



OPINION 6

WILL DEMOCRATS
NOMINATE JOE BIDEN

WORLD 8

'TRUMP WILL WIN IF
ELECTION IS FREE AND FAIR'

MONEY 10

SENSEX, NIFTY SETTLE
Marginally Down

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PARIS MY FOURTH,
LAST OLYMPICS:
MANPREET
11 SPORTS

Crucial Security Meet on Jammu and Kashmir



An Inter-State Coordination Conference between BSF, J&K Police, Central Agencies and the Punjab Police being held to focus on enhancing border security and synergy between the two State Police Forces and the Border Guarding Force, in Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The top brass of the Border Security Force (BSF), Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab police, along with representatives of the Central agencies, on Thursday attended the Inter-State Coordination Conference in Kathua to further strengthen the security grid and prevent infiltration from across the border.

After the Kathua ambush, in which five soldiers of the Indian Army sacrificed their lives in the line of duty on July 8, it is believed that the

suspected group of foreign terrorists may have infiltrated inside the Indian territory from across the International border.

When terrorism was at its peak, the Kathua-Billawar-Badnota-Basantgarh-Bhaderwah-Kishtwar axis was considered a traditional route of infiltration taken by the terrorists to enter the Kashmir valley. Former Union Minister hailing from the region, Dr Karan Singh, said the spate of terrorist attacks in the Jammu region are a matter of great concern. "I trust the

civilian and military authorities are making every effort to track down the militants as soon as possible. I do have one suggestion for Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. For many years, the Jammu Division was under the Nagrota Corps whose headquarters are hardly thirty miles from Jammu. Some years ago, for some obscure reason, the Jammu Division was removed from Nagrota and placed under Western Command in Chandigarh, over 200 miles away," he said.

Canal breach in National Capital

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a rupture in the Munak Canal, which supplies around 36.7 per cent of water (719 cusecs) from Haryana to Delhi, residential colonies in Bawana in the national Capital turned into a river on Thursday, wreaking havoc in the daily lives of the people and stranding residents in their houses. A breach in the Carrier Lined Channel (CLC) of the canal, part of the Western Yamuna Canal, led to water entering the J, K, and L blocks of the colony in northwest Delhi early Thursday, causing significant inconvenience and concern for the locals.

Videos on social media reflect the gravity of the situation with the residents trying to wade through knee-deep flooding and even waist deep water in parts of the area. Residents of the area expressed frustrations over the sudden flooding bringing their lives to halt. Shailesh Kumar, a resident of JJ block, said he was unable to go to his work and blamed the Delhi Government for not doing enough for them. "We have informed all the concerned departments, including the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Flood Control Department, Public Welfare Department, and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), at midnight after the canal overflowed," a police official said. Taking serious note of the situation, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena expressed concerns over the breach of a branch of Munak Canal and instructed the Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to take



People wade through floodwater after a breach in one of the sub-branches of Munak Canal in New Delhi on Thursday

the matter up with State Water Minister Atishi and Flood Control Department Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj. "The breach in the Munak Canal underlines the absence of adequate maintenance of the Canal, which should have been undertaken by Delhi Jal Board (DJB) through Haryana Irrigation Department from time to time," a letter by the Principal Secretary to the LG read. An official of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) said, "A report was received regarding the damage in the lining of Western Yamuna Canal being maintained by Haryana Irrigation Department (HID) near Bawana in the early morning of June 11. This has resulted in flooding in the adjoining areas of Bawana JJ Colony."

Informing that the field staff have been rushed to the site for taking immediate remedial measures, he said, "Water is being drained by temporarily puncturing the

existing storm water drain, coordinated with NDRF, MCD, SDM Narela, DJB, public representatives and local residents for providing relief from this situation." Resources such as JCB, Dewatering pump, drinking water tanker and mobile toilet have also been deployed at the location by DDA. Flow of water from Sonipat has reduced and authorities have requested Haryana to close gates on the canal to control the flow, officials said. The canal originates from the Yamuna river in Munak in Haryana's Karnal district. Delhi Minister Atishi visited the site and said, "We are at the entry point at the Munak Canal in Bawana. Last night between 12 am and 2 am, there was a breach in the embankment, the water entered the adjacent areas. This canal is maintained by Haryana Irrigation Dept, their team is here, the DJB team is here, the repair work is being done."

INLD, BSP join hands for Haryana election battle

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

The Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) has decided to again join hands with its former ally Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) for the Haryana Assembly polls due later this year, the leaders of the two parties announced on Thursday. Alliance leaders have also decided to project INDL leader Abhay Chautala as its chief ministerial face.

Under the arrangement, out of 90 Assembly seats in Haryana, the BSP will contest 37 seats leaving the rest for its senior partner in Haryana, where the ruling BJP is eyeing to come to power for third time in a row.

Addressing a joint Press conference with the BSP at Nayagaon on the outskirts of Chandigarh, Chautala asserted that the alliance is not based on any selfish interests, but has been formed keeping in mind people's feelings.

"In Haryana, we have decided to jointly fight the upcoming Assembly elections. Today, the feeling of common people is to oust from power the BJP, which is looting the state, and keep the Congress party at bay, which looted the state for 10 years earlier," Chautala said.

BSP national coordinator Akash Anand said recently BSP supremo Mayawati and Chautala held a detailed meeting regarding firming up of the alliance. "In that meeting, it had been decided that out of 90 assembly seats in Haryana, the BSP will contest on 37 seats while the rest will be fought by the INLD," he said. Anand said if alliance comes to power in the State, Chautala will be made the Chief Minister.

CM holds Budget consultations with officials



NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida on Thursday held a pre-Budget discussion with senior officials of the State administration at the Lok Seva Bhawan.

Discussion was also held on presentation on the Economic Survey Report.

The Odisha Government will present its Annual Budget on July 25 in the State Assembly, two days after the presentation of the Union Budget.

On February 8, the then Finance Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha had presented a Vote-on-Account for 2024

25 in the Assembly with an outlay of Rs 2,55,000 crore, which is about 11 per cent more than the Annual Budget, 2023-24.

The Naveen Patnaik government could not present a full-fledged Budget as the term of the 16th Assembly was scheduled to expire on June 24.

Customarily, the new government has the prerogative to formulate new programmes and schemes. Accordingly, instead of presenting a full fledged Budget, a Vote on Account was presented to enable the government to incur expenditure for the first four months of the financial year 2024 25 on existing establishment and ongoing schemes and projects.



Chemicals used for WMD seized in Tamil Nadu

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Security agencies in Chennai made a major breakthrough by seizing chemical consignment used in the production of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Delivery System which has been banned in India under the provisions of Customs Act 1962 and (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act 2005. The chemical Ortho-Chloro Benzylidene Malononitrile weighed 2,560 kgs and stored in 103 drums of 2.5 kgs each was seized from Kattupalli Port near Chennai from a Karachi-bound ship sailing from Shanghai Port. Interestingly, the ship spotted a Cyprus flag. The banned chemical was from Chengdu Shichen Trading Company Ltd and was meant for Rohail Enterprises in Rawalpindi.

Education Minister's NEET assurance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a raging row over alleged irregularities in the conduct of the medical entrance exam this year, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday met some NEET aspirants at his residence in the national Capital.

According to sources, the students raised issues like the uncertainty prevailing over the fate of the exam which was conducted in May, the delay in the counselling process and ultimately the academic calendar. While there have been demand for a retest from several quarters, the Education Ministry has maintained the incidents of paper leak were localised, and by cancelling the exam it can jeopardise the careers of lakhs of candidates who cleared the test fairly. The matter has also reached the Supreme Court, which on Thursday adjourned till July 18 the hearing on the clutch of petitions seeking that exam be cancelled and the test be reconducted. The petitioners have also sought a probe into the alleged malpractices. Besides, the CBI on Thursday arrested one of the alleged kingpins in the NEET-UG paper leak case who was on the run ever since the crackdown on irregularities in the entrance exam began, officials said. Rockey alias Rakesh Ranjan, who hails from Nalanda, and is said to be a relative of mastermind Sanjeev



Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan

File Photo PTI

Mukhia, was nabbed by the agency from outskirts of Patna, they said. The Ministry has informed the Supreme Court that a data analytics of the results of NEET-UG 2024 was conducted by IIT Madras which found there was neither any indication of "mass malpractice" nor a localised set of candidates benefiting from it and scoring abnormally high marks. The Government's assertion assumes significance in view of the observations made by the top court on July 8 that it may order a re-test if there were large-scale malpractices in holding the exam. The matter is being investigated by the CBI. Over 23.33 lakh students had taken the test on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including in 14 cities overseas. The Centre and the NTA, in their earlier affidavits filed in the apex court, had said that scrapping the exam would be

"counterproductive" and "seriously jeopardise" lakhs of honest candidates in the absence of any proof of large-scale breach of confidentiality. The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in Government and private institutions across the country. The CBI had been trailing Rockey since the case came to the agency. His run came to an end on Thursday morning when he was arrested by the agency, they said. The agency produced him before a Special Court in Patna which has remanded him to 10 days of CBI custody, they said. Earlier this week, the CBI had conducted searches at 15 locations in Bihar and Jharkhand gathering incriminating evidence in the case, they said.

Ratna Bhandar to be opened on July 14

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan on Thursday said that the Ratna Bhandar (treasure trove) of the Puri Jagannath Temple is most likely to be opened on Sunday (July 14).

Approving the high-level committee's recommendation for the opening of the Ratna Bhandar on July 14, the Srimandir



managing committee had on Wednesday given a proposal in this regard to the Odisha Government.

Informing about the same, the Law Minister stated that the government would go through the details of the proposal and the opening of Ratna Bhandar on July 14 is mostly confirmed.

Temples welcome women entrepreneurs

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Temples across India are blooming green with innovative waste management initiatives focusing on recycling of floral offerings into eco-friendly products such as compost, natural dyes, incense sticks, and more, thus protecting Mother Nature and creating job opportunities, particularly for women. For instance, at much-revered Ujjain's Mahalakaleshwar Temple, 5-6 tonnes of daily flower waste are transformed into eco-friendly products while at Mumbai's famous Siddhivinayak Temple, floral waste is being turned into natural dyes. Similarly, the Tirupati Municipal Corporation upcycles over 6 tonnes of waste daily from the Tirupati temple, employing 150



women in these green endeavours. Far in the Eastern part of India in West Bengal, known for its 13th-century Ma Tara temple, Tarapith which attracts around 12,000 devotees daily, a joint initiative between the Mallarpur Naisuva Trust and the temple

committee is transforming piles of flowers offered to the deity into recycling. The used flowers from temple offerings are turned into vermicompost for local farmers. Following the consecration of the sacred Ram Mandir in

Ayodhya early this year, the Ayodhya Municipal Corporation too has embarked on a similar plan to recycle flowers offered in the temples of Ayodhya Dham. The move aims not only to maintain the cleanliness of the temple premises but also to create job opportunities for women through the production of incense sticks and gulaal. Vishal Singh, vice-chairperson of Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) said, "The idea is to check floral waste from being dumped into rivers and other bodies of water that has been the cause for choking and polluting, leading to environmental degradation." As disposal of flowers in rivers, oceans, etc. leads to water pollution as well as affects the living organisms present in the

waters, there has been increasing demand for the concept of "Green Temples" to be integrated into national policies, transforming these religious spaces into eco-friendly hubs, said an official from the Union Environment Ministry. He said encouraging the use of digital offerings or biodegradable materials instead of traditional flowers can effectively reduce floral waste. Lauding such initiatives that have encouraged women entrepreneurs in green businesses, such as organic farming, eco-friendly product manufacturing, and sustainable fashion, Heera Lal, Special Secretary, Irrigation Department, Uttar Pradesh, said, "This not only promotes economic empowerment but also contributes to environmental sustainability."

In Kendrapada

9 students fall sick in private school

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

As many as nine students from a school were rushed to a hospital on Thursday after falling sick in a private school in Udaynagar of Kendrapada district.

As per sources, humidity and excessive heat became unbearable for the students and the kids were taken ill while two of them also lost consciousness.

When the parents reached the hospital after getting calls



from the school, they found the kids screaming and crying in pain.

The on-duty doctor said, “Excessive heat and a lack of proper ventilation in the classroom resulted in the students falling sick, but their conditions are stable now.”

“For the last three days, there was no electricity supply in the classroom and a generator was supposed to be installed, but that did not happen. Our teacher had

instructed us to take rest if we felt sick. I was already resting when I felt a sudden pain in my chest and was unable to breathe” said a student.

The parents alleged that private schools take in students beyond their capacity resulting in packed and poorly-ventilated classrooms. These schools should provide better facilities to the students.

Gajapati ADM collapses while singing on stage

CM mourns his death

PNS ■ PARLAKHEMUNDI

In a shocking incident, Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Birendra Kumar Das of Gajapati collapsed on stage while singing at a cultural programme in Paralakhemundi.

Das was rushed to a hospital in Berhampur, but doctors there declared him dead. The exact reason of the sudden death was yet to be ascertained. The incident, stated to be a case of



suspected heart attack, has sent shockwaves in the State.

As per sources, the district administration had hosted a cultural event at the Paralakhemundi Brundaban Palace on Wednesday night.

Das was singing at the function when he felt uneasy and collapsed on the stage.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Thursday expressed grief over the demise of Das.

“Late Das was a dedicated and duty-bound officer who always worked tirelessly for the benefit of the public. He was highly praised for his administrative skills and was an asset to the State. The State has lost a capable and efficient administrator in his passing,” the CM said in a message. He also conveyed his condolence to the bereaved family.

Naveen concerned over Adap Mandap Bijee mess

Writes to CM, seeks preventive steps in future

Majhi replies to Patnaik’s letter

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Voicing concern over the mishap during the Adap Mandap Bijee ritual of the deities of Puri Jagannath Temple, BJD president and Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik on Thursday urged Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to take

concrete steps to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

In a letter to Majhi, Patnaik claimed that such an incident had not taken place in the history of Jagannath Temple.

Describing Lord Jagannath as the symbol of Odia Asmita (pride), Naveen said the Lord is the identity and pride of the people of Odisha. Lakhs of devotees from across the world throng the pilgrim town of Puri to witness the famous Rath Yatra.

“The mishap that took place during the Adap Mandap Bijee has pained the devotees. I am also deeply saddened over the



incident,” Naveen said in his letter.

The BJD supremo said some ministers have made some light and non-serious remarks about the incident which has hurt the sentiments of devotees.

Notably, Lord Balabhadra’s idol slipped and fell on the Charamal (makeshift ladder)

while being taken by servitors to the Adap Mandap inside the Gundicha Temple in Pahandi procession on July 9 night. Several servitors were injured in the mishap.

However, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida and Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan reportedly described the incident as a “minor” mishap. They also said that the incident was perhaps the Lord’s ‘divine act’.

CM Majhi replied to Naveen’s letter expressing same sentiments and said care should be taken to avoid such incidents in future.

RSC holds awareness talk on Population Day

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The World Population Day is observed on July 11 to draw attention on the growing population and on the need to create a platform to raise awareness and address population issues and challenges on a global scale.

The Regional Science Centre (RSC), Bhubaneswar observed the day for the school students and organised an interactive session on “Sustainable Population Growth for a Sustainable Future” with Dr Manoranjan Das, Asst. Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack. Dr Das spoke about the “Population growth in India”, “Sustainable Development”,



“Various Challenges and Issues towards Sustainable Development”.

The session highlighted how the population growth adversely impacts the society by increasing poverty, unemployment, etc., and puts a burden on the agricultural sector which itself has several implications.

After the session, interactive quiz and film shows were conducted for the students.

The event was attended by students of DAV Public Schools of Chandrasekharpur and Pokhariput. The programme had commenced with a welcome address by Kapil Jain, Project Coordinator, Regional Science Centre, who talked about the impact of growing population on the resources which seems to be an alarming factor to meet SDG.

Govt posts Ashish Singh as Home Dept OSD

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government on Thursday transferred IPS officer Ashish Kumar Singh and posted him as OSD (Officer on Special Duty) in the Home Department.

A notification issued by the Home Department stated that Singh, a 2004-batch IPS officer, was transferred and posted as OSD, Home Department with immediate effect.

Notably, the Home Department had on June 27 sought whereabouts of Ashish Singh. The next day, DGP Arun Kumar Sarangi stated that Singh had resumed duty in the special intelligence wing on June 3.

Singh was sanctioned leave from May 4 to June 2 and, accordingly, he joined back on June 3, the DGP had said.

It may be noted that the



Election Commission of India (ECI) had directed Singh to appear before a board of AIIMS-Bhubaneswar for a health checkup following complaints from the BJP that the IPS officer was working in favour of the BJD in polls though he was on sick leave.

After a six-member board of the AIIMS submitted its report stating that Singh was mentally and physically fit, the ECI wrote to the State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) to forward the AIIMS report to the Chief Secretary for necessary action against the officer.

Odisha migrant dies in Maharashtra

Body found on railway tracks

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A migrant worker from Odisha was found dead on railway tracks under mysterious circumstances in the Thane area of Maharashtra on Thursday.

The deceased was identified as Ajay Singh of Garadama village under the Adaba police limits in Gajapati district.

Sources said Ajay had gone to Maharashtra to work as a labourer a month ago. However, his body bearing injury marks was recovered from railway tracks in the Deba area under the jurisdiction of

Thane police station.

Police have registered a case of unnatural death in this connection and initiated an investigation to ascertain the circumstances that led to his death.

Meanwhile, Ajay’s family members have urged the Odisha Government to bring back his body to their village.

In Kendrapada

Couple commits suicide over financial problem

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

A couple ended their lives by hanging themselves from a ceiling fan at their house in Fakirabad under the Derabish police station in Kendrapada district on Wednesday night.

The deceased were identified as Kartik Jena (25) and his wife

Pinki Das (21).

Though the exact reason why the couple took the extreme step was yet to be ascertained, police suspected financial problems might have led to the incident.

Derabish police station IIC Kishore Kumar Tarai, after the family members informed about the incident, reached the

spot and recovered the bodies for postmortem. Two unnatural death cases have been registered at Derabish police station in this connection, said the IIC.

