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CASEMIRO'S
MOTIVATION KEY
FOR MAN UTD IN
FINAL 11 SPORT

70 dead in Odisha triple train crash

Over 350 injured; one train derails, another crashes into it

PNS/PTI ■ BALASORE/HOWRAH

In a tragic triple train crash which took place in Odisha involving the Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express, the Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromandel Express and a goods train on Friday at least 70 people were killed and more than 350 injured.

They said several coaches of the 12864 Bengaluru-Howrah train travelling to Howrah derailed at Bahanaga Bazaar in Balasore district and fell on adjacent tracks.

"These derailed coaches collided with 12841 Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromandel Express and its coaches cap-sized too," a senior official said.

A goods train was also involved in the accident as the coaches of the Coromandel Express hit its wagons after getting derailed, the official said.

The accident happened around 7 pm, he said.

Over 350 people have been admitted to different hospitals



Rescue operation being conducted after four coaches of the Coromandel Express derailed after a head-on collision with a goods train, in Balasore district, on Friday evening PTI

across the district, officials said, adding that all private and Government hospitals have been put on alert in the nearby districts, including State

Capital Bhubaneswar. So far, 50 bodies could be brought out from under the overturned coaches, they said.

A PTI reporter at the spot

said several people were trapped under the derailed coaches, and locals were assisting emergency services personnel to rescue them, but

darkness was hindering the operation.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said he was rushing to the accident site. "Rushing to the site in Odisha. My prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured and condolences to the bereaved families. Rescue teams mobilised from Bhubaneswar and Kolkata. NDRF, State Govt. Teams and Airforce also mobilised. Will take all hands required for the rescue ops," he tweeted.

He also announced ex-gratia of ₹10 lakh for the deceased, ₹2 lakh for those grievously injured and ₹50,000 for those who got minor injuries.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said he has reviewed the situation, and will be travelling to the accident site early Saturday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was distressed by the accident, and spoke with Vaishnaw to take stock of the situation.

CAPSULE

GO FIRST TO RESTART OPS WITH 152 DAILY FLIGHTS

Mumbai: Cash-strapped Go First, which is undergoing voluntary insolvency resolution process, plans to restart operations with 26 planes and 152 daily flights, and has submitted the revival plan to aviation regulator DGCA, according to a source.

'WILL TAKE INFORMED CALL ON SEDITION LAW'

New Delhi: The Government will take an "informed and reasoned" decision on the Law Commission report on sedition after holding consultations with all stakeholders, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said on Friday and noted that recommendations in the document were "persuasive" but not "binding".

ANTI-TERROR COURT EXTENDS IMRAN'S BAIL

Lahore: Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan on Friday appeared before an anti-terrorism court here and secured an extension to his pre-arrest bail till June 13 in three cases including an attack on a top military commander's residence in Lahore, a court official said.

RUPEE GAINS 1 PAISA TO CLOSE AT 82.39 AGAINST \$

Mumbai: The rupee ended almost flat gaining 1 paisa to 82.39 against the US dollar on Friday amid positive sentiment in domestic equities markets.

2024 LS elections will throw surprising outcome: Rahul

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has asserted that the Opposition's strong unity and an unseen undercurrent were poised to "surprise" the people in the upcoming general elections in India.

Rahul was speaking at a media interaction on Thursday at the National Press Club in the United States, where he is currently on a three-city tour.

"I strongly believe that the Congress party will perform exceptionally well in the next two years," He added, "I sense the emergence of a hidden undercurrent...something that will catch people by surprise."

Citing the recent outcome of the Karnataka Assembly elections, where Congress achieved a comfortable majority and ousted the BJP from power, Rahul pointed out the importance of observing the results of the next three or four State elections.

He emphasised that these upcoming contests serve as a better indicator of the future political landscape.

In response to a question about the unity of the Opposition in India, Rahul confirmed their strong alliance.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during an interactive session at the National Press Club, in Washington, USA on Thursday PTI

"The Opposition in India is quite well united, and I see this unity growing stronger with time. We are engaging in constructive conversations with all Opposition parties, and there is considerable progress being made," he stated.

However, he acknowledged the complexities that arise from competing with other Opposition parties, requiring some negotiation and compromise.

Nonetheless, Rahul expressed confidence in overcoming these challenges.

During the interaction, Rahul also addressed a range of

topics, including press and religious freedoms in India, issues faced by minorities, and the State of the economy.

When questioned about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high global popularity, Rahul expressed his concerns about the capture of institutions and the press in India, indicating that he approached such information with caution.

Regarding the protection of minority rights in India, Rahul emphasised the importance of a robust and independent institutional framework.

IUML fully secular, claims Rahul, sparks political row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's remark that the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) is a "completely secular party" ignited a political battle on Friday.

The BJP accused the Kerala-based party of being influenced by the same ideology as the Muslim League,

while the Congress reminded the saffron party of its veteran leader LK Advani praising Mohammad Ali Jinnah during his visit to Pakistan in 2005.

During a media interaction at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, Rahul was questioned about his party's alliance with the IUML in Kerala in relation to secularism.

1983 World Cup winners back wrestlers, hope 'justice prevails'

Khap sets June 9 deadline for Brij Bhushan's arrest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Members of the 1983 World Cup-winning cricket team, including Kapil Dev and Sunil Gavaskar, have expressed their support for the protesting wrestlers and urged them not to make hasty decisions, while also hoping that their issues will be heard and resolved. At the same time, a "khap mahapan-chayat" in Kurukshetra set a deadline of June 9 to take action on its demand for the arrest of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the outgoing chief of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) and BJP MP. Singh has been accused of sexually harassing several women wrestlers.

In a joint statement, the members of the 1983 World Cup winner team conveyed their distress and concern after witnessing the visuals of wrestlers being manhandled, but they expressed their belief that rule of law will prevail.

The statement comes in response to the protest by wrestlers Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik, and Bajrang Punia, who have been demanding the arrest of Brij Bhushan for the alleged sexual exploitation of women wrestlers. The wrestlers had threatened to immerse their medals into the holy river Ganga during their protest in Haridwar on May 30 but did not carry out the act.



On May 28, police detained the wrestlers for violating law and order when they marched towards the new Parliament without permission. The police then cleared the protest site. "We are distressed and disturbed by the unseemly visuals of our champion wrestlers being manhandled. We are also deeply concerned that they are considering discarding their hard-earned medals into the River Ganga," stated the 1983 World Cup-winning team in a release to PTI.

WFI chief denied nod for June 5 rally

Ayodhya: The district administration has denied permission to BJP MP and Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh to hold a rally here on June 5.

Singh, however, said he postponed the "Jan Chetna Maharally" at the Ram Katha Park for "a few days" due to the ongoing police probe into the wrestlers' charges against him.

Want justice for wrestlers via due legal process: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur on Friday said everyone wants justice to be delivered to the wrestlers demanding action against outgoing Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, but it will hap-

pen only after following the due process of law.

Thakur's remarks came days after the country's top wrestlers, protesting for more than a month over allegations of sexual harassment against Singh, threatened to immerse their medals in the Ganga river in Haridwar.

K'taka Cabinet clears Cong's all 5 poll guarantees



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar and cabinet colleagues during a cabinet meeting in Bengaluru on Friday PTI

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka Cabinet on Friday decided to implement the Congress party's five poll guarantees without any discrimination based on caste or religion. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced that the "Gruha Jyothi" scheme, which aims to provide up to 200 units of free electricity per month to every household, will be implemented from July 1. The CM said a timeline has been set to operationalise these schemes within the current financial year.

During a media confer-

ence, Siddaramaiah, who chaired the Cabinet meeting, informed reporters that detailed discussions were held regarding the guarantees and their implementation.

However, he did not disclose the cost of the five guarantees at the moment, stating that he would share the information later.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar hailed it as a "historic day" as the Congress Government had taken concrete steps to fulfill the poll promises and had set a timeline for their implementation.

HC allows jailed Sisodia to meet ailing wife at home

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday permitted AAP leader Manish Sisodia, under arrest in cases related to alleged irregularities in the city Government's excise policy, to meet his ailing wife at his residence on Saturday.

Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma directed the Tihar Jail Superintendent to take Sisodia, the former Deputy Chief Minister, to his residence where he has been allowed to meet his wife from 10 am to 5 pm.

Sisodia was first arrested by the CBI on February 26 for his alleged role in the scam and has been in custody since then. The HC has already denied him bail in the CBI case on May 30. He was arrested on March 9 in the case lodged by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and is currently in judicial custody.



BRICS pledges to combat terror, financing networks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ CAPETOWN

A day after India called for a united fight against terrorism and those financing it, the five-nation BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) grouping on Friday vowed to combat the menace in all its forms and manifestations, including the cross-border movement of terrorists, and terror financing networks and safe havens, a veiled reference to Pakistan.

Addressing the conclave on Thursday in Capetown, External Affairs Minister S



Jaishankar had 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.

Jaishankar has in the past described Pakistan as the "epi-

centre of terrorism" where terrorists like Hafiz Saeed, Masood Azhar, Sajid Mir and Dawood Ibrahim are sheltered.

In a joint statement titled "The Cape of Good Hope", the Foreign Ministers of BRICS expressed strong condemnation of terrorism "whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed."

"They (ministers) are committed to combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the cross-border movement of terrorists, and terrorism financing networks and safe havens," the joint statement said.

Day after Shah appeal, people surrender weapons in Manipur

PTI ■ IMPHAL

More than 140 weapons have been surrendered in different places in Manipur after Union Home Minister Amit Shah's appeal a day ago, sources said on Friday.

So far, 144 arms with 11 magazines have been recovered by the security agencies.

At least 98 people lost their lives and 310 others were injured in the ethnic violence in Manipur that broke out a month ago, according to a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) on Friday. In all, 4,014 cases of arson have been reported since the violence broke out in the state on May 3, it said.

The Army, the Assam



Weapons surrendered at different locations in Manipur after Union Home Minister Amit Shah's appeal on Friday PTI

Rifles, the CAPFs and local police have been deployed in vulnerable places, it added. The Government appealed to the people to surrender the snatched arms & ammunition.

Shah, on the last day of his four-day visit to Manipur on Thursday, appealed to all concerned to surrender their weapons to the security forces and administration.

He had also warned that a search-and-combing operation would be carried out in the State soon and anyone found to possess any weapon would be prosecuted.

After the Home Minister's appeal in Imphal, more than 140 weapons have been surrendered till Friday morning, sources said.

They said the situation in Manipur was by and large peaceful in most districts and sporadic incidents of firing at or torching of empty houses by miscreants were becoming rare now as coordinated effort was made by different security agencies.

The surrendered weapons included self-loading rifles, carbine, AK and INSAS rifles, light machine guns, pistols, M16 rifles, smoke gun/tear gas, sten gun and grenade launcher.

Ethnic clashes broke out in the northeastern State on May 3 after a "Tribal Solidarity March" was organised in the state's hill districts to protest the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

XLRI: TCS head highlights importance of embracing digital transformation



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

As part of the CXO Session, XLRI PGDM(GM) hosted Gopal Krishna, Country Head, Market Function & Product Head - TCS ION, Tata Consultancy Services, Mumbai addressed the students of XLRI.

The session served as a platform for insightful discussions, sharing of best practices, and exploring innovative strategies to harness the power of digital technologies.

Krishna emphasized the need for businesses to adapt and embrace digital transformation in order to stay competitive in the digital age. "Digital transformation is not merely about incorporating technology into existing processes; it is a fundamental shift in mindset, culture, and operations," stated the country head.

The event began with an inaugural address by Kautilya Dubey, XLRI Jamshedpur, who welcomed the guest speaker, Gopal Krishna and the GST members, cohort PGDM (GM)

offered a warm welcome.

The speaker highlighted the rapid pace of technological advancements and the transformative opportunities they present for organizations across various sectors

Gopal Krishna spoke about several facets of leadership and how it has to be contextualized in ever changing dynamics of the contemporary world. He began discussing the qualities required to be a successful leader in any firm. The distinguished speaker explained his career trajectory, how he has seamlessly

navigated across several domains in his enriching career.

Gopal Krishna also explained the challenges that he had faced in his professional experience to date, and he explained how tactfully he has been dealing with all his challenges

He opined that contemporary business leaders should be adaptable to the global disruptions especially post pandemic. He also enforced his emphasis on cross functional learnings that make managers leaders in the truest sense. He has

explained strategy as an important dimension for any organization and he explained TCS ion journey and how it has been a pioneer in conducting online exams for recruitment boards smoothly throughout the country.

He also spoke at length on contextualising the strategy in accordance with the times we live in.

He was asked about his views on the digital transformation in India and how managers should partner in this digital transformation. He also dovetailed on market

dynamics, consumer behaviour and business models when entering new markets. Krishna stressed the need for building a comprehensive ecosystem, prioritizing customer satisfaction and fostering synergy among the stakeholders.

The session ended with a few questions from the students on strategy, product management and leadership. Gopal Krishna answered their queries and wished the students of XLRI PGDM(GM) an exciting year of learning and prosperous careers ahead.

Digital transformation empowering businesses in Jamshedpur

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Doggie Oye witnessed tremendous growth, expanding from a single shop to three successful establishments" says Charandeep Singh, Owner (Doggie Oye). He credits early online presence to his meteoric rise. Singh enlisted on Justdial in 2013 at a nominal fee of INR 5,000 and since then has been on a growth trajectory. His customer base has expanded, owing to the focused and niche leads provided by Justdial. With a strong online presence and exceptional customer service, the platform has become a trusted partner in Doggie Oye's success story.

Primarily known for its core and heavy industries, Jamshedpur boasts a thriving

infrastructure that supports the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Many of these businesses have benefited from online presence with the help of Justdial and have the potential to grow like Singh's Doggie Oye. The experiences of a few customers, who came forward to share their story, are testimonial to the platform's effectiveness in contributing to a business' growth.

Dr. Ankit Prasad (BRL Clinic), a prominent cosmetology professional, has built a growing business in Jamshedpur over the past six years. He also attributes his successful practice to Justdial (JD). His fruitful partnership with the compa-

ny began five years ago, and the results have been exceptional. He has a significant customer conversion rate through the platform. The highlight of the association has been the consistent lead conversion for him. As a result, BRL Clinic has increased their package with JD by nearly 15x.

Justdial has proven to be an instrumental platform in providing opportunities to businesses of all kinds in the city. Pranjal, a partner at Prabhujai Haldiram Sweets and Restaurant, has been associated with the platform for several years. Recognizing it as the ultimate tool for promoting businesses, Pranjal enrolled with a modest investment of around INR 10,000 annually. The

impact was significant, as with a substantial number of leads consisting of genuine and serious customers. Encouraged by these positive outcomes, Pranjal decided to increase the value of contracts to around INR 55,000 the following year. The guarantee of growth from Justdial, along with the consistently high quality of leads, has made it an invaluable asset for their business. Pranjal's unwavering confidence in Justdial led him to enlist one more business with Justdial(K.G.Kitchen), which also received a positive response. The stories from these Jamshedpur entrepreneurs provide a compelling narrative of Justdial's transformative impact on their businesses.

ED BK TIWARI DESIGNATED AS ACTING HEAD OF BOKARO STEEL PLANT



PNS : BOKARO

Birendra Kumar Tiwari, ED (Works), BSL has been given charge as Head of BSL exercising delegation of powers assigned to Director Incharge BSL in addition to his existing responsibilities till additional charge is given to any Director or until further orders, whichever is earlier. Notably B.K Tiwari having vast experience of the Steel sector and under him Bokaro Steel Plant achieved various milestones in terms of Production achievements pertaining to assigned targets.

BSL Township Sector-3 community Centre to get facelift as Steel club and Recreation center



R SHARMA : BOKARO

As BSL Township is under exponential phase of its renovation which ironically was dead since last so many years but with the inceptions of Visionary Leader Amarendu Prakash who is also now the new SAIL Chairman helped in triggering all round developments in Bokaro Steel City . Any vision of a leader is not feasible unless the Team is not efficient but BSL Township team under the leadership of B.S Popli truly involved in History making through sheer hard

work round the clock to let this Steel city get back its Lost glory rather than New Identity . In the same episode Community Hall located in Sector-3 which is almost the central location of the city is being given a new look of Steel Club and Recreation Centre.

It was inaugurated on June 1, 2023 by SAIL Chairman Amarendu Prakash. On this occasion, Executive Director (Finance & Accounts) Suresh Rangani, ED (MM) Amitabh Srivastava, ED (Mines) Jaideep Dasgupta, ED (Personnel) &

Rajan Prasad, CGM (Town Administration) BS Popli, CGM (Personnel) Hari Mohan Jha and other senior officers were present. In the new form, 9 large rooms, three small rooms, one hall, two basketball courts, two badminton courts and one swimming pool are being made available for the employees of Bokaro Steel in Steel Club and Recreation Centre. All the facilities of this complex are being upgraded and with new look .Notably soon this centre will be made available for the BSL personnel.

Complete foundation work of drinking water supply scheme in 2 weeks: DC

SHAILESH SHARMA : HAZARIBAG

The foundation work of the drinking water supply must be completed within two weeks. In the rainy season it is not possible to do the foundation work. The persons or public representatives, who create problems during the implementation of the plan, the concerned engineers take legal action on them and lodge the FIR on them. Under the summer action plan the repairs of the water tap must be repaired before the rainy season.

This was directed by the deputy commissioner Nancy Sahay during the review meeting of 'Jal Jeevan Mission' in the seminar hall of her office.

She said that this must be completed within the prescribed period. She said that the engineers take cooperation from Block Development Officers and Circle officers on the concern block.

She further said that the concerned engineers speed



up the plan within fifteen days. She said the boring work must be completed within two weeks, under the summer action plan the repairs of water tap work should be repaired within the time framework.

The DC further said that all BDOs must organize the meeting with the engineers and contractors for the progress of the work every month in the block and details must be sent to the district headquarter.

She further said that the district administration has appealed to all mukhya's and

other office bearers in the panchayat to co-operate with the engineers during the implementation of the plan. This plan is sanctioned for development of their areas.

She suggested to the engineers to solve the problems on a local level. In the last position it should have come to the district administration. She said that this is the important

In the meeting executive engineers, Additional Collector Shatabdi Majumdar, all assistant and junior engineers, district coordinator and contractors were present.

Avtar Singh to represent Special Olympics

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Avtar Singh, Founder; Jeevika has again been nominated to represent the country for the role of key volunteer in the Special Olympics World Games at Berlin, Germany starting from 17 - 25 June 2023. Such selections are done by International body Special Olympics, Washington USA. Presently he is a "Regional Trainer" for Asia Pacific countries & rehabilitating Intellectually Challenged persons from the past 38 yes on honorary basis. Besides First class National coaching diploma, he is 7 time National Champion in cycling & Captained Indian cycling teams for thee meets like C'wealth & Asian Games in the past.

In 1995 - Head Coach for Indian cycling team for the SO World Games - Connecticut, USA, 1999-2003 - Indian Delegate Members to Represent Spl Oly Bharat, 2007- Cycling Tech. Official for the Spl Oly World Games at Shanghai, China, 2011- Head Coach Cycling for the SPI Oly world Games at



Athens, Greece, 2013- MVP (Most Valuable Person) during SO Asia Pacific Games at Sydney, 2015- MVP(Most Valuable Person) during Spl Oly World Games at Los Angeles, USA, 2015- Head Coach Cycling, for the SO World Games at Los Angeles, USA, 2019- Technical Official Cycling, for the SPI Oly World Games at Abu Dhabi and 2023- Key Volunteer for the Spl Oly World Games at Berlin, Germany (17-25 June 2023).

