

OPINION 6
ASSAULT MOST FOUL FOR
KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

WORLD 8
PUTIN CONCLUDES
TRIP TO CHINA

MONEY 10
MORE INDIANS ARE TRAVELLING
THAN EVER BEFORE: REPORT

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RCB, CSK CLASH FOR
FINAL PLAYOFF BERTH
AMID RAIN THREAT
12 SPORTS



NAVEEN GUARANTEE

STARTING FROM JULY FREE ELECTRICITY

90% OF FAMILIES WILL BE BENEFITTED

VOTE FOR SANKHA TWICE ONE VOTE FOR MP ONE VOTE FOR MLA

MALIWAL'S NIGHTMARE

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The First Information Report (FIR) lodged by AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's Personal Secretary Bibhav Kumar has revealed shocking details of the assault. Maliwal alleged that Kejriwal's aide Kumar 'slapped' her 'at least seven to eight times' while she 'continued screaming' and 'brutally dragged' her while 'kicking' her on the 'chest, stomach, and pelvis area', and threatened with dire consequences. 'When I called 112 (emergency number) after the assault, Kumar said do what you have to do. You can't spoil anything for us. We'll bury and dump you in such a place that no one will even know', read the FIR. In a related development, Maliwal on Friday went to Tis Hazari court to record her statement before a magistrate

about the alleged assault on her. Metropolitan magistrate Katyayini Sharma Kandwal recorded Maliwal's statement in her chambers. Under section 164 CrPC, a judicial magistrate is empowered to record any statement or confession made before him during the course of an investigation. The medico-legal case report also confirmed that she has suffered internal injuries to her face. Maliwal underwent a four-hour-long medical check-up at AIIMS Delhi in the wee hours of Friday. A Delhi Police team reached AIIMS with the AAP MP at around 11 pm and left at around 3:15 am. Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) member Vandana Singh also accompanied Maliwal. During this medical examination, an X-ray and CT scan were done. According to the FIR, on May 13, Maliwal visited Kejriwal's camp office at his Civil Lines residence where she called and messaged

WAS SLAPPED, KICKED, ABUSED, THREATENED, SAYS FIR



Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal leaves Delhi Chief Minister (CM) Arvind Kejriwal's residence at Civil Lines, in New Delhi, on Friday. The Delhi Police on Friday took Maliwal to the CM's residence to recreate the crime scene as it investigates the alleged assault on her there earlier this week, officials said

Kumar, but couldn't reach him. As she waited for the CM in the drawing room, Kumar "suddenly barged in, screamed at her without provocation and abused her", before allegedly assaulting

her, it states. The FIR based on Maliwal's complaint, recorded on Thursday, three days after the incident, states that as Kumar was not present at the CM's house, she went inside the residential area "through the main door, as she has always done in the past year", and told the CM's staff that she was there to meet him. The FIR reads, "I went inside the camp office and called Kumar, but I could not go in. I then sent a message to his mobile number (through WhatsApp). However, there was no response. I then went inside the residential area through the main door as I have always done in the past year. Since Kumar was not present, I entered the residence area and informed the staff present there to tell the CM that I was there to meet him." She said a staff member informed me that the CM would meet me shortly, and suddenly, the PS of the CM, Bibhav Kumar, barged

into the room. "He started screaming without any provocation and even resorted to verbal abuse. I was stunned by this sudden outburst and reacted by telling him to stop talking to me in such a manner and to call the CM. He said, "How dare you not obey us? How can you not obey us? Your status is so low that you won't refuse us. You're a lowly woman, we'll teach you a lesson," she claimed in the FIR. Maliwal said while uttering these words, he came and stood right in front of me. "Without any provocation on my part, he started hitting me repeatedly," she said. "He slapped me at least 7-8 times while I continued to scream for help. I felt absolutely shocked and kept screaming for assistance. "In an attempt to protect myself, I pushed him away with my legs. At that moment, he aggressively attacked me, pulled my shirt up deliberately, causing the buttons to come undone, and my shirt flew up.

HISTORIC TAINT ON AAP, KEJRIWAL

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

For the first in the country's jurisprudence, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has named Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as well as its convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as an accused in the supplementary charge sheet filed in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam. This is the first time that a recognised national political party has been mentioned as an accused in a corruption case. Until now, no political party has been implicated under India's anti-money laundering laws, although several NGOs and other organisations have been scrutinised by the ED. This is also the first time that Kejriwal, who was arrested on March 21 and granted 21-day interim bail by the Supreme Court last week, has been mentioned as an accused in the ED's chargesheet. ED has claimed to have established a money trail linked to Kejriwal.

Heat wave returns in State

Further rise in temp predicted
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

After a few days of pleasant weather conditions, different parts of the State, including the capital city Bhubaneswar, on Friday experienced hot and humid conditions. But no major respite seems to be on the cards as the Regional Office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here predicted a further rise in the maximum temperature. As per the IMD, the maximum temperature (day temperature) is likely to gradually rise by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius in the subsequent four to five days at many places in the State. The IMD also issued a Yellow warning for hot and humid conditions in several parts

of the state. A similar warning was also issued for thunderstorm activities in several districts. On Saturday, hot and humid weather condition is very likely to prevail in the districts of Baleswar, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khordha, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Gajapati. Besides, thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur in the districts of Nayagarh, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Koraput, Ganjam and Gajapati, said the IMD issuing a Yellow warning. On Sunday, hot and humid weather condition is very likely to prevail in the districts of Baleswar, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khordha, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Gajapati, said the weather office issuing a Yellow warning.

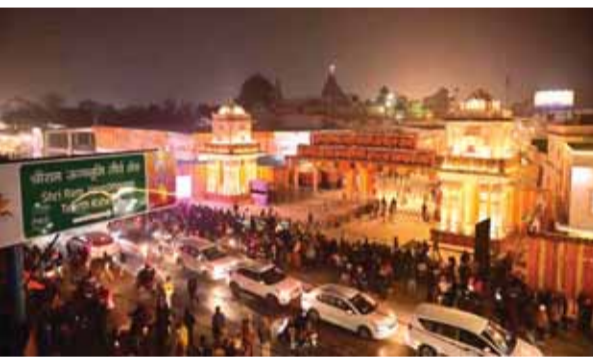
In Sundergarh 4 including couple die in road mishap

PNS ■ ROURKELA
Four persons, including a couple, lost their lives and six others were critically injured when a Bolero vehicle they were travelling in hit a road divider on National Highway-143 near Darjiling under the Chandiposh police station in Sundergarh district on Friday. The deceased were identified

as Tapan Dasmahapatra (56), his wife Sarojini Dasmahapatra (52), Gagan Kamali (70) and Amita Mohanty (50). The occupants of the vehicle were on their way from Bhogra in Baleswar district to Rourkela to attend the last rites of a relative. The Chandiposh police reached the spot and shifted the injured to hospital.

Caste a big factor in Ram Janmabhoomi

BISWAJEET BANERJEE/
KAMLESH SRIVASTAVA ■
AYODHYA



The grand inauguration of the Ram Mandir by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22 has thrust Ayodhya into the international spotlight. However, the electoral dynamics in this Lok Sabha constituency, still commonly referred to as Faizabad, are far more complex, deeply influenced by intricate caste equations alongside temple politics. In this high-stakes seat, the BJP's Thakur candidate Lallu Singh faces stiff competition from SP's Dalit candidate and sitting MLA Awadhesh Prasad, and BSP's Brahmin candidate Sachhidanand Pandey. Pandey, who recently switched allegiances from the BJP to the BSP, aims to capture the Brahmin vote bank. "Ayodhya is synonymous with Lord Ram. But when it comes to elections, invoking Ram's name is not enough. The caste of the candidates also matters," observed political analyst Rajesh N Bajpayee. He highlighted that while outsiders might see Ayodhya as a BJP bastion due to its long-standing advocacy for the Ram Temple, the reality is

more nuanced. Since 1989, there have been eight Lok Sabha elections, and the BJP has won only four of them. Lallu Singh and Vinay Katiyar each won twice, while Mitrasen Yadav won three times-twice on an SP ticket and once as a CPI candidate. The SP also clinched the seat in 2009. During the peak of Ram Lahar following the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992, the BJP faced defeat in the 1993 Vidhan Sabha election due to a strategic alliance known as social engineering. Kanshi Ram and Mulayam Singh Yadav joined forces, leading to the formation of the first Government by the SP and BSP. Locals attest to Ayodhya's

transformation following the consecration of Lord Ram. The city now bustles with traffic jams and crowds of pilgrims from across the country. The once tranquil 13-km road connecting Ayodhya with Faizabad, now renamed Ram Path, has become the city's bustling hub, reminiscent of Connaught Place in Delhi. "This Ram Path has become the city's lifeline, with prominent eateries, big merchandise shops, and business centers emerging. Quaint souvenir shops have transformed into modern establishments adorned with Ram Temple models, saffron flags, and other Hindu memorabilia," said BP Singh, a local resident.

Naveen slams 'political tourists'

Decries use of derogatory language
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

BJD supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday said the Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States and Union Ministers are visiting Odisha only during elections; so, they are "political tourists". Patnaik lambasted the Opposition for using derogatory language during



public rallies. "This time, there are some Chief Ministers and Union Ministers, who come as political tourists only at the time of elections and then they disappear. Their speeches have no effect on the people of Odisha," Patnaik remarked while addressing a meeting after filing his nomination papers for the Kantabanji Assembly seat in Balangir district. "And it's most unfortunate that many of them use derogatory and abusive language. I never believe in doing that and the people of Odisha will never appreciate such language," Patnaik said. A galaxy of senior BJP leaders starting from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Union Ministers Amit Shah and Bhupendra Yadav, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai and Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma has been campaigning in the State for BJP candidates.

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SIT formed to probe Khallikote murder

To submit charge-sheet within 30 days

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government on Friday announced formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) for investigation of the murder of a BJP worker in an attack by rivals in Khallikote of Ganjam district on Wednesday.

BJP leaders had alleged that the murder of Dilip Puhani in Khallikote was orchestrated by



Saket Rama Rao, nephew of the late queen V Sugnana Kumari Deo.

The SIT would conduct a

detailed investigation and arrest the other accused involved in the case besides the eight arrested so far. Besides, focus

would be given on collection of forensic, digital evidence for submission of charge-sheet within 30 days for early trial

of the case. ADGP (Headquarters) RK Sharma has been asked to camp at Chhatrapur in Ganjam to oversee the law and order situation there. Earlier on Wednesday, one person was killed and three others sustained critical injuries in an alleged clash between BJD and BJP workers in the district.

The BJD workers allegedly attacked the supporters of the BJP while they were putting up party banners as part of electioneering at Srikrushnasaranpur village under Khallikote block.

Bomb hurled near BJD office in Nayapalli

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Amid the ongoing elections in Odisha, two motorcycle-borne miscreants allegedly hurled a crude bomb in front of the BJD office at Gadasahi in Ward 38 of Nayapalli here at around midnight on Thursday.

According to sources, a motorcycle was damaged in the incident which took place while more than 20 workers were having a meeting in the office. They reported to have seen two persons fleeing the spot on a motorcycle. The explosion shook the entire area.



The attack came two days after Nayapalli witnessed a confrontation between BJD and BJP workers during electioneering. However, it was still unclear if the bombing

was a reaction to that dispute.

On being informed, the Nayapalli police reached the spot and began an investigation to identify the culprits.

In Kendrapada

Jail inmate dies; wife alleges foul play

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

An inmate of the Kendrapada Sub-Jail died on Thursday night. The deceased was identified as Ranjan Mallik, a resident of Barundiha village.

Mallik was arrested in house torching case by the Pattamundai Rural police and was in jail from March 10, 2024.

Later, the deceased's wife lodged a complaint with the Sadar police that her husband was tortured and killed by the jail staffs. She said she had spoken to her husband on May

15 and he did not mention about any health complication.

But on Thursday, she received a call from the jail and she was asked to come to the District Headquarters Hospital as her husband was admitted there after he felt sick.

She demanded the Kendrapada SP to conduct a thorough inquiry and provide justice to her by taking legal action against the accused involved in "killing" her husband in the jail. If no action is taken, she would immolate herself before the SP office, she said.

'Pandian should find Ratna Bhandar keys by June 10'

Else BJP will get it after it forms govt in Odisha: Assam CM

PNS ■ BRAHMAMAPUR

Assam Chief Minister and BJP star campaigner Himanta Biswa Sarma slammed the BJD over the missing of Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar keys while addressing a public gathering at Kabisuryanagar in Ganjam district on Friday.

Biswa Sarma gave an ultimatum to Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's close aide VK Pandian to find the missing keys of Ratna Bhandar by June 10. He also said that if the BJD government fails to find the missing keys, the BJP would find the keys after the party forms government in Odisha on June 10.

"I feel sad because the keys of Ratna Bhandar of Jagannath Temple have gone missing and the government is clueless about it. Even the judicial inquiry report in this regard has not been made pub-



lic. If Lord Jagannath's key is missing in Odisha, it means people of the State have lost everything on their home soil," said Biswa Sarma.

"I want to ask Pandian where he has kept the keys. You have time till June 10. BJP will form government in Odisha on June 10. Find the keys till that date or else BJP will find the keys at any cost. It is our promise. Pandian knows

to power. "Devotees across the globe face a lot of difficulties while having darshan of Lord Jagannath at Puri Srimandir due to the opening of only one Dwar, said he.

Biswa Sarma also reiterated that the BJP government would provide Rs 3,100 to farmers per quintal of paddy. "The Centre gives rice to the people of Odisha. However, Pandian only gives empty packets. If PM Modi is providing rice, the State Government should have provided dal or at least salt with it. But they are giving only empty packets in the name of Naveen Patnaik government. Even I have read from newspapers that those empty packets have been made in Tamil Nadu. We will not provide empty packets to our mothers. BJP will provide Rs 50,000 under Subhadra Yojana to every mother in the State," he added.

No comments could be received from the BJD over the allegations of the Assam Chief Minister.

Tension as leopard enters Baripada town



Rescued by Forest Dept

PNS ■ BARIPADA

A leopard caused quite a stir at Bhanjapur of Baripada town on Friday morning. The State Forest Department and the Wildlife Trust of India's (WTI) Mobile Veterinary Service (MVS) unit promptly dispatched a team to initiate a search and rescue operation.

As the town is located near the Similipal Tiger Reserve, wild animals are often sighted in the area.

The team found the big cat in the premises of Budhikhamaria Primary School and immediately cordoned off the area with the help of safety nets. Equipped with protective gear, a WTI

MVS veterinarian tranquilised the leopard from a secure distance and it was shifted to a transportation cage.

A preliminary examination conducted by the MVS unit determined that the leopard was a male estimated to be 4-5 years old. It is currently under temporary observation and will soon be released into a suitable location away from human habitation.

Rudra Mahapatra, Project Head, MVS Odisha, WTI, said, "Considering the safety of the leopard and the public, a decision was made by the Forest Department and our team to tranquilise and relocate it. Our team is currently monitoring its condition closely and administering sufficient hydration."

Hema Malini campaigns for BJP



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With electioneering picking steam in Odisha, veteran Bollywood actress and BJP's star campaigner Hema Malini arrived in Bhubaneswar on Friday.

Speaking to reporters, Hema said Odisha would have

a double-engine government. "People of Odisha are deprived of the benefits of many Central schemes. So, a change in government is needed here," she said.

She further said that Narendra Modi would hold office as Prime Minister for a third term and 400-plus Lok

Sabha seats for the NDA would become a reality in this election.

Hema Malini later addressed an Ashirwad Samavesh at Salia Sahi here at and sought votes for BJP Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha candidate Aparajita Sarangi and Bhubaneswar-North Assem-

bly nominee Priyadarshi Mishra.

Later, she headed to Kishorenagar in Cuttack district to address an election meeting. In afternoon, she participated in a road show at Pipili and addressed a public meeting at Satyabadi in Puri district.

Bijoy Mohapatra expelled from BJP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

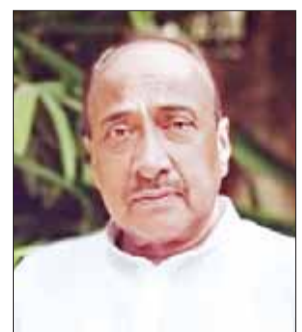
The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday expelled senior leader and former State executive member Bijoy Mohapatra and two others for alleged anti-party activities.

The two other leaders expelled are State executive member Sarada Pradhan and vice-president of State BJP SC Morcha Rakesh Mallick.

The disciplinary action was taken on the directions of party State president Manmohan Samal, party sources said.

Notably, Mohapatra's son Arvind is contesting the Assembly elections from Patkura on a BJD ticket. And the former Minister (Bijoy) is supporting his son and appealing to people to vote for him.

In his reaction, Bijoy



Mohapatra said he had tendered his resignation letter to the BJP in 2018, but it was not accepted. "In last five years, I never visited the BJP office nor did anybody ask me come to the party office.

"As a father, I have been canvassing for my son," he said.

The next course of his political future would charted out after the elections are over, he added.

Science Centre to hold Museum Day today



Free entry for all on the occasion

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Regional Science Centre, Bhubaneswar will celebrate the International Museum Day on May 18 from 10.30 am to 5 pm. The objective of the event is to raise awareness on the fact that museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures and development of mutual understanding of cooperation and peace among people.

Former Philately Bureau Head, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar,

Postal Department, Suchitra Kabiraj will join as the chief guest and will preside over a session on antique collection of stamp, coins and associated philately items on the occasion.

In addition, a slew of events like "Ideathon contest on Science Centre", "Quiz Contest" and a "Mobile Science Exhibition" will be held to mark the occasion. Students and the general public will take part in the event. The Regional Science Centre, Bhubaneswar will give free entry to the visitors on the day.

Modi shifted focus to Odisha after waning support in Hindi belt

Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dominant figure and persona, it seems that "Modi Guarantee" is now losing its strength on the ground. On the contrary, the guarantee of Congress appears to be more promising and favourable.

Modi Guarantee appears to be falsified by the mistakes made by the BJP during their ten years' reign. The anti-incumbency sentiment of the general public has been strong. The RSS which is traditionally seen as the backbone of the BJP now has distanced itself from Modi. Further, the monopoly of Modi and Saha may be a factor for weakening the party's acceptability among the masses.



UMA SHANKAR PRASAD

The BJP leaders are now directly discussing internal issues through many unofficial channels. On the

other side, the Congress's position has grown more credible due to the internal conflict in the BJP party. Overall, the Lok Sabha elections have reached a critical point. Most of the grassroots workers and leaders feel disillusioned with and disconnected from the leadership of Modi and Saha. The negative attitude of Modi and targeting of the opposition leaders and his questionable methods of withdrawing nomination have started to impact the party's image.

The RSS has decided to withhold its support from Modi and his party in the elections 2024. The RSS, known for its emphasis on collective identity and the promotion of

Hindu values, has been critical of the growing cult of personality surrounding Modi. Some leaders believe that the BJP has prioritized Modi's image and agenda over the interests of the RSS and its members. As a result, the RSS has decided not to extend its support to Modi and his close associate, Home Minister Amit Saha, in this election. When Modi felt the internal feelings of RSS and the growing support for the India Alliance and also the failure of his strategy in the Hindi belt, he moved to Odisha with a hope for political achievement. He targeted Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik directly. He not only came to Odisha but also many

heavyweights of his party like party president JP Nadda, Home Minister Saha, LS Speaker OM Birla, actress Hema Malini and many more proceeded to Odisha and targeted Naveen Patnaik.

Modi dared CM Patnaik who has been ruling in the State for the last 24 years to speak the names of all districts without seeing a paper. Modi also claimed Odisha is controlled by an outsider, which is a veiled attack on Patnaik's close confidant VK Pandian. Modi's party colleagues also targeted Pandian and Naveen in harshest terms. In reply, Pandian compared the performance of Naveen as far better than the Government of

Modi in Gujarat when he was the CM. He pointed out that Gujarat has had a double -engine Government for the last 10 years and Modi was its CM, and asked if Gujarat is the No. 1 State in the country. He also produced a comparison chart that "Malnutrition among children in Gujarat is 40% compared to Odisha's 29%, which witnessed the sharpest drop in the last 20 years. Anaemia among children in Gujarat is 79%, which is one of the worst in the country. Per capita debt burden of Gujarat is close to Rs 60,000 compared to Rs 22,000 in Odisha. "Our disaster management is the best in the country; our women's empowerment

programme, school transformation programme and Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana are incomparable," he said. "In Odisha Naveen Engine is enough. So, it is advised that the PM should focus on making India No 1. We are enough to save our culture, tradition, language and education etc.," said Pandian. Lastly, he also asked Modi to save his party BJP to achieve the magic figure of 272 to become the PM in the Centre and forget about Naveen. "Naveen Patnaik is going to form the Ministry on June 9 and he will take oath as CM for the 6th term. So please wait and watch," Pandian said.

(Journalist, Khordha, M-63706 75562)

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In Keonjhar JE found dead in mysterious circumstances

2 deaths of govt officers in dist in 3 days

PNS ■ KEONJHAR
Police recovered a body of a Junior Engineer (JE) of Saharpada block near Banachakulia village under the Ghatagaon police station in Keonjhar district on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Chandrahaya Naik, a native of Sukruli village of Mayurbhanj district. Naik was going to Banachakulia village with

some other persons by a motorbike on Wednesday. Three others returned, but the body of Naik was found in a paddy field near a forest area. It has raised several questions about his death.

Later, after receiving information, police went to the spot with a forensic team and recovered the body and initiated an investigation.

According to police, the three persons who went with the JE are in hospital. During the investigation, they told police that they met with an accident.

SDPO Pravat Kumar Tripathy said, "No external injury was found in the body. We are awaiting the post-mortem report and investigating the incident. We are interrogating the other persons who are in hospital and went with him. Details will be clear soon."

Earlier, police had recovered a mutilated body of Harichandanpur block ABDO Bidhubhusan Jena from the railway tracks near the Harichandanpur railway station. But police are yet to achieve any breakthrough in the case.

