

OPINION 6
GENDER REFORM IN
19TH-CENTURY BENGAL

WORLD 8
DHAKA'S TRAFFIC FACING CHAOS
DUE TO SPORADIC PROTESTS

MONEY 10
SENSEX RALLIES
600 POINTS

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol.20 Issue 234
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

BHUBANESWAR, TUESDAY AUGUST 27, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

Established 1864

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



PRANNOY
TAKES BREAK
11 SPORTS

UKRAINE SENDS RUSSIA ITS 9/11 MESSAGE

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Monday condemned Russia's overnight and early morning barrage on his country as "vile" and said it involved over 100 missiles of various types and about 100 "Shahed" drones. Ukraine's leader said there were deaths and dozens of injuries and that the attack caused a lot of damage to Ukraine's energy sector. "Like most previous Russian strikes, this one was just as vile, targeting critical civilian infrastructure. Most of our regions - from the Kharkiv region and Kyiv to Odesa and our western regions," Zelenskyy said. The barrage began around midnight and continued beyond

daybreak in what appeared to be Russia's biggest attack against Ukraine in weeks. Russian forces fired drones, cruise missiles and hypersonic ballistic Kinzhal missiles at 15 Ukrainian regions - more than half the country, Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said Monday morning. "The energy infrastructure has once again become the target of Russian terrorists. Unfortunately, there is damage in a number of regions," Shmyhal said, adding that Ukraine's state-owned power grid operator, Ukrenergo, has been forced to implement emergency power cuts to stabilise the system. He called on Ukraine's allies to provide Kyiv with long-range weapons and permission to use

MODI AND BIDEN DISCUSS UKRAINE

them on targets inside Russia. "In order to stop the barbaric shelling of Ukrainian cities, it is necessary to destroy the place from which the Russian missiles are launched," Shmyhal said. "We count on the support of our allies and will definitely make Russia pay." According to Ukraine's air force, there were multiple groups of Russian drones moving toward eastern, northern, southern, and central regions of Ukraine, followed by multiple cruise and ballistic missiles. The Russian Defence Ministry said in a statement that the attacks used "long-range precision air-

and sea-based weapons and strike drones against critical energy infrastructure facilities that support the operation of Ukraine's military-industrial complex. All designated targets were hit." Explosions were heard in the capital, Kyiv. Power and water supplies in the city have been disrupted by the attack, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. At least three people were killed - one in the western city of Lutsk, one in the central Dnipropetrovsk region and one in the partially occupied Zaporizhzhia region in the southeast, according to local officials. Thirteen others were wounded - one in the Kyiv region

that surrounds the Ukrainian capital, five in Lutsk, three in the southern Mykolaiv region and four in the neighbouring Odesa region. Blackouts and damage to civilian infrastructure and residential buildings were reported across the country, from the region of Sumy in the east, to the Mykolaiv and Odesa regions in the south, to the region of Rivne in the west. In Sumy, a province in the east that borders Russia, local administration said that 194 settlements were in a full power blackout, while 19 others had a partial blackout. Ukraine's private energy company, DTEK,

introduced emergency blackouts, saying in an online statement that "energy workers throughout the country work 24/7 to restore light in the homes of Ukrainians." In the wake of the barrage and the power cuts, regional officials all across Ukraine were ordered to open "points of invincibility" - shelter-type places where people can charge their devices and get refreshments during energy blackouts, Prime Minister Shmyhal said. Such points were first opened in Ukraine in the fall of 2022, when Russia targeted the country's energy infrastructure with weekly barrages. In neighbouring Poland, the military said Polish and NATO air defences were activated in the

eastern part of the country as a result of the attack. In Russia, in the meantime, officials reported a Ukrainian drone attack overnight and on Monday morning. Four people were injured in Russia's central region of Saratov, where drones hit residential buildings in two cities. One drone crashed into a residential high-rise in the city of Saratov, and another hit a residential building in the city of Engels, home to a military airfield that had been attacked before, local officials said. Russia's Defence Ministry said that a total of 22 Ukrainian drones were intercepted overnight and in the morning over eight regions, including the Saratov and Yaroslavl regions in central Russia.

Govt rolls out Subhadra Yojana guidelines

- Nearly 1 crore women to benefit
- Each beneficiary to get Rs 10K every year

NALINI SAHU
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Monday released the guidelines for the much-hyped Subhadra Yojana that promises a Rs 50,000-cash assistance to women belonging to economically weaker sections. Nearly 1 crore women will benefit. As per the guidelines, women aged between 21 and 60 years can apply for assistance under the scheme. For a beneficiary's eligibility, her date of birth mentioned on the Aadhaar card will be considered. For the financial year 2024-25, a beneficiary should be 21 years old or above and below 60 years old by July 1, 2024.

So, the beneficiary's birthday should be between July 2, 1964 and July 1, 2003. "Every woman aged between 20 and 60 with a monthly income of less than Rs 1500 will be eligible to avail the scheme," the guidelines said. As per the guidelines, a Subhadra Samiti will be formed to evaluate the effective implementation of the scheme. It will also hear grievances from women who, for some reasons, failed to get benefit of the scheme. "The prime objective of the scheme is to extend financial benefits to women. This will help them meet their day-to-day expenses. This is also an economic protection to the women belonging to weaker



sections of the society," the guideline said. On the eve of the 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in Odisha, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that his party would roll out the Subhadra Yojana if it came to power in the State. In fact, this announcement had proved a game-changer for the BJP which ended the 24 years rule of the Naveen Patnaik-led Biju Janata Dal (BJD). As per the guideline, each beneficiary will get Rs 10,000 per year for five years. Every year, the amount will be

transferred to their accounts through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in two phases. While the first instalment of Rs 5,000 will be credited to their accounts on Raksha Bandhan day, the second instalment of Rs 5,000 will be credited on International Women's Day (March 8). The beneficiary will also get a 'Subhadra' debit card. However, financially sound, government job holders, income taxpayers and those getting assistance of Rs 1,500 or more monthly or Rs 18,000 or more yearly under any gov-

ernment scheme will not be eligible to get the Subhadra assistance. A specific form will be available free of cost at Anganwadi Centres, block offices, Mo Seva Kendras, Jana Seva Kendras, etc. To apply, eligible women will visit these places and apply by filling up the form. Besides, a call centre, specific to Subhadra Yojana, will be made functional. The Department of Women and Child Development will form a Subhadra Society for better management of the scheme.



Malayalam women call out sleazy film industry men

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The turmoil faced by Malayalam film industry got worsened on Monday with three more actresses alleging that veteran actors sexually abused them in the course of movie making and script discussions. The prominent actors to face the accusation of sexual molestation are Mukesh, who is a CPI(M) MLA, Baburaj, an actor essaying the roles of evil characters, Jayasoorya, a Kerala State Film Award winner for the best actor category and Manian Pillai Raju. This is not the first time Mukesh, who hails from a family of artists in Kollam, figures in a controversy. His first wife Saritha, South India's prominent actress who had bagged national awards for her portrayal of challenging characters in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada films, "ran away" with her sons to escape torture by the actor-turned-politician. Methil Devika, eminent danseuse whom he married later too gave up on him and left his household following the ill-treatment by Mukesh and divorce proceedings are on in a family court.

A junior artiste was the first person on Monday to come out with allegations of sexual abuse against Baburaj (who is also the vice-president of AMMA), Shine Tom Chacko and Sreekumar Menon (ad film maker). The day also saw a senior artiste accusing Jayasoorya, Idavela Babu, and MP Raju for their sexual misdemeanor towards her. "Since these people hold important positions in Association of Malayalam Movie Artists, female artists are afraid to file any complaints against them. The situation in Malayalam film industry is that the female artistes have to make a lot of compromises to survive in the profession," she said. Even as this report is being filed, Geetha Vijayan, a film actress who was rated as the star of the future by critics, disclosed that she was ousted from the industry for not making any kind of adjustments with the directors and lead artists who approached her seeking sexual favours. "I have come out of many projects asking them to get lost. Though I lost many chances, looking back, I feel happy and satisfied," said Geetha Vijayan.

The current upheaval in Malayalam film industry started with the release of K Hema Committee Report on the victimisation and harassment faced by women artistes in Malayalam industry. The report "claimed" two persons on Sunday viz Ranjith (moviemaker and chairman of Government run-Chalachitra Academy) and Siddique, general secretary of AMMA who were accused of inappropriate behaviour by Bengali actress Sreelekha Mitra and an upcoming artist Revathy Sampath. Both Ranjith and Siddique have resigned from their official positions. The Kerala Government on Monday appointed a Special Investigation Team consisting of women IPS officers to probe the findings of the Hema Committee Report and also to look into the complaints by the women artistes. Ministers and bureaucrats got a reprieve from the heart rending devastation of Wayanad as the focus is on the spicy reports emerging from Bollywood. Even the evening debates in Malayalam satellite news channels have been monopolised by discussions on sexual abuse featuring the stars.

ED Director to visit Odisha from today

It's significant in State's changed political scenario
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Enforcement Directorate (ED) Director Rahul Navin will arrive in Odisha on a three-day visit starting on

Tuesday. He is scheduled to visit Puri and attend several programmes in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. His visit to Odisha assumes significance in view of the State's current political scenario after the change of government and past corruption in mind.

As the progress in the investigation of old cases and crackdown by the ED has slowed down in the past several days in Odisha, it is expected that the agency might get back into action after getting necessary directions from the top official.

Sources said the ED has initiated two new cases which might spell trouble for some leaders and officers in the State. Though details regarding such cases have not yet been divulged, sources said there could be some action in coming days. The ED Director is also scheduled to

attend a meeting with senior officials of ED in Bhubaneswar. He is likely to review the progress of pending files. Meanwhile, all the officers at ED in Bhubaneswar were seen coming to the office on Monday despite it being a holiday.

Laxmanananda murder probe report to be out soon

Says Law Minister
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR

The inquiry commission report on the brutal killing of VHP leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati would be made public soon, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan said on Monday. "The Chief Minister has had discussions in this regard and a decision will be taken soon," he told reporters. Earlier in the day, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan garlanded a statue of Laxmanananda at the latter's native village Gurujanga in Talcher. The seer's son Lokanath Das, who was also present along with other VHP and BJP leaders, demanded a CBI probe into the murder and stringent punishment

against the culprits. Meanwhile, the Kandhamal administration made elaborate security arrangements for peaceful Janmashtami celebration on Monday, which is also observed as the death anniversary of Laxmanananda, after recent social media posts raised concerns about likely unrest. Notably, unidentified gunmen had shot dead the 84-year-old Laxmanananda and four of his associates at his Jalespata Ashram in Tumudibandh of Kandhamal district on the night of August 23, 2008, the day of Janmashtami. The incident triggered ethno-communal riots in Kandhamal and adjoining areas in which at least 38 people were killed and thousands were rendered homeless. The district administration had then responded with a 40-day curfew to restore order.



The State Crime Branch, in its second charge-sheet, had stated that it had got prima facie evidence against Maoists Sabyasachi Panda, Udaya, Somanath Dandasena, Azad Duna Keshava Rao, Dasru, Lulu and Lakhmu. In October 2013, Kandhamal Additional District and Sessions Judge

Rajendra Kumar Tosh sentenced all eight convicts, including Maoist leader Udaya, to life term for murdering the seer. Justice Sarat Chandra Mohapatra was appointed as the commission on September 8, 2008 to probe Saraswati's killing and the subsequent riots. However, he passed away in 2012 before completing the inquiry. Then, Justice AS Naidu was appointed to head the one-man panel, which submitted its report in two volumes to the Home Secretary in December 2015. However, the findings are yet to be made public even 16 years after the sensational murder. In January this year, the BJP demanded that the report of judicial commission be made public without delay after the Orissa High Court issued a

notice to the then BJD government on why a CBI probe should not be ordered into the seer's murder. A lawyer and social activist, Debashisha Hota had filed a petition seeking a CBI probe into the "unsolved murder case" alleging that the State Government had not taken interest to find out the real culprits, except for claiming that Saraswati was killed by Maoists. The BJD government, however, opposed a CBI inquiry and petitioned the court to dismiss the plea with exemplary costs. It highlighted that the murder case had concluded with the conviction of the accused individuals by the Additional Session Judge. "The accused individuals have filed appeals before the High Court which are currently pending," the affidavit stated.

Bird flu: Avoid consuming chicken: Health Director

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government on Monday warned people against consuming chicken for the next few days as a precautionary measure. This came a day after about 26,000 chickens were culled as the H5N1 strain of avian influenza or bird flu was detected in the Pipili area of Puri district. "There is no reason to panic. Effective steps are being taken as was the case in the past by different departments. Districts across the State have been alerted and advised to take necessary precautions," Director of Health Services Dr Bijay Kumar Mohapatra said. He explained that fever is the first symptom of bird flu infection, and surveillance is being intensified across all districts. "We will isolate such cases with history and conduct nasopharyngeal swab test. We also have enough stock of medicines," he said. Mohapatra further said a



rapid response team has been dispatched to the affected area. "Containment measures are being enforced in the affected regions as per the protocol to prevent the spread of the virus," he said and emphasised the importance of immediate culling and disposing of the infected poultry. Stating that an overall monitoring is being done by Community Medicine De-

partment of a medical college, he cautioned against human contact with infected poultry to minimise the risk of transmission. Pipili became the epicentre of the bird flu outbreak after the recent death of 1,800 birds at a local poultry farm. While 300 chickens were culled on Saturday and another 4,700 on Sunday, said Additional Director of Disease Control Jagannath Nanda.

In city Denied free liquor, miscreants ransack shop



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Commissionerate police have begun a probe into the ransacking of a liquor shop at Laxmisagar in Bhubaneswar on Sunday night. As per reports, some unidentified youths barged into the liquor shop and created a ruckus after the staffs refused to give liquor for free.

The accused first demanded protection money and when the staffs declined, they broke the door and hurled liquor bottles at the latter. Subsequently, a complaint was lodged with the Laxmisagar police in this connection. The entire incident was captured on CCTV. "Between 9 pm and 10 pm, four to five youths came and

demanding liquor free of cost. They threatened us and demanded money and liquor. Our staffs were successful in driving them out of the shop. But they started to hurl stones at the counter," alleged a staff of the liquor shop. Sources said there are some anti-socials in the area who are demanding extortion money from other shops as well.

Miss India pageant Ananya Panda makes it to grand finale

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Ananya Panda from Odisha has advanced into the final round of the 60th Femina Miss India beauty pageant 2024. She is among the State winners, who will compete at the grand finale scheduled to be held in Mumbai in October.

The rigorous nationwide selection process, which spanned five months, included online screenings followed by a tour of each zone of the country, namely North (Delhi-NCR), East (Kolkata), North East (Guwahati), South (Bengaluru) and West (Mumbai). The Top five finalists from each State were shortlisted and invited to



Mumbai for the mega auditions, where the State winners (30) were selected, each representing a State.

This was Ananya's second try at the pageant. Though she made it to the Top 5 list, she could not win the crown from Odisha last year. "I was new to the industry. I had not done any photo shoot and lacked social media presence, which was equally important. I also worked on my public speaking skills and took my fitness seriously. These along with a strong stage presence helped me to make a mark," she told a local channel. Ananya, daughter of retired Indian Navy officer Siddhartha Panda and Anjana Panda of Cuttack, is currently working as a Business Analyst in Citi Corporation in Bengaluru.

Salia Sahi raided again; liquor seized

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Excise officials on Monday raided Salia Sahi in Bhubaneswar and seized a large quantity of illegally-distilled country liquor. The country liquor along with poha (fermented rice) was confiscated and destroyed. Raw materials used for brewing country liquor were also seized.

and sized 11,500 litres of illicit distilled liquor and 50,000 litres of poha at the slum during the 'Safe City' drive. On Sunday, police and excise officials had destroyed 4,500 litres of fermented wash and 100 litres of country liquor near Balisira under Aska block in Ganjam district. A youth was apprehended in Bira Narayanpur with 80 litres of country liquor and another 4,000 litres of hooch was seized during a raid at Arakhakuda village under Krushna Prasad block in Puri.

On city outskirts BJP groups tussle in Tomar's presence



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Chaos prevailed following a tussle between two groups of the BJP during a programme organised in the Balakati area on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar on Sunday. The BJP had organised the special event to listen to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's radio programme, 'Mann Ki Baat' along with a workshop on membership drive. Odisha BJP in-charge Vijaypal Singh Tomar and BJP national vice-president Baijayant Panda attended the event. However, some workers created a ruckus as Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita

Sarangi was allegedly not invited to the programme. Irate party workers created a ruckus and were involved in a tussle with another group. Commenting on the incident, Tomar said, "Five to ten persons have met me and we will take note of it, but no one will be given right to indulge in indiscipline." Tomar further said that be it any MP or MLA, any kind of groupism or indiscipline would not be tolerated. Action would also be taken if there is some lacunae on the part of the organisation, he added. However, the Bhubaneswar MP was yet to comment on the issue.

Principal appointment norms in aided degree colleges decried

Teachers want HE Dept to follow SC order
DINESH DAS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Higher Education Department, Government of Odisha, has initiated steps to appoint lecturers or readers to the post of Principal by publishing a Gazette notification on July 25. However, the modalities to be adopted for such appointments are going to stir many controversies. A few teachers' bodies have warned that by introducing such a practice, the new BJP Government is going to invite thousands of cases from among the aspirants who would be denied the benefit. It is pertinent to mention here that if the Government goes ahead with its plan, a lecturer who joined during early 90s will be a junior one to his counterpart who joined in the later 90s, especially in the 488 category colleges where the question of as to who is senior among the college management appointees and SSB ap-

pointees still remains a vexed issue. Earlier the HE Department had promoted the SSB lecturers to the rank of Readers in 18 years of continuous service, while 27 years parameter was applicable to the management appointed lecturers. It is also revealed that those who were appointed as junior lecturers vide advertisement No. 9 in the year 1992 with a qualifying PG mark of 48% are lobbying at the Government level for their Principalship in the aided degree colleges. While talking with a few teacher leaders, this correspondent marked genuine grievances of a section of teachers who demanded that the order of the Supreme Court in Mamata Mohanty vrs State of Odisha case in Para 21 be followed while making Principal appointment by the State Government. The order clearly says that one who wishes to become a Principal in a degree aided college should have secured 55% of marks at PG level with a good academic track. But some senior officers are misinterpreting it, they said.

For Ratna to Madhubabu Signature drive held in Thailand



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The All Odisha Lawyers' Forum held a signature drive for Odias living in Thailand for Bharat Ratna to Madhusudan Das and installation of his statue in the Indian Parliament. Along with other leaders Madhubabu had

made immense sacrifices for the protection of the Odia language and culture and formation of separate Odisha province in 1936. In Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, the members of the forum collected signatures from Odias living there. They discussed how national lead-

ers like Mahatma Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, and Pandit Nehru knew and respected Gopabandhu and Madhubabu, and collected signatures. Similarly, discussions were held on how to promote the use of the Odia language. The programme was pre-

sided over by Dr Lingaraj Sahoo, convener of the forum. Social worker Dr Chinmaya Badajena, Arun Pattnaik, Prakash Rana, Manas Malik, Naba Sahu, among others participated. Earlier, signatures were collected from 20 different States in India.

Advanced program in Precision Engg launched in WSC

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The World Skill Center Bhubaneswar (WSC) launched a new program in 'Precision Engineering' under its School of Engineering from Academic Year 2024-25 onwards. The unique one-year program requires youth to have completed either a 2-year ITI or 3-year diploma in any poly-technic of the State. "Precision engineering is a cutting-edge subject. There are attractive employment oppor-

tunities at the national and international levels for professionals trained in this field. Keeping this in mind, the new course is being implemented at the World Skill Center for the youth of Odisha. Various new and state-of-the-art labs are being especially set up for this course," said Odisha Skill Development Authority and World Skill Center CEO Rashmita Panda. This apart, five other subjects under the School of Engineering at the World Skill

Center. With this, students can prepare themselves for the modern industrial world by training in various finer aspects of engineering such as engineering drawing and inspection techniques, CNC turning, CNC milling, 3D CAD/CAM applications, multi-axis programming and machining, CNC sheet metal fabrication and grinding. The application process for the enrollment of a total of 7 subjects in the School of Engineering and School of

Services departments is underway. Last date for applications to advanced courses under 'School of Engineering' is August 30 and for 'School of Services' is September 10. Interested candidates can contact toll free number 1800 266 6002 to know more about this. Besides, the World Skill Center has informed that one can apply for enrollment through the World Skill Center website www.worldskillcenter.org

In city 80 kg gold, 9 quintal silver seized

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Sleuths of the Commercial Tax and Goods and Services Tax (CT & GST) on Monday seized huge quantities of gold and silver from near the Bhubaneswar airport. As per initial reports, around 80 kilograms of gold and over

one quintal of silver were seized. Sources said that the gold and silver were being transported in two container vehicles. The total cost of the gold and silver was said to be around Rs 30 crore. However, the source and ownership of the gold and silver were not ascertained yet.

Does Ratna Bhandar have secret chambers?

Survey to be conducted soon: Minister
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Amidst apprehensions surrounding the presence of some secret chambers inside the Ratna Bhandar of the Puri Jagannath Temple, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan on Monday said a survey would be conducted soon to get clarity about it. Harichandan told reporters, "As all the cupboards and chests have been shifted from inner and outer Ratna Bhandar, the priority is now for the repair works (of the Bhandar) after the survey."

The necessary inspection work will be undertaken by the ASI using the latest technology and equipments. "Whether there is any tunnel under or within the walls of the Ratna Bhandar, a survey will be done," said Harichandan. According to the minister, once the repair work of the Ratna Bhandar is completed, steps will be then taken for the counting of the valuables. "Once the Ratna Bhandar is fully repaired, steps will be taken for the inventerisation process which will be done based on the database of the year 1978. We hope that everything matches," he added.