Interim VC of NPU assumes charge



Registrar of the NPU Dr Rakesh Kumar offering a bouquet to the interim VC Dr Tapan Kumar Shandilya today in Daltonganj. PNS

M F AHMAD : DALTONGANJ

Interim VC of the Nilamber Pitamber university Daltonganj Dr Tapan Kumar Shandilya today assumed the charge of the office here following a notification in this regard from the Governor's secretariat on June 1.

Dr Shandilya is the VC of the Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee university Ranchi. He has been assigned this additional charge following the exit of the immediate past VC Ram Lakhan Singh on the

completion of his 3 years term here in this university.

He was welcomed by the registrar of the NPU Dr Rakesh Kumar. Dr Shandilya will look after the routine works of the NPU till further orders of the Governor's secretariat which is till the posting of the regular VC here.

As for any policy matter he will have to seek approval from the Chancellor of the state universities.

Dr Shandilya said he would be attending office here thrice in a week.

ONLINE YOGA SESSION COMMENCES AT NTPC CMHQ

PNS : RANCHI

To promote a healthy lifestyle among employees and family members, 20 days of online Yoga Session is being organised at NTPC Coal Mining Headquarters. The virtual Yoga Session commenced with inauguration by MVR Reddy, RED (Coal Mining) and Padma Reddy, President, Swayamsiddha Ladies Club (SLC) in the august presence of Srinivas K Murthy,GM(HR) & Lakshmi Murthy ,Vice President (SLC). The programme is organised with joint effort by NTPC CMHQ and Swayamsiddha Ladies Club from June 1-20,2023.

The Yoga session was conducted by Ramani Ranjan Panigrahi , Faculty and Yoga Expert with experience of more than three decades , to his credit he was the Yoga Faculty for Central Coal Fields ,JICM(Ranchi) & Bangalore University and conducted yoga and Stress Management training at Corporate Houses like SAIL, Mecon etc both in India and



abroad.

Speaking on the occasion, RED (Coal Mining), Reddy stressed upon practicing yoga for its health benefits and hoped that the three-week yoga session will largely benefit the participants and encourage them to make "Yoga a way of life".

Padma Reddy, President, SLC sharing on the occasion

said that real wealth is maintaining good health which can be attained with regular physical activity and Yoga.

Yoga Faculty, Panigrahi in his address said Yoga is an inward journey of the self, with regular practice improves the efficiency in day-to-day work. During the first day of the session, he

demonstrated yoga postures which enhance general fitness and shared the importance of breathing exercises to manage stress.

The yoga session saw participation of employees and members of Swayamsiddha Ladies Club. The concluding day of the yoga session will be held on June 21, on International

IN BRIEFS

BAFTA BREAKTHROUGH INDIA RETURNS FOR THIRD YEAR, SPOTLIGHTS RISING STARS IN COLLABORATION WITH NETFLIX

BAFTA, in partnership with Netflix, is set to launch the prestigious BAFTA Breakthrough talent program in India for the third consecutive year. Applications are now open until 5 July, welcoming emerging talent from India's film, games, and television industries. The program, which has already seen success in the UK and the US, aims to identify and nurture promising individuals worldwide, providing them with the necessary resources to further develop their skills and advance in their respective fields. With over 200 careers already accelerated through the program, BAFTA Breakthrough India offers a bespoke support system, enabling participants to enhance industry knowledge, refine their craft, overcome barriers to progress, and establish a global network of industry professionals. Netflix's support for the program, now in its fourth year in the UK and the US, further strengthens its commitment to fostering talent and celebrating diverse voices. Interested individuals can register their interest at www.bafta.org/supporting-talent/breakthrough.

'ASCI ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2022-23: DIGITAL SCRUTINY INTENSIFIES AS GAMING TAKES CENTER STAGE'

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) has released its annual complaints report, highlighting an alarming increase in advertising violations in the digital space. The report shows that digital media accounted for 75% of the processed ads and emerged as the top violator. Real-money gaming surpassed education as the most violative category, with 92% of gaming ads failing to comply with guidelines. Additionally, misleading ads featuring celebrities skyrocketed by 803%, with 97% of them lacking evidence of due diligence. ASCI's adoption of AI-based tracking has enhanced its ability to monitor digital media, calling for collaborative efforts to safeguard consumer interests. NS Rajan, Chairman, ASCI: says "The digital advertising landscape is truly challenging us all... Stepping up our surveillance through AI-based tools... ensures that ASCI is keeping pace with this dynamic environment."

'ICICI PRUDENTIAL LIFE INSURANCE LAUNCHES FIRST-OF -ITS-KIND DEBT FUND TO BUILD LONG-TERM WEALTH'

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has introduced a new debt fund, the ICICI Pru Constant Maturity Fund, making it the first such fund in the life insurance market. This offering allows customers to capitalize on the current high interest rates and build long-term wealth while achieving their financial goals. The fund, open for subscription from May 15, 2023, provides customers with the flexibility to switch asset classes without incurring any costs or tax implications. Notably, debt funds offered by life insurance companies also come with tax benefits for customers. ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has a strong track record, with its debt funds consistently outperforming respective benchmarks since their inception. By launching this new debt fund, the company aims to provide customers with an excellent investment avenue to leverage prevailing interest rates and generate long-term returns.

AAP BIGWIGS SEEK SUPPORT FROM JMM AGAINST DELHI ORDINANCE

KEJRIWAL TO WRITE TO BJP MPS SEEKING SUPPORT AGAINST DELHI ORDINANCE

PRANAV PRATYUSH : RANCHI

In a bid to garner support of Opposition parties across the country against the Centre's Ordinance that gives control of the Centre over administrative services in the National Capital Territory, National Convenor of Aam Aadmi cum Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann and other senior leaders of AAP today met Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren in Ranchi.

A delegation including the Delhi and Punjab CM along with senior leader of AAP - Education Minister, Delhi, Atishi Marlena, Rajya Sabha members Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chaddha and Delhi Assembly member Vinay Mishra convened a joint press conference here on Friday in



Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Delhi Chief Minister-cum AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Aam Aadmi Party leaders (AAP) Atishi Marlena, Sanjay Singh and Raghav Cahada and Rajya Sabha MP Mahua Maji during a joint press conference after their meeting in Ranchi on Friday. Pix by Ratan Lal

the presence of Chief Minister Hemant Soren and Rajya Sabha member Mahua Maji, where they said that the JMM will support the cause as it is a cause of the nation.

Referring to Jharkhand

CM Hemant Soren like his brother, Kejriwal said that the Ordinance brought by the Centre nullifying the Supreme Court decision is not only injustice to the people of Delhi but for the people of the coun-

try. He said that the Supreme Court had given a landmark decision giving administrative services' control to the elected government of Delhi, but the Centre deliberately brought an ordinance at a time when



Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren presents a memento to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during their meeting regarding the Center's ordinance on control of administrative service in Delhi, in Ranchi on Friday. Pix by Ratan Lal

the Supreme Court went on summer vacation.

"They would introduce a Bill in the Rajya Sabha where they (BJP) do not have majority. We appeal to all parties to support us, because this is not just an issue of Delhi. Tomorrow they may introduce such Bills, Ordinance in any State. I thank Hemant Soren ji for all the support he has assured us. I wholeheartedly thank the people of Jharkhand who have supported the people of Delhi," said Kejriwal. Commenting on the issue, Hemant Soren said, "It's a complete blow to the federal structure, unity and diversity of the country. The government (Centre) talks about the federal structure but they act in an opposite manner. Today, the Centre is neglecting and suppressing all non-BJP ruled states. The new Parliament inauguration is one such case, where the

will of the people has been ignored. We shall discuss the issue with party members and also with respectable Guruji (Shibu Soren). There must be a political and legal fight on the issue."

Punjab CM Bhagwant Singh Mann said, "The Lt Governor always interferes in the works of the elected government of Delhi. This is not just an issue of Delhi. 140 crore people of the country will have to fight to save democracy. When there is a matter of country we have to unite and save the country and democracy."

On the occasion, Kejriwal said that he will even write to the MPs of BJP seeking their support in saving the democracy. He said that a national consensus is required to fight the battle and all like-minded parties will come together against the tyranny and misrule of the Modi government.

BJP chief takes jibe on CM meeting Kejriwal



PNS : RANCHI

BJP State President and MP Deepak Prakash reacted strongly over the meeting of three Chief Ministers -- Arvind Kejriwal, Bhagwant Mann and Hemant Soren at the Jharkhand Chief Minister's residence today. Prakash said that the meeting of three Chief Ministers who are nurturers and protectors of corruption has dishonoured the holy land of Lord Birsa Munda. He said that under

Delhi, Punjab CM seeks support on ordinance

the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country is working on zero tolerance against corruption. There has been an increase in the crackdown of central investigative agencies against corruption across the country. Because of which the corrupt and their patrons are restless.

He said that the secrets of those agitating against corruption have been exposed. The difference between the words and deeds of the governments of the AAP party, which dishonoured the ideals of Anna Hazare, has been exposed. Today, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, who were ministers in the Kejriwal government in the liquor scam, are behind bars.

Prakash said that the character of the Chief Minister of Punjab is well

known. At the same time, his government has also drowned in corruption within one and a half years. Two ministers Vijay Singla, Souja Singh had to be sacked in Punjab on the charges of corruption on the basis of BJP's agitation. The videos of corruption went viral. Minister was sacked under public pressure but no FIR was registered. Bathinda MLA Amit Ratan was caught openly taking bribes.

He said that liquor scams have been exposed in Jharkhand. The senior bureaucrat is being questioned by the central investigative agencies. In such a situation, this meeting is an exercise to cover up corruption. But the truth never hides. Those who commit corruption and those who patronize it will have to face

the consequences.

Speaking on the increase in power tariff by the state government, Prakash said that the coalition government, which came to power by talking of reducing the power tariff, is wreaking havoc on the poor, farmers and the common man today. Even before this, the state government had disappointed the public by not reducing VAT on petrol and diesel. In such a situation, on the one hand, the entire state government, including the energy department, is involved in corruption, crores of rupees are being recovered at the places of brokers, middlemen, bureaucrats, on the other hand, the cost of electricity is being increased on the public.

He said that on one hand the industrialists of the state

are threatening to leave the state due to less supply of electricity, while the products of the remaining MSMEs will be costlier. He said that while strongly opposing the increased power tariff, the BJP demands its withdrawal in the public interest.

On increasing incidents of love jihad Prakash said that such incidents have increased wildly in the Hemant government. Tribal, Dalit sisters and daughters are getting affected more. If there is no pressure of conversion, incidents like murder are happening continuously. Still the government is doing appeasement politics.

He said that if the Hemant government has the courage, then it should provide justice to the victims through the fast track court.



Jharkhand Police Association members celebrate on the occasion of the end of the limited departmental examination, the Jharkhand Police Association expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister Hemant Soren. PNS



The delegation of the Jharkhand Police Association met the Chief Minister Hemant Soren and thanked him for the decision taken by the State Government to repeal the Jharkhand State Police Under Inspector Limited Departmental Competitive Examination Recruitment Rules (Recruitment Method), 2016. PNS

VIRAL VIDEO CASE Panel issues notices to Marandi, Ekka



PNS : RANCHI

The single-member inquiry committee probing the viral video of senior IAS officer Rajeev Arun Ekka has issued notices to former Chief Minister Babul Marandi and Rajeev Arun Ekka seeking information about the viral video. In the sent notice, Marandi has been asked to provide whatever information/evidence he has related to the video to the inquiry commission. At the same time, IAS officer Rajeev Arun Ekka has been asked to place whatever he knows about the viral video in front of the commission by June 15.

After the notice has been sent by the commission, now it will be a matter to be seen whether Marandi will appear with his evidence or not. Former Chief Minister Marandi had shown and made this video viral in a press conference. After this, while taking action against IAS officer Rajeev Arun Ekka, the government had removed him from the post of Principal Secretary to CM and Home Secretary. The information to form a one-member commission was issued by the Personnel Department last month. The commission's secretariat on Thursday issued a public notice in vernacular dailies in the regard. In the advertisement, the panel requested that



anyone acquainted with the facts of the case may send his or her written version by June 15. The informant can send their version either by hand or through the post. Later, the commission would ask the informant to appear before it as a witness and record his or her statement. The panel is likely to hold its next meeting on the matter on July 12. Notably, a purported video surfaced on social media on March 5 this year showing Ekka allegedly signing official documents sitting in the house of power broker Vishal Choudhary, who is also under the radar of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which is probing cases of money laundering in Jharkhand. The opposition parties, including BJP, demanded a CBI inquiry into the incident. Amid the controversy, the state government transferred Ekka from the post of the principal secretary to chief minister Hemant Soren to the panchayat raj department and ordered the formation of a commission headed by former Chief Justice of Jharkhand high court Justice V K Gupta to inquire into the incident. While announcing the constitution of the commission, the state government had said the video-clipping has led to the allegation of misuse of official positions by government servants holding important posts.

REJUVENATION OF SURYA TEMPLE RESERVOIR UNDER MISSION LIFE OF SAIL



R SHARMA : BOKARO

SAIL Bokaro Steel Plant is running a Life campaign on the occasion of World Environment Day. In this regard, the Environment Protection and Sustainability Department of Bokaro Steel Plant, along with Public Health Department and Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board, started a cleanliness drive in Surya Temple Reservoir on 02 Jun 23. Plastic waste and other debris were removed from the banks of the Sun Temple and cleaned collectively by the Department of Environmental Protection and Public Health. On this occasion, Chief General Manager (Town Administration), BS Popli appealed the citizens of Bokaro not to throw plastic waste and other debris in the water bodies as it seriously affects the water holding capacity of the ponds, also it lowers the ground water level. It is also harmful to the aquatic life of the pond. GM (Environment and Conservation) Naveen Prakash Srivastava also appealed to the people to adopt a lifestyle in harmony with Mother Earth and Nature. Public Health Officer S.K. Perera and Mohd. Tasneem also stressed on the need to keep the reservoirs clean and said that regular cleaning of the reservoirs of Bokaro Steel Plant will continue throughout Bokaro.

RS 3 LAKH LOOTED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

PNS : RANCHI

Criminals looted an amount of Rs three lakhs from a person named Mohammad Mahmood near Gurudwara of Main Road here on Friday.

Mehmood was going to withdraw money from one bank and deposit it in another bank. Meanwhile, two criminals ambushed him and carried out the incident. After the robbery, both the criminals fell from the bike. They then got up and fled on foot. It may be known that this incident is in the Lower Bazar police station area. Here, as soon as the information about the case was received, the police reached the spot and got involved in the investigation. In the interrogation of the incident, the police are scanning the CCTV footage. In another incident of snatching from the State Capital a person's mobile was snatched near Kadru DAV Kapildev school ground.

Mohammad Mehboob, son of Nizam scrap dealer of Ranchi, was looted, he was going to withdraw money from the bank and deposit it in another bank in connection with the business.

Placement Fair cum BAU - Industry Meet – 2023 organised

PNS : RANCHI

After its establishment Birsa Agricultural University (BAU) in 1981, for the first time after 42 years the University organized Placement Fair cum BAU - Industry Meet – 2023 as a mega event. Despite the limited resources, the performance of the students of the university in the field of higher education and career in the last two and a half years has been a matter of pride.

In the University, special attention is paid to the development of students' ability and efficiency and University students are giving better service in NABARD and many other national institutions, said BAU Vice Chancellor (VC), Onkar Nath Singh while inaugurating the event. "The students of BAU will prove to be very fruitful in the management of private and industry sectors on the strength of their ability, efficiency and discipline. About 400 students have been linked with online coaching for various competitions.

The VC said that there is a need to pay special attention to forestry in terms of employment. "In recent years, many new dimensions have been added in the academic field of the University. Among these, the students of Horticulture, Dairy Technology and Agricultural Engineering have



BAU VC Onkar Nath Singh alongwith others release brochures during Placement Fair cum BAU - Industry Meet – 2023, at BAU in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

performed remarkably well at the national level. He advised the Associate Dean of the concerned college to inform the State Government about the suggestion letter regarding the possibility of their employment, he added.

On the occasion, Singh also released the placement poster and souvenir published by Counseling and Placement.

Special guest NABARD, Ranchi General Manager, Gautam Kumar Singh said that at the National level about fifty per cent graduates of agriculture and allied subjects are working in NABARD institute. He announced that within ten days the placement of eleven BAU students would be done by NABARD Consultancy Service, a subsidiary unit of NABARD.

On the occasion, Dean Veterinary, Dr Sushil Prasad

threw light on the possibilities of planning in Veterinary, Dairy Technology and Fisheries sector. He said that there are immense possibilities of employment in the private sector for the students of these subjects as compared to government employment.

Dean Agriculture, Dr DK Shahi described this occasion as a very useful and encouraging opportunity for the students. He advised the students to identify their potential, develop their skills, be aware and make continuous efforts and hard work.

In the welcome speech, Dean Forestry, Dr MS Mallick said that the number of BAU colleges and students has increased a lot. "For the first time this platform has been provided to the students in the university for the purpose of awareness and conscious-

ness among the students. Due to this, apart from government employment, successful students of the university will get quality employment," he added.

Organizing Secretary and University Coordinator (Counseling and Placement) Dr. BK Jha said that about 350 graduate and post-graduate students of 11 colleges of the University have registered in this program. "Seven companies are participating in this placement fair. These include Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals, Khizist Tech Private Limited, Virbak Animal Health India Private Limited, Sarada, Kheiti Private Limited, Nebcon and Aryabhata Education and Health Trust," he added.

Jhar said that during the program, the students of the 5th semester of the University interacted with the BAU alumni, panel discussions with experts on the possibilities of employment for undergraduate and postgraduate students of agriculture and allied subjects, sensitization of students by experts and participation in counseling programs of institutions. There will be an opportunity to take

The program was coordinated by Radio Hariyali coordinator Shashi Singh. Thanks were given by the organizing chairman and DSW Dr BK Aggarwal.

Bring norms against misuse of sedition law, says panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Law Commission has backed the penal provision for the offence of sedition, saying revealing it altogether can have serious adverse ramifications for the security and integrity of the country. Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code dealing with sedition is at present under abeyance following directions of the Supreme Court issued in May, 2022.

The Commission said repealing the provision on the mere basis that certain countries have done so is essentially turning a blind eye to the glaring ground realities existing in India and that it can be retained with certain safeguards to prevent its misuse.

In its report submitted to the Government recently, the panel said cognizant of the views on the misuse of Section 124A, it recommends that model guidelines curbing them be issued by the Centre. "In this context, it is also alternatively suggested that a provision



analogous to Section 196(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC) may be incorporated as a proviso to Section 154 of CrPC, which would provide the requisite procedural safeguard before filing of a FIR with respect to an offence under Section 124A of IPC," chairman of the 22nd Law Commission Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi (ret'd) said in his covering letter to Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal.

While it is imperative to lay down certain procedural guidelines for curbing any misuse of Section 124A dealing with sedition by law enforcement authorities, any allegation of misuse of the provision does not by implication warrant a

call for its repeal, the report said. The Commission also said that sedition being a "colonial legacy" is not a valid ground for its repeal.

