



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.

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.

Continued on Page 2

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 Sonpat 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."

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RELATED STORIES ON PAGE 3



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and others during a meeting with economists at NITI Aayog, in New Delhi on Thursday

Modi and leading Economists meet to design Budget

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday met eminent economists to elicit their views and suggestions for the upcoming Budget, a senior Government official said. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Budget for 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha on July 23. Besides economists and sectoral experts, Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery and other members also attended the meeting. Sitharaman, Planning Minister Rao Inderjit Singh, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran and economists Surjit Bhalla and Ashok Gulati and veteran banker K V Kamath among others were present in the meeting. The Budget will be the first major economic document of the Modi 3.0 Government, which, among other things, is expected to lay the roadmap for making India a developed nation by 2047. President Droupadi Murmu, in her address to the joint sitting of Parliament last month, had indicated that the Government would come out with historic steps to accelerate the pace of reforms.

Continued on Page 2

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 INLD 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.

PUC certificate charges for vehicles increased



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has increased the pollution under control (PUC) certificate charges for petrol, CNG and diesel vehicles after a gap of about 13 years, Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said on Thursday. The charges for petrol, CNG or LPG (including bio fuel) two and three wheelers has increased from ₹60 to ₹80 and for four wheelers from ₹80 to ₹110, he said in a statement. Gahlot said the charges of PUC certificates for diesel vehicles has been revised from ₹100 to ₹140. The new rates will be effective as soon as it is notified by the Government, he said. The Delhi Government is committed to maintaining the city's air quality and ensuring that all vehicles meet the required pollution standards,

he said. It was a long-pending demand of the Delhi Petrol Dealers Association to keep up with the rising costs of pollution checking services, the Minister said. "Considering the request from the Delhi Petrol Dealers Association and the fact that pollution checking rates have not been revised since 2011, the Delhi Government has announced increasing the rates for pollution checking of vehicles in Delhi," he said. This revision is necessary to ensure that pollution checking stations can continue to operate efficiently and provide quality services to the public, he added. The association was advocating for an increase in pollution checking fees. Its representatives had last month met Gahlot with the demand to revise the rates.



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.

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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

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.

Continued on Page 2

Supreme Court summons State Chief Secretaries

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday summoned the Chief and Finance Secretaries of 16 States for non-compliance of the Second National Judicial Pay Commission recommendations on the payment of arrears of pension and other retirement benefits to the judicial officers. Expressing strong displeasure over non-compliance of the SNJPC's recommendations, a bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said, "We know how to extract compliance now. If we just say that the Chief Secretary will be present if the affidavit is not filed then it will not be filed.



"We are not sending them to jail but let them be here and then an affidavit will be submitted. Let they be personally present now," the bench said. Though seven opportunities have been granted to the states, it appears that full compliance has not been affected and several states are in default, it said.

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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 generating 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 gulla. 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."

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India progressing under Modi, Rahul misleading people: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP on Thursday said India is marching ahead on the path of progress under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and cited Government data to accuse Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of misleading people on the issue of employment and the government policies. The ruling party's charge comes a day after Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said the youth of the country have been completely demoralised by unemployment and claimed that their future is in "limbo" due to the BJP's "anti-education mindset".

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, party national spokesperson Syed Zafar Islam said that about 12.5 crore jobs were created in the last 10 years of the Modi government and the latest RBI report, released recently, showed creation of "five crore jobs in 2023-24 alone".

"This is a record in itself in the entire world. India is the most successful country in the world in job creation due to the strong leadership of Prime



Minister Modi. Rahul Gandhi, who insulted Hindus, has started following the religion of falsehood. He and other opposition leaders are misleading people by spreading lies," Islam charged. The BJP leader said that Rahul and other opposition party leaders may be claiming that there is unemployment in the country and jobs are not being created but the world doesn't say so. Multilateral and big institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund say inflation is under control in India and the country tops in job creation, he added. On Sunday, the Congress alleged that the Modi government had accentuated India's

"unemployment crisis" with the decimation of job-creating MSMEs through the "Tughlakian demonetisation, a hastily rushed GST, and rising imports from China". In a statement, Congress general secretary, in charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh had cited a new report by Citigroup, a global bank, to flag "alarming numbers", which he claimed confirmed what the Congress stated throughout the recent election campaign. Hitting back, Islam said the previous Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government under "an economist" Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had created just 2.9 crore jobs during its 10-year term. "Unemployment rate, which was at six per cent in 2017, has now come down to 3.2 per cent," he added. The data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) earlier this week indicated that India added nearly 4.7 crore jobs during 2023-24, taking the total number of employed people to 64.33 crore spread over 27 sectors covering the entire economy.

Mamata leaves for Anant wedding, may meet Pawar, Uddhav

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday left for Mumbai to attend the Friday's wedding ceremony of industrialist Mukesh Ambani's son Anant Ambani. Banerjee who is likely to hit multiple birds in a single shot will meet a number of senior leaders like Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray, NCP chief Sharad Pawar and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav during her stay in Mumbai. Anant is marrying businesswoman and classical dancer Radhika Merchant.

Banerjee's Mumbai trip marks her first meeting with national leaders since the Lok Sabha elections, highlighting the significance of her visit. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also likely to attend the wedding Banerjee may meet him also during her three-day stay in India's commercial capital. On what gift she was carrying for the wedding couple, none would hazard a guess though some insiders said, "when it is Didi then expect something outstanding." According to sources another celebrity from Kolkata's Tollywood film industry Raima Sen the

daughter of actress Moon Sen also has been invited to the wedding. Speaking to reporters before catching the flight Banerjee said, "I have been invited by Mukesh-ji and Nita-ji (Mukesh Ambani and Nita Ambani) to attend the wedding of Anant and Radhika. They requested me so many times. Therefore I am going to Mumbai to attend the wedding. Before that, I will meet Uddhav Thackeray. I will hold political talks as I am meeting him after a long time, especially after the Lok Sabha polls. I will also meet Sharad Pawar at his residence. Akhilesh will also be there tomorrow. So I might meet him as well depending on when he arrives." Banerjee who is looking to forge a united opposition to protest against the three new criminal laws Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA) --- that have from July 1 replaced Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and Indian Evidence Act --- is likely to discuss the modalities of the joint movement against the three laws, sources said.



According to her these new legislations would rob the people off their rights. Sources said the CM had instructed Trinamool MPs to be vocal against any anti-people measures of BJP govt. The Chief Minister who will possibly put up at a private hotel at Bandra-Kurla complex is likely to return to Kolkata on July 13, sources said adding she could also visit Delhi if required discuss the issue with other leaders. Banerjee's Mumbai trip assumes importance in the backdrop of her party's stupendous victory in the recently concluded parliamentary elections when her Trinamool Congress won 29 seats compared to opposition BJP's 12 and the Congress' one. More confident than ever before after the general elections Banerjee --- who

has for the past more than a decade been unsuccessfully trying to bring investors including the Ambanis to Bengal in a big way --- is likely to use her Ambani connections to make successful her government's annual Bengal Global Business Summit, experts say. Curiously Banerjee who leaves no chance to attack the BJP Government would not utter a word unlike the Congress or the Left post hiked in mobile-internet charges. Referring to her Mumbai visit CPI(M) central committee member Sujana Chakrabarty said "though there is no harm in a person attending the wedding ceremony of another person ... the question is whether the Chief Minister supports the hike in mobile rates ... perhaps she is not ... she has also not spoken a word against the hike in power bills by the power companies because her party has been taking donations from them." Meanwhile in a parallel development Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on Thursday met Home Minister Amit Shah and reported to him about the deteriorating law and order situation of the State

that included post poll violence and incidents of public flogging of common people by the TMC goons. Adhikari subsequently said that he had reported to the Home minister "about the atrocities committed against women in Chopra (where a woman was publicly flogged along with her alleged partner), Cooch Behar (where a lady BJP Minority Morcha Karyakarta was abducted and beaten), and Ariadaha (where a woman was held by her hands and legs and beaten with sticks), among others." Shah is known to have assured all help, sources said. The Chief Minister however refuted the BJP leaders' claims saying, "some television news channels continuously highlighted one incident but didn't show how peaceful the election was held in the state. Whenever there is something against the TMC, these channels get excited. If someone is guilty, action will be taken. Channels need to cross-check before broadcasting news. They are forced to do so or else the BJP will send CBI, ED and Income Tax Department after them. I am making an appeal now. If this continues, I will have to take legal action."

