

VP Naidu calls for exploring India-Gabon cooperation in green energy, health and agriculture

GABON(KCN): India attaches utmost priority to its relationship with Africa, Vice

President Venkaiah Naidu has said, as he called for stepping up bilateral cooperation in green energy, services, health and agriculture among other sectors. Naidu arrived here on Monday on the first leg of his three-nation

tour of Gabon, Senegal, and Qatar. Addressing the business community at an event organised by the India-Gabon Business Forum on Tuesday, Naidu said: "India attaches utmost priority to its relationship with Africa" He "called for exploring India-Gabon cooperation in green energy, ser-



vice, health and agriculture among other sectors," the Ministry of External Affairs tweeted. Around 800 Indians are living in Gabon. They are engaged in infrastructure projects, trading, and export of timber and metal scrap. The Vice President was happy that major Indian festivals are celebrated by the entire community together. He asked them to respect local laws and customs at the same time preserving the age-old Indian values of 'share & care' and respect for elders and nature. Taking to his Twitter handle, Gabon's President Ali Bongo Ondimba said he was delighted to welcome

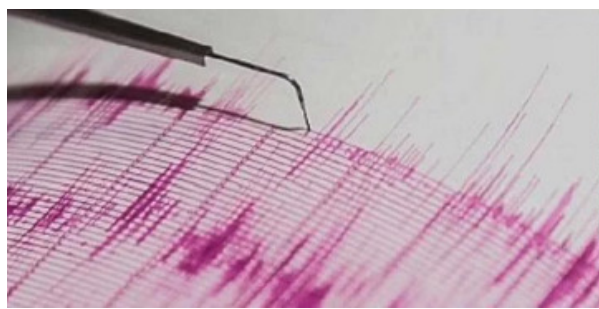
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Four killed, 14 injured as quakes hit southwest China

BEIJING: At least four people are dead and 14 others injured after two earthquakes hit southwestern China on Wednesday, state media reported. A shallow 6.1-magnitude quake hit a sparsely populated area in Sichuan province about 100 kilometres (60 miles) west of provincial capital Chengdu, broadcaster CCTV said. It was followed three minutes later by a second quake of magnitude 4.5 in a

nearby county where the deaths and injuries occurred, according to CCTV. Footage obtained by



the broadcaster showed dozens of school children screaming and ducking under desks as

their building started to shake, before dashing out of the classroom with arms over their heads.

Another video posted on social media by state-run broadcaster CGTN appeared to show the first quake

sparking a landslide that damaged cars and left rocks and soil strewn over a road. Authorities in the city of Ya'an dispatched more than 4,500 people to the quake area, including emergency rescue workers, firefighters and military police, CCTV reported. It said the city was "going all out to rescue those who have been trapped... and reduce the number of dead to the greatest extent

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If charges are wrong then get them quashed from courts: BJP chief JP Nadda on ED summoning Sonia, Rahul

BHOPAL(KCN): After the Enforcement Directorate (ED) issued summonses to Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi for questioning in a money-laundering case, BJP president JP Nadda on Wednesday said an honest person moves court to get the charges quashed.

removed. They are not doing so because papers against them were true and papers are permanent and they are forcing him (the person in the witness box) to stand there," Nadda said.

It is like your face is not good and you are cleaning the mirror, he said.



"Have you ever heard any criminal saying that he is dishonest? No criminal ever says that he is dishonest. Even after being punished and spending years in prison, they (criminals) say they were framed," Nadda told a press conference when asked if the ED summoned Sonia and Rahul in the National Herald case to harass them.

"The man who is standing in a witness box and on bail...why can't they get the charges

"It is a corruption case and courts are looking into it. Why should I comment? But I feel that if a chargesheet is filed against you, then you move the court to get it quashed as you are an honest person. Those who are not honest, they secure bail and use other provisions," Nadda said when asked to comment on the ED summoning Sonia and Rahul.

The ED has summoned the Congress president and her MP son Rahul Gandhi for questioning in a money-laundering case linked to the National Herald newspaper, officials said. While Sonia Gandhi (75) has been asked to depose before the federal agency at its headquarters in central Delhi on June 8, Rahul Gandhi has been asked to appear on Thursday (June 2).



OPCC President Sarat pattnaik visited jagannath temple, puri with Congress workers & Leaders and took the blessings Before taking Charge

Western nations vow to send more, better arms to Ukraine

KYIV(KCN): Western nations promised more and more advanced arms to bolster Ukraine's defence as its troops battled a grinding Russian offensive that was closing in on captur-

industrial Donbas region.

But as the war drags on and Russia bombards towns in its inching advance in the east, Ukraine has repeatedly pleaded for more and



ing a key city in the east.

Germany said Wednesday it will supply Ukraine with modern anti-aircraft missiles and radar systems, and the US will unveil a new weapons package later in the day that will include high-tech, medium-range rocket systems.

The Kremlin spokesman told reporters Wednesday that the US is "pouring fuel on the fire".

Western arms have been critical to Ukraine's success in stymieing Russia's much larger and better equipped military, thwarting its initial efforts to take the capital and forcing Moscow to shift its focus instead to the eastern

better weapons.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has occasionally criticized the West for moving too slowly in shipping arms, and military analysts have said Russia is hoping to overrun the Donbas before any weapons that might turn the tide arrive.

Germany has come under particular fire, both at home and from allies abroad, that it isn't doing enough.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told lawmakers that the IRIS-T SLM missiles it will send are the most modern air defense system the country has. "With this, we will enable Ukraine to defend an entire city from Russian air attacks," he said.

Scholz said Germany is in talks with the United States to coordinate the supply of rocket systems Kyiv has asked for.

In addition to the rocket systems it has promised, the US package will include helicopters, Javelin anti-tank weapon systems, tactical vehicles, spare parts

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Fight for rights of Odisha: CM Naveen Patnaik to BJD's Rajya Sabha nominees

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Chief Minister had a video conference with the four



Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday asked the four Rajya Sabha nominees of the BJD to work to protect the rights of the people of Odisha. The Chief Minister

had a video conference with the four candidates along with senior leaders, ministers, MPs and MLAs and advised them to raise issues concerning the State in a proper manner so that they are heard at the

national level. "4.5 crore people are my family. You should fight to protect their rights," he told the candidates. The BJD had nominated Sasmit Patra, Sulata Deo, Manas Mangaraj and Niranjan Bishi for the four vacant seats in the Upper House from Odisha. The candidates filed their nomination papers in the presence of BJD organisational secretary Pranab Prakash

Das, senior leaders Prasanna Acharya and Prasanna Patsani. While Patra will have a second consecutive nomination to the Rajya Sabha, the remaining three will be first timers in the Upper House. The BJD is set to win all the four seats as it has a strength of 122 members in the Assembly. While BJP did not field a candidate, Congress don't have the numbers to enter the fray.

Nostalgic calamity

Dwit David Philip

Calm after, flood, cyclone, thunder,
earth quack and volcano eruption

This is the silance I love.

The poem authored with joy before,
The break out point,
The rush to hide the exposed things,
The tears and sweats that had
the deeper meaning,

Each of them are slogans of a win,
The basic instinct is massacred but alive.
Nature is calm,
Nostalgic of the calamity that I had.
Partner, it was all in my dream,
can it be please again?



Patient's attendant,
Utkal Hospital, Bhubaneswar, Odisha



Quotation of the Day



Agents of Change: How Printmaking transformed Art

In our article series, Agents of Change, we explore developments and innovations, both technical and technological, that had a seismic impact on artistic production and consequently changed it in key ways, forever. We

The first authenticated prints were made in Japan, where they were making woodblock rubbings of Buddhist charms in the late-middle 8th century. In Europe, printmaking was underway as early as the 6th century, when

Shira Wolfe

the 1900s.

