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MONEY 10 ADOPT GUIDANCE OVER INTIMIDATION: CBDT CHIEF

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DREAM TO COMPETE WITH STARS IN INDIA: NEERAJ 12 SPORTS

Manhunt for foreign terrorists

MOHIT KANDHARI in JAMMU

A joint team of security forces continued to hunt down the group of foreign terrorists for the second day in succession in the Ahlan Gagar-Mandu forest area of Anantnag district to avenge the supreme sacrifice of their fellow soldiers. Two soldiers sacrificed their lives in the firefight on Saturday while one critically injured civilian succumbed to his injuries during treatment on Sunday. Despite carrying out massive searches, at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, the security forces could not track down the footprints of a group of battle-hardened Pakistani terrorists. It is also suspected the foreign terrorists may have once again breached the tight cordon taking advantage of the thick foliage and inclement weather

conditions prevailing in the area. The soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice have been identified as Hav Dipak Kumar Yadav and L/Nk Praveen Sharma. In a post on X, the Indian Army spokesman said, the Indian Army offers deepest condolences and stands firm with the bereaved families in this hour of grief. "General Upendra Dwivedi COAS and All Ranks of the Indian Army salute the supreme sacrifice of Bravehearts Hav Dipak Kumar Yadav & L/Nk Praveen Sharma, who laid down their lives in the line of duty, in Anantnag, J&K". Meanwhile, Inspector General (IG) of Kashmir VK Birdi who visited the encounter site told reporters on Sunday that the operation that began a day ago is underway... "Operation is underway..." IG Birdi told reporters. He said the civilian killed in

and Kashmir's Anantnag district. "Security forces had information regarding the movement of terrorists in the upper reaches. A search operation was being conducted in the Gagar-Mandu area. Security forces spotted the movement of terrorists and there was an exchange of fire between the security forces and terrorists... Operation is underway..." IG Birdi told reporters. He said the civilian killed in



Security personnel during an encounter with terrorists at Ahlan Gagar-Mandu forest area, in Anantnag district of South Kashmir, on Sunday PTI

the encounter has been identified as Abdul Rashid Dar. Giving details of the current operation, a Srinagar-based defence spokesperson said that on August 5, it was confirmed through human and electronic means that terrorists responsible for atrocities in the Doda region in July have sneaked across the Kishtwar range into the Kapran-Garol area in south Kashmir. "The Rashtriya Rifles and the Jammu and Kashmir

Police have relentlessly tracked these terrorists and precise operations were launched on the night of August 9 and 10 in the mountains in the east of Kapran where these terrorists were reportedly holed up. "Suspicious movement was observed at around 2 pm on August 10. Challenging (by security forces) was immediately responded to by indiscriminate, desperate, and reckless firing from terrorists in which two Army

personnel and two civilians in the vicinity were injured," the spokesperson said. He said the terror antecedents of the injured civilians are being ascertained. "The area is at an altitude of above 10,000 feet, has thick undergrowth, large boulders, nullahs and re-entrants that pose a serious challenge to operations. Security forces are moving deliberately and are in the process of hunting down the terrorists," the spokesperson said.



Junior doctors and medical students stage a protest against the sexual assault and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor in RG Kar Medical College & Hospital, in Kolkata, on Sunday PTI

Kolkata doctor rape-murder: Shocking details surface

SAUGAR SENGUPTA in KOLKATA

The murdered lady doctor from a North Kolkata medical college was subjected to horrific brutalities, according to preliminary postmortem and inquest reports. Referred to as "Abhaya" by her colleagues, the victim suffered ten grievous injuries, evoking memories of the decade-old Nirbhaya case in Delhi, say fellow doctors at RG Kar Medical College, where she was pursuing her postgraduate studies in chest medicine. "The autopsy report is chilling," said a fellow doctor, who is participating in the State-wide indefinite cease-work by medical staff. "She had a finger, collarbone, and pelvic bone broken. She was bleeding from her eyes, lips, abdomen, and private parts. Tufts of her hair had been torn out, and a clip was attached to her private parts," said the doctor. Police sources revealed that the brutal attack took place

within 30 to 35 minutes. The panel of doctors who conducted the postmortem suggested that she might have been raped after being killed, as it would have been nearly impossible for one person to inflict such extensive injuries in such a short time, said the police. Family sources shared that the victim was scheduled to get married next year. A colleague from the same college, requesting anonymity, said the young doctor likely endured extreme pain before her death, as a healthy person of her age would not have succumbed quickly. "The post-mortem reports are not fully out so that we can understand whether it was a gangrape or an act of an individual beast," she said. Sanjay Das - a civic volunteer from the unarmed wing of Bengal Police, which operates on a daily wage basis - was arrested on Saturday in connection with the heinous crime. Reports indicated that Das confessed to the act, even pleading with his interrogators to hang him swiftly, a desperate request that has sparked suspicion among civil society members. Many are now questioning whether Das is being used as a scapegoat to shield others involved in the crime. This, even as an unsubstantiated audio clipping went viral in the social media where a resident doctor is speaking to another person about efforts to hush up the matter. In the conversation the twosome are heard to be talking about how the CCTV footages could have been tampered and whether some fellow doctor with high connections could have been involved in the brutal act. The parents of the victim too said that they were not satisfied with the investigation adding, "there must be some other insider or insiders involved because my daughter used to regularly complain that she did not want to go to the RG Medical College ... she was under pressure for something ... she was raped and murdered and one person cannot do that alone."

Another lady doc threatened

PNS in KOLKATA

The Bengal Police on Sunday arrested another civic volunteer for threatening a woman doctor at Bhatar State General Hospital in East Burdwan district with "RG Kar-like consequences". According to the lady doctor, the man, identified as Susanta Roy, threatened her after a heated altercation, warning, "You'll face an RG Kar-like consequence for your conduct... Do you even know what happened to the doctor there?" "He was in a drunken state and misbehaved with one of our doctors when she was in night duty ... this is very scary ... we have brought it to the notice of the police," a senior official of the hospital said. Roy was subsequently arrested.

DADLS-19

**ବୁଝାଇବା ଦେଶଭକ୍ତିର ଗଙ୍ଗା
ଘରେ ଘରେ ଉଡ଼ାଇବା ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା**

ଜାତୀୟ ପତାକା କେବଳ ଆମର ପରିଚୟ ନୁହେଁ, ଏହା ଆମ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତାର ଅନନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତୀକ । ଜାତୀୟ ଏକତା ଓ ଅଖଣ୍ଡତାର ପବିତ୍ର ଭାବନାରେ ଉଦ୍‌ବୁଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ ଆସନ୍ତୁ ଘରେ ଘରେ ଉଡ଼ାଇବା ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା ।

**ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ**

**ରାଜ୍ୟବ୍ୟାପୀ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଘରେ ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା ଉଡ଼ାଇ ଦେଶମାତୃକା
ଓ ବୀର ସଂଗ୍ରାମୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ସମ୍ମାନ ଜଣାଇବା ।**

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OIPR: 15001/13/00056/2425

Pandian's helicopter ride expenses to be probed

● Announces Minister Harichandan
● Congress demands inquiry into other BJD scams too

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR
Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan on Sunday announced a probe into bureaucrat-turned Biju Janata Dal (BJD) politician V Karthikeyan Pandian's helicopter rides and associated expenses.

The probe, the minister declared, would also look into the construction of helipads using government funds and permissions granted for helicopter use by a department's secretary.

Amidst the controversy, the Congress demanded an extensive inquiry into the BJD government's involvement in multiple scams.

Harichandan said, "The State Government wants to ascertain how an IAS officer like Pandian was allowed to fly on helicopter and who bore the expenses. Secondly, wherever he visited, the then government ordered for construction



of helipads using government funds. He had visited 400 to 450 places using helicopters. The allegations on the use of government funds to construct the helipads will be probed."

"A probe will also be initi-

ated as to who and how permission was given for the use of helicopters by a department secretary even as there is no such provision," Harichandan stated.

Congress leader Bijay Patnaik said, "Instead of keep-

ing the probe limited to Pandian's chopper rides, the Congress urges the State Government to investigate the BJD's involvement in multiple scams, including the Rs 35,000-crore rural drinking water supply project scam, scam in medical expenses in treating patients during the Covid pandemic and Rs 20,000-crore irregularities in the procurement of items."

"Was there any audit of the funds utilised in the treatment of patients during the Covid pandemic? If not, the BJP government should go for it. The then BJD government claimed that it had spent Rs

20,000 crore to procure various electronic equipments. But has it been valued or verified by a competent authority? There are multiple irregularities including in the hockey sector. They should be properly investigated," Patnaik demanded.

On the other hand, the BJD refuted the allegations and said Pandian visited various places using helicopters to address public grievances.

"The matter should not be politicised. However, with the BJP coming to power, the PC practices have started at the block level," BJD leader Sambit Routray said.

Double murder over car parking 2 accused arrested; murder weapon seized

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Commissionerate police have arrested two persons in connection with the stabbing to death of two friends at Kalayani Plaza near Hitech Apartment under the Airfield police station in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday.

The police have seized the bike used by the assailants to flee from the site after committing the crime.

The two persons were being interrogated by the police as part of the probe to gather information about the crime. However, the identities of the two were yet to be revealed by the police. The cops have also seized the weapon used in the crime.

Notably, Rashmi Ranjan Sethi and his friend Julu Sethi, who ran a chicken counter, were stabbed to death in a brawl over car parking.

There was an old dispute over parking between Rashmi and maintenance in-charge of Kalyani Plaza identified as one Ganesh.

The fight took a violent turn on Wednesday night when Rashmi slapped Ganesh after the latter hurled abuses at him for parking his car in front of the plaza.

Ganesh and his associates chased Rashmi and attacked him with a knife, killing him on the spot. The assailants also attacked Julu when he tried to oppose them.

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

Later, DCP Prateek Singh and the Airfield police rushed to the spot and launched an investigation into the incident which has spread fear among locals.

Kala Kendra observes 70th foundation day

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Bhubaneswar Kala Kendra was established on August 8, 1955 being inaugurated by the then Chief Minister Nabakrushna Choudhury.

Legendary maestros like Padma Bibhusan Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra, Padma Shri Deba Prasad Das, Padma Shri Sanjukta Panigrahi, Padma Shri Raghunath Panigrahi and eminent personalities like Dhiren Das chose this institution as their workplace.

To celebrate the 70th foundation day of Bhubaneswar Kala Kendra, a two-day ceremony was held in the evenings of August 8 and 9, 2024 in a lively cultural environment under the supervision of its vice-president Nagarjuna Sethi on its own stage in its premises.

The celebrations included an art exhibition by the students of Fine Arts Department of the Kala Kendra. Other students performed Odishi Dance, Hindustani Vocal Music, Tabla and Odishi Vocal Music.

Guru Nanigopal Das, Gurbee Minakhi Behera, Guru Baikuntha Nath Satapathy, Guru Binod Bihari Rout and Guru Umesh Chandra Das directed the cultural programme with accompanying support of Guru Surendra Maharana, Guru Dadhibaman Mishra, Guru Sanjay Dev, Dhaneswar Ojha and Jalandhar Nayak.

Kala Kendra general secretary Minaketan Mohapatra, in his report, acknowledged the contributions of the parents, guardians, students, prominent music exponents and all the members of Kala Kendra who made the function a success.

Bengal installs CCTVs to stop potato supply

CM Majhi talks to Mamata for smooth transportation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as Odisha has been encountering potato crisis for the last several days amid rising prices, West Bengal has reportedly installed CCTV cameras along its border to check the movement of trucks carrying consignments of the tuber through alternate routes.

Following the restriction clamped by the West Bengal

Government, people in Odisha have been severely hit by skyrocketing prices.

As per information, the West Bengal police have now started installing CCTV cameras at certain locations along the borders with Odisha like Nilada village and trucks are also being prevented from entering Odisha at the Laxmannath Tollgate.

CCTVs have reportedly been installed at six out of ten escape routes on the West Bengal border with 24x7 police patrolling.

It is apprehended that if

Bengal continues to follow such an approach, the price of potatoes will increase further in Odisha's retail markets.

Notably, the Odisha Government has started providing three kilograms of potato at Rs 100 to each family. The Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Department started the process to provide 10 packets of potatoes to each dealer. This will continue till the market situation gets stabilised.

Meanwhile, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday spoke to

his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee over phone urging her to streamline the potato supply to the State.

According to a statement from the CMO, Majhi reminded Banerjee about their discussion in New Delhi on the sidelines of the NITI Aayog meeting, which had paved way for normalisation of potatoes supply to Odisha.

But after a few days, the supply was disrupted.

Banerjee is believed to have promised Majhi that she would take action to streamline supply of potatoes to Odisha.

Seminar on latest features in Cost Audit Framework

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICMAI)-Bhubaneswar Chapter conducted a seminar on the theme "Latest Development in the Cost Audit Framework & ABC for Maintenance of Cost Records & Cost Audit" at the CMA Bhawan here on Sunday.

The seminar was inaugurated by Ekamra MLA Babu Singh in the presence of Bibhuti Bhusan Nayak, president, ICMAI as guest of honour; TCA Srinivasa Prasad, vice-president, ICMAI; Neeraj D Joshi, council member, ICMAI and expert on the topic; Damodara Mishra, secretary,

ICMAI-EIRC; and Uttam Kumar Nayak, Regional Council member, ICMAI-EIRC as special guest.

Ramesh Chandra Patra, chairman of ICMAI-Bhubaneswar Chapter, delivered a welcome address and Barada Prasan Nayak, secretary, extended a vote of thanks.

In the technical session, Joshi, Niranjan Mishra, practising Cost Accountant, and Shyam Sundar Sonthalia, former chairman, ICMAI-EIRC, spoke on the topic as resource persons and provided insights into the latest updates in the Cost Audit framework and the essentials of Activity-Based Costing (ABC) for maintaining cost records and audits.

How to rejuvenate library movement in Odisha

Academy holds seminar in annual convention

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Library Academy (OLA) hosted its 9th annual convention and celebrated the National Librarians' Day with a seminar at the ICMR-Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC) here on Sunday.

The event, themed "Rejuvenating the Movement: Revive the Commitment for Odisha Library Advancement (RMRCOLA)," brought together library professionals, educators, researchers and policymakers from across the State to discuss the future of library services in Odisha.

The convention commenced with floral tributes to Dr SR Ranganathan, the father of Library Science in India, in honor of his 132nd birth anniversary. Dr Banamber



Sahoo, OLA founding president, Dr Bibhuti Bhusan Sahoo, president, and keynote speaker Prof BamanParida, former professor at Utkal University, set the tone for discussions.

Following the release of a commemorative souvenir, chief guest Dr Sanghamitra Pati, Director of ICMR-RMRC, Bhubaneswar, spoke on the importance of the li-

brarian in the society. The event honoured several library professionals for their contributions to the field. OLA secretary Bijoy Ketan Panda proposed a vote of thanks.

A proposal titled "Libraries Offering Knowledge and Scholarly Utilities to Rural and Urban Areas (Lokasutra)" was presented and discussed extensively. The proposal outlined nine key areas for the advancement of the library system in Odisha. The Lokasutra proposal will be submitted to the Government of Odisha for consideration with an aim of improving the library system across the State. This initiative is expected to play a crucial role in the overall development and modernisation of libraries in Odisha.

Another session focused on the initiatives of the Bakul Foundation, while a panel discussion titled "SWOT Analysis of Library Services" brought together experts to explore the current challenges and opportunities in the library sector.

In the valedictory ceremony, experts like Dr DP Sandha and Dr Debdutta Bhattacharya emphasised the need to advance library services in Odisha. This session was chaired by OLA vice-president Dr Dipak Kumar Khuntia.

Land patta distribution Fresh month-long survey in State from Aug 16

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government had decided to provide land ownership to homestead landless families, including the poor and tribals living on forest land without pattas, by December.

Accordingly, a fresh survey will be conducted from August 16 to September 15 to identify the eligible beneficiaries, a review meeting chaired by Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari decided on Friday.

Sources said that the poor, living in cities or villages, will

get land measuring four decimal within a dedicated timeframe. District Collectors have been instructed to initiate the enumeration process immediately and complete it by December 31.

The Government has also decided to provide immediate land pattas to 2,276 homeless families who were identified in the 2018 survey.

Additionally, educational institutions have been instructed to ensure that Government land is properly recorded in their names and that they take possession of it.

Govt initiates probe into DMF fund misuse

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government has launched an investigation into allegations of irregularities in the use of District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds in the State.

Mines Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena told the media that a probe has already been initiated following allegations that DMF funds have been misappropriated. Asserting that the government would strictly stick to the policy of zero-tolerance towards corrup-

tion, the Minister said the aim is to ensure complete transparency and prevent financial irregularity in any form, particularly in dealing with DMF funds. Stating that there have been allegations of misuse of DMF funds in several districts, he said the whole issue is being thoroughly verified and appropriate steps would be taken based on the findings.

The Minister said misuse of public money would not be allowed anywhere and the government is in action mode to prevent financial irregularities.

CONTEMPORARIES

Waqf institution in India in need of reform

Why the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is justified



S JYOTIRANJANA

text of Waqf in India

Waqf, as an institution, dates back to the early Islamic period and was widely used during the Sultanate and Mughal eras in India to establish and maintain religious, educational and charitable institutions. Historically, waqfs were managed by religious authorities such as Qazis, who were deeply entrenched in the Islamic legal and theological framework. This system was inherently biased, often leading to the expropriation of non-Muslim properties and contributing to the spread

of Islam through proselytisation and the appropriation of other religious sites.

The British colonial administration, while initially opposed to waqfs, eventually accommodated them through legislation like the Mussalman Waqf Validating Act of 1913. Post-Independence, the Indian government enacted the Waqf Act of 1954, creating a centralised Waqf Board with extensive powers over waqf properties. Over the years, this system has expanded with subsequent amendments further entrenching the power and influence of waqf institutions often at the expense of public interest and social harmony.

The case for reform: The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024

The introduction of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, represents a significant step towards addressing the various shortcomings of the existing waqf system. The Bill proposes approximately 40 amendments to the Waqf Act of

1995 aimed at improving transparency, accountability and the overall governance of waqf properties.

One of the key changes proposed is the redefinition of "waqf" to ensure that only those with a genuine connection to the faith and rightful ownership of the property can create waqfs. This amendment is crucial in preventing the misuse of waqf for personal or political gain. The Bill also introduces stricter regulations for the registration and management of waqf properties, including the establishment of a centralised portal for filing details of waqfs and a requirement for public notices before the update of land records. These measures are designed to increase transparency and give affected parties the opportunity to contest wrongful claims.

Another significant reform is the replacement of the Survey Commissioner with the Collector, who will now oversee the preliminary surveys of waqf properties. This change aims to reduce the influ-

ence of religious authorities in the management of waqf properties and ensure that decisions are made based on secular principles of fairness and justice. The Bill also allows for the removal of Waqf Tribunals, returning jurisdiction over waqf disputes to civil courts, which are better equipped to handle such matters impartially.

Addressing opposition concerns The introduction of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, has not been without controversy. Critics, particularly from the Opposition, argue that the Bill undermines the autonomy of Muslim religious institutions and erodes the secular fabric of the country. They claim that the inclusion of non-Muslim members in Waqf bodies and the enhanced role of the state in waqf management violate the religious freedoms guaranteed under Articles 25 and 26 of the Indian Constitution.

However, these concerns must be weighed against the broader public

interest and the need for a more transparent and accountable waqf system. The current waqf framework, with its deep roots in religious law, is an anachronism in a secular state like India. It has created a parallel legal system that privileges one community over others, often leading to social conflict and communal tensions. The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, seeks to bring waqf management in line with the principles of a modern, secular state, ensuring that the institution serves the common good rather than narrow religious or political interests.

The institution of waqf, as it exists today, is a relic of a bygone era that is increasingly out of place in a modern, secular democracy like India. The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, represents a justified and necessary step towards reforming this outdated system, ensuring that waqf properties are managed transparently and in accordance with secular principles. While the Bill

may face opposition from those with vested interests in the status quo, it is essential for long-term stability and harmony of the Indian society.

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, should be seen as part of a broader effort to modernise India's legal framework, ensuring that all religious communities are treated equally under the law and that public resources are managed in a way that benefits the entire nation. The time has come to move beyond the anachronisms of the past and embrace a more rational and secular approach to the management of religious endowments.

(The writer is an advocate, Orissa High Court, Addl. Central Government Standing Counsel, CAT, Cuttack Bench, Consulting Editor-Legal Affairs and Public Policy, The Pioneer and a Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Law and Media Studies, School of Mass Communication, KIIT University. Views are personal)

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In Brahmapur Demo against attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR
A demonstration was held near the Gandhi statue in Gandhi Nagar in Brahmapur on Sunday to condemn the rising violence and targeted attacks against Hindus in Bangladesh.

Organised by the Joint Action Committee of Brahmapur and led by committee president Sanjeeb Kumar Pattanayak, the speakers highlighted the dire situation in Bangladesh, noting that women and children have been particularly vulnerable to these atrocities.

The agitators called for urgent action from the Indian Government, urging implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to identify and deport illegal immigrants and Rohingyas from India. They also demanded that the Indian Government open diplomatic channels with Bangladesh's new government to ensure protection of the Hindu community.



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In Ganjam Human skull, bones found in forest

Police begin probe
PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR
A skull and bones, suspected to be that of a human, were recovered from a forest near Brundabanpur village under Padmapur panchayat in Ganjam district on Sunday.

According to sources, some villagers spotted the skull and bones in the forest and informed the matter to police. A bicycle was also found some meters away from the spot.

On getting information about the incident, police officials rushed to the spot and started an investigation into the matter.

Though it was unknown as to under what circumstances the skull and bones were found in the forest, police would seek the help of a forensic team to unravel the mystery surrounding it, reports said.

Police launched an investigation taking all possible angles into consideration including murder, suicide and witchcraft.

OTV News Is Now On Whatsapp

MKCG, City Hosp to get uninterrupted power supply

TPSODL laying underground cables
PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR
The TPSODL (TP South-eastern Odisha Distribution Limited) has undertaken significant steps to provide uninterrupted and quality electricity services to the Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Medical College and Hospital (MKCG) and the City Hospital in Brahmapur.

The company is currently working on laying underground cables to supply power to these two hospitals. The TPSODL is developing the resilient infrastructure with funding from the State Disaster Management Authority.

Once the underground cabling is complete, the two hospitals' power supply will remain unaffected during natural disasters and maintenance activities. This will ensure patients receive uninterrupted healthcare services.

