

**OPINION 6**  
VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN: UNHEEDED CRIES

**WORLD 8**  
NORWAY PROPOSES  
EASING ABORTION LAW

**MONEY 10**  
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# PM Modi gives Zelenskyy a comforting hug



PTI ■ KYIV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that both Ukraine and Russia should sit together without wasting time to find ways to end the ongoing war and that India was on the side of peace since the beginning of the conflict. In his talks with Zelenskyy in Kyiv that took place under the shadow of the raging war, Modi said India is ever ready to play an "active role" in every effort to restore peace in Ukraine and he would even like to contribute personally in ending the conflict. The Prime Minister's wide-ranging talks with Zelenskyy primarily focused on ways to end the war and boost bilateral cooperation in areas of trade, defence, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and education. "We (India) are not neutral. From the very beginning, we have taken sides. And we have chosen the side of peace. We have come from the land of Buddha where there is no place for war," Modi said in his opening remarks during the talks. "We have come from the land of Mahatma Gandhi who had given a message of peace to the entire world," he said. The Prime Minister also asserted India's strong commitment towards respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. "I want to assure you and the entire global community that India is committed to respecting sovereignty and territorial



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives warm welcome by Indian community during his arrival at Kyiv, in Ukraine, on Friday

PIB

integrity (of states) and it is of utmost importance to us," he said. Modi also apprised Zelenskyy of his conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Samarkand in September 2022 as well as in Moscow last month. "Some time back, when I met President Putin in Samarkand, I had told him that this was not the era of war. Last month when I went to Russia, I said in clear words that a solution to any problem is never found on the battlefield," Modi said. "The solution comes through talks, dialogue and diplomacy and we should move ahead in that

direction without wasting time. Both sides should sit together and find ways to come out of this crisis," Modi said. The Prime Minister conveyed to Zelenskyy that he had come to Kyiv with a message of peace, including from the Global South. Modi arrived in Kyiv this morning on a special train on the first-ever visit to Ukraine by an Indian Prime Minister after it became independent in 1991. The Prime Minister's visit to Kyiv is seen in many quarters as a diplomatic balancing act as his trip to Russia triggered anguish among the Western countries.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said Modi reiterated the need for "practical engagement" between all stakeholders to develop an innovative solution that will help build broad acceptability and contribute towards peace and stability. The Prime Minister conveyed to Zelenskyy India's willingness to contribute in "all possible ways" to facilitate an early return of peace to Ukraine, he said. It was a "very detailed, open and in many ways constructive discussion", Jaishankar said at a media briefing.

## SEBI bans Anil Ambani from securities market for five years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has barred industrialist Anil Ambani and 24 others from the securities market for five years on charges of diversion of funds from Reliance Home Finance Ltd. Additionally, Sebi has imposed a penalty of ₹25 crore on Ambani and restrained him from serving as a director or Key Managerial Personnel (KMP) in any listed company or Sebi-registered entity for five years. Besides, a fine ranging ₹21 crore to ₹25 crore have been levied on 24 entities. Also, the regulator barred Reliance Home Finance from the securities market for six months and slapped a fine of ₹6 lakh on it. An email sent to Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group company remained unanswered. After receiving multiple complaints alleging diversion/siphoning of funds of Reliance Home Finance Ltd, Sebi conducted an investigation for the period of FY 2018-19 to ascertain any regulatory violations. In its probe, Sebi found that Anil Ambani, with the help of RHFL's KMPs — Amit Bapna, Ravindra Sudhakar and Pinkesh R Shah — have orchestrated a



fraudulent scheme to "siphon off" funds from RHFL by disguising them as loans to entities linked to him. Although the board of directors of RHFL had issued strong directives to stop such lending practices and review corporate loans regularly, the company's management ignored these orders. This suggests a significant failure of governance, driven by certain KMPs under the influence of Anil Ambani. Given these circumstances, the company RHFL itself should not be held equally responsible as the individuals involved in the fraud. Further, the remaining entities have played the role of being either recipients of illegally obtained loans or conduits to enable illegal diversion of money from RHFL, the regulator noted.

## UP bus in Nepal veers off into a river, killing 18 Indians



Rescue work underway after an Indian number plate bus with 40 passengers coming from Pokhara to Kathmandu fell into the Marsyangdi river at Tanahun, Abu Khaireni, Nepal, on Friday

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

At least 18 Indian pilgrims who arrived in Nepal from Maharashtra for a 10-day tour were killed after a tourist bus veered off the highway and fell 150 metres into the fast-flowing Marsyangdi River in Central Nepal approximately 120 kilometres from the capital on Friday, according to media reports. The bus from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh was heading towards Nepal's Capital Kathmandu from the resort town of Pokhara when it drove off the highway in Aaina Pahara in the Tanahun district. There were 43 people, including the driver and the co-driver, on the bus with an Indian registration number. The passengers onboard the bus were part of a group of 104 Indian pilgrims who arrived in Nepal from Maharashtra in three buses two days ago for a 10-day tour of the Himalayan nation, MyRepublica news portal reported. They came from Bhusal village in Jalgaon district. After visiting Pokhara for two days, all three buses left for the capital Kathmandu on Friday morning. Madhav Prasad Paudel, chief of the Armed Police Force (APF), Kurintar, said most of the passengers travelling in the three buses were families and relatives. A list of names of the 43 passengers who were in the ill-fated bus has been released. "An Indian tourist bus travelling from Pokhara to

Kathmandu with around 43 Indians fell 150 metres into Marshyangdi River today," the Embassy of India said in a post on X. The mission is coordinating with local authorities undertaking relief and rescue. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police of the APF Shailendra Thapa, 14 bodies were retrieved from the crash site and 16 injured were rushed to a local hospital. The bus that fell on the river bank has been badly damaged. An MI 17 helicopter of the Nepal Army has left for the accident site at Anbu Khaireni in Tanahun district with a medical team for the rescue operation, MyRepublica reported. The Gandaki Province Police Office, Pokhara, said 15 of those rescued can speak. Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh Government has sent a Sub Divisional Magistrate to the incident site. An ADM has also been appointed to coordinate the relief work. Uttar Pradesh Relief Commissioner GS Naveen Kumar in a press statement said, "As per media reports and further confirmed from the MEA Nepal Division, today at about 11:30 am, a bus with registration number — UP 53 FD 7623 carrying approx 43 passengers from Maharashtra, including the driver and one assistant, fell around 150 metres into river Marshyangdi in Ambukhereni region in the Tanahu District of Nepal."

## CM announces guidelines for Subhadra implementation

- Outlay of Rs 55,825 cr earmarked
- Women aged between 21 and 60 years eligible

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday announced the guidelines for the Subhadra Yojana. He informed the State Assembly that the State Cabinet, in its meeting held on Thursday, approved implementation of the scheme from the financial year 2024-25 to financial year 2028-29. An outlay of Rs 55,825 crore has been made for this initiative. Women aged between 21 and 60 years will be eligible for Subhadra assistance. They will get Rs 10,000

per year for five years. Every year, the amount will be transferred to their accounts through DBT in two phases. While the first instalment of Rs 5,000 will be credited to their accounts on Rakhi Purnima, the second instalment of Rs 5,000 will be credited on the International Women's Day (March 8). The CM said Subhadra would transform the lives of more than 1 crore women of the State. An eligible woman beneficiary will get Rs 50,000 in total in five years, he said. In order to ensure transparency in providing the assistance,



the payment will be made directly to the beneficiary's Aadhaar-enabled single-holder (DBT) bank account through the Aadhaar Payment Bridge System (APBS). A Subhadra Debit Card will also be issued to the beneficiaries. To encourage digital transactions, 100 beneficiaries with maximum digital transactions will be identified in each Gram Panchayat and Urban Local Body and an additional incentive of Rs 500 shall

be given to each of them. Women from economically well-off families, government servants or Income Tax payees will not be eligible for this scheme. Besides, women who are receiving assistance of Rs 1,500 or more per month or Rs 18,000 or more per year under any other government scheme will also be ineligible for inclusion under Subhadra. To avail the benefits under this scheme, the women can apply by filling up the forms available free of cost at Anganwadi Centres, block offices, Mo Seva Kendras, Jan Seva Kendras, etc. A call centre will also be set up for the scheme. The Women and Child Development Department will establish a Subhadra Society for the implementation and monitoring of the programme.

## Shreemandir Ratna Bhandar chests shifted

PNS ■ PURI

The Jagannath Temple in Puri remained out of bounds for devotees from the afternoon on Friday for shifting of almirahs and chests from the shrine's Ratna Bhandar. The almirahs and chests were moved to the Niladri Vihar Museum located in the premises of the temple. Public darshan of the sibling deities remained suspended

during the exercise when a medical team, snake helpline members and a group of iron grill cutters were kept in readiness. According to the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA). However, the devotees who wanted to buy Mahaprasad were allowed to enter Anand Bazaar through the Lions Gate and exit through the north gate. The State Government, in the

SOP for shifting the containers, has approved for cutting the outer door of Bahara (outer chamber) Bhandar to take the chests out as all of them are wider than the door. Earlier, Justice Biswanath Rath, chairman of the committee on Shree Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar inventorisation and conservation, had said that all wooden almirahs in both the chambers are in severely dilapidated condition

and some even broke while being moved to check the presence of anything behind them on July 18. Once the Ratna Bhandar is emptied, it would be handed over to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which is expected to check for presence of any secret chambers or tunnel using non-destructive technology and repair the cracks and other structural damages in the treasury.

## Amit Shah launches counter offensive on Congress in Jammu and Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday launched a scathing attack on the Congress over its decision to ally with the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference in the upcoming Assembly polls beginning September 18. Accusing the Congress of repeatedly putting at risk the country's unity and security in its greed for power, the Union Home Minister also sought clarification while he posted 10 straight questions for the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi on the microblogging

site X. Before launching the party's election campaign on ground zero, the top brass of the BJP is also in the process of finalising the names of the party candidates for the 90 Assembly seats in Jammu Kashmir. As per the reports, the NC-Congress alliance has almost finalised its seat-sharing formula. Inside reports suggested the National Conference is laying its claim on at least 60 Assembly seats (41 from Kashmir and 19 from Jammu province) and offering 30 seats to the



Congress (24 from Jammu and 6 from Kashmir valley). The alliance partners are yet to formally announce the final seat-sharing arrangement. In New Delhi, BJP president JP Nadda Friday chaired a

meeting of the core group to review the report cards of the party aspirants ahead of the final meeting of the Central Election Committee on August 25. The meeting was also attended by Shah and all the core group members, including Union Minister and Election in charge G Kishan Reddy and Ram Madhav, along with other leaders National General Secretary and BJP J&K in charge Tarun Chugh, co-incharge Ashish Sood, MP Jammu Jugal Kishore, State General Secretary (org)

Ashok Kaul, State President Ravinder Raina, Union Minister and MP from Jammu, Dr Jitendra Singh. Meanwhile, referring to the manifesto of the National Conference the Union Home Minister asked, "Does the Congress support the National Conference's promise of a separate flag for Jammu and Kashmir? Do Rahul Gandhi and the Congress party support the JKNC's decision to restore Article 370 and 35A, thereby pushing Jammu and Kashmir back into an era of unrest and terrorism?"

## OSRTC FA & CAO in Vig net



Assets worth crores detected

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Vigilance police on Friday, during ongoing raids on the properties of Bijaya Kumar Mangaraj, Financial Advisor and Chief Accounts Officer (FA & CAO), Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) Bhubaneswar, unearthed assets worth crores of rupees. The movable and immovable asset unearthed so far in the names of Mangaraj and his family members included two double-storied buildings at New Colony, Palasuni, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar, two high-value plots in prime areas of Bhubaneswar, bank deposits, investment in PPF and shares worth Rs 1.48 crore, gold jewellery weighing 500 grams, two four-wheelers (Hyundai Astra and Kia Seltos) and household articles worth Rs 17.70 lakh. Mangaraj was also suspected to have a two-storied house in Ernakulam, Kerala which is under verification. The measurement and valuation or assessment of the aforesaid buildings and plots are being carried out by the Vigilance Technical Wing. Further investigation was in progress.

# Excise Min announces total ban on dance bars

No liquor shops near religious, edu institutions

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Amid a ruckus over the Chikiti hooch tragedy, Excise Minister Prithviraj Harichandan on Friday announced a total ban on dance bars in the State.

"Dance bars will be shut in Odisha. Illegal liquor shops being run on government properties will be bulldozed. The network of illicit liquor trade will also be completely destroyed within a year," he said during an adjournment motion debate in the State Assembly.

The Minister further informed that a new excise policy would be introduced in tune with 'Odia Asmita'. "No liquor shops will be allowed near religious institutions and schools, colleges and other educational institutions," he said.

Reacting to a statement by BJD MLA Arun Sahoo, Harichandan said he has taken the illegal liquor operations as a challenge after assuming the charge as the Minister of the Excise Department. "We



have started a drive to clean vices by removing bars and liquor off-shops near schools and colleges. We will raze the illegal liquor shops that had been allowed during the previous government," he added.

The announcement of ban on dance bars was made days after women, previously working at dance bars in Bhubaneswar, called on excise officials and requested them for resuming the permit to licensed foreign liquor shops in the city to host dance performances within their premises.

The BJP had also earlier accused the previous Naveen Patnaik-led BJD government of attempting to destroy the culture of Odia people by providing licences to dance bars in Bhubaneswar.

The ban is expected to be implemented State-wide with the government set to issue formal notifications and guidelines for enforcement.

While some opposition parties have welcomed the decision, others have called it a "knee-jerk reaction".

"The dance bars should be closed as the lives of youths and students are getting ruined. There is also a need to shift the liquor shops near religious and educational institutions. The illegal units in villages should also be closed," said Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati.

During the previous government, a lot of things were done only to earn revenue from liquor, he claimed.

## BJD MLAs try to climb Speaker's podium

# Opp demands Excise Minister's resignation

Over Chikiti hooch tragedy

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Assembly witnessed pandemonium for the fourth consecutive day on Friday with opposition BJD and Congress demanding resignation of Excise Minister Prithviraj Harichandan over the hooch tragedy in Chikiti in Ganjam district.

The opposition members rushed to the Speaker's podium, attempted to seize the microphone and chanted slogans in the Well of the House.

As the uproar escalated, Speaker Surama Padhy adjourned the proceedings at 10:40 am, rescheduling it for 11:30 am.

Notably, the Assembly has faced continuous disruptions from Opposition members for the past four days, hindering proceedings until 4 pm each day.

For two consecutive days, the



Opposition has been raising the issue of the Chikiti hooch tragedy from the start of the Question Hour, holding the BJP government accountable for the incident.

The BJD and the Congress demanded Excise Minister Harichandan resign taking moral responsibility for the tragedy, which has claimed three lives and left several others hospitalised.

The government has already announced an RDC (Revenue Divisional Commissioner) probe into the liquor deaths.

When the Assembly met at 10:30 am on Friday to begin the Question Hour, BJD and Congress members, shouting slogans against the government, stormed into the Well of the House and approached the Speaker's podium. Their protests intensified as the Speaker, disregarding their objections, proceeded with the Question Hour and asked the Minister to respond.

In an attempt to disrupt the proceedings, some BJD members climbed up to the Speaker's podium and tried to grab the microphone,

but they were stopped by the Assembly security staffs.

Despite the unruly scene, the Speaker tried to continue with the Question Hour, urging the protesting members to return to their seats and cooperate in the House's proceedings, but her appeals were ignored. She suggested that the Opposition raise their concerns during the Zero Hour, but they remained steadfast in their demand for the Excise Minister's resignation, continuing their slogans in the Well.

Unable to restore order, the Speaker eventually adjourned the House at 10:40 am until 11:30 am.

However, the stalemate, which had disrupted the pre-lunch sessions for four consecutive days, eventually eased, and the Assembly resumed normal functioning with the participation of the Opposition members in the Zero Hour and the adjournment motion when the House reconvened at 11:30 am after the adjournment.

## SIM box racket

# Police take accused on remand again

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police on Friday took SIM box racket key accused Raju Mandal on another two-day remand for further custodial interrogation.

Mandal, a resident of West Bengal, was arrested on August 17 with over 1,000 pre-activated SIM cards along with routers and other equipment from a house in the Laxmisaagar area in Bhubaneswar.

A day later, a local court here granted police five-day remand of Mandal. Odisha police had also sought assistance from the National Investigations Agency (NIA) and Interpol to probe suspected terror

connections between Mandal and Asadur, who allegedly operated SIM box centres at Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Ranchi from Dhaka.

Mandal had allegedly procured the devices and fake SIM cards from Asadur and then installed them in three rented houses in Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Ranchi. A total of 12 SIM boxes, 481 SIM cards and an extra 810 standby SIM cards were seized during the raids in both Cuttack and Bhubaneswar and another five SIM boxes from Ranchi.

The SIM boxes were allegedly used to make international calls to countries like China, Pakistan and Turkey, raising suspicions of terrorist involvement.

# Bharat Raksha Manch holds massive rally

- Demands deportation of Rohingya, Bangladeshi infiltrators
- Also calls for immediate arrest of Laxmanananda's killers

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Bharat Raksha Manch (BRM), a forum of Hindu nationalists, on Friday held a massive rally here seeking to draw the attention of the Odisha Government to the increasing infiltration of Bangladeshi nationals and Rohingyas into the State allegedly at the behest of some anti-national forces.

The organisation held under the leadership of BRM secretary general Dr Ashok Acharya demanded immediate identification and deportations of the infiltrators.

The BRM also demanded immediate arrest of VHP leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati's killers.

The delegates said the Rohingya and Bangladeshi intruders have settled in at least 80 urban centres and several rural areas in Odisha and fraudulently acquired voter identity cards and Aadhaar cards, thereby availing benefits of various government welfare schemes.

"During the day time, the Rohingya and Bangladeshi Muslims work as street vendors, masons and



menial workers. But they indulge in various crimes like theft, smuggling and dacoity at night. The Odisha Government must wake up and identify these infiltrators," said Suryakant Kelkar, founder and national coordinator of BRM.

Satyanarayan Jatia, a six-time Lok Sabha MP and ex-Union Minister expressed concern over the infiltrators trying to change the demographic profile of the country and maintained that India must be declared as a Hinduashtra.

Dr Acharya said, "Hindus are now insecure in some States like Kerala and West Bengal." Some interna-

tional Islamic fundamentalist organisations are sending Rohingya and Bangladeshi Muslims to increase the Muslim population in India. Hindus are being persecuted by Muslims in Pakistan and

# Swosti Premium Beach Resorts, Puri to be opened tomorrow

By CM Majhi, Dy CMs Singh Deo, Parida, Union Min Pradhan

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

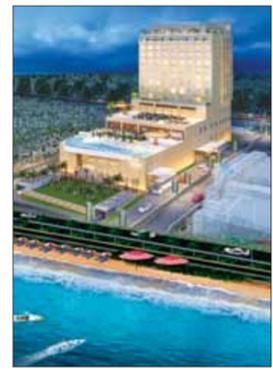
The Swosti Group's Swosti Premium Beach Resorts will be unveiled in Puri on August 25 by CM Mohan Charan Majhi.

The event will also be graced by several distinguished guests, including Union Minister for Education, Dharmendra Pradhan, along with other esteemed dignitaries such as Deputy Chief Ministers Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Pravati Parida.

Swosti Premium Beach Resorts is poised to redefine luxury accommodations in Puri, offering an unparalleled experience with its stunning architecture, world-class amenities, and exceptional service. The resort features 125 exquisitely designed luxury rooms, including suites, each thoughtfully crafted to provide both sophistication and comfort.

The guests will enjoy breathtaking views of the Golden Beach, Puri, from the comfort of their elegantly decorated rooms, equipped with state-of-the-art technology.

The resort's design beautifully



intertwines Odisha's rich cultural heritage, with interiors inspired by the graceful movements of Odishi and Mahari dances, and ceilings that echo the curved lines of the ancient Boita boats. The uniforms even celebrate the Ikat/Sambalpuri art elements.

In addition to its luxurious accommodations, the resort boasts an impressive array of facilities. These include versatile banquet halls tailored for MICE events and grand weddings, a sprawling open-air garden lawn overlooking the beach, a multi-cuisine all-day dining restaurant, a vibrant food court, an infinity swimming pool, a rejuvenating spa, a fully equipped gym, and separate game zones for adults and children.

## Crorepati Forest Range Officer arrested

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Vigilance police on Friday arrested Dhenkanal Forest Range Officer Bibhudananda Mishra for amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

A wildlife case has also been instituted against Mishra for keeping Indian peafowl in violation of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

A high-value flat in Bhubaneswar, two more in Hyderabad, eight plots in Bhubaneswar and Dhenkanal, a farmhouse with civil construction work worth Rs 2 crore at Rahangol village in Athagarh, deposits amounting to Rs 1 crore, cash of Rs



5.15 lakh, including Rs 1 lakh found concealed in a toilet flush tank, gold weighing 557 grams and two four-wheelers were detected during simultaneous searches on properties linked to Mishra, which he could not account for satisfactorily.

Sources said that Mishra had joined as a Forester on an ad-hoc basis in August 1987. He was appointed as a regular Forester a year later in 1988. In 2016, he was promoted to Forest Ranger.

## SOCIAL CANVAS

# Sub-categorisation, cream layer criteria row in quota issue

The Supreme Court's judgement on August 1 by a seven-Judge Constitution Bench in a 6:1 majority judgement on State of Punjab v. Davindra Singh, allowed States for sub-classification of Scheduled Castes for purpose of reservation in jobs and education and also introduction of cream layer criterion to SC and ST reservation different from OBC.

The matter of applicability of cream layer was denied to SCs and STs in Indra Swahney v. Union of India (1992) case, but now both sub categorization and cream layer will be applicable to all reserve categories, except EWS.