Another type of relief printing that became popular among artists is the linoleum cut. Instead of carving the image into wood, it is carved into linoleum. Easier to manipulate than wood, linoleum cuts do produce a different effect as it is more difficult to carve delicate lines in linoleum, creating a rougher result.

2. Intaglio

With the intaglio printing method, an image is incised into a metal plate using various tools or acids. The two basic types of intaglio printing are engraving and etching. In engraving, the image is cut into the plate using specific tools: needles, burnishers, scrapers or rockers. In etching, the image is created by cutting into the metal plate with acids.

3. Lithography

Lithography was the first fundamentally new printing technology since the invention of relief printing in the 15th century. It was invented in Germany in 1798 by Alois

and hold the ink, and the final stage is pressing this image onto paper. Lithography started out as a commercially successful method used for printing books, magazines and newspapers. It took a while for it to be accepted as a legitimate art form, but it eventually became a favourite method of printing for many artists including Marc Chagall, Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso, Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg, among others.

Picasso printmaking

Pablo Picasso, La Dolorosa, 1959 (lithograph).

Courtesy ABE Books

4. Monoprint

A monoprint refers to any type of print made in one version, which cannot be exactly duplicated. Using slow-drying paint or ink, the artists paint designs directly onto a plate. The image then has to be printed before the paint or ink dries and the artist is left with one strong impression. It is possible to reuse the plate, but the next print will never be exactly the

same as the first.

5. Screen printing

Screen printing, also known as serigraphy, was developed in the United States in the 20th century. The process involves forcing ink through a stencil that is embedded in or attached to silk or synthetic mesh screen. The screen is tightly stretched on a metal or wooden frame. Next, viscous ink is squeezed through and ends up on the paper under the frame. For each different colour, a separate frame is used. In the 1930s and 1940s, many artists used the touche-washout method, in which the artist painted directly onto the top surface of the screen fabric with either touche or grease crayon. Artists like Andy Warhol, Robert Motherwell, Frank Stella, and Robert Rauschenberg are all known for having worked a lot with screen printing.

Today, many artists employ photographic techniques in order to make stencils directly on the screen. Printmaking remains a popular method for artists to experiment with creating copies of their work, which are nonetheless regarded as originals in their own right.



learn how artists and the tools at their disposal evolved over the years and gave rise to new forms of art and ways of making them. In this edition, we learn about the history of printmaking in all its different shapes and forms, and how it allowed artists to create original copies of their own work.

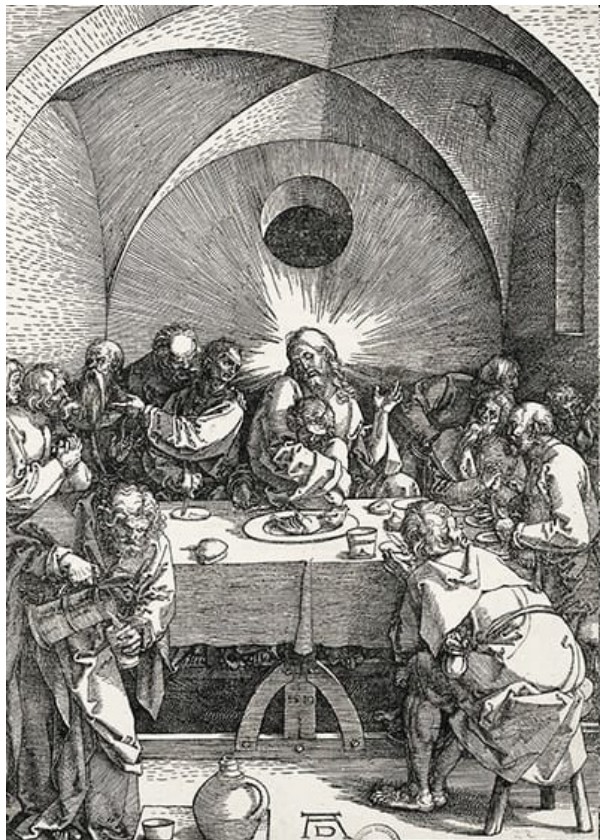
A short description of printmaking
Printmaking is an art form consisting of the production of images by various techniques of multiplication. It is usually done on paper, but other materials such as parchment, fabric, or plastic are also used. Printmaking is done either directly by the artist, or under the direct supervision of the artist.

A print is created by engraving an image into a surface like a metal plate, a block of wood or a stone. The image is then covered with ink, and run through a press onto the material of choice. Printmaking offered a way to easily reproduce works, and was revolutionary for artists and thinkers who were working before the invention of cameras, scanners, and copy machines and wanted to be able to widely disseminate their work. As time passed, printmaking developed into an art form in its own right. By choosing a fine art print medium, an artist can make several identical images, each one qualifying as a hand-made original.

Artists who have become extremely well-known for working with printmaking in their art include Katsushika Hokusai, Rembrandt van Rijn, Pablo Picasso, Albrecht Dürer, Francisco Goya, Käthe Kollwitz, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Andy Warhol.

The origins of printmaking

Printmaking is said to have originated in the 1st century AD during China's Han Dynasty. Paper was invented in 105 AD, and printmaking followed soon after. In order for Chinese scholars to study their scriptures, their texts and holy images were carved into stone slabs. Next, damp paper was pressed and moulded on the surface. They applied ink and then removed the paper. What appeared was an image of white lines on a black background, and this formed the foundation of printmaking. With the spread of Buddhism from India to China, a method was developed combining text and image, called block book printing.



people were printing on textile. When the process of papermaking was imported from the East to Europe, Europeans also started printing on paper. The first paper produced in Europe is traced back to Játiva in Spain in 1151, while the first woodcuts printed on paper were playing cards produced in Germany at the start of the 15th century.

Albrecht Dürer printmaking

Albrecht Dürer, The Last Supper, 1510. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum The different strands of printmaking

There are many different types of printmaking, using different materials and producing different outcomes:

1. Relief printing

In relief printing, an image is printed from the raised portion of a carved, etched, or cast block. The Chinese stone rubbings can be seen as the first forms of relief printing. In the 9th century, woodcuts were developed in China, following in the 14th century in Europe. Artists would draw a design on a piece of wood, sawn lengthwise across the grain, and then cut away the lines of the design. Next, oil-based ink was rolled over the block and the image was printed on paper or textiles. Starting in the 1400s, artists would make woodcuts in order to portray religious subjects, decorate books, and make playing cards. In the period known as the German Renaissance (1430-1580), Albrecht Dürer produced many woodcut prints. In the period of the 1700s and 1800s, Japanese artists created woodcut prints that would inspire many European artists like Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh and Manet. Expressionists like Kirchner and Munch also explored the woodcut method in



Senefelder. In lithography, the printing and non-printing surfaces are all at the same level, the opposite from relief or intaglio, where the design is cut into the surface block. The designs are drawn or painted on a porous surface with a greasy material, for example crayon or grease pencil, and then the surface is dampened and ink is applied with a roller. The greasy lines of the image repel the water

Katsushika Hokusai, Under the Wave off Kanagawa, 1830-33 (woodblock print). Courtesy The Art Institute of Chicago

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Actor Rajan Kumar to bring to life the tableau of Ministry of Textiles for the Republic Day Parade at Rajpath

Jaipur (KCN, Dance. In 2004, his Rajan Kumar has wears the dress. belongs to Munger been selected to perform his art on Sanjay Sharma name was included fans all over the Very big turban, district of Bihar. It



Raj): Actor Rajan Kumar is very fond of art culture. This is the reason that in 1998, the Government of India gave him the National Award for Chhau

in the Limca Book of World Records. In 2005, his name was entered in the Guinness Book of World Records as Charlie Chaplin II. International artist

This time on the tableau of the Ministry of Textiles, Rajan Kumar will be seen in a Gujarati attire. He gets into the character as soon as he

colorful dress, instantly bringing alive the tableau of the Ministry of Textiles, Rajan Kumar will enchant the Rajpath. Actor Rajan Kumar

is a matter of happiness and inspiration for the people of Munger, the people of Bihar and the whole country that a youth of a small town has

this historic day. Rajan Kumar has reached Delhi and is working day and night continuously on the Rajpath preparing for the 26 January parade.

