

## "Thai Gallery" inaugurated at Rabindra Bharati to celebrate 75 years of India Thailand Diplomatic Relationship

Kolkata (KCN, Partha Roy) "Thai Gallery" inaugurated at Rabindra Bharati Bari in Kolkata as a part of celebration of 75 years of establishment of India Thai-Modern Day chapter of Thai-Indian Relations". The exhibition show- Idea of establishing



University Museum by West Bengal Education Minister Shri Bratya Basu in presence of Her Excellency Ms. Pattarat Hongtong, Ambassador of Thailand to India, Consul General of Thailand in Kolkata Ms. Acharya Yavapras, Vice Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University Professor Sabyasachy Basu Ray Choudhury, Registrar of RBU Dr. Subir Mitra on 24th June 2022 at Jorasanko Thakur

land Diplomatic Relationship. India and Thailand have historical cultural connect spanning over many centuries. Inauguration ceremony of Thai gallery was attended by top diplomats in the city including Consul Generals of China, Italy, Japan, Germany, British Deputy High Commissioner, as well as diplomats from USA and Russia. Thai gallery hosts exhibition titled "Tagore's visit to Siam: Prelude to the

cases the story of Rabindranath Tagore's visit to Siam in 1927. Thailand was formerly known as Siam. During the visit, Tagore had opportunity to have an audience with His Majesty King Prajadhipok, Rama VII. The important modern day linkage in the exhibition is Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's royal visit to Kolkata and to Jorasanko Thakur

the exhibition to narrate about Rabindranath Tagore's visit to Siam in 1927 originated from Mr. Norachit Sinhaseni former Permanent Secretary in Foreign Ministry of Thailand in 2016. The Thai gallery will inspire young Indian and international public to explore multifaceted Thailand India relationship as well as facilitate to develop deeper understanding and strengthen people to people relationship between two nations of Asia.

## Eye on 2024 elections, central BJP leadership reviews constituencies

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): With focus on general elections in 2024, the national leadership of the BJP has started collecting information on "weak" and "very weak" parliamentary constituencies of the State, where the party lost by slender margin or came second in 2019. After the special outreach programme during the first half of June when Union Ministers visited different parliamentary constituencies highlighting the achievements of the Narendra Modi-led NDA government in the last eight years, central BJP functionaries have started visiting the State to monitor the preparedness of the party for the 2024 elections. BJP is focusing more on the parliamentary constituencies, and Assembly seats under them, where the party

lost to its rival by a low margin. As part of the programme, national BJP vice-president and former president of West

organisational matters, sources in the party said that Ghose took stock of the eight parliamentary seats where the BJP

Close on the heels of Ghose's visit, national BJP secretary Harish Dwivedi, MP from Uttar Pradesh is coming to the State



Bengal BJP Dilip Ghose was on a two-day visit to the State and held closed-door meetings with State functionaries, prabhari (organisational in-charge) and key district functionaries at the party's state office here on Sunday. Though State BJP president Samir Mohanty said it was a routine review of

was winner. Apart from reviewing organisational activities, he collected data on the delivery of Central welfare programmes to the constituents and issues in favour and against the party. Ghose, who left for Kolkata on Monday, will submit his report to the organisational in-charge of the party at the Central level.

for a similar exercise. Dwivedi will take stock of the remaining parliamentary constituencies at a meeting here on Tuesday. The BJP had lost four Lok Sabha seats of Puri, Bhadrak, Dhenkanal and Nabarangpur by a slender margin in 2019 elections. The party has identified

CONTINUED ON: P-7

## China provides USD 2.5 billion loan to Pakistan to boost its forex reserves

BEIJING(KCN): China has again rushed to bail out Pakistan by providing USD 2.5 billion in assistance to prop up the fast-depleting foreign exchange reserves of its cash-strapped all-weather ally, months after it rolled over a USD 4.5 billion loan due to be paid this year.

The announcement of the Chinese assistance

came after France signed an agreement with



Pakistan to suspend its loan worth USD 107 million under the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI).

ALSO READ: PM Sharif says Pakistan could receive USD 2 billion bailout from IMF. The agreement was signed by Ministry of Economic Affairs Secretary Mian Asad Hayaud Din and French Ambassador Nicolas

Galey, the Economic Affairs Division of Pakistan said in a statement on Monday.

"China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners. China always supports Pakistan in growing its economy, improving livelihoods and upholding financial stability," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media

CONTINUED ON: P-7

## BJD to approach Odisha Congress to support Murmu

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Following Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's assertion that he will work towards getting every vote from Odisha for NDA presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu, the BJD has decided to

smoothly. They said, the ruling party is already on the job to exploit the fissures in the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) for the presidential polls and the task has been assigned to some leaders. However, BJD leaders declined to comment anything on the election as the Chief Minister is handling it directly.

Meanwhile, president of the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee Sarat Pattanayak told this paper that the issue will be discussed in the CLP before the budget session starting from July 2. The party will discuss strategy to keep all the nine votes of the Congress MLAs in favour of the united Opposition presidential candidate Yashwant Sinha, who filed his nomination papers on Monday.

Referring to the statement of Chief Minister that the BJD party will try to get all votes from Odisha for Murmu, Pattanayak said BJD will do its work. The Congress MLAs, however, will follow the party stand and there is no threat either from the BJD or BJP. Asked about the statement of senior MLA Suresh Kumar Routray supporting the candidature of Murmu, Pattanayak said that the issue is already sorted out and a strong message has been given to the MLAs in this regard.



approach the nine Congress MLAs and the lone CPM member of the Odisha Assembly to support her.

The modalities of how to go about this is yet to be decided, though it is clear that any move in this regard will be started only after the return of the Chief Minister from his foreign tour on June 30.

Murmu is likely to visit Odisha for her campaign during the first week of July in the midst of the budget session of the Assembly. She is likely to meet all the MLAs across party lines and seek their support.

Sources said that BJD will do the groundwork before the campaign of the presidential candidate so that the process is completed

## Amid row over meeting Pope, Naveen Patnaik visits Sheikh Zayed mosque in Abu Dhabi

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Amid criticism by opposition BJP over meeting Pope Francis at Vatican City last week, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has visited Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi ahead of meeting potential investors in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Patnaik, who is on an 11-day foreign tour, had met Pope Francis on June 22, with the saffron party questioning his intention of meeting the Catholic Church head.

"The marble dome of Sheikh Zayed Mosque, Abu Dhabi is an epitome of magnificence with intri-

cate inlay work inspired by Moghul ar-

Ratha Jatra on July 1. To underline his



chitecture. I am told, the artisans and the marbles also came from Makrana village of Rajasthan. A bit of India, everywhere," Patnaik tweeted along with a video of his visit to the mosque on Monday.

Patnaik, who will return to Odisha on June 30, is scheduled to visit Puri to witness Lord Jagannath's annual

secular credentials, Patnaik is making visits to religious places of different faiths, a BJD insider said. Senior BJP lawmaker Jaynarayan Mishra, who is among those considered for the post of the Leader of Opposition in Odisha assembly, has questioned Patnaik's Vatican City visit. "By spending public

money, why did CM go there and what did he achieve in return? What was the need to meet the Pope by standing in a queue? We have never seen him meet Shankaracharya in Puri," Mishra has said.

The BJP, however, has not yet reacted on Patnaik's visit to the mosque.

Reacting to the BJP's objection, BJD legislator S B Behera said, "What is wrong in meeting the Pope? If this meeting creates a positive image of Odisha in the world, the CM has taken the right decision."

This is Patnaik's second official foreign tour in the last 22 years of his reign in Odisha.