'Want to make Barabati-Cuttack best constituency in State'

Sofia Firdaus is the Congress MLA from Barabati-Cuttack Assembly constituency and she is the only woman Congress MLA in Odisha Legislative Assembly. She is the first woman from the minority community to get elected as an MLA. She is the daughter of former Barabati-Cuttack Congress MLA, Mohammed Moqim. Our journalist Lalit Mishra talked to her over various issues.



Sofia Firdaus

LM: I shall start with your relationship with media. You have interacted with media persons and some of your interviews have been broadcast and published. As a young people's representative what is your experience of media and journalists in Odisha?
SF: I am very happy that the journalists have been extremely cordial to me. Odia journalists are skilled, well-behaved, raise very good questions and are mostly issue-based. We expect the media to be transparent and not come under any pressure. They should point out the mistakes

and highlight the good work.
LM: You had unfavorable conditions during the last election as the Congress party had a very low electoral profile in coastal Odisha. How did you overcome the barriers and win the 2024-election?
SF: On April 24, I came to know that I had to contest election. I had one month to face the poll. Initially, I had fear to face the voters as my experience of politics was

limited to previous election campaigns. I had anxiety how to take forward successfully my father's organization and reputation which he had built as a MLA. But all these fears disappeared within two days of campaign as I began interacting with people. In 2019 poll, we were going to the people. But this time people came to us. This was due to my father's good work and relation with public. I found a positive environment. People slowly accepted me as they thought to give a chance to an educated woman. Though the BJP and the BJD had high-pitch campaign it did not influence the people. Now my responsibility is to solve the problems of all sections of people as they had reposed their trust on me.
LM: As a first time MLA what is your experience in the Assembly?
SF: Assembly is the best platform to solve the issues of the people. I have raised various issues of Cuttack every day during the

ongoing Budget session. I have asked more than thirty questions. I had spoken on climate change issue and on the need for a green policy and budget for the State. There are more than half of the MLAs in the Assembly who are new. There are also young MLAs. The Assembly sessions are quite useful. I also attend Committee meetings. My attendance is hundred per cent and qualitative.
LM: How do you play your role in the Constituency?
SF: I listen to public grievance every day except the weekends and try to solve the problems of the people who come to meet me at my residence. I attend telephone grievances and social media grievances. Now we have started "Jana Abhijog Sunani" at ward level on Monday and Thursday. We invite Government officials there to speedily dispose of the grievances. However, grievance cells are closed during Assembly sessions. I put all my public activities on social media platforms

for public knowledge. I have decided to give a report card to people after five years like my father did, so that the voters can assess my performance. I consider the public representative role as an opportunity to help the people and I am doing my best.
LM: What is your development vision of Cuttack?
SF: Till now Cuttack is struggling to solve its basic issues like drainage. My priorities shall be drainage system, sports infrastructure, community infrastructure, a Skill-Center for the youth. During my father's time silver filigree work of Cuttack got GI tag. I am working to get GI tag for Cuttack "Dahi-bara". I want to make Cuttack a Green City. Cuttack city's inner area is limited. This has to be announced as Old city and a separate development plan should be implemented for this zone. The outer area can be developed extensively with better business and community service facility. I shall try to develop Ravenshaw college

, Sishu Bhawan, SCB Medical College, Shailabala Women's College, Barabati stadium and a few others which are symbols of Cuttack's identity. The Mission Shakti programme has benefitted a few women. We have to properly implement all the Government programmes meant for the women. On the whole, I want my Assembly Constituency to be the best in the State.
LM: Who do you like the most in the Congress party, Rahul Gandhi or Priyanka? Would You accept if you are made the president of the women-wing of the Congress in the State?
SF: Rahul Gandhi is our leader. His fearlessness, open attitude, simplicity and interest to reach out to people are liked by all. This is the true leadership quality. We have not seen Priyanka Gandhi as an MP yet. I have heard her speech. She gets connected with people very well during election campaigns. We expect her to come to Parliament and strengthen the

Congress. I have decided to focus on my Constituency now. Therefore, I cannot take any State responsibility of the Congress party at present. Once my constituency people tell me to take greater role, I shall consider.
LM: Do you think Congress would come to power at the Center and the State in next election?
SF: Congress and INDIA-alliance are developing at the Center. They checkedmate the electoral performance of the BJP at 240 Lok Sabha seats in 2024 poll. Congress with alliance would be able to form the next Government at the Center. There is scope for Congress to form the next Government in Odisha also. We have already base in 40 Assembly Constituencies and we have to develop another 50 more. This is possible. We need a good PCC president and good PCC which should be strong, unbiased, visionary and can work independently and fearlessly. PCC has to reach out to every district, Blocks and Gram Panchayats and wards. New people shall also join Congress once Congress develops.

Low pressures to trigger heavy rains in State

Till August 30

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha is likely to experience heavy to very heavy rainfall till August 30 under the influence of a well-marked low-pressure area over Gangetic West Bengal. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said there is a possibility of a fresh low pressure over east-central and adjoining north Bay of Ben-

gal on August 29. In the next two days, light to moderate rain/thunder-shower may continue at several places in the State, the IMD said. On Tuesday, rains or thundershowers are likely in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Deogarh. On Wednesday, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar,

Bargarh, Deogarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Balangir and Kalahandi districts would witness rains or thundershowers, said the weather office. On Thursday, rain and thundershowers are likely in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Rayagada,

Ganjam and Gajapati. The intensity of rain is likely to increase on August 30 with heavy to very heavy rains at one or two places in Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Rayagada district. Heavy rainfall is also likely at one or two places in Ganjam, Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Khordha Puri, Nayagarh, Balangir and Nuapada districts, the IMD said.

In Mayurbhanj Havildar throws boiling water on Constable

PNS ■ BARIPADA

In a horrific incident, a Havildar allegedly threw boiling water on a Constable posted at the Bangriposhi Fire Service unit in Mayurbhanj district on Sunday night. The injured victim Dushant Dehury's fault was that he was allegedly coming late to the barrack regularly. Instead of bringing the matter to the notice of higher authorities, the accused Havildar Nutan Mallick, who is in charge, al-

legedly threw boiling water on him. Sources said Dehury had returned to the barrack at around 10:30 pm. Later, an argument ensued with Mallick, who losing his cool, threw boiling water on him. It was alleged that Mallick had kept the boiling water ready "to teach Dehury a lesson". Moreover, attempts were also made to suppress the incident. Dehury was rushed to a hospital after his condition deteriorated on Monday.



The Paradip Port on Monday adds yet another feather to its cap by successfully docking MV THALASSINI AVARA (CAPE) on account of Tata Steel Ltd carrying 1,50,253 metric tonnes of steam coal, which is the highest import parcel vessel ever anchored at the port's KICT Berth.

KIMS to offer new-age hip replacement surgery



For faster recovery, reduced pain

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) is set to offer advanced patient care by introducing the direct anterior approach (DAA) for hip replacement. This cutting-edge surgical technique ensures faster recovery and less postoperative pain for patients. In line with its commitment to advanced treatment and care, KIMS hosted a Cadaveric Workshop on the 'Direct Anterior Approach for Hip Arthroplasty' (replacement), focusing on the innovative approach, drawing healthcare

professionals, researchers and medical students from the region. The workshop, organised by the Department of Orthopaedics, provided a crucial platform for participants to explore and engage with the DAA, which is rapidly gaining recognition as a superior alternative to traditional hip replacement methods. Unlike the conventional posterior or lateral approaches, which often require cutting through or detaching muscles and tendons, the DAA allows surgeons to access the hip joint through a natural space between muscles, preserving muscle integrity. The benefits of the muscle-sparing technique are significant, including reduced post-

operative pain, shorter hospital stays, faster rehabilitation, and a lower risk of complications such as hip dislocation. These advantages make the DAA an attractive option for both surgeons and patients, ensuring a quicker return to normal activities. Despite its benefits, the DAA is a complex procedure with a steep learning curve. Surgeons must master precise patient positioning, surgical planning, and the use of specialised instruments within a limited surgical field. To address these challenges, the cadaveric workshop provided participants with hands-on experience under expert guidance, helping them to hone their skills in this advanced technique.

Nrutyadham Ancient Dance Fest concludes



Lifetime Achievement awards to Ranjana, Aruna

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The 7th edition of the two-day Nrutyadham's Ancient Dance Festival concluded here on Thursday with presentation of Odishi by many eminent gurus like Durga Charan Ranbir, Alok Kanungo, Sujata Mohapatra and Dr Subhashree Patnaik. The fluent and delightful dance steps and expressions by the artistes stole the hearts of the audience present in the auditorium of the Rabindra Mandap. On the second day, Padma Shree Geeta Mahalik and Dr

Snehaprava Samantaray were felicitated with Guru Naman Lifetime Achievement Award. The second-day ceremony was inaugurated Padmashree Syamamani Devi. Noted writer and Jagannath culture researcher Dr Alekha Padhiary, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi secretary Prabodh Rath, BJP leader Jagannath Pradhan and Odishiguru Chapala Mishra also graced the occasion as guests. The first day of the festival event was inaugurated by Professor Prasanna Kumar Swain, Vice-Chancellor Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar, and eminent journalist Sriram Dash. On the occasion, Nrutyadham Lifetime Achievement awards were given to Padma Shree Ranjana Gauhar

from New Delhi and Padma Shree Aruna Mohanty, Bhubaneswar. The first day marked splendid performances by Ranjana Gauhar, Aruna Mohanty, Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar awardee Kevin Vinod Bachan and Odishi guru by Dr Subhashree Patnaik. Padmashree Ranjana Gauhar presented her dance on the theme 'Manika Veena' and "Sakhi He Kesi Madan Mudaram" while Aruna Mohanty portrayed "Pratinayak." The audience got enthralled with the enchanting performance to the two dancers. The performances delivered by Guru Dr Subhashree Patnaik with beats and notes of Odishi on both days were sheer treat for eyes of viewers.

World Senior Citizens Week BU students hold digital literacy outreach prog

To save elderly people from financial fraud

PNS ■ BRAHMAMPUR

To commemorate the World Senior Citizens Week, the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of the Berhampur University organised a digital literacy campaign for the senior citizens here on Wednesday. The motto was to save them from falling in the trap by fraudsters. The event saw students and faculty members visiting two old age homes-Biswaniketan in Ramchandrapur and Jaranivas in Gopalpur. The campaign coordinated by Dr Neha Pandey was meticulously designed to address the pressing need for digital financial literacy among the elderly. The event commenced at Biswaniketan, where the J and MC team was warmly received by the residents. The students emphasized the growing relevance of digital transactions

in everyday life and the corresponding risks associated with them. The team presented an engaging and informative session, focusing on essential digital safety practices. The primary focus was on preventing digital fraud, which has become increasingly prevalent. The students provided practical advice such as to be cautious about clicking on any unfamiliar links received via text messages or emails. They also provided essential tips to remain safe to the inmates of Jaranivas offering hands-on demonstrations of how to recognise and avoid common online scams. Dr Bandita Panda, HoD thanked Vice Chancellor Prof Geetanjali Dash for extending her support and granting permission to organise such an outreach programme. Both Biswaniketan and Jaranivas residents and caretakers expressed their gratitude for the informative sessions helpful to senior citizens.

JSW shifting EV, battery projects from Odisha to Maha?

6 months back, firm had signed pact with Odisha Govt for its units in Naraj, Paradip

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Barely six months after signing an MoU with the Odisha Government for setting up an Integrated Electric Vehicles (EV) and EV Battery Manufacturing Project at Cuttack and Paradip, the Sajjan Jindal-led JSW Group could be planning to shift it to Maharashtra. While the Odisha project has seemingly become uncertain though there is no official confirmation on it yet, the company's recent announce-

ment of a similar project in Maharashtra has raised eyebrows in industry circles. The change in dispensation in Odisha is being cited as a plausible reason for the possible exit. Notably, the Maharashtra Cabinet recently approved seven big-ticket industrial projects, including major ventures from JSW Green Mobility Limited and JSW Energy PS Eleven Limited in the fields of electric and hybrid cars and lithium battery manufacturing with an investment totalling over Rs 52,200 crore. Sources said the JSW Energy PS Eleven Limited's mega lithium battery project will come up at Nagpur, in the Vidarbha region, at a cost of

Rs 25,000 crore. It is expected to generate 5,000 jobs. Similarly, JSW Green Mobility Limited's project, which will see the manufacturing of electric and hybrid cars in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar at a cost of Rs 27,200 crore, is expected to generate over 5,200 jobs. It is envisaged that the plant will see the manufacturing of 5 lakh electric cars and 1 lakh commercial cars, sources said. On February 10, the group had affirmed its commitment to Odisha for its potential for growth and signed an MoU for the establishment of projects at Naraj in Cuttack and Paradip. The pact was inked after the State Cabinet approved a spe-

cial incentive package for the group's ambitious EV and component manufacturing projects. Economic analysts are of the view that the ambitious projects would have contributed immensely to the socio-economic upliftment of the regions and the growth of MSMEs. It would also have pushed Odisha into the ever-growing automobile industry sector. At the time of signing of MoU, JSW Group Chairman Sajjan Jindal had highlighted the multinational conglomerate's commitment to Odisha. He said that JSW chose Odisha for its first EV unit for its stable leadership, State Government's unparalleled support to industries, be-

sides its resources and skill ecosystem. Industry experts wonder whether the move to shift the projects to Maharashtra has got anything to do with the change of Government in Odisha as the Group was apparently banking heavily on a stable leadership in the State. They are also of the opinion that the Mohan Majhi Government should have initiated concrete steps to extend the required support to industries after taking charge on June 12. In the absence of a clear indication of assured support from the Government, several investors, including JSW Group, appear to be apprehensive about the future of their proposed projects in the State.

Vedanta's MHS benefits 3,300 in R'gada

120 health camps held across dist

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

The Vedanta Aluminium has launched its Mobile Health Service (MHS) since May this year so that it could cater to the healthcare needs of remote villages in the peripheral areas of the company's Sijimali mines situated in tribal-dominated Rayagada district. Since the inception of Vedanta's MHS in May 2024, over 3,300 beneficiaries belonging to 18 villages have reaped the healthcare benefits, while the well-equipped Mobile Health Units (MHUs) of Vedanta, standing ever ready to meet the exigencies, have already organised over 120 successful health camps till date.



The well-equipped MHUs armed with eligible and efficient doctors as well as paramedic staff have been conducting health check-ups, blood sugar tests, etc, and also distributing medicines free of cost. Besides, regular health camps are being held for creating awareness among the villagers along with taking preventive measures. Lauding the initiative, ASHA worker Basanti Bagh in her reactions said, "Vedanta's MHUs have been rendering yeoman service in the healthcare sector here by providing essential medical ser-

vice that is a dire need in the remote pockets inhabited by the poor, hapless and ignorant rural folks." Ambapadar villager Sakar Majhi in his reactions said, "Such a move is highly praiseworthy for which I would like to thank a lot to the Vedanta, because its MHU is a boon to us." Notably, Vedanta's Mobile Health Unit (MHU) is a testimony of the company's CSR commitments towards the State following which more than two lakh people hailing from more than 100 villages across Odisha have benefited till date.

Waterfront living widens scope for floating house biz

RAJEEV K JHA

Amidst the challenges posed by climate change and soaring real estate prices, the global trend towards waterfront living has led to the emergence of a unique market niche - floating houses. This novel concept is gaining significant traction, evident in the current floating-house market's valuation of USD 1.5 billion in 2023, projected to surge to USD 3.7 billion by 2030, showcasing a remarkable compound annual growth rate of 17.7% from 2023 to 2030.

homes. Renowned for their buoyant structures, floating houses boast diverse architectural designs, ranging from sleek and modern aesthetics to more traditional and cozy styles. Several factors contribute to the remarkable growth of the floating house market. Innovations in manufacturing and architecture aim to address housing shortages and escalating demand for prime waterfront locations due to urbanization and population density. Buyers seeking a distinctive lifestyle are drawn to the allure of calm and outdoorsy living, coupled with expansive views, waterfront access, and navigability. Driven by sustainability, innovative design, and the appeal of waterfront living, the floating house market represents a paradigm shift in modern architecture. Pioneering technologies and creative solutions have propelled this market into unprecedented growth, capturing the imagination of those seeking unique, water-bound dwellings.

Embracing a sustainable lifestyle emerges as a key trend in the floating house industry. These compact residences, often smaller than traditional houses, consume less energy for heating and cooling. Incorporating features like solar panels and renewable energy sources enhances their environmental sustainability. Another trend shaping the floating house market is the increasing demand from luxury homebuyers. These homes rival traditional luxury residences, offering cutting-edge features and finishes. Factors such as the desire for exclusivity, proximity to water, and environmentally friendly living contribute to the rising demand for luxury floating houses.

Recent developments in Croatia highlight the growing momentum in the floating house market. Oasis Meu, a maritime start-up based in Split, introduced a modern floating apartment powered by solar energy. This two-story dwelling ac-

commodates 2+2 persons, offering a 360° panoramic view from the upper deck. With amenities like a saloon, fully equipped kitchen, bathroom, and a bow deck featuring a jacuzzi, the model aims to provide the freedom of a ship with the comforts of a house. This innovative concept opens new possibilities for hotels, marinas, and resorts, expanding accommodation options in marinas, anchoring spots, and bays. The visionary designs of these models, with oval shape and navigable features, stand out in a market often characterized by immobile and unimaginatively designed structures. As the owner, Maja Regio, describes it, 'OASIS MEU's new models of floating apartments' is not only navigable but also exceptionally attractive, representing a unique offering in the market. Maja adds that these unique waterfront residences blend traditional Croatian shipbuilding methods with contemporary design, craft-

ing a distinctive living environment. Essentially, with Oasis Meu floating apartments, you can immerse yourself in Croatia's cultural heritage and legacy, all while indulging in top-tier amenities and contemporary comforts. The new business model The leasing market for floating houses is also on the rise, driven by the desire for unique living experiences, escalating housing costs, and the popularity of short-term rentals. Floating house rentals offer advantages over conventional hotel stays, providing a more memorable and spacious experience at rational prices. The business model of offering floating apartments on platforms like Airbnb and Booking.com presents several distinct advantages for both local and international tourists. Firstly, these unique accommodations offer a novel and unforgettable experience, drawing in travellers seeking something beyond conventional hotel stays.

Additionally, the mobility of floating apartments allows for diverse and picturesque locations, granting guests the opportunity to explore different waterfront vistas. Moreover, the fusion of traditional craftsmanship with modern amenities appeals to those craving cultural immersion without sacrificing comfort. Furthermore, the flexibility in pricing and booking options on platforms like Airbnb and Booking.com caters to a wide range of budgets and preferences, making these floating apartments accessible to a broad spectrum of travellers. Overall, leveraging these platforms for rental services capitalizes on the allure of distinctive accommodation experiences, attracting both local and international tourists to indulge in the enchanting charm of floating living spaces.

required, as they function similarly to other ships and vessels. Like conventional vessels such as catamarans and yachts moored in marinas, bays, and anchorages, commercial berthing is the sole requirement. Should you desire to relocate your dwelling, short-distance navigation necessitates only a basic licence, while experienced staff can facilitate longer journeys. Comparatively, floating apartments are less capital-intensive than traditional hotels, boasting simpler operations and maintenance. They offer a straightforward launch as a new business venture with the flexibility to adapt usage and location, enjoying reduced competition within this emerging market niche.

Who wouldn't be enticed by the idea of vacationing in a water-front floating apartment, especially considering the high cost of waterfront homeownership? Investing in this rapidly expanding market niche sooner rather than later seems prudent.

PM Modi to spearhead BJP's Assembly polls campaign in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the BJP's campaign in the upcoming assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, the first such democratic exercise after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP national president J P Nadda and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were also included in the list of 40 star campaigners submitted by the party to the Election Commission for the first phase of assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Manohar Lal Khattar, G Kishan Reddy, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Jitendra Singh and former



Union ministers Anurag Thakur and Smriti Irani and Gen (Retd.) V K Singh besides Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma and former

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur are other prominent faces who will visit Jammu and Kashmir during the campaigning. The

three-phased assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir are scheduled for September 18, 25 and October 1. The counting of votes will be

taken up on October 4. In a letter addressed to the Election Commission, BJP national general secretary and in-charge headquarters Arun Singh said the list of the 40 star campaigners of the party may be treated as valid for the remaining phases "unless we forward an amended list" within the prescribed time limit. The list also included former BJP general secretary and recently appointed election in-charge for Jammu and Kashmir Ram Madhav, party national general secretary in-charge Jammu and Kashmir Tarun Chugh, Jammu and Kashmir BJP chief Ravinder Raina, Member of Parliament Jugal Kishore Sharma, Rajya Sabha member Gulam Ali Khatana, General secretary (organization) Ashok Kaul and Jammu and Kashmir BJP vice president Sofi Yousuf.

Growing ties with Australia reviewed in telephonic talks between Modi, Albanese

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

India and Australia on Monday reviewed the entire spectrum of their growing ties during telephonic talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart Anthony Albanese. A statement by Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said Prime Minister Narendra Modi today spoke with the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Anthony Albanese. Both leaders took stock of progress in the bilateral relations and cooperation in the multilateral fora, including the Quad. The Prime Minister posted on social media "Delighted to speak to my friend Anthony Albanese. We took stock of progress in our bilateral relations and cooperation in the



multilateral fora, including the Quad." The talks also came in the backdrop of growing Chinese assertiveness in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region. In November 2017, India, Japan, the US, and Australia gave shape to the long-pending proposal of setting up the Quad to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-

Pacific free of any influence. India is likely to host the Quad summit this year wherein heads of states of the four countries may discuss the future course of Quad combine. The 2023 summit was held in Hiroshima, Japan. China has all along criticized the Quad claiming it will lead to the militarization of the Indo-Pacific.