Though deadline is over Parla rly stn renovation work complete by 50%

TARINI PRASAD PANDA ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

After a long demand for the development and improvement of Parla railway station, the renovation work of the station was started. However, even after the deadline of the work has expired, it is completed by 50% only.

Meanwhile, the common people have raised concerns over the delays in the construction works and tardy progress in the project. Besides, the quality of the construction has also been a point of worry.

It is worth noting here that for the improvement of Parla railway station, a grant of Rs



14 crore has been received from the Ministry of Railways in three phases. The project includes construction of new passenger restrooms, ticket counters, toilets, parking lot, railway museum, reservation counter and railway platform overbridge etc. However, despite repeated complaints about the slow pace of construction, the department officials are not taking any action.

A few denizens here said,

"More than Rs 30 lakh are being collected from Paralakhemundi railway station every month as revenue. However, the departmental authorities did not pay attention to improving amenities in the station. Despite the demand for running new trains from Paralakhemundi to Hyderabad, the department is still nonchalant. There is a demand for the construction of two level-crossings on the Naupada-Paralakhemundi-Gunupur line, but it has fallen on deaf ears of the authorities."

According to sources, the renovation work was scheduled to be completed by April this year.

In Balangir 2 BJP workers thrashed, abducted by rivals

PNS ■ BALANGIR

In an incident of pre-poll violence, two BJP workers were allegedly thrashed and kidnapped by their rivals in Balangir district on Thursday.

As per the allegations, the saffron party workers were thrashed and kidnapped by some ruling party workers near the solar plant when they were campaigning at Tendapali village under the Saintala police station with BJP's Titilagarh MLA candidate Naveen Jain.

Later, the injured BJP workers were rescued and admitted to a hospital. Subsequently, the victims lodged a complaint against 15 BJD workers at the



Saintala police station for attacking them.

Meanwhile, the BJD supporters have also filed a counter-complaint with the police accusing the BJP workers of making casteist comments.

"When we were campaigning at Tendapali village, some BJD supporters attacked our workers with sticks and other arms. In the process, two of our workers sustained grievous injuries," alleged Jain.

In Ganjam Attempt by accused to flee from PS foiled

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Police foiled an attempt by a murder accused to escape from the Kodala police station in Ganjam district with the help of some of his aides on Thursday evening.

This led to a scuffle between police and supporters of the accused who were overpowered. But though his aides managed to flee from the spot, the accused was nabbed.

The accused was then sent to judicial custody and a case was also registered against two persons involved in the scuffle



KODALA POLICE STATION

with police personnel. Dipu, a Surat returnee, was allegedly abducted and killed over illegal liquor trade rivalry between two groups. Five persons, including a juvenile, were apprehended by police in connection with his murder in October 2023.

Paradip DAV students excel in CBSE exam



School achieves 100% pass rate

PNS ■ PARADIP

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class 10th Examination results were released on May 13 and the students of DAV Public School, Paradip Port, once again demonstrated exceptional performance. The school achieved a 100% pass rate, continuing its tradition of academic excellence.

A total of 83 students from Class 10 appeared for the examination. Of these, 13 students scored more than 90% marks, while 35 students secured more than 80% marks. Impressively, 56 students

achieved more than 70% marks. Aroshikha Priyadarshini topped the class with an outstanding 97% marks, followed by Pragati Das with 96.4% and Aryan Jena with 85.2%, securing the second and third positions respectively. Many students also scored a perfect 100 in Mathematics.

Chairperson Bindushree Mohanty expressed her satisfaction with the remarkable achievement, congratulating the students, parents, and teachers for their hard work and dedication. Regional Director, Dr KC Satpathy and Regional Deputy Director, Dr Sujata Sahu, also extended their best regards on the occasion.

In Baleswar 10 workers sick after gas leak in prawn plant

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Over 10 persons fell ill after inhaling ammonia gas that leaked from a prawn processing plant in Baleswar district on Thursday evening.

The incident took place in the factory at Gadimala near Nilagiri. While some of the victims complained of uneasiness, the other fell unconscious. They were rescued and admitted to the Community Health Centre at Nilagiri.

It was later alleged that attempts were being made to hush up the matter since some of the victims were minor girls. Baleswar BJP MP candidate Pratap Sarangi along with some locals also reportedly



caught some people who were allegedly trying to secretly take a minor girl out of the hospital late in night.

Sarangi visited the local police station along with the labourers of the factory and demanded strict action against the prawn firm. "It's gross irresponsibility on the part of

the company. An investigation should be jointly launched into the incident by the Labour Department and police and stern action should be taken against it. All the minors working in the company should be rescued and rehabilitated," he told the media.

District Labour Officer

Shuva Narayan Sahu said the incident was being investigated.

A similar incident was reported in the district in September 2022 when 28 workers fell ill after ammonia gas leaked at a prawn processing plant owned by the son of former MP Rabindra Jena.

Productivity Excellence Award fest held

Firms feted for use of AI by OSPC, NPC

TATHYA ■ BHUBANESWAR

Former Chief Secretary Ashok K Tripathy, who is President, Odisha State Productivity Council (OSPC), has underscored the importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for increasing productivity across various sectors.

Tripathy was speaking in the Productivity Excellence Award ceremony organised here on May 14 along with Productivity Day Celebration by the OSPC in collaboration with the National Productivity Council (NPC).

Former Director, IIT and former Chairman, AICTE Prof Dr Damodar Acharya, Director I/C, Rourkela Steel



Plant Atanu Bhowmick, Director, Projects and Technical, Nalco Jagdish Arora and Regional Director, NPC Avijit Nayak graced the ceremony as chief guest, distinguished guest, chief speaker and guest of honour respectively.

The dignitaries congratulated the prize winners and advised them to use AI technologies for further increasing the productivity of their organisations.

Awards were presented to 35 technical teams from 17 industries inside and outside the State of Odisha in plati-

num (10 teams), gold (17 teams) and silver (8 teams) categories on the basis of an online presentation made by the teams.

The online presentations were made on the basis of work done by the teams on the use of AI-based technologies for increasing the productivity of their organisations and the Jury members had then interacted with them after their presentations.

The OSPC and NPC also conducted an essay competition in four universities (ASBM, KIIT, SOA and IIT,

Bhubaneswar) on the topic AI-Productivity Engine for Economic Growth.

The students were also given presentations on EU AI Act, Productivity, Green Productivity and ESG before the competition and advised to take up courses on AI for enhancing their employability in future.

Three students from each of the four universities were given cash awards and certificates. Top three students among all four universities were also given further cash awards and certificates.

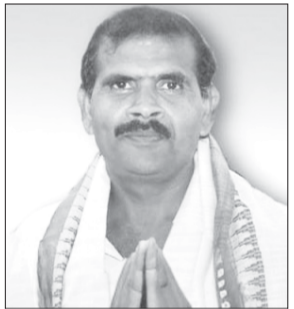
In Brahmapur Cong MLA nominee held for assaulting builder

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Saka Sujit Kumar, the Congress candidate for the Digapahandi Assembly seat in Ganjam district, was arrested by police on Thursday for allegedly assaulting a builder.

According to reports, a builder identified as Sudhansu Sangram Padhy of Sihala and two of his associates were roughed up by some miscreants when they were doing some work at a plot in Kukudakhandi near the Brahmapur police station on Wednesday.

When Padhy and his associates were on their way to the police station to lodge a com-



plaint, the Congress candidate allegedly again attacked them.

Based on the complaint lodged by Padhy, police arrested Sujit Kumar and his aide Amit Kumar.

Both Padhy and Sujit Kumar are builders. Police suspected professional rivalry to be the reason behind the incident.

Mandia water, Tikhoor, Baasi Torani Kutia Kandhas drink traditional beverages to beat summer heat

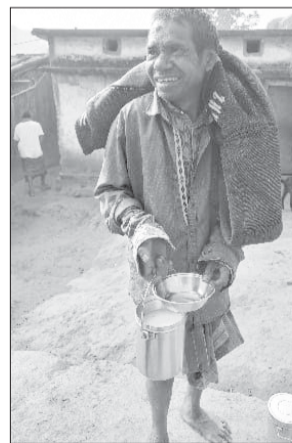
Establishes a study by SU researchers

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR

Amid the rising temperature, when urban and metropolitan dwellers are packing their refrigerators with addictive drinks, tribal people have their own way of beating the heat. They mostly consume organic and traditional beverages that protect them from the risk of sunstroke.

The Centre of Excellence Regional Development and Tribal Studies department of Sambalpur University has conducted a study on the Kutia Kandha tribe of Kalahandi, on their lifestyle and food habits. The ethnographic study by the department found that the indigenous nutritious beverages of the group, mostly derived from grains, are Mandia water, Palo Sharbat (Tikhoor), and Baasi Torani, which saves them from heatstroke.

The indigenous group living in the remote areas of Kalahandi works in the scorching sunlight, and it's also im-



portant to mention, in these hilly areas, electricity connection is still a pipe dream. But these people connect with nature, and they have their traditional way of beating the heat. Mandia (Millet), predominantly the foxtail grown in the cold seasons, is stored for use in the months of summer. Tikhoor is also one of the great examples of summertime drink.

The month-long study on the community also finds that the organic drinks help the tribal community connect with nature, as they are locally grown and consumed.

The Nodal Officer of the department, Professor Arun Kumar Acharya, said, "We studied the Kutia community of Kalahandi for a month. We stayed with them to study their lifestyle. What we found is that in a region where there is no electricity connection and no fan or cooler, this tribe doesn't get affected by the rise in temperature; they carry their traditional refreshing drinks to the hill farming zones. They don't fall sick, even if they work the whole day. These drinks keep them energetic throughout the day."

Nutritionist Suman

Agarwal said, "In a healthy human stomach, there are bacteria weighing more than 1.5 kg. During the summer, these food bacteria naturally decrease. When we ferment rice or ragi water for a day, these bacteria naturally grow. And when we drink them our body absorbs these bacteria easily. Moreover, it beats tiredness from the heat. The good bacteria and vitamin B present in these traditional beverages help a person sleep and repair all their bodyaches. As a result, the labour class strongly prefers these fermented beverages."

Candidate factor Keonjhar LS seat may not be cakewalk for BJD

Though it came triumphant for three consecutive times since 2009 thanks to Naveen craze

RAJENDRA K SAHU ■ KEONJHAR

BJD has won the Keonjhar Lok Sabha seat since 2009 for three consecutive times. But this time, the Naveen craze might not work for BJD nominee Dhanurjaya Sidhu who is contesting from the Keonjhar Lok Sabha seat.

The difference between the earlier occasions and now is that BJD faces used to be new for the electorate who cast their votes in the name of Naveen only while now, Sidhu is a known face in the district since 2004 when he was elected from Champua Assembly (ST) constituency on a Congress ticket.

The general allegations against him are that Sidhu is a turncoat who changes party and constituency from time to time keeping in mind his own business interest and has no sympathy for the public or party supporters. This is the reason, Sidhu has not been successful in any election although he had contested Keonjhar Lok Sabha seat on Congress ticket in the year 2009 and Assembly election from Telkoi (ST) on a BJD ticket in 2019.

After his debacle in Telkoi, he changed the party and joined the ruling BJD and soon after joining, he was able to get a big mining deal of transporting one lakh metric tonne of iron ore from Kashi mines of JSPL which has been a cause eyecore of many mining transporters who were also interested to get that job. The aggrieved section is looking for an opportunity to teach him a lesson. Their grievance is that

if Sidhu is elected, no other contractor will get the work as Sidhu will have monopoly over the mining industry.

Earlier, being influenced by Pyari Mohan Mohapatra, Laguri family of Champua had joined BJD and adivasi people who constitute a majority were giving their votes to BJD. This time adivasi voters will not vote for BJD as Yashwant Singh Laguri after quitting BJD is contesting Champua Assembly seat on a Congress ticket.

The general feeling of the adivasi people is that it is due to the mistake of Sidhu, Champua (ST) was converted to a general constituency in the year 2008 and since then adivasi people are deprived of sending their candidate of their own tribe to the Assembly.

Of the remaining two candidates Ananta Naik (BJP) and Er Binod Naik (Congress), Congress might not

take the advantage of incumbency against both BJD and BJP due to poor organization at the ground level. On the other hand, Ananta is in the ground even after losing the election three times as BJP nominee consecutively since 2009. Earlier, he had won the Lok Sabha election twice when there was an alliance of BJD and BJP. More importantly, the general feeling among the local mining trading community is that Ananta is not a threat to their business as is Sidhu and he can be easily managed.

Lastly, a declaration of Ananta that there will be a mega steel plant in Keonjhar if he is elected has got traction with the voters, especially the young mass. Another claim of Ananta is the recent running of two trains from Puri to New Delhi via Keonjhar, which is a boon for the people of the district by the Railways. So, this is attracting the voters towards the BJP.

Terrorism started to consume those who long practised it: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said here on Friday Asia is witnessing new tensions in land and sea as agreements were dishonoured and rule of law disregarded while terrorism has started to consume those who have long practised it. These assertions came in the backdrop of China's military continuing posturing along the frontier in eastern Ladakh and Pakistan's support to cross-border terrorist activities.

In an address at an event hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Jaishankar also talked about the power of currency and how "threat of sanctions" are deployed in the "toolbox" of global diplomacy, in remarks that came days after the US warned of punitive measures after India and Iran sealed a deal on the Chabahar port. Jaishankar extensively delved into the consequences of the Ukraine conflict, escalation of violence in West Asia and disruption of logistics in view of the geopolitical tensions, sanctions, incidents of drone attacks in the Red Sea and climate events. "The world is experiencing a 3F crisis of fuel, food and fertilisers. In Asia, new tensions have emerged in land and sea as agreements are dishonoured and rule of law disregarded," he said at the annual general meeting of the CII.

"Terrorism and extremism have started to consume those who have long practised it. In many ways, we are actually going through the perfect storm," he said.

"For India, the task is to miti-



gate its impact on itself and contribute to stabilising the world to the extent possible. It is this judicious combination of 'Bharat First' and 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' that defines our image as 'Vishwa Bandhu,' he said.

In remarks seen as a reference to China, Jaishankar also flagged concerns over "weaponisation" of economic activity and how access to raw materials or even stability of tourism are being utilised to exert political pressure.

"A different dimension of the concerns that we harbour is one emanating from a combination of excessive market shares, financial domination and technology tracking," he said.

"Between them, they have actually allowed for the weaponisation of virtually any form of economic activity. We have seen how both exports and imports, access to raw materials or even stability of tourism has been uti-

lized to exert political pressure," he said.

"At the same time, the power of sanctions has been deployed in the toolbox of international diplomacy," he said.

The external affairs minister highlighted challenges of uncertain logistics and supply chains.

"Quite apart from these conscious efforts, there have been collateral consequences of hard currency shortages and uncertain logistics. All these are driving countries to re-look at the working of globalization and devise their own solutions," he said.

"This includes exploring new partners, it includes creating shorter supply chains, building inventories and even devising new payment arrangements. Each of these has some consequence for us," he added. The external affairs minister said the government is focusing on economic growth and

stronger manufacturing besides making efforts to accelerate the flow of requisite capital, technology and best practices.

"Our export promotion efforts, already yielding results, will intensify across the world. The use of credit lines and grants to familiarise the world with our products and capabilities will also deepen," he said.

Jaishankar said there is the larger branding endeavour of the attractions of today's India that will make a case to the world of the benefits of partnership.

The current times call for something more than business as usual because trust and reliability have become so important, he said.

"We must recognize that our economic priorities will have to align with our strategic interests, whether we are speaking of market access, investments, technologies, or even education and tourism. This will be even more so as 'Make in India' gathers more steam in domains like defence, semiconductors and digital," he said.

"An economy with India's prospects also has to look at accessing global resources more seriously if we are to fuel our growth," Jaishankar said.

"For long, we have looked at Russia from a political or security perspective. As that country turns eastwards, fresh economic opportunities are presenting themselves," he said. Jaishankar said the world is today "paradoxically rebuilding" itself even as it is being disrupted. "As new production and consumption centres emerged in the last few decades, there is an accompanying compulsion to create commensurate logistical corridors," he said.

Protests in PoK result of Pak's policy of systemic plundering of resources: India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday said the protests witnessed in several parts of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) are a "natural consequence" of Islamabad's continued policy of systemic plundering of resources from the region that remains under its "forcible and illegal" occupation.

India also asserted that the entire Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh "have been, are and shall always remain integral parts of India".

Violent protests erupted in PoK over rising costs of food, fuel and essential utilities as Pakistan reels under a severe economic crisis.

"We have seen reports on protests in several areas of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir," external affairs min-



istry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

He was responding to a question on the protests in PoK.

"We believe that it is a natural consequence of Pakistan's continued policy of systemic plundering of resources from these territories which remain under its forcible and illegal occupation," Jaiswal said.

"Such exploitative policies deny the local people, rights over their own resources and the benefits

thereof," he said.

"We reiterate that the entire Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have been, are and shall always remain integral parts of India," he added. Two days ago, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar asserted that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was, is and will always be part of India.

"I have no doubt in my own mind that someone living in PoK is comparing their situation with someone actually living in Jammu and Kashmir, saying that how is it that people today are actually progressing there," he said.

Earlier this month, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said India will never give up its claim of PoK but it won't have to capture it with force because its people, on their own, would want to be part of India after seeing the development in Kashmir.

Bharat Parva captivates delegates at Cannes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The fusion of Indian culture, cuisine, and cinema took center stage at the 77th Cannes Film Festival, as the first-ever 'Bharat Parva' captivated over 250 delegates with its vibrant celebration of all things Indian. Hosted by Sanjay Jaju, Secretary of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the event which showcased the rich diversity of Indian culture was organised by NFDC in collaboration with FICCI.

The event also served as a platform to unveil posters for the 55th edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) and the inaugural edition of the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES).

Among the guests in attendance were filmmakers Ashok Amritham and Richie Mehta, renowned singer Shaan, versatile actor Rajpal Yadav, Bobby Bedi and others.

Government's proposal to sell over the counter medicines in general stores opposed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's proposal to sell over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, including antibiotics and other habit-forming medications, in general stores and grocery stores has sparked significant opposition from retail chemists and pharmacists associations across the States.

They are vehemently opposing the move, expressing concerns about the potential risks associated with easier access to these medications. Bengal Chemists and Druggists Association (BCDA), under the All India Organisation of Chemists & Druggists (AIOCD) a leading



association of pharmacists in India, said the move will pose significant public health risks due to the lack of pharmacist oversight and potential for misuse of drugs.

Sankha Roy Chowdhury and Sajal Gangopadhyay, President and General Secretary respectively of the BCDA said, "Approximately 400 compositions in general stores and gro-

cery stores including antibiotics, other habit forming drugs, nasal spray and others will be on the OTC at traditional grocery shops. "Such a move would flout the existing drug and cosmetics laws of India, pharmacy regulations and pertinent legal charters including directives from the supreme court."

The Associations asserted that India's existing network of nearly 12.40 lakh retail chemists and 13.5 lakh pharmacists is sufficient to meet the population's needs for OTC drugs. They urged the government to consider these concerns and involve all stakeholders in discussions before implementing any policy changes regarding OTC drug sales.

Rajiv Singhal, secretary general of the AIOCD too criticised the move. It has submitted a memorandum to the Centre apprising the authorities about the adverse effects of selling medicines to the common man by unqualified persons.

"Drug sale is a regulated area, and all the common medicines need to be regulated by authorized officials as per drug rules and monitored by qualified pharmacists," he asserted and equated the move with like unlicensed permission to sell grocery shop owners medicines to the common man because it will affect the health of the people. "This will affect the credibility of the whole medicine traders also," he added.

India, Mongolia review bilateral ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Mongolia reviewed entire spectrum of their bilateral defence ties during the two-day 12th Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting between Defence Ministries of two countries in Ulaanbaatar ending Friday, defence ministry said here.

Giving details of the meeting, officials said the meeting was co-chaired by Joint Secretary, MoD, India Amitabh Prasad and State Secretary of MoD, Mongolia Brigadier General Gankhuyag Davagdorj. India's Ambassador to Mongolia Atul Malhari Gotsurue also attended the meeting. During the JWG, both sides expressed satisfaction at the ongoing defence cooperation between the two countries. They reviewed the progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives and identified means to further enhance cooperation in these areas, articulating steps in this direction. Both sides also exchanged



views on the current geopolitical situation.

The Joint Secretary highlighted the potential of the capacity and capability of the Indian defence industry, and looked forward to a fruitful partnership with the Armed Forces of Mongolia. The Mongolian side exuded confidence in the capacity and capability of the Indian industry.

Both sides also acknowledged the growing ties between the two countries. The Joint Secretary and Indian Ambassador also called on

Deputy Defence Minister of Mongolia B Bayarmagnai, and discussed bilateral cooperation issues.

The delegation visited a training establishment in Ulaanbaatar and reviewed the ongoing engagements.

India enjoys age-old historical, cultural and civilisational ties with Mongolia. Both countries regard each other as 'Spiritual Neighbours'. In the modern times, values like democracy, freedom and market economy hold the two nations closer.

EC issues notice to former Judge turned BJP candidate for remarks against Mamata

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Friday issued a notice to former Calcutta High Court judge and current BJP candidate for Tamluk Lok Sabha constituency Abhijit Gangopadhyay after finding his recent remarks about West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to be "improper" and a prima facie violation of the Model Code of Conduct.

The EC said it had found Gangopadhyay's remarks against Mamata Banerjee "violative" of the model code and its advisory.

The poll panel acted on a complaint by the Trinamool Congress against Gangopadhyay for his remarks against Banerjee while addressing a public meeting held on May 15 in Haldia.

Gangopadhyay who who joined the BJP after resigning from his post as the Calcutta high court judge, allegedly asked that "Mamata Banerjee's price" was. The BJP has fielded Gangopadhyay from Tamluk seat in West Bengal



where voting will be held on May 25.

The EC in its notice noted that Gangopadhyay's comment has been found to be "improper, injudicious, beyond dignity in every sense of term, in bad taste" and prima facie violative of the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct and its advisory to political parties.