Maara Movie Review: A grounded remake of Charlie with quite a bit of heart

If you didn't know that Maara is the remake of the Malayalam film, Charlie, the opening shot of fireflies fluttering about is a strong hint of the magic contained within the universe of this film. Shortly, you see little Paaru in rapt attention, as a nun narrates to her the story of a soldier who's travelling across seas and jungles in a quest to find his soul. This is pretty much the story of this film as well, as Paaru (Shraddha Srinath) grows up to find herself in a similar quest for her soul, well, soulmate, in Maara (Madhavan).

There's another quest for a soulmate in this film, one undertaken by Vellaiyan (a wonderful Mouli), one that is later taken over by Maara. The film is a reinforcement of the power of stories, of the stories each of our lives are. This is why there are multiple characters with their own short stories, including those of Selvi (Abhirami), the sex worker, and Kani (Sshivada), the guilt-ridden doctor. The implication is that no one story is necessarily more important than another. I got the sense that Maara doesn't think of himself as a hero or a saviour, even if those around him seem to believe that. He's merely a tool, a person who breezes through life hoping to repay the extraordinary help that Vellaiyan has done to him. I loved this touch because shorn of it, Maara, the character, could have felt idealistic and unrelatable—which would have gone against the point of the film itself. This way, there's a reason for why Maara is the way he is, why he can't afford to stay at

one place for too long. I quite enjoyed that Madhavan plays this character without a sanctimonious flavour—and more importantly, in a way that shows that Maara isn't above vulnerability. There's no moral superiority in that as-

into the trap of mundanity and indifference, into routine and repetition. Maara is pretty much the film equivalent of 'Follow the white rabbit'. That's perhaps why during a conversation between Maara and a thief

the almost mystical beauty of existence. It's also likely that this is why the film's many shots are lit as they are, with many faces often aglow, as though in the presence of a halo. This is why the coincidences in this

this notion that he's a mystical being. It's his understanding—and you will see it from his eyes when he's engaged in conversation with every single character—that each of us is magical, as are our stories. In this film with per-



formances that range from great to over-the-top, I loved Mouli in particular, who plays Vellaiyan, an old man consumed by his unrequited love. Watch him in that scene with Paaru as he brings to her an old photo of his beloved, Meenakshi, but hesitates after seeing her be so charmed by photos of Maara instead. Watch him in another scene with Paaru as she tells him about Meenakshi; watch his eyes grow wide in surprise, and almost well up under the weight of decades of mourning. Ghibran's background music and Thamarai's evocative lyrics add so much to such scenes as well. It's wonderful that films like Maara are able to offer elderly charac-

teretic laughter of his—which probably can be thought of as even the desperate attempt of an unhappy man to be happy, chained as he is to his lifelong quest.

Director: Dhilip Kumar
Cast: Madhavan, Shraddha Srinath, Mouli

The film is almost a homage to art—and the dreaminess inherent in it. This can be spotted throughout the film: In the pretty wall murals, in the art plastered across and drawn all over the walls of Maara's home, in the designer kites, in the sketchbook and its pencil illustrations, in the sculptures... hell, even in the blotches of Maara's acid-wash hoodies. There's a call through this film, through its characters, to refuse to fall

(Alexander Babu), you can see a neon sign in the background that reads 'White Rabbit'. The usual response to such a call is to cite a lack of financial security, and while that is a reason to be empathetic about—especially given the enviably cushy work-free existence Paaru seems to be leading in this film—we could also note how Maara, who's hardly a wealthy man (as a thief realises), makes the choice to get by, winning and returning favours in his small community. Maara, the film, suggests that perhaps, just perhaps, his way of life could also come down to the courage to choose to step away from the norm. Realise the magic of life in you, it seems to be saying... no-

film become palatable. The central idea at the heart of this film is of two lonely souls in search of each other. Take note of that inexplicable attraction little Paaru feels as she sees a speeding train from within her bus. Or take note of that instinctive smile from Maara as he steps into his room, a room that Paaru has lived in briefly. In such a film, coincidences are to be thought of as divine providence, or as one character, when speaking about Maara says, "destiny". Another likens him to a mythical character, Santa Claus, while commenting on Maara's habit of sudden appearances that usually result in joy to whoever he meets. Maara himself, as he does many times in this film, underplays

time when films and stories are designed to be rapid for fear of making audiences impatient, films like Maara come as a welcome relief. In this film, at least two important exchanges—between Vellaiyan and Paaru, and later, between Maara and Kani—happen as wood slowly burns to ember, as tender faces are lit by the warm glow of a fireplace. It's for such moments that I'll remember this film, even if some inconsistent performances and some synthetic moments stop it from being truly great. Nevertheless, it's a film that has heart and that encourages empathy towards those around us, and if possible, to note that magic doesn't need to be thought of as an otherworldly trait, if only we cared to pay more attention to the beauty around us.

Gyanvapi Row - The political heat is difficult to Douse

As a nation, India is at the crossroads of its past karmas and their inevitable consequences. The wrong of the past which remained fossilized for centuries is being pulled out of the cave of memory. It is indeed a reality that the



truth of the 'past', however deep it is deliberately hidden, would come out and pass a cynically irritable grin on the 'present', seeking reasons for its incapability to address the ruthlessness with which it was buried. Something like the same is evidently visible in the case of Gyanvapi. Today, the gyan (knowledge), emanating from the Gyanvapi of the ancient city of Banaras, is truly exhilarating to some people in the political spectrum. They don't have to dawdle in search of issues that they can put fuel on for electoral gains. Issues of their taste are plenty and waiting for the apt moment to surface in bubbles and turn into whirlpools. Of course, for the BJP, the political climate in India gives it a free package of benefits. And it knows to which direction the mat of the mast would turn. But for the Congress, bad times never end. With Kapil Sibal making his exit, stretching the line of dissenters escaping the sinking ship, the party once again got entangled in a hotchpotch of issues making the intellectual churning that went on to dehypnotise it at Udaipur, futile. And BJP for all the reasons has the last laugh. The discovery of the Linga (phallic symbol) in the controversial mosque complex would probably give the party a nudge to what it aims for the 2024 general elections. The Ram temple in Ayodhya would also be ready by then, and the opposition parties must be aware of the blessings that the BJP is destined to tap from the 'divinity'. It is sure that the issue is catching heat and the Hindus for no reason would be in

From 'Feeding Kurtas' to 'Period Panties'- she has made the journey of Yashram Lifestyle Brands



Ritwik Mukherjee

looks so easy and smooth. She invented the period panty way back in 2009. The patent was granted in 2015 in the US and



subsequently in India in 2019. Speaking to Ritwik Mukherjee exclusively on the World Menstrual Hygiene Day (28 May), Deepa Kumar, Founder & CEO, Yashram Lifestyle Brands Pvt Ltd, explains how their all products are engineered for the needs of a girl and woman. They are highly technical products that are solving real life problems. Innovations being a core DNA for her company, she is not looking at scaling up capacity, rather she is looking for elegant solutions to real life vulnerabilities as women go through different phases of life that demands a dif-

a mood to sit silent but interestingly, except BJP, no political party seems to be gaining a coin out of it.

