

6
WORLD

8
NATION

- China hits out at NATO for branding it as 'decisive enabler' of Ukraine war
- NC and CPN-UML issue whips asking lawmakers to vote against PM
- INLD-BSP to jointly contest Haryana polls, Abhay Chautala chief ministerial face
- MoS Karandlaje urges Shah to initiate detailed probe into Valmiki corporation scam

Three die as boat sinks in floodwaters, two missing

Flood waters receding in parts of Assam, situation still grim

GOALPARA, July 11: At least three persons were killed and two others went missing after a boat sank in the floodwaters in Assam's Goalpara district on Thursday evening.

According to a senior police officer, the incident took place at Simlitola in Rongjuli police station area when the boat with around 20 people on board was returning after the cremation of a person in a nearby isolated location.

"There were approximately 20 people on the small boat. It sank due to being overloaded while navigating through flooded areas after the evening cremation," the officer said. While most of the passengers managed to swim to nearby highlands, five people were reported missing.

"SDRF personnel were called in, and they recovered the bodies of three persons. According to local villagers, two others remain miss-



ing, and efforts are ongoing to locate them," the officer added.

The deceased have been identified as Jit Karmakar (27), Prasenjit Saha (28), and Sujan Malakar (27). Meanwhile, the flood situation in the state remained grim on Thursday even though flood waters started receding in many parts of the state. The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Guwahati said light to moderate rainfall is

likely to occur at some places over Assam and its neighbouring areas.

"Moderate rain is very likely to occur at most places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya, and at many places over Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura," it said.

A report by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said that five more people lost their lives and over 14 lakh people are reeling under the deluge across 25 districts.

The toll in this year's flood, landslide, storm and lightning has now mounted to 100. Dhubri is the worst hit with over 2.37 lakh people suffering, followed by Cachar (1.82 lakh) and Golaghat (1.12 lakh), the report said. "Flood water is receding in many parts of the state. If the rain stops, the condition will continue to improve," a senior official of ASDMA said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Meeting on eviction of encroachers from Grazing Reserves held

HT Bureau
KHERONI, July 11: A public meeting was convened at Kheroni HS Playground, West Karbi Anglong, by Karbi Anei to discuss the issue of Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) here on Thursday.

The gathering aimed to demand the eviction of encroachers from PGR and VGR lands. The meeting coincided with an unannounced bandh, resulting in the closure of shops and suspension of trade activities until the evening. Following the meeting, Biswajyoti Teron, general secretary of Karbi Students Association (KSA-Semson Teron), emphasised the need to protect indigenous Karbi land. "The meeting was called to protect the land of the indigenous Karbi people. The last time there was a demonstration on eviction from PGR-VGR land during which some activists of the KSA were attacked on which the government should prompt action. There should be no violence in the days to come. The land of the Karbis should be protected. Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council could not give any land to non-indigenous people," he added.

Special leave for Assam govt employees to spend time with parents, in-laws

GUWAHATI, July 11: The Assam government has declared two days of special casual leave in November for its employees to spend time with their parents or parents-in-law, the chief minister's office (CMO) said on Thursday.

The special leaves cannot be used for personal enjoyment and those without parents or parents-in-law will not be eligible for the leaves, it added.

"The Assam government, under the leadership of CM Dr @himantabiswa, has declared special casual leave for state government employees on November 6 and 8, 2024, to spend time with their parents or parents-in-law," the CMO said in a post on X.

It said the leave must be used "solely for spending time with aging parents or parents-in-law to honour, respect, and care for them, and not for personal enjoyment".

The leaves can be availed along with holiday for Chhat Puja on November 7, second Saturday holiday on November 9 and Sunday on November 10, the CMO said.

It said that employees in essential services can avail it in a phased manner, and those who do not have parents or parents-in-law will not be entitled to it.

The two special casual leaves for spending time with parents and parents-in-law for government employees was announced by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in his first Independence Day speech after assuming office in 2021. (PTI)



Awareness programme

DIPHU: The Karbi Farmers Association (KFA) in collaboration with Dr. Anthony Phango, Manager of Cattle Demonstration Farm organised an awareness programme on cattle, goat, piggy and poultry farming to local farmers at Dokmoka Basic Junior L.P School on last Tuesday. Phango said there is profit in selling cow milk. 1 kg of cow milk is now ₹ 60. Jersey cows produce more than 20 litres per day. Dr. Phango said that not only for sick people, but for sick animals there is an ambulance facility introduced by the government. Anyone can call the toll free number 1962 if there are sick cows and the ambulance will reach the place for treating the animals. Veterinary surgeon Dr. Roton Ronghang informed the farmers that before the onset of any diseases it is better to administer medicine drops to chickens, hens and fowls to prevent from getting it, KFA president, Tingku Engti informed the farmers that KFA is for the farmers and will always work for the benefit of the farmers. The awareness programme ended with the distribution of hoe (kudal) and medicines for chickens and pigs. KFA Dokmoka branch secretary Menarson Phango chaired the programme and was attended by vice president, KFA, Robinson Teron and spokesperson, Hemari Rongpi.

Students missing

DALGAON: Five students missing were reportedly went missing from Ulubari Hafizia Madrasa under Dalgaon police station of Darang district. According to information, all the students went to bed after having dinner at 10 pm on 9th July. Later, at around 3 am, when a student of the hostel woke up, he found the hostel door opened. When he checked their beds, Mujakkir Hussain (17) of Dhanshiri Kafi, Momin Ali (15) of Fatashimolu, Barsala, Shahidul Islam (15) of West Padokhat, Rupchand Ali (15) of Mandalpara and Nazimuddin (15) of Bhulabari (Udalguri) were found missing. A student of the Madrasa told that while searching here and there, he saw some students running and he chased them but was unsuccessful. The news of a large number of students missing in one night created panic in the area. Here in the morning, the headmaster of the madrasa Abdul Mutalib informed the families of the missing students but the concern grew when they were not found at their homes either.

Drugs seized

GUWAHATI: 'Yaba' tablets worth around ₹ 30 crore have been seized in Karimganj district of Assam and two peddlers were arrested, a senior police officer said on Thursday. According to Karimganj SP Partha Protm Das, a police team intercepted a vehicle coming from neighbouring Mizoram on Wednesday night after getting specific inputs about movement of the drug consignment. "The anti-narcotics operation was launched at the Gandharjbari area under Ratabari Police Station. After a thorough search of the vehicle, 1,00,000 Yaba tablets were recovered from a special chamber inside the petrol tank," Das told PTI.

Govt to revisit change in ADR exam pattern: Himanta

GUWAHATI, July 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said his government will "revisit" its decision to change the pattern of recruitment examination for posts under grade 3 and 4.

"A govt that listens! Based on the feedback from various quarters regarding the sudden change of pattern of ADR exams and the possibility of aspirants facing an issue arising out of that, we have decided to revisit this issue and we will inform everyone on our decision shortly," Sarma said in a post on X.

The state government had announced earlier this week about holding examinations for recruitment in grade 3 and 4, besides filling vacancies in different departments by April next year. Sarma had said recruitment ex-



aminations for grade 3 and 4 will be conducted in three stages - preliminary, mains and viva-voce from September.

Prelims for 7,500 grade-3 posts will be held on September 15, 22 and 29, and for 4,500 grade-4 posts on October 20 and 27, he said.

However, the announcement had drawn criticism, with many aspirants claiming that such a change in the Assam (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

13 Indian fishermen arrested by Sri Lanka Navy for alleged illegal fishing

COLOMBO, July 11: The Sri Lankan Navy on Thursday arrested 13 Indian fishermen and seized their trawlers for allegedly poaching in its territorial waters, taking the number of Indian nationals apprehended this year by the island nation in such incidents to 252, an official statement said.

The fishermen were arrested, and their three trawlers were seized north of the Delft Island, Jaffna, the Sri Lanka Navy said in a press release.

The Sri Lanka Navy and Coast Guard conducted the special operation leading to the apprehension of the 13 Indian fishermen, it said.

Those apprehended were brought to the Kankesanthurai Harbour and will be handed to the Mailadi Fisheries Inspector for further legal proceedings.

"The Navy has seized a total of 35 Indian trawlers and 252 Indian fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters in 2024 and subsequently handed them over to authorities for

legal proceedings," the press release said.

Earlier this month, Sri Lanka voiced its concern to India over the death of a naval sailor who was killed in an operation to seize an Indian trawler allegedly engaged in illegal fishing in the island nation's territorial waters. On June 25, off the coast of Point Pedro in the north, a senior sailor from the Navy Special Boat Squadron sustained critical injuries due to "the aggressive manoeuvres of the Indian trawler, resisting its seizure," a statement issued by the Sri Lankan Navy said.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters. The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries. (PTI)

Manipur CM welcomes Kuki support for NRC implementation

IMPHAL, July 11: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Thursday commended the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body of Kuki tribes, for its support for the NRC implementation in the state and urged the organisation to hold talks on the matter.

The KIM, which is at loggerheads with the state government on various issues, last week said it will not oppose implementation of the NRC if it is carried out under the supervision of the Supreme Court and in consultation with the tribal body.

"Glad to learn that Kuki Inpi Manipur recently came out with a statement accepting the demand of NRC under the monitoring of the Supreme Court and others... Come out and let's talk at our level. If you (KIM) don't want to talk with me, talk with the Centre," Singh said.

The chief minister in March said that he would send a recommendation to the Centre

for implementing the National Register for Citizens (NRC) in the state to identify illegal immigrants. Both the state and central governments suspect that people from Myanmar who entered Manipur illegally were behind the ethnic clashes between Kuki and Meitei communities in Manipur that claimed over 200 lives since May last year.

Addressing a gathering at the launch of various government schemes, Singh said, "One of the core issues (behind the conflict) is related to the exercise of NRC. If it is agreed upon, why should the public continue to suffer?"

He said he wants to stop deforestation, illegal immigration and illegal poppy cultivation in the production of narcotics drugs in the northeastern state. "Peace is necessary and for peace to come, fact and core issues must be addressed. We must also try to achieve it soon. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



A man crossing a bamboo bridge on his motorcycle over Mora Pagaldiya river at Pathamarbashi in Baksa district on Thursday. UB photos

'The objective of the family planning (FP) programme needs to be 'Birth by choice'

'Viksit Bharat' goal can be achieved by having smaller families: Nadda

NEW DELHI, July 11: Union Health Minister J P Nadda said on Thursday that the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' can only be achieved when the health of India's families is well maintained and this can be accomplished by the smaller families, he stated.

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

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

He said the Centre and the states should also ensure that the unmet



needs of contraceptives are met especially in the high burden states, districts and blocks.

Highlighting that one-fifth of global population is India's, he stressed on the need to celebrate World Population Day as a reaffirmation and recommitment to working towards population stabilisation. "The goal of Viksit Bharat can only be achieved when the health of India's families is well

maintained, which can be achieved by smaller families," he stated.

"The Centre and the states need to collectively work to ensure that women can exercise their right to make family planning choices and are not burdened by unwanted pregnancy, and to ensure that unmet needs of contraceptives are met especially in the high burden states, districts and blocks," he said. The objective of the family planning (FP) programme needs to be 'Birth by choice and by informed choice', he stated.

Highlighting the government's focus on securing a brighter, healthier future for all, including youth, adolescents, women and the elderly, the minister said, "Collaboration is key as we address upcoming responsibilities and recognise family planning and re-

productive health as fundamental."

Promoting healthy timing and spacing between births, achieving optimal family sizes and empowering voluntary adoption of contraceptive choices are crucial for nurturing healthier and happier families, thereby contributing to our nation's brighter future, he stated.

Nadda spoke on 'Mission Parivar Vikas' (MPV), one of the successful schemes of the National Family Planning Programme, which was initially launched for 14 high priority districts (HPDs) in seven high-focus states and later expanded to cover all districts in these states and six northeastern states. He emphasised the impact of the scheme and underlined the significant increase in access to contraceptives (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt partners with Hans Foundation to boost education in tea garden

GUWAHATI, July 11: To provide quality education in tea gardens, the Assam government on Thursday joined hands with The Hans Foundation (THF) to provide a comprehensive educational upliftment programme across 100 model schools.

The collaboration, under the 'Uttam Sikhya' initiative, aims to strengthen education in these underserved areas.

According to THF, the agreement signed between The Hans Foundation and the state Education Department on Thursday will focus on improving the quality of education and overall development of students.

The programme will be implemented in phases to ensure system-

atic execution and continuous assessment, tailored to meet the specific needs of each school and its students. "This collaboration marks a pivotal step towards enhancing the quality of education and overall development of students in these underserved regions," THF said.

Secondary Education Department director Mamata Hojai said, "We are thrilled to partner with The Hans Foundation in this transformative initiative... It is about empowering our students with the skills and opportunities they need to thrive in life."

THF regional senior regional manager Krishna said the organisation will work closely with the Education Department with an aim to create a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Sensex, Nifty close marginally down amid profit-taking ahead of key financial results

MUMBAI, July 11: Benchmark Sensex and Nifty closed marginally down in a rangebound session on Thursday as investors booked profits in heavyweights ahead of the announcement of key financial results for the June quarter.

Retreating from early highs, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 27.43 points or 0.03 per cent at 79,897.34. As many as 15 Sensex shares closed with gains while the rest declined.

The index climbed 245.32 points to hit a high of 80,170.09 in early trade but later lost momentum due to selling in index heavyweights. The barometer hit a day's low of 79,464.38, down by 460.39 points from the last close.

The NSE Nifty edged down 8.50 points or 0.03 per cent to settle at 24,315.95. The broader index gyrated between a high of 24,402.65 and a low of 24,193.75 in day trade.

"The main indices are trading in a narrow range, struggling to justify their premium valuation ahead of the Q1 earnings season, which is forecast to be subdued," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Among Sensex shares, Bajaj Finance fell the most by 1.48 per



cent. Mahindra & Mahindra (1.24 per cent), NTPC (1.14 per cent) and Nestle (1.05 per cent) were also among the major losers. HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Sun Pharma, Power Grid, UltraTech Cement, Bharti Airtel, RIL and Larsen & Toubro also declined.

On the other hand, FMCG major ITC rose the most by 1.64 per cent. Tata Motors, Asian Paints and Titan also gained.

TCS gained 0.33 per cent ahead of the release of its quarterly financial results. India's largest IT services company after market hours reported an 8.7 per cent year-on-

smallcap gauge climbed 0.57 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.34 per cent.

Analysts said the broader market is exhibiting marginal momentum, led by a shift in FIIs inflow and budget expectations.

"Attention is now focused on the US inflation data, which is estimated to moderate and positively influence Fed's interest rate decisions," Nair said.

Among the indices, realty declined by 1.41 per cent, auto by 0.43 per cent and utilities by 0.19 per cent.

Oil & Gas jumped 1.68 per cent, while energy (1.20 per cent), services (1.13 per cent), industrials (0.31 per cent) and telecommunication (0.24 per cent) also advanced.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher. European markets were trading in positive territory. US markets ended significantly higher on Wednesday.

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

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

year rise in its consolidated net profit at ₹ 12,040 crore in the first quarter ended June 2024. Its revenue rose by 5.4 per cent year-on-year to ₹ 62,613 crore for the June quarter.

"After the flat start, the Nifty oscillated in a range and finally settled at 24,315.95 levels. Meanwhile, a mixed trend on the sectoral front kept the traders occupied wherein energy and FMCG ended in the green while realty and pharma closed lower." Ajit Mishra SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

In the broader market, the BSE

FinMin notifies GSTR-1A to amend outward supply form

NEW DELHI, July 11: The finance ministry has notified the GSTR-1A form which will give an option to taxpayers to amend outward supply or sales return form.

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

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

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

"By facilitating timely correc-

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

This amendment not only minimizes the risk of penalties and interest due to incorrect filings but also significantly reduces the compliance burden, underscoring the CBIC's commitment to a more responsive and taxpayer-friendly GST regime, Mohan added.

KPMG Indirect Tax Head & Partner, Abhishek Jain said enabling provisions for allowing rectification of GSTR-1 is a welcome move and should help contain unwarranted disputes on routine reconciliation between GSTR-1 and GSTR-3B (specifically inadvertent errors) for businesses.

"Also, the modus prescribed should not significantly impact the input tax credit reconciliation

process for businesses," Jain said.

This will facilitate taxpayer to add any particulars of supply of the current tax period missed out in reporting in form GSTR-1 of the said tax period or to amend any particulars already declared in GSTR-1 of the current tax period (including those declared in Invoice Furnishing Facility (IFF), for the first and second months of a quarter, if any, for quarterly taxpayers), to ensure that correct liability is auto-populated in GSTR-3B.

Currently, GST taxpayers file outward supply return GSTR-1 by the 11th day of the subsequent month, GSTR-3B is filed in a staggered manner between 20th-24th day of the succeeding month.

Taxpayers with annual turnover of up to ₹ 5 crore can file GSTR-1 quarterly within 13th day of the end of the quarter, while GSTR-3B is filed between 22nd and 24th day of the succeeding month. (PTI)

Bimal Cars records 6,000 vehicle sales in 3 years

GUWAHATI, July 11: City-based car seller Bimal Cars has achieved a remarkable milestone by selling a record 6,000 Tata vehicles over the past three years.

To celebrate this achievement, Bimal Cars has announced its biggest offer yet, available across all Bimal Cars showrooms from July 15 to July 24, 2024.

The authorities at Bimal Cars have already detailed the special offers: customers can benefit with up to ₹ 1.4 lakh in savings with free insurance on Tata Safari, up to ₹ 1.3 lakh with free insurance on Nexon EV, free insurance on Punch, up to ₹ 1 lakh on Nexon, and up to ₹ 1.2 lakh with free insurance on Harrier. Bimal Saraogi, MD of Bimal Cars, Arijant Saraogi, CEO of Bimal Cars, Rishi Khemka, Territorial Manager of Tata Motors, and Dipankar Das, MD of Bimal Cars, were present at the event.



Modi meets economists ahead of Budget for 2024-25

NEW DELHI, July 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is meeting eminent economists on Thursday to elicit their views and suggestions for the upcoming Budget, a senior government official said. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Budget for 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha on July 23.

Besides economists and sectoral experts, Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery and other members also attended the meeting.

Finance Minister Sitharaman, Planning Minister Rao Inderjit Singh, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran and economists Surjit Bhalla and Ashok Gulati and veteran banker K V Kamath among others were present in the meeting.

The Budget for 2024-25 will be the first major economic document of the Modi 3.0 government, which, among other things, is expected to lay the road map for making India a developed nation by 2047.

President Droupadi Murmu, in her address to the joint sitting of Parliament last month, had indicated that the government would come out with historic steps to accelerate the pace of reforms.

She also said the Budget will be an effective document of the government's far-reaching policies and futuristic vision. Sitharaman has already held discussions with various stakeholders, including economists and captains of Indian industry, on the forthcoming Budget. (PTI)

Take steps to accelerate growth: Eminent economists tell PM ahead of Budget

NEW DELHI, July 11: Ahead of the upcoming budget, eminent economists during a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged the government to take steps to accelerate economic growth and improve infrastructure, sources said.

The meeting was organised by the NITI Aayog on Thursday to elicit views and suggestions of economists for the first budget of the Modi 3.0 government.

"Earlier today, interacted with eminent economists and heard their insightful views on issues pertaining to furthering growth," Modi said in a post on X.

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Budget for 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha on July 23.

Besides economists and sectoral experts, Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery and other members

also attended the meeting.

Finance Minister Sitharaman, Planning minister Rao Inderjit Singh, chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran and economists Surjit Bhalla and Ashok Gulati and veteran banker K V Kamath, among others, were present in the meeting.

The Budget for 2024-25 will be the first major economic document of the Modi 3.0 government, which, among other things, is expected to lay the road map for making India a developed nation by 2047. Suggestions were also made to accelerate economic growth and improve agriculture productivity, sources added. According to sources, the discussions were also held on the Viksit Bharat @2047 document being prepared by the NITI Aayog.

President Droupadi Murmu, in her address to the joint sitting of

Parliament last month, had indicated that the government would come out with historic steps to accelerate the pace of reforms.

She also said the Budget will be an effective document of the government's far-reaching policies and futuristic vision.

Sitharaman has already held discussions with various stakeholders, including economists and captains of Indian industry, on the forthcoming Budget.

Several experts have urged the government to provide tax relief to the common man to boost consumption and take steps to check inflation and accelerate economic growth. The economy has recorded a growth rate of 8.2 per cent in 2023-24.

Earlier in February, Sitharaman presented an interim budget for 2024-25 in view of the Lok Sabha elections. (PTI)

Gold rises on jewellers' buying, positive overseas trend

NEW DELHI, July 11: Gold price rose ₹ 50 to ₹ 75,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday driven by jewellers' buying and a firm trend in the international markets, according to All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had settled at ₹ 75,050 per 10 grams on Wednesday. Silver prices also climbed by ₹ 100 to ₹ 94,500 per kg. It had closed at ₹ 94,400 per kg in the previous session.

In sarafa markets, the yellow metal was trading at ₹ 75,100 per 10 grams, up by ₹ 50 against the previous close, the association said. Traders said gold rallied due to fresh demand from local jewellers and a firm trend in overseas markets. In the global markets, spot gold was trading higher at USD 2,389.20 per ounce, up by USD 9.50 per ounce.

Gold prices firmed for a third consecutive session with investors awaiting US inflation data due later in the day for more insights on the Federal Reserve's interest rate path. Manav Modi, Senior Analyst, Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd (MOFSL), said.

