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In Assembly

Opposition demands hike in reservation cap

Accuses BJP of neglecting marginalised communities PIONEER NEWS SERVICE BHUBANESWAR

Opposition Congress and BJD in the State Assembly on Wednesday accused the BJP of altering its stance towards the tribals, Dalits and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) after coming to power in Odisha. They called for a resolution in the Assembly to increase the reservation cap beyond the current 50%.

Allegations were made that the existing reservation quotas for STs, SCs and OBCs in technical and medical institutions were disproportionately low compared to their population percentages. Currently, Odisha reserves 22.5% for STs, 16.25% for SCs and 11.25% for OBCs in government jobs.

the 50% reservation limit imposed by the courts, the State Government could still advocate for a Constitutional amendment to increase the quota limit. He cited Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra as examples where the reservation rules have been modified to better reflect demographic realities.

receive only 11.25% reservation in government jobs, with no reservation in medical and engineering colleges. Kadam expressed support for raising the reservation cap and criticised the State's current leadership for neglecting these issues. "Despite having a tribal Chief Minister, there seems to be little concern for his own community. The BJP has shifted its stance towards STs, SCs and OBCs after gaining power," he alleged.

oed Kadam's views, pledging support for exceeding the 50% cap if the government proceeded such a resolution. Sahoo criticised the CM for demanding quotas for the Gujar community in Jammu and Kashmir while showing no concern for SCs, STs and OBCs in Odisha. He also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who identifies as an OBC member, of neglecting the community in Odisha. Sahoo, along with Kadam, demanded postponing the MBBS admissions scheduled to begin on August 29.

'Zero tolerance' to corruption

Says CM in Assembly PNS BHUBANESWAR



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday reiterated his government's resolve to root out corruption in the administration in the State. Making a statement in the State Assembly on the demand for grants of the Water Resources Department, the CM said his administration has adopted a policy of "zero tolerance" to corruption so that

the dream of a 'Viksit Odisha' would be achieved. Majhi said the State Vigilance department, which has been doing a commendable job in cracking cases of graft, would be further activated to track down cases of corruption.

In State Fresh low pressure to trigger heavy rains

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Even as several parts of the State, including the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, are experiencing moderate to heavy rainfall activities for the past one week, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted formation of a fresh low-pressure area.

(7 to 11 cm) and thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur in the districts of Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Gajapati and Ganjam, said the IMD issuing a Yellow warning.

On Friday, heavy to very heavy rainfall (7 to 20 cm) and thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur in the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Rayagada, said the weather office issuing an Orange warning.

On Saturday, isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall (7 to 20 cm) with isolated extremely heavy rainfall (>20cm) is very likely to occur in the districts of Malkangiri and Koraput.

KALIA to be replaced by CM-KISAN

All eligible farmers to be covered PNS BHUBANESWAR



The new BJP government in Odisha would soon replace the existing KALIA scheme with an ambitious CM-KISAN Yojana, informed Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo on Wednesday. Speaking in the State Assembly, Singh Deo, who holds the agriculture portfolio, said that farmers would get Rs 4,000 each annually in two instalments

while landless farmers would get an assistance of Rs 12,500 in three instalments. One can apply for the benefits of the scheme through the

CM-KISAN portal. All eligible beneficiaries would be covered and they can avail the benefits of the scheme, added Singh Deo.

Mahanga double murder: 9 get life sentence

Accused Pratap Jena's case sub-judice in High Court PNS CUTTACK

in the case due to lack of evidence. The judgement was pronounced in the sensational case relating to the killing of BJP leader Kulamani Baral and his associate Dibyasingha Baral at Jankoti village in the Mahanga area in January 2, 2021.

Kulamani was raising the issue of a few BJD leaders' alleged involvement in the misappropriation of funds under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

A court in Salepur on Wednesday sentenced nine persons to life imprisonment for their involvement in the killing of a BJP leader and his associate three years ago in the Mahanga area of Cuttack district.

The family members of the deceased had levelled allegations against BJD leader and former Minister Pratap Jena in connection with the murder case.

Police had booked Pratap Jena, then Law Minister, and 12 others in the murder case on the basis of a complaint lodged by Kulamani's son Ranjit. However, Jena's name was later dropped from the charge-sheet.

However, the court of the Additional District Judge, Salepur, acquitted an accused

The court of JMFC, Salepur, had ordered for continuation of the case against Jena. The matter is currently sub-judice in the Orissa High Court.

Hearing a petition filed by Kulamani's son, the JMFC court had directed the police to probe the allegations regarding Jena's involvement in the case.

Advertisement for Odisha State Railway. It features a portrait of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the left and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on the right. The central text in Odia reads: 'ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପାଇଁ ପୁଣି ଧୂଳି ଧୂଳି କୋଟି ଟଙ୍କାର ନୂଆ ରେଳ ପ୍ରକଳ୍ପ' (New railway project worth hundreds of crores for Odisha). Below this, it says 'ଆନୁମୋଦିତ ରେଳ ପ୍ରକଳ୍ପ' (Approved railway project) and lists two projects: 'ବରଗଡ଼ରୁ ନୂଆପଡ଼ା ରୋଡ୍ ରେଳପଥ (୧୩୮ କି.ମି.)' and 'ସୁନ୍ଦରଗଡ଼ର ସରଡେଗାରୁ ଛତିଶଗଡ଼ର ଭାଲୁମୁଦା (୩୭ କି.ମି.) ଦୁଇଟିକିଆ ରେଳପଥ'.

CHSE Record Supplier under Vig lens

Raids conducted at 3 places

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Vigilance police sleuths on Wednesday conducted raids at multiple places linked to Purenra Kumar Sethy, a Record Supplier for the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), on the charge of possession of assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

Three Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs), an Assistant Commandant, five Assistant Sub-Inspectors (ASIs) and other supporting staffs of the anti-corruption agency were engaged for the raids carried out at three locations.

The searches were underway at the following places:
o A four-storied building of



Sethy at Kanan Vihar, Phase-II, Patia, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar.

o His paternal home located at Keupada, P.O. Anantapur, district Jagatsinghpur.

o Office room of Sethy located in the O/o Director, CHSE, Odisha, Samantrapur in Bhubaneswar.

Till last reports came in, the raids were on while the total value of his movable and immovable properties was yet to be calculated.

ASI held taking bribe in K'mal

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Vigilance police on Tuesday caught Rajanikant Das, an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of the Kotaghar police station in Kandhamal district, while taking a bribe of Rs 15,000 from a person,

Das had demanded the bribe from the complainant to help him and his friend in a case.

A Vigilance team apprehended the ASI while he was accepting the money at the Kali Temple in Kotaghar.

Later, raids were also carried out at two different places linked to the ASI on the disproportionate assets angle. Further investigation in connection with the case was ongoing.



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Foul stench as pet dogs made to defecate on roads

Pedestrians hit

PNS ■ CUTTACK

It is a matter of great regret that some people of upper strata of society are using the public roads as the toilet ground for their pets, more specifically the dogs. In this rainy season, the stool of dogs is creating a foul smell. It makes the lives of pedestrians miserable and sometimes unbearable.

Besides this the stray dogs of the street are barking and howling at night. The noise affects the sleeping habits of senior people. Even due to this, some aged people are suffering from insomnia and hypertension.

It is also painful to say that,

many of the people of affluent class are parking their vehicles on both sides of the road permanently. This makes the roads congested and sometimes leads to accidents.

The senior citizens have urged the local municipal authorities and the representatives of the people to take steps to discourage such habits of the affluent people.

"In the present time, vehicles can't be avoided and at the same time, there should be some law and policy so that inconvenience to the general public is avoided. The representatives of the people have a role in carrying out this objective," said Thinkers' Club president Barada Das and secretary Umasankar Misra.

Fake cancer specialist, 2 aides held in city



Had cheated several women of lakhs of rupees

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A fake HIV, cancer and skin specialist doctor was arrested for duping people of lakhs of rupees in the Laxmisagar area in Bhubaneswar.

Two of his associates, claiming to be skin specialists, have also been arrested. The trio was operating a clinic 'Asclepius Wellness Private Limited' and selling herbal products on the pretext of curing HIV and cancer and for skin fairness.

Most of their customers were women, who approached them to get fair skin. Promising an ever-glowing and fair skin, the accused cheated sev-

eral women of lakhs of rupees.

The main accused has been identified as Ajit Kumar Kandi. Police have seized some cash and a vehicle from his possession. The matter came to the fore after a victim lodged a complaint with the Laxmisagar police.

According to sources, the accused promised a woman fair glowing skin and prescribed her some medicines and fairness creams. Much to the shock of the woman, her skin got even worse with more scars all over her body and face.

"The victim had approached us with a formal complaint. The medicines the accused provided neither had any medicinal values or wellness," said a police official.

No phones, water bottles in Assembly Speaker imposes ban

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy on Wednesday imposed restriction on the use of mobile phones and carrying of water bottles in the House.

The Speaker directed the MLAs not to use mobile phone and carry water bottles inside the House.

Sources said the move came after a member was reportedly seen clicking pictures while

some other MLAs were talking over phone inside the House.

Taking strong exception to this, the Speaker asked the MLAs not to indulge in such activities inside the House.

Using mobile phones inside the Assembly is not accepted and, hence, the legislators have been asked not to use their gadgets.

While drinking water is adequately available within the Assembly complex, it is observed that several legislators carry water bottles to the House.

On I-Day celebration

'Pakistan Zindabad' slogan in K'pada school!

Shouters belong to village from where LeT handler Habibur arrested

RAJESH BEEHRA ■ KENDRAPADA

Two Muslim students in Class-IX at a government high school in Tyndakura under the Kudanagari police limits of Kendrapada district recently gave "Pakistan Zindabad" slogan at the Independence Day celebration in the schools on August 15.

The matter recently came to limelight when the headmaster of the school brought the issue to the notice of the District Education Officer (DEO) on August 23.

Notably, while the students had congregated to celebrate

the Independence Day, the accused students allegedly gave the anti-national provocative slogan after the Tricolour was unfurled and the National Anthem was sung. A third one also co-operated with the duo by giving the slogan.

Later, the headmaster called the guardians of the students to his office and discussed the matter with them. The guardians of the students assured that such a thing would not be repeated and the duo students begged apologies. Later, the guardians were asked to give in writing that such acts of their wards would not be repeated. But till August 23, the guardians skipped the order.

When asked about the matter, Kendrapada DEO Pradeep Nag stated, "I would visit the school on Thursday and would conduct a detailed inquiry by inviting their guardians."

District Collector Smruti Ranjan Pradhan said the matter was yet to come to his notice while SP Siddharth Kataria stated that no such complaint or information was with him or with the police department.

Intellectual masses, meanwhile, alleged how the district administration and police were unaware of such a sensitive incident. They demanded a high-level inquiry into the matter. They doubted if the children and their family members were not in contact with Pakistani elements.

It may be noted here that Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) handler Habibur Rahman (55), who was arrested for his involvement in antinational activities by the NIA in 2018, belongs to Mirmohalla hamlet of Tyndakura village. In January 2018, the NIA team visited the Patkura police station to con-

duct an inquiry on Habibur's family members.

Notably, the NIA had arrested Habibur from the Delhi Indira Gandhi Airport while he was returning from Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. He was a terrorist handler for Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba group and was one of the handlers of LeT terrorist Shaikh Abdul Naem alias Nomi who was initially arrested in 2007 while trying to infiltrate two Pakistani and one Kashmiri terrorist into India through Bangladesh and later escaped in 2014 and was arrested in November 2017. Habibur arranged hideouts and funds for Shaikh Abdul Naem on different occasions for carrying out terrorist activities in India on the directions of the LeT terrorist Amjad alias Rehan, who is based in Pakistan.

K'pada cops hold blood donation camp



As part of celebrating Janmastami

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

While celebrating the Janmastami in a unique way, the Kendrapada Sadar police organised a voluntary blood donation camp at the police station.

It was part of a community policing programme to keep a good rapport with the public and win their trust so as to avert any law and order situation, said police sources.

The blood donation camp

was organised under the supervision of Kendrapada Sadar police station IIC Saroj Kumar Sahu. Several local gentries, youths and police personnel donated blood. A total of 66 blood units were collected.

Leading from the front, the IIC donated blood to encourage others. Kendrapada SDPO Debendra Mallick also was present. A community feast was organised at the local Jagannath temple by the Sadar police on the occasion. Around 500 locals, police personnel, media people, lawyers, local gentries and PRI members participated in the Prasad Sevan.

New ration cards after e-KYC verification

Minister informs Assembly

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

New ration cards would be issued by the Odisha Government to the beneficiaries, who have applied for it in the past one month after e-KYC verification, the State Assembly

was informed on Wednesday.

This was in response to Barabati-Cuttack Congress MLA Sofia Firdous' claim that around ten lakh people are waiting for ration cards after having applied for it.

She sought a reply from the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister. As the Minister of the department con-

cerned was absent during the proceedings, Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj informed the House that completion of e-KYC verification within a stipulated time frame is not mandatory.

He said e-KYC verification is a sensitive matter and, hence, the government has appealed to people to get the

process completed at the earliest. Earlier, the government had stated that e-KYC audits would be made to check whether the information provided by the beneficiaries is transparent or not. Following the completion of e-KYC audits, ration cards would be provided to the new beneficiaries.

HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

Gentleman CM Majhi should take risks

Mamata Mohanta did not hesitate once before being traying the BJD that gave her a highly respectful identity as a top political leader. She is actually as dumb as Pramila Bisoyi or Chandrani Murmu who too were made public figures on sheer strength of Naveen Patnaik's popularity. This does not mean the BJD is free of betrayers. Quite a few others are on the lookout for opportunity to jump fence, as BJP insiders keep claiming, which is believable.

The few BJD crooks that took the voters for granted and caused irreparable damage to the party are still masquerading as saints in the fold. Truly-skilled pollsters had predicted a BJD victory with a smaller number of seats. Surprisingly, a nondescript YouTube channel had forecast that the BJD would bite dust only due to irritating demonstration of arrogant overconfidence by a few party rascals. The more the BJD leaders screamed 'victory for



BISWARAJ PATNAIK

sure', the more the voters got irked and enraged. The big unnoticed problem the party front-liners created was taking everything and every voter for granted. Some of them were bizarrely vulgar in abusing power in full public glare. A former BJD leader, Amarendra Das, now a BJP lawmaker, makes it open that a big portion of precious Cashew Corporation's Bhubaneswar land

was given away to SUM Hospital promoters despite his loud protest. Incidentally, he was the chairman of the body. The media chief of the party, who joined BJD only in 2018, kept bullying him on the issue, for which he resigned and let the bully strike shady deals with private parties unlawfully. As the word goes around, the SUM Hospital authorities have already occupied the pricey, prime-zone State property for a song, which the public does not know to this day. MLA Amarendra says the self-proclaimed BJD media fellow has amassed wealth by guile because the already-defamed top cop at the CMO then was protecting him.

Now that all this disturbing facts are already out in the open, Naveen and Karthikeyan have to jointly destroy these evil characters to escape slander. If they keep quiet over the matter, bigger trouble will come their way sooner than usual. This is the appropriate time to cleanse the

party thoroughly as the people have begun realising that the BJP cannot deliver the promised goods.

The people of Odisha have lost the benefits of the world's best healthcare insurance cover BSKY that was going to be made universal and one hundred units of free electric power as promised in the BJD manifesto. Naveen's administration had never failed to keep promises once made. He fell from grace only because of a few arrogant rogues that stole away or squandered enormous amounts of public money. So, unless miracles happen, the BJD will remain out of power until 2029, by which time the people will have got disgusted with the BJP government. But by then, Naveen is not certain to remain interested in politics owing to age and physical ability issues. Naveen and VK have to mend ways, apologise to the masses for grave blunders and toss out garbage-quality entities from the fold. Then,

toppling the BJP regime may become possible.

The saffron biggies had promised sizeable monetary help to women under the Subhadra Yojana, which has turned out to be a mirage. The 300-unit free power per month to every household is all crap. Now, they say it was all about solar power systems on rooftops with a subsidy. It is evident by now the BJP guys made false promises.

That Mohan Majhi is a hardworking, gentle and simple person is an established fact. But people, for sure, need aggressively forward-looking individuals who are willing to take risks to make people happy by improving their quality of life. Taking risks primarily includes discarding and punishing outwardly big ones who are corrupt and unscrupulous, be one a minister or a low-level field worker.

Statecraft and power politics are not child's play by any standard. Mohan Majhi is new in the game

and does not have the enviable autonomy Naveen enjoyed. Power politics involve elections that are incredibly complex. The saffron front-liners are mostly inexperienced, immature and poor in communication. Deputy CM KV Singh Deo seems to have no power despite impressive experience. No one knows why he is put up as a mannequin at all events instead of being given authority and opportunity to speak and exhort disillusioned colleagues and field workers. Lady Deputy CM Pravati Parida is a pure bundle of confusion as she does not seem to know the basics of anything including statecraft. She is just a poster girl only crazy to know if people find her larger than life.

Lately, to BJP's embarrassment, the Aska MLA has been caught trying to extort big money from a sand mining lessee. Earlier another wicked saffron fellow had threatened a CDMO with dire conse-

quences for delaying the transfer of a junior employee. The Governor has not done anything to bring his unruly, criminally-inclined son to book. CM Majhi, is still the meek and mild schoolteacher as of yore. He cannot afford to displease the bosses sitting in Delhi.

Lastly, no one has been able to know why unnecessarily, the BJP had fielded a core party guy against Mamata Mohanta running for Rajya Sabhas on a walkover mode. Jagannath Pradhan was certainly not a dummy. The media as well as party cadres murmured a great deal over the matter as the move looked pretty much weird and abnormal. Eventually, Pradhan withdrew and Mamata had a walkover victory. Similar mystical moves by the Manmohan Samal team indicate BJP guys are still groping in the dark. As a result, the robustly-placed BJD in the opposition camp keeps scoring too many brownie points without effort.

Sniffer dogs to guard forests



To assist in tracking bait bombs, traps

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Forest Department has come up with an ambitious project to rope in sniffer dogs to guard forests and sanctuaries and protect wildlife against poachers and other threats.

PCCF Susanta Nanda informed that sniffer dogs would be helpful in detecting bait bombs laid to poach elephants mostly in the Hindol, Dhenkanal and Angul areas

besides other parts of the State.

"Apart from bait bombs, the sniffer dogs would also be help in detecting snare traps laid by poachers to hunt small animals," said Nanda.

Nanda further informed that on an experimental basis, 10 sniffer dogs would be engaged in five Forest Ranges, including Similipal, Satkosia, Debrigarh, Hindol and Athagarh.

"We are trying to procure best-breed and best-trained dogs from private players which will be selected after a tender process," said Nanda.

3 rly projects in 4 States including Odisha approved

To cost Rs 6,456 crore

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved three railway projects worth Rs 6,456 crore to be completed by 2028-29.

The projects will span Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh, covering seven districts and generating about 114 lakh man-days of employment.

The three projects will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 300 km.

With these projects, the result of PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity, 14 new stations will be constructed, providing enhancing connectivity to two aspirational districts, Nuapada and East Singhbhum.

"New line projects will provide connectivity to approximately 1,300 villages and about 11 lakh population.

Multi-tracking project will enhance connectivity to about 1,300 villages and nearly 19 lakh population," the CCEA said in a statement.