"Now, therefore, you are hereby called upon to show cause by 17.00 hrs of 20.05.2024 as to why appropriate action for violation of Model Code of Conduct should not be taken against you. In the event of no response from your side with-

in the stipulated time, it will be presumed that you have nothing to say in the matter and the Election Commission will take appropriate action or decision in the matter without making any further reference to you," the EC said.

The TMC on Thursday moved the Election Commission against former high court judge and BJP candidate, Abhijit Gangopadhyay, for allegedly making "misogynistic" remarks against West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

According to the letter TMC leader Derek O'Brien wrote to the Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal, Gangopadhyay, in his speech had said, "Mamata Banerjee, how much are you being sold for? Your rate is 10 lakhs. Why? Because you're getting your make-up done by Keya Seth? Mamata Banerjee, is she even a woman? I keep wondering sometimes."

As per the MCC, parties and candidates should not criticise aspects of the private lives of opponents, should not make unverified allegations, and should not make statements that may be malicious or offend decency and morality.

Defence public sector firm to supply 28 units of BH100 rear dump trucks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence public sector company Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) has secured an order from Northern Coal Fields Limited (NCL) for the supply of 28 units of BH100 Rear Dump Trucks. The total value of the order is Rs 250 crore, defence ministry said here on Friday.

Giving details, officials said the BH100 Rear Dump Truck is engineered to transport payloads of up to 100 tonnes, specifically designed for the efficient handling of overburden and coal in heavy-duty mining operations.

This order marks a significant milestone in the BEML's continued partnership with NCL, reflecting the trust and reliance on the Defence Public Sector Undertaking's heavy-duty mining equipment. The dumpers will be maintained under a Guaranteed Spare Parts contract for a period of five years, ensuring uninterrupted ser-

vice and operational efficiency.

The BEML BH100 Rear Dump Truck is renowned for its robust design, advanced features, and operational efficiency. Engineered for fuel efficiency, it helps reduce operational costs while maintaining high performance levels.

Commenting on this achievement, Chairman and Managing Director of BEML, Shantanu Roy said, "Our contribution towards the coal sector is getting bigger. Our mission is to help coal players achieve their target of extracting over one billion tonnes of coal in the country. Our BH100 Rear Dump Truck has the capability to assist the NCL in their coal extraction efforts in a significant way."

This order underlines BEML's commitment to supporting the country's mining industry with robust and reliable machinery, further strengthening its position as a major player in the mining equipment sector.

Climate change worsens patients' neuro diseases: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Living with neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease has its daily struggles, but climate change is all set to add another layer of difficulty to people with such conditions, a study published in The Lancet Neurology has warned.

Following a review of 332 papers published across the world between 1968 and 2023, the team, led by Professor Sanjay Sisodiya (UCL Queen Square Institute of Neurology), said they expect the scale of the potential effects of climate change on neurological diseases to be substantial. The team underscored the urgency of comprehending the impact of climate change on this vulnerable population to mitigate adverse health outcomes and prevent exacerbating existing health disparities.

They considered 19 different nervous system conditions, chosen on the basis of the Global Burden of Disease 2016 study, including stroke,



migraine, Alzheimer's, meningitis, epilepsy and multiple sclerosis. Impact of climate change on several serious but common psychiatric disorders, including anxiety, depression and schizophrenia was also analysed.

Professor Sanjay Sisodiya, who is also Director of Genomics at the Epilepsy Society and a founding member of Epilepsy Climate Change, said: "There is clear evidence for an impact of the climate on some brain conditions, especially stroke and infections of the nervous system."

"The climatic variation that was shown to have an effect on brain diseases included

extremes of temperature (both low and high), and greater temperature variation throughout the course of day - especially when these measures were seasonally unusual.

"Night time temperatures may be particularly important, as higher temperatures through the night can disrupt sleep. Poor sleep is known to aggravate a number of brain conditions." The researchers found that there was an increase in admissions, disability or mortality as a result of a stroke in higher ambient temperatures or heat waves which are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change. They considered 19 different

nervous system conditions, chosen on the basis of the Global Burden of Disease 2016 study, including stroke, migraine, Alzheimer's, meningitis, epilepsy and multiple sclerosis.

Meanwhile, the team stated that people with dementia are susceptible to harm from extremes of temperature (e.g. heat-related illness or hypothermia) and weather events (e.g. flooding or wildfires), as cognitive impairment can limit their ability to adapt behaviour to environmental changes.

"Reduced awareness of risk is combined with a diminished capacity to seek help or to mitigate potential harm, such as by drinking more in hot weather or by adjusting clothing.

"This susceptibility is compounded by frailty, multimorbidity, and psychotropic medications. Accordingly, greater temperature variation, hotter days, and heat waves lead to increased dementia-associated hospital admissions and mortality."

Heat stress can exacerbate symptoms such as cognitive impairment, fatigue, and motor dysfunction, leading to increased morbidity and mortality among this population. Moreover, disruptions in healthcare services and access to essential medications and treatments resulting from extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, can further compound the challenges faced by individuals with neurodegenerative conditions.

Yet another review on studies investigating climate change and neurodegeneration has found evidence that a 1.5°C increase in mean ambient temperature correlated with more hospital admissions for dementia of Alzheimer's type (DAT) disease patients. Higher temperatures may accelerate Tau phosphorylation, a characteristic of Alzheimer's disease, serving as a potential explanation for increased disease severity, said the review published in StressMarq Biosciences platform.

Senior Indian, Kenyan officials conduct virtual meet to strengthen governance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials of India and Kenya have conducted a virtual meet to enhance collaboration in governance and personnel administration, a statement issued on Friday by the Personnel Ministry said.

The areas of collaboration envisage the capacity building of senior officers of Kenya in the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), it said. The meeting was held between V Srinivas, Secretary of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India and professor Nour Mohamady, Director General, Kenya School of Governance (KSG) through video conferencing on May 14, the statement said.

In the meeting, both sides discussed enhancing India-Kenya bilateral collaboration through the NCGG and the KSG in per-



sonnel administration and governance with emphasis on capacity-building programmes, it said.

The meeting was attended by senior officials of DARPG, the NCGG, the High Commission of India to Kenya from the Indian side and the directors of KSG from the Kenyan side, the statement said. The Indian side presented the strides made by the Government of India in implementing the policy "maximum governance-minimum gov-

ernment" by implementation of the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) reforms, benchmarking of e-services using National e-Services Delivery Assessment, the recognition of meritocracy through the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration. The CPGRAMS allows citizens to raise complaints against central and state government departments.



Congress, SP will run bulldozer over Ram temple if voted to power: Modi

PTI ■ BARABANKI (UP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday claimed that the Congress and Samajwadi Party will run a bulldozer over the Ram temple if elected to power, and asked them to take "tuition" from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on "where to run bulldozers".

Addressing a rally here, he also said the INDIA bloc is in the fray to create "instability" and is collapsing like a pack of cards as the polls progress. Asserting that his government is going to score a hat-trick, Modi said in the new government, he has to take many big decisions for the poor, youth, women and farmers, and for that he has come here to seek the blessings of the people of Barabanki and Mohanlalganj. "June 4 is not far. Today, the whole country and the world knows that the Modi government is going to score a hat-trick," he asserted. "On one side there is the BJP-NDA alliance dedicated to

national interest and on the other side, the 'INDI alliance' is in the field to create instability in the country. As the elections progress, these 'INDI alliance' people have started collapsing like a pack of cards," he said.

"You need MPs who will work and do good for you. We need MPs who will develop the area, not those who will abuse Modi for five years. For this you have only one option - lotus (poll symbol of BJP). Can you achieve a speed of 1,000 CC with a 100 CC engine? If you want rapid development, only a strong government can provide it... Only the BJP government can give it," he asserted. The prime minister also raised the Ram temple issue to hit out at the SP and Congress.

"A senior SP leader had said on the day of Ram Navami that Ram temple is useless. At the same time, the Congress is preparing to overturn the Supreme Court's decision on Ram Temple. For them, only their family and power matter. If the SP-Congress come to power, they will send



Ram Lalla back to the tent and bulldoze the temple," he claimed while asking them to take "tuition" from Adityanath as to where bulldozers should be used. The Adityanath government has been accused of using bulldozers to raze property of alleged criminals in the state. Samajwadi Party leader Ram

Gopal Yadav had recently courted controversy with his remarks that the Ram temple in Ayodhya is "bekaar (useless)" as it has not been properly constructed, inviting sharp criticism from Adityanath who said this shows the "reality" of the INDIA bloc. Maintaining that "nothing is

greater than vote bank for the SP-Congress," Modi said, "But, when I expose them, they become restless and lose sleep. They start saying anything and start hurling abuses." "The SP-Congress have surrendered to appeasement. And when Modi is telling their truth to the country,

they say Modi is creating Hindu-Muslim divide. The vote bank these people run after has also started understanding their truth now. Our mothers and sisters are happy with the law on triple talaq and are continuously blessing the BJP," Modi said. Taking a dig at Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, he said, "The Babuji here, the socialist prince, has now taken shelter of a new aunt". Apparently referring to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Modi said, "This new aunt of his is in Bengal. Now his aunt from Bengal has told the 'INDI alliance' people that I will support you from outside". Yadav earlier used to address BSP chief Mayawati as his "bua" (aunt). He also alluded to the fight between INDIA bloc partners - the AAP and Congress in Punjab. "An INDI alliance party has told another that don't speak anything against us in Punjab." Modi said they were day dreaming about getting the

prime minister's post. He also mocked former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel for his remarks that the people of Rae Bareilly are now going to elect the prime minister of the country, saying "Look at the extent of their dreams". "A Congress leader said the people of Rae Bareilly will elect the prime minister. Hearing this, the heart of the Samajwadi prince broke. No tears came out but all his heart's desires were washed away," the prime minister said. Baghel had said that the people of Rae Bareilly are not just electing a Lok Sabha member but also a prime minister. Modi also targeted RJD leader Lalu Prasad Yadav, saying "The champion of fodder scam from Bihar, who is currently out of jail on the pretext of ill health, is even saying that the entire reservation should now be given to Muslims. This means that Dalits, tribals and backward classes will not be able to achieve anything." Targeting the opposition on

the issue of reservation, Modi said, "When the Constitution was made, the Constituent Assembly had decided that there would be no reservation on the basis of religion. But, 10 years ago these people (Congress) had tried to give reservation on the basis of religion. They have even done this in Karnataka. There they made all the Muslims OBC overnight. They looted a huge portion of the reservation given to OBCs." Invoking Lord Ram, the prime minister said, "Beyond Ram's work ('Ram kaaj'), now it is time for national work ('rashtra kaaj'). The inspiration for Ram's work is for national work. I am asking you for 400 'paar' to protect your rights." The main contest in Barabanki is between Tanuj Punia of the Congress and BJP's Rajrani Rawat. Tanuj Punia is the son of senior Congress leader PL Punia, a former Lok Sabha MP from Barabanki (SC) Lok Sabha seat. Barabanki will vote in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections in the state on May 20.

Ladakhis united over Sixth Schedule demand despite division on LS polls: Buddhist leader

PTI ■ LEH

Even as the Lok Sabha elections for the Ladakh appear to be divided on regional basis, it will not affect the unity over the demands for statehood and safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, said Chering Dorjay Lakruk, president of Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA).

A three-cornered election in Ladakh, with the BJP and the Congress candidates from Leh and an Independent nominee from Kargil, gives an edge to the Kargil candidate.

In an interview with PTI, Lakruk stressed the need for safeguards to protect the land and culture of Ladakh, and also raised concerns over the pasture lands, used for grazing by the local nomadic tribes, being taken over by China. LBA, a prominent social and religious organisation of Ladakh, has had a key role in developing a consensus on the need for the Sixth Schedule.

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution deals with provisions for the administration of the tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Founded in 1933, the LBA had raised the demand for making Ladakh a separate



state soon after Independence. However, it was included in Jammu and Kashmir at that time. But the demand for a separate identity continued.

"After the abrogation of Article 370, there were celebrations initially. But then we realised it is not good for us," Lakruk told PTI.

He said various social, religious and other organisations and individuals came forward to press for the demand, which resulted in the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) coming together. Their representatives are in talks with a high-powered committee of the home ministry over four key demands -- Sixth Schedule, statehood, a separate public service commission and Lok Sabha seats in Leh and Kargil. Presently, the Union

Territory of Ladakh has only one Lok Sabha constituency. "During the talks with the home ministry, we felt they were buying time before the election. They did not have much to offer. Only some assurance was given on the public service commission," he said. He also dismissed reports that they were assured of extending Article 371-like protections to the region which would enable them to create elected bodies with the power to administrate tribal areas. "The home ministry did not give any offer of Article 371. It was a speculation. They told us our existing councils will be strengthened and they will create an advisory council. We already have the LAHDC Act (Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act, 1997). But now the powers of the council have also been

curtailed," he said. With a three-cornered fight between BJP's Tashi Gyalsong, Congress' Tsering Namgyal and Independent candidate from Kargil Mohd Hanifa Jan being witnessed here, Lakruk said the Kargil candidate has an edge over his rivals. Both Gyalsong and Namgyal are from Leh. "Unfortunately in Ladakh the tradition is that voting is on a regional basis. So the independent candidate will have some edge. Votes in Kargil will get consolidated behind him. There are more chances for him to win," Lakruk said. He said they had anticipated that some regional and religious sentiments may come to the fore during elections, but it will not impact the unity of the two regions over their demands. "We could see that at the time of election, some religious or regional sentiments may come in. Apex body and KDA have discussed this. Whatever the results of elections are, our unity on the four demands will not be affected," he said. He said the LBA went to every village and settlement to educate people on the demand for the Sixth Schedule. As the talks with the Union government failed, they were forced to take the path of protest.

Fight of heavyweights in Sambalpur where farmers, weavers hold the key

PTI ■ SAMBALPUR

Unemployment and distress sale of paddy are the pressing issues in Odisha's Sambalpur Lok Sabha constituency, where Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan of the BJP and influential BJD general secretary (organisation) Pranab Prakash Das are poised for a showdown. The candidates' attention is squarely on farmers and weavers, who are crucial in a region that encompasses the catchment area of the Hirakud reservoir and has a thriving handloom industry. The majority of Sambalpur's population, concentrated in five of its seven assembly constituencies, relies either on agriculture or the harvesting of Kendu and Sal leaves for their livelihoods. Pradhan, who is a Rajya Sabha MP from Bihar, is contesting elections after a gap of 15 years. He had last unsuccessfully contested assembly elections from Parahara assembly segment in 2009. Das, on the other hand, is the sitting MLA of Jajpur seat in the coastal region. He is known to be an influential organiser of the party. The prestigious Sambalpur parliamentary constituency was represented by the BJD three times in a row in 1998,



1999 and 2004. In 2009, 2014 and 2019, however, voters of the constituency elected Congress, BJD and BJP candidates respectively. Pradhan, a resident of Talcher town in Angul district and son of former Union minister Debendra Pradhan, has been a central minister since 2014 and is banking on the initiatives of the Union government to register a victory. "We are optimistic that people will vote on the lotus symbol. The BJP-led Centre has established IIM Sambalpur and people are happy with the developmental work of the Union government," he said. Das, a three-term Jajpur MLA and son of former Janata Dal state president Ashok Dash, claimed that people love Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and have been benefited from the BJD

governments' schemes for farmers, weavers, students, youths and women. "The BJD government's Kalia scheme for farmers is very popular in this region," Das said. Although a total of 14 candidates are in the fray, the contest is directly between Pradhan and Das. Congress has nominated former BJD MP and ex-minister Nagendra Pradhan, who quit the ruling party in the state and joined the grand old party a few days before filing his nominations. The Congress had first named Dulal Chandra Pradhan from the seat but later changed its candidate to Nagendra Pradhan, who had won from the constituency in 2014 on a BJD ticket, after he joined the grand old party. Aggrieved by the party's decision, Dulal Chandra Pradhan later joined the BJP.

Lalu's daughter seeks to wrest back her father's stronghold Saran

PTI ■ SARAN (BIHAR)

Sitting BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy's remark that "my name could enter record books for winning against the maximum number of members of one family" has set the political mood in Bihar's Saran where RJD president Lalu Prasad's daughter Rohini Acharya has entered the fray to wrest back her father's erstwhile pocket borough. Rudy, a former Union minister, who lost to Prasad whenever the RJD supremo was himself in the fray, has been successful against the latter's wife Rabri Devi in 2014. Five years later, Rudy defeated Prasad's elder son Tej Pratap Yadav's father-in-law Chandrika Roy. Acharya, 47, happens to be the sixth member of her family, and fourth among her siblings to enter politics, yet, in more than one respect, she stands out as an atypical politician. Rudy, 62, had made his debut in parliamentary elections in 1996 from Chhapra, as Saran was known before the 2008 delimitation. In 2004, Prasad wrested the seat in a contest marred by large-scale electoral violence that had necessitated a repoll in the entire constituency.

RMP leader Hariharan held over sexist remarks against Shailaja, Manju Warriar

PTI ■ KOZHIKODE (KERALA)

Revolutionary Marxist Party (RMP) leader K S Hariharan was on Friday arrested over his alleged sexist remarks against senior CPI(M) leader K K Shailaja and Malayalam film actress Manju Warriar. Vadakara police here recorded his arrest and then released him on station bail, an officer said. The action was taken based on a complaint recently lodged by the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), a Left outfit. The police had, on May 12, booked Hariharan under IPC Sections 509 (insulting the modesty of a woman) and 153 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot). After he was released on station bail, Hariharan told reporters that in Kerala a lot of people make controversial remarks in their speeches, but cases are not registered against them. He further said that after his speech, both he and his party leader K K Rema were attacked on social media. "We have decided to face it legally and politically," he added. Hariharan also said that what he said was wrong and that is why expressed

regret regarding it. The RMP leader said that following the incident bombs were hurled at his home, but no one has been caught in connection with that. An unidentified gang, which came on a two-wheeler, hurled some explosives at the house at around 8.15 pm on May 12, he had claimed earlier. Hariharan had made the objectionable remark on the night of May 11 while speaking at a meeting in Vadakara here, which was inaugurated by the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, V D Satheesan. The event was organised in response to the ruling LDF's charges that UDF workers had made a morched video of Shailaja, who was a candidate in Vadakara in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls. As the remark sparked a huge political storm, his own party had made a morched video openly criticised him and said Hariharan should not have made such objectionable comments against any woman. Later, Hariharan came out with a Facebook post saying friends and journalists brought to his attention that he had made an "inappropriate" remark during the speech.

In Mumbai North, Piyush challenges outsider tag against bhoomi putra Bhushan

PTI ■ MUMBAI

As BJP leader Piyush Goyal faces the challenge of overcoming the "outsider" tag, Congress's Bhushan Patil is riding on the badge of being a "bhoomi putra" (son of the soil) in Mumbai North seat. Goyal is pitted in a straight fight with Patil for the May 20 election. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut and Congress leader Varsha Gaikwad called Goyal an "outsider" earlier this month. Slamming the opposition

Maha Vikas Aghadi for labelling him as an outsider, Goyal said, "There can be nobody more Mumbaikar than me." "That is a very ridiculous argument. Not even worth responding to. I am a born Mumbaikar. Lived in Mumbai all my life, worked in Mumbai all my life," Goyal told PTI during a roadshow. The Rajya Sabha MP, who started his career as a chartered accountant, is the son of former BJP minister Vedprakash Goyal and Chandrakanta Goyal, three-term BJP MLA from Matunga.

Goyal said he was born in Mumbai, studied in H R College and Government Law College, and started his Chartered Accountancy practice in Lalbaug and worked as an investment banker on Nepean Sea Road. The opportunity of proving his salt as a Mumbaikar comes with the challenge of matching up to the big winning margin of 4.65 lakh votes recorded by BJP's Gopal Shetty in the last election. Of the 9.88 lakh votes polled in 2019, Shetty got 7.05 lakh while actor and Congress nominee Urmila Matondkar

polled 2.41 lakh. Meanwhile, Congress' Patil is asserting his identity as a local resident and a "Maharashtrian" to garner maximum votes for his party. The Congress leader is also attempting to tap the BJP's traditional vote bank, the Gujarati community, by involving his wife, a Gujarati Jain, in his campaign. Patil enjoys the support of Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Vinod Ghosalkar whose son, former corporator Abhishek Ghosalkar, was killed in Borivali earlier this year during a Facebook Live

interaction with his constituents. Patil said he is a "bhoomi putra" (son of the soil) who would continue to live among his voters in Borivali and would be approachable 24x7 to resolve their grievances. Goyal's candidature was declared much earlier than that of Patil, so the BJP leader has had an early mover advantage, holding rallies and crossing the constituency much before Patil's nomination was announced. Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi's advocate Sonal D Gondane is

another candidate in the fray. Historically, the Mumbai North seat has been a BJP bastion with former union minister Ram Naik winning five straight elections from 1989 till 2004. In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, actor Govinda, who was the Congress candidate, defeated Naik. In 2009, Sanjay Nirupam was elected as a Congress candidate. In the next two elections, in 2014 and 2019, Gopal Shetty was elected. He hasn't been fielded this time and instead the BJP chose Goyal.

BJP ended crisis of credibility in politics by fulfilling promises: Former Haryana Minister Vij

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The BJP ended the "crisis of credibility" in Indian politics by fulfilling the promises it made to people, former Haryana minister and six-term MLA Anil Vij said on Friday. The Ambala Cantonment MLA said his party does what it promises. Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to Haryana on Saturday to address two rallies in support of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Lok Sabha poll candidates, Vij said, "Modiji's visit will further boost the party's campaign in



the state." According to state BJP leaders, the prime minister is scheduled to address a rally each in Ambala and Gohana (in Sonapat district) on Saturday. It will be his first visit for campaigning in this

election season to Haryana, which goes to polls on May 25. "There is great enthusiasm among people about the prime minister's visit," Vij said. Slamming the Congress, the former Haryana home minister alleged that there was a "crisis of credibility" in the country's politics earlier because the grand old party did not fulfil what it promised to people and thus, betrayed their trust. "When the Congress was in power, it used to say it would eradicate poverty. But it failed to do so. The Congress fought elections after elections on the

'garibi hatao' slogan, but took no steps towards poverty alleviation. It is during Modi's government that 25 crore people have come out of poverty in 10 years," Vij told PTI. It is the Modi government that scrapped Article 370 of the Constitution that had bestowed a special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, enacted the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), a law against instant "triple talaq" and passed a bill for reserving one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, he said.