Disha Salian murder case: Mumbai police SIT summons BJP MLA

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a move that will pit the Ruling MahaYuti against the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Mumbai police has summoned BJP MLA and Union Minister Narayan Rane's son Nitesh Rane for questioning on the mysterious death of celebrity talent manager Disha Salian nearly hours ago. Disha (28), it may be recalled, had reportedly committed by falling from the 14th floor of Galaxy Regent building at Malad in north Mumbai on the intervening night of June 8-9, 2020. She had allegedly ended her life five days before actor Sushant Singh Rajput committed suicide at his rented duplex flat in Bandra in north-west Mumbai on June 14, 2020. Rane and BJP leaders have long been linking Sushant



Rajput's alleged death with that of Disha's death. Their allegation is that Disha was allegedly raped and murdered. They had turned the needle of suspicion towards Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray. After the then Opposition BJP had made an indirect allegation against him. Aditya had on December 23, 2022, hit back at the Shiv Sena government for trying to divert the attention of the people from the issue of Nagpur Improvement Trust (NIT) land allotment. I demand the resignation of chief minister Shinde. I am ashamed that these people were once with us." It may be recalled that on August 25, 2021 then Union Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Minister Narayan Rane on Wednesday upped the ante against the ruling Shiv Sena by reviving the controversial "suicides" by late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's ex-manager Disha Salian and Tik-Tok star Pooja Chavan. Rane - without taking any names - demanded to know

as to who were responsible for the deaths of Disha Salian and Pooja Chavan. "How did Disha Salian die? Who was present at the crime scene? Why have the police not established the cause of her death? What about the death of Pooja Chavan? I am not going to sit quietly, till the ministers responsible for the two deaths are arrested. If need be I will move the court. Let me see who will protect these ministers?" Sr Rane asked. Sr Rane's son Nitesh Rane raised suspicions about Disha's death, through three tweets. "Disha was apparently taken 2 her Malad home in a black Merc on the 8th night from the party... Sachin Waze also owned a black Merc which is with the investigation agencies now. Is it the same car? he was reinstated in the police department on the 9th of June... Connection?," Nitesh tweeted.

IAF contingent to take part in Exercise Pitch Black

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent landed today at the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Darwin, Australia for participating in Exercise Pitch Black 2024. The exercise is scheduled to be conducted from July 12-August 2 and is a biennial, multi-national exercise hosted by the RAAF, IAF said here on Thursday. Giving details, officials said IAF contingent comprises of over 150 highly skilled Air Warriors including pilots, engineers, technicians, controllers and other subject matter experts, who will be operating the formidable Su-30 MKI multirole fighters, with the C-17 Globemaster and the IL-78 Air-to-Air Refuelling aircraft in combat enabling roles. The name 'Pitch Black' was

derived from the emphasis on night time flying over large un-populated areas. This edition is slated to be the largest in the 43 year long history of Ex Pitch Black, which includes participation by 20 countries, with over 140 aircraft and 4400 military personnel of various air forces. The exercise will be focusing on Large Force Employment warfare aimed at strengthening international cooperation and shall facilitate experience enhancement with the IAF Su-30 MKI operating alongside the F-35, F-22, F-18, F-15, Gripen and Typhoon fighter aircraft. The exercise would provide IAF with an opportunity towards force integration with participating nations and mutual exchange of best practices.

The Indian Institute of Technology Ropar (IIT Ropar) and Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) have signed an important Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This agreement marks the beginning of a new era in the field of education, research, and industrial collaboration. The main objective of the MoU is to promote skill-based training and education, organize industrial visits, enhance research collaboration in areas of mutual interest, and exchange data for research purposes. Under this agreement, IIT Ropar will conduct capacity-building programs for PSPCL employees, which will enhance their skills and familiarize them with the latest technologies. Additionally, PSPCL will provide necessary data and support to IIT Ropar students

IIT Ropar, PSPCL sign MoU

PNS ■ PATIALA

to work on real industrial problems. On this occasion, Engineer R.S. Saini, Director/HR PSPCL, said, "This partnership will give us an opportunity to build a bridge between higher education and industry." Professor Rajeev Ahuja, Director IIT Ropar, sharing his thoughts, said, "This agreement will help our students gain real-world experience and strengthen industrial collaboration." The agreement was signed in the presence of Mr. Tejveer Singh, ACS Power, Engineer Baldev Singh Sran, CMD PSPCL, and Engineer Paramjeet Singh, Director-Generation PSPCL. This collaboration will undoubtedly prove beneficial for both institutions and will give a new direction to technical education and industrial development in Punjab.

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Modi and leading Economists meet to...

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She also said the Budget will be an effective document of the government's far-reaching policies and futuristic vision. Sitharaman has already held discussions with various stakeholders, including economists and captains of Indian industry, on the forthcoming Budget. Several experts have urged the government to provide tax relief to the common man to boost consumption and take steps to check inflation and accelerate economic growth. The economy has recorded a growth rate of 8.2 per cent in 2023-24. Earlier in February, Sitharaman presented an interim budget for 2024-25 in view of the Lok Sabha elections.

Chemicals used for WMD seized in Tamil...

From Page 1

Though the vessel was taken into control by the Customs Department at Kattupalli on 8 May 2024, the investigating agencies could complete the probe and identify the chemical only during the last few days. The consignment was seized by the Customs Department as it was found that the substance figured under the export control list COMET. Though officials of the ship told the security agencies that the chemical was for producing tear gas and riot control agents, the Indian officials were not convinced as there were reports that Pakistan and China were working on an offensive chemical and biological warfare program. An Australian investigator Anthony Clan had reported in 2020 itself that China and Pakistan have entered into a deal to expand bio warfare capabilities 'including running several research projects related to deadly agent anthrax'. Clan had said in his report that China's Wuhan Institute of Virology (the epicenter of the dreaded Covid-19 virus) and Pakistan's Defense

Canal breach in National...

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Assuring that the situation will be under control, she said, "In the next few hours, the repair will be completed. From tomorrow morning, water will start coming into the Canal. Three to four water treatment plants are affected, the production has decreased. In the Dwarka area, normal water supply will resume by tomorrow evening. Inquiry is required to know whether there was foul play. The canal was also breached in June last year, affecting the water supply to several areas of Delhi for two days. North west BJP MP Yogendra Chandolia reached among the people of Bawana and assured all possible help to the people. Trying to corner the AAP led Delhi government on the issue, he accused the AAP government and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) of not responding adequately. "Calls were made to the Municipal Corporation, water board officials, and flood irrigation, but only seven pumps were installed after 11 AM, which was insufficient," Chandolia stated.

Supreme Court...

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The bench made clear that it will not grant any more more extensions. It passed the orders after taking note of the submissions and perusing the note provided by lawyer K Parmeswar who is assisting the court as amicus curiae (a friend of court). At the outset, he also referred to the deduction of tax at source by the states on allowances which are due to the present and retired judicial officers. "Wherever exemptions are available under the Income Tax Act from deduction of TDS (tax deducted at source) on allowances, the state governments shall ensure that no deductions are made. Wherever TDS are wrongly deducted, the amount shall be

Education Minister's...

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The agency had earlier arrested the principal and vice principal of Jharkhand's Hazaribagh-based Oasis school in the case and two persons who allegedly led premises to NEET candidates where burnt question papers were recovered by the Bihar Police.