According to the government, the concerned routes are essential for transportation of commodities such as agriculture products, fertiliser, coal, iron ore, steel, cement and limestone, etc.

The capacity augmentation works will result in additional freight traffic of magnitude 45 MTPA (million

tonnes per annum).

Earlier this month, the CCEA approved eight railways projects worth about Rs 24,657 crore. The new line projects, to be completed by 2030-2031, will generate direct employment for about three crore man-days during the construction period.

The projects cover 14 districts in seven States, Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Telangana and West Bengal. These will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by 900 km.

Spandan holds blood donation camp

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Spandan Foundation organised a blood donation camp at the campus of My School Italy, here. Twenty five persons voluntarily donated blood on the occasion.

Cine artist and Digapahandi MLA Dr Sidhant Mohapatra inaugurated the programme and praised the noble activities of the foundation. He stated that one donor saves the lives of four persons by way of giving blood. Activist Susanta Kumar

Sabata attended the camp as chief guest and appreciated the members of the foundation for their kind service to the society. He called upon all to come forward to donate blood.

Principal My School Italy Usha Padhy and senior journalist Sudip Sahu attended as guests of honour. While employees of Blood Bank assisted in collection of blood, Dillip Mohapatra, Sasmita Sahu, Balakrushna Samantaroy, Saurav Rath, Antaryami Patra and Manoj Kumar Sahu among others conducted the camp.

Ex-MP Majhi demands 'Extend Junagarh-N'rangpur rly line to U'kote'



PNS ■ NABARANGPUR

Former MP and Nabarangpur district BJD president Ramesh Chandra Majhi called for the extension of the Junagarh-Nabarangpur railway line to Umakote.

Speaking during a Press conference on Monday, Majhi said Umakote is the district's commercial center and second largest town. Besides that, it is the largest producer of maize in Odisha, located 60 km away from the district headquarters. To the west of it lies Chhattisgarh, which is infested with Maoists. If the Junagarh-Nabarangpur rail line is extended to Umakote via

Jharigam, Chandahandi, Dabugam and Papadahandi, the farmers and residents would gain greatly, said Majhi.

He further said that earlier, when he was the MP, he had sent a letter to Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav urging immediate steps in this regard and to speed off Jeypore to Nabarangpur and Jeypore to Malkangiri railway lines, but his pleas fell on deaf ear.

Pointing to the assurance given by present MP Balabhadra Majhi to the residents of Dharmgarh in Kalahandi district recently following the extension of rail line in their area during a meeting held at Dharmgarh, Majhi alleged that the present MP, who also held the post of Chief Engineer in the Indian Railways and a native of the Jharigam constituency, has shown little interest in the development of the area with regard to railway connectivity. Instead, he is showing more interest in the area outside his constituency, Majhi charged.

In Bargarh AAP demands 300 units of free power



Also removal of smart meters

PNS ■ BARGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has demanded removal of all the smart meters of Tata Power and 300 units of power be provided free to everyone in Bargarh district.

The AAP in a memorandum to Bargarh ADM Mahendra Mhapatra stated that the Tata Power is charging outrageous

rates in the farmers-dominated Bargarh district by installing smart meters and citizens are protesting by returning the meters in various locations.

Similarly, in a power-surplus State like Odisha, customers are harassed by the company's arbitrary acts. Even major issues such as charging more per unit than other States and hourly power outages are not being addressed, the memo-

randum stated. So, the AAP demands that these smart meters be removed immediately and the old meters installed. The BJP had promised during the elections that 300 units of free electricity would be provided free to all consumers. The delegation was led by AAP district convener Bhabani Sahu. Among others, Swarup Bhoi, Amitabh Patra, Maryam Barla and Jadumani Pradhan were present.

North Odisha Dev Council to meet CM soon



RAJENDRA K SAHU ■ KEONJHAR

A delegation of the proposed North Odisha Development Council will meet Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi very soon. This was decided in a meeting of the council on Sunday at Ghatgaon.

The proposed council's convener and former MLA Subarna Naik said that about 200 members from the districts of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj attended the meeting presided over by former Telkoi MLA

Pranaballav Naik.

The members welcomed the CM's recent decision to form a taskforce with regard to formation of a North Odisha Development Council to address regional imbalances and ensure equitable distribution of resources.

But their main objection was to add the undivided Baleswar district in the proposed council. In the year 2010 when the idea of a North Odisha Council was mooted, only Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts were there in the

list. The government is collecting highest revenue from these two minerals-rich districts, but due to poor representation in the State Cabinet, they are still undeveloped in comparison to Baleswar and other coastal districts.

Subarna Naik further said different committees at block and GP levels would be formed to highlight the local issues and, if required, a mass movement would be launched in the coming days for the interest of the district of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj.

'Storytelling enhances teaching-learning'

Training held for teachers in Rayagada

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

A day-long Capacity Building Programme on "Storytelling as Pedagogy" was organised by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama School, Hatamunguda in collaboration with CBSE, Centre of Excellence, Bhubaneswar, here.

Anil Kumar Patnaik and Dr G Vinod Kumar, the resource persons, conducted the workshop using various modules specially designed for the purpose, mainly aimed to explore the role of storytelling in enhancing teaching and learn-



ing experiences. Secretary Swami Gitatmanandaji Maharaj inaugurated the workshop. In his address he discussed the subject giving examples from Panchatantra, Ramayana, Mahabharata and the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Principal Ranganath Banerjee who acted as the venue director welcomed the delegates and introduced the subject. A total of 61 teachers from seven schools participated.

In Kendrapada 26 students fall sick after prayers



PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

As many as 26 students, including 25 girls, of Hasimuddin UP School and Mendapur High School under Aul block in Kendrapada district fell sick after morning prayers on Wednesday.

Aul BEO Nalinikanta Routray said the sick students said they felt uneasiness, suffocation and chest pain. Subsequently, the school authorities informed the Aul CHC Medical Office about the mat-

ter. A team led by Dr Indrabhanu Pradhan rushed to the school and provided preliminary treatment to the students.

Though the exact reason behind the students falling sick was yet to be ascertained, it was suspected that the incident might have possibly occurred due to high humidity. The exact reason is going to be established after the medical test report is availed, stated Dr Pradhan.

Dolphin rescued from Bateswar beach

A call for action for marine conservation

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR

A live dolphin was rescued near the shore at Bateswar beach in Ganjam district and was later safely released into the sea by the forest department on Sunday. The incident highlights the growing threats posed by climate change, environmental pollution, and human activities to marine life. According to reports, last year, over 16 dolphins were sighted near the Chilika and Rushikulya estuaries.

India's seas and rivers are home to a diverse range of dolphin species, thriving in both saltwater and freshwater habitats. Dolphins play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance. Apart from marine environments, many



unique species of dolphins also inhabit brackish waters along the coastline. However, the natural habitats essential for dolphins' survival have been deteriorating rapidly. Polluted water from agricultural, industrial, urban and residential areas is contaminating rivers and streams, severely impacting the lives and reproduction of these marine mammals.

Due to water pollution, dol-

phins face food shortages and are increasingly falling victim to various diseases, often leading to death. The presence of toxic substances in water is particularly dangerous for dolphins, as it disrupts their food supply. Furthermore, dolphins are frequently caught unintentionally during fishing activities or injured by ships and trawlers. Construction of dams on rivers has signifi-

cantly reduced the flow of freshwater into the sea, adversely affecting dolphin populations and their ability to thrive.

India faces numerous challenges in dolphin conservation. These include habitat loss, water pollution, human interference, fishing activities using nets, dam and barrage construction, and climate change. The degradation of their natural habitats, rapid urbanization, industrialization, and unsustainable agricultural practices are major obstacles to dolphin protection. As a result, water pollution is increasing, and freshwater resources in rivers are dwindling, forcing dolphins to lose their natural habitats.

It is imperative that urgent measures are taken to protect dolphins and their habitats, ensuring the preservation of these vital marine species for future generations.

DGAFMS Daljit Singh visits INS Chilka

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Daljit Singh, DGAFMS and Sr Col Comdt of the Army Medical Corps visited INS Chilka and INHS Nivarini from August 24.

He was briefed on the pivotal role played by the INS Chilka in shaping the future sea warriors of the Indian Navy.

The briefing encompassed a comprehensive insight of training activities undertaken during 16 weeks' ab-initio training and initiatives taken to achieve optimal physical conditioning of Agniveers. Singh interacted with INS Chilka Commanding Officer Cmde B Deepak Aneel and the training faculty. To gain insight into Agniveer training



in the Navy, the DGAFMS took a short tour of the training infrastructure.

He also visited INHS Nivarini, the service hospital located at the Naval Base Chilka, and was briefed about the medical facilities and services available to the trainees and the station community.

The DGAFMS laid emphasis on training and medical care, reinforcing the commitment of Indian Armed Forces to maintain the highest standards of readiness and welfare for its personnel.

Week-long Sanskrit Fest ends at CUO

PNS ■ KORAPUT

The week-long Sanskrit Festival ended with enthusiasm at the Central University of Odisha on August 26.

The event, organised by the Department of Sanskrit, commenced on August 16 and was marked by significant enthusiasm from students and faculty alike.

The closing ceremony was presided over by the Vice-Chancellor of the university, Prof Chakradhar Tripathi. The event was graced by the presence of the chief guest Director of Central Sanskrit University, Puri Prof Banamali Biswal and guest of honour CUO adviser Prof VC Jha.

Also in attendance were the Registrar of the university, the

Dean of the School of Languages, and the Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Prof Narsingh Charan Panda.

Among the distinguished guests were Head of the Department of Education Prof Bharat Panda, Head of the Department of Hindi Dr Chakradhar Pradhan and a faculty member of the English Department Dr T Anjaneyulu.

The ceremony commenced with the traditional lighting of the lamp, accompanied by Vedic chanting. Prof Narsingh Charan Panda extended a warm welcome to all the guests. Two students from the Sanskrit Department delivered insightful speeches on the importance of Sanskrit, while two others showcased their skills by reciting Shlokas melodiously.

In Sunabeda Agri sops elude Chakotia Bhunjia farmers

Thanks to 'Jungle Kissam' land they got under FRA

AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA

Bijaya Jhankar, a member of Chakita Bhunjia community which is a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) from Sunabeda Gram Panchayat in Nuapada district, has been producing paddy from three acres of land granted under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006.

Despite producing over 40 quintals of paddy each year, Jhankar is unable to register for selling his surplus produce through the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS) in Bhela.

"I have been cultivating paddy on this land for the last ten years, but without PACS



registration, I am forced to go for distress sales," he lamented. Jhankar also reported being denied crop insurance under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), a critical safety net for farmers. The main reason cited for

these denials is the "Kisam" i.e. the classification of his land as 'Gramya Jungal' (village forest) in the title deed issued by the District Level Committee under the FRA.

The issue is not unique to Jhankar. Daulat Bhunjia of

Kotrabeda village, who received about three acres under the FRA, faces similar challenges. His land, classified as Protected Reserve Forest (PRF) in the title deed, also disqualifies him from availing various Government schemes' benefits.

The problem extends beyond these individual cases, affecting hundreds of farmers in the Sunabeda and Soseng Panchayats. Despite the Odisha Government's support through the Odisha PVTG Empowerment and Livelihood Improvement Programme (OPELIP), which helped in the development and leveling of FRA-allocated lands, these farmers remain excluded from crucial benefits like crop insurance and the paddy procurement system.

Under Rule 12 A of the Forest Rights Rules, the Revenue and Forest Departments are required to update the records of rights (RoRs) and reflect changes in land use following the issuance of FRA titles. Although RoRs created and separate plot numbers assigned in the revenue maps, the land classification (kisam) remains

unchanged, leading to systemic neglect and discrimination.

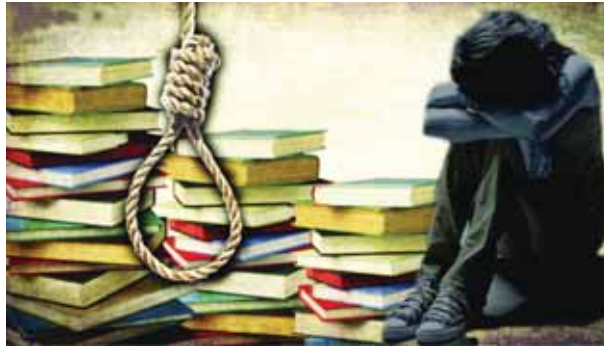
"This effectively deprives tribal farmers of essential benefits of various Government schemes, such as crop insurance and compensation for crop loss due to rainfall variability and wildlife attacks," said Krushak Sakti Sangathana convener Sanjay Tiwari.

Given the Government of India's recent launch of the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) aimed at raising awareness and achieving 100% coverage of Government schemes in PVTG-majority tribal areas, the Chakotia Bhunjias of Sunabeda area are hopeful that the Government will address these gaps and ensure that they receive the full benefits designed to support their agricultural livelihoods.

Suicide by students surges by 4 per cent annually: NCRB data

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Incidents of student suicides in India have grown at an alarming annual rate, surpassing the population growth rate and overall suicide trends, according to a new report. Based on the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, the "Student suicides: An epidemic sweeping India" report was launched on Wednesday at the Annual IC3 Conference and Expo 2024. The report pointed out that while the overall suicide numbers increased by 2 per cent annually, student suicides cases surged by 4 per cent, despite a likely "under reporting" of student suicide cases. "Over the past two decades, student suicides have grown at an alarming annual rate of 4 per cent, double the national average. In 2022, male students constituted 53 per cent (per cent) of the total student suicides. Between 2021 and 2022, male student suicides decreased by 6 per cent while female student suicides increased by 7 per cent," noted the report compiled by IC3 Institute. "The incidence of student suicides continues to surpass both population growth rates and overall suicide trends. Over the last decade, while the population of 0-24-year-olds reduced from 582 million to 581 million, the



number of student suicides increased from 6,654 to 13,044," it added. The IC3 Institute is a volunteer-based organisation that provides support to high schools around the world through guidance and training resources for their administrators, teachers and counsellors to help establish and maintain robust career and college counselling departments. According to the report, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Madhya Pradesh are identified as the states with the highest number of student suicides, together accounting for one-third of the national total. Southern states and union territories collectively contribute 29 per cent of these cases, while Rajasthan, known for its high-stakes academic environment, ranks 10th, highlighting the intense pressure associated with coaching hubs like Kota.

"The data compiled by the NCRB is based on police-recorded first information reports (FIRs). However, it is important to acknowledge that the actual number of student suicides is likely underreported. This under-reporting can be attributed to several factors, including the social stigma surrounding suicide and the criminalisation of attempted and assisted suicide under Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code. Although the 2017 Mental Healthcare Act decriminalises suicide attempts for individuals with mental illness, the legacy of criminalisation continues to impact reporting practices, it said. "Moreover, there are significant data discrepancies due to the lack of a robust data collection system, particularly in rural areas, where reporting is less consistent compared to urban regions," it said.

Ganesh Kohli, the Founder of the IC3 Movement, said the report serves as a reminder of the urgent need to address mental health challenges within our learning institutions. "Our educational focus must shift to fostering the competencies of our learners such that it supports their overall well-being, versus pushing them to compete amongst each other. "It is imperative that we build a systematic, comprehensive, and robust career and college counselling system within each institution, while seamlessly integrating the same within the learning curriculum," he said. Additionally, the report noted a dramatic increase in student suicides, with male suicides rising by 50 per cent and female suicides by 61 per cent over the past decade. "Both genders have experienced an average annual increase of 5 per cent (per cent) in the last five years. These alarming statistics underscore the critical need for enhanced counselling infrastructure and a deeper understanding of student aspirations. "Addressing these gaps is essential for shifting the focus from competitive pressures to nurturing core competencies and well-being, thereby supporting students more effectively and preventing such tragedies," the report said

India to commission its 2nd indigenous nuclear-powered submarine INS Arighat today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Giving a major boost to operation readiness and nuclear deterrence, India is likely to commission its second indigenously designed and manufactured nuclear powered submarine INS Arighat on Thursday. The first submarine INS Arihant was commissioned in 2016. As regards, INS Arighat, it was launched in 2017 at its manufacturing base, Ship Building Centre (SBC), Visakhapatnam. In fact, the SBC is building five nuclear powered submarines. While Arihant is already operational and Arighat to be commissioned on Thursday, work is now on the remaining two submarines. They are in advanced stage of construction, it was learnt. INS Arighat is 111.6 meters long and weighs 6,000 tonnes. It plays a crucial role in India's nuclear triad, enabling the nation to launch nuclear missiles from land, air, and sea. Powered by an 82.5 MW pressurized light water reactor developed with Russian assistance, INS Arighat can achieve a top speed of 24 knots submerged and 10 knots on the surface. Its primary armament consists of 12 K-15 Sagarika submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), each with a range exceeding 700 kilometers. These missiles are housed in four large vertical launch system (VLS) tubes

and are a testament to India's indigenous missile development capabilities. The submarine is divided into seven compartments, housing propulsion and combat management systems, a platform management center, and a torpedo room. Additional safety measures include two standby auxiliary engines and a retractable thruster for emergency power and mobility. INS Arighat follows in the footsteps of INS Arihant, India's first SSBN, which was commissioned in 2016. A third, yet-to-be-named SSBN was launched in 2021, further solidifying India's commitment to developing a credible sea-based nuclear deterrent. The commissioning of INS Arighat is expected to be attended by top defence, national security, and military officials. The Arihant class submarines, named after the Sanskrit word meaning "Destroyer of the Enemy," signify the strategic importance of nuclear-powered submarines. India is actively working on having five Arihant class boats along with six nuclear attack submarines to be built in three blocks.

Cabinet approves three railway projects worth ₹6,456 crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved three railway projects with a total estimated cost of Rs 6,456 crore. According to a statement from the Ministry of Railways, the approved projects will improve logistical efficiency by connecting the unconnected areas, increase the existing line capacity and enhance the transportation networks, resulting in streamlined supply chains and accelerated economic growth. "The new line proposals will provide direct connectivity and improve mobility, providing enhanced efficiency and service reliability for the Indian Railways. The multi-tracking proposal will ease operations and reduce congestion, providing the much-required infrastructural development on the busiest sections across the Indian Railways," the ministry said. "The projects are in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of a New India which will make people of the region 'Atmanirbhar' by way of comprehensive development in the area which will enhance their employment/self-employment opportunities," it added. According to the Ministry, the projects are result of PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity which have been possible through integrated planning

and will provide seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods and services. "The three projects covering seven districts in four states i.e., Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 300 kms," the Ministry said. "With these projects, 14 new stations will be constructed, providing enhanced connectivity to two aspirational districts (Nuapada and East Singhbhum)," it added. Highlighting the benefits of the new line projects, the ministry stated these will provide connectivity to approximately 1,300 villages and about 11 lakh population. "Multi-tracking project will enhance connectivity to approximately 1,300 villages and about 19 lakh population," it said. The Ministry also emphasized the benefits to the freight traffic as these are essential routes for transportation of commodities such as agriculture products, fertilizer, coal, iron ore, steel, cement and limestone etc. "The capacity augmentation works will result in additional freight traffic of magnitude 45 MTPA (Million Tonnes Per Annum)," the ministry said.