Revolt by six former Congress MLAs was a slap in party's face for cheating people, claims Himachal BJP chief

PTI ■ SHIMLA

The revolt by the six former MLAs, who had voted in favour of BJP nominee Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya Sabha polls, was a slap in the face of the Congress for "cheating" the people of Himachal Pradesh by making false promises, state BJP chief Rajiv Bindal has said. In an interview with PTI, Bindal claimed the Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led state government has no achievements to show for the 15 months it has been in power and that Congress leaders are frustrated with

this. "The Congress and the state government are bankrupt in terms of leadership and policies and have cheated the people of the state by making false promises and people with scruples are leaving the party. The revolt by its (former) legislators was a slap in the face of the Congress for cheating the public," the BJP leader said. Calling these leaders rebels shows Sukhu's frustration, he said. "One thing is clear that people are motivated by the developmental policies and charisma of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Hot as Hades

The Indian Meteorological Department has forecast severe heatwave, leading to high health risk

As if the scorching sensation on the skin and mercury's validation of the heat and humidity were not enough, the Weatherman has issued a stark warning for north-west India, forecasting a severe heatwave with a high health risk over the next week. The announcement comes as temperatures continue to soar, posing significant challenges to people's wellbeing and safety. With temperatures likely to reach alarming levels, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) advisory underscores the urgency for residents, authorities and healthcare providers to take proactive measures to mitigate their impact. Heatwaves are characterised by prolonged periods of excessively high temperatures, often accompanied by high humidity levels, which can exacerbate the risk of heat-related illnesses and even fatalities. Northwest India, comprising States such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, is particularly susceptible to extreme heat events due to its geographical location. Prolonged exposure to high temperatures can lead to various ailments, including exhaustion, heatstroke, dehydration and cramps. Vulnerable populations – such as the elderly, children, pregnant women and those with pre-existing health conditions – are at heightened risk during such extreme weather conditions. Heat-related illnesses can manifest swiftly and escalate rapidly, necessitating prompt medical attention. Symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, rapid heartbeat, confusion and fainting should not be taken lightly. Of course, one cannot fight Nature but one can always be prepared to minimise its ill effects.



To mitigate the adverse effects of the IMD forecast, it is essential to launch comprehensive public awareness campaigns to educate residents on the risks and preventive measures of heatwaves. As a thumb rule, those living on pavements and in shanties are at bigger health risk. Establishing cooling centres with air conditioning, fans and hydration facilities will provide critical relief to the vulnerable population. Encouraging people to stay hydrated and seek shelter in cool, shaded areas during peak heat hours is vital. The old system of *piyaus* is long gone; instead, now only bottled water is available. The Government must set up water kiosks so that people can get free, clean drinking water on the go. Additionally, urban planning strategies that incorporate green spaces, tree cover and reflective surfaces can mitigate the urban heat island effect and enhance thermal comfort in urban environments. During summers, water scarcity and power cuts turn things worse. The authorities must ensure that load shedding is kept to a minimum and clean drinking water is available; otherwise the chances of outbreak of waterborne diseases are high. As northwest India braces for a severe heatwave, prioritising public health and safety is paramount. The IMD forecast serves as a crucial reminder to remain vigilant, stay informed and make concerted efforts to mitigate the risks. We have braved many adversities; this too will pass!

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PICTALK



Participants at the 'Run For Vote' marathon for the Lok Sabha election awareness, in Shimla

Assault most foul for kindness to animals



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

The man who savagely assaulted a young girl who was feeding stray dogs in Delhi must receive exemplary punishment

According to a report in the *Free Press Journal*, a young girl, Manisha Solanki, who feeds 150 stray dogs daily, was abused, harassed, beaten with a stick and left bleeding and crying in pain in Raghuraj Nagar in North Delhi on May 14, 2024. The man, who reportedly attacked her, works in a roadside shop. He is also said to have savagely attacked the dogs who were quietly and peacefully eating the food she had brought. At least one dog was severely injured as the stick had nails attached to it.

The police, who have lodged an FIR following a complaint by the girl's father, need to follow up the matter vigorously and ensure that exemplary punishment is handed out to the culprit. The report that the stick had nails attached to suggest indicates that the intention was not just to hit but cause the maximum amount of pain. Also, the report that Manisha Solanki was doing no more than pleading with the man not to attack the dogs who were just peacefully eating, suggests that the person is utterly vicious by disposition. Such men are a threat to society and have to be regarded as such by the police. This is not the first incidence of its kind. In July, 2021, a 28-year-old woman was assaulted in East of Kailash by a mother-daughter duo. For the same reason, a woman was savagely beaten in Delhi's Sunlight Colony May, 2018. These are just two examples; others can be cited. Besides being assaulted, those who feed and care for stray dogs in India are also abused and harassed. It is often argued that this is because stray dogs bite and feeding ensures that their numbers grow. What is not realised is that there has been a steep fall in the number of dog bites in recent years. According to a report in *The New Indian Express* (dated December 3, 2023), by Jitendra Choubey, over 75 lakh cases of dog bites were reported in India in 2018; the figures were over 72 lakh in 2019, 46 lakh in 2020. It was over 17 lakh in 2021 and 21.8 lakh in 2022. Another report by Nikhil Ghanekar in *The Indian Express*



(dated March 27, 2024) cites data tabled in Parliament by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare showing an increase to 27.8 lakh in 2023. Despite being higher than the preceding two years, the figure of 27.8 lakhs marks a massive decline from that of over 75 lakh recorded in 2018. Besides, the accuracy of these figures has been a subject of scepticism. A report (dated March 19, 2024) by Shainu Mohan in *The New Indian Express* cited N. Jayachandran, an animal rights activist and a former member of the Kerala State Animal Welfare Board, as describing the figures of dog bites as inaccurate and saying that there were no specific details and even scratches by cats were recorded as dog bites. Doubts about the reliability of the existing figures of dog bite cases, is implied in the communication dated March 7, 2024, from the Union Government's Directorate-General of Health Services (DGHS), to State Governments asking them to provide quality data on animal bites from all public health centres, community health



KONRAD LORENZ (1903-1989) WROTE IN *MAN MEETS DOG*, 'THE WHOLE CHARM OF THE DOG LIES IN THE DEPTH OF THE FRIENDSHIP AND THE STRENGTH OF THE SPIRITUAL TIES WITH WHICH HE HAS BOUND HIMSELF TO MAN'

centres, district hospitals and tertiary care facilities with inclusion of specific details regarding bites by pet and stray dogs. Of particular significance is the directive to avoid multiple entries of the same animal bite victims by maintaining separate records for new and follow-up patients in the animal bite exposure register. The suggestion is clear: there have been duplications. In many cases, pet and not stray, dogs have been responsible. Reliable figures for the whole of India do not exist. The ones that are available clearly underline this point. According to a report by Anuradha Kher in *The Times of India* of May 24, 2004, Sassoon Hospital at Pune had recorded as many as 3,185 dog bite cases until May that year. She quoted Namdeo Patil, the hospital's medical officer, as saying that pet dogs were responsible for 70 per cent of the cases. That the percentage of bites by stray dogs continues to be very high and one needs accurate statistics regarding their involvement, is clearly reflected in the DGHS's communi-

cation directing that the cases of pet dogs biting people be separately recorded. Unfortunately, people who assault, abuse and harass those who feed and care for stray dogs do not realise this. They are emotional cripples brimming with hatred. Notwithstanding their aggression, the number of people looking after stray dogs is increasing all over India. Twenty years ago, one rarely saw people feeding them or vaccinating them on the streets. Today, one sees them in most neighbourhoods. This is hardly surprising given the nature of dogs. Konrad Lorenz (1903-1989) wrote in *Man Meets Dog*, "The whole charm of the dog lies in the depth of the friendship and the strength of the spiritual ties with which he has bound himself to man." Lorenz, ethnologist and ornithologist and recipient of the 1973 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine along with Nikolaas Tinbergen and Karl Von Frisch, should know. (The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BATTING FOR HIGHER POLLING

Madam — Apropos the news article "Sachin, IPL legends bat for higher polling," published on 17 May, this is my response. It's intriguing to see the Election Commission leveraging cricket legends like Sachin Tendulkar and IPL stars to drive voter turnout. This strategy, pairing the beloved sport with civic duty, could significantly boost engagement, especially among young voters. With the heatwave and general voter apathy threatening participation, such innovative outreach is crucial. The integration of voter awareness messages into various digital platforms and services, from PhonePe to Swiggy, shows a commendable effort to reach people where they are most active. The collaboration with these companies and the BCCI during the IPL season represents a novel approach to a persistent issue. Encouragingly, the turnout in the recent phases shows an upward trend, suggesting these initiatives might be making an impact. This extensive, multi-platform campaign underscores the importance of every vote, aiming to strengthen our democratic process. It's a robust example of how popular culture and technology can be harnessed to foster civic responsibility.

Sahil Yadav | Lucknow

STRATEGIC PORT PARTNERSHIP

Madam — Apropos the news article "India and Iran sign Chabahar Port Pact," published on 17 May, this is my response. The recent long-term contract signed by India for the Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal in Chabahar marks a significant milestone in Indo-Iranian relations. This agreement underscores the strategic importance of Chabahar as a key gateway for India into Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan. The port's development, first envisioned in 2003, highlights India's consistent efforts to establish robust trade routes and enhance regional connectivity. Despite the changing political landscape and varying degrees of focus from successive Indian Governments, the Modi administration's renewed push has revitalized the project.

Modi-Yogi powerhouse



Apropos the news article "Modi filing nomination boosts BJP morale," published on 17 May, this is my response. As an avid newspaper reader, it's clear that Prime Minister Modi's nomination in Varanasi has electrified the political scene, highlighting Uttar Pradesh's critical role in national politics. The dynamic part-

This persistence is crucial, especially as regional dynamics shift with China's Belt and Road Initiative making inroads into Central Asia and beyond. The Chabahar port offers India a strategic counterbalance, particularly for accessing Afghanistan and Central Asia, vital for regional trade and geopolitical influence. Moreover, the trilateral cooperation involving Afghanistan emphasises the port's role in fostering economic stability and prosperity in the region. This project not only strengthens India's position but also serves as a linchpin for broader regional cooperation. Given the volatile geopolitical climate, especially with the ongoing conflict in Gaza, India's strategic foothold in Chabahar gains even more significance, ensuring that it remains a critical player in West and Central Asian geopolitics.

Priyank Sharma | Bhopal

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SKILLS

Madam — Apropos the news article "The rising significance of skills in learning," published on 17 May, this is my response. Every era leaves its mark on language,

ner ship between Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is undeniably a force to reckon with. Their joint presence in Varanasi not only bolstered the morale of BJP supporters but also underscored their confidence in securing a strong mandate in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Uttar Pradesh, with its 80 Lok Sabha seats, remains the epicentre of Indian electoral politics. The BJP's ambitious target of sweeping the State again, fueled by Modi's national appeal and Yogi's governance track record, sets a formidable challenge for the opposition. The development strides made under Yogi's tenure, particularly in law and order and economic growth, resonate with the electorate. Despite the unpredictability of elections, the Modi-Yogi duo's sustained popularity suggests a potential repeat of their past electoral successes, reinforcing their influence over the political landscape of both UP and the nation.

Vanshika Kumari | Roorkee

reflecting its emotions and trends. From renaming departments to emphasising skills in education, societal shifts shape vocabulary. While some debate the elevation of skill, it's undeniable that skills underpin all relationships, from parent-child bonds to professional interactions. Today, degrees in skills offer new avenues for earning and learning, reshaping the landscape of education. Yet, this evolution prompts a reevaluation of traditional degrees and curriculum structures. To truly understand and integrate skills into education, a fundamental overhaul is necessary, starting with revisiting teacher training programs. This blend of philosophical reflection and practical action serves as a pivotal point for further discourse and implementation. Ultimately, recognising the centrality of skills enriches both education and livelihoods, expanding the horizons of learning and earning.

Siya Sood | Amritsar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Gifting power to the underserved children

Collaborative efforts aid underserved kids facing resource scarcity and socio-economic gaps, enabling education access and job market success



RAVI SONNAD

Underserved children face multifaceted challenges - limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, lack of access and opportunity to holistic education and socio-economic disparities. As a result, these children are left without the life skills and leadership skills necessary to thrive in today's rapidly evolving job market. According to the UNICEF Global Framework on Transferable Skills, an estimated 825 million children are expected to leave school without the basic skills necessary for work and life by 2030. To tackle this issue effectively, it's imperative to embrace innovative approaches to skill-based learning. One such approach involves incorporating experiential learning opportunities into the curriculum. Research indicates that life or leadership skills cannot be taught in a traditional classroom environment but are inculcated when children experience situations, reflect upon them and make changes to their behaviour and habits. Team sports, the arts and free play are considered the best mediums to create these experiential



learning environments. The dynamic and often ambiguous nature of work in the 21st century demands a greater emphasis on teaching essential life skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and financial literacy. Another essential life skill is developing emotional resilience, especially for children dealing with hardship and difficulty. Children growing up in poverty experience stress, trauma and uncertainty. Communication skills are another important component in determining the course of one's personal and professional life journey. Through activities involving team sports, music, role-playing, public speaking and collaborative projects; children acquire the confidence and abilities. Life skills training has been proven to be the most powerful antidote to reducing

intergenerational poverty since it equips children to overcome the odds stacked against them and become productive and responsible adults capable of taking care of themselves and the world around them. They can not only ensure that their families are no longer in the same socio-economic situation, but they also become powerful role models for their communities, encouraging others to believe in the prospect of a better future and take concrete steps toward realising it. Close collaboration between education institutions, non-profit organisations, Government agencies and local community stakeholders will allow resources, expertise and networks to be pooled to design and implement effective programs. By working together, these stakeholders can identify the specific needs of underserved communities and tailor educational initiatives to address them. Whether it is a customised curriculum, setting up a training centre, apprenticeships or mentorship; collaborative efforts can have a transformative impact on bringing change to skill devel-

opment at scale. There is ample evidence to suggest that in developing countries, entrepreneurship is an essential ingredient to economic empowerment. In addition to generating employment through large companies, encouraging individuals and small businesses to thrive is equally important. By instilling principles of innovation, creativity, risk-taking and resilience, entrepreneurship education equips individuals with the tools to identify problems, develop solutions and pursue their aspirations with confidence. Closing the gap in skill-based learning opportunities in underserved children requires a holistic approach that addresses the systemic barriers to education and economic empowerment. By fostering collaboration, promoting experiential learning and prioritising the development of essential life skills, we can create a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential. (The writer is the founder of *Enabling Leadership*; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN FINDING DIVINE INSPIRATION

One must explore the intricacies of karma and surrender to a higher power



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

I was looking out one very cold morning in January when it was raining lightly also. What I saw inspired me greatly. One woman, not appearing well off was walking purposefully holding her child oblivious of the rain falling. What struck me was the beauty of the Lord's creation. This woman, not so fortunate in material terms, had still something very precious - a soul in the form of a dear child. She would be able to accept all her hardships in the hope that her dear child would look after her in her later years. What is the message from the Lord? That He punishes but never condemns anyone. Ultimately, reformation is the goal of all punishments. What else? We should follow God's example. All those placed lower than us have already been punished. Be very kind and generous towards them. It is not for us to compound their misery with ill behaviour. We will be punished for sure if we do that. If anything, those, who personally serve us due to their unfortunate circumstances, should be treated with respect in addition to giving them reasonable remuneration.

My next example is the mind - a faculty given to us to think, will and feel. It has a double use. This mind can dream of anything far from reality. It can help us to do very difficult tasks and it can make us feel very good also. Lord Krishna describes, "A person, having consciousness unattached to external sense objects, enjoys that happiness within, which is extraordinary. He, having consciousness linked to the Brahman, experiences eternal bliss." (*The Bhagavad-Geeta 5.21*) Now the opposite role of the mind. It can make one highly depressed even in the most opulent surroundings.



The strongest man can feel completely helpless like Arjuna did who was depressed, affected by compassion and thus suffering; his eyes were full of tears. (2.1) Lord Krishna had to preach to him to bring him around. He did, "My delusion has been dispelled by Your mercy; my memory has been restored. I, free from doubt, am composed." (18.73) God is very kind to us human beings. It is up to us to make proper use of this faculty, which is subtle and very powerful, much more than our bodies can be. God has guided us in great detail how to make the best use of it. Most everyone feels that good times can continue indefinitely. What is the reality? They don't, because we bring from our past life/lives both good and bad karmaphalas. Their manifestations are destined. No one has only good Karamaphalas, because, then, such a person would have qualified for liberation. Therefore, both good and bad ones keep on maturing. What happens then to one who has a faulty expectation when bad times come? He or she becomes highly depressed, sad, etc. with no preparation to deal with them. God has provided a solution, which is to take His shelter. This will ensure God's help to deal with bad times. Pains/sufferings will become tolerable and one will not break down. God's help to those, who preach God's message is almost unlimited. Why? Because, "He, who will preach this supreme knowledge amongst. My devotees will be doing highest devotion towards Me." (18.68) Many highly advanced preachers have travelled to the West and spread God's consciousness. They have gained great success thanks to God's support to them.

I will cite one more example of God's magnificent creation. We all suffer due to our egos and others causing us lots of botheration. But there is one superb use of this faculty of ego if we take shelter from God. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My 'kripa' (grace). But if you will not heed on account of the feeling of being the doer (egoist), you will perish." (18.58) As mentioned earlier, God can and will help if we can drop our false sense of ego.

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Reflections on the end of a 30-year war

Amidst scenes of unspeakable horror and relentless violence, the echoes of past atrocities resonate, urging a deeper understanding of the human cost of conflict



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Fifteen years ago, on a day like today, the final bullet was fired, bringing an end to the 30-year-long war in Sri Lanka. The harrowing memories we witnessed have become a thing of the past, but their echoes still reverberate in our minds. However, I don't intend to offer a political analysis; instead, I aim to reflect on the unimaginable suffering endured by fellow human beings in this troubled land. Pain was not unique to the location where this brutal war took place, nor was any specific community singled out for oppression. The entire country, in various ways, was haunted by enemies in different forms. In my memory, there's a chilling scene that's deeply ingrained, a moment of unspeakable horror from my childhood innocence. At just six years old, I held tight to my mother's hand, driven by morbid curiosity like the others in our village who gathered hastily. Together, we witnessed the grim sight of a half-charred corpse, a stark reminder of the darkness plaguing our land. The overpowering smell of death overwhelmed us, defying our feeble attempts to shield ourselves from its grip. By the roadside, where our community thrived, lay the lifeless body of a man, his agonising death a haunting echo of the brutality lurking in the shadows. As the fire consumed his flesh, the echoes of his cries pierced the night, mourning a future stolen by merciless hands. To this day, the identity of his attackers remains a mystery, their cruelty matched only by their cowardice. In their relentless pursuit of violence, they showed no regard for the family he left behind, extinguishing life with a cold indifference that sends shivers down the spine.

That fateful day remains a solemn reminder of the darkness within the human heart, a stark acknowledgement of life's fragility in a world torn by chaos and despair. The sight of a skull, once full of life, now a grotesque symbol of agony, serves as a testament to the depths of human cruelty. Its gaping maw and charred teeth tell of the unspeakable suffering endured by its unfortunate owner - a chilling reminder of the atrocities committed by those in power. Illuminated by a burning tyre, this macabre scene exposes the brutality of oppressors who sought to crush dissent with an iron fist. Yet, this is just one episode in the chaos that engulfed Sri Lanka during the second uprising of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). The horrors of that time still linger in my mind, a grim reminder of the generation born into a world besieged by violence and despair. For the parents of this generation, survival was the sole pursuit, each day a desperate struggle against the spectre of death. To stand with the State was to invite the wrath of revolutionaries who lurked in the shadows, waiting to mete out their brand of justice in the dead of night. Conversely, to align oneself with the revolutionaries was to invite swift and merciless retribution from the State apparatus, which spared no effort in its quest to crush dissent with utmost brutality. This was the grim reality that defined an era - a reality where horror knew no bounds and mercy was but a distant memory.

In the Sinhalese-dominated areas of the country, flames of rebellion raged unchecked, while in the north and east, where Tamils and Muslims held sway, the spectre of terror loomed large, casting a pall of fear over all who dared to defy the status quo. In this fractured landscape, where lines of ethnicity and ideology blurred in



the face of unrelenting violence, the suffering of innocent lives knew no bounds.

In the crucible of my high school years, the Tamil Armed groups, notably the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), cast a long shadow over the land, their reign of terror reaching its zenith. Following the peace talks convened in Thimpu, Bhutan, the LTTE embarked on a ruthless campaign to assert their dominance, ruthlessly eliminating rival Tamil factions that dared to challenge their authority. Even those groups previously supported by the central Government under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and the State Government of Tamil Nadu were not spared from their wrath, as the LTTE sought to establish itself as the sole arbiter of Tamil interests.

Concurrently, amidst this bloody power struggle, the LTTE unleashed a wave of terror aimed at forcibly displacing Sinhalese and Muslim communities from the Northern peninsula, affording them scant hours to abandon their homes and livelihoods. Many Muslims scrambled to escape the impending violence, seizing whatever means of transportation they could find to flee to Government-controlled territories, where they hoped to find sanctuary from the chaos engulfing their homeland. Among these displaced individuals emerged tales of resilience and triumph, as some managed to rebuild their lives, ultimately ascending to positions of prominence as successful businesspersons and influential politicians. Yet, these stories of triumph are tempered by the grim reality of displacement and loss, serving as poignant reminders of the human cost exacted by the unrelenting tide of conflict and upheaval.

