

6 WORLD

● Hezbollah fires over 200 rockets into Israel after killing of senior commander

● Leaders of Russia, China attend summit of regional security grouping

8 NATION

● PM Modi to visit Russia, Austria from July 8 to 10

● Congress slams govt over 'unchecked air pollution'

State flood situation worsens further

16.50 lakh people hit in 29 districts ● Death toll touches 56 ● DCs told to complete rehab claims by Aug 15

GUWAHATI, July 4: The flood situation in Assam further deteriorated with over 16.50 lakh population affected in 29 districts with the major rivers flowing above the danger level across the state on Thursday, an official bulletin said.

An alert has been sounded in Kamrup (Metro) district with the Brahmaputra, Digaru and Kollong rivers flowing above the red mark with vast tracts of land inundated.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma chaired a meeting on the flood situation with all district commissioners late on Wednesday night and directed them to be liberal in granting relief as per norms, complete all rehabilitation claims as per norms before August 15 and provide accurate information to the headquarters so that adequate relief can be ensured.

Cabinet ministers will also be



camping in the flood-affected districts for the next three days from Thursday.

The death toll in this year's flood, landslide and storm has increased to 56 and three others are reported missing.

The severely affected flood districts are Barpeta, Biswanath, Cachar, Charaideo, Chirang, Darrang, Dhemaji, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Golaghat, Hailakandi, Hojai, Jorhat, Kamrup, Kamrup Metropolitan, East Karbi Anglong,

West Karbi Anglong, Karimganj, Lakhimpur, Majuli, Morigaon, Nagaon, Nalbari, Sivasagar, Sonitpur and Tinsukia districts.

Dhubri is the worst hit with over 2.23 lakh people suffering, followed by Darrang with nearly 1.84 lakh people and Lakhimpur with more than 1.66 lakh people reeling under flood waters. Brahmaputra is flowing above the danger marks at Nimatighat, Tezpur, Guwahati, Goalpara and Dhubri.

Its tributaries Subansiri at Badatighat, Burhi Dihing at Chenimari, Dikhou at Sivasagar, Disang at Nanglamuraghat, Dhansiri at Numaligarh, and Kopili at Kamrup and Dharamtul are flowing above the danger levels.

The Barak river is flowing above the danger mark at AP Ghat, BP Ghat, Chota Bakra and Fuletrak, while its tributaries

Dhaleswari at Gharmura, Katakhal at Matizuri and Kushiara at Karimganj town and are also flowing above the danger marks.

Meanwhile, an official claimed that a total of seventeen animals have died so far due to drowning while 72 others rescued from flood waters inside the famed Kaziranga National Park.

The animal mortality includes 11 hog deer due to drowning in the park and five during treatment. The forest officials rescued 63 hog deer, two each of otter, sambar and a scop owl and one each of a rhino calf, Indian hare and a jungle cat.

Currently, 26 animals are under treatment while 29 others have been released after treatment, the official said. Eleven animals had died due to drowning while 65 others had been rescued from flood waters (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

SCO Summit

'Make in India' initiative can add to engines of global growth: PM Modi



ASTANA, July 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the 'Make in India' initiative can add to engines of global growth and help democratise the global economy, and highlighted the importance of creating multiple, reliable and resilient supply chains.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is in Astana to attend the SCO Summit, delivered Modi's remarks at the extended format meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State here in the Kazakh capital.

Modi said that India has contributed significantly to enhancing the economic agenda of the SCO grouping with institutionalised mechanisms such as the SCO Startup Forum and Special Working Group on Startup and Innovation. With 130,000 startups in India, including 100 unicorns, our experience can be useful to others, a Ministry of External Affairs statement cited the prime minister as saying in his remarks.

"When it comes to geo-economics, the need of the day is to create multiple, reliable and resilient supply chains. This is an important take away from the Covid experience. 'Make in India' can add to

engines of global growth and help democratise the global economy. India is open to partnering with others in capacity building, especially nations of the Global South," the statement said.

The prime minister said technology not only held great promise in his times but was increasingly a game changer in both development and security. "The digital era needs more trust and transparency. AI and Cyber security raise crucial issues of their own," he said.

"When it comes to medical and wellness tourism, you may be aware that World Health Organisation has set up a Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in Gujarat. In SCO, India has taken the initiative for a new SCO Working Group on Traditional Medicine," the prime minister said. "Enhancing education, training, and capacity-building are key pillars of India's international cooperation. We are committed to further building on them, be it with the C5 partners, or those of 'Neighbourhood First' or the extended neighbourhood."

"India has shown that digital public infrastructure and digital financial inclusion can make such a huge difference. Both were discussed (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Over 50 NEET-UG candidates move SC for direction against move to cancel exam

NEW DELHI, July 4: Over 50 successful Gujarat-based NEET-UG candidates, including several who have been ranked first, have moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to restrain the Centre and the National Testing Agency from cancelling the controversy-ridden exam.

They have sought a direction from the top court to the Union Education Ministry to probe, identify and take strict action against students and others who indulged in unfair practices like paper leak and impersonation in the NEET-UG exam conducted on May 5 this year.

The fresh plea by 56 students has been filed days before a top court bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud is scheduled to hear

as many as 26 petitions seeking reliefs like re-test and probe into the conduct of the examination plagued by allegations of malpractices. The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for admission to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country. NEET-UG, 2024 was held across 4,750 centres on May 5 and around 24 lakh candidates appeared in the exam.

Allegations of irregularities, including paper leaks, have led to protests in several cities and sparing between rival political parties. The pleas seeking cancellation of the exam, re-test and high-level probe are (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Floods 'under control' but depends on weather conditions: Himanta



GUWAHATI, July 4: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said the state's flood situation was 'under control' but everything depends on the weather conditions during the next few days.

The affected people are being provided relief and plans are being drawn up for their rehabilitation

along with the repair of damaged infrastructure, he said.

"The situation is under control but everything depends on the weather. If there is no further rain in Arunachal Pradesh and South Tibet, the situation will improve, but it might worsen if there is more rainfall", Sarma told reporters after reviewing the flood situation in the

severely affected river island district Majuli.

The situation is manageable now but if it starts raining again, water from the Brahmaputra river and its tributaries will re-enter the affected villages since the embankments that were breached are still open, the chief minister said.

"As of now, I am hoping the weather will improve and the situation will be better with no more rainfall in Arunachal Pradesh and Upper Assam", he said.

The central leadership is 'all along with us and an active partner in handling the situation in the state', Sarma said. "Be it funds or the support of NDRF and armed forces, the Government of India is standing completely with the people of Assam", he added. Sarma said that many people are facing hardships due to floods and he interacted (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Voting begins in UK polls; future of Rishi Sunak as PM hangs in balance



LONDON, July 4: The future of Rishi Sunak as Britain's Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party hangs in the balance as polling booths opened across the UK on Thursday, with the British Indian leader and the man who wants his job - Keir Starmer - out early to cast their votes along with millions across the country.

Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty walked hand-in-hand to their local polling booth on a sunny day in his constituency of Richmond and Northallerton in Yorkshire, northern England. A little later, Starmer and wife

Victoria were at their polling station in Camden, north London, sporting Labour red colours.

As is customary, there is no campaigning or party political canvassing on polling in the UK.

Sunak, 44, is up against voter angst towards the incumbent Tories after 14 years in power and has had to contend with trailing far behind 61-year-old Keir Starmer-led Labour Party throughout the six-week campaign. Both leaders wrapped up their poll pitches with contrasting messages - Sunak urging voters not to hand "tax-raising" Labour a "supermajority" and Starmer playing down the prospect of a landslide win for fear of a low turnout impacting the final outcome.

Candidates are being fielded for 650 constituencies across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with 326 required for a majority in the first past the post system.

Besides the two main parties, voters will be choosing from a list of candidates representing the Liberal Democrats, Green Party, Scottish National Party (SNP), SDLP, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Sinn Fien, Plaid Cymru, the anti-immigration Reform Party and several contesting as Independent.

Around 40,000 polling booths opened across the country at 7 am local time as an estimated 46 million registered voters began (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

CBI geared to help states implement new criminal laws, says agency chief

NEW DELHI, July 4: CBI director Praveen Sood on Thursday said the central agency is geared to help states and other stakeholders implement the three new criminal laws which came into force earlier this week. He also said that the CBI is working with the Law Ministry to successfully implement the three new laws.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act respectively from July 1.

Addressing an event at the CBI academy, Ghaziabad where law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal presented the President's Police Medal (PPM) for Distinguished Service and Indian Police Medal (IPM) for Meritorious Service to 39 CBI personnel, Sood said the agency and the Law Ministry are working in synergy to prioritise more efficient prosecution along with investigation.

According to a ministry statement, he noted that CBI's role has been evolving with the passage of time, from handling primarily anti-corruption cases in the beginning to special and economic crimes, cyber crimes and bank frauds.

Addressing the gathering, Meghwal said the new criminal laws will usher in "ease of living" with citi-



zens contributing to the progress and development of the nation. Appreciating CBI, he observed that its importance is being recognised in the society due to its investigative skills which is reflected in the high conviction rate. Referring to the new criminal laws, Meghwal asserted that they will bring in ease of living in a big way for the citizenry and will expedite delivery of justice and save crucial time of all the stakeholders spent in litigation.

The minister stressed that this will prove highly productive for the nation as the energies would be channelised towards the process of development of the society and eventually lead to higher progress. (PTI)

Six sevadars arrested over Hathras stampede: UP Police

HATHRAS (UP), July 4: The Uttar Pradesh police on Thursday said they have arrested six 'sevadars', including two women, of the organising committee in connection with the Hathras stampede that killed 121 people.

The only accused named in the FIR is at large while preacher Surajpal, who is also known as Narayan Sakar Hari and Bhole Baba, will be questioned if required during investigation, a senior officer said.

"All six persons who have been arrested worked as 'sevadars' (volunteers) at the 'satsang'," Inspector General of Police (Aligarh Region) Shalabh Mathur told reporters here. "A reward of ₹ 1 lakh will be announced soon and non-bailable warrant (NBW) will also be issued against key accused Devprakash Madhukar," Mathur said.

The preacher, Surajpal, was not mentioned as an accused in the FIR lodged at (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

ICOMOS: Nominated property demonstrates 600 years of Tai-Ahom traditions

Ahom 'Moidams' one step away for inclusion in UNESCO heritage list

GUWAHATI, July 4: Ahom era 'Moidams', resting place of royal families, in Charaideo district have been recommended for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List by its international advisory body ICOMOS.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) has prepared a report 'Evaluations of Nominations of Cultural and Mixed Properties' for the 46th ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee, to be held in New Delhi on July 21-31.

The report, which PTI has accessed, evaluated a total of 36 nominations, including 19 new ones, received from across the globe and the Ahom Moidam was the only applicant from India.



"ICOMOS recommends that India, be inscribed on the World Moidams -- the Mound-Burial Heritage List on the basis of criteria (iii) and (iv)," it said.

With this recommendation, the first-time applicant Moidams are just one step short of formally entering the World Heritage List by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These were first included in the Tentative List in April 2014.

France-based ICOMOS, also an advisory body to UNESCO for cultural heritage, is an international non-governmental organisation that is comprised of professionals, experts, representatives from local authorities, companies and heritage organisations, and is dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of the architectural and landscape heritage throughout the world. Inclusion of (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

No scope for Cong-AAP alliance for polls in Haryana, Delhi: Ramesh

NEW DELHI, July 4: There does not appear to be much scope for an alliance between the Congress and the AAP for the assembly polls in Haryana and Delhi but the INDIA bloc will fight elections together in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on Thursday.

In an interview with PTI, Ramesh said there is no one formula the INDIA bloc will follow for state elections. The grouping will fight together in states where Congress leaders and other alliance partners agree to such an understanding, he said.

Asked whether the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will fight the assembly polls together going forward, Ramesh said the alliance will do so in Jharkhand and Maharashtra. "There is no INDIA 'janbandhan' in Punjab. In Haryana, we had given one seat to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the Lok Sabha polls but I don't think that INDIA janbandhan will be there for assembly polls. In Delhi, the AAP itself has said that INDIA janbandhan will not be there for assembly polls," Ramesh said. The Congress and AAP had fought the Lok Sabha polls together in Delhi, while they contested separately in Punjab.

Ramesh said, "In the context of West Bengal also, I



had said that the INDIA bloc is for Lok Sabha polls but in states where the circumstances are such that our leaders of the state and leaders of our alliance partners want, the alliance will remain. In Maharashtra, the alliance will be there with Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SCP). In Jharkhand, we have an alliance with the Jharkhand Mukti Morchh."

Where state Congress leaders and the respective alliance parties agree, there will be an alliance, he said, adding there is no one formula on which the alliance will be done for assembly polls. Asked specifically as to whether there would be an alliance in Haryana and Delhi, Ramesh said, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Sensex, Nifty close at fresh lifetime highs on gains in ICICI Bank, Infosys

MUMBAI, July 4: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ticked higher to close at fresh all-time high levels on Thursday, following buying in market heavyweights ICICI Bank, Infosys and TCS amid a largely positive trend in global equities.

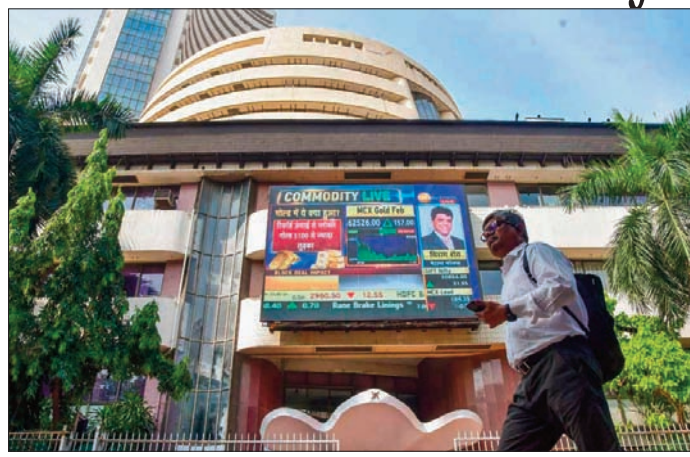
The 30-share BSE Sensex scaled an intraday record high of 80,392.64 in early trade. The index pared most of the gains later due to volatility and profit-taking by investors at record levels. Sensex closed 62.87 points or 0.08 per cent higher at 80,049.67, its all-time closing high.

The broader Nifty also hit an intra-day record high of 24,401 in early trade before closing almost flat. The 50-issue index rose by 15.65 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a record 24,302.15 with 23 of its shares closing higher and 27 with losses.

"The defensive bet on large caps like IT and pharma gained momentum due to the diminishing US inflationary pressure, improvement in QoQ earnings outlook and a resultant sharp fall in the US 10-year bond yield."

"The buoyancy in government spending and the green shoots in corporate earnings are now supporting the premium valuation. Return of FIIs to the domestic market and expectation of a rate cut in September are supporting market sentiment," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Among Sensex shares, HCL Technologies, ICICI Bank, Tata Motors, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys,



Kotak Mahindra Bank and Mahindra and Mahindra were the gainers. In contrast, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement and IndusInd Bank were among the laggards.

Analysts said that stock markets traded within a narrow range and ended nearly unchanged.

"The Nifty has approached its immediate target of 24,500 and appears slightly overextended. It would be prudent to take some profits and wait for a potential dip before considering new long positions in the index," Ajit Mishra SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

In the broader market, the BSE Smallcap gauge jumped 0.62 per cent and the midcap index climbed 0.60 per cent.

Among the indices, healthcare soared by 1.17 per cent, IT jumped by 1.12 per cent, tech by 0.98 per cent, auto by 0.88 per cent and telecommunication rose by 0.73

per cent. However, consumer durables fell by 0.22 per cent, FMCG (0.13 per cent), financial services (0.13 per cent), and Oil & Gas (0.02 per cent).

A total of 2,185 stocks advanced while 1,742 declined and 94 remained unchanged on the BSE.

As many as 23 Nifty shares advanced, 27 declined on the exchange.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul ended in the positive territory, while Shanghai closed in the red.

European markets were trading in the green territory in mid-session deals.

US markets ended higher on Wednesday during the shortened trading session. Stock exchanges will remain closed on Thursday on account of Independence Day.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude fell 0.52 per cent to USD 86.89 a barre. (PTI)

Rupee falls 1 paisa to close at 83.50 against US dollar

MUMBAI, July 4: The rupee pared its initial losses and settled for the day on an almost flat note at 83.50 against the US dollar on Thursday, resisting pressure from elevated crude oil prices.

Forex traders said a positive trend in domestic equities, wherein benchmark indices touched all-time high levels, and significant foreign fund inflows supported the rupee and restricted the fall.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.52 and hit the intraday high of 83.48 and a low of 83.56 against the American currency during the session.

It finally settled at 83.50 against the dollar, 1 paisa lower than its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee settled 1 paisa lower at 83.49 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on softness in the US dollar amid weak economic data and rise in risk appetite in global markets," said Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

"However, elevated crude oil prices may limit the gains. Investors may remain cautious ahead of the US non-farm payrolls report tomorrow," Choudhary said, adding that USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 83.80.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.15 per cent lower at 105.24.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were trading 0.47 per cent lower at USD 86.93 per barrel. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

State flood situation worsens

in the Kaziranga National Park till Wednesday. Out of the total 233 camps in the Eastern Assam Wildlife Division, 141 are still inundated so far as against the 173 on Wednesday, the official said.

In the Eastern or Agorotoli range 21 of the 34 camps have been inundated while 38 of the 58 camps in central range, 33 out of the 39 in Western or Bagori range, 10 out of the 25 in Burapahar and three out of the nine in Bokakhat are under flood waters.

'Make in India' initiative

during our SCO Presidency. They also expand the scope for international cooperation, involving SCO members and partners," he said.

"While standing resolute on challenges, it is equally important to actively and collaboratively explore avenues of progress. The current global debate is focused on creating the new connectivity linkages that would better serve a rebalanced world," he said.

"If this is to gather serious momentum, it requires the joint efforts of many. It must also be respectful of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and be built on the foundation of non-discriminatory trade and transit rights to neighbours," he said, in a veiled jibe at China, whose President Xi Jinping was present at the summit. China has invested billions in various power projects and road networks in Pakistan under the USD 65 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

The CPEC is opposed by India as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). For the SCO extended family, "we flag the progress made on Chabahar port recently through a long-term agreement between India and Iran. This not only holds great value to landlocked Central Asian states but also de-risks commerce between India and Eurasia," Modi said. India and Iran in May signed a 10-year contract for the operation of a terminal at the strategically important Chabahar port in Iran, a move that will boost regional connectivity as well as trade ties.

This is the first time India will take over the management of an overseas port that will also have a multiplier effect on trade among India, Iran and Afghanistan as efforts continue to directly tap the potential in Central Asia, bypassing neighbouring Pakistan.

Talking about Afghanistan, Modi said India and its people have a historical relationship with Afghanistan that is the bedrock of the ties between the two countries. "Our cooperation covers development projects, humanitarian assistance, capacity building and sports. India remains sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the Afghan people," Modi said. The prime minister also touched upon granting English the status of a third official language, which he said was crucial as more countries sought association with SCO as Observers or Dialogue Partners.

"We must strive to communicate better and deepen our consensus." Congratulating the Kazakh side for hosting a successful summit, Modi said India as a 'Vishwa Bandhu', or the friend of the world will always strive to deepen cooperation with all its partners.

The prime minister also extended his best wishes to the success of the upcoming Chinese presidency of SCO. India became a member of SCO in June 2017 at a summit in Kazakhstan. (PTI)

Over 50 NEET-UG candidates

listed for hearing on July 8 in the SC. The fresh plea of Sidharth Komal Singla and 55 other students was filed through lawyer Devendra Singh. It said "The Hon'ble court may further direct the respondents (Centre and the NTA) not to re-conduct NEET-UG ... as that would not only be unreasonable and harsh for the honest and hardworking students but also would lead to the infringement of the Right to Education and therefore violative of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution."

The plea sought a direction to the Centre and the NTA to identify and punish the examinees who adopted unfair means, identify the centres and take appropriate action where any "compromise to the established guidelines for NEET-UG 2024 examinations has been done."

The Petitioners are young students around 17-18 years of age, and to achieve their dream of becoming a doctor, they have given their 100 per cent and have cleared the exam after consistent hard work of more than 3-4 years, it said. However, the continuous coverage of news regarding the cancellation of the exam and possibility of a re-test for all is creating mental pressure and causing unnecessary stress, it said.

If the re-test happens as a result of "hype created due to the misleading coverage by media", the honest successful students will have to face hardship, it added. Singla, the lead petitioner, ranked 778 in the merit list of NEET-UG 2024, the plea said, adding, "He has always been an outstanding student who in class 12th has topped in his school with 96.60%. It is further stated that amongst the other co-petitioners, there are students who have scored even the 1st Rank..." (PTI)

Floods 'under control' but

with many families to assure them that they will be provided with timely relief as per the norms. "Those who have lost their homes will be provided with houses and those who have suffered any other kind of loss will also be compensated," he added.

Earlier in the day, the chief minister visited various areas of Guwahati city which has been inundated due to rising waters of the Brahmaputra. He directed the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) to take measures to drain out water accumulated there. Sarma said that appropriate steps will be taken to solve the flood problem in these areas. He directed the Water Resources Department and the GMDA to address the issues that cause flooding in the area, including construction of sluice gates. (PTI)

Voting begins in UK polls

turning out to mark a cross next to their chosen candidate on a paper ballot. Since this year, carrying an identification document to the polling booth has become compulsory in UK elections, which are open to all registered adult voters resident in the UK including Indians as Commonwealth citizens. Several voters have already cast their vote in a postal ballot, which can also be handed in to their local councils if pending. Once the votes are cast and the booths officially close at 10 pm local time, the focus shifts to the definitive exit poll soon after which gives a fair snapshot of what can be expected UK-wide. Counting commences up and down the country right away, with the first results expected just before midnight local time. "Stop Labour's supermajority" is the central message British Prime Minister Sunak was trying to drive home as he wrapped up his campaign, even as most of the incumbent Conservatives all but conceded defeat in the general election.

"Labour will put up your taxes. Again and again and again," posted Sunak on social media as the catch-all message to wind up the campaign trail. The British Indian leader and his team's strategy in the final hours was to canvas their traditional voters to narrow the gap of a widely expected defeat after clear Tory majorities in the last three general elections. The Opposition dubbed it as fear tactics to jolt Tory voters into action, with the hope of keeping the Labour majority under that won by former prime minister Tony Blair led Labour Party in 1997 of 179 seats. The Labour Party, meanwhile, was keen to override this message of its win as a foregone conclusion to fight against any complacency within the ranks and among its own voter base. It isn't 'job done', cautioned Starmer.