IAF launches comic book to motivate youth to join force

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Indian Air Force on Wednesday launched a comic book telling the story of legendary IAF Marshal Arjan Singh and the epic Battle of Boyra fought during the 1971 Indo-Pak war, aiming to educate the youth about the glorious history of the force and motivate them to join it. The 32-page 'Heroes of the Indian Air Force - Vol. I' was released by IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari at an event held at the Vayu Bhawan here. Arjan Singh, who fought in the Burma campaign during the World War II and the 1965 Indo-Pak war, was the IAF officer to be conferred the rank of the Marshal of the Indian Air Force and he had also earned the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) before Independence. The project conceived last year was led by DISHA (Directorate of Induction and Selection in a Holistic Approach) Cell of the IAF under Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari's vision. The medium of comic books was chosen to reach young minds especially those in schools and motivate them to take up career in the Indian Air Force, according to a video played at the launch event. The first volume has two stories -- 'Find Your Calling' which tells the tale of a boy named Arjan Singh who went on to become the first Marshal of the Indian Air Force; and 'Battle of Boyra' that narrates the story of the epic battle in the IAF's war history fought during the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

The stories with compelling visuals aim to foster among the children better appreciation for values of courage, motivation and perseverance, and to let them learn to walk in his footsteps, said a senior official. The second story has "adrenaline-pumping action sequences" seen through the pilot's eyes. "This air combat engagement was a significant engagement of the fighting prowess and valour of young pilots of No.22 Squadron, the Swifts, which earned the squadron the moniker Sabre Slayers," he said. The comic book's purpose is to educate young readers and depict heroics embodied in an air combat, the IAF official said. "For youngsters, it is a direct call to action," he said. A pdf version of the book will be launched online and it will be available for "free sharing" on social media, the official added. Air Force History Cell and the Air Force Museum played a key role in providing and vetting historical facts while the IAF's Directorate of Ceremonials ensured the uniform was correctly depicted as per the period described in the stories. This project aims to educate the youth about the glorious history of the IAF and motivate them to join the force, he said.

PM Modi: PMJDY personifies dignity, empowerment as it marks 10th year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana completed 10 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the scheme personifies dignity, empowerment and the opportunity to participate in the economic life of the Nation. Modi also hailed those who worked to make the Jan Dhan Yojana a success, and said the scheme has been paramount in boosting financial inclusion. "Today, we mark a

momentous occasion - #10YearsOfJanDhan. Congratulations to all the beneficiaries and compliments to all those who worked to make this scheme a success," the Prime Minister said in a social media post. The Jan Dhan Yojana has been paramount in boosting financial inclusion and giving dignity to crores of people, especially women, youth, and the marginalised communities, he said. Later, on a LinkedIn post, Modi said today marks a decade since the Pradhan

Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana was launched and for him, this initiative was more than just a policy it was an endeavour to build an India where each and every citizen, irrespective of one's economic background, has access to the formal banking apparatus. "Many of you, especially the youth, would be thinking -- why does this matter so much? After all, in this age, having a bank account would be very basic and even taken for granted. However, when we assumed office in 2014, the situation was very different. It



was almost 65 years since Independence, but access to banking was a distant dream for almost half of our households," the Prime Minister said. There's a world where savings were kept at home, vulnerable to loss and theft, he noted. "Access to credit was often at the mercy of predatory lenders. The

absence of financial security held back so many dreams," Modi said. "This problem becomes even more ironical considering the fact that four and a half decades ago, banks were nationalised by the then (Congress) Government and that too in the name of the poor! Yet, the poor never got access to banking," he said. "When the Jan Dhan Yojana was rolled out, I remember the scepticism that surrounded it too. Some people asked -- could it really be possible to bring such a large number of

people into the banking system? Will this effort lead to any concrete changes? Yes. The scale of the challenge was enormous, but so was the determination of the people of India to ensure it becomes a reality," he said. The success of the Jan Dhan Yojana has two parts to it, Modi pointed out and said one is in the numbers with over 53 crore people who never imagined they would enter a bank having bank accounts now. These accounts have a deposit balance of over Rs. 2.3 lakh crore, he said.

Vice Admiral Rajesh Dhankhar takes reins of Project Seabird

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice Admiral Rajesh Dhankhar on Wednesday assumed duties of the Director General Project Seabird, with a charter to oversee largest defence infrastructure project currently progressing at the Karwar Naval Base, from Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti., navy said here. The change of guard took place at the Headquarters, Project Seabird, New Delhi. Dhankhar was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1990 and is a specialist in Navigation and Direction. The Flag Officer is an alumnus of the prestigious Naval Academy, Defence Services Staff College, and has undergone the Higher Command Course in Japan. During his illustrious career spanning 34 years, the Flag Officer has tenanted specialist appointments onboard warships Pondicherry, Godavari, Kora and Mysore. The officer has also done



instructional tenures in the erstwhile Project 15 Training Team, Navigation and Direction School and at the MIDS Wing Officer's Cadet School, Singapore. His command appointments include Executive Officer onboard INS Delhi, and as Commanding Officer onboard INS Gharial, Mumbai and Vikramaditya. His notable staff appointments include those as Joint Director and Director at Directorate of Naval Plans, Principal Director/Commodore(Pers) at the Directorate of Personnel.

In Flag rank, he has tenanted duties of Chief Staff Officer (Training), Flag Officer Sea Training, Commandant Naval War College and the Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet. The Flag officer has also tenanted additional duties of the Chairman, Carrier Acceptance Trials Team to oversee the acceptance trials of INS Vikrant. The Flag Officer is a recipient of the Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry) in 2015 for Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) of Indian nationals from Aden and Al-Hodeida, Yemen. During his tenure as Fleet Commander, over the past ten months, the Eastern Fleet maintained high level of combat readiness and operational tempo undertaking multiple Mission Based and operational deployments, and numerous bilateral and multilateral engagements including MILAN 24 with friendly foreign navies.

Help victims of Gujarat flood: Cong to Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday expressed concern over the flood situation in Gujarat and urged the Government to take all necessary steps to reduce the impact of the natural calamity. Rain-related incidents claimed nine more lives in Gujarat, taking the death toll to 16 in two days, while another 8,500 people were relocated and rescued from flood-affected areas with rains continuing to lash some parts of the State for the fourth consecutive day on Wednesday, officials said. In a social media post, Kharge said, "The flood situation in Gujarat is extremely worrying as several people have lost their lives and are missing. Our heartfelt condolences to the families of those who have lost their loved ones. Our

thoughts are with the affected people, who are in need of urgent food and medical assistance." "We request the Central Government to ensure more NDRF & SDRF teams. We are proud of our Armed Forces and Coast Guard, who are undertaking rescue efforts. Congress leaders and workers must coordinate all possible relief efforts, in this hour of tragedy," Kharge, who is also the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, said. Rahul Gandhi said the flood situation in Gujarat is getting more severe day by day. "I express my deepest condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones and whose property has been damaged in this calamity. I hope that the injured recover soon," the former Congress Chief said. "An appeal is made to all Congress workers to provide all possible help to the affected people and the administration in relief and rescue work," he said.



DRDO, TIFR scientists complete testing of 6-qubit quantum processor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists from Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Young Scientists Laboratory for Quantum Technologies (DYSL-QT), Pune and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai have completed end-to-end testing of a 6-qubit quantum processor based on superconducting circuit technology, defence ministry said here on Wednesday. The demonstration was carried out in front of the apex committee overseeing the DYSL-QT. This included submitting a quantum circuit from a cloud-based interface, the execution of the programme on the quantum hardware and updating the cloud interface with computed results. The project being executed at TIFR Mumbai's Colaba campus is a three-way collaboration between DYSL-QT, TIFR and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). The DYSL-QT scientists put together the control and measurement apparatus using a combination of commercial off-the-shelf electronics and custom programmed development boards. The qubits were designed and fabricated at TIFR and the quantum processor architecture is based on a novel ring-resonator design invented at TIFR.

Insufficient pollinator activity poses threat to global food security

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Analysing over 1,500 fields across six continents and over 200,000 'bee visitations' to crop flowers, researchers have uncovered a troubling global trend that shows that one-third to two-thirds of farms worldwide are facing reduced yields of essential, nutrient-rich crops due to insufficient pollinator activity, thus posing threat to global food security. This phenomenon, known as "pollinator limitation," poses a serious threat to global food security and is exacerbated by the alarming decline in insect

populations, which are crucial for pollination and, consequently, for maintaining agricultural productivity. The disturbing trend comes amid various reports about the decline of insects including bees, responsible for pollination, all across the world. The study led by scientists from Rutgers University-New Brunswick highlights the critical role of pollinators in the production of vital foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes. Published in Nature Ecology & Evolution, the study reveals



that inadequate visits by pollinators are leading to significant yield deficits in vital crops such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes.

Researchers conducted a rigorous statistical analysis of over 200,000 'bee visitations' to crop flowers, utilising one of the most extensive databases on crop pollination available. Katie Turo, a postdoctoral fellow at the University and co-author of the study said, "Our findings are a cause for concern and optimism. We did detect widespread yield deficits. However, we also estimate that, through continued investment in pollinator management and research, it is likely that we can improve the efficiency of

our existing crop fields to meet the nutritional needs of our global population." Rachael Winfree, the senior author of the study and a professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources, worked with colleagues from Europe and South America to develop the most extensive database of crop pollination research globally. This open-access resource encompasses 30 years of field data on bee and other pollinator visits to plants. The research focuses on crops that require pollination, such

as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes — foods that are both nutrient-rich and culturally significant. It does not address major staple crops like rice and wheat, which do not depend on pollinators for reproduction. Pollination involves transferring pollen from the male part of a flower to the female part, enabling the plant to fertilise and produce seeds, fruits, and new plants. This transfer can be accomplished by various methods, including wind, water, or by pollinators like honeybees, wild bees, other

insects, and even bats. World over, pollinators support the reproduction of about 88 per cent of the world's flowering plants and 76 per cent of the leading global food crops. Bees are widely recognised as the most efficient pollinators, a fact highlighted by Rutgers scientists who found that blueberry, coffee, and apple crops were particularly vulnerable to pollinator limitations. The study revealed that yield deficits were evident in 25 distinct crop types across 85% of the countries examined.

K'taka HC to resume hearing on CM's petition challenging Guv prosecution order

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court is set to resume hearing on Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's petition challenging the legality of the Governor Thaaarachand's sanction for his prosecution in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) case on Thursday. The Governor on August 16 accorded sanction under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 for the commission of the alleged offences as mentioned in the petitions of Pradeep Kumar S P, T J Abraham and Snehamayi Krishna. On August 19, Siddaramaiah moved to the High Court challenging the legality of the Governor's order. The HC had directed the special court for people's representatives that was slated to hear complaints against him in the case, to defer its proceedings till the next date of hearing on August 29. In the petition, the Chief Minister submitted that the sanction order was issued without due application of mind, in violation of statutory mandates, and contrary to constitutional principles, including the advice of the Council of Ministers, which is binding under Article 163 of the Constitution of India.



The court proceedings will be keenly watched for its possible political impact. The Congress has rallied behind Siddaramaiah and ruled out his resignation over the issue and said it would wage a legal and political fight. Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who is also state Congress chief, and several senior Ministers recently met AICC President M Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi and held discussions on the Governor's order and strategy to be adopted going forward. On the Chief Minister's petition coming up for hearing in the High Court on Thursday, Home Minister G Parameshwara said there is hope that the HC will not consider the argument in favour of the Governor's decision. "There should be

material about Siddaramaiah's involvement. If they (materials) are there, they can be taken into cognisance. When there are no materials like -- his signature, his order, involvement and name... Even in the registration his name is not there. When such is the case, the court will look into all these things and will decide on it," he said. Responding to a question on whether there have been any discussions by the high command regarding the next course of action, in case the developments in the court on August 29 go against Siddaramaiah, the Minister said: "What developments will happen cannot be speculated, once things happen let's discuss, this is what they have told." Asked about speculations that he may become CM (in the event of Siddaramaiah quitting), Parameshwara, who

held a prolonged discussion with Congress leadership -- Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi -- during the recent Delhi visit, said that question doesn't arise at all, and the issue has never come up for discussion. "(My) seniority may be there...It is true that Rahul Gandhi spoke to me separately, but what was discussed cannot be speculated. I'm a disciplined member of the party and have fulfilled the responsibility given to me from time to time. He (Rahul) spoke to me regarding party things, other than that nothing was discussed," he added. Chief Minister's Legal Advisor and Virajpet Congress MLA, A S Ponnanna said: "According to us, the Governor's order is contrary to the law and seems to have been taken in a hurry." "Unilateral decision was taken by the Governor without any inquiry or examining evidence, so we are hopeful of winning in the court. Necessary action will be taken based on what the court decides," he said. Claiming that there is situation in the country where all non-BJP governments in the states are "forced to go to court for everything," Ponnanna accused ruling BJP at the Centre of "using" the Raj Bhavan and said: "in the days to come after getting admonished by the court, they will learn a lesson."

Rajasthan Guv calls for developing strong system of internal security on borders

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Governor R Haribhau Bagde on Wednesday called for making continuous efforts to develop a strong system of internal security along with vigilance and protection on the borders. The Governor also emphasised on talking to the families living on the border and making efforts for their cooperation. He praised the soldier of the party and have fulfilled the responsibility given to me from time to time. He (Rahul) spoke to me regarding party things, other than that nothing was discussed," he added. Chief Minister's Legal Advisor and Virajpet Congress MLA, A S Ponnanna said: "According to us, the Governor's order is contrary to the law and seems to have been taken in a hurry." "Unilateral decision was taken by the Governor without any inquiry or examining evidence, so we are hopeful of winning in the court. Necessary action will be taken based on what the court decides," he said. Claiming that there is situation in the country where all non-BJP governments in the states are "forced to go to court for everything," Ponnanna accused ruling BJP at the Centre of "using" the Raj Bhavan and said: "in the days to come after getting admonished by the court, they will learn a lesson."



While visiting the border area of Bikaner district, he interacted with the BSF jawans deployed there and especially praised their commitment and dedication to protect the country by constantly remaining alert even in adverse geographical conditions. On reaching the Sanchu border, Governor Bagde was informed about the battles fought between India and Pakistan between 1965 and 1971. Describing Sanchu as important from the point of view of the history of the war of the Indian Army, the governor saluted the valour of the soldiers of the Indian Army. He later visited the 'War Museum' there.

While interacting with the BSF jawans on the border area, the governor said the word soldier itself inspires the mind. Soldiers not only secure the country but also work for the integrity and unity of the nation, he said. He expressed the need to maintain mutual cooperation for development in the border districts, to hold regular meetings of officials in the border areas and to keep a constant dialogue on issues related to internal security so that any unpleasant situations in the future can be dealt with. Bagde also reiterated making effective strategies to control and prevent criminal activities in the border areas.

Coast Guard rescues 13 fishermen on boat adrift in Arabian Sea off Gujarat coast

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Amid heavy rains in Gujarat, the Indian Coast Guard has rescued 13 fishermen on board a boat adrift in the Arabian Sea off the coast in the state's Devbhumi Dwarka district, the maritime security agency said on Wednesday. Acting on an SOS message from the owner of the fishing boat 'Padmawati' on Tuesday, the ICG deployed its advanced light helicopter (ALH) and a ship for their rescue, it said in a statement. The vessel was around 15 km from Dwaraka and had suffered a machinery breakdown due to rough weather and inclement sea conditions off the coast, it said. "The ICG, as 'First Responder At Sea', immediately deployed an ALH helicopter to take stock of the situation. Meanwhile, ICG ship Abheek was diverted for the rescue operations, despite adverse weather and very rough sea conditions," it said. In a nightlong operation, the ship towed the boat amid hostile weather conditions and brought it to Okha safely on Wednesday morning. All 13 crew members were safe, said the statement.

Champai Soren under own Govt surveillance for 5 months: Himanta

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday alleged that Jharkhand minister Champai Soren had been under "surveillance of his own government" for last five months. Two sub-inspectors (SIs) of Special Branch of Jharkhand Police were nabbed by Soren's people in a Delhi hotel on Tuesday while they were keeping watch on the ex-chief minister, Sarma said. "We all know that Champai Soren is a minister in the Jharkhand government, he is also an ex-chief minister. He has decided to join BJP on August 30, but he is yet to resign and remains a minister...but his own government has put him under surveillance," Sarma claimed at a press conference here. "Soren had been put under surveillance five months ago, even before he was in talks with the BJP," the Assam CM claimed. He claimed the two SIs had been following Soren on his Delhi trips, taking the same flight and staying in the same five-star hotel as the minister. "Champai Soren's people spotted these two persons at the Delhi hotel on Tuesday



and nabbed them. Initially, they claimed to be journalists but later admitted to be Special Branch SIs. They were handed over to Chanakypuri Police Station there and Soren has also filed an FIR," Sarma said. "Whether Delhi Police will arrest them or not, we don't know as the SIs claimed to be on duty," he said, without sharing the names or photographs of the two officials as "they might have been involved in Naxal or other undercover operations". The CM said the two SIs have claimed that a "person in Constitutional position" and the Special Branch chief, Inspector General Prabhat Kumar, had put them on duty to "track" Champai Soren.

Terming it a "serious case of espionage", Sarma said, "This is one of rarest case of surveillance in Indian politics, we will raise it at the highest levels." Hitting out at the JMM-Congress, he said, "They claim to be the protectors of the Constitution. And here they are, intruding the basic right of privacy and life of a colleague of their own. Is Soren a Naxal, an extremist?" The Assam CM said it is also suspected now that Soren's phones could be tapped and there might have been a plan to "honey trap" him as a woman had also been meeting the two SIs. "We demand a thorough investigation into the matter," Sarma added.

419 HP Govt schools having low enrolment merged with nearby schools: Education Min

PTI ■ SHIMLA

As many as 419 government schools in Himachal Pradesh with five or less students have been merged with nearby schools, Education Minister Rohit Thakur informed the Vidhan Sabha on Wednesday. The move was taken to rationalise the deployment of teachers, Thakur said while responding to a question of BJP member Vipin Parmar, which was asked by his party colleague Rakesh Jamwal in his absence during the 'Question Hour'. A total of 361 primary schools with less than five students have been merged with other schools within a 2-km radius, while 58 middle section schools have been merged with schools within a 3-km distance, the minister said. The enrolment of students in government schools dropped in the last two decades, Thakur said, citing parents' inclination towards private schools and opening of private schools in the vicinity of existing government schools. Further, the rising migration of people from rural to

urban areas is also a factor for low enrolment in government schools located in rural areas, he added. Sharing figures on the declining trend, the education minister said the number of students in primary schools (up to Class 5) was 90 lakh in 2003, but it dropped to 2.99 lakh in 2023, while the strength in middle schools (Classes 6 to 8) reduced from 3.81 lakh to 2.50 lakh in the same period. In government senior secondary schools, the number of students dipped from 1.84 lakh to 1.34 lakh from 2003 to 2023, Thakur said, adding that the situation could turn worse in the next ten years. He said that as per the latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), Himachal Pradesh has slipped to 21st position and students of Class 8 are now unable to read the books of Class 2. In a cabinet meeting on July 25, the state cabinet had decided to close 89 government primary schools (GPS) and 10 government middle schools (GMS) with zero enrolments and approved the merger of GPS and GMS with five or less students within two and three kilometre radius.