US Fed Chair Jerome Powell on Wednesday mentioned that the US central bank would make interest rate decisions "when and as" they were needed. He told House members that "more good data" would build the case for a rate cut.

Addressing the lawmakers in Washington on Wednesday, Powell said he has confidence that inflation is headed downwards, however, stressed that the Fed has more work to do. Investors are waiting for the June Consumer Price Index (CPI) data to be released later on Thursday, and the Producer Price Index (PPI) report on Friday, which could add clarity

to the Fed's monetary policy path ahead, Modi added.

Silver was also marginally up at USD 31.32 an ounce in New York. "Gold continues to trade positive, supported by weakness in the US dollar and a dip in treasury yields after the Fed chair's comments on inflation and interest rates. "However, prices are stuck in a range so far in the session amid caution ahead of the CPI data for clarity of the US Fed's easing trajectory," Pranav Mer, Vice President of Research (Commodity & Currency) at BlinkX and JM Financial, said.

According to market experts, the precious metal continues to rise on Thursday as data comes to light that indicates central banks globally are still hoarding gold in spite of the revelation that the People's Bank of China stopped buying the metal for two months in June.

IAMAI flags 'concerns' over Karnataka's draft bill on platform-based gig workers

NEW DELHI, July 11: Industry body IAMAI has urged the Karnataka government to put on "hold" legislative process around its draft bill on platform-based gig workers to give sufficient time for thorough consultations, as it flagged several "concerns" that can potentially "negatively impact" ease of business in the state.

Among the various pain points, IAMAI has highlighted the possibility of dual levy coming into play on social security, and rued lack of clarity on how the proposed welfare fee contribution from aggregators to support social security of gig workers will be utilised.

Other concerns in the draft bill pertain to "overly harsh" clauses for offences, "unrealistic expectations and obligations from aggregators" and "significant legal complexities" on account of planned inclusion of gig workers' dispute redressal under the Industrial Disputes Act.

IAMAI also expressed worries over what it claimed is "ambiguity in calculation of welfare fee contribution", and lamented that onerous data sharing requirements would pose significant challenges to the business operations of aggregators.

IAMAI contended that the gig economy is an evolving sector, and any new regulations will have far-reaching ramifications for workers, platforms and the larger ecosystem.

The industry body emphasised it is "imperative"

that all stakeholders have an opportunity to provide inputs and voice their concerns before such a law is enacted.

The submissions of IAMAI comes in the backdrop of Karnataka government's move to place in the public domain a draft legislation that seeks to regulate the social security and welfare of platform-based gig workers. The draft bill moots creation of a board, grievance cell, welfare fund, among others provisions. "While we appreciate the government's efforts to provide social security and welfare measures for gig workers, we believe that the draft bill, in its current form, raises several concerns, and could hinder business operations and negatively impact the ease of doing business in the state," it said.

The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) said it is pushing for a "more balanced and collaborative approach" that aligns with existing central government laws and involves all stakeholders in a transparent and equitable manner.

"Therefore, we urge the state government to put the legislative process on hold and give a sufficient period of consultation of at least 30 to 60 days," it said.

In its submission, IAMAI has strongly urged that the state government reconsider the proposed regulation of contractual agreements, saying any direct government intervention in such arrangements is "both unnecessary and potentially harmful". (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Three die as boat sinks

The administration has been operating 365 relief camps and relief distribution centres in 20 districts, taking care of 1,57,447 displaced people at present. The authorities have distributed 2,825.36 quintals of rice, 517.22 quintals of dal, 151.97 quintals of salt and 14,015.39 litres of mustard oil among the flood victims of the state during the last 24 hours. At present, 2,580 villages are under water and 39,898.92 hectares of crop area has been damaged across Assam, the ASDMA said.

Embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been damaged by flood waters in Cachar, Darrang, Dhemajai, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Karimganj, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Morigaon, Nagaon, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Charaideo, Goalpara, Golaghat, Jorhat, Kamrup and Majuli.

The Brahmaputra is flowing above the danger mark at Nimatighat, Tezpur, Guwahati and Dhubri, the report said. Its tributaries Burhidighing at Chenimari and Disang at Nanglamuraghat are also flowing above the danger level. The Barak river's tributary Kushiya is flowing above the danger mark at Karimganj town, the ASDMA said. On account of widespread flooding, over 11,28,398 domestic animals and poultry are affected across Assam, it added. (PTI)

Govt to revisit change

Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE) pattern at short notice will inconvenience them. The ADRE for grade 3 and 4 posts were conducted for the first time in 2022, after the state assembly passed a bill allowing a single examination for recruitment in these grades as per requirement from various government departments. (PTI)

Manipur CM welcomes Kuki

Please don't play politics. We are also discussing how the affected people will survive and what the government can do for them for their livelihood and their education," Singh said. (PTI)

'Viksit Bharat' goal can be

in these states and successful reductions in maternal, infant and under-five mortality rates. "Making districts as the primary focal point of this scheme helped in bringing the TFR (Total Fertility Rate) down in the entire state. Mission Parivar Vikas has not only contributed to lowering the states' TFR but also helped in the national TFR", he stated. "We need to work towards maintaining low TFR in the states that have already achieved it, and work towards achieving in other states," he added.

Nadda cautioned the states and the UTs against getting complacent in these efforts and encouraged everyone to work towards bringing the TFR to replacement levels across all the regions in the country. "We should also create a strategy based on states' inputs and NFHS data to focus on those areas where TFR has not improved," he said. (PTI)

Govt partners with Hans

sustainable and impactful change in the lives of students in tea garden areas. Established in 2009, THF is a public charitable trust working for the wellbeing of all in over 1,200 villages and 14 cities across 25 states.

THF focuses on empowering marginalised and underprivileged communities in India, with key initiatives in health and wellbeing, education, livelihood and climate action, with special focus on children, persons with disabilities, and women. (PTI)

KFC launches new range of rolls in India

GUWAHATI, July 11: Addressing the universal dilemma of what to eat when hunger strikes, KFC has unveiled its new range of KFC Rolls, offering a variety of flavors to satisfy cravings anytime, anywhere.

Branded as "kahin bhi khao" (eat anywhere), these rolls come in five exciting flavors: Thai Spicy, Korean Tangy, American Nashville, Indian Tandoori, and Indian Spicy Veg. Each roll is priced at an affordable ₹ 99, making them an accessible snack option for all. The American Nashville Roll features a crunchy chicken fillet, onions, and a blend of spicy garlic and Nashville chili pepper sauces, all wrapped in a warm, flaky paratha. The Thai Spicy Roll offers a combination of juicy chicken, vegetables, Thai sriracha, and dynamite sauces.

For a taste of Korea, the Korean Tangy Roll includes flavors like kimchi paired with KFC's signature chicken. For those preferring local flavors, the Indian Tandoori Roll and the Indian Spicy Veg Roll provide a delicious option closer to home.

Ather Energy CEO bats for Full Electrification of Transportation in India

GUWAHATI, July 11: Tarun Mehta, CEO of Ather Energy, has strongly endorsed Amitabh Kant's recent call for the comprehensive electrification of transportation in India. Mehta echoed Kant's sentiments, emphasizing the critical need to transition to electric vehicles (EVs) to reduce fossil fuel dependence and emissions.

In a tweet, Mehta underscored the significance of this transition, stating, "Amitabh Kant, Former CEO of Niti Aayog, has once again correctly called out the urgent need for electrification of all transportation in India. Naysayers in the industry will keep nitpicking on new tech, but there's perhaps no single lever more powerful than 100% electrification to reduce fossil fuel dependence and emissions reduc-



tion. Electrification coupled with green-ification of power generation with solar and wind is an incredibly simple and powerful lever for our country today."

Mehta highlighted the potential

of the Indian electric two-wheeler (E2W) industry, noting India's leadership in technological and social transformation. He stated, "Our industry has been investing in EV manufacturing, design,

R&D, and components ahead of many 2W players globally, and today we can lead this revolution in 2Ws globally."

Reflecting on the impact of the revised FAME policy, Mehta noted how it enabled the industry to reduce reliance on subsidies while scaling up production and innovation. "With reduced maximum benefits per vehicle, the government can now support 5X E2W transition," he observed.

Tarun Mehta's endorsement follows Amitabh Kant's article in The Economic Times, where Kant advocated for a strategy to fully electrify India's fifty most polluted cities by 2030. Kant highlighted that this transition could save \$10 billion by 2030 and generate millions of jobs, positioning India as a global EV manufacturing leader.

Dima Hasao focuses on health timing & spacing of pregnancies; JSF Assam submits memorandum urging population control law

State observes World Population Day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 11: 'World Population Day' was observed in Dima Hasao district to raise awareness among the people about issues of overpopulation related to health. The program was organised by the District Health Society in the office of the Joint Director of Health Services, Haflong on Thursday. The theme for this year's World Population Day is 'Health Timing & Spacing of Pregnancies for the well-being of mother and child'.

The program was attended by the joint director of Health Services, Dr Duleswar Gogoi, SDM&HO Medical and Health Services Dr Leena Hakmaosa, district immunisation officer Dr Marina Changsan, nurses, ASHAs, medical staff, and health beneficiaries.

The celebration of World Population Day this year is divided into 4 phases: Preparatory Phase, Community Mobilisation Fortnight, Service Delivery Fortnight, and Rewards & Recognition Phase.

Dr Marina Changsan said that this day is observed to raise awareness, encourage action, and highlight issues related to the impact, urging people to opt for sustainable choices. While the growing population opens up new avenues of opportunities, it also poses challenges. She said, "We need to understand the impact and take measures accordingly, including client mobilisation and house-to-house contact carried out by front-line workers of NHM, ASHA, and



other health workers."

During the program, Dr Leena Hakmaosa emphasised the importance of awareness among eligible couples about the benefits of a smaller family and encouraged them to consider modern family planning. Overpopulation has many overall issues, particularly related to health, increasing the risk of infections like tuberculosis, malaria, cholera, dengue fever, and more. She added that we need to make eligible couples aware of the numerous benefits of birth control and the importance of delaying marriage, especially in rural areas. We need to encourage women's decision-making and male engage-

ment in family planning.

The objective of celebrating World Population Day is to address issues related to family planning and women's rights to decide when to start a family, the age of marriage, and youth development. To create an enabling environment in the community to prevent early marriage by spreading awareness about the harmful consequences of early marriage on the family and its effects on society. To increase awareness levels among the community on the age of marriage, various methods of family planning, and the roles and responsibilities of each couple and the community as a whole.

It is also informed that there are various sterilisation options available where compensation can be received for both female and male sterilisation. For female sterilisation, compensation includes Laparoscopic sterilisation/Mini Lab ₹ 2000, post-partum sterilisation (PPS) ₹ 3000, Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD) ₹ 20, Post-Partum Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (PPIUCD) ₹ 300, Post Abortion Intra-uterine Contraceptive Device (PAIUCD) ₹ 300, and Antara ₹ 100 per dose. For male sterilisation, No-scalpel Vasectomy (NSV) ₹ 3000. Services are available at Haflong Civil Hospital.

The program ended with a vote of thanks delivered by DPM, Dima Hasao, Rukmini Difoosa.

Our Tezpur correspondent adds: Advocating a strict population control law in the country, the nationalist non-political organisation Jansankhya Samadhan Foundation (JSF), Assam State Committee, on the occasion of World Population Day, Thursday, sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister of the country through the district commissioner of Kamrup (Mahanagar) at the District Commissioner's Office, Hengerabari, Guwahati.

Participating in this nationwide programme where more than 400 memorandums have been submitted in 23 different states of the country, the activists of Jansankhya Samadhan Foundation (JSF), Assam, mentioned various aspects about the need for the law. The activists said that the All India Organisation, Jansankhya Samadhan Foundation (JSF), has been conducting various campaigns across the country under the leadership of its national president Anil Choudhury for more than 10 years advocating the Population Control Act. The programmes undertaken under the guidance of Dr Indresh Kumar, national executive member of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and chief patron of JSF, have been supported by people from all parts of the country.

It is informed that a joint delegation of the organisation and Parliament met the President of India

on August 9, 2018, and submitted a petition signed by 125 MPs for a strict population control law in the country. In support of the law, mass signatures were collected across the country, and on October 29 last year, pages with more than 10 million signatures collected nationwide were taken to the Prime Minister's Office in a massive rally from Ghaziabad near Delhi. After the rally, JSF national president Anil Choudhury was forced to go on a hunger strike, and later after 21 days, the hunger strike was lifted with the intervention of Union minister Giriraj Singh, on the promise of the Prime Minister's Office showing interest in enacting a population control law. In the Union Budget Session last February, the Union Finance minister announced the formation of a high-level committee to discuss the proceedings of the Population Control law.

Assam JSF president Pankaj Talukdar and the activists said that they are very hopeful that the Prime Minister will enact a strict population control law in the country at the beginning of his third term. In this programme, JSF Assam president Pankaj Talukdar, organising secretary Mrinal Goswami, vice president Ranjan Kumar Medhi, general secretary Anirban Goswami, Parag Deka, JSF Assam Mahila Shakti Jhoola Sarma, and a few activists were present and handed over a memorandum to the Prime Minister through the district commissioner, Kamrup (M).

CPI(M) demands declaration of Assam flood as national disaster

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, July 11: The Hojai District Unit of CPI(M), through a memorandum addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has raised several demands for the flood-affected people. The memorandum was handed over to the district commissioner of Hojai for forwarding to the Prime Minister. Prior to submitting the memorandum, despite incessant rain, hundreds of CPI(M) volunteers in Hojai held a demonstration for nearly two hours at the district headquarters in Sankardevnagar on Wednesday. They raised their voices against the BJP government and called for declaring Assam flood and erosion as a national disaster.

During the demonstration, CPI(M) leader Jugeswar Das criticised the BJP government for its anti-people policies. Das demanded that Assam flood and erosion be declared a national disaster, citing severe impact on thousands of families in the last two months due to the deluge. He also criticised the state government for its failure to compensate flood victims to date. Additionally, he raised several other demands for the benefit of flood-affected people and urged the government to initiate repair work in the affected areas promptly.

Gauhati University receives high-level visit

Commissioner and secretary to Governor, along with officials, review academic & research progress



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 11: A team of officials from the Office of the Governor cum Chancellor, Gauhati University led by commissioner and secretary to the Governor SS Meenakshi Sundaram, and secretary, chancellor's secretariat Kabita Deka, visited Gauhati University on Tuesday and Wednesday and took stock of its academic, research and administrative activities.

The team on behalf of the chancellor congratulated the vice-chancellor of the university Prof PJ Handique on achieving an A+ grade in recent accreditation by NAAC. The team discussed with the vice-chancellor and key officials of the university about the processes and preparation for NAAC accreditation, NIRF ranking, initiatives undertaken to implement the National Education

Policy 2020 and the journey of the university in the last few years.

The team further visited different departments, important centers, laboratories and research facilities and took stock of the facilities available there. After interacting with the faculty members and officials, the team expressed happiness about the vibrancy of the university's academic and research environment, infrastructure, diversity of the courses, and the competitiveness of the teachers. The team extensively discussed with the IQAC team about Gauhati University's preparation for NAAC, NIRF, design of course structures based on outcome-based education (OBE). Members of the team also expressed satisfaction and offered a few suggestions where the university can take necessary steps for the greater and overall progress. They further suggested that budding universities of the state can take suggestions from Gauhati University for their growth journey.

Crackdown on illegal pharmacies in Morigaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAOON, July 11: The proliferation of illegal pharmacies along the Morigaon-Nagaon border has become a serious concern for the general public in the district. The flourishing business of illegal pharmacies operated by unauthorised license holders has endangered public health in the Baribazar area. Dishonest traders are opening pharmacies without licenses, leading to a rampant market of medicines that have caused patients to suffer from severe side effects.

The district Health Department has recently launched a massive operation against these unlicensed operators and illegal medicines. On Thursday, the Health Department conducted a raid on a pharmacy at Bari Bazar under the Mikirbheta Police Station. The illegal pharmacy, operated by Ataur Rahman in Baribazar, was found to have numerous irregularities. The Health Department's drug inspector seized approximately 65 medicines for various diseases and subsequently locked up the pharmacy.

Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharyya urges protection of indigenous interests

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 11: "We have been urging for the employment of eligible educated youths of the state in all jobs under the state government, central and semi-central government, private sector, and public sector undertakings within the state since the time of the historic Assam movements. The state government's recent decision to forgo the Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) in terms of recruitment in several categories is against the interests of the local people," said Dr Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharyya on Wednesday. He attended a programme as chief guest to felicitate shining students held at Swahid Bakori, organised by the AASU Tezpur Sadar Anchalik Committee.

Vehemently criticising the government's decision, Dr Bhattacharyya strongly opposed any decision that goes against the greater interests of the indigenous people of Assam. Talking to the media, Dr Bhat-



tacharya further stated, "This is the beginning of the crisis, and we must have our constitutional safeguards." He also demanded the protection of the interests of the indigenous people under the 6th Schedule of the Assam Accord. He expressed disappointment towards the government's decision to increase the salary of legislators.

During the felicitation ceremony, which aimed to felicitate 750 shining students of HSSLC and HSSLC examinations, Dr

Bhattacharya also offered felicitations to those who excelled in the APSC examination from Tezpur, along with internationally acclaimed taekwondo player Rodali Barua and several Sattriya artists. Among the dignitaries, principal of Tezpur College Dr Jyoti Kamal Hazarika, retired principals Dr Abani Kumar Sarma and Dr Charu Saharia Nath, and several district and central level leaders of student organisations were also present at the programme.

DLSA organises training on customary courts and legal awareness

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 11: A workshop cum training program on customary courts and basic legal procedures was organised at Gaonburha Bhawan, Khargaon in Kokrajhar on Wednesday to raise awareness among village headmen in rural areas.

The event, organised by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Kokrajhar, aimed to educate gaonburhas on important legal aspects to enhance their understanding and role in the community. Hundreds of gaonburhas from Kokrajhar and Chirang districts participated in the workshop and actively shared their views on various topics. Sumit Bhuyan, secretary of District Legal Services Authority, Kokrajhar, was the resource person for the workshop. He spoke on topics including Juvenile Justice, POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act), and Child Marriage, emphasising the importance of legal awareness among citizens.

Participants expressed satisfaction and appreciation for the workshop, highlighting its impressive content on legal procedures relevant to the community.

AGM of Kamrup Natya Samiti

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 11: The annual general meeting of the Kamrup Natya Samiti, Guwahati—a premier socio-cultural organisation of the state—will be held at the Kumar Bhaskar Natya Mandir premises on July 13, 2024 (Saturday). Rupiyoti Hazarika, general secretary of the Samiti, in a press release, requested all members of the Samiti to attend the meeting.

Tezpur prepares for 9th National Medical Laboratory Professional Week

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 11: The 9th National Medical Laboratory Professional Week, organised by the All Assam Medical Laboratory Technicians' Association, will commence from July 17 at Tezpur Medical College in Sonitpur district.

Jaran Munda, president of the reception committee for the event, highlighted the weeklong program themed 'Medical Laboratories Redefining Healthcare: Insight and Impact'. The opening ceremony will be officiated by Prof (Dr) Karuna Hazarika, principal cum chief superintendent of TMCH, at 2:00 pm on July 17, with Dr Rupam Borgohain as the guest of honour. The day will commence with a quiz competition among employees and students, inaugurated by Dr Niruprabha Saharia, HoD of the department of Pediatrics at TMCH.

On July 18, at 8:00 am, a cleanliness

drive will be initiated, inaugurated by Dr Subhana Medhi, deputy superintendent of TMCH. The day will also feature the inauguration of an indoor games competition by Dr Safiqul Islam. The weeklong program will continue with a variety of events including outdoor games competitions, debates, marathon races, cultural competitions, tree plantation, a blood donation camp, central executive meetings, seminars, cultural rallies, and will culminate on July 23 with an open session.

Among the highlights are scientific seminars, discussions on the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professional Acts 2021, and a career guidance seminar on medical laboratory technology. The event aims to emphasise the role and responsibility of medical professionals in their field and society, featuring a distinguished panel of senior doctors and experts.

Tezpur gears up for peaceful Muharram celebrations

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 11: A meeting was convened on Thursday under the chairmanship of district commissioner Deba Kumar Mishra at the Conference Hall of the DC's Office, Sonitpur, Tezpur, to ensure smooth arrangements and peaceful celebrations of Muharram on July 17, 2024, in Sonitpur district, including maintenance of law and order.

District commissioner Mishra, accompanied by superintendent of police Barun Purkayastha, addressed various issues raised during the meeting, such as procession timings, designated routes, and adherence to guidelines by different committees.

During the meeting, it was decided that from July 14 to July 16, 2024, the Muharram committees would conduct 3-day rehearsals, strictly adhering to a nightly timing of 10:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Only notified Muharram Committees of Tezpur town will be permitted to hold processions within the town, while peripheral committees are to celebrate within their designated

circles and notified areas. The district commissioner emphasised the crucial role of volunteers nominated by the committees in assisting the district administration in maintaining law and order during the festivities.

The superintendent of police urged committee members to ensure that no sharp weapons are carried during the celebratory processions. Traffic management, particularly in Dhekiajuli Revenue Circle, was also discussed extensively.

Representatives from various Muharram Committees across the district expressed their commitment to cooperate with the district administration and police for a peaceful celebration of the festival.

