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WRESTLER AMAN ENTERS SEMIFINALS 12 SPORTS



## Waqf Bill to face JPC scrutiny after Opp outcry



Union Minister Kiren Rijiju speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, in New Delhi, on Thursday

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid dissent by a Congress-led Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) which opposed the proposed law in its present form, the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was introduced in Lok Sabha on Thursday and referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for further scrutiny.

After introducing the Bill in the Lok Sabha, Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday said the government is ready for further scrutiny of the legislation. Defending the Bill, Rijiju said the Central Government's intention is clear and it has nothing to hide from the legislation saying the Waqf (Amendment) Bill does not intend to interfere with the freedom of any religious body and that no provision of the Constitution has been

violated. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said he will talk with leaders of all parties for constituting the JPC. Earlier, moving the Bill, the Minister clarified that this Bill is not intended to interfere with the functioning of religious bodies and is to provide justice to the disadvantaged and poor sections of the Muslim community. Soon after Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju sought leave to introduce the Bill in the Lok Sabha, many

Opposition MPs, who had given notices to oppose the Bill, alleged that the proposed legislation was an "attack on the Constitution and federalism". Calling it an attack on the Constitution and aimed at targeting Muslims, several INDIA Bloc MPs urged the Government to withdraw the Bill. Parties such as Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Samajwadi Party (SP), and the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) have criticised the proposed amendments including for inclusion of non-Muslims in waqf governance saying they will encroach on the religious rights. The Bill proposes significant changes to the 1995 law, such as the inclusion of Muslim women on Waqf boards and ensuring verification of land before a board announces it as a Waqf property. The Government also introduced The Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, 2024. Responding to the concerns flagged by Opposition members, Rijiju said Waqf Act 1995 did not serve its purpose, hence the amendment was planned. "I want to tell Congress these amendments are being brought to achieve what you (Congress) couldn't," he said.

## Indian hockey's historic moment at Paris

PTI ■ PARIS

The Indian men's hockey team clinched a second successive bronze medal at the Olympic Games for the first time in 52 years with a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Spain, giving veteran goalkeeper PR Sreejesh a fitting farewell here on Thursday. It was tense last few minutes for the Indians as they faced two short corners within the last minute but the defence stood tall and soaked in the pressure. India, who claimed the bronze in Tokyo Games after a hiatus of 41 years, lived up to the expectations despite not having a perfect build-up to the Games. The last time India won back-to-back Olympic medals was in 1968 (bronze) and 1972 editions (bronze). The bronze medal was also a desperate wait for the Indian



India's goalkeeper Parattu Reveendran Sreejesh, in yellow jersey, reacts as India's players celebrate after winning the men's bronze medal field hockey match against Spain at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium during the 2024 Olympics, on Thursday PTI

contingent in Paris, which has endured six fourth-place finishes so far, apart from heart-breaking disqualification of wrestler Vinesh Phogat. Spain went ahead with

skipper Marc Miralles (18th) converting a penalty stroke while India captain Harmanpreet Singh (30th, 33rd) stole the limelight with a brace. Shrugging off their heart-

wrenching 2-3 defeat against Germany in the semifinal, India came out all guns blazing to dominate the possession in the first quarter. It was an offensive start from India as they penetrated Spain's defence regularly in the first 15 minutes and created the first scoring chance of the match in the sixth minute. Vice-captain Hardik Singh created a fine move from the right and passed the ball into the D to Sukhjeet Singh, whose shot went just wide of the left side Spanish goal as the Europeans survived. The Spanish came with more purpose and intensity in the second quarter and pressed hard on the Indian goal. They took the lead in the 18th minute through a penalty stroke conversion by Miralles after Manpreet Singh conceded an unnecessary foul inside the D.

## Vinesh retires after Olympics heartbreak

PTI ■ PARIS



Her long-cherished Olympic dream shattered by a cruel twist of fate, a crestfallen Vinesh Phogat bid adieu to her international wrestling career on Thursday, saying she doesn't have the strength to continue anymore. The 29-year-old, who was disqualified for being 100gm overweight ahead of her 50kg category gold medal bout in

the Olympics on Wednesday, announced her decision on social media, seeking forgiveness from everyone who supported her. Addressing her mother Prelata, Vinesh, a three-time Olympian, wrote, "Ma, wrestling has won, I have lost. Please forgive me, your dreams and my courage, everything is broken." "I don't have any more strength now. Goodbye

wrestling 2001-2024. I shall be indebted to you all. Forgive (me)," added the two-time world championships bronze-medallist. Her stunning decision comes a day after Vinesh appealed against her disqualification from the Olympic finals in the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS), demanding that she be awarded a joint silver medal.

## Ex-West Bengal CM Buddhadeb passes away

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The last Marxist Chief Minister of Bengal and arguably the 'last surviving icon of pride' for the States decaying Left force Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee passed away on Thursday morning after a prolonged illness. He was 80 and is survived by his wife Meera Bhattacharjee and son



Suchetan. He was the State's Chief Minister from 2000 to 2011. Bhattacharjee had been in poor health for several years, and was confined to his small two-room apartment on Palm Avenue for the past 8 years mostly reading and writing books.



Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus returns to Bangladesh from Paris to take charge of interim Government

## Hasina ouster Bangladesh's second independence: Yunus

PTI ■ DHAKA

Muhammad Yunus on Thursday promised to deliver a Government which assures safety to its citizens and urged them to assist him in rebuilding the protest-torn Bangladesh, as the Nobel laureate described the ouster of Sheikh Hasina as the country's "second independence". Yunus, 84, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his pioneering work on microlending, was appointed by President Mohammed Shahabuddin as the head of the interim Government after Prime Minister Hasina resigned and fled to India following widespread protests against her regime over a controversial quota system in jobs. Yunus, who was in Paris for

the Olympic Games, returned to the country via Dubai on Thursday on an Emirates flight. Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman, senior officials, student leaders and civil society members welcomed him at the airport. At an emotional press conference at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport after his arrival, Yunus said, "Today is a day of our pride. We have got independence for the second time. We have to protect this independence." He expressed gratitude to the youth who made the protest movement against Hasina successful and said he would like to stress first is to "save the country from violence so that we can move forward on the path that the students have shown us."

## Registration of temples, mutts, trusts made mandatory in Bihar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

The Bihar Government has directed all District Magistrates (DM) to ensure that unregistered temples, mutts, and trusts in their respective areas are registered and details of their immovable assets are submitted to the Bihar State Board of Religious Trusts (BSBRT) for uploading on its website. The BSBRT operates under the State's law department. State Law Minister Nitin Nabin said, "All DMs have been directed to ensure that unregistered temples, mutts, and trusts are registered on a priority basis." He also instructed the DMs to ensure that details of immovable assets of all registered temples and mutts are promptly provided to the BSBRT for uploading on its website. "I recently sent a letter to all DMs in this regard. So far, only 18 districts have submitted data to the BSBRT," he added. The Minister said, "According to the Bihar Hindu Religious Trusts Act of 1950, all public temples, mutts, trusts, and dharamshalas must be registered with the BSBRT. The State Government will



take stringent action against those involved in illegal property transactions of registered temples, mutts, or trusts, as well as against unregistered entities that fail to register with the BSBRT." A high-level meeting with officials from the Law and Revenue and Land Reforms departments will be convened to address these issues. Registration is mandatory to protect the property, including land, of both registered and unregistered temples from unauthorised claims, the Minister said. According to the latest data from BSBRT, there are approximately 2,512 unregistered temples and

mutts in the state, owning 4,321.64 acres. The State has about 2,499 registered temples, which collectively own over 18,456 acres. According to data, the highest numbers of unregistered temples and mutts are in Vaishali (438), followed by Kaimur Bhabhua (307), West Champaran (273), Bhagalpur (191), Begusarai (185), Saran (154), and Gaya (152). Kaimur Bhabhua has 307 unregistered temples and mutts owning around 813 acres, while Khagaria has 100 unregistered entities with 722 acres. Banka district has 78 unregistered temples and mutts with approximately 332 acres.

## Forging signs of chief secretaries lands IAS officer in hot soup

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After granting prosecution sanction against controversial IAS officer Udit Prakash Rai for alleged forging of the signatures of the Chief Secretaries of Delhi and Andaman & Nicobar Administration on his annual performance appraisal reports (APAR) during different periods of his posting, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has referred the case to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for further action. Rai has also been charged with demolishing a heritage structure for construction of his official residence in Delhi's Jal Vihar while he was serving as the Chief Executive Officer of Delhi Jal Board, at a whopping cost of ₹5 crores. According to officials, Rai, a 2007 IAS officer and a blue-eyed boy of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, had forged the signatures of the reviewing authority, the Chief Secretary of A&N and Delhi between 2017 and 2021. A criminal case of forgery under sections 465/471 IPC has been registered against Rai at IP Estate Police Station on the complaint of Special Secretary (Vigilance), Delhi



Government. According to Department of Vigilance, Rai, in his APARs for the periods from 01.04.2017 to 08.10.2017 and from 09.10.2017 to 31.03.2018, had also forged the signatures of his then reporting authority, SCL Das, the then Principal Secretary (Revenue) in A&N Administration and the signature of the reviewing authority, Anindo Majumdar, the then Chief Secretary of A&N. Further, in the APAR for period from 01.04.2019 to 30.07.2019, Rai forged the signatures of the reporting authority, Vikram Dev Dutt, the then Principal Secretary (Revenue) in A&N Administration, and the signature of the reviewing authority, Chetan Bhushan Sanghi, the then Chief Secretary of A&N.



Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra inaugurates India's first rice ATM at the Mancheswar Industrial Estate in Bhubaneswar on Thursday.

## No new liquor shops in State

Excise policy to be reformed: Minister

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

No more new liquor shops would be opened in Odisha, said Excise Minister Prithviraj Harichandan on Thursday. Speaking to the media, Harichandan said, "We have decided that no new liquor shop will be opened in the State. Besides, efforts are on to reform the existing excise policy." "The illegal sale of liquor poses a major challenge for us.



In order to restrict it, we have made some changes to the excise policy. However, this is an interim excise policy which will last for seven to eight months," Harichandan added.

"As we try to make the excise policy simplified, many changes can be expected in the coming year," he informed. Efforts are being made to reform the existing excise policy,

he added. Earlier, there were reports that the newly-elected BJP government was considering implementing a gradual liquor ban in the State. Stating that society is suffering due to alcohol addiction, Social Security Minister Nityananda Gond had said the government would explore the feasibility of imposing prohibition after consultations with the Excise and other relevant departments. The Excise Department, however, had then denied any deliberation or plan mooted to ban liquor.



# Bangladesh turmoil High alert in coastal districts of State

**Tor prevent influx of migrants**  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Marine police have been asked to remain alert in the coastal districts in view of possible infiltration bid by Bangladeshi nationals into Odisha territory following the political unrest in the neighbouring country, said Director General of Police (DGP) Arun Kumar Sarangi on Thursday.

Sarangi said, "We have directed all the coastal districts and Marine police stations to remain alert to prevent entry of illegal immigrants into our territory."

"There are 18 police stations in the seven coastal districts. Of these, nine marine police stations are in Baleswar, Bhadrak and Kendrapada. As these three districts are close to the Bangladesh coast, they have been asked to remain highly alert. Moreover, the marine police stations in these

districts have been provided with more manpower to keep an eye on the situation."

As per the rule, the Marine police have been directed to intensify patrolling activities in the sea to five nautical miles, the DGP said.

Earlier, the Odisha Government issued a high alert and asked all the SPs, especially of coastal districts, to check the entry routes along the sea coast. A 24\*7 control room has also been opened in the office of the Coastal Security ADG.

## In city

# 2 hacked to death in brawl over car parking

**Police force deployed as tension prevails**  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In yet another incident of the deteriorating law and order situation in the State capital, two persons were hacked to death following a brawl over car parking at Kalayani Plaza near the Hitech Apartment under the Airfield police station on Wednesday night. The deceased were identified



as Rashmi Ranjan Sethi and his friend Julu Sethi. Rashmi Ranjan had an al-

tercation with the maintenance-in-charge of Kalyani Plaza, identified as Bapi, and

had a brawl on Tuesday night over car parking.

The dispute took a violent turn on Wednesday night when Bapi opposed Rashmi Ranjan from parking his car in front of the apartment. Following this, Rashmi Ranjan lost his cool and slapped Bapi.

Livid with rage over this, Bapi and his associate chased the former and attacked him with sharp weapons causing his death on the spot. The assailants also attacked Julu when he tried to resist them.

A profusely-bleeding Julu was rushed to the Capital Hospital. However, he succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment.

Being informed about the incident, city DCP Prateek Singh and the Airfield police rushed to the spot and launched an investigation into the matter.

As palpable tension continues in the area, a platoon of police force has been deployed at the spot to prevent any further flare up.

# In Subarnapur 'MLA's PSO shot brother before killing self'

**Claim police**  
PNS ■ SONEPUR

In a shocking revelation about the death of BJD MLA Niranjan Pujari's Personal Security Officer (PSO) Manoj Jhankar and his cousin brother, police on Thursday said the cop shot his brother before killing self.

Northern Range IGP Himansu Lal, ruling out any personal enmity in the incident, said, "After collecting scientific evidence and recording statements of more than 15 eyewitnesses, it is found that Manoj was in an inebriated condition on the fateful day."

"Manoj first fired in blank before shooting his brother dead. Later, he shot himself using his police service pistol. We will get the postmortem reports in the evening," Lal added.

Earlier, the Binika Police had detained two persons from Chulimala village in connection with the case.

Notably, bodies of Manoj, who was a police constable and posted as PSO, and his brother Seshadev Jhankar, with bullet wounds on their heads, were found lying in pools of blood in an open field in the Chulimalagaon area in the district.

# In Keonjhar Snake bites patient's attendant in hosp

**PNS ■ KEONJHAR**

In a shocking incident, a patient's attendant was bitten by a snake in the female ward of the Anadapur hospital in Keonjhar district on Wednesday night.

The victim was identified as Bajju Champiya (23) of Gahala Munda village in the district.

Baju's mother is undergoing treatment at the hospital. Due to the unavailability of beds, she was being treated on the verandah of the hospital.

When the duo was sleeping on the hospital verandah, a common krait bit Baju. His health condition started deteriorating soon after the snake-bite. "I was sleeping on the hospital verandah when a common krait bit me at around 12.50 am. I immediately informed the matter to the doctor. After necessary treatment and administration of antivenom, I am feeling better today," said Baju.

Meanwhile, the matter has raised eyebrows with locals expressing concerns over their safety at the health facility.

# Potato crisis to end soon, says Minister

**'Lasting solution lies in self-sufficiency'**  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Amid shortage of potato and high price of the tuber across Odisha, the State Government on Thursday said the prevailing crisis is likely to end soon as more consignments are set to arrive soon.

Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra told reporters that the crisis would be over in a few days with more supplies likely from West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

Asserting that potato price would come down soon, he said traders have been asked to prepare for fresh supplies of potatoes and keep the prices



under reasonable.

Sources said five trucks carrying potato arrived at the Aiginia godown in Bhubaneswar on Thursday which is likely to bring a considerable improvement in the situation.

Noting that Odisha is not self-sufficient in potato, the Minister said production of potatoes in the State is around three lakh quintals while the demand is around 13 lakh

quintals.

Therefore, the government is initiating steps to make the State self-sufficient in potato production in the next one to two years by substantially raising output, he said.

Traders claimed that the Bengal police had reportedly been stopping trucks transporting potato at a temporary checkpoint in Belda, 60 km from the Sonakania Gate. However, the problem appears

to have been solved with the arrival of fresh stocks.

Though the volume of potato that has arrived may not be enough for now, traders are hopeful that they will be able to get potatoes from West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

Amid acute shortage caused by disruption in supply from traditional source West Bengal, potato price which was Rs 30-35 per kg has shot up to around Rs 50 per kg now.

According to Odisha Traders' Association general secretary Sudhakar Panda, lack of stock in the godowns is forcing the traders to sell potato at high prices. While four trucks with potato from West Bengal have arrived, one truck has come from UP, he said, adding that efforts are on to ensure normalcy in supplies.

# Student cabinet swearing-in at DAV, K Nagar

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The DAV Public School, Kalinga Nagar, witnessed the swearing-in ceremony of its new student cabinet for the session 2024-25 in its premises amidst fervor and enthusiasm.

In a formal meeting organized to mark the occasion, chairman Madan Mohan Panda rendered the welcome address to the gathering. Attending as the chief guest, Inspector of Police, State Assembly Dushmantra Ray said, "A



true leader knows how to adapt himself with the changing situations and face the challenges bravely to harvest success even in the midst of hostile situations."

The dignitaries witnessed the democratic transfer of

power and responsibilities among the incoming and outgoing cabinet members of four houses like, Akas, Agni, Prithvi and Tejas and the School Leader and Assistant School Leader including the Secretaries and invested them with

badge and I-Card. Principal Balam Mohapatra administered the oath to the newly sworn-in cabinet members and advised them to carry out their duties and responsibilities with sincerity and devotion.

The distinguished personalities who attended the function include former Principal of the school and presently Principal of DAV, Pokhariput Bipin Kumar Sahoo and invited teachers from different sister concern schools of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

# Crorepati BDO arrested for DA

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The Vigilance police on Thursday arrested Athagarh Block Development officer (BDO) Pradeep Kumar Sahu for amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income, which he could not account for satisfactorily.

Assets detected in the names of Sahu and his family members unearthed during the raids included a single-

storey building at Bhaliabadi near the Old police station in Khordha, another building at Rajsunakhala Sahi, Rajsunakhala in Nayagarh district, a flat at Shree Enclave, Gautam Nagar in Bhubaneswar, three plots in Khordha and Rajsunakhala and Nayagarh Rs 6 lakh in cash, 300-gram gold jewellery and 500-gram silver ornaments and two four-wheeler and four two-wheelers.

# Transport Dept to reduce road mishaps

**IIT Madras to provide plan**  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commerce and Transport Department has intensified its efforts to reduce road accidents and fatalities across the State with a focus on rural areas and high-risk districts.

In a meeting here on Thursday chaired by the department's Principal Secretary Usha Padhee and attended by Transport Commissioner Amitabh Thakur, Dr

Venkatesh Balasubramaniam, Head of the Centre of Excellence for Road Safety at IIT Madras, shared comprehensive insights on utilising modern techniques and structured ap-

proaches to enhance road safety management.

The discussions highlighted the underlying causes of accidents, potential strategies to mitigate them and methods to save lives in accident-prone areas. Special emphasis was placed on raising awareness among road users.

Padhee underscored the significance of timely execution and the measurable impact of all planned initiatives. The meeting also explored data-driven solutions to address the issue of road accidents. While the State has already made notable progress, achieving greater success would require collaboration with national and international experts and organisations, added she.

## SOCIAL CANVAS

# SEBCs in Odisha deserve 50% quota in job, edu

**As they comprise 50% of State's population**

The SEBCs (Socially and Educationally Backward Classes) in Odisha are not getting 27% reservations in services and education in Odisha. In fact, they are getting zero reservations in admission to educational institutions in the State. This is the situation even if they comprise almost half of the State's population.