Bengaluru court extends judicial custody of Darshan & other accused till September 9

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A court here on Wednesday extended till September nine the judicial custody of Kannada actor Darshan Thogudeepa along with his friend Pavithra Gowda and others, who are accused in the Renukaswamy murder case. All the 17 accused, including Darshan and Pavithra, were produced before the magistrate court through video conferencing from Bengaluru and Tumakuru prisons, where they are lodged, as their judicial custody ended today. The extension of judicial custody follows a remand application filed by the Police. The 24th Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on Tuesday granted permission to shift Darshan, who is currently in judicial custody at Parappana Agrahara Central Jail here, to a jail in Ballari. After a photograph of him hanging out with three others, including a rowdy-sheeter, on the lawns of the jail had gone viral on Sunday, sparking an uproar. The court has also permitted shifting of other co-accused in the murder case to various prisons in the state. In the picture, the actor is seen in a relaxed mood, sitting on a chair and holding a cigarette and a coffee mug.



Also, a purported video of Darshan speaking to a person over a video call from the prison too had surfaced on social media. Other accused — Pawan, Raghavendra and Nandish — will be shifted to Mysuru Jail, Jagadish and Lakshmana to Shivamogga Jail, Dhanraj to Dharwad Jail, Vinay to Vijayapura Jail, Nagaraj to Kalaburagi/Gulbarga Jail, and Pradosh to Belagavi Jail, official sources said. Three accused — Pavithra Gowda, Anukumar, and Deepak — will continue to remain at Parappana Agrahara Central Jail here. Four accused — Ravi, Karthik, Nikhil and Keshavamurthy — were earlier shifted to Tumakuru prison. Nine prison officials, including the Chief Superintendent of the Parappana Agrahara jail, were suspended on Monday over their "lapses" after a preliminary probe into

"special treatment" to Darshan. Also, three FIRs were registered, including against Darshan, under sections of the Prisons Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). According to police sources, 33-year-old Renukaswamy, a fan of the actor, had sent obscene messages to Gowda, which enraged Darshan, allegedly leading to his murder. His body was found near a stormwater drain next to an apartment in Sumanahalli here on June nine. Raghavendra, one of the accused who is part of Darshan's fan club in Chitradurga, had brought Renukaswamy to a shed in R R Nagar here, on the pretext that the actor wanted to meet him. It was in this shed that he was allegedly tortured and murdered. According to the post-mortem report, Renukaswamy, a native of Chitradurga, died due to shock and haemorrhage as a result of multiple blunt injuries. Police sources said Pavithra, who is accused number one, was the "major cause" for Renukaswamy's murder, claiming that it has been proved from the probe that she instigated other accused, conspired with them, and took part in the crime.

BJP dares Cong to nominate Kumari Selja as Haryana CM candidate to prove SC support

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The Haryana unit of ruling BJP on Wednesday dared Congress to declare Kumari Selja as its chief ministerial candidate for the state assembly polls, to prove how committed it is to the well-being of the SC community. The state BJP also said they nominate Nayab Singh Saini, who belongs to the OBC category, a chief minister. Saini is also the BJP's chief ministerial face for the upcoming assembly elections, scheduled for October 1. "The BJP has already nominated a chief minister from the backward class. Rahul Gandhi claims to strongly support the SC community. Let them (Congress) declare Selja ji as the chief ministerial candidate from Haryana so that one can know how much of a well-wisher of the (SC) community they are," Haryana BJP posted on X in Hindi. Notably, Selja, who is a Lok Sabha MP from Sirsa, is a prominent Dalit face of the



to work in the state but the high command will take a final call on the matter. Meanwhile, reacting to BJP's post on X, Haryana Congress president Udai Bhan told PTI over phone that the ruling party should worry about itself as its government in the state was on its way out. Speaking about selection of the chief ministerial candidate, Bhan said Congress MLAs and the party high command will take a call on who would serve as the chief minister only after the poll results are out. He also said that the party had earlier nominated leaders from the Dalit community as chief ministers in four states, including Punjab and Maharashtra. "The BJP should tell whom they have made a CM from the SC community. Moreover, they should tell if they declared Bhajan Lal Sharma as CM candidate when they fought the last assembly elections in Rajasthan. Did they fight the polls (in MP) on Mohan

Yadav's face. In Haryana, did they fight polls in 2014 with Manohar Lal Khattar as their face?," Bhan asked. He further said that Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in Rajasthan Assembly Tika Ram Jolly come from the Dalit community. Bhan said, "One thing is clear: the BJP has accepted that Congress is coming to power in Haryana..." "That is why they are coming up with excuse of string of holidays falling around the polling date of October 1 and writing to Election Commission to defer the polls by some days... We are saying even if polling is held even before October 1, we have no objection and we are ready," he added. The Haryana BJP had last week written to the Election Commission requesting a brief postponement of the assembly polls slated for October 1, citing holidays before and after the election date that could lead to lower voter turnout.

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Gujarat rain: Parts of Vadodara city remain flooded for 2nd day, Army called in

PTI ■ VADODARA

With many parts of Gujarat's Vadodara city remaining inundated on the second consecutive day, the situation is "alarming" and the Army has been called in to carry out relief and rescue work, the state government said on Wednesday. Some areas were under 10 to 12 feet of water, said Health Minister and government spokesperson Rushikesh Patel. The Vishwamitri river which flows through the city crossed the danger mark of 25 feet on Tuesday morning following heavy rains and the release of water from Ajwa dam, he told reporters here after a review meeting with senior officials. "Water level of Ajwa Dam is 213.8 feet at present. We have closed the gates so that no additional water goes into Vishwamitri river. The river is currently flowing at 37 feet, well above the danger mark. Water has spilled into the city and many areas are flooded," he said. Four columns of the Army are at present engaged in relief and rescue work in the city,



the minister said. As a long-term solution, the state government is considering a proposal to divert floodwaters into the Narmada canal instead of releasing it in the Vishwamitri river, he said. "The situation is alarming in Vadodara because many areas on both sides of the river are still under 10 to 12 feet of water. Some areas are under four to five feet of water. The local administration has

shifted more than 5,000 people to safer places and rescued nearly 1,200 stranded people," Patel said. "In addition to a team each of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and SDRF along with a column of the Indian Army already working in the city to help stranded people, we have pressed into service three new Army columns and one more team each of NDRF and SDRF to

evacuate people and distribute food packets," he added. Local leaders of the ruling BJP too were helping people though the houses of many of them too are partially submerged, he noted. Siddharth Nagar, Akota, Harni-Sama road, Fatehgunj, Munjmahuda and Vadsar were among the worst-affected areas, said Patel, adding that more boats have been sent to expedite the relief and rescue work. More than 38,000 food packets have been distributed and another one lakh packets are ready for distribution, the minister informed. "Such a situation has arisen after nearly 20 years. The Vishwamitri gets water from Ajwa, Pratappura and three other non-gated reservoirs. As a long-term solution to flooding, we are considering diverting the dam water into Narmada canal instead of releasing it into Vishwamitri. The plan has been discussed with Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel," he said. Across Gujarat, rain-related incidents have claimed 16 lives in two days and thousands have been evacuated.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Best of luck!

India sends largest ever contingent of 84 para-athletes for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games

The 2024 Paralympic Games opened in Paris yesterday where differently abled athletes from 164 countries would be participating. India has sent its largest-ever contingent of 84 athletes this year. This year's event is a testament to the unyielding spirit of athletes who continue to inspire the world with their incredible stories of perseverance and triumph over adversity. India's participation in the 2024 Paris Paralympics is a landmark moment for the nation. With 84 athletes across various disciplines, India is fielding its largest and most diverse contingent ever. This reflects the growing recognition and support for para-sports in India, as well as the increasing number of athletes who are challenging stereotypes and redefining excellence. The Paralympic Games have a rich history, dating back to 1948, when Sir Ludwig Guttmann organized a sports competition for World War II veterans with spinal cord injuries in Stoke Mandeville, England. This event is widely regarded as the precursor to the modern Paralympic Games. Over the decades, the Paralympics have grown exponentially, becoming a global platform for athletes with disabilities to showcase their extraordinary talents and push the boundaries of what is possible.



Among the Indian athletes, one name that stands out is that of Sheetal Devi, a young archer who has defied all odds to compete at the highest level despite being born without hands. Sheetal's journey is nothing short of extraordinary. Using her feet to handle the bow and arrow, she has developed a unique technique that has made her one of the most promising archers in the world. Her story is a powerful reminder that limitations are often only in the mind, and with determination and innovation, they can be overcome. Sheetal Devi's participation in the 2024 Paralympics is more than just a personal achievement; it symbolizes hope and resilience for millions of people around the world. Her ability to turn her perceived limitations into strengths has captivated audiences and earned her recognition as a true champion of the human spirit. The 2024 Paris Paralympics continue the tradition of celebrating the incredible capabilities of athletes with disabilities. The Games are not just about winning medals; they are about breaking barriers, challenging societal perceptions, and inspiring future generations. The inclusion of more sports and the increasing participation of countries like India signify a broader acceptance and encouragement of para-sports worldwide. As the athletes compete in Paris, their stories of courage, like that of Sheetal Devi, remind us of the power of sport to transcend physical limitations and bring people together in a shared pursuit of excellence. The Paralympic Games serve as a global stage where athletes demonstrate that with perseverance, anything is possible. India's largest-ever contingent and the inspiring story of Sheetal Devi exemplify the spirit of the Paralympic movement. As these athletes compete, they continue to inspire millions, proving that no obstacle is insurmountable when met with determination and heart.

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PICTALK



A beautifully painted bus at display in the Heritage Transport Museum, in Gurugram PANKAJ KUMAR

The rise of Sunita Kejriwal

As Arvind Kejriwal remains behind bars, Sunita Kejriwal steps up to bridge the gap between her husband and the party, taking on the mantle of leadership in his absence



KALYANI SHANKAR

Whoever thought the low-profile Sunita, wife of Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal, would emerge as an acceptable leader in the Aam Admi Party? Her increasing involvement is particularly significant after her husband has been jailed for a liquor scam since March. She has become a crucial link between her husband and the Party.

The recent Lok Sabha and Assembly elections provided her an opportunity to demonstrate her potential. It is still unclear whether she will continue working for the Party after Kejriwal is released on bail.

Women from political families often enter politics as substitutes for their relatives. One successful example is Sonia Gandhi. She was the power behind the throne.

Rabri Devi, the wife of former Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, served as the Chief Minister of Bihar from 2000 to 2005. Lalu had to resign due to his alleged involvement in a scam. Rabri was merely a rubber stamp while her husband was the de facto chief minister.

She may be a novice in politics, but Sunita brings a wealth of experience and a solid professional background. Her 22-year tenure in the income tax department, ending as I-T commissioner at the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), showcases her competence.

Sunita supported her husband, Kejriwal, keeping a low profile, even during India Against Corruption, when he became a political leader and activist. Kejriwal projected himself as a family man and campaigned with Sunita during the polls.

Sunita's increasing involvement in the Aam Admi Party, particularly after Kejriwal's imprisonment, demonstrates her commitment and determination. Kejriwal is the only incumbent chief minister in Indian history who refused to resign his chief ministership even after his arrest. Speculations about her possibly succeeding Kejriwal if he resigns have been doing the rounds.

Secondly, Sunita's leadership is



crucial. She has arrived at a when the Aam Admi Party grapples with a crisis. The Assembly elections in Haryana will be held next month, and Delhi polls are due in January 2025. Many senior leaders are facing allegations of corruption charges. The recent arrest of Kejriwal has added to the Party's challenges. The Centre gave him a long rope and did not dismiss his government based on a constitutional breakdown. Manish Sisodia, Kejriwal's deputy, says Sunita's role in the Party will end when Kejriwal is out of jail. Sisodia was also arrested last year in connection with an excise policy case. AAP MP Sanjay Singh claims Sunita's role as Kejriwal's messenger is growing. Still, Kejriwal says Sunita has no interest in politics.

While Sunita may be seen as a stop-gap replacement, her growing influence in the Party makes it challenging to sideline her. Sunita's role in the Party will remain significant even if Kejriwal returns. Fourthly, the Party faces a crisis of leadership. With the upcoming Haryana and Delhi polls, AAP needs a credible leader and a good campaigner. Sunita's role as a morale



SUNITA HAS LAUNCHED HER CAMPAIGN WITH FIVE "KEJRIWAL'S GUARANTEES" FOR THE UPCOMING HARYANA ASSEMBLY POLLS

booster is to fill the gap and give pep talk.

Fifthly, the AAP members have accepted Sunita as the link, though Sunita holds no official position in AAP. She has campaigned during the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and has just begun campaigning in Haryana. She has been hard-hitting on the Modi government and the BJP. Her line of defence was that some political forces were involved in discrediting her husband.

The opposition coalition INDIA has acknowledged Sunita's increasing involvement and acceptability. She was seated in a prominent position alongside Sonia Gandhi at a recent rally in Ramliha Maidan.

Sunita has launched her campaign with five "Kejriwal's Guarantees" for the upcoming Haryana Assembly polls. They include free electricity, medical treatment, education, \$1,000 monthly aid for women, and youth employment. She lauded the AAP government for its initiatives and urged people to vote for AAP. Sunita has some downsides. Despite Kejriwal's political success, she is untested. Whether she can keep the Party intact is still being determined. Her limit-

ed purpose is to convey Kejriwal's message from prison and campaign for the upcoming elections.

Sunita is in talks with other parties like the Nationalist Congress Party and has gained access to top opposition leaders. Her strategy for selecting candidates and forming coalitions depends on the Aam Admi Party's future alliances. Overcoming anti-incumbency as AAP seeks a third term in Delhi is challenging.

When Kejriwal returns, he must ensure that the Party is under control. And that his image in public is not tarnished. He must also keep an eye on Punjab, where AAP is ruling. He must ensure a chain of command between the Party and the government. He must develop a second line of leadership, as he has not allowed any leader to emerge. He needs to keep his team united and realistically evaluate his promises of benefits. The results of the upcoming elections in Haryana and Delhi could significantly shape Delhi's future political landscape. The results will show whether Sunita succeeds.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Remember the Hippocratic Oath!



Kudos to Mr. Sujit De for the letter titled 'Don't make patients suffer' (August 26). Based upon professional fraternity (not human fraternity), the Doctors of the government hospitals are in strike in West Bengal! May it be asked what is the fault of the poorest of poor patients who have no option but to visit government hospitals during medical emergency! Why are they being denied medical treatment prolonging their suffering! Is providing treatment to patients and protesting against the murder mutually exclusive to each

other! Can't the two coexist together! What compensation would the Doctors provide to a family if their member passes away due to lack of treatment! How can the hypocrite Doctors make a cruel mockery of the Hippocratic oath! Hasn't any Doctor indulged in sexual atrocities in India previously!

What about that horrific incident (almost a decade ago) revolving around the poor mentally-retarded innocent Korpan Shah who was lynched to death by the trainee Doctors right within the campus of NRS Hospital Kolkata just on the baseless apprehension of stealing a cell phone! Will today's 'revolutionary' Doctors dare to have a look at the mirror and indulge in a bit of self introspection! Of course Doctors must enjoy rights as entitled to human beings; but perhaps the last person in the queue like Korpan Shah was also entitled to the same human rights!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

about 90 nautical miles south of Sagar Island. With an immediate response, the Maritime Search & Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Chennai received a distress signal late on August 25.

The ICG immediately dispatched two of its ships, Sarang and Amogh, and also a Dornier aircraft outfitted with enhanced night-capable sensors, to locate and rescue the stranded crew. The Dornier aircraft was crucial in spotting drifting life rafts and identifying the crew's survival red flares. The aircraft guided the ICG ships to the coordinates where two life rafts had been found tied together, sheltering the survivors.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

MIDDLE PATH ON PENSION

Madam — Government seems to have adopted the mid way approach amid the growing demand for the rollback of the OPS, the government has filled the gap between market returns and a 50% assured pension. Under the Unified Pension Scheme government contribu-

tion will increase from 14% to 18.5%. And it will take a stock of the situation after three years whether to increase this or not. What is really beneficial for the government employees who joined after 1st January 2004 is that UPS will provide them assured pension, inflation indexation and family pension.

At the moment it looks like that employees will be content with the new rolled out scheme but they may come on to the streets to demand the difference between OPS and UPS.

With life expectancy going higher and higher, how the government will be able to fund these expenses for such long durations would be a million dollar question. Employees should not forget that NPS has the unique advantage of having the equity exposure over a long period of time and invariably it will fetch far better returns over any other product or Pension scheme.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Dealing with the eternal conflicts

Conflicts have been an inevitable part of human experience throughout history. Each of us faces them in our own unique way at different points in life



SANJAY CHANDRA

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 ado-



lescent 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 battles; 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)



FIRST COLUMN

CHOOSE DIALOGUE NOT DEBATE

By fostering a mindset of dialogue over argument, we contribute to a more harmonious society



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

There is a famous saying: "Two wrongs don't make a right," meaning it is not right to do something bad to someone just because they did something bad to you. In our day-to-day life, we end up doing many things that are wrong, but we still justify them as right by arguing well. Argument has always been a very powerful self-defense tool for people since ages. But one must know an important fact: behind every argument that we engage in, lies our ignorance towards truth and sometimes deceiving ourselves by knowing the truth. Hence, the best way to sort things out is through dialogues and healthy discussions. The beautiful part of a dialogue is that it's a mutual exploration for reaching an amicable resolution with an open exchange of views, as compared to an argument, which leads to a battle of opinions. In dialogue, there is much more listening than talking, and in an argument, there is war! A dialogue is possible only when two parties collaborate to uncover deeper wisdom and co-create a new understanding with a positive attitude.

We all argue in our day-to-day life because we have an opinion on almost everything, based on our beliefs. More so, when we see the beliefs of others as a personal threat, we either start defending or attacking, creating an environment of fear and aggression. There are many who are always armed with their opinions, prepared to defend their beliefs, and ready to do battle. The best way to avoid an argument with such people is first to support their beliefs positively to make them feel happy



from inside, and then after some time, make them realize their mistake with utmost love and care.

Many of us have experienced that if we do not have an opinion about important issues, then we are considered to be weak and conciliatory. But we must not forget that if our opinion is in defense of a position or against someone else's opinion, then it might result in a huge conflict that could lead to a war-like situation. History has shown that, at the root of the majority of wars fought were differences of opinion and clash of beliefs. Hence, it takes a lot of courage to have a point of view and yet be receptive to others' to the extent that you are prepared to shift your contention. This shows that you are flexible and acknowledge there are many other ways of looking at a situation. It also demonstrates that you have the humility to learn from others' points of view. However, to possess such courage, one needs to be enlightened with spiritual powers, for it is an enlightened soul that moves from an argument to a discussion to a dialogue, a process that is driven not just by the need, but by genuine curiosity and the intention to understand others to create a peaceful and harmonious environment.