Polling experts have forecast a low turnout, which stood at 67 per cent in the last general election in December 2019 when Johnson won a solid majority on his get Brexit done message. If opinion polls are to be believed, the incumbent Tories are in line to win anywhere between 53 and 150 seats, with Labour projected to win a landslide. This will lead to Starmer taking over as Prime Minister, the first Labour leader after Gordon Brown to enter 10 Downing Street since 2010. (PTI)

Six sevadars arrested

the local Sikandra Rau police station on Tuesday after the stampede at Phulrai village that left 121 people dead in its wake. Those arrested have been identified by the police as Ram Ladaita (50), Upendra Singh Yadav (62), Megh Singh (61), Mukesh Kumar (38), and women Manju Yadav (30) and Manju Devi (40). Ram Ladaita is a native of Mainpuri district while Upendra Singh Yadav is from Manipuri and the rest are local residents of Hathras. All six were arrested on Thursday by the officials of Hathras Kotwali and Sikandra Rau police stations, the police said. IG Mathur said, "When information regarding the arrestees was obtained through detailed enquiry, these people told during inquiry that they are members of the organising committee and work as 'sevadars'."

"The organisers and members gathered crowd and collected donations in the 'satsang' committee for cooperation," the officer added.

The FIR was lodged on July 2 under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Sections 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 110 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 126 (2) (wrongful restraint), 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by the public servant) and 238 (causing disappearance of evidence). (PTI)

Ahom 'Moidams' one step

Moidams in the World Heritage List was sought by the Indian government on the basis of Cultural Criteria (iii), (iv) and (v). The nominated property has an area of 95.02 hectares and a buffer zone of 754.511 hectares.

Criterion (iii) bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared and criterion (iv) is for an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates significant stages in human history. The criterion (v), which ICOMOS rejected, is for an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture or human interaction with the environment, especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

The report stated that 90 Moidams are found within the Charaideo necropolis, situated on elevated land. These were created by building an earth mound over a hollow vault constructed of brick, stone or earth, and topped by a shrine at the centre of an octagonal wall.

The Moidams situated in Charaideo are the burial grounds of Ahom kings and queens. These are comparable to the pyramids of Egypt and substances of wonder seen through the brilliant architecture and expertise of the artisans and masons of Assam of the medieval era. (PTI)

No scope for Cong-AAP

"There does not appear to be much scope (for alliance) in Delhi and Haryana." Last month, Aam Aadmi Party's Delhi state convener Gopal Rai had said his party's alliance with the Congress was only for the Lok Sabha elections and hinted that the ruling party in the city will go solo in next year's Assembly polls here. Ramesh asserted INDIA bloc partners are united in Parliament and augmented by the BJD in Rajya Sabha. "The YSRCP has its compulsions. Their soul is with INDIA but their body is with Mr Narendra Modi. We are going to be aggressive, we are going to be proactive, we want a debate, we want a discussion but we will not be allowed to be bulldozed like the way we have been over the last 10 years," Ramesh said.

Jharkhand, Haryana and Maharashtra are slated to go for polls later this year, while assembly elections in Delhi will be held early next year. (PTI)

GOVT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER.: BAITHALANGSO DIVISION (IRRIGATION), HAMREN
(Temporary Campus at Hongkram, West Karbi Anglong, Pin-782450)

NO. EE/BDI/T/1/Part-III/2024-25/

Date

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer, Baithalangso Division (Irrigation, Hamren on behalf of Governor of Assam invites the percentage basis rates from registered contractor of Class- I, II & III of Irrigation Department as per existing norms for different Irrigation Schemes under SOPD, 2024-25 in separate Groups, under Baithalangso Division (Irrigation), Hamren (Temporary Campus at Hongkram) under the administrative control of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu for the year 2024-25. Detailed particulars may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 02/07/2024 upto 12 00 PM of 16/07/2024.

LIST OF SEHEME/WORKS

NIT No. 01 (One) of the Financial Year 2024-25

Sl. No.	Name of scheme
1	Improvement of Dorpans L.I.S
2	Improvement of Borthol LS
3	Improvement of Langhan LS
4	Improvement of Rongmandu I/S
5	Improvement of Lamalangso I/S
6	Improvement of Umroo I/S
7	Renovation of Kollonga I/S
8	Renovation of Rengthama I/S
9	Renovation of Lansphanki I/S
10	Renovation of Anukekang I/S
11	Improvement of Dighaluan I/S
12	Renovation of Kati Rongsopi I/S
13	Renovation of Hanthor I/S
14	Renovation of Turnpreng I/S
15	Renovation of Mugasong I/S
16	Improvement of Jarthang I/S
17	Improvement of Umswai I/S
18	Improvement of Habang I/S
19	Improvement of Amser I/S
20	Improvement of Voteranglangso I/S
21	Improvement of Presek I/S
22	Improvement of Loner Borman Plungeho I/S
23	Improvement of Behenru I/S
24	Improvement of Telehor I/S
25	25 Improvement of Pak Pangkro I/S
26	Improvement of Boring & Installation at Hawaipur (2. Nos)
27	Improvement of Drama Ph-II I/S
28	Improvement of Mengaon I/S
29	Improvement of Rongmandu I/S
30	Improvement of Kro Gaon I/S
31	Improvement of Lower Mengaon I/S

Sd/-

Executive Engineer

Baithalangso Division (Irrigation)

Hamren

Date 03/07/2024

Memo NO. EE/BDI/T/1/Part-III/2024-25/1170-B

Minister directs swift relief distribution for flood-hit villagers Atul Bora assesses flood impact in Morigaon & Nagaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, July 4: Minister of Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, and Veterinary Department of the government of Assam, Atul Bora, visited Morigaon on Thursday to assess the flood situation in the district. He reviewed the ongoing flood conditions with district commissioner Devashish Sharma and other officials at Morigaon Awar Bhawan on Thursday morning. During the review, the minister was briefed on the current flood situation in the district. He also directed the district commissioner to implement directives given by the chief minister during the cabinet meeting to address the floods in Morigaon district. Specifically, he instructed that flood victims receive assistance for damages incurred before August.

The minister conducted a thorough inspection to ensure proper distribution of flood relief to victims in the district. He emphasised the importance of timely relief and instructed all concerned departments to remain vigilant and proactive to minimise inconvenience to flood-affected residents. Additionally, he assessed damages to farmland, availability of animal feed, and veterinary services.

Later, minister Atul Bora visited Rathkhola in Bardubati under Bhuragaon Rajshahi Circle, severely affected by the floods, and interacted with sheltered flood victims. He reviewed the provision of relief measures, including drinking water, sanitation, medical care, livestock medicines, vaccinations, and treatments. He assured flood



victims of comprehensive government support.

The floods have affected 194 villages in Bhuragaon, Laharighat, and Mayang Revenue Circles in Morigaon district, impacting over 55,000 people and about 66,000 livestock. Approximately 13,000 hectares of agricultural land have been inundated. Twelve relief centers have been established in Bhuragaon RC and two in Laharighat RC. The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), police, administration, and locals continue rescue operations, utilising 37 boats and maintaining seven medical teams on duty.

Our Nagaon correspondent adds: Fol-

lowing directives from chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, state Agriculture minister Atul Bora visited Nagaon on Thursday to assess the flood situation in the district.

During his visit, the minister participated in a flood review meeting with district administration officials and other concerned departments at the conference hall of the district commissioner's office in Nagaon. He thoroughly assessed the situation and directed officials to take all possible measures to address the damages caused by the floods in the district. He also instructed them to expedite all necessary procedures so that compensation can be disbursed to flood victims

before August 15.

In the review meeting, minister Bora obtained detailed information from officials regarding the facilities provided to flood victims by the district administration. He emphasised the importance of ensuring prompt and equitable distribution of food relief to those affected by the floods.

Following the meeting, the minister visited two separate flood relief camps at No 2 Bhurbandha and Lawkhowa Jatiya Vidyalaya under the Samaguri constituency. He interacted with camp residents and inspected facilities such as sanitation, relief distribution, drinking water, and animal feed provided by the district administration. Later in the evening, he also visited the relief camp set up at Jakhlabandha HS School in Jakhlabandha market and interacted with the residents there.

Local MLA Rupak Sarma, DDC Gunajit Kashyap, chief executive officer of Nagaon Zila Parishad Ananta Gogoi, and other department heads participated in the review meeting at the DC's conference hall.

Meanwhile, Bibhuti Borthakur, youth leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party and trustee of the noted journalist Late Rebati Bhushan Borthakur Foundation, distributed flood relief to affected people at Kampung Potiapam village. The foundation members, including Bibhuti Borthakur, Surya Bora, and Pradyunna Bora, distributed water bottles, food items, sanitary pads, biscuits, and other essential commodities to one hundred flood-affected families in the village, as stated in a press note.

Guv Kataria surveys flood devastation



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 4: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria visited flood-affected Morigaon district on Thursday amidst the ongoing second wave of floods in the state. He spent time with the flood-affected people of Bhuragaon village, interacting with them to assess their situation.

The Governor took stock of the prevailing flood situation and directed the district administration to make adequate arrangements to meet the needs of the affected people. Swollen by heavy monsoon rains, the Brahmaputra river and its tributaries have inundated large parts of Morigaon district, affecting more than 55,000 people across three revenue circles.

Governor Kataria instructed district commissioner Devashish Sharma to promptly deliver relief materials, including medical facilities, to the flood victims. He emphasised the importance of the Health Department providing special attention to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, lactating moth-

ers, and infants. The Governor also assessed preliminary flood damages to properties, croplands, and livestock.

Commending the district administration for its timely relief and rescue efforts, the Governor urged flood-affected people to approach the district administration for assistance with any issues.

Upon arrival at Morigaon Circuit House, Kataria held a meeting with district commissioner, superintendent of police, and other district officials to review the flood situation comprehensively.

The Governor highlighted the importance of collaborative problem-solving, stating, "When a problem arises, the best approach is to sit down and discuss potential solutions. I am pleased to have engaged with both the flood victims and district authorities here. I have gathered all necessary information and will discuss with the chief minister to ensure appropriate solutions to this long standing issue affecting our people."

NTPC Bongaigaon launches Girl Empowerment Mission

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 4: The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Bongaigaon Salakati achieved a significant milestone with the inauguration of the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM), an initiative aimed at nurturing the growth and development of young girls in the region. The event was graced by Ukil Muchahary, executive member of BTR for Water Resources, Food and Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Co-operation, and Welfare of SCs, who inaugurated the program in the presence of Akhilesh Singh, head of Project at NTPC Bongaigaon, and Sangeeta Singh, president of Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club.

In his address, Ukil Muchahary emphasised the importance of empowering young girls and providing them with the necessary tools and opportunities to excel in various fields. He highlighted the transformative potential of GEM as a platform that nurtures talent, builds confidence, and instills determination among young girls. Muchahary stated, "The Girl Empowerment Mission by NTPC Bongaigaon is commendable. It not only recognises the talents of our young girls but also provides the resources and support they need to thrive in all aspects of life. This mission is a beacon of hope and a platform for our girls to shine."

Ukil also toured the community hall where the GEM participants will stay for a month. He interacted with NTPC officials and staff, appreciating the facilities and arrangements made for the program. He expressed satisfaction with NTPC Bongaigaon's efforts to create a conducive environment for the holistic development of the girls.

The event commenced with a welcome address by Akhilesh Singh, who provided an overview of GEM and its objectives. Singh emphasised the significance of GEM in driving social change and empowering communities. "GEM aims to create opportunities for young girls to explore their potential and achieve their dreams. We are committed to supporting these girls and helping them become confident and capable individuals," he said.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by esteemed guests including Asutosh Biswas, GM (Operation), Sangeeta Singh, president of Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club at NTPC Bongaigaon, Onkar Nath, AGM (HR), heads of various departments, CISF officials, and other dignitaries.

The program featured cultural performances by students showcasing their diverse talents and enthusiasm, including a traditional dance by the GEM 2023 participants. The highlight was the finale act by the selected GEM girls, whose performances captivated and inspired the entire audience.

The inauguration of GEM by NTPC Bongaigaon marks the beginning of a new chapter in empowering young girls in the region. The event concluded with a vibrant cultural program, leaving the audience inspired and hopeful for a brighter, more inclusive future for all girls.

Jorhat police seize over 60 tax collection books

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, July 4: Police seized over 60 tax collection books of the Jorhat Municipal Board (JMB) from the Board office on Wednesday in connection with a case relating to the alleged misappropriation of tax money reportedly collected by Ranjan Rajkhowa, a tax collector.

According to a source, the action comes in the wake of a case registered at Jorhat Police Station in the first week of May this year, following the lodging of an FIR by JMB authorities alleging the siphoning of tax-collected money by Rajkhowa.

The tax collection books were in the possession of Rajkhowa by taking him to the JMB office.

Rajkhowa, meanwhile, has reportedly obtained anticipatory bail from a court.

Bodoland University invites applications for FYIMP

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, July 4: Bodoland University, which has recently launched a 5-year integrated post-graduate program (FYIMP), has invited applications for the academic session 2024-2025. The Bodoland University authorities, through a press release, urged interested candidates to submit their applications through the link https://assamadmission.samarth.ac.in and visit the admission section of Bodoland University for further details.

Additionally, the Bodoland University authority announced that spot admissions for vacant seats will be conducted on July 29, 30, and 31, 2024, as per government notification on its campus.

Sampoornata Abhiyan launched in Dima Hasao

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 4: In an effort to drive rapid and effective development in underdeveloped regions of the country, the government has launched the 'Sampoornata Abhiyan', as part of the broader initiatives of the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) and the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP). Similarly, in the district of Dima Hasao, Sampoornata Abhiyan is to be launched and celebrated in different blocks for two days, i.e., on July 5 & 6, 2024.

Aspirational Blocks of Dima Hasao district, namely Dityung Valley Development Block, Maibang, and Jatinga Valley Development Block, Mahur, will celebrate 'Sampoornata Abhiyan' on July 5, whereas Dityungbra ITDP Block, Dityungbra, and New Sangbar Development Block, Sangbar, will celebrate on July 6, 2024.

Sampoornata Abhiyan is an initiative by NITI Aayog to achieve saturation of six identified Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Aspirational Blocks of this district. This scheme aims to address various aspects of development, including education, health, livelihood, nutrition, and empowerment. It focuses on creating an ecosystem that supports the overall well-being and empowerment of marginalised communities, enabling them to lead a dignified and fulfilling life.

MLA Ronghang distributes relief in Mendu Bey



DIPHU, July 4: MLA Darsing Ronghang of Howrahgahat visited flood-affected Karbi villages on the fringes of Kaziranga National Park (KNP) on Wednesday to assess the situation, where over 250 houses have been submerged due to continuous rainfall. The areas visited by Ronghang on Wednesday included Mendu Bey, Gobin Rongphar, and Thengkur Rongphar villages in the Socheng Dhenta Member of Au-

HT Bureau

tonomous Council (MAC) constituency under Howrahgahat Legislative Assembly Constituency (LAC).

Accompanied by VDC chairman Bronson Terang from Rongmongve, MLA Ronghang inspected the villages, noting that areas adjacent to NH-37 have been severely affected, with 250 out of 295 houses submerged. Paddy seedlings already transplanted in fields are now underwater.

Local resident Riso Terang from Rongmongve mentioned that due to KNP flooding, wild animals including deer, rhinos, elephants, and water buffaloes have sought refuge in Karbi hills. The Forest Department has raised awareness to protect these animals, and villagers are assisting in rescuing and handing over animals that enter villages to forest authorities.

During his visit, MLA Ronghang interacted with villagers and assured them of necessary relief measures for affected families. As immediate assistance, he distributed rice, edible oil, lentils, salt, and drinking water pouches to flood-affected families. A total of 3 tons of rice, 200 litres of edible oil, 400 kg of salt, and 8,000 pouches of drinking water were provided for distribution.

SITA launches second phase of 'Samriddhi Poultry' project

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 4: Ramen Deka, vice-chairman of the State Innovation and Transformation Aayog (SITA), inaugurated phase two of the SITA-funded project 'Samriddhi Poultry: An innovative approach for economic empowerment of rural women of Assam through model egg village' on Wednesday, at the Bongshar-Gandhmow cluster under the Sualkuchi Development Block of Kamrup Metro district.

The project, funded by SITA Assam and implemented by the Bongshar-Gandhmow cluster under Sualkuchi Development Block, is undertaken by the Directorate of Research (Veterinary), Assam Agriculture University, Khanapara. Previously, the first

phase of the project successfully ran at the Goriaghuli cluster under the Dimoria development block of Kamrup Metro district.

Addressing the gathering, vice-chairman Ramen Deka stated that the project aims to enhance the economic security of farm women through increased egg production and to establish the egg sector as a viable enterprise to double farm income. It also focuses on improving gender mainstreaming, capacity building, and skill development among rural farm women in improved layer farming techniques.

The development of model egg villages through Samriddhi Poultry aims to increase egg consumption among the local population, ensuring nutritional security and improving family economic status, thereby serving as a tool for self-employment and livelihood security.

Assistance, such as poultry sheds, has already been provided to 20 beneficiaries. Later in the program, vice-chairman Ramen Deka distributed cages for layers, pullets of commercial layers, feed, medicines, etc.

The program was also attended by SITA co-vice chairman Dhruva Prasad Baishya, SITA joint secretary to the government of Assam Joydeep Shukla, Assam state organising secretary of Bharatiya Kisan Sangh Krishna Kanta Bora, director of Research (Veterinary) Dr Prabodh Borah, principal investigator of AAU Khanapara Dr Mihir Sarma, DS Hazari ARO SITA, along with other officials and many beneficiaries.

Girl found after river drowning

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 4: A 12-year-old girl who drowned in the Diphu river has been found after a 7-hour search operation conducted by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and local residents near the 6th mile area. The deceased has been identified as Sermila Rongpharpi, daughter of Khorsing Rongphar and Kajal Ronghangpi, from Rongklarbong village under Diphu police station.

OBITUARY



Niralata Gohain, a prominent resident of Modarkhat, Phulampur village and former teacher of Dikom Vidyapeeth Primary School passed away on Wednesday at the age of 81 at her residence. Late Gohain, is the wife of Khudreshwar Gohain, a retired teacher from Modarkhat area mother of Ranjit Gohain, president of the central committee of All Assam Matak Yuva Chitra Sanmilan. Gohain is survived by 5 daughters and 3 sons. Her demise has cast a pall of gloom in Modarkhat area.

ABSU calls for declaration of Assam floods as national problem

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 4: The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) has demanded that the flood issue in the state of Assam be declared a national problem. They urged both the government of India and the government of Assam to take bold steps to address the flood problem with immediate measures.

In a press statement, ABSU president

Dipen Boro and general secretary Khanindra Basumatary stated on Thursday that the monsoon of 2024 has been challenging for the inhabitants of flood-prone areas and foothills of the Himalayan region. ABSU is aware that numerous villages across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and Assam state are affected, displacing many people who are now sheltered in relief camps.

"Assam faces floods every year, causing immense losses to farmers, crops, livestock, assets, and properties. Due to incessant rains over the last 15 days, rivers like Brahmaputra, Barak, Kopili, and many tributaries are flowing above their danger levels. This has resulted in numerous floods, erosions, landslides, and claimed the lives of 44 people so far, with lakhs of people sheltered in relief camps," the

statement read.

Therefore, the All Bodo Students Union demands and appeals to the government of India and Assam to declare the Assam flood as a national problem. They urge for immediate measures including restoration of embankments, erosion control with central funding, robust rescue operations, efficient distribution of relief and rehabilitation, and compensation for af-

fectured families.

The student union also emphasises the need for early warning systems by district administrations to alert people before situations worsen during rains and floods.

The student union expresses condolences to those who lost their lives due to the floods and calls for the government to provide special grants to the bereaved families, the statement added.

Workshop organised by TERI and Aaranyak under GEF small grants program Grassroot leaders attend capacity-building workshop

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 4: A two-day workshop on participatory mapping for grassroot leaders for the implementation of the seventh operational phase of GEF small grants was organised collaboratively by TERI (The Energy and Resource Institute) and the region's premier biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak recently.

The workshop was organised during June 27-28 at the Community Resource Centre, Chandrasing Rongpi Memorial High School, Chandrasing Rongpi of Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape.

A diverse group of 10 representatives from various organisations participated in the workshop focusing on different thematic areas ranging from livelihood to health and nutrition to sustainable agriculture. The training aimed to facilitate

interdisciplinary collaboration and standardise skills across sectors. It also sought to encourage the adoption of spatial technologies, facilitate data integration, and enhance problem-solving capabilities.

By demonstrating the value of GIS and GPS in different organisational contexts, the training served as a catalyst to improve the decision-making process, build capacity, and create a network of skilled professionals who can share knowledge and best practices.

The participating organisations included SeSTA (Seven Sisters Development Assistance) from Kamrup Metropolitan district, Lotus Progressive Centre from Nalbari, and Foundation for Sustainable Development Trust based in Guwahati.

Representatives also came from Bosco Integrated Development Society in Meghalaya, Green Valley



Society in Guwahati, and SNHPAD from Jorhat.

Rounding out the group were participants from Kalong Kapili and SPREAD NE, both from Guwahati, and Bethany Society from Shillong. This mixture of organisations brought a wealth of diverse perspectives and experiences to the training.

The event was facilitated by a team of experts including Nandita Hazarika, consultant, TERI; Arup

Kumar Das, senior manager, Aaranyak; Dr Dipankar Saharia, senior director, Firezro Services, TERI; Dr Firoz Ahmed, senior scientist in Aaranyak; Jayanta Kumar Sarma, senior programme associate, Natural Resource Management Programme in Aaranyak; and Sourav Gupta, senior researcher in Aaranyak.

Special guests, including Soumika Karmakar, regional co-ordinator NE region, UNDP-GEF,

small grants programme in TERI, and Manish Kumar Pandey, national coordinator in TERI, were felicitated during the opening session.

The workshop's curriculum was meticulously designed to cover both theoretical concepts and practical applications. The first day of the workshop focused on introducing space, place, and map reading concepts, followed by sessions on participatory mapping approaches by Jayanta Kumar Sarma and Sarlongjion Teron, senior project officer in Aaranyak, for rural development planning and a case study on natural resource mapping at Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape. Participants also received hands-on training in using GPS devices and smartphones for data collection.

The second day was dedicated to field data collection and practical application of the learned skills.

Participants engaged in land use mapping exercises and learned to transform field data into maps using Google Earth software. The day concluded with group presentations of the maps created during the workshop.

"Aaranyak is committed to the conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem, and supporting the indigenous communities residing in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape and Manas landscape through alternative sustainable livelihood activities, education, and awareness programmes. The whole initiative is supported by IUCN, KfW," a press statement released by Aaranyak stated.

The event was made possible due to the efforts of the organising team of Aaranyak, and community volunteers Stephen Lekhe and Elwin Teron also provided valuable support to the event.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The work of art is a scream of freedom.
-Christo

New criminal laws and judiciary

The recent enactment of three new laws by the BJP-led government has sparked significant concern and controversy across India. Passed hurriedly and without due deliberation in Parliament, these laws replace fundamental pillars of our criminal justice system—the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act. This unprecedented move not only undermines the democratic process but also jeopardizes the rights and liberties of every citizen. It is alarming that such sweeping changes were made with minimal debate and discussion, effectively bypassing democratic norms. The laws, named Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, were ushered in amidst the suspension of 148 opposition members, denying the House a full and fair debate. What is equally troubling is the lack of preparation and consultation with legal experts, judges, and law enforcement officials. The absence of widespread understanding and training on these laws will inevitably lead to confusion and inconsistencies in their interpretation and application. This, compounded by the simultaneous operation of old and new laws for crimes committed before and after July 1, will likely result in legal chaos and prolonged judicial processes.