Congress asks if each new district in Ladakh would have AHDCs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

With the government announcing the creation of five new districts in Ladakh, the Congress on Monday asked whether there will be elected Autonomous Hill Development Councils for each of the new districts and will they have a much more meaningful and relevant say in how budgets are spent.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said that his ministry has decided to create the five new districts in pursuit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to build a developed and prosperous Ladakh. "The new districts namely Zaskar, Drass, Sham, Nubra and Changthang will take the benefits meant for the people to their doorsteps by bolstering governance in every nook and cranny," he said. Reacting to the development, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The elected Autonomous Hill Development Council for Leh was established in 1995. The elected Autonomous Hill Development Council for Kargil was set up in 2003."

"Now five new districts have been formed in Ladakh in addition to Leh and Kargil. Will there be elected Autonomous Hill Development Councils for



each of the five new districts as well?" he asked. Presently, the two existing elected Autonomous Hill Development Councils have control over less than 10% of the total expenditure allocated to Ladakh and the balance 90% is being under the control of the lieutenant governor and the bureaucracy, he said. Will the elected AHDCs have a much more meaningful and relevant say in how budgets are spent? Ramesh asked. Earlier, the home minister said the Modi government is committed to creating abundant opportunities for the people of Ladakh. Ladakh was made a UT after the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated into two UTs on August 5, 2019. The other UT is Jammu and Kashmir. Article 370, which gave special status to the erstwhile state, was also abrogated on that day five years ago. Being a UT, Ladakh comes under the direct administrative control of the Union Home Ministry.

Coast Guard rescues 11 crew members from ship sinking off WB coast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI



The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) on Monday rescued 11 crew members from the distressed MV ITT Puma during a challenging night-time search and rescue operation. The Mumbai-registered general cargo vessel was en route from Kolkata to Port Blair when it reportedly sank about 90 nautical miles south of Sagar Island (West Bengal), defence ministry said here. The Maritime Search and Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Chennai initially received a distress signal late Sunday evening. The ICG's Regional Headquarters (North East) in Kolkata promptly mobilised two ICG vessels and a Dornier aircraft to the site. The Dornier aircraft, equipped with advanced night-capable sensors detected adrift life rafts and sighted survival red flares from the distressed crew.

Centre must increase funding for anti-pollution measures: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday criticized the Modi government for its handling of the deteriorating air quality in India and demanded that it must drastically increase the funds for the anti-pollution measures being proposed under the National Clean Air Program (NCAP).

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said there are clear steps the government must take moving forward, and the first must be to acknowledge the public "health crisis" associated with air pollution across wide swathes of India. "Among the lesser-known tragedies of the non-biological PM's reign is the rapidly deteriorating air quality nationally and the inattentiveness and policy chaos that has characterised the Government's response to it," Ramesh said in a statement. To make his point, the former environment minister cited various recent studies that have highlighted the deteriorating air quality across the States in the Country. "Aap chronology samajhiye: In early July, a study published in the prestigious Lancet journal showed that 7.2% of all deaths in India are associated with air pollution - about 34,000 deaths each year in just 10 cities," he said. In mid-July, a study by the



Centre for Science and Environment revealed that the government's pollution control interventions are poorly designed, with the National Clean Air Program (NCAP) largely focused on mitigating road dust rather than industrial, vehicular, and biomass emissions -- the source of PM 2.5 -- that are the leading causes of mortality, Ramesh said. To make matters worse, in the past five years, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has left more than 75 per cent of the Environment Protection Charge (EPC) and Environmental Compensation (EC) funds unspent, he said, claiming that in total Rs 665.75 crores have been left unutilised. "On July 29, 2024, upon being asked a question about the Lancet study, the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change made the

shocking claim in the Rajya Sabha that there was 'no conclusive data' to directly correlate air pollution and deaths," he pointed out. In districts where air pollution exceeds National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), there is a 13 per cent increase in premature mortality for adults and around 100 per cent increase in mortality for children, he said. Ramesh called for a substantial boost in financial resources allocated to the NCAP. "Our cities need at least 10-20 times more funding - NCAP must be made a Rs. 25,000 crore programme. NCAP must adopt measurement of PM 2.5 levels as the yardstick for performance. NCAP must reorient its focus to key sources of emissions - burning of solid fuels, vehicular emissions, and industrial emissions," he said.

Chief Secretaries of 17 States, UTs to make personal appearance in SC today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

In what may appear to be a rare event, the Chief Secretaries of 17 State Governments and Union Territories (UTs) are slated to appear before the Supreme Court on Tuesday over non-implementation of the Second National Judicial Pay Commission's (SNJPC) recommendations on payment of pension arrears and retirement benefits to judicial officers.

According to the cause list uploaded on the Supreme Court's website, a bench by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and comprising justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra is scheduled to hear on Tuesday the case on the plea of the All India Judges Association and 22 other similar petitions. The Association is seeking the implementation of welfare and other measures for former judges and judicial officers. The top-most bureaucrats of Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Bihar, Goa, Haryana and Odisha have to be present in the apex court in person on August 27. "I can see there is no substantive compliance. They will have to personally appear before us or we will issue non-



ailable warrants (NBWs) against them," the CJJ had observed on August 22. Advocate K Parmeshwar, amicus curiae in the matter, had contended before the top court earlier that as many as 18 States and UTs have not complied with the SNJPC recommendations fully though several orders have been issued. The All India Judges Association (AIJA) is seeking implementation of welfare and other measures for former judges and judicial officers. The Bench said the top bureaucrats will have to appear personally to explain the delay and rejected the request of various States that the Chief Secretaries be permitted to appear virtually. On July 11, the Bench had summoned the Chief Secretaries of 23 States for non-compliance with the SNJPC recommendations on August 23. The amicus curie later informed the court that five more States have complied with the directives in the meantime.

Rajnath Singh visits museum, interacts with Indian community in Tennessee

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited the National Civil Rights Museum and interacted with the Indian community in Memphis, Tennessee on Sunday on the last day of his tour to US, defence ministry said here on Monday.

Giving details, officials said the National Civil Rights Museum traces the history of the civil rights movement in the US from the 17th century to the present, and is built around the site of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr in 1968. It also has a bust of Mahatma Gandhi, acknowledging his inspiration for non-violent struggle. Interacting with the Indian diaspora from Memphis, Atlanta, Nashville, and other nearby areas, the defence



minister lauded the achievements of the community members and their contribution to society, science and economy. He described them as a 'living bridge' between India and US, fostering close relations and goodwill. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also acknowledged the efforts of the Indian community in establishing an exhibi-

tion of Mahatma Gandhi and placing two honorary 'Gandhi Way' street signals near the National Civil Rights Museum on the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019. In this last event of his US visit, he underlined India's growth story in the last decade, and the immense potential with a promising future.

SC directs States to provide info on functioning of open prisons

PTI | NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has directed several states and Union Territories (UTs) to provide complete information with regard to the functioning of open prisons within four weeks.

Semi-open or open prisons allow convicts to work outside the premises during the day to earn a livelihood and return in the evening. The concept was introduced to assimilate the convicts with society and reduce psychological pressure as they faced difficulties in leading normal lives outside. A bench of Justices B R Gavi and K V Viswanathan was informed by senior advocate K Parmeshwar, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in a matter related to congestion in jails, that several states and UTs have not yet filed their responses. The bench noted that states and UTs like Delhi, Himachal



Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab have not yet submitted the qualitative/quantitative charts despite circulation of a questionnaire seeking information in respect of the status and functioning of open correctional institutions and whether such institutions exist within their jurisdiction. "We, therefore, direct that all the States/Union

Territories, which have not yet filed their response, to file complete response within a period of four weeks from today," the bench said in its order passed on August 20. It said the states and UTs, which have not given complete information, shall also ensure compliance within four weeks. "We further clarify that if any

of the state governments or Union Territories do not respond in terms of the orders passed by this court, we will be compelled to direct the presence of the chief secretary of the states/Union Territories concerned before this court," the bench said and posted the matter for further consideration after four weeks. The apex court noted that on

July 15, it had directed the chief secretaries of various states and UTs to submit their responses on the issue of open jails. The amicus told the bench that states and UTs of Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep, Puducherry and Ladakh, have not filed their responses yet. While hearing the matter on May 9, the apex court had observed that establishing open jails can be one of the solutions to overcrowding and also addressing the issue of rehabilitation of prisoners. In its May 17 order, the bench had noted the submission of the amicus that a model draft manual has been prepared by the Union of India where the nomenclature 'open correctional institutions' is used for such facilities.

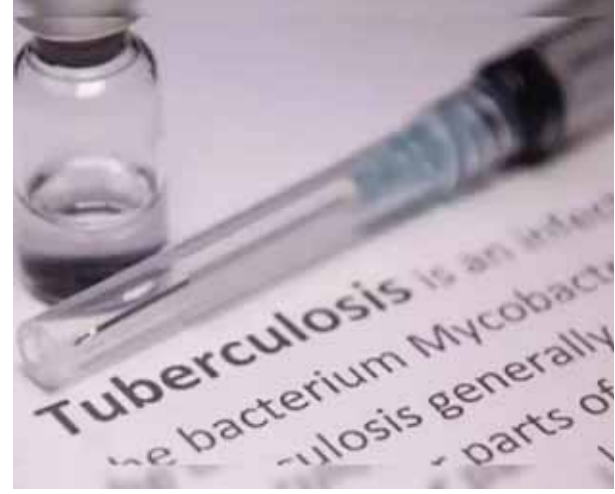
ICMR centre in Assam develops technology for precise TB testing priced at ` 35

ARCHANA JYOTI | NEW DELHI

As India races to meet its ambitious target of eliminating Tuberculosis (TB) by 2025, the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) regional center in Dibrugarh, Assam, has made a significant breakthrough: It has developed an affordable precise TB testing technology priced at just Rs 35, which employs a CRISPR-based system to detect the deadly disease using a patient's sputum sample. This innovative testing method, known as the 'CRISPR-Cas12a-based sys-

tem', is not only cost-effective but also efficient. It offers a rapid and precise diagnosis, a critical advancement in the fight against TB, especially in resource-limited settings. The low cost and ease of use make it a promising tool for widespread implementation, potentially accelerating India's progress toward its TB elimination goal, said an official from the ICMR. In contrast, conventional TB tests, such as culture, microscopy, and nucleic acid-based techniques, are often time-consuming and require sophisticated equipment. For example, TB cultures can take

up to 42 days to confirm a negative result, and other methods may suffer from issues related to sensitivity, specificity, speed, and cost. "However, the new testing technology can analyze over 1,500 samples in a single run within approximately two and a half hours, offering a significant improvement over traditional diagnostic methods," said the official about the diagnostic tool developed by Regional Medical Research Centre at Dibrugarh, one of the 26 permanent institutes of ICMR in the country. "Current diagnostic methods often exhibit limitations in



terms of sensitivity, specificity, speed and cost, emphasizing the need for innovative approaches. Conventional diagnostic techniques for TB commonly rely on culture (which requires 42 days to confirm as TB negative), microscopy, and nucleic acid-based methods. These are time-consuming and may require sophisticated equipment. Additionally, some molecular diagnostic methods, while offering improved sensitivity, may lack the desired specificity or face challenges associated with cost and ease of handling," said an official from the

ICMR. India has the highest TB burden in the world, accounting for an estimated one-fifth of global cases. The new CRISPR-Cas12a-based system, branded as 'GlowTBPCRKit', includes an amplification step using a thermal cycler and the 'RapidGlow' device. This approach aims to address the limitations of current diagnostic tools by providing a more accurate, rapid, and cost-effective solution for detecting Mycobacterium tuberculosis. The ICMR is now seeking Expressions of Interest (EoI)

from organisations, companies, and manufacturers to commercialize this technology. The ICMR-RMRCNE institute will offer expert guidance and technical support throughout the production and commercialization phases. According to the India TB report 2024 released by the Union Health Ministry in March, the incidence rate in India had fallen from 237 per lakh population in 2015 to 199 per lakh population in 2022, while the mortality rate had declined from 28 per lakh population in 2015 to 23 per lakh population in 2022.

Batenge toh katenge: UP CM Yogi says B'desh mistakes shouldn't happen in India

PTI n AGRA (UP)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath here on Monday urged people to stay united to reach the pinnacle of prosperity, saying the mistakes in Bangladesh should not happen in India. "Batenge toh katenge (if divided, we will be cut up)," he said during an inauguration event in Agra. Bangladesh recently saw massive anti-government protests, leading to the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina. The country continued to witness incidents of violence, including targeted attacks on the Hindu minority community, even after the fall of the Hasina-led government. Addressing the gathering at the programme here, Adityanath said, "There can be nothing bigger than the nation, and when will a nation be strong, when we are united and good." "Aap dekh rahe hain Bangladesh mein kya ho raha hai? Wo galatyan yahan nah honi chahiye. Batenge toh katenge! Ek rahenge to nek rahenge, surakshit rahenge aur samridhhi ki parakashtha ko pahuchenge," the chief minister said in Hindi. Roughly translated, he asked people if they are watching



what is happening in Bangladesh and said those mistakes should not happen here, adding, "If divided, we will be cut, if together, we will be good, secure and reach the pinnacle of prosperity." The chief minister also shared a clip of his speech on X. "We have to realise the resolve of Viksit Bharat (developed India)," Adityanath said after inaugurating a statue of Durga Das Rathore near the Taj Mahal metro station here. Rathore was a commander in the army of erstwhile Jodhpur province's king Maharaja Jaswant Singh who took on Mughal ruler Aurangzeb in the 17th century. After unveiling the statue, the chief minister said "evil and cunning" Aurangzeb killed Singh by deceit. He added that it was an

honour for him to inaugurate the statue in the centenary year of the 'Kakori Train Action', which is being celebrated in the state, and on the day of Janmashtami. "In a country where great heroes like Durgadas Rathore are born, no foreign invader can harm that country in any way. Humble tribute to him!" he later said on X. Addressing the gathering in Agra, Adityanath said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a clarion call for making India a developed nation by 2047 and it is the everyone's combined duty to work towards realising this resolve. Highlighting the mythological significance of Agra, he said, "Agra is an important part of the Braj region. Every particle of this region is believed to be the abode of Lord Krishna. This place has art, culture, faith, and devotion."

Cong's DNA is anti-public, says Scindia

PTI n GWALIOR

The DNA of the Congress is anti-public and the party stands in support of oppressors and those who are corrupt, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Monday. In Gwalior to take part in Krishna Janmashtami events, he further said the Congress opposes the rule of justice. Asked about the Congress' opposition to authorities razing the house of a man accused of indulging in violence during a protest in Chhatarpur, Scindia said, "The Congress will oppose every step taken for public welfare. The Congress' DNA is anti-public. They will oppose the Unified Pension Scheme and bulldozing houses of those who oppress people." "The Congress is standing in support of oppressors and those who are corrupt. This character of the party has been exposed. It is talking in favour of those involved in crimes against women as is being seen from West Bengal to Karnataka. There is rule of oppression when the Congress is in power. It opposes the rule of justice,"



Scindia added. The Congress has condemned MP authorities for bulldozing the house of Shahzad Ali, who is accused of indulging in violence during a protest called in Chhatarpur to condemn the allegedly objectionable remarks against Islam by Nashik-based spiritual leader Ramgiri Maharaj. The protest was held on August 21 and Ali's house was brought down the next day, with authorities claiming it was built without requisite permission. Speaking on local issues, Scindia said a regional industry conclave being held on August 28 will pave the way for further development of Gwalior.

After repartee, Rajini, TN Minister Duraimurugan hold out olive branches

PTI n CHENNAI

DMK senior Minister Duraimurugan, who had reacted strongly to Tamil film superstar Rajinikanth's "old timers" in DMK remark, held out an olive branch on Monday saying both of them will remain friends forever. Playing down the sudden repartee between the two, the film star said he had no regrets over Duraimurugan's remark that "old actors" were denying opportunity to youngsters. "He (Duraimurugan) is my long-time friend. I like him very much. I have no regrets over what Duraimurugan has said. Our friendship will continue," Rajinikanth told reporters at the airport on Monday when his comments were sought. On Sunday, DMK General Secretary Duraimurugan, who holds the Water Resources portfolio as minister in the M K Stalin cabinet, said, "Actors who have grown old, with falling teeth, and sporting beards in their end stages are continuing to act, denying opportunity to young actors." The minister made the remarks aimed at the top actor when reporters in Vellore drew his attention to Rajinikanth's earlier comment likening the DMK



seniors to old students refusing to leave the classroom even after securing a rank in the exams. While speaking at the release of the book 'Kalaigarr Ennum Thaa', authored by Public Works Minister E V Velu here on Saturday, Rajini who received the first copy from Chief Minister M K Stalin, compared the DMK senior Ministers to old students making it difficult for the class teacher to handle them. "The DMK has many old students who refuse to leave the classrooms even after securing a rank in exams. There's Duraimurugan who could even make life difficult for Kalaigarr (late Chief Minister M Karunanidhi)," Rajini said at the event. Turning to the chief minister, Rajini said in his inimitable

style "to a school teacher, handling new students isn't difficult. But, managing old students is not an easy task. Here there are many old students. They are not normal but are rank holders. How to manage them? Stalin sir, hats off to you." This evoked spontaneous laughter from the audience and even the chief minister was amused. Bringing the sudden controversy to a close, Duraimurugan told reporters here on Monday, "Let's not convert humour into hostility. We will forever remain as friends." Meanwhile, BJP state chief K Annamalai took a dig at the DMK, saying the actor's comments could be interpreted as a sign of brewing discontent within the ruling party.

Tripura: 12 houses set on fire after idol defaced at temple

PTI n AGARTALA

At least 12 houses and a few vehicles were set on fire by unidentified persons after an idol was found defaced at a temple in Ranirbazar area in West Tripura, police said on Monday. Prohibitory orders under Section 163 of BNSS were imposed in Jirania subdivision under which Ranirbazar falls. Heavy security deployment has also been made in the area to defuse tension. "Around 12 dwelling houses were set on fire at Ranirbazar by miscreants late on Sunday after an idol of Goddess Kali was found defaced in Kaiturbari. A few motorcycles and pick-up vans were also gutted in the blaze," Assistant Inspector General (Law and Order) Ananta Das told PTI. No human casualties were reported in the incident. Eyewitnesses said that the residents fled their dwellings upon seeing the raging mob. Das said heavy deployment of security forces have been made to defuse tension and Director General of Police, Intelligence,

Anurag Dhankar and West Tripura Superintendent of Police Kiran Kumar have visited the area. "Police will register a suo moto case once the assessment of loss of properties is completed. The situation is under control," he said. Following apprehension of breach of peace, prohibitory orders under Section 163 of BNSS have been imposed in Jirania subdivision of West Tripura district from August 26 to 28, District Magistrate Vishal Kumar said in an order. Under the prohibitory orders, assembly of five or more people will be prohibited due to violent activities in the subdivision, it added. Tipra Motha supreme Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on Monday expressed concern over the incident and appealed to everyone to maintain law and order. "Last night incident in Ranirbazar Kaiturbari area is a worrying sign with reports of communal clashes. I appeal to those who are responsible for maintaining law and order to follow the rule of law," he wrote on Facebook.

Mayawati recalls '95 guest house incident to berate SP, Congress

PTI n LUCKNOW

BSP chief Mayawati on Monday referred to the 1995 Lucknow 'state guest house incident' to attack the Samajwadi Party for the "deadly assault" on her, and the Congress for not coming to her aid despite being in power at the Centre at that time. The fresh salvo comes three days after the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief expressed her gratitude to Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav for his stance on the "objectionable comments" made by a BJP MLA against her during a TV debate. The SP had carried out a deadly attack on me on June 2, 1995, after the BSP withdrew its support, then why does Congress never speak on this? The Congress government at the Centre during that time also did not fulfil its responsibility on time," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said in a post on X. "Even when Kanshi Ram ji was in a serious condition and hospitalised, the home minister had to be



reprimanded and the opposition also gheraoed the Parliament, only after that did the Congress government take action," she said in Hindi. "Because at that time the central Congress government's intentions had also become bad, which after some untoward incident wanted to run its government from behind the scenes by imposing president's rule in Uttar Pradesh, whose conspiracy was foiled by BSP," Mayawati further claimed. "But after the caste census, will the Congress be able to ensure the rightful rights of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)? Those who are still silent on the issue of classification and creamy layer in SC/ST reservation should answer," she added.

house where Mayawati was scheduled to meet her party leaders and allegedly attacked her. She was rescued from the guest house by BJP leaders. Later, the governor sacked the Mulayam Singh Yadav dispensation and invited Mayawati to form the government. Mayawati said the entire opposition, including the BJP, had fulfilled its duty to save her from criminal elements of the SP in the name of humanity. "So why does the Congress keep having trouble with this from time to time? People should be aware of it." "Apart from this, the BSP has been putting full pressure for a caste census for years, first on the Congress at the Centre and now on the BJP," Mayawati said. "But after the caste census, will the Congress be able to ensure the rightful rights of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)? Those who are still silent on the issue of classification and creamy layer in SC/ST reservation should answer," she added.

Devotees throng temples across Jaipur to celebrate Janmashtami

PTI n JAIPUR

Thousands of devotees on Monday thronged Govind Devji temple and Shri Radha Gopinathji temple and paid obeisance amid tight security arrangements on the occasion of Janmashtami. From early morning, devotees made a beeline for 'mangla darshan' at the Govind Devji Temple at 4.30 am. Jaipur Police Commissioner Biju George Joseph said the influx of devotees is expected to increase as the day advances. Accordingly, we have made adequate security arrangements for their safety. A huge rush of devotees was also seen in several temples including Shri Radha Gopinath Ji Temple. Joseph said facial recognition CCTV cameras to identify pickpockets, vehicle thieves and other miscreants have been installed in Govind Devji temple, ISKCON temple and Akshaya Patra temple.