Additional district commissioner Pranjit Deb, additional superintendent of police Madhurima Das, circle officers from all Revenue Circles of Sonitpur, officers-in-charge of various police outposts in Sonitpur, representatives of Tezpur United Muharram Committee and its sub-committees, along with other concerned officials, attended the meeting.

Two arrested in Jagiroad



HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, July 11: On Thursday at 1:20 pm, following a tip-off, two youths were apprehended near Shilbhanga Petrol Pump. The individuals, identified as Kartik Nath (22 years), son of Lt Bijoy Nath, and Md Rekeb Ahmed (24 years), son of Md Amir Ali, both from Ghuunsa Habi village under Jagiroad Police Station, were caught with a motorcycle (No AS 21 K-3026). During the search, 14 plastic vials containing suspected heroin were recovered. Legal action is being initiated.

AAU-Zonal Research Station conducts parthenium awareness camp

Dr KD Singha leads campaign highlighting health risks & integrated weed management methods

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 11: An awareness camp was organised on Thursday, by AAU-Zonal Research Station, Diphu, at two locations: one at AAU-ZRS Campus and the other at Dillaji Mithiphang Village, Diphu, Karbi Anglong. The campaign was led by Dr KD Singha, chief scientist at AAU-ZRS, Diphu, and coordinated by all the scientists of AAU-ZRS, supported by office and field staff.

Dr Singha emphasised the importance of the parthenium awareness program and highlighted its harmful effects on human health, such as skin allergies (dermatitis), high fever, and asthma. He stressed the need for integrated management of this weed through me-



chanical, cultural, and biocontrol methods. Parthenium not only hampers crop production but also becomes a nuisance in non-cropped areas like residential

areas, parks, road sides, and railway tracks. He encouraged everyone to participate in uprooting parthenium plants in and around campuses and residential areas to

create a parthenium-free environment.

The program was successful and received high appreciation from villagers and farmers alike.

Youth thrashed to death in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, July 11: In a disturbing incident, a young man was tragically killed by a group of youths in the Alubari area of Dibrugarh on Thursday. The victim, identified as Kamal Sonar (24) from Alubari, Dibrugarh, lost his life in the incident. Police have arrested Deepjyoti Rajbanshi in connection with the murder.

"Kamal Sonar was allegedly killed by a group of 12 youths near an illegal liquor shop. It is suspected that Deepjyoti Rajbanshi had an old rivalry with Kamal. He was severely assaulted by the group at the liquor shop, resulting in serious injuries. He was admitted to AMCH in critical condition but later succumbed to his injuries during treatment," said a local resident.

Meanwhile, a case has been registered at Barbari Police Outpost,

and the police have initiated an investigation into the case.

"I want justice for my husband. My husband was brutally killed by a group of 12 youths. He was the sole earner of our family, and now how can I look after my two children? This incident happened due to the rampant growth of illegal liquor shops in the Alubari area. The police should take necessary action to shut down all illegal liquor shops," the deceased's wife told media persons.

A police official stated, "Kamal Sonar went to the liquor shop on Wednesday night to consume alcohol where Deepjyoti Rajbanshi and his gang were present. Suddenly, an altercation broke out between them, and he was severely beaten by the group. He was rushed to the hospital but unfortunately, he passed away during treatment."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

To be great is to be misunderstood.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Victory for gender justice, equality

The recent Supreme Court ruling mandating alimony for divorced Muslim women marks a significant victory for gender justice and equality. In the last few months, the judiciary has shown a commendable commitment to resolving long-pending cases, and this decision is a testament to their dedication. The case of Telangana resident Mohd. Abdul Samad echoes the historic Shah Bano Begum case of 1986. Shah Bano, divorced by Mohd. Ahmed Khan in 1978, was denied maintenance despite being the mother of his five children. Her plight led to a landmark Supreme Court ruling in her favor, ordering her husband to provide alimony. However, the ruling was overturned by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's government through a new law, bowing to pressure from conservative factions. Journalist Neeraj Chowdhury's book, "How Prime Ministers Decide," reveals Rajiv Gandhi's role in persuading Shah Bano to withdraw her case. This move, seen as appeasement to secure the Muslim vote bank, set a troubling precedent. For decades, divorced Muslim women were left without adequate legal recourse, until the recent Supreme Court decision provided a glimmer of hope.

The current ruling, rejecting Mohd. Abdul Samad's appeal against paying Rs 20,000 per month to his divorced wife, reaffirms the principle that no religious law can supersede the rights guaranteed under the Constitution. Critics argue that Islamic law, with a history spanning 1,500 years, cannot be overridden. However, the Supreme Court's stance highlights the importance of a Uniform Civil Code, a contentious yet crucial debate in India's socio-political landscape. This ruling comes at a politically charged time, with assembly elections looming in Haryana, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra. The decision is likely to influence voter behavior, potentially consolidating Muslim votes against the NDA government. Conversely, the BJP may leverage the ruling to galvanize Hindu voters. The Congress-led I.N.D.I.-Alliance, if it comes to power, will face immense pressure to address this issue. However, any attempt to overturn the Supreme Court ruling would require a parliamentary majority that appears elusive in the current political climate. The situation is reminiscent of Rajiv Gandhi's era, but today's fragmented political landscape makes such a sweeping legislative move unlikely.

Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which mandates maintenance for all divorced women irrespective of their religion, underscores the secular nature of Indian law. The Supreme Court's recent order aligns with this principle, emphasizing that justice should be universal and not confined by religious boundaries. The focus on the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, highlights the ongoing struggle for gender equality within the framework of personal laws. The Supreme Court's ruling is a reaffirmation of its commitment to protecting the rights of all citizens, especially marginalized women. The Supreme Court has once again upheld the rights of divorced Muslim women, providing them with the legal recognition and support they deserve. This decision is not just a legal mandate but a moral one, reflecting the essence of justice and equality in a diverse and democratic society. As the nation moves forward, it is imperative that we continue to uphold these principles, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their background, is treated with fairness and dignity. This ruling marks a pivotal moment in the fight for gender justice in India, reminding us that the judiciary's role is crucial in upholding the rights and dignity of all citizens.

Betting platform Polymarket has become popular on eve of US elections

By: Arun Kumar Shrivastava

Recently, cryptocurrency entrepreneur and investor Balaji Srinivasan posted a small cryptic message about the US presidential election on X (formerly Twitter). He wrote "Polymarket is the news," and shared a screenshot of the prediction betting website, where the chances of Joe Biden winning the election was shown to be 25% while his chances of losing was 70%.

Polymarket made the headlines a few days back when people bet on Biden's chances of dropping out of the election at as high as 80%. Currently, punters on Polymarket have placed bets of \$25.74 million on 42% chances of Joe Biden staying in the race while, \$7.24 million on vice-president Kamala Harris's 40% chances of replacing Biden as Democrat candidate, and \$11.09 million on Michelle Obama's 7% chances of being the Democratic Party presidential candidate. Due to intensified betting activities fuelled by the US presidential election, the monthly revenue of Polymarket crossed \$100 million for the first time in June.

Founded in 2020, Polymarket is a crypto betting platform that offers betting opportunities on political events and outcomes such as elections and results. Polymarket betting became an important indicator of US citizen's true mood at a time when newspapers and TV channels are accused of being bought-out by political parties.

In the same X thread, Balaji says, "You can now short the Party with cryptocurrency. Take any NYT headline, figure out how Sulzberger's employees are lying this time, and turn it into a prediction market. Once the Party is forced to accept reality, collect your money, Rinse and repeat."

Balaji is an influential cryptocurrency thinker, early bitcoin adopter, and prolific investor. He was tipped to be taken into the Donald Trump administration last time but for some reason he failed to make it. If Donald Trump, who

has promised his support for the cryptocurrency sector and has received substantial donations from crypto firms in his current campaign for the White House, wins, Balaji could well be a part of the US administration this time.

Balaji has been criticizing the way the US economy and its finances have been managed by the Federal Reserve under the Democratic governments. He says, "Anti-tech journalists hate tech. So, by talking to a media corporation, you harm the value of your equity, thereby harming yourself. You are literally giving them money at your own expense, by giving them \$100 in clicks and giving up \$100k in equity."

Polymarket's prediction on who will win the US presidential election 2024 has \$230 million placed on Donald Trump having 61% chance of winning, Kamala Harris 15%, Joe Biden 12%, and Michelle Obama 5%. Polymarket offers interesting possibilities for prediction. For example, you can bet on "will china invade Taiwan in 2024. At 10% chances, punters have placed \$1.2 million. Will Israel invade Lebanon before September? At 35% chances, punters have placed \$116,800. In Pop culture, it offers prediction betting on topics as Elon (Musk) tweets and Taylor Swift will marry in 2024, Diddy arrested before August. Polymarket has received a new round of funding by Ethereum co-founder Vitalik Buterin and co-founder of PayPal and investor Peter Thiel.

Recently, Taiwan charged a man for betting on the Taiwan Presidential elections that concluded in January this year. The Taiwanese laws make it illegal to bet on election results. During the election, Taiwan had blocked the Polymarket website and even launched a crackdown on illegal betting activities. The accused, Chen, had placed 472 USDC (worth \$472) for Ko Wen-je of the Taiwan People's Party to win the presidential election. Chen had placed another 60 USDC on the Democratic Progressive Party winning more seats in the legislature. (IPA Service)

Modi-Putin meet in Moscow re-affirms a longstanding time-tested friendship

The 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit held in Moscow on July 8-9 2024 will go a long way in re-embellishing one of the most enduring friendships in the geopolitical theatre. Moscow and New Delhi have seen many ups and downs together, no matter who has been in power in the Grand Kremlin Palace or in the Parliament House. Fortunately, India-Russia ties are still regime change-proof, and have withstood the serial ideological onslaughts from the United States-led "rules-based order" of the West.

The two-day bilateral summit between India and Russia (coming right before the NATO countries have their imperial huddle fronting all things Ukraine), saw the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, bestowing the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle on the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the highest state award by the country.

Modi and Putin greeted each other in warm hugs, firm handshakes, and addressed each other as "dear friend" on several occasions. The fact that Russia is Modi's first international destination after securing a third term in office, albeit with a diminished mandate, speaks volumes about the importance of the Moscow-New Delhi all-weather strategic relationship.

Moreover, Modi's latest visit comes after five years, the last time being a 2019 economic meet in Vladivostok, and is the first since the start of the Russia-Ukraine War in February 2022, as well as after Putin's landslide victory in the Russian presidential elections held in March this year.

Crucially, the two-day meet with both formal and informal segments, saw the leaders charting an exhaustive list of issues covering economic and defence links, trade volume, cooperation in energy sector, developing Russia's Northern Sea Route together, cooperation in nuclear



energy as well as space and other areas.

The "Leaders' Joint Statement on the development of strategic areas of Russia-India economic cooperation for the period up to 2030" states that Moscow and New Delhi commit to "firmly adhering to the principles of mutual respect and equality, the sovereign development of the two countries on a mutually beneficial and long-term basis", which will be "guided by the intention to maintain the trend of dynamic growth of trade in goods and services between the two states and the desire to ensure a significant increase in its volume by 2030".

As per the Leaders' Joint Statement, "bilateral economic cooperation" in nine key areas will be undertaken, including: 1) elimination of non-tariff trade barriers, possibility of the EAEU-India Free Trade Area, achieving a mutual trade volume of 100 billion USD by 2030; 2) development of a bilateral settlement system using national currencies and digital financial instruments; 3) increase in cargo turnover along new routes of the North South International Transport Corridor, Russia's Northern Sea Route and the Chennai-Vladivostok Sea Line; 4) increased bilateral trade in agriculture, food and fertilizer; 5) cooperation in nuclear energy, oil refining, petrochemi-

als and mutual energy security; 6) infrastructure development; Indian and Russian companies in each other's markets, standardization of assessment; 7) joint projects in science, education, digital economy; 8) medicine, medical and biological security; and 9) humanitarian cooperation in culture, tourism, technology, healthcare etc.

The focus on economic ties aims to address the issue of trade imbalance, with India importing more from Russia, especially oil and other fuels, to help the latter tide over grueling post-Ukraine war Western sanctions. Delivering liquefied natural gas to India will further boost the Russian economy as the country will be able to effectively diversify away from Europe, while India will fuel its growing economy slated to soon become the world's third largest in GDP, surpassing Japan and Germany in the years to come.

Although, the total India-Russia trade volume is still roughly one-third of the Russia-China trade volume that stands at 240 billion USD, trade has been growing at an exponential rate, especially since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war.

According to a report in Russia Today, "the volume of bilateral trade between Russia and India had continued to grow, hitting a record \$23.1 billion in the first four months of the current

year, marking a 10% rise versus the same period in 2023".

One of the pressing concerns has been the creation of a sustainable digital architecture of mutual payments in respective national currencies, with Rupee-Rouble exchange seeing serial hiccups in settlement. As BRICS countries seek to de-dollarise and create an alternative financial architecture for the Global South, moving away from the US dollar and its attendant restrictions, India and Russia have had testing times settling accounts in the mutual national currencies.

Moreover, unwitting delays in defence supplies, India diversifying and indigenising its military procurements, and the confusion around recruitment of Indians in the Russian army as mercenaries, among other pending issues have been suitably addressed in the bilateral summit.

In addition, Prime Minister Modi politely expressed concerns about the protracted Russia-Ukraine war, stressing on peace talks and negotiations over military solutions, for which President Putin thanked him. What Modi voiced was not an admonition of the Russian side, but merely the concerns of the Global South which wants peace and prosperity for all.

This is in stark contrast to the high-voltage morality lectures in hypocrisy coming from the West, which unilaterally condemns Russia for far smaller transgressions while batting for the genocidal Israel's extermination of Gaza in the same breath.

Modi's visit has been, expectedly, criticized in the Western press, which has been alarmed at the "hug" and the decoration of Modi with the highest Russian state award. Volodymyr Zelensky, the embattled President of Ukraine, has categorically condemned Modi's Moscow visit, especially on a day the Russians targeted some of the military installations in Kiev and a Ukrainian anti-defence missile landed on a children's hospital, which

the Western press promptly pinned on Russia. Western disinformation aside, the Modi-Putin meet has been welcomed in most of the Global south, and crucially, in Beijing.

Chinese press is awash with appreciative accounts of Modi-Putin meet, underlining that Beijing is happy to see deepening India-Russia cooperation, while expressing displeasure at the West's attempt to "sow discord" between China, India and Russia. According to an editorial in the Global Times, "China does not view closer Russian-Indian relations as a threat, whereas Western countries are increasingly dissatisfied with India's relations with Russia".

It added: "Western countries have sought to pull India into the Western camp and counter-balance China's influence, but India's response has not reciprocated the political and diplomatic gestures extended by the West". Furthermore, the Global Times wrote: "Despite Western pressure, Modi opted for Russia as his first destination for a foreign visit after beginning his third term last month. This move not only aims to strengthen India's ties with Russia, but also enhances its leverage in dealing with the US and other Western nations."

Evidently, the Western press is flooded with headlines expressing discontent, such as "Russia is a strategic spoiler in Indo-Pacific", "Modi's Moscow Miscalculation", "India Charts Its Own Course", "India's Balancing Act", etc.

However, it's reassuring to see not only New Delhi and Moscow brushing off Western sermons by ever-deepening mutual ties, but also Beijing responding maturely and cordially to the development. With Russia-India ties staying steadfast and time-tested as ever, could Moscow help precipitate a serious détente between New Delhi and Beijing? Geopolitics, as they say, is the art of the possible. (IPA Service)

The rebirth of Tibet on the world stage

By: Dipak Kurmi

A high-profile American delegation, led by Michael McCaul and Nancy Pelosi from the US House of Representatives, recently visited Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, where they met with the Dalai Lama. This meeting holds significant geopolitical implications as it signals a shift in US policy towards Tibet. The delegation conveyed a firm message that the United States no longer recognizes Tibet as a part of China. They announced plans for the "Resolve Tibet-China Act," which is expected to become law soon.

During their visit, the delegation prioritized meeting with the Tibetan spiritual leader before meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, underscoring their engagement with the Tibetan government-in-exile. The Indian government welcomed the delegation without hesitation, despite potential diplomatic repercussions with China. This stance has resonated strongly in Beijing, where Chinese leaders have historically asserted control over Tibet, tracing back to Mao Zedong's claim of 'suzerainty' over the region.

The Chinese claim over Tibet as a province and subsequent efforts to suppress its culture, heritage, and language trace back to the aftermath of World War II. The strategic decisions made during the war, such as allowing the Soviet Red Army to enter and occupy Berlin first, inadvertently bolstered Stalin's perception of Soviet dominance in post-war Europe. By 1949, the Soviet Union's acquisition of nuclear weapons further solidified this perception, despite their economic and military limitations beyond Eurasia. These historical events set the stage for the geopolitical dynamics that continue to influence relations in the region today.

The United States' initial overestimation

of Communist China during the mid-20th century contrasted sharply with the perceived instability of Chiang Kai Shek's Kuomintang regime on the mainland. Despite Mao Zedong's Maoists demonstrating greater ideological commitment, this assessment didn't justify the exclusion of Chiang Kai Shek's government and Taiwan from the United Nations. India, by all accounts a more fitting candidate, was overlooked in favor of accommodating Communist China's entry into the global stage. The Nehru government's steadfast support for recognizing Red China's status highlights a significant diplomatic decision, reflective of the complex international dynamics of that era.

For years, the US State Department maintained a belief that the Soviet Union and China operated as a unified communist bloc. It wasn't until the Sino-Soviet conflict erupted along the Ussuri River in 1969 that the true depth of animosity between the two communist powers became unmistakably clear. This clash marked a pivotal moment, revealing the significant discord and strategic rivalry that had long simmered beneath the surface of international communist solidarity.

Following the Sino-Soviet clash in 1969, President Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972 under the guidance of Dr. Henry Kissinger marked a turning point. This diplomatic thaw significantly elevated China's global standing, paving the way for Deng Xiaoping's transformative economic reforms focused on manufacturing and exports. China's subsequent economic boom, fueled largely by exports to the United States, underscored its newfound economic prowess.

Amid these developments, the US State Department had long overlooked the plight of Tibetans under Chinese rule since 1959. The reasons for this neglect remain unclear—is it due to ongoing tensions over Taiwan, or perhaps broader geopolit-



ical considerations yet to be fully understood? Time may shed light on these intentions. India's stance in this dynamic has also been pivotal.

While leftist factions in the country swiftly advocated for recognizing the new Chinese regime after its civil war victory, Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel took a more cautious approach. In November 1949, he sought American counsel through Charge d'Affairs Donovan to assess the urgency of recognizing Communist China—an early indicator of India's nuanced diplomacy in a changing global landscape.

Given Sardar Patel's extensive correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru regarding China, his primary concern likely centered on ensuring mutual recognition of the Sino-Indian border. However, Nehru, eager to move swiftly, informed the Chinese of India's decision to recognize their regime in December of that year without consulting the Sardar. This action underscored differing perspectives within India's leadership on how best to navigate relations with the emerging Communist power.

Upon receiving Nehru's message of recognition, China also presented several conditions. Firstly, India was to transfer all properties and assets belonging to China to the new regime. Secondly, India agreed not to recognize any members of the

Kuomintang (KMT). Thirdly, India was expected to support the expulsion of Nationalist China from the United Nations and endorse its replacement by the communist regime. China's intentions reveal a calculated strategy, evident from the communist regime's swift declaration of Tibet's "liberation" by the People's Liberation Army just a day before the founding of the People's Republic of China. This move followed the expulsion of the Chinese Amban by Tibetans, despite his affiliation with the Kuomintang government.

The Chinese accusation against India portrayed Nehru as a puppet of British imperialism, alleging his role in the historical humiliation of China, a narrative Mao aimed to reverse. China's People's Daily editorial criticized the concept of suzerainty as oppressive, despite China's own historical demands over Tibet. The editorial even urged the UN to scrutinize India's ties with Bhutan.

Despite warnings, including those from Ambassador K.M. Panikar, the Nehru government overlooked China's broader ambitions extending to Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan. Nehru, known for his advocacy of global peace and unity, remained unaware of these strategic maneuvers. The consequences were felt acutely in Tibet and India alike. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

POST BAG

Ensuring fair market prices: A call to address farmer concerns amidst ASAMB restructuring

Sir/Ma'am

The Government of Assam's decision to offer a Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) to the employees of the Assam State Agricultural Marketing Board (ASAMB) raises significant concerns. A crucial issue remains unaddressed: how will the government ensure effective marketing of agricultural commodities for our farmers? Due to various unfortunate reasons,

our farmers are often deprived of fair market prices for their produce. It is imperative that any restructuring or downsizing plan includes robust mechanisms to safeguard farmers' interests and guarantee them fair returns for their hard work.

Mowsam Hazarika
Writer, Poet and People's Scientist
mowsam2000@yahoo.co.in
or 9435103685

Contain Dengue outbreak

Sir/Ma'am

The Karnataka state government must declare a medical emergency in response to a severe dengue outbreak that has claimed numerous lives within just one week. Immediate action is imperative, including the establishment of a task force led by experts to address escalating cases across districts.

Comprehensive mosquito control strategies and awareness campaigns, particularly targeting schools and colleges, are urgently needed to curb the spread of the diseases. The sluggish response from the health department has

worsened the crisis, with ICU beds in hospitals overwhelmed by severe cases. A transparent data collection system is essential, along with urging residents to collaborate with health workers to eliminate mosquito breeding sites and prevent stagnant water.