The SEBCs have been historically deprived of reservations in Odisha where as it has been introduced in other parts of India long back. Odisha as a modern State came into existence in 1936. The erstwhile kings in the feudatory State had no role in promotion of the backward classes. In the pre-independence period, reservation was started by the King of Kholapur in 1902 and later, in Independent India, reservation was introduced by the southern States. Odisha introduced reservations for the backward classes recently with the enactment of The Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes Act 1993 and The Odisha Reservation of Posts and Services (socially and educationally backward classes) Act 2008.



**MANAS JENA**

The SEBCs/ backward classes/ (BCs) of Odisha have been facing serious political negligence for a long time, even after Independence. The first Backward Classes Commission was constituted in 1953 and the Centre asked the States to prepare their own list in 1961. While others acted swiftly, the Government of Odisha finally made a list in 1994 on the basis of a report by Justice NK Das Commission (1991-93). After the Supreme Court judgment in reference to Mandal Commission recommendations, while a number of southern and northern States made a good beginning on the matter of

reservation and development of backward classes, Odisha was a late riser. Finally, after sixty years of constitutional governance, The Odisha Reservation of Posts and Services (for socially and educationally backward classes) Act 2008 received the assent of the Governor on February 3, 2009.

It was a fact that Odisha's then Government (1990-95) had opposed the Mandal Commission recommendations by all means. (poor people have no caste-Biju Patnaik, the then Chief Minister of Odisha had said). Unfortunately, the purpose of reservation is always mixed with other issues such as eradication of poverty or unemployment, but it has nothing to do with such issues. Rather, reservation is an affirmative action aimed towards representation of all sections of people in socio-economic and socio-political spheres in a caste-divided society.

In the absence of Census data since 1931, a correct figure of the population of SEBCs has not been available, but it was estimated by the Mandal Commission that they constitute about 52 per cent of the total population of the country. The National Sample Survey in its 61st round in 2005 on employment and unemployment situation among social groups in India, esti-

mated the OBCs to be 41 per cent of the country's population. The socio-economic and caste census data of 2011 by the Register General of India has to disclose the caste wise population list to know the correct figure. The SEBC population in Odisha is estimated to be about 50 percent of the total population of the State. The SEBC list has included 210 castes/communities in the list. The former SC converts to Christianity are also included in the SEBC list, so it is religion neutral.

Odisha is one of the backward States of India, having featured in the bottom of many social development indicators among States. The Government of India data on migration shows that a large number of BCs are featured among migrant workers of the State. The reality is still a vast number of the most backward classes of the State are small farmers, sharecroppers, artisans, weavers, milk farmers, cattle attenders, small food vendors, carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, barbers, small traders, etc. They are in dire need of Government support for their economic development along with reservation.

Indra Sawhey judgement of 50% restriction will apply unless there are exceptional circumstances. In Odisha, the case is exceptional, be-

cause the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe constitute 39.98% (ST-22.85 and SC-17.13%, 2011 census) of the population and they are given reservations proportionate to their population percentage; so only 11% is available for the SEBCs, though they constitute near to 50 percent of the population.

No other States in India have such a percentage of SC and ST population. But States such as Tamil Nadu have already introduced a 69 percent reservation. The State of Tamil Nadu has 50 per cent reservation for BCs, out of total 69 per cent, which includes 26.5 per cent for BCs, 3.5 per cent for backward class Muslims, and 20 per cent for most backward classes. The Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of seats in educational institutions and of appointments or posts in the services under the state) Act 1993, enjoys protection of 9th schedule 257, A, inserted under constitutional 76th Amendment Act 1994 with effect from August 31, 1994. The other States, such as Kerala has 40 per cent, Karnataka has 32 per cent, Puduchery has 34 and AP has a 29 per cent reservation for BCs.

The 10 per cent EWS reservation serves the poor among higher castes. But there is a higher portion of poor

among the BCs in Odisha. The All India Debt and Investment Survey 2019 (NSS 77th survey) shows BCs have less assets in comparison to the social groups covered under EWS. There are also a higher number of households below the poverty line among BCs along with status of traditional social and educational backwardness. The Constitutional 124th amendment has expanded the scope of reservation in education, in admission to educational institutions including private, and Government jobs in initial appointments for the EWS other than SCs, STs and BCs by amending Article 15 and 16 with insertion of economically weaker section to clause 5. The EWSs are identified on the basis of family income and assets. This EWS reservation is in addition to the existing reservations and subject to a maximum of ten percent. However, with this, the reservation restrictions of 50 percent become irrelevant and the weaker section ambit has expanded to economically weaker section also other than social disability and educational backwardness which has been the dominant discourse of justification in favor of reservation.

Article 16(4) empowers States to implement reservations for any backward class of citizens. The State

Government can maintain the list of SEBCs as per the previous system since 1993 prior to the Supreme Court judgment. There was a need to amend Article 342A and substantial amendment to Article 338B and 366 of the Constitution to restore the power of the State. But the restrictions by the court limit the power of the State to formulation of its own reservation policy.

There has been a demand by many to disclose the SECC -2011 data or go for detail caste census in the next census along with repeal of the 50 percent cap to move further by allowing States to make arrangements as per their social demography. In this matter the previous BJD Government had filed a Special Leave Petition before the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court also dismissed the Special Leave Petition. Then the State Government decided that the posts and services under the State shall be reserved for the SEBCs to the extent of 27 percent in initial recruitment. But the State Government has not been implementing its policy in the matters of jobs and education. The new Government must intervene in the matter to ensure justice for SEBCs of Odisha.

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# Govt officials urged 'Wear handwoven cloths at least one day a week'

Special discount on products announced marking Handloom Day

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Principal Secretary, Handlooms, Textiles and Handicraft, Arabinda Kumar Padhee urged upon officials and staff to wear Odisha handwoven clothing at least one day in a week.  
Dr Padhee's clarion call came on the eve of the National Handloom Day, which was celebrated in a big way on August 7 here.  
The National Handloom



Day is organised nationally on August 7 to honour the handloom weavers and provide impetus to the handloom sector.  
The Day is also celebrated to commemorate the Swadeshi Movement, which

was launched on August 7, 2015.  
Dr Padhee, who has a big fan following in social media has also urged the people to post photographs wearing Odisha's hand woven products on social media using Hashtag#MyProductMyPride and #MyHandloomMyPride to encourage the handloom weavers of the State.  
Dr Padhee also announced special discounts on Odisha hand woven products from August 7 to 15 available at various outlets and online platforms such as Boyanika, Utkalika, Sambalpuri Bastralaya, and Amlan.  
He also requested to disseminate the important information in the widest manner, so that people will be aware about the State intervention in promoting use of hand woven products by the Odishan handloom weavers in a large scale.

# Youth drowns in flooded river in JSpur

Unidentified body retrieved from river in dist

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
A youth is feared to have drowned in the Devi river near Sribantapur under Apandara Panchayat in Balikuda block on Wednesday. His identity was yet to be established.  
According to the eyewitnesses the victim was seen floating across the river crying for help. However, as the river flowed with excess water, nobody dared to jump into it to rescue him. Later, the Balikuda fire brigade and ODRAF team along with po-

lice rushed to the spot and started a search operation but till the filing of the report, the youth could not be traced. The search operation was deferred till Friday morning, police informed.  
In another riverside mishap reported near Devidola bridge on the Devi river under Naugaon block on Tuesday, a youth's body was floating adjacent to the bridge. On being informed, the police retrieved the body from the river. The identity of the body was not ascertained either. Police sent the body for postmortem and further investigation was going on, said Naugaon police station IIC Sangha Mitra Nayak.

# K'pada boat operators asked to abide by safety norms

**RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA**

The district administration directed all the ferry ghat operators and boat owners, operating in the ferry ghats of Kendrapada, not to ferry more than 25 people in a boat and follow safety norms.  
Sub collector of Kendrapada Rabintra Kumar Pradhan, recently, visited all the ferry ghats and issued the directions in this regard. Besides, the boat operators were directed to obtain licence for ferrying in the rivers and water bodies by keeping life jackets, life buoys and fire extinguishers in their boats to use during emergency time. They have been also asked to write the ferrying capacity and guidelines in their boats.  
Though such guidelines were issued by the State Government earlier after a series of boat capsizing events occurred in the State, including in Kendrapada, but they were

largely ignored by the boat operators. Here one can find people, including minors, being ferried in over-crowded boats with least care to the safety guidelines.  
The NHRC on July 29 has asked the State Chief Secretary to direct all the district Collectors to check the fitness of all the registered ferry boats in their respective jurisdiction with responsible/answerable authorities at district level along with submitting a list of the number of ferry boats found operating unlawfully and banned thereafter in each district and to submit a consolidated list of all such districts before the Commission within six weeks.  
The NHRC also directed the Chief Secretary to send a detailed action taken report against the delinquent officials responsible for failure to supervise and ban the operationalization of disputed unlawful and unfit ferry boats.

# Illegal ice cream factory raided in Paradip

Unit operated without licence

**PNS ■ PARADIP**  
An illegal ice cream factory, which was in operation at Bhitargarh slum in Pradip, was raided on Thursday by Food Safety officials.  
The factory which found operating without any license or valid documents, was manufacturing poor quality ice cream and was selling it in the local market. The unsanitary and unhealthy food processing in the unit raised various health concerns.  
"We received a tipoff about a factory selling ice cream under the name Amalvita. Following this, we conducted a surprise raid. We found out

that the packaging had no mention of any dates of manufacturing or expiry. There was also no mention of any license number. This sort of practice is completely illegal and we have put a stop to it. We have fined the factory owner and issued stern warnings that the factory will not function further without proper license and documentation along with maintenance of hygiene," said Food Inspector Pitabasa Das.  
Later, the Food Safety officers carried out an inspection of food stalls at the trade fair on Paradip beach. Upon finding poor quality food colour being used and food preparation under unsanitary conditions, the officials also issued warnings to the food stall vendors.

# HUD Min unveils 46 projects of Rs 5.12 cr in Nuapada

Lays stones for many projects

**AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA**

Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Public Enterprises, Dr Krushna Chandra Mohapatra visited Nuapada district for a day to participate in various programmes. During his visit to Nuapada NAC, he inaugurated 46 projects worth Rs 5.12 crore and laid the foundation for several new projects, including 22 roads costing Rs 1.94 crore, a multipurpose hall, and a smart park with an estimated cost of Rs 3.18 crore.  
Addressing the public at the inaugural event, the Minister emphasized that the Government is dedicated to serving the people's needs and urged the planting of trees in notified area councils. Notable attendees included former MP Basant Kumar Panda and Nuapada MLA Rajendra Dholakia.



The Minister also held a district-level Press conference at the BJP district office to discuss the budgets of both the Central and State governments. He highlighted that these budgets prioritize individual and citizen development of all categories.

He said that the Odisha Government has kept its election promises to open all four gates of the Jagannath temple and create a corpus fund of Rs 500 crore for the temple's development. The Minister said that grant-in-

aid and shared taxes receipt from Central Government is Rs 91,000 crore.  
"The Centre has set a goal of providing 3 crore houses to the homeless under PMAY and Odisha will get sufficient share from the allocation," he added.

# In Sambalpur Man gets lifer for killing 2 colleagues

**NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR**

The Sessions Judge, Sambalpur on Wednesday sentenced a man to life imprisonment in a connection with the murder of two persons over past enmity in 2015 in the district.  
The convict, identified as Narayan Rout alias Bapun (32) of Badasahir under Jujumura police station in the district, was also directed to pay a fine of Rs 10,000 and in default to undergo another four months' rigorous imprisonment.  
The accused and the two deceased were workers in Bhushan Power and Steel Limited (BSPL), Thelkolei, Rengali.  
According to reports, on October 14, 2015 when one Suru was sleeping at home, Bapun assaulted him with an

axe leaving him grievously injured. Later, when Lalit reached the house, he also assaulted him and fled the spot.  
Though the duo was rushed to VIMSAR, Burla, Suru was pronounced dead on arrival and Lalit died while undergoing treatment. On the same day, the Thelkolei police registered a case under Section 302 of the IPC on the basis of the account given by an informer and complaint of Subrat Kumar Biswal, the then AGM (Admin.) of BSPL. Eventually, the accused was nabbed and investigation was launched.  
Subsequently, the murder weapon was also recovered and the medical examination of the accused was conducted.  
The judgment was pronounced by Sessions Judge Pragnya Panigrahi. Diptriranjana Senth represented the case as Public Prosecutor.

# 100 new coop societies to be formed in Ganjam

GP's not having PACS to get them

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The Odisha Government plans to establish 82 new primary agriculture cooperative societies (PACS) and 21 Primary Milk Cooperative Societies in Ganjam district, as well as upgrade five PACS to multi-purpose societies. The decision was made at the Ganjam District Cooperative Development Committee meeting chaired by district Collector Dibyajyoti Parida.  
The Collector directed the

cooperative officials to prepare the feasibility reports for opening up of the new PACS in panchayats, where there is no PACS.  
Out of 503 panchayats in the district, the PACS are functioning in 421 panchayats at present. In the last year, 21 new PACS were opened, said Deputy Registrar of the cooperative societies (DRCS), Ganjam Biswaranjan Das.  
Similarly, at present, 55 primary milk cooperative societies are functioning under the Greater Ganjam-Gajapati Milk Cooperative Union.  
As per the decision of the

Central Government, each uncovered gram panchayat will have a PACS or a primary dairy or fishery cooperative to generate employment opportunities. This will enable farmers to realize better prices for their products, and expand their markets, he said.  
The DRCS said they have already identified five PACS in the district to develop as multi-purpose cooperative societies. The main purpose of the multi-purpose cooperative societies is to diversify the business activities of the PACS and to make them vibrant economic entities at

the panchayat level.  
"We will further study their potential before recommending the Government to upgrade them as multi-purpose societies," said Das.  
He said the PACS at Dakshinapur, Kukudakhandi Bipulingi, Bada Baranga and Dharakote will be upgraded as multi-purpose societies.  
The PACS will undertake business activities including dairy, fishery, setting up of godowns, procurement of food grains, sale of fertiliser, seed, LPG, petrol and diesel etc. The societies will also set up common service centres, fair-price shops, etc.

# JSWBPSL celebrates 'Sambalpuri Din'



**PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA**

The JSW BPSL, Sambalpur Works celebrated 'Sambalpuri Din' with vibrant ethnic attire, traditional rhythms, and festive cheer, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Sambalpur.  
The event commenced with the arrival of chief guest First Lady and president of Aakanksha Ladies Club, JSW BPSL Neelam Singh. In her address, Singh praised the company's efforts in promoting local culture and traditions. The celebration was also attended by esteemed guests, including District Social Welfare Officer, Sambalpur Sandhyarani Nepal, District

Project Coordinator, Mission Shakti, Sambalpur Bharati Besra, Section Officer, Social Welfare Department Jagyaseni Mishra and Sarpanch, Thelkolei Gram Panchayat Abanti Nayak.  
The event featured captivating cultural programmes performed by company employees, with traditional Sambalpuri dance performances and soulful songs that enthralled the audience. A grand traditional lunch further delighted attendees, adding to the day's festivities. The celebration was a resounding success, fostering a sense of community and cultural pride among the JSW BPSL family.

# B'pur Passport Seva Kendra plagued by understaffing

Centre also undergoes several operational challenges

**RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR**

The recently inaugurated Passport Seva Kendra (PSK) in Brahmapur, located within the Head Post Office premises, was heralded as a significant step towards easing a rather cumbersome process of obtaining passports for the residents of Brahmapur and surrounding regions. Previously, applicants had to travel to Bhubaneswar, facing considerable inconvenience and additional expenses. However, despite the initial promise, the PSK in Brahmapur is now embroiled in a series of operational challenges that are causing significant frustration among the public.  
In the latest case, about 40 appointments were scheduled, but most were canceled, leaving many applicants disheart-

ened on Tuesday.  
The PSK was established to decentralize passport services, bringing them closer to the grassroots level. However, shortly after its opening, the center experienced severe operational issues. For nearly four to five months, services were disrupted due to persistent computer and connectivity problems. During this period, applicants could not access passport services, leading to widespread dissatisfaction. It was only after numerous public complaints and extensive media coverage that these technical issues were finally addressed.  
Now, a new and pressing issue has surfaced: The center is critically understaffed. Despite the expected workload requiring four to five employees, the PSK currently operates with only one officer. This single officer is tasked with handling all responsibilities, from verifying applications to taking photographs, capturing fingerprints, and more. This situ-



ation has created a bottleneck, severely hampering the efficiency of the service center.  
The most significant repercussion of the understaffing is the frequent cancellation of appointments. The pattern of cancellation has become a regular occurrence, with approximately 30 out of 40 daily appointments often being

cancelled. Applicants, some of whom travel from distant places like Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Paralakhemundi, Mohana, and Buguda, arrive at the center only to be told their appointments have been cancelled.  
"I was so relieved when I finally got a slot to do my passport on Tuesday at Brahmapur.

I travelled all the way here today, with full of hope, but the office told me that all forty booked slots for the day are cancelled. It is heartbreaking to have my hopes dashed like this after coming so far. I was supposed to fly to the UAE for a plumbing job that I was scheduled to join in August. Last month, they gave me a slot at the Phulbani PSK, but that day was also cancelled, according to the office. This repeated cancellation is making it impossible for me to secure my job and provide for my family," Bada Kustali village applicant K Keshab Reddy said.  
"Once we check the internet, the system shows the cancelled slots. It's a frustrating situation for everyone involved, as applicants travel long distances only to find their appointments have been cancelled without prior notice," Brahmapur PSK officer Pratap Chandra Swain said.  
A major grievance among applicants is the lack of prior

notification regarding appointment cancellations. Many applicants report receiving no messages about the status of their appointments, neither confirmation nor cancellation. The lack of communication forces them to make unnecessary trips, only to be turned away upon arrival. Furthermore, there is no information board at the center to provide updates or information about application statuses, exacerbating the confusion and frustration.  
Given the center's importance, serving not only south Odisha but also neighboring States, there is an urgent need for intervention. The public has demanded the immediate appointment of additional staff to handle the workload efficiently. Moreover, there is a pressing need to improve the communication system, ensuring applicants are promptly informed about their appointment status, especially cancellations, to avoid unnecessary travel and inconvenience.

# Will Odisha ban liquor, go PM Modi's way?

**KJD asks CM Majhi**

**PNS ■ ROURKELA**

In his popular 'Manki Baat' programme last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi advocated for a drug-free India and appealed one and all to root out the menace. He announced the launching of a portal called 'Manas' and a toll-free number with a view to involving people in large numbers before it takes the shape of a mass movement.  
But Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi's response to the call has been lukewarm because Odisha will suffer a huge revenue loss once the State is declared 'dry'. Meanwhile, Kosal

Janata Dal (KJD) spokesperson and a known anti-drug activist Dr Surama Mishra welcoming the PM's initiatives wanted to know whether the Odisha CM would go Narendra Modi's way.  
In a letter to the CM, she has asked to clarify his stand on the important issue. Citing example of the smart city Rourkela where the drug menace has ruined several families with young ones getting addicted to drug and alcohol, she has demanded stringent action against the shop owners and numerous wayside thelas in Chhend and Civil Township who are making rampant business by selling the products to school and college students.



# NDA backs Waqf Bill

## Opp slammed for rumour-mongering

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) allies JD(U), TDP, Shiv Sena and the LJP backed the Waqf (Amendment) Bill that was introduced in Lok Sabha on Thursday, saying it was aimed at bringing transparency in the functioning of the Waqf Board and was not an attempt to interfere with the running of mosques.