Moreover, the new laws introduce provisions that could severely hamper access to justice. For instance, the delayed registration of FIRs for certain offenses contradicts established Supreme Court directives, potentially enabling harassment of complainants and abuse of power by law enforcement agencies. Such regressive measures disproportionately affect vulnerable communities who already struggle to navigate the judicial system. Of particular concern is the re-introduction of provisions akin to Section 124A of the IPC, which had previously been struck down by the Supreme Court. The inclusion of vague terms like 'anti-national' and expanded references to national integrity in the new laws poses a direct threat to freedom of speech and dissent—a cornerstone of any democratic society. Furthermore, the integration of UAPA offenses into the new criminal laws creates overlapping jurisdictions and introduces the risk of dual prosecutions, significantly complicating legal proceedings and potentially leading to unjust outcomes. Legal experts predict a substantial increase in pending cases and prolonged litigation, further burdening an already overburdened judiciary. The potential impact on the lives and liberties of citizens cannot be overstated, especially for those without the means to navigate these complexities.

In response to these developments, widespread opposition from legal circles has emerged, with calls for protests and petitions to the Supreme Court. The rush to enact these laws without adequate preparation or consensus undermines the principles of justice and democratic governance. The future of India's legal framework and the protection of its citizens' rights depend on it. As responsible citizens, we must vigilantly safeguard the integrity of our judicial system and ensure that laws uphold, rather than undermine, our constitutional rights and freedoms. In addition to suspending these laws, there should be a transparent, inclusive process involving legal experts, civil society, and all political parties to ensure any revisions are just and equitable. Only through collective effort can we maintain the integrity of our democracy.

India's criminal justice overhaul: New laws replace colonial-era codes

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam are poised to replace the outdated Indian Penal Code of 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1973, and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, starting this July. During the inauguration of a workshop organized by the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Chief Justice of India hailed the enactment of these laws as a "watershed moment." This significant legislative overhaul ushers India's criminal justice system into a new era.

In updating the three laws that have governed India's criminal justice system for nearly 150 years, significant changes have been introduced. These new laws are crafted with an Indian essence, prioritizing the protection of women and children, punishing murderers, and deterring threats to the state. They aim to shift towards a reformative justice system, incorporating community service as an alternative to imprisonment. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 is a comprehensive effort to redefine and refocus the Indian Penal Code of 1860. The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 acknowledges the growing role of technology in legal proceedings.

The new laws are designed to be anti-criminal and justice-oriented, with a strong focus on civil liberties. The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita mandates that victims receive a copy of the First Information Report (FIR) and be kept informed about the progress of the investigation, including updates via digital means. It also includes provisions for conducting all trials, inquiries, and proceedings electronically, with summonses being served through electronic communication or registered post. Furthermore, the process of searching a place or seizing property must be documented using audio-video recordings.

The police officer is required to promptly forward these recordings to the District Magistrate, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, or Judicial Magistrate of the First Class. To prevent abuse of power, an investigating officer can only request the court to attach the proceeds of crime with prior approval from the Superintendent of Police or the Commissioner of Police. The information of the commission of a cognizable offence must be registered by the SHO, regardless of where the offence occurred. For offences punishable by seven years or more of imprisonment, the SHO is

required to ensure that forensic experts visit the crime scene to gather forensic evidence and record the process of evidence collection using a mobile phone or any other electronic device.

The new Act allows for the admissibility of electronic or digital records as evidence, broadening the definition of secondary evidence to encompass copies made from the original by mechanical processes or those compared with the original. It also sets limits on which facts are admissible and establishes certification requirements for such evidence in court.

As a first, community service has been introduced as a form of punishment, highlighting the humanizing aspect of the new legislation. To facilitate speedy trials, an independent Directorate of Prosecution will be established in every district.

Provisions include summary trials for less serious offences and allowing victims to contest the closure of cases involving offences punishable by over seven years. Additionally, mob lynching is recognized as a heinous crime, with the death penalty as a potential punishment.

The notion that extending police custody from 15 to 90 days is a shocking provision that will lead to police overreach is unfounded. In reality, the total period of police custody remains restricted to 15 days. This change was necessary because, in cases where the investigation was transferred from the local police to the CID or CBI, the subsequent agency's hands were tied if the initial 15 days had already elapsed.

Importantly, it is ultimately the Court's decision whether to grant police custody. Are those opposing these new laws questioning the decisions of the Hon'ble Courts? Concerns that the new laws threaten individual freedom are misguided, as they actually preserve personal liberty, offer jurisdictional flexibility, and include mechanisms to ensure accountability.

A thorough examination of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023, in comparison with the Indian Penal Code 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973, and the Indian Evidence Act 1872, reveals that these new laws are a much-needed transformation. They liberate the nation from the remnants of colonial rule, and usher in a new era of justice and humanism in India's criminal justice system. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Come 2026 - Modi govt will collapse if the NDA loses the coming assembly elections

The first short session of the 18th Lok Sabha has just ended with the third time Prime Minister Narendra Modi giving the impression once again that nothing different happened in the Lok Sabha elections 2024, he remains the same unvanquished leader of the majority party BJP like he was after the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Modi behaved in the same manner to the opposition in this short session and his reply in Lok Sabha to the debate in President's address made it clear that he remains the same majoritarian leader and not the Prime Minister of the entire nation.

It was a positive development that the opposition got its voice back in the Lok Sabha and the LOP Rahul Gandhi was at his performing best in the debate exposing the PM's fault lines as also the difference between a Hindu and BJP's Hindutva. Both Rahul and Trinamool Congress's Mahua Moitra and Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav focused on the core issues that dominated the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections and it was refreshing to note that the BJP members in the Lok Sabha, despite their usual table thumping for PM, were not at their best. An unease was there.

Now, the next session is due to start in the third week of this month. The main focus will be on the full budget for 2024-25 which the PM's office wants to be used for helping the NDA, especially the BJP to take on the rejuvenated INDIA bloc. PMO and the think tanks of PM have already identified a few areas for taking corrective measures in the budget proposals taking into account the post poll review made by the BJP.

From all indications, youth employment, farmers issues and extending some more facilities for women will form the core

of new programmes. The BJP review has also shown that the youth of the country had not voted in favour of Narendra Modi like earlier elections and the employment crisis adversely affected the BJP's youth vote bank.

INDIA bloc must remember that Narendra Modi is a 24x7 politician and he is now a wounded tiger. He is desperate to restore his present diminished status and he and the BJP can only do so by trouncing the opposition in the coming assembly polls. Already BJP high command has taken advanced preparations and their programme is going ahead smoothly excepting Maharashtra. PM himself is monitoring the preparations on behalf of the BJP leadership. For some reasons, Home Minister Amit Shah is keeping a low profile.

The state assembly elections are due in Haryana, Jharkhand and Maharashtra by the end of 2024 and to Delhi and Bihar in 2025. In the first lot, on the basis of the Lok Sabha polls results, INDIA bloc is advantageously placed. Already in Maharashtra following sweeping victory in Lok Sabha polls by the MVA, the alliance followed it up with fresh wins in the legislative council polls.

What is most significant about Maharashtra is that already some seat sharing understanding between the INDIA partners has taken place - 96 seats each out of the total of 288 seats.

Congress has shown maturity as the main leader of the national opposition by not insisting on more seats despite it securing the largest number of seats among the partners in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. This has been possible due to the perfect understanding between Sena



chief Uddhav Thackeray and Rahul Gandhi. A resounding victory for MVA is now a distinct possibility in the coming state assembly polls unless there is some last minute mess up by MVA before the elections.

The situation is equally positive in Haryana and Jharkhand for the INDIA bloc. The BJP leadership in Haryana, despite the change in Chief Minister is cornered. The Congress organisation has got a big boost after its success in getting 5 seats out of ten in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Bhupender Hooda has been able to organise the disgruntled Congress workers who were thinking of leaving the party earlier.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and the AICC secretary Priyanka Gandhi worked hard in restoring unity in the Congress ranks. The Congress Party is in a position to take on the BJP in organisational terms. Its understanding with AAP in Lok Sabha elections, can be extended to the assembly elections on the basis of talks. However, even without AAP support, the Congress is well placed now to win on its own strength.

In Jharkhand also, after the loss of three Lok Sabha seats of BJP, the INDIA bloc is on assembly as the state assembly poll approaches. Jharkhand

Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren has been released on bail. It is not clear whether he takes the post of Chief Minister again of the ruling INDIA bloc government but his release from prison after five months has led to massive impact among the tribals. Hemant is campaigning extensively and he has emerged as the leader for protecting the rights of tribals.

In Jharkhand, there is a good understanding between JMM, the Congress, RJD and the Left parties, especially the CPI(M). Liberation which has active bases in many areas of the state. Hemant has good equation with Priyanka and Rahul.

It is expected that seat sharing talks will start soon and an understanding will be reached. BJP will make all efforts to get back Jharkhand by dethroning the present JMM led government but INDIA bloc is equally strong now after Hemant's release.

If the INDIA bloc can engineer the defeat of the NDA and BJP in the three state assembly elections in 2024, there will be a catalytic change in the political situation in 2025. By February that year, elections will be held in Delhi. Irrespective of any alliance with the Congress in the Delhi assembly elections, AAP should be in a position to defeat the BJP like 2020 assembly elections.

Narendra Modi government

can be turned into a non functioning government by the opposition if the INDIA bloc can secure wins in all these four elections.

The other state assembly poll is in Bihar by the end of 2025. Though right now, the NDA is comfortably placed after the Lok Sabha polls, the state assembly performance may turn different. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav is going from strength to strength. He has emerged as the unifier of the anti-BJP forces in the state. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's status has already been devalued. His demand for declaring Bihar as a special category state has still not got PM Modi's clearance. Things might hot up in NDA by 2025 before the assembly polls.

INDIA bloc has allowed BJP to form the government after Lok Sabha polls as the minority BJP with only 240 seats-32 less than the majority figure, could secure the support of another 52 members, mostly from NDA, especially TDP with 16 members and JD(U) with 12 members.

Both these parties are not ideologically linked to BJP; they have more in common with the INDIA group. Politics is the art of possible. INDIA bloc should not wait for another five years to take on BJP in 2029.

The situation is sure to turn fluid after the three assembly polls this year. INDIA bloc has to work both at the level of mass issues and the level of Modi's temporary allies. If the political situation turns favorable, that should be fully utilized. More INDIA bloc allows the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to continue, more the threats to democracy and constitutional norms will be bigger. No opportunity should be missed to unseat the third time PM through democratic means. INDIA bloc has to keep it clearly in mind.

(IPA Service)

Understanding the historical betrayal of Hindus: Gandhi's ahimsa doctrine and Rahul Gandhi's modern manipulations

I genuinely believe that the bane of the Hindu community was internalizing the lessons of misplaced Ahimsa, predominantly spoon-fed by Gandhi - a man who was 'christened,' quite literally, as a messiah. The internalized guilt inflicted on the community even when it wanted to defend itself crippled us for generations, and to this day, we pay the price for trading our right to survival for brotherhood - a sentiment that is delicately nursed by carefully inculcated delusions.

I had just about moved on from Gandhi and started to shift my focus to Dr. BR Ambedkar when I heard another 'Gandhi' trying the same tricks that MK Gandhi employed, only in a far more sinister manner.

On the first day of the current Parliament session, Rahul Gandhi's speech caused a significant uproar. His remarks about the Hindu community were deemed indecent and filled with falsehoods, reminiscent of his election rally rhetoric. Unlike election rallies, Parliament demands decency, truth, and adherence to its rules. Statements without proof are not admitted. Despite being elected repeatedly since 2004, Rahul Gandhi appears unaware of Parliamentary behaviour and norms.

Rahul Gandhi's Controversial Speech

Rahul Gandhi in Parliament said, "Modi ji said once that India has never attacked any other country. There is a reason for that. Because this country is a country of Ahimsa (non-violence), this country is not a country of fear. So all our great personalities spoke about Ahimsa, spoke about removing fear... daro mat, daro mat... and on the other hand, Shiv ji says daro mat, daro mat, shows the Abhay Mudra, talks about Ahimsa and buries his Trishul on the ground. And the people who call themselves Hindus talk about violence, hate and lies 24 hours. You are not a Hindu. In Hinduism, it is clearly mentioned that one should stand with the truth...". After this, Rahul Gandhi randomly held out his hand to show the Abhay Mudra (essentially, claiming that it was the Congress hand symbol).

Now, we know this rant by Rahul Gandhi is insidious. We know it is sinister. But my reaction to Rahul Gandhi's rant this time was far more circumspect. I found myself not dismissing him as a blithering fool, but instead, trying to put his speech in context - historical and contemporary.

For those who support PM Modi politically, their immediate reaction would be to say that Rahul Gandhi insulted the entire Hindu community by claiming that Hindus only talk about violence and hate. Of course, this is the simplest interpretation of what he said. I, however, believe there is more to it.

There are two specific components to

what Rahul Gandhi said in Parliament. First, Hinduism's core tenet is that of non-violence. The other is that Modi does not represent all Hindus - this he said after PM Modi made a rare intervention saying that Rahul Gandhi's characterization of all Hindus as a people who espouse violence is a serious matter.

Both these components were meant to specifically cater to disgruntled Modi supporters and the young voter - who is fed the "Sabarmati ke sant" delusion as a matter of state policy. As for the second component, I believe it is meant to specifically cater to the "disgruntled Hindu voter" - a segment that has started to look beyond PM Modi for a resolution to Hindu issues. This disgruntled voter believes that the political support base has started hypenating PM Modi and Hindu issues, often sacrificing the latter for the interest of the former. For both these segments, it is essential to see through the sinister, British-esque designs of Rahul Gandhi.

One of the first instances when Hindus were defanged by the British was

with the passage of The Indian Arms Act 1878. Right after the revolt of 1857, the British, petrified of another armed resistance to their occupation, passed a law that barred Indians from carrying firearms without a license. The British understood that their best chance to continue their occupation of Bharat was through the de-arming and defanging of Hindus. The de-arming and neutering of Hindus to ensure minimum resistance to their own subjugation became a template - followed not only by the British and MK Gandhi but continued to this day by the party created by the British - the Congress party.

Rahul Gandhi, quite confidently, spoke about Ahimsa being the central tenet of Sanatan Dharma - as if those who pick up weapons to defend themselves and/or the community are committing a cardinal sin. One can't possibly blame him for his narrow view of Sanatan Dharma, given his Christian mother must have imparted the hollow punchlines that come with religious moral science lectures in Catholic schools as the gospel truth - at least theoretically, which is never followed by the faithful but proves as a great tool for religious brainwashing by inculcating a false sense of moral superiority. Sanatan Dharma has an illustrious history and the Kshatra tradition which revolves around the destruction of evil and is far from the neutered, comatose version of Hinduism that Congress wants to peddle for their own political gains.

One of the primary root words of Kshatra is 'himsayam' which relates to

the Kshatra's duty to destroy evil. The etymological explanation of the word Kshatra is, in itself, "one who protects from harm and injury," the fundamental quality of the Kshatra being to protect Dharma and therefore, the Kshatra-guna itself is related to protection - by force - if necessary.

The pacifists, who follow the path shown by MK Gandhi, often feel squeamish because they believe the Kshatra-guna relates to the promotion of violence, however, that is, again, only a result of the historical brainwashing - a political project to knock Hindus down and keep them there so the pliable community can accept their own subjugation without putting up a fight.

It is, therefore, said that "without the element of protection, Matsya-Nyaya (big fish eat little fish) would prevail." It is the eternal Sanatan wisdom that says that if there has to be order, there has to be punishment and only if there is punishment, will order emerge. Ka- mandakiya-Nitisara, in fact, opens with the praise of the King who holds the sceptre to mete out punishment to maintain order.

In the book Ksattrra, the authors write, "Among the Vedas, the Rig-veda has been associated with Brahmanas, Yajur-veda with Ksattryias, and Sama-veda with Vaisyas. The Yajur-veda has been hailed as an action-oriented, ritual-intensive Veda; while Rig-veda is more aligned to prayer, Sama-veda is aligned to worship, and Atharva-veda forms a bridge between the physical and the spiritual.

Yajur-veda is a symbol of ksattrra, of the protection of the good, and of destruction of enemies. The upa-veda associated with Yajur-veda is Artha-Veda (or Dhanur-veda). While explaining a mantra, the commentator Mahidasa says, "Dhanur-veda (archery) is the science of war."

Through the Dhanur-veda we see the entire system of war. Yajnas like Rajasuya, Sautramani, Vajapeya, and Asvamedha that are described in the Yajur-veda are famous as ksattrra-yajnas. The Vajapeya-Yaga is for preparing various units of the army in order to reclaim lost land. The Sautramani-Yaga is for bringing allies together. The Rajasuya-yaga is conducted when an emperor is born or created. The Asva-medha is for expanding the kingdom and establishing sovereign status over a large portion of land. We see unbridled ksattrra in all these yajnas.

There are elements of ksattrra even in the traditional practices related to worship and invoking the Supreme. The unfortunate situation today is that a worship of cowardice has entered military science. We have infused our mili-



Despite Gaza war crimes, India's ties with key Israeli military firms continue

By: Meher Ali

On April 5, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution urging an arms embargo on Israel and calling on countries to "cease the sale, transfer and diversion of arms, munitions and other military equipment to Israel." India abstained from voting in favour of this resolution.

The resolution came just two weeks after the publication of "Anatomy of a Genocide," a report by Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine, that gave the world evidentiary details on how Israel has committed genocide in Gaza.

This report reaffirms the January preliminary ruling of the International Court of Justice that found that "some of the acts and omissions" committed by Israel during its attacks on Gaza "appear to be capable of falling within the provisions of the [Genocide] Convention."

But if you turn to India, it would seem that for both the government and the private sector, it's business as usual with Israel and its military companies.

DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries

Just this March, Israeli state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) launched its very own, wholly-owned company called Aerospace Services India (ASI) in New Delhi at the end of March.

Danny Lauber, its Chief Executive, said that ASI is the only authorised original equipment manufacturer for India's Medium-Range Surface-To-Air Missile (MRSAM) system. It will provide components, maintenance, repair and support.

The MRSAM system was developed jointly by IAI and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), starting in 2017 through a \$1.6 billion contract. At the time, which IAI had said in a press release at the time was Israel's "largest defence contract" in the country's history.

Also this March, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) that tracks international arms transfers, published its 2023 factsheet that listed India as the top arms importer in the world. Not only that, India was Israel's top recipient for arms exports, receiving 37% of its total exports.

Meanwhile, the export of more than 20 Hermes 900 drones to Israel by Adani-Elbit Advanced Systems was widely reported in February this year.

Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL) entered into a joint venture (JV) with Israel's Elbit Systems in 2016 through its subsidiary Adani Defence and Aerospace Limited to develop drones. Two years later, Adani-Elbit Systems opened its manufacturing unit in Hyderabad, from where these drones were exported to Israel.

Four years later, AEL, through its subsidiary Orde Defense Systems, entered into a JV with another Israeli arms company called Israel Weapons Industries (IWI), through buying majority stake in PLR Systems.

IWI manufactures firearms for the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and is a subsidiary of the SK Group, owned by businessman Samy Katsav, once the point person supplying Israeli arms to the Shah of Iran.

"PLR" used to stand for Punj Lloyd Raksha Systems, IWI's initial partner, but was changed to "Precise, Lethal, Reliable" after the Adani acquisition. PLR Systems manufactures small arms such as assault rifles, machine guns and grenade launchers and markets itself as India's "first private sector arms manufacturer."

Bharat Forge, Astra Microwave and Rafael Advanced Defence Systems

The Hermes 900 exports happened alongside Israel's Rafael Advanced Defence Systems promoting its defence and communications systems at the Aero India Conference this year in Bangalore.

Like IAI, Rafael Systems is also owned by the state of Israel. Rafael entered into a JV with Kalyani Strategic Systems, which is owned by Bharat Forge, back in 2015. This JV established Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems Pvt. Ltd. (KRAS) and it became India's first privately-owned missile

manufacturing company.

In August last year, the Indian defence ministry gave KRAS a ₹ 287 crore or \$34 million contract to produce missile systems.

What's the harm? Weapons in Gaza

It has been widely reported that Israeli defence companies test their weapons on Palestinians, before selling these to international customers and the Israeli government. The words they use are "battle-tested" or "combat-proven."

IAI's subsidiary Elta Systems, along with the IDF and Israel's Defence Research & Development Directorate, are testing unmanned D9 bulldozers, called "The Panda", in Gaza, according to Israeli news website Haaretz.

The D9 bulldozers have been "extensively" used against Gaza in the past for "large-scale demolitions," according to Who Profits Research Center that sheds light on the businesses behind Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Syrian lands. But amidst the Gaza war, Israel started "adapting" these bulldozers to become autonomous; this technology was co-developed by IAI's Elta Systems.

One of IAI's most well-known weapons is the Heron TP drone, also known as the killer drone. Two of these, already deployed in Israel but owned by Germany, were loaned by the latter to the former and "instantly put to use against the Palestinians," according to an application submitted to the Republic of Nicaragua to the International Court of Justice against Germany on March 1 of this year. Nicaragua claims that Germany has contributed to committing genocide in Gaza. The loaned Heron TP drones were cited as one of the weapons used to enable it. The ICJ said on April 30 that it was turning down Nicaragua's request for provisional measures against Germany but reiterated that countries selling arms must be mindful of their obligations under the Genocide Convention.

Alongside this, Elbit's Iron Sting, also called Steel Sting, is a "precision-guided" mortar bomb that can go through concrete walls. It was "presented" at this February's Singapore Air Show. According to the company, it was put through a "pre-operational test" in 2021 during Israel's 11-day attack that it called "Operation Guardian of the Walls" which killed around 256 Palestinians, including 67 children. It is now being tested more widely in the "battlefield" and according to Elbit "customers around the globe are keenly observing [it's] performance."

Investigate is a global database that lists companies that are profiting from and supporting state violence, including against Palestinians. It reported that Elbit has manufactured white phosphorus munitions, as mentioned in its 2012 annual financial report that it submitted to the US Securities and Exchange Commission. It hasn't mentioned it in subsequent reports.

White phosphorus causes severe burns "often down to the skin", according to the Human Rights Watch, which confirmed its use by the Israeli military against civilians in the current war in Gaza. This reporter could not independently verify if the white phosphorus currently being used is manufactured by Elbit Systems.

On April 1, seven aid workers from the nonprofit World Central Kitchen (WCK), who were traveling in a convoy of three vehicles in the central Gaza Strip, were killed in a series of three missile strikes. These were most likely Spike missiles, according to Chris Cobb-Smith, a former British army personnel and UN weapons inspector, quoted by the BBC. Spike missiles are developed by Rafael. These were launched at the food aid workers from an Elbit Hermes 450 drone.