It is disturbing for a believer of Lord Shiva to have him concealed in a well, probably in an ablution tank. This indeed has the power to rake up anger despite the opposite side justifying, calling it a fountain. This may be the beginning of a judicial process, which may as usual, go for decades, before the judiciary spells out its final word. Starting from Somnath to Ayodhya, the resurrection of ancient Hindu monuments has often taken the political climate in the country into an unpredictable turn. Babri, for that matter, was the one that the BJP gained little political relevance and the name of Lord Ram did the magic consequently, making the party rise to become the ruling brigade in the country. The medieval history of India is a wholesome approval for the unapologetically horrendous brutality with which the cultural mansions in the country were pulled down. Numerous worship places of the Hindus were toppled and buried and the sentiments are high when someone sees his deity being thrown in an ablution tank. This is potentially capable of raking rage among the non-political elite in the country too. To identify the structure found in the well is the job of the court as part of its judicial process and to pacify the volatility in the air. But we need to appreciate the silence and contentment with which the entire issue is so far being debated and brought under judicial surveillance. The Gyanvapi seems to have the energy to fly beyond the Places of Worship Act of 1991, which demands the preservation of all shrines as inherited by independent India. It seems this issue needs no force from any political party to catch fire. The common man, with much of his spiritual inclination, gets pained to see the discovery of the debris of the cultural monuments, from under the ferent and unique solution each time.

Excerpts:

RM: You are an engineer by training and profession. But your business operates in a completely different area altogether. How did your entrepreneurial journey begin?

Deepa: Yes, I am an engineer and I am in the garment industry. Though it seems like different areas, when you look at our products, you will see that they are engineered for the needs of a woman. They are highly technical products that are solving real life problems.

RM: From 'Feeding Kurtas' to 'Period Panties'- how has been the journey of Yashram Lifestyle Brands so far?

Deepa: It has been a very gratifying experience to be able to solve real life challenges. The challenges that we girls and women face have been the inspiration for me to go after. Growing up, I can't remember the number of times as young girls at school we would ask our friends to check our backs to look for period stains. This was the inspiration for me to invent the period panty way back in 2009. The patent was granted in India in 2019 and in 2015 in the US.

RM: How many products do you offer from your stable currently? Are they all under the same brand or there are other brands and sub brands as well?

Deepa: We have 3 brands- Adira, Morph Maternity & Pristine Life. We offer around 18 different product categories.

RM: Do you only focus on addressing the needs of the girls and women when they are most vulnerable in their journey through womanhood?

Deepa: We do have regular products like cotton panties, regular feeding bras etc, but our expertise lies in providing elegant solutions to real life vulnerabilities as women go through different phases of life that demands a different and unique solution each time.

M. R. LALU

enough reason for him to dig out the truth. A person, with an ardent respect for his ancestors and their cultural architectural eloquence would raise his eyebrows on what he calls a remnant of brutality.

Now, it is not only a subject of politics that it would be criticized as, but also an issue that a huge lot of people would be genuinely seeking to solve. The demolition of the temple of Gyanvapi by Aurangzeb in 1669 and the remnants of it including the shivling and the remorseful Nandi, the bull, would impact the course of Indian politics. This should indeed be seen along with the arrogance with which the temples are captured by governments across the country while worship places of minorities are free to run by those communities. Temples administered by local devotees in various parts of Kerala were forcefully captured by the state government recently with an evil intent to seize the revenue that such temples make. Despite the opposition ranging from all sections of the believers, the state government was audacious to break into selected temples and forcefully bring them under its control. But most of the national media remained silent on what they think is genuine with the majority in a secular democratic republic. The historical wrong by the invaders is deliberately painted to be excusable by the liberals at the present context, but nobody, not even the intellectuals, did raise their voice against the arrogant administrative invasion of Hindu temples by the governments. Imagine an attempt of the same type being carried out on any minority community in India. The discontent and unrest and the secular liberal hubbub would be heard beyond the boundaries of the country.

India, which is a 5000 year old civilization, is measuring its own elements of culture by the RM: What is your current capacity and how do you propose to scale up or ramp up your capacity over the next two-three years?

Deepa: Our current manufacturing capacity is about 60,000 garments per month. We will not expand our manufacturing capacity beyond this but will find manufacturing partners as we scale. Our focus is to be an innovation house and we are currently in the process of creating and closing some interesting products that we will launch this year.

RM: Going forward also, would you like to continue as utility wear brands only, or



would you like to eventually roll out other kinds of garments/apparels?

Deepa: We have a strong base of utility products and we will continue to add to the repertoire. Along with that we will be adding products that my customer needs and wants. We will always be a customer centric company. As a team we constantly look for ways to improve her life and will continue to innovate in this segment.

RM: Do you have men's products as well, or is your brand only for girls and women? Deepa: We have a product for men which is the incontinence underwear. As men age,

tools of constitution that it has framed hastily, to douse questions on the destruction of its civilisational identity. Those who try to justify their stand against the demand made by the Hindus are gleefully hiding behind the Places of Worship Act today; while forcing the government to enact the efficacy of the act. They were bad-mouthing against the government when it acted on the triple talaq and many other issues that haunted societies. They praise the law of the land when it suits them and denounce it when it does not. The Hindus had to fight a long legal battle to get their holiest worship place Ayodhya back which they believe is the birthplace of Lord Ram. I think cries for other disputed cites couldn't have been louder as it is today, if the Muslim community was generous enough to let the Ayodhya dispute settle outside the court, amicably permitting the Hindu side to build a temple on their holy site. Lengthy is the judicial process in the country but the confidence it gives to the parties to take the disputes to the judiciary is remarkable. And Muslims, with no intention to stop their claim on important spiritual places dedicated to the major deities of Hindus in Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi; are determined to keep the political heat at its flashpoint. They should have been altruistic, allowing the Hindus to worship in these disputed places, which they believe are sacred to them. In such a situation, animosity between both the communities is sure to decrease and a good signal for India as it aspires to be a global power. If not, the 'truth' of the past would be thrown out of the dungeons of notoriety by the power of time and it would keep shrieking at the world for deliverance again and again.

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a few have the problem of light urine leaks. So have this product for men that we sell under the brand name Pristine Life. As a company we want to solve intimate problems for people when they are vulnerable.

RM: Are you currently working on any other interesting/innovative product/s?

Deepa: Yes, we have a lineup of interesting innovations coming up. Innovating is a core DNA for our company and we will continue to do that. Our last innovative product we launched was post delivery compression leggings in Morph Maternity

which was well received by mothers post delivery.

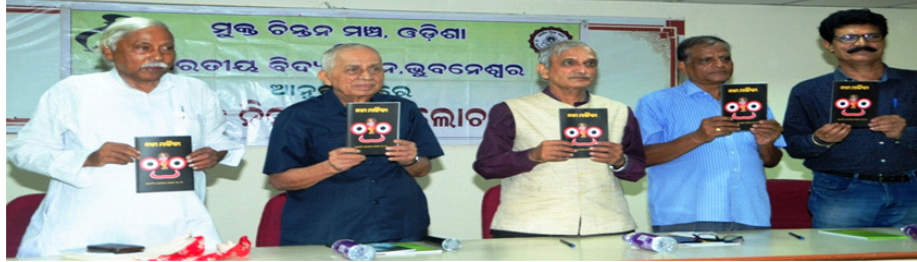
RM: Do you have a product development or R&D team to work on the new products, or you yourself work on them?

Deepa: I head the R&D team. I am very involved in the whole process. A simple conversation can trigger an idea. It was a conversation that I was having with my aunts one

afternoon when they told me that incontinence is a problem for women as they age. When I did more research into the topic, I came to understand that a lot of women avoid social life due to light incontinence. This was the trigger for me to start the incontinence range of underwear. It is a great high to see a product take shape in the mind and go into the process of drawings to products to trials to launch. And when we get positive feedback on the products, it is a very humbling and gratifying experience.