According to information, a 33 KV underground power cable is being laid from the Narendrapur Grid in the city to the new medical primary substation.

From the 33 kV line, two 11 KV feeders will provide continuous electricity. One feeder will supply power to MKCG from the new medical substation, and the other will supply power to the City Hospital from the old medical substation. The underground cabling of both 33 KV and 11 KV feeders is being carried out on a war footing. Among the total 8 km of 33 KV cable lines, 2.9 km has been completed. Similarly, of the 5.5 km of 11 KV lines, 2.175 km has been laid.

"At TPSODL, our mission is to ensure reliable, resilient and quality power supply. By prioritizing uninterrupted electricity for MKCG and City Hospital, we are committed to establishing disaster-resilient power infrastructure. Our dedicated team is working tirelessly to make this vision a reality," said TPSODL CEO Amit Kumar Garg.

CM's hometown K'jhar immune to tuber price pinch

RAJENDRA K SAHU ■ KEONJHAR
For the past few days, it has been a matter of concern not only for the consumers but also for the State Government due to the rising price of potatoes in the market. This has triggered a blame game between the opposition BJD and ruling BJP in the State.

Former CM Naveen Patnaik had written to WB CM Mamata Banarjee and Mohan Majhi had talked with Banarjee during the Niti Aayog meeting in New Delhi for supply of more potatoes to Odisha for easing the price of tuber in the State. Later, Food Supply and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra held a meeting with traders and further had to go to market to gauge the ground reality. To get over the tricky situation, it was decided by the State Government to procure potatoes from the UP, a BJP-ruled State as the Banerjee Government did not cooperate. However, all these initiatives did not bring any relief to the consumers and the price of potato kept rising which was reported to be sold at Rs 50 to Rs 60 per kg at some places. The request of Minister Patra did not have any effect on the traders.

However, the situation in Keonjhar, the native town of CM Majhi, is not as alarming as elsewhere so far as potato price is concerned. Here potato is available for consumers in ample quantity and the price is stable at Rs 40 per kg.

Manoj Mohanty, a potato trader of the town, said that generally there is a rise of price during this time every year over the procurement glitches. However, at present, potato price is Rs 40 per kg in Keonjhar. Some days back, the tuber was selling at Rs 32 per kg, he added.



consumers and the price of potato kept rising which was reported to be sold at Rs 50 to Rs 60 per kg at some places. The request of Minister Patra did not have any effect on the traders.

However, the situation in Keonjhar, the native town of CM Majhi, is not as alarming as elsewhere so far as potato price is concerned. Here potato is available for consumers in ample quantity and the price is stable at Rs 40 per kg.

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1,389 Agniveers pass out from INS Chilka

PNS ■ CHILIKA
A significant milestone was achieved as 1,389 Agniveers, including 214 women, of the Indian Navy passed out from the portals of INS Chilka on August 9.

The Passing Out Parade (POP) for the fourth batch of Agniveers marked the culmination of 161 weeks of rigorous naval training in a unique, post-sunset ceremony.

The POP was reviewed by Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi.

This event was witnessed by family members of the Agniveers, veterans and sports personality Omkar Singh, the gold medalist in shooting during Common Wealth Games 2010.

The Chief of Naval Staff congratulated the trainees on parade and exhorted the passing out course to uphold the Navy's core values of duty, honour and courage in their



pursuit of nation-building. He urged them to focus on their subsequent phases of training and become technologically proficient sea warriors.

The chief guest awarded medals and trophies to meritorious Agniveers. Vinay Maruti Kadam, AVR SSR and Sanjana, AVR MR received the

Chief of the Naval Staff Rolling Trophy and gold medal for Best Agniveer SSR and M, respectively. Sakshi Mohan Mirje, AVR SSR was awarded the General Bipin Rawat Rolling Trophy for Best Woman Agniveer in the overall order of merit and Ashish, NVK GD and Yuvraj, NVK DB were

awarded best trainees in their respective courses.

Earlier, Tripathi presented the overall championship trophy to Shivaji Division and runners-up trophy to Arjun Division. He also unveiled the 01/24 edition of 'Ankur', the bilingual trainees' magazine of the INS Chilka.

University tag for Lajpat Rai Law College urged

Alumni Association to meet CM
NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR
The Alumni Association of Lajpat Rai Law College (LRLC), Sambalpur, on Saturday demanded upgrade of their college into a university. It called upon the State Government to place all law colleges in western Odisha under the jurisdiction of the proposed Lajpat Rai Law University, which includes the law colleges in Balangir, Rourkela, Sonepur, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Bargarh, Jharsuguda and the Vikash Law College, Bargarh.

Currently, these colleges fall under the MS Law University, which was upgraded from a

law college in 2020. Established in 1967, the LRLC has been part of the Sambalpur University since 1968 and is one of the oldest law colleges in the State and the country. The Alumni Association stated that the college meets all necessary criteria, including a rich history, significant student enrolment and excellent facilities, for university status.

The association announced that a delegation led by its president Satyanarayan Panda, secretary Durga Padhi and other notable members would meet the Chancellor, the Chief Minister and the Higher Education Minister to pursue its demand. The college, known for its library, hostel facilities and distinguished alumni, has been founded in the name of freedom fighter Lala Lajpat Rai.

Polluting units warned of action in Keonjhar

Env Min holds review with mines, factory officials, hears grievances of locals
PNS ■ KEONJHAR
Minister, Forest, Environment and Labour Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia on Saturday held a review meeting at Barbil where he expressed unhappiness over the pollution in the mining town of Joda - Barbil and instructed for use of vacuum catcher instead of spraying water on roads to control dust pollution in the area.

Similarly, the Minister was surprised to know that the mine owners were managing their operations with much less than the required strength.

Minister Khuntia put emphasis on proper implementation of different labour rules



like Minimum Payment Wages Act, deposit of EPF etc. Besides, he warned of taking strict action against factory and mines owners who are polluting the natural resources by emission from their units. He also instructed the officials for the installation of machines to measure pollution particles in air.

Later, Minister Khuntia held a separate meeting with local BJP leaders and the general public. The common people alleged before him how unfair

labour practices were followed by some big industries, including Tata Steel Limited (Sponge Iron) situated at Bilaipada under Joda block. The specific complaint was that the local youths were ignored on the employment front, while non-Odias were getting jobs in the local factories and mines.

The public also brought to the notice of the Minister the delay in the completion of the Kanpur irrigation project, apart from massive irregularities in various projects.

The Minister assured that the Mohan Government will not allow any type of corruption to take place and implement all pro people schemes for which funds will not be a constraint.

Telkoi MLA Dr Fakir Mohan Naik, Keonjhar BJP vice president Deba Prasad Mishra and other party leaders like Nilamani Mahanta, RK Das, Sambari Munda, Shradhanjali Kar and Ramesh Chandra Pradhan were present.

In Keonjhar Cattle smuggler hurt in encounter with cops

3 vehicles seized
PNS ■ KEONJHAR
A cattle smuggler was injured in an encounter with a police team under a Pandapada police station area in Keonjhar district on Saturday night. He sustained two bullet injuries.

As per reports, the police team had conducted a raid after getting information that illegal cattle transportation was being carried out in three vehicles.

On seeing the police team, the cattle smugglers opened fire on them. Subsequently, the accused was injured in a retaliatory firing by police. The three vehicles laden with cattle were seized.

The encounter with the cattle smuggler has raised con-



cern as the cattle smugglers are now using firearms to carry out their illegal operations in the State.

It is not the first time that cattle smugglers opened fire on a police team. A taskforce from Cuttack had recently come under heavy firing by the cattle mafia in the Jodiaghati area.

It is alleged that smugglers procure cattle from various cattle markets in the daytime and transport them illegally to Bangladesh via Kolkata at night.

J'Spur new Collector J Sonal assumes office

Holds meet over illegal immigration from Bangladesh, flood in Mahanadi
PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR
Jagatsinghpur district's new Collector J Sonal assumed office on Friday. He took charge from Additional District Magistrate Sambit Kumar Rout who was performing as in-charge Collector after the Government transferred Jagatsinghpur Collector Anupam Saha on July 18.

ADMs Jagatsinghpur and Paradip, Sub Collector, and Collectorate staff from different departments greeted new Collector Sonal after he arrived at Collectorate here. Later, Sonal visited Maa Sarala temple in Tirtol block. A 2018 batch IAS officer, Sonal



worked as Collector, Boudha before he got transferred to Jagatsinghpur.

He held a meeting with administration officials, marine police, and Coast Guard personnel regarding a possible influx of migrants from trouble-torn Bangladesh and also over the flood situation in the Mahanadi river. He instructed the marine police and Coast Guard personnel to remain alert to prevent illegal immigration through Jagatsinghpur coastline. He also asked BDOs, local PRI members and villagers to report to police and civil administration if any unknown person is spotted in their localities.

Odia, Santali Wikimedians join show in Poland

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
In a significant event for the Odia and Santali Wikipedia communities, a group of Wikimedians from Odisha, attended the annual Wikimania conference in Katowice, Poland this year.

The Odia Wikimedians user group was represented by Subhashis Panigrahi, Chinmayee Mishra, and Aliva Sahoo. Chinmayee, an engineer by profession and a passionate Wikimedian, joined the Wikimedia movement in 2015. She is known for her efforts to create an inclusive space where everyone has a fair chance to thrive, free from discrimination or bias. Chinmayee presented a session at Wikimania 2023.

Aliva, who joined Wikimedia in 2015, has been actively contributing to the Odia Wikipedia and Hindi Wikipedia. She has also made contributions to Wikimedia Commons, Odia Wikisource,



and Wikidata. Aliva had the opportunity to attend Wikimania through the support of Wikimedia Deutschland.

Representing the Santali Wikimedians was Ramjit Tudu, who has been working on the Odia Wikipedia and is one of the active and founding volunteers on the Santali Wikipedia. Ramjit joined the event through a scholarship provided by CIS-A2K. He has played a crucial role in developing the online presence of Santali language content. Along with Wikipedia he has his own organization, OlchikiTech, and the Birmali Santali e-magazine where he continues for the digital em-

powerment of the Santali language.

Sailesh, a long-time contributor to the Odia Wikipedia, has collaborated with the Government to make Odia content available under free licences. Subhashis, an administrator of the Odia Wikipedia, has been a dedicated contributor for a long time. He has recently added numerous voice recordings for the Odia language, which can be useful for machine learning and text-to-speech applications.

This global event ended on August 10, with over 1,000 attendees from more than 100 countries having gathered in person and addressed pressing challenges facing the Wikimedia community.

I-Day preparatory meet at R'gada 'Shift Binispur Saheed Stamba to block or dist hdqrs'

BADAL TAH ■ RAYAGADA
During a preparatory meeting for celebration of the Independence Day on August 15 presided over by Collector Manoj Satyawan Mahajan, various suggestions were given by the participants which included officials, school and college heads and residents of the town.

Convenor of Rayagada Nagarika Mancha Ajay Rath suggested that at least all Government offices maintain cleanliness on the day. Goparanjan Boxipatra of Media Cares Rayagada expressed the need to include PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya and other reputed educational institutions in the activities to be conducted for the Independence Day in the district.



"The municipality administration should take befitting steps to reinstall a statue of late Biju Patnaik, which was earlier placed near the SBI chowk. Biju Patnaik, who was instrumental in shaping Rayagada as an independent district, had been neglected during BJD Government itself," said senior journalist Rasmi Ranjan Dora with deep anguish.

Gopabadi Khadi Ashram,

once engrossed with several activities of Gandhian philosophy and buzzing with the presence of prominent Gandhians namely Rama Devi, Gopabandhu Choudhury and others, is in a shambles. It needs to be revived, he opined.

The freedom fighters from Binispur, Rayagada, were known for their creative and bold methods of protest

against British colonial rule. The Sahid Stamba with seven stone pillars constructed at Binispur village of K Singhpur block for those freedom fighters needs to be formally placed either in the district or block headquarters as the Sahid memorial is situated within the disputed premises of a private person, it was opined.

A museum at Kujendri in Ramanaguda block where late

Biswanath Pattanaik, the Korapat Gandhi, as a freedom fighter stayed and educated hundreds of poor children from weaker sections of the society also requires attention. Nabakrushna Choudhury, former CM of Odisha, during a peace and bhodan foot march, stayed in the Ashram. The Ashram needs support from the district administration, it was further opined.

Instituting student fellowships/scholarships/competition schemes in the memory of freedom fighters who contributed for Rayagada will be a welcome step. Felicitating winners and some villagers from villages like Gopalbadi, Binispur and Kujendri on August 15 will keep the history of local freedom struggle alive among next generations, opined the participants.

PM releases 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient seed varieties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday released 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient and biofortified seed varieties of agricultural and horticultural crops, aiming to enhance farm productivity and farmers' income. Developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), these varieties span 61 crops, including 34 field crops and 27 horticultural crops.

Modi unveiled the seeds at three experimental agriculture plots at Delhi's Pusa Campus, where he also interacted with farmers and scientists. The field crop varieties include cereals, millets, forage crops, oilseeds, pulses, sugarcane, cotton, and fibre crops. For horticulture, the PM released new varieties of fruits, vegetables, plantation crops, tubers, spices, flowers, and medicinal plants. According to an official statement, Modi stressed on the significance of value addition in agriculture while discussing the importance of these new varieties with farmers. Farmers



present on the occasion said that these new varieties would be highly beneficial to them because of lower input cost. The Prime Minister discussed the importance of millets and underlined how people are moving towards nutritious food. He also talked about the benefits of natural farming and the increasing faith of common people towards organic farming. Modi noted that people have started consuming and demanding organic foods. Farmers appreciated

the efforts of the government in promotion of natural farming. They also lauded the role played by Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) in creating awareness, the release said. Modi suggested that the KVKs should proactively inform farmers about the benefits of the new varieties being developed every month to create awareness about their benefits, the statement said. The Prime Minister also lauded the scientists for the development of these new crop varieties.

The scientists informed that they have been working in line with the suggestion given by the Prime Minister to bring unutilised crops into the mainstream, the statement said. Since 2014, Modi has advocated for sustainable farming practices and climate-resilient methodologies to bolster farmers' income. He has consistently emphasised on the promotion of biofortified crop varieties, linking them to government initiatives like the Mid-Day Meal scheme and Anganwadi services to combat malnutrition in India.

Later addressing reporters, Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that today is a historic day for farmers as 109 varieties of 61 crops which have been released will help increase farmers' income, enhance production and reduce costs. Chouhan said that the seeds of these crops are climate-friendly and can yield good crops even in adverse weather. He also informed that these varieties are rich in nutrition.

Hindenburg: BJP slams Opposition for creating financial instability in India

PNS NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday alleged that the Congress and other Opposition parties are part of a conspiracy to create financial instability and chaos in India, as the ruling party rejected Hindenburg's charge against the SEBI chairperson as an attempt to discredit the financial watchdog. BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said the short-selling firm, which last year levelled serious allegations against the Adani group, is facing scrutiny from Indian probe agencies. Opposition parties are echoing its allegation, and the conspiracy is now clearly visible that they want to create chaos and instability, especially in the financial sector, he said. Noting that many such critical reports emanating from foreign soil are released just ahead of or during Parliament sessions, he said opposition leaders were aware that the report was coming when Parliament was scheduled to meet. The Monsoon session of Parliament was scheduled to end on Monday but was cut



short by one working day and got over on Friday. BJP leader and former Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the short-selling firm has clearly attacked market regulator SEBI in an "obvious partnership" with the Congress and has an ominous motive and goal. It is to destabilise and discredit one of the world's strongest financial systems and create chaos in the world's fastest growing economy, he said on X. He said he has read the report which, he claimed, is a classic "Congress style innuendo and lies glued

together", aimed at discrediting the regulator and causing chaos and losses in markets for investors to slow down bullish sentiments. He alleged, "I have said often and say again -- many global forces with help of Congress dynasty want to slow down or trip up India's rise. We won't let them." Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia accused the Congress of spreading anarchy and controversies over the Hindenburg Research's allegations against SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Buch.

"Congress's work is only to spread anarchy and entangle the country in controversial matters," said Scindia while responding to reporters' query on the Hindenburg Research report. The Guna MP said PM Narendra Modi and BJP workers are carrying the torch of development and progress, whereas the Congress has been trying to mislead the country and keep it in the dark for years. The Hindenburg Research on Saturday launched a broadside against market regulator SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch, alleging she and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the Adani money siphoning scandal. In a blogpost, Hindenburg said 18 months since its damning report on Adani, "SEBI has shown a surprising lack of interest in Adani's alleged undisclosed web of Mauritius and offshore shell entities." The SEBI chairperson and her husband have rejected the allegations levelled against them as baseless and asserted that their finances are an open book.

NDA eyes clear majority in RS after bypolls on 12 seats

PNS NEW DELHI

The BJP-led NDA is expected to achieve a clear majority in Rajya Sabha after bye-elections for 12 seats scheduled next month, which would help the party get the nod for key legislations such as the Waqf (Amendment) Bill. In the Upper House with the current effective strength of 229, the BJP has 87 MPs and with its allies the number is 105. Six nominated members, who usually cast their vote with the government, take the strength of the NDA to 111, four short of the half-way mark of 115.

The Congress has 26 members in the Upper House and its allies add another 58, taking the Opposition alliance numbers to 84. Among the key fence-sitters are the YSR Congress Party with 11 members and BJD with eight members. Elections to the 12 vacant Rajya Sabha seats in nine states will be held on September 3. The Election Commission has announced 12 separate elections for each of the seats, handing over a clear advantage to the ruling party in the state. The BJP and its allies are expected to win 11 of the 12 seats in the elections, which will take the NDA past the half-way



mark to 122 seats in the 245-member house. Four seats from Jammu and Kashmir in the Upper House are vacant as the Union Territory is yet to get its first legislative assembly. This reduces the effective strength of the Rajya Sabha to 241. Ten Rajya Sabha seats fell vacant as the sitting members, including Union Ministers Piyush Goyal, Sarbananda Sonowal, and Jyotiraditya Scindia, were elected to Lok Sabha. Bypolls are also being held for two seats in Telangana and Odisha. K Keshava Rao from Telangana resigned recently from the House after quitting the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) to join the Congress while Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP

Mamata Mohanta resigned from her Rajya Sabha seat and primary membership of the party. She has joined the BJP. Besides Goyal, Sonowal and Scindia, the other Rajya Sabha members who won the parliamentary polls and became members of Lok Sabha are Kamakhya Prasad Tasa (BJP), Misha Bharti (RJD), Vivek Thakur (BJP), Deepender Singh Hooda (Congress), Udayanraje Bhosle (BJP), KC Venugopal (Congress) and Biplab Kumar Deb (BJP). The BJP's allies in the Upper House include AIADMK, JD (U), NCP, JD(S), RPI (A), Shiv Sena, NCP, RLD, NPP, PMK, Tamil Manila Congress and UPPL.

11 Bangladeshi nationals caught trying to infiltrate into India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Eleven Bangladeshi nationals have been apprehended while trying to infiltrate into India through international border in West Bengal, Tripura and Meghalaya, the Border Security Force (BSF) said on Sunday.

They are being questioned and will be handed over to State police for further legal action, a spokesperson said. He said the BSF was in regular touch with its counterpart BGB to sort out mutual issues, especially the prevention of atrocities on Indian nationals and people from minority communities in Bangladesh. The South Bengal Frontier of the force headquartered in Kolkata said in a statement that its eastern command head, Additional Director General (ADG) Ravi Gandhi, chaired an operational conference on Saturday to review security along the 4,096-km-long India-Bangladesh border "amid the current unrest in Bangladesh" and the upcoming Independence Day on August 15.

It said, "11 Bangladeshi nationals have been apprehended on border while infiltrating into India. Two each were nabbed



from West Bengal and Tripura borders while seven were apprehended from Meghalaya border." They are being questioned and will be handed over to State police for further legal action, he said. The spokesperson said BSF ADG (eastern command) Ravi Gandhi chaired a meeting on Saturday to review security along this border. "Detailed deliberations were held to further enhance border control, security and management. Besides, it was decided to continue the close collaboration with counterpart Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)," he said. The BSF has been holding flag meetings with the BGB to sort out mutual issues amicably, especially for the prevention of atrocities on Indian nationals and people from minorities communities in Bangladesh and counterpart BGB has been responding well, he said.

SC to hear Kejriwal's plea against summons in defamation case today

PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal challenging a Delhi High Court order upholding the summons issued to him in a criminal defamation case for retweeting an allegedly defamatory video circulated by YouTuber Dhruv Rathee in May 2018.

A three-Judge bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Sanjay Kumar and R Mahadevan is likely to hear the matter in which Kejriwal has admitted that he "committed a mistake" by retweeting the alleged defamatory video. On March 11, the top court asked Kejriwal whether he wanted to give an apology to the complainant in the matter. Kejriwal had on February 26 told the apex court that he made a mistake by retweeting the allegedly defamatory video related to the BJP IT Cell.

The counsel appearing for complainant Vikas Sankrityayan had told the top court that Kejriwal may issue an apology on social media platforms like microblogging platform 'X' or Instagram. On February 26, the apex court, without issuing notice on



Kejriwal's plea challenging the High Court order, had asked the complainant whether he wanted to close the matter in view of the petitioner accepting it was a mistake. The top court had asked the trial court not to take up the defamation case involving Kejriwal till further orders. In its February 5 verdict, the High Court said that reposting alleged libellous content would attract the defamation law. It said a sense of responsibility has to be attached while retweeting content about which one does not have knowledge and added that retweeting defamatory content must invite penal, civil as well as tort action if the person retweeting it does not attach a disclaimer. The High Court, while refusing to quash the trial court's 2019 order summoning Kejriwal, had

said when a public figure tweets a defamatory post, the ramifications extend far beyond a mere whisper in someone's ears. It had said if the act of retweeting or reposting is allowed to be misused as it is still considered to be a vacant grey area of law, it will encourage people with ill intentions to misuse it and conveniently take a plea that they had merely retweeted a content. The Chief Minister had said in the High Court that the trial court failed to appreciate that his tweet was not intended or likely to harm the complainant. Sankrityayan claimed the YouTube video titled 'BJP IT Cell Part II' was circulated by Rathee, who lives in Germany, "wherein a number of false and defamatory allegations were made".

Bone marrow transplants can reverse heart damage associated with SCD: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI NEW DELHI

As India grapples with the challenge of eliminating sickle cell disease (SCD), a recent research offers a glimmer of hope. A new study published in 'Blood' highlights the potential of bone marrow transplants to reverse heart damage associated with SCD.