The reign of terror orchestrated by the LTTE unfolded with chilling precision, sparing none who dared to oppose its fascist ideology. Beginning with the systematic elimination of rival armed factions, the LTTE's campaign of violence soon expanded to target not only other

ethnic communities but also Tamil intellectuals who dared to advocate for political solutions and the right to self-determination. Rajani Thiarangama, a revered intellect and champion of Tamil rights, met a tragic end at the hands of LTTE militants in Jaffna - stark evidence of their ruthless intolerance of dissenting voices.

In my discussions with her father, A Rajasingham, years later in Colombo, the heartbreaking tale of his daughter's untimely demise offered a glimpse into the insidious tactics employed by the LTTE to silence its critics. This chilling account serves as but one example of the lengths to which the LTTE would go to impose its will upon the Tamil people, resorting to violence and coercion to enforce compliance. As the ranks of Tamil intellectuals dwindled, the LTTE turned its sinister gaze towards a new target: the recruitment of children into its ranks. Thousands of innocent youths were forcibly torn from their families, subjected to relentless indoctrination and thrust onto the battlefield, their tender frames bearing the weight of weapons far beyond their years.

Tragically, some would be groomed as suicide bombers, indiscriminately targeting politicians and unarmed civilians alike in a twisted bid for supremacy. As a war reporter, I witnessed the grim reality of child soldiers within the LTTE and its breakaway faction; some of them were even unable to hold their weapons properly. Many of them were malnourished, their skeletal frames visible and for them, attending school was a dream that never came true.

The horrors unleashed by the LTTE knew no bounds, wreaking havoc upon innocent lives while lining the pockets of those who profited from the chaos. Even in distant Western nations, Tamil communities were subjected to extortion and intimidation, coerced into financing the LTTE's reign of terror under threat of violence or retribution against their loved ones back home. Despite damning reports by organisations

like Human Rights Watch exposing these atrocities, the truth was often overshadowed by pro-LTTE propaganda, whitewashing the brutality of their so-called "liberation struggle." Consequently, those who fought against this unimaginable terror of tyranny were blamed. That is why, understanding this brutal reality and the plight Tamils were forced to endure is essential homework before succumbing to prejudice.

War came to an end in May 2009, after a prolonged conflict that lasted for over three decades. Since then, numerous discussions have been held regarding the identification and condemnation of those actively involved. In the aftermath, countries have rapidly developed, logistics have been enhanced and connectivity has tremendously improved. Simultaneously, thousands of ex-LTTE members have been rehabilitated and reintegrated into society, with some even marrying Sinhalese individuals. However, the victory over terror has not been wisely utilised to address systemic issues within the State structure. Excessive politicisation and the exploitation of this "victory" for personal gain by certain parties have undermined social responsibilities.

The Government's failure to effectively respond to false allegations regarding casualties and mission details has had lasting repercussions. Many misconceptions and fabricated stories, propagated by vested interests aiming to distort the true nature of this brutal period, have further complicated matters. Regrettably, there is a glaring absence of discussions on safeguarding peace and averting the recurrence of past atrocities. There is no meaning in celebrating 'victory' over the loss of human lives, but rather in building a national conscience to unite everyone towards a common goal, where peace is a precious gem cherished by all, to safeguard for generations to come.

(The writer is a Sri Lanka journalist and author; Views are personal)



THE REIGN OF TERROR ORCHESTRATED BY THE LTTE UNFOLDED WITH CHILLING PRECISION, SPARING NONE WHO DARED TO OPPOSE ITS FASCIST IDEOLOGY

The changing face of Indian philanthropy

The stage is set for a monumental leap forward in the philanthropic movement, heralding an era of 'More, Sooner and Better Giving'

India has always been a nation with a deeply ingrained concept of philanthropy. This ethos has given rise to many philanthropists, who have contributed immensely and helped build and support many of the great institutions of modern India. The Tata's being the foremost example of such modern Indian Philanthropy.

Today, philanthropy in India stands at a transformative juncture in terms of both, the quantum and the quality of giving. According to Knight Franks wealth report for 2023, the number of Ultra-High Net Worth Individuals (UHNIs), in India will grow by over 58 per cent in the next five years. India has seen the rise of many Unicorns in the past decade and is poised to see a



AMITABH JAIPURIA

rise of another ~150+ unicorns in the next few years, indicating a massive wealth surge. This is fortuitous as the demands on philanthropists for greater philanthropy will only increase which we hope will be met with a surge in philanthropic giving as well. UHNIs are redefining the giving landscape in India-they are now more actively engaged in the giving process, dedicating time to ensure their wealth dri-

ves substantial systemic improvements. Amit & Archana Chandra, Ashish Dhawan, Ajit Isaac, Harsh Mariwala, Kris Gopalakrishnan, Romesh and Sunil Wadhvani, Desh Deshpande and Vikrant Bhargava are a few of the great examples of new-age philanthropists, developing a portfolio of philanthropic initiatives including institution building and systemic change projects. This trend is only going to accelerate.

Another key trend to emerge is the gradual reduction in the average age of philanthropists. These younger and newer donors, representing both current family benefactors and first-generation wealth creators, are breaking through traditional barriers with innova-

tive and disruptive approaches to giving and are branching out to address issues beyond the historically favoured domains of healthcare, education and livelihoods. The emerging tribe of NextGen philanthropists coupled with the next generation of grassroots organisations-driven by young, committed and tech-savvy professionals-is set to transform the giving landscape in the coming years.

The proportion of technology entrepreneurs is also increasing and these philanthropists have given more generously when compared to other sectors. While they account for about 8 per cent of overall wealth in the space, their philanthropic contribution makes up nearly 35 per cent of all giving-Azim Premji, the Infosys

founders, Rohini Nilekani, Shiv Nadar, the Kamath brothers, Subroto Bagchi and Sanjeev Bikhchandani are great examples of new age Philanthropists from the Tech sector.

There's also a growing sensitivity to privilege among the younger generation of family donors and they are increasingly putting that privilege to work. Some of them are also carving out professional paths dedicated to philanthropy. However, despite the many positive trends in UHNI giving in India, challenges remain. First, there's an urgent need for India's UHNIs to increase the relative proportion of their giving. The current rate of giving doesn't match the pace of wealth accumulation. The 2023 India Philanthropy

Report by Bain & Company indicates that excluding contributions from Wipro's founder Azim Premji, UHNI donations fell by 5 per cent in fiscal year 2022 even as their wealth increased by over 9 per cent. Also, when compared to their peers in the United States, the UK and China, Indian UHNIs contribute significantly less relative to their wealth, in some cases, giving is lower by as much as a 10x factor. Second, philanthropic causes are becoming more diverse and varied, as some causes become more urgent like climate change and humanitarian crisis while traditional causes-education, healthcare, poverty alleviation and livelihoods-remain at the top of the agenda. Philanthropic capital is also increasingly being

tapped to address newer and often neglected causes in India such as sports, arts and culture and mental health amongst many others. Therefore, prioritising and allocating appropriate philanthropic capital to causes becomes crucial. Third, UHNIs need to engage themselves more in philanthropy by giving more time and effort. They also need to collaborate more with other philanthropists to pool their resources-money, time and effort-and take on more ambitious projects, create greater institutions and experiment with newer models to make a difference. They also need to experiment to see how technology can be leveraged to transform and scale services and service delivery in almost all areas, particularly in educa-

tion, healthcare, skilling and climate change.

This transformation will also be aided by a new compact between the donor and the donee that is based on greater mutual respect and sees greater participation by all stakeholders in the decision-making processes for where, how and when resources get deployed and how the impact is measured. We can expect 2024 to be a milestone year for the philanthropic movement in India with More, Sooner and Better Giving than ever before. Personal philanthropy can play a unique catalytic role in helping resolve many challenges in India, the time is now.

(The writer is CEO Accelerate Indian Philanthropy a Philanthropic initiative; views are personal)

Putin concludes trip to China

AP ■ BEIJING

Russian President Vladimir Putin concluded a two-day visit to China on Friday, emphasizing the countries' burgeoning strategic ties as well as his own personal relationship with Chinese leader Xi Jinping as they sought to present an alternative to U.S. global influence.

Putin praised the growth in bilateral trade while touring a China-Russia Expo in the northeastern city of Harbin. He met students at the Harbin Institute of Technology, which is said to work closely with the People's Liberation Army. Harbin, capital of China's Heilongjiang province, was once home to many Russian expatriates and retains some of that history in its architecture, such as the central St. Sophia Cathedral, a former Russian Orthodox church. Speaking to reporters, Putin thanked Xi and praised their talks as "substantive," saying that he spent "almost a whole day, from morning till evening" with the Chinese leader and other officials in Beijing the



previous day. The partnership between China and Russia "is not directed against anyone," Putin said in a veiled reference to the West. "It is aimed at one thing: creating better conditions for the development of our countries and improving the well-being of the people of China and the Russian

Federation." But he still had a back-handed rebuke for the U.S., and others who oppose the Moscow-Beijing relationship, saying an "emerging multipolar world ... is now taking shape before our eyes." "And it is important that those who are trying to maintain their monopoly on decision-making in the world on all issues ... do

everything in their power to ensure that this process goes naturally," he said. Both Russia and China have frequently spoken of the "emerging multipolar world" in response to what they view as U.S. hegemony. Joseph Torjigan, a research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institute, said the message being sent by China and

Russia was clear: "At this moment, they're reminding the West that they can be defiant when they want to." Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu addressed Putin's visit in an interview with The Associated Press, saying Western powers should continue to support Ukraine as part of sending a message that democracies will defend one another.

"If Ukraine is defeated at the end, I think China is going to get inspired, and they might take even more ambitious steps in expanding their power in the Indo-Pacific, and it will be disastrous for the international community," Wu said. Putin this month began his fifth term in power and Xi began his third last year. The Russian leader's trip "is an example of the two big authoritarian countries supporting each other, working together with each other, supporting each other's expansionism," Wu added.

Russia has become isolated globally following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. China has a tense relationship with

French police fatally shoot suspect in synagogue arson

AP ■ PARIS

France's Interior Minister said Friday that a man who was shot and killed by police after a suspected arson attack on a synagogue in the Normandy city of Rouen was an Algerian national who sought medical treatment in France and wasn't flagged as a suspected extremist.

Earlier the French police shot and killed the man armed with a knife and a metal bar who is suspected of having set fire to a synagogue in the Normandy city of Rouen early on Friday, the latest apparent act in a storm of antisemitism roiling France amid the Israel-Hamas war. Fire services were alerted early Friday morning to a blaze

at the synagogue. Police officers who deployed discovered the man on the roof of the building, clutching the metal bar in one hand and the kitchen knife in the other, and smoke rising from the synagogue's windows, Rouen prosecutor Frederic Teillet said at a brief news conference.

He said the man hurled abuse and threw the metal bar at the police before jumping off the roof and then running at one of the officers with his knife raised. The officer fired five shots, hitting the man four times, fatally wounding him, the prosecutor said. He said authorities are seeking to verify the man's identity. The prosecutor took no questions. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin posted on the social media site X that the man was "clearly wanting to set fire to the city's synagogue." He congratulated officers for "their reactivity and their courage." Tensions and anger have grown in France over the Israel-Hamas war. Antisemitic acts have surged in the country, which has the largest Jewish and Muslim pop-

ulations in western Europe. Rouen Mayor Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol said the man is thought to have climbed onto a trash container and thrown "a sort of Molotov cocktail" inside the synagogue, starting a fire and causing "significant damage."

"When the Jewish community is attacked, it's an attack on the national community, an attack on France, an attack on all French citizens," he said. "It's a fright for the whole nation," he added. Photos taken inside the synagogue and seen by The Associated Press showed that walls and the ceiling were charred and blackened. In Paris, Yonathan Arfi, head of the main French Jewish umbrella group, expressed fury at what he described as the "climate of terror" facing Jews in France. This week, a Paris memorial honoring people who distinguished themselves by helping to rescue Jews in France during the country's Nazi occupation in World War II was also attacked, defaced with painted blood-red hands.

Slovak PM Fico remains in serious condition after another operation

AP ■ BRATISLAVA

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico has undergone another operation two days after being shot multiple times and remains in serious condition, officials said Friday. Fico, 59, was attacked as he was greeting supporters after a government meeting in the former coal mining town of Handlova. A suspected assailant has been arrested.

Miriam Lapunikova, director of the University F D Roosevelt hospital in Banska Bystrica, where Fico was taken by helicopter after he was shot, said Fico underwent a CT scan and is currently awake and stable in an intensive care unit. She described his condition as "very serious."

She said the surgery removed dead tissues that had remained inside Fico's body. "I think it will take several more days until we will definitely know the direction of the further development," Robert Kaliniak, the defense minister



Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Slovakia Robert Kalinak speaks during a media briefing outside the F. D. Roosevelt University Hospital, where Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, who was shot and injured on May 15, is treated, in Banska Bystrica, central Slovakia, Friday. AP/PTI

and deputy prime minister, told reporters at the hospital. Still, Kaliniak stressed that the government continues to work. "The ministries are working on all their duties, nothing is frozen or halted, the country goes on," he told reporters. "The state is stable and today

the patient is stable as well." Fico has long been a divisive figure in Slovakia and beyond. His return to power last year on a pro-Russian, anti-American platform led to worries among fellow European Union and NATO members that he would abandon his country's pro-

Western course, particularly on Ukraine. Earlier Friday, the man charged with attempting to assassinate Fico was escorted by police to his home. Local media reported that it was part of a search for evidence. Markiza, a Slovak television station, showed footage of the suspect being taken to his home in the town of Levice on Friday morning, and reported that police had seized a computer and some documents. Police did not comment. Prosecutors have told police not to publicly identify the suspect or release other details about the case. The suspect's detention will be reviewed at a hearing Saturday at Slovakia's Specialized Criminal Court in Pezinok, outside the capital Bratislava.

Unconfirmed media reports suggested he was a 71-year-old retiree who was known as an amateur poet, and may have previously worked as a security guard at a mall in the country's southwest. Tamar Kaplan-Tourgeman, one of Israel's legal team, defended the country's conduct, saying it had allowed in fuel and medication to the beleaguered enclave. "Israel takes extraordinary measures in order to minimize the harm to civilians in Gaza," she told The Hague-based court. A protester shouting "Liars" briefly interrupted Kaplan-

Israel denies genocide charges

Insists it's protecting Gaza civilians

AP ■ THE HAGUE

Israel strongly denied charges of genocide on Friday, telling the United Nations' top court it was doing everything it could to protect the civilian population during its military operation in Gaza.

The International Court of Justice wrapped up a third round of hearings on emergency measures requested by South Africa, which says Israel's military incursion in the southern city of Rafah threatens the "very survival of Palestinians in Gaza" and has asked the court to order a cease-fire. Tamar Kaplan-Tourgeman, one of Israel's legal team, defended the country's conduct, saying it had allowed in fuel and medication to the beleaguered enclave. "Israel takes extraordinary measures in order to minimize the harm to civilians in Gaza," she told The Hague-based court. A protester shouting "Liars" briefly interrupted Kaplan-



A protester holds a poster of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a rally commemorating the 76th anniversary of the mass expulsion of the Palestinians from what is now Israel in 1948, often called the "Nakba" or Arabic for catastrophe, outside the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia on Friday. AP/PTI

Tourgeman's final remarks. The hearing was paused for less than a minute while security guards escorted a woman from the public gallery. South Africa told the court on Thursday that the situation in

the beleaguered enclave has reached "a new and horrific stage" and urged judges to order a half to Israeli military operations. The court was holding a third round of hearings on emer-

gency measures requested by South Africa since it first filed its genocide case at the end of last year.

According to the latest request, South Africa says Israel's military incursion in Rafah threatens the "very survival of Palestinians in Gaza." In January, judges ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza, but the panel stopped short of ordering an end to the military offensive. Judges will now deliberate on the request and are expected to issue a decision in the next weeks.

ICJ judges have broad powers to order a cease-fire and other measures, though the court doesn't have its own enforcement apparatus. A 2022 order by the court demanding that Russia halt its full-scale invasion of Ukraine has so far gone unheeded. Most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people have been displaced since fighting began.

Rishi Sunak and wife Akshata's wealth rises in 2024 Rich List

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and wife Akshata Murty, who made their debut in the annual "Sunday Times Rich List" two years ago, have moved up the ranks in the 2024 edition released on Friday thanks to the Murty's lucrative Infosys shareholding. The couple, both 44, have risen from 275th last year to 245th with an estimated wealth of GBP 651 million, making them the "wealthiest people to call 10 Downing Street home". Murty's earnings are said to far exceed that of her husband as financial statements published in February are quoted to say Sunak made GBP 2.2 million in 2022-23 compared to Murty's estimated GBP 13 million in dividends over the past year. "The couple's most valued asset is Murty's share-

holding in Infosys, a Bangalore-based IT company co-founded by Murty's father [Narayan Murthy]," reads the newspaper's analysis. "Over the past year, the shares have grown in value by GBP 108.8 million to nearly GBP 590 million. The latest annual report suggests that Murty received about GBP 13 million in dividends during that time — adding to the more than a million pounds she has been paid in previous years. She is poised to receive another GBP 10.5 million this year," it notes. The annual compilation of Britain's wealthiest families is once again topped by the Indian-origin Hinduja family, who saw their wealth increase over the past year to hit GBP 37.196 billion in the wake of the opening of their brand-new luxury OWO Hotel in the heart of London.

Vatican updates norms for evaluating Mary's vision to tackle internet hoaxes

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

The Vatican on Friday radically reformed its process for evaluating alleged visions of the Virgin Mary, weeping statues and other seemingly supernatural phenomena, putting the brakes on making definitive declarations unless the event is obviously fabricated.

The Vatican's doctrine office overhauled norms first issued in 1978, arguing that they were no longer useful or viable in the internet age. Nowadays, word about apparitions or weeping Madonnas travels quickly and can actually harm the faithful if hoaxers are trying to make money off people's beliefs or manipulate them, the Vatican said. The new norms make clear that such an abuse of people's faith can be punishable canonically, saying, "The use of purported supernatural experiences or recognised mystical elements as

a means of or a pretext for exerting control over people or carrying out abuses is to be considered of particular moral gravity."

The new norms reframe the Catholic Church's evaluation process by essentially taking off the table whether church authorities will declare a particular vision, stigmata or other seemingly divinely inspired event supernatural. Instead, the new criteria envisages six main outcomes, with the most favourable being that the church issues a noncommittal doctrinal green light, a so-called "nihil obstat." Such a declaration means there is nothing about the event that is contrary to the faith, and therefore Catholics can express devotion to it. The Catholic Church has had a long and controversial history of the faithful claiming to have had visions of the Virgin Mary, of statues purportedly

weeping tears of blood and stigmata erupting on hands and feet mimicking the wounds of Christ.

When confirmed as authentic by church authorities, these otherwise inexplicable signs have led to a flourishing of the faith, with new religious vocations and conversions. That has been the case for the purported apparitions of Mary that turned Fatima, Portugal, and Lourdes, France, into enormously popular pilgrimage destinations. Church figures who claimed to have experienced the stigmata wounds, including Padre Pio and Pope Francis' namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, have inspired millions of Catholics even if decisions about their authenticity have been elusive. Francis himself has weighed in on the phenomenon, making clear that he is devoted to the main church-approved Marian apparitions, such as Our Lady

of Guadalupe, who believers say appeared to an Indigenous man in Mexico in 1531. But Francis has expressed scepticism about more recent events, including claims of repeated messages from Mary to "seers" at the shrine of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, even while allowing pilgrimages to take place there.

"I prefer the Madonna as mother, our mother, and not a woman who's the head of a telegraphic office, who sends a message every day at a certain time," Francis told reporters in 2017. But the phenomena have also been a source of scandal. That was the case when the Vatican in 2007 excommunicated the members of a Quebec-based group, the Army of Mary, after its founder claimed to have had Marian visions and declared herself the reincarnation of the mother of Christ.

US military: First aid shipment delivered via new Gaza pier

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Trucks carrying badly needed aid for the Gaza Strip rolled across a newly built US pier and into the besieged enclave for the first time Friday as Israeli restrictions on border crossings and heavy fighting hindered the delivery of food and other supplies.

The shipment is the first in an operation that American military officials anticipate could scale up to 150 truckloads a day, all while Israel presses in on the southern city of Rafah in its 7-month offensive against Hamas. But the US and aid groups warn that the floating pier project is not a substitute for land deliveries that could bring in all the food, water and fuel needed in Gaza. Before the war, more than 500 truckloads entered the territory on an average day.

The operation's success also remains tenuous because of the risk of militant attack, logistical hurdles and a growing shortage of fuel for the trucks to run due to the Israeli blockade of Gaza since Hamas' October 7 attack. Militants killed 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage in that assault on southern Israel. The Israeli offensive since has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians in Gaza, local health officials say, while hundreds more have been killed in the West Bank. Aid agencies say they are running out of food in southern Gaza and fuel is dwindling, while the US Agency for International Development and the World Food Program say famine has already taken hold in Gaza's north. Troops finished installing the floating pier on Thursday, and the US military's Central Command said the first aid crossed into Gaza

at 9 am Friday. It said no American troops went ashore in the operation.

"This is an ongoing, multinational effort to deliver additional aid to Palestinian civilians in Gaza via a maritime corridor that is entirely humanitarian in nature, and will involve aid commodities donated by a number of countries and humanitarian organizations," the command said. The Pentagon said no backups were expected in the distribution process, which is being coordinated by the United Nations. The UN humanitarian aid coordinating agency said the start of the operation was welcome but not a replacement for deliveries by land.

"I think everyone in the operation has said it: Any and all aid into Gaza is welcome by any route," spokesperson Jens Laerke, of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told journalists in Geneva on Friday. "However, getting aid to people they need into and across Gaza cannot and should not depend on a floating dock far from where needs are most acute." The UN earlier said fuel deliveries brought through land routes have all but stopped and that would make it extremely difficult to bring the aid to Gaza's people. "It doesn't matter how the aid comes, whether it's by sea or whether by land, without fuel, aid won't get to the people," UN deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq said. Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh said the issue of fuel deliveries comes up in all US conversations with the Israelis. She also said the plan is to begin slowly with the sea route and ramp up the truck deliveries over time as they work the kinks out of the system.