In its report submitted to Meghwal, the Law Commission also said the existence of laws such as Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the National Security Act does not by implication cover all elements of the offence envisaged under Section 124A of the IPC. "Further, in the absence of a provision like Section 124A of IPC, any expression that incites violence against the government would invariably be tried under the special laws and counter-terror legislations, which contain much more

stringent provisions to deal with the accused," the report "Usage of the Law of Sedition" said. It observed that each country's legal system grapples with its own different set of realities.

"Repealing Section 124A of IPC on the mere basis that certain countries have done so is essentially turning a blind eye to the glaring ground realities existing in India," it said. In his covering letter, Justice Awasthi recalled that the constitutionality of Section 124A was challenged before the Supreme Court.

Union of India assured the Supreme Court that it was re-examining Section 124A and the court may not invest its valuable time in doing the same." Pursuant to the same, the top court directed the Central Government and all the State Governments to refrain from registering any FIR or taking any coercive measures, while suspending all continuing investigations in relation to Section 124A.

India stresses need for UNSC reform

'The current composition of the Security Council no longer aligns with the realities of our interconnected and multi-polar world'

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

With India constantly calling for restructuring the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), envoys and policy experts have said the institution in its current structure is "perverse and immoral." They also said the time to reform it is now adding the UNSC is "a perpetuation of the colonisation project" and does not reflect the rise of new powers and shifting geopolitical landscape. They also said status quo is untenable.

Speaking at a Roundtable on Security Council Reform at the UN headquarters hosted by the Permanent Missions of Brazil, India, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines late Thursday, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj said, "The current composition of the Security Council no longer aligns with the realities

of our interconnected and multi-polar world." "The Council structure, designed in a different era, does not reflect the rise of new powers, the shifting geopolitical landscape and the aspirations of nations striving for a fairer and more equitable global order," she said. The roundtable was held with the aim to bring in the perspective of the Global South on the long-pending issue, keeping in mind the pressing urgency for reformed multi-lateralism architecture in the United Nations representative of contemporary geo-political realities.

Kamboj stressed that the urgency of UNSC reform is also underscored by the unprecedented global challenges that transcend borders.

"Climate change, terrorism, pandemics, and humanitarian crises require collective efforts and shared responsibilities," she said, adding that a reformed Security Council will "enable us to pool resources,



expertise and perspectives from a wider range of countries, empowering us to confront these issues with greater effectiveness and unity."

Asserting that the "time for Security Council reform is now," Kamboj called on the Member States to "seize" the opportunity to revitalize and strengthen the United Nations by making it more inclusive, representative and responsive to the needs and aspirations of all nations.

President of India's leading think tank Observer Research Foundation (ORF) Samir Saran said in a deeply heterogeneous, multipolar world, it is "untenable" that a group of victors of war from another century should be in charge of manag-

ing the world of today. "The war is history and so is the influence and capabilities of some of the members in the room. I think the current structure of the UNSC is perverse and immoral. It is a perpetuation for many of us from the Global South of the colonisation project.

The burden of the war was borne by the colonies while the privileges of peace benefited the colonisers and their allies," he said. Saran noted that in past decades, "we have seen how the will of the comity of nations has been negated by one or more of permanent members" of Council. China, France, Russia, the UK and the US make up the five permanent members of the 15-nation Council.

Govt pushing for developed India by 2047: Def Min

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With growing stature of India, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said with power comes great responsibility quoting a famous dialogue from Hollywood blockbuster 'Spiderman' to emphasise that India's responsibility will increase in sync with its rising position.

Making this observation here while addressing an event, Rajnath said he envisioned a developed India that ensures that universal values like democracy, religious freedom, dignity and world peace are established across the globe.

The defence minister said the government is working to build a developed India by 2047, focusing on almost all sectors of the country. "India is not an emerging but a resurgent power which is regaining its place on the global eco-



nomic map under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

The defence minister also underlined the need for building a welfare state with high standard of living, social harmony and equal participation of women in the development process.

He began his address by stating that until the 17th century, India had a remarkably strong economy, constituting over a quarter of the world's GDP, but it lost its glory due to a weak military and political

slavery. The defence minister asserted that the government is working on both these fronts to ensure that India regains its old glorious status. He stated that no stone is being left unturned to create a strong, young and tech-savvy armed force on the back of robust defence industry which indigenously manufactures state-of-the-art weapons and equipment, while efforts are also being made to get rid of the colonial mindset.

"A strong military not only secures the borders, but also protects the culture and economy of a country. The goal is to build a strong, self-reliant and prosperous nation, which caters to its own needs as well as the requirements of friendly countries," he said.

"This is an era of renaissance. It is time to re-establish India as a global superpower," he added, according to the defence ministry. Talking about the political landscape in the

country, Rajnath said political parties are integral to a democracy and it cannot survive without them. At the same time, he rued that many political parties in India do not operate based on any ideology and their politics revolve around a person or a family or a caste.

"I think such politics should have no place in a developed India. Politics should be based on ideology and values and not on the basis of family, religion and caste," he said, speaking at Times Network's India Economic Conclave.

"If I talk about the political future of India, I wish that as we move ahead, our democracy should be strengthened in the same way. Criminalisation of politics should end, and our country should move forward on the path of credible politics. Politics should be understood as a medium of public service," he said.

ED raids VIPS Group of Cos in Pune for FEMA violations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said it has conducted searches at Pune and Ahmednagar in connection with FEMA violations by VIPS Group of Companies and Global Affiliate Business engaged in various illegal trade, crypto exchange and wallet services. The searches yielded seizure of cash and bank balances to the tune of Rs 18.54 crore.

VIPS Group of Companies was managed and controlled by Vinod Khute. "The ED initiated an investigation under Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 against Vinod Khute and others. Khute is presently residing in Dubai and is the mastermind of various illegal trade, crypto exchange, wallet services being operated through

VIPS Group of Companies and the proceeds were being siphoned off through Hawala to various foreign countries," the agency said in a statement.

The FEMA probe has revealed that Global Affiliate Business which is an affiliate programme that markets business in affiliate marketing by selling products through e-commerce shopping portal, was being operated through an application namely "Global Affiliate Business" available on Google Play Store as well as Apple Store, it said.

However, it was revealed that Global Affiliate Business has been running an illegal and unauthorized multi-level marketing scheme wherein if a person opts for the scheme as a member and refers other consumers/ clients on the application/ website, a commission on

his investment/ expense on the application is credited in his account/ wallet." In this manner, funds to the tune of Rs 125 crore have been collected from various investors. Further, Global Affiliate Business has also been found to be marketing the business of Kana Capital which is engaged into brokerage under which various clients of trade forex, crypto, stocks etc.," it said.

Kana Capitals in consultation with directors of VIPS group of companies also conducted various weekly training programmes for clients of Global Affiliate Business for investment in VIPSWALLET and VIPSFINTOCK for purchase of sale and purchase of crypto, stocks, and how to lure other consumers/ clients into illegal and unauthorized multi level marketing schemes.

Govt hopes to pay 85-90% MGNREGS workers through ABPS by June-end: Min



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union rural development ministry is hopeful of covering 88 to 90 per cent of active MGNREGS workers under the mandatory Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) before the month ends, officials said on Friday.

The deadline to make workers registered under the national employment guarantee scheme a part of the payment system ends on June 30. The ministry has asserted that workers will not be refused work if they do not have an

Aadhaar number. So far, around 74.9 per cent active workers have been marked eligible for the payment system, according to data on the ministry's website.

The rural development ministry has asked states to organise camps and follow-up with beneficiaries to achieve 100 per cent coverage under ABPS.

It has also clarified that beneficiaries should be requested to provide their Aadhaar number, but should not be refused work if they do not have one. Data on the min-

Send baby back: India tells Berlin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of an Indian baby girl put in foster care in Germany, New Delhi on Friday urged it to send her back at the earliest. She is living in foster care in Berlin for over 20 months. India said it is impor-

tant for the child to be in her linguistic, religious, cultural and social environment.

This appeal came as German authorities had taken custody of Ariha Shah on September 23, 2021, when she was seven months old, alleging that the parents harassed her.

India will rule automobile sector in five years: Gadkari

PTI ■ VAPI (GUJ)

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday expressed confidence that India will become the largest automobile market in the world in the next five years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Union minister for road transport and highways was addressing a gathering in Vapi town of Gujarat's Valsad district after inaugurating 'Rajju Shroff ROFEL University' campus.

"At present, the size of the Indian automobile industry is Rs 7.5 lakh crore. The industry has so far created 4.5 crore jobs, and it pays the maximum Goods and Services Tax (GST) to the Central and state governments," Gadkari said.

India was previously at fourth position in the world (automobile market) after Japan, the US and China, but recently the country surpassed Japan to become No. 3, he said.

"And, I am confident that within five years, thanks to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we will be No.1 and the size of the industry will be Rs 15 lakh crore," the minister said.

Given the qualified manpower and raw material available in the country, he expressed confidence that India can become the number one economy in the world in future.

PMLA Special court sentences man to four years' RI in drugs case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The PMLA Special Court, Jalandhar has convicted one Mahabir Singh of Amritsar on money laundering charges and sentenced him to four years rigorous imprisonment along with a fine of Rs 20,000 in a narcotics case relating to seizure of 15 kg of heroin.

Further, his immovable properties which were earlier attached by the ED have been confiscated under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the ED said.

The ED initiated investigation in 2009 on the basis of an FIR registered at Sadar police station in Amritsar

INS TRISHUL VISITS PORT ANJOUAN ISLAND

New Delhi: INS Trishul visited port Anjouan, Comoros from May 31 to June two. The ship anchored off Anjouan Island on May 31 and was received by civil-military leadership. As part of the visit, Captain Kapil Kaushik, the Commanding Officer, called on senior government officials at Anjouan. Professional interactions with Comoros Armed Forces and Comoros Coast Guard, sports fixtures and a joint Yoga session with Comoros Defence forces were undertaken by the ship during the stay in harbor, navy officials said here on Friday.

under various sections of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 and Arms Act, 1959 against accused Mahabir Singh and others.

Accused Mahabir Singh was earlier convicted by Special Court, Amritsar under NDPS Act with regard to recovery of 15 kg of heroin.

Investigation conducted by the ED revealed that the "proceeds of crime" generated from drug trade were invested by the accused in immovable properties which were subsequently attached by the ED. After investigation, the ED filed a Prosecution Complaint or chargesheet in 2017 under PMLA.

AMARNATH YATRA TRACK TO BE RESTORED SOON

New Delhi: The Border Road Organization (BRO) will complete the restoration works on Amarnath Yatra track by 15 June well before the Yatra commences on 01 July 2023. The scope of work involves snow clearance, widening of the track, restoration of all foot bridges, fixing of hand rails and construction of break walls, the defence ministry said here on Friday. Earlier the Yatra track from Baltal to the Holy Cave was maintained by Public Works Department, Jammu and Kashmir and the one from Chandanwari to Holy Cave was maintained by Pahalgam Development Authority. The tracks were handed over to the BRO in September 2022 for maintenance and upgradation.

VIRTUAL SCO SUMMIT DUE TO MANY FACTORS: MEA

New Delhi: India on Friday said the decision to host the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit next month in the virtual format was taken after reviewing several factors and no announcement was made that high-profile event will be held in person. This assertion by ministry of external affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi here came after the MEA on May 30 said India assumed rotating Chairmanship of SCO at the Samarkand Summit last year. Under India's first-ever Chairmanship, the 23rd Summit of SCO Council of Heads of State will be held in virtual format on July four, chaired by PM Modi.



Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat pays tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on the 350th anniversary of his coronation, in Nagpur on Friday

PTI

‘Month-long riots left 310 hurt, 98 dead’

37K people in 272 relief camps, says Manipur Govt



PTI ■ IMPHAL

At least 98 people lost their lives and 310 others were injured in the ethnic violence in Manipur that broke out a month ago, the Government said in a statement on Friday. A total of 37,450 people are in 272 relief camps at present, said the statement, issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

In all, 4,014 cases of arson have been reported since the violence broke out in the State on May 3, it said. "The number of deaths is 98 and the number of injured reported is 310," it said.

Over the last one month, the State police has registered 3,734 cases and arrested 65 people for their involvement in the violence, the statement said.

"Sporadic incidents of firing or torching of houses by miscreants are becoming rare now as coordinated effort is made by different security agencies," it said. The Army, Assam Rifles, CAPFs and local police have been deployed in vulnerable places, it added. Till now, 84 companies of central armed forces have been deployed, the statement said.

"More companies are being

deployed. Flag march and area domination exercises are being carried out widely. Search operations will be conducted from today to recover snatched arms and ammunition," it said.

Meetings were being held with village heads and civil society organisations to resolve conflict and bring peace, it said, claiming that the situation is normal in most of the districts.

Curfew has been relaxed for 12 hours in Imphal West, Imphal East, Bishnupur and Pherzawl, for 11 hours in Kangpokpi, for 10 hours in Churachandpur and Chandel, for eight hours in Jiribam and Tenugopal, and for seven hours in Thoubal and Kakching districts, it said.

There is no curfew in Tamenglong, Noney, Senapati, Ukhrul and Kamjong, it added.

"Movement of essential items along the NH-37 has been ensured," the statement said, noting that around 450 trucks were on the move with essential items. An uneasy calm prevailed in Manipur a day after Home Minister Amit Shah left the state, concluding his four-day visit and announcing a slew of measures to bring back normalcy.

Another district-level BJP leader killed in West Bengal

Suvendu demands Didi's resignation, TMC claims intra-party rivalry

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Yet another district-level BJP leader was murdered in Bengal prompting State Opposition leader Suvendu Adhikari to demand Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's resignation for her alleged failure as the State's police Minister.

The demand by Adhikari came after Prashant Roy Basunia an Anchal general secretary of the BJP at Dinhati in Coochbehar district of North Bengal was on Friday morning shot dead in front of his mother following brief heated exchanges with some alleged Trinamool Congress goons, sources said.

Basunia's mother said that the entire family had fled to Delhi in the face of rampant TMC attacks after the 2021 Assembly elections that saw Mamata Banerjee roaring back to power for the third-consecutive term.

"As soon as we returned to Dinhati they started threatening us... Finally they came today and shot my son from point blank range," the victim's mother said. Trinamool legislator from Dinhati Udayan Guha however, said that



Basunia had fallen victim to intra-party rivalry in the BJP.

"It was the result of intra-party bickerings," he said adding, Basunia himself had a criminal past. "He was under police radar because of his involvement in anti-social activities," Guha said.

Demanding the Chief Minister's resignation Adhikari said, "Today's incident once again proves that the law and order of Bengal has completely collapsed... As the police minister she has failed to control bomb blasts, political murders ... We demand her immediate resignation." The BJP leader demanded CBI investigation into the murder.

As hordes of TMC workers were deserting TMC and joining the BJP, the ruling party was resorting to political murders, he said reminding how scores of BJP workers had been murdered by the TMC after it came back to power in 2021.

I can change Bengal in six months if made CM: Mithun

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

In what is being seen as Mumbai cine star Mithun Chakraborty's hidden chief ministerial ambitions, the BJP leader on Friday said that he would change the face of Bengal in six months' time if he were to become the State Chief Minister. Alleging that there was a complete collapse of the State administrative system Chakraborty said that he would change things in six months if he was given the chance to become the Chief Minister.

"There is complete collapse of the system in Bengal... It is all round deterioration... But it can be corrected... If by default I am made the Chief Minister for six months then you will see the change," Chakraborty said inviting immediate attack from the ruling Trinamool Congress.

Calling Chakraborty a chit fund accused who had gone to the BJP to evade arrest, State ruling party spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said, "This is a man who was accused in the chit fund scam... In order to escape arrest he has joined BJP ... And now he is saying all sorts of things against Mamata Banerjee who made him an MP. He is a traitor... He doesn't deserve any attention because the BJP will never come to power in Bengal."



HC defers hearing in Chhota Rajan's suit against Netflix

Jailed don seeks to restrain release of series 'Scoop'

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday deferred the hearing of a suit filed by incarcerated underworld don Rajendra S Nikhalje alias Chhota Rajan seeking to restrain release of a Netflix television-series 'Scoop' - based on the killing of journalist Jyotirmoy Dey -- on the grounds of infringement on his

personal life, till June 7.

Rajan, who is lodged at Tihar Jail in the national Capital, had moved the High Court on Thursday - had sought restraint on the release of the tele-serial alleging that the serial makers had made a reference to his name (Rajan), image, purported voice and other names associated with Rajan. Rajan has sought Re 1 as damages for personal infringement. The HC Vacation Judge Justice Shivkumar G Dige adjourned the hearing of Rajan's suit till June 7 after noting that since the television series was already on the air, there was no urgency in the matter. He grant-

ed time to the makers of the television serial to have their say on the serial. "Scoop" is based on a biographical account of one of the co-accused in the Dey murder case, journalist Jigna Vora, who was later acquitted in the case. In his suit, Rajan told the High Court: "My client has been shown as the one behind the murder of Dey. He is convicted in the case. His appeal is pending before the High Court. Should he be portrayed like this in front of the whole world? Lakhs of people are going to watch it. It is going to create a lot of problems for him" Desai argued on behalf of Rajan.



Fifty-six-year-old Dey, who was an Editor (Special Investigations) with 'Mid-Day', was gunned down by a group of motorbike-riding gangsters at Powai in north-east Mumbai on June 11, 2011. It may be recalled that a Special Court had on May 2, 2018 convicted Chhota Rajan and eight others for the sensational murder and sentenced

them to life imprisonment, while it acquitted journalist Jigna Vora and another accused for lack of evidence. Appearing on behalf of Rajan, Senior Advocate Mihir Desai told the High Court that of all the other persons depicted in the series, only Rajan's real face and name had been used in the television series.

Desai argued that an appeal against the conviction was pending in the Bombay High Court, and hence the trial court's conviction could not be used against him. "The order of conviction cannot be used against Rajan in any defamatory manner or otherwise tarnish or malign his

name and reputation merely with the sole intention to gain profits, by any third person, especially in absence of his consent," Rajan stated in his suit.

In his suit filed before the commercial division of the High Court, Rajan has sought Re 1 as damages for the alleged infringement. Judge Dige wanted to know as to how Rajan's suit would fall under Commercial Courts Act since the latter has sought only Re 1 as damages.

The Judge said that if the suit qualified as a commercial suit, then the suit would be sent for mediation as per the procedure under law.

Guj court rejects anticipatory bail plea of BJP MP's father in case of abetting doctor's suicide

PTI ■ VERAVAL

Sessions court in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district on Friday rejected the anticipatory bail plea filed by BJP MP Rajesh Chudasama's father Naranbhai Chudasama in a case of abetment to suicide.

The court of sessions judge P G Gokani in Veraval town rejected 62-year-old Naranbhai's anticipatory bail plea, citing that the police investigation in the case has just started and it will not be appropriate to give any relief at this juncture,

especially when the crime is of a serious nature. An FIR was registered against the Chudasamas in May after Dr Atul Chag, a well known MD physician in the town, was found hanging from a ceiling fan at his house on February 12.

The police registered an FIR against the MP from Junagadh Lok Sabha seat, and his father under Sections 306 (abetment to suicide) and 506-2 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code.

While the legislator has not filed any plea as yet, Naranbhai filed a plea a few days ago seeking anticipatory bail on various grounds.

As per the FIR, registered three months after the doctor's death, the Chudasamas had a close relationship with him for the last 20 years and had borrowed nearly Rs 1.75 crore from him in instalments since 2008 by winning his trust. They allegedly gave Dr Chag a few cheques.