Temples welcome women...

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waste weekly from prominent temples including Hanuman Garhi, Kanak Bhawan, Nageshwar Nath Temple, Shri Kale Ram Temple, Gore Ram Temple, Bade Devkali Temple, Chhoti Devkali Temple, and Swaminarayan Temple. It converts it into items like incense sticks and havan cups, while providing safe working conditions and benefits to their employees. Startups like Hyderabad-based 'HolyWaste' and Delhi-NCR's 'Aaruhi' too have come forward in floral waste recycling, preventing thousands of kilograms of waste from ending up in water bodies or landfills each week. Poonam Sehrawat's startup, 'Aaruhi', focuses on innovative solutions for recycling floral waste from temples and other sources into useful products. Based in Delhi-NCR, 'Aaruhi' collects significant quantities of floral waste from over 15 temples in the region. This waste, which would otherwise contribute to environmental pollution, is transformed through sustainable practices into various marketable items. These include natural dyes for textiles, contributing to the fashion industry's sustainable efforts. Floral waste generated in

Crucial Security Meet...

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According to the fresh assessment made by the various security agencies, the local overground workers provided shelter, logistics and crucial information regarding the movement of security vehicles to these terrorists and in some of the cases also escorted them to their safe hideouts without coming on the radar of the security forces. In the case of the Kathua ambush, a sustained investigation is going on to identify the terror associates active in the area. Meanwhile, combing and search operations continued for the fourth day in succession to track down the footprints of the terrorists behind the attack. An adequate number of troops have been deployed in the hilly areas of Kathua, Udhampur, and Doda to neutralize the hiding group of terrorists on the run. The security forces combing the deep forests were treading cautiously to prevent getting honey-trapped. The security forces suspected the foreign terrorists may have planted improvised explosive devices in and around their safe hideouts to inflict injuries on the security forces.

Temples welcome women...

From Page 1

182 temples in Tiruchi, Thanjavur, Perambalur and Karur districts in Tamil Nadu are being converted into organic manure and used in the respective temple gardens under the ITC Mission 'Sunehra Kal' Green Temple Initiative. According to a study, the amount of floral waste produced in the religious institutions and homes in India increases during festival and wedding seasons. Dumping it directly in landfills along with other waste such as plastic and construction debris may delay degradation. Without sufficient exposure to air, the waste can take up to 30 years to decompose, and in the process release harmful greenhouse gases including methane. With Hyderabad's population growing, the city's limited landfills are overflowing, as per the research.

LG takes serious note of breach in Munak canal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday expressed concerns over the breach of a branch of Munak Canal and instructed the Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to take the matter up with state Water Minister Atishi and Flood Control Department Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj.

A letter by the Principal Secretary to the LG stated, "LG has taken serious note of the matter and has advised the Chief Secretary to take the matter with Minister (Water) and Minister (Flood Control Department), GNCTD so as to ensure that the matter is taken up with the Haryana Authorities at the appropriate level and this channel is restored, repaired and maintained at the earliest." The unlined segment of the canal should also be taken up for lining on priority, to avoid



breaches and water losses, it read. The letter also stated that there has been a massive breach in the Career Lined Channel (CLC) branch of Munak Canal, well within the boundary of Delhi. "Water in huge volume flowing out from the breached

Canal has caused flooding and inundated several residential areas in the locality as also the JJ Cluster in Bawana, impacting thousands of households, displacing families and creating general havoc." Expressing concern over the water disruption, the letter

stated that the CLC canal is the only source of water supply to Dwarka water treatment plant and its rupture is bound to cause disruption in water supply to that area. The LG issued directions to different departments and stated, "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." He directed the CEO of DJB to immediately reach the spot along with his team of engineers and coordinate with the Government of Haryana authorities to ensure restoration of Munak Canal at the earliest. "NDRF teams may be immediately asked to evacuate affected people from the area. Irrigation and Flood Control Department to deploy pumps

to drain out water at the earliest and provide additional boats to NDRF as required," Saxena directed. Saxena advised that the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) provides adequate arrangements for relief and rehabilitation measures and makes available basic minimum services including shelter to the people affected from the flooding caused by the breach. "Disaster Management Cell of Revenue Department may be advised to provide relief as per norms. Area District Magistrate to deploy a team of executive magistrates to coordinate relief and rescue operations. Local public announcements may be made to make people aware of the arrangements," he stated, directing the health department to ensure that medical teams are in place to address any exigencies and medical emergency.

BJP MP Chandolia expresses concern over breach

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The North West Delhi BJP MP Yogendra Chandolia expressed concern over the breach in the Munak canal on Thursday and met locals in the Bawana areas whose lives got affected because of the flooding caused by the rupture. "As soon as Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva and MP Yogendra Chandolia were informed by the local people about the breach of the Munak Canal wall in Bawana on Thursday morning, they spoke to the concerned officials of the Delhi and Haryana governments and directed them to start relief work," Delhi BJP Media Head Praveen Shankar Kapoor said. He added that following the



instructions of Sachdeva, the BJP MP worked tirelessly throughout the day on the ground to drain the water and went to Haryana to temporarily stop the water supply of Munak Canal. Speaking on the issue, Chandolia said, "When he received calls from workers that water had entered the JJ Colony in Bawana and the water level was continuously rising, he immediately informed the state BJP

President." Informing about his visit, he stated that he personally went to the area near the Munak Canal behind the colony with some officials and local people, where they found a breach in the dam. "After discussing the issue with the chief engineer overseeing the Munak Canal, I went to Garhi Bindroli village in Haryana, where the water for the Munak Canal is released from, and temporarily stopped the water supply," he said. "The water entering Delhi's Munak Canal was diverted and released into the Yamuna River to quickly drain the water that had entered the JJ Colonies. An area of seven kilometres was affected by this entire waterlogging," Chandolia claimed.

BJP to stage massive protest against rise in electricity bills

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP will stage a massive protest against the increased electricity bills in the national Capital in front of the Delhi Secretariat on Friday demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said that the protest is also aimed at forcing the AAP led city government to roll back the increased rates and invited everyone to bring their electricity bills and join the movement against the Kejriwal government. Delhi BJP MPs, MLAs, and Resident Welfare Association's officials will also join the protest. Sachdeva said, "The Delhi government, along with electricity companies, is looting the people of Delhi in two ways: first, by increasing the electricity bills by 8.75 per cent under the name of Power Purchase Adjustment Charge (PPAC), and second, by charging 7 per cent more in the name of the Pension



Trust." He added that these increases have been made without informing the public and without any Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) approval, causing the electricity bills of Delhi consumers to rise by 1.5 times. Questioning the Kejriwal government and the electricity companies, he asked, "Why is the pension of the retired employees of the electricity company, which is the respon-

sibility of the company, being collected from the people of Delhi under the name of the Pension Trust?" Delhi BJP chief alleged, "Even when Kejriwal was out of jail, the government was looting the people of Delhi, and now from inside the jail, it continues to do the same." He added that in the presence of many RWA representatives, people will burn copies of their electricity bills to show their anger against the government.