Overall, there is a pressing need for decisive government action to effectively contain the outbreak and address the challenges posed by dengue in Karnataka.

Dr. Vijaykumar H K
Raichur, Karnataka
hkvkmech1@gmail.com

Why India's ruling coalition must stop using foreign policy to score political points at home

By: Atul Mishra

The likely impact of the new coalition government on India's external relations has been the focus of foreign policy commentary ever since the Lok Sabha election results were declared on June 4. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party fell short of winning a majority and returned to power, leading the National Democratic Alliance with two other parties.

There is consensus over the continuity of India's foreign policy, not least because the coalition is likely to be stable and the core team responsible for executing it since 2019 has continued. There is, however, one area where change will be welcome: the use of foreign policy to score political goals at home.

Foreign policy is the medium through which the government of the day tries to secure the state's national interests. In the Indian system, the government changes every five years but the state remains a constant. This makes any government no more than a trustee of India's foreign policy.

Trusteeship enjoins the government to use the privileges of India's membership of the international community to meet national goals such as security, development and international influence.

In the past decade, while the establishment in New Delhi sought to secure national interests as it executed the country's foreign policy, it also used foreign policy to service the ruling regime, its ideology and leadership.

In terms of ideology, New Delhi promoted a particular reading of the Indian nation abroad. As part of what Foreign Minister S Jaishankar has described as "cultural rebalancing", New Delhi dropped the mention of religion when speaking of India's diversity. While India's spiritual heritage was given more importance, it also became a channel for identifying India with the majority religion.

India's history too was recast. For decades, India had articulated a modernist reading of national history on foreign soil. According to this history, in 1947 India gained independence from European colonialism, and with the dawn of a new era, it left the conflicted element of its history behind and embraced a forward-looking modernity.

But this foundational consensus of India's polity was undermined, and the Hindu nationalist reading of India's long history was rehearsed on foreign soil. For instance, in his speech to the US Congress in June 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of India's "remarkable



journey of over 75 years of freedom, after a thousand years of foreign rule in one form or another".

Similarly, while India was characterised as the "mother of democracy" — a claim that has struggled to gain international traction — the leadership stopped referring to India as a "liberal democracy". This was a break from the immediate past as the governments led by Manmohan Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee had either explicitly or through endorsement of liberal democratic values of individualism, pluralism and constitutionalism, asserted that India was a liberal democracy.

Furthermore, India's political culture allows considerable latitude to the party or coalition in power to

criticise its opponents and the Opposition, but the unwritten rule is that criticism must take place at home. This was overlooked.

Regime talking points about the record of past governments from development to corruption as well as its insistence that Indians lacked confidence or felt a sense of shame prior to 2014 were often rehearsed during events in other countries. Particularly conspicuous in this series were the comments of India's ambassador to Ireland made in *The Irish Times* in April.

In the letter, the ambassador criticised the "deeply entrenched ecosystem of corruption (created by the 55-year rule, including first 30 years, by a single dynastic party in

India)".

Similarly, foreign policy was used to craft and enhance a distinct image of the prime minister, giving him an advantage in competitive politics at home.

Mega public events such as those held at Madison Square Garden in New York, Wembley Stadium in London, Richo Coliseum in Toronto and Sydney combined populism and public diplomacy, fronting the leader over the nation.

It is true that the prime minister intervened in the Ukraine conflict to rescue Indian nationals, but this act was exaggerated and made part of election advertising.

The prime minister undeniably forged personal equations with several foreign leaders, but it is India's inherent importance in global geopolitics that has been the determining factor in producing several favourable foreign policy outcomes, especially in relations with western countries and Japan.

Where odds have been stacked against India, as in the neighbourhood due to China's influence, the prime minister's charisma has not been able to keep neighbouring states from being difficult from time to time. Geopolitics has trumped charisma vis-à-vis China.

Parties and leaders in power have the right to advertise foreign policy

accomplishments of their governments in domestic politics to stay competitive and improve their chances of re-election.

Taking credit for serving national interest is legitimate, but it is best to avoid using the country's international relations and foreign policy apparatus to serve particular interests, be they related to ideology, party or the leadership of the ruling dispensation.

If the new National Democratic Alliance government continues with this practice, it will erode the Union government's role as a trustee of India's foreign policy.

The more the state's resources and privileges are used instrumentally for narrow ends, the more its aesthetic majesty corrodes. It will set a precedent and incentivise future governments to act similarly.

The verdict of the general election is in favour of the traditional Indian values of pluralism, inclusion, consensus and secularism. India's foreign policy must rearticulate an Indian identity based on these values.

The mandate is for a coalition government and collective governance. It will be refreshing to see the nation gain prominence over the functionaries, whose job it is to secure India's interests in international affairs. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Completing ₹ 6 trillion monetisation: Reality or gimmickry? China's geospatial ambitions and security concerns

By: Shrivishtha Ajaykumar



By: Subhash Chandra Garg

The National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) was announced as part of the 2021-22 Budget. Accompanied by a lengthy release from the Press Information Bureau (PIB), it was launched by the Finance Minister in August 2021. The goal was to carry out the monetisation of public assets worth Rs 6 trillion.

Detailed in two comprehensive volumes and prepared under the supervision of NITI Aayog, the NMP listed specific monetisation targets for sectors and assets of the central government ministries and public sector enterprises (PSEs) to be implemented during the four years (2021-22 to 2024-25).

Its implementation has been a relatively low-key affair. No PIB press release was issued in the first two financial years (2021-22 and 2022-23), although some informal and cryptic media briefings were made by NITI Aayog officials, asserting significant accomplishment of their objectives. In their first official press release, on 19 June 2024, the PIB claimed that the NMP had monetised ₹ 3.85 trillion of assets in three years and for 2023-24, monetisation of ₹ 1.56 trillion was achieved against the target of 1.8 trillion.

Roads (₹ 1.60 trillion) and Railways (₹ 1.53 trillion) were expected to contribute more than 50 percent of the monetisation target, while mining (with no specific mention of coal) was expected to bring in a maximum of ₹ 28,747 crore. The press release reported zero monetisation receipts from Railways and the highest achievement of ₹ 57,794 crore from the coal sector for 2023-24.

What has been happening in the monetisation pipeline? Monetisation is all about receiving capitalised value upfront against the stream of future receipts. Have the PSEs/ government received any such capital payments? Has zero monetisation by Railways and many others led to non-genuine monetisation being included as achievements?

Thirteen sectors and two monetisation models

In addition to the roads, railways and mining mentioned above, power transmission (₹ 45,000 crore), power generation (₹ 39,832 crore), telecom (₹ 35,100 crore), warehousing (₹ 28,900 crore), natural gas pipelines (₹ 24,462 crore), product pipelines/others (₹ 22,504 crore), aviation (₹ 20,782 crore), ports (₹ 12,828 crore) and stadiums (₹ 11,450 crore) were the other sectors listed in NMP for bringing in the rest of monetised moolah.

The NMP describes the fundamental process of monetisation and proposes two basic models for the same. First, direct contract approach (DCA) considers concessions like build, operate and transfer (BOT etc.) monetisation whereby the government/ PSE enters

into a concession contract for any specific asset. They transfer the right to collect tolls and other revenues against upfront payment as well as the responsibility of operation and maintenance.

Second, the structured financing model (SFM) wherein the asset (constructed, incomplete or new) is transferred to a financing vehicle like REIT, InVIT etc., sponsored by the government/ PSE retaining significant ownership stake, for raising equity for capital investment from private funds. Most of the assets identified in the NMP were to be monetised using the first method.

Most ministries fail

There is no culture of monetisation in most of the ministries/PSEs identified in the NMP. Some did not initiate any steps, while others made half-hearted attempts. Railways, targeted to monetise railway tracks, stations etc. of ₹ 1.6 trillion, attempted monetisation in the first year, could achieve no headway, and fell out of the pipeline, resulting in zero monetisation.

The government successfully monetised six airports pre-NMP in the years 2018-20. The government unnecessarily muddled this effective model by deciding to include both unviable and viable airports in the monetisation plan. Approvals were obtained, but no tendering was undertaken, rendering the targeted ₹ 20,782 crore from airport monetisation defunct.

GAIL identified a few natural gas pipelines reluctantly and issued the bids. There were no results. GAIL stopped its efforts, throwing ₹ 24,462 crore of natural gas pipeline projects from the pipeline. Power Grid had earlier carried out a transmission grid monetisation successfully pre-NMP in 2020-21.

In the NMP era, Power Grid did not execute a single monetisation transaction, leaving ₹ 45,200 crore expected from power transmission monetisation completely stranded. Telecom/BSNL were to monetise towers, land and building assets of ₹ 35,000 crore. Instead, the government ended up parting with three revival packages costing over ₹ 3 trillion.

A few ministries/ PSEs on the original monetisation champions list did not make significant efforts either—stadiums (₹ 11,450 crore), warehousing (₹ 28,900 crore) etc. saw no activity. As much as three-fourth of the originally envisaged monetisation pipeline simply saw no throughput.

Road sector saved blushes

The PIB press release for 2023-24 attributes monetisation of ₹ 40,314 crore to the road sector. In a press release issued in February 2024, it was claimed that the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)/NHAI's monetisation crossed ₹ 1 trillion. The NHAI has been successfully monetising road assets before the NMP. In 2018-19, in the first ever monetisation transaction,

NHAI successfully raised over ₹ 9,000 crore from a toll, operate, and transfer (TOT) transactions.

Of the ₹ 1 trillion monetisation by MoRTH/ NHAI, ₹ 42,334 crore was raised through TOT, ₹ 26,125 crore through InVITs and ₹ 42,000 crore through securitisation. TOT transactions are undoubtedly genuine monetisation transactions. NHAI established the National Highways Infra Trust (NHIT) and transferred its select road assets to special purpose vehicles (SPVs) owned by the NHIT. NHAI effectively continues to manage these road assets through investment manager National Highways Infra Investment Managers Private Limited (NHIMPL), owned by the government, and project manager National Highways InVIT Project Managers Private Limited (NHIPMPL), wholly owned by NHAI.

Ideally, only the share of private investors (about 50-60 percent) of the total ₹ 26,125 crore raised through InVIT transactions should be counted as monetisation. However, considering all ₹ 26,125 as monetisation proceeds is not particularly consequential. The remaining transaction—debt raised through securitisation of ₹ 42,000 crore—was a far lower number. Despite these weaknesses, the monetisation of road assets by MoRTH/NHAI has been the most successful execution of NMP.

Monetisation gimmickry

While none of the other 13 original monetisation champions could acquit themselves well in the monetisation sweepstakes, new interlopers came in to make a mark.

The Ministry of Coal has publicly claimed that it carried out monetisation of ₹ 40,105 crore in 2021-22 and ₹ 57,180 crore in 2022-23. For 2023-24, it targeted ₹ 50,118 crore and achieved ₹ 56,794 crore, which was well over target. A new target of ₹ 54,721 crore in 2024-25 has been announced. Initially, the Ministry of Coal was not envisaged to contribute anything to the original NMP target. With current predictions, it will end up being the most 'successful' monetiser.

In the first three years of NMP, the Ministry of Coal could achieve monetisation of a humungous ₹ 1.54 trillion, around 40 percent of the total claimed monetisation of ₹ 3.85 trillion. In case the Ministry of Coal achieves its 2024-25 target (which is quite likely considering its past performance), it would contribute ₹ 2.09 trillion to the total NMP target of ₹ 6 trillion—single-handedly achieving more than one-third of the total monetisation target.

Incidentally, the auction of coal mines is not considered monetisation. Monetisation involves receiving a discounted stream of future revenues upfront from any mining concession. Since the government sets future royalty payments at the time of coal auctions, labelling these auctions as monetisation is nothing short of gimmickry.

Monetisation is not easy; it's time to be honest

Almost all of the original sectoral ministries/ PSEs (except the road sector) failed to undertake any real monetisation. Monetisation is, understandably, a difficult proposition. With better transparency, this failure could be explained and processes improved for the future. There is no point in making false claims about monetisation when it is not being undertaken. To be honest, providing a truthful account of the performance of the monetisation pipeline and undertaking real monetisation transactions by investing in state capacity is what needs to be done to meet targets. (Courtesy: The Quint)

By: Shrivishtha Ajaykumar

In February 2023, a Chinese surveillance balloon was shot down in the United States (US) by the US Air Force (USAF). While US representatives say no information was lost to the Chinese government, the incident raises concerns about the Chinese government's geospatial and surveillance capabilities.

China's geospatial strategies encompass a wide range of areas, including national security, public security, and industrial regulations. This multifaceted approach is designed to serve both economic and national security interests.

The recent balloon incident, which China claims was for weather data collection, still has raised suspicions due to the country's expanding collection methods in grey-zone warfare, including advancing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) through the use of spy balloons, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), and other aerostat technologies as part of the People's Liberation Army's Reconnaissance Strike Complex (RSC).

Global prospects of Chinese geospatial ambitions

China's development of the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BeiDou) is a testament to its technological prowess. Primarily designed for national security, driven by the 1996 Taiwan Strait missile crisis, BDS provides the Chinese military with strategic autonomy.

It enables precise missile guidance, robust communication, and enhanced cyber and drone warfare capabilities without relying on the U.S.-controlled Geographic Positioning System (GPS). BeiDou offers superior accuracy, particularly in Asia-Pacific, with position accuracy under 10 cm compared to GPS's 30 cm.

Its compatibility with GPS, Russian Globalnaya Navigatsionnaya Sputnikovaya Sistema (GLONASS), and the European Union's GALILEO provide a reliable alternative for militaries concerned about GPS signal manipulation and interference during conflicts.

China's existing geospatial strategies are bolstered by developing geospatial systems like BeiDou, a critical part

of the Space Silk Road (China's push to create a reliance on the BeiDou systems from all countries the Belt and Road Initiative passes through), and by increasing Chinese sovereignty in the global domain and the dependence of countries in China's neighbourhood on them. One such country is Pakistan, which has integrated BeiDou into its military and civil systems as part of its cooperation with China, thus reducing its dependence on GPS.

China has made similar agreements with other Belt and Road Initiative Members, including Saudi Arabia and Iran. In 2019, Saudi Arabia was also underpinned in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with China to collaborate on using BeiDou in military applications and in 2021, Iran and China signed an MoU for a strategic partnership, while internal sources later alleged this included giving Iran access to BeiDou's military-grade signals.

China's (Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) is not the only development in near space. Due to suspicions over China's use of geospatial satellites for military purposes and subsequent exclusion from the International Space Station, entitled the Wolf Amendment.

The Wolf amendment, however, has had no effect in discouraging the Chinese government from space exploration or using space data in military applications and ISR. Thus, China also developed Tiangong, a Chinese sovereign space station (Tiangong 1 first launched in 2011).

Military applications

While the BeiDou and Tiangong systems are useful for countries aligning with China, their main purpose is to assist the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA heavily relies on geospatial technology for navigation, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR), targeting, and command and control.

Integrating satellite imagery, remote sensing, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and GPS into military operations enhances China's situational awareness and overall military capability.

The People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) enhanced its ISR in the last decade,

launching various satellites alongside the BeiDou Systems.

These include advanced communications satellites capable of transmitting large volumes of data, space systems providing precise PNT services, and new weather and oceanographic satellites.

For long-range precision strikes in the Indo-Pacific region, the PLA would partially depend on high-resolution, dual-use space-based synthetic aperture radar (SAR), electro-optical (EO) sensors, and possibly electronic intelligence satellites for surveillance and targeting.

Moreover, the PLASSF has incorporated strategic oversight of the application of data from these space-based systems, integrating this information into operational planning and execution.

The leadership at the corps level or the level just below the corps (corps deputy leader) is responsible for overseeing and managing the ground-based components of various space-related systems. This includes ensuring the functionality and security of the BeiDou and other satellite and surveillance networks and coordinating their use in peacetime and wartime operations.

PLA officers have also been noted participating in international cooperation meetings with Russia under "Beibu Unity 2023", suggesting a level of strategic collaboration and potential sharing of satellite data and technologies, further enhancing their ISR capabilities.

This, alongside suspicions of China sharing geospatial information with Russia amidst the war on Ukraine, is indicative of China's dismissal of global accountability with advancing technology.

Surveillance and control

While China's removal from the ISS left the country no choice but to venture into space on its own space station and military applications of dual-use technologies such as geospatial technologies are common globally, the use of geospatial technologies in surveillance and border control have been a criticised action by China.

China uses geospatial technology, biometric databases, and facial recognition for extensive domestic surveil-

lance and control. This includes monitoring dissidents, ethnic minority groups, and potential sources of unrest.

Additionally, the Baidu Street View and Maps facility restricted both map and street views of alleged Uyghur Detention Camps. Similar surveillance by China has been revealed in Tibet.

Geospatial intelligence, along with other technologies such as drones, AI, and even biometric surveillance, can result in unethical forms of surveillance.

China's investment in Near Space Flight Vehicles (NSFV) is critical to its military strategy, including space-borne and air-borne platforms, reinforcing and ensuring continued capability even if space-based assets are compromised.

This, alongside the development of high-altitude heliports alongside the Sino-India border, is a concern for the Indian Border Force for the possible use of the ports as tactical locations at the least and the use of UAVs for surveillance and attacks at the most.

Implications for Global Security

The dual-use nature of geospatial technologies, combined with China's territorial ambitions and military advancements, pose significant and pressing challenges for other nations, including economic competition with GNSS-possessing nations, the scope of increasing geopolitical tensions through military-grade geospatial technology and information sharing and the unethical use of such technologies in grey zone warfare and domestic surveillance.

The spy balloon incident underscores the evolving nature of intelligence collection and the increasing importance of near-space technologies in modern warfare.

With China's investment in heliports on the Sino-Indian border and collaboration on military-grade geospatial information use with India's neighbours, India continues to see China as a significant player in the space race and in its border security.

As China's geospatial capabilities continue to evolve, the global community must navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by this ever-changing and strategic landscape. (Courtesy: ORF)

China and Russia have closely aligned their foreign policies to oppose the West

China hits out at NATO for branding it as 'decisive enabler' of Ukraine war, says don't bring 'chaos' to Asia

BEIJING, July 11: China on Thursday hit out at NATO for terming it as a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine, lodging a diplomatic protest to the Western alliance for the "provocative" remarks and asking it not to bring the same "chaos" to Asia.

The China-related paragraphs in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's Washington summit declaration are "biased, provocative and aimed at vilifying" Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a media briefing here. "We strongly deplore it and firmly oppose it and lodged a serious representation, (diplomatic protest) to NATO," Lin said.

He also lashed out at the NATO Asia-Pacific push, saying the organisation is strengthening ties with China's neighbours and US allies trying to seek security



at the expense of others and asked it not to bring the same "chaos" to Asia.

NATO's Asia Pacific strategy has damaged China's interests, he said and urged it to stop interfering in its internal affairs. China will firmly safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests, he said.

The NATO Washington summit has made scathing criticism of Beijing, saying China has "become a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine" through its

so-called "no limits" partnership and its large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial base.

Also, China's military exercises with Belarus, a close ally of Russia, were sharply criticised by NATO especially since they are being held close to the border of Poland, a NATO member.

Next to Russia, China appears to have become a centerpiece of NATO's criticism which comes at a time when Beijing is trying to scale down trade tariffs and sanc-

tions, especially for its electric vehicles which it is trying to market in the EU to reduce its overcapacity.

The NATO alliance comprised 32 member states, 30 European and two North American countries including the US and UK.

Chinese analysts have also been airing concerns over China getting involved in the Ukraine war risking its political and trade ties with the EU and confrontation with the powerful NATO alliance.

China is also trying to deflect criticism for supplying materials related to weapons production to Russia.

The NATO declaration said, "We call on the PRC, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council with a particular responsibility to uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, to cease all material and political support to

Russia's war effort".

"This includes the transfer of dual-use materials, such as weapons components, equipment, and raw materials that serve as inputs for Russia's defence sector. The PRC cannot enable the largest war in Europe in recent history without this negatively impacting its interests and reputation", the NATO declaration said.

Lin also tried to play down strong EU and NATO criticism of Chinese troops taking part in joint military exercises with Belarus near the Polish border, saying that it is normal military cooperation, and does not target any specific country.

Poland reportedly expressed its concern to China as the exercises are close to comfort and the Polish border is also formally referred to as the borders of NATO as Poland is a member of the organisation. (PTI)

NC and CPN-UML issue whips asking lawmakers to vote against PM Prachanda's confidence motion

KATHMANDU, July 11: Ahead of a floor test for Nepal's embattled Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Friday, the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML have issued whips requiring their lawmakers to vote against the confidence motion tabled by the former guerrilla leader.

K P Sharma Oli-led CPN-UML, the largest party in the ruling coalition, withdrew support from the Prachanda-led government last week after inking a power-sharing deal with the largest party in the House - Nepali Congress - to replace the former Maoist leader, who is expected to lose the confidence vote.

The Nepali Congress, the largest party in the 275-member House of Representatives, has 89 seats at present, while CPN-UML has 78 seats. Their combined strength of 167 is much more than the 138 seats required for a majority in the lower house. Prachanda's Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) has 32 seats.

Prachanda, who requires 138 votes for the government to win the vote of confidence in the House, is likely to secure around 63 votes, and the government is almost sure to lose the floor test on Friday.