According to locals, Kartik was unemployed, due to which there was unrest in the family for the last few years.

SOCIAL CANVAS

Buddhist heritage tourism most unexplored in Odisha

With the increasing expansion of modern travel facilities around the world, the tourism sector has emerged as one of the most visible sources of economic activities. Heritage and historical monuments sites are great assets which can be used for economic activities for locals.

The historical and natural advantages of different locations in Odisha can be developed, and used to attract different kinds of tourists, including heritage and religious tourists of different faiths.

Odisha, as the ancient land of Buddha, has such tremendous potential to promote Buddhist heritage tourism which can attract lakhs of tourists from all over the world, especially from countries with Buddhist believers in South-East, and East Asia. Buddhism has historically played a role in promoting tourism among



MANAS JENA

South-East Asia countries.

The tourism sector has emerged as one of the vital sources of employment as it is more labour intensive. Globally, countries such as France, Spain, USA, China, Italy, Turkey, Mexico, Germany, Thailand, UK and Japan were the most visited countries by international tourists. Coming home Indian States such as Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, UP, Delhi,

WB, Rajasthan, Kerala, Punjab, Bihar and Goa were the top ten States in receiving a number of international tourists. Bihar’s Bodhi Gaya and Nalanda are attractive destinations for international visitors. Bihar had received 3.5 crore tourists, both domestic and foreign, in the year 2019. India receives less than two percent of the global tourists. However, India is among top ten countries having the largest Buddhist population and the others include China, Thailand, Japan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, South Korea, and Malaysia. In spite of the potential, the Government of India and the State of Odisha have not yet fully used its vast treasure of tourist potential, especially its Buddhist heritage.

The plan of Government of India in collaboration with the World Bank and the Japanese Government for building a Buddhist circuit to promote places connected to Buddha

and Buddhist heritage has not included Odisha. The government of Odisha has requested the centre to be part of the plan. Tourism as a subject must be placed in the Concurrent List by which both the State and centre can jointly execute the plans.

These heritage assets will boost the travel and hospitality segment in a big way that is beneficial to the State as a whole and more to locals. It also helps in revisiting and reviving our inspiring past memories of the region that was once well connected to other parts of the globe through maritime trade and Buddhism. The visits of Buddhist scholars, believers and many others in large numbers will have a wider impact on the progressively changing social-cultural life and the quality of living of the people. The multi-cultural values and international exposure will strengthen our age-old secular ethos and pave

the way for access to the scope of education, trade and other economic linkage with the most advanced Buddhist countries.

The heritage tourism includes visiting the sites of remains of Buddha’s tombs, Puspagiri University, Kalinga war field in Dhauli, and many more structures excavated. Historians and archaeologists have traced that Odisha has a written history of some 2300 years from the days of the Kalinga war in 261 BC. Kalinga was thickly populated and showed early forms of people’s democracy. There were Janapadas, the People’s Republic. Buddha’s Dhama/ teachings were the beliefs of the people of the land. Though late but the Archaeological Survey of India’s excavation work has explored hundreds of Buddhist sites from different parts of the State. It is told that during the period from 6th century BC to the 15th-16th century AD, various sects

of Buddhism prevailed here, as evident from the archaeological and historical findings. In the past, Kalinga played a major role in the spread of Buddhism in South-East Asia.

It is found that from Baleswar to Ganjam on the coast and central-west Odisha, including Dambargada of Boudh, Subarnapur, Ganiapali, Bargarh, Parimalgiri, Balangir and Sambalpur districts and in a number of other places the remains and structures are available. The places include - Khadipada, Soro in Baleswar, Kupari in Bhadrak, Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitgiri in Jajpur, Tarpur and Naraj in Cuttack district, Kuruma near Konark of Puri and Banpur in Khurda district etc. The most interesting site at Ratnagiri was discovered in 1905 and later around 1960, the three places Lalitgiri, Udayagiri and Ratnagiri’s excavation has revealed many new areas of information. These three sites

form the Diamond Triangle. Rantagiri has a well built archaeological museum. The past heritage sites can also be connected to present modern Buddhist places of tourist interest, such as Dhauli peace Pagoda and Jirang Monastery in Mohana of Gajapati. These important places need connectivity by road, rail and air and what is most necessary is making available hospitality facilities to ensure amenities to take care of the comfort of the visitors. These places must be ideally peaceful from the security point of view of the visitors. The law and order of the locality and public behavior must be conducive to visitors. The best of local quality foods, cultural events and art and craft should be made available to visitors to get an exposure.

There is also a demand for qualified well-mannered multi-lingual guides having proficiency in English and other languages who can

properly explain things and help the visitors. They can be attached to hotels and tour operators. It is also highly required to give much emphasis on the preservation, restoration, recreation and maintenance of these heritage assets. The State’s universities must undertake research and documentation work to link with the heritage that will attract scholars from all over the world and make Odisha a knowledge centre.

The state Government must invest in building infrastructure and inviting private and public investors, including FDI, to promote travel agencies, good hotels and restaurants in the locality, while building good roads, railway lines and international airport connectivity on priority. Odisha’s Buddhist sites must be linked to other States in north India having more number of heritage sites.

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CBI arrests CGST Super for taking bribe

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a Superintendent of Central GST AND Central Excise at Brahmapur in Ganjam district for allegedly accepting bribe. Superintendent of Central GST and Central Excise,

Brahmapur, Manoj Kumar Subudhi was caught while accepting a bribe of Rs 15,000 from the complainant in lieu of processing his GST refund. A case had been registered by the CBI on July 9 based on the complaint against the accused. It was alleged that he demanded bribe of Rs. 20,000

from the complainant on the ground that he had earlier processed refund of GST amounting to Rs 1.77 lakh to the complainant and on the ground of smoothly processing another GST refund of nearly Rs 3 lakh to the complainant. The CBI laid a trap and Subudhi was arrested from the

office of the Assistant Commissioner, Central GST and Central Excise, Brahmapur after he was caught red-handed while accepting the first installment of bribe of Rs. 15,000 out of the total demanded amount of Rs 20,000 from the complainant, the CBI said.

Searches were conducted at the residential and official premises of the accused at Brahmapur and Bhubaneswar which led to recovery of incriminating documents. The accused was produced before the court of the Special Judge of CBI in Bhubaneswar and taken on remand by the agency, sources said

Kalikesh demands HC Bench, Agri Univ in B'ngir

Also steps to fill all vacant doctor posts, MRI facility at Bhimabhoi MCH

PNS ■ BALANGIR

Local MLA Kalikesh Singh Deo demanded setting up of a High Court Bench at Balangir while attending the felicitation ceremony organised by the District Bar Association for newly elected people's representatives, on Tuesday. "Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo, who is also the Agriculture Minister, is from Balangir district. We would demand setting up an Agricul-



ture University at Balangir," said Singh Deo further. "Moreover, Health Minister Dr Mukesh Mahaling is also

from Balangir district. He should take step for opening an MRI facility at the Bhimbhoi Medical College and Hospital

and fill all vacant posts of doctors so that quality healthcare can be provided by the MCH," Singh Deo added.

Sensitisation on child labour held in Nuapada

PNS ■ NUAPADA

A sensitisation meeting aimed at eliminating child labour was held in Khariar on Wednesday. The event, organised by the Khariar Notified Area Council (NAC), featured Khariar NAC chairperson Ujwal Gupta as the chief guest and included speakers such as CDPO Khariar Meena Agrawal, ASI Khariar PSPratibha Padhi, DCPO of the District Child Protection Unit Antaryami Baliarsingh and district coordinator of AidetAction Ranjan Sahu.



The speakers highlighted the plight of child labourers, noting their vulnerability and the various prohibited works they are forced into, resulting in atrocities and health problems.

Despite the relatively low official numbers of child labour in Nuapada district, there is noticeable child migration. Ranjan Sahu discussed the relevant Acts and

rules addressing child labour issues and urged participants to report cases to Child Line at the toll-free number 1098. Emphasizing the need to tackle other related issues such as child marriage and child migration, the NAC Chairperson called for increased community awareness to support children.

Other speakers included Community Organiser of Khariar NAC Urvashi Panigrahi, Child Line Coordinator Bikash Patra and social worker Mamata Manjari Thappa.

Law students' internship at police office



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Fifteen law undergraduates successfully completed a four-week internship programme at the Commissionerate police here under the guidance of Commissioner of Police Sanjeeb Panda.

This programme, conducted from June 5 to July 5, provided students from the SOA University and the

KIIT University practical experience in various sections such as judicial, legal, crime and licensing laws.

The Commissioner of Police commended the interns for their dedication and punctuality. He emphasised the importance of their role in providing value-added legal services and ensuring justice for victims.

This internship has equipped the students with

valuable insights and practical knowledge, preparing them for successful careers in law.

The Commissionerate remains committed to encouraging educational initiatives that bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application, Panda said.

The programme concluded with the distribution of certificates of appreciation.

In Baleswar Absconding man held for killing parents

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A man, who had been absconding for about three weeks after allegedly killing his parents, has been arrested by the Simulia police in Baleswar district.

A police team apprehended Ramesh Behera from Hyderabad and brought him here.

Ramesh of Garsong village was missing from June 22 and it was alleged that he killed his father Prabhakar and mother Champabati. Later, he buried their bodies in the farmland behind their house.

Prabhakar's body was exhumed by police in the presence of a Magistrate on the complaint of his daughter Mamata Malik after she



lodged an FIR.

Neighbours were suspicious when they saw the couple's house locked for six days and had informed Mamata about this.

Police initially traced Champabati's body after digging up several places on suspicion.

'Developed Balangir can ensure Viksit Bharat'

Says KV Singh Deo

Deo

PNS ■ BALANGIR

"The Bharatiya Janta party will fulfill all its promises made in its manifesto in the coming five years," said Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardan Singh Deo while speaking to the media here on Wednesday. "The decisions taken by our

government in its first Cabinet meeting have been implemented. They include opening of all the four gates of the Jagannath Temple, a corpus fund of Rs 500 crore for the Puri temple, implementation of the Minimum Support Price per quintal of paddy at Rs 3,100 and opening of the Ratna Bhandar for which a committee has already been constituted. We will also strive to ensure a Viksit Bharat

which cannot be achieved without development of Balangir," said he.

Singh Deo also confirmed that the implementation of the Subhdra Yojana in the State would be flagged off on September 17, the birthday of PM Modi.

When asked about 300 units of free electricity, he stressed that a person under the PM Solar Yojana can get this for free.

'Spirituality is the essence of life'

Aurobindo Pathchakra held in Keonjhar

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

A district level Shree Aurobindo Pathchakra was held in the premises of local Shree Aurobindo Integral Education Centre on July 8.

The theme of the discussion was "Essence of spirituality in human life". Devotees like Shree Prasad Tripathy, secretary Nava Jivan Sikshya Sanshad Kapil Prasad Dash



and Braja Mohan Behera participated in the discussion. They said that spirituality is the essence of life. By imparting spirituality among students a

good nation can be built, they added.

Total 300 devotees including teachers from 18 centres were present on the occasion.

In Bhadrak 7th-century Jain sculpture found on Baitarani bank



PNS ■ BHADRAK

Neglected and forgotten, a rare and precious Jain Tirthankara sculpture belonging to the 7th or 8th century has been found on the banks of Baitarani river near Mundapada village under the Bhandaripokhari police limits in Bhadrak district.

A few locals were en route

to take bath in the river when they came across the ancient idol on Thursday. The idol was half-buried in the sand when locals spotted it and alerted local researcher Bisambhar Rout, who rushed to the spot and found it to be a Jain idol.

The sculpture is one-and-a-half-foot-tall and one foot wide with a few portions of it in

damaged condition. It showcases at least 24 Tirthankaras inscribed on it. However, the faces of the Tirthankaras are not visible properly due to the damage to the idol.

"A few locals alerted me about the century-old idol found on the riverbank. As soon as I received the news, I rushed to the spot and learnt that the idol was very rare and precious. So, I informed my senior and we came to know that this was a Jain idol," informed researcher Bisambhar Rout.

"The idol is around 1.5-ft tall while it is 1-ft in width. We are guessing that the idol is from the 7th or 8th century. Hundreds of people are coming to get a glimpse of this rare age-old idol," Rout added.

In Dharmasala MLA seeks action against illegal mines, crusher units

Mostly operated by BJD leaders

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Dharmasala MLA Himanshu Sekhar Sahoo sought action by the Odisha Government against illegal mining and crusher units in the district.

In a letter to the Director of Mines and Minor Minerals, Sahoo alleged that many mining and crusher units are operating in Bichhakhandi, Rahadpur, Anjira, Bajabati, Chadheidhara, Malagadam Kusumpur and other places under his Assembly constituency.

Due to such illegal operations carried out by the mining and crusher owners, the State Government is losing a huge amount of royalty in the shape of revenue, he said.

Although the department has identified and penalised certain mining and crusher units, such units without de-

without meeting the legal parameters, norms and guidelines of Odisha Minor Mineral Concession Rules,



positing the imposed penal amount, have been operating under the nose of the department, the Legislator claimed.

Similarly, various other crusher units are also operating illegally in these areas

2016 and Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, he said. Sahoo alleged that some BJD leaders have been illegally quarrying in the hill since long.

Suryavanshi rulers patronised Rath Yatra as J'pore's gala event

NISHAN PATTANAİK ■ JEYPORE

The Rath Yatra was celebrated with much pomp and grandeur in the historical city of Jeypore in south Odisha which served as the capital of the powerful Suryavanshis who ruled over the greater part of Kalinga for much of their history.

During their heydays, the solar kings venerated Lord Jagannath as the prime deity of their kingdom that significantly helped them in building cordiality with the local Odia masses.

Puri, the home of Lord Jagannath has always been one of the most significant pilgrimages of Hindu religion and the culturally recognised

seat of the Gajapati or the regional king.

Evidently, once upon a time the king of Jeypore occupied a much larger territory than the Gajapati of Puri but could not achieve the same reverence and respect owing to the latter's cultural significance. Therefore, to claim superiority, one king of Jeypore (either Vishwambhar Dev or Raghunath Krishna Dev) ordered the priests to delay the movement of the chariot for a day.

This was explained by the priests that on the first day the deities are present in the chariot of Puri. However, on the next day they arrive in the chariot of Jeypore to bless the Maharaja and his subjects. In a political sense, the move was to maintain equivalence with



the Gajapati's religious superiority.

In the following years, the festival of Rath Yatra spread not only Jeypore but also in Visakhapatnam and other parts of Andhra. During the reign of Maharaja Sree Vikram Dev III Bahadur KCIE, sandalwood plantation was

patronised by the estate and many sandalwood saplings were brought from Mysore. The estate then distributed the saplings to Nayaks (tribal heads) of Nandapur, Koraput, Jeypore and Lamtaput to plant them across the district.

Sources said sandalwood plantations over 10,000 hect-

ares were carried out in the early 50s in the forest ranges of Jeypore, Nandapur and Koraput.

The aim was to meet sandalwood requirements of temples across Jeypore kingdom. On special occasions like Rath Yatra and Dussehra, pieces of sandalwood were also provided to the Jagannath temple in Puri and State's popular Devi shrines as gifts.

In Jeypore itself there was a large chariot made of sandalwood as per the hearsay of the old inhabitants. Nevertheless, Rath Yatra and Dussehra have always been the most popular festivals of southern Odisha and even in 2024 the festival of Lord Jagannath is celebrated with the same zest and enthusiasm like it was in earlier

India continues its efforts to infuse energy into BIMSTEC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday called on seven-nation Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) grouping to infuse new energies, resources and a fresh commitment to bolster cooperation among the Bay of Bengal countries.

The appeal was made by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar while hosting his counterparts from BIMSTEC member states at a two-day retreat in the national capital. The BIMSTEC brings together seven countries of South

and Southeast Asia for multi-faceted cooperation. Besides India, BIMSTEC comprises Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan. Jaishankar said BIMSTEC should harbour higher aspirations. For India, BIMSTEC represents the intersection of its 'Neighbourhood First' outlook, the 'Act East Policy' and the 'SAGAR' vision.

Jaishankar said in his opening remarks on the first day of the retreat. "Each of these endeavours is being proposed with a specific focus on the Bay of Bengal, where collaborative potential

has long remained unrealised," he said. "Our challenge is to change that for the better, and to do so rapidly," he added.

India has been making concerted efforts to make BIMSTEC a vibrant forum for regional cooperation as initiatives under SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) were not moving forward for a variety of reasons. India has been cooperating with the countries of the Indian Ocean region under the broader policy framework of SAGAR or Security and Growth for all in the Region.

BIMSTEC foreign ministers' retreat is aimed at exchanging ideas openly, candidly and fruitfully. "We all benefited from the last such exercise in Bangkok. This one now has a particular importance as it serves to prepare strong outcomes for the summit to be held later in the year," Jaishankar said.

"Our message should be clear - that we are all determined to infuse new energies, new resources and a new commitment into cooperation among the Bay of Bengal nations," he said.

Thailand is the current chair of BIMSTEC and it is set to

host the annual summit of the grouping later this year. Jaishankar said the first part of the discussions in the retreat will revolve around connectivity, cooperation in trade and business, collaboration in health and space, digital public infrastructure, capacity building and societal exchanges.

"I hope in the second part of our deliberations, we could focus more sharply on the possible outcomes of the forthcoming summit," he said.

BIMSTEC foreign ministers had last met in a similar format in Bangkok in July last year.

Boost to indigenous defence production

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to give a boost to self-reliance in defence manufacturing, India's premier defence research organisation DRDO has awarded seven new projects to private entities to develop key military assets including underwater launched unmanned aerial vehicle and long-range remotely operated systems.

The projects were cleared under the defence ministry's Technology Development Fund scheme to boost domestic defence manufacturing, Defence Ministry said here on Thursday.

The project for underwater-launched unmanned aerial vehicles is aimed at developing versatile marine battlefield accessories which can be deployed in multiple combat roles, officials said.