In today's fast-paced world, arguments often arise from misunderstandings, impatience, and a lack of willingness to understand the other side. Technology, while connecting us globally, has also distanced us from face-to-face interactions where emotions and intentions are better understood. This digital age has made it easy to voice opinions without accountability, often leading to heated debates rather than constructive discussions. Moreover, the culture of instant gratification has diminished our capacity for patience, making us less tolerant of differing viewpoints. We must realize that true progress, both personally and collectively, comes from understanding and empathy. When we take the time to engage in dialogues rather than arguments, we open doors to new perspectives and solutions that we might not have considered otherwise. In doing so, we not only resolve conflicts but also build stronger, more meaningful relationships. Therefore, it is essential to cultivate the habit of active listening, where we fully engage with the speaker, seeking to understand before being understood. This approach can transform potential conflicts into opportunities for growth and learning.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

A saga of violence and betrayal in Afghanistan



NILANTHA LLANGAMUWA

Kabul has long stood as a symbol of Afghanistan's resilience but conduct of many of its leaders like Hafizullah Amin remains shrouded in mystery and contention

Kabul, situated over a mile above sea level, is complemented by the Paghman Hills to the west, traditionally a retreat for Kabul's elite. Paghman, known for its pleasant climate and historical significance, was also the site of significant events, including King Amanullah's struggle for independence and the 1920 asylum of the Amir of Bukhara. The town symbolises Afghanistan's resistance to foreign dominance.

Hafizullah Amin, born in Paghman in 1929, rose to prominence as a staunch opponent of superpower influence. His brief tenure as leader, lasting only 104 days, ended with his assassination in 1979, marking a pivotal moment in Afghan politics. Amin's early education in Kabul and further studies at Columbia University, interrupted by political turmoil, solidified his political engagement. His relationship with Nour Mohammad Taraki and his subsequent return to Afghanistan via Moscow shaped his radical stance and political trajectory.

However, the accusation that Amin was a CIA agent, levied with equal fervour from the left, has been eagerly embraced by Babrak Karmal as a means to legitimise his own rule. Despite Karmal's claims of having known about Amin's alleged CIA ties since the 1950s and his assertion of possessing documentary proof, he has yet to present any credible evidence. Some foreign socialists privately dismiss this claim, suggesting that the new regime's intent was to tarnish Amin's reputation, particularly among the unassuming Afghan peasantry, by branding him as an American agent. A more nuanced explanation from a Karmal sympathiser posits that the Afghan populace, repelled by Amin's policies which they viewed as detrimental to the revolution, resorted to the CIA agent narrative as a simplistic justification. Although the USSR propagated this narrative domestically in an early 1980 film on Afghanistan, it has been notably cautious in its international communications.

An article on CIA interference in the Third World, published in International Affairs, notably omits any reference to Amin. As one commentator noted, "The uncomfortable reality for both Russians and Americans is that Amin resisted manipulation from either side." If Amin's portrayal as a genocidal dictator, a Soviet puppet, or a CIA operative is unsupported by evidence, what then is the truth? What was Amin's actual role in the Afghan revolution, and why did the Soviet Union deem it so crucial to eliminate him?

In August 1978, Nour Mohammad Taraki addressed the Islamic protest movement with a defiant stance, denouncing capitalist and reactionary forces for using religion to undermine his progressive agenda. He believed these tactics, driven by imperialistic ambitions, were outdated and doomed to fail. Despite his confidence, Taraki faced significant internal strife, particularly with Hafizullah Amin, whose ambitions threatened his leadership. Taraki's reliance on Soviet support proved insufficient as his political blindness and failure to address social realities created



opportunities for extremist groups. Taraki's plan to correct his previous mistakes and form a new government with Babrak was thwarted by Amin's swift action. Despite Taraki's efforts to arrest Amin and align with Babrak for national reconciliation, the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan necessitated external military intervention. Amin's quick consolidation of power and Taraki's subsequent political struggles illustrate the volatile and precarious nature of Afghan politics during this tumultuous period.

Hafizullah Amin was widely suspected of using Marxism as a political tool rather than adhering to its principles, while publicly presenting himself as a strict religious person. Despite his significant position as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, he faced substantial opposition, particularly from the Parcham faction. This internal discord delayed his rise to a full member of the PDPA's political committee. Amin's ability to navigate these challenges and become a prominent figure in Afghan politics, including his role in the Moscow friendship treaty, marked his personal success amidst a turbulent environment. In September 1979, Taraki's visit to Cuba and subsequent meeting with his rival Babrak Karmal in Moscow remains enigmatic. There is speculation that Taraki sought to reconcile with Babrak to remove Amin and redistribute power, though Soviet influence likely played a crucial role in these negotiations. The depth of the animosity between Taraki and Babrak suggests that Soviet intervention was necessary to facilitate

any form of political reconciliation, particularly given Taraki's longstanding hatred for Babrak and Amin's role as a significant obstacle to his power. The political instability within the Khalq and Parcham factions weakened Afghanistan's administration, making it vulnerable to extremist support. With the security situation deteriorating and the Afghan army struggling, Taraki saw the need for Soviet intervention to restore order. Despite plans to arrest Amin and form a new government with Babrak, Taraki's efforts faltered, and Amin swiftly resolved his political predicament. The complexities of this period highlight the challenging dynamics of Afghan politics and external influences shaping its trajectory.

In early December 1979, Yuri Andropov alerted Leonid Brezhnev to Amin's covert activities, his pro-Western inclinations, and the potential end of communist rule in Afghanistan, which could threaten Soviet influence. Andropov emphasized the need for military aid to support Babrak Karmal and his allies, though he did not explicitly propose a full-scale Soviet invasion. However, Andropov's primary goal was to finalize plans for the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Following this, key figures including Andropov, Dmitriy Ustinov, Andrei Gromyko, and Boris Ponomarev, convened with Brezhnev and secured approval for Soviet military action. The Politburo authorized these officials to manage the invasion's execution in utmost secrecy. The documents related to the plan were handwritten by Politburo mem-

bers, and even typists were excluded from the process. Marshal Akhromeyev and the General Staff Operations Group established their base near the Afghan border, while KGB operatives traveled to Kabul to oversee Amin's removal, marking the commencement of Operation Agate. The KGB's secrecy surrounding the assassination plan was intense. A covert team, including a chef planted in Amin's palace, was tasked with administering poison. The same toxicology laboratory that had been involved in previous assassinations, like that of Georgi Markov, handled the preparation of the poison. Talebov, an Azerbaijani operative, infiltrated Amin's kitchen and poisoned the food, ensuring the execution of the assassination plan without arousing suspicion. On December 13, 1979, Babrak Karmal and key members of his future government secretly flew from Moscow to Bagram Air Base, positioning themselves to take control of Afghanistan immediately after Amin's removal. Meanwhile, on December 17, Asadullah Amin, Hafizullah Amin's son-in-law and head of the security service, fell gravely ill from food poisoning and was rushed to Moscow for treatment. The meal that led to his illness had been prepared for Hafizullah Amin, indicating that the poisoning attempt, orchestrated by Talebov, had not gone as planned. Despite Talebov's efforts, Amin's cautious behavior, including frequent changes in his food and drink, thwarted the poisoning plot.

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



HAFIZULLAH AMIN WAS WIDELY SUSPECTED OF USING MARXISM AS A POLITICAL TOOL RATHER THAN ADHERING TO ITS PRINCIPLES, WHILE PUBLICLY PRESENTING HIMSELF AS A STRICT RELIGIOUS PERSON

The impact of CHETNA: Saving lives and empowering communities

'CHETNA@40-Nurturing Dreams, Empowering Destinies,' chronicles four decades of transformative work in women's health and community empowerment across India

When Julkiben, a dai or a traditional birth attendant (TBA), received a call from a pregnant woman, she immediately swung into action. First, she dialled 108, the number of the state government emergency ambulance. After she reached the pregnant woman's house, she cut a clean cloth into pieces to be used at the hospital and kept an empty lota (water container) ready to fetch and store water. But when the woman's labour pains increased and it became impossible for her to climb down the hill to reach the ambulance, Julkiben summoned young men from the neighbourhood to make a sling from a bed sheet and carry the pregnant woman to the ambulance. They had bare-



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

ly reached the hospital labour room when the woman delivered. Julkiben's presence of mind and timely action helped to save the lives of mother and child.

It was not just TBAs like Julkiben but women, their families and community members in 60 villages in Vansada and Chikhali, two tribal blocks of Gujarat's Navsari district, who learnt that maternal deaths could be

prevented by accessing the public health system's maternal healthcare services. In fact, the three-year initiative in these two blocks by the Centre for Health Education Training Nutrition and Adolescents (CHETNA), the Ahmedabad-based not-for-profit working to empower women, adolescents and children, led to remarkable changes. There was an increase in institutional deliveries from 58% to 82% in Vansada block. More importantly, of the 776 deliveries that took place during the last phase of the intervention, not a single maternal death was registered in the area.

How was this achieved? What was done differently that brought about behavioural change? Could this success be replicated in other districts

with poor health indicators for women?

Answers to all these questions and more have been given in the recently published coffee table book to mark their milestone of turning forty. Titled 'CHETNA@40-Nurturing Dreams, Empowering Destinies', the book chronicles the organization's four decades of collective efforts, its distinctive approaches and the impact made by its innovative communication strategies that transformed countless lives and communities in 78 districts, 124 blocks and 439 villages in seven states. One of the biggest reasons behind its ability to make a difference has been its focus on incorporating a gender lens to all its work, says Pallavi Patel, co-founder and Director,



CHETNA. Being the country's first all-women health initiative helped make CHETNA a trendsetter in women's health, nutrition and gender. It's pioneering approaches and impactful communications material gave it an edge over others. The popularity of their resources can be gauged by the fact that in 2022-2023 alone, over 2,77,981 copies of CHETNA's materials were sought by various government and NGOs based in 11 states.

The book unpacks their hands on, people-centred strategies to tackle not just the challenges in dealing with child birth complications in remote tribal areas with minimal health facilities in Rajasthan and Gujarat, but widespread nutritional anaemia in Gujarat, Rajasthan and MP. It also reveals how CHETNA fostered a change in behaviour in getting 70 schools certified tobacco free in Ahmedabad as well as in mindsets especially in Mehsana, Gujarat, one of the districts with the worst child sex ratio (CSR) in the eighties and nineties. The deeply entrenched son preference psyche and practice of placing the blame on the woman when a girl was born was addressed through saas-bahu meetings, engaging with caste panchayat leaders

and innovative dal-chawal games to explain the role of the X and Y chromosomes in determining the sex of the child. At the centre of these efforts has been CHETNA's ability to be adaptable, flexible and, creative. Besides out of the box thinking, health messages have been tweaked according to local needs, traditions and practices. Their innovative anaemia kit has undergone several adaptations as has their unique and highly popular cloth aprons with several flaps that are worn by male and female trainers to show the reproductive organs in the two sexes. Songs, games and animation films have been created to share knowledge on child care, nutrition, puberty, menstruation, adolescent

health, anaemia and contraception. The book details how CHETNA, which works under the symbiotic umbrella of the Nehru Foundation for Development set up in 1966 by the eminent scientist Vikram Sarabhai, strategically used their scientific and inventive health communications to make a lasting impact. Whether it has been to break the silence on menstruation, or creating an enabling environment for girls, CHETNA has shown that the dream it began with 40 years ago, of making women the mistress of their own destinies, was not an impossible one.

(The writer is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views are expressed are personal)

Israel's West Bank major operation kills 9 Palestinians

AP ■ AL FARAA

Israel launched a large-scale military operation in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, with its forces killing at least nine Palestinians and sealing off the volatile city of Jenin, according to Palestinian officials.

Israel has carried out nearly daily raids across the West Bank since Hamas' October 7 attack out of Gaza triggered the ongoing war there. Israel says it is routing out militants to prevent attacks on its citizens, while Palestinians in the West Bank fear it intends to broaden the war and forcibly displace more of them.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said "large forces" had entered Jenin, long a militant stronghold, as well as Tulkarem and the Al-Faraa refugee camp dating back to the 1948 Mideast war, all in the northern West Bank. He said the nine dead were all militants, including three killed in an airstrike in Tulkarem and four in an airstrike in Al-Faraa. He said another five suspected militants were arrested, and that the



Israeli police officers scuffle with ultra-Orthodox Jewish men during a protest against a potential new draft law which could end their exemptions from military service in Jerusalem, Wednesday. AP/PTI

raids were the first stage of an even larger operation. Palestinian militant groups said they were exchanging fire with Israeli troops. The governor of Jenin, Kamal Abu al-Rub, said on Palestinian radio that Israeli forces had surrounded the city, blocking exit and entry points

and access to hospitals, and ripping up infrastructure in the camp. The Palestinian Health Ministry in the West Bank said Israeli forces had blocked the roads leading to a hospital with dirt barriers and surrounded other medical facilities

in Jenin. Shoshani said the military was trying to prevent militants from taking shelter in hospitals. An Associated Press reporter saw army vehicles blocking all the entrances to Al-Faraa camp. Military jeeps and bulldozers entered the camp and soldiers were seen

patrolling its alleyways by foot. Water leaked onto the damaged streets from houses where fighting had damaged tanks and pipes. Shots rang out every few minutes. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz drew comparisons with Gaza and called for similar measures in the West Bank. "We must deal with the threat just as we deal with the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza, including the temporary evacuation of Palestinian residents and whatever steps might be required. This is a war in every respect, and we must win it," he wrote on the platform X. Shoshani said there was no plan to evacuate civilians.

Hamas called on Palestinians in the West Bank to rise up, calling the raids part of a larger plan to expand the war in Gaza and blaming the escalation on US support for Israel. The militant group called on security forces loyal to the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which cooperate with Israel, to "join the sacred battle of our people".

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud

Abbas, condemned the raids as a "serious escalation" and called on the United States to intervene. Abbas later announced he was cutting short a visit to Saudi Arabia and returning to the West Bank, where his government is based.

At least 652 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed by Israeli fire since the war in Gaza began over 10 months ago, according to the Palestinian ministry. Most have died during raids, which often trigger gunbattles with militants. Israel says the operations are required to dismantle Hamas and other militant groups. Attacks on Israelis have risen since the start of the war.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said the bodies of seven people were brought to the hospital in Tubas, another West Bank city, and another two were brought to the hospital in Jenin. The ministry identified two killed in Jenin as Qassam Jabarin, 25, and Asem Balout, 39. Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want all three for a future state. Israel has built

scores of settlements across the West Bank, which are home to over 500,000 Jewish settlers. They have Israeli citizenship, while the 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under Israeli military rule, with the Palestinian Authority exercising limited control over population centers.

The war in Gaza erupted when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel and rampaged through army bases and farming communities, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. The militants are still holding some 110 hostages, around a third of whom are believed to be dead, after most of the rest were released during a November cease-fire.

Israel responded with an offensive that has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were militants. Around 90 per cent of Gaza's population has been displaced, often multiple times, and Israeli bombardment and ground operations have caused vast destruction.

Israeli strikes in Gaza overnight and into Wednesday killed at

least 24 people, including five women and five children, according to Palestinian health officials. AP reporters at two hospitals confirmed the toll.

One strike hit tents housing displaced people near the central town of Deir al-Balah, killing eight including two brothers, 6 and 17 years old. "He's alive!" their mother shouted as the teenager's body was carried to the morgue. She later sobbed and cradled both of them.

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames their deaths on Hamas because the militants fight in dense residential areas. The military rarely comments on individual strikes in Gaza, which often kill women and children.

The US, Qatar and Egypt have spent months trying to mediate a cease-fire that would see the remaining hostages released. But the talks have repeatedly bogged down as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed "total victory" over Hamas and the militant group has demanded a lasting cease-fire and a full withdrawal from the territory.

Germany, UK seek new bilateral treaty as Starmer pursues 'reset' with EU

AP ■ BERLIN

The leaders of Germany and the United Kingdom announced plans on Wednesday to draw up a treaty meant to deepen the two nations' trade, defence and other ties.

The move comes as new UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer moves ahead with plans for a "reset" of relations with the European Union. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that he welcomes fellow centre-left leader Starmer's desire for a new beginning in relations with the EU, and "we want to take this outstretched hand". Starmer took office in early July after the previous Conservative government was trounced in an election. Four years after the UK left the EU, he says he wants to rebuild ties strained by years of ill-tempered wrangling over Brexit terms. He said that he hopes to conclude the bilateral agreement with Germany,



which has Europe's biggest economy, by the end of this year. "That will be ambitious, it will be wide-ranging, covering trade, the economy, defence and many other issues," he told reporters. The two leaders are among Ukraine's biggest military backers and stressed their commitment to keeping up that support. Starmer said that the two countries also plan to draw up a "joint action plan to tackle illegal migration". His government still faces pressure to stop migrants cross-

ing the English Channel in small boats, though it scrapped the Conservatives' contentious plan to send them on a one-way trip to Rwanda. Migration is also an issue on which Scholz's government has long been under heavy pressure, even more so since Friday's attack in Solingen in which a suspected extremist from Syria who had avoided being deported is accused of killing three people. The proposed UK-Germany treaty is modelled in part on

agreements that Britain struck in recent years with France on defense, security and closer law enforcement cooperation against people-smuggling gangs.

Starmer sent a signal by visiting Berlin early in his term — unlike predecessor Rishi Sunak, who took 18 months. But his talk of starting anew with the EU has its limits.

He has ruled out many of the major possible steps to closer ties and has been cool to the idea of a youth mobility agreement with the 27-nation bloc. "I'm absolutely clear that we do want a reset ... with Europe, a reset with the EU," Starmer said in Berlin. However, "that does not mean reversing Brexit or reentering the single market or the customs union, but it does mean a closer relation on a number of fronts — including the economy, including defence, including exchanges, but we do not have plans for the youth mobility scheme".

Bdesh's interim govt lifts ban on Jamaat-e-Islami

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's interim government Wednesday revoked a ban on the rightwing Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, less than a month after it was imposed on the Islamist party by former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who was forced to resign following massive protests against her government.

"(Lifting the ban) will come under effect immediately," the Home Ministry said in a gazette notification, noting that there was no particular evidence against the organisation.

The erstwhile Awami League government led by Hasina had imposed a ban on Jamaat on August 1, 2024, accusing the Islamist party as a "militant and terrorist" organisation. The government blamed Jamaat's student wing for inciting chaos over a jobs system for government jobs.

The notification said the ban under the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 has been lifted as there was no particular evidence against the organisation. The government believed that Jamaat and its associate bodies, including its student front Chhatra Shibir, were not involved in terrorist activities and violence.

The decision, formally published in a gazette notification on Wednesday, represents a significant change from the decision taken by the erstwhile Awami League government earlier this month, just days before its ouster.

The development came a day after Attorney General Mohammad Asaduzzaman urged the High Court to summarily reject a writ petition seeking an order on the government to ban Hasina's Awami League as a political party and scrap its registration.

"The current (interim) government has no intention to ban any political organisation," the government's top law officer told a two-judge High Court bench, which set August 29 for its decision on the writ filed by one Sarda Society as a public interest litigation. The interim government's law adviser, equivalent to a minister, Asif Nazrul

Jamaat-e-Islami leader denies party's role in attacks on Hindus

Dhaka (PTI): Jamaat-e-Islami supreme Shafiqur Rahman has said that his party was not involved in attacks on the Hindu community in Bangladesh and attributed the negative portrayal of the party to a "malicious" media campaign. He also refuted allegations that the party was involved in anti-India activities in Bangladesh and asked India to provide proof if any. Replying to a query on allegations of attack on Hindus in Bangladesh by Jamaat activists, Rahman refuted the allegations as "baseless". The minority Hindu population has faced vandalism of their business and properties and devastation of Hindu temples in the students' violence that ensued for days following the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India on August 5. "We don't believe in the concept of minority and majority, we believe in unity. We don't consider Hindus as minorities, they are our brothers and friends in Bangladesh. We are with our Hindu brothers and we will stand by them," Rahman said. Refuting allegations of attack on Hindu properties by the Jamaat cadres, Rahman said: "The activists and workers of Jamaat guarded the temples and houses of Hindus after August 5 so that no untoward incident takes place."