LG reviews flood control measures at meeting with DDMA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday chaired a meeting of Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) to review the flood control preparedness of all concerned agencies in the national Capital in light of waterlogging incidents across the city. Delhi Water Minister Atishi was also present in the meeting. While taking stock of the flooding due to breach in the Munak Canal in the Bawana area, the LG was informed that all directions issued by LG were being executed on site. The CEO of Delhi Jal Board (DJB), who had come from the site for the meeting, informed that the breach was being repaired at a war footing and will be completed by tomorrow evening. Saxena issued a total of 15 major directions to various agencies, including Irrigation & Flood Control Department (I&FCD), Public Works Department (PWD), Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC). The directions include carrying out extensive desilting of the drains,



that should have been completed by June 15, and clear all choked drains on an urgent basis. Saxena directed the MCD to step up the monitoring of drains and impose a penalty for disposing garbage in the drains, noting that such activities were primarily responsible for choking of drains that cause waterlogging in the city. "LG directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to ensure that there is no obstruction in the flow of the Yamuna due to construction of bridges and other activities in the floodplains," a statement by the Raj Niwas said. Vice Chairman of DDA

informed the LG that the authority will conduct a thorough inspection of river Yamuna in the Delhi Region on July 13 to assess and ensure that the flow of the Yamuna does not get obstructed at all during the monsoon. "The LG directed all agencies particularly the PWD, Railways and NCRTC to expedite and remove all their equipment and waste from the Yamuna at the earliest," it read. He directed the PWD, I&FCD and Tourism Department to immediately take up the cleaning of heavy deposits of construction and demolition (C&D) waste in the Yamuna near Signature Bridge which is a highly vulnerable point during

the flood. "While the LG was informed that the management and operation of all 22 major drains falling into the Yamuna has been assigned to the I&FCD, Saxena also directed for handing over the responsibility of operating regulators on these drains to I&FCD only. For this, he also directed the Department to hire additional manpower from other departments / agencies on diverted capacity to meet any contingency during the eventuality of flood in the Capital," the statement stated. Saxena was informed that 29 teams of NDRF, equipped with over 100 boats, are deployed in and around Delhi region to carry out the relief and rescue works in case of flood. A total of 15 major decisions were taken in the meeting including permanent and temporary pumps to be installed at vulnerable spots and monitored round the clock from the Control Room, all regulators and barrage gates to be manned by operators, engineers and technicians on 24x7 basis. Further, the directions were also given to I&FCD to remain in

constant touch with their counterparts in Haryana and upper reaches of Himachal Pradesh to monitor the rainfall levels and water discharge from Hathnikund Barrage on a regular basis. He directed the Revenue Department and concerned DMs to have adequate arrangements for evacuation of nearly 25,000 persons living in the low lying area, when the Yamuna crosses the danger mark. The Health Department has been directed to adequate arrangements in hospitals to deal with situations arising out of the flood and the subsequent outbreak of vector-borne diseases, he said. Other directives by Saxena include agencies to constantly monitor the waterlogging hotspots in case of heavy rains, DJB and the concerned DMs will ensure round the clock drinking water supply and food for the evacuees and critically vulnerable areas including Monastery Market, Nigam Bodh Ghat, Vijay Ghat, Chilla Regulator, Yamuna Bazar and Boat Club to be monitored round the clock from the Central Control Room.

SC judge recuses himself from Sisodia's bail plea revival hearing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Justice Sanjay Kumar on Thursday recused himself from hearing AAP leader Manish Sisodia's pleas seeking to revive his bail petitions in the excise policy-related corruption and money laundering cases. A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna, Sanjay Karol and Sanjay Kumar said another bench in which Justice Kumar is not a member will take up Sisodia's two separate pleas for reviving his bail petitions in cases filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the case. As soon as the matter was taken up for hearing, Justice Khanna said, "Our brother has

some difficulty. He will not like to hear this matter for personal reasons." Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Sisodia, requested the bench to list the matter urgently, saying time is of essence. He said the trial has not yet commenced in both the cases. The bench said another bench will take it up on July 15. On July 8, the top court agreed to list Sisodia's plea after Singhvi said an application has been filed for revival of a disposed of petition which was filed seeking bail in the cases. The plea said the law officer, appearing for the probe agencies, told the bench that the charge sheet and prosecution complaint in the main excise policy case and the linked money laundering matter will

be filed on or before July 3. "In the Manish Sisodia matter, he has been in jail for 16 months. The court said the trial must conclude, it hasn't started. I filed the special leave petition (SLP), they gave liberty to revive after July 3. The court gave liberty to list..." Singhvi had submitted. On June 4, the top court refused to entertain the bail pleas of Sisodia in cases lodged by the CBI and the ED in connection with the alleged Delhi liquor policy scam. While declining the bail, the bench on June 4 said Sisodia can revive his petitions for bail after the ED and the CBI file their final prosecution complaint and charge sheet respectively in the cases involving alleged corruption and



money laundering. A prosecution complaint is the ED's equivalent of a charge sheet. A vacation bench of justices Aravind Kumar and Sandeep Mehta had noted the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the ED and the CBI, that the central probe agencies would file their final prosecution complaint and charge sheet by July 3. "In the light of the said submissions made and having regard to the fact that the period of 6-8 months fixed by this court by order dated October 30, 2023 having not come to an end, it would suffice to dispose of these petitions with liberty to the petitioner to revive his prayer afresh after filing of the final complaint/charge-sheet

as assured by Solicitor General," the bench said in its order. It added in the event of such a bail application being filed, the same would be considered on its own merits as already observed by this court in the October 30, 2023 order. Sisodia had earlier moved the apex court challenging the Delhi High Court's May 21 verdict which dismissed his bail pleas in the cases probed by the two central agencies. The former Delhi chief minister had challenged in the high court a trial court's April 30 order by which it had rejected his bail applications in the cases involving alleged irregularities in the formulation and execution of the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy for 2021-22. On October 30 last year, the top

court denied him bail in the corruption and money laundering cases related to the alleged Delhi excise policy "scam", saying the accusation of "windfall gains" of Rs 338 crore to wholesale liquor dealers was "tentatively supported" by evidence. While dismissing the regular bail plea, the top court gave him liberty to approach the courts for relief if there was a change in the circumstances or trial got protracted. Sisodia was arrested by the CBI on February 26, 2023 for his alleged role in the liquor policy case. The ED arrested him in the money laundering case stemming from the CBI FIR on March 9, 2023. He resigned from the Delhi cabinet on February 28, 2023.

Mayor, Transport Minister inspect Najafgarh Assembly constituency

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Mayor Dr. Shelly Oberoi and Transport Minister Kailash Gehlot on Thursday inspected Najafgarh Assembly constituency area to take stock of the cleanliness system and civic amenities. During the inspection, the mayor did not find the cleanliness in the area satisfactory and directed the officials to clean the street drains regularly to avoid waterlogging in the area. Oberoi also interacted with the local residents and heard their problems. Informing the mayor about the requirements of more sanitation workers in the area to improve the sanitation system, the residents urged the mayor to strengthen the sanitation system of the area. While talking to the local people, she said, "I am the Mayor of the whole Delhi, so no matter which political party the councillors belong to, I will not discriminate in any way regarding cleanliness



of the area." She urged the residents to inform her of any problem related to cleanliness or civic amenities and assured that she will solve it as soon as possible. "Due to lack of cleaning near Surakhpur drain, waterlogging was happening. To solve the problem of waterlogging in the area, MCD has installed a temporary pump near Surakhpur drain. Also, debris has been spread on the road so that there is no waterlogging and pedestrians do not face problems in movement," she said. Oberoi assured the citizens that she will issue strict directions to the senior officials to ensure regular cleaning in

Najafgarh area. "She is very serious about the cleanliness of the city and any kind of laxity in the cleanliness work will not be tolerated," the mayor said, adding that she has visited different areas and reviewed the sanitation system and other civic amenities. "My aim is to make Delhi clean and garbage free," she said. During the inspection, the Mayor visited many areas including Mitraon village, Gopalnagar and Surakhpur. Deputy Commissioner of Najafgarh Zone Badal Kumar and other senior officers of MCD were also present during the inspection.

68-year-old man commits suicide by jumping in front of metro

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 68-year-old man allegedly committed suicide on Thursday by jumping before a train at the Kashmere Gate metro station on the Red Line, officials said. A senior police officer said the man has been identified as Sunil Gupta, a resident of Chawari Bazar. The officer said that according to the victim's brother, Gupta was suffering from tuberculosis for the past few years and had already spent more than Rs 6 lakh on his treatment. According to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), services on the Red Line -- which connects Rithala in Delhi to Shaheed Sthal (New Bus Adda) in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh -- were affected for a while.