# Vedanta Lanjigarh wins the prestigious Kalinga Environment Excellence Award 2021 for sustainability initiatives

**Lanjigarh(KCVN):** Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh unit, India's premier producer of metallurgical grade alumina, has been honoured with the prestigious Kalinga Environment Excellence Award 2021 for its

energy management, water conservation, waste to wealth, biodiversity conservation and more.

Some of the best-in-class technologies and practices in environment sustainability

for effective waste management, for which the company was first in India to undertake the initiative

- High Concentrated Slurry Disposal, dry fog systems, water sprinkling, etc. help the company ensure air quality
- A lush green belt in and around plant operations, with plantation of more than 5.40 lakh trees which also serve as carbon sinks and biodiversity spots

**Speaking about the award, Mr. GG Pal, Dy. CEO – Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh, said,** "We have deployed a robust sustainability framework across our operations. This enables us to strive for operational excellence, while creating a lasting positive impact on the environment and our communities. This award is a strong endorsement of our journey so far, and only motivates us to elevate our efforts further towards our dual objectives of business growth and sustainable development."

Vedanta Aluminium, a business of Vedanta Limited, is India's largest producer of aluminium, manufacturing half of India's aluminium i.e., 2.26 million tonnes in FY22. It is a leader in value-added aluminium products that find critical applications in core industries. Vedanta Aluminium ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) 2021 world rankings for aluminium industry, a reflection of its sustainable development practices. The company operates a 2 MTPA (million tonnes per annum) capacity alumina refinery in Lanjigarh (Kalahandi district, Odisha), India since 2007 and an associated 75 MW captive power plant. With its world-class aluminium smelters, alumina refinery and power plants in India, the company fulfils its mission of spurring emerging applications of aluminium as the 'Metal of the Future' for a greener tomorrow. [www.vedantaaluminium.com](http://www.vedantaaluminium.com)



unwavering commitment and contribution towards environmental sustainability. Vedanta Lanjigarh is the Alumina Refinery unit of Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest producer of aluminium.

The award is a true testament of the organization's approach of Zero Harm, Zero Waste and Zero Discharge towards environmental sustainability, which is multi-dimensional and spans carbon reduction,

adopted by the company include:

- Robust water management systems that include state-of-the-art Effluent Treatment Plants to recycle and reuse wastewater generated inside the plants, along with a network of rainwater harvesting structures, which have enabled the company to conserve 100 million litres of water in the previous fiscal.
- A world-class bauxite residue filtration unit

## Excise Squad Seized 42 gram Brown Sugar in Khordha. One held

Khordha (KCN) As per the direction of Collector & District Jatni area. A case has been booked vide PR. No-22/2022-23 of In-



Magistrate & Superintendent of Excise Khordha raid was conducted in Barunei area under Khordha Model PS area and arrested one person for smuggling and selling of Brown Sugar. The Excise officials have also seized 42 grams of Brown Sugar, worth -4 Lakhs 20 Thousands, one bajaj pulsar motor cycle bearing registration no-OD-33-Q-2854 from the accused. The accused has been identified as Sk.Mamtaz (22) of village -Rathipur, specter of Excise Khordha under sec.-21(b) of NDPS Act-1985. The Excise officials have informed that they are interrogating the drugs peddler to trace their further links in the brown sugar trade. The raid was conducted by Inspector of Excise Khordha Range, Bhairab Sahoo, Inspector of Excise District Mobile Unit, Sasmitha Hota, OIC, Khordha, B. Manoj Kumar, OIC, Begunia, Biranchi Narayan Mohanty and all Excise Staffs.

## Leading Legal Luminary Republic of Maldives visited MDNIY

### Bhabani Shankar Mishra expired

Cuttack(KCN): Shri Mishra, had been actively pursuing legal profession



High Court Bhabani Shankar Mishra passed away at the age of 75. The end came on 24th June 2022 on the auspicious occasion of Khalilagi Ekadashi in the tithi of Krushna Pakhya during the sacred month of Ashadha. Resident of Kanika Square in Cuttack city, Late

at Satyabadi High School, Shri Mishra passed out B.A. from Ravenshaw College and acquired Degree in Law from Madhu Sudan Law college in Cuttack. He has been unwell from sometime. Recently when Shri Mishra's health got deteriorated, he was shifted to Bengaluru and was admitted in Manipal Hospital there. He expired in Bengaluru. Spell shock and sorrow spread among lawyers community in Cuttack on his death. Condolence messages are being poured in since then. Late Shri Mishra has left behind his grief stricken wife Kananbala Mishra and four daughters and son -in-laws namely Durgesh Nandini Mishra and Jeeban Panigrahi, Priyadarshini Mishra and Rashmi Panda, Priyanka Mishra and Bikash Mishra and Shree Mishra and Sidharth Rath.

New Delhi (KCN): A delegation of 40 Civil Servants from the knowledge of Yoga. Dr. Ishwar V Basavaraddi,



Republic of Maldives visited MDNIY today to experience the value and practical Director MDNIY briefed the delegation regarding various activities and

programmes of the Institute. Fusion programme followed by Yoga Break @ Workplace sessions were conducted for the delegates. An Introductory meeting was also organized at Conference Hall, MDNIY, wherein Dr. I N Acharya, Programme Officer (Y. T) and senior officers joined the delegation. Overall, the feedback of the delegation was quite satisfactory

## School Bus Enforcement Alert

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Principal Secretary Commerce & Transport, Bishnupada Sethi on Tuesday asked the Transport Commissioner to conduct a special enforcement drive for detection of violation of School Bus Policy.

For safe transportation of School/ College and back Government had prepared transportation of School 2016.

"It is the duty of this Department to ensure implementation of Students are the most vulnerable road users. Therefore, students on journey to one of the top priorities of the Department," Mr.Sethi said in his Transport Commissioner.

During a special drive conducted by the RTOs throughout the State from 20-26th April, 2022, more than 1200 cases of the policy violations were detected.

To encourage vehicle owners to comply with the Policy guidelines, there is a need for conducting special drives in regular intervals, so that the violators will not dare to violate the rules, he pointed out. The Department of Commerce & Transport has received several complaints that many vehicles are not complying with the Rules/Act.

Therefore, the Principal Secretary asked to take steps for conduct of a special drive for a week against traffic violations next week.



students to to home, the a policy on Children in department to the policy. n e r a b l e safety of the school is the Department letter to the

He also sought a report after the special drive for kind perusal of Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra.

It is the school management's responsibility to ensure that Supreme Court guidelines for plying of school buses are complied with. 'Policy on Transportation of School Children' framed in 2016 should be strictly enforced. The school management should make sure that their buses are in order. They should ensure drivers are well trained and they have a valid driving license.

It is their responsibility to ensure that drivers are physically fit and have a proper driving license to ferry school children. Similarly, schools which are engaging buses on contractual/ hire basis shall abide by the stipulations as applicable to the buses owned by school. School authorities should conduct safety audits of these vehicles as well.

As per the guidelines, all the vehicles engaged in ferrying school children must have CCTVs, GPS trackers, first-aid box, proper grills, emergency exit, and fire extinguisher. They should maintain a list of students and their parents' names and numbers. There must be an attendant from the school on the bus.

Under no condition, overloading of vehicles is permissible. The number of children in the bus shall normally be restricted to its seating capacity. The carrying capacity of school buses and three-wheelers that transport school students should be displayed both inside and outside the vehicle.

Light vehicles that are used for transportation of vehicles must also adhere to the safety standard. In all such vehicles at a conspicuous place in the front and back side of vehicles 'school van' 'on school duty' must be written.