However, when they stopped responding to Dr Chag's repeated requests to return the money, he deposited one of their cheques of Rs 90 lakh in a bank, but it was dishonoured, the FIR stated.

Days before the suicide, the duo allegedly abused Dr Chag verbally and threatened to kill his only son Hitarth for demanding the money back, the FIR stated, adding that the threat and the thought of losing money and his son deeply upset the doctor, who took the extreme step out of shock and fear.

In his plea, Naranbhai claimed that although no concrete evidence has been found against them so far, the police suddenly lodged an FIR against them just because his son is an MP.

Guv 'dismisses' Bengal Govt's claim of not being consulted on VC appointments

PTI ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Dr CV Ananda Bose on Friday "dismissed" state Education Minister Bratya Basu's claim that Bose had appointed interim vice-chancellors for 11 universities without consulting the State Government.

He implicitly said that there had been consultation but that his office had not necessarily agreed with the State Government's recommendations. "Consultation does not mean concurrence," said Bose on the sidelines of a programme held at Raj Bhavan.



Calcutta, Jadavpur and Burdwan universities are among the 11 varsities where interim VCs have been appointed by the Governor, who is the chancellor of all the State-aided or run varsities.

Sources in Raj Bhavan claimed that 10 interim VCs, barring one in Dakshin Dinajpur district, joined duty and signed the guidelines issued by the Chancellor.

"The interim vice-chancellor of a university in Dakshin Dinajpur district was getting threatening calls from unidentified people, hence he chose not to join," a source in the state education

department said.

Hours after the Governor's office issued a list appointing interim VCs on Thursday, Basu said the Raj Bhavan's decision was "unilateral" and "violates the law".

"We came to know from the news media that the honourable chancellor has appointed Vice-Chancellors of 10 State-aided universities. These appointments were made without consulting the department. This was done in contravention of the rules laid down for the appointment of VCs and this is illegal. In these unprecedented circumstances we, on behalf of the department, are taking legal opinions on what steps could be initiated in future," Basu tweeted.

"On behalf of the higher education department, we are respectfully requesting the vice-chancellors who have been appointed illegally to reject this appointment," the minister tweeted.

In an apparent response to Basu's tweet, the governor said, "Raj Bhavan clarifies that consultation in the matter of appointment of interim VCs or authorising someone to perform the functions of an interim VC has been done."

Vijayan to preside over World Kerala Sabha in New York

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI



Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his Cabinet colleagues are on Cloud Nine as they are set to leave the Indian shores for a ten-day trip to the US and Cuba. Vijayan will preside over the World Kerala Sabha to be held in New York, which according to the CPI-M leaders in the State as well as in the US, is the largest-ever congregation of Malayalees seen anywhere outside India.

Tickets to share the podium with the Chief Minister are being sold at an unbelievable price of Rs 85,00,000 per person. The holders of these tickets can share the table with Vijayan, according to Manmadhan Nair, a New York-based CPI-M activist.

The donors would get special audience with the Chief Minister when they call on their relatives in Kerala and this is being seen as a scheme by the industries department of the State to make overseas Malayalees invest in their home State.

Though the CPI-M-led Kerala Government had completed seven years in office, the Ministers and party leaders are groping in the dark when asked about the economic and industrial development of the State. To make matters worse, three farmers committed sui-

cide in the State in quick succession as a result of debt they accrued because of the indifferent approach of cooperative banks in Kerala.

"We do not expect the Chief Minister's trip to yield any results because people in US know well that Kerala under the CPI-M is not a safe bet," said Ramesh Chennithala, former Leader of the Opposition and slammed the sale of tickets for premium seating next to the Chief Minister.

However, the Chief Minister's entourage is confident of attracting US entrepreneurs to Kerala to set up businesses here.

The fact that the Central Government could not do any harm to the Chief Minister or his family despite unleashing all central agencies on them over charges of gold smuggling, money laundering and high-level corruption, has bolstered their confidence.

Saddled with ₹8 lakh-crore loans, Telangana plunged into debt trap: Union Min



PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister for Tourism G Kishan Reddy on Friday slammed the K Chandrasekhar Rao-led BRS government for plunging Telangana into a debt trap on the back of alleged rampant corruption and suicides of farmers.

After hoisting the national flag at the historic Golconda Fort on Telangana's 10th State Formation Day, Reddy said there is a need to introspect whether the State is transforming according to the aspirations of the people and martyrs of the statehood movement.

"The budget debt of the State is Rs 3.12 lakh crore. Through PSUs, corporation banks, NBFCs, NABARD, Power Finance Corporation and RBI, the Government raised

about Rs 8 lakh crore debt. The State is plunging into a debt pile... Telangana borrowed over Rs 8 lakh worth loans from various organisations," he charged.

He alleged that the State Government has slipped into a position where it is unable to pay salaries to its employees and bills to small contractors.

"Telangana was made as a slave in the hands of one family. There is rampant corruption in the state," he further fired.

He said as many as 360 people in the first phase of the struggle and about 1,200 people died in the third phase of the Telangana statehood struggle. He claimed that the state government has borrowed money from all the institutions that can give loans in the world and the debt funds were not spent on welfare and development.

TDP fought for equal justice for both: Naidu

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) fought for equal justice for both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States during bifurcation, N Chandrababu Naidu said on Friday.

The TDP chief made these remarks as nine years have passed since the bifurcation of the former undivided Andhra Pradesh, and the 10th anniversary of Telangana Formation Day has been grandly celebrated. "With a view to developing the State after bifurcation, TDP had taken the 'Nava Nirmana Deeksha' and despite the State being in a deficit budget, we have taken all possible measures to take Andhra Pradesh on the progressive path," said the former Chief Minister in a Press note shared on Friday night.

He said that freedom fighter Potti Sriramulu, who is considered the founding father of Andhra Pradesh, had sacrificed his life for the formation of the Telugu State in 1952 and former Chief Minister NT Rama Rao had floated the TDP for the progress of the Telugu community.



The Indian flag flutters alongside the EGRIP Dome on the breathtaking Greenland ice sheet on Friday.

AP/PTI

Green Day

We must realise that we can afford to ignore environmental issues only at our own peril

The World Environment Day, celebrated annually on June 5, is unlike any other for, if nothing else, the sheer importance it holds for our survival and that of our future generations. It's quite understandable to scoff at yet another 'World This Day' or 'World That Day', especially since it doesn't hold any personal or intimate meaning in our lives such as our birthday or Mother's Day or Father's Day but what lends it gravitas is that it's much more than an individual's celebration: It calls for joint efforts by the global communities - in fact all of humanity - to protect, safeguard and conserve nature, lest we all shall perish before too long. With the increasing urgency of environmental issues, this day serves as a powerful reminder that we cannot afford to overlook the state of our environment. Unfortunately, and as a result of mankind's own doing, the world today faces unprecedented environmental challenges, including climate change, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, pollution and water scarcity, among others. These issues not only impact ecosystems and wildlife but



also pose severe threats to human health, livelihood and future generations. The day aims to unite diverse stakeholders, including individuals, organisations, Governments and communities around the world, in fostering global collaboration and solidarity. It also serves as a platform for sharing ideas, best practices and innovative approaches to tackle environmental challenges effectively.

In this light, we must train ourselves to make sincere efforts in becoming more aware of the causes that have led to, and are still leading to, issues like global warming, water scarcity and deforestation. On a very basic scale, it's also high time to plant and nurture trees as well as to reduce mankind's carbon footprint by cutting down on the greenhouse gas emissions by adapting to greener and healthier technologies rather than shamelessly using air-conditioners and fossil fuel-guzzling vehicles. In this time and age, when we have technologies such as electric vehicles available to us for use, what stops us from holding out that little bit of extra down payment initially and go for an electric vehicle which would stand us and the environment in good stead in the years to come? From minimising waste, recycling material and conserving energy to promoting eco-friendly transportation and embracing renewable resources, the global citizen must vow individual action in mitigating environmental degradation. Though the Governments have already woken up to this existential threat, what with a host of groupings like COP 27 working overtime to tackle the menace, it also helps promote policy changes and advocacy efforts. The day reminds Governments to enact and enforce environmental regulations, supports the development of sustainable policies and encourages lawmakers to prioritise environmental protection. So let's not stand in the way of a green Earth; in fact, let's help lay a new path that rejuvenates our tiring planet.

PICTALK



A view of the Raigad Fort on the 350th anniversary of the coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

US baton of values passes seamlessly



BHOPINDER SINGH

Its military leadership is today poised for an unprecedented normalcy of top two positions to be held by the citizens of African-American ethnicity

Colin Powell was the most decorated and highest-ranking black man in United States military history, ascending to National Security Adviser, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), and later Secretary of State (first black on all three accounts). The soldier and diplomat were even speculated to run for Presidency as a Republican, which he ultimately declined (though in later years, he did call fellow Republican, Donald Trump, a 'national disgrace'). The dignified Soldier-Statesman would have been conscious of his black or African-American identity in 1958 as a newly commissioned officer, but as the wise soldier late reflected, "Let it (racism) be a problem to someone else...Let it drag them down. Don't use it as an excuse for your shortcomings". America was to evolve for the better on the inclusivity front, and soon had the likes of Barack Obama and Kamala Harris, at even more senior leadership positions.

Today, American Military leadership is poised for an unprecedented normalcy of two top positions to be held by Americans of African-American ethnicity i.e., Secretary of Defence, Lloyd Austin (retired Four-Star General) and the newly nominated Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Charles Brown Jr. As nominated CJCS, Charles Brown would replace General Mark Milley and would serve at the pleasure of the President of USA for a four-year term. Amongst his many professional accomplishments, Milley of course would be remembered for standing up to retain and burnish the apolitical credentials of the 'Uniform' - he had rebuffed attempts to use his image in the election campaign by then President Donald Trump and had also famously apologised for his presence at an event that created a perception of military involvement in domestic politics. He bluntly reiterated that the Armed Forces did not serve a King or Dictator, "We take an oath to the Constitution, not an individual". The unflinchingly apolitical stance of the American Military leadership was pivotal in



denying the recklessly divisive attempt of Donald Trump to overcome the shock of the 6th January 2021, insurrection moment. Amongst the few US Presidents with virtually no Military connection, yet with an unearned urge to appropriate the institution of the Armed Forces to build his political muscularity, Trump was denied the same by the ramrod straight and constitutional posture of the US Armed Forces leadership, who simply refused to bend.

Not only did the likes of Mark Milley stand up for constitutional propriety but also for widening opportunity and intake for societal 'minorities' e.g., blacks, who remained vastly underrepresented at top leadership levels. A couple of years back, Milley pointed out that while Gen Charles Brown was amongst the 2% Air Force pilots of African-American ethnicity when he joined the Air Force in 1984, the ratio of Blacks as Air Force pilots was still an abysmal 2%, over 35 years later! Incidentally, Mark Milley himself is a 'White' and was serving under arguably the 'Whitest of White' President i.e., Donald Trump, who may not have perceived Milley's concern as a pressing issue, given his penchant and politics of majoritarianism. But then, such is the cloth from which the 'Uniform' ought to be sewn.

“NOT ONLY DID THE LIKES OF MARK MILLEY STAND UP FOR CONSTITUTIONAL PROPRIETY BUT ALSO FOR WIDENING OPPORTUNITY AND INTAKE FOR SOCIETAL 'MINORITIES', EG BLACKS, WHO REMAINED VASTLY UNDER-REPRESENTED AT TOP LEADERSHIP LEVELS

Even General Brown when questioned on the aftermath of George Floyd's murder had released a video of his own experiences (in a non-partisan way) where he accepted that as a black man in America his own experiences, "didn't always sing of liberty and equality" - such a powerful comment from him, was not held against him in his subsequent career trajectory. His commentary was fully compliant with the Constitution and apolitical, even if it riled the dispensation, then.

Now, the Pentagon will see yet another product of a fine American culture i.e., 'Military Families', in the form of Gen Charles Brown Jr. As Biden alluded, "General Brown is a warrior, descended from a proud line of warriors" - his father had served for 30 years and retired as Colonel, while his grandfather was drafted in World War 2. Soldering is a proud and immensely respected tradition in the American consciousness, and President Joe Biden remains justifiably proud of his late son, Major Beau Biden (Judge Advocate General's Corps), who served in Iraq (including a 7-month deployment in a combat zone).

From an Indian perspective, General Brown is supposed to be an authority on the challenges posed by

Chinese expansionism, especially given his experience as Air Component Commander for the United States Indo-Pacific Command. He has also visited India during the successful completion of a joint Indo-US Air Force exercise, Cope India, focused on enhancing capabilities, aircrew tactics and force employment. He had noted then, "Cope India is just one part of an ongoing effort to strengthen the relationship between the US Air Force and the Indian Air Force". General Brown's familiarity along with that of Secretary of Defense as a former Commander of US Central Command (responsible for military operations in the Middle East & Afghanistan theatre), ensures that the top two in the US Security apparatus are well-versed with India's dual challenges of China and Pakistan.

Finally, as Lloyd Austin hailed Gen Brown, "Throughout his career, he has insisted on doing right by his teammates and their families", this rings true for the 'Uniformed' fraternity universally, as the baton moves seamlessly from one to the other.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IPL earnings show the way



This IPL - 2023 has earned about ₹49,000 crore for the BCCI via split media rights over five years (to the two companies Disney Star and Mukesh Ambani's JioCinema). As a bonus, almost every IPL T20 match is selling Housefull at almost every stadium. The Indian government

must take inspiration from IPL's pooling type method to earn big revenue via rather than periodically increasing taxes on essential goods.

Taking a leaf out of this, the Government should ask every citizen to contribute ₹1 or ₹10 or ₹100 ... depending on its funds needed. This way the government can coolly earn ₹140 crore / ₹1400 crore / ₹14,000 crore without burdening the citizens. Since the financial burden is equally shared, big pain will not be felt. Even one day's salary of all employees can be cut periodically. Better limit contribution from the poor to at the most ₹10. Another way is, the Government should nationalise the IPL T-20 tournaments to earn big money (instead of a periodical tax increase).

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

ed. When it has been announced that 200 units of electricity are free, it unambiguously means that the first 200 units are free and the consumption in excess of 200 units is chargeable. Freebies are nothing but bribery.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

OVERCOMING WATER SCARCITY

Sir - Water scarcity is a pressing issue today that demands immediate attention. By adopting efficient water conservation practices, we can make a significant difference. Emphasising the importance of responsible water usage, promoting rainwater harvesting and implementing modern irrigation techniques can conserve this vital resource.

Public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives should highlight the significance of water conservation, encouraging citizens to adopt simple yet impactful habits like fixing leakages and reducing excessive water usage.

Jubel D'Cruz | Mumbai

POLITICS IS HURTING MANIPUR

Sir - So far more than 75 people have died in Manipur violence. Countless properties and houses have been burnt. Both Imphal

The multiple benefits of community-driven learning

Learners band together in a supportive environment, pooling knowledge and focusing on growing personally as well as professionally

Remember the days when getting a job meant you were pretty much set for life, and learning one skill meant you could get through your entire career until retirement? Well, those days are long gone! We're living in an age where tech is the real boss, and it's changing faster than you can say 'artificial intelligence'.

So, what's the secret to staying employable in this rapidly changing world? It's simple: never stop learning, folks. That's where upskilling comes in. And as more of us realise the importance of keeping up with the times, community-driven learning is starting to make waves.

Community-driven learning is a whole new approach where learners band together in a supportive environment, pooling their knowledge and focusing on growing personally, as well as professionally. It's all about learning together and getting better together.

Collective knowledge and experience - The thing about community learning is that you've got people from all walks of life coming together. That's a treasure trove of



insights and perspectives to tap into! Active discussions, project collaborations, and sharing of experiences can enable learners to tap into this extensive pool and gain a much broader understanding of the subject. Further, the peer-to-peer learning opportunities enrich the experience and provide real-world opinions that classic educational settings don't usually offer.

Enhanced motivation and engagement - Let's face it, learning on your own can get lonely. But when you part of a community, there's a sense of belonging and accountability. You're not just learning buddies; you're each other's cheerleaders. It's that sense of camaraderie that makes the learning experience a whole lot more enriching and fun.

Networking opportunities - Since the premise of

community-driven upskilling is based on collaborative learning and engagement, it fosters networking among learners. Also, learners might find their future business partner, their next job, or just some cool people to help them stay updated on the latest industry trends. It's precisely connections like these that we turn to in times of professional hardships, and what's a better way to forge these meaningful connections than by learning and struggling on projects together?

Continuous learning and lifelong engagement - Community-driven learning is not only helpful in better understanding different industries and functions but also fosters a lifelong learning and development mindset. As the skills, tools, and technologies keep changing every few years, it has become crucial for the modern workforce to regularly upskill, relearn, and engage with others to remain up to date on trends and technologies. Community-driven upskilling initiatives bring together like-minded individuals who all have the same

drive for continuous learning and growth.

Flexibility - Community-based learning offers great flexibility in terms of upskilling. The courses offered by digital platforms are of short durations such as one to four weeks, and sessions are held on weekends or in the evenings to accommodate learners with full-time jobs. The courses are affordable and what's not to love about learning real-world skills from industry experts, all from the comfort of your own home?

IN CONCLUSION

So, here's the bottom line: community-driven upskilling is revolutionizing professional development. It's not just about climbing the ladder; it's about fostering rapid growth. For those new to the corporate world, it's your pathway to better job satisfaction and stronger compensation. And this isn't a fleeting trend. It's about long-term resilience in your career. So get ready, because this journey into upskilling is just getting started.

(The author is Founder & CEO, of Growth School)



VAIBHAV SISINTY

FIRST COLUMN

KARNATAKA GOVT TO
CREATE A MILLION JOBS

Its mass entrepreneurship programme will create 10 lakh jobs in the first 100 days



LAKSHMI VENKATARAMAN **VENKATESAN**

With expectations running high, the newly minted Karnataka Government of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has both an obligation and an opportunity to redress the unemployment concerns raised by 28% of Karnataka's youth and fulfil their aspirations. Rahul Gandhi, taking full cognisance of this issue, has promised 10 lakh jobs in the next five years. The Congress Government led by Siddaramaiah can get a head start on fulfilling these promises, in its first 100 days, by laying the foundation for sustainable job creation and by instituting programs and policies for mass skilling and entrepreneurship. The challenges for Karnataka are manifold. As per an analysis of Karnataka PLFS data, overall youth unemployment is at nearly 16% but of that subset, educated young people are the most vulnerable. Nearly 35% of educated young people are unemployed and only 14% of women are gainfully employed.

To give immediate relief to the unemployed, Rahul Gandhi has proposed the Yuva Nidhi scheme of providing Rs. 3000 per month to unemployed graduates and Rs. 1500 every month to unemployed diploma holders. This, however, needs to be augmented by bold, new long-term solutions that address the root cause of unemployment rather than symptom management. While doing so the new government needs to avoid the pitfalls of past misguided interventions - mismatches between types of skilling and industry needs and mandating the private sector to hire a fixed number of workers - to name a few. Mass entrepreneurship in Karnataka has the potential to empower a significant number of young people to set up their own enterprises spread across a wide range of geographies – especially in Northern Karnataka and in rural areas.

An imaginative collaboration between government, private sector, civil society, and youth could be a game changer in democratising enterprise creation, setting up innovation funds, and building industry-specific programmes and partnerships with incubators, accelerators and youth-centric NGOs. To make entrepreneurial opportunities widely accessible, awareness generation campaigns can be launched through Rural Business Idea Contests, and Entrepreneurial Hackathons in educational institutions. Entrepreneurship needs to be made an integral part of education in schools and colleges in Karnataka similar to what the Delhi Government has done.