Mukta Chintan Manch organises 179th seminar on "Subsidy Yojana and the future of Odisha"

Bhubaneswar: The Mukta Chintan Manch, Odisha in collaboration with Bharatiya Bidya Bhawan, Bhubaneswar organized a 179th Seminar on "Subsidy/concession Yojana and the Future of Odisha" on Tuesday at the Conference Hall, Bharatiya Bidya Bhawan in Bhubaneswar. Chief Guest Prof. (Dr.) Ashok Kumar Mahapatra, Vice Chancellor, SOA Deemed to be University while inaugurating the seminar said that, if both the education and health sector of those countries' has not strong, and then these countries future is not bright at all. In the case of Odisha, these two sectors are very weak. The state or central government knows that, if the government backs the people in the field of education, then they get votes easily from the people. In this connection, the government provides subsidies to the people in the name of the ballot. The president of Mukta Chintan Manch S.J. Satakadi Hota presided over the seminar and said that, the ruler of the Odisha did not know the exact pride of Odisha; this is a very big problem for



us. The former Finance Minister of Odisha, S.J. Panchanan Kanungo joined as chief speaker of the seminar and said that, there is no possibility of the prosperity of Odisha through the subsidy

system. The columnist Sahadev Sahoo joined as an honorable guest of the seminar and addressed the govt. should stress and strengthen the most important two sectors i.e. Education and Health for the Odisha's development. At this time, Prof. Gopal Chandra Nanda's Anudita "NAMAMALIKA" book is unveiled by the guests. The secretary of Bharatiya Bidya Bhawan S.J. leftnant Cornel Prasanna Kumar Sahoo coordinated the programme. The secretary of Mukti Chintan Manch S.J. Pitabasa Routray gave a welcome speech whereas the convener of the seminar S.J. Radhakanta Mishra gave a vote of thanks to all.

Prep Meet for T-20 Intl' Match



Cuttack(KCN): Pankaj Lochan Mohanty, President Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) chaired the preparatory meeting of all the committees was held at the OCA Conference Hall regarding the India Vs South Africa T-20 International Cricket Match. Mr.Mohanty briefed about the T-20 international Cricket

match, which is scheduled on 12 June 2022 at Barabati Stadium, Cuttack and he sought cooperation from all quarters for the smooth conduct of this mega event. Other dignitaries present in the meeting were Chandra Sarathi Behera MLA, Cuttack Sadar, Debi Ranjan Tripathy, MLA, Banki, Rajendra Sahoo, MLA, Begunia, Souvic Biswal, MLA, Cuttack Chowdwar and Subash Singh, Mayor, Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC). Among others Debasish Samantray, Ex-MLA, Barabati Cuttack, Asirbad Behera, Secretary, OOA, Avijit Paul, Secretary, OOA, Sanjay Behera Secretary, OCA graced the occasion. Mehtab Khan, Joint Secretary, OCA, Bikash Pradhan, Treasurer, OCA, Suvashis Senapati, Member, APEX Council and all members from affiliated units. Secretary Sanjay Behera elaborated regarding the preparation of the upcoming T-20 in details.

State asks for Safety Survey

Bhubaneswar: In the wake of tragic bus mishap at Kalinga Ghat in Ganjam district, Principal Secretary Commerce and Transport,

multiple fatalities. In the late night on May 24, 2022, a tragic bus accident occurred on the Kalinga Ghat in the district of Ganjam, in which six

RTO, the driver was driving the vehicle at high speed and could not negotiate at the curve in the Ghat area and met with the accident and skidded over hazardous materials like stone, electric poles etc. which were laying on the side of road, Mr.Sethi said in his letter. The RTO also reported that chevron signages, road markings, stud reflectors were not found on the spot. At many locations, crash barriers are also damaged, he said. "In view of the vulnerability, Hilly/Ghat roads are required to be maintained properly. The Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety, therefore, has directed to take all possible safety measures like putting crash barriers etc. in the hilly area," the Principal Secretary pointed out in his letter.

He sought a report in this regard within one month for the kind perusal of the Chief Secretary. Notably, six tourists from West Bengal killed and over 40 injured when the bus in which they were travelling met with an accident on Kalinga Ghat in Ganjam district on 24 May Midnight. The bus was heading towards Visakhapatnam after the tourists from Udaynarayanpur area in Howrah district of West Bengal visited Daringbadi in Kandhamal district. Over 70 persons were on-board in the bus.



Bishnupada Sethi has asked National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and Department of Works to conduct a safety survey of all Ghat roads in the State. In the recent past many fatal road accidents have occurred in the Ghat/ Hilly areas of the State. Hilly/Ghat roads are generally vulnerable because a single accident results in mul-

people died on the spot and many people sustained grievous injury and still struggling for life in hospitals. Few days back, another accident had occurred in the Dwarsuni Ghat, Mayurbhanj District. The accident spot was jointly inspected by the RTO, Bhanjanagr and the expert team. As reported by the

51 per cent men, 26 per cent women in Odisha use tobacco in any form: NFH Survey

BHUBANESWAR: Even as Odisha government has banned sale and manufacture of tobacco since 2013, the latest family health survey revealed one in every two men and one in every four women still consume the substance in the State. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021), though the consumption of tobacco has marginally dropped, Odisha is among the top states where a significant population still use tobacco in any form - be it chewing or smoking. The State has nearly half of the men, aged above 15 years, (51.6 per cent) and 26 pc women tobacco users against the national average of 38 pc men and 8.9 pc women. People in rural areas consume more tobacco. In rural areas, 54.1 pc men and 28 pc women consume tobacco as compared to 40.5 pc men and 16.6 pc women in urban areas. While the use of any kind of tobacco has decreased from 55.9 pc in 2015-2016 to 51.6 pc in 2019-2021 among men, it has increased from 17.3 pc in 2015-2016 to 26 pc in 2019-21 among women. As many as 68.8 pc men and 31.4 pc women were consuming tobacco in 2005-06. The mean age of initiation into tobacco is 10.2 years. However, there is no data on the percent-

age of people who tried to stop smoking or using tobacco in any form during the past 12 months when the study was conducted. The most common form of tobacco consumption among men is chewing paan masala or gutkha, followed by smoking cigarettes, using khaini, and smoking beedis. Among men who smoke cigarettes or beedis, 47 pc smoke five or more cigarettes or beedis each day on an average. Among women, the most common form of tobacco used is paan masala or gutkha, paan with tobacco, and using khaini. With a significant portion of the population consuming tobacco, oral cancer has assumed alarming proportions in the State claiming more than 10,000 lives every year. Health experts expressed concern over slack enforcement as the traders rake in the mollah throwing all caution to wind. The district level committees formed to check illegal sale and manufacture of tobacco substance failed to check the menace as there is hardly any raid on the traders. Shops continue to sell tobacco products near the premises of educational institutions even as the practice is banned in the State. Last year, only Rs 9.7 lakh fine was collected during raids.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan attacks Odisha government for failing to bring progress

BHUBANESWAR: Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday attacked



the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD government in the State for failing to "achieve desired progress and development despite liberal assistance from the Centre". Speaking at 'Garib Kalyan Sammilani' organised at Podamarai under Mahanga Assembly constituency as part of countrywide meetings to mark the eighth year completion of Narendra Modi government at the Centre, Pradhan said the huge financial assistance coming from the Centre for infra-

structure development and welfare measures in the State are being siphoned off and the major beneficiaries are BJD workers. Pradhan also targeted the State government for denying the people the benefit of health welfare programmes like Ayushman Bharat. The intolerance of the BJD to the growing popularity of Modi has resulted in political violence, he alleged. The murder of Kulamani Baral and his associate Dibya Singh Baral two years ago is an act of desperation by the ruling party to silence its opponents. "The sacrifice of the two BJP leaders will not go waste," he said. Pradhan exhorted party workers to take the pledge to work tirelessly to take all the welfare measures of the government to the doorsteps of the beneficiaries. "Immense work has been done in the last eight years for women, tribals, dalits and underprivileged as our government under PM Modi's leadership dedicated itself to people's welfare," he said.

