to be around 13 million square feet by 2030 as a result of the government's EV adoption targets," it said.

Moreover, EV battery manufacturing facilities would require 2,400 acre of land to accommodate the production of 200 GWh of batteries by 2030.

By 2030, this real estate requirement will allow a production capacity of about 4 million units of 4Ws and 23 million units of 2Ws.

The Indian EV market is expected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 49 per cent between 2021-2030 and cross annual sales of 17 million

units by 2030. The consultant noted Built-to-Suit (BTS) and leased facilities are largely preferred by EV manufacturers at present due to ease of capital deployment, flexibility in lease terms, speed to market and location advantages. However, an owned facility provides more scope for customisation, save monthly rental outgoings

and has better prospects for land price appreciation, it added.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa at CBRE, said, "As we look ahead, the intersection of real estate and the EV sector presents exciting opportunities and challenges.

# SEVILLA END SEASON WITH EUROPA LEAGUE TITLE

AP ■ MADRID

It was the usual ending for Sevilla in an unusual season for the Spanish soccer club. Sevilla won the Europa League trophy yet again on Thursday after a season in which it went through coaching changes and had to fight just to avoid relegation in the Spanish league.

The team's struggles were quickly forgotten with its victory on penalties over Roma in the Europa League final on Wednesday in Budapest, which gave the club a record seventh title in the second-tier European competition.

What looked like a season to forget turned into triumph after another impressive campaign by the Spanish club in the competition where it has been dominant in recent years. Five of its titles came within the last 10



years — 2014-16, 2020 and 2023.

This time, Sevilla eliminated European powerhouses Manchester United in the quarterfinals and Juventus in the

semifinals. It had gotten past Fenerbahce and PSV Eindhoven in previous rounds.

On Wednesday, the team beat José Mourinho-coached Roma 4-1 in a penalty shootout

after a 1-1 draw.

Sevilla's turnaround this season came after the club decided to replace Jorge Sampaoli with José Luis Mendilibar in March. Before Mendilibar arrived, the

team had won only twice in eight games in all competitions, with five losses. Since he took over, Sevilla lost only twice in 16 games.

"I'm happy to be here, to have won for the club, which was having a hard time when we got here," Mendilibar said. "We have done something good that can have repercussions for the good of the club."

The coach who had spent a large part of his career with Eibar came on a contract until the end of the season but was expected to stay with Sevilla following his successful stint.

"He transformed us," said Sevilla defender Jesús Navas, the only player from the current squad who was with the club when it won the Europa League title for the first time in 2006. "He got the best out of us and the result is there. He deserves to be with this club for a long time."

Sampaoli had taken over for Julen Lopetegui after the team's unusually poor start to the season. Sevilla had finished fourth in the league the last three seasons, only behind powerhouses Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid.

This time it is sitting in 11th place entering its final match at Real Sociedad on Sunday, and will only make it to the Champions League again next season thanks to its Europa League title.

Sevilla made it to the Champions League quarterfinals in 2018, but since then had only once advanced past the group stage.

Having to play in the second-tier Europa League has certainly turned out OK for Sevilla, though, and on Thursday it will be parading to celebrate yet another European title with its fans.



## Neville backs City

AP ■ MANCHESTER

As a part of Manchester United's treble-winning team of 1999, Gary Neville admits he is in fear ahead of Saturday's FA Cup final.

United is the only team to win the three major trophies in a single English soccer season — the Premier League title, Champions League and FA Cup.

Now Manchester City is in contention to replicate that feat, having already secured the league title.

City has the chance to win its second trophy this season when it faces United in the FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium, which would set up a possible treble when the team coached by Pep Guardiola meets Inter Milan in the Champions League final in Istanbul on June 10.

"I do fear it is on the cards," Neville told The Associated Press. "City have not got there yet, but they look like they are on the way, on the path. They've got a great manager, they've got great players, but they've still got to get over the line. Anything can happen and we just pray and (have our) fingers crossed. It doesn't bear thinking about."

City has overtaken United as English soccer's dominant team over the past decade and has just won its fifth league title in six years. But the club has yet to match United's greatest ever achievement, and has yet to ever win the European title.

And now United has the chance to end its rival's trophy pursuit at Wembley on Saturday.

United manager Erik ten Hag has enjoyed an impressive first season in charge, having led United to success in the League Cup in February, as well securing a return to the Champions League next season. But Neville still considers City the favorite in the final.

"I think they will almost be disappointed now if they don't win it (the treble)," Neville said. "They'll be expected to win every game. The Cup final might present an issue or two, it is Manchester United, but they are far better than the teams they've got left to play."