## CLASSIFIED

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## Appealing to fans' inner writers, Anupam Kher offers autographed book

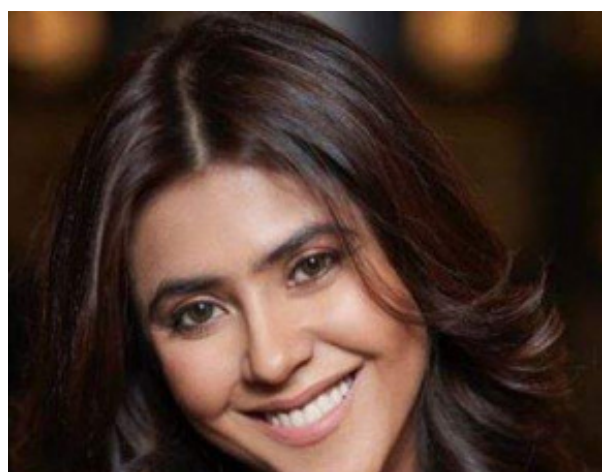


**NEW DELHI:** Asking his fans to rejuvenate their inner writers, veteran actor Anupam Kher, offered them to send his autographed book 'Your Best Day is Today' on Tuesday. Kher hopped on to Twitter and shared a candid picture of him. Calling on his fans to give a suitable caption for the picture, he wrote "Mujhe meri ye tasveer pasand hai. (I like this picture of mine) I will send an autographed copy of my latest book #YourBestDayIsToday to the person whose caption for this pic I like the most!" Adding to the cation, he noted "Hindi or English - apka caption kisi bhi bhasha me chalega! Chaliye! Apne andar ke lekhak ko jagaiye!! (your caption will go in any language! Let's go! Wake up your inner writer,) with Hibiscus smiling face and heart-shaped smile emoticon. Within a few hours of being posted, fans of the former Chairman of Film and Television Institute of India started coming up with innovative captions and showcased their creative skills. A day ago, the 65-year-old star shared a clip of his mother lauding PM Modi and scientist's efforts for the new COVID-19 vaccines.

## SC grants Ekta Kapoor interim protection from arrest in FIR over web series

**NEW DELHI(K-CN):** The Supreme

leged objectionable content in her web



Court on Thursday granted interim protection from arrest to TV producer Ekta Kapoor in an FIR against her for al-

series "XXX season 2". A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde granted interim protection to

## Phenomenal experience: Riteish Deshmukh praises Anil Kapoor, Anurag Kashyap's 'AK vs AK'

**NEW DELHI(K-CN):** Actor Riteish Deshmukh lauded Vikramaditya Motwane's 'AK vs AK' and termed the

blown!!! #AKvsAK is a phenomenal experience - @VikramMotwane take a bow my friend," tweeted

only you could do this, you are pure gold in this film but @HarshKapoor\_has outdone your entire performance in one

movie star and a film director who get into a public spat, following which the director retaliates by kidnapping the actor's



Netflix based film "a phenomenal experience". Deshmukh took to Twitter to share a poster of the movie, which features Anurag Kashyap and Anil Kapoor in lead roles. "Mind has been

Deshmukh. He then went on to heap praise on Kashyap, Kapoor, and his actor son Harshvardhan Kapoor who has a cameo in the film. "@anuragkashyap72 how good are you, @AnilKapoor Sir,

scene," the 'Housefull' actor's tweet further read. While Kapoor essays the role of a yesterday actor, Kashyap plays the role of a disgraced film director in the film. 'AK vs AK,' revolves around the story of a

daughter and films the search for her in real-time. The Netflix India Original film was released on the platform on December 24, which also happens to be Anil Kapoor's birthday.

## Aakanksha Singh joins team Mayday

Ajay Devgn's Mayday has been creating a massive buzz because of its interest-

the icing on the cake is that Ajay Sir is directing the film. It's actually happening!



ing star cast, which includes Amitabh Bachchan, Ajay Devgn, Rakul Preet Singh and Angira Dhar. Talented actress, Aakanksha Singh has now joined the team. Aakanksha will essaying the role of Ajay Devgn's wife in the film. She joined the shoot yesterday. Aakanksha says, "It's like a dream come true to be a part of such a big and much-awaited film. I am so excited to share the screen with Ajay Sir and Amitabh Sir; and

It's an important role and I am lucky that the first muhurat shot of the film had me in it." Ajay Devgn took to social media to announce that the shoot had begun yesterday. "Happy to officially begin Mayday in a start-to-finish shooting schedule. Seek blessings from the Almighty and my parents. Nothing is complete without the support of all my fans, family and well-wishers. Releases on 29th April 2022 (sic)" he posted.

## 'Wanted to make a film on Indian Army with Shah Rukh Khan', says Director Kabir Khan

**MUMBAI(KCN):** Filmmaker Kabir Khan, who is gearing up for the release of his web series "The Forgotten Army: Azaadi Ke Liye", based on Indian National Army (INA), says he wanted to make a film on the subject starring Shah Rukh Khan. He added that Shah Rukh didn't charge a fee for the voiceover he gave for the series. "Shah Rukh has very graciously given the voiceover. The series is based on a true story, so there is an introduction of a few minutes before every episode along with real footage, where he has lent his voice. I talked about it with Shah Rukh earlier as well, when this was a film script. Back then, I wanted Shah Rukh to do the film. We even had a few meetings but we couldn't take it forward," said Kabir while promoting the series along with its lead actors Sunny Kaushal and Sharvari Wagh. Kabir added that Shah Rukh didn't charge a single

paisa for his voiceover assignment. "When I was making this series, I thought I should ask Shah Rukh (to be the narrator) because Shah Rukh's father had involvement with this army. His father knew General Shahnawaz Khan, who was an important part of INA. So, I knew he (Shah Rukh Khan) has sympathy and attachment with Azad Hind Fauj and I called him up. It's not an easy task to ask a superstar for a voiceover but Shah Rukh instantly agreed to do it. Usually, when you discuss a film with Shah Rukh, it's a long process, but in this case Shah Rukh literally did the voiceover for us on the second day. I don't know whether he would like me to reveal this, but he didn't take a fee from us. I think the kind of attachment he has with Azad Hind Fauj reflects in his act." Incidentally, Shah Rukh did a cameo in Kabir Khan's 2017 release "Tubelight", starring Salman Khan.

## What Is Wrong With Indian Economy?

Indian rupee at an all-time low, inflation highest in over 4 decades, oil prices at unprecedented highs. We all have read similar headlines in the past few months. The frequency of such headlines has gone up exponentially since the inception of the Russia-Ukraine war. Even if this might sound gibberish to us, all these terms have a direct bearing on our pockets. Everything from the food we eat to the car we drive is impacted by these figures. The global economy is driven by two factors, demand and supply. Demand is defined as the number of goods and services that are demanded by the consumers in the economy. Supply is the number of goods and services that are released by the producers like farmers, for the consumers to buy. Demand and Supply need to be consistent with each other in order to keep the economy stable. In economic terminology, it is called Equilibrium. If the demand rises more rapidly than the