Police nab over 100 fraudulent travel agents till June this year

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has nabbed more than 100 fraudulent travel agents for allegedly sending passengers abroad from across the country, using various ways of cheating till June this year, officials said on Thursday. This was more than 200 per cent increase as compared to the same period last year, the officials added. These travel agents were nabbed from Punjab, Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra and West Bengal. According to a statement by the IGI Airport, 51 fraudulent agents were nabbed during the same period in 2023. "We have arrested total 108 such agents and the arrests have been made nationwide. The police have shifted their focus towards holding agents accountable rather than solely targeting the passengers, who may unknowingly fall victim to illegal immigration schemes, often seeking better

opportunities abroad," Deputy Commissioner of Police (IGI Airport) Usha Ranganani said. The officer further claimed that around 75 Look Out Circulars (LOCs) have been issued for agents who have fled abroad or remain untraceable, ensuring their apprehension on arrival or departure from India. Revealing the modus operandi of such agents, the officer said agents provide counterfeit visas that closely resemble the genuine ones to passengers. Despite their attempts to replicate the original visas, passengers are frequently apprehended at immigration check posts or airline counters, the officer said. Even if they manage to bypass the Indian authorities, they are often intercepted at the destination country's immigration check. "We have arrested total 19 such agents in the first six months this year who were involved in

such fake visa scams. We have also arrested 11 agents who were involved in donkey

routes scam (helping people cross borders illegally)," said the DCP.

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DIRECTOR

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 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 radar 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. More than 11 lakh candidates had registered for the examination which determines eligibility for junior research fellowship, appointment as assistant professors and admission to PhD in Indian universities and colleges. The examination was cancelled by the Union Education Ministry on June 19 following the alert from the Union Home Ministry's National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian



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 Sriramulu on Thursday alleged that the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation scamsters honey-trapped Government and bank officials to misappropriate money.

Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday raided several locations in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana allegedly linked to Nagendra and Daddal.

SP, Dy SP among 9 booked for assaulting SI

TI ■ KHAGARIA

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.

July 4, taking into account the complaint of Amalendu Singh, who was earlier posted at the Mansi Police Station here," the SP said.

kill him. He claimed that many in the district police had been nursing a grudge against him ever since he caught an impostor, hailing from Begusarai, who was "serving" as a sub-inspector in Khagaria.

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.

CORRIGENDUM NO. 1 DATED 10-07-2024. Some modification has been made in Tender No. N_3_HQ-2024-25, Chapter-III, Item No. 38: (Terms of Payment): Please read as: "The supply and work execution certification will be done by concerned divisional depots for their respective quantities given in schedule. Overall supply, execution & Bill MB will be filled by SSES & Certified by respective officer in charge as given below based on the work and supply certification on field MB filled by respective supervisor as under or decided by CCE/ NFR/ Dy.CSTE/HQ cum Tele & Works/ Sr.DSTE of concerned division, if required."

PUBLIC NOTICE. This is for the information of general public that my client Maini Gupta D/o Suresh Gupta R/o 12, Jaipur Estate, Nizamuddin East, New Delhi-110013, is the original allottee and owner of Residential Apartment No. A-703, on 7th Floor, Block-A, addressing 171.93 Sq. Mts. Situated in Central Park, Main Sector Road, Sector 42 (Near DLF Golf Course), Dist. Gurgaon, Haryana. My client has lost and/or misplaced some of the Original Documents w.r.t. aforesaid Property and and/or her above stated house on 10 June 2024.

PUBLIC NOTICE. It is hereby informed to the General Public that I/We, Daksh Kumar & Ruchi Varshney S/o Sh. Anil Kumar, R/o A-27, Swarn Jayanti Rail Nagar, Sector 50, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201301 have lost the Original Provisional Allotment Letter No. JGNKCA040301 Dated 30/07/2009 issued by Jaiprakash Associates Ltd. in respect of Unit bearing No. KCA0040301 in Classic Project, situated at Jaypee Greens, Noida. Anyone finding the said documents is requested to kindly return the same to me or to the Company.

PUBLIC NOTICE. It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Santosh has acquired Built Up Property bearing No. H-4112, area 35 sq. yds., Kharsra No. 841, situated at Village Ghonda Gurjar Khadar, H-Block, Gali No. 24, Jai Prakash Nagar, Ghonda, Ilaqa Shahdara, Delhi vide Gt. Deed dt. 10.05.2024 executed by Mr. Basant Singh Dully regd. as Doc. No. 2024/12/1550, New Mrs. Santosh is the undisputed owner of above said property.

NORTHERN RAILWAY Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. NOTICE INVITING TENDER. 30-Elect-24-T-2024-25-E3. Electrical work in connection with (i) Development of Goods shed at Jhajjar (JHJ), (ii) Development of Goods shed at Rohtak (ROK).

OFFICE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER, CONSTRUCTION UNIT, UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM GHINGARIKHAL, RANIKHET, DISTT-ALMORA 263645. E-Tender Notice. Letter No.: 1024/Nivida/80 Date: 10-07-2024. 1. Name of the work:- CONSTRUCTION OF PROPOSED TOURING OFFICER'S QUARTER AT CIVIL AND SOYAM FOREST RANGE, JAGESHWAR DISTT. ALMORA.

KUMAUN UNIVERSITY, NAINITAL (UTTARAKHAND). Notice for the Empanelment of Vendors (2024-25). Kumaun University, Nainital, invites applications from reputed booksellers, distributors, vendors, publishers, suppliers, and agents for empanelment as authorized vendors for the supply of books for the financial year 2024-25.

ART HOUSING FINANCE (INDIA) LIMITED. Exciting News: We're Moving to a New Location! We are thrilled to announce that we will be relocating to a new branch to better serve you!

CORRIGENDUM. Due to administrative reason following changes has been made against Tender Notice No. LMG/ENG/90 of 2024 dated 13-06-2024. Date & time of closing of above tender now to be read as 15:00 hrs. on 18-07-2024 instead of 15:00 hrs. on 11-07-2024.

PUBLIC NOTICE. Sant. Neha Maheshwari W/o Shri Vikas Kumar R/o not known, Smt. Sweta Maheshwari W/o Jitendra Kumar R/o not known, both are daughters of our clients (1) Shri Ramesh Kumar Maheshwari & (2) Smt. Neelam Maheshwari W/o Shri Ramesh Maheshwari R/o Z 7 E Deepak Vihar, Udam Nagar, West Delhi, Delhi-110058. The said "both daughters" Smt. Neha Maheshwari & Smt. Sweta Maheshwari, their husbands and children have become defunct and are harassing our said clients for their great loss several years. Therefore, above said clients Shri Ramesh Kumar Maheshwari & Smt. Neelam Maheshwari have severed all kinds of relationship with their daughters Smt. Neha Maheshwari & Smt. Sweta Maheshwari, husbands and children and have discovered them and ordered them from interfering any kind of movable and immovable property owned by our above said clients. Any person dealing with them will do so at their own risk.