City put together an unstoppable run to win the title and has blown away some of the best teams at home and abroad in its charge toward the treble. Liverpool and Arsenal were beaten 4-1 and Real Madrid lost 4-0 at Etihad Stadium in the Champions League semifinals.

Former City women's player Jill Scott believes City will be too strong for United.

"I went to the Arsenal game and it could have been 7-0," she told the AP. "The football they played was incredible."

"I can't see City not coming away with that FA Cup win. Sometimes in a one-off game anything can happen, but I just think they will be far superior."

## United looking to stop treble-chasing City

AP ■ LONDON

The roars grew louder inside Old Trafford as Erik ten Hag addressed Manchester United fans from the middle of the field, reminding them of the role they have in protecting the club's greatest ever achievement.

There was one game to go this season, the United manager told the baying crowd, and his players standing right in front of him were ready to give their all to beat Manchester City in the FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium.

"We count on you as well," he said, pointing to the supporters, who by now were punching the air in defiance. "They will give everything when you are at our backs, and I'm sure we've a really good chance to take the cup back to Old Trafford."

As rallying cries go, it was pretty much pitch perfect from Ten Hag, who knows exactly what's at stake on Saturday in a local derby with widespread repercussions.

For United, this is about much more than capturing a second trophy of the season — after the English League Cup in February that ended the club's six-year title drought — to cap an encouraging first season under Ten Hag. It's also about preserving United's proud status as the only English team to have won the league-FA Cup-European Cup treble in the same season.

City, after all, is two wins from emulating that feat, having already clinched the Premier League title and booked its place in the Champions League final against Inter Milan in Istanbul on June 10.

That United can ruin City's treble bid adds more spice to the first cup final between the rivals, which is taking place about 170 miles (270 kilometers) south of Manchester.

City starts as the undoubted favorite on the back of its stunning form since February that reeled in long-time leader Arsenal in the Premier League race and saw Bayern Munich



and Real Madrid swept aside in the Champions League knockout stage.

Before a much-weakened team — featuring a bunch of youth players — lost at Brentford 1-0 in a league match with little riding on it last Sunday, City went on a 25-match unbeaten run in all competitions and won 20 of them. Along the way, Madrid was beaten 4-0, Bayern 3-0 and Arsenal 4-1. Back in October, City thrashed United 6-3.

All those games were at home, though, and City hasn't been quite so machine-like on the road. And that's not the only source of hope for United, which is seeking its 13th FA Cup title — with only Arsenal (14) having more.

City manager Pep Guardiola talks often of his players having "rhythm" but that might have been lost after he chose to rotate his lineups for the final two league games, with the title wrapped up. Before the loss at Brentford, City was possibly fortunate to come away from Brighton with a 1-1 draw.

Erling Haaland has 52 goals in all competitions in a stunning first season at City but it's just one goal in his last six games for the Norway striker.

Meanwhile, United won its final four matches in the league, conceding just two goals in that period. And in the last meeting between the teams, United won at Old Trafford 2-1 in January — albeit after a debatable equalizing goal from Marcus Rashford.

## Sabalenka refuses to take questions on Ukraine war

AP ■ PARIS

Aryna Sabalenka, a Belarusian tennis player seeded No. 2 at the French Open, declined to answer questions about Russia's invasion of Ukraine after she won a match on Wednesday.

After her first-round win Sunday, Sabalenka had said no Russian or Belarusian athletes support the war, but she was asked Wednesday to personally condemn Belarus' role in supporting Russia's invasion.

"I've got no comments to you," the Australian Open champion said in a press conference after her 7-5, 6-2 victory over



Iryna Shymanovich in the second round at the Grand Slam tournament.

Sabalenka's first-round opponent, Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine, had urged reporters to ask the 25-year-old Sabalenka if she personally supports or

opposes the war.

Sabalenka was asked — in the context of potentially becoming the world's No. 1 player — about whether she supports Belarus' authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko. "I have no comments to

you, so thank you for your question," she replied.

Next was the question about Belarus' role in the war.

When a third question was posed, the moderator stepped in, and Sabalenka added: "You've got enough answers from me, and I've got no comments to you." On Sunday, Kostyuk had refused to shake hands with Sabalenka after their match on Court Philippe Chatrier.

After that match, Sabalenka said: "Nobody in this world, Russian athletes or Belarusian athletes, support the war. Nobody. How can we support the war? Nobody — normal people — will never support it."