The Nepali Congress (NC) has instructed its lawmakers to be present in the House and vote against Prachanda's confidence motion. Similarly, the CPN-UML has also issued a whip requiring its lawmakers to vote against the motion, My Republica newspaper reported.

This coordinated effort between the NC and the UML aims to oust the Prachanda-led government and establish new administrations at both federal and provincial levels.

Oli, the CPN-UML chairperson, met Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur

Deuba on Wednesday.

The meeting between the two leaders was aimed at formulating a future strategy on how to move forward after the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) agreed to form a new coalition government.

During the two-hour-long meeting held at Deuba's residence at Budhanilkantha, on the outskirts of Kathmandu, the two leaders discussed matters such as collecting signatures in favour of the new coalition to be led by Oli and its submission to the president.

They also discussed the formation of the new government and inviting other smaller



parties to join the national consensus government being formed under the leadership of Oli, according to sources close to CPN-UML.

The two parties have inked a deal to lead the government turn by turn for the remaining three-year period of the Parliament.

According to the agreement, Oli will become the Prime Minister for one and a half years in the first stage.

Last week, the CPN-UML demanded Prachanda's immediate resignation after the prime minister said that he is preparing to face a vote of confidence in the Parliament on Friday, given the withdrawal of support by some allies.

Prachanda, 69, has announced that he would not quit after the resignation of eight Cabinet ministers belonging to the CPN-UML and instead face a vote of confidence in Parliament.

A new alliance government led by Oli, 72, and backed up by the Nepali Congress will be formed by Sunday, the sources said.

Nepal has had 13 governments in the last 16 years, indicating the fragile nature of the Himalayan nation's political system. (PTI)

Yemen Houthi rebels fired an Iranian missile at Norwegian-flagged ship, debris analyzed by US shows

DUBAI, July 11: Yemen's Houthi rebels likely fired an Iranian-made anti-ship cruise missile at a Norwegian-flagged tanker in the Red Sea in December, an assault that now provides a public evidence-based link between the ongoing rebel campaign against shipping and Tehran, the U.S. military says.

A report by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency released Wednesday linked the attack on the Strinda, which set the vessel ablaze, to Tehran, the Houthi's main backer in Yemen's nearly decade-long war. The findings correspond with those of a Norway-based insurers group that also examined debris found on the Strinda.

It comes as the Houthis continue their months-long campaign of attacks over the Israel-Hamas war, targeting ships in the Red Sea corridor, disrupting the \$1 trillion flow of goods passing through it annually while also sparking the most intense combat the U.S. Navy has seen since World War II.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Strinda was coming from Malaysia and was bound for the Suez Canal and then on to Italy with a cargo of palm oil when it was struck by a missile Dec. 11. The attack sparked a major fire on board that the crew later extinguished without anyone being hurt.

Debris found on board later was analyzed by the U.S. military. The DIA compared the pieces of the engine from the missile found on board to the Iranian Noor anti-ship ballistic cruise missile.

"The Iranian Tolu-4 turbojet engine, used in the Noor (missile), has unique features — including the compressor stage and stator — that are consistent with engine debris recovered from the ... Houthi attack on the M/T Strinda," the DIA report said. A stator is the stationary portion of an engine.

Those pieces match images of a Tolu-4 engine that Iran displayed at the International Air and Space



Show in Russia in 2017, the DIA said. Visually, the engines bore similarities in the photographs.

The Noor was reverse engineered by Iran from the Chinese C-802 anti-ship missile, which Iran purchased from Beijing and began testing in 1996 before transfers stopped over a U.S. pressure campaign. The Iranian version is believed to have a range of up to 170 kilometers (105 miles), with an upgraded version called the Qader having a range up to 300 kilometers (185 miles). The Houthis have a look-alike missile to the Qader called the Al-Mandeb 2 with a similar range.

The Norwegian Shipowners' Mutual War Risks Insurance Association, known by the acronym DNK, also examined the debris following the Strinda attack. The association assessed it was "highly likely" the vessel had been hit by a C-802 or Noor anti-ship cruise missile.

Before the Houthis swept into Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014, the country did not have an arsenal of C-802 missiles. As the Saudi-led coalition entered Yemen's conflict on behalf of its exiled government in 2015, the Houthis' arsenal was increasingly targeted. Soon — and despite Yemen having no indige-

nous missile manufacturing infrastructure — newer missiles made their way into rebel hands.

Iran long has denied arming the Houthis, likely because of a yearslong United Nations arms embargo on the rebels. However, the U.S. and its allies have seized multiple arms shipments bound for the rebels in Mideast waters. Weapons experts as well have tied Houthi arms seized on the battlefield back to Iran.

Wednesday's DIA report pointed a seizure stemming from a Jan. 11 nighttime raid of an Iranian dhow traveling near the coast of Somalia, which saw two Navy SEALs killed. The Navy seized parts related to the Noor anti-ship cruise missile, the report said.

The Houthis have launched seaborne attacks since 2016, when they hit the Emirati vessel SWIFT-1 with a missile as it sailed back and forth in the Red Sea between an Emirati troop base in Eritrea and Yemen. They also tried to attack the USS Mason, an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer, around the same time.

But the Houthi attacks have rapidly escalated since November over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. The rebels have targeted more than 70 vessels by firing missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed four sailors. They have seized one vessel and sank two in the time since.

The Houthis maintain that their attacks target ships linked to Israel, the United States or Britain as part of the rebels' support for the militant group Hamas in its war against Israel. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the war — including some bound for Iran, which backs the Houthis. "The Houthis probably have used Iran-supplied weapons to conduct more than 100 attacks against land-based targets in Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen and dozens of attacks targeting ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden," the DIA report said. (AP)

Iranian court orders US to pay \$6.7 billion after sanctions allegedly stopped special bandage supply

TEHRAN, July 11: An Iranian court on Thursday ordered the U.S. government to pay over \$6.7 billion in compensation over a Swedish company stopping its supply of special dressings and bandages for those afflicted by a rare skin disorder after Washington imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

The order by the International Relations Law Court in Tehran comes after Iran last year seized a \$50 million cargo of Kuwaiti crude oil for American energy firm Chevron Corp. in the Strait of Hormuz amid tensions with the West, something it later said came over the court action for those suffering from Epidermolysis bullosa.

A report Thursday by the state-run IRNA news agency described the \$6.7 billion order as being filed on behalf of 300 plaintiffs, including family members of victims and those physically and emotionally damaged. IRNA said about 20 patients died after the Swedish company's decision.

Epidermolysis bullosa is a rare genetic condition that causes blisters all over the body and eyes. It can be incredibly painful and kill those afflicted.

The young who suffer from the disease are known as "butterfly children" as their skin can appear as fragile as a butterfly's wing.

The order comes as U.S. judges have issued rulings that call for billions of dollars to be paid by Iran over attacks linked to Tehran, as well as those detained by Iran and used as pawns in negotiations between the countries — something Iran has responded to with competing lawsuits accusing the U.S. of involvement in a 2017 Islamic State group attack.

The United Nations' highest court also last year rejected Tehran's legal bid to free up some \$2 billion in Iranian Central Bank assets frozen by U.S. authorities.

In 2018, then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, apparently sparking the Swedish company to withdraw from the Iranian market. Iran now says it locally produces the bandages.

The nuclear deal's collapse also escalated tensions between Iran and the U.S., sparking a series of attacks and ship seizures.

Iran seized the Marshall Islands-flagged ship carrying the Chevron oil last year.

The ship, called the Advantage Sweet, began transmitting its position for the first time since the seizure on Wednesday, potentially signaling the vessel is preparing to depart Iran.

Chevron, based in San Ramon, California, has maintained that the Advantage Sweet was "seized under false pretenses." It since has written off the cargo as a loss. (AP)

Astronauts confident Boeing space capsule can safely return them to Earth, despite failures

CAPE CANAVERAL, July 10: Two astronauts who should have been back on Earth weeks ago said on Wednesday that they're confident that Boeing's space capsule can return them safely, despite a string of vexing breakdowns.

NASA test pilots Butch Wilmore and Indian-origin Sunita Williams launched aboard Boeing's new Starliner capsule early last month, the first people to ride it.

Helium leaks and thruster failures almost derailed their arrival at the International Space Station, and has kept them there much longer than planned. Now the earliest they could return may be the end of July, officials said.

In their first news conference from orbit, the pair said they expect to return once thruster testing is complete here on Earth. They said they're not complaining about getting extra time in orbit, and are enjoying helping the station crew. Both have previously spent stints at the orbiting lab, which is also home to seven others.

"I have a real good feeling in my heart that the spacecraft will bring us home, no problem," Williams told reporters.

The test flight should have lasted eight days, ending on June 14.

NASA's commercial crew

program director Steve Stich said the earliest the Starliner astronauts might return is the end of July. The goal is to get them back before SpaceX delivers a fresh crew in mid-August, but that, too, could change, he noted.

This week, NASA and Boeing are trying to duplicate the Starliner's thruster problems on a brand new unit at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, one of the prime landing sites in the U.S. western desert. The trouble is in the propulsion system, used to maneuver the spacecraft.

Five thrusters failed as the capsule approached the space station on June 6, a day after liftoff. Four have since been re-activated. Wilmore said there should be enough working thrusters to get him and Williams out of orbit. There are also bigger engines

that could fill in, if necessary. "That mantra you've heard, failure is not an option, that's why we are staying here now," Wilmore said. "We trust that the tests that we're doing are the ones we need to do to get the right answers, to give us the data that we need to come back."

Boeing and NASA consider the ground tests essential to determine what might have gone wrong since that part of the capsule — the service module — is

discarded before landing. The leaks also are located in this disposable section.

So far, testing has not replicated the hot temperatures reached during the flight, according to Stich. Managers want to make sure the suspect thrusters are not damaged, before bringing Starliner back.

They were fired more frequently than anticipated early in the flight, and the extra demand on them may have caused them to fail, Stich noted.

At the same time, ground tests are being conducted to better understand the helium leaks, which could stem from bad seals. Officials have previously said there is ample helium left for the trip home.

Hurricane Beryl slowed some of the work. Johnson Space Centre in Houston, home to the control centres for both NASA and Boeing, was closed earlier this week to all but the most critical staff.

Boeing's Mark Nappi stressed that in an emergency, Starliner and its crew could return right now. While the company does not believe the thrusters are damaged, "we want to fill in the blanks and run this test to assure ourselves of that."

NASA ordered up the Starliner and SpaceX Dragon capsules a decade ago for astronaut flights to and from the space station, paying each company billions of dollars. SpaceX's first taxi flight with astronauts was in 2020. Boeing's first crew flight was repeatedly delayed because of software and other issues.

There have been no discussions with SpaceX about sending up a rescue capsule, Stich said. (AP)

SEOUL, July 11: South Korea said on Thursday it will begin deploying laser weapons systems designed to intercept North Korean drones, which have caused security concerns in the South in recent years.

South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration said that it will deploy at least one anti-air laser weapons system called "Block-I" by the end of this year and more in coming years.

An agency statement said the "Block-I" system is capable of launching precision attacks on small incoming drones and multi-copters. It said the system, developed by local company Hanwha Aerospace, costs just 2,000 won (about \$1.50) per shot.

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

He said that other countries like the United States and Israel are ahead of South Korea in laser weapons technology, but their primary focus has been on higher-powered laser

guns that can shoot down incoming ballistic missiles. South Korea also hopes to develop such anti-missile laser weapons, which its defense procurement agency called "a game changer" in future combat environments.

The "Block-I" system is meant to hit circuit boards and other equipment in enemy drones to make them malfunction and crash on the ground. Tests of the weapons system in 2022-2023 were successful and proved its credibility, the official said.

Some experts questioned the technology.

Lee Illwoon, an expert with the Korea Defense Network in South Korea, doubts how effectively South Korea can use its laser weapons since its anti-air radar systems aren't advanced enough to detect North Korean drones well.

He said the range of a laser weapon is relatively short, so high-power microwave weapons would be better when enemy drones are flown in large numbers simultaneously.

Jung Chang Wook, head of the Korea Defense Study Forum think tank in Seoul, said South Korea is likely about five years away from acquiring a functioning laser weapon that

can shoot down the drones used by North Korea.

North Korea has periodically flown drones across its heavily fortified border with South Korea for several years, in what observers have called tests of South Korean readiness.

In December 2022, South Korea accused the North of sending drones across the border for the first time in five years. South Korea fired warning shots and launched fighter jets and helicopters but failed to shoot down any of the drones.

In a key political meeting in December 2023, North Korea leader Kim Jong Un vowed to introduce various types of unmanned combat equipment such as attack drones for 2024. Foreign experts say Kim likely regards drones as a cheap yet effective method to trigger security jitters and an internal divide in South Korea.

Animosities between the two Koreas, split along the world's most heavily fortified border, have deepened in recent months, with North Korea flying trash-carrying balloons toward South Korea in response to South Korean activists floating political leaflets via their own balloons. (AP)

US announces \$100M additional aid for Palestinians

WASHINGTON, July 11: The United States announced on Thursday that it is providing \$100 million dollars in additional aid for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

A statement from USAID said the funding would assist the United Nations' World Food Program. It also said that through the funding, it would provide "logistics support for the safe and efficient delivery of lifesaving humanitarian aid across Gaza," without elaborating.

Aid agencies have complained that goods are not reaching people in Gaza because of the dangerous security situation and growing lawlessness that is complicating aid delivery.

Israel has ordered all Palestinians to leave Gaza City in the north as bombardment appears to escalate throughout the besieged territory. Israel says it is pursuing Hamas fighters who are regrouping in parts of Gaza that had been targeted early in the war.

Israel's heavy strikes throughout Gaza in recent days, which have killed dozens of people, could be aimed at increasing pressure on Hamas during negotiations for a cease-fire. U.S., Egyptian and Qatari mediators are meeting with Israeli officials in Qatar for talks trying to push through a deal.

Israel launched the war in Gaza after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted about 250. Since then, Israeli ground offensives and bombardments have killed more than 38,000 people in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry. It does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count.

The war has caused massive devastation and displaced most of Gaza's 2.3 million people, often multiple times. Israeli restrictions, fighting and the breakdown of law and order have limited humanitarian aid efforts, causing widespread hunger and sparking fears of famine. (AP)

Fire breaks out in the spire of the medieval cathedral in the French city of Rouen

PARIS, July 11: A fire broke out on Thursday in the spire of the medieval cathedral in the northern French city of Rouen, authorities said.

Witnesses speaking on BFM television described smoke emanating from the spire, and recalled a devastating fire in 2019 at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris that toppled its spire and collapsed its roof.

The cathedral in Rouen in Normandy is widely known from a series of paintings by impressionist Claude Monet.

Mayor Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol posted on the social media platform X that "the beginning of a fire is underway on the spire of the cathedral of Rouen. The origin is unknown at this stage. All public resources are mobilized."

The regional administration posted online that the cathedral was evacuated and a security perimeter is in place.

The cathedral in Paris, a major landmark, is scheduled to reopen in December after an unprecedented reconstruction effort.

The cause of that fire was deemed an accident. (AP)

'Early restoration of roads snapped due to floods and landslides is crucial'

Arunachal CM holds meeting to assess damage caused by landslides, flood

ITANAGAR, July 11: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu on Thursday held a high-level meeting to assess the extensive damage caused by rain-triggered landslides and floods in the state, which have disrupted surface communication to multiple districts.

At the meeting, which was also attended by chief secretary Dharmendra, the CM underscored the importance of swiftly restoring road connectivity, particularly in the flood-hit districts.

"Early restoration of roads snapped due to floods and landslides is crucial to ensuring access to essential services and aid," he said.

He allocated special funds for immediate restoration of the critical road link from Parsi-Parlo to Koloriang in remote Kurung Kumey district, including the bridge over Kumey River.

"The restoration plan must be



prepared and implemented without delay. Immediate restoration work should begin in Kurung Kumey region and other flood-affected districts cut off due to incessant rains," he stressed.

Khandu instructed relevant departments to ensure the timely provision of medicines and food supplies to the affected areas.

In addition, the chief minister was briefed about the Kurung

Kumey district administration's efforts to reopen the Damin Road for vehicular movement. The road had been cut off for several days due to incessant rains and floods, the officials added. (PTI)

Firearms seized Two Arambai Tenggol members arrested in Manipur



IMPHAL, July 11: Two members of armed group Arambai Tenggol have been arrested and firearms seized from their possession in Manipur's Imphal West district, police said.

The two persons, identified as Kangabam Lenin Singh (43) and Toijam Shantikishore (50), were apprehended in Nambul Mapal area late on Wednesday, a police statement said.

An INSAS rifle along with a magazine and 16 cartridges, and a .38 calibre pistol and a magazine along with three cartridges were seized from their possession.

A case has been registered for further investigation and legal action. (PTI)

Pro-ILP activist arrested for checking documents in Meghalaya

SHILLONG, July 11: A pro-ILP activist was arrested in Shillong on Thursday for unauthorisedly checking the documents of migrant labourers in Meghalaya, officials said.

The development comes a day after the Meghalaya Home Department filed four cases against pro-ILP activists in two districts for checking whether migrant labourers possessed requisite papers.

A pro-ILP activist was arrested from his residence in Shillong on Thursday. Three cases were filed against pro-ILP activists in the state capital on the previous day, they said.

One case under Section 126 (2) (wrongful restraint) under 351 (criminal intimidation) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered in Ri-Bhoi district and three others in East Khasi Hills district, under which Shillong falls, the officials said.

"We have registered four cases against pro-ILP activists who had gone to check the registration of migrant labourers across the state," a senior home department official told PTI.

The state government has made it compulsory for migrant labour-

ers to mandatorily register with the Labour Department under various Sections of the Interstate Workmen Act 1979 and the Meghalaya Identification, Registration (Safety & Security) of Migrant Workers Rules 2020.

Chief minister Conrad K Sangma has said that although mandatory registration is required for all migrant labourers, no individual or organisation is authorised to check the papers of such workers.

"No individual or organisation is authorised to check the papers of the migrant workers. If they do so, they are on the wrong side of the law and the police are taking action," he said.

On the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act (MRSSA), another Act to safeguard the interests of the indigenous people of the state, Sangma said the Bill was sent by the Governor to the Ministry of Home Affairs, which returned it with suggestions to make some amendments.

The Khasi Students' Union is one of the many organisations demanding the implementation of the Inner Line Permit in the hill state. The ILP is a special permit re-

quired by residents of other parts of the country to enter and stay for a specified period in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur.

The Meghalaya Legislative Assembly had also unanimously passed a resolution urging the Centre to consider extending the implementation of the ILP in Meghalaya in 2019 and is awaiting the Centre's nod.

KSU claimed that despite the presence of the state police's infiltration check gates at the various entry points into the state, it had detected over 300 migrant labourers without registration.

Last week, KSU activists erected an ILP check gate at Byrnihat which was brought down by the Ri-Bhoi district administration.

"Over 300 illegal labourers have been detected across the state as our members have gone to check if the labourers engaged by the contractors in big construction sites have requisite papers," KSU president L Marmgar said.

The KSU leader said the organisation will intensify their checking and will not cow down just because cases were filed against its members. (PTI)

Over four lakh benefited from 46 schemes in Manipur

IMPHAL, July 11: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh launched many new schemes on Thursday and also distributed benefits under various government schemes at a function held at the City Convention Centre in Imphal.

The newly launched schemes are Product Catalogue, 'Special Package to Successful Start-ups for Employment of IDPs in Manipur, CM Yarn Scheme (including Muga Silk buyback), Revised Comic Text Book, Sportspersons Livelihood Guarantee Scheme.

The chief minister along with the cabinet ministers distributed benefits under 46 schemes to more than 4 lakh beneficiaries amounting to more than ₹ 300 crore. The benefits will be transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer directly to the account of the beneficiaries.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister emphasised on the various welfare initiatives taken up by the state government towards bringing inclusive development in the State. Various initiatives like Go to Hills, Go to Village, Chief Minister-gi Hakhshelgi Tengbang, Start-up Manipur, Widows pension scheme and others have been taken up to bring equal development and collective welfare in the state, he added.

Biren also said that the ongoing unprecedented conflict and the recently occurred series of natural calamities in the State have brought hindrances to the developmental activities in the state. He also stated that the government would provide all necessary assistance for the welfare of the people.



He further added that good quality CGI sheets have been distributed to the people affected by the recent hailstorm through the respective deputy commissioner.

Keeping in view of the present situation in the state, the chief minister reminded that the territorial integrity of the state shall remain intact.

The chief minister then informed that medical teams have been formed to help the inmates of relief camps and added that a team comprised of doctors, nurses and multitasking staff. The said teams are visiting relief camps twice a week and at present, around 68 teams have been formed and visited about 238 camps for health check-up of the inmates, he continued. Biren further informed that mental health counseling facilities had also been provided to the inmates and till date around 1436 free medical check-ups have been

conducted. The benefits distributed on Thursday were under schemes including CMES for Relief Camps inmates, Special Assistance of ₹ 1 lakh per family for displaced families in relief camps, Financial Assistance for Education of Children, College Students Rehabilitation Scheme, One Time Special Assistance, Hailstorm Relief, Flood Relief, CM's Yaipha Tengbang Scheme and Incentives to Artisans among others.

The distribution of benefits under different schemes was also undertaken at different deputy commissioner's office and departments of the state government.