All in a day's work: Profits, War and Occupation
The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a US-based Quaker nonprofit that has worked in Gaza and runs the Investigate database. It included Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Elbit Systems, Rafael Advanced Systems and the SK Group in its list of companies that have been profiting from Israel's attacks on Gaza since the

beginning of this war on October 7th last year.

Elbit Systems' revenue for the last quarter of 2023 was \$1.6 billion, a 7% increase from the last quarter of 2022. Notably, Elbit earned 12% more in profits in this period from sale of land systems, including sale of ammunition and munitions to Israel, according to its financial report.

Similarly, IAI reported that 2023 was its "highest grossing year since the company's inception." Its sales in the last quarter of 2023, starting October and ending in December, amounted to \$1.4 billion. The company's CEO Boaz Levy said: "Israel Aerospace Industries' financial report for 2023 well reflects a year of significant and varied activities – one in which the country was at war during the last quarter."

For Rafael Advanced Systems, sales increased by 19% to \$1.2 billion in the last quarter compared to 2022.

All three have order backlog or pending orders worth \$18 billion (IAI), \$17.8 billion (Elbit Systems) and \$14 billion (Rafael). More than 70% of IAI and Elbit Systems' orders were from international customers, while for Rafael, it's more than 50%.

Both Elbit Systems and IAI have been marked for divestment by Investigate. Divestment means selling off one's investments in a company. In the context of the Gaza war and charges of genocide, it has meant shining a light on businesses that are directly or indirectly involved in the Israeli occupation of Palestine and rights violations against Palestinians.

According to the Investigate database, IAI has been marked because it "supports and maintains illegal settlements" in Occupied Palestine, makes killer drones, surveillance and other weapons systems that cause human rights violations.

Elbit Systems has been marked because its weapons are used in "war crimes" against Palestinians, and its surveillance systems are used along walls and checkpoints in Occupied Palestine.

The representatives of DRDO, Adani Enterprises Limited and Bharat Forge were contacted via email as well as a follow-up call to comment on their Israeli partners profiting from the war on Gaza, amidst calls for ceasefire and charge of genocide against Israel.

They were specifically asked: Why do you continue to do business with IAI/Rafael/Elbit Systems, despite the fact that the United Nations just passed a resolution urging for an arms embargo on Israel?

A spokesperson from Bharat Forge, owned by the multinational Kalyani Group, said: "Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems is a joint venture formed in August 2015 for engagement on India Specific programmes/requirements only. The entity does not undertake any export-related activity at all. Kalyani Group as a responsible corporate organisation is fully aligned with the policies laid out by the Government of India and in full compliance of various export control policies." The spokespersons for AEL and DRDO had not responded at the time this article was published.

The Indian representative at the UN Human Rights Council was asked via email the reason that India abstained from voting on an arms embargo against Israel. He also has not yet responded.

Shir Hever is the military embargo coordinator for the Palestinian Boycott, Divest, Sanctions or BDS movement that organises actions to enforce international law on Israel, inspired by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. He said, in the context of the International Court of Justice ruling, it's "plausible" that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians: "This is enough to create obligation to third states, such as India, to respect the military embargo. Weapons may not be sold to Israel, bought from Israel or transited to Israel. Whatever atrocities may be committed by the Israeli forces using such weapons, the Indian authorities and defence companies will not be able to argue that they did not know in advance that the risk exists." (Courtesy: The Wire)

Seeking support from Asia: Putin's visit to Vietnam

By: Rajoli Siddharth Javaprakash & Premesha Saha

After creating ripples across the Asia-Pacific in the aftermath of Russia signing the Comprehensive Strategic Treaty with North Korea, Putin visited Vietnam on 20 June 2024, after a gap of seven years. A lot has changed since then: a war in Ukraine and the Western sanctions have led to Southeast Asia gaining a new emphasis in Russian foreign policy, as reflected in the Russian Concept of Foreign Policy 2023, where a significant emphasis was laid on increasing economic, security and humanitarian cooperation with ASEAN member states. Hence, it is important to assess the implications of the visit not only from the point of view of understanding bilateral relations but also to understand what it means for the Southeast Asian region.

Russia-Vietnam relations at a glance

Russia and Vietnam share historical ties, Moscow supported the communist forces during the Vietnam War and was the leading economic partner for Vietnam. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there was a slight dip in bilateral ties in the 1990s, but the warm relations continued. In 2001, when Putin visited Hanoi, both nations concluded a strategic partnership, deepening economic and political cooperation. Cooperation in the energy sphere intensified after the Russian gas giant Gazprom and Petrovietnam built a modern refinery.

Further, Petrovietnam has been implementing projects in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug in the Russian Arctic since 2008. Moscow has assisted Vietnam in building hydroelectric projects such as the Son La hydropower plant. Vietnam has strategically used Russian firms and investments in oil drilling projects in the South China Sea. By doing so, Vietnam can maintain its sovereignty and keep China at bay.

The military partnership with Russia is another major driver in this dyad, with Moscow supplying Hanoi with military platforms such as the Su-27, Su-30 MKI, S-300 missile system, corvettes, Gepard class frigates, Svetlyak-class patrol boats, Kilo-class submarines, T-90 tanks, etc. In 2012, Russia concluded a Comprehensive Strategic Treaty in 2012. Hanoi was the only Southeast Asian nation to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union. A military agreement was signed in 2016, and Russia has been granted access to the Cam Ranh Naval Base on a preferential basis.

The visit
During this visit, Putin and Vietnamese President To Lam



signed 11 agreements in education, nuclear technology research, disease prevention, oil exploration, and justice. The meeting witnessed the participation of leading Russian companies like the state-owned nuclear company Rosatom, the natural gas company Novatek, and the state-controlled oil company Zarubezhneft.

Among the important ones, a joint statement on furthering strategic cooperation between Russia and Vietnam was signed. An MoU between Novatek and Petrovietnam on oil and gas cooperation was also inked, whereby Moscow will help build a 10 MW nuclear research facility in Vietnam and another agreement on cooperation on tax administration and countering customs offences. According to President Putin, 40 percent of the trade took place in national currencies, and that cooperation in the Vladivostok and Ho Chi Minh maritime corridor is promising.

Moscow's outreach to North Korea was largely geopolitical. But his visit to Vietnam has strong geo-economic undertones with a hint of symbolism. This is because there is a degree of economic dependence due to historical ties, even though bilateral trade was only US\$3.6 billion in 2023, which is far less than the US\$175 billion trade with China and US\$123 billion with the US and is not a major source of trade for Vietnam.

Now, with the imposition of international sanctions on Russia, the trade potential will be even lower. But Hanoi is still a crucial partner, as some Vietnamese banks continue to process ruble transactions. Vietnam emerged as a major destination for Russian tourists, with Vietnam ranking 6th in the number of tourists it receives.

With the initiation of the Russian concept of Foreign Policy 2023, the Russian Federation emphasises heightened cooperation with ASEAN countries. As part of its broader Look East policy proposed a decade ago, ASEAN is further a target region within the ambit of Russia's Greater Eurasian partnership, connecting the Far East with Southeast Asia, and therefore Vietnam emerges as a major player in Russia's outreach to Southeast Asia. This visit solidifies Russia's relations with Vietnam while signalling growing multipolarity in the foreign policies of South-

east Asian nations.

Implications for Vietnam

Putin's visit to Vietnam is driven by his intention to demonstrate the diplomatic support he still enjoys in the region, especially among the non-Western countries amidst West-imposed sanctions and attempts of isolation. During this visit, Putin stated, he wants to build a "reliable security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region." By hosting Putin, Vietnam, in turn, became the only country to have successfully hosted the leaders of the US, China, and Russia in recent times. This is clearly reflective of the hedging strategy that most countries in Southeast Asia are employing to deal with the brewing great power competition in the region. The Communist Party of Vietnam calls this strategy as 'bamboo diplomacy', that is, "bending with the buffeting winds of great power rivalry without being forced to take sides." This is also in line with Vietnam's age-old foreign policy belief of 'being friends with everyone and avoiding any formal alliances'.

Although there is scepticism and the awareness that Russia is possibly not in a position to supply any major weapons to Hanoi at the moment because of the Ukraine crisis, according to analysts, "Vietnam is still extraordinarily grateful for what was then the Soviet Union's massive support for the Vietnamese forces in the long Indochina wars," and this is also the reason as to why Vietnam is in a predicament as to how to address the war in Ukraine and has therefore maintained a 'neutral stance' on this issue as well.

Vietnam has chosen to abstain from various resolutions passed at the United Nations condemning Russia's actions while maintaining cordial relations with Ukraine by sending some aid to Kyiv as well. Ahead of his visit, Putin was even seen as complimenting Vietnam for its 'balanced position' on the Ukraine crisis. Vietnam is also trying to seek alternate sources for acquiring military weapons and diversifying its security partnership with other countries as well, but it will still take time for Hanoi to completely end its dependence on Russia in this aspect.

During his visit, Putin noted that 'strengthening the strategic

comprehensive partnership with Vietnam has always been a priority for Russia'. For Vietnam, this visit is mostly being seen as an opportunity to discuss concrete measures to boost the bilateral trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. Vietnam has also expressed interest in joining the BRICS, where Moscow has assumed the rotating chairmanship this year alongside two other Southeast Asian nations, Malaysia and Thailand.

This visit has not been well-received by the US, with which Vietnam upgraded its relationship to a when US President Joe Biden visited the country last year. An US State Department spokesperson commented that, "no country should give Putin a platform to promote his war of aggression and otherwise allow him to normalize his atrocities." Trade between the US and Vietnam has also accelerated in the recent times, and the US is currently reviewing to upgrade Vietnam's market economy status, which would allow Hanoi to benefit from lower tariffs on goods imported into the US.

The US and its allies are important to Vietnam in dealing with the security challenges posed by China's growing assertive actions in the South China Sea. The clash between Vietnam and China in the South China Sea is also becoming intense, even if not as intense as in the case of the Philippines. But at the same time, Vietnam does not intend to get too close to the US as this might lead to China applying more pressure on Vietnam in the South China Sea as is the case now with the Philippines.

It is obvious that this visit will not bode well with the US and its allies, but for Vietnam, this is about not choosing sides and sacrificing its ties with one country to satisfy the other. It is essentially about keeping up with its "foreign policy of diversification and pursuing a strategy of autonomy."

Adopting a hedging strategy to deal with the US-China great power competition in the region has been the go to policy adopted by most Southeast Asian nations. For some in Southeast Asia, the Ukraine crisis is also seen as a 'faraway crisis'. For instance, for a country like Thailand, a US ally, public opinion on the Russia-Ukraine war is just as divided as in Vietnam. With countries like Malaysia and Thailand, along with Vietnam, also expressing interest in joining the BRICS at a time when Moscow has assumed the rotating chairmanship, it shows that most countries in Southeast Asia want to keep their options open and diversify their partnerships by not heavily relying on any one country for fulfilling their needs both in the economic and the security domain. (Courtesy: ORF)

Pandemonium in Parliament

By: Kalyani Shankar

The 18th Lok Sabha has the potential for positive functioning. The Modi government said they wanted consensus. Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought agreement and criticised the Opposition for causing problems. Modi stated that in his third term, his Government would aim to build consensus. The Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, also emphasised the importance of the Opposition's role in representing the 'voice of the people' in the House. But at the start of the session,

they couldn't agree on important issues. Congress leader Sonia Gandhi wrote in an editorial recently in an English daily that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "Preaching consensus, provoking confrontation."

Sonia Gandhi criticised Prime Minister Modi for not acknowledging the electoral outcome and for promoting confrontation over consensus. She expressed disappointment with the first few days of the 18th Lok Sabha, pointing out that there's no sign of a changed attitude from the Prime Minister. The 18th Lok Sabha is a significant shift in Indian politics, marking the first time in a decade that Modi is leading a Parliament from a less dominant position. This shift in power dynamics requires him to navigate a coalition and contend with a more assertive opposition. The Modi government now relies on crucial support from two key allies - JD(U) and TDP.

This means the NDA allies could significantly influence the Government's plans and actions, a departure from the substantial majority the BJP enjoyed in 2019 and 2014. The increased presence of the Opposition in

various parliamentary panels is likely to generate greater engagement. The first session of the current Lok Sabha began with a strong Opposition asserting its rights. Before the session started, there was a dispute over the appointment of BJD M.P. Bhartruhari Mahtab as the pro-tem Speaker to administer.

The Congress and the INDIA bloc members felt that Congress MP Kodukunil Suresh, elected eight times, should have been given the position. However, the BJP argued that they followed the rules. Mahtab was elected to the House seven times in succession, while Suresh lost two elections. This appointment is significant as the Speaker plays a crucial role in the Indian parliamentary system as the head of the Lok Sabha, responsible for maintaining order, conducting debates, and ensuring the House's smooth functioning.

Secondly, Rahul Gandhi said he would back Om Birla, the NDA candidate, but only if the Deputy Speaker position, usually given to the Opposition, was assured. While Thambi Durai of the AIADMK, a BJP ally at the time, served as the Deputy Speaker from 2014 to 2019, the position remained vacant from 2019 to 2024. Article 93 states two Lok Sabha members will be selected as the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. Om Birla has been re-elected as the Speaker of the 17th Lok Sabha, bringing continuity and stability to the House. After being congratulated, the newly elected Speaker took out a paper and read a resolution against the 1975 Emergency imposed by late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This surprising move caught many off guard and caused tension with Congress, as the Emergency

was declared on the same date in 1975. This led the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, to lead a group to the Speaker to express their objection to a political statement from the chair.

Fourthly, some opposition parties thought the president's inaugural speech to a joint session of Parliament ignored the country's most serious problems. Also, the Opposition called for removing the Sengol, which the Prime Minister had installed with much fanfare before the Election. Fifthly, Rahul and other Opposition MPs proposed discussing the leakage of the NEET question paper first. The Speaker, however, insisted that a discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, a significant issue, should be held first. The first week's confrontation shows despite the decrease in numbers, the BJP is unlikely to change its working methods.

An energised opposition will also be beligerent. The proceedings in Rajya Sabha also saw disruptions and adjournments as Opposition members raised slogans demanding a discussion on the NEET question paper leak issue. There was also a heated argument between the Chairman and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge. The functioning of the House lies with the Speaker, a position of utmost importance in maintaining order and ensuring fair debates. The Rajya Sabha Chairman presides over the Upper House. A functioning House is necessary and a prerequisite for a healthy democracy. The need for constructive cooperation between the Government and the Opposition cannot be overstated.

The House functions effectively in addressing the pressing issues facing the nation. Both sides must recognise the truth and collaborate to make Parliament more organised. After all, the Government is accountable to Parliament. The parliamentary system emphasises collective responsibility, accountability, and flexibility. As former President Pranab Mukherjee said, its functioning is based on Debate, Dissension, and Decision. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)



Palestinian death toll from Israel-Hamas war surges past 38,000, Gaza Health Ministry says

TEL AVIV, July 4: Israel's Cabinet was set to convene Thursday to discuss Hamas' latest response to a U.S.-backed proposal for a phased cease-fire in Gaza, as diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the nine-month war stirred back to life after a weeklong hiatus.

Fighting, meanwhile, has intensified between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah, with the militant group saying it fired more than 200 rockets and exploding drones into northern Israel to avenge the killing of a senior commander in an Israeli airstrike the day before.

The relatively low-level conflict

has literally set the border ablaze, and raised fears of a potentially even more devastating war in the Middle East. Hezbollah has said it will halt its attacks if there is a cease-fire between Hamas — a fellow Iran-backed ally — and Israel.

The United States has rallied world support behind a plan that would see the release of all of the scores of hostages still held by the militant group in return for a lasting truce and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. But until now, neither side appears to have fully embraced it.

Hamas suggested "amendments" last month, some of which the U.S.

said were unworkable, without providing specifics. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has confirmed that the original proposal was an Israeli one, but has raised doubts over whether it would end the war — a key Hamas demand.

Hamas confirmed Wednesday that it had sent another response to Egypt and Qatar, which are mediating the talks, without providing details. A U.S. official said the Biden administration was examining the response, calling it constructive but saying more work needed to be done.

The official, who wasn't authorized

to comment publicly, spoke on condition of anonymity. An Israeli official said Netanyahu would convene a Cabinet meeting Thursday to discuss the latest developments surrounding the negotiations.

The official, who wasn't authorized to discuss the meeting with media, spoke on condition of anonymity. Israel would likely hold additional consultations before making a final decision on any amended proposal.

Hamas political official Bassem Naim said that the group has neither accepted nor rejected the American proposal, and has "responded with some ideas to bridge

the gap" between the two sides, without elaborating. Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas' top political leader, has shared suggestions with Egyptian, Qatari and Turkish officials, the group said in a statement late Wednesday.

U.S. officials have said the latest proposal has new language that was proposed to Egypt and Qatar on Saturday and addresses indirect negotiations that are set to commence during the first phase of the three-phase deal that U.S. President Joe Biden laid out in a May 31 speech.

The first phase calls for a "full and complete cease-fire," a with-

drawal of Israeli forces from all densely populated areas of Gaza and the release of a number of hostages, including women, older people and the wounded, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

The proposal called for the parties to negotiate the terms of the second phase during the 42 days of phase one. Under the current proposal, Hamas could release all of the remaining men, both civilians and soldiers, during the second phase.

In return, Israel could free an agreed-upon number of Palestinian prisoners and detainees. The re-

leases wouldn't occur until "sustainable calm" takes effect and all Israeli troops withdraw from Gaza. The third phase would see the return of the remains of hostages. The transition from the first to the second phase has appeared to be the main sticking point.

Hamas is concerned that Israel will restart the war after the first phase one, perhaps after making unrealistic demands in the talks. Israeli officials have expressed concern that Hamas will do the same, drawing out the talks and the initial cease-fire indefinitely without releasing the remaining captives. (AP)

The War in Gaza broke out after Palestinian militant group Hamas carried out attacks in Israel on Oct 7

Hezbollah fires over 200 rockets into Israel after killing of senior commander

BEIRUT, July 4: The Lebanese Hezbollah group says it has launched over 200 rockets at several military bases in Israel in retaliation for a strike that killed one of its senior commanders.

The attack by the Iran-backed militant group on Thursday was one of the largest in the months-long conflict along the Lebanon-Israel border, with tensions boiling in recent weeks.

The Israeli military said "numerous projectiles and suspicious aerial targets" had entered its territory from Lebanon, many of which it said were intercepted. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

It said about 160 "projectiles" were launched toward the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and over 15 drones into Israeli territory, but that it had intercepted some of them.

Israel after Hezbollah's attack struck various towns in southern Lebanon. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported that one Israeli drone strike in the border town of Houla killed at least one person. Meanwhile, Israel jets broke the sound barrier over the Lebanese capital and other areas in the country.

Israel on Wednesday acknowl-



edged that it had killed Mohammad Naameh Nasser, who headed one of Hezbollah's three regional divisions in southern Lebanon, a day earlier.

Hours after the killing, Hezbollah launched scores of Katyusha rockets and Falaq rockets with heavy warheads into northern Israel and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. It launched more rockets on Thursday and said it had also sent exploding drones into several bases.

Nasser was of great importance to Hezbollah, which said he took part in battles in conflicts in Syria and Iraq from 2011 until 2016 and fought in the group's last war with Israel in 2006. Two other senior Hezbollah commanders have also

with Hamas, another Iran-allied group that ignited the war in Gaza with its Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel. The group's leadership says it will stop its attacks once there is a cease-fire in Gaza, and that while it does not want war, it is ready for one.

Israeli officials, meanwhile, say they could decide to go to war in Lebanon if efforts for a diplomatic solution fail.

Hezbollah's retaliation comes a day after a senior adviser to U.S. President Joe Biden, Amos Hochstein, met with French President Emmanuel Macron's Lebanese envoy, Jean-Yves Le Drian, in Paris.

The fighting has displaced tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border. In northern Israel, 16 soldiers and 11 civilians have been killed. In Lebanon, more than 450 people — mostly fighters but also dozens of civilians — have been killed.

Israel sees Hezbollah as its most direct threat and estimates that it has an arsenal of 150,000 rockets and missiles, including precision-guided missiles.

In 2006, Israel and Hezbollah fought a monthlong war that ended in a draw. (AP)

EAM Jaishankar, his Chinese counterpart Wang hold talks in Astana

ASTANA, Jul 4: India and China on Thursday vowed to redouble efforts to resolve the remaining issues in eastern Ladakh at the earliest and "stabilise and rebuild" ties even as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar conveyed to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi during a meeting that the Line of Actual Control (LAC) must be respected.

In the talks held on the sidelines of the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Jaishankar underlined the need for fully abiding by relevant bilateral agreements and protocols reached between the two sides in the past for the management of the border.

In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Jaishankar and Wang had an in-depth exchange of views on finding an early resolution of the remaining issues along the LAC in eastern Ladakh to "stabilise and rebuild bilateral relations."

In the meeting, the external affairs minister also reaffirmed India's persistent view that the relations between the two sides must be based on mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity.

"Met with CPC Politburo member and FM Wang Yi in Astana this morning. Discussed early resolution of remaining issues in border areas. Agreed to redouble efforts through diplomatic and military channels to that end," Jaishankar said on X.

"Respecting the LAC and ensuring peace and tranquillity in the border

areas is essential. The three mutuals - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest - will guide our bilateral ties," he said.

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

"Both Ministers agreed to continue and step up meetings of the diplomatic and military officials of the two sides to take forward their discussions to resolve the remaining issues at the earliest," the MEA said.

"To that end, they agreed that the Working Mechanism on Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) should hold an early meeting," it said. The MEA said Jaishankar reiterated that the India-China relationship is best served by observing the three mutuals — mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests.

It said the two ministers agreed that the prolongation of the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side.

"The external affairs minister highlighted the need to redouble efforts to achieve complete disengagement from the remaining areas in eastern Ladakh and restore border peace and tranquillity in order to remove obstacles towards the return of

normalcy in bilateral relations," the MEA said.

"He reaffirmed the importance of fully abiding by relevant bilateral agreements, protocols, and understandings reached between the two Governments in the past. The Line of Actual Control must be respected and peace and tranquillity in the border areas always enforced," it said.

The Jaishankar-Wang talks came amid the dragging border row in eastern Ladakh that entered its fifth year in May. The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in a standoff since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points. The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

The two sides held the last round of high-level military talks in February with an aim to resolve the row.

Though there was no indication of a breakthrough at the 21st round of talks, both sides agreed to maintain "peace and tranquillity" on the ground and continue the communication on the way ahead. (PTI)



Leaders of Russia, China attend summit of regional security grouping

MOSCOW, July 4: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday attended the summit of a security grouping created by Moscow and Beijing to counter Western alliances.

Putin and Xi joined the leaders of other countries that are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation at its annual meeting in Kazakhstan's capital of Astana.