Banks must lend more to micro-enterprises rather than dole out small loans (the average Mudra loan is Rs. 27,000) to create viable businesses that build assets and generate jobs. Additional efforts should be made to support women as 85% of them face challenges in availing bank loans.

Karnataka can also launch state-wide mentor programmes, particularly for the educated unemployed as mentoring greatly improves chances of entrepreneurs' success, according to a study conducted across 17 countries by Sage. Rural and sector-specific entrepreneurship can be encouraged by providing rural-specific infrastructure, connectivity, grants, subsidies, low-interest loans, and tax breaks. Special schemes, grants, and mentorship programs should be instated to address gender disparities and promote gender equity. Digital entrepreneurship can be encouraged through digital literacy training, support for digital platforms and marketplaces, and digital innovation.

Key gaps in the policy landscape need to be filled by providing an enabling ecosystem with infrastructure and connectivity, simplifying regulations and expanding incentives to non-technology and non-Bengaluru-based startups. These steps, planned and executed synergistically, can help Karnataka realise the vision of creating 10 lakh jobs in five years for its youth and women, through a grassroots mass entrepreneurship movement spanning every town, taluka and village.

(The writer is the Founding and Managing Trustee of Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust)

India's stake in Awami League's Victory

Bangladesh will again become a centre of anti-India activities, should a BNP-Jama'at-led coalition return to power in Dhaka in coming elections



India must do everything possible, within four corners of international law and with absolute respect for Bangladesh's sovereignty, to help Sheikh Hasina-led Bangladesh Awami League win the parliamentary elections scheduled in that country in January 2024. Begum Khaleda Zia-led Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the main opposition party, which is allied to the Bangladesh Jama'at-e-Islami (Jama'at) and other fundamentalist Islamist organisations, is pathologically anti-India. Bangladesh will again become a centre of anti-India activity and promoter of north-eastern India's secessionist insurgent groups, should a BNP-Jama'at-led coalition return to power in Dhaka.

A look at the record of the BNP-Jama'at-led coalition government when it was in power from 2001 to 2006, makes this clear. The issuance of threats to India, the active promotion of secessionist insurgent violence in north-eastern India, and attempts to create a climate of hostility toward India in Bangladesh were the three main features of Dhaka's policy towards Delhi. An important example of the threats was one by its foreign minister, M. Morshed Khan, at a seminar in Dhaka on September 7, 2004. Referring to what he said were restrictions imposed by India on the import of goods from his country, he said, "Dhaka could end India's three billion-dollar trade here by issuing an SRO (Statutory Rogatory Order) on all Indian goods entering Bangladesh."

Striking an even more minatory note, he said, "Bangladesh is India-locked. Delhi should also remember that the seven north-eastern Indian states are Bangladesh-locked." While an attempt to



THREATS TO INDIA, THE ACTIVE PROMOTION OF INSURGENTS, VIOLENCE IN NORTH-EASTERN INDIA, AND ATTEMPTS TO CREATE A CLIMATE OF HOSTILITY TOWARD INDIA WERE MAIN FEATURES OF DHAKA'S POLICY TOWARDS DELHI

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

intimidate India was implicit in his reference to the vulnerability of India's north-eastern states vis-à-vis Bangladesh, an attempt to sow discord between these states and the rest of India was scripted into his blasting of the "Central Bank of India" (Reserve Bank of India?) for acting unilaterally against the interests of the common people of India (by imposing non-tariff barriers) such as not allowing individual states to open letters of credit without permission from Delhi.

The policy of providing sanctuary and support to north-eastern India's rebel groups, began when Bangladesh was East Pakistan, but halted after liberation in 1971 when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was in power and resumed after his assassination. Begum Khaleda Zia's government pursued it with vigour. In fact, when she was the leader of the opposition in Bangladesh's national parliament, she had referred to rebels of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and other insurgent groups of north-eastern India as "freedom fighters." Not surprisingly, her government ridiculed India's protests supported by information. Referring to the list of insurgent camps in Bangladesh provided by India's Border Security Force (BSF), Major-General Mohammad Jahangir Alam Khan of the Bangladesh Rifles, visiting India for talks with BSF's director-general, Ajay Raj Sharma, said in Delhi on September 28, 2004,

"There is not a single camp in Bangladesh. We looked for the camps' locations given in the BSF list. Some of the addresses were of our cantonment area and of our headquarters....some of the addresses even pertained to the Bay of Bengal." In sharp contrast, the present government under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has not only shut these camps down but handed over to India some of the key insurgent leaders it could apprehend.

As a part of its attempt to create an anti-India temper in Bangladesh, Begum Khaleda Zia's government even insinuated that India was behind the dastardly grenade attack on the Awami League's rally in Dhaka on August 21, 2004. Sheikh Hasina survived—albeit with injuries—the attack, which was aimed at killing her and eliminating the Awami League's top leadership. Twenty-four (including 22 on the spot) died and 300 were injured. Among those who succumbed to their injuries was Ivy Rahman, secretary of the Awami League's women's affairs wing and wife of Zillur Rahman, then the party's general secretary and subsequently the country's president.

Justice Joynul Abedin, a senior judge of the High Court Division of Bangladesh's Supreme Court, appointed on August 22 as a single-person commission to inquire into the attack, submitted his report on October 2, 2004. He said at a press briefing before submitting his report that local and

foreign terrorists and other culprits had launched the attack in a pre-planned way to destroy Bangladesh's democracy, independence and sovereignty. A report in the Independent of Bangladesh on October 3, 2004, which cited dispatch by the Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, the country's government-controlled national news agency as stating this, further said that, according to the commission, the attackers were foreign agents. Justice Abedin, who had once been a BNP functionary, did not identify the foreigners. Asked to elaborate on what he meant by saying that the grenade attack was the work of foreign agents, he said during a telephone conversation with Golam Mohiuddin of Bangladesh's daily, Prothom Alo on October 3, that he had taken into special consideration Bangladesh's geographical location and the politics of the sub-continent. He further said, "it becomes foreign the moment one crosses the geographical boundary of the country." Asked whether the commission's report mentioned the foreign country which was the closest (obviously India) he did not deny it but said, "I cannot answer this question of yours."

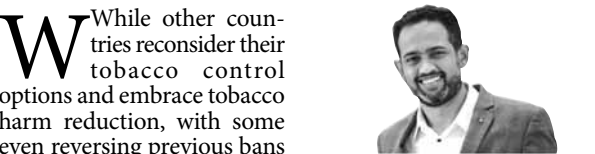
This clearly implied that India could have been the country. Significantly, among those sentenced by a special tribunal on October 10, 2018, for complicity in the grenade attack, were important BNP leaders.

Flawed ICMR paper on vaping continues to cause harm

Another year records over 13 lakh tobacco deaths in India alone because regular combustible cigarettes and tobacco remain widely available to all ages

While other countries reconsider their tobacco control options and embrace tobacco harm reduction, with some even reversing previous bans on nicotine vaping, we in India seem obsessed with the "implementation" of an ill-conceived ban on ENDS/E-cigarettes. People have even filed PILs against e-cigarettes and become instant celebrities.

In all this noise, no one appears to care that regular combustible cigarettes and tobacco remain widely available to all ages - with the last GYTS (Global Youth Tobacco Survey - 4) even showing 8.5% of current underage tobacco users with an average age of initiation at 9-11 years (Total population of 0-16-year-olds: ~ 38-40 crores or



KIRAN **MELKOTE**

(The author is the director of the Association of Harm Reduction Education and Research)

25% of our population) – there are multiple tobacco sellers in plain sight of schools yet we hardly bat an eyelid. Why is this not worrying anyone enough to file PILs against this? Why no one is calling for the "implementation" of the cigarette and tobacco laws banning sales to minors?

Yet, if we are fixated on e-cigarettes or rather nicotine vapes (or I'll start calling nicotine gum cigarette gum), it's time we take a long hard look at the infamous ICMR white paper on ENDS released 4 years ago that led to the ban on the manufacture, transport, sale etc. of nicotine vapes. The paper called for a complete ban on vaping but the law does allow personal use.

This paper was roundly criticized at the time by

renowned global experts as well as by senior doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi.

The claim of harm reduction was incorrectly assessed by the ICMR paper. The contrast should have been between risks posed by nicotine vapes versus risks posed by cigarettes and bidis. Instead, the contrast was between uncertain long-term health effects versus widespread nicotine addiction in youth. So what harm exactly does "nicotine addiction" cause? Especially if the nicotine is separate from tobacco.

Looking at the various proven carcinogens and toxic chemicals in tobacco and the clear absence of these in nicotine vapes, there is no magical process by which

vaping becomes nearly as dangerous as smoking. The relative risks have been estimated as 95% to 99% safer than cigarettes and even if these figures are overstated, the fact remains that nicotine vapes are far, far safer than cigarettes or bidis. There is no combustion in nicotine vapes (apart from poorly designed lab studies where vaping coils are overheated and burned to failure and the smoke is inhaled by poor trapped rats). In the real world, a vaper getting a "burnt taste" from a dried coil would immediately stop and get a new coil or cartridge. Every single time.

Nicotine vapes were also implicated in the EVALI outbreak where illegal THC cut with Vitamin E acetate was found to be the culprit.

Despite the wide availability of nicotine vapes, there has not been a corresponding rise in EVALI. Papers with an unsound methodology that claimed vaping caused heart disease have also been retracted.

The ICMR paper also called into question "tobacco cessation claims" of nicotine vapes saying they were unproven. On the contrary, nicotine vapes are now the most popular means to quit smoking worldwide. A recent Cochrane review in Nov 2022 (78 studies, 40 RCTs, total of 22052 subjects) showed "high-certainty evidence that ECs with nicotine increase quit rates compared to NRT". The UK government has even launched the "swap to stop" programme where 1 million

smokers will receive free nicotine vapes to reach a smoke-free society by 2030. A statement by 15 past presidents of SRNT (Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco) calls for considering the use of nicotine vaping as a means to double the quit rate. The preponderance of evidence globally is in favour of nicotine vaping as preferable to smoking.

A prominent concern also raised by the ICMR paper was about vaping being a "gateway" into tobacco use and ending up in a "nicotine addiction" even after cessation of smoking or as some folks have put it: exchanging one addiction for another. We need to consider two things here. First, nicotine is not carcinogenic and is not associat-

ed with the detrimental effects of tobacco. There are no studies that have established any detrimental effects of long-term nicotine replacements.

Second, the "gateway" theory has been comprehensively debunked in the real world. The same youth who smoke tend to also vape. It's not vaping that has suddenly led to young people picking up a smoking habit.

The ban on nicotine vaping has not served the cause of tobacco control. It has instead boosted cigarette sales and led to the current situation where youth awareness of vaping has increased to nearly 25%. A situation where tobacco control people think nicotine vapes are more dangerous than cigarettes or bidis and have largely ignored the latter.

Debt ceiling deal gets Senate nod

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Fending off a US default, the Senate gave final approval late on Thursday to a debt ceiling and budget cuts package, grinding into the night to wrap up work on the bipartisan deal and send it to President Joe Biden's desk to become law before the fast-approaching deadline.

The compromise package negotiated between Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy leaves neither Republicans nor Democrats fully pleased with the outcome.

But the result, after weeks of hard-fought budget negotiations, shelves the volatile debt ceiling issue that risked upending the US and global economy until 2025 after the next presidential election.

Approval in the Senate on a bipartisan vote, 63-36, somewhat reflected the overwhelming House tally the day before, relying on centrists in both parties to pull the Biden-McCarthy package to passage — though

Democrats led the tally in both chambers. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said ahead of voting that the bill's passage means "America can breathe a sigh of relief."

Afterward he said, "We've saved the country from the scourge of default."

Biden said in a statement following passage that senators from both parties "demonstrated once more that America is a nation that pays its bills and meets its obligations — and always will be."

He said he would sign the bill into law as soon as possible. "No one gets everything they want in a negotiation, but make no mistake: this bipartisan agreement is a big win for our economy and the American people," the president said.

The White House said he would address the nation about the matter at 7 pm EDT Friday.

Fast action was vital if Washington hoped to meet next Monday's deadline, when Treasury has said the US will

start running short of cash to pay its bills, risking a devastating default.

Raising the nation's debt limit, now \$31.4 trillion, would ensure Treasury could borrow to pay already incurred US debts.

In the end, the debt ceiling showdown was a familiar high-stakes battle in Congress, a fight taken on by McCarthy and powered by a hard-right House Republican majority confronting the Democratic president with a new era of divided government in Washington. Refusing a once routine vote to allow a the nation's debt limit to be lifted without concessions, McCarthy brought Biden's White House to the negotiating table to strike an agreement that forces spending cutbacks aimed at curbing the nation's deficits. Overall, the 99-page bill 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 defense and veterans, cuts back new money for Internal Revenue Service agents and rejects Biden's call to roll back Trump-era tax breaks on corporations and the wealthy to help cover the nation's deficits. It imposes automatic 1 per cent cuts if Congress fails to approve its annual spending bills. After the House overwhelmingly approved the package late on Wednesday, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell signaled he too wanted to waste no time ensuring it became law.

Touting its budget cuts, McConnell said on Thursday, "The Senate has a chance to make that important progress a reality." Having remained largely on the sidelines during much of the Biden-McCarthy negotiations, several senators insisted on debate over their ideas to reshape the package.

But making any changes at

this stage would almost certainly derail the compromise and none were approved.

Instead, senators dragged through rounds of voting late into the night rejecting the various amendments, but making their preferences clear. Conservative Republican senators wanted to include further cut spending, while Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia sought to remove the Mountain Valley Pipeline approval. The energy pipeline is important to Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and he defended the development running through his state, saying the country cannot run without the power of gas, coal, wind and all available energy sources. But, offering an amendment to strip the pipeline from the package, Kaine argued it would not be fair for Congress to step into a controversial project that he said would also course through his state and scoop up lands in Appalachia that have been in families for generations.



President Joe Biden falls on stage during the 2023 United States Air Force Academy Graduation Ceremony at Falcon Stadium, on Thursday at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo. AP/PTI

Iran releases 1 Danish, two Austrian citizens

Berlin (AP): Iran has released one Danish and two Austrian citizens, the European countries said on Friday, thanking Oman and Belgium for their help in getting the trio freed. Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg said he was "very relieved" that Kamran Ghaderi and Massud Mossaheb were being brought home after "years of arduous detention in Iran".

Denmark's foreign minister, Lars Lokke Rasmussen, said that he was "happy and relieved that a Danish citizen is on his way home to his family in Denmark after imprisonment in Iran". He didn't name the person, saying their identity was "a personal matter" and he couldn't go into details.

Schallenberg thanked the foreign ministers of Belgium and Oman for providing "valuable support", without elaborating on what form it took. Lokke Rasmussen thanked Belgium and said that Oman "played an important role". An Oman Royal Air Force Gulfstream IV, which had been on the ground in Tehran for several days, took off shortly before the announcement.

Albanese stresses need for diplomacy, guardrails in dealing with China

AP ■ SINGAPORE

As tensions grow between the United States and China in the Asia-Pacific, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told a gathering of top defense officials on Friday that open channels of communication are critical for preserving peace, while also advocating effective deterrence. Albanese, who has been expanding Australia's military power in response to China's growing military assertiveness in the South China Sea, the South Pacific and the East China Sea, said he has also been working to stabilise the country's diplomatic relations with China. "We recognise there are fundamental differences in our two nations' systems of government, our values and our world views," he said in his keynote address to the annual Shangri-La dialogue.

"But we begin from the principle that whatever the issue, whether we agree or disagree, it is always better and it is always more effective if we deal direct." Both US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and China's new defense minister, Gen. Li Shangfu, were in the



A police officer guards near the entrance of the Shangri-La Hotel, the venue for the 20th International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia's annual defense and security forum, in Singapore on Friday. AP/PTI

audience as Albanese spoke.

Ahead of the conference, Li rejected a request from Austin to meet on the sidelines, but the two shook hands before sitting down at opposite sides of the same table just before Albanese's address. Both the US and China have been intensifying efforts to win influence in the region, and

the weekend dialogue, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies think tank, provides an opportunity for one-on-one discussions with their regional counterparts, diplomats and leaders. Austin opens the dialogue on Saturday with a speech, and Li will follow on Sunday. Australia is a stal-

wart American ally in the region, and Albanese stressed that while China's "extraordinary economic transformation" has been a benefit to the entire region, China has also benefited from "a regional architecture that facilitates free trade, encourages the sharing of knowledge, spurs innovation and builds people-to-people connections."

"American leadership has been an indispensable part of this," he said. He also said there was a need for "guardrails" to ensure that no "one nation imagines itself too big for the rules," which he said is part of the reason he has found it necessary to boost.

Australia's defense capabilities. Beijing has strongly criticised Australia's participation in the so-called AUKUS partnership, which links it with the United States and Britain to create an Australian fleet of eight nuclear-powered submarines. "Australia's goal is not to prepare for war, but to prevent it through deterrence and reassurance and building resilience in the region, doing our part to fulfill the shared responsibility," he said.

Jens Stoltenberg heading to Turkiye in fresh push on Swedish membership

Brussels (AP): NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg will hold talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other senior Turkish officials this weekend as pressure mounts on Turkiye to lift its objections to Sweden joining the military organisation.

In a statement on Friday, NATO headquarters said Stoltenberg would attend Erdogan's inauguration, after the long-term Turkish leader won an election runoff last weekend.

The former Norwegian prime minister will also take part in meetings in Turkiye on Sunday. No details were provided.

NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time allied leaders meet in Lithuania on July 11-12, but Turkiye and Hungary have yet to endorse the move. All 31 member countries must ratify a candidate's accession protocol for it to join.

Biden falls from stage, says he got 'sandbagged'

Colorado (AP): President Joe Biden quipped that he got "sandbagged" on Thursday after he tripped and fell — but was uninjured — while onstage at the US Air Force Academy graduation.

Biden had been greeting the graduates in Colorado Springs, Colorado, at the front of the stage with salutes and handshakes, and turned to jog back toward his seat when he fell. He was helped up by an Air Force officer as well as two members of his US Secret Service detail. Onlookers, including some members of the official delegation onstage, watched in concern before Biden, who at age 80 is the oldest president in US history, returned to his seat to view the end of the ceremony.

"I got sandbagged," the president told reporters with a smile when he arrived back at the White House on Thursday evening before pretending to jog into the residence. Two small black sandbags had been

onstage supporting the teleprompter used by Biden and other speakers at the graduation.

"He's fine," White House communications director Ben LaBolt tweeted after the incident. "There was a sandbag on stage while he was shaking hands."

Biden has been dogged by questions about his age and his fitness to serve, and his missteps have become fodder for political rivals as he campaigns for a second term in 2024. He has stumbled before going up the stairs and onto Air Force One and he once got caught up in his bike pedals while stopping to talk to reporters near his home in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

Biden's personal doctor said after the president's most recent physical exam in February that Biden "remains a healthy, vigorous 80-year-old male, who is fit to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency."

Prachanda may visit China next month

Kathmandu (PTI): Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" is likely to visit China next month or in early August, a leader of the ruling party said on Friday, in what could be the senior Maoist leader's second bilateral visit abroad since assuming office in December 2022. Prachanda on Wednesday left for India on an official visit for talks with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and other leaders to further bolster the age-old, multifaceted and cordial ties between the two countries.