The study, titled 'Impact of Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation on Myocardial Fibrosis in Young Patients with Sickle Cell Disease', indicates that hematopoietic stem cell transplants (HCT) can significantly reduce myocardial fibrosis, a serious complication of the disease.

Sickle cell disease, a genetic disorder causing abnormally shaped red blood cells, leads to chronic anemia and various complications, including heart damage. Traditional treatments, such as hydroxyurea, have been ineffective in reversing these complications, as per the study. However, HCT, which replaces a patient's faulty blood stem cells with healthy ones, appears to offer a new avenue for improving heart health in affected individuals.

The study, conducted by St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, involved analysing cardiac MRI scans from patients undergoing HCT. Results showed a decrease in myocardial extracellular volume (ECV), a marker of heart muscle scarring, by 3.4% in the first year after transplantation, with further reductions observed in patients with two-year follow-up data. While these

findings are promising, they highlight the need for larger studies to confirm the long-term benefits of HCT and its potential role in addressing the broader challenge of sickle cell disease in India. The country continues to face significant hurdles in eliminating SCD, but advancements like these provide hope for improved treatment and management of the disease.

The study holds significance in the context of India which has a large number of people with the blood disorder. In fact, India has launched a Sickle Cell Mission which aims to provide affordable, accessible and quality care to all patients with sickle cell disease (SCD), reducing the prevalence of the disease through awareness campaigns and targeting screening of 7 crore people aged 0-40 years in affected districts of tribal areas by 2025-26. While welcoming the outcome of the study and stressing that it was time that bone marrow transplants facilities are expanded in the country, Dr Li CBS Dangi who has been working in the sector for the past several years also stressed on creating awareness and mobilising community efforts to combat sickle cell disorder and thalassemia. With a mission to eliminate sickle cell disease by 2047, Dangi has started screening the NCC cadets at the blood NCC donation camps also for the blood disorders at the endemic tribal belts of States like Madhya Pradesh under the State Health Mission.

Village courts face challenges due to manpower, fund shortages



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Conceived as a tool to deliver affordable and quick access to justice, 'gram nyayalayas' or village courts are today finding it difficult to live up to their purpose due to manpower shortage and financial crunch. So far 481 gram nyayalayas have been notified by 15 States, of which 309 have been made operational in 10 States, the law Ministry told Parliament in the just-concluded Monsoon session. In 1986, the law commission had suggested setting up village courts to provide affordable and quick access to justice to citizens at their doorsteps. After years, The Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008 came into effect from Gandhi Jayanti the next year. The Act provides for the establishment of gram nyayalayas at the grass roots level to provide access to justice to the citizens at their doorsteps and to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to anyone due to social, economic or other disabilities. Citing "certain studies", the law ministry said in

the parliament that the main reasons for slow progress in setting up of these village courts include non-filling of the post of nyayadhikaris in many States, non-availability of public prosecutors, notaries and general shortage of first-class judicial magistrates. Limited pecuniary jurisdiction of gram nyayalayas, insufficient staff, inadequate financial backing from States, reluctance from legal and State authorities and lack of community awareness were the other reasons cited for the present state of affairs of village courts, the government said.

Besides, the issue of overlapping jurisdiction with regular courts is another reason for "slow take off" of such courts in some States, it added. Many States have their own parallel systems of village courts functioning at panchayat level. As per guidelines, the Centre provides Rs 18 lakh per gram nyayalaya to meet non-recurring expenditure as a one-time measure and bears 50 per cent of the recurring expenses of these courts, subject to a ceiling of Rs 3.20 lakh per courts per annum during the first three years.

Chirag to convene meet of SC MPs of different parties

PNS NEW DELHI

Union Minister and LJP (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan is planning to convene a meeting of Scheduled Caste MPs of different parties as he works to mobilise support ahead of his party filing a review plea in the Supreme Court against its judgment allowing sub-categorisation of reservation within the community. The Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) leader has already expressed his disagreement with the verdict and said his party will file a review petition in the apex court.

Paswan, sources said, has reached out to Scheduled Caste MPs to gauge their view over the verdict, a judgment of far-reaching political impact over which major national parties have maintained silence while engaging in internal stock-taking deliberations, and may convene a formal meeting soon. It remains to be seen, though, what the response of the Scheduled Caste MPs of different parties will be, many of whom have spoken in different voices depending on the mood of their constituencies. The parties like Paswan's or Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which draw support from numerically strong SC communities which fare better than other Dalit castes on social and economic metrics, have come out openly against the judgment. However, another Dalit ally of the BJP and Union Minister



Jitan Ram Manjhi has lauded the verdict, saying that his community of Manjhis are "grossly under-represented" in the benefits brought by quota as better-off SC communities corner most of the positions in jobs and educational institutes on offer. The critics of the verdict have argued that a chunk of vacancies reserved for the SCs often remain open due to a lack of adequately qualified applicants, saying introducing sub-quotas for different castes within the larger quota will only worsen the problem. Both the ruling BJP and the main opposition Congress have not taken a categorical stand on the issue, leaving it to their state leaders to frame their responses based on regional sensibilities. A seven-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud had ruled on August 1 by a 6:1 majority that the further sub-classification of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by the states can be permitted to ensure grant of quota to more backward castes inside these groups.

Meghwal accuses Opposition of creating confusion over SC 'observation' on creamy layer

PTI NEW DELHI

Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal has accused the opposition of creating confusion among people over the Supreme Court "observation" on creamy layer among SCs and STs, and asserted that the Constitution given by B R Ambedkar has no provision of a creamy layer. In an interview to PTI Videos, he said the BJP-led NDA government will follow Ambedkar's Constitution and will continue the reservation system for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as provided in it.

Meghwal noted that though the opposition is aware that the top court had only made an "observation" on creamy layer, it is trying to create confusion among people. On Saturday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had said that the idea of denying reservation to SCs and STs on account of the creamy layer concept is "condemnable". He also said the government should have brought a legislation in Parliament to nullify the part of the recent Supreme Court judgement that talks about the issue. Meghwal underlined that the top court had said that if the states want, they can do sub-classification. But SC has not made any decision on creamy layer. It is an observation, he asserted. "There is a difference between direction and observation," he



reminded the opposition. Earlier this month, a seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court led by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud ruled in a 6:1 majority judgement that state governments were permitted to sub-classify communities within the SC list based on empirical data. Supreme Court judge B R Gavai had said states must evolve a policy for identifying the creamy layer even among the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Schedule Tribes (ST) and deny them the benefit of reservation. Justice Gavai penned a separate but concurring judgement in which the top court by a majority verdict said the states are empowered to make sub-classifications of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for granting quotas within the reserved category to uplift those who belong to the more underprivileged castes. The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, held a detailed discussion on the Supreme Court judgement on the sub-categorisation of reservation for SCs and STs as granted in the Constitution.

UP bypolls: BSP to fight all 10 Assembly seats, announces Mayawati

PTI LUCKNOW
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Sunday announced that her party will field candidates in all the 10 assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh where bypolls are going to be held. The Election Commission is yet to declare the schedule for the by-elections to Karhal, Milkpur, Katchari, Kundark, Ghaziabad, Khair, Meerapur, Phulpur, Majhawan and Sisamau assembly seats. In a statement, released after a meeting of the BSP's state unit district chiefs, office bearers and functionaries, the party said Mayawati reviewed the preparations for the upcoming assembly bypolls. "Ten assembly constituencies have fallen vacant after the Lok Sabha elections. No offi-

cial announcement of the date has been made so far but activities pertaining to this are increasing continuously, especially the ruling party, BJP, and its government have made it an issue of prestige, due to which the interest of the people in the bypolls has also increased," it said. "The BSP will field its candidate in all these assembly constituencies, where by-elections will take place, and will contest the bypolls with full might," the statement said. By-elections were necessitated for nine seats as the MLAs were elected to the Lok Sabha. The Sisamau seat fell vacant due to the disqualification SP leader Irfan Solanki as MLA after he was sentenced to jail in a criminal case. Mounting an attack on the BJP, Mayawati said, "There is

tremendous anger among the common public as the BJP government at the Centre and in the state has not only failed in stopping rising poverty, unemployment, price rise and backwardness but has also not paid enough attention towards this." "Hence, to divert the attention of the people from these issues, they are resorting to destructive bulldozer politics (vidhvansak bulldozer raajini), and are continuously hatching conspiracies to create new casteist and communal violence or dispute," she said. "In this sequence, a new law on religious conversion (has been brought), sub-classification of people of the SC-ST society and the creamy layer are new attempts to divide them, denying caste census, government interfer-



ence in the operation of the mosques-madrasas and Waqf are being done," the BSP chief said. While these are happening, the poor and the hard-working people are striving to live with self-respect and earn livelihood, she said. She said now that people are not blindly believing the intention and policy of the government, the BSP must

continue its efforts to win the trust through its policy and principle of "bahujan hitaaye, bahujan sukhaaye". Attacking the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government on the issue of law and order, Mayawati said that in this matter, the strictness of the government is more on paper and it is ineffective on the BJP people." Earlier on Sunday, Mayawati on X said that the Congress, which won Lok Sabha seats by promising to protect reservation, seems to be in favour of sub-classification within SCs and STs and is yet to raise its voice against the issue of exclusion of the creamy layer in these communities from the benefits of quota. On August 1, the Supreme Court held that states are constitutionally empowered

to make sub-classifications within scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and batted for the creamy layer to be excluded from reservation. "The national president of the Congress (Mallikarjun Kharge) said before disclosing the party's stand on sub-classification of SCs and STs, his party will consult NGOs and lawyers and others. This makes it clear that Congress is in favour of sub-classification," Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati said in a series of posts on X in Hindi. "The Congress has spoken in a vague manner about the creamy layer issue. Despite it having 99 MPs, no voice was raised in Parliament till the adjournment to nullify the Supreme Court's decision, whereas this party has won

these seats in the name of saving the Constitution and reservation," she said. Mayawati also said after the BSP's press conference on Saturday, "we got to know about the statement given by the Congress president, in which the credit for reservation has been given not to Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao ambedkar but to Pandit Nehru and Gandhiji, in which there is not even an iota of truth." "Whereas in reality the entire credit for reservation goes to Baba Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, whom the Congress conspired to prevent from entering the Constituent assembly and also defeated in the elections. He was also forced to resign from the post of Law Minister," Mayawati said.

Kerala Minister breaks down while consoling kin of landslide victims

PTI WAYANAD (KERALA)
Kerala Forest Minister A K Saseendran broke down while consoling people looking for their missing family members days after the devastating landslides in Wayanad district. The minister, who visited the landslide-hit areas, spoke to a father and son who were seen searching at the spot where their house once stood. Saseendran turned emotional while listening to the painful words and concerns of the hapless family and embraced the boy to console him. The minister himself was inconsolable while sharing their plight to the media later. "I never thought in my life that I would have to see such a sight. What reply should I give them? There is no answer to their questions..." Saseendran told reporters.



He urged everyone to work in unison to rebuild the lives of the victims. The minister also assured survivors that the entire state and the government stood by them in their most difficult time in life. An extensive search is continuing in landslide-hit Wayanad to trace those who are still missing in the aftermath of the calamity that hit the hill district on July 30. On Saturday, Modi visited the landslides-hit Wayanad district and assured that the central government would "spare no effort" in helping Kerala in relief and rehabilitation while describing the tragedy as "nature displaying its furious form." According to the state government, the landslides killed 229 people, while over 130 are still missing.

Bihar: Tributes paid to Khudiram Bose at Muzaffarpur Central Jail

PTI MUZAFFARPUR/PATNA
A large number of people gathered outside the Muzaffarpur Central Jail on Sunday to pay tributes to freedom fighter Khudiram Bose, who was hanged in the prison on this day in 1908. Bose was the youngest freedom fighter to have been hanged during the British Raj. Bose was sentenced to death for the attempted assassination of a British judge, Magistrate Douglas Kingsford, the then magistrate of Muzaffarpur, by lobbing bombs at a carriage he and his associate Prafulla Chaki suspected the British judge was travelling in. The incident led to the death of two British women. Divisional Commissioner of Tirhut Division, Mihir Kumar



Singh, Inspector General of Police Shivdeep Wamanrao Lande, District Magistrate of Muzaffarpur, Subrata Sen, and several people from Bose's ancestral village in Habibpur in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal and hundreds of others took part in paying tributes to the freedom fighter. Officials also garlanded a statue of the freedom fighter at the Khudiram Bose Memorial in Company Bagh where Bose had executed the

daring act, along with Prafulla Chaki. Prafulla Chaki fatally shot himself before the arrest. Khudiram Bose was arrested and put on trial for the murder of the two women and was sentenced to death. He became the youngest martyr in the history of the Indian independence movement. Meanwhile, Bihar Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, his deputy Samrat Choudhary and several other dignitaries paid homage to those who died while attempting to hoist the Indian tricolour near Patna Secretariat on this day during the Quit India Movement. On August 11, 1942, during the Quit India movement, seven people were killed by British forces while they were hoisting the flag near Patna Secretariat.

Pendharkar takes charge of Spear Corps, Manipur conflict top priority

PTI DIMAPUR
Lieutenant General Abhijit S Pendharkar assumed command of the Indian Army's elite Spear Corps on Saturday, inheriting a significant challenge in the form of the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur which has claimed more than 200 lives in the past year. Lt General Pendharkar succeeds Lieutenant General Harjeet Singh Sahi, who moves to the Army War College in Mhow as its commandant. Commissioned into the Assam Regiment in 1990, Pendharkar has held a variety of command and staff positions through an illustrious career spanning over 34 years, serving in all types of terrain and operational environment, a defence official said. His experience includes counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir and

commanding formations along the Line of Control. Prior to taking over as the head of the Spear Corps, Pendharkar served as the Director General of the Territorial Army. He is a recipient of the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Yudh Seva Medal, and multiple commendation awards. Lt Gen Pendharkar has held important staff appointments at all levels including a tenure at Military Operations Directorate at Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Army), the official said. The Spear Corps, the largest in the Indian Army, is responsible for maintaining security in the majority of areas in the northeastern region including the state of Manipur where ethnic violence that first started in May 2023 has claimed more than 200 lives.

Panic over fire rumour, 6 hospitalised after jumping from train in UP

PTI SHAHJAHANPUR/NEW DELHI
Six passengers were hospitalised after they jumped out of a moving train in panic near Uttar Pradesh's Bilpur on Sunday following rumours of a fire, Government Railway Police (GRP) officials said. Earlier, Northern Railway spokesperson Kultar Singh had said that "12 passengers have been injured". The incident took place in a general coach of the Howrah-Amritsar Mail in the morning near Bilpur station, which falls under the Moradabad division, he said. GRP station in-charge Rehman Khan told PTI that when the train reached Bilpur station in Bareilly, a rumour spread that



the train has caught fire. Someone pulled the emergency chain to stop the train and some passengers started jumping from the moving train, he said. Six passengers, including two women, were injured, and they

were admitted to the Shahjahanpur Medical College, the GRP official said. Khan said Anwari (26), Akhtari (45), Kuldeep (26), Ruby Lal (50), Shiv Sharan (40) and Chandrapal (35) were hospitalised. The railway official had earlier said passengers pulled the chain for an emergency stop and jumped out of the train in panic while it was still moving. "Prima facie, it looks like some miscreants or unruly passenger operated a fire extinguisher which created an impression that a fire had broken out in the general coach of the moving Howrah-Amritsar Mail," he had said. Singh had said that the Railway Protection Force (RPF) is investigating the case.

Northeast wing of federation of former servicemen in banking sector formed

PTI GUWAHATI
To press for their legal rights and provide support to colleagues across various sectors, the Northeast wing of a pan-India body of ex-servicemen working in the banking sector has been formed, a statement said on Sunday. This team is set to play a crucial role in advocating for their rights, improving working conditions and fostering a supportive community for the esteemed members, it said. Samrat Shome, secretary of the regional committee, said, "There are many unique problems faced by ex-servicemen, who are working in the banking sector post-retirement from active service. There are legal rights and benefits that must be



ensured to the ex-servicemen and we will work to ensure that our members get these." Citing an example, he said banks have a fixed quota for recruitment of ex-servicemen, but in many cases the vacancies are not filled as per the num-

ber of jobs assured for them. "We will take up such instances and ensure our members are not deprived," he said. The newly formed committee will also provide support to ex-servicemen engaged in other sectors as well, Shome said.

Kushal Kumar Das was named the president and Dipankar Bharali the treasurer of the Northeast committee, formed during a meeting of All India Ex-Servicemen Bank Employees Federation here on Saturday which was attended by the president and secretary of the central committee Praveen Kumar Sharma and Suresh Kumar respectively. Among the initiatives to be undertaken by the committee are developing new programmes to support the professional and personal needs of the members. The new regional wing will also organise workshops and seminars to promote continuous learning and career growth, the statement said.

Tripura's connectivity project with Bangladesh may be delayed: Minister

PTI RANCHI
Tripura's connectivity project with Bangladesh - the Agartala-Akhaura rail link and Maitree bridge - may be delayed due to the political turmoil and change in government in the neighbouring country, state Transport minister Sushanta Chowdhury said. An interim government under Muhammad Yunus was formed in the neighbouring country after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government on August 5 following widespread protests against her government over a controversial quota system in jobs. Chowdhury said most of the connectivity projects with Bangladesh were almost complete but now not sure when they will be started. "All the connectivity projects with Bangladesh... We are not sure when these projects which were almost completed will see the light of the day. The Agartala-Chittagong flight was to be started soon, but it has become uncertain now. The same is the condition of the Agartala-Akhaura rail link, Maitree Bridge, etc. Let us wait and watch," the Tripura Transport minister told PTI. The 12.24-km Agartala-Akhaura rail link being built at

a total cost of Rs 972.52 crore is the first railway connectivity between India's North-East and Bangladesh to encourage trade between the two countries. The general manager of the Indian Railway Construction Company Ltd (IRCON), Raman Singh Singla said the 5.46 km long railway track was completed on the Indian side. A Railway Ministry official said 98 per cent work on the 6.78 km long track in Bangladesh was already completed and the project could see the light of the day any time, but with the political turmoil and change in government in the neighbouring country, the project may be delayed. The official said the work on the Indian side was funded by the Ministry of DoNER and the Bangladesh side work was implemented by the Bangladesh Railway and funded by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). This project was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina on November 1 last year. The Maitree bridge was inaugurated long back and movements of passenger and goods-laden trucks was supposed to

start soon. However, representatives of the chamber of commerce and intelligentsia in Tripura are of the view that trade and internal politics cannot be mixed up because international trade is beneficial for both countries. Prof Asish Nath of the Department of Economic, Tripura University said, "We should not always mix up internal politics with trade because it is beneficial for both countries. Sheikh Hasina resigned on Monday and the country witnessed unprecedented violence, but trade resumed on Thursday through land ports". Nath said all the Tripura-Bangladesh connectivity projects would be started, but it might take some time. The President of the Export-Import Chamber of Commerce, Tripura, Nitai Saha said, "Maybe the volume of trade through all the land ports including Agartala-Akhaura and Srimantapur Integrated Check posts have reduced, but it resumed within three-four days of fall of the Awami League government. I have no doubt that trade will start in full swing and all the connectivity projects will be launched. Let us wait for some time."

TN Congress to hold tricolour marches, flays BJP for 'attempt to appropriate' national flag

PTI CHENNAI
Tamil Nadu Congress Committee President K Selvaperunthagai on Sunday tasked his party office-bearers with holding tricolour marches on two-wheelers and through padayatras and hit out at the BJP for what he described as an attempt to 'appropriate' the national flag by conducting Tiranga yatras. Selvaperunthagai said no force including the BJP can break the bond the Congress party has with the tricolour and everyone has a right to hoist the national flag on Independence day and celebrate. In a statement, the Congress party leader said the BJP is making attempts to appropriate the tricolour by holding tricolour rallies in states, which are not a usual practice, but based on PM Narendra Modi's recent appeal. From August 12 to 15, Selvaperunthagai said district Congress committee presidents should organise 'tricolour motorcycle rallies' in their respective district headquarters. In villages and talukas, padayatras should be conducted by holding the national flag. In such celebratory events,

the connect and bond the Congress party has with the national flag should be explained to the people by tracing the freedom movement, the role played by Gandhiji and the party's pivotal role. The TNCC leader alleged that the RSS, the parent organisation of the BJP had not hoisted the national flag for 52 years. Only on August 15, 1947 and on January 26, 1950 the national flag was hoisted at the RSS headquarters in Nagpur, he said. After a gap of 52 years, the national flag was hoisted by the RSS only on January 26, 2001, Selvaperunthagai claimed. Therefore, the RSS boycotted and insulted the national flag and now the BJP is attempting to appropriate it and it is a 'conspiracy'. On August 9, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked people to make "Har Ghar Tiranga" campaign a memorable mass movement. He also replaced his profile picture with the national flag and urged them to do the same. Following this, the BJP announced Tiranga yatras (Tricolour marches) from August 11 to 14.

Villages in Vadodara alerted as Sardar Sarovar dam level rises

PTI AHMEDABAD
The Vadodara administration on Sunday alerted 25 villages in the district after release of water from the Omkareshwar dam in Madhya Pradesh and heavy rains led to a rise in the Sardar Sarovar dam level in Gujarat's Narmada district. Residents of these villages have been asked not to venture near the Narmada river bed, officials said. As the Sardar Sarovar dam level rose due to inflow following heavy rainfall in the catchment areas upstream and release of water from the Omkareshwar dam in neighbouring MP, authorities opened nine radial gates of the Gujarat-based reservoir by 1.50 metres, they said. The Sardar Sarovar dam recorded a level of 134.75 metres on Sunday morning as against the full reservoir level of 138.68 metres, an official from the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited said. The dam's water level rose by 3.5 metres in the last 24 hours, he said. "A total of 1,35,000 cusecs (cubic foot per second) of water will be released in the Narmada river through the River Bed Power House (RBPH) that produces hydro-



electricity, and the opening of nine radial gates of the Sardar Sarovar dam," an official statement said. Vadodara's in-charge collector Mamata Hirpara said authorities were maintaining a vigil and precautionary measures have been taken in 25 villages under Shiner, Dabhoi and Karajan talukas of the district. These villages are located along the Narmada river banks in Vadodara district, and local administration has been instructed to keep an eye on the situation and take precautionary measures, she said. Keeping in mind the possibility of more water release from the Narmada dam upstream, the district administration has appealed to residents of the 25

villages not to venture near the river bed, the collector said. The district administration is taking all measures to avoid any accident or casualty in low-lying areas of the Sardar Sarovar dam, she added. The Sardar Sarovar project is one of the largest water resources project in India covering four major states - Maharashtra, MP, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The dam's spillway discharging capacity (30.7 lakh cusecs) would be third highest in the world, as per the project website. Rains continued in parts of south and central Gujarat districts in the last 24 hours, with the state receiving 70.35 per cent of the annual average rainfall.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Catastrophe revisited

Prime Minister Modi visits Wayanad, pledges full Central Government support for recovery efforts

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently visited Wayanad, Kerala, which was devastated by landslides that left more than 200 dead. Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a review meeting after conducting an aerial and ground survey of the landslide-hit areas in Wayanad. Recalling the devastating 1979 Morbi dam disaster in Gujarat, Modi empathised with the affected residents, assuring them of full support from the central government. During his day-long visit to Wayanad, Modi surveyed the destruction caused by the July 30 landslides. Modi's visit included a trek through the severely impacted Chooralmala region, where he assessed the damage and interacted with rescue personnel, officials, and residents. He also visited a relief camp in Meppadi, offering comfort to survivors, including children who had lost family members. PM Modi emphasised the need for better preparedness and resilient infrastructure to mitigate the impact of such natural disasters in the future.