The TDP and the LJP also supported the Bill being sent to a parliamentary committee for further examination. Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju introduced the Waqf (Amendment) Bill and proposed sending it to a joint parliamentary committee after the Opposition parties objected to its provisions. Speaking in Lok Sabha as the Government moved for introducing the Bill, Janata Dal (United) leader and Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan' asserted that the Bill was not anti-Muslim. Defending the Bill, he said, "Several members are making it sound as if the amendment in the Waqf Board law is anti-Muslim. How is it anti-Muslim? Here example of Ayodhya is being given... Can you not differentiate between a temple and an institution? This is not an attempt to interfere with mosques. This law is for the institution, to



make it transparent... How was the Waqf Board formed?" he said, and himself replied that it was through a law. The minister said if any institution established through law becomes autocratic, the Government has the right to bring a law to ensure transparency, he said. Slamming the Opposition parties, he said, "There is no communal divide. They are spreading rumours." Taking a jibe at the Congress over the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, he asked, "Who killed thousands of Sikhs?" "The Bill should come and transparency should be brought," he said. Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MP G M Harish Balyogi said his party will not mind if the Bill is sent to a parliamentary panel. "I appreciate the concern with which Government has brought this Bill. The

purpose of the donors need to be protected. When the purpose and power get misused, it is the responsibility of the Government to bring reforms and introduce transparency in the system," he said. The TDP MP said there is a requirement for the Government to regulate and streamline the purpose. "The Bill has been brought and we support it... We believe that the registration is going to help poor Muslims and women of the country, and bring transparency," the TDP MP said, adding his party will not mind if the Bill is sent to a panel of Parliament for further consultation. "If wider consultations are required to remove misconceptions and to educate the purpose of the Bill, we have no problem

sending it to the select committee," he said. Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Eknath Shinde also supported the Bill. "Some people are only politicising this Bill. There is only one intention behind this Bill -- to bring transparency and accountability," he said. He accused the opposition of spreading misinformation on the Bill. "When their Government was in power, they put administrators in temples like Shirdi. They did not remember federalism at that time. They have pushed Muslim women back," he said in Lok Sabha. Lok Janshakti Party-Ram Vilas (LJP-RV) MP Shambhavi Choudhary spoke on similar lines and supported the Bill. "The founder of our party Ram Vilas Paswan ji always supported Muslims. In 2004, he wanted a Muslim to become the prime Minister. We support this Bill, but if some people want wider consultations, we have no objection if it goes to a committee," Choudhary told reporters outside Parliament. "This is not an anti-Muslim Bill. It is bringing equality in the representation of the minorities by including groups like Bohra Muslims, Ahmadiyya and women who will also get representation," the LJP MP said.

# Bill aimed at targeting Muslims, draconian law: INDIA Bloc MPs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Opposition on Thursday strongly protested against the introduction of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha, with several INDIA Bloc MPs calling it an attack on the Constitution and aimed at targeting Muslims. They also urged the Government to withdraw the Bill. Soon after Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju sought leave to introduce the Bill, Congress MP KC Venugopal — who had submitted notice to oppose its introduction — accused the Government of violating freedom of religion and attacking the federal system through it. "This is a draconian law and a fundamental attack on the Constitution," Venugopal said. Opposing the Waqf Bill in Lok Sabha, Venugopal said, "We are Hindus but at the same time, we respect the faith of other religions. This Bill is specialized for the Maharashtra, Haryana elections. You do not understand that last time the people of India clearly taught you a lesson. This is an attack on the federal system." "Through this Bill, they are putting a provision that non-Muslims also be members of the Waqf governing council. It is a direct attack on freedom of religion... Next you will go for Christians, then Jains... People of India will not



buy this kind of divisive politics now," Venugopal asserted. Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav said the Bill was being introduced to appease the BJP's hardcore supporters. "What is the point of including non-Muslims in Waqf boards when this is not done in other religious bodies?" Yadav asked. "The truth is that the BJP has brought this Bill to appease its hardcore supporters," the Kannauj MP said. Samajwadi Party MP Mohibullah Nadvi said the Bill was against freedom of religion. He said appointing non-Muslims in the Central Waqf Council and other such bodies was violative of the rights of Muslims. Opposing its introduction, Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Sudip Bandhopadhyay said the Bill was divisive, anti-constitutional and anti-federalism. "This is against the Constitution, a religious minority and federalism. It shuns justice in every possible way," DMK MP Kanimozhi said. "It is a direct violation of

Article 30, which deals with minorities to administer their institutions. This Bill targets a particular religious group..." she said. Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) - Sharadchandra Pawar MP Supriya Sule said her party opposed the Bill as it was against a particular minority community. "Look at what is happening in Bangladesh, there is so much pain... It is the moral duty of a country to protect minorities," Sule said. "The Government should clarify the intent and the timing of the Bill. We object, withdraw this Bill... Let's discuss it and then bring a Bill that is fair and just," she added. The Indian Union Muslim League's (IUML) ET Mohammed Basheer said the Bill was violative of articles 14, 15, 25, 26 and 30 of the Constitution. He alleged it was part of the Government's "dirty agenda" and called the Bill divisive. If this Bill is passed, the Waqf system will collapse, he said. He also claimed that the bill would encourage encroachment on Waqf land. "Your intention is to communalise, put Hindus and Muslims in compartments... We will not let this happen," Basheer said. All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen Chairperson Asaduddin Owaisi claimed that the House did not have the competence to make the amendments.



# Opp MPs protest, demand MSP for farmers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Thursday held a protest on the Parliament premises, demanding that farmers' crops be bought at MSP and justice ensured for them. MPs from parties such as the Trinamool Congress (TMC), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) - Sharadchandra Pawar, and the Shiv Sena (UBT), among others, protested on the steps leading to the Makar Dwar of Parliament. The MPs wore a garland of vegetables and raised slogans such as "Kisan ko phasal pe MSP do" and "Kisan pe anyay bandh karo." The manner in which the BJP has given minimum support price to TDP (Telugu Desam Party) and JD(U), it should also ensure MSP (minimum support price) for farmers and that is why we are protesting," Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said. The export ban on onion farmers of Maharashtra should be lifted. Innumerable requests have been made to the Centre but to no avail, she said.



# India, UK discuss Bangladesh crisis amid Hasina's asylum plans

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday discussed the unfolding situation in Bangladesh with his British counterpart David Lammy during a phone conversation. The call was initiated by Lammy. In a social media post later, Jaishankar said he and Lammy also deliberated on the developments in West Asia. "Received a call from UK Secretary @DavidLammy today. Discussed the situation in Bangladesh and West Asia," Jaishankar said. The discussion between Jaishankar and the British Foreign Secretary on the situation in Bangladesh comes against the backdrop of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's initial plan to seek asylum in London. However, the plan has hit a roadblock following the UK's hesitation to provide her refuge. Meanwhile, as an interim Government takes charge in Dhaka, India on Thursday said the interests of the people of Bangladesh are foremost in its mind. India also hoped for early restoration of law and order in Bangladesh. As far as India is concerned, interests of people of Bangladesh are foremost in our mind, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. The situation in Bangladesh is still evolving, he said. Asked when former prime minister Sheikh Hasina will leave India, Jaiswal said: "We do not have any update on her plan." To another question on reports of attacks on minority communities in Bangladesh, the MEA spokesperson said New Delhi is monitoring the situation. He said India is in touch with authorities in Bangladesh to ensure safety and security of Indian missions, the personnel working there and Indians residing in that country. Hasina resigned as the prime minister on Monday following weeks of massive protests that initially began as an agitation against a job quota scheme but weeks later morphed into a mass movement demanding her ouster from power.

# Dhankhar leaves House in a huff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday left the House for a short time after heated exchanges with some Opposition members who wanted to raise the issue of Vinesh Phogat's disqualification and described the scene as "unprecedented and indigestible." Dhankhar expressed his anguish on the conduct of Opposition members and left the House for a while. "For sometime I am not finding myself in a position to sit here..." Dhankhar said, adding he was leaving the House "with a heavy heart." Deputy Chairman Harivansh chaired the Zero Hour proceedings. Trouble started in the morning session when Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge sought to raise the Phogat disqualification issue but Dhankhar did not allow it. This followed an angry exchange between the Chair and TMC leader Derek O'Brien. "It is an important issue. It is not an issue of a particular individual," Kharge said soon after the listed papers were tabled in the House. He wanted to know "who is behind" the disqualification. However, Dhankhar did not allow Kharge to raise the issue and went ahead with the scheduled Zero Hour listings. In the meantime, Derek O'Brien stood up to raise his point, but could not be heard because of uproar in the House. To this Dhankhar cautioned the TMC member, saying



"You are shouting at the Chair. Your conduct is ugliest in the House. I condemn your actions. Next time I will show you the door." As uproar continued, Opposition parties staged a walkout. "They (Opposition) think they are all wise. They think they are the only ones whose hearts are bleeding. The entire nation is in pain because of our girl. Entire nation is feeling the pain from the President to the Prime Minister to myself and many more. Everyone is sharing that situation, but to... Politicize it is the greatest disrespect to that girl. That girl has a long way to go," Dhankhar said. Leader of the House and BJP President J P Nadda also condemned the behaviour of Opposition members towards the Chair and also accused the Congress party of politicising the Phogat disqualification issue. "Opposition does not have a solid issue to discuss," he said. Nadda emphasised the whole country is behind Phogat and even the Prime Minister has described the wrestler as 'champion of champions'. After Nadda spoke, Dhankhar

expressed his anguish on the conduct of Opposition members and left the House saying he was not in a position to remain in the House for the time being. Before leaving the Rajya Sabha, Dhankhar said the behaviour of the Opposition members has crossed all limits by creating anarchy in the House and disrespecting the prestige of the Chair. "They are not challenging me. They are challenging the post of the Chairman. And they are challenging the Chair, as they think that the person who is sitting on this Chair is not capable," he said. Dhankhar rued that he did not get the desired support from the House despite making all efforts. "I am not running away from the oath. But what I have seen today, the way a member has behaved, the way the Opposition bench has conducted, I am not finding myself in a position to sit here for sometime," Dhankhar said, adding he was leaving the House "with a heavy heart." After Dhankhar left the House, Deputy Chairman Harivansh chaired the Zero Hour proceedings. Dhankhar later chaired the Question Hour. After returning to the Chair, he said when a scene is created in the House and it becomes the epicentre of disruption for the entire nation, then it is a bounden duty to sometimes take a tough decision. "I left my seat to introspect. Having witnessed (the scene)... Which I found was unprecedented, and indigestible," Dhankhar said.

# SC to hear plea to delay NEET-PG exam

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court agreed to hear on Friday a plea seeking postponement of the NEET-PG examination, scheduled for August 11, which claimed that candidates have been allocated cities that are highly inconvenient for them to reach. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra on Thursday took note of the

submissions of lawyer Anas Tanwir on the issue. The bench said the matter will be listed on Friday. The plea said many candidates have been allocated cities which are highly inconvenient for them to reach. It said the test cities were allotted on July 31 and the specific centres will be declared on August 8. While the allocation of the centres was done to curb malpractices, the plea said



due to the paucity of time, it is difficult for the candidates to make arrangements for travel to specific cities. "Issue a writ in the nature of Mandamus ... The Respondents (National Testing Agency) to reschedule the NEET-PG 2024 examination," stated the plea filed by Vishal Soren. The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)-Postgraduate exam was initially supposed to be held on June 23. It was postponed by the Union Health Ministry as a "precautionary measure" in the wake of alleged irregularities in certain competitive exams.

# Govt servants stand to lose job over faked documents, RS told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Existing instructions permit the termination of a Government servant for furnishing false information or producing a false certificate to secure an appointment, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Thursday. The response assumes significance as the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) recently cancelled the provisional candidature of probationary IAS officer Pujja Khedkar and debarred her from all future examinations for fraudulently availing attempts in the civil services examination beyond eligibility. She has also been accused of misusing disability and Other Backward Class or OBC (non-creamy layer) quotas, among others. In a written reply, Union Minister of State for Personnel



Jitendra Singh said complaints are received from time to time regarding employment in Government Ministries and departments on the basis of fake caste certificates, which are normally forwarded to the concerned Ministries/departments for appropriate action. "The extant instructions provide that if it is found that a Government servant had furnished false information or produced a false certificate in order to secure an appointment, he should not be retained in service," he said. Thus, when an appointing authority comes to know that an employee has submitted a fake caste certificate, it has to initiate action to remove or dismiss such an employee from service according to the provisions of the relevant service rules, Singh said. The Minister said the responsibility for issuing and verifying the caste/community certificates lies with the concerned state governments. The Supreme Court, vide its judgement dated September 2, 1994, in the matter of 'Kumari Madhuri Patil vs Addl Commissioner', has laid down detailed criteria/guidelines to be followed by the state governments for the issuance of social status certificates, their scrutiny and their approval, he said. States and Union Territories have been requested on several occasions to ensure that the caste certificate referred to the district authorities is verified and reported to the appointing authority within one month of receipt of a request from such authority, the minister said.



# CDS wants India to ramp up defence production

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauthan on Thursday said here the global disruptions have presented an opportunity for the Indian Defence Eco-system to ramp up their defence manufacturing capabilities so that the country transcends from being an importer to being an exporter of munitions, as well as, ammunition. Making this assertion at the Ammo India 2024 Conference organised by Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), he said the global geopolitical environment is in a state of flux. "We are passing through an era of big global disruptions. Amidst the vagaries of the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) of the World, the global arms industry is grappling with a seemingly insurmountable problem of widening demand and supply gap," he stressed. The CDS highlighted the importance of Aatmanirbharta and self-reliance in defence and emphasised how it is central to attaining strategic autonomy for the nation. He mentioned various policy changes, reforms and the initiatives taken by the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces to promote Make in India and Make for the World drive especially with respect to ammunition manufacturing.

# Rajnath showers praises on ace shooter Bhaker

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday showered praise on star pistol shooter Manu Bhaker as he met the double Olympic bronze medalist after her triumphant return from the Paris Games. He said every Indian is elated by her "incredible performances". Rajnath also shared a photograph of their meeting in a social media post. "Delighted to meet India's ace shooter, Manu Bhaker, who scripted history at the Paris Olympics by winning two Bronze medals for the country. Every Indian is elated by her incredible performances. Best wishes for her future endeavours," he wrote on the social media platform. Bhaker arrived home on Wednesday after her historic feat at the ongoing Paris



Games where she became the first Indian in the post-Independence era to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics. The ace shooter later posted on social media that the defence minister inspired her with his words of motivation. "I am honoured to have the opportunity to meet with the Hon'ble Defence Minister of India, Shri Rajnath Singh at his office in New Delhi. I am grateful he took time out from his busy schedule to offer his support and inspired me with his words of motivation. #JeetKiAur #Cheer4Bharat #Paris2024 #Olympics @rajnathsingh @DefenceMinIndia @WeAreTeamIndia," she posted on the social media platform and also shared a photograph of the meeting. Bhaker will return to Paris on Saturday where she will be one of the flag-bearers of the Indian contingent at the Paris Olympics Closing Ceremony on Sunday. The 22-year-old Bhaker won a bronze each in the women's 10m air pistol and 10m air pistol mixed team event where she had paired with Sarabjot Singh to script Olympic history for the country. Before her, British-Indian athlete Norman Pritchard had won two silver medals in 200m sprint and 200m hurdles at the 1900 Olympics but that achievement had come in the pre-Independence era.

# Govt nurturing 1,050 athletes for international participation: Mandaviya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is currently nurturing 1,050 athletes selected under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), bearing all expenses from training to gears and for international participation, Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Mansukh Lal Mandaviya said in Rajya Sabha on Thursday. The Government has three initiatives to identify talents at the grassroots level and nurture them and provide opportunities to them to play at the national and international levels, said Mandaviya while responding to a supplementary. Under Khelo India, the



Government has created a centre in each district. It is also organising competitions for school and college students over 14 years on state and national levels. There is a KIRTI programme (Khelo India Rising Talent Identification), which identifies talents from the schools and colleges. "Currently a talent identification process is going on in the country, in which one lakh talented sportsperson will be identified," said Mandaviya.



# After Wayanad tragedy, State MPs, MLAs demand ecologically sensitive rail line

**KUMAR CHELLAPPAN**  
■ KOCHI

Closely on the heels of the disaster that struck Wayanad that claimed more than 400 lives and made hundreds of families without roof over their heads, Kerala is on its way to perpetuate another major mishap under the pretext of development. Even as the Union Minister of forest Bhupender Yadav declared that the landslide and deluge that devastated Wayanad was a man made disaster because of scant regard for ecology and environment, a team of MPs and MLAs from the State called on Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav and submitted a memorandum seeking the speeding up of the construction of Angamali to Sabari Railway Line which they claim would help pilgrims to the holy shrine of Sabarimala atop the Western Ghats. Devotees of Lord Ayyappa, the presiding deity of Sabarimala are agast over the enthusiasm shown by the elected representatives of the people pushing for a separate railway line to the holy shrine. "None of these representatives belong to the Sanatana Dharma and most



of them consider idol worship as a cardinal sin. There is something more than the ordinary eyes could see behind this demand for the railway line to Sabarimala," said PNS Namboodiri, a former Government official based in Ettumanoor. He told *The Pioneer* that not a single MP or MLA came forward to condemn the Kerala Government action of allowing women in the age group of 10 to 50 worshipping at the shrine. "It is a centuries old custom that women in the 10 to 50 age group are not allowed in this particular shrine as Lord Ayyappa here is in the manifestation of eternal

bachelor," said Namboodiri. Scholars like Namboodiri and T K Subramanina Namboodiri are unanimous in their apprehension that there is a conspiracy against the temple dating back to many centuries. "They want to elevate the pilgrimage center to a shopping complex and business district," said Subramanian Namboodiri. "All super fast trains including Vande Bharat Expresses plying in Kerala travel slowly because of outdated signal and tracks and it would take years for the Railways to bring on par with the rest of the nation. The Kerala Government should give top priority to this process," said a top

official of the Railways based in Kerala. Alok Kumar Verma, former chief engineer of Indian Railways concurred with this observation and said focus should be on improving speed and efficiency. It may be remembered that B V Kumar, former chief of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence had warned the country about the mushrooming of cannabis plantations in the high grades of Kerala. "The top grade cannabis cultivated in these areas have to be brought to the plains and what is the safest route than the railways," he had said while reacting to the demand of Kerala politicians for this rail route. Namboodiri pointed out that the Sabarimala Temple opens the sanctum sanctorum just for five months every year. "The trains will run almost empty for the next seven months. The argument that there should be train service to transport the hill produce to the plains does not hold water as only marginal crop is cultivated in the region," said PNS Namboodirippadu, a former revenue official who has put in years of service in the region.