## Gael Monfils withdraws with wrist injury

AP ■ PARIS

A thrilling five-set victory took a toll on Gael Monfils, whose withdrawal from the French Open handed No. 6 Holger Rune a walkover to the third round.

The 36-year-old Frenchman said he has a strained left wrist and can't continue.

He battled Sebastian Baez for nearly four hours on Court Philippe Chatrier before beating the Argentine 3-6, 6-3, 7-5, 1-6, 7-5 in a first-round match that ended at 12:18 a.m. local time Wednesday.

The victory was Monfils' first at tour level this year, as the veteran was coming back from heel surgery.

"Actually, physically, I'm quite fine. But I had the problem with my wrist that I cannot solve," he said. "The doctor say was not good to play with that type of injury. Yesterday was actually very risky, and then today definitely say I should stop."

Monfils reached the semifinals at the French Open in 2008 and made it to the quarterfinals on three other occasions.

## French Open hopes AI can help players block death threats, hate

AP ■ PARIS

Frances Tiafoe says he receives death threats via social media after he loses professional tennis matches. Jessica Pegula says the same. So does Donna Vekic — directed at just her or her family, too.

"Everybody gets them after a loss," said Tiafoe, a 25-year-old from Maryland who was scheduled to play in the French Open's second round on Thursday and was a semifinalist at last year's US Open.

"It's just how society is today. I know how that affects people's mental health. That's very real."

Sloane Stephens, the 2017 champion at Flushing Meadows and 2018 runner-up at Roland Garros, says she often deals with racist messages directed at her online, and said some prompted the FBI to investigate.

"It's obviously been a problem my entire career. It has never stopped," said Stephens, who is Black. "If anything, it's only gotten worse."

In a bid to try to protect athletes from that sort of abuse at Roland Garros during the 15-day Grand Slam tournament that ends June 11, the French Tennis Federation (FFT) is paying a company to provide play-



ers with software that uses artificial intelligence to block these sorts of negative comments.

Every contestant in every category — singles, doubles, juniors, wheelchair competitors and so on, for a total of around 700 to 800 — is allowed free access to Bodyguard.ai for use on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. A few dozen players had signed up for the service as of the start of this week, according to Bodyguard.

"This is really important for us: for the players to be very comfortable and be able to focus on the competition. Tennis is mental. It's really what you have in your mind that counts; you're making 1,000 decisions during a match," said FFT CEO

Caroline Flaissier, who put the cost to the federation at somewhere between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

"We know that there is a lot of cyberbullying," she said. "We have to address that major issue, so we thought let's do a test."

That includes monitoring social media used by the FFT and the French Open itself. An FFT spokeswoman said Wednesday that 4,500 messages had been deleted out of the 79,000 received on those accounts since May 21.

Yann Guerin, head of sports for Nice-based Bodyguard, said the company's software — which is constantly updated by employees who might notice new words or emojis that should be part of

the screening — needs less than 100 milliseconds to analyze a comment and delete it if it's "hateful or undesirable." He cited the example of one player who participated in qualifying rounds last week, before the start of the tournament proper.

"He lost ... so he was disappointed. Then he checked his phone and was like, 'Whoa,'" Guerin said, estimating that more than 70% of the comments that athlete received would fall under the heading of "toxicity." "Very bad," Guerin said. "Not bad. VERY bad."

That's nothing out of the ordinary, according to players.

"It's a big issue in tennis. We get these stupid and abusive comments all the time. And to be honest, we are tired of it," said Daria Kasatkina, a 26-year-old from Russia who was a 2022 semifinalist in Paris. "People just do that and they don't get punished. Nothing. Only we suffer from reading all of this (expletive)."

Several players, from various countries, described distasteful messages arriving via apps.

Usually accounts are flooded after a defeat — often, they say, from gamblers disappointed to lose money wagering on a match.



## Novak Djokovic moves on from Kosovo comments

AP ■ PARIS

Novak Djokovic sure seemed like someone ready to move on from the latest non-tennis issue he's been involved in during a Grand Slam tournament. Criticised after his previous match for comments about clashes in northern Kosovo between ethnic Serbs and NATO-led peacekeepers, the 22-time major champion stayed away from political matters on Wednesday night.

When his 7-6 (2), 6-0, 6-3 victory over Marton Fucsovics in the second round of the French Open ended, Djokovic, a 36-year-old from Serbia, wrote on the lens of a TV camera — a custom at more and more tennis tournaments — and kept it simple, with an autograph and a smiley face.