The objective is part of a larger framework of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and maritime domain awareness (MDA), they said. The project has been awarded to Sagar Defence Engineering Pvt Ltd, Pune, according to the defence ministry. The other projects are development of ice detection sensor for aircraft, manufacturing of radar signal processor, long-range remotely-operated vehicles for detection and neutralisation of underwater objects.

The long-range remotely-operated vehicles will be dual-use systems that will enable detection, classification, localisation and neutralisation of underwater objects while keeping the key assets away from the suspected operational area, the ministry said.

The work has been awarded to a start-up, IROV Technologies Pvt Ltd, Kochi. The other projects are development of radar



signal processor with active antenna array simulator, development of Indian regional navigation satellite system-based timing acquisition and dissemination system and indigenous scenario and sensor simulation toolkit.

The toolkit project involves development of an indigenous system for simulator training of pilots in realistic scenarios. This will help in full mission planning and large force engagement, the ministry said. The project has been awarded to start-up, Oxygen 2 Innovation Pvt Ltd, Noida.

"Providing impetus to Aatmanirbharta, Defence

Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has awarded seven new projects to industries under the Technology Development Fund scheme for various requirements of the armed forces and aerospace and defence sectors," the ministry said. "These project sanctions are a testimony to the continuing endeavour of DRDO in nurturing Industries, especially MSMEs & start-ups, in defence and aerospace domains," it said.

"The indigenous development of these technologies will strengthen the military industrial ecosystem," it said in a statement.

Nadda bats for family planning for Viksit Bharat



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister J P Nadda said on Thursday that the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' can only be achieved when the health of India's families is well maintained and this can be accomplished by the smaller families, he stated.

He said the Centre and the States need to collectively work to ensure that women can exercise their right to make family planning choices and are not burdened by unwanted pregnancy.

Nadda virtually held a meeting with the states and the Union Territories (UTs) on the occasion of World Population Day. The theme of the event was 'Healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies for the wellbeing of mother and child'.

He said the Centre and the States should also ensure that the unmet needs of contraceptives are met especially in the high burden States, districts

and blocks. Highlighting that one-fifth of global population is India's, he stressed on the need to celebrate World Population Day as a reaffirmation and recommitment to working towards population stabilisation.

The goal of Viksit Bharat can only be achieved when the health of India's families is well maintained, which can be achieved by smaller families," he stated.

The Centre and the states need to collectively work to ensure that women can exercise their right to make family planning choices and are not burdened by unwanted pregnancy, and to ensure that unmet needs of contraceptives are met especially in the high burden states, districts and blocks," he said.

The objective of the family planning (FP) programme needs to be 'Birth by choice and by informed choice', he stated.

Highlighting the government's

focus on securing a brighter, healthier future for all, including youth, adolescents, women and the elderly, the Minister said.

"Collaboration is key as we address upcoming responsibilities and recognise family planning and reproductive health as fundamental," Nadda spoke on 'Mission Parivar Vikas' (MPV), one of the successful schemes of the National Family Planning Programme, which was initially launched for 14 high priority districts (HPDs) in seven high-focus states and later expanded to cover all districts in these states and six northeastern states.

"Making districts as the primary focal point of this scheme helped in bringing the TFR (Total Fertility Rate) down in the entire state. Mission Parivar Vikas has not only contributed to lowering the states' TFR but also helped in the national TFR," he stated.

CBI likely to file chargesheet in UGC-NET paper leak case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is likely to file a chargesheet against a youth who allegedly circulated a "doctored" screenshot of the UGC-NET paper on Telegram which led to the cancellation of the examination after an alert from the Union Home Ministry about a possible "breach", officials said.

The CBI did not find any large-scale conspiracy in the episode and would limit the charge sheet to offences of attempt to cheat or cheating, they said.

The central agency's probe into the alleged UGC-NET paper leak had found that the screenshot of the "leaked" question paper for the June 18 examination was "doctored" by a school student, the officials said.

The CBI has informally conveyed its findings to the government and is likely to file a charge sheet against the youth, they said.



Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C). "The UGC received certain inputs from the National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre under the Ministry of Home Affairs on the examination.

These inputs prima facie indicate that the integrity of the aforesaid examination may have been compromised," the Ministry of Education had said after the cancellation of the examination.

The investigation was handed over to the CBI, which found that the purported screenshot of the paper was created by the school student using an app. He changed the date of the screenshot to June 17 to make some money by giving the impression that he had access to the question paper, they said.

The youth tried to give an impression that he could arrange subject-specific papers which were to be held later, they said.

The central agency consulted forensic experts who opined that the screenshot was doctored, they said.

The examination was cancelled based on inputs received by the University Grants Commission from the I4C that the paper was available on the darknet and was allegedly being sold for Rs 5-6 lakh on messaging platforms, sources said.

The UGC-NET will now be held afresh from August 21 to September 4.

LS Speaker Birla for greater democratisation of UN, WTO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday made a strong pitch for greater democratisation of global governance structures such as the UN Security Council and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Addressing the 10th BRICS Parliamentary Forum in St

Petersburg in Russia, Birla said India was committed to uniting emerging markets and developing countries, and affirmed its dedication to the principles of mutual respect, understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness and consensus.

He was speaking at the first plenary session on the theme of "The BRICS Parliamentary



dimension: prospects for strengthening inter-parliamentary cooperation". Birla also welcomed the

four new members — Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — into the BRICS

Parliamentary Forum. "BRICS, largely representing the interests of the developing world, stands for greater democratisation of the global governance system, and for reforming the international organisations such as the UN Security Council, WTO, at the global level," the Lok Sabha speaker said.

Heart to Bravehearts car rally to mark Kargil war anniversary flagged off

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant General Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, on Thursday here flagged off the 'Heart to Bravehearts', a car rally to commemorate the 25th anniversary of India's victory in the Kargil War, army said.

The 'Heart to Bravehearts' Car Rally is a tribute to the valour, resilience and sacrifices of heroes of Kargil War to com-

memorate Rajat Jayanti Celebrations of the Kargil War. The Car Rally was simultaneously flagged off from Tanot Border Post, Tezu, and Kochi Port on June 30, carrying messages from citizens to the soldiers across the country especially those deployed on the borders.

The teams converged in Delhi on July 9 and flagged off on Thursday to further proceed to the Kargil War Memorial at

Dras. The Rally will cover a distance of over 10000 Km before culminating at the Kargil War Memorial on July 15.

The Rally passes through various military stations en-route and felicitates the brave soldiers of the Indian Army. The Flag-off and Flag-in ceremonies at all prominent places are being conducted in the presence of serving personnel, Veterans, Veer Naris, and family members of the Bravehearts and



eminent dignitaries. The Kargil War Veterans and Veer Naris are being felicitated recognising their sacrifices and unwavering support during the war.

This Rally, organised by Mahindra & Mahindra in collaboration with Indian Army, carries messages from the citizens in the form of letters, poems, sketches, and other creative expressions. As the Rally makes its way

through the length and breadth of the country, they carry with them the stories of courage, sacrifice, and patriotism. The gestures in form of letters, messages and posters/photographs collected at Mahindra & Mahindra showrooms pan India are also being carried by the Rally. The campaign is a sincere call on and opportunity for all Indians to express their appreciation towards the Indian Armed Forces.

Valmiki Corp scamsters honey trapped officials: BJP leader

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Senior BJP leader B S Sriramulu on Thursday alleged that the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation scamsters honey-trapped Government and bank officials to misappropriate money. The former Minister claimed that high-end luxury cars were purchased with the money meant for the welfare of tribal people. The money was laundered and used in different elections, including the Lok Sabha election, he further claimed. "The scamsters purchased a Lamborghini car with the Valmiki Corporation funds, diverted money through 'hawala' channels and spent it on elections," Sriramulu claimed at a press conference here. Former Minister Narasimha Nayak (Raju Gowda) alleged that the state government played a dubious role in the scam. "We all know that more than



Rs three crore cannot be transferred without the approval of the Finance Secretary, but on a single day Rs 50 crore was transferred. It is surprising that no one in the government knew about it," Nayak pointed out. According to the BJP leader, the money was transferred to the accounts of 16 business persons. The amount transferred was somewhere between Rs 4.12 crore to Rs 5.98 crore. Both the BJP leaders demanded the arrest of Congress MLA B Nagendra who resigned as Tribal Welfare minister after the scam came to light. The alleged scam was

uncovered when the Accounts Superintendent of the Corporation, Chandrasekharan P, took his own life on May 26 and left a suicide note alleging that a sum of Rs 187 crore was illegally transferred from the corporation. This includes Rs 88.62 crore illegally credited to various accounts of some IT companies and a Hyderabad-based cooperative bank, according to official sources. The Congress government thereafter constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT), which has so far arrested 11 people in connection with the case.

Student migration dangerous trend: UDF; not limited to Kerala alone, counters LDF

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress-led UDF opposition on Thursday said in the state assembly that the increasing student migration from Kerala was a dangerous trend which if not addressed, would result in the southern state becoming the home of elderly people. The Left government, however, brushed it aside, saying it was a global phenomenon that was not confined to Kerala alone. The issue was raised by the UDF while seeking adjournment of the House proceedings to discuss the matter, permission for which was denied by the Speaker after the state government said that student migrations were a normal trend and an outcome of globalisation. Following the denial of permission for the motion to adjourn the House, the opposition staged a walkout, alleging that the government and the state higher education minister were "in denial mode" and not

acknowledging the danger posed by student migration. State Higher Education Minister R Bindu claimed that student migration was a "global phenomenon" following globalisation and was not confined to Kerala alone. "Kerala is one of the states where student migration is very low," Bindu said, adding that students go abroad as they can work there while studying and also because of relaxed visa norms in countries with a smaller population. To address the issue, the state government has initiated various 'earn while you learn' projects, she said. The government was also considering framing laws to regulate agencies which recruit students to go abroad by luring them with false promises, the minister added. Bindu also claimed that the higher education in the state was one of the best in the country which was evident from the high grades received by universities and colleges in



Kerala at the national level. "Therefore, there was no need to discuss the issue in the House," the minister said. Disagreeing with the minister's claims, Congress MLA Mathew Kuzhalnadan, who was one of the legislators who moved the adjournment notice, said that youngsters were leaving Kerala as they have not been provided a proper socio-economic environment to survive in the state. Kuzhalnadan said that one of the major reasons for it was the "stagnant economic

growth" in the state as compared to its neighbours. He contended that the reason for the lack of economic growth was the "ideological stubbornness" in the state, which was leading to FDIs and other investment and job opportunities flowing to the neighbouring states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. Kuzhalnadan also pointed out that urban unemployment was the highest in Kerala. "For all these reasons, youngsters in Kerala are socially, economically, and politically frustrated, and they want to escape from here. That is why they migrate abroad," he claimed. While Kuzhalnadan's claims were refuted by Bindu as being contrary to the actual situation, he was backed by the Leader of Opposition in the state assembly, V D Satheesan, who said that student migration was "unregulated" and a matter of immense concern.

SP, Dy SP among 9 booked for assaulting SI



PTI ■ KHAGARIA

A case has been registered against nine police personnel, including an officer of SP rank, who have been accused of assaulting a sub-inspector and snatching away his mobile phone two years ago, an official said on Thursday. According to Khagaria Superintendent of Police Chandan Kumar Kushwaha, the FIR has been lodged with Chitragupt Nagar Police Station in the district, following an order, dated May 6, of the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court. "Upon receipt of the court order, an FIR was registered on July 4, taking into account the complaint of Amalendu Singh, who was earlier posted at the Mansi Police Station here," the SP said. The sub-inspector, in his complaint, alleged that he was beaten up by the then SP and other officials on June 26, 2022 when they also snatched away his phone and threatened to kill him. He claimed that many in the district police had been nursing a grouse against him ever since he caught an impostor, hailing from Begusarai, who was 'serving' as a sub-inspector in Khagaria. The complainant also claimed that after he cracked the case, he started facing pressure from colleagues and seniors "to keep silent" over the matter and was even placed under suspension after being booked in a "fake corruption case" at the vigilance court in Bhagalpur. He approached the CJM's court this year as his police complaint, lodged two days after the alleged assault, was hanging fire. Besides the then SP, others named in the FIR are the then deputy SP and the then SHO of the Sadar Police Station. Others named in the FIR are officials of inspector and sub-inspector rank posted at different places in Khagaria.

Meghalaya: Pro-ILP activist arrested for checking documents of migrant labourers

PTI ■ SHILLONG

A pro-ILP activist was arrested in Shillong on Thursday for unauthorisedly checking the documents of migrant labourers in Meghalaya, officials said. The development comes a day after the Meghalaya Home Department filed four cases against pro-ILP activists in two districts for checking whether migrant labourers possessed requisite papers. A pro-ILP activist was arrested from his residence in Shillong on Thursday. Three cases were filed against pro-ILP activists in the state capital on the previous day, they said. One case under Section 126 (2) (wrongful restraint) under 351 (criminal intimidation) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered in Ri-Bhoi district and three others in East Khasi Hills district, under which Shillong falls, the officials said. "We have registered four cases against pro-ILP activists who had gone to check the registration of migrant labourers across the state," a senior home department official told PTI. The state government has



made it compulsory for migrant labourers to mandatorily register with the Labour Department under various Sections of the Interstate Workmen Act 1979 and the Meghalaya Identification, Registration (Safety & Security) of Migrant Workers Rules 2020. Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has said that although mandatory registration is required for all migrant labourers, no individual or organisation is authorised to check the papers of such workers. "No individual or organisation is authorised to check the papers of the migrant workers. If they do

so, they are on the wrong side of the law and the police are taking action," he said. On the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act (MRSSA), another Act to safeguard the interests of the indigenous people of the state, Sangma said the Bill was sent by the Governor to the Ministry of Home Affairs, which returned it with suggestions to make some amendments. The Khasi Students' Union is one of the many organisations demanding the implementation of the Inner Line Permit in the hill state. The ILP is a special permit required by residents of other parts of the country to enter

and stay for a specified period in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur. The Meghalaya Legislative Assembly had also unanimously passed a resolution urging the Centre to consider extending the implementation of the ILP in Meghalaya in 2019 and is awaiting the Centre's nod. KSU claimed that despite the presence of the state police's infiltration check gates at the various entry points into the state, it had detected over 300 migrant labourers without registration. Last week, KSU activists erected an ILP check gate at Byrnihat which was brought down by the Ri-Bhoi district administration. "Over 300 illegal labourers have been detected across the state as our members have gone to check if the labourers engaged by the contractors in big construction sites have requisite papers," KSU president L Marngar said. The KSU leader said the organisation will intensify their checking and will not cow down just because cases were filed against its members.

Make State advisory board for disabled persons functional in one month: HC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday directed the Maharashtra government to make the state advisory board for policies related to disabled persons functional within a month. "For God's sake, do it by then," the HC said. A division bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar said it was alarming that the state government requires directives from the court to fulfil its statutory obligations. The state government should not wait for orders from court to implement laws, especially reformative ones, it said. The government constituted the board under provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in 2018, but it has been non-functional since 2020 as posts of the non-official members are vacant. The HC bench on Wednesday asked the government to inform a time frame by when vacancies would be filled and the board would be made functional. Additional government pleader Abhay Patki on Thursday said the board would be made functional in 15 days. "We will give you some more



time than 15 days. For God's sake, do it by then. We direct that the advisory board shall be constituted and made functional within a month from today," the HC said. The court was hearing a public interest litigation taken up suo motu (on its own) on the issue of bollards put up on footpaths in Mumbai, thus making them inaccessible to persons with disabilities. The bench noted that if the state advisory board was functional, then courts would not be burdened with matters pertaining to the welfare of persons with disabilities. "We could have relegated this matter also to the board. It could have taken all measures," the court said. The state government should not wait for orders from court to implement laws, especially reformative ones, it said.

"Can there be anything more alarming that for an Act the court has to issue directions. This is your (government) obligation. For this also you need directions?" CJ Upadhyaya asked. In July 2023, the Maharashtra government informed the Supreme Court, which was hearing a matter related to disabled persons, that the state advisory board was constituted, the bench noted. It is true that the board was set up in 2018 but it is non-functional since 2020 due to vacancies, the court said. "What is the use of merely constituting a board when it is not functional? We hope and expect that within 30 days the board shall be made functional in all respects," the HC said posting the matter for further hearing on August 14.

Unnao accident: Bus was not road worthy

PTI ■ UNNAO

The double-decker bus that hit a milk tanker on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, leaving 18 people dead, was "unfit" for operations, officials said. Police have registered an FIR in connection with the incident, which also left 19 people injured, but have not named any accused, they said. "The bus that met with the accident belongs to M/s K C Jain Travels Jodhpur, Rajasthan which is registered at Pushpendra Singh's address in Mawai Khurd of Mahoba district of Uttar Pradesh. The said bus was found to be unfit for operations as it did not have the necessary documents," Assistant Divisional Transport Officer (Enforcement) Arvind Singh told reporters on Wednesday. "On contacting Pushpendra Singh, it was found that the bus was being operated by Chandan Jaiswal, a resident of Paharganj in Delhi," he said. Based on a complaint by Arvind Singh, an FIR was registered in the matter on Wednesday under sections 233 (using false evidence), 106-1 (death due to negligence) and 125 (endangering the life or personal safety of others) of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS). "No accused has been named in the FIR. We are trying to ascertain the real owner of the bus and the company that



operated it. Arrests will be made once it is ascertained," said Investigating Officer (IO) Phool Singh. Meanwhile, the local administration was busy making arrangements to send the bodies of the 18 people killed in the accident, all of them from Bihar, to their native places. The deceased were identified as bus driver Ekhlaiq (49), milk tanker driver Sunil Kumar (35), Ashfaq (45), Ruby (40), Gulnaz (12), Suhail (4), Sonu (32) and Soni (28), Deepak Kumar (27), Shivdayal (28), Murtaza (53), Bharat Rai (45), Anil Rai (41), Himanshu (23), Naushad (41), Ramchandra Sahni (40), Shahid Ali (45) and Satendra Rai (30). Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of Unnao Dr Satya Prakash said ambulances carrying the bodies of 15 victims left for their native places around 1 am after post-mortem examination. The

ambulances were provided by the administration. "Post-mortem of the remaining three bodies was completed around 10 am and they were also sent to the victims' native places in ambulances," the CMO added. Sixteen of the 19 injured were admitted to the district hospital. Six of the injured who sustained serious injuries were referred to Lucknow and Kanpur trauma centres on Wednesday, said Chief Medical Superintendent of district hospital Dr Vivek Gupta. "Five of the 10 injured were discharged from the hospital after their condition improved. The other five are undergoing treatment and are out of danger," he said. Former MP Anand Mohan reached the district hospital late on Wednesday night and met the injured. He also consoled the family members of the deceased.