**Pradeep Kumar Panda**

supply, there are fewer products available to be bought. In order to buy the product now, more people are ready to pay a higher amount of money. This leads to a rise in the general level of prices (inflation) and is called Demand-pull inflation. On the other hand, if the supply rises more than the demand, more and more sellers are ready to sell the products at a cheaper rate. This leads to a fall in the general price levels in the economy. Another type of inflation is Cost-push inflation. This happens if the price of raw material rises due to several factors and thus the overall cost of production rises. To keep their profits intact, producers sell them at a higher price and this snowballs to higher prices for the final consumers. Now, India, to say humbly, is stuck between the devil and the deep blue sea. The country is facing both the type of inflations, demand-pull as well as cost-push. The demand in the economy has been increasing post the Covid-19 pandemic. The muted demand owing to restrictions on movement has started to recover. However,

it takes time for the companies to increase the supply of goods. This has led to higher inflation and higher pressure on our pockets. On the supply side, there are various factors at play. The supply chain has been struggling since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Especially the semiconductors have been in massive shortage leading to the rise in prices of mobile phones, laptops and other electronic gadgets. The situation has been made worse by the Russia-Ukraine war. Russia and Ukraine are major exporters of important commodities. This includes oil, wheat, rare metals and fertilisers. The oil prices have skyrocketed since the outbreak. And it is particularly troublesome as no transportation is possible without oil. So, if oil rises, the price of every commodity rises. Russia and Ukraine, which are among the world's top 4 exporters of wheat, have also stopped exporting the grain. The impact of that step can be seen on our food plates. Companies have increased the prices of flour and other related products. Likewise, other commodities like fertilisers

and rare metals are in shortage across the globe. The inflation figures are a testimony to this fact. This has spooked the investors and the share markets are also responding negatively to it. Quite frankly, no one. The factors behind our troubles are widespread. The central banks, the Reserve Bank of India in our case, can majorly control the demand but not the supply. Governments, on the other hand, have limited means to improve the financial conditions rapidly. Unless the Russia-Ukraine war and other geopolitical tensions ease up and a normal supply chain is established, we might continue to see high prices and economic turmoil. It might not be too encouraging but at least now we know where the problem lies. It is time for judicious combination of both fiscal policy and monetary policy. The Ministry of Finance, Government of India along with the Reserve Bank of India should chalk out strategy for addressing inflation as well as boosting GDP growth rate of the country.

The Author is an Economist

## 15 tonnes of lifesaving COVID-19 supplies arrive in Samoa

A planeload of medical equipment and supplies touched down in Apia on Monday to bolster Samoa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The goods were provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) for the Ministry of Health

Service, with funding support from the European Union (EU). "They say that it is in times of crisis that your true friends are revealed, and

**Suva/Apia**

of supplies, but in their ongoing tremendous support for our COVID-19 preparedness and response," said Minister of Health, the Honourable Valasi Luapitofanua To'ogamaga Tafito Selesele. "This equipment and medical supplies will be used by Samoan health workers around the country as they continue to test and treat patients and to remain safe themselves as they save lives. Faafetai tele lava for your kind assistance." Samoa detected its first community transmission of COVID-19 on 17 March 2022 after two years of being COVID-free. To date, the country has reported a total of 9,592 cases. However, with more than 92 percent of adults having received at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccines, the death rate has been low. The 15-tonne delivery consists of 280,000 surgical masks, 248,300 gloves, 72,000 gowns, 30,000 N95 masks, 10,300 face shields, 3000 pulse oximeters and 50 oxygen concentrators for Samoa from WHO's regional stockpile. Further items including oxygen concentrators and pulse oximeters also arrived on the plane to be sent by boat to neighbouring Tokelau. "We knew we needed to get this equipment and supplies into health workers' hands here in Samoa, but getting it here was going to be a challenge, due to limited flights and inflated shipping costs. Thankfully, we spoke with our colleagues at WFP and, with support from the EU, they made this flight possible," said WHO Representative to Samoa, Dr Kim Eva Dickson. The EU provides extensive support to WHO's COVID-19 response in the Pacific, both financially and as a partner in the Pacific COVID-19 Joint Incident Management Team. "As COVID-19 begins to spread in Samoa, it is absolutely critical to bring these life-saving supplies to the frontlines of the crisis," said Alpha Bah, Director of WFP's Pacific Multi-Country Office. "WFP is pleased to join forces with WHO in support of the Ministry of Health's efforts in containing the spread of the virus. We thank the EU for its ongoing support to the Pacific Humanitarian Air Service. Generous funding has enabled WFP and our partners to send flights to 15 Pacific countries so far." "The coronavirus pandemic is a global

challenge which requires a global response. In the Pacific, the EU redirected EUR 20 million to WHO, WFP and the Pacific Community to help countries fight COVID-19 outbreaks on their shores. These resources continue to strengthen medical systems to respond to COVID-19. I am happy that the EU can now contribute to the assistance provided to Samoa, with the hope that the situation will improve soon," said the Ambassador of the European Union for the Pacific and to Samoa, H.E. Sujiro Seam. WFP's Pacific Humanitarian Air Service is a part of the greater Pacific Humanitarian Team's COVID-19 Response Plan – a comprehensive regional response plan that seeks to consolidate efforts by UN agencies, governments, regional and multilateral organizations, NGOs, donors and development partners. It operates under the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway established by the Pacific Islands Forum and its member countries. With generous funding from the European Union, the Government of Australia and USAID, WFP has so far run 37 flights, transporting a total of 317 tonnes of critical medical cargo across the Pacific region. Supplies being loaded onto the Pacific Humanitarian Air Service flight in Nadi, Fiji. Credit: Matthew Donoghue/WFP About WFP: \The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impact of climate change. In the Pacific, WFP works towards improving the capacity of Pacific Island Countries and Territories to reduce the risk of, prepare for and respond to disasters with a view of building a more resilient Pacific Community – while focusing on partnership and innovation utilizing the cluster approach. About WHO: The World Health Organization (WHO) is the United Nation's specialized agency for international public health. In the Pacific, WHO's Division of Pacific Technical Support provides tailored, timely support to 21 Pacific Island countries and areas. Our main office is in Suva, Fiji, and the Division has six other offices across the region: The Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.



of Samoa and transported by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) through its Pacific Humanitarian Air

WHO, WFP and the EU have shown themselves to be true friends indeed to Samoa – not just in this latest delivery

## Digital learning improves but no district in top two categories in centre's rankings

NEW DELHI: Digital learning in schools is gradually improving with more than 60 districts showing improvements between 2018-2019 and 2019-20, according to the latest district-wise ranking of school education.

Among the southern states, digital learning grading is lowest in the districts of Andhra Pradesh and the highest in Kerala, according to the Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D) for 2018-19 and 2019-20 released by the Department of School Education and Literacy, under the Ministry of Education.

The progress in digital learning is slow but steady, said the survey, which for the first time rated districts on the standard of schools.

The number of districts in the third-highest "Ati

Uttam" category of the index doubled from four to eight in 2019-20. None of the districts could make it to the top two categories of "Daksh" and "Utkarsh". The number of districts in the "Uttam" category in digital learning also went up from 27 to 41.

According to the survey, 20 districts showed 20 per cent improvements in their score while the performance of 43 districts went up by 10 per cent.

Districts scoring more than 90 per cent are categorised as "Daksh". "Utkarsh" is the second-highest-ranking scoring 81 to 90 per cent, followed by "Ati Uttam" (71 to 80 per cent), "Uttam" (61 to 70 per cent), Prachesta-1 (51 to 60 per cent), Prachesta-2 (41 to 50 per cent), Prachesta-3 (31 to 40 per cent), Akanshi-1 (21 to 30 per cent) and

Akanshi-2 (11 to 20 per cent).

The survey released on Monday said that in many Andhra Pradesh districts like Srikakulam, Chittoor, Kurnool, Kadapa and Nellore, the digital learning scores were less than 10 out of the grading of 50.

In comparison, most Kerala districts scored around 30. Even in Tamil Nadu, where two districts – Dharmapuri and Villuparam – were placed in the

"Ati Uttam" category for their overall performance, the digital learning curve remains low.