Abu Dhabi opens first brewery as UAE relaxes alcohol laws

AP ■ ABU DHABI

In 2018, Chad McGehee opened Side Hustle Brews and Spirits, an Abu Dhabi-branded brewery and distillery with funky camels on its cans and playful names familiar to anyone living in the United Arab Emirates. The only problem was it was illegal to produce alcohol in the country, so his company made its hoppy India pale ale in the United States and then imported it to the UAE for sale. That's all changed as Abu Dhabi has overhauled its laws to allow for the micro and craft breweries that have taken the rest of the world by storm, part of a wider reconsideration of alcohol policies in the Islamic nation increasingly drawing tourists. And McGehee's dream of IPAs



in Arabia became a reality — though it took hard work as they were the first to open. "The government had created a regulation around fermentation, but the steps of getting a permit, the steps of inspection,

all of these things were not put on paper yet. So that had to be built out as we were going through this process," McGehee said on a recent afternoon at his brew pub on Abu Dhabi's Al Maryah Island.

Abu Dhabi long has been considered by those living in the UAE to be more buttoned-up than the rambunctious neighbouring emirate of Dubai, home to night clubs, beach bars and pubs drawing tourists and residents to imbibe. In the seven emirates of the UAE, Sharjah outright bans the sale and consumption of alcohol, like neighbouring Saudi Arabia, as well as Iran and Kuwait. But beginning in 2020, Abu Dhabi changed its policies. It eliminated its licensing system for alcohol purchases for drinkers to boost sales and tourism during the coronavirus pandemic. Eliminating the licenses allowed Muslims, if they chose, to drink, as well as decriminalised alcohol possession for those without a license.

"I think progression in this country is par for the course, they're always moving things forward," said Nadeem Selbak, one of the partners at Craft, which is Side Hustle's brew pub. The Emirates still maintains a strict no-tolerance policy on drunken driving and public intoxication. Islam also considers alcohol consumption as "haram", or forbidden. But alcohol sales long have been a major driver of tax revenue and a moneymaker for the UAE. Dubai Duty Free, for instance, sold 6 million cans of beer last year, as well as 3.8 million bottles of liquor and 2.3 million bottles of whiskey for thirsty travellers.

But despite that demand, there was no local equipment available to open a brewery in the UAE. McGehee ended up

importing almost everything for the brewery, nearly all of it coming from the US. Abu Dhabi represents a completely untapped market for Side Hustle.

"The idea for me was like going back in time, when I started almost 20 years ago," said Mitchell Dougherty, Side Hustle's brewmaster. At any given point, Craft has 14 beers on tap. So far this year they have brewed 34 and aim to reach up to 100 by the end of the year.

The names of the beers include some winking reminders of life in the UAE, including one called "Message Card Ninja" — a nod to business cards showing scantly clad women that appear under car windshield wipers in some Dubai neighbourhoods.

Want buffer zone in Kharkiv but no plan to capture: Putin

AP ■ KHARKIV

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday that Moscow's offensive in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region aims to create a buffer zone but has no plans to capture the city. Putin's comments on a trip to China were his first on the offensive launched on May 10, which opened a new front in the war and displaced thousands of Ukrainians within few days. It came hours after a massive Ukrainian drone attack on the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula early Friday caused power cutoffs in the city of Sevastopol after an earlier attack damaged aircraft and fuel storage at an airbase. In southern Russia, Russian authorities said the attack on Friday also set a refinery ablaze. Moscow launched attacks in the Kharkiv region in response to Ukrainian shelling of Russia's Belgorod region, Putin told reporters Friday on a visit to Harbin, China.

"I have said publicly that if it continues, we will be forced to create a security zone, a sanitary zone," he said. "That's what we are doing."

Putin said that Russian troops were "advancing daily according to plan" and said that there were no plans to capture Kharkiv, for now. Ukrainian troops were fighting Friday to halt Russian advances in Kharkiv region that began late last week. The town of Vovchansk, located 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the Russian border, has been a hot spot in the fighting in recent days. Ukrainian authorities have evacuated around 8,000 civilians from the town. The Russian army's usual tactic is to reduce towns and villages to ruins with aerial strikes before its units move in.

By starting the new offensive, Russian troops "expanded the zone of active hostilities by almost 70 kilometers" (about 45 miles), in an effort to force Ukraine to spread its forces and use reserve troops, Ukraine's military chief, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, said Friday. In the Kharkiv region, Russian forces have advanced 10 kilo-



This image shows an overview of destroyed SU 27 fighter aircraft in reuelment at Belbek air base in Crimea on Thursday.

members from the border, President Volodymyr Zelensky told reporters on Friday. Separately, in his strongest remarks yet on Ukraine's upcoming peace conference slated for next month, Putin said it was a vain attempt to enforce terms of a peaceful settlement on Russia. Putin emphasized that Russia wasn't invited to the Swiss-hosted meeting.

He said that Russia was ready for talks but shrugged off Ukrainian Zelensky's peace formula as wishful thinking. He said that prospective peace talks could be based on a draft deal that was negotiated by Russia and Ukraine during their Istanbul talks in 2022. Meanwhile, the drone raids on Crimea marked Kyiv's attempt to strike back during Moscow's offensive in northeastern Ukraine, which has added to the pressure on outnumbered and outgunned Ukrainian forces, which are waiting for delayed deliveries of crucial weapons and ammunition from Western partners.

A Ukrainian intelligence official confirmed to The Associated Press that Ukraine's Security Service and Military Intelligence conducted a joint operation to strike Russia's military infrastructure sites in Novorossiysk, on the Black

Sea coast, and occupied Sevastopol. The official spoke on condition of anonymity, because they weren't authorized to comment publicly.

The operation targeted ships and vessels of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and was conducted by aerial drones built in Ukraine, the official said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that air defenses downed 51 Ukrainian drones over Crimea, another 44 over the Krasnodar region of Russia and six over the Belgorod region. It said Russian warplanes and patrol boats also destroyed six sea drones in the Black Sea. At least three fighter jets were destroyed in an earlier attack in Crimea a few days ago, according to satellite imagery of the airbase provided by Maxar Technologies.

Mikhail Razvozhaev, the governor of Sevastopol, which is the main base for Russia's Black Sea Fleet, said the drone attack damaged the city's power plant. He said it could take a day to fully restore energy supplies and warned residents that power would be cut to parts of the city.

"Communal services are doing their best to restore the power system as quickly as possible," he said in a statement.

Razvozhaev also announced that schools in the city would

be closed temporarily. Earlier Ukrainian attacks damaged aircraft and a fuel storage facility at Belbek air base near Sevastopol, according to satellite images released by Maxar Technologies.

In the Krasnodar region, the authorities said a drone attack early Friday caused a fire at an oil refinery in Tuapse which was later contained. There were no casualties.

The Ukraine has repeatedly targeted refineries and other energy facilities deep inside Russia, causing significant damage. The Krasnodar region's governor, Veniamin Kondratyev, said fragments of downed drones around the port of Novorossiysk caused several fires, but there were no casualties. Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said that a Ukrainian drone struck a vehicle, killing a woman and her 4-year-old child. Another attack set a fuel tank ablaze at a gas station in the region, he said.

In addition to Kharkiv, recent Russian offensive attacks have come in the eastern Donetsk region, as well as the Chernihiv and Suly regions in the north and in the southern Zaporizhzhia region. The apparent aim is to stretch depleted Ukrainian resources and exploit weaknesses.

Having strengthened their grouping in the northern region, Russian forces are now concentrating their efforts to advance near the village of Lyptsy, as well as the town of Vovchansk, according to Syrskiy, the Ukrainian military commander.

Syrskiy also said he inspected the units that are "preparing for defense" of the Suly region. On Tuesday, the head of Ukraine's Military Intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov, reportedly said that the Russian army had plans to start offensive actions in Suly.

Russia has also been testing defenses at other points along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, which snakes from north to south through eastern Ukraine. That line has barely changed over the past 18 months, in what has become a war of attrition.

Russia expels British defence attaché in tit-for-tat move

AP ■ SEUL

Moscow (AP): Russia on Thursday declared Britain's defence attaché persona non grata and gave the diplomat a week to leave the country in response to London's decision to expel the Russian defence attaché earlier this month over spying allegations.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it summoned a representative of the British Embassy in Moscow on Thursday to express its "strong protest in connection with the unfriendly and groundless decision" to expel the Russian attaché from London. "We emphasized that we regard this step as a politically motivated action of clearly Russophobic nature, which is causing irreparable damage to bilateral relations," the statement read.

Britain on May 8 announced several measures to target Moscow's intelligence gathering operations in the UK. Those included a decision to boot Maxim Elovik, a Russian colonel who the British government termed an "undeclared military intelligence officer," rescinding the diplomatic status of several Russian-owned properties because they are believed to have been used for intelligence purposes, and imposing new restrictions on Russian diplomatic visas and visits.

The government said the measures followed criminal cases in London alleging espionage and sabotage by people acting on behalf of Russia. It also cited allegations that the Russian government planned to sabotage military aid for Ukraine in Germany and Poland and carried out spying in Bulgaria and Italy, along with cyber and disinformation activities, air space violations and jamming GPS signals to hamper civilian air traffic.

In response, Russia's Foreign Ministry on Thursday announced the expelling of the British defence attaché Adrian Coghill, and vowed "further retaliatory steps." The UK has had an uneasy relationship with Russia for years, accusing its agents of targeted killings and espionage, including cyberattacks aimed at British lawmakers and leaking and amplifying sensitive information to serve Russian interests.

N Korea test-fires missiles a day after US, South fighter jet drill

AP ■ SEUL

North Korea fired suspected short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast on Friday, South Korea's military said, a day after South Korea and the US flew powerful fighter jets in a joint drill that the North views as a major security threat.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the weapons launched from the North's east coast Wonsan region traveled about 300 kilometers (185 miles) before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said a North Korean missile landed outside Japan's exclusive economic zone.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff statement called the launches "a clear provocation" that threatens peace on the Korean Peninsula. It said South Korea will maintain a firm readiness to repel potential aggressions by North Korea in conjunctions with the military alliance with the United States. North Korea has extended its run of weapons testing in recent months as part of its efforts to enlarge and modernize its arsenal while diplomacy with the United States and South Korea remains stalled.

Last week, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised the test firing of a new multiple rocket launch system, according to the North's state media.



North Korea says it has been forced to boost its nuclear and missile programs to deal with US-led hostilities. North Korea cites expanded US-South Korea military training, which it calls an invasion rehearsal. Many foreign experts say North Korea uses its rivals' military drills as a pretext for building a larger weapons arsenal in the belief that it would boost its leverage in future diplomacy with the US. On Thursday, two South Korean F-35As and two U.S. F-22 Raptors were mobilized for a combined aerial exercise over the central region of South Korea. North Korea is extremely sensitive to the deployment of sophisticated U.S. aircraft. It was reportedly the first deployment of a US F-22 to South Korea in seven months. The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Friday the re-deployment of the U.S. F-22s for joint training

with South Korea is "another clear proof of the hostile nature of the U.S." which seeks "a showdown of force" with North Korea. KCNA accuses "the military gangsters" of South Korea of intensifying tensions to keep pace with "their master's confrontation scheme" against the North. It warned the F-22s flyovers "will only precipitate the advent of a situation that the U.S. does not want to see." But it didn't elaborate what steps North Korea would take.

Also Friday, Kim's sister and senior official Kim Yo Jong said North Korea's recent weapons tests were part of the country's five-year arms buildup plan launched in 2021. She said the recently tested weapons are designed to attack Seoul, the South Korean capital, and denied outside speculation that the tests were meant to display weapons that North Korea plans to export to Russia.

British Sikh peer faces suspension from House of Lords

PTI ■ LONDON

Parliament's Conduct Committee on Friday released its report into the conduct of British Sikh peer Lord Kulveer Ranger and found him in breach of the Code of Conduct on bullying and harassment following a drunken incident in the House of Lords. The 49-year-old parliamentarian, who has apologised for his conduct, will be suspended for three weeks and also be banned from access to the bars in Parliament for a period of 12 months after the committee said it was "struck by the seriousness of the incident".

The report entitled "The conduct of Lord Ranger of Northwood" goes on to detail how two complainants, both

members of the parliamentary community, were accosted with inappropriate comments and invasion of their personal space in a way they found threatening. Their report will now be tabled before the Lords to agree its findings of the sanction after the House reconvenes early next month. "We recommend that Lord Ranger of Northwood be suspended from the service of the House for three weeks," concludes the report by the cross-party Conduct Committee.

"We further recommend that Lord Ranger of Northwood be denied access to bars in the House of Lords for a period of 12 months, and that in other Lords catering venues that serve both alcohol and food he be denied service of alcohol for the

same period. We invite the Commons authorities to consider whether a similar response would be appropriate with regard to the facilities administered by that House," it notes. The committee's report follows findings by the House of Lords Commissioner for Standards, Martin Jolley, who concluded Ranger had breached paragraph 19 of the Code of Conduct applying to bullying and harassment.

He, however, recommended a shorter one-week suspension taking Lord Ranger's apology and "out of character" nature of the conduct into account, which the committee felt was not sufficient given the "aggravating factors" of Ranger's alcohol intake and the power imbalance between him and the complainants.

"I am deeply mortified at the descriptions of my behaviour. I must say I have little recollection of the incident but that in no way to diminish how you both have described my actions or how they made you feel," reads Ranger's letter of "sincere" apology to the complainants, also published alongside the committee's report.

"Throughout my life I have never seen it fit to behave in an aggressive or rude manner. I can only add that I have had a variety of very concerning health issues for both my children and wife during December and January that have been very stressful and taken a significant toll on my physical capacity and mental health, and may have had some bearing on my whol-

ly uncharacteristic outburst and responses to your questions, for which again I am extremely sorry," he adds.

The committee said Ranger did not appeal against either the commissioner's findings or the recommended sanction and instead wrote a further letter of apology to the Conduct Committee, enclosing two character references.

The complainants, referred to only as JK and LM, submitted complaints about Ranger's behaviour in February following the incident on January 17. They said Ranger had approached them without invitation, when they were in Strangers' Bar in the Lords.

United Textiles Limited
Regd. Office 7th K.M. Stone,
Barwala Road, Hisar - 125001
(Haryana)
CIN: L17115HR1993PLC032092

Notice

Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, notice is hereby given that the Meeting of Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, 29th May, 2024 at 11.00 AM at the Regd. Office of the Company to consider the Audited Financial Results for the Quarter/Year Ended 31st March, 2024.

Further as per the Company's Code of Conduct for Prevention of Insider Trading, the trading window for dealing with securities of the Company will remain close from 31.03.2024 to 48 hours after the declaration of the Financial Results. The said information is also available on Company's Website www.unitedtextileslimited.com and also on the website of stock exchanges at www.bseindia.com.

For United Textiles Limited
(Vivek Aggarwal)
Whole Time Director
Date: 07.05.2024 (DIN 07079208)

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
(UNDER THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, GOVT. OF INDIA)
KURUKSHETRA-136119

Advt. No. 66/2024

Admission in Ph.D. Program in Odd Semester of Academic Year 2024-25

National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra invites online applications via Google Form from Indian and Foreign nationals for admission in the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD.) Degree Programmes on Full Time (Institute/CSIR-UGC-NET-JRF, Project), Visvesvaraya Fellowship Scheme, Self-Financed Full Time and Part Time seats for Academic Year 2024-25. Number of Seats, Online Application Form Link, and other relevant details along with Ph.D. Regulation are available on the Institute website: www.nitkr.ac.in under Admission 2024-> Ph.D. tab.

All interested candidates may fill the Google Form latest by May 31, 2024, 03:00 p.m. If the application is incomplete or any information is found misleading/false at any point during or after the admission process, the candidate's candidature/admission will be cancelled and the application fee will not be refunded in any case.

Please visit Institute website regularly for any announcement or updates in this regard.

Registrar /Ic

Indiabulls Enterprises Limited
(CIN: U71290HR2019PLC077579)

Extract of Consolidated Audited Financial Results for the quarter and year ended 31 March 2024

Particulars	Quarter ended 31-Mar-24		Quarter ended 31-Mar-23		Year ended 31-Mar-24		Year ended 31-Mar-23	
	(Refer note-3)	Unaudited	(Refer note-3)	Audited	(Audited)	Audited		
Total Income from operations	14.67	15.72	17.95	58.76	87.97			
Net (Loss)/Profit for the period (before Tax, minority interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of associates, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(18.81)	(1.70)	(2.18)	(25.20)	14.75			
Net (Loss)/Profit for the period (before Tax, minority interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of associates (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items))	(18.81)	(1.70)	(11.24)	(25.20)	5.69			
Net (Loss)/Profit for the period (after Tax, minority interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of associates (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items))	(18.36)	(1.84)	(11.92)	(25.24)	4.13			
Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(18.92)	(1.84)	(11.65)	(25.33)	4.59			
Equity share capital	39.67	39.67	39.67	39.67	39.67			
Reserves (excluding revaluation reserve) as shown in the audited Balance Sheet				206.07	231.41			
Earnings per share (EPS) of Rs.2 each from continuing operations								
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	(0.95)	(0.11)	(0.55)	(1.37)	0.11			
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	(0.95)	(0.11)	(0.55)	(1.37)	0.11			
Earnings per share (EPS) of Rs.2 each from discontinued operations								
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	0.02	0.02	(0.05)	0.10	0.09			
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	0.02	0.02	(0.05)	0.10	0.09			

Notes:

- The above results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and subsequently approved at the meeting of the Board of Directors held on 17 May 2024.
- Key Standalone Financial Information:**

Particulars	Quarter ended 31-Mar-24		Quarter ended 31-Mar-23		Year ended 31-Mar-24		Year ended 31-Mar-23	
	(Refer note-3)	Unaudited	(Refer note-3)	Audited	(Audited)	Audited		
Total Income	12.43	13.39	14.54	48.43	84.71			
(Loss)/Profit before Tax	(17.88)	(4.39)	(382.15)	(33.00)	(368.56)			
Net Loss/Profit after Tax	(17.95)	(4.03)	(381.24)	(33.39)	(383.46)			

3) Figures for the quarters ended 31 March 2024 and 31 March 2023 represent the balancing figures between the audited figures for the full financial year and published reviewed year to date figures upto third quarter of the respective financial year.

4) The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarterly / annual financial results filed with the stock exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly / annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://www.indiabulsenet.com>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).

Registered Office: 5th Floor, Plot No. 108, IT Park, Udyog Vihar, Phase-1 Gurugram, Haryana 122016

For and on behalf of Board of Directors

Vijay Kumar Agarwal
Executive Director
DIN 08329352

Place : Gurugram
Date : 17 May 2024

Yaari Digital Integrated Services Limited
(Formerly "Yaari Digital Integrated Services Limited")
(CIN: L51101HR2007PLC077999)

Extract of Consolidated Audited Financial Results for the quarter and year ended 31 March 2024

Particulars	Quarter ended 31-Mar-24		Quarter ended 31-Dec-23		Quarter ended 31-Mar-23		Year ended 31-Mar-24		Year ended 31-Mar-23	
	(Refer note-3)	Unaudited	(Refer note-3)	Unaudited	(Refer note-3)	Audited	(Audited)	Audited		
Total Income from Operations	0.28	2.57	-	-	3.15			185.90		
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Minority Interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of Associate, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(6.70)	(3.67)	(70.48)	(21.61)	84.69					
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Minority Interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of Associate (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items))	(6.70)	(3.67)	(70.48)	(21.61)	84.69					
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after Tax, Minority Interest and Share of Profit / (Loss) of Associate (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(6.70)	(3.67)	(70.83)	(21.61)	94.85					
Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(7.34)	(6.13)	(90.85)	(12.31)	58.58					
Equity Share Capital	19.74	19.74	19.74	19.74	19.74					
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the audited Balance Sheet					(253.50)			(242.79)		
Earnings per Share (EPS) before extraordinary items										
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	(0.67)	(0.37)	(7.06)	(2.15)	9.44					
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	(0.67)	(0.37)	(7.06)	(2.15)	9.44					
Earnings per Share (EPS) after extraordinary items										
- Basic (Amount in Rs.)	(0.67)	(0.37)	(7.06)	(2.15)	9.44					
- Diluted (Amount in Rs.)	(0.67)	(0.37)	(7.06)	(2.15)	9.44					

Notes:

- The above results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and subsequently approved at the meeting of the Board of Directors held on 17 May 2024.
- Key Standalone Financial Information:**

Particulars	Quarter ended 31-Mar-24		Quarter ended 31-Dec-23		Quarter ended 31-Mar-23		Year ended 31-Mar-24		Year ended 31-Mar-23	
	(Refer note-3)	Unaudited	(Refer note-3)	Unaudited	(Refer note-3)	Audited	(Audited)	Audited		
Total Income	0.37	2.87	32.48	3.57	529.69					
Profit/(Loss) before Tax	(14.36)	(8.05)	(39.41)	(43.37)	412.77					
Net Profit/(Loss) after Tax	(14.36)	(8.05)	(39.66)	(43.37)	412.99					

3) Figures for the quarters ended 31 March 2024 and 31 March 2023 represent the balancing figures between the audited figures for the full financial year and published reviewed year to date figures upto third quarter of the respective financial year.

4) The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly / Annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://www.yaari.com>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).