Odisha Collects more GST

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Odisha continues to collect more and more GST, thanks to overdrive of the State Government officials. In month of May Odisha has collected Rs.3956 Crore, while registering 24 Per cent growth over corresponding period of 2021. During May 2021, Odisha was able to collect Rs.3197 Crore, said an official. So far India is concerned, the gross GST revenue collected in the month of May 2022 is Rs.1,40,885crore. And of which CGST is Rs.25,036 crore, SGST is Rs.32,001 crore,IGST is Rs.73,345 crore (including Rs. 37469 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is Rs.10,502 crore (including Rs.931 crore collected on import of goods). The Union Government has settled Rs.27,924 crore to CGST and Rs.23,123 crore to SGST from IGST. The total revenue of Centre and the States in the month of May 2022 after regular settlement is Rs.52,960 crore for CGST and Rs.55,124 crore for the SGST. In addition, Centre has also released GST compensation of Rs.86912 crores to States and UTs on

31.05.2022. The revenues for the month of May 2022 are 44% higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year of Rs.97,821 crore. During the month, revenues from import of goods were 43% higher and the revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) are 44% higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year. This is only the fourth time the monthly GST collection crossed Rs.1.40 lakh crore mark since inception of GST and third month at a stretch since March 2022. The collection in the month of May, which pertains to the returns for April, the first month of the financial year, has always been lesser than that in April, which pertains to the returns for March, the closing of the financial year. However, it is encouraging to see that even in the month of May 2022, the gross GST revenues have crossed the Rs.1.40 lakh crore mark. Total number of e-way bills generated in the month of April 2022 were 7.4 crore, which is 4% lesser than 7.7 crore e-way bills generated in the month of March 2022.

'Rainfall intensity to vary in Odisha this monsoon', says IMD's long range forecast

BHUBANESWAR: This year's monsoon story in Odisha is likely to be the same as it has been in the past. Below average rainfall over west and northern districts and normal over coastal and southern parts. According to India Meteorological Department's (IMD) long range forecast of south-west monsoon which was released on Tuesday, rainfall intensity is likely to vary in different parts of the State. Some parts of central, west and north Odisha are expected to receive below normal rainfall. Regions of south and north coastal Odisha are likely to receive normal to above normal rainfall in the four months between June and September.

"There is a mixed probability of rainfall in Odisha this monsoon season. While some parts are expected to receive normal to above normal rainfall, some parts will experience below normal rainfall," IMD DG, Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra told The New Indian Express.

Odisha comes under Central India and monsoon core zone. The long range forecast suggests monsoon core zone will receive above normal rainfall for which there is a possibility that rainfall deficit in parts of the State will not be very high, said Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre Director, HR Biswas.

The IMD predicted above normal rainfall in June during which average temperature will be below normal. "Odisha is expected to receive above normal rainfall in June and this will help farmers in the sowing process," said Mohapatra.

Lifestyle announces launch of Miss Raja Season 2 contest to celebrate Raja Parba in Odisha To celebrate the great style sense of Odisha's youth, #LifestyleMissRaja2022 contest opens entries for winning prize worth Rs.50,000

Bhubaneswar (KCN): Lifestyle, India's leading fashion destination, announces its second season of Lifestyle Miss Raja in

Barbil police arrested a woman for attacking a man

Barbil (KCN): Police have arrested a woman and charged her with in a attempted murder case. As per report, Subshini Mahakud, a 30 year-old woman, resident of Bhusugaon, reportedly attacked Keshari Sandil, a 55-year-old man from the village, with a machete at his back causing a grave injury. Though Police did not say the cause of such incident, but according to the husband of the accused woman, there was a dispute between the two families over a pet dog. However police arrested the accused based on complain of Sandil and took him to court under Section 324/307/506 of the Indian Penal Code.

Khorda Development Authority demand again raised

Khurda (KCN): In spite a glorious history of Khorda, now a days Khorda is neglected in all respect. People of Khorda facing a lot of problems. For the upliftment of their social life and status by declaring re-separate Development Authority ie Khorda Development Authority a demand memorandum submitted by a panel of intellectuals like Adv Satya Ranjan lala, Former Register Prof Dr Narayan Rao Adv Prafulla Dash and Columnist and Journalist Uma Sankar Prasad on march 3 but till today the action appears to be dismal. As a popular and justified Chief Minister the people of Khorda requested to take a bold step on the matter as early as possible.

ITD raid offices of Shrinibas Sahu, themining owner



Barbil (KCN): A raid is undergoing by the Income Tax department at the Shrinibas Sahu mine owner's office today. As per source at about 10.00am a team with two Scorpio vehicle entered in to the office of Mr Sahu located at OMC, Chhak, Barbil of Keonjhar district along with few police personnel. Having heard of their identity the security allowed them to enter and the main gate of the office get closed. As per information Mr. Sahu is running a sponge plant called Cracker India located in Bileipada of Keonjhar district while he is also extracting iron in M/S Geetarani iron ore mines on 67,586 hectares of land in Raikala under Banaigarh subdivision of Sundargarh district. In the past the Shah Commission ordered to close down this mines for irregularities and demanded a fine

of Rs 3,84 crore as penalty At that time Mr Sahu was given financial assistance by RP Sao to run the mines with some condition. It was too observed that the R P Sao company was doing excavation work along with Triveni earth movers. However, the company later withdrew from the company. Today, all the offices of RP Sao Company, which is now occupied by Shyam Sells are also being raided in Jharkhand and Joda office together. This pointed out the involvement of the said company in some financial irregularities. People alleged that IT department is raiding in all places where Shyam sales has connection and raid at Shrinibas Sahu is part of this. However, It is hoped that the details will come to light from the income tax department official soon.

with the highest votes. The grand finale will be conducted at the Lifestyle store in Esplanade One Mall and will have none other than

the popular actress Bhoomika Dash announce the Lifestyle Miss Parba of 2022 and hand over voucher worth Rs. 50,000. The contest is being aggressively promoted through different online and offline avenues.

All the young fashionistas of Bhubaneswar who aspire to be successful models, #LifestyleMissRaja2022 provides a perfect platform to be recognized for one's great fashion sense.

Announcing the contest, celebrity Bhoomika Dash said, "I feel glad to be associated with Lifestyle for the 2nd

season of #LifestyleMissRaja2022 contest. This is a great way for the brand to connect with the young women of Bhubaneswar. Lifestyle is best known for its latest and trendy fashion collection across all categories with an affordable price range. Do visit the Lifestyle store at Esplanade mall for your Raja Parba shopping!"

Rohini Haldea, Assistant Vice President - Marketing, Lifestyle said, "Celebrating the Raja Parba Fest in Bhubaneswar has been a great experience for us. The passion and enthusiasm of the participants truly fuel the energy of the contest. Lifestyle, with its trendy festive collection and #LifestyleMissRaja2022, proudly celebrates the festival with the young women of Bhubaneswar as a true ode to womanhood." Lifestyle offers a great range of ethnic wear with vibrant colours and modern silhouettes that perfectly capture the vibe of the festive season. The prices only add to the delight with Kurtas starting at Rs. 599/-, stylish tunics at Rs. 999/- and kurta sets from Rs. 1,999 only. The collection can be shopped at any Lifestyle store in Odisha.



Bhubaneswar, to celebrate the occasion of Raja Parba. The #LifestyleMissRaja2022 contest aims to showcase the passion and unique fashion sensibilities of the city's young women. The three-day festival in Odisha, which is a celebration of womanhood, will be commemorated by Lifestyle through its 2nd season of Miss Raja Parba contest. Popular Ollywood actress Bhoomika Dash announced the contest on 27th May on her social media.