Nobody claims wagh nakh being brought from London was used by Shivaji: Minister

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar told the Legislative Assembly on Thursday that nobody has claimed that the 'wagh nakh' or tiger claw-shaped weapon being brought to the state from London was used by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. He also rejected the claim that the government spent crores of rupees to bring this weapon from Victoria and Albert Museum in London to Maharashtra, and said the travel expenses and signing of the agreement cost Rs 14.08 lakh. His remarks come days after a historian claimed that the wagh nakh used by the founder of the Maratha empire to kill Bijapur

Sultanate's general Afzal Khan was in Satara itself. Mungantiwar informed the House that the wagh nakh will be brought from London for a period of three years and kept on display at a museum in Satara in the state from July 19. The museum in London had initially agreed to give the weapon for one year, but the state government persuaded it to hand it over for display in the state for three years, he said. "The wagh nakh will be kept on display at the government museum in Satara in the presence of the descendants of the warrior king on July 19," the Cultural Affairs Minister told the House. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was an ideal ruler and is an inspiration to one and all, he



said. "Nobody claims that this wagh nakh being brought from London was used by Shivaji Maharaj...We were given photo evidence by Shivaji Maharaj's followers that a box in which the wagh nakh was kept at the London museum mentioned that it was used to kill Afzal Khan. We communicated with the

prime ministers of India and the UK as well as the museum authorities. The museum never mentioned that the weapon belonged to Shivaji Maharaj and used for killing Afzal Khan," he said. "There were demands to remove the encroachment around Afzal Khan's grave on November 5, 2022. Accordingly, it was done on

November 10, the day when Shivaji Maharaj killed Afzal Khan using a wagh nakh (in 1659)," he said. Mungantiwar said the government spent Rs 14.08 lakh for travel to London and signing of the agreement with the museum there to bring the wagh nakh to India. "We are not giving any rent to display the wagh nakh here," he said. Historian Indrajit Sawant recently said the wagh nakh being brought to Maharashtra from London does not belong to Shivaji Maharaj as the original one is with the descendants of the Maratha warrior king in Satara. He also claimed that the wagh nakh was being brought to the state on a loan agreement of Rs 30 crore for three years.

First mothership docks at Kerala's Vizhinjam port

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A big cargo ship called 'San Fernando' from China arrived at Kerala's newly built Vizhinjam International Sea Port on Thursday, marking the first container ship arrival at India's largest transshipment port. The mothership was given a water salute by four tugs, which piloted it to the dock. San Fernando, a 300-meter-long cargo ship, will offload 1,900 containers at Vizhinjam International Seaport Limited (VISL). On Friday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan

will formally welcome the ship. In a Facebook post, Kerala Port Minister V N Vasavan said San Fernando has been berthed at Vizhinjam Port and termed it as a truly momentous occasion. "This is a truly momentous occasion. Tomorrow (Friday), the chief minister will formally welcome the ship, with the Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, attending as the chief guest. The ship was safely berthed by four tugboats," he said. The minister said the ship



had been tied up to the dock using a heavy-duty rope, and this process (called mooring) has been completed successfully. The mothership carries large

containers which will be transferred to other ships and later transported to other ports in the country and abroad. The formal reception ceremony will be attended by

several dignitaries, including Central and state ministers, officials, and members of the public. "The dream is approaching the shore. The first mothership is reaching Kerala's Vizhinjam port. San Fernando will be officially welcomed on behalf of Kerala tomorrow," Vijayan in a Facebook post said on Thursday. Equipped with modern equipment and advanced automation and IT systems, Vizhinjam will become India's first semi-automated port, expected to be fully commissioned in September or October 2024.

FIRST COLUMN

PM MODI'S STRATEGIC VISIT

PM Modi's visit to Russia underscores the importance of Russia in India's foreign policy



This week marked several high-profile meetings amongst senior leaders around the globe, discussing primarily various conflicts and possible outcomes. PM Narendra Modi, in his first state visit during his third stint, visited Russia and Austria. The State visit by the India PM was the first since the Ukraine war and underscores the primacy of Russia in India's state of affairs. Meanwhile, all North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) leaders assembled in Washington DC to discuss global geopolitics. Ukraine and the Middel East featured prominently in all the discussions, even though the flavours were significantly different.

The India-Russia joint statement following President Putin and PM Modis' bilateral meetings read "The Sides highlighted the imperative of peaceful resolution of the conflict around Ukraine through dialogue and diplomacy including engagement between both parties. They noted with appreciation relevant proposals of mediation and good offices aimed at peaceful resolution of the conflict by international law and based on the UN Charter in its entirety and totality. "Earlier, PM Modi during one of the televised speeches of the two leaders told his Russian counterpart "peace is of utmost importance" and solution to Ukraine could not be found on the battlefield. He expressed serious concern regarding the bombing of a children's hospital in Kyiv and said "When innocent children are murdered, one sees them die, the heart pains and that pain is unbearable." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, with whom PM Modi has had several telephone calls in the past, called the Russia state visit by India "a blow to peace efforts."

NATO Secretary General, Mr Stoltenberg in the run-up to the NATO summit said "Allies will agree a financial pledge for Ukraine", and that he also expects more immediate military support to Ukraine." Ukraine is moving closer to NATO ". The close relationship with NATO was one of the reasons Russia came marching into Ukraine. It was a tightrope walk for PM Modi, in Russia, given the relatively new strategic relationships, he has developed in his last decade of being at the helm, crucial among them being the India-US partnership. It would be worth mentioning that



In the wake of the war in Ukraine, India has not yet verbally criticised Russia, for its aggression and has also stayed away from multilateral resolutions against Moscow. In the first few months, of Russia's attack on Ukraine, several US top leaders had criticised India's stance regarding the war, and even a threat of sanctions was discussed.

However, with deft diplomatic efforts made by both long-term partners, the high-decibel criticism was restricted to closed-door meetings. PM Modi's state visit to Russia opened some of the past heartburn regarding Ukraine in Washington. US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said "US has raised concerns with India regarding its relationship with Russia". He added "We would urge India, as we do any country when it engages with Russia, to make clear that any resolution to the conflict in Ukraine needs to be one that respects the UN charter, that respects Ukraine's territorial integrity." This comes at a time when the US has been seen to be one of the most important allies of India in the recent past.

Interestingly President Putin upon re-election chose to visit Beijing in one of his first official trips and followed it with a bilateral last week, on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Kazakhstan. China and Russia have mutually agreed to be friends without any limitations, and are widely seen as challengers to what they allege as the US-led democratic order. India and China are on an extremely rough patch due to the military aggression on India's borders. India managed to walk the tight rope for now, but at some point of time it will have to balance it out with more action-able statements on world conflicts.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

A call for civility and integrity in democracy

The elected representatives must adhere to constitutional principles and the high standards set by the framers of the Constitution



The Constitution and its makers Deserve Respect.J.S. RajputIn a functional democracy, election times could indeed become a celebration time, not only the competing candidates and their partiers, but also for the for entire country, which may involve votes, and future voters. Imagine a situation in which every candidate remains respectful to all others, and is ever conscious of his words and their usage in every interaction, interview and interpretation of the views of his competitors. Everyone who enters the election fray is duty-bound to remember that there is a generation of younger people watching closely how they conduct themselves in competitive conditions, and the extent to which they are conscious of their conduct and behaviour, both in public and private. Though it is a major responsibility of the family and school to shape the growing up of the children, the significance of the role of society and particularly those keen to lead the society could never be ignored.

It is not only the 'Acharya' whose conduct is under watch and is emulated, children in their sensitive years learn from numerous sources, and no one is out of their ambit of keen observation. Having seen, observed and participated in the elections that were just over, one may find all these 'expectations' just 'utopian, to be aspired for, but with full understanding that these would never be fulfilled! After the election results, the parliament meets, and there is only a superficial bonhomie of a few minutes, followed by the same old routine of distrust, and a sense of shyness, the creation of hurdles and ensuring that the nation must once again get ready to suffer continuous shouting in both the Houses of parliament and regular walk-outs! Is it amazing – and sadly enough, amusing – that the elected representatives of the great Indian democracy just cannot sit together and find out ways and means to sit together, express themselves, and arrive at inferences that are for the good of their voters? How could they ignore that they are the legatees of Gandhi, Ambedkar, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagolachari, and that illustrious lot that prepared the Constitution, and had created



IF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE ELECTED ARE CAPABLE, MEN OF CHARACTER AND INTEGRITY, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE THE BEST EVEN OF A DEFECTIVE CONSTITUTION. IF THEY ARE LACKING IN THESE, THE CONSTITUTION CANNOT HELP THE COUNTRY

ated conditions to enable them to get elected, enjoy all the perks and privileges that have been acquiring bulging proportions? A veteran of the freedom struggle once told me he finds it repulsive when people go to Raj Ghat before beginning their so-called fasts, political dramas and whatever you may call it. I share his anguish. Many others would also be doing so. Those who indulge in such frivolities could remember what Dr Ambedkar had mentioned in his concluding speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949: "If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also a fact, what must we do? The first thing in my judgment we must do is hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha." He goes on to point out that even with the Constitution in place, the nation, its people in general and those occupying constitutional positions in particular must never forget: "...however good a constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot.... The Constitution can provide only the organs of the State such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary.

The factors on which the working of those organs of the State depends are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics." Not only Dr. Ambedkar, but other stalwarts were also equally concerned oabouthow things may take shape in future.

Speaking on November 26 of 1949, the final remarks of the President of the Constituent Assembly could be the guiding light for every member of parliament, irrespective of his party affiliations: "Whatever the Constitution may or may not provide, the welfare of the country will depend on how the country is administered. That will depend upon the men who administer it. It is a trite saying that a country can have only the Government it deserves.

If the people who are elected are capable, and men of character and integrity, they will be able to make the best even of a defective Constitution. If they are lacking in these, the Constitution cannot help the country. After all, a constitution like a machine is a lifeless thing. It acquires life because of the men who control it and operate it, and India needs today nothing more than a set of honest men who will have the interest of the country before them".

There can be no better articulation of the anxiety and anguish that every concerned Indian citizen experiences at this juncture of history. India needs awakeners not only in every section of Indian society." The newly elected MPs could rally move towards an illustrious political career if they just internalize the thoughts, ideas and ideals of three of the illustrious Indians: Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad and Ambedkar; the ARG" This could become their tribute and salutations to the three of them, and that would equip them to plunge into the service of the people and India. Scholars and institutions must launch serious analysis of certain aspects of how the democratic process has fared in its actual practice, in sustaining its credibility amongst the voters.

They could also find out with academic fidelity – and inform the

people what has eroded Gandhian values that were supposed to become the cornerstone of the Indian Democracy after the Constitution of India was prepared with un-heard of dexterity and socio-economic and cultural comprehension by its framers, all of whom were distinguished freedom fighters, known for their sacrifice, non-accumulation, and commitment to a cause.

Not only in India, the greatness of the contributions of Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar is acknowledged globally. It is indeed intriguing for numerous people how those who swore by his name all the time to give a zing to their political ambitions, blatantly ignore some of his basic premises which were an outcome not only of his intellectual prowess but also a precise and incisive comprehension of life he had led!

Take the example of reservations for the SC/SC communities. It is the responsibility of the members of the Parliament and State assemblies to fact-check the extent to which reservations have helped the target groups. How long shall the unscrupulous among the politicians shall be allowed to play the games of caste, creed, religion, region and even language? If all this is permitted to continue, it would be impossible to create an India that projects social cohesion and religious amity.

Revert back to the sixties of the last century, Gandhi had gone but had not vanished from the psyche of the people, young persons were convinced that the caste system would be eliminated during the next two to three decades. Yes, that was the spirit of the Constitution of India, that was the India of Baba Saheb's Dreams! *(Professor Rajput works in education, social cohesion and religious amity; views are personal)*

India and US support for the Dalai Lama and Tibetans upsets China

India and America's identical and unequivocal stance on Tibet has rattled China, highlighting the evolving geopolitical dynamics in Asia

In a significant diplomatic move, both India and the United States have extended their support to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan cause, provoking a strong reaction from China. The adoption of the Resolve Tibet Act by the US Congress and a recent high-profile meeting between a bipartisan American Congressional delegation and the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala have amplified the tensions between the US, India, and China. This article explores the strategic and ideological implications of these developments.

A Diplomatic Convergence: The backdrop of this development is the increasingly strained relationship between the United States and China.



K S TOMAR

The US Congress's passage of the Resolve Tibet Act, which promises comprehensive support for the Tibetan cause, marks a clear stance against China's policies in Tibet. The meeting between the American delegation and the Dalai Lama further underscores this commitment.

In a related move, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with the US delegation, who congratulated him on his historic third-term

election victory and praised the fairness and transparency of the recent Indian general elections. Modi's subsequent Twitter post highlighted the strong bipartisan support for advancing the India-US strategic partnership. Notably, the post did not mention the Dalai Lama, though it was clear the topic was a significant aspect of the discussions.

India's hosting of the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamshala places it in a unique position concerning the Tibetan cause. The Indian government has historically balanced its support for Tibet with its broader strategic and economic relations with China. The timing of the meetings suggests a coordinated diplomatic effort to highlight shared values and mutual

interests in countering China's assertive policies.

Strategic Ramifications: The convergence of American and Indian interests reflects the evolving geopolitical landscape in Asia. Both nations share concerns about China's growing influence and assertive behavior, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. By reinforcing their strategic partnership, the United States and India signal their commitment to a rules-based international order, countering China's ambitions.

In response, China is likely to intensify its efforts to strengthen alliances and expand its influence in the region. This could involve deepening ties with Pakistan, increasing engagement with other South Asian nations, and accelerating

ing Belt and Road Initiative projects to secure strategic footholds. Additionally, China might enhance its military posture along disputed borders with India, particularly in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, to assert territorial claims.

Beyond immediate strategic calculations, these meetings highlight the broader ideological contest between democratic values and authoritarian governance. The Dalai Lama, a symbol of non-violent resistance and spiritual leadership, embodies values resonating with global advocates of democracy and human rights. Engaging with him reinforces the US and India's commitment to these principles.

China, facing scrutiny over its

human rights record in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong, is placed in a defensive position. In the global influence battle, soft power and moral authority are becoming increasingly important.

The Dharamshala and Delhi meetings enhance the soft power of the United States and India, positioning them as champions of human rights and democratic values.

The Path Forward: As the geopolitical chessboard in Asia becomes more complex, the interplay between diplomacy and deterrence will be crucial. The United States and India, through coordinated diplomatic actions, are setting the stage for a more assertive and collaborative approach to countering China's influence. This involves not only

strengthening bilateral ties but also fostering broader coalitions with like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

The high-level US delegation, led by Republican Rep. Michael McCaul and including prominent figures like Democratic former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, discussed the relevance and significance of the Resolve Tibet Act. President Joe Biden, a strong advocate for Tibetan rights, is expected to approve the Act.

China's reaction has been predictably strong, warning the United States against sending the "wrong signal." The Chinese embassy in India emphasized China's stance on Tibet as an internal matter, condemning any perceived

interference in its domestic affairs.

Conclusion

India and America's identical and unequivocal stance on Tibet has rattled China, highlighting the evolving geopolitical dynamics in Asia. The historical breach of trust by China in 1962, replicated in 2020 during the Ladakh confrontation, underscores the challenges in Sino-Indian relations. Prime Minister Modi's efforts to normalize ties with Beijing have not yielded desired results, reflecting the ongoing tension.

Adopting a more nuanced approach to diplomacy may help mitigate tensions while advancing China's strategic goals.

(Writer is a political analyst; views are personal)

S Korea to deploy laser weapons to intercept North Korean drones

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea said Thursday it will begin deploying laser weapons systems designed to intercept North Korean drones, which have caused security concerns in the South in recent years.

South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration said that it will deploy at least one anti-air laser weapons system called "Block-I" by the end of this year and more in coming years. An agency statement said the "Block-I" system is capable of launching precision attacks on small incoming drones and multi-copters. It said the system, developed by local company Hanwha Aerospace, costs just 2,000 won (about \$1.50) per shot. "We face North Korea on our doorstep and its drones

pose present threats to us, so that's why we've been aiming to build and deploy laser weapons soon to cope with them," an agency official said, requesting anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to media on the issue.

He said that other countries like the United States and Israel are ahead of South Korea in laser weapons technology, but their primary focus has been on higher-powered laser guns that can shoot down incoming ballistic missiles. South Korea also hopes to develop such anti-missile laser weapons, which its defense procurement agency called "a game changer" in future combat environments. The "Block-I" system is meant to hit circuit boards and other equipment in enemy drones to make them malfunction and crash on the ground. Tests of

the weapons system in 2022-2023 were successful and proved its credibility, the official said. Some experts questioned the technology. Lee Illwoo, an expert with the Korea Defense Network in South Korea, doubts how effectively South Korea can use its laser weapons since its anti-air radar systems aren't advanced enough to detect North Korean drones well. He said the range of a laser weapon is relatively short, so high-power microwave weapons would be better when enemy drones are flown in large numbers simultaneously. Jung Chang Wook, head of the Korea Defense Study Forum think tank in Seoul, said South Korea is likely about five years away from acquiring a functioning laser weapon that can shoot down the drones used by

North Korea. North Korea has periodically flown drones across its heavily fortified border with South Korea for several years, in what observers have called tests of South Korean readiness. In December 2022, South Korea accused the North of sending drones across the border for the first time in five years. South Korea fired warning shots and launched fighter jets and helicopters but failed to shoot down any of the drones. In a key political meeting in December 2023, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to introduce various types of unmanned combat equipment such as attack drones for 2024. Foreign experts say Kim likely regards drones as a cheap yet effective method to trigger security jitters and an internal divide in South Korea.