Registered Office: 5th Floor, Plot No. 108, IT Park, Udyog Vihar, Phase-1 Gurugram, Haryana 122016

By order of the Board of Directors
For Yaari Digital Integrated Services Limited

Supriya Bhatnagar
Director
DIN: 08731453
duly authorised by the Board of Directors

Place : Gurugram
Date : 17 May 2024

India needs to focus on manufacturing: Nirmala to Indian Inc

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the country needs to ramp up its manufacturing sector to increase its share in the global value chain and become 'Atmanirbhar'. Addressing the captains of the Indian industry at a CII Annual Business Summit, the minister also underlined the need of achieving greater sophistication in product manufacturing and policy support. "I also want to underline much against the advice given by some economists that India should no longer be looking at manufacturing or ramping up manufacturing. I like to highlight the fact that manufacturing must increase. India must also increase with the help of policies its (manufacturing) share in the global value chain," she said. Some of the economists including former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan have expressed the opinion



that India should rather focus on the services sector rather than manufacturing as it has missed that opportunity. China's model of manufacturing-led growth cannot be replicated any more. However, Sitharaman said, expanding manufacturing

will help India become self-reliant. She also expressed hope that India still has an opportunity to ramp up its manufacturing capability as the world is looking at China plus one strategy post-COVID-19. Quoting a Capgemini Research Institute report

released in May, she said, India figures at the top of the list of investment destinations for senior executives in Europe and in the US, who are looking to reduce their dependence on China and shift part of their manufacturing capacity to emerging markets.

Sixty-five per cent of nearly 760 executives surveyed has said that they plan to increase investments significantly in India. Presently, the telecom sector's PLI has helped India to become a better Atmanirbhar as 60 per cent import substitution has been achieved in the telecom sector. This itself gives quite a big scope for our Indian industry, she said, adding, that the PLI scheme is also transforming the mobile and electronics sectors. From 78 per cent import to dependence in 2014, she said, today 99 per cent of all mobiles sold in India are made in India. Value addition in electronics and smartphone manufacturing too have grown significantly and crossed 20 per cent from the negligible level of 2014-15, she said. Citing an example, she said, India has become Apple's second largest manufacturing hub for iPhones outside of China with exports to USD 1.1 billion last year. Speaking about the service

sector, Sitharaman said India commands over 50 per cent of the world's Global Capability Centres (GCCs) and remains the most preferred destination creating significant domestic and global opportunities. The number of GCCs in India has increased to more than 1,580 at the moment. She emphasised that the "fundamental basis for the consistent and steady growth and high growth is the policy stability, absence of flip flops, corruption free decision making, and making sure that the facilitation both in legislative and also the legal frameworks are all simultaneously going on." Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government looks at the private sector as a partner in developing India, she said. "We see a very big role for the private sector and we would like to partner with them in the development with the government acting as a facilitator and an enabler," she said.

More Indians are travelling than ever before: Report



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Be it international or domestic, more Indians are travelling than ever before, claims a new report, as a whopping "97 million passengers" travelled through Indian airports in the first three months of 2024 alone. "Travel Trends 2024: Breaking Boundaries", conducted by the Mastercard Economics Institute (MEI), provides comprehensive insights into the evolving landscape of the travel industry across 74 markets, including 13 in the Asia Pacific region (APAC). "In 2024, fuelled by a growing middle class and expanded route capacity, more Indians are travelling internationally than ever before. In the first three months of 2024, 97 million passengers travelled through Indian airports. Just 10 years ago, the same figure would have taken a whole year to achieve," read the report. While domestic air passenger traffic surged 21 per cent above 2019 levels, international travel rose by 4 per cent. Indian travellers, according to the report, are increasingly exploring key markets, with a 53 per cent increase in visits to Japan, a 248 per cent growth to Vietnam, and a 59 per cent rise in visits to the United States, compared to 2019, despite a stronger US dollar. Also, Amsterdam, followed by Singapore, London, Frankfurt, and Melbourne

are the top five trending destinations that Indian travellers are visiting this summer (June - August 2024), as measured by the change in share of flight bookings in the report. "Consumers in the Asia Pacific region have an intense desire and willingness to travel and are becoming increasingly savvy to ensure they get the best value and unforgettable experiences from their trips. For tourism authorities, retailers, the hospitality and F&B sectors, the bottom line is that costs matter," said David Mann, chief economist, Asia Pacific, Mastercard, in a statement. The report also pointed out how consumers globally continue to prioritise experiences over material goods and the same is playing out in the travel sector where spending on experiences, especially nightlife, totals "12 per cent of tourism sales" -- the highest point in at least five years. Additionally, a burgeoning fine dining scene in India has translated to marginal outperformance of the fine dining category for in-destination tourism dining, it reported. "As of March 2024, spending on casual dining rose by 49.2 per cent, while fine dining saw a 55.2 per cent increase compared to the previous year," it added. Mastercard Economics Institute, launched in 2020, analysis macroeconomic trends through the lens of the consumer.

Most Indian knowledge workers use AI at workplace, says report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

AI is increasingly influencing the way people work as well as hire and India has one of the highest AI adoption rates among knowledge workers, says a report by Microsoft and LinkedIn. According to the India findings of the 2024 Annual Work Trend Index from Microsoft and LinkedIn, 92 per cent of knowledge workers in India use AI at work, as compared to the global figure of 75 per cent. However, a large majority, 91 per cent of leaders in India, also believe their companies need to adopt AI to stay competitive and 54 per cent worry their organisation lacks a plan and vision for implementation. The findings are based on a survey of 31,000 people in 31 countries, labour and hiring trends on LinkedIn, trillions of Microsoft 365 productivity signals and research with Fortune 500 customers. As per the report, AI skills are now a top priority when it comes to hiring, with 75 per



cent stating they wouldn't hire someone lacking in AI skills, outpacing the global average of 66 per cent. "AI skills outweigh experience, with 80 per cent of leaders in India preferring to hire a less experienced candidate with AI skills, over a more experienced candidate without them," the report said. Moreover, organisations that

empower employees with AI tools and training will attract the best talent, and professionals who skill up in AI will have the edge. "... This AI optimism presents a tremendous opportunity for organisations to invest in the right tools and training, to unlock efficiencies for employees and ultimately drive long-term business impact," said Irina Ghose,

Managing Director, Microsoft India and South Asia. The demand for AI expertise has seen a remarkable 17 per cent jump from last year, said Ruchee Anand, Head of Talent & Learning Solutions at LinkedIn. "As the workforce looks to tap into the benefits of AI, it's crucial for leaders to boost their organisation's AI capabilities through thoughtful investment in both technology and talent," Anand noted. As of late last year, there has been a multi-fold increase globally in LinkedIn members adding AI skills like Copilot and ChatGPT to their profiles and a sharp increase in non-technical professionals using LinkedIn Learning courses to build their AI aptitude. On the sidelines of the report, Microsoft announced new capabilities in Copilot for Microsoft 365 to help people get started with AI, and LinkedIn announced over 50 learning courses that are being made free to empower professionals at all levels to advance AI.

Rupee rises 17 paise to close at 83.33 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rupee appreciated 17 paise to close at 83.33 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, on positive domestic markets and expectations of some fresh foreign inflows. Reports of selling of US dollars by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also supported the rupee, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.50 and touched an intraday high of 83.32 and a low of 83.50. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.33 (provisional), a rise of 17 paise from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 83.50 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on strengthening of the US dollar amid hawkish Fed speak and weak Asian and European markets. However, a positive tone in domestic markets may support the rupee at lower levels. "Any fresh FII inflows and/or RBI intervention may support rupee at lower levels. USD-INR spot price is expected to



trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 83.70," 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 at 104.73, higher by 0.26 per cent. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.13 per cent to USD 83.38 per barrel. On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 253.31 points, or 0.34 per cent, to close at 73,917.03 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 62.25 points, or 0.28 per cent, higher at 22,466.10 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 776.49 crore, according to exchange data.

GSTN rolls out special procedure for tobacco makers to register machines with tax authorities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Network (GSTN) has implemented a special procedure for manufacturers of pan masala, gutkha and similar tobacco products to register their machines with tax authorities, a move intended at checking evasion. In January, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) had announced the introduction of a new registration and monthly return filing procedure to improve GST compliance for manufacturers of pan masala and tobacco products effective April 1. The date was later extended till May 15. GSTN on May 16 informed the taxpayers that the online facility for such manufacturers to submit their machine-related information through form GST SRM-I has been introduced on the GST portal. "To begin with, facility to register the machines has been made available on the GST portal to file the information in Form GST SRM-I. All taxpayers dealing in the items (pan masala, gutkha)... May use the facility to file the information about machines," GSTN said in an information on the website. Form GST SRM-II (for return filing) will also be made available on the portal shortly, it added. Moore Singh Executive Director Rajat Mohan said the move is a significant step towards enhancing regulatory oversight and compliance. "The introduction of an online utility for GST SRM-I will facilitate better tracking of machinery and production processes, thereby helping to curb tax evasion and ensure



proper tax administration. Taxpayers are advised to promptly utilise the GST portal's new feature for machine registration to comply with the requirements and avoid any potential penalties for non-compliance," Mohan added. The move to overhaul the registration, record-keeping, and monthly filing of such businesses was aimed at improving GST compliance for manufacturers of pan masala and tobacco products. The GST law was also amended via Finance Bill 2024, to say that manufacturers of pan masala, gutkha and similar tobacco products will have to pay a penalty of up to Rs 1 lakh, if they fail to register their packing machinery with GST authorities with effect from April 1. However, this penalty provision is yet to be notified. The procedure was to be applicable for manufacturers of pan-masala, unmanufactured tobacco (without lime tube) with or without brand name, 'Hookah' or 'gudaku' tobacco, smoking mixtures for pipes and cigarettes, chewing tobacco (without lime tube), filter khaini, jarda scented tobacco, snuff and branded or unbranded 'Gutkha', etc.

Sensex climbs over 250 points on buying in Reliance, M&M

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Friday as buying in index majors M&M, Reliance Industries and ITC helped the indices rebound from early lows. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 253.31 points, or 0.34 per cent, to settle at 73,917.03. The NSE Nifty advanced 62.25 points, or 0.28 per cent, to 22,466.10. M&M was the biggest gainer on the Sensex chart, rising 5.97 per cent, followed by JSW Steel, Ultra Cement, Kotak Bank, ITC and NTPC. Reliance Industries gained 0.73 per cent to close at Rs 2,871 apiece. In contrast, TCS, HCL Tech,

HUL, Nestle Industries, Bajaj Finserv, Wipro and Infosys were among the losers. "Despite mixed global signals and uncertainties surrounding the US Fed, the Indian market experienced a robust recovery, largely fuelled by the outperformance of the broader market and positive Q4 earnings. "Further, some index heavyweight earnings surpassed expectations, and midcap and small-cap stocks continued to exhibit buying interest during dips. Auto and consumer durables particularly stood out with strong earnings momentum," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

India benefiting from more investments coming into country as less foreign investment going into China: UN expert

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

India registered "very robust" economic growth performance and has become an alternative investment destination for many western companies as "less and less" foreign investment is going into China, an expert at the UN said as the global body revised upwards the Indian GDP growth for 2024. "India is also benefiting from more investments coming into India from other western sources as less and less foreign investment is going into China, western investment is going into China. India has become an alternative investment source or destination for many western companies. I think that is also benefiting India," Hamid Rashid, Chief of the Global Economic Monitoring

Branch, Economic Analysis and Policy Division, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), told reporters here on Thursday. He was briefing on the mid-year update of the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024 that has revised upwards India's growth projections for 2024, with the country's economy now forecast to expand by close to seven per cent this year. The World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2024, released Thursday, said, "India's economy is forecast to expand by 6.9 per cent in 2024 and 6.6 per cent in 2025, mainly driven by strong public investment and resilient private consumption. Although subdued external demand will continue to weigh on merchandise export

growth, pharmaceuticals and chemicals exports are expected to expand strongly." The 6.9 per cent economic growth projections for India in the mid-year update is an upward revision from the 6.2 per cent GDP forecast made by the UN in January this year. On the Indian economic outlook, Rashid said "I think the drivers are very simple. Indian inflation has come down significantly. And that means that the fiscal position is not as constrained as in other countries and there is both support on the monetary side and the fiscal side in terms of stimulating growth." He noted that in India "already the growth momentum actually was from last year and is continuing and also India's export has been pretty robust." "So I think given all these factors, this improvement is a

very reasonable modest upward revision that we have done, given that what we see is happening in the Indian economy right now," he added. He further said the oil price and special import arrangements that India has with Russia is also "helping India tremendously in terms of keeping its import costs down." "So overall, I think we are very comfortable with the numbers that we have for India," he added. Rashid said that "we saw very robust growth performance in India, also in Brazil, and some other large developing economies" and added that India has done "remarkably well" and "we see quite a bit of improvement in the growth outlook for India — 6.9 per cent this year and 6.6 per cent next year, so that is looking good at this point."

SII to acquire 20 per cent stake in IntegriMedical

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vaccines manufacturer Serum Institute of India (SII) on Friday said it is acquiring 20 per cent stake in IntegriMedical, to advance needle-free injection system technology. IntegriMedical has developed a US patented needle-free Injection System (N-FIS) that utilises high-velocity jet stream using mechanical power to effectively and consistently administer biologics and drugs, Serum Institute of India (SII) said in a statement. The company, however, did not disclose the financial details of the transaction. The innovative drug delivery solution aims to alleviate pain during administration, providing needle-phobic patients with a stress-free experience. "IntegriMedical's N-FIS represents a significant advancement in drug delivery and we envision a needle-free solution to deliver vaccines. We believe this could



potentially revolutionise the way we administer vaccines, making the process more comfortable for patients and healthcare professionals," SII CEO Adar Poonawalla said. IntegriMedical's N-FIS has received regulatory approvals from CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation), CE (European regulatory approval) MDSAP (Medical Device Single Audit Program, Australia) and is

ISO 13485 certified, the statement said. "Additionally, the technology is patented in the United States," it added. "This investment is a testament to the potential of our needle-free Injections System technology and its ability to revolutionize drug delivery. SII's expertise in vaccine manufacturing and global distribution will be invaluable as we work towards making our technology more widely accessible to patients worldwide," IntegriMedical Managing Director Sarvesh Mutha said. N-FIS will be available in the Indian private market, offering patients and healthcare providers an alternative to traditional needle-based injections, SII said. The technology's advantages include the elimination of needle-phobia, alleviation of pain during administration, convenience of use, and prevention of needle-stick injuries and cross-contamination, it added.

Dhanuka Agritech FY24 net profit goes up

PNS ■ DELHI

Dhanuka Agritech — one of the leading agri input companies in India — on Friday announced its financial results for the fourth quarter of the financial year ending March 2024. The company recorded revenues of Rs 1758.54 crore for the period ending March 31, 2024, an increase of 3.4 per cent over PY of Rs 1700.22 crore. Profit after tax was Rs 239.09 crore, as compared to PY profit after tax of Rs 233.51 crore. The company recently launched several products which will revolutionise the agricultural sector of the country. The products, include LaNevo, MYCORE SUPER and Purge. Commenting on the Q4 performance, MK Dhanuka, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, Dhanuka Agritech Ltd said, despite the year 2023 recording below-average rainfall (820 mm compared to the usual 868.6 mm) due to El Nino, prevailing volatile and challenging market conditions, the company performed reasonably well. "Our new product offerings have received encouraging responses from the farming community," he said.

India likely to lose Olympic boxing quota as WADA suspends Parveen for three whereabouts failures

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World championship bronze medalist boxer Parveen Hooda is likely to lose her Paris Olympic quota after being suspended by World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) for three whereabouts failures in 12 months.

Parveen, who fetched an Olympic quota in the women's 57kg weight class during the Asian Games last year, failed to file her whereabouts in the period from April 2022 to March 2023 as per the WADA rules.

"She has been suspended by WADA for 1.5 years. The suspension starts this month. It will go on till November 2025," Parveen's coach Sudhir Hooda told PTI.

Athletes included in the Registered Testing Pool (RTP) must provide full address for their overnight location, the name and full address of each location where they train, work or conduct other regular scheduled activities, as well as the usual time-frames of each activity. RTP athletes must also identify a 60-minute window and



location for each day of the quarter, during which they must be available for testing. Failure to comply with whereabouts and testing obligations will result in a whereabouts failure. According to WADA rules,

"any combination of three whereabouts failures (filing failure and/or missed test) within a period of 12 months constitute an anti-doping rule violation, for which the applicable sanction is 2 years' ineligibility subject to a

reduction to a minimum of 1 year depending on your degree of fault."

Lawyer Vidushpat Singhania, who is handling Parveen's case, said they are in correspondence with the International Testing Agency

(ITA) and are pushing to get the sanction removed or shortened.

"We have been in correspondence with multiple parties including the ITA and WADA ombudsman. We are trying our best for a no

sanction or reduced one," Singhania said.

"We are trying for them to withdraw the notice for whereabouts failure, if that happens there will be no sanction. We are looking to finalise it immediately because of the Olympic quota place," he added.

However, even if the sanction is reduced to a year, Parveen will not be able to compete at the Paris Games in July-August this year. In October last year, it had come to light that Parveen had committed multiple whereabouts failures in one-year period and had received a notice form ITA, which is overseeing the anti-doping programme for boxing at the Olympics.

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) was confident of a favourable result.

Currently, only four Indian boxers — Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preeti (54kg), Parveen (57kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) — have won quota places.

In boxing, a quota is awarded to the athlete not the country. The final Olympic qualifier is scheduled to begin on May 24 in Bangkok.



Team captain, two other players arrested over alleged soccer match fixing in Australia

AP ■ SYDNEY

Australian professional soccer was rocked Friday by accusations that the captain of A-League club Macarthur FC paid two younger teammates up to 10,000 Australian dollars (\$6,600) to deliberately receive yellow cards in a scheme set up by a South American gambling connection. The player were identified Macarthur team leader Ulises Davila and fellow players Kearyn Baccus and Clayton Lewis as the players arrested over their alleged involvement in the match-fixing scheme, which police say led to hundreds of thousands of dollars being paid out in winnings.

All three players were formally charged and granted bail on Friday afternoon, with Davila scheduled to appear in court on June 24.

Authorities still want to interview a fourth player allegedly involved in the scheme, threatening to extradite him if he does not return to New South Wales state to face questioning. Investigators allege yellow cards were manipulated during games played on Nov. 24 and Dec. 9. They also allege unsuccessful attempts were made to do similar during matches on April 20 and May 4. Macarthur played out a 1-1 draw with Melbourne Victory on Nov. 24 before beating Sydney FC 2-0 on Dec. 9. All three players were given yellow cards in the Dec. 9 game against Sydney.

The team beat Sydney 1-0 on April 20 before being beaten 4-0 by Sydney FC in a playoff elimination game on May 4. Macarthur finished in fifth place during the regular season.

Police Assistant Commissioner Michael Fitzgerald said the players had "betrayed the trust

of their supporters and the code."

"Yellow cards and the subsequent penalties that arise out of those yellow cards could change the result of that game," he said a media conference Friday. "\$10,000 may seem a lot of money to a young sports person, (but) that is incredibly insignificant when you consider the damage that being charged with this offense and convicted results in."

No further information was given about the South American gambling connection.

The southwest Sydney club said it was "shocked" by the allegations, which came after a six-month police investigation. State police said the probe was launched in December 2023 with the help of Britain-based officials after suspicious betting patterns were identified. Macarthur FC chief executive Sam Krslovic said the club was caught off-guard by the arrests but it would work with authorities, adding: "Integrity of our game is a foundation pillar and we will work closely with all relevant agencies on this matter."

Australian Associated Press reported that Davila was arrested on Friday at South Coogee, in Sydney's east, when police executed a search warrant as part of the investigation. Lewis was arrested in Parramatta and Baccus was arrested in Campbelltown, both western Sydney suburbs.

Davila was expected to be charged with two counts of engaging in conduct that corrupts a betting outcome of an event and two counts of facilitating conduct that corrupts a betting outcome of an event. The other two players will be charged with engaging in conduct that corrupts a betting outcome of an event.

Brazil picked by FIFA to get soccer's 2027 Women World Cup, a first for South America

AP ■ BANGKOK

Brazil will host the 2027 Women's World Cup after a vote of FIFA's full membership chose the South American bid over a joint proposal from Belgium, Netherlands and Germany.

The FIFA Congress on Friday voted 119-78 for Brazil in the reduced field of two candidates to host the 2027 tournament after a joint bid by the United States and Mexico was pulled late last month, and South Africa withdrew its candidacy in November.

It will be the first time the global women's tournament, first played in 1991, is staged in South America. Brazil was strongly favored to win since October when FIFA brokered deals for the men's World Cups of 2030 and 2034. It left South American neighbors Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay getting just one game each of the 104 in the



2030 tournament that will be mostly co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco.

A key point for FIFA was clearing the way for its close ally Saudi Arabia to get the 2034 World Cup uncontested in a fast-track process. South American soccer body CONMEBOL's agreement to take a small part of the 2030 tournament removed it from the subsequent bidding. The US-Mexico decision to opt out and focus on bidding for

the 2031 World Cup — that decision is due next year — was another indicator of Brazil's expected win. The Brazilian bid team hugged and celebrated on the podium after the result was announced, and described it as a victory for women's soccer, for their country and for South America.

"We are a South American country that achieved the victory for women's soccer," Brazil's soccer federation

president Ednaldo Rodrigues said before reflecting on recent flooding that has devastated parts of the country. "After the things that impact all Brazilians — a catastrophe due to the climate change — our achievement today, the first Women's World Cup in South America, will help strengthen us." It was the first time that all of FIFA's member associations had the opportunity to weigh in on the host of the women's tournament. Previously, it was decided by the FIFA Council, the governing body's decision-making committee.

There were 207 of the 211 members eligible to vote in the electronic ballot which gave three options: Brazil, BNG or abstain. Brazil was even more favored to win the contest after ranking higher in an evaluation report by a FIFA-appointed panel. The next World Cup votes, to endorse the 2030 and 2034 hosts, will be on Dec.



My records not under threat for now: Usain Bolt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Usain Bolt is going to be back at the Olympics after eight years. But competitors need not worry, the world's fastest man will be in Paris to merely watch the action and feel chuffed about his phenomenal records which, he believes, are "not under threat" in the foreseeable future.

In a telephonic interview with PTI from New York, where he is currently promoting next month's ICC T20 World Cup as its ambassador, Bolt spoke about life after retirement, the nagging itch to compete, especially when he watches his sport, and also a desire to visit India some time in future.

His superhuman effort of 9.58 seconds (100m) and 19.19 seconds (200m) at the 2009 World Championships in Berlin have not been threatened ever since.