#LifestyleMissRaja2022 welcomes young women from Bhubaneswar to participate in the contest by uploading their most stylish picture on Instagram using the hashtag and tagging @LifestyleStores. The entries would be evaluated basis the stylish look created, and the number of likes garnered on the post. 10 pre-finalists will be announced on the 9th of June and invited for a stylish makeover in Lifestyle's newest trends by an industry expert and photographed professionally. These images will be further posted by the pre-finalists on their Instagram page for a voting round. The contest will culminate on the 15th of June with the announcement of the winner




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Air India offers cash incentive, reduces eligibility age to encourage staff to voluntarily retire

NEW DELHI: In an apparent bid to encourage a significant section of its employees to voluntarily retire, Air India on Wednesday reduced the eligibility age from 55 to 40 and announced cash incentive.

The Tata Group took control of Air India on January 27 after successfully winning the bid for the airline on October 8 last year.

Since April, the airline's chairman N Chandrasekaran has rejigged the top manage-



ment of the airline, bringing in senior and middle-level executives who have worked in other companies of the Tata group such as Tata Steel and Vistara.

In a communique sent to employees on Wednesday, the airline said that according to the existing regulations of Air India, permanent employees can avail voluntary retirement if they are of 55 years of age or more and they have worked in the carrier for 20 years.

As an additional benefit, the carrier is reducing the age eligibility from 55 years to 40 years for cabin crew members who are in grades "S-3, S-5, S-7, E-0, E-1, E-2, E-3, E-4 and E-5", clerical and allied staff who are in grades "S-2, S-5, S-6 and S-7" and unskilled employees who are in grades "S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4 and S-5", it noted.

"An ex-gratia amount will also be provided to the aforementioned employees, who apply for voluntary retirement from June 1, 2022 to July 31, 2022 as a one-time benefit," it said.

Also, employees who apply for voluntary retirement between June 1 and June 30 will also receive an additional incentive over and above the ex-gratia amount, it added.

"The acceptance of your application for the above benefits and the date of release shall be subject to management's discretion," it stated.

International police bust 'FluBot' mobile phone scam

THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS: Police in 11 countries have taken down a mobile phone scam dubbed FluBot that spread around the world via fake text messages, Dutch and EU police said on Wednesday.

Dutch cybercops led an operation in May targeting the malware, which infects Android phones using texts which pretend to be from a parcel firm or which say a person has a voicemail waiting. Hackers would then steal bank details from infected phones, which automatically sent messages to other mobiles in the user's contact list, passing on the scam like a flu virus.

"To date, we have disconnected ten thousand victims from the FluBot network and prevented over 6.5 million spam text messages," Dutch police said in a statement.

The EU's police agency Europol said FluBot was among "the fastest-spreading mobile malware to date" and was "able to spread like wildfire

due to its ability to access an infected smartphone's contacts."

Police had made the malware "inactive" but are still hunting the culprits, it said.

"This FluBot infrastructure is now under the control of law enforcement, putting a stop to the destructive spiral," Europol said.

The countries involved in carrying out the investigation were Australia, the United States, Belgium, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, coordinated by Europol's cybercrime centre.

FluBot became one of the world's most notorious cyberscams after it first emerged in December 2020, "wreaking havoc" around the world, Europol said.

ALSO READ | Big companies trying to grab a slice of 'gig pie

The agency said the bug had compromised a "huge number of devices worldwide", especially in Europe and the United States, with

Sudipta Mishra

Awarded Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Literary Honours by Motivational Strips

KCN (Bureau): Sudipta Mishra is a multi-faceted artist and dancer who has excelled in the various fields of art and culture. At a young



age, She has already weaved more than 100 books as a co-author.

She has been ceaselessly musing on different social platforms like Youth Ki Awaaz, Momespresso, The Pink Comrade, Story Scraper, etc. The prestigious Notion Press has so far published three books to her credit. Her book, The Essence of Life, is credited with Amazon best seller recently. Her book, The Songs of My Heart, so well crafted, is all set to scale newer heights and pinnacle of glory in the days to come.

She has garnered numerous accolades from various international organisations for her outstanding contribution to the literary world. A strong female voice against gender discrimi-

nation, global warming and domestic violence against women, pandemic and the ongoing war in the global scenario, she has penned



down countless articles in the newspapers of Bihar and Odisha.

Her poetic excellence has been duly lauded globally and she is conferred with Honorary Doctorate by International Academy of Culture, A Word With Renaissance, Motivational Strips and International Human Organisation. As an author as well as a poet, she has reached the acme of success and zenith of glory receiving recognitions like the International Besties Award by Bhabya International Foundation and the Best Author of 2021 by the Indian Golden Award Organisation.

Furthermore, she has added another feather to her cap by bagging the Mahadevi Verma Sahitya Siromani award.

In addition to that, she has made her state proud by receiving Rabindranath Tagore's honour excellence recognition twice in recent months from Calcutta, and from Seychelles department of art and culture.

Presently, she is pursuing PhD degree in English at CVU in the Kingdom of Tonga.

Four killed, 14 injured as quakes hit southwest China

Continued from page-1

possible".

Officials were also scrambling to "ensure no casualties are caused by secondary disasters", CCTV added.

The China Earthquake Networks Center said the first quake, in Ya'an's Lushan county, struck at a depth of 17 kilometres at about 5 pm local time.

The US Geological Survey said the quake registered a magnitude of 5.9 and was shallower at a depth of 10 kilometres. Tremors were felt in cities across Sichuan province, damaging some telecommunications lines, state media reported.

Provincial authorities said some buildings had been damaged but there were no initial reports of any structures collapsing.

At a press briefing Wednesday evening, officials at the provincial earthquake bureau said the first quake was an aftershock from a magnitude 7.0 quake in 2013 that killed around 200 people.

Mountainous Sichuan -- a popular tourist destination home to China's giant pandas -- is an earthquake-prone area. A shallow quake on the border with neighbouring Yunnan province in January this year injured more than 20 people.

Last September three people were killed and dozens of others injured when another shallow quake damaged tens of thousands of homes.

A magnitude 8.0 quake in 2008 in Sichuan's Wenchuan county cost tens of thousands of lives and caused enormous damage. Among the dead were thousands of children killed when poorly constructed school buildings collapsed, though the government did not release an exact death toll as the issue took on a political dimension.

Western nations vow to send more, better arms to Ukraine

Continued from page-1

and more, two senior administration officials said Tuesday.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview the package before it is formally unveiled. One official noted that the advanced rocket systems will give Ukrainian forces greater precision in targeting Russian assets inside Ukraine.

Moscow views the US plans to supply more weapons "negatively", Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Wednesday, saying the Kremlin doesn't trust Kyiv's assurances that the rocket systems will not be used to attack Russia. "We believe that the US is deliberately and diligently pouring fuel on the fire," Peskov said.

The announcements come as a regional governor said Russian forces now control 70% of Sievierodonetsk, a city that is key to Moscow's efforts to complete their capture of the Donbas, where Ukrainian and Russian-backed separatists have fought for years and where the separatists already held swaths of territory.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai said in a post on the Telegram messaging app that some Ukrainian troops have pulled back from the city, though he later told The Associated Press that the troops who remained were battling it out in the streets.

The only other city in Luhansk that the Russians have not yet captured, Lysychansk, is still "fully" under Ukrainian control, he said, but it would likely be next.

"If the Russians manage to take full control over Sievierodonetsk within two to three days, they will start installing artillery and mortars and will shell Lysychansk more intensively," Haidai said.