Control rooms have been set up at each of the three temples for surveillance. Teams of policemen in plain clothes have also been deployed in the temples, he said. "Photos and other details of criminals of the state and interstate are already fed in the database. Whenever these criminals come in the range of the CCTV, they will be identified and immediately an alert will pop up and security personnel on duty will nab them immediately," the officer said. Temples in Jaipur and across the state have been decorated with flowers and lights for Janmashtami celebrations.

IMD warns of torrential rain in MP, Rajasthan Gujarat, Maha

PTI n NEW DELHI

A depression over northwest Madhya Pradesh and adjoining Rajasthan has intensified into a deep depression, the India Meteorological Department said on Monday and warned of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in parts of the two states and Gujarat, Goa and Maharashtra over the next two to three days. At 11:30 pm on August 25, the deep depression lay centred near 70 km south-southeast of Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. This system is expected to move west-southwest, affecting South Rajasthan, and Gujarat, and reaching Saurashtra, Kutch, and parts of Pakistan by August 29, the IMD said in an update issued at 2 am. The weather department said another low-pressure area is located over Bangladesh and adjoining Gangetic West Bengal. It is likely to intensify further and move towards Gangetic West Bengal, north Odisha, and Jharkhand over the next two days. Issuing a red alert, the IMD said heavy to extremely heavy rainfall is expected in West Madhya Pradesh on August 26. Similar conditions are forecast for east and south Rajasthan, Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch from August 26 to 29. Konkan, Goa, Madhya Maharashtra, Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, and Jharkhand are also expected to receive heavy to extremely heavy rainfall over the next two days. The IMD has warned of strong winds reaching up to 50 kmph in Madhya Pradesh on August 26 and up to 60 kmph in south Rajasthan on August 26-27. In Gujarat, nearby Pakistan, north Maharashtra, and the northeast Arabian Sea, strong winds gusting up to 55 kmph are expected on August 26, increasing to 60 kmph on August 27 and 28. Rough to very rough sea conditions are anticipated off the coasts of Gujarat, Pakistan, and north Maharashtra until August 30.

Trademark suit: HC temporarily restrains Pune eatery from using brand name 'Burger King'

PTI n MUMBAI

In an interim relief to US giant Burger King in a trademark infringement suit, the Bombay High Court on Monday restrained a Pune-based eatery from using the brand name till September 6. The company moved the high court last week, challenging an order passed by a Pune court dismissing its suit alleging trademark infringement against a namesake eatery in Pune. A division bench of Justices A S Chandurkar and Rajesh Patil on Monday said that it would first hear the company's application seeking interim injunction against the eatery on September 6.



Until then, the ad-interim order granted by the Pune court in January 2012 restraining the eatery from using the name "Burger King" shall be extended, the high court said. The fast-food company, in its suit, sought an injunction against the eatery from using the name "Burger King", as it

was causing the company huge loss, damage and harm to its goodwill, business and reputation. A Pune court had dismissed the 2011 suit filed by Burger King Corporation, noting that the city-based eatery had been operating since 1992, which was even before the US burger joint opened shop in

India. Burger King Corporation also filed an application in the high court seeking an interim injunction against the eatery owners from using the name pending the hearing and final disposal of its appeal. The company's advocate, Hiren Kamod, on Monday submitted to the court that until their plea or application seeking an interim injunction is heard, the ad-interim order passed in 2012 by the Pune court shall be extended. Advocate Abhijit Sarwate, appearing for the eatery owners, Anahita Irani and Shapoor Irani, submitted to the court that they have started using the name 'Burger King' online since two days.

Seven prison officials suspended in K'taka for giving special treatment to jailed actor Darshan

PTI n BENGALURU

Seven prison officials have been suspended for allegedly giving special treatment to Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, who is currently in judicial custody in the Renukaswamy murder case. A Superintendent of the Central Jail at Parappana Agrahara here has also been transferred following an inquiry after a photo of the actor smoking with a coffee mug in hand emerged on social media on Sunday sparking a row. The picture shows Darshan sitting leisurely on a lawn on the jail premises along with three others, including two alleged rowdy-sheets. Those suspended are jailers



Sharan Basappa Amingad and Prabhu S Khandelwal, assistant jailers L S Kuppeswamy, Srikanth Talwar, head warders Venkappa, Sampath Kumar and warder K Basappa, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara told reporters here on Monday. The new jail superintendent will be asked to strictly deal with such incidents of

"dereliction of duty," he said. Parameshwara said soon after the matter came to his knowledge he directed the Director General of Police to conduct a probe following which a team of senior police officials visited the jail. Their inquiry confirmed the involvement of the suspended officers in facilitating special treatment to Darshan, he added. Parameshwara said it is a matter of concern that such incidents occur despite the presence of CCTVs and jammers inside the prisons in the state. A total of 17 people including Darshan along with his friend Pavithra Gowda are currently in judicial custody in connection with the murder case.

Buried under mining waste, river pulled back from brink in Rajasthan

PTI n KOTA (RAJASTHAN)

Environmentalist Bitthal Sanadhya was roaming near the Labhakho and Peepalada areas of the Dabi forest range in Rajasthan's Bundi district when he was told by a forest ranger that the place was a river buried by debris from illegal mining sites. Stunned by the revelation, Bundi Jal Biradari president Sanadhya -- who

draws inspiration from Ramon Magsaysay Award winner Rajendra Singh -- was driven to revive the river, a tributary of the Chambal known locally as the Aeru. Armed with GPS images of the illegal mining sites and the buried river, he approached Rajasthan High Court in 2018 and filed a PIL to revive the Aeru in the region. An eight-kilometre stretch of the Aeru, which covers 40

kilometres through the Bhilwara and Bundi districts before merging into the Chambal, had been buried under debris from illegal mines. The Aeru originates from Tilaswa Mahadev in Bhilwara and passes through six villages before entering Bundi at Lamakhoh. For years, suspected mining mafia illegally mined stones and slabs in the Aeru, turning



the river into a dump yard. "The ranger's response when he said it was part of the Aeru

river buried under mining dump stunned me," Sanadhya said. "Since then, I devoted

myself to bringing the river back to life," he added. Following a five-year battle, the high court last year ordered the Department of Mines & Geology to prepare an action plan for the removal of the mining waste from the river and allocate funds for its implementation. Complying with the order, Bundi collector Akshay Godara allocated Rs 10 crore from the District Mining

Foundation Trust for removing the waste earlier this year. Work on the river revival project, beginning with the removal of the mining debris, started in June and it has already begun to pay dividends. Crystal-clear water now flows over a more than two-kilometre stretch, with the hope that the Aeru will once again enrich the riverbanks as

it had previously done. At least 15 earthmovers and 25 dumpers have been deployed to remove the mining waste and 40 per cent of the work has already been completed, said Ajay Singh Gurjar -- a junior engineer of the water resources department, which is executing the cleanup drive. The work is now stopped for the monsoon but it will be completed by November, he added.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Give peace a chance

The Cairo talks represent a glimmer of hope for war ravaged Gaza in an otherwise bleak situation

As fighting continues unabated in Gaza, negotiators gathered in Cairo this weekend for crucial discussions aimed at securing a ceasefire. The talks come at a pivotal moment, with the conflict between Hamas and Israel now in its tenth month. Despite the ongoing hostilities, there is hope that a breakthrough might be within reach, though significant hurdles remain. The war has left Gaza in ruins and triggered a humanitarian crisis of immense proportions. The conflict has displaced nearly all of Gaza's population at least once, and efforts to broker a ceasefire have so far failed to bring lasting peace. The international community, led by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, has been engaged in persistent but ultimately inconclusive negotiations to end the violence. The Cairo talks, held under the shadow of ongoing violence, are seen as a critical step towards ending the conflict. However, the talks are complicated by the fact that Hamas, while sending a delegation to Cairo, has stated that it will not participate directly in the negotiations. Instead, the Hamas delegation is expected to meet with senior Egyptian officials to receive updates on the progress of the talks. Hamas continues to insist on a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, including from the Philadelphi Corridor along the Gaza-Egypt border, a key sticking point in the discussions. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has his own reservations and is unwilling to withdraw troops from border.



The framework for the current talks is based on a plan outlined by U.S. President Joe Biden on May 31, which has been endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. The plan envisions a three-phase process,

beginning with a full and complete ceasefire, during which hostages would be exchanged for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Despite initial agreement on the plan by Hamas leadership, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed reservations, particularly regarding the continued presence of Israeli troops along the Gaza-Egypt border, which he argues is necessary to prevent Hamas from rearming. The United States is exploring new proposals to bridge the gap between Israel and Hamas. The success of talks likely hinges on whether the U.S. can pressure Netanyahu into accepting a compromise. Meanwhile the war rages on in Gaza. Israeli airstrikes and artillery fire have devastated the territory, with reports of dozens of civilian casualties in recent days. The United Nations has reported large-scale evacuations from areas such as Deir el-Balah and Khan Yunis, as Israeli military operations intensify. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dire, with displaced families forced to flee daily in search of safety. Both Israelis and Gazans are increasingly desperate for an end to the bloodshed. Protests have erupted across Israel, with thousands calling for a deal to secure the release of the remaining hostages. The path to peace remains fraught with challenges, and the coming days will be crucial in determining whether a lasting ceasefire can be achieved.

PICTALK



A farmer harvests grapes, at Repora Lar area in Ganderbal, Kashmir

PTI

Life's dilemmas: Lessons from everyday conflicts

We should recognise the value of pausing and reflecting, to determine whether our reactions to perceived insults are genuinely justified

We face conflicts and dilemmas many times in our lives. We resolve a few of those, avoiding others to avoid confrontation. We went through some fascinating times recently. We cast our votes to elect the next central government. The excitement of the crowd at the polling booth was palpable even early in the morning. There was another major event, which was at our society level. We also had elections for the governing body of our residents' welfare association. I realised that the two elections mirrored each other. New alliances were formed, and old ones were discarded. Sworn foes smiled at each other with a warmth not unlike the hot Delhi summers. There were many heartbreaks too if friends vied for the same position. Two of the prospective candidates for a position went about venting their frustration when told by well-meaning friends about the intent of the other. I suggested a mutual tete-a-tete. The conflict was resolved. I faced a dilemma as an



adolescent half a century back. One afternoon, I had an argument with a friend, which went a little overboard, and I punched him. He was taller than me and did not take kindly to my aggression. He punched me back. It did not erupt into a full-blown fist fight only because I had already rationalised his punch a little before it had connected with my soft abdomen. After all, I had started the battle; he was entitled to retaliate. Many of us hesitate to ask for personal favour, apprehensive of facing rejection. It is also a dilemma, albeit in our minds. I had no say in the allotment of the zonal

railways after the completion of our railway probation training. I did get an opportunity to express my heart's desire, when my senior asked me if I had any preference for the place of posting. I was diffident and I gave a convoluted reply, "Anywhere, though my preference would be Mughalsarai." This was a small town in my native state. He took the first part of my statement at face value. I was posted at Sealdah, the other end, and a long way from my hometown - physically, linguistically, and culturally. I understood much later in life the importance of plain speaking, however unpalatable it might be. It may cause initial bitterness, but the relationship would be stronger eventually. The self-realisation still did not give me the courage to upbraid a junior colleague for his tardiness. I chose to walk away from confrontation by not allocating him any responsibilities. I envy those who have mastered sugar-coating the bitter pill. It softens the blow, yet hits the person equally

hard. But it might even convey a wrong meaning. During a recent conversation, my wife and her friend contemplated conveying a rather difficult sentiment to another friend through a message. A small phrase was added to be polite. I felt that this changed the intent to something entirely different. They did not agree and chose not to send the message. Yet, the friend had not hesitated to upbraid another friend a few days earlier over a trivial issue. I saw conflict in the two situations, she did not. Conflicts have been a part of our lives since ages. I would not like to be the Arjun who faced the biggest challenge of his life. I am a mere mortal. I have my follies. It is not for me to preach to be perfect. I would look at the words of author Jo Coudert to give me strength, "Every life is a dilemma that must be solved by the person living it." (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

In the 19th century, as British colonialism reshaped the Indian socio-cultural landscape, intellectuals like Captain N. Augustus Willard and Indian reformers grappled with the status of women in India. Willard, like many British officials, viewed Indian women with a mixture of pity and a sense of moral duty, perceiving them as victims of ignorance, reflected in their preference for songs that were considered passionate and sensual. At the same time, English-educated Bengali elites, inspired by both Western ideas and traditional Hindu values, sought to reform women's education while retaining patriarchal norms. It is pertinent to mention the role played by the renowned social reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a key figure among the Bengali bhadralok, who championed the cause of widow remarriage and women's education. Influenced by Western education, yet deeply rooted in his cultural heritage, Vidyasagar sought to balance these dual influences. He established numerous schools for girls, believing that education was essential for their empowerment and societal upliftment. Another key figure in India's renaissance movement, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (Chattopadhyay), a luminary in Indian literature, is celebrated for his seminal contributions to both educational reforms and the Indian freedom struggle. His multifaceted legacy extends beyond his literary genius, encapsulating his role as an intellectual force in the socio-political landscape of 19th-century India. Bankim Chandra was a pioneering figure in the sphere of educational reforms in India. His vision for education was grounded in the belief that a modern, enlightened society could only emerge through an educated populace. Chatterjee advocated for the modernization of the education system, emphasizing the need to integrate Western scientific knowledge with traditional Indian learning. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's engagement with educational reforms is evident in his writings



and his role as a Deputy Magistrate - the first in-charge (Sub-divisional magistrate) of the Arambag subdivision in West Bengal. He used his position to influence educational policies and advocate for the establishment of institutions that could impart contemporary education. Author of India's National Song Vande Mataram became a clarion call during India's Independence movement, Bankim Chandra's novels, often interwoven with themes of social and educational upliftment, served as a medium to propagate his ideas to a broader audience. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's novels often depicted strong, complex female characters, who played crucial roles in the narrative, challenging the traditional views of women in society. "Vande Mataram," depicted in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel "Anandamath," serves as the manifesto of the Sanyasi group, celebrating a land abundant with rice, lush greenery, vibrant flowers, and sparkling rivers. The song idolizes the country as a goddess incarnate. While historically and politically significant, "Anandamath" unfolds through semiotic, discursive, and aesthetic dimen-

BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTOPADHYAY'S NOVELS OFTEN DEPICTED STRONG, COMPLEX FEMALE CHARACTERS, WHO PLAYED CRUCIAL ROLES IN THE NARRATIVE, CHALLENGING THE TRADITIONAL VIEWS OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

sions. The narrative, through characters like Mohendra, Kalyani, and Sukumari, intertwines with India's traditional and cultural contexts. The Santan of the Math, led by guru Satyananda and his disciples, embody qualities of truth, knowledge, emotion, patience, and being. "Vande Mataram" transcends patriotism, embodying philosophical renderings of existential and metaphysical human attributes, with women depicted as equals, exemplified by Shanti's bravery and sacrifice. Bankim Chandra's portrayal of women was significant as it challenged the prevailing societal norms and provided a progressive vision of women's roles in society. In "Devi Chaudhurani" (1884) the protagonist Prafulla transforms from a submissive girl into the powerful Devi Chaudhurani, a leader of a band of rebels. Her character embodies the potential for women's empowerment and the possibility of their active participation in societal change. By depicting women as strong, capable, and essential to the nation's progress, his novels contributed to the broader discourse on women's rights and empowerment in pre-independent India, which, however, is debatable.

Novels like "Kapalkundala," "Debi Chaudhurani," and "Durgeshnandini" feature characters such as Kapalkundala, Prafulla, and Ayesha, who exhibit depth and complexity. "Brisabhriksha" (The Poison Tree) and "Krisnakanter Uil" addresses social issues like widow remarriage and polygamy through the stories of Suryamukhi, Kundanandini, and Rohini. In "Sitaram," the tragic effects of polygamy are highlighted, while "Anandamath" contrasts the nation's depiction as Mother, while the exclusion of women from the fight for its cause is also depicted. It can be said that Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's depiction of strong, independent female characters - despite their complexities - challenged existing gender norms and inspired a rethinking of women's potential and place in society. By showcasing women as central figures in the fight against oppression and as leaders in their own right, Bankim Chandra's works resonated with the growing movements for social and political reform. (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Gender reform in 19th-century Bengal

In the 19th century, a complex interplay of reformist and colonial influences emerged, particularly concerning the status of women

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SANCTITY OF OATH

Madam - We all expect aspirants who desire to make a career in public service must be clean in their thoughts and acts. All MPs, MLAs take oath and swear on this but the reality is different. For those of whom read this information don't be confused and conclude yourself that this is the tally of medals in the recently concluded Paris Olympics 2024. Anybody would have been shocked and put their head in shame to feel pity for the people who have voted for the respective candidates from their constituency by the fond hope that they will deliver well for them. The update is that there are as many as 151 sitting MPs and MLAs declared cases related to crimes against women in their election affidavits, with West Bengal having the highest number of lawmakers facing such cases, according to a recent report by a poll rights body. West Bengal tops the list with 25 sitting MPs and MLAs facing charges related to crimes against women, followed by Andhra Pradesh with 21 and Odisha with 17, according to the report that comes under the ongoing nationwide protests. BJP tops the list with 54 MPs and MLAs facing charges of crime against women, and Congress follows with 23. It would be more appropriate if the law takes its course to prove or clear those of charges by putting them before the fast track so that people's trust on them can be delivered on its own merits.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Madam - Today, we are facing a serious threat in the form of youth unemployment, which is hindering India's long-term development and growth. It stresses the need to tackle this problem for sustainable economic development. A few announcements have been made in the recent budget to address the issue of the job crisis in India. The key factors responsible for the employment cri-

Chalk vs cheese!



This relates to your edit "Surging Ahead" (Aug.24). Words, they say, are the dress of thoughts. And it is by their words that Americans are today judging Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. Trump's utterances are akin to Modi's in the last lap of the 2024 elections when he neither had issues nor proper words to bash the Opposition with. He spoke like one cornered and defeated, rather than one who was optimistic of winning the election. In the end, his "mutton,

is are outdated labor laws acting as disincentives for large-scale employment. The government's past efforts to enhance private investment have mainly been focused on increasing production activities rather than creating jobs. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the share of unemployed youth in the total unemployed population was 82.9% in 2022. The government of India should consider increasing industrialization and investment in agriculture, as it can create more job opportunities and boost the productivity of the overall nation.

Neha Tomar | Ujjain

PROTECT TEMPLE LANDS

Madam - In the state of Andhra Pradesh, many temple lands have been illegally occupied and used for unnecessary constructions. Due to this, the temples are not able to conduct their puja programs properly. Strict measures should be taken to prevent land encroachment.

mughal and mangalsutra" rants did not resonate even with those aligned with the BJP. In the fight for the US' presidency, Trump is not coming out trumps with his all too palpable lies, slanderous remarks at Kamala and his fist-pumping which is not helping him or his party to take the battle into the 'enemy' lines. Poor leadership is on full display, with Trump seemingly tilting at the windmills. In contrast, Kamala has shown much grace, sense and sensibility as she speaks about issues rather than engaging with Trump in a shouting match. Trump already has the baggage of making the USA a laughing stock of the world with his open calls for violence and questioning institutions that constitute America's bedrock of democracy. As the hour of reckoning approaches, it is becoming increasingly clear that it's going to be chalk Vs cheese, and that there are no fence-sitters this time.

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

There should be important laws and regulations for the protection of lands. Such laws need to be framed and strictly enforced. Special ordinances should also be framed to protect temple lands. People's cooperation is very important for the protection of temple lands. Conservation of lands is possible if temples, their administrators and local people work together. All necessary measures regarding protection of lands can be taken by deputing specially trained personnel to protect temple lands. By recording land status and other details in digital form, illegal encroachments can be detected quickly. It is good for conservation of lands.

Protection of temple lands means protection of spiritual, cultural and social rights. Hence, it is imperative that the government, local institutions, and people work together.

Appanna Gonapa | Visakhapatnam

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

ALL WORK AND NO SPORTS MAKES YOU DULL

Sports are essential for achieving physical and mental balance to have wholesome life



SAKSHI SETHI

The question of whether India is overly focused on work and less on sports is a valid concern, especially in a country where academic and professional success is often prioritized over physical activities. In many Indian families, there is a strong emphasis on academics and securing stable, well-paying jobs. However, this focus often overshadows the importance of sports, which sometimes are viewed as extracurricular activities rather than potential career paths. Despite living in the 21st century, the competitive nature of academic exams, such as the IIT-JEE, NEET, IIFT and various public service exams, place enormous pressure on students to excel in academics and as a result, sports often end up taking a backseat during the crucial educational years.



There is no denying the fact that sports teach valuable life skills such as teamwork, leadership, discipline and resilience, which are beneficial in both personal as well as professional life. Today, if we look back, India's journey in the Olympics has been marked by significant achievements, challenges and a growing presence in various sports disciplines be it archery, weightlifting, badminton, athletics and the list goes on and on. Increasing media coverage of a diverse range of sports beyond cricket has helped in promoting other sports. Moreover, sports have proved to be a powerful tool for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. They bridge divides, foster understanding, and create opportunities for personal and collective growth as can be seen in the 2024 Olympics being held in Paris. Enhancing sports in India

requires a multi-faceted approach that involves government support, private-sector investment, grassroots development and public engagement. By addressing these areas, India can unlock its vast potential in sports, leading to greater national pride, improved public health and economic benefits which even include initiatives to encourage female participation thereby providing equal opportunities, safety assurance and challenging societal norms that restrict women's involvement in sports. Moreover, sports can be adapted for individuals of all abilities thereby promoting inclusivity for people with disabilities. This will help not only in breaking down barriers but ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Sports can be a tool for conflict resolution, providing a neutral ground where individuals or groups in conflict can engage constructively. It even teaches important life skills such as leadership, resilience and teamwork. These skills are transferable to other areas of life, contributing to personal development and societal harmony. Programs that use sports for peacebuilding have been successful in areas of conflict around the world. International sports events such as the Olympics often serve as platforms for diplomacy and dialogue between nations, helping to ease tensions and promote global peace. While there has traditionally been a strong focus on academics and work in India, there is a growing recognition of the importance of sports.