APPENDIX IV-A. Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property. E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

APPENDIX IV-A. Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property. E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

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PUBLIC NOTICE. It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Vandana Sharma who is owner of Property No. 701, area measuring 150 sq. yds., Part of Kharsra No. 837, situated at Village Tamoornagar, New Friends Colony, New Delhi, having acquired the same from her husband from Mr. Narenber Sharma vide Gt. Deed dated 02.03.2023 registered vide Document No.1233, at Sub-Registrar, VI, New Delhi, who was owner of the aforesaid property & other land as per records of revenue vide Khatai basis, and same to be finance & mortgage by Fedbank Financial Services Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person having any type of claim/right/interest in the said property or any other land or interest in the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all types of Encumbrances, liens etc. Lucem Legal LLP Plot No. 136, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049, Contact # 011-40046316

PUBLIC NOTICE. Notice is hereby given to the General Public that of Mrs. Vandana Sharma, W/o. Vikas Kumar, R/o. B-2, 2nd Floor, area 75 Sq. Ft., built on Plot No. 31416, at Sector-5, Vasant Vihar, West Delhi, New Delhi, U.P. by virtue of her death of late Mr. Utam Singh and his died on 20.05.2021 as per SMC dated 07.11.2021, and Mrs. Vandana Sharma W/o. Vikas Kumar, R/o. B-2, 2nd Floor, area 75 Sq. Ft., built on Plot No. 31416, at Sector-5, Vasant Vihar, West Delhi, New Delhi, U.P. is the sole and legal heir of the deceased Mr. Utam Singh and she is the owner of the said property and she is the owner of the said property and she is the owner of the said property and she is the owner of the said property.

APPENDIX IV-A. Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property. E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Chandra Kishor Agarwal S/o Ramesh Chandra Agarwal R/o 221A, 8A, First Floor, Ganesh Enclave, Nehru Nagar, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Chander Kishore Agarwal.

PD(589)A I, Sachin Agrawal S/o Chander Kishore Agarwal R/o 221A, 8A, First Floor, Ganesh Enclave, IIC, Nehru Nagar, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Sachin Agarwal.

PD(590)A I, hitherto known as Simrat D/o Tej Mohan Singh and W/o Keshav Nagi R/o B-484, Sarita Vihar, Near Apollo Hospital, Sarita Vihar, New Delhi-110076 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Simrat Kaur. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

PD(591)C I, Mrs. Poonam Jaiswal Modi W/o Rajesh Kumar Modi R/o 107-Naveentam Apartments Sector-09, Rohini-110085, hereby declare that Mrs. Poonam Modi & Mrs. Poonam Jaiswal Modi is one and the same Person.

PD(592)C

NORTHERN RAILWAY 1st CORRIGENDUM. Name of Work:- "Electrical work regarding repairing of Air-Conditioning System installed at Dormitories in DLI Main Railway Station with other works and provision of VRF type air conditioning plant along with CAMC." The amendments in above said tender are as under:

ANNEXURE - II POSSESSION NOTICE (SECTION 13(4)) (For Immovable property) Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Canara Bank under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act 54 of 2002) (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a Demand Notice dated 30.03.2024 calling upon the Borrower M/S AGNIHOTRI CONSTRUCTION (borrower) and Mr. SUBODH KUMAR AGNIHOTRI (borrower) pay the amount mentioned in the notice, bearing Rs. 70,14,854.78 (Rupees Seventy Lakhs Fourteen Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Four and Paise Seventy Eight Only) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

Canara Bank REGIONAL OFFICE, WEST DELHI, PHONE: 011-2845099, 9821711328. ANNEXURE - II POSSESSION NOTICE (SECTION 13(4)) (For Immovable property) Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Canara Bank under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act 54 of 2002) (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a Demand Notice dated 30.03.2024 calling upon the Borrower M/S AGNIHOTRI CONSTRUCTION (borrower) and Mr. SUBODH KUMAR AGNIHOTRI (borrower) pay the amount mentioned in the notice, bearing Rs. 70,14,854.78 (Rupees Seventy Lakhs Fourteen Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Four and Paise Seventy Eight Only) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Going strong @75

The 2024 NATO summit concluded with pledges to support Ukraine and strengthen defence preparedness

Seventy-five years ago, 12 nations gathered in Washington, DC to sign the North Atlantic Treaty, better known as NATO aiming to safeguard their collective defence amid the rise of communism under Soviet Union. This year, 32 NATO Allies convened once more in Washington, DC to make critical decisions on ensuring the protection of the member countries. In these 75 years a lot has changed. The Soviet Union does not exist and the Warsaw Pact has been disbanded. But NATO is alive and taking on new challenges in the emerging world order. The 2024 NATO Summit concluded after three days of high-level discussions and strategic deliberations among the member states. Basically, a product of cold war era, NATO has been pivotal in addressing pressing global security challenges, reaffirming commitments to collective defence, and exploring new avenues of cooperation among the member states. One of the primary focuses of the summit was of course reinforcing NATO's collective defence posture. In response to



escalating tensions and conflicts in various parts of the world, NATO leaders agreed to bolster their military capabilities and readiness. This includes increased defence spending by member states, the deployment of additional troops to Eastern Europe, and the enhancement of cyber defence mechanisms. NATO members reaffirmed their commitment to expanding partnerships beyond its traditional geographical boundaries.

The summit saw increased engagement with non-member countries, emphasising the importance of global security cooperation. Key partners, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, participated in discussions on shared security concerns

and collaborative initiatives. In the new world order China and Russia have emerged a formidable player in the world arena. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine remained a critical issue at the summit. NATO reiterated its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. NATO has remained steadfast in its support to Ukraine and has supported Ukraine's war efforts but just about avoiding direct confrontation with Russia and widening the scope of war. India so far has maintained a safe distance with NATO. It has charted its own nonaligned path steering clear of either of the two blocs NATO and now defunct, The Warsaw Pact. India, though not a NATO member, has been closely monitoring the developments of the summit. As a major player on the global stage, the outcomes of the NATO summit have several implications for India's strategic interests and foreign policy. India has been increasingly engaging with NATO members on various fronts, including defence and security cooperation. The emphasis on collective defence and partnerships at the summit opens avenues for India to deepen its strategic ties with NATO countries. Joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and defence technology collaborations could see a significant boost, enhancing India's defence capabilities.

PICTALK



Anganwadi workers conduct inspection of stored water to curb the spread of dengue during monsoon

PTI

Will Democrats nominate Joe Biden



KALYANI SHANKAR

As the Democratic Party prepares to nominate him, questions linger about Biden's ability to lead, the party's strategy and potential challengers

U.S. President Joe Biden's underwhelming performance in the 2024 presidential debate last week raised concerns due to his apparent fatigue, forgetfulness, and confusion. This has caused uncertainty among supporters despite Biden's attempts to reassure them in the post-debate period. Even last week, during a speech in Madison, Wisconsin, he initially said he would "beat Donald Trump again in 2020" before correcting himself to "2024," which added to the uncertainty. According to the Spanish newspaper El Pais, Biden has defended himself about three things. First, his support stayed pretty much the same after the debate. Secondly, most party voters want him to continue. The last point is that other options are not better. President Biden has demonstrated resilience in the face of pressure to step down. He confidently declared at a rally in Madison that he would run and win again, which cheered his supporters and reassured sceptics. President Biden's improved performance in his public appearances post-debate has the potential to significantly reshape his chances in the upcoming election and the prospects of the Democratic Party.

This shift in dynamics could bring a sense of hope and anticipation to the party. Next month, the Democratic Party will nominate President Biden as its 2024 Presidential candidate in a virtual convention. This event will officially confirm Biden's candidacy and establish the party's campaign strategy. If Biden stays in the race, it will be tough for any other candidate to win the Democratic nomination. This is because the party rules give Biden a big advantage. These rules include specific guidelines for delegate allocation and superdelegate influence.

If Biden were to resign, who would take his place? With only four months before the 2024 election, finding the right person takes a lot of work. This shows how serious the situation is. Kamala Harris, the current Vice President and Joe Biden's running mate is the top contender for the



upcoming presidential election. Many believe that she has the advantage. However, her lack of popularity could be a significant challenge, as 49% of Americans disapprove of her according to polling averages. Republicans hope Harris will become the Democratic presidential nominee, believing it will benefit Trump's campaign. The Trump campaign has launched an ad with the slogan: "This November, vote Republican. Stop Kamala." A recent poll by Reuters/Ipsos showed that Michelle Obama could win against Trump in November. However, Michelle has repeatedly said she does not aspire to be President, so it's doubtful she will run. Several names are being floated to replace President Biden.