Most of the Tamil Nadu districts have scored less than 30, Chennai being the best with 27 and Thoothukkudi lowest with 14 in digital learning.

Most of the Karnataka districts have scored below 20 barring Bidar, Dakshin Kannada, Mandya, Bengaluru (South) and Bengaluru (North).

## G-7 leaders end summit pledging to hurt Russia economically

ELMAU: Leaders of the world's wealthiest democracies struck a united stance to support Ukraine for "as long as it takes" as Russia's invasion grinds on, and said they would explore far-reaching steps to cap Kremlin income from oil sales that are financing the war.

The final statement Tuesday from the Group of Seven summit in Germany underlined their intent to impose "severe and immediate economic

thus within reach of sanctions.

To be effective, however, it would have to involve as many consuming countries as possible, in particular India, where refiners have been snapping up cheap Russian oil shunned by Western traders.

Details on how the proposal would be implemented were left for continuing talks in coming weeks. The US has already blocked Russian oil imports,

"in these exceptional circumstances, publicly supported investment in the gas sector can be appropriate as a temporary response."

Before the summit's close, leaders joined in condemning what they called the "abominable" Russian attack on a shopping mall in the town of Kremechuk, calling it a war crime and vowing that President Vladimir Putin and others involved "will be held to account".

and price hikes on essential goods around the globe.

The G-7 has sought to assuage those concerns.

While the group's annual gathering has been dominated by Ukraine and by the war's knock-on effects, such as the challenge to food supplies in parts of the world caused by the interruption of Ukrainian grain exports, Scholz has been keen to show that the G-7 also can

## Tailor murdered over 'insult to Islam'; curfew in Udaipur areas, prohibitory orders across Rajasthan

UDAIPUR: Two men with a cleaver murdered a tailor here, saying in a video post on social media that they are avenging an insult to Islam and triggering communal tension in the Rajasthan city, part of which was placed under curfew.

marks made on social media by him.

ALSO READ: Union Home Ministry dispatches team of anti-terror agency NIA to Udaipur

A BJP leader said the victim feared for his life and had sought police protection, but the authorities did not

the removal of the corpse only after the murderers are arrested and compensation -- Rs 50 lakh and a government job -- given to the victim's family.

On Twitter, CM Ashok Gehlot appealed for calm and asked people not to

Poonia targeted the Congress government in Rajasthan, saying that the murder was the result of its "appeasement policy".

He said those seen in the video had threatened the victim on June 17.

"The victim had



Within hours, prohibitory orders banning the assembly of people were imposed across the state for a month and mobile internet services suspended for the next 24 hours.

At 8 pm, curfew was declared till further orders in seven police station areas of Udaipur city.

ALSO READ: Man beheaded in Rajasthan for supporting suspended BJP leader Nupur Sharma in social media post

The men who allegedly carried out the daylight murder posted three videos online admitting to the crime and were soon arrested.

In a video clip, one of the purported assailants declared that they had "beheaded" the man and went on to threaten Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying their knife will get him as well.

Indirectly, the assailants also referred to Nupur Sharma, the BJP leader suspended from the party over a remark on Prophet Mohammad.

Kanhaiya Lal, the tailor, was recently arrested by the local police over some re-

act on his appeal. The assailants entered his shop in the city's Dhan Mandi area posing as customers.

As the tailor took the measurements of one of them -- who later identified himself as Riaz Akhtari - attacked him with a cleaver, nearly severing his neck.

The other man shot the brutal murder with his mobile phone.

The two men fled from the scene and later uploaded this clip on social media. In another video, the alleged assailant said they "beheaded" the tailor and threatened the prime minister for lighting "this fire".

Yet another provocative video was recorded on June 17, in which Akhtari said he will post it the day he carries out the murder.

He asked other members of the community to continue with similar attacks.

As the videos circulated on social media, tension escalated.

Shopkeepers in local markets downed shutters.

Shopkeepers stopped police from taking away the body, saying they will allow

share the videos.

"The guilty will not be spared. The entire police team is working on it with full alertness. I can imagine the anger which is there among people due to the murder. We are taking action accordingly," he told reporters in Jodhpur.

Udaipur Superintendent of Police Manoj Kumar also promised strict action.

"A brutal murder has happened. Broadly, it seems to be a planned murder. We are discussing the demands put forth by the family members. Strict action will be taken against the criminals. I appeal to people to maintain peace," he said.

Gehlot said there is communal tension in the country and the prime minister should address the people.

He said both Hindus and Muslims are worried.

"It is more impactful if the prime minister speaks. I believe that the prime minister should address the country on this occasion and should make an appeal that we will not tolerate violence at any cost. What is the problem in saying so?" he said.

BJP state chief Satish

asked for security but it was not given by the police," he claimed, adding that this indicated the apathy of the state's Congress government.

The state unit of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) made the same claim.

"The situation in Rajasthan is such that Hindus are being attacked and murdered at many places. It is because of the politics of appeasement of CM Ashok Gehlot," Poonia claimed.

Leader of Opposition Gulab Chand Kataria also condemned the incident and said he was reaching Udaipur Tuesday night.

The prohibitory orders under section 144 of the CrPC, however, do not allow the gathering of more than three people. About 600 more policemen, including five companies of the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary, were sent to Udaipur, officials said.

Senior police officers were also rushed to the city. Gehlot said the trial will be fast-tracked under the state's "case officer scheme".



costs" on Russia.

It left out key details on how the fossil fuel price caps would work in practice, setting up more discussion in the weeks ahead to "explore" measures to bar imports of Russian oil above a certain level. That would hit a key Russian source of income and, in theory, help relieve the energy price spikes and inflation afflicting the global economy as a result of the war.

"We remain steadfast in our commitment to our unprecedented coordination on sanctions for as long as necessary, acting in unison at every stage," the leaders said.

Leaders also agreed on a ban on imports of Russian gold and to step up aid to countries hit with food shortages by the blockade on Ukraine grain shipments through the Black Sea.

The price cap would in theory work by barring service providers such as shippers or insurers from dealing with oil priced above a fixed level.

That could work because the service providers are mostly located in the European Union or the UK and

which were small in any case.

The European Union has decided to impose a ban on the 90% of Russian oil that comes by sea, but that does not take effect until the end of the year, meaning Europe continues to send money to Russia for energy even while condemning the war. Meanwhile, higher global oil prices have softened the blow to Russia's income, even as Western traders shun Russian oil. Energy themes were front and centre at the summit throughout. Europe is scrambling to find new sources of oil and fresh supplies of gas as Russia dials back gas supplies in what leaders say is a political move.

Meanwhile high energy prices are a headache for G-7 countries' consumers. The summit host, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz defended the G-7's decision to soften commitments to end public support for fossil fuel investments, saying the war in Ukraine means time-limited support for new natural gas extraction projects may be necessary.

The G-7 nations said in a statement Tuesday at the end of their three-day summit that

The leaders of the US, Germany, France, Italy, the UK, Canada and Japan on Monday pledged to support Ukraine "for as long as it takes" after conferring by video link with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The summit host, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, said he "once again very emphatically set out the situation as Ukraine currently sees it." Zelenskyy's address came hours before Ukrainian officials reported a deadly Russian missile strike on a crowded shopping mall in the central city of Kremechuk.

From the secluded Schloss Elmau hotel in the Bavarian Alps, the G-7 leaders will move to Madrid for a summit of NATO leaders, where fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine will again dominate the agenda. All G-7 members other than Japan are NATO members, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has been invited to Madrid.

Zelenskyy has openly worried that the West has become fatigued by the cost of a war that is contributing to soaring energy costs

move ahead on pre-war priorities.