However, for sports to gain equal footing, there needs to be a cultural shift, increased investment and better integration of sports into daily life. By promoting a balanced approach that values both work and sports, India can and will foster a healthier, more active and well-rounded society. Achieving this balance involves effective time management, prioritization and a shift in mindset that values both mental and physical well-being.

(The writer is an educator; views expressed are personal)

How feasible is the goal of \$5 trillion economy by 2025



B K JHA

Can India truly sustain such high growth rates, or do these figures oversimplify the complex realities of its socio-political landscape?



In any discussion involving economists, a common saying goes, "When six economists gather and deliberate, there will be seven views." This adage humorously reflects the diversity of opinions that often arises in economic discourse. While economists are inclined to project growth through metrics like GDP, inflation, and depreciation rates, these projections sometimes oversimplify the complexities of real-world politics and societal dynamics. Indeed, even the most well-reasoned economic forecasts can falter when confronted with the unpredictable nature of political realities and the broader socio-economic context. Economists from the Reserve Bank of India, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, other big financial institutions, and even our government-serving prominent experts arrive at different projections of India's growth story. Going by the latest two projections, Krishnamurthy Venkata Subramanian, the former Chief Economic Adviser to the Narendra Modi government and current Executive Director for India at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) says India will be reaching a \$55 trillion economy by 2047. Subramanian's projection of a \$55 trillion economy appears optimistic, especially when juxtaposed with Ernst & Young's prediction of \$26 trillion by 2047. At this point, it is difficult to say whose projection is realistic given the very dynamic nature of the Indian economy where several socio-economic and political forces are at work simultaneously. Subramanian has made a bold claim in his new book, India @100: Envisioning Tomorrow's Economic Powerhouse. Released recently by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal at a Special Session organized by ASSOCHAM in New Delhi, the book envisions India reaching a \$55 trillion economy by 2047. Subramanian's proposition, while ambitious, is grounded in a comprehensive analysis of India's economic trajectory and the policies required to sustain high growth rates. It is not difficult to find the economic rationale behind such an ambitious projection, considering India's historical inflation rates, currency depreciation, and recent economic policies. He rightly emphasizes that achieving this target hinges on maintaining a real growth rate of 8% and an inflation rate of around 5%.



SINCE 2014, NEW FIRM CREATION IN INDIA HAS SURGED, ESTABLISHING THE COUNTRY AS THE THIRD-LARGEST ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM GLOBALLY. ENTREPRENEURSHIP NOT ONLY DRIVES PRODUCTIVITY IN NEW FIRMS BUT ALSO COMPELS INCUMBENT FIRMS TO INNOVATE

Historically, the depreciation of the Indian rupee against the dollar has averaged between 3% and 3.5%, primarily due to India's higher inflation rates. Subramanian notes that before the adoption of inflation targeting in 2016, India's inflation averaged above 7%, necessitating higher depreciation rates. However, with inflation targeting and subsequent economic stability, India's inflation rate has moderated to around 5%, even amid global economic shocks like COVID-19 and the Ukraine war. The rule of 72—a simple formula to estimate the doubling time of an investment—to project India's economic growth may have some limitations. Subramanian posits that if India's real growth rate remains at 7% and inflation at 5%, the nominal growth rate in rupee terms would be 12%. Accounting for a historical depreciation rate of 3%, the dollar-denominated growth rate would be around 9%, doubling the economy every eight years. This would place India's GDP at \$26 trillion by 2047. However, Subramanian argues that with improved inflation targeting, resulting in lower inflation and depreciation rates, India could achieve a nominal growth rate of 13% in rupee terms and 12% in dollar terms. This would lead to the economy doubling every six years, reaching the \$55 trillion mark by 2047.

To many economists and experts, these projections seem unreasonable as it is very difficult to predict 20 years of macroeconomic environment and political realities. Political stability would be a growth driver certainly but if India's current stable coalition

government loses its strength the entire economic journey would face a difficult path. Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal may disagree as while releasing the book launch, he also emphasized that the target appears realistic due to the current political stability in India. He noted that even in a coalition government, the ability to make bold decisions has been a key factor in driving economic reforms. Goyal highlighted that political stability, particularly with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) maintaining a dominant position, provides a conducive environment for long-term economic planning. He pointed out that most seats the BJP lost in the last general elections were by margins of less than 30,000 votes, suggesting a strong underlying support base. This political backdrop, according to Goyal, is essential for sustaining bold economic reforms over the next two decades and beyond. It is widely admitted that achieving these ambitious targets requires sound economic policies, particularly those that promote formalization, innovation, and entrepreneurship. India's informal sector, which constitutes a significant portion of the economy, is far less productive than the formal sector. Enhancing formalization through digital infrastructure and regulatory reforms could substantially boost productivity. Additionally, the importance of entrepreneurship and innovation. Since 2014, new firm creation in India has surged, establishing the country as the third-largest entrepreneurial ecosystem globally. Entrepreneurship not only drives productivity in new firms but also compels incumbent firms to innovate, leading to overall economic growth. A key pillar of Subramanian's vision is ethical wealth creation, which he believes

is essential for fostering a large, prosperous middle class. He refutes the notion that wealth creation and employment are opposing forces, citing examples from his personal experiences and the broader economy. Wealth creators, he argues, generate significant employment and pay higher wages, contributing to overall economic welfare. Emphasis on ethical wealth creation stems from past instances of crony capitalism, which stifled economic growth and led to systemic inefficiencies. By promoting a transparent and fair business environment, India can ensure that wealth creation benefits a broader spectrum of society, thereby enhancing social and economic inclusion. The claim of a \$55 trillion economy may be viewed by some economists as hypothetical, given the complexities of global and domestic economic landscapes. Nevertheless, India's inherent economic strengths and resilience could indeed support the realization of the India@100 vision. Despite the slowing pace of globalization, geo-political tensions, and other unseen negative forces could pose significant threats to India's growth trajectory. Nonetheless, with the right policies, particularly those that encourage domestic investment and exports, India can navigate these challenges and sustain high growth rates, controlled inflation, prudent currency management, and robust economic policies that foster innovation, formalization, and ethical wealth creation. As India stands on the cusp of a new economic era, these pillars will be crucial in shaping its journey toward becoming a global economic powerhouse.

(The author is a senior journalist. Views expressed are personal)

Building the foundation for the future: The struggles of adolescent girls in slums

Despite government initiatives, the young girls are often deprived of education facilities as they have to work and shoulder domestic responsibilities

In Narrow lanes of Baba Ramdev Nagar, a slum in Jaipur, 12-year-old Pooja (name changed) cradles her three-year-old brother while her mother Sharda cooks nearby. Pooja obediently runs back and forth fetching water and other necessities as her mother instructs.



HARSHALI NEELKANTI ZALKE

In contrast, her 8-year-old brother plays undisturbed. The scene takes a poignant turn when a friend of Pooja's, returning from school, stops by. Pooja's eyes light up as they discuss school, revealing her longing for education. But when asked why Pooja isn't attending school, Sharda interjects, "If she goes to school, who will look after the children?" Pooja's dreams seem to slip further from her grasp.

Sharda and her husband, daily wage labourers, are among the many families in Baba Ramdev Nagar, a slum of over 500 people. Predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Castes and Tribes, including Lohars (blacksmiths), Jogis, Kambliyas, and daily labourers, these families have migrated from remote rural areas of Rajasthan, driven by the hope of better employment opportunities in

the city. While some families have settled permanently, others migrate seasonally, depending on the availability of work. However, the migration process and the economic hardships it brings take the greatest toll on the education of children, particularly girls. The struggle to make ends meet often forces families to prioritize immediate survival over long-term investments like education. In these situations, girls bear the brunt of the burden. The economic strain on the household disproportionately affects girls compared to boys, stunting not only their education but also their physical and mental development. Another story echoes Pooja's in this slum—14-year-old

Asha (name changed), the eldest of four siblings. With her parents working as scrap dealers, Asha is left to care for her siblings and manage the household. On days when her mother cannot work, Asha steps in. Despite her strong desire to learn, Asha hasn't seen the inside of a classroom since fifth grade. Her education, like that of many girls in the slum, halted as she took on responsibilities at home. An elderly resident, Kanti, questions, "If the girl goes to school, who will take care of the house and the younger siblings?" Yet, she remains silent on why these responsibilities aren't placed on the boys. Akhilesh Mishra, a social worker who has been active in the slum for eight years, points out, "There is



still a lack of awareness about educating girls in urban slums like Baba Ramdev Nagar. Economic challenges and a lack of social consciousness about the importance of education lead parents to prioritize income over

schooling, often dragging children into child labor." He adds that although the government has launched programs to promote girls' education, the distance girls in Baba Ramdev Nagar maintain from school prevents

them from benefiting. IndiaSpend's report highlights a concerning trend: while primary school dropout rates for girls in 2021-22 were 1.35%, this figure jumped to 12.25% at the secondary level. The report underscores the urgent need for not just policy implementation but also grassroots awareness. Societal awareness is critical to ensuring girls' education is valued as highly as boys'. The struggle for education is most pronounced for adolescent girls, particularly in urban poverty-stricken areas like Baba Ramdev Nagar. Though some urban areas are beginning to reduce barriers to education, the girls in this slum continue to fight for their right to learn.

In Baba Ramdev Nagar, the pursuit of education for girls like Pooja and Asha faces formidable obstacles. Economic hardships and entrenched societal norms prioritize immediate survival over long-term education, leaving many girls out of school. Despite government initiatives, the gap in educational attainment remains wide due to factors such as child labor and domestic responsibilities disproportionately shouldered by girls. Addressing these challenges is crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty and securing a brighter future for these young girls.

(The writer is a grassroots worker from Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Charkha Features)

Despite regime change, Dhaka's traffic facing chaos due to sporadic protests

PTI n DHAKA

Dhaka's roads, known for its notorious traffic, have become more chaotic as sporadic protests by various organisations have led to severe congestion, leaving commuters stranded and scrambling for alternative routes.

On Monday morning, rickshaw pullers blocked the Shahbagh intersection to demand a ban on battery-operated auto rickshaws and other issues, stopping all traffic on nearby roads. The protest began around 10:30 a.m.

The rickshaw pullers protesting at Shahbagh claimed that autorickshaw drivers were charging too little-Tk20 (approx Rs 14) instead of the standard Tk50 (approx Rs 35)-from passengers, which meant they weren't getting any business. They also pointed out that autorickshaws, which previously operated in the alleys, now run on main roads, ignoring traffic rules and causing traffic jams and accidents.

This situation has worsened the already chaotic traffic and led to a shortage of public transportation options for commuters.

On Sunday, the city's traffic came to a standstill in key locations including the High Court, Motsho Bhaban, Shahbagh, Science Lab, and Dhanmondi. Protesters took to the streets in these areas to voice their demands, further aggravating the already notorious traffic situation in Dhaka.

Many commuters found themselves abandoning their vehicles and walking to their destinations due to the prolonged congestion.

"I was stuck in traffic for hours. After crossing Shahbagh and reaching the High Court area, my vehicle



came to a halt. I had no choice but to get out and continue on foot," said Rakibul Hasan, a commuter travelling from Dhanmondi to Paltan. His experience is a testament to the widespread disruptions faced by many in the city.

In 2023, Dhaka was ranked the fifth worst city in the world for traffic congestion in Numbeo's Traffic Index, up from ninth place in 2022, with the average one-way travel time increasing from 61 minutes to 57.8 minutes.

Adding to the congestion, a programme by the Ansars, a volunteer security force, led to significant traffic jams around Purana Paltan, Bijoy Nagar, Gulistan, and Segunbagicha. The disruption extended to areas like Banglamotor, Kawran Bazar, and Farmgate, creating a ripple effect throughout Dhaka's road network.

"The protests are constant and sporadic, making it nearly impossible to predict traffic conditions from one day to the next," said Ajijul Ahmed, another frustrated commuter.

"It feels like every few hours there's a new roadblock or demonstration, and it's causing a lot of inconvenience for people trying to go about their daily lives," he said.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has been struggling to manage the traffic chaos. A senior official of traffic police said various organisations have been holding programmes and sit-ins leading to road blockades and traffic.

"On Sunday there were a lot of processions and also sit-ins by the Ansar group. Demonstrations and protests by several groups and communities in various pockets have been a regular affair for the last few weeks. That has led to a lot of traffic congestion," a traffic police official said.

With one side of the road closed, traffic pressure has shifted to surrounding areas. Although we have advised using alternative routes, drivers are often disregarding this, resulting in additional congestion.

The reopening of the metro

services, which had been closed due to the violent anti-government protests, has somewhat alleviated the strain on other modes of transportation.

However, the relief has been limited as continuous and sporadic protests continue to disrupt traffic flow.

Commuters who previously relied on the metro are now facing the dual challenge of navigating congested roads and dealing with the unpredictability of protest-related disruptions.

With the metro back in operation, many students and office-goers have returned to using this mode of transport. However, the impact of the prolonged protests is still felt. The return of metro services has not fully resolved the traffic issues, as the ongoing demonstrations continue to create bottlenecks and delays.

The economic impact of these disruptions has been significant. The cost of commuting has increased due to higher fares for cabs and auto rickshaws, and the delays have affected

business operations and daily routines.

Middle-class families and students, already strained by rising costs, find themselves further burdened by the need to navigate through the traffic chaos.

"There is a problem of inflation in Bangladesh and the ongoing traffic crisis has only aggravated the situation for middle-class people like us who have to depend on public transport. In several places cabs and auto-rickshaws charge us more than the normal rates," Sukumar Mitra, an employee at a three-star hotel here.

Both Shahbagh and the adjoining Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) area, close to Dhaka University, were central to the protests that led to the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government on August 5. Hasina fled to India amid escalating violence and unrest, leaving a volatile situation in her wake.

As Dhaka grapples with the ongoing and sporadic protests, the city's infrastructure and public services are under severe strain.

Commuters like Sadikul Hasan and Ajijul Ahmed are left to navigate a constantly shifting landscape of roadblocks and delays, hoping for a resolution to the unrest that has so profoundly impacted their daily lives.

The city's traffic woes, exacerbated by the protests, highlight the broader issues facing Dhaka's transportation system and the ongoing struggle for stability in the capital.

After unprecedented anti-government protests, which reached a crescendo on August 5, Hasina resigned as prime minister and fled the country. She landed in India on August 5 and is currently staying there.

Bangabandhu to toppled statue: Mujibur Rahman's contested legacy post Bangladesh upheaval

PTI n DHAKA

When a popular uprising in Bangladesh brought down the Sheikh Hasina-led government, college student Alif Hossain felt the deposed prime minister got what she deserved, but the toppling of the Dhaka statue of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by protesters on August 5 left him deeply disturbed.

"It was just wrong. He fought for the liberation of our country, he is the Father of the Nation, our Bangabandhu, how could he be so disgraced in the fit of anger," the Dhaka-based student rued.

The legacy of Rahman or Mujib, as he was popularly called, lives on in the names of streets, institutions, public landmarks, his fiery speeches made during the struggle for independence, the face of Bangladeshi currency, and till recently in statues and murals.

The unprecedented protests precipitated the fall of the previous government as Hasina fled to India on August 5 leaving behind a country in political turmoil.

In the wake of her departure, she courted even more public opprobrium, and her father's legacy too became a prime target as anti-government protesters vented their ire on Rahman's towering statue at Bijoy Sarani in the heart of Dhaka and pulled it down, with images being broadcast on local and international media channels.

Public murals depicting Bangabandhu ('Friend of Bengal') — a sobriquet that characterised the legacy of Bangladesh's first president — were defaced, and his house in Dhanmondi where he and most of his family members were assassinated on August 15, 1975 and which was later turned into a memorial, was badly damaged by protesters.

In the Dhaka University area, a series of wall panels on the front side of the building of the famous Teacher Student Centre (TSC) bears old mosaic panels depicting legendary personalities and historic moments like the signing of the Instrument of Surrender of Pakistani forces in Dhaka on December 16, 1971, which led to the birth of the new nation of Bangladesh.

The mosaic panel depicting Rahman has been defaced, his face blackened.

On the Dhaka University campus, a huge mural on a wall depicting Bangabandhu was defaced with graffiti scrawled all over the artwork.

Many artworks made on public walls in the university area after August 5 mock Hasina and her fleeing to India and extol the public resistance culminating in what many Bangladeshis now call the 'Victory Day' of '36 July'.

From being revered by countrymen to his images and memorials being disgraced, Rahman's legacy is now much contested in the post-upheaval society of Bangladesh.

The 'Gen Z' as the young protesters are being labelled by many, were born after the Liberation War of 1971, and political observers say their idea of Bangladesh is "different" from what the pre-1971 generations may have had.

Hasina, 76, resigned as the prime minister on August 5 amid mass protests against her



government. The protests, which started last month initially with a demand to end the quota system that reserved 30 per cent of government jobs for the families of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's War of Independence against Pakistan in 1971, later turned into anti-government demonstrations.

Abdul Moyeen Khan, a senior leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and a former Cabinet minister of Bangladesh criticised Hasina and accused her of "destroying" the several institutions of the country which resulted in this "revolt by students" that was later supported by the general masses.

"If she was a real leader, she wouldn't have led the country to drive to that stage," Khan told PTI in an interview in Dhaka on Thursday.

Asked if the demigration of Rahman's legacy is undermining the 1971 liberation war, he said, "No".

"It is a continuous process, you have to formulate and reformulate, the human society doesn't remain static at any place. It (recent movement) is not undermining anything," Khan said.

But, a section of Bangladeshis feels a palpable fear that "Mujib's legacy may be slowly erased or whittled down", an argument countered by protesters who claim that "he was given undue space in history by the Awami League government" and "many controversial facets of his life have not been told to people".

Alif Hossain, who studies at a college in Dhaka, however, pleads for a "more mature" approach to looking at history.

"In retrospect, we cannot go back and start attacking Mujibur Rahman's legacy. History should not be erased even if it is contested. His daughter (Sheikh Hasina) did wrong things and faced consequences. But, toppling statues and defacing Bangabandhu's murals is just plain wrong," he told PTI here.

Opposite the TSC is the famous Raju Memorial — an iconic sculpture mounted on a raised platform — located in a traffic roundabout that faces

the Suhrawardy Udyan, a national memorial which marks the spot where Rahman had delivered the historic March 7, 1971 speech during the independence struggle.

On two Dhaka Metro piers, one on each side of the Raju Memorial, huge murals of Rahman and Hasina were earlier painted. During the agitation, both artworks were defaced by anti-government protesters, and still stand sullied, making a visible dent in Mujib's legacy in Dhaka.

The Bangabandhu National Stadium, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Novo Theatre, and the Bangabandhu Avenue in Dhaka, all carry the name of the founding father of Bangladesh.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Novo Theatre, inaugurated in September 2004, was established as a non-formal science educational institution to "eradicate superstitions and blind faith from the society and to inculcate positive scientific temper in the mind of people, especially among the students", reads a description on its website. The headquarters of the Awami League is located on Bangabandhu Avenue. The party, formed in 1949, under Rahman had led the struggle for independence of Bangladesh. Its offices were also targeted by anti-government protesters recently.

Rahman was born in 1920 in undivided India. Bangladesh evolved from Bengal presidency to East Bengal to East Pakistan and eventually as a separate nation born in 1971. According to a profile of Rahman on the Dhaka University website, "he is regarded as 'Jatir Janak' or 'Jatir Pita' (both meaning 'Father of the Nation') of Bangladesh. The then Hasina government had marked his birth centenary by declaring 2020-21 as 'Mujib Year'.

In the highly charged environment that Bangladesh is in right now on the back of anti-government protests, there is an element of uncertainty around the future of Mujib's legacy, but his legend shall live on.

Greek-flagged tanker burning after Houthi attacks, but no sign of oil spill

AP n DUBAI

A Greek-flagged tanker repeatedly attacked by Yemen's Houthi rebels in the Red Sea remains ablaze but hasn't sprung a major oil leak in the waterway, a European Union naval command said Monday.

The attack on the Sounion marks the most serious assault in weeks by the rebels, who continue to target shipping through the Red Sea corridor over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. The attacks have disrupted the \$1 trillion in trade that typically passes through the region, as well as halting some aid shipments to conflict-ravaged Sudan and Yemen.

Images published by the EU's Operation Aspidos, whose mission is to protect shipping in the area, showed smoke rising from multiple points along the Sounion's deck and its bridge Sunday. Fires could be seen burning in at least nine different locations on the deck



of the vessel, which had been loaded with 150,000 tons of Iraqi crude oil — roughly 1 million barrels. Some flames appeared near hatches of the tanker's oil tanks.

"So far there are no obvious signs of an oil spill," the EU mission said. The Sounion "is both a navigational and an imminent environmental hazard. This situation underlines that these kinds of attacks pose not only a threat against the freedom of

navigation but also to the lives of seafarers, the environment, and subsequently the life of all citizens living in that region."

The U.S. State Department similarly warned about the ecological danger to the Red Sea, home to coral reefs and other natural habitats and wildlife. Footage showing explosions on board the Sounion released earlier by the Houthis and later analyzed by The Associated Press suggested that the rebels again

boarded an abandoned vessel and rigged it with explosives in an attempt to sink it.

"While the crew has been evacuated, the Houthis appear determined to sink the ship and its cargo into the sea," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement Saturday.

"Through these attacks, the Houthis have made clear they are willing to destroy the fishing industry and regional ecosystems that Yemenis and other communities in the region rely on for their livelihoods, just as they have undermined the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to the region through their reckless attacks."

For their part, the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel highlighted the EU's photographs and described the Sounion as being targeted for "punishment to the company that owns the ship for violating the decision to ban access to the ports" of Israel.