Wayanad is perhaps the worst hit as the incessant rains triggered landslides, damaging homes and infrastructure and causing extensive agricultural losses. The region's economy, heavily dependent on agriculture and tourism, has been severely impacted, with farmers facing significant losses and tourists staying away due to the adverse weather conditions. However, Wayanad is not the only place that has endured losses. This year's monsoon has brought unprecedented destruction across the country. From north to south, no region has been spared from the monsoon fury. The Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have also endured losses. Torrential rains, landslides, and flash floods have resulted in significant loss of life and property. In Himachal Pradesh, an entire village was tragically wiped off due to a deluge after a cloudburst. The heavy rainfall has also caused rivers to overflow, leading to widespread flooding and disruption of daily life in the plains. Roads have been washed away, leaving many remote areas inaccessible, and thousands of people have been displaced from their homes. The increasing frequency and intensity of monsoon-related disasters in India can be attributed to a combination of factors, including climate change, deforestation, and unplanned urbanisation. India must continue to invest in and implement strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy sources. International cooperation is also crucial in addressing the climate change. Besides, ensuring that development projects, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas like the Himalayas must be properly evaluated before being commissioned. This includes stricter regulations on construction and deforestation. In the given scenario what is of utmost importance is preparedness—strengthening disaster management capabilities at the local, state, and national levels. This includes improving early warning systems, enhancing infrastructure resilience, and conducting regular disaster preparedness drills.

PICTALK



An elderly woman spins tricolour yarns ahead of the Independence Day in Nadia district

When heroes defy their legacies



SANTHOSH MATHEEW

History is a tapestry of contradictions and ironies, offering few clear heroes or villains. Instead, it presents figures whose actions and legacies are deeply intriguing

History, much like a tapestry, is interwoven with threads of contradiction, paradox, and irony. It refuses to offer a simplistic narrative of heroes and villains, instead presenting us with figures whose actions and legacies are often at odds. Even as we try to categorize these individuals within neat labels, the complexities of their lives and the contexts in which they lived often defy such easy classifications. In delving into these paradoxes, we uncover the profound dichotomies that have shaped our world. Here, we explore some of the most striking examples of such contradictions.



The Pulitzer Prize is one of the most prestigious awards in journalism, representing the pinnacle of recognition for investigative reporting, public service, and literary achievement. It stands as a symbol of journalistic integrity and excellence. Yet, the man behind this esteemed award, Joseph Pulitzer, was a pioneer of "yellow journalism"—a style characterized by sensationalism, exaggeration, and a sometimes tenuous relationship with the truth. Pulitzer's newspapers, including the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the New York World, became synonymous with this sensationalist style, prioritising scandal, shock, and spectacle over factual reporting. Pulitzer was, in many ways, a shrewd businessman who used his media empire to captivate, excite, and often inflame public opinion. Yet, despite his role in fostering yellow journalism, Pulitzer's legacy is paradoxically one of promoting journalistic excellence. The award that bears his name has honoured countless journalists who have exposed corruption, championed the underdog, and stood as defenders of truth against tyranny. The irony is profound: a man who built his career on sensationalism is now celebrated as a patron of journalistic integrity. This duality highlights the complexities of human nature and the ever-evolving landscape of media. The Nobel Prizes, particularly the Nobel

Peace Prize, embody the highest aspirations of humanity. They honour individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to the betterment of the world through science, literature, and the pursuit of peace. However, the man behind these prestigious awards, Alfred Nobel, accumulated his wealth from an invention that has caused immense destruction: dynamite. Nobel's invention revolutionized construction and engineering, but it also became a powerful tool in warfare. The devastating impact of dynamite weighed heavily on Nobel's conscience. It is said that his decision to establish the Nobel Prize was influenced by a premature obituary that labelled him "the merchant of death" after his invention became synonymous with violence and destruction. By creating the Nobel Prizes, particularly the Peace Prize, Nobel sought to reshape his legacy from one of destruction to one of hope and progress. Yet, the contrast between his contribution to the proliferation of powerful weapons and his desire to reward peacemakers serves as a poignant reminder of the paradoxes that can define a person's life. A recent example of this paradox can be found in the story of



JINNAH'S PERSONAL LIFE WAS FAR REMOVED FROM THE STRICT RELIGIOUS VALUES THAT WOULD LATER COME TO DEFINE THE COUNTRY HE FOUNDED. JINNAH WAS A HIGHLY WESTERNISED INDIVIDUAL WHO ENJOYED THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019. Abiy was recognized for his efforts in resolving the long-standing conflict with neighbouring Eritrea, earning international acclaim as a peacemaker. However, within two years of receiving the prize, Abiy found himself leading his nation into a brutal civil war. The conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region has been marked by atrocities, displacement, and a humanitarian crisis of staggering proportions. The United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights are celebrated as monumental achievements in the history of human rights, enshrining the principles of freedom, equality, and justice. Thomas Jefferson, one of the Founding Fathers and the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, played a crucial role in shaping these foundational documents. Yet, Jefferson was also a slave owner who, during his lifetime, owned over 600 enslaved people. This glaring contradiction between his public advocacy for liberty and his private practice of slavery has sparked intense debate among historians and scholars. Jefferson's writings espoused ideals of freedom and human dignity, yet he continued to benefit from an institution that deprived others of these very rights. Similarly, Muhammad Ali Jinnah is revered as the founding father of Pakistan, the world's first Islamic republic. He is celebrated for his role in establishing a nation for Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, based on the idea of Muslim nationalism. However, Jinnah's personal life was far removed from the strict religious values that would later come to define the country he founded. Jinnah was a highly Westernised individual who enjoyed the finer things in life. He was known to smoke cigars, drink alcohol, and reportedly favoured pork—a practice contrary to Islamic teachings. His second wife, Maryam, was a Parsi, and his only daughter, Dina, married a Parsi as well, sparking considerable controversy given his public role as a Muslim leader. These episodes remind us that even the greatest leaders are not without their contradictions. In the end, history reminds us that even the greatest of icons are not immune to contradiction—it is in their complexity that their true humanity shines through. (The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BAIL NOT JAIL SHOULD BE THE NORM

Madam — Recently, while an assistant director of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) was swiftly remanded to CBI custody over a bribery charge involving Rs 20 lakhs from a Mumbai-based jeweler, the ongoing case of Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia raises serious concerns. Despite being accused of money laundering in the Delhi excise policy scam, Sisodia has languished in jail for 17 months without any progress toward a trial, as observed by the Supreme Court. The Court emphasised that personal liberty is paramount, and delaying bail without commencing the trial is unacceptable, leading to Sisodia's release on bail. This case highlights a troubling disparity in the justice system: while some accused individuals evade legal consequences due to the laxity of investigative agencies and courts, others, potentially innocent, remain imprisoned for years, leaving their families to suffer. As we have seen in numerous cases, delayed justice is effectively denied justice. A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

HATS OFF TO INDIAN OLYMPIC SQUAD

Madam— Hats off to the Indian Hockey team for regaining its past international glory via winning a medal in the Paris - Olympics - 2024. Their defeating the great - proven - teams such as Australia and England elucidates their resolve, dedication, determination. It could not enter the final and had to settle for bronze (due to sheer bad luck of the day). This is the 13th Olympic medal for India in hockey (8 gold, 1 silver, 4 bronze). Arman Sherawat's bronze in wrestling, cooled the hearts of Indians, which otherwise wallowed in pain over the disqualification of Vinesh Phogat, (the gold medal sure shot). Hats off to the Indian magnificent 6, who won 5 bronze medals and 1 silver in the Paris Olympics - 2024. Also kudos to all the national and international participants of the prestigious grand gala Olympics (sports festival). Kudos to Indian winners: 3 shooters:

A world in turmoil



The world seems to be in flames. In the UK, violent clashes between communities are intensifying, with immigrants gaining

ground in the conflict. Across Europe, a similar surge sees immigrants clashing with native populations. But the most alarming development this week has been the chaos and coup in our neighboring country—once a close friend and an Islamic nation that upheld peaceful coexistence among all religions, now plunged into turmoil. These are difficult times where unrests and upheavals have become order of the day. Amidst this global unrest, our own opposition leaders are calling for insurrection, openly demanding the removal of our elected Prime Minister. These are the same voices that champion democracy and preach about love. Yet, we believe that Indians will never tread that destructive path. We stood strong during the Emergency, showing our love for the nation and our willingness to fight for it if necessary. C K Subramaniam | Bengaluru

Manu, Sarabjot, Swapnil Kusale, wrestler Aman Sehrawat and the hockey team for the 5 bronze medals, star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra for the silver medal (for the athletic 89.45 m throw). PV Srinivas Sreelekha | Secunderabad

NEERAJ WINS SILVER

Madam — India's star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra clinched a silver medal at the Paris Olympics, performing in front of an enthusiastic crowd at Stade de France. Neeraj's throw of 89.45m earned him second place on the podium. Although it was his best performance of the season, it wasn't enough to secure gold, which went to Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem with a throw of 92.97m, (will be hard to beat in the near future) setting a new Olympic record. It's a pity for 145 crore Indian that we have not won a single gold but we plan to hold the Olympics in India! It is quite evident that Neeraj Chopra has given his best (though too much pressure of expectations was put on the guy). But the most important thing to note is that India is very poor in succession planning and finding alternatives,

not just in sports but in every field. If the sports administration could not find a single alternative between Tokyo and Paris then it's an utter failure (sadly Vinesh Phogat's golden hope mar by 100 gram over weight) for the sports authority. Among Indians Neeraj Chopra is a champion player but what he failed to do is to up his game and cross 90m during the last four years. It is a classic case of a person sitting on his laurels and not pushing himself. Last 4 years he has not even crossed 90m marks once and the government has spent (Rs. 5,21,72,457 crore) so much money on him. One has to agree that 8th August was the Pakistan's day but fact is that Nadeem crossed 90m earlier and today in the crucial moment he did it twice while winning the gold. He had not even half the support that Neeraj got. India stands behind Pakistan in the medal tally at Olympics. What else, wondering, though it's sports!

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

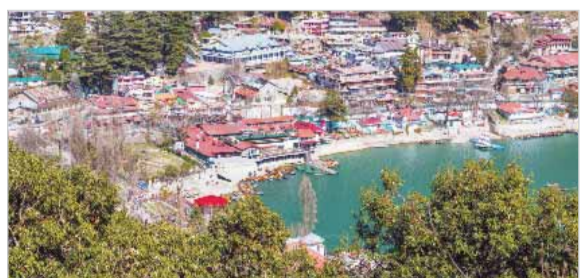
A Heartfelt reflection on the changing face of Nainital



SANJAY CHANDRA

Over the decades, relentless deforestation and unchecked construction have turned Nainital's once verdant landscapes into tinderboxes

Summers were harsh this year. Fire rained from the skies. Cities were burning. So were the mountains. My first holiday to the mountains was in the summer of 1970. We boarded the train in the evening, excited about the trip. The first glimpse of the distant mountains the next morning kept us awake for the remaining journey, as the faint outlines turned prominent. The bus ride from the railway station was equally exciting. Sometimes we travelled hugging the mountains, and at other times we looked down with fear, as the bus moved literally at the edge of the road.



After what felt like an impossibly long time, as we turned a bend, I gasped looking with awe at the majestic lake spread out before me. We had arrived at Nainital. I had fallen in love with the hills. I would return several times in the following years, till I realised that there were many other equally beautiful hills to explore. Things started changing fast. My first view in the summer of 1970 faded into a fond memory, which I would often draw upon to mourn a lost time. I still remember very vividly the green shades covering the hills, even in the summers, much before the onset of monsoons. There was not even a speck of brown visible beneath the thick curtain of foliage. I also do not remember the presence of fans, coolers, refrigerators, much less air conditioners. The only cooling devices were the soft ice-cream machines along the Mall road. The subsequent visits were a stark contrast. We could see the rapid pace of deforestation and the mushrooming of construction activities along the roads. There was a hazy curtain of dust as dumpers carried their load from the innumerable quarries in the hills. Fans started making their entry in homes and hotels, initially only for a few days in peak summers, and then for a better part of the year. I was unaware of the ecological disaster that was in the making at that stage in life. However, I could intuitively sense that it was not something desirable. A few wild fires in earlier years started increasing in numbers and intensity. It was easy to attribute these to the locals setting off accidental fires. The high and mighty of the land are seldom blamed. Wildfires in the mountains are not new; but not to the extent that they now ravage. A trickle in the previous century is now a raging river. Fires in the Nainital region alone engulfed vast tracts of land even entering residential areas. Other mountains in the north also faced the same fate. Even the plains are not immune to the rapid march

of unplanned urbanisation and the greed of the unscrupulous. I remember going to view Ram Lila wearing half-sleeved sweaters. We would wait with baited breaths for Diwali. However warm it was the previous day, we would invariably take out heavier woollens from Diwali. With time, winters started setting in later than we were used to. Our beautiful planet is nudging us with innumerable omens to wake up and look after her. Hills are sinking under the heavy burden of unplanned construction of houses, hotels, and resorts. Sea levels are going up. Many coastal cities may submerge over the next few decades. Water tables are fast going down resulting in conflicts for drinking water. We need to act to live a better future for the coming generations. Let us remember British historian, explorer and activist Robert Swan, "The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it." (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

HAVE A INTREPID AND ROBUST MINDSET

Through spiritual practices, one can find strength to continue the journey of life



RAVI VALLURI

Always be associated with people who are good at heart. This is what Swami Vivekananda said. My mother shares her birthday with Swami Vivekananda who was born on 12th January 1863. Association, Sangha, and Satsang were her strong points. She nurtured strong bonds with all religious faiths and spiritually inclined people. She wanted to pursue medicine but life did not take that trajectory instead she became a qualified medical social worker. She used to tell patients and their children, 'Fear is only as deep as the mind allows.' Thus, patients afflicted with TB, but not bedridden, participated in the projects. This was what she called 'Diversionary Therapy'. The TB Hospital became a unique template for the methods adopted by doctors, para-med staff, social workers, government bodies and NGOs, all to contribute to the rehabilitation of the patients. Climate changes, civilizations collapse, governments change political affiliations alter and even the best possible model collapses. This is inevitable. As Buddha says, 'The only permanent thing in life is impermanence.' The lofty objectives were not approved by a new set of hospital administrators and the beacon of hope collapsed but she tried hard with a robust mindset. This was extremely traumatic for my mother and she became a patient of Paroxysmal Atrial Tachycardia (PAT). This is a type of arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat). Paroxysmal means that the episode of arrhythmia originates and terminates abruptly. Atrial implies the arrhythmia starts with the atria or in the upper chambers of the heart. The tachycardia results in a signifi-



cant increase in the heartbeat per minute. It abnormally increases the pace, like in an athlete on a treadmill. PAT significantly increases the heartbeat of an adult from the normal 60 to 100 to 130 to 230 and among infants and children, it shoots up from 100 to 130 to 220 beats per minute. It is accompanied by sweating, dizziness, palpitations, angina and acute breathlessness.

Normally, a patient suffers from such a condition owing to emotional upheavals, physical exhaustion, deep anxiety, and consumption of caffeine or alcohol. I saw my mother suffering from this condition on several occasions and being admitted to the ICU. It was a distressing and disturbing sight. While it is not a life-threatening affliction, it certainly disorients the psychology and attitude of the patient. During her suffering, we saw her clutching onto her rosary as a lifesaver, while we prayed fervently for her recovery. She was administered medication but it worked only to an extent. The real help came in the form of a pentagon-shaped talisman. That is through Siddha Healing, Pranik Healing, the ten-day Vipassana Course and the Part 1 and Part 2 Art of Living courses. This is the unique, amazing and scientific power of the breath. Breathing techniques, meditation, medication, and proper diet changed the trajectory of the life of the patient and brought back the mojo in her life. 'When you take a breath in, let it become your meditation that all the suffering of all the beings in the world is riding on that incoming breath and reaching your heart, and see a miracle happen,' says Osho. Till her final days, she continued with these practices. Senior citizens, those in pain and agony and even the able-bodied should undertake the courses mentioned. Swami Vivekananda took Yoga to America and spread the Ramakrishna Mission. He was the Arjuna of Shri Rama Krishna Paramhansa. My mother imbibed the trait of service to mankind by reading extensively about Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda and the Almighty God blessed her with an intrepid mind.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Populism will not let food subsidy reforms take off



UTTAM GUPTA

Leakages can be curbed if the subsidy is given directly to the beneficiaries using 'direct benefit transfer' mode. The potential for reducing food subsidies is immense



In the full Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23, 2024, the government has pegged the budget estimate (BE) food subsidy for FY 2024-25 at Rs 205,250 crore which is no different from the estimate given in the interim Budget. Though slightly lower than the revised estimate (RE) of Rs 211,394 crores for FY 2023-24, this is no consolation as invariably, the RE for any financial year turns out to be higher than the BE. For instance, while presenting the budget for FY 2023-24, Sitharaman kept the BE for food subsidy at Rs 197,000 crore. Against this, RE has turned out to be Rs 14,394 crore more. The moot point is that the expenditure incurred by the Central government during the last five years under this head has been consistently over Rs 200,000 crore mark every year 2020-21: Rs 529,000 crore; 2021-22: Rs 372,000 crore; 2022-23: Rs 287,000 crore; 2023-24: Rs 211,394 crores and 2024-25: Rs 205,250 crore (BE). During 2024-25, food subsidy will account for 4.2 per cent of its budget (Rs 4820,000 crore), 5.5 per cent of its revenue expenditure (Rs 3709,000 crore) and consume nearly 8 per cent of its estimated net tax receipts (Rs 2583,000 crore). Reining in food subsidy is no less important than the goal it seeks to achieve namely providing 'food security'. The uncontrolled rise in the former leads to an unsustainable increase in fiscal deficit (excess of total receipts over total expenditure) which can injure the economy in multiple ways through high inflation, high interest rates, a slowdown in growth, fewer jobs, low incomes and so on. This, in turn, can lead to a demand for higher financial assistance including food subsidies from the government thereby exacerbating the vicious cycle. There exists a huge scope for reducing food subsidies. To assess this, at the outset, let us see how it is administered. Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), the Centre asks the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other state agencies to procure food from the farmers at MSP (minimum support price) and organize its distribution to around 820 million people for free.



REINING IN FOOD SUBSIDY IS NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE GOAL IT SEEKS TO ACHIEVE NAMEDLY PROVIDING 'FOOD SECURITY'. THE UNCONTROLLED RISE IN THE FORMER LEADS TO AN UNSUSTAINABLE INCREASE IN FISCAL DEFICIT (EXCESS OF TOTAL RECEIPTS OVER TOTAL EXPENDITURE) WHICH CAN INJURE THE ECONOMY IN MULTIPLE WAYS

The entire cost i.e. MSP paid to farmers plus handling and distribution cost (HDC) is reimbursed to the FCI/other state agencies as a subsidy. The money comes from the Union Budget's allocation for 'food subsidy'. While, the PMGKAY has been in force since January 1, 2023, before that, the Centre was giving food to 820 million persons (7 kg of cereals per person per month to 120 million poorest of the poor persons covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana or AAY families and five kg of cereals per person per month to the remaining 700 million) at a heavily subsidized price of Rs 2/3/1 per kg for wheat/price/coarse cereals under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). In addition, since April 2020, it has given 5 kg of food per person per month for "free" to all 820 million beneficiaries under PMGKAY to mitigate the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic. From January 1, 2023, it merged the free part of PMGKAY with the regular food security schemes under NFSA. Now, food is available to all 820 million beneficiaries for free under the new incarnation of NFSA namely the PMGKAY. This arrangement will continue for five years till the end of CY 2028 as per the announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2023. Avenues for saving in subsidy First, fundamentally, subsidized food is meant for the poor. The number of poor isn't more than 15 - 20 per cent of India's population. Yet, the number of beneficiaries under the PMGKAY at 820 million works out to nearly 59 per cent of the population. Even as per the Shanta Kumar Committee (2015), the number of people eligible for subsidized food under NFSA shouldn't be more than 40 per cent. The excess of 19 per cent comes to around 270 million.