Yemen Houthi rebels fire Iranian missile at Norwegian-flagged ship

AP ■ DUBAI

Yemen's Houthi rebels likely fired an Iranian-made anti-ship cruise missile at a Norwegian-flagged tanker in the Red Sea in December, an assault that now provides a public, evidence-based link between the ongoing rebel campaign against shipping and Tehran, the US military says. A report by the US Defence Intelligence Agency released Wednesday linked the attack on the Strinda, which set the vessel ablaze, to Tehran, the Houthi's main backer in Yemen's nearly decadelong war. The findings correspond with those of a Norway-based insurers group that also examined debris found on the Strinda. It comes as the Houthis continue their monthslong campaign of attacks over the Israel-Hamas war, targeting ships in the Red Sea corridor, disrupting the USD 1 trillion flow of goods passing through it annually while also sparking the most intense combat the US Navy has seen since World War II. Iran's mission to the United Nations, responding to questions from The

Associated Press, again denied arming the Houthis despite the reports. "We are aware that (the Houthis) have significantly developed their military capabilities relying on their very own sources," the mission said. "The prolonged war against them is the primary factor behind the expansion of their military prowess." The Strinda was coming from Malaysia and was bound for the Suez Canal and then on to Italy with a cargo of palm oil when it was struck by a missile December 11. The attack sparked a major fire on board that the crew later extinguished without anyone being hurt. Debris found on board later was analysed by the US military. The DIA compared the pieces of the engine from the missile found on board to the Iranian Noor anti-ship ballistic cruise missile. "The Iranian Tolu-4 turbojet engine, used in the Noor (missile), has unique features — including the compressor stage and stator — that are consistent with engine debris recovered from the ... Houthi attack on the M/T Strinda," the DIA

report said. A stator is the stationary portion of an engine. Those pieces match images of a Tolu-4 engine that Iran displayed at the International Air and Space Show in Russia in 2017, the DIA said. Visually, the engines bore similarities in the photographs. The Noor was reverse engineered by Iran from the Chinese C-802 anti-ship missile, which Iran purchased from Beijing and began testing in 1996 before transfers stopped over a US pressure campaign. The Iranian version is believed to have a range of up to 170 kilometres, with an upgraded version called the Qader having a range up to 300 kilometres. The Houthis have a look-alike missile to the Qader called the Al-Mandeb 2 with a similar range. The Norwegian Shipowners' Mutual War Risks Insurance Association, known by the acronym DNK, also examined the debris following the Strinda attack. The association assessed it was "highly likely" the vessel had been hit by a C-802 or Noor anti-ship cruise missile.

'Trump will win if election is free and fair'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Observing that the June 27 presidential debate did have some impact on the popularity of Donald Trump, the head of "Sikh Americans for Trump" has said the former president's victory will depend on whether the election is free, fair and legal. "I think our community is very much in support. I have seen a lot of support in favour of President Trump. We are raising funds for President Trump. We are going to the convention soon," Maryland-based community leader Jasdip Singh Jassee, head of "Sikh Americans for Trump", told PTI ahead of the Republican National Convention (RNC) in Milwaukee next week.

Republican delegates from across the country, during the four-day RNC convention in Milwaukee, would formally nominate Trump as their presidential candidate for the November 5 general election. Incumbent President Joe Biden is the presumptive nominee of the Democratic party.

"We will be mobilising our team nationwide this time, even on the West Coast, in New York, Texas, in support of President Trump," said Jassee, who has been appointed on the finance committee for President Trump, the Trump 47.

"We all knew about President Biden's issues that he had for the last four years, but it was very interesting to see... for the American public and media, to see it during the debate how much President Biden has declined his mental capacity and his thought processes, which was very evident throughout. But somehow, the American media was kind of controlling it and not letting the people know about it," he said in response to a question.

"So right now, we see that the debate did have some impact on President Trump's popularity, but the country's overall situation, such as inflation, illegal immigration, a disorderly border at this time, the infrastructure, the violence and the crime that is happening in America, and also zero foreign

Top Biden fundraiser, says Democrats not going to win presidency with him

Washington (PTI): A top Hollywood fundraiser for US President Joe Biden called for a new Democratic presidential candidate on Wednesday, arguing that the party cannot win the White House in November with him as the nominee. "We are not going to win in November with this president. On top of that, we will not win the House, and we are going to lose the Senate. This is not only my opinion, this is the opinion of every senator and Congress member and governor who I have spoken with in private. Every single one, irrespective of what he or she is saying publicly," George Clooney, an actor, director and film producer, said in an op-ed in "The New York Times". Clooney, who

hosted a very successful fundraiser for Biden in June, said he observed a different Joe Biden at that event.

"The one battle he cannot win is the fight against time. None of us can. It is devastating to say it, but the Joe Biden I was with three weeks ago in the fund-raiser was not the Joe 'big F-ing deal' Biden of 2010. He was not even the Joe Biden of 2020. He was the same man we all witnessed at the debate," he wrote. "Was he tired? Yes. A cold? Maybe. But our party leaders need to stop telling us that 51 million people did not see what we just saw. We are all so terrified by the prospect of a second Trump term that we have opted to ignore every warning sign," Clooney said.

policy where America is not a leader anymore," he observed.

"All of this has had an impact on Biden's campaign in addition to his debate performance and his physical and mental capacity. But again, the key issue is what President Trump said in the debate when he was asked a question, will you accept the verdict? He said if it is a fair, legal, and honest election, yes, I will. So again, the key is, if this election is going to be fair, honest or legal," Jassee said.

"If that happens, then yes, President Trump will win, because that is what the American public wants. But if there is a swamp involved, or deep state involved, or vested interest involved, then we do not know what the result is going to be," Jassee said. According to him, this year, the support of the Indian community, South Asian community, Sikh community for Trump has gotten like four times more than what it was in 2020. "Now, people come up to me and say, hey, we want to be in your support.

British Indian MPs swear oath on 'Bhagavad Gita, Gutka & Bible

PTI ■ LONDON

Newly elected Indian-origin MPs to the House of Commons have been pledging their allegiance to the British Crown as a symbol of loyalty to the country, choosing to swear on holy texts or to affirm their oath during the first week of a new Parliament. A new copy of the 'Bhagavad Gita' presented to Speaker Lindsay Hoyle by Shailesh Vara, former Conservative Party member of Parliament who lost his Cambridgeshire seat in last week's general election, featured early on as Rishi Sunak was among the first British Indian MPs to take his oath as Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday. Holding the text in his right hand, the former prime minister read out the customary text: "I swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King

Charles, his heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God." First-time MP Kanishka Narayan, who is the first Indian-origin member of Parliament to represent Wales in the Westminster Parliament after winning the Vale of Glamorgan seat for Labour, also chose the 'Gita' for his oath, as did new Tory MP from Leicester Shivani Raja. Bob Blackman, a Tory veteran who represents Harrow East in London and has chaired the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Hindus, chose to hold both the 'Gita' and the 'King James Bible' for his oath-taking ceremony. "This 'Bhagavad Gita' has been specially blessed in a temple in India and will be used by Hindu MPs entering Parliament following this General Election and those who will enter in the generations to come," said Shailesh Vara, when he recent-

ly presented the holy text blessed at the Mayapur temple headquarters of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Some of the British Sikh MPs such as Tan Dhesi and first-timers Gurinder Singh Josan, Harpreet Uppal, Satvir Kaur and Warinder Singh Juss chose to swear their oath to the Sikh scriptures but without holding any text in their hands. Preet Kaur Gill, with her head covered with a red scarf, chose to hold the cloth-wrapped 'Sundar Gutka' prayer book during her swearing-in. Sojan Joseph, the mental health nurse from Kerala who has been elected Labour MP from Ashford in Kent, chose the 'New Testament' biblical text to swear his oath. Meanwhile, the 'King James Bible' was chosen by re-elected Conservatives Priti Patel and Claire Coutinho, as well as Liberal Democrat Munira

Wilson. MPs can opt for a non-religious affirmation, as did the two new Independent MPs with their roots in India, Shokat Adam and Iqbal Mahmood, along with many others including Tory MP Gagan Mohindra and Labour's Lisa Nandy and Seema Malhotra. First-timers like Tory MP Dr Neil Shastri-Hunt and Labour's Jeevun Sandher and Sonia Kumar also chose to affirm their pledge of allegiance. The affirmation reads: "I do solemnly, sincerely, and truly declare and affirm, that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles, his heirs and successors, according to law." All elected MPs, including 29 of Indian heritage, have been queuing up in the Commons chamber since Tuesday to complete this protocol before they can officially take their seats in Parliament.

US Coast Guard patrol spots Chinese naval ships off Alaska island

Anchorage (AP): A US Coast Guard cutter on routine patrol in the Bering Sea came across several Chinese military ships in international waters but within the US exclusive economic zone, officials said Wednesday.

The crew detected three vessels approximately 124 miles (200 kilometers) north of the Amchitka Pass in the Aleutian Islands, the Coast Guard said in a statement. A short time later, a helicopter aircrew from Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak spotted a fourth ship approximately 84 miles (135 kilometers) north of the Amukta Pass. All four of the People's Republic of China vessels were "transiting in international waters but still inside the US Exclusive Economic Zone," which extends 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) from the U.S. shoreline, the statement said. "The Chinese naval presence operated in accordance with international rules and norms," said Rear

Adm. Megan Dean, Seventeenth Coast Guard District commander. "We met presence with presence to ensure there were no disruptions to US interests in the maritime environment around Alaska." U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kimball is a 418-foot (127-meter) ship based in Honolulu. This wasn't the first time Chinese naval ships have sailed near Alaska waters. In September 2022, the Kimball spotted guided missile cruiser from China in the Bering Sea. And in Sept. 2021, Coast Guard cutters in the Bering Sea and North Pacific Ocean encountered Chinese ships, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) off the Aleutian Islands. The US military routinely conducts what it calls freedom of navigation operations in disputed waters in Asia that China claims as its own, deploying Navy ships to sail through waterways such as the South China Sea.

UK mulls tighter crossbow laws after three women were slain in an attack

AP ■ LONDON

A man suspected of killing the wife and daughters of a BBC radio sports commentator with a crossbow was being treated in a hospital Thursday after being found injured in a cemetery some 15 miles (22 kilometers) from the scene of the crimes. Police had spent almost a day hunting for Kyle Clifford after the attack on Carol Hunt, 61, and her daughters Hannah, 28 and Louise, 25 at their home in Bushey, northwest of London. Police and ambulance crews called to the suburban cul-de-sac on Tuesday evening tried to save them, but they were pronounced dead at the scene.

After a frantic search across a swath of London's northern fringe, Clifford, 26, was found Wednesday in the Enfield area of north London, near his home. Footage from Sky News showed the suspect being carried on a stretcher out of Lavender Hill Cemetery. Armed police offi-

cers, forensic personnel and ambulance staff had massed around the cemetery through the day.

Police did not say how he was injured, but stressed that they had not fired any shots. They said Clifford had not yet been arrested.

"Following extensive inquiries, the suspect has been located and nobody else is being sought in connection with the investigation at this time," said Detective Inspector Justine Jenkins from the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Major Crime Unit. Police did not say how or whether Clifford was connected to the women, but said they believed the attack was targeted. British media reported that Clifford was an ex-boyfriend of one of the victims. Jenkins said the investigation was moving "at pace" and that formal identification of the victims had yet to take place. The BBC confirmed the victims

were the family of its sports commentator John Hunt. Hunt is the main racing commentator for BBC 5 Live, the corporation's main news and sports radio channel.

His voice is known to millions through his coverage of the world famous Grand National and The Derby. Shocked neighbors came late Wednesday to lay flowers near the scene of the attack.

"They were the loveliest, gentlest family," said Su Kehinde, who lives nearby. "They were the meekest human beings. They did not deserve this. They were beautiful souls." People in Britain do not need a license to own a crossbow, but it is illegal to carry one in public without a reasonable excuse. The new Labour Party government, which took office last week, said it would "swiftly consider" findings of a recently launched review into whether controls on owning crossbows should be tightened.

Sizzling heatwave in parts of southern & central Europe prompts alerts

AP ■ BELGRADE

Weather alerts, forest fires, melting pavement in cities: A sizzling heat wave has sent temperatures in parts of central and southern Europe soaring toward 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in some places. From Italy to Romania, authorities warned people to be cautious, drive carefully if going on holiday, drink plenty of water and avoid going out during the hottest hours of the day. Italian authorities declared a red weather alert in seven cities on Thursday, mostly in the central parts of the country but also the capital Rome and Trieste in the northeast. The heat conditions are aggravated by humidity and could affect healthy people as well as those with health conditions, authorities warned. Similar warnings were issued in neighboring Croatia and further east and south.

Croatia's main tourism resort, the southern Adriatic Sea town of Dubrovnik, recorded 28 degrees Celsius (82.4 Fahrenheit) at dawn, signalling there won't be relief when the sun goes down. Forest fires have been reported this week in Albania, near the border with Greece, as well as in Bosnia and Italy. Meteorologists said temperatures were even higher than officially reported in big cities where sizzling concrete radiates the heat above the ground and the asphalt softens under one's feet. "It was impossible to breathe yesterday," said Antonela Spicanovic, from the Montenegrin capital of Podgorica, where temperatures reached 39C (102F) on Wednesday. The city seemed deserted with many of its residents staying indoors or heading for the Adriatic Sea coast or the mountains. "I spend my days in the apartment, under

the air conditioning," said Dorde Stanišić, an electrical engineer also from Podgorica. "It's hell outside." Mendim Rugova, a meteorologist from neighboring Kosovo, said temperatures in the country have risen on average by 2.5 degrees since the 1980s. He said the current heat wave could last until the end of July. "In the region we could see temperatures above 40C, in parts of Albania, Northern Macedonia, in Greece and also in parts of Serbia," he predicted. In Czechia's capital of Prague, where temperatures reached 34C Wednesday before dropping slightly Thursday, the city zoo delivered ten tons of ice to provide much-needed relief for the animals. The ice was strategically placed around the zoo Wednesday creating cool spots where animals could find refuge from unusually high temperatures.

In the Romanian capital Bucharest, street thermometers showed 42C (107F) on Tuesday and Wednesday though the official measurements were a few degrees lower. Neighboring Serbia reported record temperatures so far this summer, with thermostats at 35C (95F) Thursday morning in the north of the country. In the capital Belgrade, doctors reported treating people who collapsed, felt dizzy or complained of headaches due to the heat. Serbian authorities have said that the use of air conditioning led to huge power consumption similar to levels normally seen in winter, when electricity in the Balkan country use electricity for heating. During a previous heat wave last month, Montenegro, Bosnia, Croatia and Albania faced a major power outage amid the overload and a collapse of a regional distribution line.

Woman who swept to sea while swimming at beach rescued

Tokyo (AP): A Chinese woman who was swept out to sea while swimming at a Japanese beach was rescued 37 hours later after drifting in a swimming ring more than 80 kilometers (50 miles) in the Pacific Ocean, officials said Thursday. Japan's coast guard launched a search for the woman, identified only as a Chinese national in her 20s, after receiving a call Monday night from her friend saying she had disappeared while swimming at Shimoda, about 200 kilometers (125 miles) southwest of Tokyo. The woman was spotted by a cargo ship early Wednesday, about 36 hours after she disappeared, off the southern tip of Boso Peninsula, the coast guard said. The cargo ship asked a passing LPG tanker, the Kakuwa Maru No. 8, to help.

Deepening Russia-China ties concern NATO

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

NATO has voiced profound concern over China's deepening relationship with Russia and accused Beijing of becoming a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine through its so-called "no limits" partnership with the country. Leaders of the 32-member North Atlantic Treaty Organisation said this in a statement following their meeting in Washington to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the North Atlantic Council. "The People's Republic of China's (PRC) stated ambitions and coercive policies continue to challenge our interests, security and values. The deepening strategic partnership between Russia and the PRC and their mutually reinforcing attempts to undercut and reshape the rules-based international order are a cause for profound concern," said the Washington Summit Declaration. "We are confronted by hybrid, cyber, space and other threats and malicious activities from state and non-state actors," it said. "The PRC has become a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine through its so-called "no limits" partnership and its large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial base. This increases the threat Russia poses to its neighbours and to Euro-Atlantic security," it said. NATO leaders called on China, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council with a particular responsibility to uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, to cease all material and political support to Russia's war effort. "This includes the transfer of dual-use materials, such as weapons components, equipment, and raw materials that serve as inputs for Russia's defence sector. The PRC cannot enable the largest war in Europe in recent history without this negatively impacting its interests and reputation," said the declaration issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting during which it welcomed Sweden as its 32nd member country. The historic accession of Finland and Sweden makes them safer and the alliance stronger, including in the High North and the Baltic Sea, it said.