The Sounion came under repeated attack last week by the Houthis. A French destroyer operating as part of Operation Aspidos later rescued the Sounion's crew of 25 Filipinos and Russians, as well as four private security personnel, and took them to nearby Djibouti.

The Houthis have targeted more than 80 vessels with missiles and drones since the war in Gaza started in October. They seized one vessel and sank two in the campaign that also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by a U.S.-led coalition in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets.

The rebels maintain that they target ships linked to Israel, the U.S. or the U.K. To force an end to Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the conflict, including some bound for Iran.

PTI n SINGAPORE

Singapore's Indian-origin leader of the Opposition Pritam Singh has applied to have his case heard in the High Court instead of the State Courts.

Singh, 48, faces two charges of lying to a parliamentary committee that was convened in November 2021 to look into the lying controversy involving his party's former MP Raeesah Khan. Khan has resigned from Parliament.

He applied to have the case heard in the High Court on Monday, according to a Channel News Asia report.

Singh's lawyers, Andre Darius Jumabhoy and Aristotile Emmanuel Eng, relied on the case of former transport minister S. Iswaran which has been rescheduled for hearing in the High Court next month.

Citing the Iswaran case, the lawyers said in the arguments that there was also "strong public interest" for Singh's case to be heard in the High Court.

This is the first prosecution of its kind, the Channel cited Jumabhoy as having said.

"This case goes to the very essence of our democracy, and this is not

Singapore Indian-origin Opposition leader seeks High Court trial over alleged lies to Parliament

my characterisation," said the lawyer. He referred to a speech that Leader of the House, Minister Indraneel Rajah, made in February 2022 to refer Singh's case to the public prosecutor.

She said: "Fundamentally, the motions are about safeguarding the essence of democracy - our democracy - and preserving its most vital and essential characteristic, which is trust. They are about the need to ensure the integrity of our institutions and Parliament in particular, and about the confidence Singaporeans can have in their elected representatives."

Jumabhoy said the minister's "eloquent summary" touches on what is at stake, and said it seems "almost churlish" in such circumstances to say Singh's case does not warrant a transfer to the High Court.

The lawyer said he was not denigrating the State Courts or attempting to insult the State

Courts' capabilities by providing reasons for why the High Court is better suited to hear the case.

If not, every such application would involve some form of disparagement and leave the application "entirely redundant", said Jumabhoy.

He said the prosecution appeared to be taking a position that Singh's application was "offensive" in and of itself, using the term "scandalous" and saying the defence is questioning the integrity and independence of the State Court judges.

"It's not only the resources that are being brought to bear against what I say is a straightforward application, it's the tenor of the (prosecution's) submissions that are troubling," said Jumabhoy.

Justice Hoo Sheau Peng, who heard the motion, said there seems to be an implication that the State Courts and their judges are "not well-placed to hear this case" because of the nature of the case.

fair and impartial trial cannot be had in any State Court, that some question of law of unusual difficulty is likely to arise, or that it is expedient for the ends of justice or is required by the Criminal Procedure Code or any other law to transfer the case.

Ang explained that Singh's lawyers had written to the prosecution to ask the prosecution to exercise its powers to transfer the case to the High Court.

The prosecution replied to say they were "unable to accede to this request" and did not agree to do so.

At this point, Singh and his lawyers should have applied for a judicial review of the prosecution's decision, but instead, they filed the criminal motion under Section 239 of the Criminal Procedure Code, said Ang.

"There is nothing to be gained in law at least by the applicant relying and referring to Iswaran's case, said Ang.

"Instead ... There are all manner of attempts to refer to Iswaran's case as if the matter is the case, the facts are analogous, there's the same level of public interest, etc. And we say this is really a backdoor attempt to review the public prosecutor's discretion," said Ang.

Jumabhoy said the trial judge, whoever he is, will have to grapple with important personalities in the Singapore context, and this is very different from the usual run-of-the-mill cases that come before the court.

He said the defence did not intend to make any implication in relation to the State Court judges. "I think in fairness to ourselves, if we intended to make that point, we would have come out and said it," he said.

The prosecution, which Jumabhoy characterised as "something of a star-studded line-up", comprised a four-member team led by Deputy Attorney-General and Senior Counsel Ang Cheng Hock.

Ang pointed out that Iswaran's case was referred to the High Court under a different section.

Singh's application was made under Section 239 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which states that the High Court may order the transfer for three reasons: That a



fair and impartial trial cannot be had in any State Court, that some question of law of unusual difficulty is likely to arise, or that it is expedient for the ends of justice or is required by the Criminal Procedure Code or any other law to transfer the case.

Ang explained that Singh's lawyers had written to the prosecution to ask the prosecution to exercise its powers to transfer the case to the High Court.

The prosecution replied to say they were "unable to accede to this request" and did not agree to do so.

At this point, Singh and his lawyers should have applied for a judicial review of the prosecution's decision, but instead, they filed the criminal motion under Section 239 of the Criminal Procedure Code, said Ang.

"There is nothing to be gained in law at least by the applicant relying and referring to Iswaran's case, said Ang.

"Instead ... There are all manner of attempts to refer to Iswaran's case as if the matter is the case, the facts are analogous, there's the same level of public interest, etc. And we say this is really a backdoor attempt to review the public prosecutor's discretion," said Ang.

TAIWAN DRILLS WITH ANTI-AMPHIBIOUS LANDING MISSILES TO DETER CHINA

AP n PINGTING (TAIWAN)

Taiwan drilled Monday with anti-amphibious landing missiles as part of strategy to remain mobile and deadly in an attempt to deter an attack from China, which claims the democratically ruled island of Taiwan as its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary. Troops fired tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missiles known as TOW 2A missiles mounted on M1167 Humvees at floating targets off a beach in Pingtung County during the two days of exercises. The area on Taiwan's southern tip faces both toward the Taiwan Strait and China, and toward the Pacific Ocean. The missiles are among the most effective and popular anti-tank weapons in the world and a key component in what some experts say is Taiwan's best strategy to resist a potential Chinese invasion. China has ramped up its military threat in recent years based on its vast edge in numbers of warplanes, ships and missiles. Taiwan bought 1,700 units of the newer TOW 2B system from the U.S., the last of



which are due to be delivered by the end of the year. The two days of testing will also gauge the more sophisticated TOW 2B's interoperability with the TOW 2A and its ability to acquire targets at night, the Defense Ministry said. Advocates of such weaponry argue that these more mobile systems stand the best chance in an asymmetric battle against a much larger Chinese force. China has the world's largest standing military, but most of Taiwan is composed of steep mountains, mud flats and heavily built-up urban areas poorly suited to such a conventional force. Others have argued Taiwan needs more warplanes and surface ships. China sends warplanes and warships near Taiwan on a near-daily basis in an attempt to intimidate its citizens and degrade the island's defenses. In response, Taiwan has extended the period of national military service to one year, building its own submarines and importing sophisticated new equipment from the U.S. The vast majority of Taiwanese favor the current status of de-facto independence for their island, which separated from mainland China amid civil war in 1949.



Trump is expected to tie Harris to chaotic Afghanistan war withdrawal in speech to National Guard

AP n WASHINGTON

In a speech Monday to National Guard soldiers in Michigan, former President Donald Trump is expected to promote his foreign policy record and the Vice President Kamala Harris to one of the Biden administration's lowest points: the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years of war. The speech coincides with the third anniversary of the Aug. 26, 2021, suicide bombing at Hamid Karzai International Airport, which killed 13 U.S. Service members and more than 100 Afghans. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack. Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, is set to appear at 2 p.m. Eastern time at the National Guard Association of the United States' 146th General Conference & Exhibition in Detroit. Since Biden ended his reelection bid, Trump has been zeroing in on Harris, now the Democratic presidential nominee, and her roles in foreign policy decisions. He specifically highlights the vice president's statements that she was the last person in the room before Biden made the decision on Afghanistan. "She bragged that she would be the last person in the room, and she was. She was the last person in the room with Biden when the two of them decided to pull the troops out of Afghanistan," he said last week in a North Carolina rally. "She had the final vote. She had the final say, and she was all for it." The relatives of some of the 13 American servicemembers who were killed appeared on stage at the Republican National Convention last month, saying Biden had never publicly named their loved ones. The display was an implicit response to allegations that Trump doesn't respect veterans and had previously referred to slain World War II soldiers as suckers and losers - accusations denied by Trump. Under Trump, the United States signed a peace agreement with the Taliban that was aimed at ending America's longest war and bringing U.S. troops home. Biden later pointed to that agreement as he sought to deflect blame for the Taliban overrunning Afghanistan, saying it bound him to withdraw troops and set the stage for the chaos that engulfed the country. A Biden administration review of the withdrawal acknowledged that the evacuation of Americans and allies from Afghanistan should have started sooner, but attributed the delays to the Afghan government and military, and to U.S. Military and intelligence community assessments. The top two U.S. Generals who oversaw the evacuation said the administration inadequately planned for the withdrawal. The nation's top-ranking military officer at the time, then-Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley, told lawmakers earlier this year he had urged Biden to keep a residual force of 2,500 forces to give backup. Instead, Biden decided to keep a much smaller force of 650 that would be limited to securing the U.



Israel-Hamas war latest: Iran's Foreign Minister vows definitive retaliation against Israel

AP n JERUSALEM

Iran's foreign minister again has referenced his country's planned retaliation over the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. Abbas Araghchi said late Sunday he made the remark in a conversation with Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani by telephone. "Iran reaction to Israeli terrorist attack in Tehran is definitive, and will be measured & well calculated," Araghchi wrote on the social platform X. "We do not fear escalation, yet do not seek it - unlike Israel." Tajani said in a statement he "called for restraint and to pursue a constructive approach, in order to stop the cycle of military actions in the region, which only risks bringing more suffering." "It is important that Iran exercises moderation towards Hezbollah in order to avert an escalation on the Lebanese-Israeli border, where Italian soldiers of the UNIFIL contingent are operating, and towards the Houthis in order to avoid an increase in tensions in the Red Sea area, where Italy plays a leading role in the (European Union's) Aspidem mission," he said in the statement. Their call came after Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, long backed by Iran, traded heavy fire early Sunday but backed off from sparking a widely feared all-out war. Meanwhile, a round of high-level talks in Cairo meant to bring about a cease-fire and hostage deal to at least temporarily end the 10-month Israel-Hamas war in Gaza ended Sunday without a final agreement, a U.S. Official said. But talks will continue at lower levels in the coming days in an effort to bridge remaining gaps.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the talks, said lower level "working teams" will remain in Cairo to meet with mediators the United States, Qatar and Egypt in hopes of addressing remaining disagreements. The talks included CIA director William Burns and David Barnea, the head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency. A Hamas delegation was briefed by Egyptian and Qatari mediators but did not directly take part in negotiations. **HERE'S THE LATEST:** **Israel says more polio vaccines are delivered to Gaza:** Polio vaccines for more than 1 million people have been delivered to Gaza, Israel's military said Sunday, after the first confirmed case of the disease in the territory in a quarter-century. It was not immediately clear how, or how quickly, the more than 25,000 vials of vaccine would be distributed in Gaza, where ongoing fighting and unrest have challenged humanitarian efforts during more than 10 months of war. Other polio cases are suspected across the largely devastated territory after the virus was detected in wastewater in six different locations in July. Aid groups plan to vaccinate more than 600,000 children under age 10 and have called for an urgent pause in the war to increase vaccinations. The World Health Organization and the United Nations children's agency have said that, at a minimum, a seven-day pause is needed. The U.N. Has aimed to bring 1.6 million doses of polio vaccine into Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians are crowded into tent camps lacking clean water or proper disposal of sewage and garbage.

North Korea shows new drone attacking a target as Seoul and US hold large military exercises

AP n SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised a demonstration of new exploding drones designed to crash into targets and pledged to spur development of such weapons to boost his military's war readiness, state media said Monday. Kim has been flaunting his growing military capabilities amid tensions with Washington and Seoul. North Korean photos of the test showed a white drone with X-shaped tails and wings supposedly crashing into and destroying a target resembling South Korea's main K-2 battle tank. Most combat drones stand off from targets and fire missiles. The test, which state media said took place Saturday, came as the U.S. and South Korean militaries are conducting a large-scale exercise aimed at enhancing their combined capabilities to defend against growing North Korean nuclear threats. The allies said the Ulchi Freedom Shield drills, which continue through Thursday, are focused on enhancing their readiness against North



Korean threats and will also reflect lessons learned from recent armed conflicts. The United States and South Korea also on Monday began a separate amphibious landing drill involving dozens of aircraft and vessels from their navies and marines, including U.S. F-35 fighters and amphibious assault ship USS Boxer. South Korea's military said the Ssangyong Exercise, which will continue through Sept. 7, is aimed at sharpening combat interoperability. North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Saturday's drone test involved various types of drones built to fly different ranges to attack enemy targets on land and sea.

It said the drones flew along various routes before accurately hitting test targets. Kim said global trends in military technologies and modern combat show the importance of drones in war and that the North's military should be equipped with advanced drones "as early as possible." He called for accelerated development and production of various drones that explode on impact, conduct reconnaissance or attack targets underwater, KCNA said. Lee Chang Hyun, spokesperson of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during a briefing that South

Korea's military was closely examining North Korea's drone capabilities but did not provide a detailed assessment. He said without elaborating that the South's military is equipped with systems to detect and intercept such drones. Some analysts suggest the North Korean drones shown in state media photos resemble Russia's Zala Lancet-3 drones, and Lee said the South was looking into the possibility Russia had helped North Korea acquire its drone capability. "We are aware that during the past exchanges between North Korea and Russia that some (drones) were given (to North Korea) as gifts," Lee said. "We would need to analyze various aspects, including whether (North Korea) would have modified to improve their capabilities, or other possibilities." North Korea and Russia have been aligning closely in the face of their separate confrontations with the United States, with Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin holding back-to-back summits in September last year and June.

Protesters against judiciary overhaul plan urge Mexican president to respect democracy

AP n MEXICO CITY

Thousands demonstrated in Mexico's capital Sunday in the latest opposition to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's proposed judicial overhaul and other moves by the governing party that critics say will weaken democratic checks and balances. Throngs of people, many of them striking federal court workers and judges, ended their march outside the Supreme Court building in the heart of the capital, waving flags reading "Judicial independence" and "Respect democracy." "Right now, we're protesting the reforms, but it's not just the reforms," said lawyer Mauricio Espinosa. "Its all of these attacks against the judicial branch and other autonomous bodies. What it does is end up strengthening the executive, the next president." Following big electoral victories in

June by the president's Morena party and its allies, the government has pushed for sweeping changes to Mexico's judicial system, long at odds with López Obrador, a populist who has openly attacked judges and ignored court orders. His proposal includes having judges elected to office, something analysts, judges and international observers fear would stack courts with politically biased judges with little experience. That was the concern for Espinosa, who said judges "will have to raise money to campaign, find someone to have their backs. So their sentences will no longer be 100% independent." The proposed changes would require approval by Mexico's Congress, where the governing coalition has the majority. And electoral authorities on Friday allocated Morena and allied parties 73% of the seats in the lower house of



Congress, though they won a significantly smaller 60% of the vote. That would give the governing bloc the two-thirds majority in Chamber of Deputies needed to push through constitutional changes with little or no compromise. The coalition will be a few seats short

of a two-thirds majority in the Senate, but it could feasibly win the needed votes from a smaller party. While the new legislators don't take office until Sept. 1, a congressional committee on Friday already began pushing forward another contentious initiative - the elimination of seven

autonomous bodies, including the National Institute of Transparency. Morena argues Mexico's independent oversight and regulatory bodies are a waste of money. It says oversight responsibilities should be given to government departments instead, essentially allowing them to police themselves. The collective moves by the president and his party have fuelled concerns about undermining democratic institutions. But for many in the crowds, the overhaul of the judiciary represents the greatest threat. Federal court employees and judges are on strike, the value of the peso has slumped and international financial firms have voiced concerns. At midweek, U.S. Ambassador Ken Salazar warned that electing judges is a "risk" for Mexico's democracy and "threatens the historic commercial relationship" between the two countries.

Gunmen kill 33 bus passengers in Pakistan's restive Balochistan

PTI n KARACHI

Heavily-armed gunmen killed at least 33 people in two separate attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan province on Monday, as insurgent attacks spiked in the restive region. In the first incident, at least 23 people from Pakistan's Punjab province were killed in a targeted attack in Balochistan's Musakhel district after gunmen offloaded them from buses and checked their identities. Senior Superintendent of Police Ayub Khoso said: "The passengers were told to get down from buses and shot dead after being identified from their national ID cards,"

Khoso said. "Most of those killed belonged to southern Punjab and some are from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa suggesting they were killed because of their ethnic background," he added. In another attack, gunmen killed at least 10 people, including four police officers, in the Qalat district also in Balochistan, authorities said. Security sources told Geo News that terrorists attacked multiple sites in Balochistan on the night of August 24 and 25. Khoso said the armed men also set some 12 vehicles on fire on the highway in Musakhel. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), the most active

militant group in the province, claimed responsibility for the attack in Musakhel. President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the attack, Radio Pakistan reported. Expressing grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives in the despicable incident, they prayed for the departed souls and condoled with the bereaved families. Zardari said the brutal killing of innocent people was the killing of the entire humanity and called for the culprits to be brought to justice. The Prime Minister directed the local administration to fully cooperate with the bereaved families and provide



medical aid to the injured. He also directed the law enforcement agencies to immediately investigate the incident. "The terrorists responsible for

this incident will be severely punished," the premier vowed, adding that any kind of terrorism was not acceptable in the country. Both the president and the

prime minister expressed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to eradicate the menace of terrorism. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti strongly condemned the incident of terrorism. He expressed heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the families of those who died in the cowardly act of terrorists. The terrorists and their facilitators will not be able to escape an exemplary end, he said, adding that the Balochistan government will pursue the terrorists. In a separate terrorist attack, a railway bridge was blown up in Bolan's Dozan area, said police. Balochistan is

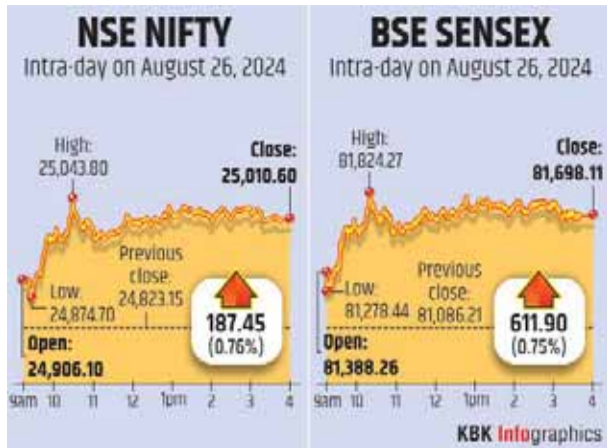
Pakistan's largest province but, although it has more resources than other provinces, it is the least developed. The BLA and other Baloch separatists have intensified attacks on Punjabis and Sinhdhis from elsewhere in Pakistan working in the region. They have also targeted foreign energy firms they accuse of exploiting the region without sharing profits. The attacks come nearly four months after a similar attack targeting people from Punjab. In April, nine passengers were offloaded from a bus near Noshki and shot dead after gunmen checked their ID cards. In October last year, unidentified gunmen fatally

shot six labourers hailing from Punjab in Turbat in Balochistan's Kech district. According to the police, the killings were targeted. All victims belonged to different areas of southern Punjab, suggesting they had been chosen for their ethnic background. A similar incident occurred in 2015 when gunmen killed 20 construction workers and injured three others in a pre-dawn attack on a labourers' camp near Turbat. There were at least 170 militant attacks in Balochistan last year which killed 151 civilians and 114 security personnel, according to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies.

Sensex rallies 600 points

PTI n MUMBAI

Stock market benchmark Sindices Sensex and Nifty surged nearly 1 per cent on Monday, propelled by intense buying in metal, IT and consumer durable stocks amid hopes that the US Federal Reserve will start cutting interest rates soon. Renewed Foreign fund inflows and buying in frontline stocks HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries further bolstered investor sentiment, traders said. Rising for the fifth straight day, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 611.90 points or 0.75 per cent to settle at 81,698.11. During the day, it surged 738.06 points or 0.91 per cent to 81,824.27. A total of 2,189 stocks advanced, while 1,860 declined and 148 remained unchanged on the BSE. The NSE Nifty soared 187.45 points or 0.76 per cent to 25,010.60, registering gains for the eighth session in a row. Among the 30 Sensex firms, HCL Technologies, NTPC, Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra, JSW Steel, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro and Tata Consultancy Services were the biggest



gainers. On the other hand, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, Maruti and Hindustan Unilever were among the laggards. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 0.66 per cent and the smallcap index soared 0.20 per cent. "US Fed has signalled a rate cut in September, reflecting in the decline in US treasury yields and the dollar index, which has led to a rally in global markets despite there being no indication of the size of cuts. Indian markets hit a new high led by a change in FII stance to positive from negative, along

with continued strong DII inflows. "Although the overall trend was positive, large caps outperformed on account of healthy earnings and relatively fair valuation compared to broader markets. IT, Realty, FMCG and Consumption gained on account of improved outlook," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Among the indices, metal surged 2.03 per cent, realty (1.69 per cent), consumer durables (1.43 per cent), IT (1.37 per cent), teck (1.11 per cent) and commodities (0.91

per cent). Telecommunication and services were the laggards. In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended with significant gains on Friday. "Markets kicked off the week on a positive note, gaining over half a per cent, driven by a dovish stance from the US Fed," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,944.48 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.08 per cent to USD 79.87 a barrel. "Optimism was the order of the day as dovish statements by the Fed Chair last week sparked positivity across the globe and also at Dalal Street. Markets shrugged off the recent sluggish trading sessions, as the US Fed chairperson, last week, pointing towards a likely rate cut fuelled a major rally that saw Nifty close above the crucial 25k mark.