# Certain agencies exerting pressure for re-imposition of AFSPA: Manipur CM

**PTI ■ IMPHAL**

Manipur Chief Minister Biren Singh on Thursday said certain central agencies were exerting pressure for the re-imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in the valley districts of the State. Responding to a query from Naga People's Front (NPF) member Leishiyu Keishing in the Assembly, Singh said, "Due to the evolving situation in the valley districts since May 3 last year, some central agencies were pressing for the re-imposition of AFSPA." He added that even during discussions with him, these agencies argued that normal laws could not address the situation and thus AFSPA should be reinstated in the valley districts. Objecting to the suggestion, Singh said, "We were at a point of demanding the removal of AFSPA from hill districts, but I was questioned about whether the situation in the valley districts could be managed under normal laws." Singh explained that he assured the agencies that the unrest was a result of emotional responses to recent violence and that he would address the situation gradually. The CM admitted



that the evolving situation in the valley districts has made it challenging to provide satisfactory answers to the agencies during their visits. He acknowledged that the agencies were not fully satisfied with his previous responses and appealed to the people through the House, saying, "There is significant pressure for the imposition of AFSPA in the valley." Reflecting on the hardships caused by AFSPA, Singh said, "If the Act could restore law and order, it would have been achieved long ago. A humane approach is needed." He emphasised his own past

opposition to AFSPA, stating, "I have long stood against AFSPA, both as a journalist and as a public figure. It is an inhumane and draconian Act that humiliates people, instills fear, and destroys dignity." Singh noted that after the situation improved in the valley districts, AFSPA was removed from 19 police stations. He reiterated the desire to remove AFSPA from the hill areas as well, calling for central leaders to be convinced of this need. Singh expressed hope that new criminal laws will help manage the evolving situation in Manipur.

# Rain claims 100 lives in Himachal since start of monsoon

**PTI ■ SHIMLA**

Rain has taken 100 lives since the onset of monsoon on June 27 and continues to thwart the traffic in the state with 97 roads closed at the moment, officials said on Thursday. The Met office on Thursday issued an 'orange' warning, foreboding heavy to very rainfall, marked by thunderstorm and lightning, at places in Kangra, Mandi, Shimla, and Sirmour districts for Saturday. 'According to the state emergency operation centre, 30 people died after falling from a height, 23 in accidental drowning, 14 of snake bite, 13 due to electrocution, 11 in cloudburst, three in flash floods and one in landslide and five due to other reasons. 'The maximum deaths, 21, were reported from Mandi, followed by 18 in Kangra while Shimla and Sirmour districts for nine deaths each. 'The Met also warned of a low to moderate flash flood in parts of Sirmour, Chamba, Shimla, and Mandi districts in the next 24 hours. 'By Thursday evening, 40 roads were closed in Mandi, 26 in Kullu, 15 in Shimla, six in Kangra, four each in Sirmour and Lahaul and Spiti, and one each in Hamirpur and Kinnaur districts. 'The traffic was restricted to one side of the road on the Shimla-Kalka National Highway 5 due to debris on the road near Kandaghat in Solan district. Long queues of vehicles were seen on both sides of the road. 'Forty-five transformers and 25 water supply schemes are affected in the state, the state emergency centre said. 'Shillaroo recorded the highest rainfall at 86.4 mm since Wednesday evening, followed by Kufri (78 mm), Baggi (76.6 mm), Sundernagar (64.2 mm), Mandi (60.2 mm), Gohar (57.4 mm), Jogindernagar (53.7 mm), Pandoh (50 mm), Palampur (48.8 mm), Dharmsihala (38.6 mm), Shimla (34 mm) Narkanda (28.5 mm), Bilaspur Jubbarhatti (25 mm each), Kangra (22.6 mm), Dhaulakuan (22 mm), and Manali (16 mm). 'The water supply to Shimla city can be disturbed for the next 2-3 days due to turbidity in the water sources, the Shimla Jal Prabandhak Nigam said. 'The state received 29 per cent deficit rainfall till August 8, beginning from Jun1, the date monsoon hits the country. 'The state received 307.9 mm rainfall against an average of 435.5 mm during this period. 'In August so far, Himachal Pradesh has recorded 80.8 mm rainfall against a normal of 78.5 mm.

# Centre to diplomatically deal with attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh: Himanta

**PTI ■ GUWAHATI**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday expressed confidence that the Centre will address the alleged attacks on Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh through diplomatic efforts. He assured that while the Indian government is managing the situation with patience and caution, the focus remains on ensuring safety and maintaining strict vigilance along the Indo-Bangladesh border, which has been fully sealed. "The Indian government will deal with the situation politically and diplomatically with the new dispensation. We have been asked not to comment much on it but to be patient and tolerant," the Chief Minister said on the sidelines of a programme here. "The solution does not lie in allowing those trying to enter India following persecution in the neighbouring country but to ensure their safety and security there. There are various organisations like the UN and others to deal with the situation diplomatically," Sarma said. Sarma further noted his reluctance to comment on the alleged attacks to avoid potential repercussions on minorities in Bangladesh. "I am confident that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is



doing everything possible to ensure the safety and security of Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists in that country," he said. He assured that Assam is maintaining strict border security, allowing entry only to those with valid passports, visas, and bona fide Indian citizenship. Sarma had previously indicated concerns about the situation in Bangladesh from two perspectives - the potential influx of people through the border and the risk of the

neighbouring country becoming a refuge for insurgents from Northeast India. He had asserted that there is no doubt that with the cooperation of the previous government in Bangladesh, 'we have been successful in curbing extremist activities in Northeast India'. He hoped that the new government in Bangladesh will also maintain the same cooperation and not allow their country to become a safe haven for NE insurgents.

# Education best tool for social transformation: Arunachal Governor

**PTI ■ ITANAGAR**

Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Thursday called on all stakeholders to focus on developing students' physical, mental, and moral foundations to shape them into responsible citizens. Speaking at a three-day 'chintan shivir-cum-education conclave' here, Parnaik emphasised that a strong mental and moral foundation would result in educated, disciplined, and inspired individuals, contributing to the state's transformation from 'Shiksit Arunachal' to 'Viksit Arunachal'. Highlighting the critical role of education, the governor said it equips people with knowledge and skills necessary for personal and societal growth. "It awakens joy, curiosity and a deep desire to pursue leadership roles and positively impact those around them," the governor added. Parnaik stressed the importance of the 'Guru-Shishya Parampara,' advocating for impactful and innovative teacher training

programmes. He urged the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which promotes a holistic curriculum that encourages critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. Parnaik recommended aligning the curriculum with NEP 2020 principles while incorporating the state's cultural heritage. The governor also addressed initiatives such as the Mission 'National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy' (NIPUN Bharat) and Prime Minister Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI Schools), emphasising the need for adopting best practices and innovative approaches to set new educational standards. Parnaik commended State Education Minister Pasang Dorjee Sonu, his advisor Mutchu Mithi, Education Commissioner Amjad Tak, and Education Secretary Duly Kamduk for organising the conclave and encouraged participants to engage in meaningful discussions to enhance the state's educational framework.

# Assam: Over 1,000 rare Sanchi manuscripts to go digital

**PTI ■ GUWAHATI**

The Dibrugarh University along with an NGO Nanda Talukdar Foundation (NTF) has decided to preserve over 1,000 rare manuscripts of Assam by digitising and making them accessible to the public. NTF in a statement on Thursday said that the initiative promises to open the doors to a vast collection of rare and unseen Sanchi Paat (leaves of the Sanchi tree) manuscripts for anyone, anywhere in the world. The Dibrugarh University recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Nanda Talukdar Foundation (NTF) to preserve Assam's rich literary heritage, it added. As part of the MoU, NTF will serve as the knowledge partner in the preservation and digitisation of over 1,000 rare and ancient manuscripts housed at the Assamese Department of the university. These manuscripts, written in old Assamese, Sanskrit, Tai and Bengali, cover various subjects including Vaishnavism, Buddhism and ancient customs of Assam, reflecting the diverse cultural and religious heritage of the region," the release said. Under this partnership, the manuscripts will be digitised



and made available in the public domain, enabling scholars and researchers worldwide to access these invaluable resources, it added. This initiative is the first large-scale effort to make rare Assamese manuscripts publicly accessible and ensure their preservation for future generations. Commenting on the development, Mrinal Talukdar on behalf of NTF said: "The digitisation of these manuscripts is not only a matter of preservation but also opens the door to knowledge. We are honoured to be part of this groundbreaking project. Dibrugarh University Registrar Dr Parmanand Sonowal said the partnership is a significant step towards making the vast and diverse heritage of Assam accessible to the world. "We hope this initiative will inspire further efforts in preserving our cultural legacy," he added.

# Hilsa yield poor during June-September session: Fishermen's organisations

**PTI ■ KOLKATA**

Hilsa fish yield has sharply declined in its hub in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district this season, with trawlers netting 25-30 tonne a day instead of 50 tonne two years ago, an office-bearer of a fishermen's organisation said on Thursday. However, fishermen's organisations do not anticipate an immediate impact on the supply in city markets despite the current situation in Bangladesh, as shipments from the neighbouring nation cross the border only during the September-October festive period. Bijan Maity, general secretary of the Kakkdwip Matsya Unnayan Samity, said out of 1,000 trawlers operating in the Kakkdwip-Diamond Harbour area, about 70 have been actively fishing for Hilsa since mid-June. The Hilsa season typically runs from June to September, a period when the fish migrate from the sea to rivers to spawn.



"The daily Hilsa haul is not more than 15-20 tonnes this season unlike 50 tonnes two years ago and around 100 tonnes five years ago," he said. Maity said the fish caught this season weigh around 500-600 grams, with larger Hilsas being rare. "This reduced yield is attributed to factors such as air and water pollution and indiscriminate netting of juvenile Hilsa," he added. He emphasised that fish

shorter than 23 cm or weighing less than 500 grams should ideally be released, but some fishermen continue to catch these smaller fish for quick profit. He expressed hope that yields might improve with favourable weather conditions and noted that the rise in diesel prices has increased trawler operating costs from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.5 lakh, making it harder for fishermen to recover their expenses.

"Let's hope that yield will increase in the next few days if the rainy and windy weather conditions continue," he said. He said that a haul of 32,000-35,000 tonne would be termed a good catch, but such a situation was unlikely. In the Digha-Mandarmani belt of Purba Medinipur, another major Hilsa hub, the catch has also been below expectations due to insufficient rainfall, according to a spokesperson from the Digha Fishermen and Fish Traders Association. "Last year, the catch was 15 tonnes in the first two months, but this year it has been way below," Anwar Maqsood, secretary of Fish Importers Association, said. Maqsood said regular imports of Hilsa from Bangladesh have ceased since 2012, except for a special allowance during Durga Puja. Currently, Hilsa imports are limited to Myanmar, with about 25 tonnes arriving by ship in each consignment. The timing of future consignments remains uncertain.

# And river runs through desert: Rain revives dry Luni river in Barmer

**PTI ■ JODHPUR**

The rain, a flowing river and the desert. A rare trifeata celebrated by locals in the arid land of Barmer with song, dance and prayers to welcome the unusual sight of the Luni river flowing through their town. After three days of continuous rain, the river flowed through Samdari town in the western Rajasthan district on Wednesday. It was only for the second time in five years and the locals couldn't have been happier. Luni River, also known as 'Maruganga' or the Ganga of Rajasthan, originates from the Nag Pahadi in Aravali ranges in Ajmer and flows through nine districts of the state before merging into Gujarat's Rann of Kutch. However, the river hardly reaches Barmer even when it rains heavily in the region, an expert said. After encountering the rare sight on Wednesday, elated residents of the Samdari town gathered around the river as women sang folk songs while men danced on the beats of



the drums. The locals, who consider this to be an auspicious occasion for the entire region, worshipped the river and offered 'chunri' (a traditional red scarf). Convener of the Jodhpur chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Culture Heritage (INTACH) Mahendra Singh Tanwar said the Luni river has had a huge natural and cultural significance in this region since long. "But due to various factors including negligence of the river for over a decade, the

river has an existential threat," he said. Tanwar said the river originates in Nag mountains of Ajmer and travels about 495 km before merging into the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. "The river travels 350 km in Rajasthan through Ajmer, Nagaur, Jodhpur, Pali, Jalore and Barmer districts but hardly reaches Barmer and even during heavy rain," he said. Former union minister of state Kailash Chaudhary and others also offered prayers at the river while similar scenes were witnessed at a few other

places as well. The celebration underscores the importance of water in the desert area where people have to live with limited supply of water and face acute water crisis during the summer season. Emphasising on a plan to preserve water in the usually dry river, a local resident, Goparam, said that the river flowed in the area last year as well but it all went to waste. "If a plan is made for saving or storing this water, it could prove to be a boon for farmers. This will also raise the underground water level in the surrounding region, which will help the farming, devastated by the absence of water and industrial effluent", he said. Due to the rainfall in its catchment area, an area that collects water after rainfall, over the past five days, the river is currently flowing to its full capacity. Although the river had water last year as well, the flow and volume were less. Residents said that several other local rivers join this approximately 350 km long river in Rajasthan.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Daunting task ahead

The interim Govt led by Yunus must restore law and order in Bangladesh as there is chaos and fear all around

As Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus takes charge of the interim government of Bangladesh, he may have the challenging task of restoring peace and law and order in the country. Bangladesh, relatively a young nation, is once again in the throes of instability. The latest chapter in its ongoing saga of unrest, unfolded after the ouster of Sheikh Hasina and subsequent takeover by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. As Yunus steps into power, the country is gripped by fear and uncertainty, prompting hundreds of citizens to seek refuge in India. Recent months saw political violence, protests, and crackdowns on dissent; creating a volatile environment that led to the ouster of Sheikh Hasina and chaos on the roads of Dhaka. The announcement of Muhammad Yunus, a globally renowned figure for his work in microfinance and founder of Grameen Bank, taking over the reins of power comes as a dramatic twist. Yunus, who has faced his share of political and legal challenges in recent years, has long been a critic of the Hasina Government's policies.



The political upheaval has triggered a wave of fear among the populace especially the minorities. Reports indicate that hundreds of Bangladeshis are attempting to cross the border into India, driven by concerns for their safety. The future course of Bangladesh's political landscape under Yunus' leadership is fraught with uncertainty. Yunus has been an advocate for political reform and transparency. His leadership could usher in a new era of governance, focusing on anti-corruption measures and democratic practices. However, implementing these changes in a deeply entrenched political system will be a formidable challenge. Besides, Bangladesh's economy has been under strain due to mismanagement and corruption. Yunus' expertise in economic development and microfinance could play a pivotal role in revitalising the economy, promoting entrepreneurship, and creating jobs. While some may view him as a saviour, others may see him as an outsider with no political experience. Building trust and garnering widespread support will be essential for his administration's success. However, the biggest challenge would be restoring peace and maintaining the law and order. Ensuring law and order during this transition period is paramount. Yunus will need the cooperation of the military and law enforcement agencies to maintain stability and prevent further violence. As Bangladesh stands on the brink of a new political era with Muhammad Yunus at the helm, the road ahead is uncertain. The immediate priority will be to address the fears of the populace and restore a sense of security, especially amongst minorities. All said and done, right now the army will call the shots and till elections are announced nothing can be said about the future of interim government itself. The coming days will be crucial in determining whether Yunus' leadership can guide the country towards stability and prosperity or if Bangladesh will descend into further chaotic unrest.

Government's policies. The political upheaval has triggered a wave of fear among the populace especially the minorities. Reports indicate that hundreds of Bangladeshis are attempting to cross the border into India, driven by concerns for their safety. The future course of Bangladesh's political landscape under Yunus' leadership is fraught with uncertainty. Yunus has been an advocate for political reform and transparency. His leadership could usher in a new era of governance, focusing on anti-corruption measures and democratic practices. However, implementing these changes in a deeply entrenched political system will be a formidable challenge. Besides, Bangladesh's economy has been under strain due to mismanagement and corruption. Yunus' expertise in economic development and microfinance could play a pivotal role in revitalising the economy, promoting entrepreneurship, and creating jobs. While some may view him as a saviour, others may see him as an outsider with no political experience. Building trust and garnering widespread support will be essential for his administration's success. However, the biggest challenge would be restoring peace and maintaining the law and order. Ensuring law and order during this transition period is paramount. Yunus will need the cooperation of the military and law enforcement agencies to maintain stability and prevent further violence. As Bangladesh stands on the brink of a new political era with Muhammad Yunus at the helm, the road ahead is uncertain. The immediate priority will be to address the fears of the populace and restore a sense of security, especially amongst minorities. All said and done, right now the army will call the shots and till elections are announced nothing can be said about the future of interim government itself. The coming days will be crucial in determining whether Yunus' leadership can guide the country towards stability and prosperity or if Bangladesh will descend into further chaotic unrest.

### PICTALK



A priest performs 'aarti' at Bade Hanumanji temple which was flooded after heavy rains in Prayagraj

## Rediscovering the true value of life

Amidst climate change and environmental crises, it's time to re-evaluate our priorities and appreciate the irreplaceable gifts that nature freely provides

The best things in life, they say, come free. It is a dubious statement that we may not readily agree to in a world where anything material has a price tag attached to it. The problem is not in the maxim that I opened this piece with; the problem is with our definition of "the best things". We have devised a curious way to assess our lives by putting a numerical value on everything we can possess and call our own. Even as we scamper all over the place trying to fetch luxuries and comfort items, we tend to forget several things which we do not personally possess but are indispensable to our existence. They are more valuable to us than all the material assets of the world put together. Air, sunlight, water, and soil for instance. Many things are too obvious for us to appreciate as I discovered recently when astronauts Sunita Williams and Barry Wilmore got stranded in space. Reports say that her extended stay would affect her body adversely and as per NASA,



it could alter the structure of the eyes and brain, and their function "because low-gravity conditions shift the body's fluids toward the head". Gravity: The natural phenomenon that Newton discovered by chance in late 1666 when he saw an apple fall to the ground isn't something that we pay attention to in our daily lives. We take universal gravitation for granted, just as we take many other conventional things and natural forces as part of our privilege on this planet. The heat wave sweeping across the globe, the unprecedented floods and unseasonal snow are all testimonies of this casual attitude we have adopted towards the most valuable things in life that the universe has granted us. Climate change has been converted to a mere topic of discussion and not as a veritable threat for all species. Who will tell us that we have been presently allowed to live the best versions of ourselves aided by natural resources and no matter how hard we try, we cannot replicate these conditions in another part of the universe anytime soon? We may be vain to declare that space travel will soon become a regular thing thanks to man's daring explorations. We can claim that we are

# Cultural identity shapes behaviour

This cultural phenomenon, observed in many parts of the world, highlights the profound impact of inherited values on personal and collective actions



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

In India, several clans have their pedigree narratives. It is a great instrument for creating venerable ideals of behaviour and conduct and, above all, pride in their antecedents. Like many other places in the world, their pedigree is often traced to some other planet or has an anecdote or theory associated with their distinctive pedigree. Some consider themselves descendants of the Sun (Suryavanshi), others consider themselves descendants of the Moon (Chandravanshi), and so the call goes on.

The veracity of these claims is another story altogether, but invariably there is an ideal connected to them, and that is important. For example, the Suryavanshis are supposed to be very committed to their 'word of mouth', and they are supposed to never backtrack from what they have said or promised.

These ideals are important in identity formation and establishing a bottom line of behaviour. They also create a narrative of keeping the clan on track, such as it may be. There are fallouts for rituals, marriages, festivities, and more. Loyalty is not territorial because the clan has, often, migrated from its place of origin but the bonding is clear. Their rituals of festivities and celebrations keep the clan together, even though technology may have played its role in the widespread celebration and observance of clan identities. The protocols are very often strictly adhered to. Often these serve as an unwritten code of behavior.