Zelenskyy, meanwhile, said the country is losing between 60 and 100 soldiers a day in the fighting and that another 500 are wounded. He told the US TV channel Newsmax on Tuesday night that "the most difficult situation is in the east of Ukraine and southern Donetsk and Luhansk," two regions that make up the Donbas.

In southern Ukraine, a regional governor sounded a more positive note, saying Russian troops are retreating and blowing up bridges to prevent a possible Ukrainian advance.

Vitaliy Kim, governor of the Mykolayiv region, said in messages on Telegram on Wednesday that Russia was on the defensive. "They are afraid of a counterattack by the Ukrainian army," Kim wrote. He didn't specify where the retreat was happening.

The parts of the Mykolayiv region which have been held by Russian forces in recent days are close to the large Russia-held city of Kherson. Zelenskyy said in his nightly address there had been "some success in the Kherson direction" for Ukraine.

VP Naidu calls for exploring India-Gabon cooperation in green energy, health and agriculture

Continued from page-1

the Vice-President of India to Gabon.

He said economic opportunities, the quality of the business climate, and stability are factors that make Gabon an attractive country.

Replying to his tweet, Naidu said: "India stands committed to be an active partner in Gabon's growth story. Together we can harness our many complementarities and broaden our economic cooperation for a better tomorrow."

Naidu on Tuesday also held wide-ranging talks with Gabon's top leadership and expressed India's readiness to work with the central African country in various sectors and broaden regional and multilateral cooperation.

While Naidu's visit is the first by any Indian vice president to all three countries, it marks the first-ever high-level visit from India to Gabon and Senegal.

From Gabon, Naidu will travel to Senegal on Wednesday where he will hold delegation-level talks with its President Macky Sall, and meet the President of the National Assembly Moustapha Niassé, and other dignitaries.

India and Senegal are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations this year. The vice-president is also expected to attend a business roundtable and address the Indian community.

His visit is expected to add momentum to India's engagement with Africa and emphasise New Delhi's commitment to the African continent, the Vice-President Secretariat said in a statement ahead of his departure. The last leg of the tour will be the visit to Qatar from June 4 to 7.

Anand beats Vachier-Lagrave in Norway Chess tournament



NORWAY: Indian chess ace Viswanathan Anand defeated Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in 40 moves in the first round of the classical section of the Norway Chess tournament here. The win over the French player late on Tuesday enabled the Indian GM to gain 3 points. American Wesley So beat Teimur Rajadobov in the first round to be level with Anand, while Magnus Carlsen had to settle for a draw with China's Wang Had. In the blitz event played prior to the Classical, Anand had shocked world champion, Carlsen, in round seven on the way to a fourth-

place finish.

The former world champion, however, suffered defeats to Anish Giri (the Netherlands) and Vachier-Lagrave in the fourth and ninth round respectively to finish with 5 points in the 10-player blitz event.

So finished on top of the Blitz standings with 6.5 points, one clear of Carlsen while Giri took the third spot. He thus earned the right to pick his starting number for the classical event.

In the classical event, the players would play an Armeggedon (sudden death) game in case of a draw.

Gareth Bale bids farewell to Madrid, says he fulfilled his dream

MADRID: Gareth Bale confirmed he is leaving Real Madrid on Wednesday, saying he was happy to have fulfilled his dream of playing with the Spanish powerhouse. The 32-year-old Bale, whose contract

can now look back, reflect and say with honesty that this dream became a reality and much, much more," he said in a letter posted on Twitter.

"To be a part of this club's history and to achieve what we

fans but was thankful to everyone at the club in his farewell letter.

"I write this message to say thank you to all my teammates, past and present, my managers, the back room staff and to the fans that supported me,"

perform to his potential since joining for a then-world record fee of 100 million euros (now \$107 million).

Earlier this year, Bale spoke out against the psychological harm that professional athletes can receive from



expires at the end of this month, joined Madrid from Tottenham in 2013. He played on loan with the English club in 2020-21.

"I arrived here nine years ago as a young man who wanted to realize my dream of playing for Real Madrid. To wear the pristine white kit, to wear the crest on my chest, to play at the Santiago Bernabéu, to win titles and to be part of what it's so famous for, to win the Champions League. I

achieved while I was a Real Madrid player, has been an incredible experience and one I will never forget," the Wales forward said.

He helped Madrid win five European titles, scoring in the 2014 and 2018 Champions League finals. He also helped the club lift four Club World Cup trophies and win three Spanish league titles.

Bale, whose next move remains unknown, had an old feud with Madrid

he said. Bale was booed the few times he got to play this season, and was even jeered by some during the team's title celebrations after it won the Champions League a record-extending 14th time last week. He has long been at odds with Madrid fans who felt he didn't make the club a priority and instead focused on Wales' national team.

Fans and Spanish media said Bale failed to consistently

the media after a leading Spanish sports daily published a column entitled "The Welsh Parasite." Bale accused the media of "encouraging anger and disappointment in fans."

This season, he made only seven appearances and scored one goal with the club.

"Together we were able to create some moments that will live forever in the history of this club and football," Bale said. "It has been an honor."

Zverev downs Alcaraz to reach French Open semi-final after thriller

PARIS: Alexander Zverev beat Carlos Alcaraz in a dramatic four-set clash on Tuesday to secure a French Open semi-final meeting with either Novak Djokovic or Rafael Nadal. The German third seed claimed a 6-4, 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (9/7) victory over 19-year-old Spanish sensation Alcaraz after three hours and 18 minutes.

Zverev moved into his second straight last-four match at Roland Garros with his first-ever Grand Slam win over a top-10 player. "I hope I can win it before he starts beating us all and we have no chance," said Zverev.

"The match was swinging his way. I'm extremely happy to win the tie-break." The 2020 US Open runner-up will face either world number one Djokovic or 13-time champion Nadal -- who meet later Tuesday -- in the semis on Friday.

Alcaraz has won four titles this year, including two Masters 1,000 events, but made 56 unforced errors as he missed the chance to reach a first major semi-final. Instead, Olympic champion Zverev reached the last four at a Slam for the fifth time in his career to maintain his bid for a maiden title at one of the sport's four biggest events.

It also gave him a measure of revenge for the heavy defeat he suffered against Alcaraz in the Madrid Masters final earlier this month. Alcaraz delighted the Court Philippe Chatrier crowd with a rally to take the third set.

A dramatic fourth set saw Zverev miss a chance to serve out the tie, but he sealed victory on his second match point in the tie-break.

Zverev holds off fightback

Alcaraz paid for making 16 unforced errors as Zverev took the opener thanks to the only

break in game five.

It was the world number three who drew first blood in the second set too, as Alcaraz netted on a second breakpoint in the seventh game, before a confident hold to love gave Zverev a 5-3 advantage.

Alcaraz managed to lift himself for an attack on Zverev's next service game, but the German saved a break opportunity and managed to close it out for a two-set buffer on his third set point with an ace.

The crowd tried to lift Alcaraz as he started his attempt to come back from two sets down and win for the first time in his young career. He did improve slightly and held his first four service games without trouble, before digging deep to save a breakpoint in the ninth game of the third set to edge 5-4 in front.

That brush with the exit door energised the youngster, and he quickly brought up two set points with a brilliant passing shot.

He needed just one to force a fourth set, breaking Zverev for the first time as the 25-year-old prodded wide.

Alcaraz looked the more likely to make a breakthrough for much of the next set, but Zverev, aided by one incredible backhand, made a move in the ninth game when his opponent double-faulted on a second breakpoint. But Zverev failed to serve out the match, as Alcaraz hammered a magnificent return into the corner and then whipped away a backhand to break straight back.

A tie-break of the highest quality ensued, with both players hitting a series of breath-taking winners. A stunning backhand up the line gave Alcaraz the first set point, but he mishit into the net. Zverev netted on his first match point but quickly brought up a second, which he took with a thunderous backhand return.

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