RBI constantly working on policies, platforms to make India's financial system strong: Guv Das

PTI n BENGALURU

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday said the central bank is constantly working on policies, systems, and platforms to make the country's financial sector strong, nimble and customer centric. Addressing the RBI@90 Global Conference on 'Digital Public Infrastructure and Emerging Technologies', Das recalled various initiatives being taken by the RBI with regard to Unified Lending Interface (ULI) and Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). The Governor also said that the UPI system has the potential to evolve into a cheaper and quicker alternative to the available channels of cross-border remittances and "a beginning can be made with small value personal remittances as it can be quickly implemented." According to the Economic Survey tabled in Parliament in July, remittances to India, the second largest source of external financing after service exports, are projected to grow at 3.7 per



cent to USD 124 billion in 2024 and at 4 per cent to reach USD 129 billion in 2025. Das said the Reserve Bank of India is looking forward to the journey towards RBI@100 with considerable optimism. "We are constantly working on devising policies, approaches, systems and platforms that will make our financial sector stronger, nimble and customer centric," he said. Speaking on the theme of DPI and emerging technologies, he said over the last decade, the traditional banking system has undergone an unprecedented technological

transformation. By all indications, this process is likely to become even more intense in the coming years, he added. He said DPI spurs market innovation by reducing transaction costs, democratising access, maintaining competition through interoperability, and attracting private capital. Referring to the country's experience, Das said "DPI has enabled India to achieve, in less than a decade, levels of financial inclusion that would have otherwise taken several decades or more". Digital Public Infrastructure refers to basic technology

systems, created mainly in the public sector, which are openly available to users and other developers. India's DPI journey is a unique model, wherein the base technical infrastructure is built, operated and managed in the public sector, while the private sector accesses the DPI to create innovative customer facing services. "The advantage of developing DPI in the public sector is that typically the private sector would be averse to capital investment to create infrastructure with uncertain returns," the Governor said and added that privately created infrastructure may not also be amenable to democratised access or interoperability. The Governor talked about India's advancements in the field of digitalisation of the financial services. He further said Unified Payments Interface (UPI), a real-time payment system, has emerged as a robust, cost-effective and portable retail payment system and is attracting active interest across the globe.

Alembic Pharma gets USFDA nod for generic drug

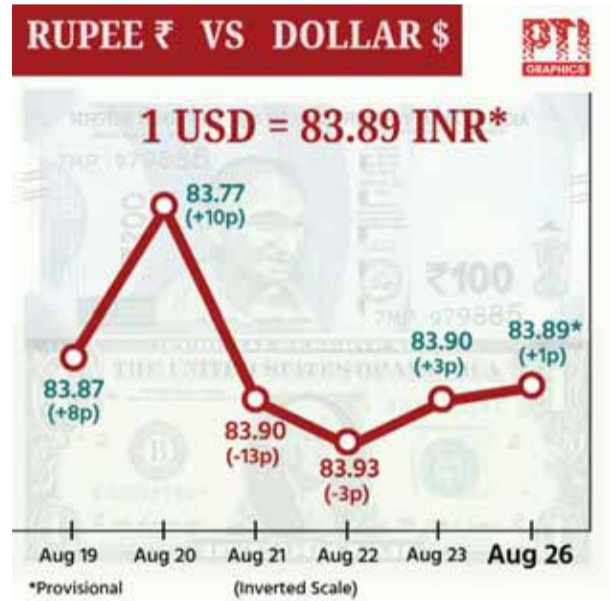
PTI n NEW DELHI

Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Monday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market a generic medication used to treat moderate-to-severe psoriasis of the scalp. The company has received final approval from the US Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) for its abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) for Betamethasone Valerate Foam, the drug firm said in a statement. The approved ANDA is therapeutically equivalent to the reference listed drug product Luxiq Foam (0.12 per cent) of Norvium Bioscience, LLC (Norvium). Betamethasone valerate foam is a topical corticosteroid indicated for relief of the inflammatory and pruritic manifestations of corticosteroid-responsive dermatoses of the scalp.

Rupee settles on flat note, closes 1 paisa higher at 83.89 against US dollar

PTI n MUMBAI

The rupee pared its initial gains and settled for the day on a flat note, rising just 1 paisa to 83.89 (provisional) against the American currency on Monday, weighed down by a surge in crude oil prices. Forex traders said the Indian rupee gained in morning trade on rise in domestic markets and a weak US Dollar. However, a surge in crude oil prices capped sharp gains for the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.83 and touched an intra-day high of 83.80 against the US dollar and a low of 83.91. The domestic currency finally settled at 83.89 (provisional), 1 paisa higher than its previous close. On Friday, the rupee traded in a narrow range and settled higher by 3 paise at 83.90 against the American currency.



Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.07 per cent higher at 100.78. The US dollar had witnessed a sharp correction and fell to the lowest level since July 2023, on dovish comments by Fed Chair Jerome Powell at the Jackson

Hole Symposium. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on risk in global risk sentiments amid dovish Fed speak and rising expectations of a rate cut by the Fed in September. However, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and rising crude oil prices may cap sharp upside," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.92 per cent to USD 79.75 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex advanced 611.90 points, or 0.75 per cent, to close at 81,698.11 points. The Nifty rose 187.45 points, or 0.76 per cent, to 25,010.60 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Friday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 1,944.48 crore, according to exchange data.

Finance Minister-led inter-ministerial panel meets Singapore president, discusses boosting ties

PTI n SINGAPORE

Inter-ministerial delegation led by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday met Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and discussed boosting partnership between the two countries. Both sides discussed boosting the India-Singapore Strategic Partnership by focusing on key areas like digitalisation, green initiatives and skill development. "FM Smt. @nsitharaman appreciated President Mr. @Tharman_S for being a strong proponent of multilateralism through his seminal contribution to developing far-reaching reforms that can enable governments and institutions to deal with 21st century challenges," the finance ministry said in a post on X. During the meeting, Sitharaman expressed gratitude to the Singapore



President for his invaluable contributions as a member of the G20 Expert Group on Strengthening MDBs during India's Presidency in 2023. Along with Sitharaman, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav were present for the meeting. India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable is a unique mechanism established to set a new agenda for India-Singapore bilateral relations. Its inaugural meeting was held in New Delhi in September 2022. This meeting will enable both sides to review various aspects of their strategic partnership and identify new avenues to further elevate and broaden it. The delegation also met Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong earlier during the day. During the interactions, the leaders discussed the need to strengthen partnership and broaden cooperation between the two countries.

Over 23 lakh Govt employees under NPS get option to choose unified pension scheme

PTI n NEW DELHI

The just-announced Unified Pension Scheme for central government employees will be available only for those who are currently subscribers of the New Pension Scheme (NPS), including retirees. The new scheme guarantees employees 50 per cent of their average basic pay over the last 12 months before retirement as a pension for a minimum qualifying service of 25 years against a market returns linked payout under the NPS. According to the scheme approved by the Union Cabinet, the pension will be proportionate for a lesser service period of up to a minimum of 10 years. Also, assured pension of Rs 10,000 per month on superannuation



after a minimum of 10 years of service. The scheme has been brought out to address the concerns of government employees over NPS, which came into effect from January 1, 2004. Under the old pension scheme (OPS), effective before January 2004,

employees got 50 per cent of their last drawn basic pay as pension. Unlike the old pension scheme, OPS is contributory in nature, wherein employees will be required to contribute 10 per cent of their basic salary and dearness allowance while the employer's

contribution (the central government) will be 18.5 per cent. Under the NPS, the employer contribution is 14 per cent, and the employee contribution is 10 per cent. However, the eventual payout depends on the market returns on that corpus, mostly invested in government debt. Employees, under the OPS, were not required to make any contribution. They, however, contributed to the General Provident Fund (GPF). The accumulated amount, along with interest, was paid to the employee at the time of retirement. As the NPS was less attractive than the OPS, several non-BJP-ruled states decided to go back to the old pension scheme, which offered a DA-linked benefit.

GST taxpayers without valid bank a/c to be barred from filing GSTR-1 from September 1

PTI n NEW DELHI

GST taxpayers who do not furnish bank account details to GST authorities will be barred from filing outward supply return GSTR-1 from September 1, GST Network (GSTN) has said in an advisory. As per GST Rule 10A, a taxpayer is required to furnish details of a valid bank account within a period of 30 days from the date of grant of registration, or before furnishing the details of outward supplies of goods or services or both in Form GSTR-1or using Invoice Furnishing Facility (IFF), whichever is earlier. "From 1st September, 2024 this rule is being enforced. Therefore, for the tax period August-2024 onwards, the taxpayer will not be able



furnish GSTR-01/IFF as the case may be, without furnishing the details of a valid bank account in their registration details on GST portal," GSTN said in an advisory dated August 23. The GST Council in its meeting in July last year, had approved amendment to Rule 10A to strengthen the registration process and to effectively deal with the menace of fake and fraudulent registrations in

goods and services tax (GST). As per the amendment, a registered taxpayer was required to furnish the details of bank account having his name and PAN within 30 days of grant of registration or before filing of statement of outward supply in Form GSTR-1/IFF (invoice furnishing facility), whichever is earlier. In the advisory, the GSTN asked all the taxpayers who have not yet furnished the details of a valid bank account information in their registration details by visiting the GST portal. "...In absence of a valid bank account details in GST registration, you will not be able to file GSTR-1 or IFF as the case may be, from August 2024 return period," the GSTN advisory added.

India offers huge opportunity, economic trajectory fantastic: Infosys CEO

PTI n NEW DELHI

India offers a "huge opportunity" for Infosys, CEO Salil Parekh said, noting that the country's "fantastic" economic trajectory has set it apart from the rest of the world. The Bengaluru-headquartered IT company has clocked "strong growth" in its India business in the first quarter of this fiscal year, although revenue from the market is relatively small. "India is a huge opportunity... The growth that we are seeing for different types of work across Indian environment is massive, and we are very much part of making sure that we engage both with private sector companies and with Government agencies," Parekh told PTI.

Sebi issues notice to Paytm on ESOPs given to CEO Sharma; firm says disclosure already made

PTI n NEW DELHI

Market regulator Sebi has issued notice to fintech firm One97 Communications, which owns the Paytm brand, in the March 2024 quarter on employee stock options given to its MD and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma, according to the company filing on Monday. In response to a query from stock exchanges, Paytm said the notice is not a new development, and it is in regulatory contact with the market regulator to make required representations. According to Paytm's financial year 2024 annual



result filing, it had issued 2.1 crore employee stock options (ESOP) to Sharma in the financial year 2022. Sebi had issued a show cause notice to Paytm on ESOP issued to Sharma. "This is not a new development, as the Company had already made relevant disclosures on this matter in its financial results for the quarter and year

ended March 31, 2024, as well as the quarter ended June 30, 2024. The Company is in regular communication with the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and making necessary representations regarding this matter," Paytm said in response to a stock exchange query. The disclosure made on May 22 and July 19 said that Paytm has submitted its preliminary response and is in the process of seeking further information from the regulator in this regard. "Based on an independent legal opinion obtained by the management, it believes that the Company is compliant with the relevant regulations.

India adds record 15 GW solar capacity in Jan-June: Report

PTI n NEW DELHI

India has registered record solar installations of about 15 GW during the first half of 2024 as "developers raced" to complete delayed projects, a report by Mercom Capital said. The country added 3.89 GW of solar capacity during January-June 2023, the US-based research firm said in its latest report. "In the first half, solar installations in India reached 15 GW, surpassing all previous years records, posting an increase of 282 per cent compared to 1H 2023," the report titled 'India Solar Market Update' said. The record installations were registered as developers raced



to commission the previously delayed projects, it said. As of June 2024, India's

cumulative installed solar capacity stood at 87.2 GW, of which the utility-scale

projects accounted for nearly 87 per cent, and rooftop solar over 13 per cent. Solar energy accounted for 19.5 per cent of India's installed power capacity and over 44 per cent of the total installed renewable energy capacity. The average cost of large-scale solar projects was down by almost 26 per cent year-on-year and 2 per cent quarter-on-quarter. The year 2024 is shaping up to be a breakout year for India's solar industry, with an impressive first half. "However, to ensure that the strong pipeline of projects and ramped-up tender activity translate into timely installations, it is critical that we tackle the component

supply and grid connectivity challenges with urgency so we can meet the 280 GW target by 2030," Raj Prabhukar, CEO of Mercom Capital Group, said. In 1H 2024, a total of 41.4 GW of tenders were announced. The tendered capacity issued during the period increased 51 per cent from 27.5 GW in 1H 2023. In the first half of 2024, about 31.8 GW of projects were auctioned, up 321 per cent from 7.6 GW in 1H 2023. Mercom Capital specialises in providing market intelligence on energy storage, smart grid technology and solar energy, in addition to offering advisory services on emerging markets and strategic decision-making.



Players from 13 countries to compete in junior badminton meet

Association of India at the PE Society's Modern PDMBA Sports Complex. The tournament, held in memory of the late Sushant Chipalkatti, has become a key fixture in the international junior badminton calendar. A total 280 players from 13 countries including India, USA, UAE, Australia, Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal, Malaysia, Switzerland, England, Taipei, Iran will be seen in action during this event. In previous editions, star players such as Saina Nehwal, PV Sindhu, Kidambi Shrikant, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Priyanshu Rajawat, and Chirag Shetty have played in this tournament. The tournament will feature competitions in U-19 boys and girls singles, doubles and mix doubles categories. As part of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) circuit, it offers participants an opportunity to earn ranking points and gain international experience.

Para-athletes laud Svayam, PCI for transportation accessibility



Accessibility organisation Svayam, which is partnering the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), has been lauded by top para-athletes like table tennis player Bhavina Patel for making transportation accessible for them during their stay in the national capital before heading to Paris for the Paralympics starting on Wednesday. Svayam donated special vehicles that can accommodate wheelchairs without the athletes having to be displaced to board and deboard, ensuring greater mobility. Patel thanked SAI (Sports Authority of India), and the Table Tennis Federation of India among others for the initiative. "Svayam has played an important role by providing special vehicles that enhance accessibility and travel comfort, highlighting their crucial role in improving our overall experience and performance," she said in a press release issued by PCI. Para discus thrower Sakshi Kasana also appreciated the organisation, which started as an online portal providing information on policies, laws, and healthcare before expanding its focus to promote "Accessibility For All." "The special vehicles provided to us significantly eased our journey, allowing me to focus more on my training and preparation. They made a real difference in my daily routine, helping me to practice better and allowing me to stay focused on achieving the best results," Kasana said. Svayam has earlier collaborated with PCI in the 5th Indian Open Para-Athletic International Championship & Regional Sports Training held at Bangalore in 2023. It is also associated with the Khelo India Para Games and the Disability Cricket Council of India (DCCI) since 2020. Speaking about the collaboration with Svayam for a second Paralympics, PCI President, Devendra Jhajharia said, "Svayam has not just understood and addressed the needs of our para-athletes they have given out a strong message to the nation on the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility. "Athletes have to travel a lot for their competitions so if they are given this kind of ease of transportation, it gives them mental strength and more confidence." Sminu Jindal, Founder-Partner, Svayam said the partnership has broken barriers and promoted dignity and independence for people with reduced mobility.



Swimmer Ali makes Paralympics a year after losing lower leg in shark attack while snorkeling

AP n PARIS The first step for swimmer Ali Truweit was overcoming her newfound fear of the one place she had always felt safe - the water. Because the sound of water, any sound involving water, instantly triggered flashbacks to the day she swam for her life after being bitten by a shark. She and a friend were snorkeling in the ocean off Turks and Caicos on May 24, 2023, when a shark charged and bit Truweit's lower left leg. Bleeding and with the shark circling, Truweit went into competitive swim mode and raced 75 yards toward the safety of the boat. Truweit was rushed to the hospital and airlifted to the United States, where she had three surgeries, including one to amputate her leg below the knee. To reclaim her love of the water, she went to the family's backyard pool. She waded up to her waist, fought off fear and almost took back control. The plunge not only started her path toward healing but to Paris for the Paralympics. "I love comeback stories," said the 24-year-old from Darien, Connecticut, who qualified for Paris in the 100 free, 400 free and the 100 back. "I've definitely relied on other people's comeback stories to help me hold on to what feels like a bold and unrealistic hope - of fighting off a shark and surviving and losing a limb and making the Paralympics all in a year. Her itinerary for that summer involved fun and adventure before starting work at a consulting firm. Truweit had just graduated from Yale after a career in the pool in which she was a four-year letter winner. She kicked things off by running a marathon with her mom on Mother's Day. Next on the list: joining friends for some sun on the beaches in Turks and Caicos. She went snorkeling with Yale teammate and good friend Sophie Pilkinton in an area not known for sharks. On their way back to the boat, a shark aggressively approached and began bumping them. "We tried to fight back," Truweit said. What was believed to be a bull shark bit her on the foot and lower leg. "My immediate thought was, Am I crazy or do I not have a foot right now?" Truweit said. "It was a really hard image for me. But you move immediately into action." Stay calm. Remain conscious. Just get to the boat. That's all she focused on as she and Pilkinton sprinted through the water, intensely aware the shark was still there. Once on the boat, Pilkinton applied a tourniquet to slow the bleeding. Truweit was later airlifted to a trauma hospital in Miami for two surgeries to fight infections. She was transported to a hospital in New York, where on her 23rd birthday, she underwent a transtibial - below-the-knee - amputation. "A lot of dark days," she said. "But I'm alive and I almost took back control. The plunge not only started her path toward healing but to Paris for the Paralympics. That's why Truweit went to rehab even on days when she didn't feel good or was sad. "Just put in the work," she said. First, though, she needed to alter her "Why?" Instead of, "Why did this happen to me?" she centered on, "Why not throw everything into something?" More specifically, why not the Paralympics? After all, she had plenty of time to get ready for the 2028 Summer Paralympics in Los Angeles. "But I'm not someone who waits," she said. So Paris in 2024 it was, even if the time frame was incredibly tight. She went through prosthetic training and strength exercises. She also worked with trauma therapists, which led to narrative therapy to re-author her life and combat her nightmares. "So that I don't let fear rule my life," Truweit explained. "I had lost enough and anything that was on the table for me to regain, I was going to fight to regain it. "I didn't want to lose a limb and my love of the water, too." About 3 1/2 months removed from the attack, she was competing again. It was early but necessary to make certain standards to be in contention for a Paralympic spot. To help her, she teamed up with her club coach, Jamie Barone. "I was just really curious how I was going to feel being back on the pool deck and back in a competitive space," Truweit said. "The more I worked at it, the flashbacks reduced and the pain lessened." She qualified for nationals in Orlando, Florida, where she swam freestyle and backstroke. In April, she attended an international meet in Portugal - her first trip out of the country since the shark attack. Her mom was there as she shined in the 400 free S10 category, in which swimmers have a physical impairment affecting one of their joints. "She's just basically a workhorse who refuses to give up," said her mom, Jody. "That's who she was before the attack and amputation and that's who she is every single day now." At U.S. Paralympic trials in Minneapolis in late June, she won the 100 backstroke, 400 free and 100 free. She joins a team that includes Paralympic swimming great Jessica Long and a host of returning medalists from Tokyo. "I think hearing my name on that team was just a reminder to me that I'm stronger than I think," said Truweit, who launched the "Stronger than you think" foundation to help others navigate through the healing process. "That we're all stronger than we think." In Paris, she will have the support of about 50 family members and friends. "A year ago, I was just working to get back in the water," Truweit said. "I now get back in the water and that sense of joy comes back, and the smile comes back. To have that again is something I'm so thankful for. Honestly, it's one of the moments in my swim career that I'm the proudest of, because I know how much work it took.

If fitness permits, I hope to play LA 2028 Olympics: Manpreet Singh

PTI n NEW DELHI He will be on the wrong side of 30s and maintaining fitness would be no stroll in the park but veteran Indian hockey mid-fielder Manpreet Singh foresees an unprecedented fifth Olympic appearance for himself in the 2028 Los Angeles Games before he calls time on his career. The 32-year-old is a two-time Olympic medalist. He captained the side that ended a 41-year-old Olympic medal drought in Tokyo 2020, before remaining a part of the squad under Harmanpreet Singh for an encore in Paris 2024. "My target is till Los Angeles but it all depends upon my fitness. If I can maintain my fitness and game, I will surely be there in LA," the ace mid-fielder told PTI in an exclusive interview. "In today's hockey fitness is very important so at the end everything will boil down to my fitness," added the player, who has rarely faced any fitness issues in his career. Former greats Udham Singh, Leslie Claudius, and Dhanraj Pillai along with Manpreet's recently-retired contemporary P R Sreejesh also have four Olympic appearances to their credit. And Manpreet, a veteran of 378 international games and 44 goals, is now aiming to go one better on them by making the cut for LA 2028. The easy-going player, who hails from Mithapur village in Punjab, is grateful for all that he has achieved with the team. "Winning back-to-back medals is a something wonderful for me. It was after a long time that we won back-to-back medals and every athlete aspires to win an Olympic medal. "I have played four Olympics. In the first two, I didn't get any medal but in the last two, I won medals and you can't imagine my happiness," he said. A multi-faceted player, Manpreet can play in a defensive position as well when the team needs. His skills came in handy in India's 4-2 penalty shootout win over Britain in the quarterfinals of the Paris Olympics despite being down to 10 men with 42 minutes remaining in the match. "I am always prepared to play in every scenario. I always adjust to every position which the team demands. When (Amit) Rohidas got the red card, I immediately realised that I had to play in the defence. "I have trained a lot for that, even in Pro League matches. So, it was not very



difficult for me. I knew my roles and responsibilities, I just had to execute my plans," Manpreet said. The show against Britain tested the Indian team's mental toughness and Manpreet credited a short three-day camp at renowned adventurer Mike Horn's base in Switzerland before the Olympics for that. "That camp was very useful for us. It changed our mindset and taught us to be strong. When we went there, nobody knew what we were supposed to do there," he recalled. "That camp taught us how to tackle adverse situations with a strong mentality. That camp also taught us how to be together and help each other

in difficult situations." We learnt to play as a team and be united," he said. Talking about Sreejesh, who retired at 36 after the Paris Games, Manpreet was effusive in his praise for the former teammate. "Everyone knows how good a goalkeeper he (Sreejesh) was but it was his personal decision and it is with every athlete. But we need to look at how we need to cope with this situation. "Krishan (Bahadur Pathak) and Suraj (Karkera) are good goalkeepers and already have the experience of playing at the highest level," he said. Manpreet's Malaysian wife Illi Najwa Saddique and their two-and-half-year-old daughter Jasmine were there in Paris when he won his second Olympic medal and the star said it was the best moment of his life to share the joy with his family. "After the medal ceremony, my daughter and wife were with me at the ground and my daughter was running around the ground. I had a photo of my daughter wearing the medal, it was a really proud feeling," he said. Manpreet revealed that Jasmine, despite her tender age, seems to have developed a liking for shooting after meeting double Olympic medallist pistol shooter Manu Bhaker recently.