The program was attended by cabinet ministers, a Member of Parliament, MLAs, the chief secretary, the security advisor to the government of Manipur, high ranking civil and police officials and beneficiaries of different welfare schemes among others. (NNN)

Arunachal govt effects bureaucratic reshuffle

ITANAGAR, July 11: The Arunachal Pradesh government has effected a reshuffle of officials, a notification issued by chief secretary Dharmendra said. Upper Subansiri Deputy Commissioner Talo Potom was transferred and posted as Itanagar Capital Region (ICR) deputy commissioner,



replacing Shweta Nagarkoti, who was posted as DC of newly created Keyi Panyor district. Arunachal Pradesh Civil Service (APCS) officer Ibom Tao, who was awaiting posting, was posted as secretary of the state Human Rights Commission.

Yomcha Additional deputy commissioner Tasso Gambo was transferred and promoted to Upper Subansiri Deputy Commissioner, the notification issued on Wednesday evening said.

Joint secretary Puroik Welfare, Bopai Puroik, was promoted as the deputy commissioner of the newly created Bichom district. Additional resident commissioner, Guwahati, Dilip Kumar Chutia, was transferred and posted as joint secretary to the chief minister. Indian Corporate Law Service (ICLS) officer, Anu Singh, who was special secretary of monitoring and evaluation, was transferred and posted as OSD in the office of divisional commissioner (West), the order read. (PTI)

Nagaland gets Agriculture Leadership Award

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 11: Nagaland received the prestigious Agriculture Leadership Award 2024 in the category of Best State in Horticulture.

The award was given to the state for its outstanding work in introducing innovative programmes and policies for horticulture development, which has positively touched the lives of a large number of farmers and the rural people in the state.

Nagaland minister for women resource development and horticulture Sahnouuonuo Kruse received the award on behalf of the state at the 15th Agriculture Leadership Conclave held in New Delhi on Wednesday evening in the presence of Union minister for road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari and Union minister agriculture and farmers welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

Congress, INDIA bloc will raise Manipur issue in Parliament: Rahul

NEW DELHI, July 11: The Congress and the INDIA bloc will raise the need for peace in Manipur with full force in Parliament to put pressure on the government to end this tragedy, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said on Thursday, days after his visit to the violence-hit state.

He also reiterated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should visit Manipur and appeal for peace.

Gandhi made the remarks in a post in Hindi on X as he shared a video of his interactions with the people of Manipur during his day-long visit to the restive state on Monday.

"I have visited Manipur three times since violence broke out there, but unfortunately there is no improvement in the situation -- even today the state is divided into two parts. Houses are burning, innocent lives are in danger and thousands of families are forced to live in relief camps," the former Con-

gress chief said. The prime minister should personally visit Manipur, listen to the problems of the people of the state and appeal for peace, Gandhi said.

"The Congress party and INDIA bloc will raise the need for peace in Manipur with full force in Parliament to put pressure on the government to end this tragedy," the Congress leader said.

During his stay in Manipur, Gandhi had visited three relief camps in different districts of the BJP-ruled state and interacted with people belonging to both the warring ethnic groups -- Meiteis and Kukis -- who were displaced by the violence.

Gandhi had also visited Manipur weeks after ethnic violence broke out in the northeastern state on May 3 last year. He also began his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' from the state in January 2024.

In the video, Gandhi is seen interacting with people at various relief camps. The people narrate to him their plight and fears and urge him to fight for them and raise their voice.

The Congress leader is seen in the video telling the people that his party and its MPs had raised the problems the people of Manipur were facing in the Parliament session that has just gone by and promised to raise the issues again in the upcoming session.

"We can put pressure (on the government) and we will put pressure on them," he says to the people.

"I can help you, I can raise the issue and put pressure but I can't reassure you when you will be able to go back to your homes because the government has the answer to this. You will see in the next session, I will raise your voice," Gandhi tells the people at a relief camp in Manipur. Tagging Gandhi's over five-minute

video, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, "It has been more than a year since Manipur became unstable. The people there are facing violence, murder, riots and displacement. Thousands of innocent people are forced to live in relief camps."

"After all, when will the Prime Minister speak on Manipur? ...Why did the government not make efforts for peace in Manipur?" she said.

Parliament's Budget Session will be held between July 22 and August 12. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the budget on July 23.

Manipur plunged into violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities in May last year. Since then, some 200 people have been killed while thousands have been displaced following large-scale arson that gutted homes and government buildings. (PTI)

NIELIT launches digital forensics training program for students

KOHIMA, July 11: The National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) Kohima, Government of India, launched a digital forensics training program for students, university lecturers/professors, and government officials. The program reflects NIELIT Kohima's unwavering commitment to strengthening cyber security defences, aligning perfectly with the Government of India's vision of enhancing national digital security, an official statement said today.

Established in 2010, NIELIT Kohima boasts

Nagaland's only advanced digital forensics lab equipped with cutting-edge facilities and a team of experts. Their commitment to advancing digital forensics and cyber security is evident through their comprehensive training programs and robust forensic analysis services, aiding police in Nagaland and other northeastern states in solving cyber-crimes, it also said. This new initiative signifies a further step in that direction, offering training to international students under the aegis of NIELIT and MeitY, Government of India, the statement added. (NNN)

Manipur farmers awarded for outstanding contributions Kabi Meitei is a fish breeder having experience and skill in breeding indigenous fish species

IMPHAL, July 11: Three fish farmers of Manipur have been conferred with Best Farmer Award by various fisheries institutes in recognition of their outstanding contributions towards development of fisheries in Manipur on the occasion of this year's National Fish Farmers Day held on July 10.

Kabi Meitei Naorem of Uchiwa village, Kakchong district was felicitated by ICAR - Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), Barrackpore, Kolkata with Best Fish Farmer, 2024. Rockson Kashung of Chadong village, Kamjong district was honoured as the Best Fish Farmer award by the College of Fisheries, Lembucherra, Tripura under Central Agriculture University, Imphal and ICAR - Directorate of Coldwater Fisheries Research, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand awarded Phungkhajai Mahung Khuiya of Kaziphung, Hungbung, Ukhrul District with Progressive Fish Farmer Award, 2024, an official statement said.

Kabi Meitei is an established fish



breeder having experience and skill in breeding of indigenous fish species of Manipur which are highly prized and cherished by local populace like Ngaton, Ngakra and Ukabi (Anabas testudineus). The State Fisheries Department has already provided him a Breeding unit under the financial assistance scheme of the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB),

Hyderabad, it also said.

Rockson Kashung is a progressive fish farmer from Chadong village who has popularized cage culture in the upstream water bodies of Mapithel Reservoir. Following the submergence of his native village and agricultural land due to construction of Mapithel Dam, he initiated cage culture as an alternative livelihood for displaced

villagers. Presently, Rockson manages 24 units of cage culture by rearing exotic carps (grass carp, silver carp, common carp), big head, rohu, puntius sarana, etc. and generating income and employment for local people, the official statement also said.

Phungkhajai M. Khuiya of Kaziphung village is also a progressive fish farmer who has been specializing in breeding of carp seeds at Nungsangkhong village of Ukhrul district, the official statement also said. His contribution in seed production and supply to farmers from the hatchery unit established under the Blue Revolution scheme implemented by the State Fishery Department and holding of Fishing Mela, an annual gala event for propagation and popularization of fishery amongst the Tangkhul community is outstanding. Recently, he started Cold Water fishery in Ukhrul district for the first time in Manipur by culturing rare indigenous Ngara fish, which is accustomed to rivers in high altitude with cold climate, it added. (NNN)

NATIONAL SC-ST HUB(NSSH)
 कृषि उपकरण एवं सेवा सौकर सुदूरगम, नगराज इण्डस्ट्रीज
 Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises(MSME) Gov. of India
 through NSIC, New Delhi

Supported

SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME
With Placement Support for SC/ST youth

Conducted by
केंद्रीय पेट्रोसायन अभियांत्रिकी एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान (सिपेट)
कौशल और तकनीकी सहायता केंद्र (सी.एस.टी.एस.)-गुवाहाटी
 Central Institute Of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology(CIPET)
 Centre for Skillng & Technical Support(CSTS)-GUWAHATI
 NH-31, CHANGSARI(GUWAHATI),KAMRUP, ASSAM -781101
 Email:guwahati@cipet.gov.in website: www.cipet.gov.in

CIPET-CSTS-Guwahati invites applications from SC/ST youth for the following Capacity Building Skill Development Training Programme under National SC/ST Hub scheme of Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises(MSME) Govt. of India implemented through NSIC, New Delhi

Sl. No.	Name of the course	Training Duration	No. of candidates	Entry Qualification & Age limit	Training Centre (Venue)
1	MACHINE OPERATOR- PLASTICS PROCESSING (NSQF Level-4)	960 Hrs (5 months)	30	Entry Qualification: Min. 10 Std. Age as on date of commencement of training : 18Yrs.(completed)	CIPET-CSTS-Guwahati, Changsari, Kamrup, Assam

Note:

- Training will be provided free of cost. Shared accommodation, Food, Training materials, etc. will be provided to all participants free of cost as per the scheme.
- Certificate will be awarded to all the participants on successful completion of the training duration.
- Placement will be provided to all the participants at industries across the country on successful completion of the training.
- Beneficiaries will be selected through an interview to be conducted on physical mode by CIPET-CSTS-Guwahati. Date of selection interview will be informed over phone. No other communications will be done for the same. No TA/DA will be reimbursed for attending the selection interview.
- Preference will be given to female and divyang SC/ST candidates.

Last date of submission of application form 25.07.2024

How to apply: Interested candidates may apply online by scanning the QR Code given here or may submit application physically by post. List of Documents/Information to be submitted with application form: (1)Name, (2)Father's/Husband's Name,(3) Permanent Address, (4)Mobile No.,(5)Qualification,(6) Caste,(7)Family Income Certificate/BPL/AY/PH Card (8) Aadhar (9) PAN/Voter's ID (10) Residential Certificate,(10) Passport Size Photo-5 copies, etc.

For more details, please contact -
 8638474900 (R.K.Das)/ 9383098698(G.C.Chetry)/ 9854985313(U.Baishya)

Scan QR code to apply

Janasanyog /DF/508/24/12-Jul-24

BNSS heralds transformative era in criminal justice, promotes transparency: Delhi HC

NEW DELHI, July 11: Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), the new law that replaced the CrPC, heralds a transformative era in criminal justice and promotes a system which is transparent, accountable and fundamentally aligned with the principles of fairness and justice, the Delhi High Court has observed.

The court's observations came while granting bail to an accused in a drugs case registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

It said under the BNSS, the practice of photography and videography, which are universally accepted as the best practices for better erudition and appreciation of the evidence, has been made mandatory.

"Realising the need of changing time, the legislature has now passed the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). The practice of photography and videography has now been made mandatory," Justice Amit Mahajan said.

The high court further said, "This legislative enhancement is designed to ensure a more transparent and accountable approach in investigation. BNSS, with its comprehensive emphasis on technological integration, heralds a transformative era in criminal justice, promoting a system that is not only transparent and



accountable but also fundamentally aligned with the principles of fairness and justice."

BNSS, along with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Sanhita (BSS), came into force from July 1. In the present case, the crime branch of Delhi Police had received an information in December 2019 that accused Bantu, who allegedly used to supply 'charas' in the city after procuring it from Himachal Pradesh, would come to supply the contraband drug to someone near Majnu ka Tila here.

It was alleged that the accused was caught and during the search, one bag was recovered from him containing 1.1 kg charas, concealed in two packs of 550 gram each.

Seeking bail in the case, the counsel for Bantu said even though the applicant was apprehended during daytime, and the

phones are handy with almost everyone especially, in a metropolitan city like Delhi.

The judge said the court has come across a number of cases where the investigating authority has done photography and videography of the recovery.

The court said it is peculiar that the investigating authorities, understanding the importance of such additional evidence, make efforts to belie allegations of false implication and endorse the recovery of contraband by photography and videography in some cases, but fail to undertake any steps to do the same in other cases.

"It is not the case of the prosecution that the police team was not carrying any instrument (mobile phone) at the time of the raid. The same even though, is not fatal to the case of the prosecution, however, at this stage, the benefit cannot be denied to the accused," the high court said while granting bail to Bantu.

The court said the accused has made out a prima facie case for grant of bail on the grounds of absence of independent witnesses and prolonged delay in the trial and that he is stated to be of clean antecedents.

"Therefore, I am satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the applicant is not likely to commit any offence while on bail," the judge said. (PTI)

First mothership docks at Kerala's Vizhinjam international transshipment port

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 11: A big cargo ship called 'San Fernando' from China arrived at Kerala's newly built Vizhinjam International Sea Port on Thursday, marking the first container ship arrival at India's largest transshipment port.

The mothership was given a water salute by four tugs, which piloted it to the dock.

San Fernando, a 300-meter-long cargo ship, will offload 1,900 containers at Vizhinjam International Seaport Limited (VISL).

On Friday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will formally welcome the ship.

In a Facebook post, Kerala Port Minister V N Vasavan said San Fernando has been berthed at Vizhinjam Port and termed it as a truly momentous occasion.

"This is a truly momentous occasion. Tomorrow (Friday), the chief minister will formally welcome the ship, with the Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, attending as the chief guest. The ship was safely berthed by four tugboats," he said.

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

The mothership carries large containers which will be transferred to other ships and later



transported to other ports in the country and abroad.

The formal reception ceremony will be attended by several dignitaries, including Central and state ministers, officials, and members of the public.

"The dream is approaching the shore. The first mothership is reaching Kerala's Vizhinjam port. San Fernando will be officially welcomed on behalf of Kerala tomorrow," Vijayan in a Facebook post said on Thursday.

Equipped with modern equipment and advanced automation and IT systems, Vizhinjam will become India's first semi-automated port, expected to be fully commissioned in September or October 2024.

"It is a natural port with depths between 20 and 24 meters. We have found that the ocean bottom here is rocky,

which is very rare. Elsewhere, we would have to dredge to attain such depths," Vasavan said.

In a Facebook post on Wednesday evening, the chief minister said special attention and care have been taken by the government to complete the port construction project in this manner since 2016.

"A special action calendar was prepared, and monthly reviews were conducted. Even a special mobile app was prepared for daily reviews. The construction work was carried out ensuring the availability of construction materials from within and outside the state.

"The timely completion of each component of the project was ensured. Adani Group has worked to complete this project in a time-bound manner," Vijayan said.

He said the total investment for the Vizhinjam port is ₹ 8,867

crore. Out of this, the state government and the Central government have allocated ₹ 5,595 crore and ₹ 818 crore respectively.

At the time of signing the contract for the port construction, the Central Environment Ministry had recommended ₹ 8 crore for rehabilitation works. "However, the state government, with a very favourable approach towards fishermen, has spent ₹ 100 crore for rehabilitation so far," the chief minister said.

The government has utilised funds to address the issues raised by the Vizhinjam residents, and Adani Company's CSR funds have also been used to carry out necessary works. More than 5,000 direct employment opportunities have been created as part of this port project, he added.

Vijayan said when this port becomes a reality, Kerala will become the hub of container business in the country.

"There will be significant development in industries like commerce, transportation, tourism, and others, leading to overall economic growth of the state. The Vizhinjam port will be a catalyst for this growth. This is a dream come true for the government and the people, who have worked together to make it a reality. We can proudly celebrate this achievement," he said. (PTI)

Panel formed to probe falling of Lord Balabhadra idol on servitors during Rath Yatra ritual



BHUBANESWAR, July 11: Puri's Jagannath temple has formed a three-member panel to probe the falling of Lord Balabhadra idol on some servitors while it was being taken from the chariot to Gundicha temple as part of the Rath Yatra festival, an official said.

The committee has expressed concern over the incident during the 'Pahandi' ritual on Tuesday night and also held a detailed discussion on the incident, said V V Yadav, chief administrator of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) in Puri.

The three-member panel consisting of an additional district magistrate (ADM), SJTA administrator (development), and a DSP rank police officer will investigate the matter and submit a report within 10 days after completion of 'Niladri Bije' (return of Lord Jagannath and his siblings to their temple), he said.

The committee will examine the available video footage and see whether designated servitors were there or not along with other aspects that led to such an incident, Yadav told reporters.

The chief administrator also said that the managing committee has also recommended the Odisha government to reopen Ratna Bhandar (treasury) of the Jagannath temple for inventory and repair works.

A dozen servitors of the Puri Jagannath temple were injured on Tuesday when the idol of Lord Balabhadra fell on them while it was being taken from the chariot to

Gundicha temple as part of the Rath Yatra festival, Puri Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain said.

The incident happened shortly after 9 pm when the heavy wooden idol was being brought down from Lord Balabhadra's chariot to be taken to the Gundicha temple.

Out of the 12 injured servitors, only one person has been shifted to a health facility for observation only, Swain said.

Similarly, Puri Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb, who is also the chairman of the managing committee, expressed concerns over the mishap and said it has hurt all the devotees of Lord Jagannath across the world.

The managing committee meeting held a detailed discussion including the presence of a higher number of servitors on the chariot and during the 'Pahandi' ritual, he said.

The committee will meet again after 'Niladri Bije' and take appropriate steps so that such an incident does not recur, Deb said.

Meanwhile, opposition BJD and Congress have targeted the state government over the issue.

The incident has severely hurt the sentiments of millions of Jagannath devotees including 4.5 crore Odias, BJD leader and Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das said and urged the BJP government to ensure smooth conduct of the remaining rituals of Rath Yatra.

Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati said, "The party (BJP), which came to power with blessings of Lord Jagannath is unable to protect the Lord. For ministers, the chief minister and the BJP, it may be a minor thing but it is not a small thing for the devotees."

State BJP vice-president Biranchi Tripathy said the BJD has no right to make any statement as it has been involved in a series of irregularities in the management of the temple. (PTI)

DRDO sanctions 7 new defence projects to private sector

NEW DELHI, July 11: India's premier defence research organisation DRDO has awarded seven new projects to private entities to develop key military assets including underwater launched unmanned aerial vehicle and long-range remotely operated systems.

The projects were cleared under the defence ministry's Technology Development Fund scheme to boost domestic defence manufacturing.

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

The objective is part of a larger framework of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and maritime domain awareness (MDA), they said.

The project has been awarded to Sagar Defence Engineering Pvt Ltd, Pune, according to the defence ministry.

BMW hit-and-run: Main accused Mihir Shah was drunk at time of crash: Mumbai cops

MUMBAI, July 11: Mihir Shah, the main accused in the BMW hit-and-run case and son of a Shiv Sena politician,

was under the influence of alcohol when he allegedly rammed his luxury car into a two-wheeler here, killing a woman, a Mumbai police official said on Thursday.

A probe team of the police recreated the accident scene in the early hours of the day to get more information about the chain of events and also confronted Mihir Shah (24) with his family driver and co-accused Rajrishi Bidawat, who was in the car at the time of the horrific crash in central Mumbai's Worli area.

A woman, Kaveri Nakhwa (45), was killed and her husband Pradip injured after their two-wheeler was hit from the rear by a BMW allegedly

driven by Mihir Shah at 5:30am on Sunday in Worli's arterial Anni Besant Road.

The probe has found that Mihir Shah sped off towards the Bandra Worli Sea Link even as the woman remained on the bonnet of the car and then got entangled in its wheels for a distance of a more than 1.5 kilometres.

The prime accused, who was arrested from Virar Phata in neighbouring Palghar district on Tuesday, is in cop custody till July 16 and being questioned by a team of the Worli police, the official said.

"Our probe has found he was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the accident. The crime scene involving the car hitting the two-wheeler and then dragging the victim was recreated in order to get more details," the official explained.

The other projects are development of ice detection sensor for aircraft, manufacturing of radar signal processor, long-range remotely-operated vehicles for detection and neutralisation of underwater objects. The long-range remotely-operated vehicles will be dual-use systems that will enable detection, classification, localisation and neutralisation of underwater objects while keeping the key assets away from the suspected operational area, the ministry said. The work has been awarded to a start-up, IROV Technologies Pvt Ltd, Kochi.

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

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

"Providing impetus to Aatmanirbharta, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has awarded seven new projects to industries under the Technology Development Fund scheme for various requirements of the armed forces and aerospace and defence sectors," the ministry said.

"These project sanctions are a testimony to the continuing endeavour of DRDO in nurturing industries, especially MSMEs & start-ups, in defence and aerospace domains," it said.

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

of ice detection sensor for aircraft, manufacturing of radar signal processor, long-range remotely-operated vehicles for detection and neutralisation of underwater objects. The long-range remotely-operated vehicles will be dual-use systems that will enable detection, classification, localisation and neutralisation of underwater objects while keeping the key assets away from the suspected operational area, the ministry said. The work has been awarded to a start-up, IROV Technologies Pvt Ltd, Kochi.

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

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

"Providing impetus to Aatmanirbharta, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has awarded seven new projects to industries under the Technology Development Fund scheme for various requirements of the armed forces and aerospace and defence sectors," the ministry said.

"These project sanctions are a testimony to the continuing endeavour of DRDO in nurturing industries, especially MSMEs & start-ups, in defence and aerospace domains," it said.

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

The Centre's fresh affidavit said experts from IIT Madras have found that the marks distribution follows the bell-shaped curve that is witnessed in any large-scale examination indicating no abnormality. A bell curve describes the shape of data conforming to a normal distribution.

The affidavit said for 2024-25, the counselling process for undergraduate seats will be conducted in four rounds starting from the third week of July.

The NTA also filed a separate additional affidavit on the similar lines and said it has carried out an analysis of distribution of marks at the national, state and city level.