Don't bring chaos to Asia: China to NATO

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Thursday hit out at NATO for terming it as a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine, lodging a diplomatic protest to the Western alliance for the "provocative" remarks and asking it not to bring the same "chaos" to Asia. The China-related paragraphs in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's Washington summit declaration are "biased, provocative and aimed at vilifying" Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a media briefing here. "We strongly deplore it and firmly oppose it and lodged a serious representation, (diplomatic protest) to NATO," Lin said. He also lashed out at the NATO Asia-Pacific push, saying the organisation is strengthening ties with China's neighbours and US allies trying to seek security at the expense of others and asked it not to bring the same "chaos" to Asia. NATO's Asia Pacific strategy has damaged China's interests, he said and urged it to stop interfering in its internal affairs. China will firmly safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests, he said. The NATO Washington summit has made scathing criticism of Beijing, saying China has "become a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine" through its so-called



"no limits" partnership and its large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial base. Also, China's military exercises with Belarus, a close ally of Russia, were sharply criticised by NATO especially since they are being held close to the border of Poland, a NATO member. Next to Russia, China appears to have become a centerpiece of NATO's criticism which comes at a time when Beijing is trying to scale down trade tariffs and sanctions, especially for its electric vehicles which it is trying to market in the EU to reduce its overcapacity. The NATO alliance comprised 32 member states, 30 European and two North American countries including the US

and UK. Chinese analysts have also been airing concerns over China getting involved in the Ukraine war risking its political and trade ties with the EU and confrontation with the powerful NATO alliance. China is also trying to deflect criticism for supplying materials related to weapons production to Russia. The NATO declaration said, "We call on the PRC, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council with a particular responsibility to uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, to cease all material and political support to Russia's war effort". "This includes the transfer of dual-use materials, such as weapons components, equip-

ment, and raw materials that serve as inputs for Russia's defence sector. The PRC cannot enable the largest war in Europe in recent history without this negatively impacting its interests and reputation," the NATO declaration said. Lin also tried to play down strong EU and NATO criticism of Chinese troops taking part in joint military exercises with Belarus near the Polish border, saying that it is normal military cooperation, and does not target any specific country. Poland reportedly expressed its concern to China as the exercises are close to comfort and the Polish border is also formally referred to as the borders of NATO as Poland is a member of the organisation.

US says Chinese overcapacity has significant spillovers around world

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

China's industrial manufacturing overcapacity has significant spillovers around the world, the Joe Biden administration said on Wednesday, noting that addressing these challenges may warrant taking defensive action to protect firms and workers — and the traditional toolkit of trade actions may not be sufficient. "We are growing concerned that China's enduring macro-economic imbalances and non-market policies and practices pose a significant risk to workers and businesses in the United States and the rest of the world. We are worried that these features of China's economy can lead to industrial overcapacity that has significant spillovers around the world and can compromise our collective supply chain resilience, given the resulting

over-concentration in some manufacturing sectors," Under Secretary for International Affairs Jay Shambaugh said. The United States, along with its allies and partners in developing economies and advanced economies alike, share mutual objectives to address China's policies that have negative economic spillovers to its firms, workers and economic resilience, he added. "Addressing these challenges may warrant our taking defensive action to protect our firms and workers — and the traditional toolkit of trade actions may not be sufficient. More creative approaches may be necessary to mitigate the impacts of China's overcapacity. We should be clear — defence against overcapacity or dumping is not protectionist or anti-trade, it is an attempt to safeguard firms and workers from distortions

in another economy," Shambaugh said. "The best outcome, though, would be for China to acknowledge the growing concerns among its major trading partners and work with us to address them. We will take defensive action if needed, but we would prefer for China to take action itself to address the macroeconomic and structural forces that are generating the potential for a second 'China shock' for its major trading partners," he said. "China could boost consumption by strengthening its safety net, increasing household incomes and reforming its internal migration rules. It could better support services, not just manufacturing. It could reduce harmful and wasteful subsidies. These would all be in China's interest and reduce tensions," the Treasury official said.



People make their way through the rain as the remnants of Hurricane Beryl hit Ottawa, Ontario

AP/PTI

Russia declares newspaper 'undesirable'

Moscow (AP): The Russian prosecutor general's office on Wednesday declared The Moscow Times, an online newspaper popular among Russia's expatriate community, as an "undesirable organisation". The designation comes amid a crackdown on critical news media and the opposition. It means the newspaper must stop any work in Russia and it subjects any Russian who cooperates with the paper to up to five years in prison. It is a more severe measure than the "foreign agent" designation applied to the news outlet in November, which subjects individuals and organisations to increased financial scrutiny and requires any of their public material to prominently include notice of being declared a foreign agent. The Moscow Times already moved its editorial operations out of Russia in 2022 after the passage of a law imposing stiff penalties for material regarded as discrediting the Russian military and its war in Ukraine. It publishes in English and in Russian, but its Russian-language site was blocked in Russia several months after the Ukraine war began. In an editors' note on the decision, the newspaper said "the labelling of The Moscow Times as undesirable is the latest of many efforts to suppress our reporting on the truth in Russia and its war in Ukraine.... This designation will make it even more difficult for us to do our jobs, putting reporters and fixers inside Russia at risk of criminal prosecution and making sources even more hesitant to speak to us. "We refuse to give in to this pressure. We refuse to be silenced," the newspaper said. The publication began in 1992 as a daily print paper distributed for free in restaurants, hotels and other locations popular with expatriates, whose presence in Moscow was soaring after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It later reduced its print edition to weekly, then became online only in 2017.

NC, CPN-UML ask lawmakers to vote against Prachanda's trust motion

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

A head of a floor test for Nepal's Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Friday, the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML have issued whips requiring their lawmakers to vote against the confidence motion tabled by the former guerrilla leader. KP Sharma Oli-led CPN-UML, the largest party in the ruling coalition, withdrew support from the Prachanda-led government last week after inking a power-sharing deal with the largest party in the House - Nepali Congress - to replace the former Maoist leader, who is expected to lose the confidence vote. The Nepali Congress, the largest party in the 275-member House of Representatives, has 89 seats at present, while CPN-UML has 78 seats. Their combined strength of 167 is much more than the 138 seats required for a majority in the lower house. Prachanda's Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) has 32 seats.

Prachanda, who requires 138 votes for the government to win

the vote of confidence in the House, is likely to secure around 63 votes, and the government is almost sure to lose the floor test on Friday. The Nepali Congress (NC) has instructed its lawmakers to be present in the House and vote against Prachanda's confidence motion. Similarly, the CPN-UML has also issued a whip requiring its lawmakers to vote against the motion, My Republica newspaper reported. This coordinated effort between the NC and the UML aims to oust the Prachanda-led government and establish new administrations at both federal and provincial levels. Oli, the CPN-UML chairperson, met Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba on Wednesday. The meeting between the two leaders was aimed at formulating a future strategy on how to move forward after the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) agreed to form a new coalition government. During the two-hour-long meeting held at Deuba's residence at Budhanilkantha, on the

outskirts of Kathmandu, the two leaders discussed matters such as collecting signatures in favour of the new coalition to be led by Oli and its submission to the president. They also discussed the formation of the new government and inviting other smaller parties to join the national consensus government being formed under the leadership of Oli, according to sources close to CPN-UML. The two parties have inked a deal to lead the government turn by turn for the remaining three-year period of the Parliament. According to the agreement, Oli will become the Prime Minister for one and a half years in the first stage. Last week, the CPN-UML demanded Prachanda's immediate resignation after the prime minister said that he is preparing to face a vote of confidence in the Parliament on Friday, given the withdrawal of support by some allies. Prachanda, 69, has announced that he would not quit after the resignation of eight Cabinet ministers belonging to the CPN-UML and instead face a vote of confidence in Parliament.

Pakistan court says actions of Imran Khan similar to that of a 'terrorist'

PTI ■ LAHORE

An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan on Thursday said the actions of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan were similar to that of a "terrorist" in a case linked to the May 9 violence and ruled that he had delegated the task of attacking military installations, government properties, and police officials to party leaders to exert pressure for his release. The 71-year-old PTI founder and hundreds of his party colleagues are being tried under multiple cases, including one under the Official Secrets Act in connection with the May 9, 2023, violent protests by his supporters that damaged key military installations across Pakistan. The unprecedented protests erupted across Pakistan on May 9 last year after Khan was arrested in an alleged corruption case. Khan's party workers allegedly vandalised a dozen military installations, including the Jinnah House (Lahore Corps Commander House), Mianwali

Airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad. The Army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi too was attacked by the mob for the first time. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party termed the anti-terrorism court's ruling an "absurd order" and declared that it would launch a protest. The anti-terrorism court (ATC) at Lahore had earlier this week dismissed pre-arrest bail to Khan in three cases related to the May 9 riots and allowed police his continued custody for interrogation. In a detailed order issued here on Thursday, ATC Judge Khalid Arshad said: "An extraordinary concession of pre-arrest bail is meant for an innocent person and not the petitioner, Imran Khan Niazi, who hatched, materialised alleged criminal conspiracy along with the senior PTI leadership and protesters/accused having a common object to wage a war against the state to topple over the government." The order said that Khan not

only incited people but also instructed leaders to create chaos, disturb law and order, and commit arson to pressure the military and government for his release. This was disclosed in statements from two prosecution witnesses, The Express Tribune newspaper reported. "The pre-arrest bail of the petitioner has no merits and is hereby dismissed while withdrawing his already granted interim bail," the judge said. The judge further observed: A peaceful demonstrator becomes a "terrorist" when he hatches a criminal conspiracy, disseminates it and shares a common object with other accused, who, being armed, attack and attempt to damage state properties like Lahore Corps Commander House known as Jinnah House at Lahore, targeting government machinery... He loses his normal right to be a law-abiding citizen." The order, quoting the special public prosecutor, said that a criminal conspiracy was hatched at Khan's Lahore Zaman Park

residence on May 7 and 8 in which Khan himself told the top PTI leadership regarding his apprehension of arrest and the reaction of launching protests and damage of military installations. Reacting to the detailed ACT order, the PTI said, "The judgment contains no evidence of Imran Khan ordering May 9 violence. The judge while dismissing pre-arrest bails of Khan is drawing inferences and assumptions." The PTI pointed out in its statement, how previously the Supreme Court of Pakistan had termed the arrest of Imran Khan, illegal and added: "We will challenge the verdict of the Anti-Terrorism Court." The anti-terrorist courts in other parts of the country, including Rawalpindi, Sargodha etc have dismissed the case accusing Imran Khan of being the main accused of instigating the May 9 violent incidents, based on the fact that there is no evidence provided establishing the prosecution's point," the PTI said.

Indonesia ex-minister sentenced to 10 years

AP ■ JAKARTA

Indonesia's anti-graft court sentenced a former agriculture minister to 10 years in prison Thursday after finding him guilty of corruption-related extortion, abuse of power and bribery involving ministry contracts with private vendors. The case has tarnished President Joko Widodo's credibility in fighting corruption. Five other members of Widodo's Cabinet have been sentenced to prison terms in corruption cases, casting a shadow over his efforts to clean up government while his term will end in October. The court in the capital, Jakarta, ruled that the former Cabinet minister, Syahrul Yasin Limpo, was guilty of abusing his power by enriching himself and other officials. It also

ordered him to pay a 300 million rupiah (\$18,500) fine, and said he would be subject to another four months' imprisonment if he fails to pay. "The defendant has legally and convincingly been proven guilty of corruption," presiding Judge Rianto Adam Pontoh said. "He wasn't a good example as a public official, what he has done is counter the government's efforts to fight corruption and enriched himself by corruption." Limpo had been arrested last October by the Corruption Eradication Commission, known as the KPK. He has denied wrongdoing. Several ministry officials testified during the trial that secretariats, directorates general and agencies within the ministry was required to give up 20% of their budgets to Limpo, as though they were indebted to



Former Agriculture Minister Syahrul Yasin Limpo is escorted by cops after his sentencing at the Corruption Court in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Thursday

AP/PTI

him, and he threatened their jobs if they rejected his demands. Vendors and suppliers were also asked to set aside money to fulfill the then-minister's demands, the trial revealed. Limpo used the money on luxurious cars, gifts and apart-

ments, charter private jets, family parties and gatherings, and for religious observances and pilgrimages. Limpo also used the bribes to disburse humanitarian aid for disaster victims and to his Nasdem political party.

Prosecutors, who sought 12 years imprisonment for Limpo, said the politician accepted a total of 44.7 billion rupiah (\$2.7 million) between January 2020 and October 2023. In their indictment, prosecutors accused Limpo of ordering his two subordinates, Kasdi Subagyono and Muhammad Hatta, to collect the illicit money. They were each sentenced to four years in prison in separate cases. During the trial, Limpo said he was the victim of political persecution and felt that he had been slandered by his subordinates in his ministry who fears of being replaced or removed from their position. "I never received any information about their objection to any of my orders," Limpo said. "If they think it's wrong, they should consult and discuss with me first."

In historic first, Lahore High Court swears in woman Chief Justice

PTI ■ LAHORE

Justice Aalia Neelum on Thursday took oath as the Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court (LHC) of Pakistan, making her the first woman to be ele-

vated as the court's top judge. Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan administered the oath of office to her. Punjab province's first woman Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz was also present in the oath-taking ceremony.

कार्यालय वरिष्ठ प्रबन्धक विद्युत खण्ड-प्रथम			
उ.प्र. राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण ,			
ए-1/4 लखनपुर, कानपुर			
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एनए द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के कार्पेटी जलमय में विद्युत औद्योगिक क्षेत्र बाहेरी में विद्युत विकास कार्य हेतु सरकारी विभागों / सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों / निगमों / प्राधिकरणों / परिवहनों / नगर निकायों में पंजीकृत विद्युत लाइसेन्सी एवं अनुमति देकर / फॉर्स से अत्यकालीन ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है, जो दिनांक 12.07.2024 को अपरान्ह 4:00 बजे से दिनांक 19.07.2024 को अपरान्ह 5:00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकती है। निविदा को दिनांक 20.07.2024 को अपरान्ह 4:00 बजे खोला जायेगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा शायब पत्रों की मूल प्रतियां दिनांक 23.07.2024 को सायं 5:00 बजे तक कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण निम्नवत् है-			
क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत रु. (लाख में)	
1.	Providing 11 KV HT/LT Composite Line at Balance Road No. 11, 10, 06, 04, 02 & 01 at Mega Food Park Baheri Distt. Bareilly.	76.38	
नोट - 1. निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कर सहित बरे अंकित करें। जी.एस.टी. अलग से देय होगी।			
2. विद्युत कार्य हेतु निविदादाताओं को निविदा अपलोड करते समय "विद्युत सुरक्षा विभाग" उ.प्र. शासन, लखनऊ के जे.पी. के अनुमोदित लाइसेन्स अपलोड करना अनिवार्य होने, अन्यथा निविदा को रद्दकार नहीं किया जायेगा।			
निविदा सम्बन्धी विस्तृत जानकारी प्राधिकरण की website:www.onlineupsida.com पर स्थित ई-लिक एवं यूपीएलसी की website:http://etender.up.nic.in पर देखी जा सकती है। वरिष्ठ प्रबन्धक विद्युत खण्ड-प्रथम उ.प्र.रा.औ.वि.प्र., कानपुर			

Sensex, Nifty settle marginally down

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty closed marginally down in a volatile session on Thursday as investors booked profits in heavyweights ahead of the announcement of key financial results for the June quarter.

Retreating from early highs, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 27.43 points or 0.03 per cent at 79,897.34. The index climbed 245.32 points to hit a high of 80,170.09 in early trade but later lost momentum due to selling in index heavyweights. The barometer hit a day's low of 79,464.38, down by 460.39 points from the last close.

The NSE Nifty edged down 8.50 points or 0.03 per cent to settle at 24,315.95. The broader index gyrated between a high of 24,402.65 and a low of 24,193.75 in day trade."The main indices are trading in a narrow range, struggling to justify its premium valuation ahead of the Q1 earnings season, which is forecast to be subdued," Vinod Nair, Head



of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Among Sensex shares, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Nestle, NTPC, Power Grid, NTPC, UltraTech Cement and Larsen & Toubro were the biggest laggards.

The prominent gainers were ITC, Tata Motors, Asian Paints and Titan.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher.

European markets were trading in positive territory.

US markets ended significantly higher on

Wednesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 583.96 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.21 per cent to USD 85.26 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark closed lower by 426.87 points or 0.53 per cent at 79,924.77 on Wednesday. The NSE Nifty dropped 108.75 points or 0.45 per cent to settle at 24,324.45.

Both the benchmark indices had hit their record high levels in opening deals on Wednesday.

Gold rises on jewellers' buying, positive overseas trend

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rose Rs 50 to Rs 75,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday driven by jewellers' buying and a firm trend in the international markets, according to All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had settled at Rs 75,050 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

Silver prices also climbed by Rs 100 to Rs 94,500 per kg. It had closed at Rs 94,400 per kg in the previous session.

In sarafa markets, the yellow metal was trading at Rs 75,100 per 10 grams, up by Rs 50 against the previous close, the association said.

Traders said gold rallied due to fresh demand from local jewellers and a firm trend in overseas markets.

In the global markets, spot gold was trading higher at USD 2,389.20 per ounce, up by USD 9.50 per ounce. Gold prices firmed for a third consecutive session with investors awaiting US inflation data due later in the day for more insights on the Federal Reserve's interest rate path, Manav Modi, Senior Analyst, Commodity Research, said.

India's oil, gas exploration offers USD 100 bn opportunity: Hardeep

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday called for stepping up oil and gas hunt to cut India's reliance on imports and making available fuel at an affordable and sustainable way.

Speaking at the Urja Varta conference, he said the exploration and production (E&P) sector is integral in the journey towards energy self-sufficiency, which is critical for sustained economic growth.

"E&P offers investment opportunities worth USD 100 billion by 2030," he said.

Stating that India's exploration and production potential still lies untapped, he said, "I find it strange that India is so heavily reliant on oil imports despite the abundant geological resources available to us."

The Indian sedimentary basins hold about 651.8 million tonnes of crude oil and 1138.6 billion cubic meters of natural gas, he said.

Puri said only 10 per cent of our sedimentary basin area is under exploration, which will rise to 16 per cent by 2024-end after the current bid ends.

"The focus of our exploratory endeavours must pivot



towards discovering 'Yet to Find' resources," he said.

India imports over 85 per cent of its crude oil needs. Crude oil is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel in refineries.

"The government is doing its part to catalyse investments in E&P. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) has instituted sweeping reforms, empowering stakeholders to contribute to our nation's progress," he said, adding "We intend to increase India's exploration acreage to 1 million sq. Km. By 2030."

The minister said since its inception in 2015, the Discovered Small Field (DSF) Policy has garnered

investments of approximately USD 2 billion and brought in 29 new players in the field.

"The opening up of the erstwhile no-go areas has paved the way for exploration activities in previously restricted zones, fostering investments, notably in regions such as the Andamans," he said.

Puri announced formation of a Joint Working Group (JWG), comprising representatives from private E&P operators, the National Oil Companies, MoPNG, and DGH to examine issues relating to the ease of doing business in E&P, adequacy of policies and procedures, and the need for their revision.