Chhetri's Bengaluru FC to take on Mohun Bagan SG in Durand Cup semis

PTI n KOLKATA Charismatic former India captain Sunil Chhetri will be pivotal to Bengaluru FC's chances of making it to the Durand Cup summit clash when they take on Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the last-four contest at the iconic Salt Lake Stadium, here on Tuesday. As Asia's oldest football tournament enters the final stages of the competition, Bengaluru FC have their task cut out against the defending champions. Mogan Bagan have not only scored 10 goals but also stoutly defended their citadel, conceding just three goals. Bengaluru FC too have shown great promise in the tournament, scoring 11 goals and conceding only two in the four games they have played. They overcame Kerala Blasters

Praggnanandhaa holds Liren, Gukesh draws with Vachier-Lagrave

PTI n ST LOUIS (USA) Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa navigated his match against the reigning world champion Ding Liren with remarkable ease, holding him to a draw in the sixth round of the Sinquefeld Cup, the final leg of the Grand Chess Tour. World championship challenger D Gukesh also played out another enterprising draw with France's Maxime Vachier-Lagrave while Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi suffered a shocking loss, going down to Fabiano Caruana of United States in just 25 moves. The sixth round saw no other surprises as the games between Anish Giri of Holland and Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan and Alireza Firouzja of France versus local star Wesley So ended draws. With just three rounds remaining, Caruana seems determined to give Firouzja a run for his money even though the former still leads the fray on 4 points. Caruana and Wesley So are on 3.5 points each. Praggnanandhaa, Gukesh, Vachier-Lagrave and Liren share the fourth spot on three points each with Nepomniachtchi and Abdusattorov following them a half point behind. Anish Giri stands last on two points in the USD 3,50,000 prize money tournament. Gukesh has been trying hard in almost every game but so far the lady luck has not smiled on him. Playing white against Vachier-Lagrave, he went for the King pawn opening and faced the tried and tested Najdorf Sicilian.



Gukesh came up with a double-edged idea in the middle game that fetched him a pawn in return for a king side attack for Vachier-Lagrave. For sometime it looked like the Frenchman had a powerful attack but Gukesh always found the best manoeuvres. In the end, the Indian had an extra pawn but black had counterplay compensating for the same. The game was drawn vide stalemate after 72 moves. Praggnanandhaa did not have to sweat much against Liren, who has been pretty solid in the tournament and is not taking much risk ahead of the World Championship match against Gukesh in November. The Kings Indian defense by Praggnanandhaa as black did not see any serious mistake from either side and the game was drawn without much ado. Results round 6: Ding Liren (Chn, 3) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 3); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 4) drew with Wesley So (Usa, 3.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 2) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 2.5); Ian Nepomniachtchi (Fid, 2.5) lost to Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 3.5); D Gukesh (Ind, 3) drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 3).

Prannoy takes break to recover from impact of chikungunya

PTI n NEW DELHI Seasoned Indian shuttler HS Prannoy on Monday said he is taking a break from the sport to allow his body to fully recover from the effects of chikungunya, which had adversely impacted his performance at the Paris Olympics. The 32-year-old, a 2022 Thomas Cup title winner and a world and Asian Games bronze-medallist, had been laid low by a week-long bout of the mosquito-borne viral disease that causes severe pain in the joints just ahead of the Paris Olympics. "Unfortunately, the battle with chikungunya has taken a toll on my body, leaving me with persistent pains that make it impossible to compete at my best," Prannoy wrote on X. "After careful consideration with my team, I've decided to withdraw from some of the upcoming tournaments to focus on recovery. Thank you for your understanding and support during this challenging time. I'll be back stronger," he added. Prannoy, however, did not provide a time line for his recovery or mentioned the tournaments he has withdrawn from. The Kerala shuttler, who won the world championship bronze in 2023, had been ravaged by a spate of illnesses, including a chronic stomach disorder and a nagging back injury. At the Paris Games, despite not being fully fit, Prannoy won both his Group matches to progress to the round of 16. He, however, went down to compatriot Lakshya Sen in the pre-quarterfinal.



Focus on Suryakumar, Shreyas and Sarfaraz in Buchi Babu meet

PTI n COIMBATORE

India dasher Suryakumar Yadav will turn up for Mumbai in their Buchi Babu contest against TNCA XI, beginning here on Tuesday, with an aim to get his Test career back on track.

Shreyas Iyer, also part of Mumbai's squad, too will be looking to make a statement in the pre-season event, having last played a Test in February.

The star-studded Mumbai side will be captained by Sarfaraz Khan, who too will be jostling for space in a full strength Test squad when the home season begins next month despite a promising beginning against England earlier this year.

The likes of Virat Kohli, K L Rahul and Rishabh Pant, who were not available for different reasons over course of the five games against England, are expected to be available for the two Test series against Bangladesh beginning September 19 in Chennai.

The centre of attention in the round three of the Buchi Babu match undoubtedly will be Suryakumar, who recently led India to victory in his first series as T20 skipper. Not in the team's ODI plans for the



moment, the 33-year-old remains determined to play in all three formats. His sole Test appearance came against Australia in February 2023.

Since then, he has continued to flourish in white-ball cricket before taking up the T20 International captaincy duties for the Men in Blue.

Effectively, the Buchi Babu

outing will be a mere warm-up for Suryakumar and others in the mix, given they all will be part of the Duleep Trophy beginning September 5.

Suryakumar's last competitive outing in First-Class cricket came during the Duleep Trophy last year. Playing for West Zone, Suryakumar managed only 71

runs in four innings at an average of just 17.75, with a top score of 52, while his side, led by Priyank Panchal, lost the final to South Zone by 75 runs.

Besides Surya, Sarfaraz and Shreyas will also be among the attractions in the Mumbai squad.

Sarfaraz, who made his Test debut earlier this year against

England, has been promising with the bat, managing 200 runs in five innings at an average of 50.00, including three half-centuries.

As for Iyer, he is yet to leave a mark in the longest format after 14 Tests, while since January 2023, he has only managed 187 runs in 12 innings at an average of only

17.00, with a top score of only 35.

Therefore, while there is no headache for Sarfaraz heading into this Buchi Babu meet, the upcoming domestic season holds more significance for Iyer, who will be leading Team D in the Duleep Trophy.

Mumbai's opponents TNCA XI will be led by R Sai Kishore, who was the leading wicket-taker in Ranji Trophy last season.

TEAMS (FROM)

TNCA XI: R Sai Kishore (c), Pradosh Ranjan Paul (vc), Mokit RS Hariharan, G Ajitesh, Indrajith Baba, Boopathi Vaishna Kumar, S Lokeshwar (wk), SR Athish (wk), R Sonu Yadav, P Vidyuth, S Lakshya Jain, S Ajith Ram, G Govinth, CV Achyuth, H Trilok Nag and V Yudheeswaran.

MUMBAI: Sarfaraz Khan (c), Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Akhil Herwadkar, Divyansh Saxena, Musheer Khan, Vedant Murkar, Siddhant Addhatrao, Suryansh Shedge, Shams Mulani, Tanush Kotian, Himanshu Singh, Atharva Ankolekar, Roystan Dias, Mohit Avasthi, Sylvester Dsouza and Junaid Khan.



Australia name fit again Darcie Brown in T20 World Cup squad, Jonassen misses out

PTI n SYDNEY

Pacer Darcie Brown, who has recovered from her foot injury, was on Monday named in Australia's 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup even as the defending champions left out experienced spinner Jess Jonassen.

Brown, who pulled out of the tour of Bangladesh in March due to a foot injury, is now fully fit and will be joined by fellow pacer Tayla Vlaeminck.

"The pace duo of Tayla and Darcie is one we've been wanting to unleash for a while and is a real point of difference for us," selection chief Shawn Flegler said.

suffered an acute rib fracture after being struck by a ball while batting in the off season while Harris also missed the English franchise league due to a calf injury.

However, left-arm spinner Jonassen has been left out of the squad again despite being the joint highest wicket-taker for Delhi Capitals in the Women's Premier League and the third-highest wicket-taker in The Hundred earlier this month.

"Jess Jonassen is again unlucky to miss out but we've been impressed with the way she's bounced back and we'll continue to monitor her form ahead of the home summer," Flegler said.

The team, which will be vying for a fourth consecutive T20 title, will be led by Alyssa Healy while Tahlia McGrath will be her deputy in the tournament beginning in the UAE on October 3.

"This is the first time in a long time we've had our entire contract list available for selection ahead of a World Cup and it's resulted in a really stable and balanced squad," Flegler said.

"It's the first time Alyssa will have the reins at a World Cup and we've already seen what her and Tahlia bring from a leadership perspective, so it's exciting for them to have this opportunity to lead their country on the biggest stage," Flegler added.

She will miss a T20 World Cup for the first time since her debut in 2012, having featured in five tournament wins since then.

Rising star Phoebe Litchfield will play in her first World Cup and Flegler said she will be "a real x-factor" within an experienced squad.

Australia will play three T20Is against New Zealand next month in the run up to the T20 World Cup.

Left-arm spinner Sophie Molineux and Grace Harris have also recovered from their injuries.

Molineux was forced to pull out of The Hundred having

All-rounder Heather Graham, who won't travel to the UAE, will be the only addition to the squad for the series against New Zealand.

SQUAD: Alyssa Healy (c), Tahlia McGrath (vc), Darcie Brown, Ashleigh Gardner, Kim Garth, Grace Harris, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Sophie Molineux, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Wareham, Tayla Vlaeminck.

US Open 2024: Even players aren't sure who will be at their best on New York's hard courts

AP n NEW YORK

Tennis fans unable to decide who has the best shot at doing well at the U.S. Open have company as the year's last Grand Slam tournament is set to begin Monday. Even the players themselves aren't sure what to expect.

"We've seen every player, all the time, surprise us every single week, every single tournament, every Slam. Sometimes there's no rhyme or reason why someone maybe does well," said Jessica Pegula, a six-time major quarterfinalist. "Sometimes it doesn't make any sense."

There is the usual uncertainty that comes in New York, thanks to the vagaries of injuries and the grind of a long season. One additional factor this time could be all of the surface-switching: Tennis at the Summer Olympics was played on courts at Roland Garros, also the French Open site. So players went from clay in

Paris to grass at Wimbledon, then back to clay, before shifting to hard courts before the U.S. Open.

"It's a strange year," British player Dan Evans said. "That's for sure."

Pegula, for one, handled that last transition just fine, going from the Olympics to a title at Toronto and a runner-up showing at Cincinnati. Her doubles partner in Paris, 2023 U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff, played in three Olympic events, exiting early in each, then lost her second match in Toronto and her first in Cincinnati.

"Changing surfaces, it's tough, not just on your body, but mentally. ... But it's part of the job, and we'll adjust," said Tommy Paul, who won a bronze medal in doubles with Taylor Fritz for the U.S. In Paris and had a 1-2 record in Montreal and Cincinnati. "Maybe there's one player or two players that are burned out from the (Olympic) experience. But other than that, for

the most part, everyone is pretty adjusted by now."

The woman who defeated Pegula in the Cincinnati final, No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, skipped the trip back to France for the 2024 Games but said she isn't all that convinced that

having - or not having - normal preparation necessarily will dictate results the next two weeks.

"Everyone who came here, they think they are ready to win. I think it's not about who is ready. You can be ready better" than the rest of the group," said

Sabalenka, a two-time champion at the Australian Open and runner-up to Gauff at last year's U.S. Open, "but at the end of the day, it's all about how hard are you ready to fight for it - especially on those days when you don't feel your best."

Another player not at the Olympics, Frances Tiafoe, reached the Cincinnati Open title match before losing to No. 1 Jannik Sinner, whose two positive steroids tests in March came to light less than a week ago.

Tiafoe, a 26-year-old from Maryland, finds the home crowds and high attention of the U.S. Open bring out his best, so he wanted to concentrate on getting ready for the site of his first Grand Slam semifinal in 2022.

"It's open for a lot of guys this year, for sure. ... It's always different in a Slam. The lights are a little brighter," he said. "We'll see what ends up happening. Personally, I just like where I'm at."

Then there are those such as defending U.S. Open champion Novak Djokovic, who won a gold medal at the Paris Games but didn't play a single hard-court tuneup event, or Carlos Alcaraz, the silver medalist whose only recent match on a hard court was a loss in Cincinnati.



Lydia Ko completes Cinderella-like story by winning British Open

AP n ST ANDREWS (SCOTLAND)

Lydia Ko covered her face with her hands and cried tears of joy.

An Olympic gold medal. Entry into the Hall of Fame. And now another major championship title - at the home of golf, no less. Summers don't come much better than that.

Ko completed what she described as a "Cinderella-like story" by breaking free from a logjam of world-class talent to win the Women's British Open by two strokes at St. Andrews on Sunday, securing a third major title - and a first in eight years. Just two weeks ago, the 27-year-old New Zealander took gold at the Olympic Games in Paris.

"This is almost too good to be true," Ko said.

She rolled in a left-to-right birdie putt at the storied 18th hole on the Old Course to shoot 3-under 69 - for 7 under overall - and then had to wait to finish ahead of top-ranked Nelly Korda, defending champion Lilia Vu and two-time champion Jiyai Shin. That quartet of past or present No. 1s shared the lead at one point down the stretch of an engrossing final round played mostly in cold, blustery and wet conditions before ending in sunshine.

Ko was waiting on the practice putting green not far from the 18th green, doing stretches while wearing ear muffs, when Vu lined up a 20-foot putt for birdie that needed to go in to force a playoff. It came up short, and Vu

ultimately made bogey to shoot 73 and drop to 5 under alongside Korda (72), Shin (74) and also Ruoning Yin (70) in a four-way tie for second place. Ko wept in the embrace of her caddy.

Ko qualified for the Hall of Fame by winning the gold medal in Paris on Aug. 10 and now has what many believe to be the ultimate prize in the sport - a major championship title at the home of golf.

Ko was asked what feels better: an Olympic gold medal, her first two majors, or winning a third at St. Andrews.

"It's kind of like saying, Do you like your mother better or your father better?" she said, eliciting laughter from the crowd around the 18th green. "They are all special in their own way."

Her last major came at the Chevron Championship in 2016. A year earlier, she won the Evian Championship as an 18-year-old prodigy.

Now, she's like a veteran - and still winning trophies.

Korda, seeking a second major title of a dominant 2024 containing six victories for the American, started the final round two shots back from Shin, the champion from 2008 and '12 and the overnight leader on 7 under. By her 10th hole, Korda was in the outright lead after three birdies in a four-hole stretch around the turn and before long she was two strokes clear as Shin and Vu toiled at the start of the back nine in miserable weather.

AP n CASTLE ROCK (US)

Adam Scott is playing in the 11th straight time, the most of any player from the International team. That wasn't much of a surprise.

Neither were the six players for the American team.

The BMW Championship was the final tournament for six automatic qualifiers for the U.S. And International teams who will compete Sept. 27-30 at Royal Montreal.

The leading six players remained unchanged.

Scottie Scheffler, Xander Schauffele, Wyndham Clark, Collin Morikawa, Patrick Cantlay and newcomer Sahith Theegala qualified for the Americans. Sam Burns could have grabbed the sixth spot only if he had won. He finished one shot behind Keegan Bradley.

The six qualifiers for the International team were Hideki Matsuyama, Tom Kim, Sungjae Im, Jason Day, Scott

Presidents Cup teams get six automatic qualifiers with half teams still to be picked

and Byeong Hun An. Corey Connors of Canada had a chance with a big finish at Castle Pines, but he closed with a 73 and tied for 22nd. The International team is based on the world ranking.

Jim Furyk and Mike Weir of Canada will announce their six captain's picks after the Tour Championship, and that's where the intrigue lies.

"I hope I didn't throw a huge wrench in everybody's plans," Bradley said, whose victory moved him to No. 10 in the U.S. Standings.

Bradley, 38, already is the youngest Ryder Cup captain since Arnold Palmer (34) was a playing captain in 1963. He also has PGA Tour titles in each of the last three years, and his win at the BMW



Championship moved him to No. 11 in the world ranking.

Burns moved to No. 7, followed by Tony Finau, Russell Henley, Bradley, Brian

Harman and Max Homa. Henley has never played in the Ryder Cup or Presidents Cup team.

Harman and Homa have not

been in good form for most of the summer. And then there is Justin Thomas, who has played for every U.S. Team since 2017. He is at No. 19, following a year in which he was the lowest-ranked player in the Ryder Cup standings when he was picked.

Thomas at least made it to the Tour Championship - the 30th and final spot - giving him a week to perform.

"I feel like I played well in some big tournaments this year. I just did it earlier in the season," Thomas said. "I know I'm playing well enough, but that's up to Jim and the rest of the captains and the guys on the team. My hope is that I get to Atlanta and I prove that I belong."

Weir would like to have Canadians on his side for the

home crowd. None qualified. Connors was at No. 7, followed by Cam Davis and Min Woo Lee of Australia, Christiaan Bezuidenhout, and three Canadians - Taylor Pendrith, Nick Taylor and Adam Hadwin.

Pendrith played in the last Presidents Cup. He held it together on the back nine to assure a spot at the Tour Championship next week.

"I want to be on the Presidents Cup badly. But I've had a great season, and if I didn't play great these last two weeks, I'd be OK with it," he said. "It would sting a little bit for sure, but to come out here and do it and perform under the pressure, it feels incredible. I can't wait to keep going."

Scott has played on every Presidents Cup team since 2003 - one year after Tom Kim was born - but has never been on a winning team. The 2003 matches ended in a tie in South Africa, and the Americans have won nine in a row.

Kvaratskhelia inspires Napoli to 1st win of Conte era with 3-0 victory over Bologna

AP n MILAN

Antonio Conte has Khvicha Kvaratskhelia back to his brilliant best and Napoli back to winning ways.

Kvaratskhelia set up one goal and scored the second as Napoli beat Bologna 3-0 on Sunday for the first Serie A win of the Conte era - and the team's first league victory since April 7. Conte became Napoli's fifth coach in little more than a year when he was hired in June but his new team crumbled 3-0 at Hellas Verona in his first match back in Serie A.

"The punch in the face we got in Verona made us immediately understand that if we want to forget the past we have to stay in the center of the ring, you give punches and you get them, but you



have to keep standing," Conte said.

"I have a lot of faith in this group ... it was a tough week but we united even more, you won't get anywhere individually. These are my first three points with Napoli and I have great emotion. It is these feelings that push you to go further."

Napoli also lost

Kvaratskhelia to a minor head injury in Verona but the Georgia winger was back on Sunday - despite also having recently returned from his home country after his wife gave birth to their first child this week.

It was a different team right from the start in Naples and Giacomo Raspadori almost scored in the opening

minute.

Kvaratskhelia hit the crossbar shortly before halftime with a looping header from the tightest of angles but Napoli didn't have to wait much longer for the first goal under Conte.

Giovanni Di Lorenzo started the move in first-half stoppages, cutting inside from the right before passing to Kvaratskhelia, who played him a superb ball back, dinking it over the Bologna defense for Di Lorenzo to sweep into the far side of the net. And Kvaratskhelia got on the scoresheet himself in the 75th, racing downfield from just inside the Bologna half and firing into the bottom left corner from the edge of the area, with the help of a slight deflection.

Kvaratskhelia celebrated by sucking his thumb in an

apparent dedication to his newborn son.

Kvaratskhelia also had a hand in the third, in stoppage time. As he threaded the ball through to new signing David Neres, who rolled it across for Giovanni Simeone to slot past Lukas Skorupski.

SURPRISE DEFEATS: Atalanta and Roma both fell to shock defeats.

Atalanta, which was one of only four sides to win on the opening weekend, had a penalty saved and hit the woodwork twice in a 2-1 loss at Torino.

Summer signing Mateo Retegui headed Atalanta into the lead in the 26th minute but Che Adams set up Ivan Ilic for the equalizer five minutes later and scored himself at the start of the second half.

LOST

I Rajib Lochan Das, S/o- Khetramohan Das, Vill- Balisahi, Po-Dosinga, Ps-Dhamara, Dist-Bhadrak declared that on dtd. 19.08.2024 while I was moving in Dhamara Market at 6.00 PM three numbers of original sale deed bearing No. 432, dtd. 28.05.2010 having Mouza-Balisahi, sale deed No. 1818, dtd. 19.11.2003 of Mouza- Purnaprasad and sale deed No. 3421, dtd. 16.10.1999 of Mouza- Brahmapur and 6 numbers of Original ROR namely Mouza- Balisahi, Khata No. 90/142, Khata No. 90/115 and Mouza- Purnaprasad, Khata No. 131/66 and Khata No. 31 and Mouza- Brahmapur, Khata No. 897/258 and Khata No. 897/34 has been missed anywhere without my knowledge and I was not able to trace it. I also lodged FIR before Dhamara Police Station, Dhamara GDNo. 10, dtd. on 21.08.24. Sd/- Rajib Lochan Das