There is another anecdote linked with planets, especially the Sun. Japan is considered to be the land of the rising sun, and there are anecdotes about special places in many parts of the world related to the sun. Toledo is a good illustration of a place where the sun's rays are said to have met the Earth for the first time. There are other rituals associated with the sun in many parts of the world as well. In



India, planet worship is considered particularly venerable by many components of the population, and the steps in sun worship are a widely shared phenomenon. This practice is often accompanied by pouring water facing the sun. Celebrating obeisance to the sun is popular and has many stories spun around it. It may be useful to remind oneself that, in the belief of many, worship of even other planets is a virtuous thing to do. The point, however, is to recognise that behaviour is determined by one's belief, and this belief may not always be an act of choice but an act of an inherited value system and cognitive association with values that are considered virtuous. This component of tradition, which is common in many parts of the world, is now often referred to, not so complementarily, as the Third World Phenomena. The older the community, the greater their belief and the more grounded their behaviour. In such communities' gender relationships have a strong overlay of traditional beliefs.



LIKE MANY OTHER PLACES IN THE WORLD, THEIR PEDIGREE IS OFTEN TRACED TO SOME OTHER PLANET OR HAS AN ANECDOTE ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR DISTINCTIVE PEDIGREE. SOME CONSIDER THEMSELVES DESCENDANTS OF THE SUN, OTHERS CONSIDER THEMSELVES DESCENDANTS OF THE MOON

Indeed, icons that grow up at times geography-wise and even climate-wise are significant factors in belief systems.

The broad takeaway from this narrative should be a realisation, that what goes into the composition of the human mind and belief system is often not only acquired from formal learning in the classroom but also by inherited and handed down beliefs.

This is an important aspect of learning which deserves far more attention even in formal learning systems. There is an obvious need to understand, all that goes into the making of one's identity and personality make-up.

One of the important dimensions should also be to assess and evaluate the complete personality of a person when recruiting him. The identity that that person carries may have many layers that are important for his work performance. Unfortunately, not enough literature is available to convert all this into assessment instruments. This understanding would help to

explain why there are so many times a situation of grief when a person is recruited on just what could be called his 'professional knowledge'.

It will be worth remembering that professional knowledge is indeed important in the work dimension but that is not a full personality at work. To create a work identity, it is important to selectively integrate the cultural identities of individuals with a focus on the organisational identity of the enterprise concerned.

This is an important dimension of work management that both employers and employees need to pay much more attention to, more than what they have enabled so far. This will help to manage, better, group identities at work and create a culture of resonance for greater productivity and fulfilment all around. The idea of focusing on the 'complete personality', to the extent possible, is worth considering.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### BANGLADESH CRISIS

Madam — Amid the backdrop of controversial job reservations and widespread violent protests, Bangladesh has seen its former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed flee the country and seek temporary exile in India, a sanctuary supposedly facilitated by the United Kingdom. The nation now stands on the brink of establishing a new interim regime, led by Muhammad Yunus and supported by student unions and the military. It is deeply disappointing that the international community, with whom Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had maintained good relations—particularly China, the US, and the United Kingdom—turned a blind eye to her government during this crisis. The violent student protests, demonstrations, and clashes, followed by anti-government forces, went largely ignored by these global allies. China, despite being a close economic partner of Bangladesh, remained a passive observer throughout the turmoil.

India's support for Bangladesh during this tumultuous period is commendable and highlights Prime Minister Modi's political commitment to its neighbor, strengthening bilateral relations rooted in cultural and historical ties. However, it is regrettable that Hindu citizens and temples have borne the brunt of the lawlessness and vandalism, acts seemingly orchestrated to provoke Indian sentiments.

While the caretaker government led by the army appears to be a viable solution at the moment, it remains uncertain whether it can overcome the significant economic losses and extensive damage to national properties caused by the protests. There is hope that peace will prevail in Dhaka and that New Delhi's active involvement will help pave the way for the formation of an interim government, free from being hijacked by the military or anti-India radical elements. Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Bagarkote

#### We are proud of you!



Had the gravitational force acted on Vinesh Phogat been little bit kinder she would have not only lost the silver medal which was in her grab but would have also bagged a gold considering her performance in the tournament so far. Vinesh lost the gold by weighing 100 Grams more than the permit-

ted weight of 50 kgs in the category and also suffered a disqualification from the tournament. It is one of the most unfortunate thing that could have happened to her as a sportsperson, shattering her dreams. Regardless of this she is the golden girl and would be remembered for her superb performance.

While Phogat has been successful in bagging Gold and silver medals in Commonwealth and Asian games, courtesy misfortune Olympics has been eluding her as she suffered an injury in Rio olympics in 2016 while in 2020 Tokyo olympics and in the Paris olympics yesterday she suffered a cruel disqualification! Phogat, you might have lost Gold medal in Olympics, for sure you have won a place in the hearts of all the sports lovers in the world! We are proud of you!!

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

#### THE PLIGHT OF SEWER WORKERS

Madam— Kudos to Mr N Sadhasiva Reddy for his letter titled "Death of sanitation workers" (August 7). Our eardrums are constantly bombarded with the triumphant declarations of "conquering" the other side of the Moon, yet all that is provided for a sewer worker risking his life for society's "dirty work" is an ordinary rope. Billions of state funds are invested in mass yoga performances on the streets to showcase the country's "might" to the world, yet the same ordinary rope is the only safety measure for the poorest souls in this "mighty" India. Gigantic statues and bullet train projects are undertaken to "mesmerize" the world, but the faceless manual scavengers who work tirelessly to keep our environment clean receive no more than that ordinary rope. Those who ignore the plight and suffering of these unsung heroes, without whose essential service our "civilized modern" society would come to a standstill, are nothing short of barbarians. Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

#### PREAMBLE MISSING IN NCERT BOOKS

Madam — The absence of the "Indian Constitution" preamble in some NCERT textbooks for certain classes should not lead to blame. Instead, consider this as an opportunity to highlight its sacred importance and encourage students to learn it with increased focus. This can greatly contribute to shaping a clean thought process centered on equality and the socialist republic structure. It would be beneficial if NCERT issued a circular or sent an online message to all schools following the NCERT syllabus, advising them to download the preamble from Google or refer to other NCERT textbooks. Emphasising its sacred points with enhanced focus during teaching can greatly benefit the students. It is very important that today's children know about our freedom struggle and how our Constitution was written. PV Srinivas Sreelekha | Secunderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

### HASINA'S OUSTER: A BLOW TO INDIA

Ouster of Sheikh Hasina shakes India's strategic balance in the neighbourhood



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

A full-fledged crisis has been lobbed in India's court, with the ouster of PM Sheikh Hasina earlier this week. India's already troubled neighbourhood has now three countries under the firm grip of the armed forces. Pakistan, Myanmar and now Bangladesh, are now the army-ruled troika, on a slippery slope of getting too close to China. Out of the two, it was Bangladesh which has been the crown jewel of India's neighbourhood first policy, having had a visibly pro-India government for the past decade and half. Pakistan has been China's proxy state acting against Indian interests, while Myanmar due to the army rule, has also slipped closer to China. Meanwhile, a pro-China (read anti-India) leader in the Maldives, a not-too-Delhi-friendly regime in Nepal, presents Indian diplomacy as one of its biggest challenges in recent history.

Former PM Sheikh Hasina, despite her dictatorial governance style, enjoyed bipartisan support in India. She used her relations with Narendra Modi and the opposition leaders in India, to come out heavily on extremist forces operating on Bangladeshi soil against India's interests. It is no coincidence that former PM Hasina has travelled to New Delhi thrice in a year. PM Modi, lauded her efforts in upgrading the bilateral relations when she came for a state visit, a first under the new government in the centre. Indo-Bangladesh bilateral grew from strength to strength during Sheikh Hasina's decade and a half-regime, with important long-term infrastructure projects being operationalised by India and increasing new transit and trade corridors between the two



neighbours. India shares, nearly 4000 km of land border with Bangladesh, bringing its 5 states in unique proximity to the neighbour. This land border, the fifth largest land border in the world, acts as a porous conduit for the movement of goods and people during times of bonhomie, as governments maintain strict vigil keeping in mind each other's interests. This was visible during Sheikh Hasina's tenure when cross-border smuggling and terrorism had nearly vanished. This has built a very comfortable position for Indian diplomats, as they have trusted a friendly regime to keep Indian interests in mind. However, with Sheikh Hasina, gone and chances of her never being back in the political arena of Bangladesh looking extremely certain, things are about to change. India has not built bipartisan support for itself in the local Bangladeshi politics.

It has chosen to be cosy with Sheikh Hasina's government and dealt with overtures from the principal opposition party in Bangladesh with nonchalance. The fear was, that showing any affinity to Bangladesh's opposition party may not be taken kindly by Sheikh Hasina. Therefore a public diplomacy narrative emerged, that Sheikh Hasina was 'too close to be comfortable', with India and acting against her nation's interests. A caged opposition in Bangladesh managed to get external support from China, and Pakistan's intelligence agency, both of whom have a huge interest in keeping India under constant stress in the geopolitical affairs of the region. The on-ground situation in Bangladesh currently is against India. The current interim regime has allies who may be infiltrated with extremist elements, with whom India has had bitter experiences in the past. The nature of the protests and subsequent ouster of Sheikh Hasina ensured that any of her policies, including being pro-India would not be taken too kindly by the Bangladeshi citizens. An anti-Sheikh Hasina mood could easily be swayed to anti anti-India mood, which would be detrimental to the long-drawn deep bilateral relationship. It would be a challenge for India to work new bunch of leaders in Bangladesh and remain a crucial strategic allies for the eastern neighbour.

(The writer is a political analyst; views are personal)

# Bangladesh at political crossroads

The interim government faces a formidable task in restoring law and order, organising free and fair elections, combating corruption and gaining public trust



K S TOMAR

According to British paraspyologist Celia Elizabeth Green, "In an autocracy, one person has his way; in an aristocracy, a few people have their way; in a democracy, no one has his way." This sentiment resonates deeply with the ousted former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, who refused to acknowledge the clear signs of her impending downfall. Conspiracy theory is gaining momentum which led to ouster of EX PM, Sheikh Hasina which allegedly included the intelligence agencies of America (CIA), Pakistan (ISI) and China which yearned for an alternate government led by EX PM, Khalida Zia who might be on her way of ascendancy to power in future. Another version points out the preference of China and Pakistan to have Anti-Indian government in Dhaka which might alter the regional balance in South Asia.

CONSPIRACY THEORY. There have been numerous speculations and allegations regarding the United States' involvement in attempts to oust Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Some argue that the U.S. might be seeking a more favourable government in Dhaka due to concerns over human rights, democratic practices, and regional security dynamics. Critics suggest that American interests, particularly in countering China's growing influence in South Asia, might drive such alleged conspiracies. However, concrete evidence of U.S. involvement in any conspiracy against Sheikh Hasina is lacking. Officially, the U.S. government has maintained a stance of promoting democratic values and fair elections in Bangladesh. Publicly, U.S. officials have expressed concerns about political repression and the fairness of the electoral process under Hasina's administration but stopped short of endorsing any regime change. Sheikh Hasina's administration has leveraged these allegations to bolster nationalist sentiment and consolidate power, portraying itself as a bulwark against foreign interference. This narrative resonates with many Bangladeshis, fostering a perception of external threats to national sovereignty. Ultimately, while suspicions persist, the claims of direct American involvement in a conspiracy to oust Sheikh Hasina remain speculative and unproven. The situation underscores the complex interplay of domestic politics and international relations in Bangladesh.

Hasina's dramatic fall from grace has not surprised many, except perhaps herself. She ignored the rising tide of public discontent and the conspiracies hatched by vested interests aiming to assert dominance in South Asia and undermine India. Winning 288 out of 300 seats in the January 2024 elections, alongside the arrests of opposition leaders and suppression of dissent, highlighted a significant loss of credibility for Hasina, culminating in widespread revolt and her eventual ouster. Hasina, a pro-democracy leader who witnessed the sacrifices made by her late father and family, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Bangladesh, has now left the nation poised for a potential regime dominated by hardliners, anti-India, and pro-China forces, possibly sandwiching this troubled nation between two powers in the future. The interim government faces several challenges: **Restoring Political Stability:** establishing neutral ground and engaging in dialogue with all political factions to ensure a peaceful and democratic transition.



**Organizing Free and Fair Elections:** Ensuring upcoming elections are free, fair, and credible to restore public trust in the democratic process. **Combating Corruption:** Initiating anti-corruption drives to target high-profile politicians and business leaders while ensuring fairness. **Maintaining Law and Order:** Managing protests and civil unrest carefully, and ensuring security forces act with restraint to avoid human rights abuses. **Ensuring Human Rights:** Balancing order with respecting human rights and avoiding authoritarianism. Gaining Public Trust; Building public confidence through transparency, effective communication, and inclusive policies. **International Relations:** Engaging with international organizations, donor countries, and regional allies to ensure continued support and investment. The political upheaval in Bangladesh over the past 13 months has been deeply polarizing and emotionally charged citizens. Experts attribute the whirlwind of violent emotions to an unresolved conflict over the nation's identity—a conflict that must be successfully addressed for the country's survival. There is no denying that Hasina was a secular and reformist figure in Bangladesh. Her government had been instrumental in ensuring safety and fostering economic growth, making Bangladesh one of the fastest-growing developing nations. Yet, her leadership was marred by accusations of election rigging, suppression of opposition, and human rights violations, which stoked public discontent. The crisis reached its peak with unprecedented violence and street protests, allegedly orchestrated by Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, and active involvement from Khalida Zia's BNP and Chinese intelligence networks.

Amidst this turmoil, Nobel Peace Laureate Muhammad Yunus was chosen to lead an interim government after consultations with military leaders and key stakeholders. Experts and ex-diplomats agree that the current turmoil is a by-product of the public uprising against Hasina, who fled the country with India's assistance. She is now seeking asylum in Europe, with the UK being a potential destination, though nothing is certain. **Comparative Analysis of Hasina and Rajapaksa's Ousters:** There are several similarities between Sheikh Hasina's downfall in Bangladesh in 2024 and the ouster of Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2022. Both events stem from political, economic, and social factors. **Economic Mismanagement and Authoritarian Governance:** Sheikh Hasina faced criticism for stifling dissent and undermining democratic processes. Similarly, Gotabaya Rajapaksa's administration was criticized for authoritarianism and nepotism. Both countries struggled with economic difficulties, rising living costs, and unemployment, leading to public frustration and mass protests. **Debt and Foreign Exchange Issues:** Bangladesh experienced increasing national debt and challenges in managing foreign exchange reserves, while Sri Lanka faced a severe economic crisis characterized by foreign exchange shortages and high inflation, leading to widespread hardship. **Public Unrest and International Factors:** Both countries saw mass protests against economic hardships and political repression. The international relations of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka were strained due to economic mismanagement and human rights abuses, affecting foreign aid and investment. Challenges for India: **Political Instability in Bangladesh:** The removal of a stable, pro-India government may lead to political instability, creating a power vacuum that could be filled by elements less friendly toward India. This could foster anti-India sentiments and alter bilateral relations. **Border Security and Migration:** Political changes might affect cooperation on border management, potentially increasing challenges related to illegal migration, human trafficking, and terrorism. **Economic Relations and Trade:** Changes in the political landscape could impact ongoing and future trade agreements, affecting bilateral trade beneficial to both countries. **Geopolitical Dynamics:** A new leadership might tilt towards China, enhancing its influence in Bangladesh and affecting India's strategic interests in the region. **Counterterrorism Efforts:** A change in leadership might alter the level of collaboration on counterterrorism, impacting efforts to combat terrorism and insurgency. **Water-Sharing Disputes:** The Teesta River water-sharing agreement, already a contentious issue, might face new challenges with a change in leadership. **India's Strategic Response:** Experts suggest India should engage diplomatically with the new leadership, enhance border security, reassess trade agreements, and strengthen regional alliances to counter external influences like China's growing presence in Bangladesh. Navigating these challenges requires a careful balance between immediate stabilization measures and laying the foundation for long-term democratic governance. The success of the interim government in managing these issues is crucial for providing stability to Bangladesh.

(The writer is a strategic affairs columnist and political analyst based in Shimla; views are personal)



THERE IS NO DENYING THAT HASINA WAS A SECULAR AND REFORMIST FIGURE IN BANGLADESH. HER GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ENSURING SAFETY AND FOSTERING ECONOMIC GROWTH, MAKING BANGLADESH ONE OF THE FASTEST-GROWING DEVELOPING NATION

# Khalistan movement is bereft of any vision, survives merely on hatred

Khalistan movement harps upon divisive tactics and has struggled to present a viable vision for a sovereign state nearly fifty years since its inception

Gurupatwant Singh Pannun, of Sikhs for Justice, recently released a video over his X-handle that Chandra Arya, a Hindu Member of Parliament in Canada's House of Commons should go back to India. Arya had earlier criticized the Khalistani extremists for vandalism at BAPS Swaminarayan Temple in Edmonton in Alberta state. The temple was recently found sprayed with anti-India graffiti of recognizably Khalistani variety. Why do Khalistani always need to assert their existence through hatred of the Hindus? If they are indeed fighting for a sovereign Khalistan, even though no sensible or patriotic Indian would approve of it, they must establish the tenability



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

of the idea. Strangely, a movement approaching 50 years has not been able to throw up a credible map of Khalistan. On June 9, 2022, Pannun released a map of India at an event held at Lahore Press Club which showed Shimla, Himachal Pradesh as the capital of Khalistan. Could things get more ridiculous? The Sikhs comprise less than two per cent of Himachal Pradesh's

population. Their percentage same in Shimla city, which is not contiguous to Punjab where most Sikhs live. The map in addition to Punjab encompassed almost the whole of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, five districts of Rajasthan, several districts of Uttarakhnad and several districts from Uttar Pradesh. The net effect of such a map would be to reduce the Sikhs into a minority in Khalistan. In the early 19th century, Maharaja Ranjit Singh could rule over trans-Sutlej Punjab, by the dint of sword, despite the Sikhs comprising no more than 10 per cent of the population (based on Census figures, 1881). This was because the form of government was autocratic in an era of autocracy. Still, the Maharaja had to pursue an inclusive and tolerant policy given the fractured religious demography of Punjab. In the 21st century, when democracy has triumphed in the sub-continent, do Khalistanis propose to turn the clock back on political evolution? The fact that "Khalistan" should be carved out from the Indian side of Punjab alone makes the motive of its sponsors suspect. Few Sikhs indeed remain on the Pakistan side of Punjab, from where the bulk of them were ethnically cleansed after the partition. However, the very same fact should prohibit the Sikhs from pursuing any secessionist agenda from the Indian side. The Sikhs concentrated in the fertile terrains of



central Punjab, which fell to the Pakistan side, and took refuge on the Indian side after the partition. There was a forcible exchange of population between the two halves of Punjab on religious lines. This bolstered their population from 13 per cent in colonial Punjab (Census, 1941) to 33 per cent in East Punjab (Census, 1961). After the reorganization of Punjab (1966), whereby Hindu-dominated Haryana

and Himachal Pradesh were separated, their population share increased to 60.2 per cent in rump Punjab (Census, 1971). There is no grouse against Sikhs becoming a majority in Indian Punjab, as never before in the history of Punjab. However, there would certainly be a grouse if this majority, of less than two-thirds, wants to secede from the territory of the state. Questions will be asked why they have not demanded a single square inch of territory from the Pakistan side and all liability is on India which had graciously accommodated the Sikhs after the partition. The Khalistanis could grumble that not conceding a sovereign nation to the Sikhs during the partition itself was an injustice.