The grouping was established in 2001 by China, Russia and the four ex-Soviet Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to promote regional security and economic cooperation. It was later joined by India, Pakistan and Iran. Russia's western neighbour and ally, Belarus, joined the SCO on Thursday. Observer states and dialogue partners include Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Addressing the summit, Putin emphasised the group's focus on ensuring security of its members and said the SCO will form a dedicated centre that will coordinate response to various

security challenges. He added that the group's members will also endorse a special program to fight separatism and extremism. Xi called on the SCO members to show solidarity in the face "the real challenges of intervention and polarisation," according to a readout of his speech by the official Xinhua news agency. "In the face of the real threat of the Cold War mentality, we have to safeguard the security bottom line," he added.

Besides Putin and Xi, and summit host Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, attending Thursday's meeting are Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, President Emomali Rakhmon of Tajikistan, President Sadyr Zapparov of Kyrgyzstan and President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India has sent his foreign minister S Jaishankar. Iran is still choosing a successor to President Ebrahim Raisi, killed in a helicopter crash in May,

Does Prachanda want to block Oli from becoming Nepal's PM

KATHMANDU, July 4: Is Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal Prachanda's decision to not quit after the resignation of eight Cabinet ministers belonging to the largest party and face a vote of confidence in Parliament a strategy to block his former ally-turned-rival K P Sharma Oli from occupying the post?

Nepali Congress (NC) president Sher Bahadur Deuba and Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) chairman K P Sharma Oli, both former premiers, inked a power-sharing deal on Monday night to form a new NC-UML alliance government.

The CPN-UML, which is the largest party in the ruling coalition, withdrew support to the Prachanda-led government, following which eight of their Cabinet ministers resigned on Wednesday. Their resignations were accepted by the Prime Minister on Thursday.

Meanwhile, three ministers representing the Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP) in the Prachanda-led coalition government too are set to resign from their posts, a source close to JSP president Ashok Rai said.

The party has seven seats in the Lower House and has decided to support the NC-UML alliance.

The Nepali Congress, which is the largest party in the 275-member House of Representatives (HoR), has 89 seats, while CPN-UML has 78 seats. Prachanda's party, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre (CPN-MC), has 32 seats.

Senior leader of CPN-United Socialist (CPN-US)



Ghanashyam Bhushal said his party — which has 10 seats in the Lower House — will vote in favour of the Prachanda-led government when the latter seeks a vote of confidence in the House.

As of Thursday, Prime Minister Prachanda enjoys support from just 63 members of the HoR but he requires 138 votes for the government to win the vote of confidence in the House.

Prachanda has already declared not to quit the post, even when demanded by CPN-UML, despite having lost the majority in the Lower House and instead decided to face the Vote of Confidence, for which he has 30 days.

Political analysts see a tactic behind Prachanda's move not to resign from the post but to face the House as they suggest the Prime Minister possibly wants to block Oli from becoming the Prime Minister

in any way.

This can be a step to create a tussle between the Nepali Congress and UML at a time when the two large parties agreed to make Oli the Prime Minister in the first phase, they said.

"The Prime Minister can prolong his tenure by one month and seek a vote of confidence technically speaking but on moral ground, he should resign as there is clear indication that he lost majority support," pointed out Dinesh Tripathi, a senior advocate.

The Prime Minister might want to block Oli from becoming the Prime Minister, but he will not succeed, said Tripathi.

According to Article 76 (3) of the Constitution, if the coalition government formed under Article 76 (2) fails, the largest party will get a chance to lead the government.

But at a time, when the largest party has already given consent for Oli to be the prime minister, Article 76 (3) will not be attracted for the leader of the second largest party to become the Prime Minister.

The new government should be formed under Article 76 (2), Tripathi argued.

Article 76 (2) says in cases where no party has a clear majority in the House, the President shall appoint as the prime minister "a member of the House who can command a majority with the support of two or more parties." (PTI)

Does Prachanda want to block Oli from becoming Nepal's PM (PTI)

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Does Prachanda want to block Oli from becoming Nepal's PM (PTI)

Japanese man sentenced to 17.5 years in prison, and 20 strokes of the cane in S'pore for rape

KUALA LUMPUR, July 4: A Japanese hairstylist has been sentenced to 17.5 years in prison and 20 strokes of the cane in Singapore for what the judge described as a "brutal and cruel" assault and rape of a drunk student five years ago, his lawyer said on Thursday.

Kita Ikko, 39, pleaded guilty Monday to one charge of rape, one charge of sexual assault by penetration, and one charge of making an obscene film, defense lawyer Adrian Wee told The Associated Press.

The Kyodo News Agency cited the Japanese Embassy in Singapore as saying that Kita is set to be the first Japanese person to be sentenced to caning in Singapore. Singaporean law calls for caning male convicts under the age of 50 for a variety of offences including rape, drug trafficking, vandalism and robbery. It has drawn criticism from internal bodies but continue to be common.

Kita was arrested in December 2019 after the 20-year-old student lodged a police report. He met the victim for the first time at a riverside bar and took her to his home where prosecutors said he sexually assaulted and raped her. He also recorded the acts on his mobile phone and sent it to a friend.

Wee said Kita was out on bail until he was charged in May last year and remained in police custody until his guilty plea and sentencing this week.

"The assault that you have perpetrated on the victim was brutal and cruel," said Justice Aedil Abdullah. He found that the victim was so intimidated that she couldn't walk by herself.

In a ruling Monday, he said Kita continued to attack her while she was unable to escape and that the ordeal had scarred the victim psychologically. The sentence will be backdated back to the date of his remand in May 2023. (AP)

At SCO summit, Pak PM raises terrorism concern; urges global engagement with Afghan Taliban

ASTANA, July 4: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday raised the issue of terrorism as a major concern for member states at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and called for "meaningful" engagement with the Afghan Taliban government.

Shahbaz, who arrived in Kazakhstan's capital of Astana on Wednesday for a two-day official visit, represented Pakistan at the SCO meeting where leaders and diplomats from countries including China, India, Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan have gathered to discuss economic and security cooperation.

The prime minister, during his address, emphasised the importance of maintaining peace in the region as a precondition for economic development, Dawn News reported. "Achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan is a lynch-

pin to this common objective," he said, adding that the international community "meaningfully engage with the Afghan government to meet their genuine economic and development needs".

Sharif also said the Afghan Taliban must also "take concrete measures" to ensure its soil is not used for terrorism against any other state.

"Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including state terrorism, must be condemned in clear and unambiguous terms," he said, adding that there was "no justification for killing innocent people or using the bogey of terrorism" for political point-scoring. He also touched on the topic of globalisation and highlighted that leaders had the responsibility to rise above partisan geopolitics and join hands to secure a prosperous future for our people.

Regarding Pakistan's role in regional trade connectivity, the premier said the country's location made it an "ideal trade conduit" for the region and added that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) supplemented "SCO's vision of regional connectivity and economic interaction".

Shehbaz also advocated for the promotion "of national currencies for mutual settlements within the region" to avoid "global financial shocks". He said alternative funding mechanisms would "give impetus to different development projects in the SCO region".

The prime minister said Pakistan would do "its utmost to pro-

vide impetus to collective efforts to raise living standards in the SCO region" while talking about the rise in political and military conflicts across the globe and consequent hike in food and fuel prices, which have "seriously affected members' ability to address poverty". Pakistan and India became a member of SCO in June 2017 at a summit in Kazakhstan.

Recalling how Pakistan and Russia used to have a bilateral trade and a barter system in the 1950s and 1960s, Shehbaz, on Wednesday, during his interaction with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the sidelines of the summit, called for overcoming financial and banking issues between

the two countries by renewing and expanding trade under a barter system.

"I think today is the time we can overcome financial and other banking issues by renewing our trade and expanding our trade under a barter," Shehbaz told Putin. "That will be very beneficial to Pakistan and we will be able to overcome many problems." Putin said both countries could enhance their cooperation in energy and agriculture and expressed his readiness to promote cooperation with cash-strapped Pakistan in the field of food security.

Meanwhile, Shehbaz also proposed to establish tripartite institutional mechanisms, particularly in economic and investment areas to strengthen Pakistan-Turkiye-Azerbaijan economic and commercial cooperation. (PTI)



Extreme weather conditions claim 5 lives

Incessant rains wreak havoc in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 4: The extreme monsoon weather occurrences caused widespread damages throughout Nagaland while five people were washed away in different locations in the state.

According to an update from the Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA) on Thursday, reports of damages to houses, roads, bridges, breast wall of roads, fishery ponds, paddy fields, jhum cultivation and also loss of human lives due to the extreme weather conditions were received.

In Tuensang district, two boys from Kejok village were washed away at Ayong nullah on June 28. The body of one of them was retrieved the same day. Though the search operation continued till the third day of the incident, the body of the other boy could not be recovered, and the search operation was called off with the consent of the father of the deceased and all parties involved in the operation.

According to reports, a youth



drowned in Nsonji lake in Tseminyu district and his body was recovered on July 1. On June 29, a youth was reportedly swept away in the Dzuvuru stream in Kohima district. Though the search operation is still being continued, his body could not be retrieved to date.

In Noklak district, a person was swept away by strong water current at Nguhaiu between Saddle to Noklak on July 1. His body was retrieved around 8 pm the same day.

In Mokokchung district, landslides occurred in several wards affecting human habitation.

In Kiphire district, continuous rains have caused damage to public infrastructures and families in Forest ward, Medical ward, Kiphire-Amahator road, Kiza colony and Jail ward prompting the evacuation of several families. Flood waters also damaged paddy fields in the district.

Several landslides/road blockages

were also reported at Fakim/Tsundang area, Tsuvong ward, Pungro sub-division and between Sitimi and Shisimi in the district.

In Noklak district, landslides were reported in Punyaongan ward 4, Punyaongan region and Sanglao village. Due to incessant rains, road damages and road sinking have been reported between Chingmei and Noklak and Nokak-Saddle. In Zunheboto district, several houses were destroyed by landslides at DC Hill West. Zhavame village in Phek reported paddy field damage due to the flash flood.

In Shamator district, the Shiponger and Moksuke bridges between Chesore and Y Anner had been partially destroyed by flash flood on July 2. Another large landslide was reported from the NAP ward. Landslides and mudslides at multiple locations under the Shamator district were also reported.

Peren district also reported landslides on Tening-Nsong road.

4-lane road from Meghalaya to Assam approved

SHILLONG, July 4: The Centre has approved ₹ 24,000 crore for the construction of a four-lane road from Umiam to Silchar via East Jaintia Hills district to improve the road connectivity to Assam. Mizoram and Tripura, Meghalaya deputy chief minister Prestone Tynsong said on Thursday.

He said that out of the total amount approved, ₹ 12,000 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of a 100-km stretch of road between Umiam and Malidor (both in Meghalaya).

The amount also includes compensation for landowners.

"This project will help ease travel to Silchar, Mizoram and Tripura, connecting Guwahati in Assam," Tynsong told PTI in an interview.

The remaining ₹ 12,000 crore has been earmarked for the construction of the remaining 4-lane road in neighbouring Assam.

The proposed 4-lane road will replace the existing National Highway-6 which is in deplorable condition along various stretches in



Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district.

Tynsong also said that Union minister of road transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari had on June 24 approved ₹ 290 crore for repairs and improvement of NH-6 from Lumshong to Malidor in East Jaintia Hills district.

The NH-6 is in deplorable condition and people travelling to and from Assam, Mizoram and Tripura are affected following heavy rainfall due to the monsoon in Meghalaya.

Meanwhile, newly elected Shillong MP Dr Ricky Syngkon had also met Gadkari to seek repair of the NH-6. (PTI)

'Arunachal remote areas to have access to essential services'

ITANAGAR, July 4: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu on Thursday asserted that his government is committed to realizing the goal of 'Viksit Arunachal' by focusing on comprehensive and inclusive development strategies. He said all unconnected villages will be linked to administrative headquarters.

"Efforts will be made to ensure that even the most remote areas have access to essential services and infrastructure," Khandu said in a post on X. As per the Union Ministry of Rural Development, out of 455 villages in the state, 135 villages are yet to be connected. The chief minister also promised total implementation of the National Education Policy-2020 (NEP). Terming the NEP-2020 adopted by the Central government as one of the greatest reforms in the education sector, Khandu said, "The complete implementation of NEP-2020 will promote universal access to quality education and improve learning outcomes across the state."

"We want our students to be equipped with 21st-century skills necessary for their personal and professional growth," he said. (PTI)

Safety of flood victims a priority: Manipur Govt

IMPHAL, July 4: With the water levels of various rivers in Manipur rising, and flooding cases in the valley areas, the Manipur government said recently that it is giving priority "to relocate the flood victims to safer places in flood hit areas". It can be mentioned here that the state government had issued an order on Tuesday that Wednesday would be a holiday, while the Education department had declared July 3 and July 4 as holidays. Incessant rains over the last few days have caused overflow of the rivers in Manipur inundating several places. Meanwhile, water resources and relief & disaster management minister, Awangbow Neumai recently said that the

priority of the State Government is to relocate the flood victims to safer places in flood hit areas. Speaking at the press conference at his New Secretariat Office in Imphal, Awangbow said that most of the rivers have crossed the danger level. He also said that over 2000 persons have been evacuated, and the rest have been moved to safer locations and relief camps before the flood water level increased. To prevent the overflow and breach of Imphal River at various locations the minister appealed for the active participation of manpower from volunteers, local clubs, MLAs, ministers, local representatives, state forces, paramilitary forces NDRF and SDRF. (NNN)

RECRUITMENT NOTICE

In pursuance of the Govt. communication vide eCF No.464166/3 dated 3rd July, 2024, this is for information of all concerned that the verification of the original documents in respect of the following candidates shortlisted by Assam Public Service Commission for appointment to the post of Assistant Professor (Non-Technical) and Librarian in the State Engineering Colleges under Higher Education Department is scheduled as per details given below:

Date & Time: 08th July, 2024 11:00 AM onwards

Venue: Office of the Director of Technical Education, Assam, Kahilpara, Guwahati-19.

SL. NO.	ROLL NO.	SUBJECT	CANDIDATE NAME	FATHER'S NAME	GENDER
1	25063	Physics	MAYURI DEVEE	NARAYAN CHANDRA NATH	FEMALE
2	25019	Physics	BISHWAJIT BARUAH	TARANATH BARUAH	MALE
3	25089	Physics	RINGSHAR NARZARY	JAYMAL NARZARY	MALE
4	20001	Chemistry	AVINASH HAZARIKA	LATE CHANDRA KANTA HAZARIKA	MALE
5	24059	Mathematics	DR PRANAB KALITA	LATE RADHA KANTA KALITA	MALE
6	24111	Mathematics	NEERAJ KUMAR PAUL	NIL KANTA PAUL	MALE
7	24078	Mathematics	JITEN BORGHAIN	LATE AMULYA BORGHAIN	MALE
8	24164	Mathematics	SUJAN SINHA	PARAN SENA SINHA	MALE
9	24110	Mathematics	NAVALAKHI HAZARIKA	LILA HAZARIKA	FEMALE
10	24038	Mathematics	BISWAJIT TAHU	DURGA PRASAD TAHU	MALE
11	21018	English	DEBABHUSON BORAH	LILARAM BORAH	MALE
12	22010	Humanities	RADAB BASUMATARY	BINOD BASUMATARY	MALE
13	23063	Librarian	TRINAYAN BORGHAIN	LATE BIPIN BORGHAIN	MALE

Note: Candidates must bring all the original documents and a self-attested photo copy set of the following:

- All relevant original documents as per the eligibility criteria
- Caste Certificate (If applicable)
- Aadhar Card/PAN/EPC/Passport etc.
- One Passport Size Photograph.

Sd/- Shri Dhruvajyoti Borah, ACS
Director of Technical Education, Assam,
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19.

Janasanyog /D/2210/24/5-Jul-24

Seeks help for tribal council Tipra Motha chief meets three Union ministers in Delhi

AGARTALA, July 4: Tipra Motha supreme Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on Thursday called on Union Tribal Affairs minister Jual Oram in New Delhi and requested more funds for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC).

The Tipra Motha, which joined the BJP-led coalition government in Tripura just before the Lok Sabha election, is running the board of TTAADC. "Met minister of Tribal Affairs, Jual Oram, along with Mr C K Jamatia and MP from Tripura East Parliamentary constituency, Smt. Kriti Devi Debbarma in Delhi on Thursday," he wrote on Facebook.

Debbarma said, "Tripura used to be an indigenous/tribal state, but over the years, due to various factors, we, the indigenous, have become a minority in our own land. I requested him to financially empower the TTAADC."

Tipra Motha chief who is currently in Delhi, also met DoNER minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and Union Minister State (independent charge) for Skill Develop-



ment & Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary on Wednesday.

"Met DoNER minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia and apprised him of the problems faced by the indigenous tribes of Tripura, especially in the 6th schedule areas. Social impact assessment and audit of the projects must be done. And I also informed him about the projects that can be implemented in TTAADC", he stated in a separate post.

He also said, "Called on Union minister Jayanta Chaudhury and discussed the potential opportunities that can be created in the TTAADC areas through his ministry, and he has assured me of his full support and cooperation." (PTI)

Arunachal Guv releases book on Kargil War

ITANAGAR, July 4: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt General (Retd) K T Parnaik has launched a book on Kargil War authored by Vir Chakra awardee, the late Colonel M B Ravindranath.

The book, titled 'Kargil War: The Turning Point' was released by Parnaik at Cariappa Hall at Rajendra Singhji Army Officers Institute in Bengaluru on Wednesday, a statement issued by the Raj Bhavan here said.

The author, who was the commanding officer of the 2nd battalion of Rajputana Rifles, gave insight into the operations of his battalion from May to July of 1999 during Operation Vijay.

The battalion was instrumental in capturing the imposing 'Tololing' feature in the Drass sector on June 12-13, 1999. It was the first success of the Indian Army and proved to be the turning point of the war.

Speaking at the event, Parnaik, who had also commanded the 2nd battalion of the Rajputana Rifles in 1990-93, commended the late Col M B Ravindranath for the in-depth narration of the valour and élan of the Indian Army, the statement said.

He also appreciated the contributions of Anitha Ravindranath, wife of the late Col Ravindranath and officers of 2 Rajputana Rifles in bringing out the publication posthumously. (PTI)

ADVERTISEMENT

As per approval of the Hon'ble Executive Chairman, Assam State Legal Services Authority vide approval No. ASLSA 192/2019/792 dated 04-06-2024, applications are hereby invited from eligible candidates in Standard Form as published in Assam Gazette in Part-IX for contractual engagement in the following post for Office of the Legal Aid Defense Counsel System, Dima Hasao under the District Legal Services Authority, Dima Hasao as per LADCS Modified Scheme, 2022 of NALSA.

Sl. No.	Name of Post	No. of Post	Monthly honorarium
01.	Office Assistant (Contractual)	01	Rs. 15,000/-
02.	Receptionist-cum-Data Ent Operator (Contractual)	01	Rs. 15,000/-
03.	Peon (Contractual)	01	Rs. 10,000/-

N.B. Monthly honorarium as per NALSA Guideline on LADCS Office for Class-B towns.

(Population more than 2 lacs but below 10 lacs).

1. Details for the post of Office Assistant and Receptionist-cum-Data Entry Operator:

1.	Mode of recruitment	> Computer Skill Test followed by Personal Interview.
2.	Tenure	Initially for a period of 01 (One) year
3.	Age	Minimum: 21 years Maximum: 40 years as on the date of advertisement. Age Relaxation as per Govt. Rule.
4.	Qualification	> Educational Qualification: - Graduation in any discipline > Basic word processing skills and the ability to operate computer and skills to feed data. > Good typing speed with proper setting of petition. > Ability to take dictation and prepare files for presentation in the Courts. > File maintenance and processing knowledge. > Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
5.	Work Profile	> Keeping updated record of legal aided cases. > Uploading the updated record/progress of the legal aided cases on NALSA portal and digital platforms as per directions. > Maintaining complete files of legal aided cases and keeping files with proper index in a systematic manner. > Typing applications, petitions, appeals etc. > Doing ministerial work related to cases such as filing applications for copies of orders, judgement etc. > Any other task assigned by the Legal Aid Defense Counsels. > Any work/duty assigned by District Legal Services Authority.

2. Details for the post of Peon:

1.	Mode of recruitment	> Personal Interview.
2.	Tenure	Initially for a period of 01 (One) year
3.	Age	Minimum: 18 years Maximum: 40 years as on the date of advertisement. Age Relaxation as per Govt. Rule.
4.	Qualification	> Educational Qualification: - Class VIII Passed. Those who have passed HSSLC or above shall be ineligible to apply.
5.	Work Profile	> General work of Multi-Tasking Staff or Peon. > Cleaning the office before the commencement of office hours. > Ensuring that all places in the office are kept clean. > Bringing and serving water, beverages to the visitors in the office. > Carrying dak, miscellaneous work etc. > Any work/duty assigned by District Legal Services Authority.

Terms and Conditions:

- Candidates must be an Indian Citizen as defined in Article 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India.
- The applicants shall mention their mobile number (preferably WhatsApp No.) and e-mail ID in the application form without fail.
- The candidates must have valid Employment Exchange Registration Card.
- Applications received late or without proper supporting documents or incomplete will be summarily rejected.
- The candidates who are already in any other service shall apply through proper channel.
- The mode of Selection for the post of Data Entry Operator and Office Assistant will be based on Computer Skill Test followed by Personal Interview. The Computer Skill Test shall carry 50 marks and the candidates securing 60% will be called for Personal Interview. On the other hand, the mode of Selection for the post of Peon will solely be on the basis of Personal Interview.
- The appointment shall be purely temporary and 1 (One) year contract basis and does not entitle the person to be regularized in Govt. service. After expiry of the contract period of 01 (One) year, the contractual agreement will automatically stand terminated unless renewed by the competent authority.
- Candidates having work experience in the field of Legal Aid related matters shall be given preference.
- No T.A/D.A. will be admissible to the candidates for attending the recruitment process.
- Canvassing directly or indirectly shall disqualify a candidate.
- The last date of receipt of application is 18-07-2024 during the office hours. No application will be entertained after the last date.
- The list of eligible candidates/rejected candidates along with date, time and venue of computer skill test and Personal interview shall be uploaded in the official website <https://dlsa.dimahasao.gov.in> of Dima Hasao Judiciary in due course. No separate call letters will be issued.
- The District & Sessions Judge-cum-Chairman, DLSA, Dima Hasao reserves the right to alter/modify or change any terms or conditions mentioned in the advertisement and recruitment process.

Sd/-
District & Sessions Judge
-cum- Chairman, DLSA,
Dima Hasao, Haflong

Janasanyog /D/2196/24/5-Jul-24

PM Modi to visit Russia, Austria from July 8 to 10

Modi's first visit to Russia in nearly five years

NEW DELHI, July 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay a visit to Russia from July 8 to 9 to hold the 22nd India-Russia annual summit that will review the entire range of multifaceted ties between the two countries, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Thursday.

After concluding the trip to Russia, Modi will travel to Austria, which will be the first visit by an Indian prime minister to that country in 41 years, it said.

It will be Modi's first visit to Russia in nearly five years. His last visit to Russia was in 2019 when he attended an economic conclave in the Far East city of Vladivostok.

The annual summit between the prime minister of India and the president of Russia is the highest institutional dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between the two countries.

So far, 21 annual summits have taken place alternately in India and



Russia.