Woman TV journalist's body recovered from lake in Dhaka

Dhaka (PTI): The body of a 32-year-old woman TV journalist in Bangladesh was recovered from a lake here in the capital on Wednesday, according to media reports.

The deceased was identified as Sarah Rahanuma, a newsroom editor at Gazi TV, a Bengali-language satellite and cable television channel owned by Gazi Group.

Her body was found floating in Hatirjheel Lake in Dhaka, The Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported. Inspector Bachchu Mia, in charge of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) police outpost, confirmed the recovery of her body.

Doctors pulled the body from the lake and took it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where the doctor declared her dead around 2:00 am.

A man named Sagar, who brought Sarah to the hospital, said: "I saw the woman floating in Hatirjheel Lake. Later, she was brought to DMCH, where doctors declared her dead."

Before her death, Sarah posted a status on her Facebook on Tuesday night tagging one Fahim Faysal. "It was nice having a friend like you. God bless you always. Hope, you'll fulfil all your dreams soon. I know we had a lot of planning together. Sorry, can't fulfil our plans. May god bless you in every aspect of your life," she wrote.

In an earlier post, she wrote: "It is better to die than to live a life akin to death." Inspector Bachchu Mia said the body was kept in the DMCH morgue.

Police have stated that an investigation will be conducted to determine the cause of her death. However, deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's US-based son, Sajeb Wazed, gave a political colour to the journalist's death, saying that it was "another brutal attack" on the freedom of expression in the country.

Feds refine indictment in Trump Jan 6 case, charges unchanged

Washington (AP): Special counsel Jack Smith filed a new indictment Tuesday against Donald Trump over his efforts to undo the 2020 presidential election that keeps the same criminal charges but narrows the allegations against him following a Supreme Court opinion that conferred broad immunity on former presidents. The new indictment removes a section of the indictment that had accused Trump of trying to use the law enforcement powers of the Justice Department to overturn his election loss, an area of conduct for which the Supreme Court, in a 6-3 opinion last month, said that Trump was absolutely immune from prosecution.

The stripped-down criminal case represents a first effort by prosecutors to comply with a Supreme Court opinion likely to result in a significant revision of the allegations against Trump over his efforts to block the peaceful transfer of power. It was filed three days ahead of a deadline for prosecutors and defense lawyers to tell the judge in the case how they wanted to proceed in light of that opinion, which said former presidents are presumptively immune from prosecution for official White House acts.

The two sides will be back in court for a status hearing next week, the first such appearance in months given that the case had been effectively frozen since last December as Trump's immunity appeal worked its way through the justice system. In a statement on his Truth Social platform, Trump called the new indictment "an act of desperation" and an "effort to resurrect a dead Witch Hunt."

Far right's rise in eastern Germany hinders skilled worker recruitment

AP ■ JENA

When electrical engineer Preetam Gaikwad first moved to Jena in 2013, she was smitten by what the eastern German city had to offer: a prestigious university, top research institutions, and cutting-edge technology companies, global leaders in their field. Eleven years later, the Indian native takes a more sober view.

"I'm really worried about the development of the political situation here," Gaikwad, 43 said. Jena is in the eastern German state of Thuringia, which has elections on September 1.

The far-right Alternative for Germany party, or AfD, is currently leading the polls with about 30 per cent support, far ahead of the centre-right Christian Democrats (21 per cent) and the centre-left Social Democrats of Chancellor Olaf



Scholz (7 per cent). The AfD's anti-foreigner stance is the cornerstone of its campaign, raising concern among businesses like Jenoptik, Gaikwad's employer. The company, which supplied lens assemblies for Perseverance, the NASA remote vehicle on Mars, employs 1,680 people in Jena and more than 4,600 glob-

ally. Jenoptik, one of the few internationally successful businesses in Jena, depends on being able to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce, much of it from outside Germany. The rise of the AfD is making that more difficult, says Jenoptik CEO Stefan Traeger.

More and more prospective employees tell Traeger that while they would love to work for Jenoptik, they won't take a job there because they don't want to live in a state dominated by a hard-right party that ostracizes migrants or other minorities such as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Traeger, a Jena native who studied in the US, told the AP he hopes that after the election "we will still be as open, free and democratic a country as we are now. That's what we need in order to move the company forward".

Maduro taps hardline loyalist to oversee police forces, prompting fears of deepening crackdown

Caracas (AP): Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Tuesday appointed a ruling socialist party boss to oversee the country's police forces, empowering a hardline loyalist who has vowed to pursue government opponents as part of an ongoing crackdown that has alarmed human rights groups. Maduro named Diosdado Cabello Interior Minister as part of a Cabinet shuffle following last month's contested presidential election. Along with Maduro, Cabello is one of the most fervent stalwarts of the so-called Bolivarian revolution started by the late Hugo Chávez and has long been considered the second most powerful person

in Venezuela after Maduro. A retired army lieutenant, he fought alongside Chávez in a failed military uprising in 1992 and later served as acting president when Chávez himself was removed in a brief coup a decade later. However, Chávez passed him over when he picked Maduro — a civilian with no military pedigree — as his successor shortly before he died of cancer in 2013. Since then, he's served in a number of roles, including National Assembly president and head of the ruling socialist party. Until now, he never served in Maduro's Cabinet, an omission that has long fuelled speculation of an unspoken rivalry between the two.

Human rights groups fear that Cabello's appointment to Interior Minister, with oversight of Venezuela's police forces, will intensify the government's heavy handed response to protests that erupted after last month's presidential election, when Maduro was declared the winner despite strong evidence presented by the opposition that its candidate prevailed by a 2-to-1 margin. More than 2,000 people — including journalists, politicians and aid workers — have been arrested since the July 28 election. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on Wednesday is expected to deliver a report in Washington at a special meet-

ing of the Organization of American States to discuss the crackdown.

"If the new Cabinet is a bellwether of what Maduro intends to do, Cabello's appointment is an indication of even more repression to come," said Juanita Goebertus, director for the Americas at Human Rights Watch. Cabello, 61, has been among key insiders calling for a forceful response to those casting doubt on Maduro's victory. With deep roots in the security forces, he's seen his influence expand as Venezuelans have tired of Maduro, blaming him for wrecking the oil-rich economy.

Denmark creates three new ministers in govt reshuffle

Copenhagen (AP): Denmark's three-party centrist government said on Wednesday it will create three new ministries, including a government office in charge of emergency preparedness.

The government wants a minister in charge of European Union affairs ahead of Denmark's rotating EU presidency in the second half of 2025.

The shuffle means Denmark, like Sweden, will have a minister in charge of emergencies and preparedness for climate change or cyberattacks. The third new minister will be in charge of carrying out and coordinating Denmark's green policy.

"I hope this can inspire the rest of the world," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen



said of the new green policy ministry. The Scandinavian country has a goal of 70 per cent emissions reductions by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050.

Frederiksen did not give any names nor say whether any of the current government's 23 ministries would be made redundant. She said the changes will be announced on

Thursday when the new government is formally presented to King Frederik X. Also Wednesday, Frederiksen named 49-year-old Dan Jørgensen as Denmark's candidate for the new commissioner to the European Union's powerful executive arm which polices EU laws and negotiates trade on behalf of member countries.

Traders observe strike across Pak to protest new taxes

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Traders in Pakistan went on strike on Wednesday, shutting down their businesses in all major cities and urban areas to protest a rise in electricity costs and new taxes imposed on shop owners. The government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has steadily raised electricity prices since Pakistan last month struck a deal with the International Monetary Fund for a new USD 7 billion loan. The higher cost of living and price hikes have triggered widespread discontent and drawn protests. Most of the public markets across Pakistan were closed on Wednesday, though pharmacies and grocery stores selling basic food items



remained open. Kashif Chaudhry, a strike leader, said those were not closed so as not to inconvenience the general public. Stores were shuttered in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, the nearby garrison city of Rawalpindi, as well as in

the city of Lahore, the country's culture capital, and the main economic hub of Karachi. The strike was called by Naem-ur-Rehman who heads the religious Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan party and endorsed by most of the various traders' unions and

associations. However, traders in the north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the southwestern Balochistan provinces observed a partial strike, keeping some stores open while closing others. The strike is aimed at forcing the government to reverse the recent hikes in power bills and the controversial tax that followed the recent talks with the IMF, which wants to see Pakistan broaden its tax base. The July deal was Pakistan's latest turn to the global lender for help in propping up its economy and dealing with its debts through big bailouts. Earlier this year, the IMF approved the immediate release of the final USD 1.1 billion tranche of a \$3 billion bailout to Pakistan.

'Working on identifying culprits in alleged financial coup'

PTI ■ MALE

Maldivian police on Wednesday said that they are working on identifying the possible culprits in an alleged 'financial coup', two days after President Mohamed Muizzu accused the opposition of plotting to topple his government using a decision by the national bank to suspend foreign transactions from Rufiyaa cards. On Sunday, the Bank of Maldives (BML) suspended foreign transactions for existing debit cards, as well as new debit and credit cards linked to MVR (the Maldivian rufiyaa) accounts. It also lowered the monthly standard and gold credit card limit to USD 100. However, it reversed the decision within hours, saying it was based on instructions

from its regulator, the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA). The police opened a criminal investigation on Monday, citing there's room to believe the opposition had attempted to topple President Muizzu's administration by stoking up fears of a financial crisis and inciting people to take to the streets. In a statement on Wednesday, the police said they are working on "collecting all necessary information and conducting a detailed review of everything that needs looking into" in their investigation, the Sun news portal reported. "We are also identifying the people who possibly need to be taken action against and all other works pertaining to the investigation," said the police. Speaking at a party meeting of the ruling People's National

Congress (PNC) on Monday night, President Muizzu said that he had worked to find a resolution for the Bank issue alongside his ministers as soon as he had become aware of the situation. He asserted that the bank's decision had been against his advice. Muizzu said that many had raised questions as to why a government-majority holding bank had made such a decision against government advice. However, most people were unaware that BML's Board of Directors does not have a government majority at this time, he said. Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, was sworn in as the President in November last year. "As of now, there's only four government directors there. The remaining five directors

are not government-aligned. So we don't have a majority yet. We have nominated two directors, but it will take a couple of weeks for them to be appointed through the existing procedures there. Even though the Chairman has not been appointed yet, the name has been sent," he said. Muizzu, who also heads the ruling People's National Congress (PNC) party, alleged that this was a calculated coup attempt by a select group of people and added that the Police have now commenced investigations into the matter. The main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) chairperson Fayyaz Ismail, however, said that the events show a coup brewing within President Muizzu's administration and not one instigated by outside forces.

Two killed in sectarian violence in Pak's Punjab province

Lahore (PTI): At least two Shia men were killed and over 30 others injured in a deadly sectarian clash in Pakistan's Punjab province, forcing authorities to deploy paramilitary forces in the area, police said on Wednesday. The clash between two sects — Shia and Sunni — took place in Kalabagh Town Mianwali district, some 400 km from Lahore starting on Monday evening and continuing through Tuesday till late evening. Tension was simmering between the two sects over taking out a procession in connection with the Chehlum of Imam Hussain, grandson of Prophet Muhammad, in Kalabagh Town through a certain route. A senior police officer told PTI on Wednesday that the Sunnis had objected that the Shias should not be allowed to take out a procession on a route which had their mosques. However, the Shias insisted that they would take out the procession in the town without caring about any restrictions.

The officer said that the Shias took out the procession on the 'certain route' that caused the sectarian clash. "The crossfire between the two sects started on Monday evening and lasted till late on Tuesday night. Some 33 people with bullet wounds were shifted to hospital where two Shia men succumbed to their injuries while the condition of three to four others is critical," he said. Some armed Sunni men first opened fire on the Shia procession which led to the armed clash. Besides the dead, most of the injured belong to the Shia sect.

The police officer further said elements of the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), an anti-Shai outfit, could be behind this incident. Punjab Inspector General Police Dr Usman Anwar rushed to the troubled town and imposed a ban on the assembling of four people, in the whole district of Mianwali.

Following the deadly clash, Pakistan Rangers were deputed to the area to maintain law and order and both rangers and police personnel deployed in Mianwali held patrolling in the town on Wednesday.

Ukraine seeks more US weapons support for Russia offensive

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Ukraine's daring ground offensive has taken the fight to Russia, but not nearly as much as its leaders would like because, they say, the United States won't let them. The U.S. restricts the use of long-range ballistic missiles it provides to Ukraine, which wants to aim them at military targets inside Russia. Ukraine's offensive, along with a barrage of drones and missiles that Moscow launched this week, has intensified pressure on the Biden administration to ease its cautious approach to the use of Western weapons in escalating Ukrainian attacks. The Biden administration says its careful deliberations, including which advanced weapons it supplies to Ukraine and when, are necessary to avoid provoking retaliation from Russian President Vladimir Putin. Some analysts agree Putin would take a Ukrainian strike by an American long-range ballistic

missile within Russia as an attack by the U.S. itself. But many other American and European supporters of Ukraine say the White House should see that Putin's threats of attacking the West, including with nuclear weapons, are bluster. Their fear is the U.S. support that has allowed Ukraine to withstand Russia's 2022 invasion comes with delays and caveats that could ultimately contribute to its defeat. "This war is going to end exactly how Western policymakers decide it will end," said Philip Breedlove, a retired U.S. general who led NATO in Europe from 2013 to 2016 and is among the retired U.S. military leaders and diplomats, Republican lawmakers, security analysts and others pushing for a loosening of restrictions on how Ukraine uses Western-provided weapons. "If we keep doing what we're doing, Ukraine will eventually lose," Breedlove said. "Because right now... we are purposely not giving Ukraine what they

need to win." Lifting such restrictions "would strengthen Ukrainian self-defense, save lives and reduce destruction in Ukraine," European Union foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell wrote Monday on the social platform X after Russia launched more than 200 missiles and drones at Ukraine. The next day, Russia launched 91 more. The push and pull is playing out during Ukraine's surprise offensive into Russia's southern Kursk region, the first ground invasion of Russia since World War II. Throughout the war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has balanced copious thanks for U.S. support with frustrated appeals for more arms and ammunition. Upping the pressure this month, he again said Ukraine must fight the war as it sees fit with all the weapons at its disposal and appealed for the U.S. to drop a ban on using American long-range ATACMS missiles to strike deeper into Russia.

"A sick old man from the Red Square, who constantly threatens everyone with the red button, will not dictate any of his red lines to us," Zelenskyy said recently of Putin. The Biden administration this year allowed Ukraine to fire shorter-range U.S.-provided munitions across the border in self-defense, but not ATACMS. Security analysts say Ukraine is using U.S.-provided HIMARS rocket systems in its offensive. Ukraine also announced it has used a U.S.-supplied glide bomb against Russian forces and deployed its own prototype of a long-range drone-missile hybrid. Zelenskyy's military appeared to have launched the ground offensive on Aug. 6 without consulting American leaders. As Ukraine has claimed nearly 500 square miles (1,300 square kilometers) of Russian territory, it has taken a message from another U.S. ally that receives military support, said Roman Kostenko, a Ukrainian lawmaker and military commander.

'US military may escort Philippine ships in SCS'

AP ■ MANILA

The US military is open to consultations about escorting Philippine ships in the disputed South China Sea, the head of US Indo-Pacific Command said Tuesday amid a spike in hostilities between Beijing and Manila in the disputed waters. Adm. Samuel Paparo's remarks, which he made in response to a question during a news conference in Manila with Philippine Armed Forces chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr., provided a glimpse of the mindset of one of the highest American military commanders outside the U.S. mainland on a prospective operation that would risk putting U.S. Navy ships in direct collisions with those of China. Chinese coast guard, navy and suspected militia ships regularly clash with Philippine vessels during attempts to resupply Filipino sailors stationed in parts of the South China Sea claimed by both countries. As these clashes grow increasingly hostile, resulting in injuries to Filipino sailors and damage to their ships, the Philippine government has faced questions about invoking a treaty alliance with Washington. Paparo and Brawner spoke to reporters after an international military conference in Manila organized by the US Indo-Pacific Command, at which China's increasingly assertive actions in the South China Sea were spotlighted. Military and defense officials and diplomats from the US and allied countries attended but there were no Chinese representatives. Asked if the US military would consider escorting Philippine ships delivering food and other supplies to Filipino forces in the South China Sea, Paparo replied, "Certainly, within the context of consultations."



"Every option between the two sovereign nations in terms of our mutual defense, escort of one vessel to the other, is an entirely reasonable option within our Mutual Defense Treaty, among this close alliance between the two of us," Paparo said without elaborating. Brawner responded cautiously to the suggestion, which could run afoul of Philippine laws including a constitutional ban on foreign forces directly joining local combat operations. "The attitude of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, as dictated by the Philippine laws, is for us to first rely on ourselves," Brawner said. "We are going to try all options, all avenues that are available to us in order for us to achieve the mission... in this case, the resupply and rotation of our troops." "We will then seek for other options when we are already constrained from doing it ourselves," Brawner said. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has said there has been no situation so far that would warrant activating the treaty, which requires the allies to come to each other's aid if they come under external attack. President Joe Biden and his administration have repeatedly renewed their "ironclad" commitment to help defend the Philippines under the 1951 treaty if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr said at the conference that China is "the biggest disruptor" of peace in Southeast Asia and called for stronger international censure over its aggression in the South China Sea, a day after China blocked Philippine vessels from delivering food to a coast guard ship at the disput-

ed Sabina Shoal in the contested waters. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said that "the label of undermining peace can never be pinned on China," blaming unspecified other actors for "making infringements and provocations in the South China Sea and introducing external forces to undermine the large picture of regional peace and stability." Teodoro later told reporters on the sidelines of the conference that international statements of concern against China's increasingly assertive actions in the disputed waters and elsewhere were "not enough." "The antidote is a stronger collective multilateral action against China," Teodoro said, adding that a UN Security Council resolution would be a strong step, but unlikely given China's security council veto. He also called for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to do more. The 10-nation Southeast Asian bloc includes the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, which have South China Sea claims that overlap with each other, as well as China's and Taiwan's. "ASEAN, to remain relevant and credible, cannot continue to ignore what China is doing in the South China Sea," Teodoro said. In the latest incident in the South China Sea, Philippine officials said China deployed "an excessive force" of 40 ships that blocked two Philippine vessels from delivering food and other supplies to Manila's largest coast guard ship in Sabina Shoal on Monday.

Ukraine first lady wants country's kids to see themselves as 'generation of winners'

Uzhhorod (Ukraine)(AP): Ukraine's first lady wants her country's children to view themselves not as a generation enduring a grinding war, but rather as "a generation of winners." On the sidelines of a day spent at a rehabilitation camp for Ukrainian children in the relatively safe western city of Uzhhorod, Olena Zelenska said Tuesday that working with the next generation was both a moral obligation and a "strategic priority" for Ukraine's future. Many of the children will return to front-line cities after spending a few weeks at the camp, barely enough time to overcome the trauma they face over and over. "This issue needs to be addressed immediately, as soon as it arises, before it grows into something more," Zelenska told The Associated Press in a brief interview at the camp.