Further, during the last nine-and-a-half years of the incumbent government, 250 million persons have come out of poverty (as per a recent report by Niti Aayog). These persons can be excluded from the list of beneficiaries. Doing a back-of-the-envelope calculation, giving free food to a million persons entails a subsidy of Rs 200 crore per annum. Excluding 250 million will help save Rs 50,000 crore. The existing beneficiaries list of 820 million is based on 2011 Census estimates while the Supreme Court (SC) has directed that the Centre should take into account the population during 2021. On this basis, it needs to give free food to an additional 100 million. That will cost Rs 20,000 crore. Even after providing for this, it will save Rs 30,000 crore annually. Second, why every beneficiary should get free food? The Shanta Kumar Committee had recommended that non-AAY persons should pay 50 per cent of the MSP. Other than AAY are 700 million persons. Minus 250 million (who shouldn't get a subsidy at all) and adding 100 million (as per SC order), we get 550 million. Making them pay 50 per cent of MSP or Rs 11.4 per kg (wheat), will save Rs 37,600 crore annually. Third, the NFSA legislation enacted in 2013 required beneficiaries to pay Rs 2/3/1 per kg for wheat/rice/coarse cereals. If these rates for three years. Since 2016, there has been no legal bar on increasing the price. Yet, far from increasing, the Modi - government has reduced the price to zero. Are they all (read: 820 million persons) so poor that they can't pay even a fraction of the cost (in the case of wheat at Rs 2 per kg, it is 1/15th)? Even if you make them pay a notional Rs 1 per kg, this will yield savings of Rs 5000 crore per annum. Fourth, the initial idea under the

Scheme was that FCI et al would buy only the quantity needed for meeting beneficiaries' requirements under NFSA plus maintain some 'strategic' buffer to meet emergencies. It was never meant to be an 'open-ended' procurement which it has become today. This has also contributed to the avoidable increase in subsidy besides stocking problems. Shunning 'open-ended' purchases can yield significant savings. Fifth, currently, FCI/state agencies are paid HDC on an 'actual' basis. This leads to payment for inefficiencies in the system and even cost padding. The stories of loaders being paid hefty salaries by the FCI are still fresh in memory. A shift from 'actual' to reimbursement of cost to agencies on a 'normative' basis can save a lot of subsidy. Finally, the availability of a mammoth of around 60 million tons (the quantity distributed under the PMGKAY) in the supply chain with zero price tag is an open invitation to dubious operators to siphon off and sell in the open market raking in a moolah. The PDS scam in West Bengal involving the diversion of subsidized food grains worth tens of thousands of crore currently under investigation by the central agencies provides a classic example. This can be curbed if the subsidy is given directly to the beneficiaries using DBT (direct benefit transfer) mode. The potential for reducing food subsidies is immense. The government can go for any of the above measures or all of them depending on how much savings it targets. But, ALAS under the current political scenario, Modi won't dare to take even a baby step like charging a notional price of Rs 1 per kg. (The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Implications of upheaval in Bangladesh on its trade relations with India

The sudden turn of events have raised concerns about the potential impact on trade, economic stability, and the broader geopolitical dynamics of the region

Since Sheikh Hasina assumed office as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in 2009, the country has been a key ally of India. Her leadership has seen significant progress in bilateral relations, with a focus on infrastructure, connectivity, and trade. However, the recent political crisis in Bangladesh has raised concerns about the future of this partnership. On January 8, 2024, Sheikh Hasina declared that boosting the country's economy would be her top priority for the next five years. Yet, by August 2024, the nation was engulfed in violent demonstrations over a quota system for government positions, leading to a deepening domestic political crisis. As tensions escalated, Sheikh Hasina resigned and sought



ADITYA PRATAP SINGH

refuge in India, raising concerns about the stability of Bangladesh and its impact on Indo-Bangladesh relations. **The Evolution of Indo-Bangladesh Relations** Over the past decade, India and Bangladesh have fostered strong economic ties, with infrastructure and connectivity projects playing a crucial role in strengthening their relationship. Since 2016, India has extended \$8 billion in

credit to Bangladesh for the development of road, rail, shipping, and port infrastructure. The two nations have also engaged in various areas of commerce, including medical tourism, business expansion, and the international garment trade. Bangladesh, a major player in the global garment industry, relies heavily on cotton imports from India. The textile and garment sectors account for 56% of Bangladesh's total exports to India, making it a vital trading partner in South Asia. In the financial year 2023-24, bilateral trade between the two countries reached \$13 billion, according to the Union Ministry of Commerce. **The Impact on Trade** Sheikh Hasina's leadership saw a flourishing of com-

merce between India and Bangladesh, leading to a significant trade surplus for India. However, the ongoing political turmoil in Bangladesh threatens to disrupt this economic partnership. The civil unrest and worsening economic situation have created security concerns that could impact Indian exports, commerce, and infrastructure projects in the neighboring nation. One of the major challenges will be on the bilateral trade front. After reaching \$12.21 billion in 2022-23, India's exports to Bangladesh dropped to \$11 billion in 2023-24. Similarly, Bangladesh's imports decreased from \$2 billion in the previous year to \$1.84 billion in the most recent fiscal year. Indian exporters have



voiced concerns about the situation in Bangladesh, fearing that the instability in the country will negatively affect commerce between the two nations. A significant scarcity of dollars in Bangladesh, as noted by the think tank GTRI, has already curtailed the country's ability to import goods, particularly from India. **Uncertainty Surrounding the Free Trade Agreement**

In October 2023, India and Bangladesh discussed the possibility of a free trade agreement (FTA) during a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Trade meeting in Dhaka. An FTA could streamline regulations, encourage investment and commerce, and potentially remove customs tariffs, boosting trade between the two countries. According to a 2012 World Bank working paper, a full-product FTA could enhance Bangladesh's exports to India by 182%, while a partial FTA might grow them by 134%. This would contribute to strengthening Bangladesh's trade transport infrastructure and commerce links, leading to a significant rise in exports. However, the current political crisis has cast doubt on the

future of the FTA proposals. Sheikh Hasina's exit might slow or pause this development, affecting the expansion of commerce and trade in new areas between the two nations. **Challenges for the Textile and Garment Industry** The ongoing crisis in Bangladesh could also have a negative impact on other sectors, particularly the textile and garment industry. In the fiscal year 2021-2022, Bangladesh exported garments worth \$42.613 billion, solidifying its position as the second-largest apparel exporter globally. However, the recent incidents of factories being set on fire have raised concerns about the future of this industry. Many of these textile units are owned by traders associated with the

Awami League Party, making them particularly vulnerable in the current political climate. While India has the potential to step in and provide garments to developed economies, there are certain drawbacks to this shift. Bangladesh, as a Least Developed Country, benefits from zero-duty advantages, while Indian goods face tariff barriers. If borders remain closed and duty-free export-import activities are suspended, there is a possibility of increased demand for Indian garments. However, it is still too early to make definitive predictions about the opportunities and gains that might arise from this situation. (The author is a PhD scholar at HBTU, Kanpur; views are personal)

'Bringing eco on track priority'

PTI n DHAKA

The top priority of Bangladesh's interim government is to bring the economy back on track and restore the people's trust in the banks, finance and planning adviser Salehuddin Ahmed has said. Former Bangladesh Bank governor Ahmed was entrusted with the charge of the finance and planning ministries by interim leader Muhammad Yunus, who announced the portfolios of his 16-member council of advisers on Friday. The interim government led by the 84-year-old Nobel laureate was formed after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government on August 5 following widespread protests against her government over a controversial quota system in jobs.

Talking to reporters on Saturday for the first time after assuming office, Ahmed said the government's priority is to restore the trust of common people in the banks while resuming the operations of the central bank.

"Then we'll work on bringing reforms," state-run news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) quoted him as saying.

"For various reasons, the country's economy has slowed down. Our goal will be to revive the economy as quickly as possible. Once the economy comes to a standstill, it becomes quite difficult to restart it. We do not want it to come to a halt," he said.

"There are various problems in the economy. There are issues with the banking sector, inflation, and many other complexities. We will need to work on all fronts," the Dhaka Tribune newspaper quoted him as saying. Asserting that they have been given the responsibility during a "critical time" for the country, he said, "At this time, it's not just about law and order or security measures; opening banks, keeping ports operational—everything needs to be given equal importance." He added that it would not take much time to resume the basic operations of the banking sector. "Already the operations are there, but there were some deviations at the middle of the operations...the operations



A student paints a new graffiti on a street wall at Dhaka University campus in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bidhan Poddar, Suprodip Chakma sworn-in as interim Govt's advisers in Bangladesh

PTI n DHAKA

Dr Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar and Suprodip Chakma were sworn in on Sunday as the members of the council of advisers of Bangladesh's interim government led by Nobel laureate Prof Dr. Muhammad Yunus. President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath of office to Poddar and Chakma while Chief Adviser Dr. Yunus witnessed the ceremony at Darbar Hall of the presidential palace

were not at all derailed, rather slowed down a little bit. We'll enhance the pace," he said. He said the interim government wants to establish an

'Bangabhaban' here, state-run BSS news agency reported.

On Thursday, the majority of the members of the 16-member council of advisers took oath. The council will assist Yunus in running the state's affairs. Chakma, former Ambassador and Chairman of the Chattogram Hill Tracts Development Board, and Dr Poddar, former director of the National Institute of Mental Health, could not take oath on Thursday as they

"equal and just-based society" and to ensure increasing incomes while reducing inflation. On Friday, the governor of Bangladesh Bank Abdur

were outside Dhaka, the news agency said. Another adviser, freedom fighter Farooq-e Azam, could not take oath as he was outside the capital. Yunus, the 84-year-old economist was appointed as the head of the interim government on Tuesday after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India following widespread protests against her government over a controversial quota system in jobs. He took the oath of office on Thursday.

Rouf Talukder tendered his resignation, citing personal reasons. His resignation is part of a broader wave of departures from various institutions of

the country following the recent fall of the Hasina-led government.

Bangladesh's Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan also tendered his resignation, five days after the fall of Hasina's regime amid massive street protests and students marching towards the apex court demanding a revamp of the judiciary. Over 230 people were killed in Bangladesh in the incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina government on Monday, taking the death toll to 560 since the anti-quota protests first started in mid-July.

The crisis in Bangladesh, which is a crucial market for Indian textiles, poses "significant concerns" for India's textile and apparel sector, according to the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry. The textile industry body believes that any supply disruption in Bangladesh will have an immediate impact on the supply chain, potentially affecting production schedules and delivery timelines of Indian firms.

Refaat Ahmed sworn in as B'desh new chief justice

PTI n DHAKA

Syed Refaat Ahmed was sworn in as Bangladesh's new chief justice on Sunday, a day after Obaidul Hassan stepped down as the top judge following an ultimatum by the protesters demanding a revamp of the judiciary.

Hassan and five other judges of the apex Appellate Division on Saturday tendered their resignation, five days after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's regime amid massive street protests.

His resignation came as protesters of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement gathered at the apex court premises. The students had issued an ultimatum to him and the judges of the Appellate Division to resign by 1 pm.

Ahmed took oath as the new chief justice during a ceremony at the Darbar Hall of the president's official residence at around 12.45 pm local time, The Daily Star newspaper



reported. President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath to the chief justice. The oath-taking ceremony was conducted by Cabinet Secretary Mahbub Hossain, the report said.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, who was sworn in on Thursday as the head of an interim government following the ouster of Hasina, also attended the event.

President Shahabuddin on Saturday appointed Justice Ahmed as the 25th chief justice of Bangladesh.

Several top officials in Bangladesh, including Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Maksud Kamal and Bangla Academy Director General Professor Dr Md Harun-Ur-Rashid Askari, resigned from their posts in the wake of new protests by students and other demonstrators. Meanwhile, Dr Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar and Suprodip Chakma were sworn in on Sunday as the members of the council of advisers of Bangladesh's interim government led by Nobel laureate Prof Dr Muhammad Yunus.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath of office to Poddar and Chakma while Chief Adviser Dr Yunus witnessed the ceremony at Darbar Hall of the presidential palace 'Bangabhaban' here, state-run BSS news agency reported.

Schoolchildren in UK to be trained in spotting fake news

PTI n LONDON

Schoolchildren will be taught how to spot extremist content and fake news online under proposed changes to the curriculum in the wake of far-right riots across UK cities fuelled by misinformation on social media.

UK Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson told "The Daily Telegraph" on Sunday that she is launching a review of the curriculum in both primary and secondary schools to embed critical thinking across multiple subjects and arm children against "putrid conspiracy theories". It means schoolchildren may analyse articles in English lessons to help learn how to weed out fabricated clickbait from accurate reporting. "It's more important than ever that we give young people the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge what they see online," Phillipson told the newspaper. "That's why our curriculum

review will develop plans to embed critical skills in lessons to arm our children against the disinformation, fake news and putrid conspiracy theories awash on social media," she said. "Our renewed curriculum will always put high and rising standards in core subjects first - that's non-negotiable. But alongside this we will create a broad, knowledge-rich curriculum that widens access to cultural subjects and gives pupils the knowledge and skills they need to thrive at work and throughout life," she added.

The move came as the chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council, Chief Constable Gavin Stephens, cautioned in an article in the newspaper over disinformation being widely shared on social media sites during the recent violent clashes. "What has struck me during the disorder is how vulnerable we all are to disinformation and vile hatred online. We have spoken in recent

years about how to keep our children safe online, and what we have learned this week is that left unchecked misinformation and harmful posts can undermine all our safety," he writes. "How we behave online is not abstract. It has real world consequences. Perhaps we should be deleting a lot more than we share," he added.

The riots began in Southport, the scene of the fatal stabbings in north-west England of three young girls at a holiday dance workshop on July 29, after false claims over the UK-born teenage male suspect being a Muslim refugee who arrived illegally into the country on a small boat recently spread like wildfire online. The violent clashes, blamed by Prime Minister Keir Starmer on "far-right thuggery", soon spread across different cities with tough policing action and fast-track court hearings being brought in to clamp down on the unrest.

Trump's campaign says its emails were hacked

AP n WASHINGTON

Former President Donald Trump's presidential campaign said on Saturday that it has been hacked and suggested Iranian actors were involved in stealing and distributing sensitive internal documents. The campaign provided no specific evidence of Iran's involvement, but the claim comes a day after Microsoft issued a report detailing foreign agents' attempts to interfere in the US campaign in 2024.

It cited an instance of an Iranian military intelligence unit in June sending "a spear-phishing email to a high-ranking official of a presidential campaign from a compromised email account of a former senior advisor."

Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung blamed the hack on "foreign sources hostile to the United States." A spokesperson for the National Security Council said in a statement that it takes any report of improper foreign

interference "extremely seriously" and condemns any government or entity that attempts to undermine confidence in US democratic institutions, but said it deferred to the Justice Department on this matter.

Iran's mission to the United Nations, when asked about the claim of the Trump campaign, denied being involved. "We do not accord any credence to such reports," the mission told The Associated Press. "The Iranian government neither possesses nor harbors any intent or motive to interfere in the United States presidential election."

However, Iran long has been suspected of running hacking campaigns targeting its enemies in the Middle East and beyond. Tehran also long has threatened to retaliate against Trump over the 2020 drone strike he ordered that killed prominent Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

The US Justice Department this past week unsealed crim-

inal charges against a Pakistani national with ties to Iran alleged to have plotted assassination attempts against political figures in the United States, including potentially Trump, and to have sought to hire purported hitmen who were actually undercover law enforcement officials. Court documents in that case pointedly noted a desire by Iran to conduct operations against perceived enemies of the regime and to avenge the killing of Soleimani.

Politico first reported Saturday on the hack. The outlet reported that it began receiving emails on July 22 from an anonymous account. The source — an AOL email account identified only as "Robert" — passed along what appeared to be a research dossier the campaign had apparently done on the Republican vice presidential nominee, Ohio Sen. JD Vance. The document was dated Feb. 23, almost five months before Trump selected Vance as his running mate.

Harris pledges to work to end taxes on tips

AP n LAS VEGAS

Vice President Kamala Harris promised on Saturday to work to eliminate taxes on tips paid to restaurant workers and other service employees, echoing a pledge that her opponent in November, Donald Trump, has made, and creating a rare instance of political overlap from both sides. Harris made the announcement at a rally on the campus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where the economy relies heavily on the hotel, restaurant and entertainment industries. Trump vowed essentially the same thing at his own rally in the city in June — though neither he nor Harris are likely to be able to fully do that without actions from Congress.

"It is my promise to everyone here that, when I am president, we will continue our fight for working families of America," Harris said. "Including to raise the minimum wage and eliminate taxes on tips for service and hospitality workers." Trump responded on his social media site a short time later, posting that Harris "just copied

my NO TAXES ON TIPS Policy."

"The difference is, she won't do it, she just wants it for Political Purposes!" the former president wrote. "This was a TRUMP idea - She has no ideas, she can only steal from me." Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, came to Nevada as the final stop of a battleground blitz in which their party has shown new energy after President Joe Biden exited the race and endorsed Harris. On Sunday, the vice president is holding a San Francisco fundraiser that has already raised more than USD 12 million, her campaign said, with House Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi among those set to speak.

There were 12,000-plus people inside the campus basketball arena on Saturday and, before the event started, local law enforcement opted to close the doors to the event due to people becoming ill while waiting outside to go through security in the 109-degree heat. Approximately 4,000 people were in line when the entrances were shut down.

Walz referenced that during his speech, but turned it into an



Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris speaks at a campaign rally at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas on Saturday

AP/PTI

applause line by adding of Nevada, "don't worry, we're going to be back a lot."

As part of the trip, Harris is hoping to build greater support among Latino voters. In 2020, Biden narrowly beat Republican Trump by 2.4 percentage points in Nevada. Trump, the former president,

tried to create more support in a state that relies on the service industry with his own, previous pledge to make workers' tips tax-free. But the union represented 60,000 workers in that industry, the Culinary Workers Union, announced its endorsement of Harris. About 54 per cent of the union's members are

Latino, 55 per cent women and 60 per cent immigrants.

"The path to victory runs through Nevada," the union said in a statement, "and the Culinary Union will deliver Nevada for President Kamala Harris and Vice President Tim Walz."

Harris made her promise on eliminating tip taxation as part of a broader appeal to strengthen the nation's middle class, seizing on a theme that was a centerpiece of Biden's now-defunct reelection bid.

"We believe in a future where we lower the cost of living for America's families so they have a chance, not just to get by, but to get ahead," she said.

AP VoteCast found in 2020 that 14 per cent of Nevada voters were Hispanic, with Biden winning 54 per cent of their votes. His margin with Hispanic voters was slightly better nationwide, a sign that Democrats cannot take this bloc of voters for granted. "There's an incredible energy here among the college students and community members who are coming together to support and listen to our next president, Kamala Harris," said Imer Cespedes-Alvarado, 21.

Kin of Brazilian plane crash victims gather in Sao Paulo, identification process on

AP n SAO PAULO

Families of victims of an airliner crash in Brazil are gathering Sunday at a morgue and hotels in Sao Paulo as forensic experts work to identify the remains of the 62 people killed in the accident.

Local authorities said the bodies of the pilot, Danilo Santos Romano, and his co-pilot, Humberto de Campos Alencar e Silva, were the first to be identified by forensic experts.

Sao Paulo state government said in a statement Saturday evening that the remains of all the victims had been recovered. There were 34 male and 28 female bodies in the wreckage, it said.

The ATR 72 twin-engine turboprop operated by Brazilian airline Voepass was headed for Guarulhos international

airport in Sao Paulo with 58 passengers and four crew members when it went down Friday in Vinhedo, 78 kilometres north of the metropolis. Voepass said three passengers who held Brazilian identification also carried Venezuelan documents and one had Portuguese.

At least eight physicians were aboard, Parana state Gov. Ratinho Junior said. Four professors at Unioeste university in western Parana were also confirmed dead.

Three-year-old Liz Ibba dos Santos, who was travelling with her father, was the only child known to be on passenger list. The remains of Luna, a dog that was travelling with a Venezuelan family, was found in the wreckage. Sao Paulo's morgue began receiving the bodies Friday

evening, and it asked victims' relatives to bring in medical, X-ray and dental records to help identify the bodies. Blood tests were also done to help identification efforts.

The few family members speaking about the tragedy did so on social media. Tania Azevedo, who lost her son Tiago in the crash, was put up in one of the hotels in Sao Paulo, but said in a posting that she was waiting to go to the morgue.

"I believe Tiago is somewhere trying to help the other people wounded who also need light and love," she said. "I couldn't go there (to the morgue). I am here waiting. It is dark here, I need some light and love myself." Images recorded by witnesses showed the aircraft in a flat spin and plunging vertically before

smashing to the ground inside a gated community, and leaving an obliterated fuselage consumed by fire. Residents said there were no injuries on the ground.

It was the world's deadliest airline crash since January 2023, when 72 people died on a Yeti Airlines plane in Nepal that stalled and crashed while making its landing approach. That plane also was an ATR 72, and the final report blamed pilot error.

Metsul, one of Brazil's most respected meteorological companies, said Friday there were reports of severe icing in Sao Paulo state around the time of the crash. Local media cited experts pointing to icing as a potential cause for the accident. A video shared on social media channels Saturday shows a Voepass pilot telling passengers

of a flight from Guarulhos to the city of Cascavel, the same origin of the crashed plane, that the ATR 72 has flown safely around the world for decades. He also asked passengers to be respectful to the memory of his colleagues and the company and asked for prayers.

"This tragedy doesn't hit only those who perished in this accident. It hits all of us," the unidentified pilot said. "We are giving all our hearts, all our best to be here and fulfil our mission to take you safely and comfortably to your destination."

Police restricted access to the main entrance of the Sao Paulo morgue where bodies from the crash were being identified. Some family members of the victims arrived on foot, others came in minivans. None spoke to journalists, and authorities

requested that they not be filmed as they came.

A flight carrying more family members from Parana state landed Saturday afternoon at Guarulhos airport, and they also chose not to speak to journalists. A minivan sponsored by the airline was provided to transport them to the morgue.

Many family members were gathered at a hotel in downtown Sao Paulo, and declining to speak to media there, too. An American Eagle ATR 72-200 crashed on October 31, 1994, and the US National Transportation Safety Board determined the probable cause was ice buildup while the plane was circling in a holding pattern. The plane rolled at about 8,000 feet and dove into the ground, killing all 68 people on board. The US Federal Aviation

Administration issued operating procedures for ATRs and similar planes telling pilots not to use the autopilot in icing conditions.

Brazilian aviation expert Lito Sousa cautioned that meteorological conditions alone might not be enough to explain why the Voepass plane fell in the manner it did Friday.

"Analysing an air crash just with images can lead to wrong conclusions about the causes," Sousa told The Associated Press by phone.

"But we can see a plane with loss of support, no horizontal speed. In this flat spin condition, there's no way to reclaim control of the plane." Brazil's air force said Saturday that both of the plane's flight recorders had been sent to its analysis laboratory in the capital, Brasilia. The results of its

investigations are expected to be published within 30 days, it said.

Marcelo Moura, director of operations for Voepass, told reporters Friday night that while there were forecasts for ice, they were within acceptable levels for the aircraft. In an earlier statement, the Brazilian air force's centre for the investigation and prevention of air accidents said the plane's pilots did not call for help or say they were operating under adverse weather conditions.

The ATR 72, which is built by a joint venture of Airbus in France and Italy's Leonardo SpA, is generally used on shorter flights. Crashes involving various models of the ATR 72 have resulted in 470 deaths going back to the 1990s, according to a database of the Aviation Safety Network.