It was quite different from what happened after his win Monday, when Djokovic drew attention for writing in Serbian, "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia. Stop the violence," and then speaking out about the matter at a news conference with reporters from his home country.

That drew rebukes from a member of France's government, French Open tournament director Amelie Mauresmo and the Kosovo tennis federation.

Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera warned Djokovic over Wednesday morning not to wade into such international issues again at Roland Garros, saying his comments were "not appropriate." Speaking on TV station France 2, Oudea-Castera said Mauresmo encouraged Djokovic and his entourage to maintain "neutrality" on the field of play.

Asked about Oudea-Castera and Mauresmo, Djokovic responded: "I have no more comment on that. I said what I needed to say."

## Russian Olympic cycling medalists barred from races

AP ■ AIGLE (SWITZERLAND)

Two Russian track cyclists who won medals at the Tokyo Olympics were ruled ineligible to race Wednesday for breaching rules monitoring their neutrality during the war on Ukraine.

Anastasiya Voinova and Mariya Novolodskaya cannot race in International Cycling Union (UCI) events from Thursday, the governing body said in a document posted on its website. The world championships are held in August in Glasgow, Scotland.

"This ineligibility will apply for as long as the ad hoc rules regarding Russia and Belarus remain in force," the UCI said in the document without detailing the breaches.

A rules update published May 3 takes effect Thursday and specifies "the strictest neutrali-



ty towards the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus at any time since the beginning of the war in Ukraine is required" to race in UCI events.

The UCI can deny neutral status to riders or officials "who are or have been contracted to the Russian or Belarusian military" or who have shown support for the war in interviews or social media posts. Taking part

in pro-war demonstrations or displaying the "Z" symbol that is associated with the invasion of Ukraine also should be disqualifying.

At the Olympics held in 2021, Voinova took bronze in women's team sprint on the track after getting silver in the event at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. The 30-year-old racer is also a multiple world champion.

## Harjai Milkha leads, Nihal second

PTI ■ EDINBURGH

Harjai Milkha Singh proved he is a chip of the old block as he finished strongly with three birdies in the last five holes to card 2-under 70 and take sole lead in Boys 13 category of the US Kids Golf European Championship here.

Playing in extremely cold and freezing conditions, Harjai, son of Indian golf legend Jeev Milkha Singh, and grandson of the Olympic icon the late Milkha Singh, leads at 2-under 142.

With rounds of 72-70, he is two ahead of three others at tied second.

The Indians, who gained an entry into the event after solid showings on local Tours, had another fine day at the highly competitive European Championship.

While Harjai is in sole lead in Boy's 13, Nihal Cheema, the youngest member of the 16-strong Indian squad, is tied-second in Boys under-7. Bengaluru's Adit

Veeramachaneni is sole third in Boy's 9 section, and Vihaan Jain is tied-fifth in the Boy's 13 competition.

All three Indian girls figured in top-seven. First day co-leader Mahreen Bhatia slipped to tied third with a 75 in Girl's 13-14 category at the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club.

Naina Kapoor (81-85) rose to tied-fifth in the Girl's 11 section but Ananyaa Sood (77-75) slipped from tied-sixth to seventh in Girl's 12.

In Boy's 13, one of the most competitive sections, Harjai was 2-over after seven holes with one birdie and three bogeys, but a birdie on eighth saw him turn in one-over.

On the back nine, Harjai was in full flow as he birdied three times in last five holes. The birdies came on 14th, 15th and 17th holes. With one more round to go Chandigarh golfer is two ahead of American Colin McAskin (73-71), South Africa's Jordan Botha (75-69) and England's Kodi Dean of (77-67).

## Thailand Open: Kiran moves to QFs, Ashmita bows out

PTI ■ BANGKOK

India's Kiran George continued his good run as he cruised into the quarterfinals of the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament, beating world number 26 China's Weng Hong Yang in straight games here on Thursday.

Kiran, the world number 59, took 39 minutes to beat his higher-ranked Chinese opponent 21-11, 21-19 in the men's singles round of 16 clash.

It is the first time that Kiran has reached the quarterfinal at a BWF World Tour Super 500 event.

The 2022 Odisha Open winner will face the winner of the match between Ng Ka Long Angus of Hong Kong and Toma Junior Popov of France in last eight clash on Friday.

However, it was the end of the road for 23-year-old Ashmita Chaliha, who went down 18-21



13-21 to former Olympic and three-time World Champion Carolina Marin of Spain.

Later in the day, Saina Nehwal, Lakshya Sen and the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will play their respective pre-quarterfinals.