Prachanda is currently leading a high-level delegation of more than 100 members to India. This is the 68-year-old Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) leader's first bilateral visit abroad since assuming office last year.

Following his visit to India, he is likely to visit China next month.

Elahi re-arrested

Lahore (PTI): The President of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party Parvez Elahi was on Friday arrested again minutes after a judicial magistrate here ordered his release in an embezzlement case.

Elahi, a close aide to former prime minister Khan, was a day earlier arrested outside his residence in Punjab province in the Rs 70 million corruption case related to the embezzlement of development funds allocated for the Gujrat district. The former chief minister of Punjab province was re-arrested by officials of the Anti-Corruption Establishment Punjab in a corruption case registered against him in Gujranwala, Geo News reported. Judicial Magistrate Ghulam Murtaza Virk issued Elahi's release order while announcing the verdict he had reserved on a plea seeking the PTI leader's physical remand. "Parvez Elahi should be released if he is not wanted in any other case," the verdict said. Murtaza had reserved the verdict after hearing the former

Punjab chief minister's case, where ACE Punjab requested the court for his 14-day physical remand. Elahi's counsel Advocate Rana Intizar informed the court that all documents related to the projects were available. "Anti-corruption watchdog is introducing its own law under which the judge hearing the cases will be of their choice," the council said, adding that on January 17 a payment worth Rs 360 million was made when Naqvi was the chief minister. Earlier on Friday, the 77-year-old leader claimed innocence and said that he was a "supporter" of the Pakistan Army, urging party supporters to stay strong. Speaking to reporters before his appearance in the court, Elahi said: "I am innocent and a supporter of the Pakistan Army." While speaking to Geo News, Elahi without naming anybody took a jibe at the former party leaders who announced their decision to part ways with PTI chief Imran Khan, saying that he won't hold any press conference.

Anti-terror court extends Imran bail till June 13

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan on Friday appeared before an anti-terrorism court here and secured an extension to his pre-arrest bail till June 13 in three cases, including an attack on a top military commander's residence in Lahore, a court official said. Khan, 70, who appeared before the ATC Lahore amid high security, reiterated that he faces "serious threats" to his life. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party chairman also appeared before the Lahore High Court to seek an extension to his bail in the murder case of PTI worker Zille Shah. The Lahore High Court has extended his bail in the case till June 6.

The ATC, Judge Ijaz Ahmad Buttar questioned why he (Khan) is not joining the investigation in the case related to the attack on Lahore Corps Commander House known as Jinnah House. Khan

Usman Buzdar to quit politics

PTI ■ LAHORE

Usman Buzdar, the former chief minister of Pakistan's Punjab province, on Friday, became the latest leader of ex-prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party to quit politics in the aftermath of the May 9 violence.

Several PTI leaders, including former human rights minister and ousted prime minister Imran Khan's close aide Shireen Mazari, have quit the party following the "Black Day" violence triggered by the arrest of the cricketer-turned-politician in the Al-Qadir case. "First of all, I condemn the May 9 incidents. The military installations which were targeted were properties of the state of Pakistan and I believe we should avoid such incidents,"



declined. The judge however directed him to join the investigation and extended his bail till Jun 13," the official said.

Violence erupted across Pakistan on May 9 when crick-

Buzdar told journalists during a press conference here. Buzdar, whose term as chief minister was cut short in March 2022, said he had always stood with the armed forces of Pakistan and would continue to do so, Geo News reported. "I have always committed to politics of nobility [...] but due to the current circumstances, I have decided to quit politics," the former chief minister, once considered close to Khan, the PTI chairman, said.

The former chief minister called on all stakeholders to reach a consensus and asked the authorities to release all those who were innocent from jail.

eter-turned-politician Khan was arrested by the National Accountability Board (NAB) from the premises of Islamabad High Court in a corruption case. Khan was released on bail two days later.

Centrist parties alarmed over support for German far-right

Berlin (AP): Prominent members of German mainstream parties have expressed alarm at a new poll that shows support for the far-right Alternative for Germany at a record high.

The DeutschlandTrend survey, conducted monthly by infratest dimap for public broadcaster ARD, that was released on Thursday puts voter support for Alternative for Germany at 18 per cent, on a par with Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats.

In the 2021 election, Scholz's party received 25.7 per cent of the vote, while Alternative for Germany, or AfD, got 10.3 per cent.

"This (...) is a disaster and should be understood as an alarm signal for all parties of the center," said Norbert Roettgen, a senior lawmaker for the main opposition Christian Democrats, whose support stood at 29 per cent in the poll of 1,302 voters conducted from May 30-31. The margin of error was up to three percentage points.

Roettgen said his own centre-right party should ask itself why it hasn't profited as much from voters' unhappiness at the government.

His party colleague Serap Guler said the strong support for AfD should alarm all democratic parties.

"We bear responsibility for changing this again quickly," she said late on Thursday.

AfD previously hit 18 per cent in the DeutschlandTrend survey in September 2018 amid discord in then Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government.

Scholz's three-party coalition with the environmentalist Greens and the libertarian Free Democrats has faced strong headwind recently over high immigration and a plan to replace millions of home heating systems in the country.



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Letter No. : 2281(I)/Nivida-01/2023-24

Dated : 02/06/2023

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering)

Short Term E-TENDER NOTICE

The superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated 06/06/2023 & onwards on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Cost of work (Rupee in lakh)	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in lakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration for tendering
1	Construction Division PWD Almora Construction of motor road from Km. 1.800 of Nirai Motor Road to Oliya gaon Lachampur and Supakot under State Sector in Someshwar Constituency, District Almora (Phase-II Stage-II)	₹ 168.98 Lakh with GST	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 2.86 Lakh	60 Days	12 Months (including Raining /Winter Season)	Class "B" & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./ Any state Govt./ Any Govt. Undertaking

Dev Shah crowned Spelling Bee champ

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Dev Shah, a 14-year-old eighth-grader from Florida, who correctly spelled the word "psammophile" has won the 2023 Scripps National Spelling Bee, a prestigious contest where children of Indian origin have ruled the roost.

Shah correctly spelled the word to win the 95th national bee and the USD 50,000 prize on Thursday. "It's surreal," Shah said onstage after the confetti fell on his head and he lifted the trophy high above.

"I don't know if it's settled in. My legs are still shaking," he said at the competition in National Harbor, Maryland.

"I made a lot of sacrifices these last three months and I'm glad I made them," Shah said. "I'm glad to now get back what I sacrificed." After much anticipation about a possible spell-



off, a smiling Shah won by correctly spelling "psammophile", a plant or animal that thrives in sandy areas, the Washington Post newspaper reported.

"Psammo meaning sand, Greek?" he asked. "Phile, meaning love, Greek?"

Shah instantly identified

the roots of his word, but asked for all the information just to be safe, while smiling slightly in a way that suggested he was pretty sure he had it, the New York Times newspaper reported.

Shah cut back on his extracurricular activities to dedicate more time to the dictionary. Some days he would not even go to school, since exams were over. He'd be better off studying, Shah figured. That end-of-year field trip his classmates at Morgan Fitzgerald Middle School went on? No thanks.

"I knew I had to study," Shah said. "It paid off."

Other words that Shah correctly spelled during the competition include: bathypitotmeter, tolsester, rommack, aegagrus, schistorrhachis, poliorcetics, Perioeci, exhortation, cocomat and ardoise.

Sensex, Nifty rise on gains in metal, auto stocks

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Friday after two days of fall, helped by buying in metal, telecom and auto stocks amid a firm trend in global markets.
Automakers led by Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra reporting robust wholesales of passenger vehicles and GST collections crossing Rs 1.50 lakh crore for the third straight month in May also added to the optimism.
The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 118.57 points or 0.19 per cent to settle at 62,547.11. During the day, it jumped 291.3 points or 0.46 per cent to 62,719.84.
The NSE Nifty advanced 46.35 points or 0.25 per cent to finish at 18,534.10.
On a weekly basis, the BSE benchmark gained 45.42 points

or 0.07 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 34.75 points or 0.18 per cent.
“This week, the Indian market was volatile. However, it was able to regain momentum led by a positive domestic outlook accompanied by global cues. Auto stocks garnered attention as sales numbers for May came in strong, with a sequential recovery boosting sentiment across the sector.
“The hope that the Fed will refrain from a rate hike has provided comfort to the global equity market,” Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.
Tata Steel was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising nearly 2 per cent, followed by Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Larsen & Toubro, Titan, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, ITC, State Bank of India and Nestle.
In contrast, Infosys, Wipro,



arrival expected early next week, the rural and agri-related stock would also be in focus,” Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.
In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.60 per cent and smallcap index jumped 0.57 per cent.
Among the indices, metal climbed 1.71 per cent, realty jumped 1.33 per cent, telecommunication (1.06 per cent), auto (0.98 per cent), industrials (0.85 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.83 per cent), com-

modities (0.73 per cent), health-care (0.72 per cent) and consumer durables (0.67 per cent).
IT, teck, utilities, energy and oil & gas were the laggards.
Global stocks rose on Friday as sentiment was lifted by signs the US Fed will skip a rate hike at its next meeting and the approval of US debt ceiling legislation, Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities, said.
In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the green.
Equity markets in Europe were trading in positive territory. The US markets ended higher on Thursday.
GST collections recorded a 12 per cent rise in May at over Rs 1.57 lakh crore, according to official data released on Thursday.
Manufacturing activities in India advanced further and touched a 31-month high in May, supported by a stronger increase in new orders and favourable market conditions, which in turn generated more employment opportunities, a monthly survey said on Thursday.
Automakers led by Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra, and Toyota Kirloskar Motor on Thursday reported robust wholesales of passenger vehicles in the domestic market for May riding on strong demand for SUVs.
Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.74 per cent to USD 75.57 a barrel.
Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 71.07 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.
The rupee appreciated by 9 paise to 82.31 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday.
“With markets on the ten-terhooks ahead of the debt ceiling vote in the US Senate and OPEC+ meeting over the weekend, Monday’s trading session could witness heightened volatility,” Riches Vanara, Technical And Derivatives Analyst, stoxbox, said.

Irdai: SBI Life to takeover liabilities of 2 L policies, assets of SILIC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Regulator Irdai on Friday directed SBI Life Insurance Company to takeover the policy liabilities of around two lakh policies along with assets of Sahara India Life Insurance Co Ltd (SILIC) with immediate effect.
The decision was taken at the meeting of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) in view of deteriorating financial health of the SILIC.
“The Authority has identified SBI Life Insurance Company Limited (SBI Life), which is one of the largest life insurers in the country with satisfactory financials, as the acquirer insurer of the life insurance business of SILIC.
“SBI Life shall take over the policy liabilities of around two lakh policies of SILIC, backed by the policyholders’ assets, with immediate effect,” Irdai said in its order.
In a statement, the Irdai said it has also taken necessary steps to ensure the smooth transition for all policyholders of SILIC.
A committee comprising of Member (Actuary), Member (Life), and Member (F&I) has been constituted for implementation of the order in a time-bound manner.
“SBI Life has been directed to take adequate steps to reach out to the policyholders of SILIC, with regard to servicing of policies, including setting up of a dedicated cell to address the queries of the policyholders of SILIC, and also publish necessary details on their website,” it said.
Sahara India Life Insurance was granted a Certificate of Registration in 2004 to transact the business of life insurance. In view of the certain serious issues on the financial propriety and governance aspects of the insurer, the authority had appointed an administrator to manage the business of the insurer in 2017, Irdai said.
The insurer was also not allowed to underwrite new business. Thereafter, further directions were issued to the insurer to meet the regulatory requirements.
“Despite being provided ample opportunities and sufficient time to ensure compliances, SILIC has failed to comply with directions of the authority and take any affirmative steps to protect the interests of its policyholders,” the regulator said.
Further, the policy data of SILIC reveals that the company’s portfolio is showing run-off trend.

Govt asks industry to cut edible oils MRP by ₹8-12 per litre as global prices drop

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Centre on Friday directed edible oil associations to further reduce the maximum retail price (MRP) of major edible oils by Rs 8-12 per litre with immediate effect, in line with the global market.
“Some companies which have not reduced their prices and their MRP is higher than other brands have also been advised to reduce their prices,” the food ministry said after a meeting, chaired by food secretary Sanjeev Chopra, with the industry representatives.
Price to distributors by the manufacturers and refiners also



needs to be reduced with immediate effect so that the price drop is not diluted in any way, it said.
It was also impressed upon that whenever a reduction in price to distributors is made by the manufacturers/refiners, the benefit should be passed on to the consumers by the industry and the ministry may be kept informed on a regular basis, it added.
With the edible oil prices continuing to show a downward trend and set to witness further reduction by the edible oil

industry, the ministry said, “the Indian consumers can expect to pay less for their edible oils. The falling edible oil prices will help in further cooling inflation fears if any.”
Industry representatives including Solvent Extraction Association of India and Indian Vegetable Oil Producers’ Association were present in the second meeting convened within a month to discuss further reduction in retail prices of edible oils amidst a continued fall in the global prices.
In the meeting, the ministry said the international prices of imported edible oils are continuing on a downward trend



Sebi takes steps to boost liquidity in RFQ platform

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Capital markets regulator Sebi on Friday came out with guidelines for transactions in corporate bonds through Request for Quote (RFQ) platform by stock brokers in order to increase liquidity on the platform.
For all the trades in proprietary capacity, stock brokers will have to undertake at least 10 per cent of their total secondary market trades by value in corporate bonds in that month by placing quotes through one-to-one or one-to-many mode on the RFQ platform of stock exchanges from July 1, and further, the percentage will increase to 25 per cent from April next year, Sebi said in a circular.
Stock brokers will have to consider the trades executed by value through one-to-one (OTO) or one-to-many (OTM) mode of RFQ with respect to the total secondary market trades in corporate bonds, during the current month and immediately preceding two months on a rolling basis.
Further, only trades pertaining to proprietary capacity of stock brokers will be considered for the purpose of such calculations.
The RFQ or Request for Quote platform is a system or interface for inviting and/or giving quotes on an electronic platform. The platform was introduced as a ‘participant-based’ model, wherein all regulated entities, listed corporate bodies, institutional investors and all Indian financial institutions were eligible to register, access and transact.
In October 2022, Sebi allowed stock brokers to place bids on the RFQ platform on behalf of their clients to facilitate wider participation in the corporate bond market. This was in addition to the existing option of placing bids in a proprietary capacity.
Quotes on RFQ platforms can be placed to an identified counterparty -- one-to-one’ mode -- or to all the participants -- one-to-many’ mode.
Moreover, stock brokers have been encouraged to place bids in proprietary capacity or for clients on RFQ platform through OTM mode, as the same would contribute towards achieving better price discovery.

RBI proposes norms on cyber resilience, digital payment security controls for PSOs

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The Reserve Bank on Friday proposed to establish robust governance mechanisms for authorised non-bank payment system operators (PSOs) to effectively address emerging cybersecurity risks.
Towards this goal, the central bank has issued a ‘Draft Master Directions on Cyber Resilience and Digital Payment Security Controls for Payment System Operators’.
The draft directions cover governance mechanisms for the identification, assessment, monitoring and management of cybersecurity risks, including information security risks and vulnerabilities. They also specify baseline security measures to ensure safe and secure digital



payment transactions.
The central bank said existing instructions concerning security and risk mitigation for card payments, prepaid payment instruments (PPIs) and mobile banking will remain in effect. “To effectively identify, monitor, control and manage cyber and technology related risks arising out of linkages of PSOs with

unregulated entities, who are part of their digital payments ecosystem, PSOs shall ensure adherence to these Directions by such unregulated entities as well, subject to a mutual agreement,” the draft directions said.
The RBI has invited stakeholders to provide comments and feedback on the draft by June 30. “The Board of Directors (Board) of the PSO shall be responsible for ensuring adequate oversight over information security risks, including cyber risk and cyber resilience,” the draft said.
Additionally, as per the draft, PSOs will be required to develop an approved Cyber Crisis Management Plan (CCMP) to detect, contain, respond to, and recover from cyber threats and attacks.

Forex kitty drops \$4.34 billion to \$ 589.14 billion

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Falling for the second consecutive week, India’s forex reserves dropped by USD 4.339 billion to USD 589.138 billion for the week ended May 26, the Reserve Bank said on Friday.
In the previous reporting week, the reserves had declined by USD 6.052 billion to USD 593.477 billion.
It can be noted that in October 2021, the country’s forex kitty had reached an all-time high of USD 645 billion. The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.
For the week ended May 26, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the

reserves, declined by USD 4.014 billion to USD 520.931 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI on Friday.
Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.
Gold reserves dropped by USD 225 million to USD 44.902 billion, the RBI said.
The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 84 million to USD 18.192 billion, the apex bank said.
The country’s reserve position with the IMF was down by USD 17 million to USD 5.113 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

Goldman sees RBI pausing again on June 8 review

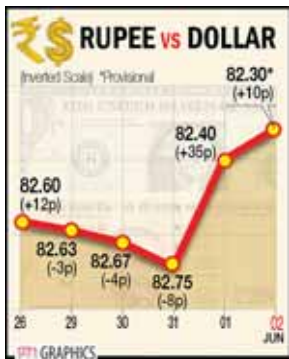
PTI ■ MUMBAI
Forecasting a steeper fall in inflation to the tune of 50 bps lower than previously projected, a Wall Street brokerage sees the central bank leaving the policy rates unchanged at 6.5 per cent in the forthcoming review on June 8.
Analysts at Goldman Sachs India in a report on Friday said the headline inflation will average 5.3 per cent this year, which is within the RBI target of 2 per cent plus or minus 4 per cent, even though they expect some risk to food inflation stemming from crop damages due to unseasonal rains.
It can be noted that retail

inflation has declined to an 18-month low of 4.7 per cent in April from 5.7 per cent in March. Moreover, core inflation has also fallen to 5.2 per cent in April.
Going forward, we see average headline inflation at 5.3 per cent in 2023, which is within the RBI target of 2-6 per cent. (Q1 of FY24) headline inflation is likely to be around 50 bps below the most recent RBI forecast. This will have the RBI keeping the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent in the June 8 policy meeting and expect the central bank to remain on hold till the end of the year, the agency said in the report.