Zelenskyy 'confirms' daring military incursion onto Russian soil

AP n KYIV
Days after Ukraine began a surprise military incursion into Russia's Kursk border region, Zelenskyy broke the government's silence on late Saturday by indirectly acknowledging ongoing military actions to "push the war out into the aggressor's territory" in his nightly address. Overnight into Sunday, a Russian drone and missile barrage on Kyiv killed two people including a 4-year-old boy. In Russia, Kursk's regional governor said that a Ukrainian missile shot down by Russian air defences fell on a residential building, wounding 13 people. Russia attacked Ukraine with four ballistic missiles and 57 Shahed drones, Ukraine's Air Force said. Air defences shot down 53 drones. The bodies of a 35-year old man and his son were found under rubble after fragments of missiles fell on a residential area in Kyiv's suburban Brovary district, according to Ukraine's State Emergency Service on Sunday. Another three people

in the district were also injured in the attack. Serhii Popko, head of the Kyiv City Military Administration said it was the second time this month Kyiv was targeted. Popko said ballistic missiles did not reach the capital but that suburbs took the hit, while drones aiming for the capital were shot down. Zelenskyy, citing preliminary information, said that Russia had used a North Korean missile in the strike. Ukraine and the US have previously said that Russia has used North Korean missiles in the war. Zelenskyy reiterated calls to Western allies to step up in assistance to Ukraine, and that "to really stop Russian terror, we need not only a full-fledged air shield that will protect all our cities and communities, but also strong decisions from partners — decisions that will remove restrictions on our defensive actions." Meanwhile, Ukraine's incursion into Russia continued for a sixth day. The largest such attack since the full-scale invasion and unprecedented for its



Russian Emergency paramedics roll a stretcher with a resident of an apartment building damaged after shelling by the Ukrainian side into an ambulance in Kursk, Russia, on Sunday. **AP/PTI**

use of Ukrainian military units on Russian soil, it caught Moscow unaware and was an embarrassment to Russian military leaders who have scrambled to contain the breach. The exact aims of the operation remain unclear and Ukrainian military officials have adopted a policy of secrecy, presumably to ensure its success. Military experts have said that it is

likely intended to draw Russian reserves away from the intense fighting in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, while a presidential advisor suggested it may strengthen Kyiv's hand in any future negotiations with Russia. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Sunday that Ukraine "understands perfectly well" that the recent attacks "make no sense from a military point of view." "The Kyiv regime is continuing its terrorist activity with the sole purpose of intimidating the peaceful population of Russia," she added. Kursk acting governor Aleksei Smirnov said on Sunday that a "Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group" entered the Belovsky district the previous day, but that the situation had been "stabilized." In Russia, the Defense Ministry said 35 drones were shot down overnight over the Kursk, Voronezh, Belgorod, Bryansk and Oryol regions. Ukraine has not commented on the Sunday drone attacks inside Russia. But it comes as Ukraine has increased the pace of similar drone attacks largely targeting military infrastructure and oil depots in recent weeks. Meanwhile, Belarus said it was sending more troops to its border with Ukraine on Saturday, saying Ukrainian drones had violated its airspace as part of Kyiv's military incursion into Russia's Kursk region. Authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko said Belarusian air defense forces destroyed dozens of targets flying from Ukraine over the Mogilev region, which borders Russia, on Friday evening. "The Ukrainian armed forces violated all rules of conduct and violated the airspace of the Republic of Belarus. In the eastern direction, very close to us in the Kostyukovich district," Lukashenko said at a meeting in Minsk on Saturday. Belarusian Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin said Belarus regards the violation of its airspace as a provocation and is "ready for retaliatory action."

Israel broadens evacuation orders Bid to protect rights, religious freedoms of minorities in Pak

AP n DEIR AL-BALAH
The Israeli military ordered more evacuations in southern Gaza early Sunday after a deadly airstrike on a school-turned-shelter in the north killed at least 80 Palestinians, according to local health authorities. Israel said it targeted a militant command post, killing 19 fighters. Israel has repeatedly ordered mass evacuations as its troops have returned to heavily destroyed areas where they had previously battled Palestinian militants. The vast majority of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people have been displaced by the 10-month-old war, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands have crammed into squalid tent camps with few public services or sought shelter in schools like the one struck on Saturday. Palestinians say nowhere in the besieged territory feels safe. The latest evacuation orders apply to areas in Khan Younis, including part of an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone from which the military said rockets had been fired. Israel accuses Hamas and other mil-

itants of hiding among civilians and launching attacks from residential areas. Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, suffered widespread destruction during an air and ground offensive earlier this year. Tens of thousands fled again last week after an earlier evacuation order. Hundreds of families carrying their belongings in their arms left their homes and shelters early Sunday, seeking elusive refuge. "We don't know where to go," said Amal Abu Yahia, a mother of three, who had returned to Khan Younis in June to shelter in their severely damaged home. "This is my fourth displacement," said the 42-year-old widow, whose husband was killed when an Israeli airstrike hit their neighbours' house in March. She said they went to Muwasi, a sprawling tent camp along the coast, but could not find any space. Ramadan Issa, a father of five in his 50s, fled Khan Younis with 17 members of his extended family, joining hundreds of people walking toward central Gaza early Sunday.



"Every time we settle in one place and build tents for women and children, the occupation comes and bombs the area," he said, referring to Israel. "This situation is unbearable." Gaza's Health Ministry says the Palestinian death toll from the 10-month-old war is approaching 40,000, without saying how many were fighters. Aid groups have struggled to address the staggering humanitarian crisis in the territory, while international experts have warned of famine. The war began when Hamas-

Iran and its militant allies across the region. The strike on Saturday hit a mosque inside a school in Gaza City where thousands of people were sheltering. The Gaza Health Ministry said 80 people were killed and around 50 wounded. The Israeli military disputed the toll and said it killed 19 Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants in a precise strike, releasing what it said were their names and photos. Hamas and Palestinian activists disputed the military's claims, saying two of the 19 had been killed in earlier strikes and that others were known to be civilians or opponents of Hamas. Gaza City and the rest of the north have been surrounded by Israeli forces and largely cut off from the world since late last year, and it was not possible to independently confirm the accounts from either side. The UN human rights office says Israel has carried out "systematic attacks on schools," which have served as shelters since the start of the war, with at least 21 hit since July 4, leaving hundreds dead, including women and children.

PTI n ISLAMABAD
Pakistan's top civil and military leadership on Sunday vowed to protect the rights and religious freedoms of minorities, urging all segments of the society to work for promoting interfaith harmony, the spirit of love, tolerance, brotherhood and unity. In 2009, Pakistan declared August 11 as the National Minorities Day to honour the historic speech made by its founder M A Jinnah who on August 11, 1947, promised to protect their rights. President Asif Ali Zardari in his message said that minorities in Pakistan enjoy all political, economic and social rights which have been guaranteed by the Constitution, according to state-run Radio Pakistan. "We reaffirm our commitment to the promise made by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, on 11th August 1947, to the country's minorities to protect their rights and religious freedoms," Zardari said, adding the government was taking several steps for the political, social and economic empowerment of minorities. The president urged all segments of the society to educate the people about their rights and work to promote interfaith harmony, the spirit of love, tolerance, brotherhood and unity to make Pakistan a strong country. Zardari expressed confidence that the minorities of Pakistan would continue to play a positive role towards the country's development. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to minorities for their outstanding role in the country's development and prosperity. "The purpose of celebrating the day is to express solidarity with the minorities living in Pakistan and to acknowledge their services for the state of Pakistan," he said. The prime minister said that "our minority community played a key role in the Pakistan movement and since the creation of Pakistan, has been contributing immensely to nation-building." Alluding to Jinnah's historic speech, Sharif said that complete religious freedom has been given to minorities. He expressed commitment to protect the rights of minorities and their overall development and prosperity. Meanwhile, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, and the services chiefs acknowledged the indispensable contributions of minorities to the nation's progress, prosperity, and rich cultural heritage. According to an army statement, the army leadership, extending warm felicitations to the minority communities of the country, said, "This occasion serves as a poignant reminder of the diversity, inclusivity and harmonious coexistence that are the hallmarks of our great nation." The army said minority communities are an integral and vital part of the social fabric of the country and their rights and freedoms are sacrosanct as enshrined in the Constitution and Islam. According to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics in 2021, there are 96.47 per cent Muslims in the country, followed by 2.14 per cent Hindus, 1.27 per cent Christians, 0.09 per cent Ahmadi Muslims and 0.02 per cent others. The minorities are often at the receiving end due to violence by extremist groups.

FS Misri meets Nepal's top leadership, discuss ways to strengthen bilateral ties

PTI n KATHMANDU
Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Sunday met with Nepal's top leadership and discussed ways to provide an impetus to various sectors of bilateral cooperation. Misri, who is here on a two-day visit at the invitation of his Nepalese counterpart Sewa Lamsal, paid a courtesy call on President Ramchandra Paudel at the president's office Sheetalniwas in Kathmandu. "While conveying greetings of the Indian leadership, he discussed ways to further strengthen India-Nepal ties across all sectors," the Indian Embassy in Nepal said in a post on X. Misri also called on Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli at his office at Singhdurbar. "Foreign Secretary reaffirmed India & Nepal's civilizational, close and multifaceted relationship & discussed ways to provide an impetus to various

sectors of bilateral cooperation," the mission said in another post. Foreign Secretary Sewa Lamsal was also present on the occasion. Earlier in the day, Misri and Secretary of Nepal's Urban Development Ministry Maniram Galal jointly inaugurated a new building of Nepal Bhasha Parishad in Kathmandu built under India's post-earthquake reconstruction grant. "Foreign Secretary @VikramMisri & Mr Maniram Galal, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, Govt of Nepal jointly inaugurated the new building of Nepal Bhasha Parishad in Kathmandu, built under India's post-earthquake reconstruction grant," the Embassy of India said in a post on X. The building in the Naradevi area of the capital was damaged in the 2015 earthquake. Nepal Bhasha is the language belonging to the ethnic Newar community of

Kathmandu. In keeping with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call of Ek Ped Ma ke Naam, Misri planted a sapling of Nili Gulmohar at the Indian mission's complex. Launched by Prime Minister Modi, on World Environment Day this year, the campaign aims to plant 800 million trees by September 2024 and 1.4 billion trees by March 2025 through a collective effort involving the government and society in India. Misri was earlier received by his Nepalese counterpart Sewa Lamsal upon his arrival here. "Foreign Secretary of India @VikramMisri arrives in Kathmandu for an official visit from 11-12 August 2024. Warm reception by Nepal Foreign Secretary Ms Sewa Lamsal," the Embassy of India said in another post on X. "The visit is in keeping with the tradition of regular high-level India-Nepal bilateral exchanges

Two men shot before concert at raceway in Iowa
Iowa (AP): Two people were shot and killed at a raceway in Iowa just as a concert was about to begin, authorities said on Sunday. The shooting happened Saturday night at the I-29 Speedway in Pacific Junction, roughly 20 miles south of Omaha, Nebraska. An outdoor concert at the venue was about to begin when shots were fired in the parking lot, the Iowa Department of Public Safety said in an online press release. The victims were identified as Marcus L. Johnson, 28; and Charles A. Williams Jr, 27. Both were from Omaha, Nebraska. The Mills County Sheriff's Office is being assisted by the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation, Iowa State Patrol, Omaha Police Department, and other law enforcement agencies. Authorities are asking anyone who has information about the shooting to contact the Mills County Sheriff's Office.

At least 18 dead after landfill site collapses in Uganda's capital

AP n KAMPALA
A vast landfill site in the Ugandan capital collapsed, killing at least 18 people, the Red Cross said. Fourteen other people were injured when the Kiteezi landfill, which serves as a waste disposal site for much of Kampala, collapsed late Friday. At least two of the dead were children, Kampala Capital City Authority said in a statement. The collapse is believed to have been triggered by heavy rainfall. The precise details of what happened were unclear, but the city authority said there was a "structural failure in waste mass". Irene Nakasiita, a spokeswoman for the Uganda Red Cross, said the toll reached 18 after more bodies were retrieved from the scene on



Sunday. "The assessment is not yet completed," she said, adding that rainfall was slowing the efforts of rescue teams digging through heaps of trash. The Kiteezi landfill is on a steep slope in an impoverished part of the city. Women and children who scavenge plastic waste for income frequently gather there, and some homes have been built close to the landfill.

'Pure veg Indian dishes' - new trend among foodies in Karachi

PTI n KARACHI
Pakistan's industrial and financial centre Karachi has become the food capital for the foodies of the cosmopolitan city, with the latest trend being an acquired taste for authentic and refined Indian vegetarian dishes such as 'soyabean aloo biryani', 'aloo tikki', 'vada pav', 'masala dosa' and 'dhokla'. For millions of people in the capital of Sindh province, Karachi's beauty is the food options ranging from the most expensive European and Italian cuisine to affordable Chinese food or a simple bun kabab as the food capital caters to the taste and pockets of everyone. The foodies in recent months have also developed a taste for "pure vegetarian" dishes. Mahesh Kumar, who owns the small Maharaj Karamchand

Vegetarian Foods Inn inside a historical old compound of the bustling M A Jinnah Road, says his business is booming as people have developed a taste for vegetarian dishes known in Karachi as "pure vegetarian Indian dishes". The Narayan compound, where before partition Hindus, Sikhs and Christians lived in peace and harmony, not only houses the restaurant but also the centuries-old Swaminarayan Temple and also a Gurdwara. Initially built for the inhabitants of the compound, the Maharaj Karamchand Inn is now a popular joint for the lawyers and visitors who show up every day at the city courts just opposite the compound or for other businesses in this commercially vibrant area of old Karachi. "Our Soyabean Aloo Biryani, Aloo Tikki, Paneer Karahi, and

Mixed Vegetables are famous and we witness a lot of rush during lunchtime with a lot of takeaways and deliveries as well," Kumar said. Kumar said his father started the restaurant in 1960 and there is nothing fancy about it with the same old wooden chairs and tables, but what attracts Muslim and non-Muslim customers is the home-made spices and the fresh vegetables and oil used in preparing the dishes. Kumar admits they do not publicise their restaurant because there are still some Muslim conservatives who consider it taboo for Muslims to eat food prepared by Hindus. "We have enough clientele who are happy with our food and service but don't like to promote it," he added. It is not just this Hindu-run

vegetarian restaurant that is doing a great job but, in other parts of Karachi, entrepreneur Hindu, Christian and Muslim women have set up food stalls specialising in refined Indian vegetarian dishes such as 'pav bhaji', 'vada pav', 'masala dosa' and 'dhokla'. Kavita, who started a food stall in the Cantt area on a side street eight months ago, sells Indian vegetarian dishes and can barely keep up with the rush at her stall. "What is surprising for us is that apart from walk-in customers, we have developed a clientele of regular customers who love our food," she said. What surprised Kavita and her family is the taste the meat-loving people of Karachi have developed for pure vegetarian dishes. Not only Kavita but her sister-in-law, Chandrika Dixit, brother Jeetendra and her

mother Nomita manage three stalls next to each other while a fourth stall which sells 'dhoklas', 'aam panna' and 'dal samosas' is run by a Christian lady Mary Richards. "We all live in the same compound close by and after hearing how people have taken to Indian vegetarian dishes we have decided to try our luck. We make these dishes regularly at home," Mary said. Muslim and non-Muslim customers, calling out her name "Kavita Didi", vibrate in the air as people coming in their cars also have to line up for their orders on the well-lit street. Kavita's food stall has already been covered by big media outlets in Pakistan and even BBC ran a story as to how a Hindu girl's food is selling like hot cakes among Karachites. On the other side of the cos-

mopolitan city, two sisters - Mahreen and Lubna - are also doing well with their food stall on a famous food street in the populous Hussainabad area. "We are unique in the sense that we sell Indian vegetarian food surrounded by restaurants and stalls selling traditional Pakistani meat dishes," chuckled Lubna. The two sisters have learnt how to make 'masala dosa', 'vada pav', 'vegetarian rice' and 'pav bhaji' from their elders who migrated from India after the partition in 1947. Both sisters talk at length as their hands remain busy preparing dishes and handing them out to eager customers. "People are now eating these dishes because they are not expensive, tasty and quick to prepare," Mahreen said. Far from the crowded

Hussainabad area, a Muslim Gujarati-speaking family that migrated from Junagadh in India has been selling different varieties of masala dosas in Bahadurabad for over five decades. "Come sunset and business begins," says Zafar, whose father started the masala dosa stall on a scrap Suzuki van proudly claiming that their food joint is among the first original places to sell pure vegetarian Indian dishes. Zafar and his team of cooks and helpers sell varieties of masala dosas but the aloo masala dosa remains their best-selling item despite being priced at 500 rupees. "I think Karachi has a lot of migrants from India who are more moderate or liberal in their choice of food and that is why there is an acquired taste for Indian vegetarian dishes,"

Zafar explained. On the other end of the spectrum are the upscale Rajdhani Delight and Nawab Dynasty restaurants in the posh Clifton area whose daily "pure vegetarian" and "chicken Thalys" are sought after by foodies. As soon as you walk into the Rajdhani Delight restaurant owned by a Gujarati family, the aroma of authentic Rajasthani and Gujarati food just gets into you, restaurant manager Jerome Earnest said. The 'navratan vegetarian thali' with its mixture of vegetable, paneer, daal dishes, chutneys, achar, spicy yoghurt, dhokla, rice, salty lassi and gulab jamuns is a steal for 1500 rupees with waiters attired in traditional Rajasthani costumes waiting to serve you fresh chapatis in the metal tray with small bowls.

Sebi proposed F&O norms to hit exchanges, brokers: Reports

PTI NEW DELHI

Stock exchanges and brokers, catering to retail traders, could be hit hard by the regulator Sebi's proposed measures for Futures & Options (F&O) trading regulations, with market volumes slumping 30-40 per cent, according to reports.

If these measures are implemented, the number of investors could decrease, it added. Moreover, discount brokers, who depend heavily on retail investors, are expected to be more affected than traditional full-service brokers.

Sebi, in its consultation paper in July, proposed seven measures, including increasing minimum contract size and upfront collection of option premiums, intra-day monitoring of position limits, rationalisation of strike prices, removal of calendar spread benefit on expiry day and increase in near contract expiry margin.

Sebi stated that these measures are aimed at enhancing investor protection and promote market stability in derivative markets. According to a report by



Jefferies, Sebi's proposed measures to reduce the number of weekly option contracts from 18 to 6 could impact around 35 per cent of industry premiums. However, if trading shifts to the remaining contracts, the overall impact can be reduced to 20-25 per cent. Among its 7 proposed measures, IIFL Securities see the highest impact from the withdrawal of weekly options (only 1 per exchange allowed) as index Options account for 98 per cent of the volumes. IIFL Securities expects the National Stock Exchange

(NSE) to be more affected than the BSE because 60 per cent of NSE's revenue comes from options trading, compared to 40 per cent for BSE. It estimates that by the financial year 2026, NSE's earnings could be reduced by 25-30 per cent while BSE's earnings could drop by 15-18 per cent. Jefferies also believes that removal of Bankex weekly contract can impact BSE's earnings per share (EPS) by 7-9 per cent over FY25-27. It further said that BSE might see a small decline in earnings, but if trading

activity shifts from discontinued products, it could offset the impact or even lead to earnings growth. "We don't see any impact on MCX from these regulations. Within the value chain, discount brokers are likely to be more impacted than traditional full service brokers given former's dependence on retail investors," IIFL Securities said.

Jefferies believes that clearing members like Nuvama, which caters to institutional players High-Frequency Traders (HFTs) and Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) are less impacted. Rationalizing weekly options to only one benchmark index per exchange will significantly affect the NSE because it currently has four weekly index expiries, with "Bank Nifty" being the most important, contributing to 50 per cent of its options volume. The change could reduce NSE's overall trading volumes by 30-35 per cent, IIFL Securities said. On the other hand, BSE is expected to be less affected since it only has two contracts, with Sensex making up 85 per cent of its volumes in FY24.

Adopt guidance over intimidation: CBDT chief Agrawal to I-T officials

PTI NEW DELHI

Income-tax department officials should make renewed efforts to come across as responsible, responsive, transparent apart from undertaking an approach of "guidance over intimidation" while dealing with taxpayers, the CBDT chairman has said. Ravi Agrawal, the head of the direct taxes administration body of the country, suggested a 'PRUDENT' approach to be followed by the taxmen as the income tax regime completed 164 years in India.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chief recently spoke to his colleagues via an online video 'Samvaad' session -- The Chairman Speaks -- on the occasion of the 165th Income Tax Day that was observed on July 24. He said the tax department has undergone "transformational" change, adopted technology in its processes, increased taxpayer base and that its orientation has changed from being largely an "enforcement and adversarial" department to largely a service department facilitating taxpayer compliance through non-



intrusive tax administration. Agrawal said revenue under the direct tax category has been growing and there were about 65 crore PANs and more than 8.5 crore ITRs were filed during 2023-24 fiscal.

"Our role as part of the tax administration is critical. It is incumbent on us to serve the citizens as well as business with professionalism as we embark on our journey to fulfil honourable Prime Minister's vision of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 and with the beginning of 'Amrit Kal', I take this opportunity to present an approach to be adopted by each one of us irrespective of rank in the department," he said. The approach, he said, has been encapsulated under the acronym PRUDENT and it will guide the officials as they continue to navigate the "complexities" of tax administration. Explaining the acronym

PRUDENT, Agrawal said P stands for professionalism, R for being responsible and responsive, U for understanding transactions and businesses, D for dedication and due diligence, E for effective enforcement, N for non-intrusive administration and T for technology-based tax administration. He said the tax officials should enhance professionalism in the department by investing in capacity building, fostering adaptability, prioritizing taxpayer service, maintaining a judicious approach and ensuring ease of business on one hand, while ensuring data driven action.

By being responsible and responsive, he said, the taxman has "to be decisive, rather than have an ad-hoc approach". "I would like to emphasize that any decision that we take has impact on the concerned taxpayer. As a responsible administration, we must commit ourselves to be transparent in our actions. This transparency builds trust and ensures that the administration is held accountable for its actions,"

Steel prices trade at 3-year lows on increased supplies: Report

PTI NEW DELHI

Domestic steel prices have dropped to a three-year low on account of increased imports, according to a report.

Hot rolled coils (HRC) prices have fallen to Rs 51,000 a tonne from a peak of Rs 76,000 a tonne in April 2022, markets research firm BigMint said in a report. The rate of cold rolled coils (CRC) is trading at Rs 58,200 a tonne from the peak of Rs 86,300 a tonne in April 2022. The prices exclude the 18 per cent GST on the commodity.

"The rates of HRC and CRC in India are trading at their three-year low graph. The surge in imports has impacted the domestic prices hitting the demand," BigMint said. According to the data, imports during the April-June quarter surged by 68 per cent to 1.93 million tonnes (MT) from 1.15 MT in the same period of 2023-24. Steel imports rose by 38 per cent to 8.319 MT in 2023-24, making India a net importer of the commodity. Steel players have raised the issue of increased imports from select countries with the government and sought measures to protect the domestic industry from rising shipments.