The BWF World Tour is divided into six levels, namely World Tour Finals, four Super 1000, six Super 750, seven Super 500, and 11 Super 300 in order. One other category of tournament, the BWF Tour Super 100 level, also offers ranking points.

# WE ARE USED TO DUKES BALL: AXAR



PTI ■ PORTSMOUTH

Switching from playing T20s to the longest format of the game is difficult but practising with the red ball through the IPL will help in the tough transition at the World Test Championship final against Australia, feels India all-rounder Axar Patel.

Most members of the Indian team head to the marquee event after playing T20 cricket in the IPL for over two months.

Additionally, while the SG balls are used to play the red-ball format in India, the Dukes ball will be used for the WTC final.

However, India are well prepared for the twin challenges. To familiarise themselves with the Dukes ball, which is used in English conditions, the 'Men in Blue' have been working with it.

"We knew about this before the start of the IPL. So even dur-

ing the IPL, it was discussed that we will bowl with the red ball," Axar told ICC.

"We had red balls, so we were using them. You know when and how to play, how much time you have. This mental switch from white ball to red ball is obviously tough, but we have enough time," Axar added.

The left-arm spinner, however, said that the focus is on hitting the right spot irrespective of the ball used.

"We switch from white ball to red ball. It is a similar switch to go from SG to Dukes, you have to use your talent and skill. You have to execute your plan, your bowling rhythm. Irrespective of the ball, if you bowl a good ball at a good spot, it works.

"So, that's what we're doing. Since the match is in England, which is different from India, we are planning what lines and

lengths will work here. The same thing in practice, we are good to go."

The first batch of Indian players, including the likes of Virat Kohli and Axar, landed in London early last week and have been preparing for the final, scheduled to be held at The Oval from June 7 to 11.

"Those who did not qualify (for IPL Playoffs) got more time. So I don't think there will be many problems because we have had a good time to prepare." "The difference is the Dukes ball remains shinier for longer. But during the IPL, we had ordered the ball, so were practising with it and have gotten used to it," Axar said.

The Indian team will also have to quickly adapt to the relatively cooler conditions in England, having played the IPL in sweltering heat.

"We came after playing IPL,

where it was 40-45 degrees in India. After that it feels great here. We have taken out our winter clothes and are roaming around wearing jumpers. It's also a bit windy. Whenever we come to the UK, we enjoy the weather. It remains a little cool, there is no heat."

In stark contrast to India's spin-friendly pitches, the conditions in England are more suited to swing bowling.

"Obviously, the conditions in India and England are different. The fast bowlers have more of a role here. In India, spinners play a more important role," Axar said. "The conditions are the same for both teams. In England, the wind assists swing bowling and offers good bounce if you bowl at the right spots.

"The team is getting together slowly, so the planning will go on. We'll leave the planning to our bowling coach."

# Oz need to be wary of Pujara, Kohli: Ponting

PTI ■ LONDON

Australia will have to guard against the "thorn in their side" Cheteshwar Pujara and a "back at his best" Virat Kohli if they are to counter India in the World Test Championship final at The Oval next week, feels legendary cricketer Ricky Ponting.

India's Test batting mainstay Pujara could provide valuable insights to his teammates, having played extensively at Sussex in the English County Championship, while Kohli is at his absolute best having cracked two centuries and six half-tens for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the recently-concluded Indian Premier League.

"The Australian team will be talking about Virat, no doubt about it, and they'll be talking about Pujara. They're the two," Ponting said on 'The ICC Review'.

Pujara is known to relish the challenges thrown at him by Australian bowlers, having scored more Test runs and centuries against them than any other side, and his contribution would be crucial to India's chances of lifting the WTC trophy in their second attempt.

"Pujara has been a thorn in their side a lot in the past, and in Australia, and this wicket will potentially be a lot more like an Australian pitch. They know that they'll have to get him early," opined the former Australian captain.

Pujara, who bats at No. 3, has 2,033 runs and five centuries in 24 Tests against Australia, and skipper Rohit Sharma will hope he makes a couple of more vital contributions for the side in the



WTC final.

Kohli, apart from his sparkling form in the IPL, had smashed 186 in the fourth Test against Australia in March during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and would be itching to have a go at the Pat Cummins-led side.

"They also know that Virat over the last few weeks is probably just about back to his absolute best, albeit in T20 cricket. He told me that the feeling he's getting right now is that he's almost back to his best, and that's an ominous warning for the Australians going into a one-off game," said Ponting.