Members of the Group of Seven major economies pledged Tuesday to create a new climate club' for nations that want to take more ambitious action to tackle global warming.

The move, championed by Scholz, will see countries that join the club agree on tougher measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the aim of keeping global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) this century compared with pre-industrial times.

Countries that are part of the club will try to harmonise their measures in such a way that they are comparable and avoid members imposing climate-related tariffs on each others' imports.

Speaking at the end of the three-day summit in Elmau, Germany, Scholz said the aim was to "ensure that protecting the climate is a competitive advantage, not a disadvantage".

He said details of the planned climate club would be finalised this year.

# Monsoon Readiness In Urban Zones State Gets 342nd Fire Station

Bhubaneswar: With the arrival of monsoon in the State, Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Principal Secretary G Mathi Vathanan asked heads

should have been covered with net with warning written prominently on the said points to caution the people about the danger," the Principal Secretary said.

soon has already hit the state, it is time for the administration to get into the enforcement mode to ensure that instructions issued in this regard are fully complied by the respective agencies/officials, he directed. The agencies such as ULBs, Works Department, Water resources department, IDCO, NHAI, etc., have their roads and drains in the towns are responsible for complying with the instructions to ensure that their roads and drains do not become death traps during urban flooding in the monsoon times.

The ULB with the elected Mayor/Chairperson at the helm of affairs to enforce the instructions of the Government issued in public interest, he added. The Commissioners and Executive Officers have been asked to issue instructions to all the subordinate agencies/officials in charge of maintenance of the roads and drains to get the roads and drains once again verified through field inspection and thereafter to take up periodical inspection on a regular basis. Further, the H&UD Department has asked the officers to furnish certificate to the effect that "all the roads & drains under their respective jurisdic-

tion and administrative control have been physically inspected and it is hereby certified that all the openings and inspection chambers are properly closed and all unsafe spots are properly guarded and safety sign boards are erected and there is no more unsafe spots endangering public safety". Such certificates may be obtained from all the field officials countersigned by their supervising officers from all the relevant agencies/departments, he said. The certificate will be shared with the Ward Committee and other members including Mission Sakthi groups/federations from the respective ward areas for cross verification from the field and corrective follow up actions by the ULBs to ensure that public roads and drains remain safe always. It was decided that the certificates from all the agencies/department officers should be obtained before June 30, 2022 and the compiled certificates pertaining to the wards are sent to the Ward Committees before July 7, 2022. The Principal Secretary Housing & Urban Development asked to submit a compliance report to the Department by July 10, 2022 without fail.



of all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to ensure accident-free roads, drains. For this purpose, Mr. Mathi Vathanan has written a letter to all the Commissioners of Municipal Corporations and Executive Officers of all Municipalities & NACs. He asked take up desilting of the drains regularly by the respective road & drain agencies to ensure free flow of stormwater during the rainy season. "It was made clear to all concerned that all the drains under the jurisdiction of your Urban Local Body excepting the major open drains should have been covered with slabs and the vulnerable points

It is also important to replace/repair the drain covers or inspection chambers on the roads /drains properly to avoid accidents, he suggested. Mr. Mathi Vathanan said that during or after desilting or maintenance work, the openings are not covered properly leading to accidents when the place is flooded during heavy rains. There were incidents of accidents with a few fatalities in the past evoking strong public reaction, causing adverse media reports and also bringing bad name for the Government. They also result in cases in the Human rights commission and courts. Now that the mon-

## Another jumbo carcass exhumed in Athagarh, fourth this month

BHUBANESWAR: Amid a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe into incidents of elephant deaths cover-up in Athagarh, another jumbo carcass was

presence of SIT members, who were on a spot visit to the area to investigate the recovery of three carcasses, two male and a female, by the Special Task Force of

sured a thorough probe by the SIT into this matter. Athagarh Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Sudarshan Gopinath Jadav said no tusks were found at the

that has been asked to submit its report to the State government within a month. While this is the fifth elephant carcass recovered from Athagarh area this year, a carcass exhumed from Jilinda range of Satkosia Wildlife Division, close to Narasinghpur area of the division, has raised more suspicion about functioning of a massive ivory-smuggling racket in the region. Moreover, the alleged involvement of forest staff and officials in this nexus, has made the issue more critical. Honorary Wildlife Warden of Khurda Subhendu Mallik said the issue needs to be dealt with seriously and all range officers and DFOs who have served in the division in last three years be brought under the purview of investigation.



recovered by the forest officials from the division on Monday leaving the department red-faced. This is the fifth elephant carcass recovered from the division since February and fourth this month. A team of Athagarh forest division exhumed the carcass from Mandap reserve forest of Kusapal beat in Gopapur section, in Baramba range, in

Crime Branch and Forest officials earlier this month. "We have not been able to determine the exact age and sex of the carcass which appears to have been buried at the spot two years back. The samples have been sent to OUAT lab for examination," said Angul RCCF M Yogajayanand, who is heading the SIT. The Angul RCCF as-

Cuttack: As per State Government's



policy of having at least one Fire Station in each Block, a new Fire Station was inaugurated at Baruan under Jajpur block on Tuesday. The new Fire Station was made operational today morning. This is the 342nd Fire Station of Odisha Fire Service. Baruan Fire Station was sanctioned by the Home Department on October 27, 2016. Collector Jajpur provided Government land of 1.05 acre in the year

2020 for the station, informed DGP, Fire Services Santosh Kumar Upadhyay..

At the initiative of Jajpur Collector Chakravarti Singh Rathor, this new Fire station could be made functional within existing Government infrastructure of revenue authorities, Mr. Upadhyay said. The State Government has already sanctioned administrative approval for Rs. 1.31 Crore for construction which is to be constructed by the Odisha State Police Housing and Welfare Corporation (OSPH&WC) very soon. Staff quarters will be constructed soon, the DGP Fire Services said.

One motor fire engine and 1 twin tender (407) vehicle, fire pumps and other rescue equipment have been attached to this newly inaugurated Fire Station. One driver, one LFM and six Firemen have been attached to this new Fire Station on re-distribution basis from neighbouring Fire Stations. Strategically located at Baruan crossing, this Fire Station can easily provide service to the public in adjacent interior areas of Bauran GP.

Bichitra Kumar Panda, Fire Officer, Central Range and Purna Chandra Marandi, Assistant Fire Officer, Jajpur remained present during inauguration of the Fire Station under active guidance of local MLA Pranab Prakash Das and Collector Chakravarti Singh Rathor.

Function was attended by local genities, media, PRI members, senior citizens and Government staff.

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# GST Council gives nod to remove tax exemptions on some items

NEW DELHI: The GST Council on Tuesday approved changes in tax rates on some goods and services while allow-

will take place on Wednesday. Opposition-ruled states have been pressing for either extension of the GST compensation

gested withdrawal of GST exemption on a host of services including on hotel accommodation of less than Rs 1,000 per

renting of residential dwellings by businesses for residential use.

With regard to e-way bill on intra-state



ing states to issue an e-way bill for intra-state movement of gold and precious stones, officials said. The Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising state counterparts, also cleared a host of compliance procedures for GST-registered businesses along with a GoM report on high-risk tax payers to check evasion.

The discussion on the crucial issues of extension of compensation to states beyond June 2022 and the imposition of 28 per cent GST on casinos, online gaming and horse racing,

regime or increasing states' share in revenue from the current 50 per cent.

In the meeting on Tuesday, the Council accepted the interim report of the group of state finance ministers, headed by Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj S Bommai, on rate rationalisation, including correction of inverted duty structure and removing tax exemption on some items, to simplify the rate structure.