Global demand muted; gradual improvement expected in domestic market: Tata Motors

PTI NEW DELHI

Tata Motors expects demand to remain sluggish in overseas markets this fiscal while pinning hopes on a gradual bounce back in the domestic market on the back of new launches and the upcoming festive season.

Earlier this month, the Mumbai-based automaker reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 5,566 crore and total income of Rs 1,09,623 crore for June quarter.

"Overall, from a demand perspective, we do anticipate that as far as the global demand is concerned, it is likely to remain muted. It has been that way. It's likely to remain muted. No immediate changes there," Tata Motors Global CFO PB Balaji said in an analyst call.

In the domestic market, the company expects a gradual improvement in demand during the rest of the year aided by government plans to invest on infrastructure, healthy monsoons, favourable overall economic macros, new launches and upcoming festive period, he noted.



"So there is a need for absolute reason why there is an optimism as far as the domestic demand buildup is concerned, how gradual it's going to be, we will have to wait and see," Balaji said. He noted that commodities are also likely to remain range bound and therefore, in this situation, the automaker is confident of sustaining the performance in the coming quarters, and delivering a strong year. "So financials wise, this business is on a strong wicket and is likely to remain that way in the coming quarters and the full year as well," Balaji said.

Passenger vehicle industry retail sales witnessed decline for two consecutive months - May and June, this fiscal. Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles MD Shailesh Chandra cited high channel

inventory as a notable challenge.

"We have an all-time high channel inventory with further buildup which happened in Q1, did add stress on the wholesales. Also, there has been moderation in the EV fleet segment demand due to the expiry of FAME II in March 2024," he stated. Outlining the company's strategy, Chandra said: "As far as we are concerned, in terms of actions, we focus on retail acceleration backed by effective marketing campaigns, micro market focus, targeted product interventions, which are going to come in the coming months."

"There are new upcoming launches primarily to drive customer excitement and of course, it is also going to help the company improve footfalls in the showroom," he added. He also highlighted the company's focus on cost reduction.

"We will continue the rigor on tight control on fixed cost and continued effort on structural cost reduction within the organization," Chandra said.

LIC to invest around ` 1.30 lakh crore in stock market in FY25

PTI NEW DELHI

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) MD and CEO Siddhartha Mohanty has said that the corporation is looking to make fresh investments of around Rs 1.30 lakh crore in equities during the current financial year. During April-June FY25, the insurance behemoth made an investment of about Rs 38,000 crore in shares as against Rs 23,300 crore in the same period a year ago.

LIC earned a profit of Rs 15,500 crore from its investments in equity markets during the first quarter. The profit from its investment was higher by 13.5 per cent quarter-on-quarter. "We are surely looking at the markets and price movements...We are looking to invest a good amount at least whatever we had invested in last financial year...LIC made an investment of around Rs 1.32 lakh crore in FY24," he said. Market value of LIC's investment in stocks of various companies stood at



around Rs 15 lakh crore at the end of June, he said. LIC has exposure in 282 companies through investment in their shares as of June 30, 2024.

The Assets Under Management (AUM) increased to Rs 53,58,781 crore as at June-end as compared to Rs 46,11,067 crore at the end of same quarter previous year, registering an increase of 16.22 per cent. Total investment grew by Rs 7,30,662 crore, from Rs 42,44,852 crore in March 2023 to Rs 49,75,514 crore as on March 31, 2024. Total equity investment portfolio constitute Rs 12,39,740 crore as against Rs 8,39,662 crore in 2022-23, whereas other investments constitute Rs 37,35,774 crore as against Rs 34,05,190 crore in 2022-23.

Macroeconomic data, global trends, Q1 earnings to drive market sentiments this week: Analysts

PTI NEW DELHI

Macroeconomic data announcements, the last batch of Q1 earnings and global trends are the major factors that would influence trading sentiments in the equity market in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

Besides, trading activity of foreign investors would also be a crucial factor in dictating movement in the market.

Equity markets would remain closed on Thursday for Independence Day. "This week, all focus will be on the global markets as we can see the extension of weakness after a long period of stability. The Indian equity market could also witness some bit of levelling off this week as investors process recent gains and contend with high prices. Geopolitical tensions are also escalating, but markets are not reacting significantly, which is reflected in the declining crude oil prices," said Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd. On the domestic front, the



last batch of Q1 earnings will drive stock-specific movements. Hero MotoCorp, Hindalco are some of the big corporate earnings this week, he added. "Additionally, institutional flows will play a crucial role in market dynamics," Gour said. Vodafone Idea, NMDCL, IRCTC, SJVN and PC Jeweller would also announce their quarterly earnings during the week. From the macroeconomic front, industrial production data for June and inflation rate for July will be announced on Monday.

WPI inflation data will be out on Wednesday. Indian inflation data is due this week, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. "Moving forward, the direction of the domestic market will be influenced by global markets," Nair added. Last week, the BSE benchmark slumped 1,276.04 points or 1.57 per cent, while the Nifty declined 350.2 points or 1.41 per cent. Stock markets globally faced a sharp correction last week triggered by the unwinding of the yen carry trade and recession fears in the US.

Financial strain of disability in India high, insurance aims to bridge gap

PTI KOLKATA

A staggering number of Indians face financial hardship due to disability, with lakhs suffering temporary or permanent limitations each year and recognising this critical gap in financial security, insurance companies are stepping forward with innovative solutions, officials said on Sunday.

A 2018 report by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) revealed that India, despite having only 1 per cent of the world's

vehicles, accounts for 6 per cent of all road crashes.

According to experts, close to 5 to 7 lakh people in the country suffer from temporary or permanent disability each year due to the high rates of accidents and crippling diseases and lose their ability to work and earn a livelihood. "The onset of disability often brings substantial healthcare expenses, making comprehensive insurance coverage crucial to prevent social and financial decline," Future Generali India Insurance, Chief Distribution

Officer, Ramit Goyal said. A study titled 'Measuring the financial impact of disabilities in India' available on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) website, suggests around one-fifth (20.32 per cent) of the household's monthly consumption expenditure was spent on out-of-pocket expenses for disability. More than half (57.1 per cent) of the households were pushed to catastrophic health expenditure due to one of the members being disabled. Almost one-fifth (19.1 per cent) of the households that

were above the poverty line before one of the members was treated for disability were pushed below the poverty line. According to R Garg, Head-



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Term Insurance, Policybazaar.Com, in a country like India where there is no social security coverage like those in developed nations and where 2.2 per cent of the population is disabled, having disability income protection becomes prudent.

FGII's said recently launched group health insurance product covers both temporary and permanent disabilities arising from physical or mental illnesses, accidents, and unforeseen events that result in income loss.

The plan provides a safety net by replacing up to 75 per cent of pre-disability income per month, along with potential coverage for loan EMIs and credit card minimum payments. Bajaj Allianz another leading insurer said it has seen a steady increase in personal accident insurance uptake, which includes disability income protection.

Bhaskar Nerurkar, Head of the Health Administration Team at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, noted that rising living costs and greater awareness of financial

security through insurance are driving this trend. He added that as accident rates climb, more individuals and companies are seeking disability and income loss coverage, leading to higher penetration rates.

Continued support and favourable regulations from IRDAI can further boost this growth, Nerurkar emphasised. P Nanda Gopal, Founder and CEO of Upsure, emphasises the critical need for DIP plans among vulnerable groups like daily wage earners and gig workers.

Falling prices, imports challenges for lab-grown diamond industry: GTRI

PTI NEW DELHI

Significant fall in prices, eroding consumer interest and competition with imports are some of the major challenges being faced by the domestic lab-grown diamond industry, think tank GTRI said on Sunday.

It also said that while India faces the issue of production overcapacity, it continues to import lab-grown diamonds in large amounts and this issue needs deeper investigation.

To address these challenges, the government needs to take certain steps such as setting clear and consistent rules to standardize quality, certification, and market practices; issuing a Quality Control Order to check quality of imports; and



investment in research and development to improve production processes, reduce costs, and enhance the quality of lab-grown diamonds. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that India's lab-grown diamond industry is facing a major challenge, with prices falling by 65 per cent in the past year,

from Rs 60,000 to Rs 20,000 per carat due to local overproduction and oversupply from abroad. This sharp decline points to problems like overproduction, high imports, and lack of regulation, which are hurting consumer confidence. Urgent corrective steps are needed to

get this high-growth industry back on track, it added. Meanwhile, natural diamonds cost around Rs 3.5 lakh per carat and this price drop is making it difficult for manufacturers to repay loans taken for purchasing lab-grown diamond making machines, putting them under financial strain, it said.

Lab-grown diamonds, as the name suggests, are created in laboratories replicating the natural high pressure, high temperature conditions under which diamonds are formed in the Earth's mantle. These diamonds are chemically, physically, and optically identical to natural diamonds. Natural diamonds come in various shapes, while lab-grown diamonds are usually square or rectangular. Lab-grown diamonds are

produced in a rough form and need to be cut and polished, just like natural diamonds. The value of a cut and polished lab-grown diamond is 6-8 times higher than its rough form.

"The industry faces several challenges, including falling prices, intensifying competition both from local and imports, and the lack of clear regulatory frameworks. These issues pose potential risks to the sustained growth and profitability of India's lab-grown diamond sector," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said. He said that the number of units producing lab-grown diamonds in India has increased to 10,000 units, leading to over supply and competition.

Major cement companies report volume growth in June qtr, revenue remains muted due to lower price

PTI NEW DELHI

Leading cement manufacturers reported single-digit volume growth in the June quarter, though their topline was muted on account of the continued downtrend in the price.

Listed manufacturers such as UltraTech, Ambuja Cements, ACC, Shree Cements, and Dalmia Bharat - in their latest quarter earnings reported gains in volumes, ranging from 3 to 9 per cent and increase in capacity utilisation. However, soft cement prices have put their topline under pressure in the April-June period. Besides, raw material costs went up marginally due to an increase in the cost of fly ash and slag.

The all-India average cement price was at around Rs 348 per 50 kg bag in June 2024, down around 3 per cent year-on-year. However, this was higher when compared to Rs 335 per bag in May 2024.

For the first two months of FY25, the average cement price was at Rs 340 per bag, down 8 per cent YoY. In FY24, the average price was Rs 365 per bag and Rs 375 per bag in FY23, according to the report. Moreover, intense heatwave and general elections also slowed the pace of construction activities in April-May.

UltraTech Cement reported a flat consolidated net profit of Rs 1,696.59 crore for the June quarter. The leading cement maker's revenue from

operations was up 1.87 per cent at Rs 18,069.56 crore for the period. Volume sales were up 7 per cent to 31.95 million tonne (MT), said the Aditya Birla Group firm which has announced an open offer for the South-based rival India Cements Ltd after acquiring the promoter's stake.

Adani Group firm Ambuja Cements Ltd reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 789.63 crore and its revenue from operations was at Rs 8,311.48 crore. Though its results were not comparable due to past acquisitions of Sanghi Industries and ACCPL, its consolidated revenue from operations was at Rs 8,712.90 crore in the corresponding June period of FY24.

A REFRESHING TWIST ON PROBIOTIC HEALTH

Yakult Light Mango Flavour combines the benefits of probiotics with the delicious taste of mango. This new variant supports gut health and boosts immunity with every sip.

Enjoy a tasty and healthy addition to your daily routine, says SAKSHI PRIYA



In today's fast-paced world, maintaining good health is a top priority, especially with increasing lifestyle disorders linked to poor nutrition, stress and inadequate sleep. A robust immune system is essential for combating these challenges and ensuring overall well-being. One effective way to support immunity is through probiotics, which are known for their ability to enhance gut health. Recognising this, Yakult Danone India Pvt Ltd, a leader in the probiotic industry, has launched an exciting new product Yakult Light Mango Flavour. Probiotics are live bacteria that are beneficial for gut health. They work by increasing the population of good bacteria in the gut, which helps reduce harmful, disease-causing

bacteria. This balance is crucial for proper digestion, nutrient absorption and overall immune function. A healthy gut is often linked to a strong immune system, which is essential for fighting off infections and maintaining overall well-being. Yakult has long been a trusted name in probiotics and its latest offering, Yakult Light Mango Flavour, continues this legacy. The new product contains the same unique probiotic strain, Lactobacillus casei Shirota (SHIROTA strain), as the original Yakult. This strain is scientifically proven to survive the journey through the digestive tract and reach the intestines alive, where it can impart its health benefits. The story of Yakult begins with Dr. Minoru Shirota, a Japanese medical doctor who was

deeply moved by the poor health conditions in Japan during the early 1900s. Witnessing the deaths of children due to infections caused by inadequate hygiene and poverty, Dr. Shirota dedicated his life to preventive health. He believed in using probiotics to prevent diseases rather than curing them after they occur. This philosophy led to the development of the SHIROTA strain, which has now been helping people maintain gut health for over 90 years. Yakult Light Mango Flavour combines the health benefits of probiotics with the delightful taste of mango, a favourite fruit among Indians. This new variant is a sister product to the original Yakult, offering the same 6.5 billion beneficial bacteria in every bottle. The

mango flavour adds a refreshing twist, making it an enjoyable choice for those who love the fruit and want to incorporate probiotics into their daily routine. Dr. Neerja Hajela, Head of Science and Regulatory Affairs at Yakult Danone India Pvt Ltd, emphasises the importance of probiotics in daily life: "Lactobacillus casei Shirota is backed by more than 100 human studies conducted across the globe, including India. Probiotics increase the good bacteria in the gut, reducing the harmful ones. This balance ensures better digestion, proper absorption of nutrients, and stronger immunity, reducing the risk of infections." In today's environment, where factors like pollution, stress and poor diet can easily disrupt gut health, incorporating probiotics into your diet is a proactive step toward better health. A decrease in probiotic bacteria, coupled with unhealthy lifestyle choices, can lead to poor gut health and weak immunity, manifesting as fatigue, poor growth, malnutrition, and repeated infections. Therefore, introducing scientifically validated probiotic products like Yakult into your daily routine is essential for maintaining a healthy gut and a strong immune system. Yakult Light Mango Flavour is more than just a tasty drink; it's a step toward better health. By incorporating this probiotic-rich beverage into your daily routine, you can support your gut health and boost your immunity. As Yakult Danone India continues to innovate and expand its offerings, the new mango flavour is an attestation to its commitment to improving the health and well-being of its consumers. Whether you're a longtime fan of Yakult or new to probiotics, Yakult Light Mango Flavour is a refreshing way to support your health goals.

Revolutionising Fitness and Wellness

Renowned fitness expert SUMAYA DALMIA highlights the importance of balanced lifestyle habits, emphasising nutrition, exercise and daily activity for sustainable health

At the recent FDCI Manifest Wedding Weekend, renowned fitness and wellness expert Sumaya Dalmia delivered a masterclass focused on practical health and fitness advice. The session, designed for brides, grooms and wellness enthusiasts, aimed to promote sustainable fitness habits rather than quick fixes or superficial transformations. Sumaya's approach emphasised the importance of a balanced lifestyle, combining nutrition, exercise and daily physical activity for long-term health benefits. Sumaya began the masterclass by addressing common fitness myths that often mislead people. She debunked the idea that weightlifting leads to unwanted bulk, especially for women. Instead, she encouraged attendees to embrace strength training, highlighting its role in building muscle, improving metabolism and boosting confidence. Sumaya stressed that fitness is not an instant achievement but a lifelong journey requiring consistency and dedication. She pointed out that while exercise is crucial, nutrition is equally vital in achieving fitness goals, stating, "99.9% of anything to do with gut health, losing weight or aesthetics is about nutrition." The masterclass delved into the importance of understanding individual dietary needs, focusing on protein intake. Sumaya explained how to calculate daily protein requirements and stressed the significance of distributing protein consumption throughout the day for optimal absorption. Rather than categorising foods as "good" or "bad," Sumaya advocated for balanced eating, integrating proteins, healthy fats and carbohydrates based on personal needs. This approach, which promotes moderation and mindful eating, resonated well with the audience.



Sumaya also addressed the role of daily physical activity beyond structured workouts. She acknowledged that modern lifestyles often involve less natural movement, contrasting this with the more active routines observed in other cultures. By encouraging simple activities like walking, taking the stairs and doing household work, Sumaya illustrated that even basic physical engagement significantly contributes to overall health. Her message was clear, while structured workouts remain essential, daily physical activities are equally important for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The masterclass provided valuable insights into

creating a balanced fitness routine that includes strength, flexibility, mobility, cardiovascular and core exercises. Sumaya's approach to fitness reflects the lessons learned during the pandemic, emphasising that effective workouts can be achieved at home with minimal equipment. This perspective encourages individuals to find ways to stay active, regardless of their environment or access to gym facilities. Another significant aspect of Sumaya's masterclass was the discussion on diet, nutrition and lifestyle adjustments tailored for specific needs, such as PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome). She stressed the importance of mindful eating and clean eating, especially as one ages. For those following vegetarian diets, she recommended high-quality protein sources like nuts, seeds, quinoa, paneer, soya and sprouts. Proper cooking methods and using spices like hing and ginger were suggested to aid digestion. For individuals with PCOS, she recommended a diet high in protein, healthy fats and fibre-rich vegetables to help regulate hormones. Sumaya also touched on the topic of supplementation,

explaining the difference between Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) and Optimum Daily Allowance (ODA). She highlighted the importance of tailoring supplement intake to individual needs, considering factors such as menopause, perimenopause and specific conditions like PCOS. Essential supplements like Vitamin D3, magnesium glycinate and B12 were recommended, noting that even with sun exposure, many people, including Indians, often require D3 supplementation. She cited studies showing a link between low D3 levels and severe COVID-19 cases, underscoring its importance for overall health. Sumaya Dalmia's masterclass offered attendees a comprehensive guide to achieving and maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Her focus on debunking fitness myths, promoting sustainable habits and encouraging a holistic approach to health and wellness inspired participants to adopt practices that support long-term well-being. Sumaya's insights serve as a reminder that true fitness is about balance, consistency and personalisation, empowering individuals to take control of their health journey.

No one is immune to antimicrobial resistance

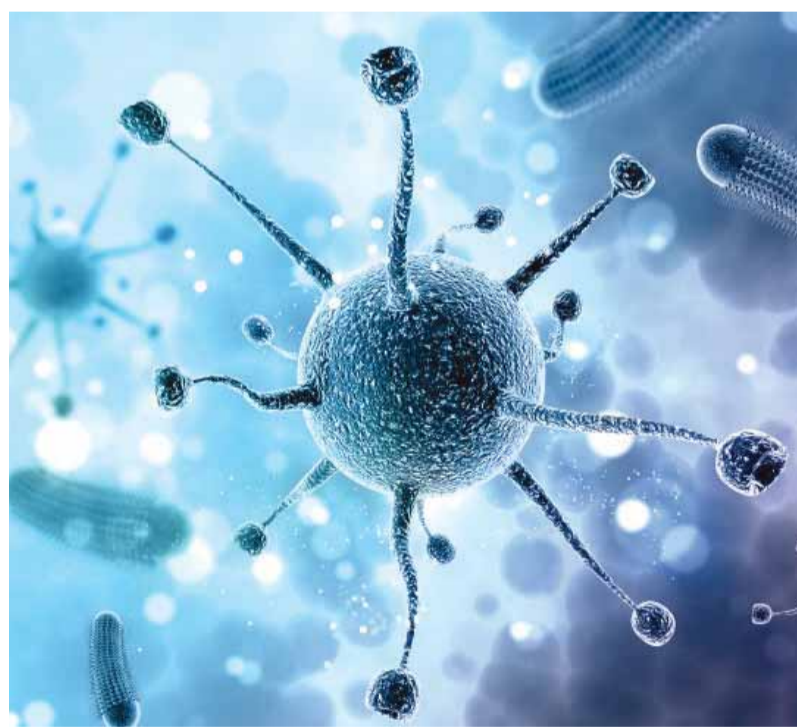
SHOBHA SHUKLA

"Even the healthiest amongst us could face a life-threatening situation through a minor injury, routine surgery, or common lung infection, if antimicrobials fail," said Dr Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Nepal. "For those with pre-existing conditions like cancers, HIV, or diabetes, an untreatable infection can become an unexpected and deadly adversary."

Why do infections become difficult to treat or untreatable? Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites change over time and become resistant to (or no longer respond to) medicines, making infections harder (or impossible) to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. Misuse and overuse of medicines fuels AMR. It is important to remember that it is the disease-causing microbe (and not the human being, animal or plant which is being treated) that becomes resistant to medicines. Therefore, even if a person uses antimicrobial medicines responsibly, they are still at risk of acquiring a drug-resistant infection. Resistant microbes can pass between animals, plants and food, and in the environment. A "One Health" approach which recognises that the health of animals, humans, plants and the environment are interlinked is therefore essential to respond to AMR. **No one is immune to AMR** AMR threatens to unravel a century of medical progress, turning once treatable infections into untreatable life-threatening conditions, said Dr Pandav. "AMR is identified by the WHO as one of the top 10 global health threats facing humanity. AMR is making infections harder to treat, leading to prolonged hospital stays, higher medical costs, and increased disability, morbidity, and mortality. AMR has a real and devastating impact on individuals,

families, environmental health, agricultural and food productions, and livelihoods." Dr Pandav was speaking as a Guest of Honour at the South Asia Sub-Regional Media Workshop to prevent Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) held in Kathmandu, Nepal. The workshop was organised by Health TV Online along with co-hosts, including the Ministry of Health and Population of government of Nepal, Nepal Health Research Council of government of Nepal, Global AMR Media Alliance (GAMA), and partners.