The last summit was held on December 6, 2021 in New Delhi. President Vladimir Putin had visited India to attend the summit.

The summit saw both sides sealing 28 MoUs and agreements besides coming out with a joint

statement titled "India-Russia Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity".

Modi and Putin last held bilateral talks on the margins of a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at Samarkand in Uzbekistan on September 16,

2022.

In the meeting, Modi had famously pressed Putin to end the conflict in Ukraine saying "today's era is not of war".

"I know today's era is not of war. We discussed this issue on phone several times that democracy, diplomacy and dialogue touch the entire world," Modi had said.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Modi has held several telephonic conversations with Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

In reflection of its strong friendship with Russia, India has not yet condemned Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue.

India's import of Russian crude oil has also gone up significantly notwithstanding the G7 price cap and increasing disquiet over the procurement in many Western

countries.

In December 2022, the G7 grouping and its allies announced a cap on the price of Russian oil as part of a series of punitive measures against Moscow in view of its invasion of Ukraine. The price cap restricts countries to pay more than USD 60 a barrel.

From Russia, Modi will travel to Austria. He will be in Austria on July 9 and 10.

"This will be the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Austria in 41 years. He will call on President of the Republic of Austria Alexander Van der Bellen and hold talks with Chancellor of Austria Karl Nehammer," the MEA said.

"The prime minister and Chancellor will also address business leaders from India and Austria," it said in a statement.

Modi will also interact with members of the Indian community in Moscow as well as in Vienna, the MEA said. (PTI)

Congress slams govt over 'unchecked air pollution'



NEW DELHI, July 4: Expressing concern over "unchecked air pollution", the Congress alleged on Thursday that the Narendra Modi government has launched an "all-out war" on India's environmental protection norms and prioritised the "profits of the PM's friends" over the health of people.

Congress general secretary, in-charge communications, Jai Ram Ramesh said a new study published in the prestigious global medical journal, "The Lancet Planetary Health", shows how bad this crisis is, with 7.2 per cent of all deaths in India associated with air pollution --? about 34,000 deaths each year in just 10 cities.

"Unchecked air pollution is killing tens of thousands of Indians every year," Ramesh said in a statement. Citing the report, he said Delhi is the worst affected with 12,000 deaths due to air pollution each year.

However, even cities with lower pollution levels, such as Pune, Chennai and Hyderabad, witness thousands of deaths, the former Union environment minister added.

"The study found that even lower levels of PM2.5 (particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter) pollution can cause many deaths. This public health crisis is a direct result of the failures of the non-biological PM's government, which has prioritised the profits of India's people," he alleged.

Ramesh claimed that since 2017, the BJP-led Centre has continuously pushed back the deadline for coal power plants to install the pollution-controlling Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) equipment.

"It has led to thousands of deaths, all for the profit of plant owners. Skyrocketing prices of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders have meant that indoor air pollution has worsened, as families are forced to cook on chulhas

instead of cooking gas," he said. The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), launched in 2019 with typical fanfare, has turned out to be a "complete failure", Ramesh claimed.

"More than 50 per cent of NCAP funds were not utilised by the end of 2023. Further, as the recent Lancet study points out, the clean-air targets set by the NCAP are much too low to save lives," the Congress leader said.

Of the 131 cities under the NCAP, most do not even have the data to track their air pollution, he said.

Of the 46 cities that have the data, only eight have met the NCAP's low target, while 22 cities actually saw the air pollution problem getting worse, Ramesh said.

"The Modi government has launched an all-out war on India's environmental protection norms. The Forest Conservation (Amendment) Act of 2023 stripped protections for much of India's forests, the Biological Diversity Act and Environmental Protection Acts have been diluted, the Forest Rights Act of 2006 has been weakened, and Environmental Impact Assessment norms have been bypassed," he alleged.

"The National Green Tribunal has been made toothless, for the benefit of the PM's corporate cronies," Ramesh said further. He called on the government to drastically increase the funds made available under the NCAP.

"The current budget, inclusive of NCAP funding and the 15th Finance Commission's grants, is about ₹ 10,500 crore, spread across 131 cities! Our cities need at least 10-20 times more funding -- NCAP must be made a ₹ 25,000 crore programme," he said.

The air pollution norms for the coal power plants must be enforced immediately, the Congress leader demanded. (PTI)

Kirodi Meena keeps his word, submits resignation as minister over BJP's poor performance

JAIPUR, July 4: Rajasthan minister Kirodi Lal Meena, who had said he will quit the state Cabinet if the BJP loses any Lok Sabha seat under his responsibility, has submitted his resignation but it is yet to be accepted.

Meena -- who holds multiple portfolios including agriculture, rural development, disaster management and relief minister -- said the party high command has called him to Delhi on Friday and he would explain to them why he put in his papers.

The 72-year-old said he has no expectations, or resentment with the organisation or Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma.

Meena said he has submitted his papers due to his public vow that he will resign if the party loses LS any seat under his responsibility.

During the recently held elections, he had said Prime Minister Narendra Modi assigned him seven seats in eastern Rajasthan on which he worked hard during the polls.

In the Lok Sabha poll results an-

nounced on June 4, the BJP lost four seats, including his native Dausa, in eastern Rajasthan. Overall the BJP won 14 of the state's 25 seats, its tally coming down from 24 in the 2019 polls.

"The party high command has called me to Delhi tomorrow, I will go and satisfy them (on my decision). I could not make the party win. I had said if the party does not win, I will resign," he told reporters here.

"It is my moral responsibility to resign. I met the chief minister but he rejected my resignation... my credibility among the people should remain intact, I have resigned," he said.

When asked whether he was unhappy with the party for not making him a deputy CM, Meena said no.

"If I was dissatisfied, I would have resigned immediately after taking oath. I have no complaint against the organisation or the chief minister, neither do I have any complaints nor am I greedy for power. I did not resign because of the post. I

resigned because I stand by what I said about my failure to get the party win seats," he said.

Earlier, Meena posted on X, "Raghukul reeti sada chali aai, pran jaai par vachan na jaai" to underline his unwavering intent to keep his promise at any cost.

Meena campaigned on eastern Rajasthan seats including Dausa, Bharatpur, Karauli-Dholpur, Alwar, Tonk-Sawatmadhopur and Kota-Bundi.

In the results declared last month, the BJP lost Dausa, Bharatpur, Karauli-Dholpur and Tonk-Sawai Madhopur.

He was also in the race for chief minister's post after the results of the assembly elections were announced in December last year, but the party high command picked first-time MLA Bhajanlal Sharma to lead the state.

Kirodi Meena, who is a five-time MLA and a former Rajya Sabha MP, has been a Lok Sabha MP from Dausa and Sawai Madhopur. (PTI)

Chandrababu Naidu meets PM Modi, terms talks on Andhra Pradesh-specific issues 'constructive'

NEW DELHI, July 4: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the national capital on Thursday and described their discussions on key development issues concerning the state as "constructive".

During the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Naidu advocated for increased assistance to Andhra Pradesh in lieu of special category status.

The chief of Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which is an important ally in the BJP-led NDA government, presented several crucial proposals for the state's development and sought the Union government support, sources said.

Following the meeting, he expressed confidence in Andhra Pradesh's potential to "re-emerge as a powerhouse among states" under PM Modi's leadership.

"Today, I had a constructive meeting with the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri @narendramodi ji, in Delhi to address important matters concerning the welfare and development of Andhra Pradesh. I am confident that under his leadership, our state will re-emerge as a powerhouse among states," Naidu tweeted. The PMO confirmed the meeting between Naidu and Modi via social media.

The Andhra Pradesh chief minister's two-day Delhi visit included meetings with several Union Ministers. He discussed national highway projects with Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari and praised the "spirit of co-operative federalism" after talks with Minister Piyush Goyal.

"I'm confident that together we shall take Andhra Pradesh further on the road to progress and prosperity," Naidu tweeted after meeting Gadkari. After his meeting with Goyal, the chief minister said, "This wonderful spirit of cooperative federalism will help our state, Andhra Pradesh, unlock its full potential. It was a pleasure meeting you in Delhi today!"

Naidu also met Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan to discuss state-specific issues. (PTI)

Karnataka CM rejects BJP's demand for CBI probe into MUDA 'scam'



BENGALURU, July 4: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday rejected the BJP's demand for a CBI probe into alleged irregularities in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) even as the opposition party intensified its protests against "fraudulent" allotment of sites to land losers.

The BJP has alleged that alternative sites were also allotted to the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been acquired by the MUDA, and sought his resignation.

The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of over three acres of her land, which the authority had acquired for developing a residential layout.

The controversial scheme envisages allotting 50 per cent of developed land to the land loser in lieu of undeveloped land acquired for forming layouts. The BJP has alleged that irregularities to the tune of Rs 4,000 crore had taken place in distribution of sites to land losers by MUDA. "Apparently 4,500-5,000 sites were allotted by flouting norms," a BJP leader claimed.

The Chief Minister on Wednesday said housing sites allotted by MUDA under the scheme to land losers have been put on hold pending an investigation into the alleged irregularities.

The BJP staged a protest in Mysuru -- the Chief Minister's home district -- on Thursday and tried to lay siege to the MUDA office there,

but the police detained them and whisked them away in a bus.

"Have they (BJP) given any case (to CBI) during their tenure? I have given seven cases (including his earlier tenure as CM). This is not a case that is to be given to CBI...we too had demanded, did they give (any case to CBI for probe)," Siddaramaiah said on Thursday in response to a question on BJP demanding for a CBI probe.

Urban Development Minister B S Suresha (Byrathi Suresha) has ordered a probe by a four-member committee.

Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said he wouldn't resign. "What role do I have in the case?" he had asked. Home Minister G Parameshwara said the alleged irregularities in the allotment of residential sites by MUDA are being probed, and noted that the Chief Minister has already given clarification.

On BJP demanding CBI probe, he said, "if everything is given to CBI, then there is nothing to do here. They (BJP) are asking for a CBI probe for everything...."

To a question on the BJP planning to raise the MUDA irregularities issue in the coming Legislature session, Parameshwara said: "whatever issues they raise the government will respond to them effectively, without any hesitation."

"We don't know what issues they are planning to raise, they will have to give a notice to the Speaker on the issues they raise. We don't know what their priorities are," the Minister said. (PTI)

Advani stable, under observation: Hospital sources

NEW DELHI, July 4:

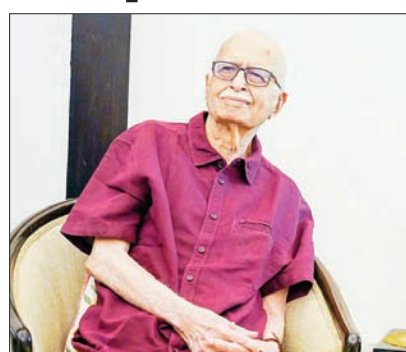
The health condition of BJP veteran and former deputy prime minister Lal Krishna Advani remains "stable" and he is currently under observation of a team of doctors, sources said on Thursday.

The 96-year-old, who was born in undivided India, was admitted to the Apollo Hospital here Wednesday, days after being discharged from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) following a night-long stay there.

"He (Advani) remains stable today after being admitted at the hospital last night. He is currently under observation of a team of doctors in the neurology department," an Apollo Hospital source said Thursday.

Further details about his health condition are awaited. Advani was brought to the facility around 9 pm Wednesday. He was accompanied by his daughter Pratibha Advani.

A hospital source said on Wednesday night Advani has been admitted under neurology department senior consultant Dr Vinit Suri. (PTI)



Battles of Tololing, Tiger Hill proved to be decisive: Kargil heroes on 25th anniversary of 1999 war

NEW DELHI, July 4: Barely four months into his service, a young Lieutenant Balwan Singh led the Indian Army's Ghatkhat Platoon in a strategic assault on Pakistani intruders during the Kargil war and was among the brave soldiers who captured Tiger Hill on July 4, 1999.

"There was no looking back from there. It was victory after the capture of the Tiger Hill," recalls Singh, now a colonel with the famed 18 Grenadiers, who was injured while fighting the enemy but continued to fight. He was honoured with Maha Vir Chakra for his valour.

Raised in 1976, the 18 Grenadiers played a pivotal role in the war. The battalion was conferred with 52 honours, including a Param Vir Chakra, two Maha Vir Chakra, six Vir Chakra, several Sena Medals and a Commendation Card of the Chief of the Army Staff.

On Wednesday, Col Singh and many other Kargil heroes from the battalion recalled the heroics of its bravehearts in Operation Vijay.

The war was declared over on July 26, 1999, after the Indian forces successfully pushed back the Pakistani forces which had stealthily occupied important heights in Ladakh.

On the night of July 3, 1999, soldiers of 18 Grenadiers, also called the Pole Star Battalion, embarked on their mission to



capture Tiger Hill and had accomplished the task by the next morning, said Brig (ret) Khushal Thakur, who commanded the battalion during the crucial battles of Tololing and Tiger Hill.

"On June 12-13, 1999, we won Tololing and it was a big turning point in this war. It boosted the morale of our armed forces and the countrymen and dipped the morale of the Pakistani side. One by one, we kept capturing the peaks in Mushkoo or Batalik sector and the next task was Tiger Hill," Brig (ret) Thakur, who was a colonel during the war, told PTI.

"For the Tiger Hill, I had adequate time for reconnaissance. I had artillery guns, multi-barrel rocket launchers and high-altitude warfare equipment... Despite all the losses suffered, the morale of the men of 18 Grenadiers was sky high and our brave men captured the Tiger Hill, planting the Indian

Amritpal can meet family but won't be allowed to leave Delhi: Parole order for taking LS oath

CHANDIGARH/AMRITSAR, July 4:

Jailed radical preacher Amritpal Singh who is being brought to Delhi on parole to take oath as a Lok Sabha member will be allowed to meet his family but will not be permitted to leave the "territorial jurisdiction" of New Delhi.

During his stay in the national capital, neither Singh nor his relatives or family members can make a statement in any form of media, according to the conditions laid down in his parole order issued by the district magistrate of Punjab's Amritsar from where he was arrested on April 23 last year. The Khalistani sympathiser, who won the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha seat in Punjab in the recent parliamentary elections while being lodged in a jail in Assam's Dibrugarh district, is scheduled to take oath on Friday.

Singh, 31, will be flown in from Assam to Delhi for taking oath and his parole period of four days starts from

July 5, sources said on Wednesday.

The parole order, which mentions 10 conditions, stated that the period of temporary release will include the time taken for the journey from the central jail in Dibrugarh to New Delhi and back. He will "not enter the territorial jurisdiction of any place other than New Delhi during the period of temporary release", it stated.

"Amritpal Singh or any of his relatives shall not be permitted to videograph any statement of Amritpal and/or circulate any such statement in any electronic form," according to the order. He will also "refrain from doing any action or making any statement that is prejudicial to national security", it stated.

"The relatives of Amritpal, as defined under Section 2 (c) of the Punjab Detention (Condition of Detention) Order, 1981, shall be allowed to meet him during the period he is housed in New Delhi," the order stated.

On deployment of security personnel for Singh, the order stated he will be accompanied by such a number of police personnel as is deemed appropriate by the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Amritsar (Rural).

These personnel will be there with him from the date and time of his temporary release from the jail, and till the time he returns to the prison for continuation of his period of detention, it stated. For the time period, when Singh is present within the precincts of the Parliament, "he shall be accompanied by such number of police personnel, or other security personnel as permitted by the Secretary General, Lok Sabha," the order stated.

It added that for the period, when Singh is not required in the precincts of the Parliament, he shall be "housed at such place in New Delhi as is deemed appropriate by the SSP, Amritsar (Rural), after taking into account various security considerations". (PTI)

by various units.

"If I talk about my unit, 18 Grenadiers, we are bravehearts, two officers, two JCOs, and 30 other ranks sacrificed their lives (in this war) and many others were injured and some disabled for life," Col Nimbalkar told PTI after paying homage to fallen heroes at the National War Memorial.

"So, this tells the cost of capturing the features of Tololing and Tiger Hill as far as my battalion was concerned," he said.

The Army officer, who hails from Maharashtra, proudly shows the regimental insignia bearing the motto "Sarvada Shaktishali" emblazoned on his military cap and explains its origin.

"We are now celebrating the 25th year of Kargil Vijay Diwas... I remember when we were successful, I remember when we were facing casualties, I remember Lt Col Viswanathan, who sacrificed his life during the battle of Tololing," he said.

Col Nimbalkar paid homage to his Indian Military Academy (IMA) coursemate Capt Manoj Pandey and hero of the Tiger Hill battle on his death anniversary at the memorial.

"There are mixed emotions. There is a sense of achievement but it has come at a great cost. Today is the day for all of us to collectively acknowledge the efforts of our heroes and sacrifices (they) made for the nation," he said. (PTI)

Form of war rapidly transforming, will have to be ready to accept change: CDS Chauhan

NEW DELHI, July 4: Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan on Thursday said the form of war is transforming rapidly due to technological advancements and the country's armed forces will have to be ready to accept this change.

He made the remarks while addressing a gathering of Army officers, junior commissioned officers (JCOs) and soldiers drawn from 18 Grenadiers to mark 25 years of the battles of Tololing and Tiger Hill fought during the Kargil war in 1999.

Tiger Hill top was captured by the Indian Army on July 4, 1999. The 18 Grenadiers battalion played a pivotal role in the Kargil conflict. 'Vijay Diwas' is celebrated on July 26 every year to mark India's victory over Pakistan in the 1999 Kargil war.

"People of the country have faith in our capabilities and due to that, we have this immense prestige. The legacy that has been bequeathed to you has been earned by our ancestors. We may not have made a direct contribution but we are reaping its fruits," Gen Chauhan told the gathering.

This also "entrusts on us responsibilities", both individually



and as a community, he said. One cannot make a mistake as a soldier and as a community, the trust can never be lowered, the chief of defence staff (CDS) added.

In his address, Gen Chauhan said, "We are going through an age of transformation. In today's era, the form of a war is rapidly changing. Therefore, we will always have to be ready to accept this change."

"We want to become a professional armed force and a superpower... India. It is our desire. This can happen only if we work with new energy, new zeal and new thoughts."

Quoting scientists and philosophers, the CDS under-

lined that change is the only constant and the Indian armed forces "cannot stay away from this change"

"Due to rapid technological developments, the form of the war is changing rapidly. In the past, it was found that valour was an essential element in winning a battle. But in future wars, valour alone is not enough... We will have to be flexible and imaginative and keep an open mind," he added.

As many weapons get upgraded with better technology, tactics and strategies also change and it is very rapid now, the CDS told the gathering.

"Today we are talking of a multi-domain warfare. Instead of just conventional domains like land, sea, maritime and air, the cyber, electromagnetic spectrum and space domains are also added to augment our military strength," he said.

The CDS said that people love and trust the armed forces and if "we have to maintain it, we will have to bring change. We cannot fail in a war," he asserted, adding that unlike sports, there are no runners-up in war as winner takes it all.

"To maintain that trust, you will have to understand and adapt to these new things. This is the main reason why the government has made the post of a CDS and it is part of reforms that we are endeavouring to implement," Gen Chauhan said.

He said that as CDS, his mandate is to bring jointness and integration among the three Services, that all must work in consonance. "A unit works like a human body where any ailment impacts overall health," he said.

Gen Chauhan extended his greetings to members of the 18 Grenadiers battalion and also the Veer Nari, whose sons or husbands made the supreme sacrifice for the nation. (PTI)

Six kids not five died at Indore shelter home, claims report; one buried without autopsy



INDORE, July 4: A preliminary inquiry by a high-level committee of the district administration into the running of a shelter home here has found that not five but six children died there in the past five days, an official said on Thursday. The committee's report has also raised questions over over-admission, "irregularities" concerning the management of the private-run facility for special children and a cholera outbreak there.

Until Wednesday, officials had the information that five children from the shelter home, which has now been served a show-cause notice, had died and nearly 50 were hospitalised over suspected food poisoning.

Ankit Garg (8) was the first child to die at the Shri Yugpurush Dham Bal Ashram, run by an NGO in the city's Malhar-

ganj area, said an official, who is a part of the probe committee. Garg died on the intervening night of June 29 and 30.

But his body was handed over to his family and buried after allegedly hiding the information about his death from the authorities, said the official.

"The Ashram management did not inform the administration about the death of this child. His body was handed over to his kin and buried at a local cremation ground," the official said.

The Ashram management claimed that the eight-year-old died of epilepsy, but it could not be confirmed, the official said.

Asked about the cause of Garg's death, Indore Collector Ashish Singh told PTI, "Post-mortem could not be conducted as the administration

was not informed about the death of this child by the Ashram management. Therefore, it cannot be said now what may have caused his death." The collector said he has issued a notice to the Ashram management asking them why a criminal case should not be registered against them for concealing information about Garg's death and other "irregularities".

Based on the interim probe report of the high-level committee, the Ashram management has been asked to reply to the notice within three days and appropriate action will be taken after receiving their reply, he said.

Singh said the investigation has also exposed the admission of more children beyond the capacity of the shelter home, improper maintenance of medical records and other irregularities in the maintenance of the Ashram.

So, some children are being considered to be shifted to other institutions, he said.

The institute has a total of 204 inmates, including orphans and those suffering from mental ailments.

Despite repeated attempts, Ashram's principal Anita Sharma could not be contacted.

Four children died inside the Ashram between July 1 and July 2 after suffering from

vomiting and diarrhoea, while another passed away on June 30 allegedly due to seizures, officials said.

With the revelation of the death of another child on the intervening night of June 29 and 30, the number of children who lost their lives at the Ashram has risen to six, they said. Officials said 60 children of the shelter home have been admitted to the city-run Chacha Nehru Children's Hospital and three of them are in critical condition.

Singh said, "We have not been able to know the exact source of infection, but on the basis of the initial investigation report, it is certain that the health of most of the children at the Ashram deteriorated due to a cholera outbreak."

An official, who is part of the probe panel, said a doctor from the district hospital had found symptoms of vomiting and diarrhoea in two children of the Ashram on June 27, but the management did not inform the administration.

"Surprisingly, it was only when the district administration team reached the Ashram for a check-up on July 2 that the two children were admitted to the hospital along with other sick children," he said.

These children are mentally very weak and cannot even narrate their ordeal, the official added. (PTI)

Probe launched after parents claim dead snake found in mid-day meal

SANGLI, July 4: A tiny dead snake was allegedly found in a packet distributed under the mid-day meal scheme meant for children aged between six months and three years at an 'Anganwadi' or a government-run nursery school in western Maharashtra's Sangli district, prompting the authorities to launch a probe.

The incident was reported by the parents of a child in Palus on Monday, said Anandi Bhosale, Vice-President of the State Anganwadi Workers' Union.

Calling it a "serious" incident, Congress leader and Palus-Kadegaon MLA Vishwajeet Kadam raised the issue in the state legislative assembly in the ongoing monsoon session. He demanded a detailed probe into the incident and action against those responsible for it.

District officials said the child's parents disposed of the dead snake after photographing it and sent the image to the local anganwadi sevika (worker). But despite this, the food sample from the packet has been collected and sent to a laboratory for testing, they said.