"Well, for me, I don't think so. Not right now. I think there's a long way to go. You understand, I don't see anybody really break the record. So I think I still have a few more years to go (laughs)," said Bolt, the only sprinter to have won both the 100m and 200m gold medals in three consecutive Olympics..

"No, I don't think the world record will be under threat. For me, I'm watching what's going on now when it comes to the race, it's picking up a few times," he added. Five sprinters, including USA's Christian Miller and Kendall Williams (both 9.93), have hit the sub-10 second mark this season, but Bolt's time remains way out of reach. The fastest time in 200m this season was set by USA's Kenneth Bednarek (19.67).

"A few of them have run under 10 seconds. So I'm just observing now. I think by July we'll see who will be out in front and we can definitely see where the race will go. But for now, we're still just watching and see. The leads are progressing," said Jamaican, who has been nicknamed 'Lightning Bolt'.

Bolt is now a family man and his varied commercial commitments continue to take him around the world but at times, he does miss the adrenaline rush of sprinting. "Definitely, you know, it's been good. I can't complain," he said when asked about life after retirement. "I try to stay busy. I have a family now so I try to... Figure out the time and stay home sometimes, spend some time with the family. But I do miss competition, especially when I watch it. I know I'm going to be itching when I get to the Olympics this year. For me, that should be interesting. I'm also excited to be there first time to actually watch a championship. So that should be good," said the Olympic legend.

Among a host of track and field stars in Paris, Bolt is also keen to track the performance of India's path-breaking javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, who in Tokyo, became the first Indian to win an Olympic gold in athletics.

Bolt too remembers that iconic moment for Indian sport. "Of course, of course," responded Bolt when asked if he was aware of Chopra and his stellar achievements.

"When I saw that, the first thing I said, it must have been really exciting for him. So that's a big, big deal for a country. To win the Olympic gold medal, you know what I mean? "He must have been proud of the work that he put in. Because I understand the effort and the time it takes to really work hard and to dedicate to your craft," he said.

Bolt last visited India close to a decade ago and hopes to return in the near future. "I know I have a lot of Indian fans and I get a lot of tags (on social media) so I just want to say thanks for the support. I look forward to coming there again in the near future. "I've not been there in a while. So I'm excited to get a chance to come there and spend a lot more time than just a few days. So thanks for everything and just all love," added the legendary sprinter.

Xavi reportedly under pressure at Barcelona after saying it will struggle to compete with Madrid

AP ■ BARCELONA (SPAIN)

Xavi Hernández's honesty about Barcelona's ongoing financial strife has reportedly not sat well with the club.

In a message directed at Barcelona fans, Xavi said earlier this week that no one should get too excited about the summer transfer market since there is little money to spend.

Spanish sports media has been rife with reports since then that club president Joan Laporta was not pleased with those comments and could be thinking of firing the former Spain great.

After Barcelona's 2-0 win over last-placed Almeria on Thursday, Xavi said he "understood the noise" that his comments generated, but that he is convinced his job is secure.

"I understand the noise, Barça is always like this, but I am calm and fully motivated, and that is what I transmit to Laporta and (sports director) Deco, who are the most important people in his project," Xavi said.

The reported friction between coach and club came after Xavi said on Wednesday that "our fans and club members must understand the situation is very difficult, above all on the economic level, for us to compete with our top rivals, whether it be Real Madrid or teams in Europe."

"We have to accept that. That doesn't mean we don't want to compete and that we won't fight for titles, but this is the situation Barça is in." Officially, the club said it had no comment on the media reports that Xavi's job could be in danger.

Barcelona will finish the season without a title. It has lost all three Clásico matches with Madrid across all competitions and lost both its league games with Girona by the score of 4-2, in addition to other big losses. Xavi said at one point that he was giving up and would not finish his contract after a 5-3 loss to Villarreal in January, only to take that back in April and commit to staying at

Barcelona after the team had improved.

And, all the while Madrid has won the domestic league, reached another Champions League final, and is widely expected to acquire France star Kylian Mbappé.

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Barcelona still has a goal to achieve, secure the second-placed finish in the table that will earn it a spot in the

Spanish Super Cup next season. It gets six million euros (USD 6.5 million) if it participates in the mini-tournament held in Saudi Arabia, money that it can ill afford to miss out on.

Barcelona can lock up the second spot with a victory when it hosts Rayo Vallecano on Sunday in the second-to-last round. It is four points ahead of third-placed Girona, which is at Valencia.

Laporta inherited a club mired in debts of more than 1.3 million euros, and soccer's most expensive payroll, when he returned to run the club for a second time in 2021.

His policy of selling off future television revenues and other club assets, which Laporta dubbed financial "levers," allowed Barcelona to sign Robert Lewandowski and other players two seasons ago. But, the club's wages still

exceed the salary cap established by the Spanish league and it is more likely to sell players this off-season than bringing in new talent.

EUROPA, RELEGATION: Real Sociedad visits Real Betis on Sunday with both fighting for a Europa League spot.

Sociedad is in sixth place and holding the berth, while Betis is a point behind in seventh and currently in the Europa Conference League position. Cadiz is in the relegation zone, four points behind Mallorca, the last team clinging to safety. Rayo and Celta Vigo are a point ahead of Mallorca.

Cadiz hosts Las Palmas on Sunday, while Mallorca hosts Almeria and Celta is at Granada.

Champion Madrid is at Villarreal as it eyes the Champions League final against Borussia Dortmund on June 1.

Archer Deepika Kumari to train in Korea ahead of World Qualifiers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ace Indian archer Deepika Kumari will train in South Korea ahead of next month's Final Olympic World Qualification tournament in Antalya, Turkey after the sports ministry approved her request to finance the stint.

Deepika, who was reinducted into the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) core group following a silver medal at the World Cup in Shanghai last month, is part of the Indian women's team that will aim to seal a Paris Games quota in the tournament.

She will train at the Kim

Archer School for 13 days before heading to Antalya for the qualifiers beginning June 14.

Under TOPS, the ministry will be covering her airfare, boarding and lodging, training expenditure and local transport among other expenses.

The Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) also granted financial assistance to the archery teams (both men and women) for procurement of physiotherapy equipment ahead of the Paris Games.

Besides, the MOC approved assistance towards procurement of archery



equipment for Pravin Jadhav and request of shooter Raiza Dhillon to train in India for 11 days followed by training in Italy with coach Ennio Falco for a week.

The TOPS will cover Dhillon's boarding and lodging cost, coaching fee in Italy and ammunition and clay birds among other expenses.

Trap shooter Rajeshwari Kumari's request for assistance towards vision and eye training coach was also approved.

Proposals from athletes Eldhose Paul and Kishore Kumar Jena and badminton player HS Prannoy were also given the go-ahead.

The TOPS will provide assistance to Eldhose to compete in two international events in France, while Jena, his coach and physiotherapist will be given financial assistance so that he can compete in the Paavo Nurmi Games in Finland, and Paris Diamond League.

Prannoy, his coach, trainer and physio will be provided financial assistance for travel to the Australia Open.

The MOC also approved para-athlete Bhagyashree Jadhav's request for financial assistance towards engaging personal support staff till the Paralympics.



RCB AND CSK CLASH FOR FINAL PLAYOFF BERTH AMID RAIN THREAT

PTI ■ BENGALURU
Royal Challengers Bengaluru's fairytale resurgent run will be up against the might of five-time champions Chennai Super Kings and the weather gods when the two sides clash in an epic do-or-die match to decide the fourth and final team for the IPL play-offs, here on Saturday. Thursday's washout in Hyderabad meant that Sunil Chhetri joined Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals as the three confirmed teams for the playoffs and the race is now for only one spot with two teams in fray -- CSK and RCB. Boasting of a better net run-rate and more points, defending champions CSK (13 points, NRR 0.528) start favourites at a venue where

they have lost to the home side only once in eight matches. RCB has 12 points and a net run-rate of 0.387. However, what has heightened the drama surrounding the game is the forecast of rain. A washout will take CSK through to the playoffs, while RCB will need to win by at least 18 runs or chase the target with about 11 balls to spare. The odds are therefore stacked against the home side, which is the most in-form unit in the tournament's final stretch. They've staged a spectacular comeback, securing five straight wins after enduring a six-match losing streak. Orange Cap holder Kohli has been in phenomenal form with three fifties in last five innings as he is poised to ignite the field with yet another stellar show. They will hope that skipper Faf

du Plessis is back among runs, having capped single digit scores in his last two outings. In the middle order, Rajat Patidar and Cameron Green have both showcased compelling form. Mahipal Lomror and Dinesh Karthik would be looking to make the most out of the Chinnaswamy track, which is typically a good batting wicket. As for RCB's bowling, Yash Dayal has been their star, bagging the most wickets this season. Lockie Ferguson, Mohammed Siraj, Green, and Swapnil Singh face a formidable task ahead. Will Jacks, who has impressed with the bat, is a part-time spin bowling option. But it will be interesting to see if he is utilised on this track. For CSK, Ruturaj Gaikwad has been the team's top run-scorer this season and is expected to



STAGE SET FOR EPIC FACE-OFF

give them a fine start. Fellow opener Rachin Ravindra is also back among runs and he along with Daryl Mitchell will be expected to lift the top order. They will hope that Shivam Dube gets back into his rhythm. He has failed to score in his last four outings. In bowling, pacer Simarjeet Singh and Tushar Deshpande have done a neat job after they missed their premier trio of Mustafizur Rahman, Matheesha Pathirana and Deepak Chahar. The inspiring presence of Mahendra Singh Dhoni will continue to be a factor for the side but it remains to be seen how big a role he is able to play given some nagging injury concerns.

TEAMS (FROM):
RCB: Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh

Karthik (wk), Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh and Saurav Chauhan.
CSK: Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), Rachin Ravindra, Ajinkya Rahane, Daryl Mitchell, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Sameer Rizvi, MS Dhoni (wk), Maheesh Theekshana, Tushar Deshpande, Shardul Thakur, Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Nishant Sindhu, Mitchell Santner, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Prashant Solanki, Mukesh Choudhary, Simarjeet Singh, RS Hangargekar and Aravelly Avanish.

When Chhetri sounded out Virat Kohli before retirement announcement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

As Sunil Chhetri sat contemplating how he would break his retirement plans to the world, he knew there was one man who would understand what exactly he was going through and Virat Kohli did not disappoint the iconic Indian football captain. The 39-year-old Chhetri, the most capped India footballer with 150 matches to his credit and the country's top-scorer with 94 goals, will hang up his boots after the World Cup qualifying match against Kuwait on June 6 in Kolkata. Chhetri's announcement came on Thursday, driven by, what he described as, rather inexplicable instincts. And he chose Kohli as one of his confidantes before going public with his decision. "I did talk to Virat Kohli before my retirement decision, he is very close to me. I discussed with him because we both understand that we would know this thing exactly the way it is," Chhetri said in an online media interaction from Bhubaneswar where he is currently part of a national camp for the World Cup qualifiers.



"He (Chhetri) is a really great player. He actually messaged me as well informing that he's going to do that. But I would actually say I felt like he is at peace with the decision," Kohli said in a short video interview on his IPL side Royal Challengers Bengaluru's 'X' page. "I have become very close with him over the years and I wish the best. He is a lovely, lovely guy." Chhetri and Kohli have often spoken about each other fondly with the former stating that they share jokes and also some deep and meaningful chats whenever they catch up. "...It just hits the right note," Chhetri had stated in an earlier interaction. Kohli was among the first to offer support to Chhetri when he made an emotional plea to fans to show up for the national footballers during the 2018 Hero Cup in Mumbai. Kohli later described Chhetri as "a man I can call a true friend." "Very grateful for the friendship we have skip," he had stated on Chhetri's

birthday in 2022. **VAMIKA HAS STARTED BATTING: KOHLI:** Kohli, besides talking about Chhetri, also informed that his daughter Vamika has recently started swinging the bat but said he would never force his kids to take up cricket. Kohli and his actor wife Anushka Sharma recently also welcomed a son, Akaay after the birth of Vamika in 2021. "My daughter picked up a bat and she is really enjoying swinging the bat. But it's their choice," he said. RCB are currently placed sixth in the IPL standings with 12 points from 13 games and will take on defending champions Chennai Super Kings in a must-win match here on Friday. RCB made a remarkable comeback with five straight wins after enduring a six-game losing streak to stay afloat in the play-off race. "The month of May has been very good. We found a ray of sunlight. We are glad that we have made the fans happy again," Kohli said of their fightback.

OTHER SPORTS

Shooter Manu Bhaker continues to dominate Olympic Selection Trials

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Olympian Manu Bhaker displayed complete dominance in 10m air pistol Olympic Selection Trials (OST), shooting a superb score to overcome the challenge of Asian Games medallist Esha Singh here on Friday. Bhaker, coached by the legendary pistol marksman Jaspal Rana, shot a superb 241.0 in the third OST to push back the challenge of Esha (240.2) and Rhythm Sangwan (220.3) at the MP State Shooting Academy ranges. Surbhi Rao (199.3) and Palka (179.1) were fourth and fifth respectively. Manu's performance is all the more creditable as she came

into the 10m air pistol trials on the back of a superb showing in the 25m sports pistol trials. The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) is conducting a series of four trials in pistol and rifle to select the squad for the Paris Olympics. The top-three scores in the trials along with Paris Olympics quota points will count towards the selection of the Indian squad for the Summer Games. The range, however, was set on fire by Naveen in men's 10m air pistol OST T3 final, as he shot a 246.8, 0.3 points more than the existing world record, to emerge victorious. Sarabjot Singh (242.4) was a distant second, while Arjun Singh Cheema (218.8), Varun



Tomar (197.3) and Ravinder Singh (176.9) were third, fourth and fifth respectively. Ramita Jindal emerged winner in women's 10 air rifle finals (Trial 3), posting 252.6 to edge past Olympian Elavenil Valarivan (252.1). Nancy was

after coming through two shoot-offs for the top podium finish against Divyansh Singh Panwar. Both ended on 252.5. Arjun Babuta (229.9) was third, while world champion Rudranksh Patil and Sandeep Singh were third and fourth respectively. India No. 1 and world record holder Sift Kaur Samra returned a splendid 593, while Olympian Anjum Moudgil shot a modest 588 as the duo dominated the qualification round (Trial 4) in the 50m rifle 3-positions event. Nishchal (587), Shriyanka Sadangi (580) and Ashi Chouksey (577) were third, fourth and fifth respectively going into the finals to be played on Saturday.

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Indian women's hockey team's new captain Salima Tete hopes to utilise the "valuable lessons" learnt from the recent home series against South Africa to make a fresh start in the European leg of the FIH Pro League, beginning in Antwerp, Belgium on Wednesday. Under former skipper Savita Punia, India managed just two wins from eight matches in the first leg held in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela to slip to sixth spot in the nine-team standings. The midfielder from Jharkhand was handed over the captaincy baton, while Navneet Kaur was named her deputy ahead of the friendly series against South Africa at the SAI south centre here

New skipper Salima ready for European leg of Pro League after SA lessons

earlier this month. India won the series 4-2. "As the captain of the Indian women's hockey team, it's a great honour to lead our talented squad into the European leg of the FIH Hockey Pro League," Salima said before leaving for Antwerp on Friday. "We are determined to showcase our best performance and make our nation proud on the international stage. The recent series against South Africa has taught us valuable lessons, and we are eager to apply them as we face formidable opponents



in Europe. With teamwork, dedication, and a fighting spirit, we aim to leave a mark in every match we play." India will face Argentina in Antwerp on Wednesday in

their first match of the European leg. This leg of the league will unfold in Belgium and England, with Antwerp hosting the matches till May 26, while London will host the matches from June 1-9. In the six-match friendly series against South Africa held from May 3 to 11, India won the first three games 1-0, 5-1, and 3-1 respectively. However, the visitors mounted a strong comeback in the fourth 2-2 (2-4 SO win) and fifth 1-1 (3-1 SO win) matches. In the final game of the series, India won 4-3 in the shootout

following a 1-1 tie at the end of regulation time. Vice-captain Navneet said she is committed to support her Salima and the team to achieve success. "Being appointed as the vice-captain is both a privilege and a responsibility. Alongside our captain, Salima Tete, I am committed to supporting and motivating our team members to give their all in every game. "The recent series against South Africa showcased our resilience and determination, and we carry that momentum into the upcoming challenges in Europe," she said.

Please let us compete in Paris, we need mental peace before Olympics: Women quota winners

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Paris Games quota-winning women wrestlers on Friday pleaded with the national federation not to subject them to selection trials, saying that every single step they take and every little thing they do from now on will have a bearing on India's medal chances at the Olympics. Anshu Malik, India's first female wrestler to reach the senior World Championships final in 2021, said all they need now is "mental peace" to prepare for the Games. If selected, it will be 22-year-old Anshu's second shot at an Olympic medal, having competed at the Tokyo Games. She had exceeded expectations by locking a quota in women's 57kg category as a 17-year old but lack of big-stage experience meant that she crashed out in the first round. However, the attacking wrestler from Nidani village has made tremendous progress since then, winning a historic Worlds silver and four Asian Championships medals. She missed the Asian Games due to a knee injury she suffered during the Asian Championships last year and fears that putting her body under pressure so close to the

Games may spoil her preparations. "We have to be very, very careful with every little thing we do. We are cautious in every single step we take from here on. I have competed at a number of competitions in the recent past, international events, nationals, trials and then the Qualifiers, so I am not required to be assessed on fitness through trials," Anshu told PTI from Tokyo where she is training these days. "We need mental peace before the Olympics. Already two months is too less a period to prepare. At this stage, every single day counts. We plan our training on a weekly basis and if I am called to India for trials, it will disrupt plans and affect medal chances. "I also want to go to Europe for an international training camp from June 10 but I can't finalise that because of uncertainty around the trials. We need to strategise bouts with rivals but how will I do that if I prepare for the trials and not for the Olympics?" she asked. The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has called its selection committee meeting on May 21 in Delhi to decide on the trials criteria. Nisha Dahiya (68kg) and Reetika Hooda (76kg) are



among the five women wrestlers who have secured quotas for India. "I am still recovering from the weight-cut at the qualifiers, if again we undergo trials, it will affect our body. We have to complete with elite wrestlers and need to plan well, but after securing the quota, Nisha has not met her family in Panipat. "I came straight to my training centre from Istanbul. I did not want to lose time and focus, so began training here. I did not allow even my parents to come here. We will meet now only after the Olympics." According to the criteria explained earlier, it was said that the wrestlers, who finished

rivals could be and wrote down around 20-22 rivals, who I was expected to clash with and started watching their bouts. "I was well-prepared. I expected China to win, for me China is the strongest rival, though I have beaten her." After securing the quota, Nisha has not met her family in Panipat. "I came straight to my training centre from Istanbul. I did not want to lose time and focus, so began training here. I did not allow even my parents to come here. We will meet now only after the Olympics." According to the criteria explained earlier, it was said that the wrestlers, who finished

in the top-four at the last trials will compete against each other and the winner from the group will fight it out with the quota winner. "It takes us about seven days to reduce weight and almost a similar time to recover after competition. If I have to again start the procedure, it's a huge challenge. We should not be subjected to the trials," said Reetika, whose natural body weight is 81kg. Reetika, the country's first U23 women's world champion, feels that Japan and Turkey will pose the biggest challenge to her at the Games. "I am pretty confident of doing well although the USA wrestler, who I had beaten in the U23 worlds final is also strong. My attack is pretty good and defense is a bit weak. If I can play my attacking game, I will be a medal contender in Paris," said Reetika, who trains under coach Mandeep in Rohtak. Experts believe that subjecting quota winners to trials could result in injuries. "At this stage, when everything will be at stake, the wrestlers will go all out. It could lead to some rough bouts and result in injuries. This situation should be avoided," said a coach who did not wish to be named.

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Arjun Erigaisi loses to Nikolas Theodorou in Sharjah Masters chess

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi was stunned by Nikolas Theodorou of Greece in the second round of Sharjah Masters chess tournament here. Erigaisi, however, bounced back to register a victory over Nikolzi Kacherava of Switzerland in the third round that puts back his status as world number eight in live ratings. It was not an easy day for the Indian contingent. Aravindh Chithambaram was the pick of the lot as he carved out an exceptional victory with white pieces. The two-time national champion, who is based in Chennai, got the better of Muradli Mahammad of Azerbaijan to be the only Indian in the leading group. Important and Indian results after Round 2: Nikolas Theodorou (GRE, 2) beat Arjun Erigaisi (1); Vasy Ivanchuk (UKR, 1) lost to Arjun Tabatabaei (IRI, 2); Temur Kuybokarov (AUS) lost to Vladimir Fedoseev (2); Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 2) Jahongir Vakhidov (IZB, 1); Muradli Mahammad (AZE, 1) lost to Aravindh Chithambaram (2); Marcini Krzyzanowski (POL, 2) beat Abhimanyu Mishra (USA, 1);



Volodar Murzin (FID, 2) beat P Iniyani (1); Salem A R Saleh (UAE, 2) beat Shreyas Royal (ENG, 1); Parham Maghsodloo, Parham (IRI, 1.5) beat S P Sethuraman; Denis Kadric (MNE, 1) drew with S L Narayanan (1); Nihal Sarin (1) drew with Mikheil Mchedlishvili (GEO, 1); B Adhiban (1) drew with Ruanak Sadhwani (1); Shant Sargsyan (ATM, 0.5) lost to Sankalp Gupta (1.5); David Gavrilescu (ROU, 0.5) lost to Abhimanyu Puranik (1.5); Maurizzi

Marcandria (FRA, 1) drew with D Harika (1); Bbisara Assaubayeva (KAZ, 0.5) lost to Aditya Mittal (1.5); Madaminov Mukhiddin (UZB, 1) drew with Abhijeet Gupta (1); Deac Bogdan-Daniel (ROU, 1) beat Bharath, Subramaniyam (0); Yilmaz Mustafa (TUR, 0.5) drew with Pranav Anand (0.5); Raja Rithvik (0.5) drew with Leon Luke Menodonda (0.5); Eltaj Safarli (AZE, 1) beat Aditya Samant (0); V Pranav beat Alsisher Suleymenov (UZB).