Rupee rises 9 paise to close at 82.31 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The rupee appreciated by 9 paise to 82.31 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, supported by broad dollar weakness and a positive trend in domestic equities.
At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened on a positive note against the US dollar and settled at 82.31 (provisional), up 9 paise over its previous close.
During the day, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 82.27 and a low of 82.38 in the day trade.
On Thursday, the rupee

closed at 82.40 against the US currency.
“The Indian rupee strengthened for the second consecutive day on positive domestic markets and a weak US dollar. However, a rebound in crude oil prices capped sharp gains,” said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.
The dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.12 per cent to 103.43.
Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures advanced 1.28 per cent to USD 75.23 per



barrel. “We expect rupee to trade with a slight positive bias in the near term on risk-on sentiments in the global mar-

ONGC to maintain financial flexibility as earnings steady: S&P

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
State-owned ONGC’s operating cash flows will rise over the next 12-24 months due to higher production volumes, stable earnings from domestic gas production, and the removal of a windfall tax on crude oil, S&P Global Ratings said on Friday.
“This should help the company maintain its good credit quality, despite its investment plans and healthy shareholder distributions,” the rating agency said in a statement.
ONGC is India’s largest oil

and gas producer.
“We estimate that ONGC’s domestic production volumes will rise by 8-10 per cent for fiscal 2024 (year ending March 31). The increase is attributable to the start of oil production from its block in the Krishna Godavari basin later this year,” S&P said.
At the same time, production at the Sakhalin-1 project of ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) should also recover to fiscal 2022 levels, after a period of disruptions because of geopolitical issues.
Oil and Natural Gas

Corporation produced a total of 42.8 million tonne of oil equivalent (mmtoe) in fiscal 2023 compared with 43.4 mmtoe in fiscal 2022. OVL produced a total of 10.2 mmtoe in fiscal 2023, down from 12.3 mmtoe in fiscal 2022.
“Growth in production volumes will outstrip the impact of moderating oil prices on ONGC’s earnings, in our view. We estimate the company’s EBITDA at Rs 1-1.1 lakh crore over fiscals 2024 and 2025, compared with about Rs 98,700 crore in fiscal 2023,” it said.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Future Lifestyle Fashions Ltd has received a total claim of Rs 2,155.53 crore from 12 financial creditors in the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) initiated against this Future group company recently.
The resolution professional of the company has provisionally admitted claims of Rs 2,117.03 crore and claims worth Rs 38.5 crore are “under verification,” said the latest data shared by Future Lifestyle

Fashions Ltd (FLFL) on the exchanges.
As per the provision of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code, a Committee of Creditors (CoC) of FLFL has been formed and it will have its first meeting next week.
“We wish to inform you that the first meeting of CoC of Future Lifestyle Fashions Limited (under CIRP) will be held on Tuesday, June 6, 2023,” it said.
On May 4, the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) had directed to initiate CIRP against FLFL, admitting a petition from Bank of India. This is the third company of the Kishore Biyani-led Future Group to be dragged into CIRP by its creditors for defaulting on loans.
Its flagship firm Future Retail Ltd and logistics and infra arm Future Enterprises are already facing insolvency proceedings.
FLFL was considering asset monetisation to pare its debts, however, it did not materialise. It had entered into a One Time Restructuring (OTR) Plan with

lenders also.
The company has in-house retail chains Central and Brand Factory, exclusive brand outlets (EBOs) and other multi-brand outlets (MBOs) of nearly a dozen apparel labels, including Lee Copper, Champion, aLL, Indigo Nation, Giovanni, John Miller, Scullers, Converse and Urbana in its portfolio.
According to the regulatory filing, State Bank of India leads the CoC of FLFL with 22.51 per cent voting share. It had an admitted loan of Rs 476.59 crore.

Future Lifestyle Insolvency: RP receives claims of ₹2,155.53 cr from financial creditors

Centre imposes stock limits on pulses till Oct to prevent hoarding

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
To prevent hoarding and check price rise, the Centre on Friday imposed stock limits on all pulses, except moong, held by wholesalers, retailers, importers and millers till October. The stock limits are imposed with immediate effect. An order in this regard has been issued by the Union Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry. Retail prices of pulses rose by more than 20 per cent during the January-June period of this year, according to the ministry’s data.
According to the ministry, the stock limit of 200 tonnes has been imposed on wholesalers provided they do not hold more than 200 tonnes of one variety of pulses. For retailers, the stock limit will be 5 tonnes.
In the case of millets, the stock limit will be the last three months of production or 25 per cent of annual installed capacity, whichever is higher.
Lastly, for importers, the stock limit will be the same as that of wholesalers for stocks held/imported prior to May 15, 2021.
And for pulses imported after May 15, the stock limit applicable on wholesalers will apply after 45 days from the date of customs clearance, the order said.

3rd SEED JESSICA PEGULA STUNNED

AP ■ PARIS

Jessica Pegula quickly gathered her belongings and marched out of Court Philippe Chatrier after a 6-1, 6-3 loss to Elise Mertens in the third round on Friday at the French Open, a far earlier exit than the No. 3-seeded American has been used to at Grand Slam tournaments lately.

Pegula was a quarterfinalist at four of the five most recent majors, including a year ago at Roland Garros.

She's never gone further than that stage at a Slam and never really got into this match against the 28th-seeded Mertens on a day with a breeze at about 10 mph (15 kph) and a chill in the low 60s Fahrenheit (low teens Celsius).

"I feel like I was still playing good points. Elise was just

being really tough, not making a lot of errors and making me play every single ball. And with the windy conditions, I felt like it definitely played into her game," said Pegula, whose parents own the NFL's Buffalo Bills and NHL's Buffalo Sabres.

"She returned well and I thought that she used the wind on both sides to her advantage," Pegula said. "She was playing aggressive on the side with the wind and then, against the wind, I think she was playing some really good defense."

Mertens is a 27-year-old Belgian who was a semifinalist at the 2018 Australian Open and twice has reached the US Open quarterfinals.

But she still has not made it beyond the fourth round on the red clay in Paris. She will attempt to do that when she



plays Sunday against 2021 French Open runner-up Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, who beat No. 24 Anastasia Potapova 4-6, 6-3, 6-0.

With Pegula joining No. 5 Caroline Garcia, No. 8 Maria Sakkari and No. 10 Petra Kvitova on the sideline, four of the top 10 women's seeds already are gone. That's part of a pattern this year at Roland Garros: Only 12 seeds made it through two rounds, the fewest in Paris since the field expanded to 32 seeds in 2002.

With the losses by Pegula and Potapova, only 10 remain.

Another woman from the United States joined Pegula on the way out early on Friday: Peyton Stearns, the 2022 NCAA champion for the University of Texas, was eliminated by No. 9 Daria Kasatkina 6-0, 6-1 in 55 minutes.

In other early results Friday, No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, the Australian Open champion in January, won, as did men's No. 11 seed Karen Khachanov.

Stearns, a big hitter who defeated 2017 French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko in the second round, simply could not find her targets. More than half of Kasatkina's 59 points came via the 30 unforced errors by Stearns. Pegula had similar issues, making 28 unforced errors to only 13 by Mertens.

It was a rough start for Pegula. When she dumped a forehand into the net, Pegula chucked her racket off the ground, already down 4-0. The deficit was 5-0 after fewer than 20 minutes. There was more of the same in the second set. Mertens used drop shots effectively, and Pegula couldn't get going.

Fritz shushes booing crowd

AP ■ PARIS

The French Open crowd was not happy with American player Taylor Fritz after he beat one of their own — indeed, their last man in the bracket — so they booed and whistle relentlessly. Fritz's response? He told them to shush. Over and over again.

Fritz, a 25-year-old from California who is seeded No. 9 at Roland Garros, got into a back-and-forth with the fans at Court Suzanne Lenglen after his 2-6 6-4 6-3 6-4 comeback victory over 78th-ranked Arthur Rinderknech in the second round on Thursday night.

Rinderknech attempted a lob that landed long on the

last point, and Fritz, who had been running toward the baseline to chase the ball, immediately looked up into the stands and pressed his right index finger to his lips to say, essentially, "Hush!"

He held that pose for a bit as he headed back toward the net for a postmatch handshake, then spread his arms wide, wind-milled them a bit as if to egg on the rowdiness, and yelled: "Come on! I want to hear it!" During the customary winner's on-court interview that followed, more jeers rained down on Fritz, and 2013 Wimbledon champion Marion Bartoli kept pausing her attempts to ask a question into her microphone.



Parul targets Asian Games medal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two months of high-altitude training at Colorado Springs in the USA has done wonders for Indian long-distance runner Parul Chaudhary, who is aiming for a medal in the upcoming Asian Games in China as well as breaking Lalita Babar's 3000m steeplechase national record.

The 28-year-old Chaudhary has been training at Colorado Springs -- which is at an altitude of 1800m above sea level -- along with star men's 3000m steeple-chaser Avinash Sable since March 20.

She set a national record of 15:10.35s in the 5000m race at the Track Festival in Walnut, California, on May 6 before clocking her personal best of 9:29.51s in her pet event of 3000m steeplechase at the USATF Los Angeles Grand Prix on May 26.

"I have benefitted immensely from the high-altitude training at Colorado Springs. Last year, I was here (Colorado Springs) for just 25 days, but this time, it has been two months now here, doing high-altitude training," Chaudhary told PTI from her training base at Colorado Springs.

"The continuous training for two months is showing in my timing. The season has been great for me so far. I am currently in training-cum-competition mode, and once the main international competitions of the season start, I hope to achieve my goals."

Chaudhary, the daughter of a farmer from Bahrala village in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut district, is currently training under foreign coach Scott Simmons and Indian coach Jaiveer Singh.

Target is Asian Games medal and breaking Lalita Babar's national record

In the senior circuit for nearly 10 years without much international success, Chaudhary is hoping this season to be a defining one as she aims for medals in the Hangzhou Asian Games in September-October.

In the 2018 Asian Games, the 5000m gold-medal winner had clocked 15:08.08s while the silver winner ran 15:30.57s, which is much more than the national record set by Chaudhary last month.

Europa League final referee harassed by Roma fans at airport

AP ■ ROME

Europa League final referee Anthony Taylor and his family had to be escorted away by security at Budapest airport after outraged Roma fans directed insults at him and threw a chair in his direction, a video published on the Gazzetta dello Sport website showed.

Roma has largely blamed Taylor for its penalty shootout loss to Sevilla in the final on Wednesday. Roma coach Jose Mourinho lashed out at the referee in his post-match news conference and then was seen

insulting Taylor with a series of expletives in the garage of the Puskas Arena in Budapest, Hungary, as his team prepared to depart the stadium.

The English top-tier soccer's referees association said in a statement that it "is aware of videos circulating on social media showing Anthony Taylor and his family being harassed and abused at Budapest Airport."

"We are appalled at the unjustified and abhorrent abuse directed at Anthony and his family as he tries to make his way home from refereeing the UEFA Europa League final.

We will continue to provide our full support to Anthony and his family," the referees association added.

UEFA is still awaiting the referee's report from the match.

Roma general manager Tiago Pinto continued the attack on Taylor in a statement to Italian news agency ANSA on Thursday.

"We at AS Roma don't want to raise doubts about Sevilla's merits. We believe that with our opponents we put on a great final and honored the stage offered to us by UEFA in the best way," Pinto said.

Lakshya enters Thailand semis

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen stormed into the semi-finals of Thailand Open Super 500 tournament with a straight game demolition of Malaysia's Leong Jun Hao in men's singles here on Friday.

The 21-year-old from Almor punched the air after unleashing a jump smash which sealed his 21-19 21-11 win over the qualifier from Malaysia in the quarterfinals.

The win helped him to enter the last four for the first time this season, having come close in Indonesia Masters, where he exited in the quarterfinals.

The Indian, whose ranking has slipped to world number 23 from a career-high of six fol-

lowing below-par performances this season, will take on either fifth seed Lu Guang Zu of China or Thailand's second seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the semifinals.

Kiran George's giant run, however, came to an end after he went down 16-21 17-21 against Toma Junior Popov of France in another men's singles match.

It was an exciting contest as Lakshya and Leong kept pushing each other from the start. But after a 10-11 deficit at the interval, the Indian fell behind as the Malaysian managed to hold a 16-10 lead.

But Lakshya then changed gears, stepping up the pace in the rallies to restore parity at 17-17 before pocketing the opening game as Leong looked tired.

Szymon to remain referee for CL final after apology: UEFA

AP ■ GENEVA

Polish soccer referee Szymon Marciniak apologised on Friday for speaking at a business event tied to a far-right politician and was confirmed by UEFA to officiate next week's Champions League final.

Marciniak's appointment for the game between Manchester City and Inter Milan on June 10, months after he refereed the World Cup final in Qatar, was at risk on Thursday after a Warsaw-based anti-racism group alerted UEFA to his conference appearance this week.

UEFA said on Friday it accepted Marciniak's "profound apologies and clarification" and that anti-racism group Never Again had also then asked for the referee to be retained.

Casemiro's winning mentality key for Man Utd in final



AP ■ LONDON

A few concerns were raised when Brazil midfielder Casemiro completed his move to Manchester United in August.

Would he still have enough motivation after nine trophy-filled years at Real Madrid?

Could he adapt quickly enough to the English game?

Was a 30-year-old defensive midfielder really worth USD 60 million and a reported weekly wage of USD 435,000?

The answers, without doubt, have been yes, yes and absolutely yes.

Take away Erling Haaland and the signing that had the biggest impact in English soccer this season is surely Casemiro, who — in the words of his coach — has exceeded expectations "by far."

"He keeps surprising you," United manager Erik ten Hag said.

"He's such a brilliant football player."

If there's one player Ten Hag would want to have available for the FA Cup final against

Manchester City on Saturday, it's Casemiro.

Quite simply, the difference with and without him is huge.

Casemiro started 24 of United's 38 league games this season, and was a substitute in four others. According to statistics compiled by the Who Scored website, United conceded an average of less than a goal a game when Casemiro was in the team and 1.5 goals when he wasn't.

He made 3.2 tackles per game in the Premier League, the third highest behind Fulham's Joao Palhinha and Leeds' Tyler Adams.

United conceded 57 goals in the league last season. With Casemiro stationed in front of the defense, that number was down to 43 this season as United secured a return to the Champions League and all the riches that brings.

So, yes, Casemiro really was worth it.

Ten Hag noted upon arriving at United at the end of last season that a leader in central midfield was the

biggest thing missing in a team which had been getting by with an oft-maligned "McFred" (Scott McTominay and Fred) axis.

"We studied this and we searched for this — it was not easy because there aren't many in the profile who fits to the standard of Manchester United," Ten Hag said, before listing what Casemiro brings.

"We know him as very good with organization, anticipation, winning duels, fighting and keeping the team together. But in possession, his passing distribution and finishing is very important."

More than that, his winning mentality — fostered at Madrid, where he won five Champions League titles and the Spanish league three times — is something United had been missing in the post-Alex Ferguson era.

It has that now and it's mostly because of the arrival of Casemiro and another former Madrid player, Raphael Varane.

"The pressure is something we are used to playing with. And we need the pressure — it's not that kind of pressure that limits you," Varane said.

"Sometimes quality is not enough — you need the motivation, character, passion on the pitch, because in the top level in the Premier League, there are good players in any team. But to play in this kind of clubs you need something else ... something different, that character to fight, to assume the responsibility, to never hide on the pitch, to be ready to face every challenge you can."



Raducanu parts ways with coach

AP ■ LONDON

Emma Raducanu, the 2021 US Open champion, will no longer work with Sebastian Sachs, who had been her fifth coach in the past two years.

Raducanu announced the split via a Twitter post on Thursday.

"I have really enjoyed Seb's coaching and working with him, it's unfortunate that circumstances made it unfeasible for both of us to continue right now and we have decided to part ways," her post said.

"I wish Seb all the best moving forwards."

Raducanu hasn't played since April and announced last month she would miss the French Open and Wimbledon because she needed what she called "minor" procedures on both hands and an ankle. She said then she expected to be sidelined for a few months.

Her record during an injury-plagued 2023 is 5-5.

Raducanu became one of the stars of tennis two years ago, when she made a surprising run to the fourth round at Wimbledon while ranked outside the top 300, then, soon after, won the US Open at age 18 to become the first qualifier to claim a Grand Slam singles title.

Kerala Blasters' appeal against fine refected

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation on Friday rejected Kerala Blasters FC's appeal against the Rs 4 crore fine imposed on them for misconduct and abandonment of their ISL playoff match against Bengaluru FC.

The committee also rejected KBFC's head coach Ivan Vukumanovic's appeal against the fine of Rs 5 lakh and a 10-game ban imposed on him.

In both cases, the Appeal Committee upheld the earlier decisions of the Disciplinary Committee and were asked to "pay the respective fines within two weeks".

Their ISL playoff on March 3 sparked controversy as Kerala Blasters walked off the field claiming that Sunil Chhetri's winning strike from an extra time freekick was not "legitimate".



They claimed that referee Crystal John did not blow the whistle before Chhetri took the kick and the players were not ready.

By virtue of their extra-time lead Bengaluru FC were declared 1-0 winners and advanced into the ISL semifinals.

"The appeal of the appellant team is denied and that Kerala Blasters FC is instructed to pay the fine of Rs 4 crore imposed by the Disciplinary Committee,"

the Appeal Committee stated in its decision.

On the appeal made by Ivan Vukumanovic, the Appeal Committee said: "This Committee holds that the appeal of the Appellant Coach is denied and that Ivan Vukumanovic is instructed to pay the fine of Rs 5 lakh and serve the suspension for 10 matches and the ban from being a part of the team dressing room and team bench, irrespective of the team he is contracted with.

Steady start for Manu Gandas

PTI ■ HAMBURG

Indian golfer Manu Gandas carded an even par 72 that placed him Tied-26th at the Porsche European Open here.

Gandas came into the DP World Tour because of the strategic alliance with the India's domestic PGTI Tour, where he topped the rankings last year.

Gandas, the lone Indian in the field as Shubhankar Sharma took time off this week to practice for the Open next month, had three birdies against three bogeys.

Gandas started from the first with a birdie but he bogeyed second, fourth and eighth and turned in 2-over. Birdies on 14th and 15th saved the day for him as he turned in a card of even par.

Germany's Max Kieffer carded a four under par 69 to share the first-round lead as he staked an early claim to become the first German winner on home soil for 15 years.

Stuttgart beat Hamburg in Bundesliga playoff

AP ■ STUTTGART

Hamburger SV's five-year wait to rejoin the Bundesliga looks set to continue.

Serhou Guirassy helped to put Stuttgart in a commanding position to keep its place in Germany's top division with a 3-0 win over Hamburg on Thursday in the first leg of their playoff.

Guirassy had failed to make the most of a one-on-one chance and had a penalty saved in the first half, but the Guinea forward grabbed Stuttgart's third goal early in the second half.

Hamburg's task was further complicated in the 69th minute when substitute Anssi Suhonen was sent off minutes after coming on for a studs-up lunge at Joshua Vagnoman's thigh.

The win puts Stuttgart,



which finished third from bottom in the Bundesliga, on course to stay in the first division before the second leg of the playoff in Hamburg on Monday. Hamburg finished third in the second division.

There was a minute's silence before Thursday's game in tribute to the 15-year-old player who died after a post-match brawl at an interna-

tional youth tournament in Frankfurt last weekend.

Stuttgart got off to a great start with Konstantinos Mavropanos heading the opener inside the first minute.

The visitors had Daniel Heuer Fernandes to thank for keeping the score down. The Hamburg goalkeeper saved from Chris Führich, then got the better of Guirassy in a one-on-one, and also saved Guirassy's penalty in the 27th. Two minutes later he produced another save to deflect Führich's effort away.

Führich effectively created the second goal in the 51st when he eluded two Hamburg defenders and played a perfectly weighted pass for Enzo Millot, who crossed for the unmarked Vagnoman to score.

Guirassy finally scored with a header to a corner three minutes later.

Shields fighting for gender equality for women boxers

AP ■ DETROIT

Claressa Shields is perhaps in the prime of her career, establishing a big enough name as a two-time Olympic gold medalist and world champion in three weight classes to headline the first boxing card in the six-year history of Little Caesars Arena in the Motor City.

The undisputed middleweight champion became

the first woman to earn a seven-figure payday in her last two fights and is expected to make another \$1 million Saturday night when she faces top-ranked contender Maricela Cornejo in the home of the Detroit Red Wings and Pistons. Shields grew up poor in Flint, Michigan, and has earned enough money to become rich at 28.

Still, she laments the gender inequities in boxing.