The foundation that bears her name, which is funded entirely by foreign donations, created the camp along with the Voices of the Children charity. A study by the Olena Zelenska Foundation and the Kyiv School of Economics this year found that 44% of Ukrainian children show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Dressed casually with white sneakers, black pants, a white

T-shirt and pearls around her neck, Zelenska blended into the camp's activities with the children. Since the start of the war, she has emerged as an unofficial ambassador for Ukraine globally. She was the first from President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's family to leave the country after Russia invaded in February 2022 to promote Ukraine's cause. But she is

equally active within Ukraine, and easily recognizable to the displaced families and wounded soldiers she visits. At the camp, she joined an art therapy session midway, sitting beside a boy whose home was struck by an aerial bomb and who was later forced to evacuate from his hometown ahead of the Russian advance this summer. Zelenska smiled and engaged with the children, examining each watercolor they presented. She even joined in, drawing a pink flower, a star and a heart. The conversation stayed away from the war. "To ensure our children do not become a lost generation, we as adults must be not just active but also swift," Zelenska said. "It's difficult, but there is still the ongoing defense of the country. However, I am confident that political will combined with international cooperation can work wonders."

UN resolution on Myanmar condemns military attacks on civilians, urge peace

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Renewed peace efforts, condemning attacks on civilians — especially by the Myanmar military — and calling for a halt to illicit arms transfers. The draft resolution obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press expresses "alarm at the increased violence across Myanmar," which is engulfed in civil war between the military-led regime and resistance forces. It calls for "safe, rapid, and unhindered humanitarian access at scale," expressing "grave concern" at the deteriorating humanitarian situation and restrictions on humanitarian access in the country that led to rising food insecurity and hunger. The proposed resolution warns that the current situation has the potential to further exacerbate discrimination, ethnically motivated violence, violations of international humanitarian law, human rights abuses, and con-

flict-related sexual violence. Myanmar's military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, 2021. It was the day Parliament was to reconvene following November 2020 elections, which her National League for Democracy party won overwhelmingly — an outcome the military claims without evidence was based on fraud. Suu Kyi and party members remain under arrest. The takeover was met with massive public opposition, which has since turned into armed resistance and civil war. The military regime now faces its greatest challenge from the ethnic minority militias and people's defense forces who support the main opposition and have captured wide swaths of territory in fierce fighting in recent months. The draft resolution stresses the central role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the 10-country bloc whose 2021 peace plan has so far

been rejected by Myanmar's generals. It calls for an immediate end to the violence and dialogue among contending parties brokered through an ASEAN envoy. The draft resolution urges renewed efforts by the ASEAN special envoy to Myanmar, Alounkeo Kittikhoun, and new U.N. special envoy, Julie Bishop, "to engage all relevant stakeholders to seek a peaceful, inclusive solution to the crisis in Myanmar." Security Council negotiations on the draft resolution are expected to be tough. The 15-member council approved its first-ever resolution on Myanmar in December 2022 by a vote of 12-0 with three abstentions — Russia, China and India, who all have ties to the Myanmar regime. India's two-year term on the council ended that month, but Russia and China are veto-wielding permanent members of the council.

24 missing after floods in Yemen

Cairo (AP): Floodwaters swept through a village in northern Yemen, inundating homes and shops and leaving at least 24 people missing, authorities said Wednesday. Heavy rains over the past few days pounded the Melhan district in Al-Mahwit province, triggering floods that caved in seven homes and four shops, according to a statement. Yemen was already the poorest Arab nation before it was plunged into civil war in 2014, when Iran-backed Houthis rebels took control of the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north, forcing the government to flee to the south, then to Saudi Arabia. Seasonal monsoon rains in the late summer often turn into flooding in Yemen, but there are indications that the country is experiencing more extreme weather events due to climate change.

Haiti's army wants recruits to fight gangs, and youths jump at rare job offer

Port-Au-Prince (Haiti) (AP): The announcement that Haiti's military wanted recruits crackled through a small radio perched on a street stall in downtown Port-Au-Prince where Maurenceley Clerge repairs and sells smartphones. It was early morning, and the 21-year-old paused, eager to hear the details. He envisioned earning enough to afford his own food and rent. Two weeks later, he completed the required paperwork and stood in line with hundreds of other Haitians under a brutal sun for the chance to join up. "It's the moment I have been waiting for," said Clerge, who stays with a friend who also provides him with food. "I want to serve as a citizen of this country and also to move up and upgrade my life." Thousands of young Haitians are jumping at the chance to become soldiers as widespread gang violence creates a rare job opportunity in a deeply impoverished country where work is scarce.

Brushing aside the possibility they could be kidnapped, tortured or killed, Haiti's youngest generation is answering the call of a government seeking to rebuild a once-reviled military, reinstated just years ago with the aim to crush gangs. "I thought about it a lot because I know that being a soldier requires a lot of sacrifice," said Samuel Delmas, who recently applied. "Everything that you're doing is risky." The 20-year-old is taking computer repair courses but doesn't have a job. He heard about the recruitment via a Facebook group. "I have always wanted to be useful to my country," he said. Gangs forced Delmas and his family to flee their home two years ago, with only enough time to grab a handful of clothes amid a barrage of gunfire. "I want to protect citizens who are on the run like me," he said. Haiti's government has not said how many soldiers it aims to hire nor how many have applied so far, but documents published

online by the Defense Ministry show that at least 3,000 people were selected in mid-August and asked to submit documents as they await physical and mental tests. If all were hired, that would more than double the force strength of 2,000 of early last year. About 60% of Haiti's population of nearly 12 million people earn less than \$2 a day, with inflation soaring to double digits in recent years. "Most young kids are not working," said Emerson Celadon, a 25-year-old mechanic who applied and was selected for the next round. "I was making some money, but... that is still not enough for a family of four." It's not clear how much soldiers earn, Defense Minister Jean-Marc Bernier Antoine did not return messages for comment. However, Celadon said friends in the army told him they make about \$300 a month. On a recent afternoon, Celadon joined hundreds of mostly young men lined up outside a former U.N. base, a yellow envelope under his arm,

waiting to take the first of several required tests to join the army. Haiti's armed forces were once widely feared and hated, with soldiers accused of horrific human rights abuses. The military organized several coups in the second half of the 20th century, even after so-called "dictator for life" François Duvalier diluted its strength. After the last coup in 1991, to oust former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the government disbanded the armed forces in 1995. At the time, there were some 7,000 soldiers. "The decision to demobilize the army... proved to be one of the most catastrophic decisions in the country's history," said Michael Deibert, the author of two books about Haiti. He noted that, as a result, the first generation of politically-aligned gangs took root in the late 1990s and early 2000s. "They stepped into a security void left by what would have been a security force, one whose role the Haitian police have never been fully able to assume," Deibert said.

Nifty gains marginally to hit lifetime high

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Nifty rose marginally to hit a fresh lifetime high of 25,052 and Sensex gained over 70 points on Wednesday, helped by buying in IT stocks amid a largely positive global market. Recent foreign fund inflows and lower global crude oil prices also strengthened investor sentiments, traders said.

Rising for the tenth straight session, the NSE Nifty went up by 34.60 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 25,052.35. The benchmark surged 111.85 points or 0.44 per cent to hit a fresh intra-day all-time peak of 25,129.60. Extending its winning run to the seventh day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 73.80 points or 0.09 per cent to settle at 81,785.56. During the day, it jumped 327.5 points or 0.40 per cent to 82,039.26. Among the 30 Sensex firms,



Bharti Airtel, Infosys, IndusInd Bank, Sun Pharma, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance and JSW Steel were the biggest gainers. Asian Paints, Maruti, Nestle, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank and UltraTech Cement were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled higher while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading in positive territory. The US markets ended with marginal gains on Tuesday. "The market has entered a consolidation phase with low volatility and this trend is likely to continue in the near-term. Falling bond yields in the US have restrained FII selling and they have even turned marginal buyers. Going by previous trends, DIIs are likely to sell if FIIs

continue to buy. "This trend will keep the market within a range with a slight upward bias. This is a desirable and healthy trend, given the elevated valuations in the market," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,503.76 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 604.08 crore. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.82 per cent to USD 78.90 a barrel. After oscillating between highs and lows, the BSE benchmark eked out a marginal gain of 13.65 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 81,711.76 on Tuesday. The NSE Nifty ended almost flat, up 7.15 points or 0.03 per cent, at 25,017.75 — its ninth straight session of gains.

SBI MD hopes market correction over time will get funds back to banking system

PTI ■ MUMBAI

SBI Managing Director Ashwini Tewari on Wednesday said a correction in the equity markets "over time" can help banks get back the deposits it has ceded. He also said the country's largest lender is betting on the small-ticket Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts to drive deposit growth. Speaking on the sidelines of the GFF, he told reporters that the capital markets rally has seen a shift of money away from the banks to the higher yielding alternatives. "As the market corrects over time, some of the money that was earlier with us, will come back," he said. Interestingly, he said the bank is also looking at the small-ticket deposits from the decade-old PMJDY across its vast network as well to drive its deposit growth. "(We are focusing) on the small-value, small ticket accounts to raise deposits. Jan Dhan is something we have not focused on (previously), which we will do," he said. It can be noted that for nearly



18 months, the credit growth has been racing ahead of the deposit growth, forcing lenders to raise rates and compromising margins, and has also led to fears of banks being forced to temper loan growth. The Indian markets have witnessed an impressive rally in the last few months and the banking system has been complaining about the shift of funds being one of the reasons for slower deposit growth. Tewari on Wednesday said the regulator's moves on higher risk weights on unsecured loans and proposals on higher provisioning for project loans

are a "signal" for tempering deposit growth. He also said if the market demands, the bank will have to raise deposit rates. The MD of the bank said nearly 90 per cent of the funds fuelling credit for the banking system used to come from deposits, and the share is coming down as the banks are forced to go for other instruments like infrastructure bonds. Meanwhile, Tewari said the bank is not seeing any higher delinquency on the micro loans portfolio. He also said there is a scope for the volumes on central bank digital currency to go up.

Family Offices AUM growth projected at 14 per cent over three years: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Family Offices in India projected for 14 per cent growth in Asset Under Management (AUM) and a 5 per cent increase in alternative investments over the next 3 years, a report said. AUM for mid to large-sized family offices in India will grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 14 per cent over the next three years, potentially increasing by 1.5 times, a report by Sundaram Alternates titled 'From Legacy to Leadership' said. This report highlights the significant evolution of family offices as they transition from wealth preservation to a growth-focused mindset. Indian family offices are increasingly embracing alternative investments, with a projected 5 per cent increase in allocations to 18 per cent over the next three years, it said. This aligns with a global trend, where family offices allocate more than 50 per cent of their assets to alternatives, it said.

GAIL says LNG under new pacts to flow from 2026, gets one more ship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned gas utility SGAIL (India) Ltd will start importing LNG under two new contracts from 2026 and has added one more ship to transport the fuel, its Chairman Sandeep Kumar Gupta said on Wednesday. The company had in January this year signed back-to-back deals to import liquefied natural gas (LNG). It first signed deal to import 1 million tonnes of LNG from Dutch energy trader Vitol for 10 years and then another agreement to buy 0.5 million tonne per annum of LNG from UAE's ADNOC-Gas. "As a leading natural gas player, your company

recognises the importance of ensuring supply security. In this direction, we have signed two 10-year LNG supply agreements, starting in 2026: 1 million tonnes from Vitol Asia Pte Ltd, Singapore and 0.5 million tonnes from ADNOC Gas, UAE," he said at the company's annual general meeting. LNG is natural gas, extracted from below the surface, that has been cooled down to liquid form for ease and safety of non-pressurised storage or transport. GAIL will import LNG in cryogenic ships and turn it back into its gaseous state before piping it to users that may include power plants for generating electricity,

fertiliser units for producing crop nutrients or city gas operators for selling to automobiles as CNG or piping to household kitchens for cooking. India imports roughly half of its gas needs as local production is insufficient to meet demand. GAIL operates a 5 million tonnes a year LNG import facility at Dabhol in Maharashtra and has leased space at terminals in Gujarat and Odisha. It is scouting for a 26 per cent stake in a US-based LNG plant to source 1 million tonnes-a-year of LNG for 15 years. "Additionally, GAIL's volume of 4.5 million tonnes per annum is now renewed under LNG SPA signed between Qatar Energy LNG

and Petronet LNG Ltd, with supplies commencing in 2028 for a period of 20 years," he said. GAIL has hired the long-term LNG vessel, GAIL Urja, and has entered into a 14-year time charter party agreement for a newly built LNG carrier. "The time charter for this LNG carrier will begin in early 2025," he said, adding that GAIL's fleet of five LNG carriers will enable the company to meet the requirement of transporting contracted LNG volumes to India. Gupta said GAIL, which is India's largest gas transportation and marketing firm, is also solidifying its position as a

key player in the Indian petrochemical industry by establishing a diverse range of product offerings. "GAIL's 500,000 tonnes PDHPP project at Usar (in Maharashtra), 60,000 polypropylene plant at Pata (Uttar Pradesh), 1.25 million tonnes PTA plant at GMPL, Mangaluru and 50,000 tonnes Isopropyl Alcohol (IPA) Project at Usar will diversify and expand GAIL's existing petrochemical portfolio and provide robust growth in years to come," he said. "GAIL is also exploring the feasibility of setting up a world scale greenfield ethane cracker." It is also working on feasibility of coal gasification

project in a joint venture with Coal India Ltd to produce synthetic natural gas. Stating that GAIL was well-positioned to become a leader in the energy transition, he said the company board has approved the advancement of the net zero carbon emission target by five years from the earlier 2040 to 2035. "Advancing its endeavours to reduce its carbon footprint, GAIL has installed the country's first MW scale green hydrogen electrolyser in Vijaipur, Madhya Pradesh," he said, adding that the firm was also working on setting up of 500 kilo litres per day 1G ethanol plant.

Govt to soon launch scheme to train adolescent girls for non-traditional jobs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government will soon launch a scheme to train 14-18 years old girls in non-traditional job roles, a move aimed at increasing women's participation in the labour force, a top official said on Wednesday. The pilot of the scheme will be launched in the next 2-3 weeks, Secretary in Ministry of Women and Child Development Anil Malik said. The scheme, which is being launched in 27 districts in the pilot phase, will eventually be expanded to cover 218 districts across the country, he said. A non-traditional career is generally defined as a certain

role that has less than 25 per cent of a specific gender, either men or women. As part of the 'Introduction of Special Project for Empowering Adolescent Girls & Women, 14-18 years old girls would be provided training near their schools and homes while they continue their education. The secretary shared that the pilot will be launched in 2-3 weeks under which training in non-traditional job roles will be provided along with digital skilling, digital marketing and general personality orientation. This programme would ultimately lead to higher participation of women in the labour force, he added.

Rupee falls three paise to close at 83.96 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 3 paise to close at 83.96 (provisional) against the American currency on Wednesday, amidst strong dollar demand from importers particularly oil companies. Forex traders said a positive trend in domestic equities, foreign fund inflows and overnight decline in crude oil prices cushioned the downside.



Anuj Choudhary -- Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Choudhary further noted that rise in global risk sentiments amid dovish Fed speak and rising expectations of a rate cut by the US Fed in September may support the rupee. "Traders may remain cautious ahead of US GDP and core personal consumption expenditures (PCE) data from the US this week. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading

0.36 per cent higher at 100.91. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.93 per cent to USD 78.81 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex rose 73.80 points, or 0.09 per cent, to close at 81,785.56 points. The Nifty closed 34.60 points, or 0.14 per cent, up at 25,052.35 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Tuesday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 1,503.76 crore, according to exchange data.

Fast cross-border payments to make it difficult to check money laundering, terror funding: Fed official

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Days after RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das sought to bring greater efficiency to trans-border transactions, a senior US Fed official on Wednesday said that frictionless cross-border payments will make it difficult to check money laundering and terror funding. Speaking at the Global Fintech Fest 2024 here, Christopher J Waller, a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, made it clear that "not all frictions that slow payments down are bad". The US Fed official overseeing payment systems said slowing down the speed at which payments are cleared and settled helps banks prevent money laundering and counter the financing of terrorism, detect fraud, and recover fraudulent or misdirected cross-border payments. He said unless new solutions are found, interlinking fast payment systems "might



increase" the risk-management burden for banks that participate in them. Acknowledging that consumers and businesses want cheaper and faster cross-border payments, Waller expressed his reservations. "I am not entirely convinced that interlinking arrangements will necessarily deliver," he said. Delivering a lecture in India's tech capital Bengaluru on Monday, Das advocated a faster interlinking of domestic payment systems to overcome the concerns of high costs and delays. "With the emergence of Fast

Payment Systems across countries and experimentation around CBDC, new possibilities are opening up to bring in greater efficiency to cross-border payments. Maximum efficiency gains in such initiatives would come from ensuring inter-operability as a key design element," Das had said. Waller, however, said that it may not be easier. "There is no silver bullet that increases speed and efficiency without tradeoffs," he added. He said certain frictions are built "purposely" into the global payment system for compliance and risk-

management reasons. The professor of economics said legal, compliance and operational considerations will have to be looked at, along with governance, oversight, data privacy and settlement arrangements when thinking about interlinking. He said the right incentives for the sender in a cross-border payment is essential, and also conceded that it exists in remittances. However, these are very small value transactions, he said, wondering whether the senders need to be incentivised at all. "We need to ask ourselves whether banks would find a central bank interlinking service more effective than their existing arrangements for cross-border payments, and if they would actually use it," Waller said. He also made it clear that having strong domestic networks is a necessity before one can embark on interlinking and added that the US Fed's system will take two years to be ready.

Gold prices remain steady; silver declines ₹400



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices remained flat at Rs 74,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday in scattered deals even as it weakened in the overseas markets. Silver prices, however, declined Rs 400 to Rs 87,800 per kilogram. It had ended at Rs 88,200 per kg in the previous session on Tuesday. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also ruled flat at Rs 74,000 per 10 grams. Traders attributed the fall in silver price due to poor offtake by industrial units and global influences.

In the international markets, comex gold is trading at USD 2,542.20 per ounce, down USD 10.70 per ounce or 0.42 per cent. "Gold prices were slightly lower during European trading hours on Wednesday, due to a rebound in the US dollar," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. According to Kaynat Chainwala, AVP-Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, comex gold is trading above USD 2,500 per ounce, supported by the FOMC meeting minutes, which reinforced expectations of a September rate cut. Rising geopolitical tensions, particularly the escalating Israel-Hezbollah conflict, also bolstered gold prices as a safe-haven asset, Chainwala said. Silver was also quoting lower at USD 29.93 per ounce in the global markets.

Shipping Ministry approves wage structure revision for workers of major ports

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has approved wage structure revision for workers at major ports, an official statement said on Wednesday. According to the statement, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Bipartite Wage Negotiation Committee (BWNC) and the Indian Port Association (IPA), averting an indefinite strike that was set to disrupt operations across 12 major ports in India. The MoU facilitates the revision of the wage structure and addresses other service conditions, including

potential anomalies, the ministry said. Additionally, the statement said, a special allowance of Rs 500 per month will be provided to working employees during the operative period of the settlement, from January 1, 2022, until December 31, 2026, or until the date of the employee's superannuation, whichever comes first. Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said the timely resolution of these issues reflects MoPSWs commitment to fostering a harmonious and productive working environment across all Indian ports.