This includes at least six governors: Gavin Newsom from California, Gretchen Whitmer from Michigan, Josh Shapiro from Pennsylvania, J. B. Pritzker from Illinois, and Ro Khanna, a representative from California. Each of these potential candidates has their strengths and weaknesses. For instance, Gavin Newsom is the favourite. Their potential to run for office would have dif-



IF BIDEN WERE TO RESIGN, WHO WOULD TAKE HIS PLACE? WITH ONLY FOUR MONTHS BEFORE THE 2024 ELECTION, FINDING THE RIGHT PERSON TAKES A LOT OF WORK. THIS SHOWS HOW SERIOUS THE SITUATION IS

ferent effects on the Democratic Party and the upcoming election. After the debate, polls from CNN, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal showed that Biden is six points behind Trump in the country. Biden is also trailing in the most crucial states he won in 2020. Furthermore, other states he won—Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Virginia—now seem uncertain.

In 2020, four months before the election, Biden was 9 points ahead in the polls. However, he eventually won the election with 51.25% of the popular vote, compared to Trump's 46.8%.

This data suggests Biden may face a more challenging race in 2024 than 2020. When asked whether he could run the country for another term, he told ABC in a recent interview. "I believe so; I wouldn't be running if I didn't think I did. Look, I'm running again because I believe I understand best what has to be done to take this nation to a completely new level. We're on our way." Polls reveal that voters are more concerned about whether the 81-year-old President could manage another four years in the

White House than his 77-year-old predecessor.

Biden needs to be more competent to win in November. Biden was confident when he said, "If the Lord Almighty came down and said, 'Joe, get out of the race,' I'd get out of the race," but added, "The Lord Almighty's not coming down." So, it is up to God Almighty to go down and ask him to keep out of the race. Trump quietly observes Biden's challenging position. India has had a good rapport with both Trump and Biden. There is also bipartisan support. Therefore, it is unlikely that their South Asia and India policies will change, given the growing economic influence of India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also has a good rapport with both of them. Biden is facing challenges as he moves toward November. Trump has raised a lot of money and still has support from his party despite some court decisions going against him. Both candidates are trying to harm each other's reputation. Elections are unpredictable, especially with four months to go. Anything could happen.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Upgrade teaching standards in new technology



During the IT industry boom, many engineering colleges in India emerged without updated curricula, industry linkages,

or adequate student-faculty ratios. Except for IITs, some NITs, and a few private colleges, these institutions have failed to produce job-ready graduates.

A survey by Aspiring Minds revealed that 86% of engineers are unemployable in the knowledge economy. Most private engineering colleges now focus on AI, ML, DS, and IoT, but 90% of their teachers lack fundamental knowledge in these fields. Teachers need continuous professional development through refresher courses and orientation programs to stay current. Teaching AI and Data Science requires a different approach than programming them. Addressing the gaps in teaching standards, particularly in emerging technologies, is crucial for preparing future engineers and maintaining the quality of education in India.

M Suresh Babu | Hyderabad

pose alternatives, and facilitate smooth functioning of the House. Gandhi's recent actions have portrayed him as a proactive leader, but he must be mindful of his conduct. The effectiveness of his maiden speech as LoP is debated, but it undeniably stirred significant responses from the Prime Minister and Union ministers. The upcoming budget session will be keenly watched to see if the Opposition can maintain its momentum.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

ADDRESS MOB LYNNING IN UP

Madam — In 2023, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced a provision for the death penalty for mob lynching under new criminal laws. However, this commitment seems hollow in practice. In Shamli district, Uttar Pradesh, scrap dealer Firoz Qureshi was lynched by a mob, yet local authorities downplayed the incident as a mutual dispute. When journalists Zakir Ali Tyagi and Wasim Akram Tyagi reported on the

lynching, they faced FIRs for allegedly disturbing communal harmony.

The Press Club of India has rightly called for the cancellation of these FIRs, emphasizing that reporting publicly available information is a cornerstone of authentic journalism. The arbitrary use of laws to intimidate journalists violates Article 19(1)(A) of the Constitution. Upholding journalistic freedom is essential to maintaining a democratic society.

Mob lynching must not be tolerated because it represents a severe breakdown of the rule of law and undermines the foundations of a civilized society. It fosters a climate of fear and impunity, where individuals take the law into their own hands, leading to tragic and often fatal outcomes. Such acts of violence erode trust in legal institutions, perpetuate communal hatred, and jeopardize the safety and rights of individuals.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The synergy between culture and economy

Culture and economy are deeply intertwined, each influencing and enhancing the other. This can lead to sustainable economic progress



PRABHA GUPTA

Culture and economy are deeply intertwined, each influencing and shaping the other in multiple ways. This synergy can be observed through various lenses, from local community impacts to global economic trends. Cultural assets such as traditions, arts, and heritage sites can drive economic growth. Cities with rich cultural histories often attract tourism, which stimulates local businesses and generates revenue. For example, the cultural heritage of cities like Paris and Rome makes them top tourist destinations, contributing significantly to their economies.



structure such as museums, theatres, and festivals, they create vibrant communities that attract residents, businesses, and tourists. These investments can lead to urban regeneration and increased property values.

A culturally diverse workforce brings various perspectives and skills, fostering creativity and problem-solving. This diversity can enhance a company's ability to innovate and adapt to changing markets, making economies more resilient to shocks.

Globalisation has increased cultural exchange, leading to the spread of ideas, goods, and services across borders. This cultural exchange can open new markets for businesses and create opportunities for economic partnerships. For instance, the glob-

al popularity of K-pop and Japanese anime has created vast economic opportunities for South Korea and Japan. Cultural education enhances human capital by fostering critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills. These qualities are essential in the modern economy, where knowledge and innovation are key drivers of success. Investing in cultural education can thus contribute to a more skilled and adaptable workforce.

Maitreya Dadashri, the force behind the summit also shared this vision, "The synergy between culture and economy forms the foundation of sustainable development. We envision a future where spiritual and economic prosperity evolve hand in hand," he said.

Countries and cities often use culture to brand themselves and build soft power. Cultural diplomacy, through international cultural events, exchanges, and collaborations, can enhance a nation's global image and influence, attracting foreign investment and tourism. Law and Justice Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal echoed this senti-

ment at the Maitri Cultural Economy Summit 2024. "The Modi government has been dedicated to nurturing culture to harness its economic potential," he said. He emphasised that India's cultural economy is deeply rooted in the ancient wisdom of the Vedas and Puranas, making it an intrinsic part of the nation's identity. Cultural tourism in cities like Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Puri, along with major events such as the Kumbh Mela, play a significant role in contributing to the GDP.

In conclusion, the synergy between culture and economy is a powerful combo that drives both societal and economic progress. By recognizing and fostering this relationship, policymakers, businesses, and communities can harness cultural assets to achieve sustainable economic growth and development. This was aptly summed up by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari when he said that importance of cultural economic governance must be the cornerstone of our policies.

(The writer is a social activist and business consultant; views are personal)

USE OF DIGITAL TECH IN HEALTHCARE

Madam — Apropos the article "Transforming healthcare with digital technologies," published on July 9, this is my response. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for digital transformation in the healthcare sector. According to the 2018 Digital Trends report by Econsultancy, only 7% of healthcare and pharmaceutical companies have gone digital, compared to 15% in other industries. The pandemic has underscored the importance of digitizing medical services, which can reduce costs and improve quality.

For instance, Austria's e-Medication system has been running successfully for years, allowing patients to access their electronic medical records anytime and anywhere. Similarly, doctors in Sweden and Denmark send e-prescriptions to pharmacies. The UK's National Health Service is working with Google to deploy AI in healthcare. Digital transformation empowers patients to manage their treatment independently and ensures that medical histories are readily accessible in emergencies, eliminating the need for physical files.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

RAGA AS LEADER OF OPPOSITION

Madam — During the last week, Rahul Gandhi visited Haryana, Manipur, and Rae Bareilly, expressing his opinions on various incidents as the Leader of Opposition. This reflects a mature Indian democracy and raises expectations for his role in the next budget session. A 2012 government note described the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha as the "Shadow Prime Minister of India." Since becoming LoP, Gandhi has targeted Modi inside and outside Parliament.