"Children in the age group of six months to three years receive packets of mid-day meal, a pre-mix of dal khichadi, at anganwadis. These packets are distributed to families once they arrive at the anganwadi. On Mon-

day, meal packets were distributed by anganwadi workers in Palus. The parents of one child claimed that a tiny dead snake was found in the packet they received," Bhosale said on Wednesday.

The parents took a photo of the snake and sent it to the anganwadi sevika, she said.

"But by the time the sevika forwarded the photo to our district sevika group, the parents had already disposed of the suspected dead snake," she said.

Bhosale added that the issue was raised during a meeting held on July 2, and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Sangli Zilla Parishad, Sandip Yadav, who heads the Women and Child Welfare and Anganwadi section, was informed.

She said the godown where the meal packets are stored was reportedly sealed following the incident.

Bhosale also claimed that there have been complaints about the contractor responsible for supplying the pre-mixed meal packets. (PTI)

E-AUCTION FOR CATERING UNITS AT TINSUKIA DIVISION

E-Auction for catering units (General Minor Unit) over Tinsukia Division. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Trips/Days. 1826.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	Catg-TSK-BOJ-GMU-75-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 2, size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/2	Catg-TSK-DJG-GMU-58-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 3, size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/3	Catg-TSK-DJG-GMU-56-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 5, size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/4	Catg-TSK-NAM-GMU-64-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 2, size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/5	Catg-TSK-BOJ-GMU-74-24-1	At PF-1, GMU tea stall no 3, size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/6	Catg-TSK-NAM-GMU-6-24-1	GMU (Tea stall no 1 at Namrup station)
AA/7	Catg-TSK-NAM-GMU-60-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 4, size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/8	Catg-TSK-DJG-GMU-57-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 4, size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/9	Catg-TSK-BOJ-GMU-27-24-1	GMU (Tea Stall no 1 PF-1)

Auction Start Date & Time: 11.00 hrs. of 23-07-2024. Auction Close Date & Time: 12.50 hrs. of 23-07-2024. Prospective bidders are requested to visit E-Auction Leasing Module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Railway Manager (C), Tinsukia

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Over 7 pc of daily deaths in 10 Indian cities linked to PM2.5 pollution: Lancet study

NEW DELHI, July 4: On average, 7.2 per cent of all daily deaths in 10 of the largest and most polluted cities in India, including Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai, were linked to PM2.5 levels higher than World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for safe exposure, according to a study published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal.

Delhi was found to have the largest fraction of daily and yearly deaths attributable to PM2.5 air pollution, caused by particles sized 2.5 micrometres or less in diameter.

Sources of such pollution include vehicular and industrial emissions.

Researchers said that daily exposure to PM2.5 pollution in Indian cities is linked with

Another bridge collapses in Bihar, 10th such incident in over 15 days

PATNA, July 4: Another bridge collapsed in Bihar's Saran district on Thursday, the 10th such incident in the state in just over a fortnight.

According to District Magistrate Aman Samir, the latest incident is the third such collapse in Saran in the last 24 hours. "A high-level probe has been ordered to find out reasons for the collapse of these small bridges in the district," he said.

No casualty was reported after the structure, built 15 years ago by local authorities, collapsed this morning, he said.

The small bridge over the Gandaki river was situated in the Baneyapur block and used to connect several villages in Saran with the neighbouring Siwan district.

"The small bridge was constructed 15 years ago. I am going to the spot. Several other officials of the district administration have already reached there. The exact cause of the bridge collapse is yet to be ascertained but desilting work was recently undertaken," the district magistrate told PTI.

On Wednesday, the Saran district witnessed the collapse of two small bridges - one in the Janta Bazar area and another in the Lahladpur area.

According to locals, heavy rainfall for the last few days in the district might have contributed to the collapse of these small bridges. Altogether 10 bridges collapsed in Siwan, Saran, Madhubani, Araria, East Champaran and Kishanganj districts in the past 16 days.

Commenting on recent incidents of bridge collapse in Bihar, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary on Thursday told reporters, "The CM, after a review meeting on Wednesday, has given a clear instruction to officials concerned to conduct a survey of all old bridges in the state and identify those that require immediate repair. The CM has also asked departments concerned to immediately prepare their respective maintenance policy for bridges or causeways in the state." Chaudhary, also the state BJP president, said the



government has already ordered a probe into the bridge collapse incidents to find out the reasons and strict action would be taken against the guilty. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, however, claimed that 12 bridges have collapsed in Bihar since June 18.

In a post on X on Thursday, he wrote, "Twelve bridges have collapsed in Bihar since June 18...Both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar are silent over these incidents in Bihar. What happened to the claims of good governance and corruption-free government? These incidents show how corruption is rampant in every department of the state government." The latest incident took place a day after Kumar chaired a meeting to review the maintenance policies of the departments concerned.

He had said the road construction department had already prepared its bridge maintenance policy and the rural works department should immediately chalk out its plan at the earliest. (PTI)

and at key locations. Each company usually comprises 80 to 90 security personnel.

"More than 22,000 security personnel will be deployed along the Rath Yatra route and other important places on July 7. These include 12,000 personnel from regular police force, 6,000 Home Guards, 11 companies of CAPF and 35 companies of SRP," Malik said. Of these, 4,500 personnel will walk with the procession on the entire route while 1,931 personnel will be deployed for traffic management, he said. (PTI)

Over 22,000 cops to guard Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra in Ahmedabad on July 7

AHMEDABAD, July 4: The 147th edition of the annual Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath will take place on July 7 in Ahmedabad where more than 22,000 security personnel will guard the event which draws lakhs of devotees, an official said on Thursday.

Extra care will be taken to manage the crowd in view of the recent stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras where more than 100 persons were killed, Ahmedabad Commissioner of Police GS Malik said at a press conference here after holding a review meeting with

nearly 600 police officers.

This time, police will use face detection cameras to identify criminals by matching people's faces in crowds with the database, he said. The police will also deploy 20 drones and some balloon-mounted cameras to keep a watch on the people's movement, the official said. He said companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), such as the BSF and Rapid Action Force, and 35 companies of the State Reserve Police (SRP) will also be deployed on the 16-km yatra route

and at key locations. Each company usually comprises 80 to 90 security personnel.

"More than 22,000 security personnel will be deployed along the Rath Yatra route and other important places on July 7. These include 12,000 personnel from regular police force, 6,000 Home Guards, 11 companies of CAPF and 35 companies of SRP," Malik said. Of these, 4,500 personnel will walk with the procession on the entire route while 1,931 personnel will be deployed for traffic management, he said. (PTI)

Local MNS functionary shot at

CHANDRAPUR, July 4: An office-bearer of the labour wing of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) was seriously injured in Chandrapur city of the state on Thursday after an unidentified person fired at him, police said.

The victim, Aman Andhewar, has been admitted to a hospital in Nagpur, they said.

"Andhewar, who is the district president of the MNS Kamgar Sena, was going towards the lift of Raghuvanshi Complex, where his office is located, when a person with his face covered opened fire at him. The district fired two rounds. While one bullet just brushed past Andhewar, the second one hit him in the back," a police official said.

"After being fired upon, Andhewar went to a clothes shop in the same complex to save himself and came out with a wooden stick in his hand in search of the accused, who had fled from the spot by that time. The incident was recorded on CCTV," he said.

Tension prevailed in the area following the incident. Police personnel reached the spot and Andhewar was taken to a private hospital for treatment, he said. (PTI)

No. PHEE/HOEUM-55/Part-11/2024-25/
ADVERTISEMENT NOTICE

Application are invited from eligible Indian Citizens for Engagement on Contractual Basis for the post of 4 (Four) No. Technical Officer-I in the O/o the Executive Engineer (PHE) Hojai Division under Jal Jeevan Mission, DWSM, Hojai as per Terms & Conditions mention below —

Sl No.	Name of Post	Educational Qualification	Age Limit	Monthly Remuneration
1	Technical Officer-I (T.O.-I)	1) B.E./B.Tech in Civil Engineering from a recognized University/institution with minimum 60% marks. 2) 1 year post education experience desirable.	Not more than 35 years as on 1st January 2024.	The proposed remuneration will be Rs. 30,000.00 (Rupees Thirty thousand) only per month

Terms and Conditions

- The applicant should attend the walk in interview on relevant date along with their duly filled application form supported by the original testimonials along with self attested copies to submit it in the office.
- To download the application form click : <https://tinyurl.com/2vfh9y8b>
- Send your application form to recruitmentphehoj@gmail.com keeping the subject as application for the post T.O.-I .
- Computer knowledge in MS office/ OS and Internet.
- Knowledge of Assamese, English, Hindi and other local languages.
- No TA/DA admissible to the candidate for appearing the interview.
- i) Last date of application submission :12/07/2024
ii) Date of walk in interview for T.O.-I: 16/07/2024
iii) Venue : O/O the Executive Engineer (PHE) Hojai Division, Hojai
iv) Time : 10.00 A.M. Candidates reaching venue after 12.00 PM will not be entertained.

Sd/-
Member Secretary, DWSM
Cum
Executive Engineer (PHE)
Hojai Division, Hojai

Janasanyog /D/2191/24/ 5-Jul-24

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
DIRECTORATE OF HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUARIAN STUDIES, ASSAM
NARAYANI HANDIQUI HISTORICAL INSTUTUTE
GUWAHATI-781001

To : Sri Jetendra Thaosan
Night Chowkidar, Directorate of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Guwahati-1
S/O - Shantilal Thaosan
Vill — Thajuiwari
P.O- Singwari
P. S- Diyungmukh
Dist- Dima- Hasao
Pin- 788819

Sub : Notice regarding unauthorized absence.

As you have been absent from your duties without leave for the last six months since 01-01-2024, you are hereby asked to report before the undersigned within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which, necessary action shall be taken against you in your absence.

Sd/-
Directorate of Historical and
Antiquarian Studies, Assam,
Guwahati-1.

Janasanyog /D/2183/ 24/5-Jul-24

EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

No. TE(Ex)Admn-1/2024/392
ONLINE COUNSELLING FOR ADMISSION INTO B.TECH COURSES
[Offered by the State Engineering Colleges of Assam]

For participation in the online counselling process for provisional admission into the 1st semester B.TECH courses of State Engineering Colleges of Assam based on the Combined Entrance Examination [CEE-2024] , the aspiring eligible candidates having CEE- 2024 Rank must fill up the online counselling form and upload their required documents as mentioned in the Counselling Guidelines -2024 by logging in, using their Application No. of CEE-2024 and Date of Birth w.e.f. 66 July to 156 July, 2024 , in the link of the online portal which will be made available at <https://dte.assam.gov.in>.

- For further details regarding the educational qualification, Date of Birth etc., please refer to the Counselling Guidelines-2024 available in the website <https://dte.assam.gov.in>
- The details of the schedule for allotment of seat, submission of acceptance letter by the candidates and parent/guardian will be notified in the DTE's website <https://dte.assam.gov.in> in due course of time. Therefore, candidates are requested to visit the website frequently.
- If a candidate uploads any forged documents or submit misleading information, his/her candidature will be forfeited at any stage during the provisional selection process/ during the study period.

Sd/-
Director of Technical Education, Assam,
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog /D/2188/ 24/5-Jul-24

CATE BLANCHETT TO RECEIVE SHARE HER JOURNEY GROUND-BREAKER AWARD AT TIFF 2024



LOS ANGELES, July 4: Australian actor and producer Cate Blanchett will be honoured with the TIFF Share Her Journey Groundbreaker Award at the 49th Toronto International Film Festival. The two-time Oscar winner, who has been part of the films such as "Tar", "The Aviator", "Blue Jasmine" and "Thor: Ragnarok", the "Elizabeth" franchise, will receive the honour on September 8 at Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto, Canada.

Its proceeds will be donated to TIFF's Every Story Fund, which champions diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in film, reported Deadline. The TIFF Share Her Journey Groundbreaker Award is given to a leading woman in the motion picture industry who has championed the careers of others and paved the way for the next generation.

Blanchett, 55, will also participate in an In Conversation With... event looking back on her career. "Cate Blanchett is a marvel. One of the finest actors in film history, she has consistently shown range, depth and audacity on screen. Off screen, she has been a tireless champion of increased equity and justice in many sectors."

"Cate's passion for the transformative power of storytelling, and her commitment to breaking down barriers for women, align with the goals of our Share Her Journey initiative. We're honoured to present Cate Blanchett with this year's Share Her Journey Groundbreaker Award, and can't wait to welcome her back to Toronto," said TIFF CEO Cameron Bailey. (PTI)

Nice to be able treat period dramas a bit more irreverently: 'My Lady Jane' actor Edward Bluemel

NEW DELHI, July 4: British actor Edward Bluemel, who stars in the historical fantasy series "My Lady Jane", says the trend of treating period dramas irreverently is a welcome one as audiences can enjoy a piece of history in a different way.

What also helps is the popularity of shows set in a bygone era thanks to the costumes and elaborate sets, added the 31-year-old, known for "Killing Eve" and "A Discovery of Witches".

Starring Emily Bader in the title role, "My Lady Jane" is one of the latest additions to the list of reimagined and period dramas such as "Bridgerton" and "The Buccaneers". It is streaming on Prime Video.

Asked if a trend of irreverent historical shows was on the rise, Bluemel said: "Absolutely!"

"It's something that people love. People love period dramas. They love the costumes, the sets, but people also love to have a lot of fun. The reality is that the Tudor period in real life probably wasn't that much fun. So, it's nice to be able to take this and add a fantastical element and sort of basically treat it a little bit more irreverently."

"People can watch it in such a different way and enjoy it in a different way. There's definitely room for very

historically accurate period dramas and they're incredibly important and can be so educational and captivating. But we live in a world where we can have both, which is great," the actor told PTI in an interview.

Starring in "My Lady Jane" was a full circle moment for Bluemel, whose all-time favourite film as a child was 2001's "A Knight's Tale", starring Heath Ledger.

"I watched it when I was about seven years old for the first time and it completely changed to me what a film could be. I saw that history could be fun. I saw that history didn't have to be accurate or stuffy."

"It feels amazing to be coming full circle and being in a TV show that actually had 'A Knight's Tale' on the mood board in the beginning of it. It feels like I've sort of achieved what I came here to do," he said.

"My Lady Jane" is a retelling of the story of Lady Jane Grey, the young Tudor noblewoman who was Queen of England for nine days and then beheaded in 1553. In Prime Video's alt-universe version, based on the 2016 novel "My Lady Jane", Lady Jane saves herself from execution.

If Bluemel could rewrite English royal history, what would he revise or change?

"I think, in general, we could do better without the royal family," he replied.

Keeping up with the revisionist aspect of its telling, "My Lady Jane" has cast Jordan Peters, a Black actor also known for the British movie "Pirates".

as King Edward VI.

The fantastical element is one of the aspects that allows the series to have fun with the narrative, the actor said. "We live in an incredibly diverse society today. There's so much like that in this show. We are having fun with it. Historically, it doesn't matter at all like what sort of ethnicity anybody has too."

"As long as they can play the character and find the truth in the character, then that's great for me. Also, the show is a fantasy anyway. If people were to focus on what colour people are, they're seriously missing the point." The actor, who stars opposite Bader as Lord Guildford Dudley, said he consciously didn't read the novel and decided to be part of the show on the basis of the script the writers had prepared.

"I was sold on the script... I decided not to read it (novel) because I didn't want there to be too many different sorts of things in my head. I really wanted to stick with the script that I was given to play the role, where Guildford was so amazingly brought to life on the page."

Bluemel, a graduate of Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, described his character Guildford as someone who is running away from who he is. (PTI)

Veteran actress Smriti Biswas passes away at 100



NASHIK, July 4: Veteran actor Smriti Biswas, who worked in a number of Hindi, Marathi and Bengali films, has died at her residence in Maharashtra's Nashik city, sources said on Thursday.

Biswas, 100, breathed her last late Wednesday night following age-related issues, they said. A noted yesteryear actor, she was living in a one-room-kitchen rented flat in Nashik Road area here.

She started her career as a child artist and featured in movies of notable filmmakers like Guru Dutt, V Shantaram, Mrinal Sen, Bimal Roy, BR Chopra and Raj Kapoor. Biswas co-starred with actors like Dev Anand, Kishore Kumar and Balraj Sahni in various films.

She debuted in the world of films with the Bengali movie Sandhya (1930). Model Girl (1960) was her last Hindi film. Biswas had quit acting after marrying filmmaker S D Narang.

After her husband's death, she shifted to Nashik.

Biswas celebrated her 100th birthday on February 17, 2024. She is survived by two sons Rajeev and Satyajet, the sources said. (PTI)

MAESTRO ZUBIN MEHTA TO CONDUCT 4 CONCERTS FOR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF INDIA AUTUMN SEASON

MUMBAI, July 4: Legendary conductor Zubin Mehta will return to the Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI) for its Autumn 2024 season with the compositions of Johann Strauss II and Richard Strauss, the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) has announced.

Speaking about the upcoming season, Khushroo N Suntook, chairman of the NCPA and co-founder of the SOI, said that Mehta will be conducting the SOI in four concerts of two vastly different programmes.

"It gives us great pleasure to welcome back acclaimed conductor and my old friend Zubin Mehta to the NCPA for the SOI Autumn 2024 Season. The visit of Zubin Mehta has always been

much anticipated, however, his performing with an Indian orchestra was met with tremendous enthusiasm last year. During his visit, Zubin was highly appreciative of the orchestra's quality and promised to return to conduct the SOI soon," Suntook said in a statement.

Mehta, who had first conducted the SOI in August 2023, will lead the orchestra on August 17 and 18 at Jamshed Bhabha Theatre to present light Viennese music by Johann Strauss II, including "Overture to Die Fledermaus", "Emperor Waltz" and "Viennese Blood".

The SOI will be joined by soprano soloist Chen Reiss. The compositions have previ-

ously been performed under Mehta's baton at the iconic Vienna New Year's Concerts on at least five occasions.

The final two concerts feature Richard Strauss's music, of which Mehta is regarded as one of the finest interpreters.

On August 24 and 25, Mehta will conduct Richard Strauss' "Don Juan", the India premiere of "Ein Heldenleben" and "Four Last Songs" that will be sung by soprano Krassimira Stoyanova.

The concerts will be performed in association with the Mehli Mehta Music Foundation, a premier music school named after Mehta's father.

"The Foundation is highly appreciative of Maestro Mehta's unstinting support and encour-

agement as we celebrate our 30th anniversary. His unwavering commitment and belief in our mission have been instrumental in reaching this milestone. As we reflect on three decades of achievements, we recognize that his contributions have been pivotal in our journey," Mehroo Jeejeebhoy, founder trustee, Mehli Mehta Music Foundation, said in a statement.

The SOI Autumn 2024 Season will be followed by one of the world's most renowned opera competitions, Operalia, coming to India for the first time in September, where the SOI will be conducted by renowned tenor Plácido Domingo during the finale. (PTI)



India look to finetune strategies in T20I series against SA ahead of Asia Cup, WC

CHENNAI, July 4: Indian women's team will be eager to use the three-match T20I series against South Africa, beginning here from Friday, as a testbed to finetune its strategies before hitting the road to the Asia Cup and the T20 World Cup.

In fact, this is India's last white ball bilateral series ahead of the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka from July 19 and the ICC showpiece in Bangladesh from October 4. In that context, the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side will leave no stone unturned in their effort to embark for those big events in the best possible frame of mind. They have displayed signs of it too in the preceding three-match ODI series in Bengaluru and in the one-off Test here. The relentless India have won all those assignments despite the Proteas creating pockets of fight.

Since 2023, India have featured in seven T20I series, winning three of them and losing four. They would certainly want to bridge that gap, however narrow it might be.

India will take consolation from the form of their players in the first two legs of this series.

In the ODIs, vice-captain and star batter Smriti Mandhana shone brightly with two hundreds and a fifty in three matches, while Harmanpreet found her feet with a hundred in the final ODI.

The only jarring note of that triumphant run might have been the shoddy form of opener Shafali Verma but she allayed the concerns with a fiery double hundred, the quickest in women's cricket, in the one-off Test here. Jemimah Rodrigues and Richa Ghosh too have shown sparks of regaining



their touch, and these batters occupy the first five places in India's run-makers' list in the shortest format. So, the team management will eye a flawless outing from this quintet against South Africa, who are coming off a less than satisfactory outing against the Lankans at home in the T20Is.

India's bowling too looks very strong on paper, as pacers Renuka Singh, Pooja Vastrakar and Arundhati Reddy have been on the money, while spinners Deepti

Sharma, Radha Yadav, Asha Shobana and Shreyanka Patil present a formidable force.

From a South African perspective, they will depend heavily on skipper Laura Wolvaardt for runs up the order and early momentum.

Wolvaardt showed her prolific side slamming a century each in the ODIs and in the one-off Test.

The opener's form will be a crucial factor if SA want to win a T20I series since January last year when they prevailed in a home tri-

series also involving India and the West Indies.

"We have played a lot of good cricket in patches, but to narrow it down, we have to be more consistent," all-rounder Chloe Tryon had mentioned in the pre-match press meet.

But the tourists can't lean on Wolvaardt alone as they need runs from Marizanne Kapp, Sune Luus, Anneke Bosch and Tazmin Brits.

Nonkululeko Mlaba and

Masabata Klaas, Nadine de Klerk and Ayabonga Khaka will have to be at their absolute best against this Indian batting line-up. The Proteas will also hope that they can get a few overs from the experienced Kapp, who has not bowled in the series so far as she is recovering from an injury.

Although the MA Chidambaram pitch generally remains on the sluggish side, it was a smoother one in the one-off Test. (PTI)

Portugal and France meet in quarterfinals as Ronaldo and Mbappé go head to head

HAMBURG (GERMANY), July 4: Portugal and France meet in the European Championship quarterfinals on Friday and the match features a head to head between two of soccer's biggest stars: Cristiano Ronaldo and Kylian Mbappé. The winner will play either Spain or host nation Germany in the semifinals. Kick-off is at 9 p.m. local (1900 GMT) in Hamburg.

It's a match between two of the pre-tournament favorites but neither have been convincing. Portugal hasn't scored a goal in its last two matches — a 2-0 loss to Georgia and a 0-0 with Slovenia before winning a penalty shootout — while no France player has scored from open play at Euro 2024. The French have had two own-goals and a penalty from Mbappé.

Ronaldo burst into tears after having a penalty saved in extra time against Slovenia. Appearing in his record sixth European Championship, he has yet to score — if he does, the 39-year-old striker would be the oldest ever scorer at the tournament.

Mbappé will again be wearing a protective mask after sustaining a broken nose in France's group opener against Austria. France coach Didier Deschamps said after the last-16 win over Belgium that Mbappé might need to wear the mask for "months."

The match will be played exactly 18 years after the nations' meeting in the 2006 World Cup semifinals, when Zinedine Zidane scored the winner from the penalty spot. Ronaldo played the

full match and the player of the match was Lilian Thuram, whose son, Marcus, is likely to feature for France in Hamburg.