"This analysis indicates that the distribution of marks is quite normal and there seems to be no extraneous factor, which would influence the distribution of marks," the NTA said in its affidavit, which also gave details of the system in place for ensuring confidential printing of question papers, their transportation and distribution.

While hearing the pleas on July 8, the top court had observed that the sanctity of the NEET-UG 2024 has been "breached".

Saying that a re-test may be ordered if the entire process was affected, the bench had sought details from the NTA and the CBI, including the timing and manner of the alleged paper leak, besides the number of wrongdoers to understand the extent of irregularities claimed by the petitioners.

The top court is hearing a batch of pleas related to NEET-UG 2024, including those alleging irregularities and malpractices, and seeking a direction to conduct it afresh.

Over 23.33 lakh students had taken the test on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including in 14 cities overseas. (PTI)

CBI likely to file charge sheet against youth who circulated 'doctored' screenshot of UGC-NET paper

NEW DELHI, July 11: The CBI is likely to file a charge sheet against a youth who allegedly circulated a "doctored" screenshot of the UGC-NET paper on Telegram which led to the cancellation of the exam after an alert from the Union Home Ministry about a possible "breach", officials said.

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

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

The CBI has informally conveyed its findings to the government and is likely to file a charge sheet against the youth, they said. More than 11 lakh candidates had registered for the exam which determines eligibility for junior research fellowship, appointment as assistant professors and admission to PhD in Indian universities and colleges.

The exam was cancelled by the Union Education Ministry on July 19 following the alert from the Union Home Ministry's National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C). (PTI)

Much-anticipated hearing in SC on pleas related to NEET-UG 2024 deferred to July 18

NEW DELHI, July 11: The Supreme Court on Thursday adjourned till July 18 the hearing of a clutch of petitions seeking cancellation, re-test and probe into alleged malpractices in the conduct of NEET-UG 2024 as the responses of the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA) were yet to be received by some parties.

Amid the festering row over the all-India examination, the top court noted that separate affidavits filed on Wednesday by the Centre and the NTA, which conducts the test, have not been received by counsel for some of the petitioners.

"The further hearing shall be on Thursday (July 18)," a bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, however, said they have served their affidavit to the counsel for the parties.

During the brief hearing, counsel for the petitioners sought listing of the pleas on July 15 but Mehta said he would be unavailable that day.

The bench said it has received a status report from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on the progress made in the probe into alleged irregularities in the conduct of NEET-UG 2024.

In an additional affidavit filed in the apex court on Wednesday, the Centre said data analytics of the results of NEET-UG 2024 was conducted by IIT Madras which found there was neither any indication of "mass malpractice" nor a localised set of candidates benefiting from it and scoring abnormally high marks.

The government's assertion assumes significance in view of the observations made by the top court on July 8 that it may order a re-test if there were large-scale malpractices in holding the exam on May 5.

Over 23.33 lakh students had taken the test on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including in 14 cities overseas. (PTI)

Dream come true, says Bihar's first transwoman police sub-inspector

PATNA, July 11: For Manvi Madhu Kashyap, it was a dream come true when she cleared a recruitment test and became the first transwoman sub-inspector in the Bihar Police. After being rejected by several coaching centres for being transgender, Kashyap who hailed from a small village in Banka district, finally scripted history. "It is like a dream come true for me. I am incredibly grateful for each and every person who has been there with me," she told PTI Video. But her journey does not stop here. "I want to visit my village in a police uniform to convey the message that one can achieve anything through hard work and dedication," said Kashyap. (PTI)

The Centre's fresh affidavit said experts from IIT Madras have found that the marks distribution follows the bell-shaped curve that is witnessed in any large-scale examination indicating no abnormality. A bell curve describes the shape of data conforming to a normal distribution.

The affidavit said for 2024-25, the counselling process for undergraduate seats will be conducted in four rounds starting from the third week of July.

The NTA also filed a separate additional affidavit on the similar lines and said it has carried out an analysis of distribution of marks at the national, state and city level.

"This analysis indicates that the distribution of marks is quite normal and there seems to be no extraneous factor, which would influence the distribution of marks," the NTA said in its affidavit, which also gave details of the system in place for ensuring confidential printing of question papers, their transportation and distribution.

While hearing the pleas on July 8, the top court had observed that the sanctity of the NEET-UG 2024 has been "breached".

Saying that a re-test may be ordered if the entire process was affected, the bench had sought details from the NTA and the CBI, including the timing and manner of the alleged paper leak, besides the number of wrongdoers to understand the extent of irregularities claimed by the petitioners.

The top court is hearing a batch of pleas related to NEET-UG 2024, including those alleging irregularities and malpractices, and seeking a direction to conduct it afresh.

Over 23.33 lakh students had taken the test on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including in 14 cities overseas. (PTI)

Case study highlights hidden health risks of prolonged exposure to pigeons

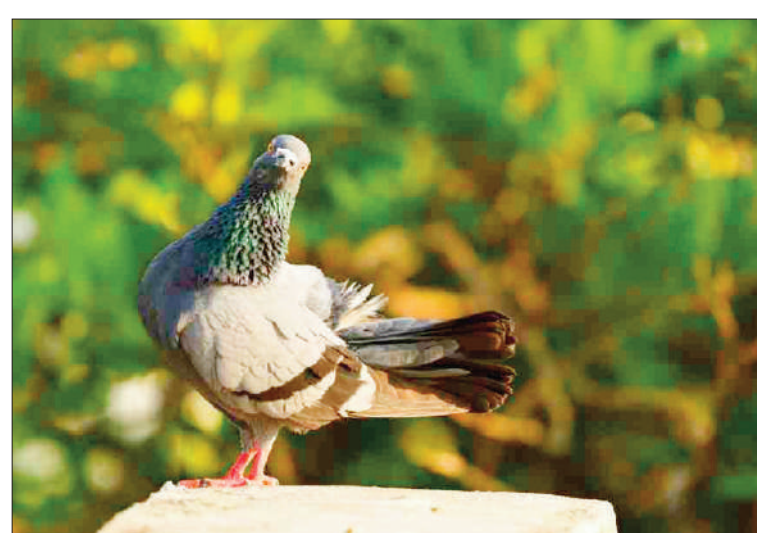
NEW DELHI, July 11: A new case study of a boy, who developed potentially fatal allergic reactions after a prolonged contact with pigeon feathers and droppings, has brought to light severe health risks related to long-term exposure to the bird.

The 11-year-old from east Delhi was brought to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here with what initially seemed like a routine cough, doctors said in the study.

His condition, however, worsened as his respiratory functions declined, they said in a statement.

The child was diagnosed with Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis (HP), which was triggered by an allergic reaction to pigeon proteins, and required immediate medical attention. Dr Dhiren Gupta, Co-Director of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), said.

Medical tests showed lung inflammation and opacities consistent with HP, he said. Opacities refer to areas appearing white on a chest radiograph, when they should be darker.



Gupta explained that HP is a chronic interstitial lung disease, in which the organ gets scarred, making it difficult to breathe. The condition is more common among adults and rare in children, affecting 2-4 per one lakh population in a year, he added.

The boy was administered steroids and provided breathing support via high-flow oxygen therapy, in which the gas is passed in the body through a tube placed in the nostrils. This helped bring down inflammation in his lungs and restore breathing to

near-normal levels, the doctor said in the case study. Seeing the boy responding positively to treatment, he was eventually discharged with a comprehensive care plan to manage his condition, Gupta said.

HP results from inflammation, brought about by the immune system in response to repeated exposure to certain environmental substances, such as bird allergens, moulds and fungi. Second-hand exposure to e-cigarettes too could result in an inflammatory response, Gupta told PTI.

The case highlights hidden health risks posed by long-term exposure to birds and the critical importance of recognising the early signs of HP. Taking prompt action can prevent serious complications, Gupta said.

"Education about potential environmental triggers, like bird droppings and feathers, is essential for preventing similar incidents," he said.

He also emphasised the need for exercising caution while dealing with seemingly harmless pigeons and chickens. (PTI)

ENGINEERING WORKS AT LUMDING DIVISION
E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/118 of 2024, Dated: 09-07-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN. 1. Brief Description of Item:** Track maintenance work including SEI renewal works, casual renewal of rail. Distressing operation of LWR, pulling back of rail, Assistance to Track Machine pre & post working during machine working in section and other ancillary works under the jurisdiction of SSE/P/Way/New Halflong. **Tender Value:** ₹2,82,12,999.75/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹2,91,100/-; E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 05-08-2024 and opened at 15:00 hrs. on 06-08-2024. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 05-08-2024 in website <http://www.i-reps.gov.in>.

DRMWorks, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from MOHAMMED TALIBUL ISLAM To TALEBUL ISLAM before the notary hatsingimari on dt 10/07/2024.

TALEBUL ISLAM
S/O- BILLAL BEPARI
VILL=JHOWDANGA PT
||
P/O =JHOWDANGA
P/S = MANKACHAR
DIST= SOUTH
S A L M A R A
MANKACHAR MOBILE
NO _9365580340

Kardashians to Mike Tyson expected AT AMBANI WEDDING

MUMBAI, July 11: Top celebrities Kim and Khloe Kardashian, boxer Mike Tyson, former UK prime ministers and global business tycoons are expected to attend the wedding of Anant Ambani, youngest son of Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, in Mumbai on Friday.

After four months of star-studded pre-wedding celebrations, Anant Ambani, 29, will tie the knot with Radhika Merchant, daughter of pharmaceutical tycoons Viren and Shailesh Merchant.

The guest list is a mix of Indian and international celebrities, politicians and corporate bigwigs, sources aware of the matter said.

Mukesh Ambani and his wife, Nita, in the past had lavish weddings for their other children too - Beyoncé performed at daughter Isha Ambani's 2018 nuptials that boosted of guests like Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, and a year later Coldplay's Chris Martin performed at Akash's pre-wedding bash in St Moritz, Switzerland and Maroon 5 at his wedding in Mumbai.

But the wedding of the youngest has eclipsed both. A three-day pre-wedding event at Gujarat's Jamanagar - hometown of Ambani which also houses his conglomerate's giant oil refining complex - featured some 1,200 guests,

including Meta's Mark Zuckerberg, Microsoft's Bill Gates, BlackRock co-founder Larry Fink, Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai and Saudi Aramco chairman Yasir Al Rumayyan as well as a performance by Rihanna.

In June, the celebrations travelled overseas when guests embarked on a luxury cruise along the stunning azure coastline of the Tyrrhenian Sea in Italy, to the French Mediterranean and featured performances by Backstreet Boys, singer Katy Perry and Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli.

Justin Bieber performed at the 'sangeet' ceremony last week.

The wedding on Friday will

take place at Jio World Convention Center in Mumbai, followed by dinner receptions on the following days.

Besides the Kardashians, the extravaganza is expected to be attended by former UK prime ministers Boris Johnson and Tony Blair, futurist Peter Diamandis, artist Jeff Koons, self-help coach Jay Shetty, former US Secretary of State John Kerry, former Canadian PM Stephen Harper, sources said.

Bollywood stars too are expected to attend the celebrations. The events leading to the wedding featured Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Deepika Padukone, and Alia Bhatt.



Veteran actors Amitabh Bachchan and Aamir Khan are also expected to attend. And so is Priyanka Chopra-Jonas, Aishwarya Rai-Bachchan, Janhvi Kapoor and Sara Ali Khan.

The corporate world luminaries expected include HSBC Holdings plc Chairman Mark Tucker, Samsung Electronics chairman Jay Lee, Saudi

Aramco CEO Amin Nasser, BP chief executive Murray Auchincloss, Emma Walmsley of drug giant GSK Plc, Jim Taiclet of Lockheed Martin and FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

Ericsson CEO Borje Ekholm, HP president Enrique Lores, Temasek CEO Dilhan Pillay, Khaldoon Al Mubarak of Mubadala, ADIA board member Khalil Mohd Sharif Foulathi, and Kuwait Investment Authority MD Bader Mohammad Al-Saad.

Several Indian business tycoons, including Gautam Adani, are expected at the wedding, they said.

Adani had also attended the Jamnagar event. Anant and Radhika got engaged in a traditional ceremony in January 2023. (PTI)

PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS, NICK JONAS ARRIVE IN MUMBAI FOR ANANT-RADHIKA'S WEDDING

MUMBAI, July 11: Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas arrived in Mumbai with her husband, singer Nick Jonas on Thursday ahead of the high-profile wedding ceremony of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant. After months-long pre-wedding festivities, Anant, son of billionaire Mukesh Ambani, and Radhika, daughter of industrialist Viren Merchant, will finally tie the knot on Friday here.

Priyanka shared a series of pictures

on her Instagram Stories ahead of the grand event.

"#AnantandRadhika," the actor, who was recently in Australia shooting for her Hollywood film "The Bluff",

wrote in a post. "Mumbai monsoon," she captioned a video of clouds from her plane.

According to videos circulating on social media, Priyanka, 41, and Nick, 31, were spotted exiting from the airport as it rained.

The actor smiled, waved at and

greeted the paparazzi stationed outside with a namaste before she left with her husband, who also acknowledged the photographers when they called out his name. Anant and Radhika will tie the knot at the Jio World Convention Centre here tomorrow. (PTI)



Kubbra Sait joins cast of David Dhawan's next film

NEW DELHI, July 11: Actor Kubbra Sait, known for her roles in "Sacred Games" and "Jawaani Jaaneman", has boarded the cast of veteran filmmaker David Dhawan's upcoming film.

Billed as a family entertainer, the currently untitled project also stars Varun Dhawan, Manish Paul, and Mrunal Thakur.

Sait shared a series of pictures from the first day of the film's shooting on her Instagram Stories.

"Another day another rupee #Day1 #OnSet @manishpaul @varundvn @mrunalthakur #DavidDhawan," she wrote on Wednesday.

Also starring Sreeleela, the movie is produced by Tips Films and is expected to be released in theatres next year.

The film marks the third collaboration between father-son duo David Dhawan and Varun Dhawan after "Main Tera Hero" (2014) and the reboot of "Coolie No 1" (2020). (PTI)



WOULD LOVE TO DO A ROMANTIC COMEDY: PURAB KOHLI

NEW DELHI, July 11: After a spate of intense thrillers, actor Purab Kohli says he would love to star in a mature romantic comedy.

Best known for popular 1998 school drama "Hip Hip Hurray" as well as films such as "My Brother... Nikhil", "Rock On!" and "Turning 30" as well as international series "Sense8" and Hollywood movie "The Matrix: Resurrections", Kohli will next be seen in the mystery thriller web series "36 Days".

Recently, the actor has starred in "Blind", "London Files", "Bob Biswas", and "London Confidential", all thrillers across different mediums.

"I would love to do a romantic comedy... A mature romantic comedy is something I would really like to do. I always wanted to do that and I haven't had the opportunity. I feel a nice romantic comedy is something I would really be interested in," Kohli told PTI in a virtual interview from London.

"36 Days" is a 36-day journey to the fateful moment that upends the lives of Goa's Casa De Magnolia residents.

"An enigmatic woman's arrival in a seemingly idyllic housing estate in Goa threatens to expose the residents' darkest secrets. As they clamour to unravel her mysteries, all their lies and hidden identities begin destroying them, culminating in absolute horror," the makers said.

Produced by Sony LIV in association with BBC Studios India, "36 Days" is directed by Vishal Furia. It is a remake of the Welsh noir "35 Days".

In the series, Kohli plays Hrishikesh Jaykar, one of the residents of Casa De Magnolia.

The Mumbai-born actor said he was earlier offered another part on the show but as he didn't have the dates at the time, he decided to say no to the project.

As the shooting of "36 Days" was pushed, a slot opened up in his schedule and he joined the series albeit in a different role.

"The good thing about the BBC is that they always get shows that have been produced already internationally. A lot of very intelligent writing minds have put in a lot of hours in creating these properties or stories

that can be retold around the world and what if they make the same show in China, America or India. So, it's a no brainer when something comes from them. You know it's going to be good and a nicely written show," he said.

Fronted by Neha Sharma, "36 Days" also stars Amruta Khanvilkar, Sharib Hashmi, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Shruti Seth, and Sushant Divgikar.

Kohli said all characters in the show have their own backstories.

"The right thing to do is you cast such good actors and give them something nice to do with every character. Everybody on the show has done quite a lot and it's a really colourful sort of cast and good actors.

"I feel everybody is being used beautifully and everybody is sort of linked to the main story in some way or the other and through that link you uncover the mess, the secrets, the complexities that are existing in each individual household as you go along," he added.

and participating in reality TV series, the 45-year-old has done pretty much everything in his over 20 year-career.

But his first job was as a cleaner at his house when he was barely 12.

"My mother bought a vacuum cleaner in the house and I just loved using it. It was so cool. I really wanted to use it so then I found a way to go to all my aunties and uncles' houses for Rs 10-Rs 20 just to vacuum clean their house. That was the first job I did," he recalled.

Kohli said he enjoys working in the field he is in and would like to gradually shift to behind-the-camera duties. A few years ago, he directed a music video on the National Anthem.

"I really love the medium... I need to be in something that is creative... Right now, I am enjoying writing. I don't have anything that is published or being made into something. But, I am writing a screenplay and I feel that would be the next sort of gradual step... I would move towards writing and directing." (PTI)

ENGLAND BEAT NETHERLANDS 2-1 TO REACH ANOTHER EURO FINAL

DORTMUND, July 11: England is into another European Championship final after its latest dramatic, come-from-behind win that even took King Charles III on a roller coaster ride.

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

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

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

Watkins' goal was fit for a king. He had only made one previous appearance at Euro 2024 — as a substitute in the group game against Denmark — so it was a surprise when he was introduced by Southgate in the 80th minute in England's biggest match so far. The gamble paid off.

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

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



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

It was painful for Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman.

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

money on us."

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

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

The sea of orange in the giant South Stand at Dortmund's Westfalenstadion fell silent for the

first time after Watkins' late goal. It housed the most vocal of the Dutch supporters who dominated the city center before marching in their thousands to the stadium ahead of the game. Police reported three separate clashes between fans from both countries in the city. (AP)

Colombia beat Uruguay 1-0 to reach Copa America final against Argentina

CHARLOTTE (US), July 11: Jefferson Lerma scored in the 39th minute, and Colombia played a man short the entire second half in a 1-0 win over Uruguay on Wednesday night to reach the Copa America final against Lionel Messi and Argentina.

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

In a contentious match that included seven yellow cards and one red, players from both teams pushed and shoved in a scrum on the field at the final whistle and some players went into the stands to scrap with fans.

Defending champion Argentina and Colombia meet Sunday night at Miami Gardens, Florida.

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

James Rodríguez's corner kick was headed in from short range by Lerma, who outjumped José María Giménez for his third in-

ternational goal and second of the tournament. Rodríguez has six assists in the tournament — triple the total of any other player.

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

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

Ríos was removed on a stretcher, re-entered the match, then went down in another challenge and was substituted in the 62nd minute. Rodríguez was removed at the same time to keep him eligible for the final.

Colombia goalkeeper Federico Valverde did not have to make his first save until he stopped Nicolás de la Cruz in the 68th minute.

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

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

Gregg Berhalter fired as US men's soccer coach

NEW YORK, July 11: Gregg Berhalter was fired 10 months into his second stint as U.S. men's soccer coach, leaving the Americans searching for a leader less than two years before they host the World Cup.

Berhalter was dismissed Wednesday, nine days after his team's first-round exit from the Copa America flamed doubts he was the right person to remain in charge. "The Copa America result is extremely disappointing and I take full responsibility for our performance," Berhalter said in a statement. "Our approach and process was always focused on the 2026 World Cup and I remain confident that this group will be one of the great stories in 2026." After opening the Copa America with a 2-0 win over Bolivia, the U.S. lost to Panama 2-1 while playing most of the match a man short due to Tim Weah's ejection, then were eliminated with a 2-1 defeat to Uruguay. The U.S. had seven wins, six losses and one draw in his second stint, leaving his overall record at 44 wins, 17 losses and 13 draws.

When Berhalter returned to the bench last September, he proclaimed the team's goal was "to

change soccer in America forever." If that is to happen, it will be without him.

Sporting director Matt Crocker rehired Berhalter and also will make the recommendation on his replacement. The team next plays in September friendlies against Canada and New Zealand.

USSF spokesman Neil Buethel would not make Crocker available to answer questions from The Associated Press.

"Our immediate focus is on finding a coach who can maximize our potential as we continue to prepare for the 2026 World Cup, and we have already begun our search process," Crocker said in a statement.

USSF president Cindy Parlow Cone also issued a statement. She did not immediately respond to a text message seeking additional comment.

Jürgen Klopp, Thierry Henry, Patrick Vieira and Marcelo Bielsa are among those being speculated about as candidates to replace Berhalter, along with Jesse Marsch, Hugo Pérez, Pellegrino Matarazzo, David Wagner, Steve Cherundolo, Jim Curtin, Massimiliano Allegri and Mauricio Pochettino. (AP)

Paris is my fourth and probably last Olympics: Manpreet

BENGALURU, July 11: He has no plans to retire anytime soon but former Indian men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh very well knows that the Paris Games will be his fourth and last Olympics, and wants to give his best one last time at the world's biggest sporting extravaganza.

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

Besides, he has been a member of the team that won 2014 and 2022 Asian Games gold medals. "I never thought that I would be able to play four Olympics. It is every player's dream to play in the Olympics and win medals. I consider myself very lucky that this is my fourth Olympics," Manpreet told PTI Bhasha.