Almost 5 million people died of AMR in a year "In 2019 it was estimated that almost 5 million deaths were associated with bacterial AMR including 1.27 million deaths being directly caused by it. Raising awareness is our first line of defence against AMR. It is a collective responsibility, and the media plays a crucial role to shape public opinion, influence policy, and dispel myths and misinformation. Public messaging on AMR in the media needs to be simple, consistent, and clear," said Dr Pandav. "Four quadripartite agencies that have joined hands to combat AMR globally include the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), WHO, World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In a meeting in 2022, they had identified working with the media as one of the top four priorities. South Asia Media Workshop to prevent AMR was organised to raise awareness among media personnel and increase their active engagement on AMR and addressing it with One Health approach," said Kalpana Acharya, Organising Chairperson of South Asia Media Workshop to prevent AMR, Editor-in-Chief of Health TV Online, and founding Board Member of Global AMR Media Alliance (GAMA). **Nepal's response to AMR challenge** "I would like to commend Nepal government's Ministry of Health and Population for their leadership and



initiatives already taken to tackle the AMR challenge. Nepal has successfully endorsed the National Action Plan on AMR. At the 77th World Health Assembly two months back, governments, including that of Nepal, endorsed the resolution to accelerate national and global responses to AMR," informed Dr Pandav. "In Nepal in 2019, there were 6400 deaths attributable to AMR and 23200 deaths associated with AMR. Nepal has the 153rd highest death rate per 100,000 population associated with AMR across 204 countries. AMR was the third biggest cause of death in 2019 in Nepal (after cardiovascular diseases and chronic respiratory diseases). The number of AMR deaths in Nepal is higher than deaths from neoplasms, respiratory infections and TB, digestive diseases, maternal and neonatal disorders and diabetes and kidney diseases," said Dr

Madan Kumar Upadhyaya, Chief of Quality Standards and Regulation Division, Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal. He also Chairs AMR National Technical Working Committee and serves as a Member Secretary of AMR National Steering Committee of government of Nepal. Discovery of penicillin was a breakthrough moment in 1928 but resistance against penicillin was reported in the 1940s - soon after it came into the market. Methicillin resistant S.aureus (MRSA) was reported in 1961. Microbes are becoming resistant to the medicines we have - due to their misuse or overuse. And now it is 30 years since a new class of antibiotics was last introduced, shared Dr Upadhyaya. Nepal is a signatory to Jaipur Ministerial Declaration on AMR 2011 when the South-East Asia region of the WHO became the first WHO region to adopt it.

Dr Upadhyaya shared that Nepal's National Action Plan on AMR (2024-2028) is currently awaiting the endorsement from the cabinet. It has already been endorsed by the National Technical Working Group on AMR, Finance Ministry of Nepal, National Planning Commission of Nepal, and the Social Committee of Nepal's cabinet. The National Action Plan on AMR (2024-2028) of Nepal has five strategic priorities, each with its time-bound activities, managed by a government agency (focal point) with supporting partners.

- Improve awareness and understanding of AMR through effective communication, education and training
- Strengthen the knowledge and evidence through surveillance and research
- Reduce the incidence of infection through effective infection prevention and control
- Optimise the use of antimicrobial agents in human, animal and food, and
- Promote investments for AMR activities, research and innovations.

The Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal is the national focal point for AMR. Nepal's Department of Drug Administration is the national focal point for antimicrobial consumption. Nepal's Veterinary Standards and Regulatory Laboratory is the national focal point for antimicrobial use in the animal health sector. Nepal's National Public Health Laboratory is the national focal point for AMR surveillance in human health. Nepal's Central Veterinary Laboratory serves as the focal point for AMR surveillance in animal health. Nepal's Department of Food Technology and Quality Control serves as a focal point for AMR surveillance in the food sector, and the Department of Environment is the focal point for AMR in the environment, said Dr Madan Kumar Upadhyaya. "Implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plan on AMR is

challenging with limited technical capacity and budgetary resources. Limited access to diagnostic microbiology facilities (at subnational level) and access to antimicrobials is another challenge," said Dr Upadhyaya. **Right and timely diagnosis and right treatment is key** Good plan has to be followed by a greater implementation on the ground. "We have to find an effective strategy to implement the National Action Plan on AMR. More importantly, we have to take it to the local level and ensure that the right antimicrobials are prescribed, the right amount of medicines are taken and for the right disease," said Dr Roshan Pokhrel, Health Secretary, Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal. "We need to make progress in combating AMR and measure the progress too (with right data) to ensure that we are preventing AMR." World leaders will convene on 26th September 2024 at the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AMR. This is the second such meeting. The first UN High-Level Meeting on AMR was held in 2016 which resulted in significant global and national actions to address AMR with One Health approach. Participants in Nepal called upon the world leaders for stronger commitments matched with concrete actions to prevent AMR. Later this year, the World AMR Awareness Week (18-24 November 2024) will be observed worldwide on the theme: Educate, Advocate and Act Now. (Shobha Shukla is the award-winning founding Managing Editor and Executive Director of CNS (Citizen News Service) and is a feminist, health and development justice advocate. She is a former senior Physics faculty of prestigious Loreto Convent College and current Coordinator of Asia Pacific Regional Media Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT Media) and Chairperson of Global AMR Media Alliance (GAMA).

It's a dream to compete with other international stars in India: Neeraj

PTI n NEW DELHI

Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra hoped to compete with other prominent international names in India sooner than later following his silver medal-winning effort in the Paris Olympics. Chopra bagged the silver at the Paris showpiece with a throw of 89.45m behind Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who hurled the javelin to 92.97m, an Olympic record. Anderson Peters of Grenada came third with a throw of 88.54m among the field that included some high-profile javelin throwers like Julian Webber, Jakub Vadlejch and Julius Yego.



"It's a dream of mine to compete with other international stars in India. Hopefully, there will be an international competition soon in India and I can do that," Chopra said during an interactive session with fans organised by the Olympics.Com But before that, Chopra, whose silver was his second successive Olympics medal after the gold in Tokyo, said he wanted to work on certain areas of his game. "I am entering a new season now. So, I don't have that much time to change training

methods or technique. But I hope to improve upon a couple of areas, especially the line of the javelin. "You know, the correct angle of throwing so that I get more power in my throw. I will certainly work on it," he said. Chopra said he wanted to give it all in the Paris Games final despite being below his best physically. "The body conditions (of his) were tough. But when Arshad made that throw...I was able to hit my season's best

because the thought was set in my mind that I had to give the best throw because the competition had already become very tough." Mothers of Chopra and Nadeem had taken the social media by storm as they showered affection on each other's son. Chopra said his mother always spoke from her heart as she to date remained a simple rural soul. "My mother...she always stayed in a village before and

after her marriage. She is not familiar with social media and things like that. She often speaks from her heart. But she understands what families of athletes, even from different countries, feel towards them." **Praise for Sreejesh, Manu** Chopra lauded shooter Manu Bhaker for showing perseverance to grab two bronze medals in the Paris Games after experiencing the utter disappointment in the Tokyo edition. "The way Manu Bhaker prepared her mind and came from her Tokyo setback is impressive. Her mindset appeared to be very strong this time while taking part in back-to-back competitions. I think it's just a start for her because I saw even people over 50 (age) were participating in shooting. "I hope Manu will play in a lot more competitions, bring a lot more medals for the country and change the colour of the medal too," he said. The 26-year-old also hailed Indian hockey team's goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, who retired from top-level competition with a bronze at Paris. "Sreejesh is a very relaxed and funny person. He motivates younger players a lot. Sreejesh bhai had said that he would retire after the Olympics. The players, I think, also felt that they should win it for Sreejesh bhai after doing so many great things for the team." Chopra said Sreejesh offers a fine example in tackling pressure situations. "He has so many years of experience and he knows how to tackle the pressure situations. He seemed to be in his zone when I met him before the bronze medal match," he added.

After another gold, US men's basketball programme will now catch its breath

PTI n PARIS

The first practice for the US men's Olympic basketball team after arriving in Paris was one of those workouts that those who were there, watching behind closed doors, will talk about for a long time. Players were split up evenly. Go play, they were told. What happened next set the tone for the rest of the team's time at the Paris Games. "We warmed up and then it became competitive," US assistant coach Erik Spoelstra said. "And, that's when you realized, one, that this team really cares and that it felt the responsibility to play and compete at the highest level. And then secondly, the level of talent on that floor ... we knew it could exceed all expectations." A couple of weeks later, they won gold. The mission was completed Saturday night when the U.S. Won gold for the fifth consecutive Games, holding off France - in Paris, no less - 98-87. Stephen Curry scored 24 points, all on 3-pointers, while Kevin Durant won his fourth Olympic gold and LeBron James won his third gold and fourth medal overall. And then, the party started. Before long, it'll be time to start thinking about how to do it again in 2028 when the Olympics return to Los Angeles. Grant Hill will be



back as managing director for the men's national team, and he's already excited about what is looming. "I've done a lot of things in my life," Hill said. "And, this is a thing that certainly consumes you, but it is incredibly rewarding." Especially when the team wins. There will be changes between now and 2028. James will be 43 and likely retired by then (though with James, never say never). It might seem iffy for Curry and Durant to still be playing in four years, but again, who knows? Some players like Anthony Davis and Bam Adebayo already have said they want in; others like Anthony Edwards, Devin Booker, Jayson Tatum and Tyrese Haliburton seem to be locked if they want to continue. No decisions are set, and that won't change for a while. Hill is going to take a well-earned break. The next major international tournament is

the World Cup in Qatar in 2027. It's safe to say that it'll be sometime in 2025 when he even starts getting serious about putting together a group for that. "Over four years, a lot can and will happen," Hill said. "Now, getting away from it a little bit, just letting things play out and see how guys continue to develop and see what kind of season guys have over the next year or so. And then, at some point, you start that process all over again." When he took over, Hill said he wanted a pipeline for both players and coaches. People leave the program, others move up. Steve Kerr made clear when he agreed to replace Gregg Popovich as US coach, it would be for the 2023 World Cup and the Paris Olympics. It would seem likely that the next national team coach will be either Spoelstra or Tyrone Lue, given how both were assistants under Kerr the last two summers.



Gymnast Jordan must return bronze medal after court mandates score change: IOC

PTI n PARIS

American gymnast Jordan Chiles must return the bronze medal she won in the Paris Olympics floor exercise after sport's highest court said her score was judged improperly, the International Olympic Committee confirmed Sunday. The IOC announced early Sunday it was reallocating the bronze from Monday's women's floor final to Romanian Ana Barbosu after the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) said Saturday night it would respect the court's decision and elevate Barbosu to third. The decision came less than 24 hours after the Court of Arbitration for Sport voided a scoring appeal made by Team USA coach Cecile Landi during the competition that had vaulted Chiles onto the podium. CAS ruled Saturday that the on-floor appeal by Landi to have 0.1 added to Chiles' score came outside the 1-minute window allowed by the FIG. The ad hoc committee wrote that

Landi's inquiry came a minute and four seconds after the score was posted. The IOC said in a statement it will be in touch with the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee regarding the return of Chiles' bronze and will work with the Romanian Olympic Committee to discuss a reallocation ceremony honouring Barbosu. CAS wrote Saturday that the initial finishing order should be restored, with Barbosu third, Romanian Sabrina Maneca-Voinea fourth and Chiles fifth. The organization added the FIG should determine the final ranking "in accordance with the above decision," but left it to the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) to decide who would get the medal behind gold winner Rebeca Andrade of Brazil and silver medalist Simone Biles of the US. The FIG said it was the IOC's call on whether to reallocate the medal. The IOC confirmed Sunday it would respect FIG's decision and seek to have Chiles' medal returned.

After coach's life was saved backstage, Uzbekistan dominate Olympic boxing

PTI n PARIS

Uzbekistan's beloved head boxing coach was revived from apparent cardiac arrest by two members of Britain's training staff after celebrating his team's first gold medal of the Paris Olympics, his fighters confirmed. The Uzbek team went on to win five golds - more than any Olympic team in the last 20 years - in tribute to Tulkin Kilichev, who is recovering in a Paris hospital. "(Kilichev) is more than a coach or a father, in fact," Bakhodir Jalolov said after winning his second super heavyweight gold medal. "He



has raised us. He educated us. He has transmitted the sports spirit to us. He has been with me in my heart, and tomorrow we will be going to visit him in the hospital."

Kilichev fell ill backstage after flyweight Hasanboy Dusmatov won Uzbekistan's first gold medal Thursday. According to GB Boxing, team doctor Harj Singh and physical therapist Robbie Lillis found Kilichev in life-threatening distress. They performed CPR on the coach, and Lillis also used a defibrillator, the team said. Jalolov said Kilichev remained in contact with the team over the past two days while recovering, and his fighters responded with a historic performance. Jalolov was the last of Uzbekistan's five Paris champions to climb the podium Saturday night in the

best Olympic performance since Cuba also won five golds at the 2004 Athens Games. Uzbekistan won the final five men's gold medal bouts contested at Roland Garros, starting with Dusmatov on Thursday - a victory followed by that

frightening moment for Kilichev. "This is history for Uzbekistan, and I'm emotional because becoming a two-time Olympic champion was my dream," Jalolov said. "Now I feel very happy, and I will continue my

career as a professional boxer." Lazizbek Mullojonov won the heavyweight title Friday night, joining a remarkable Olympic lineage at that weight including Joe Frazier, George Foreman, Teofilo Stevenson, Felix Savon and Oleksandr Usyk.

Sifan wins women's marathon

PTI n PARIS

Sifan Hassan traded elbows with Tigst Assefa with 150 meters left in the women's marathon, then passed her along the railing to win the race for her third distance medal of the Paris Games on Sunday. Hassan finished in an Olympic record time of 2 hours, 22 minutes, 55 seconds. She also won bronze in the 5,000 and 10,000. By simply completing the marathon, she ran more than 62 kilometres. She now has six Olympic medals. In Tokyo, Hassan won the 5,000 and 10,000 and finished third in the 1,500. Assefa got silver, and Kenya's Hellen Obiri took the bronze. Breaking



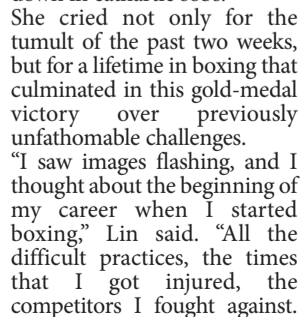
tradition, the women's Olympic marathon was held on the final day instead of the men's race. Hassan, an Ethiopian-born

racer who runs for the Netherlands, used the same tactic in the hilly, 26.2-mile course as on the oval. She lingered behind the leaders for most of the race before summoning up the energy for a late-race kick that would go down as one of the best of the sport has seen. This one, amazingly, had more the look of a crowded race on the oval down the stretch. As Hassan gathered to make her last pass, Assefa, from Ethiopia, tried to block her path. Hassan moved to the inside around a bend. Assefa tried to squeeze her against the barrier separating the course from the cheering fans. The runners traded elbows, and then, Hassan took off past Assefa and sprinted in for the win.

Boxer Lin Yu-ting wins gold, concludes an Olympics filled with scrutiny

PTI n PARIS

Lin Yu-ting fought to remain poised and calm throughout the Paris Olympics boxing tournament, even when it seemed like most of the chattering world was maligning her, misrepresenting her and questioning the very nature of her being. The flyweight shut off her social media, kept up her training and focused on earning one proficient victory after another. But when she heard Taiwan's anthem while standing on the top podium at Roland Garros with a gold medal around her neck, Lin suddenly broke




down in cathartic sobs. She cried not only for the tumult of the past two weeks, but for a lifetime in boxing that culminated in this gold-medal victory over previously unfathomable challenges. "I saw images flashing, and I thought about the beginning of my career when I started boxing," Lin said. "All the difficult practices, the times that I got injured, the competitors I fought against. All these images flashed in my head. There are times of great pain. There are times of great joy. I cried because I was so touched." Lin completed her domination of her division Saturday night, following Imane Khelif's lead a

day earlier by giving a glittering response to the intense scrutiny faced by both fighters inside the ring and around the world over misconceptions about their womanhood. Lin routed Julia Szeremeta of Poland 5:0 in the final, capping her four-fight unbeaten run through Paris by winning Taiwan's first Olympic boxing gold medal. On Friday, Khelif won Algeria's first women's boxing medal with a decisive victory in the welterweight division final, beating Yang Liu of China. Both fighters persevered through an avalanche of criticism and uninformed speculation about their sex during the Paris tournament to deliver the best performances of their boxing careers. "Every fight is not easy," Lin said. "Winning 5-0 might seem easy, but behind that is a lot of practice and hard work"

World leaders, celebrities and online critics attempted to make it about something other than the boxers' years of work. The detractors either questioned their eligibility to be in women's competitions or falsely claimed they were men, forcing both women to take unwanted starring roles in a debate over changing attitudes toward gender identity and safety regulation in sports. Lin said she minimized this potentially enormous distraction by managing to avoid learning about it almost entirely. She also said she'll speak with her team about whether to take legal action against some of the claims.

ଅନ୍ତର୍ଜାତୀୟ ଯୁବ ଦିବସ ଅବସରରେ ମାନ୍ୟବର ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ବାର୍ତ୍ତା



“ଅନ୍ତର୍ଜାତୀୟ ଯୁବ ଦିବସ” ଅବସରରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ମୋର ଆଗନ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା। ଯୁବବର୍ଗଙ୍କୁ ସୁସ୍ଥ, ସୁରକ୍ଷିତ ଏବଂ ଗ୍ଲାୟା ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଗଠନ ପାଇଁ ସଚେତନ କରିବା ଏହି ଦିବସର ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଆଦେଶ। ସଚେତନତା ଅଭାବରୁ ଯୁବବର୍ଗଙ୍କ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଅସୁରକ୍ଷିତ ହୋଇପାରେ। ସୁସ୍ଥ ଜୀବନଯାତ୍ରା ବିଷୟରେ ସଚେତନ ନ ହେଲେ ସେମାନେ ଏଚ୍.ଆଇ.ଭି. (HIV) ଭୂତାଣୁ ଦ୍ୱାରା କବଚିତ ହୋଇ ଏଡ୍ସ (AIDS) ଭଳି ଏକ ମାରାତ୍ମକ ସଂକ୍ରମଣର ଶିକାର ହୋଇପାରନ୍ତି। ଏଚ୍.ଆଇ.ଭି./ଏଡ୍ସ ଏବଂ ଏସ୍.ଆଇ.ଏସ୍. ସହ-ସଂକ୍ରମଣ ଛପରେ ସଚେତନତା ଓ ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ପାଇଁ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସରକାରଙ୍କ ପ୍ରାୟୋଗିକ ସଚେତନତା ଅଭିଯାନରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସାମିଲ ହୋଇଛି। ଏହି କ୍ରମରେ ଆଜିଠି ଆମ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ଏକ ସଚେତନ ଅଭିଯାନ ଶୁଭାରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଛି।


ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଜିଲ୍ଲାସ୍ତରୀୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଗ୍ରାମାଞ୍ଚଳ ଓ ସହରାଞ୍ଚଳରେ ସଚେତନତା ଶିବିର ଏବଂ ଲୋକନୃତ୍ୟ ଆଦି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ କରାଯାଇଛି। ଏ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସର୍ବସ୍ୱଳ୍ପ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ହେବାର ସମ୍ଭାବନା ଥିବା ଯୁବବର୍ଗଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦୁର୍ଲ୍ଲଭମାନଙ୍କରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଅନ୍ତର୍ନିହିତ ପ୍ରତିଭାକୁ ନେଇ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗିତା ଯଥା-ନୀତି, ବୌଦ୍ଧିକତ୍ୱ, କୁଇଜ୍ ଓ କ୍ରିକେଟ ଆଦି କ୍ରିୟାରେ ସଚେତନ କରାଯାଇଛି।

ସମ୍ପ୍ରତି ଏଚ୍.ଆଇ.ଭି. ବିଷୟରେ ଅଧିକ ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ ନିଃଶୁଳ୍କ ପୋଲ୍ ନମ୍ବର ୧୦୯୭ ସହ ସାମାଜିକ ଗଣମାଧ୍ୟମ ଏବଂ ଡିଜିଟାଲ ଉପକରଣର ବହୁଳ ବ୍ୟବହାରକୁ ପ୍ରାଧାନ୍ୟ ଦିଆଯାଇଛି। ଡିଜିଟାଲ ମାଧ୍ୟମକୁ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରି ଆମ ଯୁବବର୍ଗ ନିରନ୍ତର ବିକାଶ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ପୂରଣ କରିବା ସହିତ ଆମ ଦେଶ ତଥା ରାଜ୍ୟ ପାଇଁ ଏକ ସୁସ୍ଥ ଏବଂ ସୁରକ୍ଷାପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବାରେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ସହଯୋଗ କରିବେ ବୋଲି ମୋର ଦୃଢ଼ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ।

Nara Chandrababu Naidu
(ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ)

ଡା. ପୁକେଶ ମହାଲିକା ମାନ୍ୟବର ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ

ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା



ବାର୍ତ୍ତା

ଆଜି ‘ଅନ୍ତର୍ଜାତୀୟ ଯୁବ ଦିବସ’ରେ ସମସ୍ତ ଯୁବବର୍ଗଙ୍କୁ ମୋର ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା। ରାଜ୍ୟ ତଥା ଦେଶର ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଯୁବବର୍ଗଙ୍କୁ ସୁସ୍ଥ, ସୁରକ୍ଷିତ ଓ ନିରାମୟ ଜୀବନ କାମନା କରୁଛି।

ସଚେତନ ହେଲେ ଆମେ ଯେକୌଣସି କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ବିଜୟ ହେବା। ଏଚ୍.ଆଇ.ଭି. ଭୂତାଣୁ ଦ୍ୱାରା ବ୍ୟାପ୍ତ ଏଡ୍ସ ସଂକ୍ରମଣ ଏବେ ଯୁବବର୍ଗଙ୍କୁ କବଚିତ କରିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲାଣି। ଏହି ସଂକ୍ରମଣକୁ ଆମର ରାଜ୍ୟକୁ ଦୂରରେ ଦେବାର ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟା ଜାରି ରହିଛି। ଏହା ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଆମର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଆଜି ବହୁମାତ୍ରାରେ ପାଳିତ ହୋଇଥିବା ବେଳେ ସଂକ୍ରମଣରୁ ହେବାର ବିପଦ ସମ୍ଭାବନା ଆଡ଼କୁ ଆମେ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିସାରିଛେ। ତଥାପି ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟସ୍ତରରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ସଂଗଠିତ ଭାବେ ଚାଲି ରହିଛି।

ଏହି ସଂକ୍ରମଣକୁ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପ୍ରତିହତ କରିବା ପାଇଁ କୌଣସି ଔଷଧ ବାହାରି ନ ଥିବାରୁ ସଚେତନତାକୁ ଆହୁରି ତୀବ୍ରତର କରିବାକୁ ଆଜିଠି ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ଶୁଭାରମ୍ଭ ହେଉଛି ଏକ ସଚେତନ ଦୂର ମାସିଆ ସଚେତନତା ଅଭିଯାନ।

ତେଣୁ, ଆମେ ସଂକଳ୍ପ ନେବା, ସଚେତନତା ବାର୍ତ୍ତାବହ ହୋଇ ଏଡ୍ସ ମୁକ୍ତ ରାଜ୍ୟ ଗଠନ ଏବଂ ଏଡ୍ସ ମୁକ୍ତ ପିଠିର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନକୁ ସାକାର କରିବା।

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