This is a bogus argument. None of the districts in colonial Punjab had a Sikh majority, which made the demand for "Khalistan" completely untenable. As early as December 2, 1942, Master Tara Singh had asked for the bifurcation of colonial Punjab – one dominated by the Muslims and another by Hindu-Sikhs. History aside, "Khalistan" would put the future of Sikhs in jeopardy. Around 30 per cent of wheat procured by authorities and 21 per cent of rice procured during FY. 2021-22 came from Punjab alone. The loss of this assured procurement by the Food Corporation of India will put Punjab under mountains of rice and wheat. The "Khalistan", a landlocked nation sandwiched between

India and Pakistan, will be dependent on trade with both. Even today it can redirect its procurement mechanism profitably towards other states rather than favouring Punjab. However, Punjab, whose 75 population is dependent on agriculture for livelihood would be sorely hit. The loss of a huge pan-Indian market for Punjab will be disastrous in every sector e.g. transportation, hosiery, machine tools etc. The Sikh population in other states of India would be adversely affected. No wonder, the Khalistanis prefer to stroke passions, by ducking these critical questions. (The writer is an author and an independent researcher based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)







# Plot to kill 'as many as possible' at Taylor Swift shows in Vienna foiled

**AP ■ VIENNA**

Austrian security officials said Thursday that the main suspect of the two arrested in a foiled plot to attack now-cancelled Taylor Swift shows in Vienna fully confessed to his plans to "kill as many people as possible outside the concert venue".

Officials told reporters at a press conference in the Austrian capital that they found ties to the Islamic State group, and when the 19-year-old began working on his attack plans in July, he quit his regular job and "conspicuously changed his appearance and adapted to IS propaganda".

The head of the Directorate of State Security and Intelligence, Omar Hajjawi-Pirchner, said the 19-year-old wanted to use knives or self-made explosives outside the Ernst Happel Stadium to kill as many people as possible.

He was "clearly radicalised in the direction of the Islamic State and thinks it is right to kill infidels," Hajjawi-Pirchner said.

Just a few weeks ago, the 19-year-old had also uploaded an oath of allegiance to the current leader of the Islamic State group militia to an internet account. During a raid of

his home in Ternitz, south of Vienna, investigators found chemical substances and technical devices that indicated "concrete preparatory acts," said Franz Ruf, Director General for Public Security at the Ministry of the Interior.

Authorities also found Islamic State group and al-Qaida material at the home of the second suspect, a 17-year-old Austrian. He was employed a few days ago by a company providing services at the venue for the concerts, and was arrested by special police forces near the stadium.

The suspects' names were not released in line with Austrian privacy rules.

No other suspects are being sought, Interior Minister Gerhard Karner said. However, a 15-year-old, who had been in contact with both suspects, was also interrogated by police.

"The situation was serious, the situation is serious. But we can also say: A tragedy was prevented," he said.

The cancellations of three sold-out concerts this week devastated Swifties across the globe, many of whom had dropped thousands of euros (dollars) on travel and lodging in Austria's expensive capital city for the sold-out Eras Tour shows on



Thursday, Friday and Saturday at the Ernst Happel Stadium, which sat empty Thursday morning aside from media filming outside. Security officials and the organisers of the concerts, Barracuda Music, were in close contact about whether to cancel the three concerts, but in the end it was the organizer who made the call.

confirmation of a planned attack at the stadium.

Europe is enamoured by the American superstar, with the German town of Gelsenkirchen renaming itself "Swiftkirchen" before its mid-July concerts.

Austria's Vice-Chancellor Werner Kogler wrote on social platform X: "For many, a dream has been shattered today. On three evenings in Vienna, tens of thousands of #Swifties should have celebrated life together."

"I am very sorry that you were denied this. Swifties stick together, hate and terror can't destroy that," Kogler added.

Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer posted on X that "the cancellation of the Taylor Swift concerts by the organisers is a bitter disappointment for all fans in Austria."

"The situation surrounding the apparently planned terror attack in Vienna was very serious," he wrote. But he added that, thanks to intense cooperation between police and Austrian and foreign intelligence, "the threat could be recognised early on, tackled and a tragedy prevented."

Barracuda Music said that "all tickets will be automatically refunded

within the next 10 business days." The same wording was posted under the Vienna dates on Swift's official website.

The Vienna stadium had been sold out for the planned concerts, APA reported, with an estimated 170,000 fans expected for the concerts in Austria. Some who posted on X lamented months of now-wasted efforts to make friendship bracelets and pick out fashionable outfits for the performance.

Swift is expected to perform at London's Wembley stadium in five concerts between Aug 15 and 20 to close the European leg of her record-setting Eras Tour.

In 2017, an attack at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, killed 22 people. Suicide bomber Salman Abedi set up a knapsack bomb in Manchester Arena at the end of Grande's concert as thousands of young fans were leaving. More than 100 people were injured. Abedi died in the explosion. An official inquiry reported in 2023 that Britain's domestic intelligence agency, MI5, didn't act swiftly enough on key information and missed a significant opportunity to prevent the bombing, the deadliest extremist attack in the United Kingdom in recent years.

# Anti-racism protesters march counters violence in UK

**PTI ■ LONDON**

A massive turnout of anti-racism counter-protesters swarmed the streets of London and other UK cities in an effort to outnumber the far-right violent mobs causing mayhem over the past week, described by Scotland Yard as a "show of unity from communities".

Fears of violence at several planned extremist rallies targeting immigration lawyers and agencies across London and other cities on Wednesday evening abated as thousands of specialist police officers patrolled the streets and counter-protesters waving placards reading "Smash Fascism & Racism" and "Stop the far right" turned out in hoards for peace marches.

The UK government, however, cautioned that there is intelligence that more far-right action could take place in the next few days even as there was relief that violent disorder was averted overnight. "Last night more than 1,000 officers were deployed across the capital ready to respond to any scenes of disorder. Their efforts and the strength of unity demonstrated by London's communities resulted in a largely peaceful evening," said Metropolitan Police chief Mark Rowley, who



revealed that dawn raids were carried out early on Thursday morning to arrest suspected violent offenders from the past few days. "What I want to make really clear is those we've arrested aren't protesters, patriots or decent citizens. They're thugs and criminals. Around 70 per cent have previous convictions for weapon possession, violence, drugs and other serious offences. Some have football banning orders. These are violent people taking to the streets under the guise of protest to engage in disorder," he said.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan thanked people who peacefully stood "united against racism and Islamophobia", as well as the "heroic police force" for working round the clock to

keep Londoners safe. "To those far-right thugs still intent on sowing hatred and division, you will never be welcome here," he said in a post on X. More than 400 people have been arrested since the first clashes last Tuesday, when false claims spread online that the suspect in the fatal stabbings in Southport, north-west England, was a refugee who had come to the UK in a small boat last year.

"I am cautious about what happened last night. It's good that we didn't see the level of disorder and criminality on our streets that we have in previous days, but obviously this is just the start," UK Policing Minister Diana Johnson told "Sky News". "There is now further intelligence of events during the

# Trump allies amplify a false claim about Harris' racial identity

**AP ■ WASHINGTON**

Ohio Sen JD Vance, Donald Trump's running mate, defended on Wednesday a false claim the former president made about Vice President Kamala Harris' racial identity, suggesting wrongly that Harris had downplayed her Black heritage in trying to suggest she's inauthentic.

"What I took it as was an attack on Kamala Harris being a chameleon," he told reporters when asked in Michigan about the former president's suggestion that Harris, the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, had only recently identified as Black.

"I think he was observing the basic foundational reality that Kamala Harris pretends to be something different depending on what audience she's speaking to," Vance said. "She fakes who she is depending on the

audience she's in front of, and that's who she is and that's who she's always been."

Vance's was the most recent of the Republican criticisms of how Harris portrays herself, in the wake of Trump's comments last week to the National Association of Black Journalists conference in Chicago. Florida Rep. Byron Donalds, a high-profile Trump surrogate who is a Black man, echoed the claim on Sunday as a guest on ABC's "This Week."

The proliferation of Trump's falsehood by other Republicans is part of their effort to stay in his favor, said former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele.

"It's I'll do anything and I don't want to be on the wrong side of you," said Steele, a former Maryland lieutenant governor who was the first Black man to lead the RNC. "It's I don't want

to take the heat that comes with calling out your racism, that comes with calling out your ugliness, so I will pretend that's not what it is."

The Harris campaign has declined to comment specifically on Trump's false claim. The vice president, speaking to a Black sorority last week, accused Trump of "the same old show: the divisiveness and the disrespect."

Harris has frequently talked about being Black in addition to being Indian American during her political career. She was the first African American to serve as California attorney general and became the first Indian American to serve as a U.S. senator and the second Black woman, after Carol Moseley Braun of Illinois.

As an undergraduate, Harris attended Howard University, one of the nation's most promi-

nent historically Black colleges and universities, where she also pledged the historically Black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha.

As San Francisco's first Black district attorney, she was recognized as a "Woman of Power" by the National Urban League and received the Thurgood Marshall Award from the National Black Prosecutors Association in 2005.

She was recognized in India Abroad during her 2010 campaign for California attorney general as being potentially "the first African American as well as the first Indian-American" to hold the office.

Harris identified as both Black and Indian in an Associated Press story published that same year about the number of candidates of Indian descent running for prominent offices that year.

# Policemen in Bangladesh slowly returning to work

**PTI ■ DHAKA**

Policemen in Bangladesh were slowly returning to work from Thursday in response to the call by the newly-appointed chief, the official media reported, amidst the political turmoil and street violence in the country.

Following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on Monday due to student-led protests, several police stations were attacked and set on fire, leading to many officers evacuating their stations due to the threat of more attacks. More than 400 people, including police personnel, were killed in the violence centring the students' movement.

On Wednesday, the newly-appointed Inspector General of Police, Md Mainul Islam, ordered

officers to join their respective units within the next 24 hours. People from all walks of life, including different political parties leaders and students, are extending all-out necessary support to the returnee police personnel so they can come to their workplaces safely, according to a press release issued by police headquarters on Thursday.

The policemen are returning to their working places from Thursday responding to the call of the newly-appointed IGP, the BSS news agency reported citing the release.

Meanwhile, quoting witnesses, The Daily Star newspaper reported that some police personnel in plainclothes were arriving at Rajarbagh Police Lines, signed in the attendance registers.

However, they are not going to their respective workplaces, such as police stations, due to security concerns.

Addressing a press briefing at the Police Headquarters on Thursday, IGP Islam said some unprofessional officers did not follow the accepted principles of applying force and violated human rights.

"It is because of them [unprofessional officers] that this ongoing violence and casualties have occurred," he was quoted as saying by The Daily Star newspaper. Many police officials have been injured, killed, and tortured because of some unprofessional and overly ambitious officials, he said.

Islam assured that every murder would be properly investigated.

# Israeli strike on Gaza home kills 7

**AP ■ JERUSALEM**

A new report from Human Rights Watch says Israeli soldiers killed at least seven people and severely wounded two, including a 5-year-old, when they attacked a home in Gaza City where a Palestinian family was sheltering from the Israel-Hamas war in December.

Gaza faces a severe humanitarian crisis with Israeli restrictions on aid and ongoing fighting limiting access to crucial medical, food and other supplies.

The Health Ministry says the death toll in the territory is nearing 40,000.

Regional tensions have soared since Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed July 31 in Iran by a presumed Israeli strike. Retaliation has been expected.

French President Emmanuel Macron beseeched Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in a phone call to do everything in his power to avoid a new military escalation that he said would do lasting damage to regional stability.

World leaders have been pushing for a cease-fire in Gaza, and United States President Joe Biden spoke with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on Tuesday about their hopes for a deal calming tensions in the Middle East.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet over the weekend that Israel is already in a "multi-front war" with Iran and its proxies.

# Ukrainian forces make significant incursion in Kursk region

**AP ■ KYIV**

A top official in the Kursk region of Russia that borders Ukraine said Thursday that fighting is continuing in an area where Ukrainian forces made a significant incursion this week.

Ukrainian officials haven't commented on the scope of the operation around the town of Sudzha. But Kursk's acting deputy governor, Andrei Belostotsky, said that Russian forces are fighting to prevent Ukrainians from advancing further into the region.

"The enemy has not advanced a single meter, on the contrary, it is retreating. The enemy's equipment and combat forces are being actively destroyed. We hope that in the near future...the enemy will be stopped," Belostotsky said, according to state news agency RIA-Novosti.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday described the incursion as a "large-scale provocation."

Putin met with his top defence and security officials to discuss what he called the "indiscriminate shelling of civilian buildings, residential houses, ambulances with different types of weapons". He instructed the Cabinet to coordinate assistance to the Kursk region. The fighting is about 500 km (320 miles) from Moscow. Army chief of staff Valery Gerasimov told Putin at the meeting via video link that about 100 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed in the battle and more than 200 others were

wounded, Russian news agencies reported.

The Ukrainian shelling, meanwhile, killed at least two people — a paramedic and an ambulance driver — and wounded 24 others, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said in a statement Wednesday.

It wasn't possible to independently verify the Russian claims. Disinformation and propaganda have played a central role in the war, now in its third year.

John Kirby, the White House's national security spokesman, declined to comment on the operation and said the Biden administration has reached out to the Ukrainians to better understand what happened. If confirmed, the cross-border foray would be among Ukraine's largest since Russia launched its full-scale invasion on Feb 24, 2022, and unprecedented for its deployment of Ukrainian military units.

# Resolve Kashmir issue by peaceful means: UN

**PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS**

A final settlement of the Kashmir issue should be reached by peaceful means under the UN Charter and full respect for human rights, a spokesperson for UN chief Antonio Guterres has said, recalling the 1972 Simla agreement between India and Pakistan which rejects any third-party mediation.

"Our position on Kashmir remains unchanged," Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, said at the daily press briefing here Wednesday. India has repeatedly told Pakistan that the Union Territories of Jammu and

Kashmir and Ladakh "was, is and shall forever" remain an integral part of the country.

The ties between the two countries nosedived after India abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution, revoking the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating the State into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019. Haq said this while responding to a question by a Palestinian journalist on the UN Secretary-General's position on Kashmir and the situation there five years after the abrogation of Article 370. Haq said that the final settlement of the issue concerning Jammu and Kashmir "is to be reached by peaceful means

in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and full respect for human rights." He added that the position of the United Nations is governed by the charter of the United Nations and applicable Security Council resolutions. "The Secretary-General also recalls the 1972 agreement on bilateral relations between India and Pakistan, also known as the Simla Agreement," he said. The Simla Agreement was signed by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and then Pakistan President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1972 and is a bilateral agreement between the countries and rejects any third-party mediation on the Kashmir issue.

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e-TENDER CALL NOTICE  
File No. CE/R&B/ACCTS-04/22/239  
Date: 02/08/2024

Name of Work - Car Parking inside Administrative Building Premises.  
Estimated Cost: Rs.2,10,65,960.18. Last date & time of submission of bid: 27.08.2024 upto 18.00 Hrs.  
Refer our Website for details <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>

Sd/- Executive Engineer  
Roads & building Division  
Paradip Port Authority  
PPA/PR/27/2024-2025 dt:02.08.2024

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उपग्रह राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण  
ए-114, लखनपुर, कानपुर

एतद् द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के विभिन्न जमदानी में स्थित औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में विद्युत विकास, अनुसंधान एवं रख-रखाव कार्यों हेतु सरकारी भित्तियों/सार्वजनिक उपकरणों/निर्माण/प्राधिकरण/परिषदों/नगर निकायों में पंजीकृत एवं अनुवीची फर्मों /उपेक्षारतों से अत्यन्त ही महत्वपूर्ण एवं आवश्यकता की जाती है जो दिनांक 09.08.2024 को अन्तर्गत 04.00 बजे से दिनांक 20.08.2024 को अन्तर्गत 5.00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकती है। निविदाओं को दिनांक 21.08.2024 को अन्तर्गत 04.00 बजे खोला जाएगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा शब्द पत्रों की मूल प्रतियां दिनांक 23.08.2024 को सत्र 5.00 बजे तक कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण निम्नवत् है:-

क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत (लाख में)
1	Supply and Installation of CCTV & Annual service charge with 05 years AMC at IA, Mathura site A & B, Kosi Kotwan I & II Kosi Kalan (Mathura), Firozabad, Bhogona (Mainpuri), Foundary Nagar Agra, Sikandra Site A, B, C & EPIIP Agra.	98.66

नोट:- 1. निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कर सहित दरे अंकित करें। जीएसटीडीएस अलग से देना होगा। निविदा सम्बन्धी विस्तृत जानकारी के लिए [www.onlineupsida.com](http://www.onlineupsida.com) पर दिखत ई-निविदा एवं सूचीपत्रों की <http://etender.up.nic.in> पर देखी जा सकती है।  
जय महाराष्ट्र (सि) नु. अखिल भारतीय किसान, कानपुर

**Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot (Admission Branch)**

**Baba Farid University of Health Sciences**  
Sadiq Road, Faridkot - 151203  
Ph: 01639-256232, 256236

**Admission Notice to MBBS/BDS Courses under NEET UG-2024**  
Online Registration/Application are invited through University website from eligible candidates on the basis of NEET-UG-2024 and as per Punjab Govt. Notification/Prospectus for admission to UG Medical/Dental Courses in Govt./Private colleges of Punjab w.e.f 09.08.2024 to 15.08.2024. Last date for deposit of Registration Fee through Online Payment Gateway is 16.08.2024. Combined Online counseling for admission to undergraduate (Medical/Dental) courses in all the Medical/Dental Colleges including Private Universities and Minority Institutions in the State of Punjab will be conducted by BFUHS Faridkot. Any Notification/updates issued by MCC/Govt. of India/Govt. of Punjab regarding UG admissions session 2024 shall be applicable. For Prospectus/Detailed Schedule/Fee/Details and updates visit at [www.bfuhhs.ac.in](http://www.bfuhhs.ac.in)

REGISTRAR  
nil/12/208/2023/36481 Dated CHD :- 8/8/2024

**PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.**  
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001)  
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website- [www.pspcl.in](http://www.pspcl.in)  
Mobile No. 96461-22067

**E-Tender Enq. No. 550/P-1/EMPWP-12752 dated 07.08.24**  
Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Construction Cell-1) GGSSTP, Roonpagan invites E-Tender ID No. 2024\_POWER\_125092\_1 for the work of operation of D. M. Water Treatment plants and Chemical Dosing system of Stage-II and III of GGSSTP, Roonpagan, as per scope of work. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 07.08.21.00 AM onwards.  
Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>  
RTP-83/24

76155/12/3266/2023/36508 Dated CHD :- 8/8/2024

**JASCH GAUGING TECHNOLOGIES LIMITED**  
CIN: L33111DL2021PLC381513  
Regd. Office: 502, Block-C, NDM-2, N.S.P., Pitampura, New DELHI 110034  
Website: [www.jasch.net.in](http://www.jasch.net.in), Phone: 0130-2216666

**FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (POST LISTING) & e-VOTING**  
The process of sending emails containing link for Annual Report 2024 and notice of First Annual General Meeting (AGM) (Post Listing) of the Company, scheduled to be held on Friday, 06-09-2024 at 10.00 hours through Video Conference/ Other Audio Visual Means ("VC/OAVM") has been completed on 07-08-2024. Members who have not provided their email id or did not receive our email, may download the same from the website of the Company [www.jasch.net.in](http://www.jasch.net.in) under the link Investors>Annual Reports or that of BSE Ltd. Information as to user id & password and instructions for participating in the AGM through VC/OAVM and remote electronic voting (e-voting), are contained in the aforesaid notice and are equally applicable to persons who have become members of the Company after sending of notice. Only those persons, whose names are recorded in the register of members or in the register of beneficial owners maintained by the depository as on cut-off date 30-08-2024, are entitled to remote e-voting, which will commence at 09:00 hours on 03-09-2024 and will not be allowed beyond 17:00 hours on 05-09-2024. A member may participate in the AGM even after exercising his right to vote through remote e-voting but shall not be allowed to vote again in the meeting. Results will be declared within the time permitted by law and will be posted at the above website of the Company under the link "Notices". Grievances, if any, relating to non-receipt of the notice of AGM or relating to e-voting may be sent by email to [ramap@alankit.com](mailto:ramap@alankit.com).

for Jasch Gauging Technologies Ltd  
Sd/- Neeraj Kumar  
Company Secretary

Sonipat,  
07-08-2024



# RBI keeps interest rate unchanged Sensex, Nifty tumble nearly 1%

For ninth time in a row

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Thursday expectedly kept the benchmark interest rate and stance unchanged for the ninth straight policy meeting, saying it cannot afford to look through persisting high food inflation and has to remain vigilant to prevent spillover. Retaining its unambiguous focus on inflation, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which consists of three RBI and three external members, kept the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent. Four out of the six members of MPC voted in favour of the rate decision. The panel, whose four-year term ends in October, also decided to retain a policy stance at "withdrawal of accommodation" to aid MPC's focus on bringing inflation towards its 4 per cent target. Inflation climbed to 5.08 per cent in June, primarily driven by the food component. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said food inflation



remains "stubbornly" high. "Without price stability, high growth cannot be sustained," he said, adding that "monetary policy must continue to be disinflationary". He said the MPC would have looked through high food inflation if it was transitory. "But in an environment of persisting high food inflation, as we are experiencing now, the MPC cannot afford to do so. It has to remain vigilant to prevent spillovers or second round effects from persistent food inflation and preserve the gains made so far in monetary policy credibility." The MPC last revised interest rate in February 2023, when it was hiked to 6.5 per cent. The status quo by RBI comes

confirmation on the disinflationary trend. "We continue to expect scope for change in stance in the October policy with rate cuts beginning from December. The prospects of simultaneous change in stance and rate cuts could increase depending on how domestic inflation and global environment transitions," she said. Radhika Rao, Executive Director and Senior Economist, DBS Bank said, policy guidance reinforced that domestic considerations will be prioritised, despite a sharp buildup in rate cut pricing for the US Fed. "The RBI MPC retained its cautious tone on inflation, in the face of an anticipated pass-through from perishables price pressures and tariff adjustments. With domestic demand conditions calling for a focus on inflation, we expect the policy rate to stay on hold for the rest of the year," Rao added. The Governor flagged alternative investment avenues becoming more attractive to retail customers leading to bank deposits trailing loan growth. Though he did not specify the alternate avenues, he may have been referring to investors flocking to the stock markets.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed nearly 1 per cent down on Thursday after the Reserve Bank of India decided to keep the policy rate unchanged for the ninth time in a row, saying food inflation remains stubborn. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 581.79 points or 0.73 per cent to settle at 78,886.22 in a volatile trade. During the day, it tumbled 669.07 points or 0.84 per cent to 78,798.94. After a day's breather, the NSE Nifty retreated to close lower by 180.50 points or 0.74 per cent to 24,117. During the day, it tumbled 217.8 points or 0.89 per cent to 24,079.70. The Reserve Bank of India on Thursday expectedly kept the benchmark interest rate and stance unchanged for the ninth straight policy meeting, saying it cannot afford to look through persisting high food inflation and has to remain vigilant to prevent spillover. Retaining its unambiguous focus on inflation, the Monetary



Policy Committee (MPC), which consists of three RBI and three external members, kept the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent. The panel, whose four-year term ends in October, also decided to retain a policy stance at "withdrawal of accommodation" to aid MPC's focus on bringing inflation towards its 4 per cent target. Inflation climbed to 5.08 per cent in June, primarily driven by the food component. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said food inflation remains "stubbornly" high. "RBI MPC is in wait and watch mode and has kept the interest rates unchanged, waiting for clues from the largest Central Bank of the world, the US Federal Reserve, before acting. Stock markets will continue to consolidate in the meanwhile," said Umeshkumar Mehta, CIO, SAMCO Mutual Fund. Among the 30 Sensex firms, Asian Paints, Infosys, JSW Steel,

UltraTech Cement, Power Grid, Larsen & Toubro, HCL Technologies and Tata Steel were the biggest laggards. Tata Motors, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ITC, IndusInd Bank and Axis Bank were the gainers. In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended lower on Wednesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,314.76 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.66 per cent to USD 77.83 a barrel. On Wednesday, the BSE benchmark rallied 874.94 points or 1.11 per cent to settle at 79,468.01. During the day, it jumped 1,046.13 points or 1.33 per cent to 79,639.20. The NSE Nifty jumped 304.95 points or 1.27 per cent to 24,297.50. Intraday, it surged 345.15 points or 1.43 per cent to 24,337.70.

## Sebi amends alternative investment funds norms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has amended alternative investment funds (AIF) norms specifying maximum permissible limit for extension of tenure by 'Large Value Funds'. In a notification, Sebi said a large value fund for accredited investors may be permitted to extend its tenure up to five years. This is subject to the approval of two-thirds of the unit holders by value of their investment in the large value fund for accredited investors. The extension in tenure of any existing scheme of a large value fund for accredited investors will be subject to such conditions as specified by the regulator. The move is aimed at providing clarity to investors in Large Value Funds for Accredited Investors (LVFIs) about their investment horizon. Large Value Fund (LVF) for accredited investors means an AIF or scheme of an AIF in which each investor



(other than the manager, sponsor, employees or directors of the AIF or employees or directors of the manager) is an accredited investor and invests at least Rs 70 crore. Additionally, the regulator has allowed Category I and II AIFs to borrow for a period of up to 30 days for the purpose of meeting temporary shortfall in drawdown from investors while making investments in a bid to facilitate ease of doing business and provide operational flexibility. Category I and II AIFs shall "not borrow funds directly or indirectly or engage in

## Rupee falls 1 paisa to close at 83.96 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day lower by 1 paisa at 83.96 (provisional) against US dollar on Thursday, after the Reserve Bank expectedly kept the benchmark interest rate and stance unchanged for the ninth straight policy meeting. Forex traders said weak domestic markets, surge in crude oil prices and foreign fund outflows weighed on the rupee. However, a decline in the US Dollar index prevented the local unit from declining sharply. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.94 and touched an intraday low of 83.97 and a high of 83.93 against the dollar during the session. It finally settled at 83.96 (provisional) against the American currency, down 1 paisa from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day lower by 3 paise at 83.95 against US dollar. The local unit had slumped 37 paise to settle at an all-time low of 84.09 against the



US dollar on Monday. "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on selling pressure from foreign investors and weak domestic markets. Ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East may also pressurise the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. However, weak US dollar may support the rupee at lower levels. Any intervention by RBI may also support the rupee. "Traders may take cues from weekly unemployment claims data from the US. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.75 to Rs 84.20," Choudhary said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.12 per cent to 103.07 points. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.78 per cent lower at USD 77.72 per barrel in futures trade. On the macroeconomic front, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank kept the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent. Announcing the bi-monthly monetary policy review RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das

said Indian rupee remained largely range-bound so far this financial year. The panel also decided to retain a policy stance at "withdrawal of accommodation" to aid MPC's focus on bringing inflation towards its 4 per cent target. The status quo by RBI comes amid varied central bank action in advanced economies. While the Bank of England reduced interest rates last week, the Bank of Japan hiked rates to their highest levels since 2008. Also, fears of a US recession have risen on the back of weak employment numbers, piling up pressure on the Federal Reserve to start cutting rates to support the economy. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 581.79 points, or 0.73 per cent, to close at 78,886.22 points, while the Nifty declined 180.50 points, or 0.74 per cent, to 24,117.00 points. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 3,314.76 crore, according to exchange data.

## India's forex reserves at record high of USD 675 billion, says Das

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The country's forex reserves touched a record high of USD 675 billion on August 2, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Thursday. The previous all-time high for the kitty was USD 670.857 billion on July 19 this year, and the last reported reserve was USD 667.386 billion on July 26. Das said overall, the country's external sector "remains resilient" as indicated by an improvement in key indicators. "We remain confident of meeting our external financing requirements comfortably," he said in his statement after the review of the monetary policy. Das said foreign portfolio investors turned net buyers in the domestic market from June 2024 with net inflows of USD 9.7 billion during June- to August 6, after witnessing outflows of USD 4.2 billion in April and May.

## India could gain in readymade garment exports amid B'desh crisis, says report

PTI ■ KOLKATA

India can be a beneficiary in the international readymade garment markets as Bangladesh, the world's second-largest exporter in the sector, grapples with economic challenges, amid ongoing political unrest there, according to a report released on Thursday. India could gain monthly export orders worth USD 200-250 million in the short term, a CareEdge study said. While Bangladesh has historically captured a significant portion of China's declining share in global readymade garment (RMG) exports, India has been unable to fully capitalise on the opportunity, it said. However, the current situation in Bangladesh presents a golden chance for the Indian RMG sector to expand its footprint both in short and medium terms, the report said. "If the unrest in Bangladesh persists for an extended period, it could result in a significant shift in export orders towards India. Industry estimates suggest India could gain monthly export orders worth USD 200-250 million in the short term and around USD 300-350 million in the medium term," the rating agency said in its observation.

## 17 new printers launched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese printer manufacturer, Brother, today launched a new range of 17 laser printers designed to improve the productivity of SOHO, SMB & Corporate segments. From compact to versatile printing devices catering to the needs of businesses, this powerful new range offers a solution to various work settings and demands with an array of efficiency-boosting features. The newly launched Mono & Color Printers allow seamless integration with various devices and networks with support for Wireless and USB connectivity, along with the Brother Mobile Connect App. With the ability to send documents straight to a mobile, tablet, or desktop, the devices make document management more efficient for users. "With these new single functions and multifunction printers, Brother International is offering cost effective printing solutions that boost business productivity without any compromise. These new printers cater to the ever changing need of having the best of printing technology at an affordable price. The Monochrome and Colour LED series also improves workflow by offering features like security function, wireless connectivity and mobile printing. We have ensured that customers get the



optimal usage out of our printers," says Alok Nigam, Managing Director at Brother International India. This new range will be available in the market through Brother India's genuine retailers and channel partners across the country & even on e-commerce platforms to the customers, said Mr Nigam. With faster print speeds of up to 34 pages per minute, automatic 2-sided print, and a generous paper-tray capacity for up to 250 sheets, users can print, scan & copy large quantities, efficiently and without interruption. From the initial setup to efficient print management, Brother has designed these printers with the end user in mind, simplifying the printing experience without compromising the performance & print quality. The Toner Box Series is a cost-effective printing solution for SMBs looking for high-volume, good-quality printing. Its comes with 2600 pages yield in-box toner. Its cost-saving toner box technology reduces printing costs to 33 paise per page, making it the perfect printing partner. The series has 4 Multifunction Printers and 2 Single function printers.

## Stability in mortgage rate to help maintain strong housing demand: Realtors on RBI policy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The housing market will continue to see strong demand in the coming months as mortgage rates are likely to remain stable following the RBI move to keep the repo rate unchanged, according to real estate developers. They are hopeful for a rate cut in the next monetary policy committee meeting. Commenting on the RBI policy, realtors body CREDAI President Boman Irani said, "RBI's decision to keep the repo rates unchanged at 6.5 per cent would maintain the borrowing costs for homebuyers and their ongoing home loan EMIs. However, we do expect and hope for a rate cut in the upcoming MPC meets, given the relatively favourable macro-economic dynamics." "Coupled with the festive season in the coming months, we expect the housing sales momentum to continue going into the final quarters of the 2024 calendar year," he added. NAREDCO President G Hari Babu the central bank's decision creates a stable environment for the real estate sector. "With steady borrowing costs, home loans become more affordable, which is likely to boost demand in the housing market, especially during the upcoming festive season. This stability allows developers to plan projects confidently, knowing that

financing conditions will remain favourable," he added. The Reserve Bank of India expectedly kept the benchmark interest rate and stance unchanged for the ninth straight policy meeting, saying it cannot afford to look through persisting high food inflation and has to remain vigilant to prevent spillover. Leading housing brokerage firm Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said this sets a positive tone for the housing industry. "Maintaining interest rates offers consistency in borrowing costs, which will prompt more aspiring homebuyers to consider taking the plunge — and thus drive demand in the housing market. With interest rates staying steady, EMIs will remain manageable for current and potential homeowners, potentially leading to increased home sales — particularly in the price-sensitive affordable segment," he added. Housing.Com Group Chief Executive Officer Dhruv Agarwala noted that stable home loan interest rates continue to support robust demand in India's housing sector. Real estate data analytic firm PropEquity CEO Samir Jasuja said, "Any rate hike would have halted the real estate sales momentum which in the past few years have been on an upward trajectory. Going forward, a reduction in the benchmark interest rate will

go a long way in providing a further boost to the real estate sector, a major segment of the economy." Shrinivas Rao, CEO of Vestian, said that the steady monetary policy for the past one-and-a-half years has ensured stability in the real estate sector, boosting demand for all asset classes. Among developers, Gurugram-based Krisumi Corporation Managing Director Mohit Jain said, "While a rate cut would have been an ideal scenario to propel economic growth across industries, including real estate, maintaining the status quo will help prevent borrowing cost from rising, enable affordability, propel the residential demand and boost the overall economy." Bengaluru-based Sterling Developers CMD Ramani Sastri said the decision fosters consumer confidence and offers a sense of continuity and predictability to the real estate sector, which is already witnessing a strong demand from end-users. "The decision will keep the ongoing sales momentum on track and boost the optimistic attitude currently prevailing in the market," he added. Nayan Raheja of Delhi-NCR-based Raheja Developers said, "As luxury housing gains momentum, maintaining the status quo will further boost the demand for more properties and strengthen market confidence."

## IT hiring likely to grow by 8.5% by next year as demand grows: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

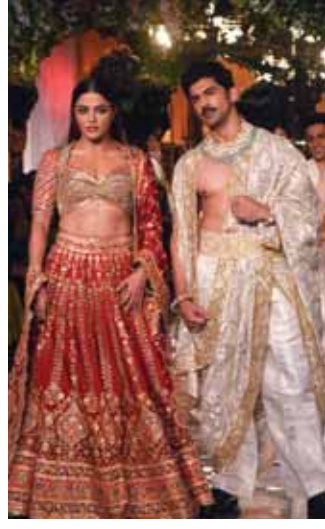
With IT companies gradually coming out of the slump and actively ramping up their hiring efforts, a report on Thursday said that recruitment is set to surge with an estimated 8.5 per cent increase in job roles within the industry by next year. The demand for skilled IT talent is growing after a slow period late last year and early this year. Hiring is set to surge, with an estimated 8.5 per cent increase in job roles within the industry by next year, according to a report by Indeed, a global job matching and hiring platform and a subsidiary of Recruit Holdings. This data from Indeed has been compiled from Indeed Hiring Tracker and Indeed's platform data. Indeed Hiring Tracker is a quarterly report that explores the employment landscape and job market. The report further revealed that almost 70 per cent of all tech jobs currently on the Indeed platform are for software roles. The dominance of software roles on Indeed is driven by the rapid adoption of technologies by companies like AI, machine learning, and blockchain which has further amplified the need for specialised software development, the report stated. The thriving tech startup ecosystem also plays a

significant role, as new ventures prioritise hiring developers to build and scale their products, it said. According to Indeed data, companies are actively hiring for roles such as Application Developer, Software Engineer, Full-Stack Developer, Senior Software Engineer, and PHP Developer. There's also a growing demand for NET Developers, Software Architects, DevOps Engineers, Data Engineers, and Front-End Developers, it stated. Also, the continuous need for updates, security patches, and new features in existing software is driving a steady demand for skilled professionals who can keep pace with evolving user needs and technological advancements, it said. "The IT sector has consistently stood as a major employment powerhouse. However, recent quarters saw a slowdown in hiring, with companies exercising caution as they navigated through global uncertainties and economic shifts. Now, the tide is turning. Companies are actively ramping up their hiring efforts. We can also expect Global Capability Centers (GCCs) to significantly contribute to this uptick in hiring, particularly in software and technological roles, Indeed India Head of Sales Sashi Kumar added.



# GLITTER AND GRACE INDIA COUTURE WEEK 2024

With 14 breathtaking shows, Hyundai India Couture Week 2024 spotlighted the artistry of India's finest couturiers. From opulent bridal wear by Abu Sandeep to avant-garde creations by Rahul Mishra. This edition underscored the visionary leadership of FDCI and the boundless creativity of the designers, leaving fashion enthusiasts eager for more, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



The 17th edition of Hyundai India Couture Week 2024 unfolded with 14 breathtaking shows, spotlighting top couturiers who seamlessly fused tradition with modernity. This glamorous event underscored the creativity and craftsmanship of the Indian fashion industry, offering a mesmerizing glimpse into the future of haute couture. The Hyundai India Couture Week opened with a breathtaking display by *Abu Sandeep* with *Wamiqa Gabbi* as the 'ASAL' bride and *Taha Shah Badussha* as the 'MARD' groom, setting a high bar for the week's fusion of tradition and modernity. Following this, *Isha Jajodia's* 'Rose room' featured *Ridhima Kapoor* in an elegant golden ensemble, while *Jacqueline Fernandez* dazzled as the showstopper in a dramatic black gown. In *Siddhartha*



*Tytlar's* 'Caligula's Feast', *Malaika Arora* wowed in a gray and black lehenga adorned with intricate silver and gold embroidery, complemented by *Rahul Khanna* in a richly embellished sherwani and bold



black boots. *Kunal Rawal's* 'Sehra' collection, showcased by *Aditya Roy Kapur*, redefined wedding couture with a modern twist on traditional elegance. In contrast, *Suneet Varma's* 'Nazm'



reimagined Indian decorative arts with luxurious fabrics like metallic tissue and pastel organza, creating a fresh aesthetic. *Dolly J's* 'La Vie En Rose' was highlighted by *Sonakshi Sinha* in a glamorous



pink gown adorned with gold and glitter, whereas *JJ Valaya's* 'MURAQQA' elegantly blended historical richness with contemporary flair. Among the standout moments, *Amit Aggarwal's* 'ANTE VORTA', inspired by the Greek goddess of the future, and *Rahul Mishra's* 'Nargis' Collection, celebrated nature's beauty, with *Lisa Ray* as the showstopper in an exotic ensemble. Additionally, *Jayanti Reddy's* 'Evocative Nawabi Canvas,' featuring *Aditi Rao Hydari*, highlighted Nawabi grandeur, while *Gaurav Gupta's* 'Arunodaya,' with *Khushi Kapoor* and *Vedang Raina*, captured the transformative beauty of dawn. *Rimzim Dadu's* 'Stucco,' showcased by *Sobhita Dhulipala*, impressed with its innovative textures and *Tarun Tahliani's* 'Otherworldly'



pushed couture boundaries with futuristic designs. The week concluded spectacularly with *Falguni Shane Peacock's* 'Rang Mahal,' featuring *Vicky Kaushal* and *Rashmika Mandanna*, marking a memorable end to the fashion extravaganza. As the curtains fall on this year's India Couture Week, the event leaves behind a legacy of innovation and elegance. The week was a tribute to the visionary leadership of FDCI Chairman *Mr. Sunil Sethi* and the dedication of all involved in showcasing the brilliance of Indian fashion. With creativity and tradition celebrated in equal measure, the fashion world eagerly awaits the next chapter, inspired by the extraordinary displays of artistry and craftsmanship from this year's spectacular event. Photos: Pankaj Kumar

## A New Chapter in Indian Luxury Fashion

The luxury fashion world has been set ablaze by the recent launch of the *Tiger Toy* collection, a groundbreaking collaboration between *Tiger Marrón* and *KoyToy* by *Kunaal Kyhaan*. This union of two powerhouse Indian brands has redefined the accessories market with its bold fusion of cultural heritage and contemporary design



**TEAM VIVA**

Industry insiders have been captivated by the collection's audacious blend of influences. The incorporation of Mughal architectural motifs alongside modern pop culture elements represents a daring departure from conventional luxury aesthetics. This innovative approach has fashion critics hailing *Tiger Toy* as a new benchmark for cultural fusion in high-end accessories. The *Arch bag* series has emerged as the standout of the collection. Inspired by the elegant pointed arches of Mughal architecture, these pieces have instantly become classics. The *Maharani* purse

and *Paan Saddle bag*, in particular, have been praised as game-changers, offering a fresh interpretation of traditional Indian elements for the global luxury market. Sustainability is at the forefront of this collection, with *Tiger Marrón* and *KoyToy* showcasing a commitment to eco-conscious fashion. The use of organic vegan leather alongside high-grade natural leathers demonstrates a nuanced understanding of modern

consumer's diverse preferences and environmental concerns. This approach has been lauded as a significant step forward for luxury brands in addressing sustainability without compromising on quality or aesthetics. *Kunaal Kyhaan* Soolekar's involvement has added an extra layer of excitement to the collaboration. His background in architecture and interior design has resulted in innovative structures and shapes rarely seen in handbags and accessories. Fashion enthusiasts have been thrilled to see *Soolekar's* renowned bold yet harmonious style has translated into wearable art. The fashion world has responded with overwhelming enthusiasm to the *Tiger Toy* launch. The collection has successfully bridged the gap between cultural nostalgia and modern functionality, inspiring a new wave of designers to explore their heritage through a contemporary lens. It's clear that the *Tiger Toy* collection represents more than just a line of accessories. It stands as a bold statement about the evolving identity of Indian luxury fashion on the global stage.