The judgement led by the Chief Justice, while upholding the State power to do classification, imposed conditions before the States to generate quantifiable data to justify such division based on inadequate representation. The process is not above judicial scrutiny. While sub-categorization has got a mixed response among Dalit groups and political parties, the introduction of cream layer is being opposed by almost all.



MANAS JENA

Though primarily the petition was relating to SC sub-categorization but unnecessarily the judgement has included STs who constitute almost half of SC population of the country and their issues are different as they are culturally-religiously not part of the caste system. The most vulnerable tribes such as PVTGs are identified and supplemented with special projects along with a host of protective leg-

islation such as religion neutral status, exclusive land and forest rights, PESA, FRA and 5th and 6th scheduled provisions.

SCs continue as part of hierarchical caste society and the very basis of their identification started with untouchability and caste occupations. The reality is castes identified within SC are having very little commonality and also practice hierarchy among them though in varying degrees. The castes traditionally engaged in leather work, shoe makers, drummers, scavengers and Safai karamcharis and communities engaged in socially inferior occupations are seen as lowest in caste hierarchy. The anti-caste movement very seldom discusses the issues of social assimilation among Dalits in line with annihilation of caste. There are more than 1,100 sub castes identified as SCs in 28 States. The SC status is State specific, so also their issues are based on their occupations and social status. It is also linked to religion and local political dynamics.

The issue of sub-categorization movement started some time in

1990 in AP, Katakana and Tamil Nadu by the Madigas who are claiming themselves as less represented among SCs in getting reservation benefits that are not in proportion to their counterparts such as Mala and Adi Andhra. Similarly, the Valmikis, Majbis of Punjab and Arunthathiyars and Chakliars of TN, Musahar and Dom in Bihar and Mangs of Maharashtra also subscribe to the same argument.

The Mala, Holeya, Paraiyar, Pallar, Chamar, Ravidasia, Paswan and Mahar etc have comparatively taken little higher benefits than others.

Odisha has witnessed a untouchable Dalit reservation movement against "Kaibarta, Keuta and Dhibar" castes who though not untouchable have entered into the SC list and have taken a lion's share in reserve seats in job, education and political posts. The Bengali refugees have got the SC status in Odisha and have been rehabilitated with land and other benefits. They have also made their presence felt in local business and politics, while the locals there suffer the most. The

untouchable communities, Safai karamcharis and Mehentara caste have been dealt with a raw deal.

The sub-categorisation move started with The AP SCs (Rationalization of Reservation) Act 2000 which was upheld by the AP High Court but it was declared unconstitutional later. There were also a number of State Commissions which recommended for sub-categorization in different times such as JP Ramachandra Raju Commission, AP, J Gurnam Singh Commission, Haryana, RN Prasad Committee, Punjab, Lahuji Salve Commission in Maharashtra, Sadashiva Commission, Karnataka, Mahadalit Commission, Bihar and Janarthanam Committee in TN. Bihar divided the Dalits into Dalit and Mahadalit in 2007 and Haryana created a group called deprived SCs in 2020.

The sub-categorization has been encouraged by the BJP when PM Narendra Modi met Krishana Madiga, leader of Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi in last election meeting and promised him for a change. The support of Govern-

ment for sub categorisation was well represented by both the Attorney General and Solicitor General. Dr PL Punia while in NCSC had made a recommendation for sub-categorization in 2010. The Justice Usha Mehra Commission set up by the Union Government on request of AP Government had opined in its report in favour of sub-categorization in 2008. The then Government of Odisha besides 14 other States had however disagreed with sub-categorization idea.

To promote substantive equality, preferential treatment is required for the most disadvantaged section. To that effect sub-categorisation is a reality for States aspiring for it.

A number of studies have found that creamy layer is not an issue among SCs and STs. Because economic development of a few does not kick off social discrimination historically faced by Dalits and Adivasies. The study by DICCI and MSJE reported that there is a very insignificant number of affluent among SCs and STs. Even though all the reserve seats will be filled up, it will not cover one percent of

their population, they said. The NSO 77th survey 2019 on debt and investment shows huge asset inequality among social groups and found SCs to be on a lower ladder.

It is expected that the next move of the BJP Government is making reservation Hindu centric. The Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims have been demanding SC status. Justice Sachar and Justice Ranganatha Mishra Commissions' recommendations are still pending and currently, Justice Balakrishnan Commission is investigating the issue. The BJP has been opposing the religion neutral character of SCs and STs to oppose the inclusion of non-Hindus specially Muslims and Christians though already Sikhs and Buddhists have got an entry in SC list. While opposing entry of Dalit Christians it is being argued that though they face social discrimination but they are relatively more well off than Dalit Hindus may be due to access to English education and exposure to larger Christian society.

(manasbbsr15@gmail.com)

# B'pur Rotary Clubs, Bugis In exchange flags

A step towards club's international tie-up

RAJEV RATHAN  
BRAHMAMPUR

In a heartwarming display of international camaraderie, the Rotary Club of Brahmampur and Rotary Club of Bugis Junction, Singapore, conducted a Flag Exchange Program here on August 20. It was the second Flag Exchange Program for Rotary Club of Brahmampur within a week, showcasing their commitment to global connections.



Rotary Club of Brahmampur president Rtn RL Tarun and Rotary Club of Bugis Junction, Singapore, led by past president Rtn Kersi Aspar, partner Zenobia, past president Rtn Reto Callegari, and past president Rtn Bernice, exchanged

flags at a special function. The event was attended by a large number of members from Rotary Club of Brahmampur

The visiting delegation from Singapore expressed admiration for the projects and activities undertaken by the

Club of Brahmampur, highlighting the strong bond between the two clubs. Secretary Rtn KVG Ravi Kumar, treasurer Rtn V Satyanarayana, and past presidents Rtn VVR N Rao, Rtn Satyakam Patro, Rtn V Santosh Kumar, Rtn Srinivas Prusty, Rtn Mihir Panigrahi, Rtn Murali Krishna, and Rtn Pradyumna Bishoi, along with numerous members, participated in the programme.

Past president Rtn Murali Krishna briefed the Singaporean delegates on the significance of Brahmampur and the history of the Rotary Club of Brahmampur. Secretary Rtn KVG Ravi Kumar read out the

activities report of the club. Rtn Sarthak proposed the vote of thanks

The delegates also visited Christian Hospital, where they planted trees, and later visited the Dialysis Centre at Meenakshi Hospital. Additionally, they stopped by the Rotary Clock Tower at Girija Chowk, Brahmampur, further strengthening their connection to the city. This Flag Exchange Program symbolizes the growing friendship between Rotary Club of Brahmampur and Rotary Club of Berhampur and Rotary Club of Bugis Junction, Singapore, paving the way for future collaborations and service projects.

## INBRIEF

### CPPA Rome appoints Aruna Mohanty as Global Ambassador

Bhubaneswar: The Centre for Peace & Performing Arts (CPPA), Rome, has appointed eminent danseuse Padma Shri Geeta Chandran and Padma Shri Aruna Mohanty as its 'Global Cultural Ambassador' for the year 2024-2025. Geeta Chandran consid-



ered a foremost exponent of Indian classical dance Bharatanatyam and Aruna Mohanty considered a foremost exponent of Indian classical dance Odishi are widely recognised for their innovation in choreography and for working on themes with far-reaching social influence.

### 95 litres of ID liquor seized, 20 held in BBSR

Bhubaneswar: On the instructions of Commissioner of Police Sanjeeb Panda, extensive excise enforcement was conducted on Thursday night across 24 locations under the jurisdiction of 18 police stations of the BBSR Urban Police Department (UPD). This operation resulted in the seizure of 975 litres of illicitly distilled (ID) liquor, 22 litres of foreign liquor, destruction of 500 litres of Mahua wash and the arrest of 20 individuals, including two women. The action was part of the ongoing 'Safe City Drive' of the Commissionerate police and efforts to make the city safer to ensure a secure and law-abiding environment for all citizens and discourage people not to consume ID liquor.

### Thinkia GP polls to be held on Oct 4

Jagatsinghpur: The State Election Commission has scheduled elections for Thinkia Grama Panchayat under Erasama block for the post of Sarpanch and ward members for October 4 the results of which would be declared a day later. According to official information, elections for the Thinkia GP will be notified on August 27, and filing of

nominations will start on September 2 and continue till September 6. Scrutiny of nominations would be conducted on September 9. After withdrawal of nominations final contestants' list would be published on September 13 and the vote will be held on October 4.

### JSpur ZP launches 'Plant for Mother' drive

Jagatsinghpur: The Jagatsinghpur Zilla Parishad launched the 'Plant for Mother' drive in a function held on Thursday. Speaking at the inauguration event, the guests



emphasised the importance of planting tree for environment. As many as 120 plants were planted inside the Zilla Parishad premises. The inauguration event was attended by the ZP president, the district Collector, ZP chief executive officer, SHGs members, and a few NGO activists.

### Silk India exhibition begins in Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar: Artisans of the Orissa Art and Craft Committee have come to Bhubaneswar to exhibit their ethnic weaves and traditional pure silk and cotton products to cater to the demand of the festival season with the theme, "Silk India - Wedding Collection". The Orissa Art and Craft Committee, founded by a group of artisans, designers, social activists, academics and environmentalists, attempts to promote exquisite traditional skill, cotton and creations of the weavers and encourage them to be contemporary and economically relevant. The exhibition cum sale will continue till August 31 from 10.30 am to 8.30 pm at The New Marriion, Janpath, Bhubaneswar.



# Police raid Balangir jail following gang war



Tobacco, restricted food items, trimmer found

PNS ■ BALANGIR

A police team led by SP Rishikesh Khilari conducted a raid on the district jail in Balangir on Friday morning following a clash between rival groups in the prison.

The police found several prohibited items, including bidis, cigarettes, lighters, a

trimmer and various food items.

"Searches were carried out across 12 wards and other areas of the jail. We found several items, including tobacco and unauthorised food items, that are strictly banned on jail premises. A trimmer was also seized. The jailor will submit a detailed report on it," the SP said.

On the clash in which a criminal, Babulu Mahanad, was attacked by a rival group, Khilari said that the jail authori-

ties have been asked to keep the rival group members in separate cells and take action.

Jail Superintendent Sarbeswar Sahu claimed that the contraband items might have been thrown into the jail from outside. "An investigation will be conducted into presence of trimmer, which was given to the jail salon, in a cell," he added.

Sources said the Balangir jail is overcrowded with 456 inmates against its capacity for 392.

# In Balangir Baby elephant separated from herd, rescued

PNS ■ BALANGIR

A lone baby elephant was rescued on Thursday from the Babjore forest in Deogaon Forest Range in Balangir district by forest officials.

The elephant, which appeared to be weak, was tranquilised and given necessary treatment on the spot. Blood and nasal samples were collected and those would be sent for Centre for Wildlife Health, OUAT in Bhubaneswar for further examination.

The elephant is around three to five-year-old and its condition is stable, said Khariar Block Veterinary Officer Sangram Keshari Behera.

Personnel of the Deogaon Forest Range had detected the movement of a single juvenile



elephant near village Samra on August 21. In the previous night, the animal was spotted wandering in different villages like Salepali, Jarasingha and Kuliabhal.

Forest officials believe that this lone juvenile elephant has been either left out of a herd or have been ousted from the herd. It is perhaps a member of a 12-jumbo herd staying in the Patnagarh Forest Range area.

# In Sambalpur Man injured in lightning dies; 2 critical

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU  
SAMBALPUR

A 46-year-old man of Tabla village under Maneswar block in Sambalpur district, who had been injured in lightning, died on Friday while undergoing treatment.

Three men, identified as Shrikanta Pradhan (41), the owner of a paddy field, along with two farm labourers, Sapan Munda (46) and Sumanta Majhi (36), were working in a farmland on Wednesday morning when lightning struck them.

Other farm labourers rescued them in unconscious conditions and informed their family members. Initially, they were rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital, where the doctors provided primary treatment and referred them to the VIMSAR, Burla.

The doctors in the hospital pronounced one victim dead on Friday. The deceased was identified as Sapan Munda, who is survived by his wife and

two young sons. Out of the other two victims, Sumanta is in a critical condition and Srikanth is out of danger.

Debendra Kumar Padhan, general secretary of the Farmer's Association, said, "There were 22 other farm workers who managed to take shelter under a building, but Suman and two other injured were on one side of the field when lightning struck them. We are trying to apply and get the ex-gratia amount Sapan's family deserves."

The disaster management team of the district said the administration is aware of the incident; the PM report and official process take around 15 days in minimum to release the ex-gratia amount from the State fund, which will be Rs 4 lakh, and from the Central government fund, it will be Rs 2 lakh. A total of Rs 6 lakh would be sanctioned for the family of the deceased. Apart from this, in the same official process, the injured would be given compensation as per the injury sustained.

# Favourite Jajpur got Rs 3,074 cr between 2021 & '24

INFORMS CM IN ASSEMBLY

PNS ■ JAJPUR

Jajpur district received a whopping Rs 3,074 crore under the Chief Minister-Special Relief Fund between 2021 and 2024, said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi in a reply to MLA Amar Naik in the State Assembly on Thursday.

Besides, the district administration has spent Rs 3,008 crore. Despite so much money being pumped into the district, 437 projects have been completed, 255 projects are still in progress and 1,037 projects are yet to be started, said Majhi.

The district was such a favourite with the BJD government that even though 24 projects were not started in 2021-22, the government gifted thousand more project to the district. When the election was around the corner, the number of grants to the district doubled.

"Have you ever heard so much money being released from the Chief Minister's Special Fund to a district? What happened with the money? There should be an inquiry, demanded BJP MLA Saroj Padhi.

"Jajpur district received the highest amount of grants. This doesn't mean that other districts were neglected," said BJD MLA Biswaranjan Mallick. The district had received over Rs 9 crore for the Biraja Temple Project but the work is half-completed.

"The Biraja Temple work is yet to be completed. It has been going on for the last five years. There is no information plaque at the work site. We had sought information under the RTI but received none. Similarly, the NC Autonomous College had received Rs 9 crore. Three years have passed but the building construction work is yet to be finished," alleged a Jajpur resident, Sanjan Singh.

# K'put MP, R'gada dist MLAs feted by host of bodies

BADAL TAH ■ RAYGADA

A grand civic reception was given to the recently won MP, Koraput and MLAs of Rayagada district here.

Several associations namely Baisya Sangha, Merchant Association, Rice Millers' Association, Stone Crusher Owners Association, Brahman Samaj, Soundhik Samaj, Walker Clubs, Senior Citizens Association, Bar Association, Citizen's Council etc felicitated Koraput MP Saptagiri Ulaka, Rayagada MLA Appalawamy Kadra, Bissam Cuttack MLA Nila Madhaba Hikaka and Gunupur MLA Satyajit Gomango.

Senior Advocate Madan Padhi and senior journalist Dr Badal Tah were also felicitated, on the occasion.



his sustained efforts on a Government medical College in Rayagada, inclusion of Jhodia Community in the list of Scheduled Tribe, expediting work in Rayagada Rail Division, Bypass road, Gunupur-Therubali Railway line project, Railway over bridge near Sai International Hotel, few trains' extensions and stoppages at JK Pur, Bissamcuttack, Ambadola and Railway ticket concessions to senior citizens and media personnel, establishment of airport at Rayagada, etc

He was titled as a Towerman of Rayagada as he facilitated a plan of 4G mobile coverage to 833 villages, mobile towers to provide 4G mobile services

to 393 villages and yet another plan of establishing 318 towers for 440 uncovered villages. In addition to the above, because of his keen efforts, list of 57 villages where survey is in progress.

Saptagiri requested the august gathering to raise their voices before him so that he can represent those in the form of questions in the Parliament and seek quick solutions. Kadra appealed to the public to work in a cohesive manner to restore 506 acre from Jeypore Sugar Company and initiate several development projects on the same land including a medical college. He even suggested to

shift residential offices of Collector, SP and DFO, which unnecessarily occupy lots of space in the mid of the town, to that 506 acre and make those offices people friendly.

Satyajit assured the public to follow-up Therubali and Gunupur railway line at all levels possible. Nilamadhab emphasized to initiate innovative programmes with poor people of his constituency including integrated development of Dangaria Kandhas, a Primarily Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) residing in Niyamagiri hill range.

Chandramouli Kumundan, who presided and moderated the meeting, requested the MP and MLAs to renovate the road from Kureru to Parvatipuram leading to Visakhapatnam, which is extremely dilapidated with thousands of potholes, motorable.

## SWOSTI PREMIUM → BEACH RESORTS, PURI ←

# GRAND OPENING

Inauguration by  
**Sri Mohan Charan Majhi**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

Chief Guest  
**Sri Dharmendra Pradhan**  
Hon'ble Union Minister for Education

on  
**25<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

Guests of Honour

 SRI K. V. SINGH DEO HON'BLE DY CM ODISHA	 SMT. PRAVATI PARIDA HON'BLE DY CM, ODISHA	 SRI PRITHVI RAJ HARICHANDAN HON'BLE MINISTER EXCISE LAW & WORKS ODISHA	 DR. SAMBIT PATRA HON'BLE MP, PURI	 SRI SUNIL MOHANTY HON'BLE MLA PURI	 MS. UPASNA MOHAPATRA HON'BLE MLA BRAMHAGIRI	 SRI BABU SINGH HON'BLE MLA BBSR (EKAMRA)
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# India, US sign key defence pacts during Rajnath's Washington visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

In an effort to further strengthen defence ties, India and US have inked two major agreements - Security of Supplies Arrangement (SOSA) and Memorandum of Agreement regarding the Assignment of Liaison Officers.

Two important documents have been signed in Washington DC as Raksha Mantri Shri @rajnathsingh's visit to the United States begins. Senior Defence officials from both sides concluded the Security of Supplies Arrangement (SOSA), and Memorandum of Agreement regarding the Assignment of Liaison Officers," Defence Ministry said in a social media post.

The US and India entered into a "bilateral, non-binding Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA)", the US Department of Defence (DoD) said in a press release on Thursday.

Through this SOSA, the US and India agree to provide reciprocal priority support for goods and services that promote National defence.

Global Strategic Partnership, officials said.

The agreements signed on Thursday pertain to the Security of Supplies Arrangement (SOSA) and a Memorandum of Agreement regarding the Assignment of Liaison Officers.

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The Arrangement will enable both countries to acquire the industrial resources they need from one another to resolve unanticipated supply chain disruptions to meet national security needs, it said.

The SOSA was signed by Dr Vic Ramdass, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Industrial Base Policy, on behalf of the US, and Samir Kumar Sinha, Additional Secretary and Director General (Acquisitions), on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

"This Security of Supply Arrangement represents a pivotal moment in the US-India Major Defence Partner relationship and will be a key factor in strengthening the US-India Defence

Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)," said Ramdass.

"I look forward to OUSD(A&S) hosting the next DTTI meeting this fall to deepen cooperation between our respective defence industrial bases and pursue bilateral co-development, co-production, and co-sustainability initiatives," he said.

In the Arrangement, the US and India commit to support one another's priority delivery requests for procurement of critical national defence resources.

The US will provide India assurances under the US Defence Priorities and Allocations System (DPAS), with programme determinations by DoD and rating authorisation by the Department of Commerce (DOC).

India will in turn establish a Government-Industry Code of Conduct with its industrial base, where Indian firms will voluntarily agree to make every reasonable effort to provide the US priority

support, the release said.

With an expanding global supply chain for DOD, SOSAs are an important mechanism for DoD to strengthen interoperability with US defence trade partners.

The Arrangements institute working groups, establish communication mechanisms, streamline DoD processes, and proactively act to allay anticipated supply chain issues in peacetime, emergency, and armed conflict.

They are also a useful tool in developing investment strategies to ensure redundancy and security, it said. India is the 18th SOSA partner of the US. Other SOSA partners include Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

Meanwhile, Rajnath said India and US, together, are a formidable force which can ensure peace, prosperity and stability in the world.

He made this assertion while interacting with the Indian diaspora after landing in Washington.

He described India and US as natural allies, which are destined to be strong partners, and this collaboration is growing continuously.

Rajnath re-asserted the fact that under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's stature has grown on the global stage.

"Earlier, India's words at international fora were not heeded; but today, the whole world listens carefully," he said. Rajnath pointed out that before 2014, India was among the 'Fragile Five' nations, as coined by investment firm Morgan Stanley, and today it finds itself among the 'Fabulous Five' economies of the world.

He cited the firm's recent report, which says that India will become the third largest economy by 2027.

He stressed that the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

ensured that the Indian economy was not adversely impacted as compared to other countries.

The defence minister highlighted the fact that the government has successfully brought 25 crore people above poverty line.

He added that as per latest data, retail inflation fell to a five-year low of 3.54% and foreign exchange reserves have reached an all-time high of \$675 billion.

He enumerated the steps taken by the Government to achieve 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence, including the notification of Positive Indigenisation Lists comprising over 5,000 items.

He emphasised that the consistent efforts are being made to ensure that state-of-the-art defence items are manufactured on Indian soil by domestic companies.

Rajnath acknowledged the fact that the defence exports, which were Rs 600 crore before the current government came to power, have now risen significantly to over Rs 21,000 crore.



## President Murmu lauds ISRO's debris-free space mission goal by 2030

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday voiced concern over increasing space debris as a result of numerous satellites being placed in orbit and lauded ISRO for setting itself a target to make future space missions debris free by 2030.

She was speaking at the celebration of the maiden National Space Day to mark the first anniversary of the landing of India's Chandrayaan-3 project.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted people on the first National Space Day, and said his Government has taken a series of futuristic decisions relating to this sector and will do even more in the times to come.

Modi had announced the celebration of the National Space Day last year following India's success in landing its first spacecraft on the moon on this day with the Chandrayaan-3 mission.

He said in a social media post, "Greetings to everyone on the first National Space Day. We recall with great pride our nation's achievements in the space sector. It is also a day to laud the contributions of our space scientists."