Ponting is also mightily impressed with young Shubman Gill's performance in the IPL and the 23-year-old's exploits in the last two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar series.

Gill hit three centuries for Gujarat Titans in IPL. "He looks like a terrific young guy. He's got that bit of attitude about him as

well. He's got a bit of swagger. He has some serious class. That sort of front-foot pull shot that he plays against the fast bowlers will be a shot that he'll probably need against this Australian attack," said Ponting.

With the pace bowlers likely to do a lot of heavy lifting during the one-off Test, Ponting believes veteran Mohammed Shami will have to be at his absolute best against the strong Australian batting lineup, given that Jasprit Bumrah is not in the frame owing to injury.

"I think he has to step up or try and take his game to another level if India are going to win this game. When you talk to the Australian batters as well, they understand how good Shami is whether it's new ball or old ball, whether it's in Australia or India.

"They know the skillset he's got and how dangerous he can be. It's going to have to be him," added Ponting.



## Australia head into the WTC final against India wary of their dismal Oval record

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

As Australia begin preparations for the World Test Championship final against India, the men from Down Under would be eager to put their past struggles at The Oval behind them.

In over 140 years of Test cricket in England, Australia have had one of the worst records at The Oval, which will host the final from June 7 to 11 between the top two Test sides.

Australia, who played at The Oval in 1880 in what was the first-ever Test in England, have managed a mere seven wins from 38 Tests at the famous South London venue, putting their success rate at the venue at 18.42 per cent, their poorest across England.

Australia have won just twice in the past 50 years at The Oval. On the other hand, they have 17 wins from 29 matches at The Lord's at a success rate of 43.59 per cent, which is better than hosts England's 39.72 per cent from 141 games and South Africa's 33.33 per cent at the same venue.

Australia have a success rate of 34.62 per cent at Headingley, 30.43 per cent at Trent Bridge, and 29.03 per cent and 26.67 per cent at Old Trafford and Edgbaston respectively.

India, on the other hand, haven't fared too well at the venue either having won two, drawn seven and lost five games. But the Rohit Sharma-led side will be boosted by the 157-run win over England here in 2021, which was its first victory at the venue in a Test match in 40 years.

According to cricket.com.au, Australia will have their first full training session in the UK on Thursday in Beckenham, which is 20km from central London.

Pat Cummins and his men will train at Kent's out-ground across the weekend as both sides will be granted access to facilities at The Oval only two days prior to the fixture.

And while The Oval is likely to favour the pacers, Beckenham is known to have a batter-friendly track.

Australia finished the 2021-23 WTC cycle on top of the table, their only loss being the 2-1 away defeat to India earlier this year.

They haven't beaten the Men in Blue, both home and away, in eight years — four successive series defeats.



## Key for both teams will be to dismiss Smith and Kohli early: Finch

PTI ■ LONDON

Former captain Aaron Finch believes that he will put his money on Steve Smith even though Australia will also need to get rid of star India batter Virat Kohli as early as possible in what promises to be an enticing World Test Championship final, starting June 7 at the Oval here.

"Both (Kohli and Smith) will be batting at number four, so the key is to try and get them as early as possible. Early wickets to expose them to the brand new ball will be absolutely key. I will always side with Steve Smith, I think his record is outstanding, but it will be a very good contest," Finch told Star Sports.

India vs Australia rivalry brings out the best in both teams, he said.

"I think the rivalry is held in such high regard in both countries, that I think it brings out the best in both teams," he added.

"Obviously, India has had the better of Australia in the last three series I think, so both teams will rise to the occasion no matter where it's played, at home or away or this time at neutral territory. It's just a must watch thing."



## 'Conway has caught Williamson bug to keep learning'

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Former New Zealand spinner John Bracewell believes charismatic batter Devon Conway has caught the "Kane Williamson bug" to keep learning from past mistakes and making rapid improvements in his batting technique.

Conway, a late entrant into the New Zealand setup at 29, took the cricketing world by storm by smashing a double hundred on Test debut against England in 2021 to become only the seventh batter to do so in the longest format.

Conway, now 31, also played a vital role for Chennai Super Kings in only his second IPL season, scoring six half-centuries and aggregating 672 runs with a highest of an unbeaten 92 and an average touching 52.

His opening partnerships with Ruturaj Gaikwad formed the cornerstone of CSK's record-equalling fifth title. The all-format New Zealand cricketer was third on the IPL's Orange Cap list behind Shubman Gill and RCB's South African skipper Faf du Plessis.