However, with great power comes great responsibility. Gandhi must maintain the sanctity of his position, opposing questionable government policies without obstructing proceedings. He should ensure government accountability, pro-



FIRST COLUMN PM MODI'S STRATEGIC VISIT

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



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

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 Middle East featured prominently in all the discussions, even though the flavours were significantly different.

The India-Russia joint statement following President Putin and PM Modi's 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 actionable statements on world conflicts.

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

A call for civility and integrity in democracy



J S RAJPUT

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. Rajput In a functional democracy, election times could indeed become a celebration time, not only the competing candidates and their parties, 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 cre-



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 about how 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/ST 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.



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 mutu-

al 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 accelerat-

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 Illwoon, an expert with the South 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 Korea 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 Jaspip 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 at 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.

Oil tanker held by Iran heads toward international waters

AP ■ DUBAI

An oil tanker held by Iran for over a year after being seized was sailing Thursday toward international waters, tracking data showed. The Marshall Islands-flagged tanker Advantage Sweet traveled toward the Strait of Hormuz, where it was seized in April 2023 by Iran's navy while carrying \$50 million worth of oil from Kuwait for Chevron Corp. That's according to tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press. Iran did not acknowledge the ship's departure. It came after an Iranian court on Thursday ordered the U.S. government to pay over \$6.7 billion in compensation over a Swedish company stopping its supply of special dressings and bandages for those afflicted by a rare skin disorder after Washington imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic. Iran's government initially said it

seized the Advantage Sweet because it hit another vessel, something not supported by any evidence. Then Iranian officials linked the Advantage Sweet's seizure to the court case that was decided Thursday. A report by the state-run IRNA news agency described the \$6.7 billion order as being filed on behalf of 300 plaintiffs, including family members of victims and those physically and emotionally damaged. IRNA said about 20 patients died after the Swedish company's decision. Epidermolysis bullosa is a rare genetic condition that causes blisters all over the body and eyes. It can be incredibly painful and kill those afflicted. The young who suffer from the disease are known as "butterfly children" as their skin can appear as fragile as a butterfly's wing. The order comes as U.S. judges have issued rulings that call for billions of dollars

to be paid by Iran over attacks linked to Tehran, as well as those detained by Iran and used as pawns in negotiations between the countries — something Iran has responded to with competing lawsuits accusing the U.S. of involvement in a 2017 Islamic State group attack. The United Nations' highest court also last year rejected Tehran's legal bid to free up some \$2 billion in Iranian Central Bank assets frozen by U.S. authorities. In 2018, then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, apparently sparking the Swedish company to withdraw from the Iranian market. Iran now says it locally produces the bandages. Chevron, based in San Ramon, California, has maintained that the Advantage Sweet was "seized under false pretenses." It since has written off the cargo as a loss.

Fire breaks out in spire of medieval cathedral in Rouen

AP ■ PARIS

A fire broke out Thursday in the spire of the medieval cathedral in Rouen, a major landmark in northern France that was under renovation, but authorities said it was quickly brought under control. Witnesses told French television they saw smoke emanating from the spire just after midday, and recalled a devastating fire in 2019 at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris that toppled its spire and collapsed its roof. Rouen's 12th century cathedral, which is considered to be a Gothic masterpiece, is widely beloved, not least because of a series of paintings by impressionist Claude Monet capturing its asymmetrical western facade. It is also the tallest church in France, and among the tallest

cathedrals in the entire world — and renowned for its three towers, each constructed in a different style. Mayor Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol first posted on the social media platform X around midday that "the beginning of a fire is underway on the spire of the cathedral of Rouen." Less than 90 minutes later, Stephane Gouezec, of the Seine-Maritime firefighters, said the source of the blaze had been located — some 120 metres high — and the fire contained. Crews were working to ensure there were no remaining "hot spots," he added. But he told reporters the risk of the flames spreading was low because the fire was in an area where there was mostly metal. Gouezec said construction workers were the first to notice the fire and alerted authorities.

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 especially 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, Shocket 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. "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 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 has 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 many 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 macroeconomic 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, MyRepublica 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-United 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 judgement 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

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-



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

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 elevated 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 बजट प्रबन्धक विद्युत खण्ड-प्रथम
UPSIDA उ.प्र. राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण,
 ए-1/4 लखनपुर, कानपुर

अवकाशिन ई-निविदा सूचना

एलएन द्वारा प्रविष्ट किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के केबल जलानंद में विद्युत औद्योगिक क्षेत्र बंदी में विद्युत विकास कार्य हेतु सरकारी विभागों / सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों / निगमों / प्राधिकरणों / परिवहनों / नगर निगमों में पंजीकृत विद्युत लाइसेंसों एवं अनुसूची देकर/ फॉर्म से अवकाशिन 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 राफ्त 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. (सायं 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 बंधे 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 से जमा "क" अनुमतिपत्र लाइसेंस अपलोड करना अनिवार्य होगा, अर्थात् निविदा को स्वीकार नहीं किया जायेगा।
 निविदा सम्बन्धी विस्तृत जानकारी प्राधिकरण की website: www.onlineupsida.com पर स्थित ई-लिक एवं यूपीएलकी की website: http://etender.up.nic.in पर देखी जा सकती है। बजट 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 further simplify 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.

Rupee falls 5 paise to close at 83.56 against US dollar

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 has 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-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.

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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 suscep-

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-armed 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



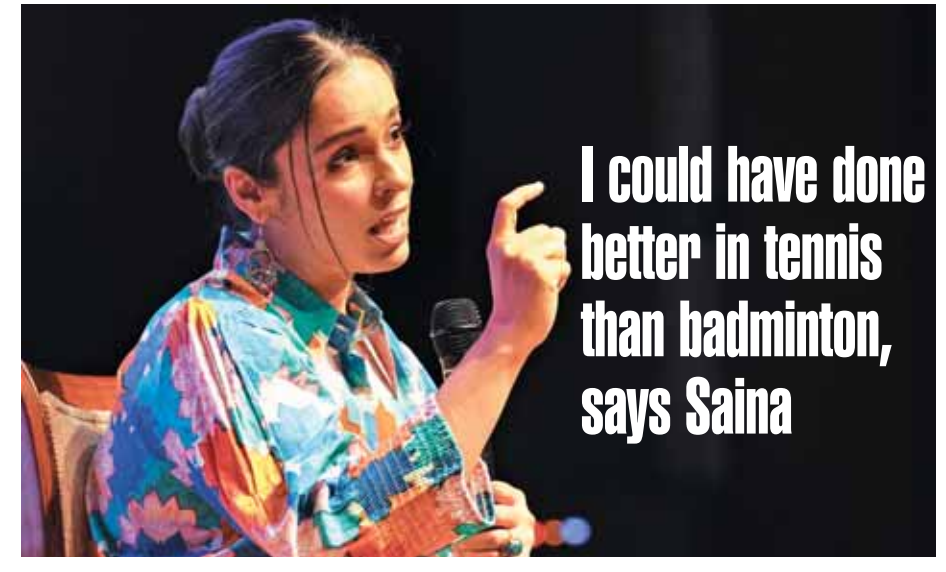
pace spearheads, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins, were unable to break the partnership between openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran, who ended up making 118 runs. "I think Ash bowled pretty well in the powerplay. They probably played the spin quite well and batting first probably assessed the 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 silver and a bronze 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."

Indian Racing Festival: Ganguly buys Kolkata Royal Tigers team

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 acquired stakes 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. MFCFC 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."

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

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-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 know whatever shot 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.