President Murmu said "Space debris can cause problems for space missions," she said during the event at Bharat Mandapam here that was attended by Union minister Jitendra Singh, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman S Somanath, engineers, ISRO scientists and representatives of the country's nascent space industry.

The President appreciated the ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Operations Management facility, which ensures continuous progress of space research activities.

"I am also happy to note that India is moving forward to make all its space missions debris free by 2030," Murmu said. The President said ISRO had made remarkable achievements in the space sector as well as invaluable contributions to the country's social and economic development.

She appreciated the dedicated scientists who placed India's space programme among the best in the world by using minimum resources.

The President said the progress of India's space sector was extraordinary. "Be it a successfully completed Mars mission with limited resources or the successful launch of more than a hundred satellites at once, we have made many impressive achievements," she said.

At the event, Dr Jitendra Singh announced that an Indian will land on the surface of Moon, fifteen years from now, in the year 2040 and highlighted the historic landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the Moon's South Pole, a feat that astonished the world and established India as a leader in space exploration. Later the President also presented awards to winners of the Robotics Challenge and the Bharatiya Antariksh Hackathon on the occasion.

"In the last six decades, India has not only touched the lives of its citizens but also reached the Moon," said Dr. Jitendra Singh.

## Govind takes charge as Union Home Secretary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Senior IAS officer Govind Mohan on Friday took charge as the Union Home Secretary following the retirement of incumbent Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

Mohan, a 1989-batch IAS officer of Sikkim cadre, was serving as Union Culture Secretary before being appointed as Union Home Secretary last week.

A B.Tech from Banaras Hindu University and PG Diploma from IIM, Ahmedabad, the senior bureaucrat has a wide experience of serving both the Sikkim and the Central Governments in various capacities. Mohan is considered to be one of the brilliant officers presently serving in the Government and known for his diligence. He had earlier served the Home Ministry as additional Secretary handling several key divisions. A seasoned bureaucrat, Mohan was also the Government's key officer during the COVID-19 pandemic and tasked with overseeing implementation of decisions taken for various protocols and ensuring smooth coordination with States.

As Union Culture Secretary, Mohan has successfully launched two flagship programmes of the Modi Government 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' and 'Har Ghar Tiranga movement'.

The 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' is an initiative to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of Independence of the country and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements.

Hosting of the national flag in every home, 'Tiranga Yatras', 'Tiranga' rallies and 'Tiranga' runs are key initiatives under the 'Har Ghar Tiranga movement'. After the launch of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga movement', job opportunities were created for thousands of women associated with self-help groups (SHGs), which have increasingly taken over flag production to meet the massive demand, officials said.

## Steps to modernise railways discussed at ASSOCHAM meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

India is the country with maximum electrification for expansion of tracks, Mukul Saran Mathur, Additional Member, Commercial, Ministry of Railways, said in his inaugural address at the ASSOCHAM National Conference held on Friday in New Delhi.

Eminent experts, stakeholders and senior government officials from the Railway Ministry deliberated upon a range of issues and transformative technical solutions for 'Modernisation of Railway for Viksit Bharat'.

Mathur, while focusing on the achievements of the railways, said the rail network has been increased to 68,000 km currently and more capacity must be created immediately because two crore people travel every day by train in the country.

He added that more than 5,000 special trains have recently been operated to transport migrants. He also mentioned an example for Vande Bharat trains, a major "flagship product" in India.

According to Mathur, Rs 85,000-crore plan was provided for railways expansion in 2023-24.

He said the railways' refund process for tickets has become efficient as it has been reduced by one-two business days.

Deepak Sharma, Senior Member ASSOCHAM and CEO, River Engineering Pvt Ltd, highlighted the modernisation of railways as a key component in India's vision of 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India).

Sharma said the initiative aims to transform the Indian Railways into a world class network that supports economic growth, enhances connectivity, and improves the quality of life for millions of people.

Sanjay Bajpai, Co-chairman, the National Council on Logistics and Warehousing, ASSOCHAM and Executive



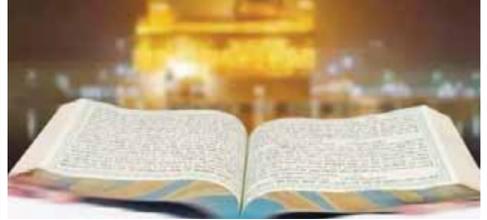
Director, the Container Corporation of India Ltd talked about how AI and machine learning are useful in terminals for 100 per cent cargo visibility.

We aim to have the last mile connectivity as we are working on the Gati Shakti plan, he added.

Animesh Gupta, a scientist at Goldratt Research Labs USA, discussed the gaps in railways related to technology and freight.

"We need to reach 40 per cent freight by rail to meet the demands. There's a need to reduce the environmental footprint of railway operations. The railway sector needs to ensure that digital solutions are secure and protected from cyber threats," Gupta said.

Concentrating on transportation dependability, President of ACTO Manish Puri said that in order to satisfy capacity and demand, infrastructure and logistical output are the main areas of concern due to the increase in trade activity. In order to realise the goal of 'Viksit Bharat', contemporary railway transition is essential since it advances the country's economy, society, and technology.



## India seeks return of seized Guru Granth Sahib copies from Qatar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

India on Friday said it has taken up with Qatar reports of seizure of copies of the Guru Granth Sahib, and is according high priority to the matter.

"We have seen reports regarding the Guru Granth Sahib seized by the Qatari authorities and the demand of their release by the Sikh community," External Affairs Ministry spokesman said.

He said the Government has already taken up the matter with the Qatari side and the Indian Embassy in Doha has kept the Sikh community in the Qatari capital abreast of the developments.

"It is important to note that

two Swaroops of Guru Granth Sahib were taken by Qatari authorities from two individuals/groups who were charged for running religious establishment without approval of the government of Qatar," Jaiswal said. "Our Embassy rendered all possible assistance within the ambit of local laws and regulations," he said.

The Spokesperson was responding to media queries on the issue.

"One Swaroop of the Holy Book was returned by Qatari authorities and it was assured that the other Swaroop is also kept with respect," Jaiswal said.

"We continue to follow up the matter with Qatari authorities with high priority and hope for early resolution," he said.

## Health Ministry to replace colonial convocation attire with local dress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

In a bid to move away from the "colonial legacy" of wearing the black robe and cap for convocation ceremonies and instead embrace attire that reflects India's diverse cultural heritage, the Union Health Ministry has directed its institutes including AIIMS to develop a new dress code for convocation ceremonies that reflects local traditions.

"Currently, the black robe and cap is being used during convocation by various institutes of the ministry," the communication said. This attire originated in the middle ages in Europe and was introduced by the British in all their colonies," said the Ministry in a statement.



"The above tradition is a colonial legacy which needs to be changed," the communication to all of its institutes said. "Accordingly it has been decided by the ministry that the various institutes of the Ministry including AIIMS/TNIs engaged in imparting medical education will design (an) appropriate India(n) dress code for the convocation ceremony of their institute -

based on local traditions of the state in which the institute is located," the communication stated.

Overall, the goal is to modernise and localise the convocation experience, making it more relevant and reflective of India's rich and varied cultural landscape.

The proposed dress codes will need to be submitted for approval by the Union Health Secretary.

## Plea for clarity on new captive elephant genetic data rules

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Senior Congress Leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday urged Union Environment Minister Bhopender Yadav to provide clarity on a recent circular regarding the transport of captive elephants.

Ramesh sought detailed information on the process used by the Ministry to establish the genetic profiles of elephants, including how this data is being generated and who is responsible for maintaining the database.

In a letter to Yadav, the former Environment Minister Ramesh drew the attention of the Government that on August 20, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change reminded the Elephant Range States of the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024.

"In particular attention was drawn to the provision of clause (7) Terms and Conditions, sub-clause (3) which mandates that 'No transfer of an elephant shall be permissible unless genetic profile of the elephant has been entered in the electronic monitoring application of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change,'" Ramesh said in his letter to Yadav.

Ramesh said this condition itself raises four issues on which there is need for clarity in the public domain.

How exactly is the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change establishing the genetic profile of each elephant, Ramesh asked.



"Who is generating this data and maintaining this database? How exactly does the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change intend to use this genetic data for the protection of captive and wild elephants?" he said.

"I presume that we have the laboratory infrastructure with the necessary sequencing facilities," Ramesh said.

On August 20, the Ministry had issued a memorandum to Chief Wildlife Wardens and Principal Chief Forest Conservators regarding the Captive Elephant (Transfer and Transport) Rules. These rules are designed to regulate the movement of captive elephants within and between States in India.

A key provision, sub-clause 3, mandates that no elephant can be transferred unless its genetic profile is recorded in the Ministry's electronic monitoring application. The memorandum instructs State officials to ensure full compliance with these requirements to facilitate proper tracking and management of captive elephants.

## Docs resume work after SC order, easing patients woes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Much to the relief of the patients, resident doctors across the country returned to work on Friday, bringing an end to their 11-day strike which was sparked by the alleged rape and murder of a junior doctor at RG Kar Medical College in Kolkata on August 9.

The strike, which began on August 12, had led to the shutdown of non-emergency services, including outpatient departments (OPD) and diagnostics, causing significant delays in patient care.

The medics have been advocating for a central law to prevent violence against healthcare professionals in the workplace.

After the Supreme Court made an appeal to all the resident doctors across the country to resume work, the Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA), which was the first to give the nationwide strike call, on Friday said that they are suspending nationwide elective services halt and resuming duties.

However, while resident doctors across the country resumed their duties, protests continue in West Bengal, where the issue originated. In Bengal, the agitating junior doctors have maintained their cease-work, leading to ongoing disruptions in State-run hospitals.

The Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), a key resident doctors association, said "FAIMA has decided to call off the strike following



positive directions from the Chief Justice of India. We welcome the acceptance of our prayers for interim protections and the necessary steps to enhance hospital security."

Dr. Dhruv Chauhan, the National Council Coordinator of the Indian Medical Association-Junior Doctors Network (IMA-JDN), said that their demands for the Central Protection Act, which is in the hands of the Government of India is still the same, and will continue to fight for our rights.

The United Doctors Front Association (UDF) also said in response to the SC's proactive and reassuring directives, they have resolved to suspend the ongoing nationwide strike.

The Supreme Court had directed healthcare professionals to return to work, emphasising that both judges and doctors, who handle matters of life and liberty, should not engage in strikes.

It also assured that no coercive action would be taken against the striking medics and instructed the Centre to enhance safety measures for healthcare personnel.

## PM-JANMAN campaign to uplift tribes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

To deliver crucial services and benefits to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in 194 districts across India, the Government has launched a nationwide campaign under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyaan (PM-JANMAN) which was conceived last year.

The campaign to be running until September 10 seeks to address the social, economic, and educational challenges faced by PVTGs by providing essential services such as housing, clean water, sanitation, education, healthcare, and improved connectivity.

India's Scheduled Tribe (ST) population stands at 10.45 crore, with 75 communities classified as PVTGs in 18 states and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

PM-JANMAN was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas on November 15 last year in Jharkhand with an aim to provide essential services like housing, clean water, sanitation, education, healthcare, and better road and telecom connectivity to PVTG families.

A budget of Rs 15,000 crore has been allocated over three years starting from 2023. Last year, a similar campaign reached 100 districts, covering 500 blocks and 15,000 habitations.

This year, the effort will expand to cover 28,700 habitations and reach 44.6 lakh individuals in 194 districts.

# Karnataka Govt mulls safety steps for doctors, hospital staff post-Kolkata incident

PTI n BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Friday suggested a slew of measures to be adopted to ensure the safety and security of doctors working in hospitals across the state. A meeting chaired by Minister for Medical Education Sharanprakash Patil discussed safety measures for doctors, nurses and hospital staff. Members of the doctors' association were asked to draft a document so that the Department of Medical Education can prepare a standard advisory. After the recent rape and murder of a woman doctor in Kolkata, which has shocked the entire nation, the safety profile for the working doctors has once again been reviewed, the Director of Medical Education Dr Shobha Rathod said. "On the instructions of our minister, we have held a meeting with all the directors of the government institutes and the super speciality hospitals to identify the



gaps in the safety profile for our working doctors," she told PTI. According to DME, there are 71 medical colleges including 22 government medical colleges under the Department of Medical Education. Apart from them, there are nursing and paramedical institutes in the state. During the meet, the department also reviewed the safety lapses. Following the Nirbhaya advisory, the department has been insisting that there are no dark corridors anywhere and

all the places should be well lit, Rathod said adding that CCTV cameras should be installed in most of the areas. "The security personnel are the ones who can walk anywhere with the consent in all the areas of the institute, so whether we have a good background check of all these people whom we take under security and house-keeping, that was one issue." All the institutes have the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) committees, which can also suggest a

precautionary measure so that if there is any such incident then an alert can be sounded. Rathod said the POSH committees have been regularly conducting meeting to make sure that there are no incidents of harassment of women. The department is also using Artificial Intelligence for the safety of each doctor. Self-defence training of the doctors and counseling of medical professionals regarding their stress levels were also discussed, she explained. "We are also encouraging pink boxes so that in case of unbiased complaints, the administration can look into it," Dr Rathod said. "Introducing of 'code white' system. - If there is something called a code white, which we have already seen, it being worked out in our Indian Institute of nephro-urology, that will make all of them alert, how quickly we can be alerted if there is an untoward incident which is happening," she added.

# Withdraw cases against Badlapur protesters, or we will hit the streets: Uddhav

PTI n MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Friday demanded the withdrawal of cases against those who had protested in Badlapur against the alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls, warning that the opposition would have to hit the streets if it is not done. Addressing a news conference, Thackeray said the August 24 'Maharashtra Bandh' called by the opposition bloc Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) is not political but against "perversion" and urged people cutting across caste and religion to participate in it. He claimed the bandh would be observed on behalf of the people of the state. Slamming the Eknath Shinde government's action over the Badlapur protest, Thackeray said, "Arrests are still taking place in Badlapur. The cases against the protesters must be withdrawn or else we have to hit the streets." A massive protest rocked Badlapur town in Thane dis-



tract on Tuesday after thousands of people hit the streets and spilled onto railway tracks to protest the alleged sexual assault of two four-year-old girls by a male attendant at a local school. At least 25 police personnel were injured in the incidents of stone-pelting at the railway station and other parts of Badlapur during the protest. Police have arrested 72 persons in connection with the violence during the stir. The accused was arrested on August 17. He has been sent to police custody till August 26. Thackeray said the bandh should be "strictly" followed till 2 pm, ensuring that emergency services remain operational.

# Himachal Govt signs pact with MSTC for e-auction of mines

PTI n SHIMLA

The Himachal Pradesh government has signed a pact with MSTC Ltd to facilitate e-auction services for mining leases and composite licenses in the state, Industries Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan said on Friday. Chauhan said the state government will auction two big blocks of limestone in Arki tehsil of Solan district and Sunni tehsil of Shimla district. The limestone from these blocks is of fine quality, making it highly valuable for use in cement, steel, glass and fertilizer industries, the minister said. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by Director of Industries Rakesh Kumar Prajapati on behalf of the state government and Regional Manager Nitin Anand representing Metal Scrap Trade Corporation (MSTC) Ltd, a Government of India enterprise under the Ministry of Steel, according to a statement issued here.



Further, Chauhan highlighted that the auction of these mineral mines would not only boost the state's revenue but also create employment opportunities for the local population. On Friday, the minister also presided over the 231st meeting of the Board of Directors of HP General Industries Corporation Ltd here. During the meeting, the board approved a 7 per cent dividend payment to the Himachal Pradesh government for FY23, amounting to Rs 50.06 lakh. This dividend represents a 2 per cent increase over the state government's standard directive of 5 per cent, the statement said.

# Shivraj lauds Modi Govt's efforts to uplift backward classes, mocks Cong for 'lip service'

PTI n PATNA

Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday praised the Narendra Modi government for its efforts to uplift backward classes and accused the Congress-led opposition of merely offering "lip service" to the cause. The Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development was addressing a party function in memory of Ramphal Mandal, a freedom fighter who went to the gallows

at the age of 19 for killing three British officials who were blamed for a police firing during the 1942 Quit India movement. Chouhan, a former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, noted that Mandal was a "dhanuk", a backward class "known for its contribution in nation building, in my home state as well as Bihar". "Our opponents only pay lip service to backward classes who have got their due only under the current BJP regime, with an 'ati pichhda' (extremely backward class)

Narendra Modi at the helm", said Chouhan. He added, "It is Modi who gave 27 per cent reservation to the OBCs in entrance tests like NEET. It is this government which granted constitutional status to the National OBC Commission. Compare this with the Congress which slept over recommendations of the Kalelkar Commission". Chouhan's averment comes in the backdrop of the opposition, led by Rahul Gandhi, making a strong pitch for "caste census", which implies enumeration of



social groups other than SCs, STs and religious minorities, which was last undertaken about a century ago. The BJP leader said, "Mere talks will not do. We need to make a difference to the lives of the common people. The Modi government is committed to build 13 lakh houses in the next four years for the benefit of the homeless. Entrepreneurship is being encouraged among women through schemes like Lakhpati Didi". "We are also trying to ensure an increase in agricultural output,

alongside a reduction in cost of farming, so that agriculture is not seen as an economically unviable activity. Activities like horticulture and floriculture are also being encouraged and farmers are being provided support when they face losses because natural calamities", the agriculture minister said. Earlier, Chouhan held a discussion with farmers and said he was "amazed" to see stalls of local items like makhana, rice, honey and maize put up at the state-of-the-art 'Krishi Bhavan'. "In Bihar, we do not have large

tracts of land. More than 90 per cent of cultivators are marginal farmers. But they are working wonders", remarked Chouhan. The Minister also said that "makhana" (fox nuts), which is cultivated mostly in Bihar, is in huge demand abroad and its export would bring immense benefits to farmers. "Diversification of agriculture is on the government's roadmap... Along with traditional crops, we will encourage cultivation of items which could bring in more money", the minister added.

# Himachal to launch new flight routes to connect Chandigarh, Kullu, Dharamshala

PTI n SHIMLA

In a bid to further boost tourism in the state, the Himachal Pradesh government is set to introduce new flight routes connecting Chandigarh, Kullu and Dharamshala, officials said on Friday. According to the officials, the government is already in discussions with airlines and other stakeholders to launch flights in these routes. The direct flight between Kullu and Dharamshala is expected to significantly benefit the tourism sector, addressing a long-standing demand from visitors, a statement issued here said. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu emphasised the government's commitment to attracting high-end tourists to the state. "Strengthening air connectivity was crucial to achieving our tourism goals and reducing travel time and costs for tourists is essential," he



said. "Himachal Pradesh is blessed with breathtaking landscapes and has immense potential for tourism. Systematic development of tourism infrastructure would not only increase tourist footfalls but also bolster the local economy," CM Sukhu said. Four flight routes, linking a few popular tourist destinations in the state with other parts of the country, are currently operational. Flights on the Delhi-

Shimla-Delhi and Shimla-Dharamshala-Shimla routes operate daily, while the Amritsar-Shimla-Amritsar and Amritsar-Kullu-Amritsar routes are operational thrice a week. In addition to expanding flight routes, the Himachal Pradesh government is also developing new heliports to further improve air connectivity for tourists, the statement said. "Rs 13 crore has been allocated for the construction of heli-

ports in Rakkar and Palampur in Kangra district, Reckong Peo in Kinnaur district and another in Chamba district," it said. "The hilly terrain of Himachal Pradesh makes the construction of heliports beneficial," the chief minister. "These heliports would attract more tourists by saving travel time and they would also provide assistance to local residents in emergencies, if any," he added. The more tourists we attract, the more benefits would accrue to the people of the state, Sukhu said, adding that the state government was adopting a focused approach to establish these heliports, ensuring that each district headquarters was connected to this facility. Furthermore, the state government has declared Kangra district as the tourism capital of Himachal Pradesh and is upgrading the necessary tourism infrastructure in the district, the statement said.

# Prime suspect in schoolgirl's sexual assault at fake NCC camp case commits suicide

PTI n KRISHNAGIRI (TAMIL NADU)

The prime suspect in the sexual assault of a school girl at a fake NCC camp at Bargur in the district died allegedly by suicide on Friday, said police. Sivaraman reportedly consumed rat control paste ahead of his arrest on August 19, they said. He was admitted to the Government Medical College Hospital in Krishnagiri, where he was undergoing treatment for fracturing his leg when he attempted to escape from being caught by the police. Later, he was referred to the Government Medical College Hospital, Salem as his condition worsened, and he died today. Incidentally, Sivaraman's father Ashok Kumar died in a road accident when he was riding a two-wheeler in an inebriated



condition on Thursday, a senior police official said. Sivaraman was among 11 people, including the school authorities, who were arrested by the Bargur All-Woman police. He had organised the fake NCC camp where the girl student studying in class 8 and several other girls were sexually assaulted. About 41 students, including 17 girls, participated in the fake NCC camp recently and the incident of sexual assault came to light after the girl narrated her trauma to her par-

ents, who then lodged a complaint with the police. Opposition parties AIADMK and BJP have raised suspicion over the death of Sivaraman by suicide following his father's demise allegedly due to a road accident and wondered if any attempt was being made to shield the real culprit involved in the sexual assault and abuse of the girls at the fake NCC camp. Citing media reports, AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami said the timing of Sivaraman's death before the Special Investigation Team (SIT) commenced the probe into the case, and also that of Ashok Kumar on Thursday night raises doubts. "The public wonders whether Sivaraman has been killed fearing he might reveal the names of real culprits involved in the criminal activity and

that the police are trying to shield the real culprits," Palaniswami said in a statement here. He demanded that a SIT undertake a thorough probe and expose those involved in the sexual assault and abuse at the fake NCC camps. Also, he sought to know how many such camps were organised so far and if any action has been taken on the schools that allowed their children to participate in such fake camps. Expressing similar doubts, BJP state chief K Annamalai said, "both the deaths are suspicious... A strong doubt arises whether those involved in the case have actually been arrested or whether the two deaths took place to save someone," he said in a post on social media platform X. He urged the SIT to conduct a detailed enquiry and bring out the truth.

# Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar in Delhi to discuss MUDA 'scam' with Congress high command



PTI n NEW DELHI

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar arrived in the national capital on Friday for crucial meetings with top Congress leaders. Sources indicate that the primary focus of these discussions will be to formulate a strategy ahead of next week's high court hearing on the controversial Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) 'scam' case. The MUDA 'scam' has been a thorn in Siddaramaiah's side, with allegations of illegal land dealings involving the chief minister and his wife Parvathi flying thick and fast. At the heart of the controversy are claims that Parvathi received 14 plots in exchange for 3.16 acres of land, which was allegedly

acquired illegally by MUDA. Adding to political pressure, Karnataka Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot has recently sanctioned investigations under the Prevention of Corruption Act, intensifying scrutiny of the chief minister. Sources refer to the matter suggest that the Delhi meetings will also address pending corruption cases against the state BJP leaders. The Congress leadership is expected to devise a counter strategy to exert pressure on the governor. Accompanying Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar are several key state ministers, including Home Minister G Pameshwar, Social Welfare Minister H C Mahadevappa and Minority and Housing Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan, MLC K Govindaraju and Power Minister K J George.

# Teen gangraped in Assam, massive protests erupt

PTI n GUWAHATI

A 14-year-old girl was allegedly gang-raped by three persons in Assam's Nagaon district, triggering massive protests by people on the streets. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma promised that stern action would be taken against the perpetrators. The girl was allegedly assaulted and raped by three persons while she was returning home from her tuition on her bicycle in Dhing area around 8 pm on Thursday, police said. Three persons came in a motorcycle and surrounded the girl, who was then allegedly raped by them and left in an injured and unconscious state on the roadside near a pond. The class 10 student was later rescued by locals, who informed the police. She was initially taken to a health centre in Dhing and later shifted to a hospital in Nagaon for treatment and medical examination. "The criminals who dared to commit such a heinous crime against a minor Hindu girl of Dhing will not be spared by the law. I have directed the DGP and



Water Resources Minister Pijush Hazarika to rush to Dhing and take the toughest action," Sarma told reporters in Hailakandi. Sarma alleged that after Lok Sabha elections, "a section of members of a particular community have become very active and have been encouraged to commit such crimes. We will, however, come down heavily on the perpetrators and nobody will be spared." In the last two months, 22 such crimes against women have taken place and this is

the 23rd such incident in the state, he added. "In Lower and central Assam and Barak Valley districts, where indigenous people have become a numeric minority, they are living in constant fear. People outside these regions cannot gauge this harsh reality," he said. The chief minister urged all to be sensitive about these issues of the indigenous people. "We should identify the real perpetrators behind these heinous crimes and not be

stuck in blaming communities within the Hindu society," Sarma said. The police said that one person had been already arrested and another detained while a search was on to nab the others. DGP G P Singh reached Dhing and visited the crime scene along with district police officials. Meanwhile, people from all sections of the society hit the streets on Friday morning demanding the arrest of the culprits. Shopkeepers downed the shutters of their business establishments and social and political organisations demanded stringent action against the culprits and security for women and girls. Tension prevailed in the area and police patrolling and vigil have been intensified. Earlier, Sarma had said that "the horrific incident at Dhing, involving a minor, is a crime against humanity and has struck our collective conscience". "We will NOT SPARE anyone & BRING the perpetrators to JUSTICE. I've directed @DGPAssamPolice to visit the site and ensure swift action against such monsters," Sarma posted on X.

# Four labourers among 5 killed as under-construction cottage's roof caves in at MP resort

PTI n MHOW (MP)

Five persons -- four labourers and their contractor -- were killed after the roof of an under-construction cottage at a resort collapsed in Indore district amid heavy rains, a police official said on Friday. The incident occurred at Choral village in Mhow tehsil, about 40km from the district headquarters, on Thursday night when four labourers and their contractor were sleeping under the freshly laid concrete slab, which suddenly came crashing down, trapping them, he said. Two of the deceased were brothers. Police were informed about the roof collapse at around 6.30 am and they immediately rushed to the spot and started a rescue operation, Indore (Rural) Superintendent of Police Hitika Wasal told PTI over the phone from the construction site which is surrounded by forests and hillocks. The operation ended with the recovery of five bodies, which were sent to a hospital, she said, adding "We have launched an investigation

into the incident." The accident came to light in the morning when other labourers turned up for work at the site, said inspector Amit Kumar of the Simrol police station. The deceased were identified as labourers Hariom Malviya (22), Ajay Malviya (20), Gopal Prajapati (45), Raja (22) and their contractor Pawan Panchal (35), Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Umakant Chaudhary said. Hariom and Ajay Malviya were brothers, he added. "The roof slab which collapsed was constructed just one or two days ago," Chaudhary added. The police officer said six cottages were being readied at the resort and their structures appeared weak at the first glance. The department concerned will check the quality of construction work, Chaudhary added. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav expressed grief over the tragedy and announced financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh each to the family of the deceased. Indore District Magistrate Ashish Singh said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Surging ahead

Kamala's socialism resonates with people while personal attacks by Trump diminish his chances in the US elections

As the United States gears up for another contentious election, the spotlight is once again on Vice President Kamala Harris. Her steadfast commitment to secularism has struck a chord with a diverse electorate that values the separation of church and state. In contrast, former President Donald Trump's attacks on Harris, aimed at undermining her credibility, may be backfiring, potentially diminishing his chances in the upcoming elections. As the political climate in the United States continues to evolve, Vice President Kamala Harris has emerged as a prominent advocate for policies rooted in democratic socialism. Her focus on social justice, economic equality, and government intervention to address systemic issues resonates with a growing segment of the American electorate. Meanwhile, former President Donald Trump's attacks on Harris appear to be weakening his appeal, potentially diminishing his chances in the upcoming elections. Kamala Harris's brand of socialism centres on creating a fairer society through progressive taxation expanded healthcare access, and stronger social safety nets. Her policies aim to address the widening wealth gap, ensure affordable education, and promote racial and gender equality. These ideas have gained traction, particularly among younger voters, minorities, and working-class Americans who feel left behind by the current economic system. Harris's commitment to these principles is seen as a response to the pressing needs of a diverse and economically stratified nation. By advocating for policies that prioritize the needs of the many over the interests of the few, Harris is tapping into a widespread desire for systemic change. In contrast, Donald Trump's strategy has often relied on personal attacks, attempting to discredit Harris by questioning her policies and character. However, these comments have not only failed to undermine Harris's growing support but may also be backfiring on Trump himself. Many voters perceive Trump's rhetoric as divisive and out of touch with the issues that matter most to them, such as healthcare, education, and economic justice. Moreover, Trump's focus on personal attacks rather than substantive policy debates could be alienating voters who are looking for solutions to real problems. As the electorate becomes increasingly concerned with issues like income inequality, climate change, and access to healthcare, Trump's attacks may come across as a distraction from the pressing issues at hand. Kamala Harris's approach, rooted in democratic socialism, offers a vision of an America where everyone has a fair shot at success. This vision is resonating with a growing number of voters who are frustrated with the status quo and are seeking leaders who will champion their interests. Meanwhile, Trump's jabs may be costing him the support of those who are tired of political mudslinging and are looking for a leader who can address their needs.



These incidents happened within days when the entire nation was gripped by the horrors of the R G Kar Medical College and Hospital at Kolkata. And these are not isolated incidents – they are part of a grim reality where a rape is reported every 21 minutes. Yet, despite the horror these crimes evoke, they are quickly forgotten by all except the victims and their families, who are left to fight lonely, often futile battles for justice for years, which sometimes is only the ray of hope for them. India's response to sexual violence remains disturbingly inadequate. More than a decade has passed since the Nirbhaya case – a brutal gang rape that shocked the nation and led to the passage of new sexual assault laws. But the situation has barely improved. Nearly 50 years before Nirbhaya, the fearless, Aruna Shanbaug, a 25-year-old nurse, was viciously assaulted by a hospital cleaner in Mumbai. Sodomized, strangled with a metal chain, and left for dead, she survived – only to remain in a vegetative state for 41 years until her death. Her ordeal led to a landmark judgment on passive euthanasia in India, yet her suffering stands as a testament to the enduring failures of a society that continues to fail its women. The recent brutal rape and murder of a 31-year-old postgraduate trainee doctor in Kolkata serves as a grim reminder that little has changed. Female healthcare workers or

women workers per se, still fear for their safety even in supposed sanctuaries such as hospitals. This ongoing crisis underscores the dire need for real change – a change that goes beyond laws and addresses the deep-seated cultural and institutional failures that allow such atrocities to persist. This incident of R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital has shaken the conscience of West Bengal, and the ripple effects are being felt across the political landscape – and the entire nation. The public's reaction to this crime has been fierce and unforgiving. Protests have erupted across the state, with citizens demanding justice not only for the victim but also calling for broader reforms to ensure such incidents are not repeated. The political and social response to the incident has been equally chaotic. The decision for a swift call for a CBI investigation and capital punishment, alongside the rally for "Khela Hobe Divas," has been met with criticism for its timing and focus. Additionally, state actions, such as the transfer of doctors allegedly involved in protests and the use of social media to counter celebrity critiques (read debates), have further fueled debates about the handling of the case. The political implications of this incident could be far-reaching. Beyond politics, the safety of women and girls in India remains a critical concern, deeply rooted in societal norms, legal frameworks, and institutional practices. Despite advancements in legislation and public awareness, instances of violence and harassment against women are prevalent. High-profile cases of assault, trafficking, and domestic violence highlight the persistent vulnerabilities faced by women and girls. The legal system, while equipped with laws like the 'Protection of Human Rights Act' and the 'Criminal Law Amendment Act', or for that matter, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO of 2012), often struggles with implementation and enforcement. There are systemic delays in justice delivery and shortcomings in police response, which exacerbate the sense of insecurity. Protective measures, including the establishment of fast-track courts and specialized police units, aim to address these issues and provide some ray of light in this dark world for women. Further, societal attitudes towards women play a significant role in undermining these measures. Deep-seated patriarchal views and cultural practices continue to normalize gender-based violence, making it difficult for protective laws to translate into tangible safety for women. The lack of comprehensive sexual education and community engagement further perpetuates harmful stereotypes and behaviours. Right education for the boys at home is another crucial area for intervention by the government and NGOs. The role of NGOs and grassroots movements has been pivotal in advocating for women's rights and safety. Effective safety measures must involve not only legal reforms but also significant shifts in overall attitudes and community involvement. The challenge before the authorities is not just one of governance but of moral leadership – a test that will define their legacy to guarantee safety to women and girl children. *Aami tomari maatiro konya, janoni bosundhara /Tobe aamar manobojanmo keno bonchito kora...* (I am no other, but the daughter/Why deprive me of the legacy of my human life...). Written in the year 1933 by Rabindranath Tagore, these lines echo far and wide and call for collective action. It is time to stand up to see where we stand and where we fail. (The writer is Program Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

### PICTALK



A mahout bathes an elephant at Elephant Orphanage in Pinnawala

PTI

## Empowering Women: Mandatory self-defence training in schools

This proactive approach could provide women with the skills and confidence to fend off potential attackers, empowering them

The cauldron of public rage is boiling over in the aftermath of the rape and murder of a young resident doctor in Kolkata. It isn't the first time that the nation is witnessing such gruesomeness, and it won't be the last either unless something drastic happens at all levels – societal, legal and psychological.

It isn't that there were no horrific instances of sexual assault on women before Nirbhaya. There were, but Nirbhaya's case brought the issue of women's safety (or the lack of it) front and centre, and it resulted in instituting legislation that offered women more protection and legal support. Stringent measures have been implemented, yet incidents keep happening across the country. It nearly feels like no external force can stem this rot, and it is time for women to take their protection into their own hands, literally. In light of the above, I am wondering if it wouldn't be more prudent and practical to arm our girls with self-defence tactics right from the beginning. Crimes against women have become so reg-



ular, that attention must now turn towards finding means to empower women in a way that will give them confidence and security in different realms of their professional and private lives. The violations can probably be attributed to a deep-rooted patriarchal mindset that has been the bane of women (not just in India), but fixing the blame on society or its vagaries does not help us fight critical issues such as this. It's worse when women themselves are held responsible for the abuses they are subjected to. If society wants to pin the responsibility of safety on women, then there must be an action plan to arm women with the necessary armament. In simple words, why not

make martial arts and other self-defence lessons compulsory in the school curriculum? If there can be a sports or PT period, there can be a martial arts period too. The very idea of equipping our girls with the skills to fend off troublemakers makes me jubilant and offers hope that no legislation can offer. Widespread condemnation and demand for punitive action cannot pre-empt future instances.

What can curb it is the general knowledge among errant men that the woman they have cornered is capable of packing a punch, a chop or a kick that will neutralise them. Martial arts has been an optional activity for girls in an urban setting, but only when it is introduced as a part of the curriculum from primary grades in every school and they must be genuinely emancipated from the dangers that lurk at every corner of their daily lives. It is encouraging to learn that the government is intent on its aim to ensure the safety of women in the country and hand out the severest punishment to perpetrators,

but these are steps taken post-incident. What is suggested in this piece is a plan to provide a pre-emptive measure, a way to forestall violent attacks against women by their defences. It can deter a good majority of men on the loose with vagrant ideas. Parents who are better informed enrol their daughters in self-defence programmes, but they are few and far between. The real difference will be seen only when every school-going child is taught the techniques to ward off an offender by dint of their physical prowess. If our women can win medals in the boxing and wrestling rings, if they can build enough brawns along with brains in school, if every man who casts a salacious glance on a woman remembers that his prospective victim is not a push-over, then there will be change. Let us empower our girls with the spunk to keep the marauders at bay. (The author is a columnist, author and writing coach based in Dubai; views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR

VALID CONCERNS ON E-COMMERCE  
Madam — Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, has raised valid concerns about the questionable practices of e-commerce companies, particularly regarding predatory pricing, cash burning, successive years of losses, and the use of FDI to cover these losses. His concerns emphasize the need for policymakers to ensure a level playing field for local businesses and industries. More troubling is the destination and intent behind the FDI in these companies. E-commerce companies consistently declare significant losses in their income tax returns, carrying them forward year after year to offset against future profits. This cycle continues with mergers, where the losses of merged companies are also carried forward. In contrast, local traders and entrepreneurs pay regular taxes on their incomes, while e-commerce companies avoid taxes through their accounting strategies. This tax advantage, along with the convenience and wide range of products offered by online trade, gives e-commerce companies a significant edge. Goyal suggests that cash burn by e-commerce companies should not be allowed as a deduction, and the period for carrying forward losses should be limited to a maximum of two years. The impact of e-commerce on local traders is already evident, with potential job losses on the horizon. Another concern is the shift of youth from traditional businesses and agriculture to delivery jobs, leading to their migration from rural areas to metro cities. Vinod Johri | New Delhi

MODERN SLAVERY  
Madam — "I freed a thousand slaves. I could have freed more if only they knew they were slaves". One need not look beyond these thought-provoking words of American abolitionist Harriet Tubman to decipher the evils of slavery. Though Tubman spoke at the end of the 19th century, her words hold true for modern slavery as well. Human trafficking, bonded

In a flashback all the past horrendous incidents of violence against women, particularly incidents of rape cross the mind. Here in our country, newspaper pages more than often bring out horrifying accounts of sexual violence – a 65-year-old grandmother assaulted in Kharagpur or a teenage girl, native of Uttar Pradesh, was gang-raped inside a government bus at the Dehradun Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) in Uttarakhand on August 12, 2024, and the latest from Maharashtra, when on August 20, 2024, two minor girls, aged 4, studying in Nursery, were sexually assaulted by a school sweeper in the washroom of a well-known Adarsh Vidya Mandir in Badlapur school near Mumbai. These incidents happened within days when the entire nation was gripped by the horrors of the R G Kar Medical College and Hospital at Kolkata. And these are not isolated incidents – they are part of a grim reality where a rape is reported every 21 minutes. Yet, despite the horror these crimes evoke, they are quickly forgotten by all except the victims and their families, who are left to fight lonely, often futile battles for justice for years, which sometimes is only the ray of hope for them. India's response to sexual violence remains disturbingly inadequate. More than a decade has passed since the Nirbhaya case – a brutal gang rape that shocked the nation and led to the passage of new sexual assault laws. But the situation has barely improved. Nearly 50 years before Nirbhaya, the fearless, Aruna Shanbaug, a 25-year-old nurse, was viciously assaulted by a hospital cleaner in Mumbai. Sodomized, strangled with a metal chain, and left for dead, she survived – only to remain in a vegetative state for 41 years until her death. Her ordeal led to a landmark judgment on passive euthanasia in India, yet her suffering stands as a testament to the enduring failures of a society that continues to fail its women. The recent brutal rape and murder of a 31-year-old postgraduate trainee doctor in Kolkata serves as a grim reminder that little has changed. Female healthcare workers or



women workers per se, still fear for their safety even in supposed sanctuaries such as hospitals. This ongoing crisis underscores the dire need for real change – a change that goes beyond laws and addresses the deep-seated cultural and institutional failures that allow such atrocities to persist. This incident of R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital has shaken the conscience of West Bengal, and the ripple effects are being felt across the political landscape – and the entire nation. The public's reaction to this crime has been fierce and unforgiving. Protests have erupted across the state, with citizens demanding justice not only for the victim but also calling for broader reforms to ensure such incidents are not repeated. The political and social response to the incident has been equally chaotic. The decision for a swift call for a CBI investigation and capital punishment, alongside the rally for "Khela Hobe Divas," has been met with criticism for its timing and focus. Additionally, state actions, such as the transfer of doctors allegedly involved in protests and the use of social media to counter celebrity critiques (read debates), have further fueled debates about the handling of the case. The political implications of this incident could be far-reaching. Beyond politics, the safety of women and girls in India remains a critical concern, deeply rooted in societal norms, legal frameworks, and institutional practices. Despite advancements in legislation and public awareness, instances of violence and harassment against women are prevalent. High-profile cases of assault, trafficking, and domestic violence highlight the persistent vulnerabilities faced by women and girls. The legal system, while equipped with laws like the 'Protection of Human Rights Act' and the 'Criminal Law Amendment Act', or for that matter, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO of 2012), often struggles with implementation and enforcement. There are systemic delays in justice delivery and shortcomings in police response, which exacerbate the sense of insecurity. Protective measures, including the establishment of fast-track courts and specialized police units, aim to address these issues and provide some ray of light in this dark world for women. Further, societal attitudes towards women play a significant role in undermining these measures. Deep-seated patriarchal views and cultural practices continue to normalize gender-based violence, making it difficult for protective laws to translate into tangible safety for women. The lack of comprehensive sexual education and community engagement further perpetuates harmful stereotypes and behaviours. Right education for the boys at home is another crucial area for intervention by the government and NGOs. The role of NGOs and grassroots movements has been pivotal in advocating for women's rights and safety. Effective safety measures must involve not only legal reforms but also significant shifts in overall attitudes and community involvement. The challenge before the authorities is not just one of governance but of moral leadership – a test that will define their legacy to guarantee safety to women and girl children. *Aami tomari maatiro konya, janoni bosundhara /Tobe aamar manobojanmo keno bonchito kora...* (I am no other, but the daughter/Why deprive me of the legacy of my human life...). Written in the year 1933 by Rabindranath Tagore, these lines echo far and wide and call for collective action. It is time to stand up to see where we stand and where we fail. (The writer is Program Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)



HIGH-PROFILE CASES OF ASSAULT, TRAFFICKING, AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HIGHLIGHT THE PERSISTENT VULNERABILITIES FACED BY WOMEN

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Lateral entries rolled back



As proposed to "The Govt steps back" published on 22nd August, it is my response". Efficient bureaucracy leads to good governance and with this good intention the gov-

ernment wanted to rope in 45 lateral entries into our civil services, which was not the first time, it has been happening since Nehru's days. But such is the compulsion of coalition politics that the government had to give in to the demands of its own allies. Prime Minister Modi had also rolled back critical three farm laws which were in the larger interest of the farmers. So now after this decision, it is going to boost opposition morale to put Gol on the mat again in future, and it has given Modi's government a negative and weak government's image. Hopefully it will learn its lessons and take opposition and allies on board before rolling out any sensitive changes or policies in future. It is the most democratic thing to do anyway because what is democracy if it is not inclusive and does not reflect people's will. Bal Govind | Noida

#### NO LIMITS FOR PARA PLAYERS

Madam — The season of Paralympics is all set to begin with Indian athletic contingent start reaching over there in the Game village of Paris. So far, the closing of Paris Olympics done, with India taking on six medals only, however some sports spectators and aficionados are setting the medal count limit with 12 medals at the Paralympics. India has successfully lifted 19 medals in Paralympics Tokyo edition of 2021, for all those are setting the bar before the real talent actually comes up, it is crucial to appreciate the talent and zeal of our para players. Let's don't set any specific boundary of medals that they have to win for the nation. Why just 12, our players have the capability of winning much more. May their competitive spirit and sportsmanship, let them conquer the sports laurels in a celebrated manner without any pressure. Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

labour and forced marriages are direct examples of today's slavery whereas domestic work, construction activities, and sexual exploitation fall into the "domain" of forced labour. Nothing can exemplify modern slavery better than the child labour. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has identified about twenty five million men and women as victims of modern slavery. Nobody can turn somebody into a slave unless the latter allows them is now something like a misnomer. ILO has specially targeted migrant workers who are easily lured because of their poor understanding of local language and tradition. To take stock of the progress done by ancillary agencies and the respective governments, "International Day for the Abolition of Slave trade" is observed on August 23. It is hoped that the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights that states "no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms" gains a fresh momentum. Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### THE ESSENCE OF BEING: BEYOND BODY AND MIND

The soul is envisioned as pure and tranquil, the mind remains latent and unmanifest.