"I am going to Paris thinking as if it is my last Olympics and I have to give my best. I haven't thought about quitting the game yet and my complete focus is on the Paris Games," the experienced midfielder, who made his debut for India in 2011 at the age of just 19, said. But the journey from Mithapur village in Jalandhar to Paris has not been a smooth sail-



ing for Manpreet. He had to fight poverty, false allegations and witness mother's struggles to make a mark in his career.

After the Tokyo Olympics, Manpreet had to endure the worst phase of his career when former coach Sjoerd Marjine levelled serious allegations against him.

Marjine accused that Manpreet asked a player to underperform so that his friends could get in the team during 2018 Commonwealth Games, an allegation which both the men and women's teams

jointly denied, stating that the Dutchman did so to publicise his book. "That was the most difficult phase for me. I could never even think of such things. I was broken and lost faith in everyone. I told (PR) Sreejesh with whom I share everything. My mother also encouraged me to keep playing to fulfil my father's dream and my whole team supported me," said Manpreet. "In bad times, the support of the family and team is very important because at that time the player finds himself very

lonely. When the team stands together, it gives a lot of encouragement and also helps in making a comeback. We have also seen Hardik Pandya making a great comeback recently."

"When I look back now, it seems like a dream. I come from a humble background where we have seen struggles for the basic needs. "Father used to work as a carpenter in Dubai but had returned from there due to medical reasons. My mother struggled a lot and both my brothers also played hockey but they left due to financial problems," said Manpreet, who was the flag-bearer of the Indian contingent at Tokyo Olympics along with boxing legend MC Mary Kom.

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

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

Radha Govinda Barua Inter-District Cricket: Nagaon wins

HT Correspondent

MORIGAOON, July 11: Nagaon Sports Association advanced to the second round of the Radha Govinda Barua Inter-District cricket tournament by leading Hojai District Sports Association (HDSA) by 54 runs in the first innings of the Radha Govind Barua Under-16 Inter-District Cricket Tournament being played at Khirud Barua Stadium since Wednesday.

Nagaon District Sports Association scored 103 runs against HDSA in the first innings of the second day of the match, played at Khirud Barua Stadium under the auspices of Morigaon District Sports Association. Durlav Devroy took eight wickets for Hojai, while Ankit took two wickets.

HDSA finished their first innings with just 49 runs. Githartha Bora took five wickets and Dhritiman Das took three wickets for Nagaon. Shubrajit scored 44 runs and Manas Kumar scored 22 runs in the second innings to help Nagaon score 114 for seven wickets. Hojai District Sports Association scored 23/3 in the second innings. Durlav Devroy of Hojai received the player of the match award for taking 13 wickets across both innings. The match was conducted by Assam Cricket Association panel umpires Zehurul Haque and Nuruddin Siddiqui.

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

'We all want to be loved': England coach Southgate savors Euro 2024 semifinal win after criticism

DORTMUND, July 11: Gareth Southgate has faced non-stop criticism as England's manager at Euro 2024. Reaching the final could rekindle a love affair with the team's supporters.

A coach once idolized by his team's fans — and with the most consistently successful record of any England manager — had been the target of a volley of plastic cups from disgruntled fans at one game, and criticism from British TV commentators over his cautious approach.

Wednesday's 2-1 win over the Netherlands in the Euro 2024 semifinals might change all that. Southgate's team played a more open, attacking style for much of the game, and his decision to take off captain Harry Kane paid dividends when substitute Ollie Watkins scored a dramatic stoppage-time winner.

"We all want to be loved, right? When you're doing something for your country and you're a proud Englishman, when you don't feel that back and when all you read is criticism, it's hard. So to be able to celebrate the second

final (after Euro 2020) is very, very special," Southgate said, paying tribute to England's traveling fans.

"If I hadn't been on the grass, I'd have been watching, celebrating like they were. We are kindred spirits in many ways but of course I'm the one who has to pick a team. So to be able to give them a night like tonight, it's very special."

Southgate was once seen as someone who reconnected England with its fan base, making them fall back in love with the team. Supporters sang of Southgate being "the one" and the vest — or waistcoat — he wore at the 2018 World Cup became one of the iconic symbols of his first major tournament in charge.

But a loss on penalties to Italy at home in the Euro 2020 final seemed for some to show the limits of his cautious tactics as England tried and failed to defend an early 1-0 lead.

At Euro 2024, England's path to its semifinal game against the Netherlands featured some games that were hard to watch —

England didn't have a shot on goal until deep into added time against Slovakia in the round of 16, and the 80th minute against Switzerland in the quarterfinals. Both were crucial goals that kept England's hopes alive.

Until Wednesday, Southgate's most notable experiment in Germany was one that backfired, deploying right back Trent Alexander-Arnold as a central midfielder in the opening 1-0 win over Serbia and 1-1 draw with Denmark. England faces Spain in Sunday's final, one game away from what would be its first men's trophy since winning the 1966 World Cup on home soil.

"The only reason I took the job was to try and bring success to England as a nation and try and improve English football. To be able to take the team to its first final overseas, I'm immensely proud of that," Southgate said.

"We play the team who have been the best team in the tournament and we have a day less to prepare so it's a huge task. But we're still here and we're fighting." (AP)



McIlroy trying to move on from US Open loss

NORTH BERWICK (SCOTLAND), July 11: Rory McIlroy got back into his own little world a few days too late.

The immediate aftermath of a U.S. Open he threw away — missing two putts in the 3-foot range — included a previously planned trip to Manhattan. McIlroy said he walked the High Line a couple of times, able to be a face in the crowd of America's busiest city. "Alone with my thoughts for a couple days, which was good," McIlroy said Wednesday at the Genesis Scottish Open, his first time back from a most devastating loss at Pinehurst No. 2. "They were hard, but at the same time, as each day went by it became easier to focus on the positives and then to think about the future instead of what had just happened." (AP)

I could have done better in tennis than badminton: Saina Nehwal

NEW DELHI, July 11: Trail-blazing Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal feels she would have perhaps excelled more as a sportsperson if she had picked a tennis racket instead of playing badminton.

Nehwal has an impressive resume as a badminton player. Not only she became the first Indian woman shuttler to be ranked No. 1 in the world, she was the first woman athlete from the country to win an Olympic medal.

"Sometimes I feel that it would have been good if my parents had put me in tennis," Saina said during her "Her Story-My Story" talk at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

"There is more money and I had more strength I think. I could have done better in tennis than badminton," she added.

While Saina has inspired many to take up badminton, the 34-year-old herself didn't have anyone to look up to when she picked the racket at the age of 8.

"When I started, I didn't have any role models to look up to. No



one to look up to and say 'I want to be world number one or be an Olympic medalist,' I hadn't seen

anyone do that in badminton before me," Saina said. Beside the London Olympics

bronze, Nehwal also won a bronze and a silver at the World Championships and multiple Commonwealth Games gold, including two in the women's singles. She urged the youngsters present to explore a career in sports.

"I always tell children to concentrate on games. China wins 60-70 medals. We only get 3-4. There are so many doctors and engineers, their names don't come in newspapers," she said.

"I want girls to especially to come forward and start getting fit and get into sports. Now we are there for the children, there are world number ones, Olympic champions and so many medallists to look up to," she added.

Reflecting on her career, she said her hard work compensated for the lack of talent.

"I loved hard work, I was not the most talented person, I need to practice a lot. If a talented player is doing something 100 times I had to do it 1000 times. But I like hard work. My coaches like my never give up attitude." (PTI)

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

MUMBAI, July 11: Ace badminton player PV Sindhu, javelin thrower Kishore Jena and hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh are some of the athletes whose feats are being celebrated in the city in leadup to the Paris Olympics, starting July 26.

An outdoor campaign was launched here on Thursday to celebrate the "champions of the game" by sports goods manufacturing company Puma, which has partnered with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) as their official footwear partner for the Olympics. A total of 45 Indian athletes bound for the Olympics will represent the German company, whose "See the Game Like We Do" campaign aims to celebrate the feats of the sportspersons here.

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

Masood to continue as Pakistan Test captain, decision on Babar put on hold

LAHORE, July 11: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and coach Jason Gillespie have reposed faith on Shan Masood to continue as national team's Test captain ahead of a packed international season, but a decision on the leadership role of Babar Azam in white ball formats has been put on hold.

Pakistan is scheduled to host England in a three-match Test series in October this year, while rubbers against Bangladesh, South Africa and the West Indies are also on the calendar.

The PCB held a meeting here on Wednesday, which was attended by senior board officials, national selectors, Gillespie, white ball formats coach Gary Kirsten and assistant coach Azhar Mahmood, to discuss Pakistan's meek outing in the recent T20 World Cup in the Americas.

"The meeting was held to discuss ways to move forward with a comprehensive blueprint for the national team in red and white ball formats," indicated a source aware of the developments.

Masood, who took over as Test captain ahead of the tour to Australia earlier this year, received a complete vote of confidence.

"Shan got the support at the meeting to continue as Test captain for the upcoming series against



Bangladesh, England, South Africa and the West Indies between August and January," he said.

However, no decision was taken on Babar's white ball captaincy although his performance as captain and batsman came under a lot of discussion. Babar, according to the source, came under criticism for his lack of strength and leadership skills when the chips were down, especially during the T20 WC.

Meanwhile, former Pakistan pacer Sarfraz Nawaz asked to sack the entire selection committee as they had shown collective incompetence in the ICC showpiece and in the build up to it.

"The selection committee has

worked collectively and should be sacked collectively for their failure and incompetence," said Nawaz.

Nawaz said he had told PCB officials several times not to give any administrative role to sacked selector Wahab Riaz.

"I am on record to have written letters to Zaka (Ashraf) and (Mohsin) Naqvi regarding Wahab's suspected past and his lack of abilities as an administrator. Nobody paid heed to my suggestion."

"I knew well that Wahab was not capable of delivering in any capacity yet he was made selector, advisor and manager. On all fronts he failed," he said. (PTI)

Lorenzo Musetti reaches his first Grand Slam semifinal at Wimbledon and will face Novak Djokovic

LONDON, July 11: Lorenzo Musetti threw his head back and spread his arms wide to celebrate reaching his first Grand Slam semifinal at Wimbledon, then covered his face with both hands.

His 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 victory over Taylor Fritz on Wednesday was a big deal, to be sure. After all, the 25th-seeded Musetti, a 22-year-old from Italy, never had made it past the third round at the All England Club — or past the fourth round at any major tournament — until this fortnight.

Now, though, comes a far tougher test: taking on Novak Djokovic.

"He probably knows, better than me, the surface and the stadium, for sure," Musetti said with a chuckle, aware he'll be making his Centre Court debut on Friday. "Jokes apart, he's a legend everywhere, but especially here in Wimbledon."

This will be Djokovic's record-breaking 13th semifinal at Wimbledon alone — equaling Roger Federer — and 49th Slam semifinal overall, extending a mark he already held. As Musetti pursues his first major championship, Djokovic seeks a 25th, including what would be an eighth at the All England Club.

Djokovic's smooth trip through this year's bracket was made even easier when the man he was supposed to play in the quarterfinals Wednesday, Alex de Minaur, pulled out with a hip injury hours before their match was scheduled to begin.

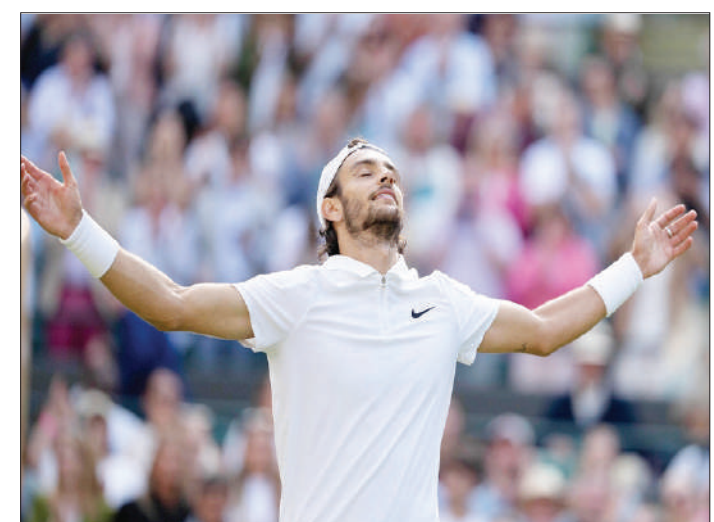
Musetti was forced to work for his spot in the final four: His 3 1/2-hour victory over the 13th-seeded Fritz was the 37th five-setter at the All England Club this year, the most at any Grand Slam tournament.

Musetti acknowledged he didn't get off to an ideal start, in part because of nerves. But an early break in the second set helped alter the course of the evening.

"Immediately, I changed my mind. I changed my attitude," he said. "And that probably made the difference."

Musetti's son, Ludovico, was born in March, and he said Wednesday that helped him rededicate himself to his sport and strive to no longer "throw away matches."

"Instead of me teaching him, he's teaching me. ... Having a child makes you reflect a lot,"



Musetti said. "I feel more mature on the court, more mature off the court, and more mature as a player, as a father, as a person."

Playing at a sun-swathed No. 1 Court against Fritz, an American who is one of the sport's biggest servers but fell to 0-4 in major quarterfinals, Musetti managed to accumulate 13 break points and convert six.

With Queen Camilla, the wife of King Charles III, in the stands and joining fans in doing the wave, Musetti did far more to vary his strokes — a drop shot here, a lob there, plenty of slices — than Fritz did.

"I just felt like it took a lot to finish the point," Fritz said.

Djokovic had knee surgery less than a month before the start of play at the All England Club. But despite limitations on his movement, the 37-year-old Djokovic has dropped only two sets so far — facing a qualifier in the first round, a wild-card entrant in the second and only one seeded player, No. 15 Holger Rune.

Instead of going up against No. 9 de Minaur on Wednesday, Djokovic will get three full days off before meeting Musetti. The other semifinal Friday is defending champion Carlos Alcaraz against Daniil Medvedev.

Djokovic and Musetti have played each other six times previously. Djokovic has won five of those, including a five-setter at this year's French Open that concluded after 3 a.m. It was in Djokovic's following match in Paris that he tore the meniscus in his right knee.

"We know each other pretty well. They've always been a huge fight so I expect a big, big fight."

It's going to be one of the toughest challenges on tour," Musetti said, "but I am an ambitious guy and I like to be challenged."

In the women's quarterfinals Wednesday, 2022 champion Elena Rybakina grabbed nine of the last 11 games to defeat No. 21 Elina Svitolina 6-3, 6-2, and No. 31 Barbora Krejickova eliminated No. 13 Jelena Ostapenko 6-4, 7-6 (4) in a matchup between two past champions at the French Open.

The other women's semifinal on Thursday is No. 7 Jasmine Paolini of Italy against unseeded Donna Vekic of Croatia.

Kazakhstan's Rybakina ended her win with her seventh ace and improved to 19-2 at Wimbledon in four appearances.

"Definitely, I have an aggressive style of game," Rybakina said. "I have a huge serve, so it's a big advantage."

Krejickova won her first Grand Slam title on the red clay at Roland Garros in 2021, but the 28-year-old from the Czech Republic never put together a five-match winning streak on grass until now.

De Minaur's exit is the latest due to injury in Week 2. His hip issue arose right at the end of his win against Arthur Fils on Monday.

De Minaur said he heard a crack and knew something was wrong.

He underwent medical tests Tuesday that revealed the extent of the problem but tried to practice on Wednesday morning, hoping to participate in what would have been his first Wimbledon quarterfinal.

"This was the biggest match of my career," de Minaur said, "so wanted to do anything I could to play." (AP)

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

India defeated Zimbabwe by 23 runs to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series



HARARE, July 11: Ravi Bishnoi's fielding has always had a touch of athleticism but he took it to a different plane in the third T20 against Zimbabwe when he leapt to pluck a screamer off Avesh Khan to dismiss Brian Bennett, leaving his India teammate in awe.

India defeated Zimbabwe by 23 runs on Wednesday to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series but the talk in the dressing room was Bishnoi's astonishing catch to dismiss the Zimbabwe top-order batter, reducing the hosts to 19 for 3 in the fourth over.

The pacer said he was left "shocked" for a moment.

"When he took the catch, I don't think he got the reaction time. I also did not get the reaction time (to see what happened). I was, in fact, shocked how he took that catch," said Avesh, who took two wickets as India restricted Zimbabwe to 159/6 in the chase of 182.

Avesh added that the wicket should be credited to Bishnoi's account for the sheer effort.

"He is a good fielder, works a lot on his fielding. The catch that he took, the scoreboard will show that it was taken by me, but it should be credited in his (Bishnoi's) account," added Avesh in a video posted by BCCI.

India skipper Shubman Gill said it was a truly amazing effort from Bishnoi and showed that the leg-spinner was enjoying his fielding.

"Very happy with the team's win to go 2-1 up in the series and the catch that Bishi (Bishnoi) took was absolutely remarkable. It was truly delightful to watch."

"Cricket is definitely a team sport and it's more so a team sport when you're fielding. So, it's very important to have fun when you are fielding. If you are having fun then you are always in the game," added the captain.

Washington Sundar said he had the best view of the catch as he was positioned at mid-on.

"It was a great opportunity for me to stand at mid-on and have a clear view of whatever happened throughout the catch... and throughout that particular ball. It (ball) went at rocket speed and Bishnoi... that rocket speed was there (he also displayed rocket speed)," said Sundar.

Bishnoi himself was humble about the catch, saying he had been doing more fielding drills.

"Yes, it felt good. We were talking about fielding for the last 2-3 days, how to improve my fielding even more. It's a new normal for me to take the catch off Avesh's bowling."

"As long as we don't make that effort to take the catch we won't know if it is near or far. So, I push myself to be as close to the catch as possible," added Bishnoi.

Rinku Singh said this was not the first time Bishnoi has taken an outstanding catch.

"It was an outstanding catch, (but) it's not that he has taken such a catch for the first time; he has taken several good catches in international cricket and IPL," said Rinku. (PTI)

Opportunity for Indian players to get direct entry into junior French Open



NEW DELHI, July 11: Indian players will get an opportunity along with other Asian competitors to earn a direct entry into the junior French Open next year through the inaugural Roland-Garros Junior Series — a qualifying event to be held from October 16-20 in Tokyo.

To make it to the Tokyo event, the players in the Asian region will first have to compete in the regional qualifying tournaments in Kazakhstan (August 5-9) and China (August 11-17). The two finalists — both boys and girls — in these qualifying events will book their spots for the Tokyo event where the winner will be awarded direct entry into the 2025 junior French Open.

The tournament is the result of an agreement between the French Tennis Federation (FFT) and the Asian Tennis Federation (ATF).

"The motivation behind focusing on Asian youth is due to the continent's comparatively smaller representation in the top players of professional and Junior international rankings especially when compared to Europe and North America," an ATF press release stated.

"It is a very heartening time for me to be a part of the great clay court development initiative and commencement of Roland-Garros Junior Series by Renault in Asia with the col-

laborative efforts of FFT & ATF. "We are very excited to work with FFT to help deliver this premium opportunity to our deserving juniors to compete for the enviable spot in 2025 Roland-Garros Junior."

Roland-Garros has a special niche and traction in the hearts of the tennis lovers and it brings a lot of inspiration for our aspiring players. Let's go stronger Asia," said Yuriy Polyskiy, ATF President.

Kei Nishikori, the first Asian tennis player to win an Olympic medal and the only Asian to reach a Grand Slam final in ATP history (US Open 2014), is the tournament ambassador.

Roland-Garros Junior Series has been taking place with the same concept in Brazil since 2022, gathering top Latin American Junior players such as Joao Fonseca, who won the first edition and is close to break ATP Top 200.

"After the success of Roland-Garros Junior Series by Renault in Brazil since 2022, I feel delighted to extend this world-class event for Juniors in Japan. Together with Asian Tennis Federation and Japanese Tennis Association, we're aiming to support the best Asian Juniors to make them live a Roland-Garros experience in Tokyo on clay," said Amélie Mauresmo, the Roland-Garros tournament Director. (PTI)

Babar Azam has got enough opportunities: Shahid Afridi

KARACHI, July 11: Former Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi has come down heavily on embattled skipper Babar Azam for the team's poor performance in the T20 World Cup, saying that he had been given enough opportunities to lead the side, and it was time for the PCB to take a call on his captaincy.

Former champions Pakistan lost to newcomers USA and arch-rivals India to be eliminated in the group stage of the World Cup held in the USA and West Indies.

"Babar has got a full open chance to lead Pakistan. He has been given enough time to show his worth as captain. Now whatever surgery the PCB wants to do, they should take their decision," Afridi told the media in Birmingham where he is taking part in the World Legends Championship.

"I have also captained Pakistan and so have Younis Khan and Misbah-ul-Haq but whenever the team has performed badly in the World Cups, first thing the captain faces the knife (sic)," he said.

Babar has led Pakistan in four World Cups and two Asia Cups.

Afridi also said that if the PCB decides to appoint a new skipper, he and the two new foreign coaches — Gary Kirsten and Jason Gillespie — should be given enough time to prove themselves.

"Whatever decision the PCB takes it should take but it should give time to the captain, coach and the system to work," he added.

The former skipper also disagreed with the Pakistan Cricket Board's decision to sack national selectors Wahab Riaz and Abdul Razzaq.

The two former Test players were removed from the selection committee in the wake of the team's disastrous T20 World Cup campaign. (PTI)