ALSO READ: Opposition-ruled states demand extension of GST compensation period by five years. The GoM had sug-

gested replacing it with a 12 per cent tax. It also recommended a levy of 5 per cent GST on room rent (excluding ICU) charged for hospitalised patients where the hospital room charges are above Rs 5,000 per day.

It wanted all post office services other than postcards and inland letters, book post and envelopes weighing less than 10 gm, to be taxed. Also, cheques, loose or in book form should be taxed at 18 per cent, the GoM recommended.

The GoM favoured withdrawal of exemption given to

movement of gold, jewellery and precious stones to check evasion, the Council recommended that states can decide on the threshold above which the electronic bill is to be made mandatory. A panel of state ministers had recommended the threshold to be Rs 2 lakh and above.

With regard to high-risk taxpayers, a report of a panel of state finance ministers had suggested verification after registration for high-risk taxpayers under GST, besides using verification of electricity bill details and bank accounts for identifying such taxpayers.

## 'Direct SpiceJet to remove our livery from its planes': Jet Airways writes to DGCA

NEW DELHI: Jet Airways has asked the aviation regulator DGCA to direct SpiceJet to remove its

of our operations in 2019, several aircraft were returned to the lessors and then leased out to some In-

tioned. The letter also noted that some of these aircraft have been involved in accidents or

its renewed air operator certificate (AOC) from DGCA on May 20 this year and it is planning to start commercial flight operations in September. SpiceJet has 90-odd planes in its fleet. Some of the B737 aircraft it has were with Jet Airways before the latter went bankrupt in 2019.

Airline liveries are fundamental statements of branding and corporate identity and all operators endeavour to make theirs as distinctive and readily recognisable as possible, Jet Airways stated in its letter.

Therefore, it is evident that an operator flying its aircraft in another airline's livery has a serious potential to mislead the public about the identity of the operator, something which cannot be taken lightly, it mentioned.

# Opposition-ruled states demand extension of GST compensation period by five years

CHANDIGARH: States ruled by Opposition parties have demanded that either the revenue sharing formula under the GST regime should be changed or the compensation period should be extended by five years, amid concerns over revenue losses.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced on July 1, 2017, and states were assured of compensation for the revenue loss till June 2022, arising on account of the GST rollout. As the GST Council commenced here on Tuesday, the states have also cited a recent Supreme Court ruling that decisions made by the Council are not binding and states need not stick to them.

The ruling by the court has been seen by some as states having powers to determine taxation.

Chhattisgarh Finance Minister TS Singh Deo said the present formula for equally splitting revenues from the GST between the Centre and states should be changed, with a larger share of 70-80 per cent being given to states.

Kerala Finance Minister KN Balagopal said the GST compensation mechanism for states should be extended to make good the revenue loss. "Almost all states are asking for an extension of the compensation period," Balagopal said.

In a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who is chairing the GST Council meeting here, Deo said his state has suffered a huge revenue loss under the GST regime, mainly because mining and manufacturing states have suffered the most under GST, which is a consumption-based tax. "We are presenting the proposal in the GST Council to continue with the 14 per cent protected revenue provision. If the protective revenue provision is not continued then the 50 per cent formula for CGST and SGST should be changed to SGST 80 -70 per cent and CGST 20-30 per cent," said Deo, who is unable to attend the meeting due to COVID-19 infection.

Otherwise, the present compensation mechanism, he said, should continue for another five years. Currently, revenue collected from the GST is shared equally between the Centre and states. The collection from cess levied on luxury, demerit and sin goods is used entirely to compensate the states for revenue loss due to GST implementation.

The two-day GST Council meeting, which is currently underway in Chandigarh, is slated to discuss the compensation mechanism after the five-year period, which was decided at the time of the GST rollout.

Though states' protected revenue has been growing at 14 per cent compounded growth, the cess collection did not increase at the same proportion, and COVID-19 further increased the gap between protected revenue and the actual revenue receipt, including a reduction in cess collection.

In order to meet the resource gap of the states due to the short release of compensation, the Centre borrowed Rs 1.1 lakh crore in 2020-21 and Rs 1.59 lakh crore in 2021-22 as back-to-back loans to meet a part of the shortfall in cess collection.

As per data on revenue growth collated for the Council meeting, only five out of 31 states/UTs Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim registered a revenue growth higher than the protected revenue rate for states under the GST in the financial year 2021-22.

Puducherry, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Himachal

Pradesh have recorded the highest revenue gap between the protected revenue and post-settlement gross state GST revenue in 2021-22. As per a Reserve Bank study, the weighted average tax rate under the GST has declined from 14.4 per cent at the time of its launch to 11.6 per cent in September 2019.

In the letter to Sitharaman, Deo said Chhattisgarh has suffered a revenue loss of Rs 4,127 crore in the last fiscal, Rs 3,620 crore in 2020-21, Rs 3,176 crore in 2019-20 and Rs 2,786 crore in 2018-19. The most pertinent issue being brought to her notice is the ending of the provision of 14 per cent protected revenue due on June 30. Requested an extension of five years on this to protect the states from severe revenue loss and let them function as an effective federal unit of India, Deo tweeted. Recalling the recent Supreme Court judgement regarding the power of the GST Council, Deo said: Unless we in the GST Council as its members unilaterally ensure the financial stability through rational revenue realisation for each and every State and Union Territory in India then the very concept for which the GST Council was put in place may appear to be untenable.

## China provides USD 2.5 billion loan to Pakistan to boost its forex reserves

Continued from page-1

briefing here while replying to a question about China providing RMB 15 billion (USD 2.3 billion) to Pakistan to build its depleting foreign exchange reserves.

Pakistan media quoted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as saying that Pakistan is hopeful of getting USD 2 billion from the IMF.

China's latest assistance is in addition to Beijing rolling over USD 4.5 billion debt due to be paid by Islamabad in March this year and USD 2.5 billion given in 2019 to boost the sagging foreign exchange reserves of Pakistan.

Pakistan is the second country in the sub-continent after Sri Lanka to face a serious economic crisis notwithstanding massive Chinese investments and loans.

China had skirted desperate pleas from Sri Lankan leaders before the country went bankrupt defaulting on all its foreign debt totalling USD 51 billion.

The new Chinese assistance to Pakistan followed the visit of Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa this month during which the two countries agreed to step up defence and anti-terrorism cooperation.

Last month Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto made his maiden visit to Beijing and held talks with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.

Cash-starved Pakistan has faced growing economic challenges, with high inflation, sliding forex reserves, a widening current account deficit and a depreciating currency.

Chinese banks have agreed to refinance Pakistan with USD 2.3 billion worth of funds in a massive relief for the cash-starved country to help it bolster its depleting foreign exchange reserves, Pakistan Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said early this month.

Pakistan is facing an uncertain economic situation due to a delay in the revival of a stalled multibillion-dollar International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme.

Saudi Arabia has agreed to provide Pakistan with a "sizeable package" of around USD 8 billion to help the country revive its ailing economy.

Saudi Arabia provided USD 3 billion deposits to the State Bank of Pakistan in December 2021 while the Saudi oil facility was operationalised from March 2022, providing Islamabad with USD 100 million to procure oil.

Saudi Arabia provided USD 3 billion deposits to the State Bank of Pakistan in December 2021 while the Saudi oil facility was operationalised from March 2022, providing Pakistan with USD 100 million to procure oil.