"I think he's been an absolute magician in terms of his adaptability to all three formats, his skillset and his (growth)," Bracewell, who played 41 Tests garnering 102 wickets and 1000-plus runs, told Sen Radio.

"I like the way he's become

ing a better cricketer all the time, so he's obviously caught the Kane Williamson bug of being a learner, not a guy that actually just sits there and relies on being talented," said the 65-year-old. Conway has so far amassed 1212 Test, 508 ODI and 632 T20I runs, and Bracewell believes the cricketer can rival the best in the business.

"His game is just continuing to progress and that's something that Kane Williamson had introduced into the New Zealand side along with (former wicketkeeper) BJ Watling.

"That's something that Devon Conway's picked up and moved forward with him taking it to another dimension."

Bracewell believes Conway will play a huge role during the ODI World Cup, scheduled to be held in India in October-November this year, given that Williamson would unlikely have recovered completely from an ACL injury he suffered in the IPL.

"He's one of a series of components, but he's certainly an important one," said Bracewell.

"One, that he knows those (Indian) conditions (and) two, that he's extremely adaptable in terms of now he's opening the batting in T20. So he has that adaptability to be able to move up and down the order and fit in, so that makes him a good replacement for somebody like Kane."

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni successfully underwent a left knee surgery in a Mumbai hospital on Thursday, raising hopes of playing in the 17th edition of Indian Premier League next year.

Dhoni, who led Chennai Super Kings to their fifth IPL title, had flown to Mumbai from Ahmedabad after the final on Monday and consulted renowned sports orthopaedic surgeon Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, who is also on the BCCI medical panel and had performed surgeries on a number of top Indian cricketers, including Rishabh Pant.

"Yes, Dhoni has had a successful knee surgery at the Kokilaben Hospital in Mumbai on Thursday. He is doing fine and the surgery happened in the morning. I don't have details. I am yet to get all the details about the nature of surgery and other things," CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan confirmed to PTI.

"He will be discharged in a day or two. He would be resting for a few days before his extensive rehabilitation starts. It is now expected that he would have enough time to get fit to play in the next IPL," another source close to CSK management told PTI on conditions of anonymity.



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will be completely the iconic captain's call.

After the IPL final, Dhoni had said: "If you circumstantially see, it's the best time to announce retirement. The easy thing for me to say is thank you and retire. But the hard thing to do is to work hard for nine months and try to play one more IPL season. The body has to hold up. But the amount of love I have received from CSK fans, it would be a gift for them to play one more season.

"The way they've shown their love and emotion, it's something I need to do for them. It's the last part of my career. It started over here and full house was chanting my name. It was same thing in Chennai, but it will be good to come back and play whatever I can. The kind of cricket I play, they feel they can play that cricket. There's nothing orthodox about it and I like to keep it simple."

## Ronaldo absent with injury as Saudi soccer season ends

AP ■ RIYADH

Cristiano Ronaldo's first season in Saudi Arabia came to an end, although the star forward was absent as Al-Nassr beat Al-Fateh 3-0 to finish in second place in the league.

Ronaldo, who signed for the Riyadh club in December before scoring 14 goals in 16 league games, picked up a muscle injury four days previously and was rested ahead of Portugal's European Championship qualifiers against Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iceland in June.

In the 38-year-old Ronaldo's absence on Wednesday, Anderson Talisca took center stage to score twice. He also assisted Mohammed Marwan for a third. Al-Ittihad, which had already secured the league championship in the penultimate round, celebrated a first title since 2009 with a 2-0 win against Al-Tai.



Abderazzak Hamdallah of Morocco opened the scoring with a second-half penalty that also secured the golden boot with his 21st goal of the season. Former Leeds United and Wolverhampton winger Helder Costa added the second in injury time. It's the first league title won by coach Nuno Santo, just 18 months after the Portuguese tactician was dismissed by Tottenham Hotspur in the English Premier League.

Al-Hilal, champions last season, finished in third spot with a 3-2 win over Al-Raed.

The league will expand from 16 to 18 teams next season.

## Pathirana set to make ODI debut ahead of WC qualifiers

AP ■ HAMBANTOTA

Sri Lanka has unleashed some special bowling talents ahead of big events over the years.

In the case of Lasith Malinga, he was thrown into the deep end during a so-called Top End tour of Australia in 2004. In the case of Ajantha Mendis, he was introduced just before the Asia Cup and he starred with six wickets against India in the final as Sri Lanka clinched the trophy in 2008.