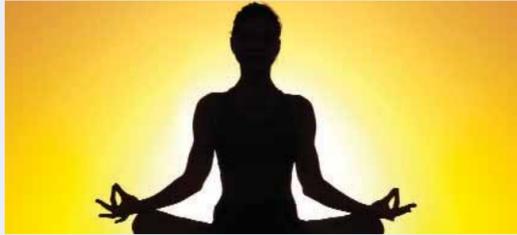


RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

It is now becoming something of a cliché in various circles of modern life—from religion to psychology to holistic medicine—to use the phrase “body-mind-soul” or “body-mind-spirit” when referring to our totality as human beings. So, what do we exactly mean when we ask, What is the body? What is the mind? What is the soul? and What is the spirit? It is often said that the real self is behind the mind or intellect. It is also said that we can experience and know the self when we go beyond the mind, which is like a sheath of the soul.

This is truly said, but it means something different than what is generally understood because to experience or perceive the soul, we do not have to cross the mind which is considered to be a subtle form of matter. No! Instead, we have to calm the ripples of the mind, stop it from being agitated by the outer world, and check its outward tendency. From a spiritual perspective, it should be understood that when the soul is in the soul-world, it is pure, calm, tranquil, and above all bondages or attributes.

There, the mind is unmanifest, and its abilities of volition, action, desire, understanding, ascertainment, etc., are not at play but at rest—not emerged but latent and merged. While in the soul-world, the soul is pinned, so to say, only on one thought, one consciousness, one feeling, one understanding, viz—“I am a Soul, I am a Soul, I am a Soul”. That is all—nothing more. The turbulence, the vagrancy, the sportiveness of the mind is at rest, or you may say that, in a sense, it is in deep sleep. Therefore, when it is said that “If we want to experience the peace and tranquility



of the soul or have to know the self, we will have to go beyond the intellect and the mind,” it does not mean that we will penetrate, percolate through, tear away, or cross over to a material form as the mind is understood to be. No! It means that to know ourselves, we will have to concentrate our mind on the maxim: “I am a soul, a child of the Supreme Soul.”

We will have to make our intellect and mind one-pointed and disposed to understand the Self alone. We will have to lay all our memories, thoughts, feelings, etc., to rest. This is what would be ‘going beyond’ the mind. For this, there are so many methods that have been advocated, demonstrated, advised, and laid down by various spiritual and religious teachers. However, the all-knowing Almighty has offered His supreme advice that we should control the mind using the intellect. This means that we have to know the Self, the Supreme, etc., and using that, know the Self to calm ourselves. He has sermonized that it can be best done by pinning the mind on the name, form, attributes, and relation of the Supreme with the soul.

His sermon is, “Manmana Bhav,” i.e., concentrate your mind on me, your love, your faith in me. And I assure you that I will bless you with supreme sanctity, peace, and bliss, and you will attain me. I will purge you of all sins, rest assured. If we act as HE says, all our inner conflict will end, and we will work only as His divine instrument. By aligning ourselves with the Supreme, our mind will cease its endless wandering, and we will find ourselves centred and at peace. We will then be able to adjust ourselves easily and quickly in any situation. Having been freed from other psychological memories, except that of the Supreme and our duty, our energy potential will find no resistance and will be free for full performance. We will thus be able to attain excellence and experience peace and tranquillity without putting in much effort. This state of effortless being is what every soul seeks, whether knowingly or unknowingly. The Supreme guides us to this state of fulfilment, away from the darkness of ignorance. Now, it's up to us whether to listen to the Almighty or keep wandering in the darkness of ignorance.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

# Reject calls for extraditing Sheikh Hasina

India must stand firm in its refusal to hand over a leader who has been a steadfast ally, particularly when such demands come from factions with anti-India sentiment



HIARANMAY KARLEKAR

India must not pay the slightest heed to the demand by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party's secretary-general, Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, to extradite Sheikh Hasina to his country. From reports in Indian newspapers, he seems to have cited two grounds, both utterly laughable, for his demand. The first is that she should stand trial for the murder and other charges levelled against her. The question is: will she receive a fair trial under the conditions now prevailing in Bangladesh? The matter is important. Even if the charges levelled against her are true, and she has done terrible things, she has an inalienable right to a fair trial.

This, she will not get with large mobs literally baying for her blood, statues of her father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the architect of the country's emergence from East Pakistan to sovereign Bangladesh, are being pulled down, the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum of 32 Dhanmondi, Dhaka, his erstwhile residence, ransacked and burnt, and the Liberation War Museum at Suhrawardy Udyan Dhaka, razed to the ground.

Clearly, a section of people is trying to take advantage of the situation created by the Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement (ADSM), to target the symbols of Bangladesh's liberation struggle. Undoing the country's independence and its re-unification with Pakistan is, of course, out of the question. But cultivating closer ties with Pakistan, pursuing a stridently hostile policy towards India, which such elements have never ceased hating for playing a decisive role in Bangladesh's independence by routing Pakistan in the 1971 war, and replacing Bangladesh's secular, democratic polity by one practicing fundamentalist Islam, has been a part of the agenda of the country's fundamentalist Islamist groups.

It is no secret that the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, recently re-incarnated as Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (BJE), its students' organization, Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir (BICS)—which was Islami Chhatra Sangha (ICS) in 1971—and allied organisations like al-Badr, al-Shams, Razakars, and Shanti Committee, had sided with Pakistan and committed despicable war crimes during the liberation war of 1971. A number of them have been punished, including some who have been executed, by the International Crimes Tribunal set by the Bangladesh Government in 2009 by an amendment to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, to investigate and prosecute personnel of the Pakistan Army and BJE, Razakars, Al-Badr, Al-Shams, and Shanti Committee, accused of committing genocide during the 1971 liberation war.

The BJE and the BICS, which have close links with Islamist terrorist organisations like Ansar al-Islam, linked to Al-Qaeda in the Indian Sub-continent (AQIS) and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), clearly joined the ADSM to further their own agenda, which is transforming a secular and democratic Bangladesh into an Islamic emirate. To do this, they must eliminate from the political scene not only the Awami League and its leaders, particularly Sheikh Hasina, but all secular, democratic and humanist civil society organisations and leaders.



GIVEN THAT THE AWAMI LEAGUE HAS BEEN REDUCED TO SUCH STRAITS THAT IT COULD NOT EVEN OBSERVE THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE GRENADE ATTACKS ON AUGUST 21, 2004, IT COULD HARDLY BE IN A POSITION TO CONSPIRE TO DEFEAT THE STUDENTS' UPSURGE

Revealingly, circulating in Bangladesh in the wake of Sheikh Hasina's ouster, is a list of intellectuals, scholars, lawyers, academics, human rights social activists, who its shadowy authors want to “see.”

Included in the list of 50 or more were the Professor Abul Barakat (a well-known economist who had exposed the sources of the BJE's phenomenal wealth), Rana Dasgupta (general secretary of the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council), AAMS Arefin Siddique, (former vice-chancellor, Dhaka University), and Professor Sadeka Halim (vice-chancellor, Jagannath University) and a number of journalists and film personalities. In these circumstances, Sheikh Hasina's life will be in danger if she is extradited to Bangladesh: nor can she be assured of a fair trial, particularly given the fact that judges will either be under tremendous pressure or will be pre-disposed to convict her as they have been appointed by the Interim Government and are hostile to her.

The second ground that, according to the reports, Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir has cited for Sheikh Hasina's extradition, is that the Awami League and she were conspiring in New Delhi to falsify (sic) the victory that students and other citizens of Bangladesh have achieved. Nothing could be more ludicrous. Most Awami League leaders are in Bangladesh, busy defending themselves in courts

against charges brought against them, or in hiding. A number of them have been lynched. The homes and business establishments of many of them have been destroyed and set aflame.

In fact, the Awami League has been reduced to such straits that, unlike in the earlier years, it could not stage an event to observe the anniversary of the grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka on August 21, 2004, to protest against increasing terrorist attacks on its cadres and leaders.

Perpetrated by the terrorist outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HUJIB), it left at least 24 persons dead and over 300 injured. Among the wounded was Sheikh Hasina, whose hearing has been permanently impaired. Ivy Rahman, secretary of the Awami League's women's affairs wing and wife of its general-secretary, Zillur Rahman, who subsequently became Bangladesh's president, was also seriously hurt. She later died later in hospital.

Given that the Awami League has been reduced to such straits that it could not even observe the anniversary of the grenade attacks on August 21, 2004, it could hardly be in a position to conspire to defeat the students' upsurge. It may well be argued that Sheikh Hasina needs to be present in courts to stand trial and face cross-examination to establish the veracity of the charges levelled against her, or examine the complicity of others involved.

For that, the interim government or its successor must establish that a prima facie case exists against her and then request India to allow an emissary to question her in any facility that New Delhi may provide.

Meanwhile, there can be no question of extraditing her. The BNP-BJE coalition government, in office from 2001 to 2006 with Begum Khaleda Zia as prime minister, made no bones about its hostility to India. Indeed, except those headed by Sheikh Hasina, all governments of Bangladesh since the murder of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, have been hostile to India and pro-Pakistan.

To cite one example, under them, Bangladesh provided sanctuary, assistance and training to north-east India's secessionist rebel groups. On the other hand, Sheikh Hasina not only closed down their sanctuaries but handed over to India some of the leaders of these secessionist terrorist groups. In fact, India-Bangladesh relations were perhaps more cordial under her than even when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman headed the government in Dhaka. Extraditing Sheikh Hasina would send the message round that even the most loyal friends of India cannot depend on it for support in times of distress. That is not something that New Delhi should want.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

# Lateral entry in bureaucracy: A double-edged sword of reform and controversy

The implementation of lateral entry has sparked serious concerns about social justice and the representation of marginalised groups in the Indian bureaucracy

The introduction of lateral appointments in India's bureaucracy has sparked intense debate, particularly due to the absence of reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). The issue gained traction with a recent UPSC advertisement for 45 senior positions, which did not include the constitutionally mandated quotas, raising concerns about social justice and the representation of disadvantaged groups in high-level government roles.



K S TOMAR

trations. However, the lack of provisions for reservations in this system has led to widespread criticism. Rahul Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition, accused the NDA government of undermining the Constitution by excluding reservations from these appointments. He argued that this move was a direct attack on social justice, sidelining the underprivileged and diluting their representation in the

higher echelons of bureaucracy. In response, Arjun Meghwal pointed out the Congress's past practices, highlighting the appointments of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as Finance Secretary in 1971 and Montek Ahluwalia as Planning Commission Chairman without transparent procedures.

Since the inception of the lateral entry system in 2018, the government has received 6,077 applications, resulting in the appointment of 63 individuals to senior positions across various ministries, with approximately 35 from the private sector. While these appointments aim to bring in expertise and fresh perspectives, the exclusion of reservations has overshadowed the intended benefits. The backlog of vacancies

in proportion to these 63 officials can only be addressed if the government creates new posts specifically for candidates from SC, ST, OBC, and EWS categories. The delay in amending recruitment rules has already caused significant harm, as many eligible candidates may have crossed the age limit.

The introduction of lateral appointments has been met with mixed reactions within the bureaucracy. While it brings in specialized knowledge and fresh perspectives, it also poses several risks to the traditional bureaucratic structure:

**Impact on Bureaucracy:** A Mixed Bag; the introduction of lateral appointments has been met with mixed reactions. While it brings in specialized



knowledge and fresh perspectives, it also poses several risks to the traditional bureaucratic structure.

**Demoralization of Bureaucracy:** Traditional bureaucrats, who have risen through the ranks, may feel demoralized seeing lateral entrants appointed to senior positions without undergoing the rigorous training and years of service they have endured. This could lead to a perception that meritocracy is being

undermined and create uncertainty regarding career progression.

**Integration Challenges:** Lateral entrants may struggle to integrate into the established bureaucratic culture, leading to friction with traditional bureaucrats.

**3rd. Potential Conflicts of Interest:** Lateral entrants from the private sector may face conflicts of interest, where their decisions could be influenced by their previous affiliations.

This raises concerns about policy bias and the potential prioritization of private sector interests over the public good. **Accountability and Transparency Issues:** Unlike career bureaucrats, lateral entrants might not undergo the same level of public scrutiny

and evaluation, leading to concerns about transparency in decision-making. Their lack of deep institutional knowledge could also affect the quality of their decisions, especially in complex policy areas. **Impact on Administrative Cohesion:** The introduction of lateral entrants at senior levels could fragment authority within the bureaucracy, leading to inefficiencies and delays.

**Positive Takeaways:** Lateral entry into senior government positions offers several benefits:

**Expertise Infusion:** Brings specialized knowledge from various sectors, enhancing policy-making. **Diverse Perspectives:** Introduces new viewpoints, fostering innovative solutions.

**Increased Efficiency:** Private sector professionals bring a focus on performance and efficiency.

**Skill Gap Bridging:** Addresses deficiencies in areas like technology and finance. **Meritocracy Promotion:** Emphasizes skills over seniority, potentially improving leadership quality.

**Governance Flexibility:** Allows for quick adaptation to new challenges with experienced professionals.

**Public-Private Collaboration:** Strengthens ties between government and private sectors. (Writer has been ex chairperson of Standing Committee of All State Public service Commissions in India and former chairman of HP Public Service Commission; views are personal)

# Kamala Harris accepts Democratic nomination

## Warns of Trump's return risks



Delegates cheer during the Democratic National Convention Thursday in Chicago.

AP/PTI

PTI n CHICAGO

Kamala Harris has used her presidential acceptance speech to present herself as a leader who could unite all Americans to chart a "new way forward" and warned them of "extremely serious" consequences of putting her Republican rival Donald Trump back in the White House. Vice President Harris, who is of Indian and African heritage, on Thursday night accepted her party's nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, becoming the second woman to do so for the Democratic Party after former first lady Hillary Clinton. The 59-year-old leader walked on stage to thunderous applause and a standing ovation from the audience. Chants of "Yes You Can!" erupted before her remarks. Taking the stage at the United Center in Chicago to accept her nomination, Harris, who was a tough prosecutor in California before becoming US Vice President, said she is no stranger to unlikely journeys. "On behalf of the people, on behalf of every American, regardless of party, race, gender or the language your grand-

mother speaks, on behalf of my mother and everyone who has ever set out on their own unlikely journey on behalf of Americans, like the people I grew up with, people who work hard, chase their dreams and look out for one another, on behalf of everyone whose story could only be written in the greatest nation on earth, I accept your nomination the United States," she said. She fondly remembered her mother Shyamala Gopalan and said that she misses her every day, especially when she is on the verge of breaking the highest glass ceiling of the United States. She said the November 5 election is the most important in America's history. "Our nation with this election has a precious, fleeting opportunity to move past the bitterness, cynicism, and divisive battles of the past. A chance to chart a new way forward. Not as members of any one party or faction, but as Americans," she said in her 40-minute speech. Vice President Harris outlined her plans for a "new way forward" if she's elected to be the 47th president of the United States. "I will be a president who unites us around our highest aspirations. A president who leads — and listens. Who is

realistic, Practical and has common sense. And always fights for the American people. From the courthouse to the White House, that has been my life's work," Harris said. She laid out the consequences of electing former president Trump, 78, to a second term. "In many ways, Donald Trump is an unserious man, but the consequences of putting Donald Trump back in the White House are extremely serious," she warned. She spoke about the "chaos and calamity" of his years in the Oval Office and also pointed to him questioning election results in 2020 when he lost his reelection bid to Biden. "Donald Trump tried to throw away your votes. When he failed, he sent an armed mob to the United States Capitol where they assaulted law enforcement officers. When politicians in his own party begged him to call off the mob and send help, he did the opposite. He fanned the flames," she said. Harris also highlighted that Trump was convicted on 34 felony counts in a hush-money case and that a federal jury in his civil defamation trial found that the former president had sexually abused writer E Jean Carroll.

# RFK Jr withdraws from Arizona ballot amid Trump alliance speculation

Phoenix (AP): Robert F. Kennedy Jr. withdrew from the ballot in Arizona late Thursday, a day before he and Donald Trump were set to appear miles apart in the Phoenix area as speculation grows that Kennedy could drop his independent presidential bid and endorse the Republican nominee. Kennedy is scheduled to speak at 2 p.m. Eastern time in Phoenix "about the present historical moment and his path forward," according to his campaign. Hours later, Trump will hold a rally in neighbouring Glendale. Trump, campaigning Thursday in southern Arizona at the US-Mexico border, said that "no plans have been made" for Kennedy to appear with him on Friday. But he noted they would be in the same city at the same time.

On Thursday evening, Trump's campaign made an unusual announcement, teasing that he would be joined by "a special guest" at his Glendale event.

Hours later when he called into Fox News Channel after the Democratic National Convention wrapped, Trump said of Kennedy, "I have no idea if he's going to endorse me." But he noted that they were going to be in the same state and said, "It's possible we will be meeting tomorrow and we'll be discussing it." Representatives for Trump's campaign did not respond to messages about whether Kennedy would be the guest and the Kennedy campaign did not immediately return a message seeking comment if he would be joining Trump. Kennedy's Arizona withdrawal, confirmed by a spokesperson for the secretary of state, came less than a week after Kennedy submitted well more than the required number of signatures to appear on the ballot. His critics raised questions about the validity of some of the signatures after a pro-Kennedy super PAC was heavily involved in his effort to collect them, potentially running afoul of rules against coordination between candidates and independent political groups. But on Thursday, Kennedy, his running mate, Nicole Shanahan and all of their electors submitted notarized letters dated that day, withdrawing from the race in the state.

A year ago, some would have thought it inconceivable that Kennedy — a member of the most storied family in Democratic politics — would work with Trump to keep a Democrat out of the White House. Even in recent months, Kennedy has accused Trump of betraying his followers, while Trump has criticised Kennedy as "the most radical left candidate in the race." But the two campaigns have ramped up their compliments to each other and engaged in behind-the-scenes discussions in recent weeks, according to those familiar with the efforts. Both campaigns have spent months accusing Democrats of weaponising the legal system for their own benefit. And both have hinted publicly that they could be open to joining forces, with the shared goal of limiting the election



chances of Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris. Last month, during the Republican National Convention, Kennedy's son posted and then quickly deleted a video showing a phone call between Kennedy and Trump, in which the former president appeared to try to talk Kennedy into siding with him.

Talks between the two camps have continued, with close Trump allies quietly lobbying Kennedy to drop out of the race and support the Republican nominee, according to a person familiar with the efforts who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations. Trump told CNN on Tuesday that he would "love" an endorsement from Kennedy, whom he called a "brilliant guy." He also said he would "certainly" be open to Kennedy playing a role in his administration if Kennedy drops out and endorses him.

Shanahan, also openly suggested on a podcast this week that his campaign might "walk away right now and join forces with Donald Trump." While she clarified that she is not personally in talks with Trump, she entertained the idea that Kennedy could join Trump's administration as secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

"I think that Bobby in a role like that would be excellent," Shanahan said. "I fully support it. I have high hopes." Kennedy, a son of former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and a nephew of former President John F. Kennedy, hasn't disclosed the reason for his Friday remarks, but they come as his campaign's momentum has slipped.

Kennedy Jr. first entered the 2024 presidential race as a Democrat but left the party last fall to run as an independent. He built an unusually strong base for a third-party bid, fueled in part by anti-establishment voters and vaccine sceptics who have followed his anti-vaccine work since the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Macron talks with key players to form new French govt

AP n PARIS

After the excitement of the Paris Olympics and a Mediterranean vacation, now French President Emmanuel Macron has to figure out how to make his country governable again. Faced with a hung parliament, social tensions and ballooning debt, Macron kicked off talks Friday with key political players in a bid to choose a new prime minister who would form a government and end the deadlock created by snap legislative elections last month.

Members of the left-wing New Popular Front coalition that won the most seats pressured Macron for a quick decision. Their nominee for prime minister, little-known civil servant Lucie Castets, said after Friday's meetings in the Elysee Palace that she was ready to govern, and ready for compromise to get things done.

But the party only has about a third of the seats in the National Assembly, France's powerful lower house of parliament, and no party has a majority. Macron's centrist alliance came in second and the far-right National Rally came in third.

There's no rulebook that requires Macron to name a candidate from the party that won the most seats, or lays out a timeline for a decision. The absence of any dominant political bloc is unprecedented in France's modern Republic.

Centrists and conservatives are also meeting with Macron on Friday, while National Rally leaders Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella are expected at the Elysee on Monday. Macron's office said he will name a prime minister based on these consultations, which are aimed at "moving towards the broadest and most stable majority possible."

Castets said that in her meeting with Macron, he "recognised that a message was sent by the French during the elections" but seemed reluctant to allow an opposition party to form a government. Left-wing leaders have decried

Macron's decision to delay the prime minister nomination while he spent time at the Olympics and at the presidential holiday retreat in Bregancon on the French Riviera.

"We need a response Tuesday," said the national secretary of the Greens party, Marine Tondelier. "There are urgent issues, and leaving weeks roll by without facing them is grave, and even irresponsible."

The New Popular Front, which includes the hard-left France Unbowed, the Socialists and the Greens, has insisted that the prime minister should come out of their ranks as the largest group.

Macron last month appeared to dismiss Castets, saying in a televised interview "the issue is not a name provided by a political group" and stressing instead the need for a parliamentary majority behind the candidate. Politicians from the centre, the right and the far right have suggested they would try to bring down any government that includes members from France Unbowed.

Macron appears more keen to seek a coalition that could include politicians from the centre-left to the traditional right.

Other names that have emerged in French media as potential prime minister candidates include centre-left politician Bernard Cazeneuve, who served as France's top cop during a series of bloody terror attacks in 2015, and Xavier Bertrand, a former minister considered relatively moderate within the French right. Conservative politician Michel Barnier, EU's chief negotiator for post-Brexit talks, is also considered a potential candidate.

As president, Macron has sole power to name the prime minister according to the French Constitution.