France midfielder Adrien Rabiot is suspended after collecting two yellow cards. The likelihood is that Antoine Griezmann will drop back into central midfield to cover for Rabiot, with Ousmane Dembele potentially coming into the forward line.

Portugal has no reported injury concerns, with all 26 players in the squad training on Wednesday. No players are suspended, either. Mbappé is one of four France players who will miss the semifinals if they pick up another booking, should the team advance. It is the same with Ronaldo and five other Portugal players.

France has only conceded one goal at Euro 2024. That was the retaken penalty by Poland striker Robert Lewandowski, whose first effort was saved by Mike Maignan before the France goalkeeper was adjudged to have come off his line too early.

The 25-year-old Mbappé has 48 goals for France. He has a long way to go to catch Ronaldo, who has a men's record 130 international goals.

This is the teams' third straight meeting at a European Championship. In the tournament in 2021, they drew 2-2 in the group stage — Ronaldo scored two penalties — and Portugal won 1-0 in the final in 2016.

Ronaldo, who will make a record 212th appearance for Portugal, has had 20 shots without scoring at Euro 2024. (AP)

Spain face hosts Germany in quarterfinals with a potential record on line

STUTTGART (GERMANY), July 4: Spain meet host nation Germany on Friday in the quarterfinals of the European Championship in an eagerly-anticipated match between two of the best performing sides at the tournament.

There is also a potential record on the line as Spain and Germany have each won three European Championships, better than any other nation. Two of the most exciting talents will be on show in Spain teenager Lamine Yamal and 21-year-old Germany forward Jamal Musiala.

The winner will advance to face France or Portugal in the semifinal in Munich on Tuesday. Spain and Germany are the leading scorers at Euro 2024, having netted nine and 10 goals respectively in their four matches. They have also conjured the most attempts on target.

Spain has never eliminated a host nation, either at a European Championship or at the World Cup. La Roja is the only team to have won all its matches at

Euro 2024, beating Croatia, Italy and Albania in the group stage before thumping Georgia 4-1 in the round of 16. Germany beat Scotland and Hungary but drew against Switzerland before eliminating Denmark.

Germany hasn't beaten Spain in a major tournament since a group-stage victory at Euro '88.

Team news — Lamine Yamal, Nico Williams and Fabian Ruiz all missed Spain's training session on Tuesday, while Aymeric Laporte only jogged once around the field.

However, all are expected to be fit for Friday's match. Germany defender Jonathan Tah returns from suspension and coach Julian Nagelsmann has reported no injury concerns.

Spain and Germany have only conceded three goals between them. The only time Spain goalkeeper Unai Simón had to pick the ball out of his net was against Georgia, while Germany conceded against Scotland and Switzerland. (AP)

Chess: Gukesh holds Caruana; Pragg draws with Nepomniachtchi

BUCHAREST (ROMANIA), July 4: World Championship challenger Grandmaster D Gukesh played out a draw with tournament leader and top seed Fabiano Caruana of United States in the seventh round of the Superbet classic chess tournament here.

On another all-draws day, R Praggnanandhaa signed peace with Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia leaving the lead positions intact like the previous round.

Caruana on 4.5 points remains in front with two victories and five draws, he is followed by Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and Alireza Firouzja of France, who are all half a point behind the American.

Nepomniachtchi shares the fifth spot with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France with a fifty percent score, a half point ahead of the trio of American Wesley So, Dutch Anish Giri and Uzbekistan's first son in chess Nodirbek Abdusattorov.

Just two rounds remain in the USD 350000 prize money tournament.



Gukesh's choice of Italian opening gave him an optical advantage against Caruana. After the initial tussle, the players reached a middle game wherein the Indian had an edge thanks to better placed forces but Caruana was up to the task in finding the defense to maintain the balance. The pieces got traded at regu-

lar intervals in this encounter and the players arrived at a Queen and rook endgame where neither side had a real chance. The game was drawn after 62 moves.

Praggnanandhaa had a relatively easy day against Nepomniachtchi despite playing black. Years of working with World

number one Magnus Carlsen and his own expertise as the two-time world championship challenger has made Nepomniachtchi a leading theoretician but in the seventh round the Indian surprised him with what looked like a sensational preparation.

The next round would mostly decide the final outcome of the tournament as Caruana is facing Praggnanandhaa and Gukesh has a tough nut to crack in his final white game in Anish. Firouzja might also fancy his chances for a maiden victory in the Grand chess tour if he can conquer the machine-like precision of Nepomniachtchi.

Results round 7: Ian Nepomniachtchi (FID, 3.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 4); Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rom, 2) drew with Alireza Firouzja (fra, 4); Anish Giri (Ned, 3) drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 3.5); D Gukesh (Ind, 4) drew with Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 4.5); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 3.5) beat Wesley So (Usa, 3) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 3). (PTI)

Indian-origin schoolgirl chess prodigy to be youngest in England team

LONDON, July 4: Bodhana Sivanandan, a nine-year-old Indian-origin schoolgirl is set to make chess history after she became the youngest person selected to represent England internationally in any sport.

Bodhana, from Harrow in north-west London, will join the England Women's Team at the Chess Olympiad in Budapest, Hungary, in September. The others in her team are all in their 20s, 30s or 40s.

"I found out yesterday after I came back from school when my dad told me. I was happy. I hope I'll do well and I'll get another title," she told the BBC on Wednesday.

Malcolm Pein, manager of the England chess team, described the schoolgirl as one of the most remarkable British chess prodigies he has ever seen.

"It's exciting — she's on course to be one of the best British players ever," he said.

Her father, Siva Sivanandan, says he remains mystified about where his daughter got her talent. "I'm an engineering graduate, as is my wife, but I'm not good at chess," he said.

Bodhana first picked up chess during the pandemic lockdown when Siva's friend was going back to India and gave her a few bags which also had a chess board.

"I was interested in the pieces, so I started playing," she recalls.

Last December, Sivanandan won the European Blitz Chess Championship in Zagreb, Croatia, and was dubbed "super talented" at the time.

Soon after, she was among a group of young chess enthusiasts invited by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to 10 Downing Street to mark the government's major new GBP 1 million investment package for the game.

The package has since been in place to support children attending schools in disadvantaged areas across England to learn and play chess, improve the visibility and availability of the game, and fund elite playing. (PTI)

I am going to Olympics at 14, all sacrifices were worth it: swimmer Dhinidhi

ENGALURU, July 4: At times, she misses the carefree pleasures her peers enjoy and occasionally experiences a sense of solitude, but all of that has been worth it for 14-year-old swimmer Dhinidhi Desinghu, who is gearing up to fulfil her dream of competing at the Olympics later this month.

The Bengaluru swimmer, who studies in Class 9, is set to be the youngest member of the Indian contingent at the Paris Olympics.

"Sometimes I miss the fun generally kids of my age have. I do not go out much with friends and feel lonely. But then I wanted to swim and I wanted to go to the Olympics," Dhinidhi told PTI Bhasha in an exclusive interview at her residence.

"I am the one who chose this path for me. With that comes a lot of sacrifices but I do feel different, extraordinary and proud. At 14, I am going to the Olympics, so all the sacrifices are worth it," she added.

The Olympic cycle has been an underwhelming one for In-

dian swimming as none of the swimmers were able to breach either the 'A' or 'B' qualification time. But Dhinidhi has been on a roll, winning medals at the National Games and the senior National championships last year. Her performances this season made her the top-ranked Indian female swimmer with the Swimming Federation of India handing her one of the two Universality places and an opportunity of a lifetime.

"I knew that I had a chance (of making the Olympics) because I have been working really very hard but it was surprising that I got this chance so early in my career. Being the youngest one in the Indian contingent is a big honour."

"I am super excited to be a part of the Indian Olympic contingent as I will get a chance to meet the greatest athletes," said Dhinidhi, who will compete in the women's 200m freestyle event.

Having got the opportunity to compete at the Olympics at such a young age, Dhinidhi wants to

Dhinidhi has been on a roll, winning medals at the National Games and the senior National championships last year. Her performances this season made her the top-ranked Indian female swimmer with the Swimming Federation of India handing her one of the two Universality places and an opportunity of a lifetime

soak in everything and gain experience.

"This is just the beginning and I have a long long way to go. I am really excited to know what more I can do in 2028 and 2032.

"I want to experience the feeling of staying at the Olympic village. What kind of races are being held there as the competition in India is totally different from what we get at international level. I want to see the dedication, the focus and the preparation of world class athletes."

"I am not thinking about performance as it is just about learning this time. I am sure whatever learnings I have here, that will make me a better athlete."

"I am not thinking about performance as it is just about learning this time. I am sure whatever learnings I have here, that will make me a better athlete." She is excited to meet her idol — seven-time Olympic gold medalist swimmer Katie Ledecky.

"I made a greeting card last year for her. I used to think that whenever I get a chance to meet her, I will give this to her. I looked up at her from a very young age and luckily, I got this chance. Hopefully I can give it to her in Paris. I will be on the seventh moon if I get a chance to even see her," she said. (PTI)



They're home: India's T20 world champs welcomed by frenzied fans; meet PM



NEW DELHI, July 4: Exuberant fans lined up to express support despite monsoon showers and heavy security deployment before Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted them for breakfast as India's T20 World Cup-winning cricket stars returned to a euphoric reception, here on Thursday.

Hundreds of supporters, holding placards congratulating their favourites and waving the national flag, braved the inclement weather to wait outside the airport for the victorious side, which defeated South Africa by seven runs in the final in Bridgetown on Saturday last week.

There was dancing, there were multiple cakes, and there were fans on streets showing just why cricket is the most passionately followed sport in the country. The energy rubbed off on the weary players, who joined

in the fun after arriving at the hotel from airport to complete the party atmosphere.

"We have waited for this moment for the past 13 years. The team has made us proud by winning the World Cup," a fan, who claimed to have been waiting since 4:30am in the morning said, referring to India's last World Cup triumph which came back in 2011.

The side was unable to head back home immediately after the title win due to a shutdown forced by hurricane Beryl in Barbados. They were cocooned in their hotel before the BCCI secretary Jay Shah made arrangements for a special charter flight.

The Air India special charter flight AIC24WC -- Air India Champions 24 World Cup -- arrived in Delhi at 6am (IST) on

Thursday after a 16-hour non-stop journey.

Heavy security was deployed to keep the crowd in check at the Indira Gandhi International airport but that did little to dampen the spirits as fans cheered enthusiastically holding up posters of star batter Virat Kohli, skipper Rohit Sharma and outgoing head coach Rahul Dravid.

Two buses were stationed outside the T3 Terminal to ferry the players to ITC Maurya Sheraton, where they were greeted by dhol and traditional Bhangra dancers.

Most of them, including skipper Rohit Sharma, all-rounder Hardik Pandya, Suryakumar Yadav and Rishabh Pant, shook a leg with the assembled dancers, giving them a memory that would last a lifetime.

Even the on-duty security personnel had smiles on their faces as the players let their hair down after the long journey, shook hands with everyone who wanted to and moved into their rooms after cutting yet another cake, this time in the shape of the trophy they had brought back.

All of this unfolded amid expected media frenzy. A brief while later, they left to meet Modi at his official residence, continuing a hectic schedule that awaits them through the day.

Accompanied by BCCI President Roger Binny and secretary Jay Shah, the squad, including outgoing head coach Rahul Dravid, spent close to two hours at the 7, Lok Kalyan Marg residence of the Prime Minister before heading back to the hotel.

Binny and Shah also presented Modi with a customised team jersey, inscribed with NAMO at the back.

"An excellent meeting with our Champions! Hosted the World Cup winning team at 7, LKM and had a memorable conversation on their experiences through the tournament." Modi posted on 'X' along with pic-

tures from the meet.

In a video later shared by his office, the players could be seen having light-hearted conversations with the PM.

"What a great honour, meeting our honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji. Thank you sir for inviting us to the Prime Minister's residence," Kohli posted on Instagram with a picture of him with the PM.

Earlier, at the airport, the tired but excited players acknowledged the waiting fans by waving at them and flashing warm smiles.

Suryakumar, who took the sensational match-winning catch of David Miller in the final, was the most animated in responding to the cheering.

Pant, who returned to international cricket at the just-concluded event after a life-threatening car accident, saluted the gathered crowd, while pacer Mohammed Siraj blew flying kisses in their direction.

Rohit and Player of the Final Kohli, both of whom retired from T20Is at the end of India's campaign, were among the last to come out of the VIP exit.

Rohit raised the coveted trophy for the fans to catch a glimpse before boarding the bus. Kohli, on his part, gave a thumbs up to acknowledge the support.

In their excitement to see their heroes in person, some fans claimed that they had been waiting outside the airport since last night.

The players are now headed to Mumbai to participate in an open bus victory parade starting at 5pm followed by a felicitation ceremony at the Wankhede Stadium.

It would be a special moment for the 37-year-old Rohit, who is a Mumbaier and a huge fan favourite in the city.

A similar road show was held in Mumbai 17 years ago when Dhoni's team had beaten arch-rivals Pakistan in the final of the inaugural 2007 World T20 in South Africa. (PTI)

Coco Gauff and Carlos Alcaraz advance at Wimbledon; Naomi Osaka loses



LONDON, July 4: Coco Gauff likes No. 1 Court at Wimbledon.

It's where she beat Venus Williams back in 2019 when Gauff made her Wimbledon debut at age 15.

On Wednesday, Gauff beat qualifier Anca Todoni 6-2, 6-1 to advance to the third round at the All England Club.

"This is the court where I first started here at Wimbledon. Court 1 is always a special place for me to play on," the 21-year-old Gauff said in her on-court interview.

The victory also allows Gauff, the No. 2 seed, to move another step away from last year's first-round exit.

"Overall, I just learned about life a lot," the U.S. Open champion said when asked about putting that three-set loss to Sofia Kenin behind her.

"I just realized that, yes, what I do I'm very passionate about, but it's not ever that serious and sometimes the world can make you feel like there's so much pressure, there's so much expectation," she said. "At the end of the (day), it's a game. It's sport."

The 19-year-old Todoni is from Romania and was making her Grand Slam debut.

"I do think I could have played cleaner at some moments," Gauff said.

Five years ago, Gauff beat Williams — a five-time Wimbledon champion — 6-4, 6-4 in the first round and eventually reached the last 16, all in her

Grand Slam debut.

Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz trailed 6-5 in the first set Wednesday before coming back to beat Aleksander Vukic 7-6 (5), 6-2, 6-2, setting up a third-round meeting with No. 29 Frances Tiafoe after the American eliminated Borna Coric 7-6 (5), 6-1, 6-3.

When told by the on-court interviewer that Tiafoe said he's "coming after you," the 21-year-old Spaniard replied with a smile: "I'm going for him."

"We played a really good match in the U.S. Open," the No. 3 seed said of their 2022 semifinal that Alcaraz won at Flushing Meadows.

In other results, four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka was eliminated in the second round by No. 19 Emma Navarro by a score of 6-4, 6-1, while No. 1 Jannik Sinner got past 2021 runner-up Matteo Berrettini 7-6 (3), 7-6 (4), 2-6, 7-6 (4) at Centre Court in an all-Italian contest.

"I knew that I had to raise my level today," Sinner said. "He is a grass-court specialist. ... I'm very happy how I handled the situation."

No. 11 Danielle Collins completed her first-round match — a 6-3, 7-6 (4) win over Clara Tauson. It had been suspended Tuesday night at 4-4 in the second set.

No. 20 Beatriz Haddad Maia advanced to the third round by beating Magdalena Frech 7-5, 6-3. (AP)

Wimbledon: Bopanna-Ebden move to second round



LONDON, July 4: India's Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden moved into the second round of the Wimbledon men's doubles event with a smooth win over Robin Haas and Sander Arends here.

Bopanna and Ebden sailed past their Dutch opponents 7-5, 6-4 in an hour and 11 minutes in a rain-interrupted match on Wednesday.

The second seeds, who are the current Australian Open champions, will face Germany's Hendrik Jebens and Constantin Frantzen in the second round.

The Indo-Australian pair had reached the semifinals of the season's third Grand Slam last year.

Earlier on Wednesday, India's Sumit Nagal and his Serbian partner Dusan Lajovic were ousted in the first round by Spaniards Pedro Martinez and Jaume Munar.

Martinez and Munar won 6-2, 6-2 in one hour and seven minutes.

India will have further representation in men's doubles first round through N Sriram Balaji and Yuki Bhambhani later on Thursday.

Balaji will partner Britain's Luke Johnson and will face fourth seeds Mate Pavic of Serbia and Marcelo Arevalo of El Salvador.

On the other hand, Bhambhani and France's Albano Olivetti will take on the Kazakh duo of Alexander Bublik and Alexander Shevchenko. (PTI)

Babar Azam seeks help of Australian power-hitting coach Young



LAHORE, July 4: Pakistan skipper Babar Azam has sought the help of Shannon Young, the renowned Australian power-hitting coach, to reinvent his T20 skills after an underwhelming campaign in the just-concluded World Cup.

Babar made 120 runs from four matches at a strike-rate of 101, as Pakistan bowed out of the ICC showpiece even without entering the Super Eights.

Babar met Young, who coached Australia's Glenn Maxwell and

Jake Fraser-McGurk, and discussed with him the essential skills required to execute power shots successfully in T20 format.

The meeting took place in Lahore where Young is on a private visit.

Young has been credited with mentoring a number of Australian players and improving their power-hitting skills.

The young batting sensation McGurk had set the 2024 edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) alight with his range-hitting while

playing for the Delhi Capitals.

Babar has often been criticised for his low strike-rate and inability to regularly hit sixes in the shortest format and after 123 T20Is he has a strike rate of 129.

The 29-year-old was removed as captain of all formats last year after Pakistan failed to qualify for the semifinals of the 50-over World Cup in India.

But he was reinstated as captain in the white ball formats ahead of the T20 World Cup in place of Shaheen Shah Afridi. (PTI)

Bayer Leverkusen to start its Bundesliga title defense

FRANKFURT, July 4: German champion Bayer Leverkusen will kick off its Bundesliga title defense away to local rival Borussia Muenchengladbach on Aug. 23.

As usual in Germany, the champion plays the first game of the new league season on a Friday night.

Gladbach was the only Bundesliga team that managed to stop Leverkusen scoring last season, holding Xabi Alonso's team to a 0-0 draw in their last meeting in January.

Leverkusen was the first team to win the Bundesliga title without losing a game. (AP)

At SCO summit, Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif says terrorism should be tackled through joint efforts

ASTANA/ISLAMABAD, July 4: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday raised the issue of terrorism as a major concern for member states at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit and said terrorism in its all forms should be tackled through joint efforts.

Shahbaz, who arrived in Kazakhstan's capital of Astana on Wednesday for a two-day official visit, represented Pakistan at the SCO meeting where leaders and diplomats from countries including China, India, Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan have gathered to discuss economic and security cooperation.

The prime minister, during his address, emphasised the importance of maintaining peace in the region as a precondition for economic development and called for "meaningful" engagement with the Afghan Taliban government, Dawn News reported.

"Achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan is a lynchpin to this common objective," he said, adding that the international community "meaningfully engage with the Afghan government to meet their genuine economic

and development needs". Sharif also said the Afghan Taliban must also "take concrete measures" to ensure its soil is not used for terrorism against any other state.

"Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including state terrorism, must be condemned in clear and unambiguous terms," the premier stressed, adding that there was "no justification for killing innocent people or using the bogey of terrorism" for political point-scoring.

"We must ensure respect for the universally recognised principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and people's fundamental right to self-determination," he said, adding the UNSC resolutions offer a workable framework to resolve long-standing disputes, including those in our region, Sharif said, in a veiled reference to the Kashmir issue.

Regarding Pakistan's role in regional trade connectivity, the premier said the country's location made it an "ideal trade conduit" for the region and added that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) supplemented "SCO's vision of regional connectivity and economic interaction". (PTI)

Copa America quarterfinals: Plenty of intrigue, even if Messi, Vinicius can't participate

LOS ANGELES, July 4: Lionel Messi's leg injury was the only major obstacle that fell into Argentina's path while it rolled through group play and into the Copa America quarterfinals.

Bigger challenges await the defending champions, and they're hoping Messi will be there to lead the way in perhaps his final international tournament.

The 15-time Copa America champion Albiceleste are still the undeniable favorites in the Americas' biggest soccer tournament when quarterfinal play gets underway, but the other 15-time Copa champs — Uruguay — top the list of challengers capable of taking them down.

With the host Americans and Mexico eliminated in group play, the spotlight shifts firmly to the South American powerhouses determined to raise the trophy.

Argentina vs Ecuador

In Houston, it's unclear whether Messi will play in the opening quarterfinal due to a leg injury that sidelined him in the team's most recent match against Peru. Coach Lionel Scaloni said Messi's availability will be a game-time decision.

"Depending on how he responds, we will decide," Scaloni said Wednesday before training. "There are ramifications when Leo is not able to play. We'll try to make sure that he can play. If not, we'll

try to find the best solution for the team. I will talk to him today. It's only fair that he can take his time and be able to train as much as he can." Argentina has been sturdy even without a goal from Messi in the tournament, winning all three group stage matches by a combined 5-0.

Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez has four goals in a spectacular effort despite coming off the bench twice, while Manchester City's Julián Alvarez got the other goal. If Scaloni decides to play both center forwards together, it could be more than enough to make up for Messi — and a nightmare for underdog Ecuador, which earned its unexpected quarterfinal spot by holding Mexico scoreless last weekend.

Venezuela vs Canada

In Arlington, Texas, it is a matchup of pleasant surprises. Venezuela has enjoyed an outstanding tournament so far, winning its three matches by a combined 6-1 with offensive leadership from Salomon Rondon and Eduard Bello.

Canada got out of Copa group play for the first time despite scoring just one total goal in three games before losing Inter Milan's Tajon Buchanan to a broken leg in training Tuesday. Reaching the semifinals would be a massive achievement for either of these teams.

Colombia vs Panama



In Glendale, Arizona, the quarters move west for a pair of games held in air-conditioned stadiums amid a continent-



wide heat wave. Colombia is now unbeaten in 26 consecutive matches after holding Brazil to

a draw to win its group. Led by veteran star James Rodríguez, Los Cafeteros will be favored to eliminate Panama, which

knocked off the host U.S. team to advance from group play.

Brazil vs Uruguay

The Sin City will host easily the most tantalizing matchup of the round, featuring a faltering powerhouse against a team known for perennially punching above its weight.

No quarterfinal team looked as shaky as Brazil, which stumbled into the next round with a thoroughly unimpressive effort. Colombia and Costa Rica both held the Selecao to draws, and fan discontent is roiling.

Even worse, Real Madrid star Vinicius Junior is suspended for the quarterfinal after accumulating two yellow cards. Yet Brazil is still laden with individual talent that's barely touched the field in this tournament, so it's far too early to write off the five-time World Cup winners.

Uruguay looks just as good as advertised under brilliant coach Marcelo Bielsa, winning three times by a combined 9-1 in group play led by Liverpool striker Darwin Nunez. After beating Brazil and Argentina in recent World Cup qualifying matches, La Celeste probably would be the tournament favorites if not for Argentina's similarly strong form — but Brazil has the pure talent to end those dreams in a hurry. (AP)