TV and streaming deals are 10 to 20 times more lucrative for men than women, according to Shields' promoter, Dmitriy Salita. Typically, male boxers make about \$3 million per fight while female fighters just recently started getting seven figures for a night in the ring, while some earn more and many make much less.

"We don't get the equal TV time, the equal promotion, equal

pay," Shields said earlier this week in an interview with The Associated Press. "That's what I've been trying to do with my platform, make sure I get all of that."

Shields is boxing in a marquee event in part because sports-streaming service DAZN stepped up enough financially to help facilitate the fight.

Women in boxing have shown they can sell out big are-

nas, as Katie Taylor and Amanda Serrano did 13 months ago at New York's Madison Square Garden, but they're not compensated as well as men in the same sport.

"It's like any other profession where the women still haven't caught up," said Jackie Kallen, a 77-year-old former boxing publicist and manager, who was commissioner of the International Female Boxing

Association when it was founded in 1997. "It's got a ways to go."

"They take a beating just like the men. They bleed just like the men, but they don't get paid just like the men."

Boxing Hall of Famer Christy Martin, whose bloody nose in the ring 27 years ago landed her on the cover of Sports Illustrated, said she would've never imagined women in the sport headlining

cards in big-time arenas as they do now.

Martin, though, said the lack of a deep talent pool limits opportunities.

"If you look back at the real old-timers in the sport, they would fight every other week," the 54-year-old Martin said in a telephone interview from Texas. "Now, we're lucky to see champions once a year."

Shields (13-0, 2 knockouts)

turned pro in 2016 after becoming the first US boxer — female, or male — to win consecutive Olympic gold medals and is averaging two fights a year. Cornejo (16-5, 6 KOs) replaced Hanna Gabriels (21-2-1, 12 KOs) last week in the 160-pound division title fight after the Costa Rican was removed from the card due to results from a Voluntary Anti-Doping Association test in May.

India shouldn't pick WTC XI with pre-determined mindset: Prasad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India should not pick the playing XI for the World Test Championship final with a pre-determined mindset like they did two years ago, says former chief selector MSK Prasad, who feels it would be very tough to fill the injured Rishabh Pant's shoes as his overseas feats are unparalleled.

India's move to pick two spinners — Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja — in the 2021 WTC final against New Zealand backfired as pacers dominated the game in overcast conditions at Southampton.

Spin could play a role in the final against Australia at The Oval in London from June 7 but Prasad advised the team to take the final call depending on the conditions at that time.

"We went with two spinners and three fast bowlers in the mind but subsequently there was rain, we should have changed our plans, somehow we stuck to the same playing eleven. But that is in the past.

"It all depends on conditions at The Oval. The is the actual story of the movie, the pitch and conditions. We don't know how they will be over five days, so we should not pre fix our mind and understand the conditions and back your instincts," the former India wicketkeeper told PTI.

Pant, who has scored centuries in England, Australia and South Africa, won't be available



to counter attack if the top-order fails. Prasad feels KS Bharat is the automatic choice in Pant's absence but the latter's ability as a batter is rare.

"It is a pretty straightforward call to pick Bharat (over Ishan Kishan). It is really tough to fill the shoes of Rishabh especially in an away series. In the history of entire India cricket, no other wicketkeeper batter has hundreds in England, South Africa and Australia, so it's very difficult to replace him.

"You need to have a wicketkeeper who is fit and fine for

100 overs. This is a Test match and we need to think from that aspect. "But if you are thinking you can have Ishan Kishan, Bharat has been tried and tested and has played India A in England, so they might end up going with him," said Prasad, who was the chief selector between 2016 and 2020.

India's star studded top four comprising Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli are expected to deliver against the likes of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins.

Ajinkya Rahane at five also adds to the experience of the batting unit.

"That is going to decide the fate of the game. How our top order is going to face their fast bowling. "With Gill in the form of his life, Rohit already has a hundred in England, Kohli has been in great form and Pujara has got lot of runs in county cricket and Ajinkya with his experience, it is the best we can have, they have to fight and win the game," Prasad said.

Gill has recorded centuries across formats in the last six

months and was the standout batter in the IPL.

"It is all about the mindset and Gill has adapted to different formats now. In IPL he did say about technical changes he made in his batting to improve strike rate. So, if a player can change his mindset as per format he is going to do well in any format.

"That is what he has done across formats. I hope he will replicate that form in England," said the 48-year-old who played six Tests and 17 ODIs between 1998-99.

If India does go with four pacers, then choosing between Ashwin and Jadeja becomes very difficult considering what they bring to the table, said Prasad.

"Jadeja has been so good of late that he can play as a specialist batter. It is a tricky call considering what both can bring to the table, it is hard to ignore. Ashwin with his 400 plus wickets and he is someone who is who can bowl on any surface. If it comes to that, it will be a very tough call," he said.

Another tough call will be to choose between Umesh Yadav and all-rounder Shardul Thakur.

"That is the trickiest part. If you see the statistics, Umesh is more successful in home conditions compared to away conditions, so picking Shardul gives you that batting advantage. You need to have long batting depth also against a quality attack like Australia," Prasad added.



Australia unsure about India's bowling line-up

PTI ■ LONDON

Australia are expecting Ravindra Jadeja to feature in India's playing XI in the World Test Championship final but are unsure about Ravichandran Ashwin's participation in the marquee contest to be played at The Oval starting June 7.

India utilised three spinners during the recent Border-Gavaskar Trophy series with both Ashwin (25 wickets) and Jadeja (22) shining bright to help their side claim a 2-1 series win.

Talking to local media prior to Australia's training session at the Kent County Cricket Ground in Beckenham on Thursday, assistant coach Daniel Vettori said the team management had a lot of discussion about India's probable bowling attack.

"We have been debating that," Vettori said.

"I think Jadeja will play because of the batting he brings to the table and how successful he has been at that No.6 position.

"Then the question will be around that fourth seamer and the all-rounder in (Shardul) Thakur and Ashwin, but they are (both) pretty good choices."

Vettori, however, feels Ashwin might just lose out on a spot in the playing XI because of team combination despite enjoying a decent record in England.

The experienced off-spinner has a total of 18 wickets at an average of 28.11 from seven matches in England but has played just one Test at The Oval.

"Ashwin is an incredible bowler and he will be first choice in most teams, and just with their combinations it may lead to that (him missing selection)," Vettori said.

"We expect The Oval to behave how it always behaves. "It is a good wicket, but it can offer a lot to the spinners as the game goes on."

Vettori also expects Cameron Green to play a big part in the WTC final, especially after his superb showing in the just-concluded IPL.

"Any cricket is preparation now. He is doing work in the background to make sure his bowling loads are up and he is actually ready for Test cricket," Vettori said of Green.

"We look at it like if you are involved in high-intensity, high-class cricket, we are happy with that as it means you are playing cricket.

"The hardest thing for guys is coming out of nothing and that might be a challenge for a couple of guys who have had an extended break and how they get up to speed as quickly as possible," he said.

It's a grand final for us: Lyon

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Off-spinner Nathan Lyon doesn't believe Australia's preparations for the World Test Championship final will be affected by the talk around the Ashes, terming the upcoming contest against India as "grand final".

India and Australia will square off in the WTC final at The Oval from June 7.

The five-Test Ashes against England beginning June 16 has dominated the headlines over the past few months as Australia seek to win the marquee series away from home for the first time in 22 years.

"Yes, we are playing the Ashes but we've got a big game that we're up for. This (WTC final) is our grand final, and then our season basically starts again," Lyon was quoted as saying by Australian Associated Press.

"That's probably where we're quite happy with where we're at with our planning. We are able to understand what we've got around the corner, and be OK. It's exciting to be part of the final and the fanfare and stuff around it, it's bloody special.

"I know every Australian fan is looking forward to the Ashes, and so they should be. But they should also be excited



about this match," he added.

Australia will head into the Ashes without any warm-up game with the WTC final being the lone match before the contest against England.

Lyon believes the 1-2 loss Test series in India earlier this year won't have any bearing on the upcoming contest.

"You can wipe off anything that happened in India," Lyon said.

"Both teams are really well rounded in their squads. It is going to be a really good challenge.

"India obviously have some class batters but they have some class fast bowlers as well. It's going to be a good challenge. Both squads going at it and competing for one game, it's going to be a really good challenge," he said.

"It's a fresh start. I'm looking forward to it"

ECB CEO supports India getting 38% earnings share

PTI ■ DUBAI

India make immense contribution in driving revenues and fuelling the growth of cricket globally and deserve to earn USD 230 million per year from 2024 to 2027 under ICC's proposed financial model, feels ECB chief executive officer Richard Gould.

According to the new proposed distribution model, the Indian cricket board (BCCI) could earn 38.5 per cent of the USD 600 million earnings over the next four-year commercial cycle with the ECB (USD 41.33 million) and Cricket Australia (USD 37.53 million) being the next highest earners.

The PCB is likely to take home USD 34.51 million (5.75 per cent), while the rest will be shared by the remaining eight full members.

In total, the 12 full members will get USD 532.84 million (88.81 per cent) with the remaining USD 67.16 million (11.19 per cent) going to the associate members out of the USD 600 million projected pool.

The proposals, which are due to be ratified by the ICC, were criticised as it will only further increase the financial disparity in the game.

However, Gould defended ICC's new allocation model.

"When you see where that value is created, I think it's understandable," Gould said on the latest episode of The Final Word podcast.

"There may be tweaks in the margins here or there, but the dominant position India is in is



based on India's ability to drive revenues and drive the sport forward. One point four billion people, one sport, ten (IPL) teams, one international team."

"What I'm also fascinated by is India's determination also to assist the world game. You look at the percentages and go 'Well, that's not fair it should be split equally'. But we've got to look at the size of the market.

"India play as many international fixtures as any other team in the world. And they do that because they know when they tour as

an international team, they bring interest and revenue to that home side. I think it's important to see things in the round, in that regard," he added.

Gould acknowledged the disparity, but he took a holistic view of the situation.

"I get it (the financial inequality). But I also understand how important India is, because without them we wouldn't have the kind of revenues that are coming into the game," he said.

"And I do think India make huge efforts to be responsible partners in this when I see the amount they travel around the world, taking India everywhere. I do think it is a balance.

"I think there is collective decision-making, both in India and within the ICC, and I think there is a real determination and understanding we need (for) cricket to be expanding and we need it to be healthy around the world."

Gould feels instead of the host nation retaining all revenue, boards need to pay touring sides during bilateral series.

Sehrawat to lead India 'A' in Emerging Women's Asia Cup



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Batting all-rounder Shweta Sehrawat will lead a 14-member Indian 'A' squad in the upcoming ACC Emerging Women's Asia Cup beginning in Hong Kong on June 12. India 'A' will begin their campaign on June 13 against hosts Hong Kong at the Tin Kwong Road Recreation Ground.

"The All India Women's Selection Committee on Friday announced the India 'A' (Emerging) squad for the upcoming ACC Emerging Women's Asia Cup 2023," BCCI said in a release. The tournament will feature eight teams which are divided into two groups.

India 'A' (Emerging) is a part of Group A which also features hosts Hong Kong, Thailand 'A' and Pakistan 'A', while Bangladesh 'A', Sri Lanka 'A', Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates are in Group B.

The final will be played on June 21.

SQUAD: Shweta Sehrawat (Captain), Soumya Tiwari (vice-captain), Trisha Gongadi, Muskan Malik, Shreyanka Patil, Kanika Ahuja, Uma Chetry (wicketkeeper), Mamatha Madiwala (wicketkeeper), Titas Sadhu, Yashasri S, Kashvee Gautam, Parshavi Chopra, Mannat Kashyap, B Anusha.

Head Coach: Nooshin Al Khadeer

SCHEDULE: June 13 - India 'A' vs Hong Kong; June 15 - India 'A' vs Thailand 'A'; June 17 - India 'A' vs Pakistan 'A'



Afghanistan beat SL in 1st ODI

AP ■ HAMBANTOTA

Sri Lanka has several head-saches ahead of its World Cup qualifiers in two weeks' time after suffering a heavy six-wickets defeat against Afghanistan on Friday.

Set a target of 269, Afghanistan got there with 19 deliveries to spare to take the opener of the three-match one-day international series.

Ibrahim Zadran was the hero for the visitors, top scoring with 98 runs. The opening batter took the Sri Lankan quicks to task during the Power Play as he raced to his half-century in just 35 balls.

Zadran, a 21-year-old right-handed batter, settled down after the field restrictions as he added 146 runs with Rahmat Shah for the second wicket as the Afghans proved Sri Lanka's total of 268 was way below par.

Kasun Rajitha broke the stand when he had Zadran caught at deep mid-wicket, just two runs short of his fourth ODI hundred. Zadran's 98 runs came off 98 balls with 11 hits to the ropes and two over it.

Sri Lanka also dismissed Rahmat Shah for 55 when Matheesha Pathirana claimed his first ODI wicket. But Hashmathullah Shahidi's 38 sealed the game for his side.

The Afghan captain shared 42 runs for the fourth wicket with Mohammad Nabi, who remained 27 not out.

Sri Lanka brought in the experienced Dimuth Karunaratne and Angelo Mathews to the ODI squad to address the team's batting woes.

But it was back to square one as they slumped to 84-4 with Mathews (12) and Karunaratne (4) not able to make big contributions.

Charith Asalanka held the Sri Lankan innings together with his seventh half-century and went on to score 91 off 95 balls with 12 fours. He was well backed up by Dhananjaya de Silva (51) as they shared a 99-run partnership for the fifth wicket. But Sri Lanka needed much more than that.

Asalanka's knock was some consolation for the Sri Lankans, but the former world champions needed the senior players to put their hands up as there were too many soft dismissals.

Afghanistan, which has already qualified for the World Cup in India later this year, was without star bowler Rashid Khan, who sat out with a lower back strain. But their bowlers responded well keeping Sri Lanka to a below-par total cutting down the work of the batters.

Tongue's debut makes family friend richer

PTI ■ LONDON

A family friend of Josh Tongue, who made his England Test debut against Ireland, has hit the jackpot for a wager he had placed 14 years back on the pace bowler that he would one day go on to represent the country.

Josh, a 25-year-old right-arm quick, received his England cap from pace bowling stalwart James Anderson on Thursday in the one-off Test against Ireland on Thursday, and though he did not take a wicket, the Worcester Academy product bowled 13 overs, conceding just 40 runs.

A pub landlord, Tim Piper — a family friend — had taken a 500-1 odds that Josh would eventually play for his country when the boy was just 11 years old.

When Josh, who was included in the squad as injury cover ahead of the Ashes, was announced in the playing XI against Ireland, Piper became richer by 50,000 pounds.

"It's been amazing, absolutely wonderful," Piper told Sen Radio on Friday.

"I never dreamt it would be this popular and people in the



pub can see me talking to people in America, India, Australia, they've got friends messaging them saying, 'what the hell happened in Redditch (a town south of Birmingham where Piper resides)'?"

Piper, who watched Josh from a young age and played backyard cricket with him, added he was happy to see the youngster get his Test cap from one of the all-time great bowlers Anderson.

"This (father Phil Tongue) is a friend of mine for 35 years, this (Josh) is his son and I see the work him and his wife have put in to chase this boy around England for the last 25 years. It's wonderful for the family and they were on the pitch today (Thursday) when he got his cap

presented by Jimmy Anderson. "It's just a fairytale," added Piper.

Josh, originally started off as a leg spinner and played Under-11s when he was six, and Piper had the belief that the youngster would one day play for the country.

"On Tuesday night someone phoned me up and said he's (Josh) playing. I was like, 'you what?'" Piper said.

"I look at Sky Sport, BBC Sport, I saw that he was starting (against Ireland) so obviously ran upstairs, got the betting slip out of the cupboard, it's been next to my passport for the last 14 years. I thought I bet to check this slip but I wrote it and read it correctly.

"It's there and I thought oh my God. He knew I bet on him from a young age... it was known in Worcestershire cricket club a bet had been put on him."

Piper is the landlord of the Cricketers Arms pub in Redditch and played with Phil Tongue in local tournaments in the 1990s.

"Even though it's 50,000 pounds to me, a lovely amount, but I'm so happy for the family," he added.

Medal-less second day for India in Bishkek

PTI ■ BISHKEK

Sajan Bhanwal made a spirited comeback after trailing 0-7 but lost steam in the second period of his bronze medal play-off after three Indian women wrestlers made early exit as India endured a medal-less day at the UWW Ranking Series event here on Friday.

Bhanwal, who was passive initially, lost points in a jiffy from 'par terre' position against China's Rui Liu but logged five straight points to reduce the deficit. The Chinese wrestler was tired but Bhanwal too did not have much left in the tank and shook hands for a 5-7 defeat in the 77kg bout.

Vikas lost the 72kg bronze play-off to Georgia's Otar Abuladze. The Indian Greco-Roman team thus will return with just one medal — a bronze — that came through Manjeet in the 55kg category.

"We could have won at least 4-5 medals in this tournament. The competition was not much high, mostly the Asian wrestlers were competing. It was much tougher in the Croatian Ranking Series event. Sajan could have won today but since there was no national camp, our Greco-Roman wrestlers were not well-

prepared," national coach Har-gobind Singh told PTI.

"Usually they have better stamina but not having good practice has affected their fitness," he added.

The national camps for senior wrestlers were put on hold due to the ongoing agitation of top grapplers and the Indian Olympic Association's ad-hoc committee taking charge of the functioning of the Wrestling Federation of India.

In the women's competition, young Sonam Malik, who is returning from an elbow injury, and Nisha Dahiya suffered first-round defeats while Priya lost her quarterfinal bout.

Sonam, the silver medallist at the 2022 junior world championships, lost 3-5 to China's Jia Long in the qualification round.

The Asian championship silver medallist Nisha had a disappointing result in the 68kg competition as she lost by technical superiority to Uzbekistan's Furuza Esenbaeva. The Uzbeki later lost her quarterfinal to Turkey's Nesir Bas, thus closing the repechage door on Nisha.

In the 76kg, Priya began with a 6-0 win over Ukraine's Anastasiya Osnich but lost the quarterfinal 1-10 to China's Qiandegenchagan.

Banarse reaches surfing final

PTI ■ MANGALORE

Sugar Banarse, the 17-year-old from Goa, came up with an impressive performance in the Women's Open category to reach the final of the 4th Indian Open of Surfing here on Friday.

Banarse, who collected the highest number of points (10.17), will look to defend her title on Saturday against tough competitors like Tamil Nadu's Kamali Moorthy (8.50) and Shrishti Selvam (4.74) and Karnataka's Sinchana Gowda (5.17).

In the Men's Open category, Sanjaikumar S, Srikanth D, Raghub Paneeerselvam, Sathish Sarvanan, Manikandhan M, Kishore Kumar, Sankanthos M and Surya P advanced to the semifinals, scheduled to be



held on Saturday.

Srikanth D, who scored the highest number of points, said, "The waves were comparatively smaller than the previous day and but I am happy to do well today. I want to continue with the tempo and win the title."

The Grooms Boys (U16) category semifinals saw Tamil boys dominate as three out of four surfers from the state made it to the final. Teenage

surfer Kishore Kumar emerged as the highest scorer in the category for the second consecutive day (11.67) as he stunned everyone with his stellar performance.

Tayin Arun, with 9.17 points, and Harish P with 6.33, were other boys from Tamil Nadu to book final berths. Karnataka's only hope Pradeep Pujar earned 4.30 points to reach to the final.