The French president said last month he would keep the outgoing centrist government on a purely caretaker role to "handle current affairs," notably during the Olympics that ended on August 11.

# Last body from sunken superyacht recovered

Rome (AP): Italian rescuers brought ashore the body of the final missing person who was on a superyacht that sunk off the coast of Sicily. The woman's body was detected on Friday, the Coast Guard said. She has not been officially identified, but Hannah Lynch, the 18-year-old daughter of British tech magnate Mike Lynch, is reportedly unaccounted for. The Lynch family was aboard The Bayesian, a 56-metre (184-foot) British-flagged yacht, when went down in a storm early Monday. Civil protection officials said they believe the ship was struck by a tornado over the water, known as a waterspout, and sank quickly. Mike Lynch's body was recovered Thursday. He had been celebrating his recent acquittal on fraud charges with his family and the people who had defended him at trial in the United States.

# Norway proposes easing abortion law

Copenhagen (AP): Norway's government said Friday it wants to relax restrictions on abortion for the first time in nearly half a century to make it legal for women to terminate pregnancies up to the 18th week of gestation. Norway's laws currently allow legal abortions up to 12 weeks, but many pregnant women ask for an abortion after the 12th week and are granted it in hospitals and clinics. The proposed changes are "in line with practice today. Almost no one is refused applications for abortion after the 12th week," Norwegian Health Minister Jan Christian Vestre said. He said that "women's right to self-determined abortion is a fundamental value in Norway." The Norwegian Institute of Public Health said abortion rate has remained "historically low for several years" at about 12,000 each year, but began to rise in 2022. Last year some 12,814 pregnancy terminations were performed in Norway, a 6.7% increase from 2022, figures show.

The government agency said that eight out of 10 abortions are performed before the 9th week, and that nine out of 10 abortions are performed with medication. Free abortion was introduced in Norway in 1978 and women can opt for a surgical or medical abortion. "Society has changed significantly since the 1970s," Vestre told a press conference. The law proposal needs a majority — 85 votes — in the 169-member Stortinget, or parliament. So far some 80 lawmakers have said they will vote in favour of the new law. It was not yet clear when a vote would be held in parliament. The Centre Party, which holds 28 seats in Stortinget and is one of the parties in the governing coalition, wants to keep the current abortion limit of 12 weeks. Family Minister Kjersti Toppe said she hopes that "as many people as possible vote in line with the party line," but added that the issue was "a matter of conscience" and allowed party members to vote against the party's stance.

# House fire in Serbia kills six people

Belgrade (AP) A house fire in a northern Serbian city early Friday killed six people, including four children, police said. The fire erupted around 3 am in Novi Sad, some 90 kilometres (54 miles) north of Belgrade, the capital, said the Interior Minister Ivica Dacic. An emergency doctor told state television channel RTS that all the victims were already dead when the medical team reached the scene. Dacic said in a statement that initial findings suggest the cause could have been a charging electric scooter. The children were between 2 and 7 years old, said Dacic. Police are working to establish the victims' identity but they assume they are all members of a family registered at the address, he added. Serbian media published photos from the scene showing charred items in a small brick house, including a baby stroller and a washing machine.

# S'pore starts screening incoming passengers for mpox symptoms

PTI n SINGAPORE

Temperature and visual screening will be carried out at Changi and Seletar airports for inbound travellers and crew arriving on flights from places that may be exposed to outbreak of the viral disease. Health advisories have also been put in place at air checkpoints, so that travellers will take the necessary personal precautions to avoid being infected. Travellers are strongly advised to follow the advisory, especially if they are travelling to and from affected countries. Those found to have fever, rash and/or symptoms compatible with mpox will be referred for medical assessment. The MOH said there are no mpox clade I cases detected in Singapore to date. But it is monitoring the global situation very closely and the outbreak remains generally confined to Africa, with two cases of the more severe mpox clade I reported in Sweden and Thailand. There are currently no

reports of local spread in these two countries. The World Health Organisation (WHO) on August 14 declared mpox a global public health emergency for the second time in two years. As there were no reported cases of the more severe clade I exported out of the African continent, MOH said then that the immediate public health risk to Singapore was low. Infectious disease experts also said then that there was no need for visitors from countries where mpox is circulating, or Singaporeans who are returning home, to quarantine themselves if they do not have any symptoms. According to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, there have been more than 27,000 cases and more than 1,300 deaths since January 2023 in the current outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

# Security stepped up at Germany NATO air base

Berlin (AP): Security at a NATO air base in western Germany has been raised because of intelligence information pointing to a "potential threat," and all staff not essential to missions have been sent home as a precaution, NATO said. The Geilenkirchen air base, near the border with the Netherlands, is where the alliance's Airborne Warning and Control System, or AWACS, aircraft are based. A post on the NATO AWACS fleet's account on social media network X late Thursday night announcing that "we raised the security level" did not elaborate on the nature of the potential threat. It said that "operations continue as planned." The Geilenkirchen base said Friday that it had nothing to add to the statement and "the situation at the moment is unchanged." German news agency dpa said a reporter saw police cars on the grounds of the air base. Police confirmed a deployment Thursday night but gave no details, and offered no information on Friday morning. Last week, a major German air force based near Cologne was locked down for several hours amid fears that its water supply might have been tampered with. An investigation found no evidence of such sabotage. There were also reports of suspicious observations at Geilenkirchen and a person was briefly detained for questioning near the base, dpa reported at the time, but there turned out to be nothing untoward. The incidents come at a time of jitters about the possible vulnerability of infrastructure to attempted Russian sabotage. On Thursday, prosecutors in Flensburg, in Germany's far north, said they were investigating suspicions of espionage for the purpose of sabotage, without elaborating on who might be behind it. German media reported that drones had been spotted over a chemical park in Brunsbüttel, on the North Sea coast.

# Kolkata rape-murder: British Indians hold justice march

London (PTI): Indian students, charities and diaspora organisations in Britain have organised a series of events to continue to highlight their demand for justice following the rape-murder of an on-duty female doctor at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. While women's organisations came together to organise peace vigils at the Mahatma Gandhi statue in Parliament Square in London and across several other UK cities on Thursday, the Students' Federation of India - United Kingdom (SFI-UK) organised a march in the city of Liverpool on Wednesday. The hundreds who gathered at London's Parliament Square lit candles to spell out "justice" and held placards with messages calling for respect and empowerment of women. "We have received overwhelming support from the entire



world, proving that the time has come to wake up, take notice, rise up above our individual interests and join hands in our endeavour of showing support and solidarity to the cause," said Dr Dipti Jain of the Medicos Women Charity. "These peace protests are being held by units we set up in several cities in England, Scotland and Wales at the same time with Belfast and Dublin arrang-

ing theirs over the weekend. We have involved global units in the US, Canada and Australia, who are also holding peace vigils with us," said the UK-based National Health Service (NHS) doctor, who trained as a medic in Kolkata. Earlier, SFI-UK continued its series of student-led peaceful protests and demonstrations with a march from London Road to the city centre of Liverpool.

# US expands Mexico asylum appointment area

PTI n CIUDAD HALDIGO

As soon as she stepped onto Mexican soil this week, Venezuelan migrant Yuri Carolina Meléndez downloaded the US government's app to apply for asylum appointments. The CBP One app has been around, but as of Friday migrants in Mexico's southernmost states bordering Guatemala will be able to apply for appointments. Previously, they had to be in central or northern Mexico. "I have to wait to see if it really works," the woman said while resting under a tree with her 16- and 18-year-old daughters along a border highway leading to the city of Tapachula this week. Mexico has been asking the US to expand the app's access to the south in an attempt to relieve the pressure migrants feel to continue north to at least Mexico City. In recent years, the Mexican government has tried to contain migrants in the south farther

from the US border, but the lack of work opportunities and housing in southern cities like Tapachula have pushed migrants north. Mexico hopes that if migrants can wait for their appointments in the south they might not risk getting snagged by authorities without papers or by organised crime groups that prey on migrants travelling north. With an appointment, they could, in theory, move without interference. Germin Alemán, a 31-year-old from Honduras travelling with his wife and three children, planned to register as soon as they reached Tapachula. "We're going to apply here, we're going to wait for the appointment," he said as they walked from the border toward Tapachula. Others, however, still felt the pressure to get farther north. Many migrants often carry big debts and need to start paying them off as soon as possible. Meléndez, for instance, said she planned to keep mov-

ing to improve her chances of finding work. CBP One has been one of the measures of greatest impact in US efforts to bring order to the growing demand for US asylum along its southwestern border. In the 2023 fiscal year, US Customs and Border Protection reported more than 2.4 million encounters with migrants along the US Southwest border. Since the app was launched in January 2023, more than 765,000 people have scheduled appointments to request asylum. Immigration has become a central issue in the US presidential election. When the Biden administration temporarily suspended the asylum process for those who crossed illegally in June, the app became one of the only ways to request asylum. The US handles 1,500 appointments daily. The number of migrants crossing the US border illegally has fallen significantly since peak-

ing in December 2023. Washington attributes much of that decline to Mexico's enforcement efforts, which include nabbing migrants in the north and sending them south again. Still, Mexico welcomes CBP One's expansion. "That is going to help us a lot," Foreign Affairs Secretary Alicia Bárcena said earlier this month when she announced the expansion was coming. Immigration is a key issue in the two countries' relationship. But for dozens of non-governmental groups that advocate for migrants and human rights, there is little to celebrate. In an open letter to the Mexican government Thursday, they called CBP One "a violation of international law" because it allows the US to limit access to its territory for people in need of protection. The groups argued that many migrants wind up stuck in Mexico for months waiting in full shelters or camping in unsanitary conditions.

# 18 Indians killed as bus falls into river in Nepal



PTI n KATHMANDU

At least 18 Indian pilgrims who arrived in Nepal from Maharashtra for a 10-day tour were killed after a tourist bus veered off the highway and fell 150 metres into the fast-flowing Marsyangdi River in central Nepal approximately 120 kilometres from the capital on Friday, according to media reports.

The bus from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh was heading towards Nepal's capital Kathmandu from the resort town of Pokhara when it drove off the highway in Aaina Pahara in the Tanahun district. There were 43 people, including the driver and the co-driver, on the bus with an Indian registration number.

The passengers onboard the bus were part of a group of 104 Indian pilgrims who arrived in Nepal from Maharashtra in three buses two days ago for a 10-day tour of the Himalayan nation, MyRepublica news portal reported.

They came from Bhusal village in Jalgaon district. After visiting Pokhara for two days, all three buses left for the capital Kathmandu on Friday morning. Madhav Prasad Paudel, chief of the Armed Police Force (APF), Kurintar, said that most of the passengers travelling in the three buses were families and relatives.

A list of names of the 43 pas-

sengers who were in the ill-fated bus has been released. "An Indian tourist bus travelling from Pokhara to Kathmandu with around 43 Indians fell 150 metres into the Marsyangdi River today," the Embassy of India said in a post on X. The mission is coordinating with local authorities undertaking relief and rescue. According to Deputy Superintendent of Police of the APF Shaileendra Thapa, 14 bodies were retrieved from the crash site and 16 injured were rushed to a local hospital.

The bus that fell on the river bank has been badly damaged. An MI 17 helicopter of the Nepal Army has left for the accident site at Anbu Khairani in Tanahun district with a medical team for the rescue operation, MyRepublica reported. The Gandaki Province Police Office, Pokhara, said 15 of those rescued can speak.

Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh government has sent a Sub Divisional Magistrate to the incident site. An ADM has also been appointed to coordinate the relief work.

Uttar Pradesh Relief Commissioner GS Naveen Kumar in a press statement said, "As per media reports and further confirmed from the MEA Nepal Division, today at about 11:30 am, a bus with registration number - UP 53 FD 7623 carrying approx 43 pas-

sengers from Maharashtra, including the driver and one assistant, fell around 150 metres into river Marshyandi in Ambukherani region in the Tanahu District of Nepal." The statement added, "The UP government has sent SDM Maharajanjan to the incident site. The MEA is coordinating the search and rescue operations with local authorities." Nepal's rivers are generally fast-flowing due to the mountainous terrain. Heavy monsoon downpours in the past few days have swollen the waterways and turned them murky brown, making it even more difficult to see the wreckage. Monsoon season brings heavy rains to Nepal from June to September, often triggering landslides in the mountainous Himalayan country.

Last month, two buses carrying 65 passengers were washed away by a landslide into the swollen Trishuli River in Nepal. The bodies from the two buses were washed away down the Trishuli River as far as 100 kilometres. Extensive search operations, including the deployment of a 12-member team from India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), have not yet located the two missing buses and many passengers swept away by the landslide. The bodies of five Indian nationals have been recovered so far while two are still missing.

# 'Bangladeshis not angry but hurt'

PTI n DHAKA

Top BNP leader here said Bangladeshis are "not angry but hurt" over deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's stay in India, even as he urged politicians and security strategists in New Delhi to "rethink" their policy given the ground reality here.

In an exclusive interview with PTI at his residence in Dhaka, Abdul Moyeen Khan, a former Cabinet minister of Bangladesh, also said his country shares a border with India on three sides and it is a big neighbour, so there is "no reason why India should not be our best friend". After unprecedented anti-government protests which reached a crescendo on August 5, Hasina resigned as prime minister and fled the country, even as protesters had termed the fall of the government and her departure a "day of victory". She landed in India on August 5 and is currently staying there, even as her over two-week-long pres-

ence in India has given rise to speculation here. Khan said the current situation is of "consolidation" and coming back to normalcy.

The interim government led by Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus is trying to stabilise the country and electoral reforms are their "top priority". Asked if elections are held in Bangladesh what are the prospects for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by former prime minister Khalida Zia, he said: "If there is a free and fair elections, our prospects will be decided by the people, and if they want us to be the majority or not, we will respect that, the will of the people is supreme in a democratic system." The 77-year-old veteran leader is also a member of the National Standing Committee of the BNP, a party that was established in 1978. He served as a Cabinet minister under the tenure of the then-prime minister Zia.

"The current situation is quite

clear. It is amazing how the country is settling back after such a big upheaval. People are trying to get back to their normal day-to-day life, the (interim) government is trying to normalise everything, and they are up to their main mandate which is the transition from autocracy to democracy," Khan told PTI on Thursday.

Asked how he saw the trajectory of the Dhaka-New Delhi ties because of the presence of Hasina in India, he said it "depends entirely on how India decides".

On Hasina's stay in India after fleeing Bangladesh, he said "Bangladeshis are not angry, but hurt, wounded... as they never expected this". The former Cabinet minister claimed that New Delhi's behaviour towards Awami League and Hasina has "transformed into anti-Indian feeling in a real sense of the term".

"There is no reason for us to be unfriendly with India unless India behaves in a way that

forces the people of Bangladesh to doubt their intentions," he added.

There are reports in newspapers that the US and UK governments had "refused" to take Hasina in and under these circumstances, she has found "refuge" in India and this is "public information", the BNP leader claimed.

The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi had earlier said the approval for former Prime Minister Hasina to come to India was "granted at short notice".

"The situation is still evolving. At this stage, we have nothing new to share about her plans," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters on August 16 when asked exactly under what condition she was in India. Khan in Dhaka said: "It is up to policy planners, politicians and security strategists in India to decide how long can they house her, and on what ground they can house her, and on what policies they can house

her. It is not us to decide. What we have said is what the foreign advisor has said on it."

New Delhi has to make up its mind whether it wants to be a "friend of the Bangladeshi people" or they want to be a "friend of a section of people, or one party or one leader".

The senior BNP leader alleged that policy planners, politicians and security strategists in New Delhi "somehow put their stake in one person and one party, Sheikh Hasina and Awami League" and claimed that it was the "biggest tragedy on the part of India".

"I can't believe such a great nation failed to understand the basic instinct, psychology of the people of Bangladesh... I sincerely hope India comes out of this mindset," he said.

It is "high time" the policy planners, politicians, and security strategists in New Delhi "rethink their policy and reformulate it in the light of the reality on the ground in Bangladesh.

# Hasina's diplomatic passport revoked

Dhaka (PTI): Bangladesh's interim government has revoked ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's diplomatic passport along with all members of the former Cabinet, over two weeks after she resigned and fled to India following a student-led uprising against her government.

A statement by the Security Services Division of the Home Affairs Ministry on Thursday said diplomatic passports received by the former prime minister, ex-PM's advisors, cabinet members and all members of the recently dissolved Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) and their spouses would be revoked immediately, the official BSS news agency reported. President Mohammed Shahabuddin in August dissolved the 12th Parliament after Hasina, 76, fled the country. Currently, an interim government led by Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus is running the country.

Diplomatic passports of the officials would also be revoked immediately upon termination of their tenure or appoint-

ment, it said. The release said ordinary passports may be issued in their favour based on the reports of at least two investigating agencies, it added. Hasina fled to India after being forced to resign in the face of a student-led mass uprising on August 5.

According to the Indian visa policy, Bangladeshi citizens holding diplomatic or official passports are eligible for visa-free entry and a stay of up to 45 days, The Daily Star newspaper said. As of Thursday, Hasina has already spent 18 days in India. Hasina does not hold any passport other than the diplomatic passport issued in her name, the paper said quoting government sources.

The cancellation of her diplomatic passport and its associated visa privileges may put her at risk of extradition. The extradition of Hasina, who is facing 51 cases, including 42 for murder, falls within the legal framework of the extradition treaty signed between Bangladesh and India, the BSS report said.

# Bangladesh floods kills 15, maroon over 4.5 million

PTI n DHAKA

Monsoon rainfall-triggered floods in deltaic Bangladesh and upstream Indian regions killed at least 15 people and affected over four million others in this country, posing a huge administrative challenge to the newly installed interim government amid a political transition. Several rivers are flowing above the danger mark, particularly in north-eastern, eastern and south-eastern Bangladesh inundating many cities and towns apart from several hundred villages killing people, damaging the infrastructures and disrupting communication lines.

"At least 15 people have been killed and 4.8 million people in as many as 11 districts have been affected by floods triggered by heavy rains in Bangladesh," state-run news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) said quoting Md Kamrul Hasan, secretary of the Disaster Management Ministry. Rescue operations in the flood-affected areas are being carried out by the army, navy, coast guard, Border Guards, Bangladesh (BGB), fire services, police as well as students, Hasan told media persons. More than a dozen places across these areas received over 60 mm of rainfall, ranging from 151 mm at Cox's Bazar to 62 in Gopalganj, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department and forecast heavy rainfall in various regions of the country over the next three days due to active monsoon conditions over the Bay of Bengal, according to the Dhaka Tribune newspaper.

Bangladesh is crisscrossed by more than 200 rivers, 54 of them being transboundary rivers with upper riparian India, in four major basins. A depression (a system that brings in copious rainfall) in the Bay of Bengal has led to the current deluge with rivers in two basins - the north-eastern Meghna Basin and south-western Chattogram Hills Basin - flowing above the danger mark.

Apart from the torrential rains, the overflowing rivers, El Nino and climate change phenomenon were the factors responsible for widespread flooding in the country, weather experts said on Friday.

A Disaster Management Ministry spokesperson said:



"We are monitoring the flood situation and relief activities from our control room in Dhaka."

Communications with the central Feni district, which is located almost midway between the capital Dhaka and the port city of Chattogram, was virtually cut off while flood waters largely submerged the district headquarters and the collapsed electricity supply system disrupted the telecommunication lines. "The cross border Khowai in (northeastern) Habiganj now flows 199 centimetres or nearly 2 metres above the danger marks at places, the Gumti (in eastern Bangladesh) flow at 118 centimetres above danger mark and Halda in (southeastern) Chattogram 1 metre at places," a spokesman of the Flood Warning and Forecasting

Centre (FFWC) said about the situation on Friday afternoon. The FFWC office came under criticism for failure to predict the situation even as the officials attributed the situation to a lack of information from counterparts in the upstream Indian region.

According to local media reports, the situation became bizarre as local government representatives were unavailable or on the run because of their political affiliation after the ouster of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime. Yunus, 84, assumed charge on August 8 soon after Hasina, 76, stepped down on August 5 and fled to India amidst a mass uprising that followed attacks, vandalism and killings of many people loyal to her since last month.

# 'Biden to dispatch adviser to China as he looks to sharpen policy focus in final months'

AP n BUELLTON

President Joe Biden plans to dispatch his national security adviser Jake Sullivan to China as the White House aims to sharpen its focus on foreign policy in the Democrat's final months in office.

Sullivan's visit to meet with his counterpart, Wang Yi, is expected to take place next week, according to a person familiar with planning for the trip who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The White House is expected to announce plans for the trip later on Friday.

Sullivan has met with Chinese officials several times over the course of the administration to discuss the two economic rivals complicated relationship, but this will be his first visit to China. The expected announcement comes as Biden is vacationing in California's

Santa Ynez Valley. The high-level visit by Sullivan to China could potentially set the ground for another face-to-face meeting for Biden with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The two leaders last November spent four hours together at a bucolic Northern California estate — in meetings, a working lunch and a garden stroll — as they looked to steady a relationship that has been fraught for much of Biden's time in office. Their meeting led to modest agreements to combat illegal fentanyl and reestablish military communications. But there were still deep differences on economic competition and global security threats.

Still, Biden and Xi are looking to bring a greater measure of stability to a relationship that is being defined by differences over export controls, tensions over Taiwan, the wars in the Middle East and Europe, and more.

# Ukraine recaptures land in the Kharkiv region

AP n KYIV

Ukrainian forces say they have recaptured territory in the eastern region of Kharkiv, where Russia launched a large offensive in the spring that brought initial gains but the operation soon stalled. Ukraine's 3rd Separate Assault Brigade said in a statement late Thursday that its forces advanced nearly two square kilometers (about three-quarters of a square mile) in that area.

It was unclear when the attack was launched, its scale, and the area of the offensive, and it's hard to predict if it will have further impact on the battlefield. Ukraine's reported counteroffensive in the Kharkiv region comes as its forces have gained new momentum and altered the battlefield this month. Kyiv launched a shock offensive into Russia's western Kursk region on August 6, while simultaneously intensifying a drone war against military and fuel targets that sparked blazes deep in Russia

this week.