This collaboration between *Tiger Marrón* and *KoyToy* has challenged perceptions, pushed boundaries and reshaped the landscape of luxury accessories. As the collection makes its mark, it heralds a new era in fashion - one that celebrates cultural richness, embraces innovation and makes luxury more accessible than ever before. The *Tiger Toy* collection has not just met expectations, it has exceeded them, setting a new standard for what Indian luxury fashion can achieve on the world stage.



## A FUSION OF STYLE, WELLNESS AND TIMELESS ELEGANCE

The FDCI Manifest Wedding Weekend is where luxury, creativity and personal expression converge to redefine the art of celebrating love, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

The Fashion Design Council of India's (FDCI) Manifest Wedding Weekend, stands as a premier event that manifests the height of bridal fashion and lifestyle. The second edition of this event promises an exceptional experience, showcasing a star-studded line-up of India's top designers, jewellers and wellness experts, all coming together to celebrate love and style. The fashion segment of the event was nothing short of spectacular. Attendees were treated to an array of designs from renowned couturiers such as *Asal & Mard* by *Abu Sandeep*, *Gaurav Gupta Couture*, *Amit Aggarwal*, *Dolly J* and *Tarun Tahliani*. Each designer brought their unique flair to the forefront, from the regal elegance of *Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla's* creations to the innovative and avant-garde ensembles by *Gaurav Gupta*. This variety ensured there was something to captivate every taste and preference, making it an essential visit for anyone wishing to make a statement on their wedding day. Jewellery was another



highlight of the weekend, with exquisite pieces from prestigious brands like *Prakshi Fine Jewellery*, *Raj Mahtani Couture Jewellers* and *Archana Aggarwal Timeless Jewellery*. The craftsmanship on display was exceptional, merging traditional techniques with contemporary designs. The inclusion of regional jewellers such as *Kishandas & Co.* and *Shree Jee Jewellers Jaipur* added depth and diversity to the collection, celebrating the rich heritage of Indian jewellery while incorporating modern twists. What truly set this year's event apart were the masterclasses, which provided invaluable insights and practical tips for attendees. *Sumaya Dalmia*, a renowned wellness expert, conducted a compelling session on sustainable living, rather than quick fixes, was enlightening. Her engaging and humorous approach made the session accessible and relevant, offering practical advice on maintaining wellness as part of wedding preparations and

beyond. On the photography front, *Badal Jain* offered a masterclass on capturing the emotional essence of weddings. His perspective on wedding photography as a form of storytelling, rather than mere documentation, encouraged couples to focus on authentic moments and genuine experiences. His approach focuses on documenting real, unposed moments, reflecting the true essence of the celebration. *Jain's* philosophy ensures a sincere and lasting representation of the couple's special day. The FDCI Manifest Wedding Weekend was a celebration of beauty, creativity and personal connection. It seamlessly combined fashion, jewellery and wellness to create a holistic experience for attendees. Beyond the stunning displays and insightful masterclasses, the event underscored the importance of personalisation and meaning in weddings. It celebrated not just the grandeur of the occasion but also the stories and emotions that make each celebration unique.



# WRESTLER AMAN ENTERS SEMIFINALS

PTI ■ PARIS

Young Indian grappler Aman Sehrawat rekindled India's hopes of a medal in wrestling, demolishing former world champion Zelimkhan Abakarov of Albania by technical superiority to seal a place in the 57kg free-style semifinal at the Paris Olympics here on Thursday.

Aman was in imperious form as he toyed with Abakarov in the second round. The 21-year-old Indian locked his legs at the start of the second round and turned him over multiple times to earn eight straight points to secure a 12-0 victory.

The bout started with Aman earning a passivity point after his Russian-turned-Albanian opponent did not initiate any attacking move. Moments later, the Indian effected a left-leg hold to earn two more points to showcase his dominance by going 3-0 up at the end of round 1.

Aman was on song in round 2 and Abakarov, world champion in 2022, bore the brunt. The Indian's superb agility against the 31-year-old Albanian was on display as he attacked the left leg to bring him down.

He then effected a 'fitley' (leg lace), turning the Albanian around several times to end the contest with more than two minutes to go. Abakarov contested the last two points awarded to Aman but the referee ruled in favour of the Indian and awarded him a point.

Aman will meet Japanese top seed Rei Higuchi in the last-four round later in the day.

Earlier, Aman ensured himself an easy passage into the quarterfinal with a dominating performance against North Macedonian rival Vladimir Egorov.

The 21-year-old Indian, an Asian Championship gold medalist and the only male wrestler from the country to qualify for the Olympics, was amazingly agile as he kept his defence intact while regularly overpowering his 29-year-old former European champion with leg holds to win the bout on technical superiority (10-0).

Egorov seemed to be in a bit of bother after the first round, requiring medical attention on his knee following Aman's all-out attack.

But the Macedonian could not stage a comeback with Aman effecting a takedown to earn two



more points and go 10-0 up with more than two minutes remaining on the clock.

**ANSHU MALIK LOSES:** Woman grappler Anshu Malik displayed great determination but could not breach the defence of USA's vastly experienced Helen Louise Maroulis, losing 2-7 in the 57kg pre-quarterfinals.

It was a rematch of the 2021 World Championship final in Oslo where Anshu had to settle for silver against the American.

Anshu's hopes of qualifying for the bronze-medal bout now hinge on 'repechage' provided Helen, the 2016 Rio Olympics gold medalist and Tokyo Games bronze medalist, reaches the final.

Anshu was up against one of the most reputed wrestlers in the world, but she fought with a lot of gumption to concede just two points in the first round. Helen attacked Anshu's left leg and then pushed the Indian to the mat to take a 2-0 lead.

The Indian then held Helen, a three-time world champion, at bay in the first round before the American came back to showcase her pedigree in the second and win despite getting a warning.



AP ■ LE BOURGET (FRANCE)

For many athletes at the Paris Olympics, the fun was just beginning after they were done competing.

During the second full week of the 2024 Olympics, going home wasn't an option. Now that the pressure of having to compete is gone, it was time to become a fan: Enjoy Paris and watch other sports.

"I'm a huge track fan," said triathlete Morgan Pearson, who won the silver medal with the U.S. Team in the mixed relay on Monday. "I hope to go to some of those races. I'm a huge Olympic fan in general."

American sport climber Zach Hammer, who was finished competing on Tuesday, also was headed to the track.

"I would definitely be excited to watch the men's 200-(meter) with (Noah) Lyles. He's one of my favorite athletes," he said.

"I'm definitely excited to get the full Olympic experience, and I'll go watch whatever there is to watch. It will definitely be cool to see Americans competing on the

## Athletes stick around Paris Games to watch other sports, get full experience

biggest stage."

U.S. Rower Jacob Plihal was among those who stayed in town after competing during the first week.

"Hopefully I can watch a little handball if that's still going, maybe 3x3 basketball," he said.

"I don't know what the schedules are. I've been focused on the racing but I'm excited to stick around and watch other sports, cheer Team USA on and get to know some athletes at the (Olympic) Village."

Another American sport climber, Sam Watson, who broke the speed world record in an elimination heat on Tuesday, was making the most out of his stay at the village. He was challenging fellow athletes to chess games and trying to get selfies with a member of



Thompson-Smith added that she "did see a bit of beach volleyball" but "I think everyone wants to see the athletics, just to see something like that and feel the atmosphere of the crowd would be incredible. But I'm open to seeing anything now ... I'm here to make as many memories and see as much as I possibly can."

Rover Viktorija Senkute, who won Lithuania's first medal at the Games last week, was sticking around to watch her boyfriend, Simonas Maldonis, compete in canoe sprint.

Athletes can watch their own discipline with their accreditation, but need tickets for other sports. Some said they can get them through their national Olympic committees, or with the

International Olympic Committee, which gives each athlete one free ticket per day.

There was an additional Olympic experience for athletes this time in Paris, as for the first time in the Summer Games organizers gave them a place to be closer to fans and celebrate their medals. In the new Champions Park, athletes got a chance to parade with their medals and interact with fans.

"I feel as if this year they've done a really good job of treating after winning athletes with memories that we're going to cherish forever," French rugby player Aaron Grandier Nkanang said after going to the Champions Park. "We're just in front of the Eiffel Tower, and there's thousands of people out to come and cheer us on."

## Panghal likely to get three-year ban for indiscipline: Source

PTI ■ PARIS

Wrestler Antim Panghal, who caused embarrassment to the Indian Olympic contingent by trying to facilitate her sister's entry into the athletes village through her accreditation card, is likely to be banned for three years by the IOA, a source told PTI on Thursday.

Panghal had crashed out of the Olympics after losing her opening bout in the women's 53kg category on Wednesday.

"IOA (Indian Olympic Association) officials discussed the issue that caused embarrassment to all. It is considering a three-year ban on everyone involved, including the coaches," a source in the Indian contingent told PTI.

"First, we need to ensure that she reaches home. The decision will be announced only after she reaches India," the source added.

Panghal is set to take a flight to Delhi this evening.

The IOA decided to send her and her support staff back after the disciplinary breach was brought to its notice by the French authorities. The body, however, asserted that the ban has not yet been imposed.

"A ban has not been imposed as yet," said an IOA official. Speaking with PTI before her flight back to India, the 19-

year-old said, "I did not intend to do anything wrong. I was not well and there was confusion. All of this happened due to confusion."

Later, in a video, she admitted that she had to go to the police station but only for the verification of her accreditation card.

"It was not a good day for me. I lost. A lot is being spread about me, that's not true. I had high fever, and had taken permission from my coach to go to the hotel with my sister."

"I needed some some of my belongings which were in the Games Village. My sister took my card and asked the officials there if she could take my belongings. They took her to the Police Station for accreditation verification."

She also denied that her coaches were drunk and got into an altercation with a taxi driver over fare.

"My coaches had stayed back at the venue and when they wanted to come back, we booked a cab for them. My coaches did not have enough cash and due to the language issues, led to an argument with the taxi driver."

"Since they came to collect some Euros from the hotel room, it took some time and led to the situation. I already have had a bad time, please don't spread rumours. Please support me," she said.

## Weinberg helps US beat Australia 11-10 in men's water polo quarters

AP ■ NANTERRE

Adrian Weinberg made two blocks in a penalty shootout to help the United States beat Australia 11-10 in the quarterfinals of the men's water polo tournament at the Paris Olympics.

Hannes Daube and Alex Bowen each scored two goals in regulation as the U.S. Reached the semifinals at the Olympics for the first time since 2008.

Daube and Bowen also converted their penalty shots in the tiebreaker.

"It was exhausting," U.S. Attacker Marko Vavic said. "Both of us fighting for our country, each trying to get to the semifinal. It's what we've been dreaming about since we were kids. Everyone put it down on the line."

It was the third straight win for the U.S., which will play Serbia on Friday at Paris La Defense Arena. Serbia is trying to become the third men's team to win three consecutive Olympic gold medals.

Croatia will face Hungary in the other semifinal. Croatia beat Spain 10-8 in the first quarterfinal of the day, and Hungary edged Italy 12-10 in another game that went to a penalty shootout.

Serbia advanced when captain Nikola Jaksic skipped home a perfect shot from deep with 3 seconds left, lifting his country to a 12-11 victory over Greece.

"We finally looked like the team that came here to win it," Jaksic said. "We didn't give up from the first to the last moment."

Angelos Vlachopoulos had just tied the game for Greece with 6 seconds remaining.

"In this moment, I really hope this is a dream right now, just a nightmare and I will wake up and play again," Greece's Dimitrios Skoumpakis said. "Every guy on this team really tried a lot. We worked very hard, but this is the sport."

The U.S. Rallied after a tough sequence in the first quarter. Max



Irving had a goal waved off when the game was stopped for a video review and U.S. Attacker Johnny Hooper received a brutality foul, taking him out for the rest of the contest.

Luke Pavillard converted a penalty shot to give Australia a 3-1 lead.

Australia also got a 4-minute power play that it turned into two more goals and a 5-2 advantage.

But the U.S. Went ahead 6-5 when Daube scored with 6:03 left in regulation. After Pavillard scored two straight for Australia, Bowen's man-

up goal with 32 seconds remaining tied it at 7.

Irving also connected for the U.S. In the tiebreaker before Vavic closed it out for the U.S., beating Australia goaltender Nic Porter after they played together in college at Southern California.

"I didn't even look at him until I went up to shoot," Vavic said. "He was trying to eye me down and talk to me about the pressure before I got there. "He was chirping me, but I just tried to keep my composure and luckily I stuck it."

Pavillard scored four times for Australia in regulation on four shots. He also converted his penalty shot in the tiebreaker.

"Full credit to the U.S.," Porter said. "They really pulled it out of the fire there. It was our game to win, and they snatched it from us for sure."

Kristian Manhercz scored five times for Hungary in its quarterfinal win, and Gergo Zalanki had three goals. Manhercz and Zalanki also made their penalty shots in the tiebreaker.

Francesco di Fulvio and Gonzalo Echenique each scored three goals in the loss. When it was over, Italy's Nicholas Presciutti directed a middle finger toward Hungary's players.

AP ■ PARIS

## Oleksandr punches his way to Paris Gold

Oleksandr Khyzhniak was one minute away from winning an Olympic gold medal three years ago when he was rocked by one miraculous punch. Khyzhniak went down, the fight was stopped and the most fearsome boxer in Tokyo had to settle for silver.

The middleweight from Ukraine decided he would wait three years to make it right. Khyzhniak got his epic redemption Wednesday night at the Paris Games with a gold medal finally around his neck - but only after he paid for it in time, sweat and pain.

Khyzhniak beat Nurbek Oralbay of Kazakhstan 3:2 in a thrilling final at Roland Garros, securing the championship that evaded him in heartbreaking fashion in Tokyo. The fighters unloaded on each other for three action-packed rounds, but Khyzhniak clinched the win by dominating a final three minutes filled with a jaw-dropping number of uppercuts, combinations and power punches for an Olympic fight.

When Khyzhniak's hand was raised, the 29-year-old dropped to his knees in cathartic relief.

Even though he is an obvious blue-chip professional prospect, Khyzhniak put any other chapters of his life on hold because he was determined to do what he couldn't in Tokyo.

Khyzhniak spent the last three years thinking about his loss to Hebert Sousa of Brazil, a game competitor who clearly wasn't the best middleweight in a stacked division in Tokyo. Khyzhniak was up 20-18 on all five cards after two rounds in their gold medal bout, meaning he only had to avoid a stoppage or a point deduction to win.

But Khyzhniak simply couldn't stop himself from coming forward relentlessly. He knows no way to fight other than to throw as many punches as his arms can muster for nine minutes of bruising, bleeding pressure.

So Khyzhniak kept coming forward, and the artful Sousa floored him with what might have been just a flash knockdown in the pros but was enough to persuade the Olympic referee to stop the bout.

After the loss, Khyzhniak devot-



ed himself to an Olympic comeback, winning every amateur bout he took since Tokyo. When the Olympics eliminated the 75-kilogram division in which Khyzhniak fought in Tokyo, he even moved up to 80 kilograms - now called middleweight.

The veteran amateurs put on a memorable show worthy of their combined star power, but Khyzhniak won with another phenomenal third round. He

didn't steamroll through his four bouts in Paris. He was tested in his early fights before he reached the semifinals against Arlen Lopez, the two-time Olympic gold medalist from Cuba.

The veteran amateurs put on a memorable show worthy of their combined star power, but Khyzhniak won with another phenomenal third round. He

simply wouldn't stop pressuring Lopez, who finally ran out of stratagems to keep the Ukrainian star off him.

In the final, Khyzhniak faced a dynamic prospect in the 24-year-old Oralbay, whose twin brother also fought at Paris. Oralbay had ample skill and punching power to challenge Khyzhniak, and the fighters were essentially even on the

scorecards heading to the third round.

And what a round it turned out to be.

Oralbay bled from a cut near his right eye early in the third, but the fighters unloaded on each other for three minutes. All five judges favored Khyzhniak, who snapped Oralbay's head back on his neck multiple times with pinpoint-perfect uppercuts.

Khyzhniak was the second gold medal winner at Roland Garros on Wednesday, joining Erislandy Alvarez of Cuba. Alvarez edged Sofiane Oumiha of France 3:2 in an exciting lightweight bout - but it couldn't match the emotion and savagery on display between Khyzhniak and Oralbay, who fights one weight class below his twin brother.

Earlier on the card, Lin Yu-ting

of Taiwan advanced to the women's featherweight gold medal bout with her third straight victory while dealing with widespread scrutiny regarding misconceptions about her gender.

Tokyo gold medalist Bakhodir Jalolov of Uzbekistan shut out Nelvie Tiafack of Germany to move within one victory of becoming the first two-time super heavyweight gold medalist in Olympic history. The 30-year-old Jalolov, a 14-0 professional, will fight Ayoub Ghadfa of Spain for gold.

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