The same blueprint is to be followed with 20-year-old Matheesha Pathirana, who will make his ODI debut in the three-match series against Afghanistan that gets underway on Friday. Although Pathirana has played just one Twenty20 International, he is already a star after performing a key role for Chennai in the Super Kings' run to a record fifth Indian Premier League title.

Pathirana bowls with a unique round-arm action and Sri Lankans hope that he'll be quite a handful for batters during the World Cup qualifiers later this month in Zimbabwe. Sri Lanka, which won the 1996 World Cup title and has twice been runner-up, needs to go through qualifying because of its slide down the International Cricket Council rankings in the one-day format.

Afghanistan has no such issues after qualifying automatically for the showpiece event later this year in India.

Bowling is Afghanistan's strength, with three Afghan players featuring in the list of top 10 bowlers in official ICC rankings. Leg-spinner Rashid Khan will miss the first two games because of a lower-back injury, but off-spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi will find the conditions in Hambantota to their liking.

Afghanistan also has left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmed, who was quite a handful for Gujarat Titans during the IPL.

Although bowling is the team's strong point, Afghanistan also some solid batting.

Ibrahim Zadran showcased that he is a star in the making during the ICC Under-19 World Cup and since graduating to the senior side, he has smashed three centuries in just eight one-dayers. That includes a career-best 162, the highest score by an Afghan in ODIs.

Friday's series-opener will be the first international to be staged at Hambantota in more than three years. The series was hastily arranged after Sri Lanka failed to automatically qualify for the World Cup, and will provide an opportunity for the selectors to take a final look at some of the players before they submit the squad to the ICC before the June 10 deadline.

## You had a lot of selfish characters playing for England: Harmison

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England pacer Steve Harmison has hinted that quite a few senior players in the side did not contribute to the team spirit in the late 90s and early 2000s, but all that changed during the 2005 Ashes series, which the hosts won 2-1.

Responding to former Australian quick Jason Gillespie's assessment that he had noticed a big change in the England side during the 2005 Ashes, Harmison, who was part of the 2005 side, said that, "The difference between that and 2003,

2001 and 1999, 1997, was in 2005 we were a team."

Gillespie had suggested that he had never seen such camaraderie in the England team during previous series between the two sides.

"I noticed a big difference in the England side in the '05 Ashes... we'd never felt that as an Australian side before," Gillespie told 'Sen Radio' on Thursday.

"England would normally go out in dribs or drabs going onto the field... (but this time) it was really noticeable that as soon as the umpires walked out there,



(England skipper) Michael Vaughan was straight out there, everyone was straight out there, quick chat and then they would literally run to their fielding positions, the bowler would run


and hand his cap to the umpire and before our batters were halfway onto the ground, the whole England team was set up ready to play, ready to rock," added Gillespie.

Harmison, 44, who played 63 Tests taking 226 wickets, said quite a few "selfish" players contributed to the poor culture in the England side.

"We'd grown up as a team, we played as a team and we behaved off the field like a team (in 2005). In 1997, 2001, 2003/04, you had a lot of selfish characters playing for England," said Harmison.

"Some great cricketers, don't get me wrong... but when you look at — and I've got no problem saying this — the likes of Nasser (Hussain), Athers (Michael Atherton), Thorpey (Graham Thorpe), Corkey (Dominic Cork), Darren Gough, Andy Caddock, there was a group of individuals playing all together as a team where you look at 2005, we were a team," added Harmison.

Harmison added that even though Australian cricketers might have had differences, they were swept aside for the common good of the side.



C-478

**OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, BHAWANIPATNA**  
**DIST-KALAHANDI, PIN-766001**  
**'e' Procurement Notice.**  
**Bid Identification No. BPM/02/2023-24**

**The Executive Officer on behalf of Bhawanipatna Municipality invites tenders in Single Cover System. Bid documents consisting of specification the Schedule of Quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen the Govt. Website i.e. <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>**

**1. Number of Civil works: 158 (One Hundred Fifty Eight) numbers**

**2. Estimated Costs: 2.26 lakhs to 16.95 lakhs**

**3. Period of completion: As per NIT**

**4. Date and time of availability of the bid documents in the portal: From 10.00 A.M. of 01.06.2023 to 05.00 PM of 12.06.2023**

**5. Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids in the portal: 05.00 PM of 12.06.2023**

**6. Bids will be opened on: 10.00 AM of Dt. 13.06.2023**

**7. Name and address of the officer inviting bid: Executive Officer, Bhawanipatna Municipality**

**Executive Officer**  
**Bhawanipatna Municipality**

**OIPR-13100/11/0004/2324**