FinMin notifies GSTR-1A to amend outward supply form

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry has notified the GSTR-1A form which will give an option to taxpayers to amend outward supply or sales return form.

Last month, the GST Council had recommended providing a new optional facility by way of form GSTR-1A to facilitate the taxpayers to amend the details in form GSTR-1 for a tax period and/ or to declare additional details.

GSTR-1A will, however, have to be filed before filing of return in GSTR-3B for the said tax period. The finance ministry on July 10 notified the GSTR-1A form.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has introduced a significant enhancement to the GST compliance framework with the optional facility of form GSTR-1A.

"By facilitating timely corrections, form GSTR-1A ensures that the correct tax liability is auto-populated in form GSTR-3B, reducing manual errors and fostering a streamlined compliance process," he said.

Sebi to auction HBN Dairies properties; fixes reserve price at ₹67.70 cr



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi will auction eight properties of HBN Dairies & Allied Ltd next month for a reserve price of Rs 67.70 crore.

The move is a part of Sebi's effort to recover money raised by HBN Dairies through illicit collective investment schemes.

This came after the Supreme Court in its order dated May 14, 2024, authorised Sebi to sell the assets of HBN Dairies & Allied Ltd (HBN) with the active involvement of the liquidator.

The markets watchdog initiated the process for the sale of assets after HBN Dairies & Allied Ltd and its directors — Harmender Singh Sran, Amandeep Singh Sran, Manjeet Kaur Sran and Jasbeer Kaur — failed to refund the investors' money.

The properties to go under the hammer include a shopping mall-cum-multiplex, hotel, plots and commercial shops, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notice on Wednesday.

The properties were located in New Delhi, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra and were

auctioned at a reserve price of Rs 67.70 crore.

Quikr Realty has been engaged by Sebi to assist it in the e-auction, while C1 India has been appointed as the e-auction service provider, the regulator said in a notice.

As per the notice, the regulator said bidders should make independent enquiries regarding the encumbrances, litigations, attachments and acquisition liabilities of the properties put on action prior to submitting their bid.

"Sale or auction shall be through online bidding. Bidders can participate in the e-auction from anywhere," the regulator noted.

The markets watchdog is inviting bids for the sale of properties in the recovery proceedings against HBN Dairies & Allied Ltd and its directors.

Sebi said the auction will be conducted online on August 13 from 11 am to 1 pm.

The company had illegally mobilised Rs 1,136 crore from gullible investors through schemes involving purchase of cattle to earn huge returns from the sale of ghee.

By indulging in these activities, HBN Dairies & Allied had flouted the regulatory norms.

Budget needs to take steps to address lower than expected growth in consumption: CEO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government needs to take steps such as reviewing personal income tax slabs in the upcoming Union Budget to drive private consumption, which in turn will drive private investment, Godrej & Boyce Executive Director & CEO, Anil G Verma said on Thursday.

He also expressed optimism that the government will build upon the solid foundation laid by the interim budget, which

focused on boosting infrastructure development, maintaining fiscal prudence, and laid progressive emphasis on women, youth, farmers, and the underprivileged through skilling, welfare measures and financial assistance.

"The important area that needs to be addressed now, amongst others, is the continued lower-than-expected growth in private consumption," Verma said in a statement.

Asserting that private consumption drives private



investment, he said, "Therefore, I am hopeful that the GoI (government of India) will take steps that boost consumption through a slew of measures that could include optimising GST rates, reviewing of personal income tax slabs and reassessment of the interest rates to provide EMI relief to the large masses whose purchases of assets such as homes and consumer durables are through loans."

These steps will not only provide tailwinds to the

consumer durables industry but also have a multiplier effect on the industries that serve them, through increased capacity utilisation and hence also pave the way for private investments to flow in at a faster pace, Verma said.

Looking ahead, he said, "I hope that the upcoming budget continues to prioritise these areas while also introducing policies that promote innovation, production-linked incentives (PLIs), and sustainable practices."

Procurement through GeM crosses ₹1.24 lakh cr in Q1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With the procurement of goods and services through government's portal GeM crossing Rs 1.24 lakh crore in first quarter of 2024-25, the platform will become world's largest by the end of this fiscal, a senior official said on Thursday.

The Government e-Market (GeM) portal was launched on August 9, 2016, for online purchases of goods and services by all central government ministries and departments.

"GeM has clocked a gross merchandise value of Rs 1,24,761 lakh crore at the end of first quarter, representing a quarter-on-quarter growth of 136 per cent over last year's Rs 52,670 crore," GeM CEO Prashant Kumar Singh told reporters here.

He said that going by this pace, it will become the world's largest platform.

South Korea's KONEPS is the largest such platform in the world. GeM stands at the second position. It is followed by Singapore's GeBIZ.

He added that the procurement by central ministries including CPSEs surpassed Rs 1 lakh crore



milestone in this period with ministries of coal, defence and petroleum and gas emerging as the top procurers in this quarter.

"Of this Rs 1 lakh crore, CPSEs share accounted for more than Rs 91,000 crore," Singh said, adding during the first quarter, services segment has been the prime mover.

Services buying crossed Rs 80,500 during the quarter.

In 2023-24, the procurement from this portal had crossed Rs 4 lakh crore.

Talking about the initiatives of the portal, Singh said that carrying forward its vision of reaching out to the last mile sellers and with an aim to public

procurement, they are planning to roll out 'GeM SAHAYAK' programme which aims at creating a pan-India network of 6,000-7,000 trained and certified accredited trainers.

The Sahayaks, he said, would offer their services to potential and existing GeM sellers in navigating on the portal and enhancing business opportunities.

Buyers too will benefit from their services in terms of creation of bids and other value-added services, Singh said.

To further promote ease of doing business, he said the platform has drastically reduced transaction charges leviable on sellers.

As per the new revenue policy of GeM, the sellers/service providers will be charged only 0.30 per cent of the order value (previously 0.45 per cent) on orders worth more than Rs 5 lakh.

He added that these transaction charges would be capped at Rs 3 lakh as against Rs 72.50 lakh being changed earlier.

"This reduction in transaction charges levied on the GeM platform by almost 33 per cent to 96 per cent would greatly benefit our sellers and is likely to make their offerings more competitive in the marketplace," Singh said.

To promote the government's initiative of "vocal for local", the platform has added a page of 'The Aabhar Collection'.

It showcases over 120 exquisite and hand-crafted gift items and hampers, featuring select products from One District One Product (ODOP) and Geographical Indication (GI) categories with prices ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 25,000 to be used by government buyers for all their official events/ceremonies.

Further, he said, to maintain its pole position in the public procurement space, GeM is all

set to deploy its generative AI-based chat bot — GeMAI — in the coming quarter.

The AI tool has been trained to provide solutions based on a nuanced analysis of queries raised by buyers and sellers through various complaint and feedback mechanisms.

"Conversational analytics and business intelligence using generative AI are also being harnessed to build a robust AI-powered chat bot," he said.

GeM has over 1.5 lakh government buyers and over 62 lakh sellers and service providers offering a wide range of products and services.

Currently, government departments, ministries, public sector units, state governments, and central armed police forces are allowed to carry out transactions through this portal.

The portal provides a wide range of products from office stationery to vehicles. Automobiles, computers and office furniture are some of the major product categories.

Services, including transportation, hiring of helicopter services, logistics, waste management, webcasting and analytical, are listed on the portal.

REC Limited avails green loan facility

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

In a significant step towards sustainable development in India, REC Limited, a leader in the Indian power sector, has successfully availed a green loan of JPY 31.96 Billion (equivalent to USD 200 million) to finance eligible green projects in India.

This strategic investment reinforces REC's commitment to foster sustainable growth, in alignment with the Company's Green Finance Framework.

This green facility is a first of its kind successful collaboration between an Indian government entity and Deutsche Bank AG, GIFT City branch.

This facility sets a benchmark in the Indian public sector landscape for similar green financing transactions, highlighting a growing commitment to sustainable financing.

The facility also marks one of the first JPY-denominated green loan transaction for Deutsche Bank AG, GIFT City.

MSME can play role in making India leading electronic manufacturing hub: Secretary, MeitY

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Manufacturing will play a major role in the structural transformation of the Indian economy and electronics will be an important sector driving this transition, according to S Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India.

"We should enhance domestic value-add in electronics from 18-20 per cent to 35-40 per cent within the next five years. MSMEs will play a crucial role in this effort and have a huge role to play in electronics components manufacturing," he said, during his address at the CII MSME Growth Summit in New Delhi.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee settled for the day 5 paise lower at 83.56 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, weighed down by a weak tone in domestic markets and a recovery in crude oil prices.

Forex traders said rupee traded with a slight negative bias on profit booking in the domestic market, which may result in foreign fund outflows.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.49, but lost ground and touched an intraday low of 83.59 against the American currency during the session.

It finally settled at 83.56 (provisional) against the



dollar, 5 paise lower than its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee stayed range-bound and settled 2 paise lower at 83.51 against the US dollar.

"Elevated crude oil prices may also weigh on the rupee. However, soft US Dollar and positive Asian currencies may support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from inflation and weekly unemployment claims data

from the US. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.35 to Rs 83.80," said Anuj Choudhary -- Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.16 per cent lower at 104.87.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were trading 0.24 per cent higher at

USD 85.28 per barrel.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended the day 27.43 points, or 0.03 per cent, lower at 79,897.34 points.

The broader NSE Nifty settled 8.50 points, or 0.03 per cent, down at 24,315.95 points.

"The domestic indices fell for the second consecutive session after hitting record highs on Tuesday. However, FII inflows and a soft tone in the US Dollar cushioned the downside," Choudhary said.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Wednesday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 583.96 crore, according to exchange data.

Auto component industry to see moderate growth this fiscal: ICRA

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Red Sea crisis is likely to impact the margins of the auto component industry over the next few quarters amid higher container rates and shipping time, credit ratings agency ICRA said on Thursday, projecting a moderate growth for the industry this fiscal.

Close to two-thirds of the auto component exports are made to North America and Europe, and one-third of the imports is made from these regions, as per the ratings agency.

"The disruption along the Red Sea route has resulted in a surge in container rates by 2-3 times in YTD (year-to-date) this calendar year compared to CY2023, while shipping time has also increased by around

two weeks," ICRA said.

The operating margins are set for a year-on-year improvement of around 50 basis-points in FY2025, benefitting from better operating leverage, higher content per vehicle, and value additions, while remaining exposed to any sharp volatility in commodity prices and foreign exchange rates, it said.

Also, the industry's liquidity position, according to ICRA, remains comfortable, especially across tier-I players supported by stable cash flows and earnings.

ICRA said it expects the growth in revenues of the Indian auto component industry to ease to 5-7 per cent this fiscal, from the highs of around 14 per cent in FY 2023-24.

"Demand from domestic

original equipment manufacturers (OEM) constitutes over 50 per cent of sales for the Indian auto component industry and the pace of growth in the segment is expected to moderate in FY2025," said Details, Vinutaa S, Vice President and Sector Head for corporate ratings at ICRA Limited.

The ratings agency said these growth projections are based on the sample of 46 auto ancillaries with aggregate annual revenues of over Rs 3,00,000 crore in FY2024.

The aging of vehicles and increased sales of used vehicles in global markets are also expected to aid in the export of components for the replacement segment in overseas markets, according to the ratings agency.

PARIS IS MY FOURTH AND PROBABLY LAST OLYMPICS: MANPREET

PTI ■ BENGALURU

He has no plans to retire anytime soon but former Indian men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh very well knows that the Paris Games will be his fourth and last Olympics, and wants to give his best one last time at the world's biggest sporting extravaganza.

Manpreet, 32, was the captain of the Indian team that broke a 41-year-old Olympic medal drought in Tokyo by bagging the bronze.

Besides, he has been a member of the team that won 2014 and 2022 Asian Games gold medals.

"I never thought that I would be able to play four Olympics. It is every player's dream to play in the Olympics and win medals. I consider myself very lucky that this is my fourth Olympics," Manpreet told PTI Bhasha.

"I am going to Paris thinking as if it is my last Olympics and I have to give my best. I haven't thought about quitting the game yet and my complete focus is on the Paris Games," the experienced midfielder, who made his debut for India in 2011 at the age of just 19, said.

But the journey from Mithapur village in Jalandhar to Paris has not been a smooth sailing for Manpreet. He had to fight poverty, false allegations and witness mother's struggles to make a mark in his career.

After the Tokyo Olympics, Manpreet had to endure the worst phase of his career when

former coach Sjoerd Marijne levelled serious allegations against him.

Marijne accused that Manpreet asked a player to underperform so that his friends could get in the team during 2018 Commonwealth Games, an allegation which both the men and women's teams jointly denied, stating that the Dutchman did so to publicise his book.

"That was the most difficult phase for me. I could never even think of such things. I was broken and lost faith in everyone. I told (PR) Sreejesh with whom I share everything. My mother also encouraged me to keep playing to fulfil my father's dream and my whole team supported me," said Manpreet.

"In bad times, the support of the family and team is very important because at that time the player finds himself very lonely. When the team stands together, it gives a lot of encouragement and also helps in making a comeback. We have also seen Hardik Pandya making a great comeback recently."

"When I look back now, it seems like a dream. I come from a humble background where we have seen struggles for the basic needs.

"Father used to work as a carpenter in Dubai but had returned from there due to medical reasons. My mother struggled a lot and both my brothers also played hockey but they left due to financial problems," said Manpreet, who was the flag-bearer of the Indian contingent at Tokyo



Olympics along with boxing legend MC Mary Kom.

Manpreet is no longer captain of the side with Harmanpreet Singh taking over the responsibility, but the star midfielder knows his role in the team as one of the senior-most member.

"Even if I am not the captain now, it does not make any difference. Every player has his own role in hockey. The effort is to take everyone along. Being a senior, we have to inspire the youngsters," he said.

Manpreet, who idolises Pargat Singh, who too hails from Mithapur, said they followed the same process which they did during Tokyo in terms of preparation for Paris Games.

"Before the Tokyo Olympics, we spent maximum time together due to COVID that resulted in excellent team bonding. We will continue the same because 11 players are the same who were in Tokyo. We are sharing our experiences with the five debutants," he said.

India have been placed in tough pool in the Paris Olympics along side Australia, Belgium, Argentina, New Zealand and Ireland.

"Our pool is tough and we cannot take any team lightly. New Zealand has defeated us in the World Cup and Ireland has recently defeated Belgium. Our focus is on ourselves as to how we can execute our strategy," he said.

"We get less chances against good teams but converting 50-50 chances is the mark of a champion. We are well prepared to do that in Paris."



Sindhu's smash speed, Jena's throw celebrated in Mumbai ahead of Olympics

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Ace badminton player PV Sindhu, javelin thrower Kishore Jena and hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh are some of the athletes whose feats are being celebrated in the city in leadup to the Paris Olympics, starting July 26.

An outdoor campaign was launched here on Thursday to celebrate the 'champions of the game' by sports goods manufacturing company Puma, which has partnered with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) as their official footwear partner for the Olympics.

A total of 45 Indian athletes bound for the Olympics will represent the German company, whose 'See the Game Like We Do' campaign aims to

celebrate the feats of the sportspersons here.

"(The) double Olympic medalist PV Sindhu's powerful smash, Olympic bronze medallist and hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh's ability to stop the fastest balls with ease with a series of larger-than-life outdoor spectacles across Mumbai, as it shows Asian Games medalist Kishore Jena's throw, equivalent to the height of a skyscraper," Puma said in a release.

"Sindhu's speed of a smash at 349 kmph is 3x the speed of Mumbai's iconic Central Line route. Her exemplary achievement is visualised across the coaches with imagery splashed across coaches of the local train on this route," it added.

Jena's best throw at 87.54m will

be commemorated with his image on the facade of a similar sized structure in Prabhadevi.

Sreejesh been illustrated on a digital billboard on the Eastern Express Highway (EEH) serving the cities of Mumbai and Thane.

Over 100 Indian athletes will receive podium and travel footwear, trolleys, backpacks, sippers, yoga mats, headbands, wristbands, socks and towels, designed to maximise their training and comfort during the Paris Olympics.

"The IOA is deeply committed to enhancing India's medal prospects at the Paris Olympics, and such collaborations are a crucial step towards achieving that goal," IOA president PT Usha said.

With a late goal fit for a king, England reaches another Euro final by beating Netherlands 2-1

AP ■ DORTMUND

England is into another European Championship final after its latest dramatic, come-from-behind win that even took King Charles III on a roller coaster ride.

Ollie Watkins, who came on for captain Harry Kane in a bold call by England coach Gareth Southgate, scored in the first minute of stoppage time to earn England a 2-1 win over the Netherlands on Wednesday and a shot at Spain in the title match.

In the knockout stage at Euro 2024, England has scored a stoppage-time equalizer through Jude Bellingham before edging past Slovakia in the last 16 and needed a penalty-shootout to see off Switzerland in the quarterfinals.

The English are keeping their supporters back home on the edge of their seats as the men's team moves closer to a first title since the 1966 World Cup - and that includes its monarch.

"If I may encourage you to secure victory before the need for any last minute wonder-goals or another penalties drama, I am sure the stresses on the nation's collective heart rate and blood pressure would be greatly alleviated!" the king said in a congratulatory message soon after the game in Dortmund.

Watkins' goal was fit for a king. He had only made one previous appearance at Euro 2024 - as a substitute in the



group game against Denmark - so it was a surprise when he was introduced by Southgate in the 80th minute in England's biggest match so far. The gamble paid off.

Fed by another substitute in Cole Palmer, Watkins took a touch with his back to goal just inside the area and, from a tight angle, smashed a fierce shot into the bottom corner.

"Unbelievable - I've been waiting for that moment for weeks," said Watkins, the Aston Villa striker who was the fourth-equal top scorer in the Premier League last season.

"It's taken a lot of hard work to

get to where I am today. I got the opportunity and took it with both hands."

It was painful for Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman.

"I had a feeling toward the end of the match that maybe we could score," Koeman said, "and for sure in extra time I'd have put money on us."