On Friday some new details emerged about damage and injuries caused by some of those attacks.

A Ukrainian drone attack targeting a distant Russian air base in its Volgograd region caused significant damage to an airfield that reportedly housed glide bombs used by Moscow in the war, satellite photos analyzed Friday by The Associated Press showed.

Meanwhile, an attack on a cargo ferry at the port of Kavkaz in Russia's Krasnodar region on Thursday injured 13 people, Russia's state news agency Tass reported Friday. Citing health officials, Tass said that four of the injured have been hospitalised and one other person remained unaccounted for.

Ukraine's gains have reshaped the morale of Ukrainians 10 years after Russia first invaded their country, and 2 1/2 years after Moscow launched a full-scale invasion that has led to mass

death and destruction and created Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. Ukraine and its Western allies hope that the regained momentum could strengthen Kyiv's hand on the diplomatic front.

A visit to Kyiv by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is meeting Friday with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is being closely watched. Modi, who has maintained cordial ties and economic relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, could play a role in forging a mediated peace.

But the incursion into Russia itself is risky. It has highlighted Russian vulnerabilities but also further stretched Ukrainian forces, who were already fighting on a frontline running for hundreds of kilometers. And it has possibly compromised its ability to hold back Russian forces who have slowly but steadily gained ground in the Donetsk region, diverting Ukrainian forces who otherwise could bolster defense there.

# SL prez poll candidate passes away

Colombo (PTI): One of the 39 candidates in the fray in Sri Lanka's presidential election scheduled for September 21 has passed away. Idroos Mohamed Ilyas, 79, an independent candidate from the north-western Puttalam district died last night from a heart attack while he was being taken to a hospital, his family said. He was a member of parliament in the 1990s representing the island's nine per cent Muslim minority from the northern district of Jaffna. His name with his electoral symbol, 'injection syringe', was placed fourth from the top of the lengthy ballot paper made so by the record 39 candidates, four more in comparison to the previous election held in November 2019.

# Pak seeks \$4bn loan from Middle East banks

PTI n ISLAMABAD

Cash-strapped Pakistan is in talks with banks in the Middle East to borrow approximately USD 4 billion to meet its external financial commitments for the current fiscal year, as part of the USD 7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) currently pending for IMF's approval.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and his team had a virtual meeting with Dr Adnan Chulwani, Group CEO of Dubai Islamic Bank, on Thursday, the Dawn newspaper reported on Friday.

On Wednesday, a similar interaction was held with Mashreq Bank President and Group CEO Ahmed Abdelaal. Both meetings had been arranged to "discuss the economic outlook and explore investment oppor-

tunities in Pakistan".

For the current fiscal year, Pakistan has pitched about USD 20 billion in foreign borrowing in the budget, besides another USD 3 billion rollover from the UAE that was reported separately for the balance of payments. With this much borrowing, Pakistan's reserves are estimated to grow to about USD 19-20 billion by the end of the current fiscal year. Of the USD 20 billion estimate, about USD 4 billion is targeted to be arranged through foreign commercial borrowing during the current fiscal year and another USD 1 billion in international bonds.

Separately, The Express Tribune newspaper reported that Pakistan begins seeking commercial loans from Middle Eastern banks to bridge the external financing gap, as the

IMF indefinitely postponed the approval of a USD 7 billion EFF this week after Islamabad failed to secure the additional USD 2 billion in financing and the rollover of USD 12 billion in cash deposits from Saudi Arabia, China, and the UAE.

The finance minister now hopes that the IMF may approve the new EFF next month. Pakistan has also intensified its engagement with foreign commercial banks, though high financing costs and a low credit rating from international agencies remain significant hurdles. Pakistan's current credit rating stands at CCC+, which is below investment grade, leading to higher interest rate demands from commercial banks.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, the Ministry of Finance and the

State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) briefed the Senate Standing Committee on Economic Affairs about Pakistan's engagements with the IMF since 1958. Qader Bakhs, an executive from the SBP, informed the parliamentary forum that Pakistan's last Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF had an average interest rate of 5.1 per cent, making it a costly deal. He also noted that the new IMF loan is expected to carry similar rates unless global interest rates decline.

The IMF interest rate is determined by the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket price, plus a 1% base rate and two additional surcharges linked to loan volume and duration, he explained.

The SBP official further detailed that if a country borrows more than 187.5 per cent

of its IMF quota, a 2 per cent surcharge applies. Additionally, a 1 per cent surcharge is levied if the borrowing period exceeds three years, he said.

Traditionally, lending by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the IMF was considered affordable. However, due to Pakistan's increasing borrowing needs and limited capacity to sustain such debt, the WB and ADB have also raised their interest rates. Data shared by the finance ministry revealed that Pakistan's interest costs on IMF loans have steadily risen since 2008. That year, Pakistan borrowed from the IMF at an interest rate of 1.6 per cent, which increased to 2.4 per cent in 2013. The 2019 IMF programme was secured at an average interest rate of 3.41 per cent.

**Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot**

**Admission Notice**

**Post Basic Nursing Courses, session 2024**

Online applications are invited for vacant seats for admission in all the Govt./Private colleges of Punjab through University website from candidates who have not appeared in PPBNET-2024 on the basis of GNM examinations from **25.08.2024 To 31.08.2024**

2nd round of Online counseling schedule for all PPBNET-2024 appeared and Not appeared candidates is available on University website

**Note:- Any Notification/Corrigendum/Amendment by Govt. of Punjab will be followed. For the detailed schedule/Prospectus & updates visit us at: [www.bfuhs.ac.in](http://www.bfuhs.ac.in).**

**REGISTRAR**

nil/12/17/2023/36949 Dated CHD :- 8/22/2024

**Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar**

**Tender Notice Reference No.GNDU/Gen/69/2024**

The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:

Sr. No.	Item	Quantity
1	Imaging of Part-C & Part-D of OMR front cover. Scanning of OMR Front cover having Part-C and Part-D with Scan No. and processing of Data in the form of marks list.	10 Lac for Two semesters (5 Lacs per semester)

Closing date & Time: **07-09-2024 at 5:00 PM**  
For details log onto: [www.eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://www.eproc.punjab.gov.in)  
**Note:** Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only

**Assistant Registrar (General)**  
**Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar**

NA/12/24953/2023/36955 Dated CHD :- 8/23/2024

**PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.**  
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001)  
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website- [www.pspscil.in](http://www.pspscil.in)  
Contact No.96461-17604, 96461-17659

**Tender Enquiry No. 1701/TGM/O&M/PC-2579 Dated: 22-08-2024**  
Chief Engineer/O&M (P&P Cell-II), GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat, invites E-tender for the Procurement of Scaling and Antisize Compound. Quantity as per NIT. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 22-08-2024 at 17:00 Hrs. onwards.

**Note:-** Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

**GHTP-72/24**

**76155/12/3341/2023/36973 Dated CHD :- 8/23/2024**

**UPSIDA** कायाविक्रम प्रमाण मासिकपत्रक (अभिलेखन)-आर 30300 राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण ए-1/4, सखनपुर, कानपुर

**अद्यतनकारीय ई-निविदा सूचना**

एतद्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के विभिन्न जगहों में विद्युत विकार, अनुसंधान एवं रख-रखाव कार्य हेतु सरकारी विभागों/सार्वजनिक उपकरणों/निगमों/प्राधिकरणों/परिचालकों/नगर निगमों में पंजीकृत एवं अनुभवी कर्मियों/सेक्योरिटी एवं अत्यन्तवर्गीय ई-निविदाओं आगति की जाती है जो दिनांक 24.08.2024 को अपरान्ह 04.00 बजे से दिनांक 02.09.2024 को अपरान्ह 5.00 बजे तक ऑनलाइन की जा सकती है। निविदाओं को दिनांक 03.09.2024 को अपरान्ह 04.00 बजे खोला जायेगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा राख्य पत्रों की मूल प्रतियां दिनांक 06.09.2024 को सां. 5.00 बजे तक कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा के माध्यम से आगति की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण निम्नवत् है:-

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

**नोट:-** 1. निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कर वसुल हेतु अंकित करें। जीएसटी/सीएसटी अलग से देना होगा। 2. निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण जानकारी प्राप्त करने की वेबसाइट: [www.onlinespsida.com](http://www.onlinespsida.com) पर विद्युत ई-निविदा एवं सूचीकरण की वेबसाइट: <http://etender.up.nic.in> पर देना जा सकती है।

**अ. महासचिव (वि.उ.)** मु. उ. उपकरणऔद्योगिक, कानपुर

# Sensex, Nifty edge up in volatile trade ahead of US Fed chief speech

PTI n MUMBAI

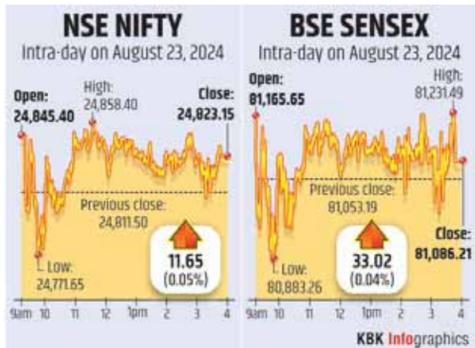
Benchmark Sensex and Nifty edged up in volatile trade on Friday following buying in blue-chip stocks such as ICICI Bank and Bharti Airtel amid mixed global trends ahead of the US Fed chair Jerome Powell's speech at Jackson Hole Symposium.

Rising for the fourth straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 33.02 points or 0.04 per cent higher at 81,086.21.

In early trade, the benchmark declined 169.93 points or 0.20 per cent to a low of 80,883.26. Later, it bounced back 178.3 points or 0.21 per cent to hit a high of 81,231.49 but gave up gains towards the end.

The NSE Nifty edged up 11.65 points or 0.05 per cent to close at 24,823.15 registering gains for the seventh session in a row.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Motors, Sun Pharmaceutical, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finserv,



ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra and JSW Steel were the gainers. Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Asian Paints, Titan, Infosys, State Bank of India, Tata Consultancy Services and HDFC Bank were the laggards.

"Ahead of the FED chair Powell's speech, the Indian indices oscillated around the flat trajectory and mixed

global market sentiments further catalysed this scenario," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said. Investors are exercising caution and awaiting Powell's signals for more insights on the interest rate path, Nair added. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 0.15 per cent, however the midcap index fell 0.66 per cent. Among the indices, Services

surged by 1.07 per cent, Auto by 0.93 per cent, Industrials by 0.26 per cent, capital goods by 0.23 per cent and Consumer Discretionary by 0.13 per cent. Realty, IT, Oil & Gas and Teck were among the laggards.

"Indian market struggled for direction in early trade on Friday as investors awaited cues from US Federal Reserve Jerome Powell's speech at the ongoing Jackson Hole Economic Symposium.

"Markets are looking for new clues on the timing and pace of possible interest rate cuts by the Fed this year," Avdhut Bagkar Technical and Derivatives Analyst at StoxBox.

Bajaj Auto stock jumped 5 per cent after the company became the first automotive original equipment manufacturer (OEM) to receive a domestic value addition certificate for all 15 electric models it submitted for clearance from the Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI).

# Rupee rises 4 paise to close at 83.89 against US dollar

PTI n MUMBAI

The rupee traded in a narrow range and settled higher by 4 paise at 83.89 (provisional) against the American currency on Friday, as traders remained cautious ahead of Fed Chair Jerome Powell's speech at the Jackson Hole Symposium.

Forex traders said weak US Dollar, foreign fund inflows and a positive tone in the domestic markets supported the rupee. However, overnight gains in crude oil prices capped sharp gains.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened weak at 83.93 and touched an intraday high of 83.85 against the US dollar.

The domestic currency finally settled at 83.89 (provisional), 4 paise higher from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee traded in a narrow range and settled lower by 3 paise at 83.93 against the American currency.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias as traders remain cautious ahead



of Fed Chair Jerome Powell's speech at the Jackson Hole Symposium which could provide some cues on Fed's path to cut interest rates.

"Weak US and Asian markets and a recovery in crude oil prices may pressure the rupee while positive domestic markets may support the rupee at lower levels," said Anuj Choudhary -- Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Meanwhile, the dollar index,

which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.10 per cent lower at 101.40.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, advanced 1.05 per cent to USD 78.03 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex advanced 33.02 points, or 0.04 per cent, to close at 81,086.21 points. The Nifty rose 11.65 points, or 0.05 per cent, to 24,823.15 points.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Thursday as they purchased shares worth Rs 1,371.79 crore, according to exchange data.

On the domestic macroeconomic front, the minutes of the last Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday noted that the calibrated increase in policy repo rate by 250 basis points since May 2022 and subsequent change of stance to the withdrawal of accommodation have facilitated gradual disinflation over 2022-23.

# India's forex reserves jump by USD 4.546 bn to USD 674.664 bn

PTI n MUMBAI

India's forex reserves jumped by USD 4.546 billion to USD 674.664 billion during the week ended August 16, the RBI said on Friday.

In the previous week, the forex kitty had dropped by USD 4.8 billion to USD 670.119 billion. On August 2, the overall reserves hit an all-time high of USD 674.919 billion.

In the week ended August 16, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 3.609 billion to USD 591.569 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves increased by USD 865 million to USD 60,104 billion during the week, the RBI said.

# Sebi asks CAs to be 'extra careful' while auditing listed SMEs

PTI n MUMBAI

Sebi's whole-time member Ashwani Bhatia on Friday asked chartered accountants to be more diligent while auditing companies listed on the SME exchange platforms.

Addressing an industry event of CAs, Bhatia said it is important to look at the listed SMEs (Small and medium-sized enterprises) in a more careful way because the same companies will grow to be a part of the main board in the future.

"We have seen some challenges there (SME platform). We request you to be extra careful as far as SME IPOs and fundraising are concerned because these small companies will become much, much bigger going forward," the banker-turned-capital markets regulator said.

Bhatia expressed satisfaction with the progress of the SME platform, stating that Rs 14,000 crore has been raised by such entities, with Rs 6,000 crore being raised in FY24



alone. He compared the CAs to "doctors", and added that they act as first-level regulators by ensuring orderly conduct of companies.

Bhatia said many Sebi investigations and orders, which take over a year to complete, may not be necessary at all if the CAs had done their work more diligently.

It can be noted that in March this year, Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch had flagged concerns around "price manipulation" in the SME platform listings and investors

to be cautious. Meanwhile, addressing CAs on Friday, Bhatia recalled the conduct of SBI's past chairman R K Talwar and said that the strength of character of the leader helps create "great institutions". He also said that despite the regulator coming out with regulations to enable delisting, the experience has been the "reverse" with little interest on that front.

The whole-time member hinted that the low interest in delisting is due to high valuations, and added that even foreign companies are looking at listing in India.

# Registration of housing properties in Noida, Gr Noida up 29 per cent in Apr-Jun at 8,212 units: Report

PTI n NEW DELHI

Registration of residential properties in Noida and Greater Noida rose 29 per cent annually in the June quarter to 8,212 units, according to housing brokerage firm Square Yards. As many as 6,354 units were registered in the year-ago period.

Residential real estate activity in Noida and Greater Noida saw a marked uptick in the June quarter of 2024, with 8,212 residential transactions registered with the Inspector General of Registration (IGR).

"The combined sales value of these transactions reached Rs 6,013 crore, representing a 59 per cent year-on-year surge, outpacing the growth in transaction volume," the consultant said in a statement. In Noida, Square Yards said that 3,200 units were registered during the April-June period against 2,408



units a year ago. Greater Noida saw a 27 per cent increase in registration of residential properties at 5,012 units compared to 3,946 units in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Among developers, realty firm Nirala World topped both the number of transactions and sales value in April-June 2024. Its project, Nirala Estate in Tech Zone-4 (Greater Noida), led the pack with 620 units registered, amounting to Rs 565 crore in sales value, the consultant said.

# Gold prices decline by ` 350, silver drops ` 200

PTI n NEW DELHI

Gold prices declined by Rs 350 to Rs 73,800 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

In the previous session, gold of 99.9 per cent purity traded at Rs 74,150 per 10 grams. Silver declined by Rs 200 to Rs 87,000 per kg from Rs 87,200 per kg in the previous day.

Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also dropped by Rs 350 to Rs 73,450 per 10 grams against Rs 73,800 per 10 grams on Thursday.

The yellow metal extended losses on Friday, weighed down by rising US Treasury yields and a recovery in the dollar index, market experts said.

Prices of precious metal were also influenced by the minutes of the last Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) released by RBI on Thursday. Reserve Bank Governor



Shaktikanta Das said that the current policy rate of 6.5 per cent is broadly balanced, and any justification for policy easing at this juncture can be misleading, according to the MPC minutes.

Governor Das and three other members voted for the status quo on the repo rate in the MPC, while two members advocated a rate cut.

Globally, gold at Comex gained USD 18.20 to trade at USD 2,534.90 per ounce. Silver was trading 1.24 per cent higher at USD 29.84 per ounce in the international markets.

Minutes from the US Federal Reserve's July meeting

revealed a strong inclination toward a rate cut next month, a move supported by at least two Fed officials, Prathamesh Mallya, DVP- Research, Non-Agri Commodities and Currencies, Angel One Ltd, said.

"Speculators overstated the likelihood of an aggressive rate cut before the end of the year; now they trimmed their bets and are pricing three 25-basis-point cuts across the remaining three Fed policy meetings this year, down from around four cuts priced two days ago," said Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities.

# US top trading partner, highest trade deficit with China in January-June 2024: GTRI

PTI n NEW DELHI

The US has emerged as India's top trading partner during January-June this year, while the country has recorded its highest trade deficit of USD 41.6 billion with China during the period, according to think tank GTRI.

It also said the country's merchandise exports rose 5.41 per cent to USD 230.51 billion during the first of 2024.

"China topped the list with a substantial trade deficit of USD 41.6 billion, as exports to China were USD 8.5 billion, while imports reached USD 50.1 billion during January-June 2024," it added. The data analysis for the first half of this calendar year by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) showed



India exports goods to 239 countries and out of these, 126 countries showed positive growth in exports. These nations account for 75.3 per cent of India's total exports.

Major countries with increased exports include the USA, UAE, Netherlands, Singapore, and China. However, exports declined in

98 countries, which account for 24.6 per cent of India's exports, with notable declines in Italy, Belgium, Nepal, and Hong Kong.

"The US is India's top export partner. Exports to the US increased from USD 37.7 billion in January-June 2023 to USD 41.6 billion in January-June 2024, reflecting

a growth of 10.5 per cent. The UAE saw a significant rise in exports, increasing from USD 15.8 billion to USD 19.7 billion, marking a 24.9 per cent growth," it said.

In the first half of 2024, China remained the largest import supplier, with imports increasing from USD 46.2 billion to USD 50.1 billion.

"In FY2024, China was India's top trading partner, just ahead of the US. However, from January to June 2024, the US became India's largest trading partner, with total trade growing from USD 59.4 billion to USD 62.5 billion, a 5.3 per cent increase," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said. China followed as the second-largest trading partner, with total trade rising from USD 54.4 billion to USD 58.6 billion, marking a 7.7 per cent increase.

# India steel market hit by unfair imports, dumping amid slump in China: Former Steel Secretary

PTI n NEW DELHI

Indian steel market is hit by "unfair imports and dumping" amid a demand slump in China and the government needs to take action in a time-bound manner, former steel secretary Nagendra Nath Sinha has said.

"If you take flat steel products, imports are certainly an issue. The slump in the Chinese market has really shaken the (domestic) market," Sinha, who superannuated on July 31, said at the 7th edition of BigMint's Indian Iron Ore and Pellet Summit on Friday. He also warned of the price realisations getting affected due to surging imports impacting the profitability of steel makers.

"To the extent the imports currently happening are



unfair and there is dumping going on and the Indian government should certainly respond to them in a timeframe," Sinha said.

His statement assumes significance as local steel players have been raising the issue of imports for months from select countries

including China. Steelmakers have raised concern that India is becoming a net importer of steel against the aim to become a global supplier of the commodity.

Sinha said "...Duty prayers for imposition of the duty are being considered at a longer

timeframe for about a year and a half that is not going help industry at least give them a fair hearing."

On August 16, the government initiated an anti-dumping probe into the import of hot-rolled steel products from Vietnam following a complaint by a domestic industry.

The commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) is probing the alleged dumping of 'hot rolled flat products of alloy or non-alloy steel'. According to the DGTR notification, Indian Steel Association has filed an application on behalf of domestic producers - JSW Steel Ltd and ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India Ltd - seeking initiation of an anti-dumping investigation on imports from Vietnam.

# Peak power demand to grow by 15GW/year for next 6 years: Govt Official

PTI n NEW DELHI

Power demand in the country will grow at a higher rate of 15GW per annum for next six years compared to 11GW per annum in last one decade, a senior government official said on Friday.

By 2030, about 85 GW of additional demand will be added during the solar hours and during the non solar hours more than 90 GW will be added to the peak demand, said Additional Secretary Power Srikant Nagulapalli at an Industry Conclave organised by IEEMA.

"... The CAGR may not reflect these numbers truly, but if you see the absolute numbers it's a big jump and to meet

this growth, substantial expansion of our coal capacity and along with solar, wind, storage and also transmission capacity is being undertaken," Nagulapalli added.

Nagulapalli noted that "India's peak demand grew at an average of 11GW for the last 10 years and going forward for the next 6 years, we expect that the demand is going to grow at an average of 15 GW per year."

He further stated that approx 40 GW will be through storage. "By 2030, we intend to rely on storage capacity, be it long storage batteries to supply our non solar hour peak," he said.

The Ministry of Power has set a target of 500 GW capacity from non-fossil fuel-based



sources by 2030.