## Eye on 2024 elections, central BJP leadership reviews constituencies

Continued from page-1

144 Lok Sabha seats across the country including four from Odisha, which it lost last time narrowly. The party has drawn a detailed plan to strengthen its presence in these seats during the 2024 elections. A Central committee of the BJP comprising national leaders is supervising the entire programme. A State committee will execute the plans made by the central committee based on the reports of the two leaders on the ground.



livery from the budget carrier's aircraft as it misleads public about the identity of the operator and is also a safety hazard. Each airline has its own livery -- a specific paint scheme comprising logo that is applied on aircraft. In a letter to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on June 21, Jet Airways stated, "After the stoppage

dian operators such as SpiceJet." Many of these airplanes continue to fly in full Jet Airways' colours and tail with Jet Airways' name blanked off and overwritten by decals (a vinyl wrap), it added. "Also, the Jet Airways logo on the tail has been painted over, but is still discernible if one looks carefully," it men-

tioned. The photographs of which have been widely circulated in media.

One such example is the runway excursion of a SpiceJet B737 aircraft in Mumbai in 2019 where Jet Airways colour scheme and part of the logo is prominently visible in the photos still available on the internet, it mentioned.

Jet Airways received

## US Supreme Court backs high school football coach in praying on field after games

WASHINGTON: The Supreme Court, here on Monday, said that a high school football coach who knelt and prayed on the field after games was protected by the Constitution, a decision that opponents said would open the door to "much more coercive prayer" in public schools.

The court ruled 6-3 for the coach with the conservative justices in the majority and the liberals in dissent. The case was the latest in a line of rulings for religious plaintiffs.

The case forced the justices to wrestle with how to balance the religious and free speech rights of teachers and coaches with the rights of students not to feel pressured into participating in religious practices. The liberal justices in the minority said there was evidence that Bremerton (Washington) High School Coach Joseph Kennedy's prayers at the 50-yard-line had a coercive effect on students and allowed him to incorporate his "personal religious beliefs into a school event."

Dissenting Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote that the decision "sets us further down a perilous path in forcing states to entangle themselves with religion." But the justices in the

majority emphasized that the coach's prayers came after the games were over and at a time when he wasn't responsible for students and was free to do other things.



The coach and his attorneys at First Liberty Institute, a Christian legal group, were among those cheering the decision. Kennedy said in an interview that his first reaction was one of pure joy. "Just like in all my football games I just threw my arms up, you know, 'touch-down,'" he said. He described the seven years since the dispute began as tough on his family but "absolutely worth it."

Joe Kennedy, a former assistant football coach at Bremerton High School in Bremerton (Photo | AP) Justice Neil Gorsuch, writing for the majority in the ruling, declared, "The Constitution and the best of our traditions counsel mutual respect and tolerance, not censorship and suppression, for religious and nonreligious views alike."

Gorsuch noted that the coach "prayed during a period when school employees were free to speak with a friend, call for a reservation at a restaurant, check email, or attend to other personal matters" and "while his students were otherwise occupied." It would be wrong to treat everything public school teachers and coaches say and do as speech subject to government control, he wrote. If that were the case, "a school could fire a Muslim teacher for wearing a headscarf in the classroom or prohibit a Christian aide from praying quietly over her lunch in the cafeteria," he wrote.

He closed by writing that: "Respect for religious expressions is indispensable to life in a free and diverse Republic—whether those expressions take place in a sanctuary or on a field, and whether they manifest through the spoken word or a bowed head." The decision continues a pattern in which the court has ruled in favour of religious plaintiffs. Last week the court ruled that Maine can't exclude religious schools from a pro-

gram that offers tuition aid for private education, a decision that could ease religious organizations' access to taxpayer money. In dissent, Sotomayor wrote Monday that players "recognize that gaining the coach's approval may pay dividends small and large, from extra playing time to a stronger letter of recommendation to additional support in college athletic recruiting." And she said, "some students reported joining Kennedy's prayer because they felt social pressure to follow their coach and teammates."

Sotomayor was joined in her dissent by Justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan. Paul Clement, the attorney who argued the case on behalf of Kennedy, said in a statement that the decision would allow the coach "to finally return to the place he belongs — coaching football and quietly praying by himself after the game."

Kennedy now lives in Florida, and it was unclear when — or if — he might move back across the country to Washington state for a part-time job that had paid him less than \$5,000. He said in the interview that he is in Florida to help his father-in-law but his fam-

ily remains in Washington and it was never his intention to remain in Florida permanently. He said his lawyers and the school district would need to work things out for him to return to coaching.

He started coaching at the school in 2008 and initially prayed alone on the 50-yard line at the end of games. Students started joining him, and over time he began to deliver a short, inspirational talk with religious references. Kennedy did that for years and also led students in locker room prayers. The school district learned what he was doing in 2015 and asked him to stop out of concerns the district could be sued for violating students' religious freedom rights.

He stopped leading students in prayer in the locker room and on the field but wanted to continue kneeling and praying on the field himself after games. The school asked him not to do so while still "on duty" as a coach after the games. When he continued, the school put him on paid leave. The head coach of the varsity team later recommended he not be rehired because, among other things, he failed to follow district policy.

In a statement, the Bremerton School District and its attorneys at Americans United for the Separation of Church and State said the decision undermines the separation required by the Constitution. The school district said in a statement that it had "followed the law and acted to protect the religious freedom of all students and their families."

Rachel Laser, the head of Americans United, said the decision "opens the door to much more coercive prayer in our public schools" and undermines the religious freedom of students.

The school district's attorney, Richard Katskee, said it is studying the decision and considering its next steps. Three justices on the court — Breyer, Kagan and Justice Samuel Alito — attended public high schools, while the other six attended Catholic schools.

## Swiatek wins 36th match in a row in 1st round at Wimbledon

WIMBLEDON: From the red clay of the French Open to the green grass of Wimbledon, the wins keep coming for Iga Swiatek.

The top-seeded Pole won her opening match on Centre Court on Tuesday, beating Croatian qualifier Jana Fett 6-0, 6-3.

The victory was Swiatek's 36th in a row and includes all seven matches she played at this year's French Open in winning her second title at Roland Garros. It's the longest winning streak on the women's tour since 1997, when Martina Hingis won 37.

"It's my first match on grass this season, so I knew it's going to be tricky," Swiatek said on court. "I'm just figuring out how to play here and trying to implement all the stuff that we were practicing on."

Even with seven-time champion Serena Williams in the draw at the All England Club, Swiatek is the woman to beat. She won five tournaments before heading to Paris in May, earning consecutive titles in Doha, Indian Wells, Miami, Stuttgart and Rome.

Swiatek, again wearing a pin with the colors of Ukraine on her hat, started out like she left off in her last match at the French Open. But she went down 3-1 in the second set be-

fore recovering.

"The second set, at the beginning I lost my focus a little bit and she used that pretty well," Swiatek said.

Barbora Krejčíková, who won the French Open in 2021 to split Swiatek's two titles there, also advanced to the second round. The





13th-seeded Czech defeated Maryna Zanevska of Belgium 7-6 (4), 6-3. No. 4 Paula Badosa, No. 5 Maria Sakkari, No. 12 Jelena Ostapenko and No. 33 Shuai Zhang of

China also advanced.

Among the seeded player to lose was Olympic champion Belinda Bencic. The 14th-seeded Swiss player lost to Qiang Wang of China 6-4, 5-7, 6-2.

No. 18 Jil Teichmann of Switzerland, No. 20 Amanda Anisimova of the United States and No. 27 Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan also lost. In the men's draw, No. 18 Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria retired from his match with an apparent injury. He was leading Steve Johnson of the United States 6-4, 2-5 when he stopped.

No. 15 Reilly Opelka of the United States, No. 19 Alex De Minaur of Australia, No. 29 Jenson Brooksby of the United States and No. 31 Sebastian Baez of Argentina also won.

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