England will play Lamine Yamal and Spain in Sunday's final in Berlin. It will be the nation's first title match on foreign soil, having won the World Cup in 1966 and lost to Italy in the Euro 2020 final - both times at Wembley Stadium.

"It's going to be unbelievably tough - a really difficult game," Kane said of the title match, with Spain widely regarded as the best team at the tournament.

"One more game to make history."

The sea of orange in the giant South Stand at Dortmund's Westfalenstadion fell silent for the first time after Watkins' late goal. It housed the most vocal of the Dutch supporters who dominated the city center before marching in their thousands to the stadium ahead of the game. Police reported three separate clashes between fans from both

countries in the city.

It gave the occasion the feeling of a home match for the Dutch and England was up against it even more after the 21-year-old Xavi Simons became the second youngest scorer for the Netherlands at a Euros.

The Paris Saint-Germain midfielder dispossessed Declan Rice about 40 meters (yards) out, drove forward and unleashed a shot into the far corner from outside the area.

Compared to the 16-year-old Yamal, Spain's new superstar, Simons is a soccer veteran but this was another case of a young player shining on the big stage at the Euros.

Kane has had plenty of big moments at major tournaments and he had another when he slotted home a penalty after Denzel Dumfries' outstretched leg made contact with Kane's foot as the England striker attempted a shot.

Kane became the sixth player to be on three goals for the tournament.

An open first half, which saw Dumfries and England's Phil Foden hit the goal frame, made way for a tight and tense second half that had a huge two-minute spell when Bukayo Saka had a goal disallowed before Kane and Foden were taken off.

It might rank as Southgate's best call in his eight-year England tenure. And that the goal was set up by Palmer, who entered as a substitute the same time as Watkins, will have made it even sweeter.

Colombia beats Uruguay 1-0 and will face Messi and Argentina in Copa America final

AP ■ CHARLOTTE (NORTH CAROLINA)

Jefferson Lerma scored in the 39th minute, and Colombia played a man short the entire second half in a 1-0 win over Uruguay on Wednesday night to reach the Copa America final against Lionel Messi and Argentina.

Daniel Muñoz was ejected in first-half stoppage time for his second yellow card, but Colombia held on to reach the championship for the first time since winning its only Copa title as host in 2001. Colombia extended its unbeaten streak to a team record 28 games, one more than from 1992-94 and the longest current streak in men's international soccer.

In a contentious match that included seven yellow cards and one red, players from both teams pushed and shoved in a scrum on the field at the final whistle. Darwin Núñez and about a dozen Uruguay teammates went into the stands as fans brawled.

A video showed Núñez hitting a fan in Colombian team colors.

Defending champion Argentina and Colombia meet Sunday night at Miami Gardens, Florida. The Albiceleste are seeking a record 16th Copa title and are looking to join Spain from 2008-12 as the only

countries to win three straight major championships.

Uruguay stays in Charlotte to meet Canada in Saturday night's third-place match.

Before an overwhelmingly pro-Colombia crowd of 70,644 that filled Bank of America Stadium with yellow jerseys and flags, Uruguay fell behind for the first time in the tournament.

James Rodríguez's corner kick was headed in from short range by Lerma, who outjumped José María Giménez for his third international goal and second of the tournament.

Rodríguez has six assists in the tournament -- triple the total of any other player.

Muñoz received his first yellow card from Mexican referee César Ramos in the 31st minute for a reckless slide tackle on Maximiliano Araújo and his second for elbowing Manuel Ugarte in the stomach.

Rodríguez was given a yellow card in the 55th minute for arguing with Ramos when the referee failed to stop play after Richard Ríos was kicked on a shin by Darwin Núñez.

Ríos was removed on a stretcher, re-entered the match, then went down in another challenge and was



substituted in the 62nd minute.

Rodríguez was removed at the same time to keep him eligible for the final.

Colombia goalkeeper Camilo Vargas didn't have to make his first save until he stopped Nicolás de la Cruz in the 68th minute.

Luis Suárez, Uruguay's career leader with 68 goals, entered in the 66th minute and hit the outside of a post with a shot in the 71st. He grasped his head in his hands in disgust.

Colombia's Mateus Uribe, another second-half sub, put an open shot wide in the 88th, and Uribe's open shot in the fourth minute of stoppage time ricocheted off the body of sliding goalkeeper Sergio Rochet and then the crossbar.

Uruguay moved Rochet up the field in the final minute, desperate for a goal.

The match was played in 90-degree heat on a surface that was converted from artificial turf to grass in the weeks leading up to the game.

Players on the NFL's Carolina Panthers have been outspoken about soccer teams having the luxury of playing on grass on their home field.

NFL games at venue are played on artificial turf, which players say leaves them more susce.

STARC EXPRESSES DISPLEASURE AT BEING DROPPED FOR T20 WC GAME AGAINST AFGHANISTAN

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian pacer Mitchell Starc has expressed his displeasure at being dropped for the crucial T20 World Cup Super Eights match against Afghanistan in the Caribbean, saying he was not one bit amused by the team management's decision. The 2021 T20 World Cup champions suffered a shocking 21-run loss to Afghanistan, which dealt a massive blow to Australia's chances of entering the semifinals. Australia had replaced Starc with Ashton Agar for the match but the left-arm spinner, despite tying down the Afghanistan batters, could not take any wickets. "No -- two World Cups in a row," Starc was quoted as saying by Sydney Morning Herald on Willow Talk podcast when quizzed about his omission and whether he was amused by the decision. "Just the match-up, they (team management) saw previous games on that ground in St Vincent with spin playing a part and obviously Ash (Ashton) and the left-armers enticing them to make a change," he added. This was the second occasion in a row where the Australian pacer was dropped for a T20 World Cup match against Afghanistan, with the previous one being in Adelaide in 2022 where also the hosts failed to reach the last four stage. Agar and the two Australian



pace spearheads, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins, were unable to break the partnership between openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and

Ibrahim Zadran, who ended up making 118 runs. "I think Ash bowled pretty well in the powerplay. They probably played the spin quite

well and batting first probably assessed the conditions a little bit better than we did, and had a couple of stumbles that in the end cost us the game," said

Starc. "It was probably the fielding that cost us again that game. That meant we had to win against India and we fell short

there as well." Australia then went on to lose to India in Super Eights and were later eliminated from the competition. Starc also expressed his displeasure with the scheduling of the tournament and pre seeding that saw them advance to the pre determined group despite topping the group stage. "We finished ahead of England (in the group stage) and end up where we were pre-seeded as the second side. All of a sudden, you're in a different group." "The argument was it was because it was so hard to get around the West Indies, so fans knew where your team was playing. "So then why don't you have the chock-a-block tournament at the front... And then spread it out at the back end? We had the two night games and the third was a day game, so it wasn't the best preparation. We had a delayed flight out of St Vincent, it was a 90-minute drive from the airport to the hotel in St Lucia, and then we had a 10 o'clock toss. He added that the travelling between venues in the West Indies is always difficult. "I think that was probably maybe a misread [by organisers], the fact that the front half of the tournament was more spread out, and then you hit the super eights and ... travel around the West Indies is probably not the easiest thing to do, certainly not to travel home from."



Shocked by that amazing catch: Avesh on Bishnoi's wonder grab in India's win against Zimbabwe

PTI ■ HARARE

Ravi Bishnoi's fielding has always had a touch of athleticism but he took it to a different plane in the third T20I against Zimbabwe when he leapt to pluck a screamer off Avesh Khan to dismiss Brian Bennett, leaving his India teammate in awe. India defeated Zimbabwe by 23 runs on Wednesday to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series but the talk in the dressing room was Bishnoi's astonishing catch to dismiss the Zimbabwe top-order batter, reducing the hosts to 19 for 3 in the fourth over. The pacer said he was left "shocked" for a moment. "When he took the catch, I don't think he got the reaction time. I also did not get the reaction time (to see what happened). I was, in fact, shocked how he took that catch," said Avesh, who took two wickets as India restricted Zimbabwe to 159/6 in the chase of 182. Avesh added that the wicket

should be credited to Bishnoi's account for the sheer effort. "He is a good fielder, works a lot on his fielding. The catch that he took, the scoreboard will show that it was taken by me, but it should be credited in his (Bishnoi's) account," added Avesh in a video posted by BCCI. India skipper Shubman Gill said it was a truly amazing effort from Bishnoi and showed that the leg-spinner was enjoying his fielding. "Very happy with the team's win to go 2-1 up in the series and the catch that Bishi (Bishnoi) took was absolutely remarkable. It was truly delightful to watch. "Cricket is definitely a team sport and it's more so a team sport when you're fielding. So, it's very important to have fun when you are fielding. If you are having fun then you are always in the game," added the captain. Washington Sundar said he had the best view of the catch as he was positioned at mid-on.



I could have done better in tennis than badminton, says Saina

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Trailblazing Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal feels she would have perhaps excelled more as a sportsperson if she had picked a tennis racquet instead of playing badminton. Nehwal has an impressive resume as a badminton player. Not only she became the first Indian woman shuttler to be ranked No. 1 in the world, she was the first woman athlete from the country to win an Olympic medal. "Sometimes I feel that it would have been good if my parents had put me in tennis," Saina said during her "Her Story-My Story" talk at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. "There is more money and I had more strength I think. I could have done better in tennis than badminton," she

added. While Saina has inspired many to take up badminton, the 34-year-old herself didn't have anyone to look up to when she picked the racquet at the age of 8. "When I started, I didn't have any role models to look up to. No one to look up to and say 'I want to be world number one or be an Olympic medallist,' I hadn't seen anyone do that in badminton before me," Saina said. Beside the London Olympics bronze, Nehwal also won a bronze and a silver at the World Championships and multiple Commonwealth Games gold, including two in the women's singles. She urged the youngsters present to explore a career in sports. "I always tell children to

concentrate on games. China wins 60-70 medals. We only get 3-4. There are so many doctors and engineers, their names don't come in newspapers," she said. "I want girls to especially to come forward and start getting fit and get into sports. Now we are there for the children, there are world number ones, Olympic champions and so many medallist to look up to," she added. Reflecting on her career, she said her hard work compensated for the lack of talent. "I loved hard work, I was not the most talented person, I need to practice a lot. If a talented player is doing something 100 times I had to do it 1000 times. But I like hard work. My coaches like my never give up attitude."

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly was on Thursday unveiled as the owner of the Kolkata Royal Tigers ahead of the Indian Racing Festival 2024, scheduled between August and September this year. Apart from the debutant Kolkata racing team, the event will see participation from seven other outfits based at Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Goa, Kochi, and Ahmedabad. The racing festival encompasses two main championships — Indian

Racing League (IRL) and the Formula 4 Indian Championship (F4IC). Expressing his enthusiasm for the association, Ganguly, the former BCCI president said: "I am truly excited to embark on this journey with the Kolkata team in the Indian Racing Festival. "Motorsports has always been a passion of mine and together with the Kolkata Royal Tigers, we aim to build a strong legacy in the Indian Racing Festival and inspire a new generation of motorsport enthusiasts." Akhilesh Reddy, Chairman and Managing Director of



Racing Promotions Pvt Ltd (RPPL), welcomed Ganguly to the racing fold. "We are thrilled to announce Sourav Ganguly as the owner of the Kolkata franchise. His visionary leadership and commitment to excellence, shaped by years of legendary cricketing success, brings unparalleled dynamism to the Indian Racing Festival," he said. It may be recalled that veteran India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has recently gambled in American Gambits, a team that will take part in the second edition of the Global Chess League.

Mumbai City FC ropes in Greek striker Nikolaos Karelis

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai City FC on Thursday announced roping in Greek striker Nikolaos Karelis ahead of the upcoming Indian Super League season. The 32-year-old, also known as Nikos Karelis, is set for his maiden stint in India. He began his youth career with Ergotelis and made his senior professional debut with them in 2007. Karelis has played for seven

more clubs including stints in Russia (Amkar Perm), Belgium (Genk), England (Brentford) and the Netherlands (ADO Den Haag). Mumbai City FC will be his eighth club. Karelis has netted 103 goals in 361 professional matches along with 29 assists, while his best performance at a club came for Panathinaikos, for whom he scored 36 goals in 114 competitive games. The 2014-15 season was his



standout when Karelis scored 19 goals in 50 contests. He won the Greek Cup with Panathinaikos in 2013-14. Later, he also won two titles with the Greek club PAOK in 2018-19 (Super League Greece and Greek Cup). Karelis was last associated with another Greek club Panetolikos, where he was adjudged its player of the season in 2022-23. "The team has achieved significant success over the

past few years, and I am eager to contribute to its continued success in the upcoming season," Karelis said in a release. MCFC head coach Petr Kratky said, "Nikos is a highly talented player who perfectly matches the requirements we expect from our forwards. He has experience playing in various European countries and has consistently proven his calibre in different leagues."

AP ■ LONDON

Carlos Alcaraz's ability to hit any type of shot, from any position on the court, on any surface, keeps fans on the edge of their seats. Keeps other players guessing, too. Alcaraz delights in all of that - he loves putting on a show just as much as he enjoys knowing he makes the guys on the other side of the net uncomfortable - and figures it can only help him in the Wimbledon semifinals against Daniil Medvedev on Friday. It's beneficial, Alcaraz said, that opponents need to focus on whether he'll be "able to be back (in) the point or ... Able to hit an unbelievable shot." "For me," he said, "it's great that they're thinking about it." Alcaraz, the No. 3 seed, is seeking a second consecutive trophy at the All England Club and fourth Grand Slam title overall. His triumph last month at the French Open made him, at 21, the youngest man to collect a major trophy on hard, grass and clay courts. Medvedev, who is seeded No. 5 and defeated No. 1 Jannik Sinner in the quarterfinals, won the 2021 U.S. Open but is just 1-5 in major finals. The other match Friday will be No. 2 Novak Djokovic, who has won seven of his men's-

Carlos faces Daniil and Novak plays Lorenzo in Wimbledon's semis



record 24 Slam championships at Wimbledon, against No. 25 Lorenzo Musetti, making his debut in a major semifinal. "Against him, you are probably more stressed, because he's probably the best player ever - or one of the best players ever," said the 22-year-old Musetti, who beat Taylor Fritz in five sets on Wednesday, while Djokovic got the day off because his foe, Alex de Minaur, withdrew with an injured hip. "You walk on court with a different mentality," said Musetti, whose 1-5 record

against Djokovic includes a five-set loss at this year's French Open that ended at after 3 a.m. "If I play in a certain way, I could have my shot in the next round." Alcaraz vs. Medvedev is a rematch from last year's semifinals, when Alcaraz won in straight sets before getting past Djokovic in the final. It also offers a contrast between a talented attacker (Alcaraz) and a consummate defender (Medvedev). "The most difficult thing about facing Daniil, or the most special thing about him, is he can reach every ball,"

Alcaraz said. "Well, he is like a wall. Every ball bounces back." Asked what Alcaraz's best quality is, Medvedev began this way: "To be honest, everything." That sounds like an exaggeration. Might not be. "That's where it's tough to play against him, because you hit, he can hit a winner from there. So you try to make his life difficult. You try to hit the shot as good as you can. Maybe he goes for it and he cannot make it," said Medvedev, who has won just two of their previous six encounters. "Carlos can do whatever, from any position," Medvedev said, "and that's not easy to play against." Tommy Paul, the 12th-seeded American who lost to Alcaraz in the quarterfinals, put something else on the lengthy list of the Spaniard's attributes. "He moves unbelievably well. He's probably the quickest player. It's very hard to get the ball by him," Paul said. "Grass suits him. He moves incredible on the grass. It's not easy to

change direction the way that he does. He stays pretty low. Yeah, I mean, it's not easy." And then, in a nod to the sort of highlight-reel material Alcaraz regularly produces, Paul added: "Half of the job when you're out there is not to let him win one of those crazy points - because when he does, he kind of gets on a roll."

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit before Executive Magistrate ,Puri , I, Ajay Laxmi Mohapatra Spouse of Adit kumar Mahapatra ,resident of Madhusudan Nagar, Lane-10, Talabania,Dist-Puri Pin-752002 declare that I have changed my name from Ajay Laxmi to Ajay Laxmi Mohapatra. Which was wrongly mention in my PPO Ajay Laxmi to Ajay Laxmi Mohapatra and in my husband's service records to Ajay laxmi Mohapatra for necessary correction. Henceforth I shall be known as Ajay Laxmi Mohapatra for all future purposes.



OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BARGARH
Email: rd_bgdh@yahoo.co.in
Gmail: rwdbgh@gmail.com

e-Procurement Notice No. ONLINE-BGH- 01 OF 2024-25

1	Name of the Work	:	Building works during 2024-25 in the district of Bargarh.			
2	EMD	:	@ 1% of the estimated cost put to tender			
3	Other details	:	As per DTGN			
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender online for bidding	Last Date & Time of Seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender		
1	2	From To	5	6		
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Bargarh	ONLINE-BGH-01 OF 2024-25	20.07.2024 at 11.00 A.M. upto 30.07.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.	30.07.2024 upto 5.00 PM	31.07.2024 at 11.00 A.M.		

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.

Executive Engineer
R.W. Division, Bargarh



GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, SUNDARGARH
Email: erkela@yahoo.co.in

TENDER CALL NOTICE
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. ONLINE-EERKL-03 of 2024-25

1.	Name of the Work	:-	Building Works			
2.	Total No. of works	:-	7 (Seven) Nos.			
3.	Estimated cost	:-	Rs. 4.05 to 24.30 Lakhs			
4.	Class of contractor	:-	"D", "C" & "B" Class			
5.	Period of completion	:-	01 (One) & 02(Two) Months			
6.	Type of Tender	:-	Single Cover			
7.	Other details					
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding	Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender		
1	2	From To	5	7		
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Sundargarh	Online - EERKL-03 of 2024-25	20.07.2024 from 10.00 AM upto 05.00 PM	25.07.2024 upto 1.00 PM	30.07.2024 at 11.00 AM		

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in & for more information please visit the office.

Additional Chief Engineer
RW Division-II,Sundargarh