"... We have already crossed 200 GW (RE capacity addition) and additional 300 GW has to be realised in the next 6 years, of this (300GW) almost 225 GW will be from solar and wind," he said.

On capacity addition, he said this plan prioritises the RE zones of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh etc. As there are large chunks of solar potential lands available.

He also talked about plan to

install offshore wind farms near Gujarat and Tamil Nadu coast and added that the country is also gearing up to add green hydrogen capacity in a big way especially coastal areas of Odisha, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and so on.

"We have large demand that is going to come from EVs and also data centres," he pointed out.

Together with the electrification of the economy all these will drive the demand that is going to come up in the near future, he stated.

The whole country, if you see, is connected into a single grid running on single frequency and it is capable of transferring 170 GW power from one end to another even

remote regions in Arunachal and Ladakh are connected.

He noted that the government is promoting the storage through PSPs (pumped hydro storage projects) and batteries. "We aim for 40 GW of BESS (battery energy storage system) and 19 GW PSP capacity in next 6 years and in the budget also an announcement made that a new PSP Policy would come to push PSP projects," he stated.

The government has also improved about 4GW of BESS through VGF (viability gap funding). Beyond this we are creating a policy framework for bringing battery energy storage systems in a short-term in a big way, he added.

# Foxconn infuses ` 1,200 crore in Karnataka unit

PTI n NEW DELHI

Electronics manufacturing giant Foxconn has infused about Rs 1,200 crore -- approximately USD 144 million -- into its Karnataka-based Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development Pvt Ltd, the company said in a recent regulatory filing.

The iPhone contract manufacturer's Singapore-based arm Foxconn Singapore Pte has bought over 120.35 crore stocks of Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development Pvt Ltd at Rs 10 per share on August 21. The Karnataka government

in a statement last week said Foxconn is planning to invest Rs 25,000 crore to establish a massive manufacturing plant near Doodda Ballapur that will create 40,000 jobs.

"The unit in Karnataka will soon become the second-largest Foxconn plant after China's unit. It will create 40,000 direct jobs, especially for middle-level educated individuals, and our investment will not stop here; in the future, we plan to explore other sectors also," Foxconn Chairman Young Liu was quoted as saying in the statement. With the fresh infusion, Foxconn Singapore has invested over Rs 13,800 crore in the Karnataka unit.

# UNCOVERING THE PAST

## THE LAHORE CONSPIRACY CASE

Aparna Vaidik's *Revolutionaries on Trial* offers a fresh perspective on the Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1929, highlighting the trial's intricate political and legal dimensions. By examining the roles of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, Vaidik reveals the trial's broader significance beyond martyrdom, providing a deeper understanding of its impact on India's independence struggle, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

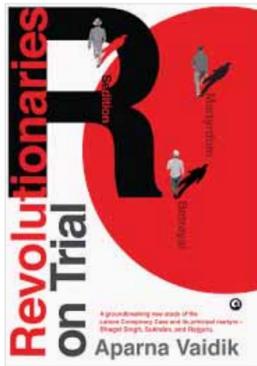
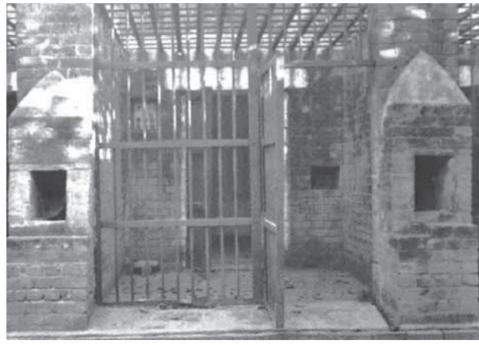
Aparna Vaidik's *Revolutionaries on Trial* is a riveting examination of one of the most significant and controversial events in India's struggle for independence - The Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1929. This book distinguishes itself with its insightful portrayal of the trial, not merely as a moment of colonial injustice but as a complex interplay of legal, political and cultural forces that shaped the course of Indian nationalism.

One of the most striking aspects of Vaidik's work is her ability to reframe the Lahore Conspiracy Case from a simplistic tale of martyrdom into a multifaceted historical event with far-reaching implications. While Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru have been venerated as heroes of the Indian independence movement, Vaidik challenges the reader to look beyond this familiar narrative. She delves into the intricacies of the trial, revealing the colonial state's calculated efforts to use the legal system as a tool for suppressing



revolutionary activities while simultaneously attempting to undermine the moral authority of the independence movement. The book challenges the conventional focus on Bhagat Singh as the central figure, providing a more holistic view of the revolutionary movement. By highlighting the contributions and experiences of Sukhdev and Rajguru, Vaidik corrects the often narrow historical lens that tends to elevate Singh's martyrdom while marginalising his comrade's significant roles. This nuanced

portrayal helps to appreciate the collective nature of the HSRAs struggle and the ideological and personal dynamics within the revolutionary group. Vaidik's approach is particularly compelling because she does not merely focus on the courtroom drama. Instead, she broadens the scope to include the roles played by the colonial government, the revolutionaries, the Indian press and the public. This holistic view allows readers to appreciate the trial's significance as a cultural and political spectacle that extended



far beyond the legal proceedings. Vaidik's detailed examination of the motivations and strategies of all the actors involved provides a richer understanding of the dynamics at play during this critical period in India's history. The book's exploration of the colonial state's decision to prosecute the revolutionaries is particularly eye-opening. The author argues that the trial was not just about dispensing justice, it was a deliberate move by the British to assert their authority and counter the growing influence of

revolutionary ideologies. This perspective adds a new layer of complexity to the story, highlighting the colonial government's strategic use of public trials to shape public opinion and maintain control. Moreover, Vaidik's analysis of the revolutionaries' actions during the trial challenges the conventional view that their courtroom tactics were purely propagandistic. She presents a nuanced argument that these actions were part of a broader political strategy designed to galvanise public support and expose the hypocrisies of the colonial regime. This interpretation enriches our understanding of revolutionary politics and underscores the significance of the trial in the broader context of India's nationalist movement. Vaidik's scholarly rigor is matched by her engaging writing style, making *Revolutionaries on Trial* both accessible and informative. The book is meticulously researched, drawing on a wide range of sources, including

archival documents, personal letters and contemporary press reports. This thoroughness not only enhances the credibility of Vaidik's arguments but also brings the historical events to life, making the book a compelling read. *Revolutionaries on Trial* is a significant contribution to the study of Indian history. It offers fresh insights into a well-known event, challenging readers to reconsider their understanding of the Lahore Conspiracy Case and the broader struggle for independence. Vaidik's work is essential reading for anyone interested in the complexities of colonial justice, revolutionary movements and the enduring legacy of India's fight for freedom. Whether you are a historian, a student of political science or simply someone interested in the depth of India's past, this book is sure to leave a lasting impression.

**Book Name** — Revolutionaries on Trial  
**Author** — Aparna Vaidik  
**Publisher** — Aleph book company  
**Price** — Rs. 999

## Through the Eyes of a Top Indian Cop

Jayaram Padikkal (1937-1997) was an IPS officer who served as the chief of Kerala Police during 1993 to 1994. He was the youngest DIG in the country as he excelled in investigation and intelligence gathering. Had it not been for a controversy associated with the custodial death of a young Maoist leader by name P Rajan of the Regional Engineering College (now NIT) at Kozhikode during the black days of the internal emergency, Padikkal would have retired as the top echelon of the Home Ministry either as the chief of IB or CBI.

It is strange that the entire media in Kerala went gaga when Padikkal was suspended from service following the Rajan case. Though he was reinstated in service following the Court acquitted him of all charges, the Kerala media never left him alone and went after his blood with their own findings which were far from reality. All columns, books and even films of those days portrayed him as a villain. Even today, young journalists who do not have any idea about the Rajan case, lambast Padikkal. The truth is that there was a period in the history of Kerala Police when people, cutting across political lines, demanded that cases of murder, corruption and misuse of power should be investigated by Jayaram Padikkal! Newspapers and periodicals in the State stand proof of this demand.

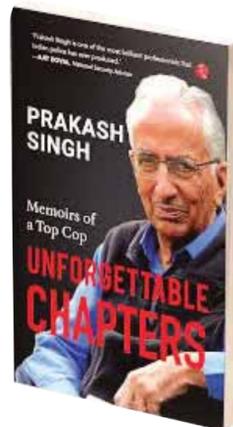
What happened to Padikkal was his success in exposing the hypocrisy and double standard of the Communists. Interestingly it was during the tenure of EMS Namboodiripad as chief minister that a separate unit was set up in the State for tackling the Maoist menace. Padikkal was appointed as head of the special unit and he did not let his bosses down. The Maoists, they were known as Naxalites those days, ran for their lives and within a couple of years, Padikkal and his "boys" finished them off. But they struck back during the emergency days and

A revealing account of the challenges, controversies and victories faced by one of India's top police officers, as detailed in Prakash Singh's *Unforgettable Chapters: Memoirs of a Top Cop*, shedding light on the complex world of law enforcement in the country, says **KUMAR CHELLAPPAN**

murdered three cops including a deputy superintendent of police. Rajan was taken into custody for facilitating the escape of the Maoists who were the perpetrators of the heinous crime. While a lot of tears were shed for Rajan, the Kerala society ignored the sacrifice made by the cops and that was how Padikkal became the "evil character". Padikkal, the super cop of Kerala, breathed his last in 1997 and had a peaceful death.

Despite the persecution and attack by the media and intellectuals, Padikkal kept his cool. "I was not a public relations officer of the Kerala Police and my mission was to safeguard the Constitution of India," he reportedly told a close associate when he was asked why he was indifferent to criticism by the media.

Memories about Jayaram Padikkal crept into the mind while going through "UNFORGETTABLE CHAPTERS", Memoirs of a Top Cop by Prakash Singh, a former IPS officer who had served as police chief of Uttar Pradesh, assam, Punjab, Nagaland and as the director general of Border Security Force. Prakash Singh also fought for reforms in police, which if implemented would have elevated our cops to the best force in the world. But politicians do not want to liberate police from their shackles. The importance of our political leaders is known by the number of armed cops guarding them. A chief minister like Pinarayi Vijayan, whom the



CPI(M) in Kerala portrays as the most popular politician in India, does not move out of his palatial house without a heavy posse of commandoes and a cavalcade of fifty SUVs and siren-wielding ambulances. Singh's memoirs take the readers through a period in India filled with terrorism, political turmoil and insurgency. He has hands-on experience in tackling terrorism in States like Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Nagaland and the mafia raj of Uttar Pradesh. Singh has diagnosed the root cause of insurgency in North East India in an exemplary manner. No other political historians, security experts or observers have gone into the basics of these issues like Prakash Singh.

While serving as DGP in Uttar Pradesh, Singh had alerted his colleagues and subordinates about the danger posed by the Mukhtar Ansari, the dreaded don of Uttar Pradesh. Ansari,

nephew of a former vice-president of the country, was an accused in cases of murders, dacoity and rape. He was described as a shaheed by Asaduddin Owaisi much to the anguish of the law-abiding citizens in India. Though Prakash Singh did not approve the Sangh Parivar demolishing the disputed structure at Ayodhya in 1992, this police officer makes it unambiguously clear that the Babri Mosque was nothing other than the temple where Lord Rama was born.

What makes this book a must read for all who are interested in knowing the political and social chaos is the kind of information provided by the author. He has shared with the readers the reasons for the fall in standards of policing in the country. Post-retirement, Singh drew the attention of the Supreme Court to factors like the executive misuse and abuse of the police in frequent postings and transfers, recruitment procedures vitiated by political recommendations, promotions getting influenced, tampering of investigations, and unlawful directions to the police as matters of concern.

Singh is no ordinary police officer and is proved by his admission that he regrets his failure in mastering Sanskrit and not learning martial arts. His third regret that he could not divide his life in the four ashrams prescribed by our ancestors is uncalculated. We need officers like Prakash Singh to share their experiences with the new generation cops. It will make major changes in the spirit and soul of young officers. Prakash Singh had won a historical case against the Union of India when the Supreme Court ordered that IPS officers selected to head the police force should get a minimum two-year tenure as chief. Super cops like Padikkal and Prakash Singh belong to a different genre and they are the ones described by Chanakya as the real policemen.

## Rediscovering the Sacred Female Principle

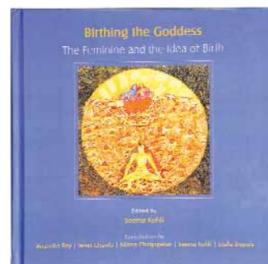
*Birthing the Goddess: The Feminine and the Idea of Birth* is a profound anthology exploring the intersection of femininity and creation through diverse cultural and spiritual lenses. With essays that challenge conventional narratives and illuminate the sacred dimensions of birth, this collection offers a fresh and insightful perspective on the divine feminine, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

*Birthing the Goddess: The Feminine and the Idea of Birth* is a captivating anthology that navigates the rich ground where birth, creation and the feminine divine intersect. Compiled by a diverse group of contributors, including Seema Kohli, Anamika Roy, Janet Chawla, Nilima Chitgopekar and Stella Dupuis. This volume extends the inquiry begun in *Experiencing the Goddess*, offering an even deeper exploration of the spiritual and cultural significance of the feminine principle.

The book opens by reframing birth as not just a biological event but as a transformative process imbued with profound spiritual and cultural meaning. Anamika Roy's essay, "Radha Was Created Not Born," sets the tone by exploring the origins of Radha, a central figure in Hinduism whose existence stems from artistic and poetic creation rather than traditional birth. This interpretation of Radha's origin as a divine construct rather than a born deity is both refreshing and thought-provoking, challenging readers to reconsider the boundaries of creation.

Janet Chawla's "Birth as Magic and Dai as the Shaman" is another standout, delving into traditional Indian birthing practices. Chawla's exploration of the sacred roles of traditional midwives (dais) offers a poignant contrast to the sterile, clinical approaches of modern medicine. Her essay is a compelling reminder of the deep spiritual connections that can exist in the birthing process, connections that modern practices often overlook or undervalue.

Nilima Chitgopekar "Not from the Womb - Birthing in the Devi Mahatmya" examines the divine birth of Durga, highlighting her emergence not as a typical birth but as a product of divine assembly. This essay powerfully underscores the symbolic and theological weight of Durga's creation, positioning her as a pivotal figure in maintaining cosmic



balance. Seema Kohli's essay, "Journey of Surya, from Martanda to Hiranyagarbha - Immortal Cycle of Creation and Recreation," adds a fascinating dimension to the anthology. By weaving Vedic concepts of creation with personal reflections, Kohli brings ancient symbols like the Golden Womb (Hiranyagarbha) and the Sun (Martanda) into contemporary relevance, offering readers a unique blend of mythology and modern interpretation.

In "Birth of a Hero - The Pursuit of Immortality," Stella Dupuis explores the universal motif of heroism and immortality. She connects Amazonian women warriors, India's Sati memorial stones and Ladakh's Matsyendranth sculpture. Her analysis of the birth and quests of mythical heroes across different cultures enriches the anthology by showing the diverse ways divine favor and heroic journeys are

conceptualised. *Birthing the Goddess* is a deeply engaging and intellectually stimulating collection that offers new perspectives on the feminine divine through the themes of birth and creation. Each essay challenges conventional narratives and invites readers to go through into the sacred dimensions of the feminine, making the book a valuable addition to studies in mythology, spirituality and cultural traditions.

What stands out most about this anthology is its ability to work together diverse perspectives into a coherent and profound meditation on the feminine principle. The author's willingness to challenge traditional narratives and explore lesser-known stories is both brave and necessary in today's cultural landscape. This book is not just an academic exercise; it's a spiritual journey that prompts readers to reflect on their own understanding of birth, creation and the divine feminine. For anyone interested in mythology, spirituality or cultural studies, *Birthing the Goddess* is a must-read. Its rich content and thought-provoking essays will leave a lasting impression, inspiring deeper contemplation and appreciation of the sacred feminine.

**Book Name** — Birthing the Goddess: The Feminine and the Idea of Birth  
**Publisher** — Aryan Books International  
**Price** — Rs. 1950

# GUKESH, PRAGGNANANDHAA DRAW AGAIN IN SINQUEFIELD CUP



PTI SAINT LOUIS (USA)

World Championship challenger D Gukesh enjoyed an advantageous position against tournament co-leader Alireza Firouzja of France but eventually settled for a draw in the fourth round of the Sinquefield Cup, here.

Praggnanandhaa also drew his game against Anish Giri of Holland and almost at the half way stage in this 10-player round-robin tournament, the Indians stand at a level fifty percent score.

pieces and even though the Dutchman believed he had some chances, they were thwarted in no time.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France, Nepomniachtchi, Praggnanandhaa and Gukesh. Abdusattorov and Giri share the ninth spot with 1.5 points each.

# Ilkay returns for unlikely second spell at Man City after just a year at Barcelona



AP MANCHESTER

Ilkay Gundogan is back at Manchester City for a sequel few could have expected. A year after leaving for Barcelona, the former Germany midfielder completed his unlikely return to City on Friday on a free transfer and a season-long deal.

against Aston Villa on the final day of the 2021-22 Premier League season to seal a 3-2 win that clinched the title. He was at City for seven years after joining in 2016 as Guardiola's first signing, and was often his manager's go-to player with big performances and significant goals.

should the Spain star need a break. He is well-versed in Guardiola's style of play so has the benefit of not needing a transitional period, and will compete for a place in the midfield alongside the irreplaceable Rodri with Kevin De Bruyne, Bernardo Silva, Mateo Kovacic and Phil Foden.

# Aditi and Diksha fight hard on tough opening day at AIG Women's Open



PTI ST. ANDREWS (SCOTLAND)

Indian golfers Diksha Dagar and Aditi Ashok made crucial birdies on their final holes to keep alive their chances of making the cut after the first round of the AIG Women's Open.

On first and second to go 5-over but the birdie on ninth made it 4-over for the day. Diksha, T-21 last year at Walton Heath, was 5-over for her first nine holes, the back nine of the Old Course with bogeys on 10, 11, 13, 16 and 17.

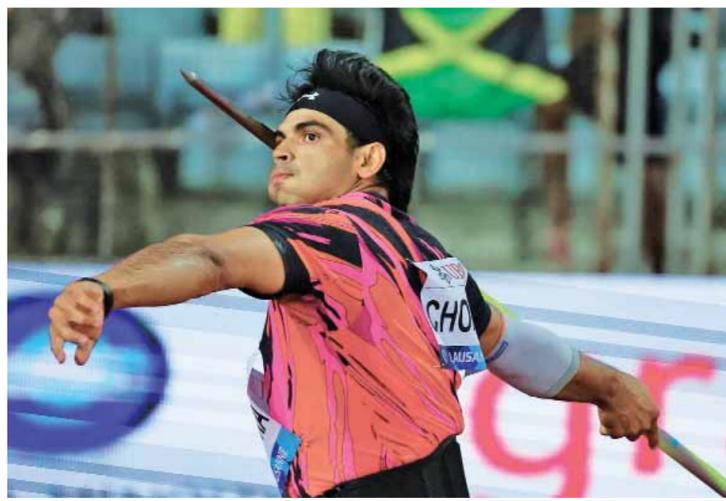
The three-time LET winner then had a great back nine as she made birdies on 10, 12, 15 and 18 to hold a solo lead on five-under-par in the final major of the year.

duced rounds of 68 (-4) on the opening day at the Old Course. Six players are in a share of fourth place with Korean duo Jenny Shin and Mi Hyang Lee, American pair Andrea Lee and Lilia Vu, Thailand's Patty Tavatanakit and Japan's Mao Saigo all on three-under.

# Neeraj finishes second in Lausanne Diamond League with season's best 89.49m

PTI LAUSANNE

Star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra finished second in the Diamond League here after producing a season's best effort of 89.49m from his last attempt in a gritty performance despite lingering fitness concerns.



(career) best throw on my last attempt. It was a tough start, but the comeback was really nice and I enjoyed the fighting spirit I showed," Chopra said after the event.

stay mentally tough and fight through," Peters, who had struggled to find form last year, led the competition here from beginning to end and he stamped his class with the 90m-plus throw in the last round. He has a personal best of 93.07m achieved in 2022.

finish, Chopra is joint third alongside Weber in Diamond League standings with 15 points. Peters jumped to top spot with 21 points. Czech Republic's Jakub Vadlejch, who finished seventh (82.03m) on Thursday, is in second spot with 16 points.

in the Paris Olympics on August 8 adding to his historic gold in the Tokyo edition of the Games three years ago. Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem had beaten Chopra for the gold in Paris with an Olympic record throw of 92.97m. Nadeem was missing from the field here.

# Sri Lanka-New Zealand opening Test at Galle to have a rest day

PTI DUBAI

Sri Lanka's opening Test against New Zealand at Galle next month will be a six-day affair with the provision of a rest day owing to the presidential election in the island nation.



host a Test across six days, with their match against Zimbabwe in Colombo in 2001 also including a rest day due to Poya Day (full moon), said the ICC.

Rest days were a common feature in Test cricket in the last century, with several matches in the cricketing world being played across six days with Sunday usually being an off day.

# India A bowlers fight back but Australia A's lead surges to 192 on Day 2 of unofficial Test

PTI GOLD COAST (AUSTRALIA)

India A bowlers led a spirited fightback but Australia A tightened grip on the unofficial one-off women's Test, with the hosts' overall lead surging to 192 runs here on the second day on Friday.



Mani (17) and Mannat Kashyap (19) put up 56 runs to deny Australia a huge lead. Mani then swung into action with the ball immediately as Australia A batters' once again struggled against Indian spinners.

the first essay, also got rid of Nicole Faltem (16) before she cleaned up Tess Fintoo with an off-break. However, opener Emma de Brouge continued to hold fort from one end as she scored 58 runs off 117 balls before falling prey to rookie leg-spinner Priya Mishra.

Affidavit and Government of Odisha Housing & Urban Development Department notices. Includes details for National Competitive Bidding through e-procurement for building construction work.