A draft committee meeting, scheduled to convene on August 28, 2024, will prepare the settlement within ten days. This committee will include one representative from each federation as well as management representatives appointed by the IPA Chairman. "The management assured that the BWNC proceedings will be concluded, with the final settlement reached within 15 days," the statement said, adding that considering this development, the six federations have unanimously decided to defer the strike previously planned for August 28, 2024.

The total transaction volume on UPI is expected to increase to 439 billion by 2028-29 from about 131 billion in the last financial year and account for 91 per cent of overall retail digital payments, said a PwC India Report. The report titled "The Indian Payments Handbook -- 2024-29" also said India's digital payments landscape has witnessed remarkable growth over the past eight years and the industry is projected to expand more than three times in volume, from 159 billion transactions in 2023-24 to 481 billion by 2028-29. In terms of value of payment transactions, the market

UPI transaction volume expected to rise to 439 bn by FY29: PwC India report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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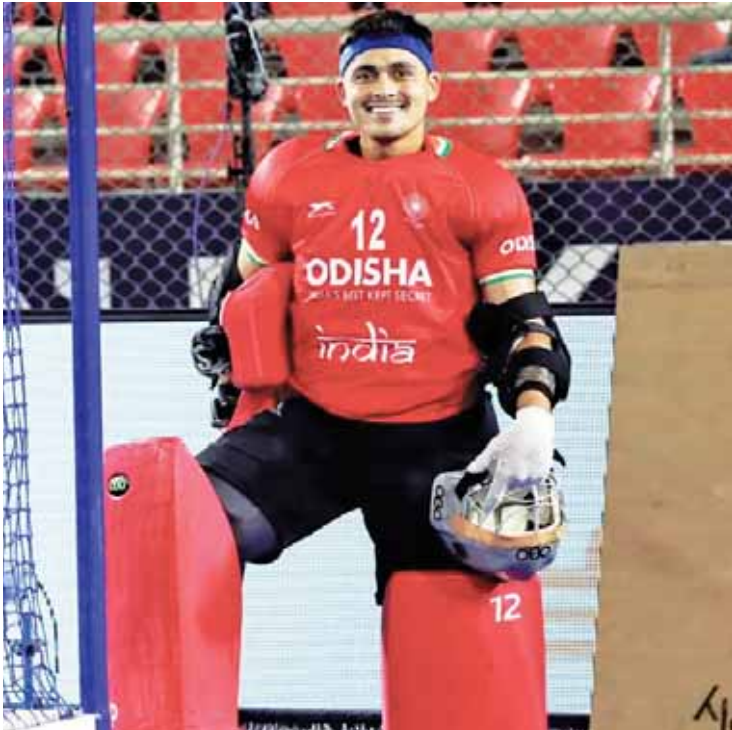
growth is expected to double, from Rs 265 lakh crore to Rs 593 lakh crore over the same period. The PwC India report said UPI continues its remarkable growth trajectory with a year-on-year growth in transaction volume of 57 per cent, it said. "In FY 2023-24, the total transaction volume was slightly over 131 billion and is

expected to grow to 439 billion by 2028-29. UPI now accounts for over 80 per cent of the overall retail digital payments in India and is expected to contribute to 91 per cent by 2028-29," the report said. It further said credit cards have witnessed a formidable growth in 2023-24 with the industry adding more than 16 million new ones. With the addition of new cards, the industry has also seen 22 per cent and 28 per cent surge in transactional volume and value, respectively. On the other hand, debit cards have seen a dip in both transactions volume and value owing to the shift in preferences by cardholders.

PATHAK NAMED INDIA GOALKEEPER IN ASIAN CHAMPIONS TROPHY SQUAD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Krishan Bahadur Pathak, on expected lines, was on Wednesday named the main goalkeeper after the retirement of PR Sreejesh in the Harmanpreet Singh-led 18-member Indian team for the upcoming Asian Champions Trophy.

standby and will look to prove his credentials alongside the brilliant Harmanpreet. A power-packed drag-flicker, Jugraj has proven his worth in the limited opportunities he got in the Pro League, and it will be up to him to cement his place in the side. Arajjeet Singh Hundal is the third drag-flicker in the team. The defence will be manned by Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Harmanpreet Singh, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay and Sumit. Raj Kumar Pal, Nilakanta Sharma, Manpreet Singh, and Mohammed Raheel will form the midfield, while a young forwardline featuring Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Hundal, junior India captain Uttam Singh, and debutant Gurjot Singh will lead the attack. Ten players from the Paris Olympics bronze medal-winning squad are part of this team. "This is an important campaign for us to ensure we build on our ranking points. The team has just returned to the camp after all the celebrations following our performance in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games," chief coach Craig Fulton said in a Hockey India statement. "The past few weeks have truly been incredible with all the love and



adulation for the team and we hope this support will continue all through our future campaigns. "The new Olympic cycle for us begins with the Asian Champions Trophy and we are ready for the challenge. "While we have rested a few players

from the squad that played in Paris, we have brought in a few youngsters who have done well in training and have earned the opportunity to play in Asian Champions Trophy. "We will have Gurjot making his international debut, and I believe this is a great opportunity for youngsters who have received a call-up to shine," Fulton added. The Indian team will begin its campaign against China on September 8, followed by a match against Japan the next day. After a day's rest, India will take on Malaysia on September 11 and play Korea the next day. Then, the Indian side will take on arch-rivals Pakistan on September 14. The semi-finals and final are slated on September 16 and 17 respectively.

SQUAD:
Goalkeepers: Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Suraj Karkera; **Defenders:** Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Harmanpreet Singh (c), Jugraj Singh, Sanjay, Sumit; **Midfielders:** Raj Kumar Pal, Nilakanta Sharma, Vivek Sagar Prasad (VC), Manpreet Singh, Mohammed. Raheel Mouseen; **Forwards:** Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Arajjeet Singh Hundal, Uttam Singh, Gurjot Singh.



SINQUEFIELD CUP Gukesh draws with Giri; Praggnanandhaa holds Caruana

PTI ■ SAINT LOUIS (USA)
India's Grandmasters D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa played out their eighth draw in as many games at the Sinquefield Cup, which is a part of the Grand Chess Tour. While World Championship challenger Gukesh signed peace with Anish Giri of Holland in just 23 moves, Praggnanandhaa too followed suit and drew with local favourite Fabiano Caruana in 28 moves. With all the games ending in draws in the eighth round, Alireza Firouzja of France won the Grand Chess Tour with one round to spare here and became entitled to a USD 100,000 bonus after his successful stint throughout. In the eighth round, Firouzja played out the longest game that also ended peacefully after 80 moves against Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi. In the two other games of the day in the ten-player double round-robin tournament, Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan split the point with Ding Liren of China and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France drew with Wesley So of United States. Alireza took his tally to an unassailable 5.5 points out of eight games and Caruana is the only player who can catch him on points table provided Alireza loses his final bout against Praggnanandhaa and

AP ■ SAO PAULO (BRAZIL)

Uruguayan soccer player Juan Izquierdo died Tuesday at a hospital in Brazil five days after collapsing during a game at Sao Paulo. He was 27. Hospital Albert Einstein in Sao Paulo said in a statement that the Nacional defender died at 9:38 p.m. Local time following "cardiorespiratory arrest associated with his cardiac arrhythmia." Izquierdo was taken to the hospital after he collapsed late in a Copa Libertadores soccer match between Nacional and Sao Paulo at the Brazilian city's Morumbi Stadium last Thursday. The Uruguayan club posted a statement on social media saying Izquierdo's death is felt "in deep pain and impact in our hearts" and "all Nacional is in grief for his irreplaceable loss." South American soccer's governing body also posted a tribute. CONMEBOL president Alejandro

Uruguayan soccer player Juan has died, days after collapsing during a game in Brazil

Dominguez said he's "deeply sorry about the early departure of Juan Izquierdo. "South American soccer is in mourning," he said. Other federations, including Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina, also expressed their condolences. In a statement Monday, doctors at the hospital said Izquierdo was put into neurological critical care because of increased intracranial pressure. He had been on a ventilator since Sunday. Uruguayan media said Izquierdo's parents and Nacional executives were at the hospital in Sao Paulo. Izquierdo was married and had two children - the youngest, a boy, was born earlier in August.



Uruguayan national team players were among those expressing their condolences. "Pain, sadness, it is hard to explain," Inter Miami striker Luis Suárez said. "May he rest

in peace. I wish a lot of strength for his family and friends." Uruguay's first- and second-division soccer leagues were postponed last weekend due to concerns over Izquierdo's health. Sao Paulo players wore a shirt in support of the Uruguayan footballer before the team's 2-1 Brazilian league win against Vitoria on Sunday. The Brazilian club also posted a message after Izquierdo's death. "We had days of prayers, union and hope, and today we are in deep sadness with the news of the death of Juan Izquierdo," Sao Paulo's club statement said. "Our condolences to family, friends, teammates, Nacional fans and all the Uruguayan people in this moment of grief." Izquierdo's professional career began in 2018 at local club Cerro. He joined Peñarol the following year, but didn't get much playing time. "Peñarol is deeply sorry about the passing of Juan Manuel

Izquierdo. We express our heartfelt condolences and we embrace his family, his friends and Nacional in this moment of so much pain," Peñarol said in its social media channels. After leaving Peñarol, Izquierdo moved to Montevideo Wanderers. His athletic form and sharp tackles caught the attention of Mexico's San Luis in 2021, but he quickly returned to the Montevideo Wanderers. Izquierdo was signed by Nacional in 2022, played one match and then was transferred to the local Liverpool club. The defender was one of Liverpool's best players in the campaign that led to Uruguay's league title in 2023, the club's first in more than a century. Izquierdo returned to Nacional this year and was vying for a position in the starting lineup with veteran Sebastián Coates, who played for Uruguay's national team. He played 23 matches this year and scored one goal.

US OPEN 2024

Naomi gets her first top 10 win in more than four years by defeating Ostapenko

AP ■ NEW YORK
A year ago, still on maternity leave and still unsure when she would play elite tennis again, Naomi Osaka visited the U.S. Open to appear with Michael Phelps for a discussion about mental health. While at the site, she sat in the stands to watch one of Coco Gauff's matches. Osaka also already was thinking about being back on a court at Flushing Meadows, so much so that she was pondering what she might want to wear to compete. And there she was Tuesday at Louis Armstrong Stadium, overpowering No. 10 seed Jelena Ostapenko 6-3, 6-2 while decked out, from her visor to her dress to the bows on her back and attached to her shoes, in lime green - the color of this "Brat" summer, as it happens (IYKYK) - and playing very much like a two-time champion at the place and a former No. 1-ranked star. "I feel like being able to be a part of (designing) my tennis outfits gives me, I would say, a different strength, especially the U.S. Open outfits. I feel like they are a little bit more flamboyant. When I was putting on my outfit today, I was, like, Ah, I hope this isn't too much," Osaka said with a smile. "Because I had the tutu, and then I had the bow jacket and it was green. I feel like everyone was staring at me." Another player asked for a photo, Osaka said, adding: "I hope it was a positive picture (and) it wasn't, like, Oh, my God, look at her. For me, when I put on the outfit, it's almost like a super suit, so I try to channel that." Did that well enough Tuesday to register her first victory against a top-10 opponent in more than four years. Osaka claimed titles in New



York in 2018 and 2020, along with a pair of trophies at the Australian Open in 2019 and 2021, and her matchup against 2017 French Open champion Ostapenko marked the first time two past major champs faced off in the opening round at the U.S. Open since Serena Williams defeated Maria Sharapova five years ago. Another such contest came Tuesday night, when 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin beat 2021 U.S. Open winner Emma Raducanu 6-1, 3-6, 6-4. "Having two wins here means a lot, and I think for me, I've been struggling with confidence throughout the year," said Osaka, who returned to action at the Australian Open in January, her first Grand Slam appearance in nearly 1 1/2 years because of mental health breaks and time away to have a baby. "This time now forces me to look in the mirror and say, Hey, you've done really well here. There's no reason why you can't do well again." How's this for doing well? Osaka did not make a single unforced error in the first set and finished with only five, 16 fewer than Ostapenko. "I do remember thinking, I need to win this match so I can wear my other color. That was very important to me," said Osaka, who is ranked 88th and

Evans outlasts Khachanov over 5 hours, 35 minutes in match that sets US Open record for length

AP ■ NEW YORK
A few hours into a match that eventually set a U.S. Open record for length, Dan Evans glanced over at the scoreboard. Not to see how he was doing, but to clarify exactly how long he had been playing. "In the fourth set, I had to check the set to see what set we were in," Evans said. "I wasn't entirely sure what set we were in." More than an hour later, Evans won the

longest match at the U.S. Open since tiebreakers were introduced in 1970, beating Karen Khachanov 6-7 (6), 7-6 (2), 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-4 on Tuesday in 5 hours, 35 minutes. Evans trailed 4-0 in the fifth set before running off the final six games. The final point, fittingly, was a marathon 22-shot rally, with Evans on the defensive for much of the point before hitting a hard shot to the corner that set No. 23-seeded Khachanov couldn't get back over the net with his backhand. The previous record was 5 hours, 26



minutes, when Stefan Edberg beat Michael Chang in a five-setter in the 1992 semifinals. "I was hurting all over, really," said the

34-year-old Evans, who was grabbing at his lower legs and resting his hands on his knees in the final set. "I don't think I've played five hours, that long, in a day, ever - in two sessions, never mind in one. I was actually thinking that on the court. I've never practiced two hours, two hours. It's normally an hour and a half." Evans improved to 5-0 against Khachanov, a semifinalist at the 2022 U.S. Open, by emerging in a match in which the sets lasted 68, 67, 72, 67 and 61 minutes.

Jannik starts poorly at US Open but wins his first match since his steroids case emerged

AP ■ NEW YORK
If there were any boos directed Jannik Sinner's way at the U.S. Open, they were imperceptible amid the polite applause from the sparse crowd at Arthur Ashe Stadium when he was introduced Tuesday before the No. 1-ranked man's first match since his doping case emerged a week ago. After a sloppy and slow opening set, Sinner pulled away for a 2-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-2 victory against Mackie McDonald of the United States to reach the second round at Flushing Meadows. "The response from fans, I feel it has been great. Also throughout, when the news came out, in the practice sessions, there was a lot of support, which I'm very glad and happy about," Sinner said. "It is still a little bit not easy. You have to go through, day by day." There were no apparent signs in the stands or disparaging shouts making reference to what no one knew about for



months: Sinner tested positive twice for trace amounts of the anabolic steroid Clostebol in an eight-day span in March. Nothing was announced publicly until last week, when word came that the 23-year-old Italian was docked prize money and ranking points from the tournament where the first result appeared, but he escaped a suspension because it was ruled he was not at fault and the drug entered his system unintentionally, through a massage from his physiotherapist.

2021 champion Emma loses in first round to Sofia

AP ■ NEW YORK
Emma Raducanu wiped away tears at her post-match news conference after losing to Sofia Kenin 6-1, 3-6, 6-4 in the first round of the U.S. Open, keeping the 2021 champion winless at the tournament since her title. "I feel down. I feel sad," Raducanu said, pausing to find her words. "Obviously this is a tournament I really want to do well in." Three years ago, Britain's Raducanu was 18 at the U.S. Open when she became the first qualifier to claim any Grand Slam singles championship. She was eliminated in the first round by Alizé Cornet in 2022, then missed the trip to Flushing Meadows last year after having surgery on both wrists and an ankle. This time, Raducanu was outplayed down the stretch by Kenin, an American who won the Australian Open in 2020. "I'm mentally super tough, and I feel like that's something that I've always had," said Kenin, who had lost six of her past seven matches heading into the



U.S. Open. "I had confidence going into the match today, and of course I believed I could win." Kenin finished with 45 winners, nearly twice as many as Raducanu's 24. "She's a Slam champion for a reason. ... Credit to her," said Raducanu, who hadn't played a match on tour since a loss in Washington on Aug. 2. The lack of action might have been a mistake but was a result of a "collective" decision by her team, Raducanu said. Her next event will be the Korea Open, which starts in Seoul on Sept. 16.

KOHLI, JAISWAL MOVE UP IN TEST RANKINGS, ROHIT DROPS TO 6TH



PTI ■ DUBAI
Senior India batter Virat Kohli moved up two rungs to eighth place while his captain Rohit Sharma dropped a spot to sixth in the latest ICC Test rankings released here on Wednesday. Joining Rohit and Kohli in the top 10 is young Yashasvi Jaiswal, who has moved up a spot to seventh. Veteran England batter Joe Root maintained his place as the top ranked Test batter in the world following their success in the opening Test

against Sri Lanka in Manchester. But Root's teammate Harry Brook has made a massive jump on the back of scores of 56 and 32 during that Old Trafford contest. The 25-year-old has risen three places to fourth overall, leaping past Pakistan's Babar Azam, Australia's Steve Smith and Rohit. Babar has dropped a whopping six places to fall from shared third to ninth following a rare failure in the first innings of Pakistan's Test against Bangladesh in

Rawalpindi. But teammate Mohammad Rizwan gained seven spots, achieving a new career-high rating by moving inside the top 10 at a shared 10th following his century in the same match. Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim has achieved a career-high rating as he climbed seven spots to move to 17th. Seasoned India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin continues to hold the top spot among bowlers while pacer Jasprit Bumrah and left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja have maintained their third and

seventh spots respectively. England seamer Chris Woakes, who is up four rungs to 16th, and Sri Lanka's Asitha Fernando (up 10 spots to 17th) have gained some ground while Pakistan's right-arm pacer Naseem Shah (up four spots to 33rd) and England's Gus Atkinson (up four places to 42nd) have attained career-best ratings following good returns from their recent appearances. Among all-rounders, Jadeja and Ashwin continue to occupy the top two spots while Axar Patel is ranked sixth.

LLC returns with Season 3 Takes legendary cricketers to Kashmir after nearly 40 years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Legends League Cricket, featuring retired swashbucklers like Shikhar Dawan and Dinesh Karthik among others, will return for a third season on September 20, criss-crossing Jodhpur, Surat, and Jammu before finally bringing the high-profile cricketers to Srinagar after close to 40 years. The league will kick off at the Barkatullah Khan Stadium in Jodhpur on September 20. A total of 25 matches will be played among six teams and the last two sides standing will play the final on October 16. The franchise-based tournament, which features a pool of over 200 players, will have its final at the Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar. "Legends League Cricket is back for another season and we are very excited to also be playing in Kashmir this season. This is a huge opportunity for the people of Kashmir to come to the stadium and



watch live cricketing action for the first time in almost 40 years," said Raman Raheja, Co-Founder, Legends League Cricket. "It also presents a unique opportunity for the cricketers to experience the beauty of Kashmir and enjoy the hospitality and

love of the wonderful people of Srinagar." The organisers stated that the league attracted a massive audience of 180 million across India during the previous season, spanning 19 matches. "With an extended schedule and a star-studded lineup, including the recently retired Dhawan and Karthik, the upcoming season is poised to surpass previous records," the organisers stated. In the previous edition held in India, former international stalwarts such as Suresh Raina, Aaron Finch, Martin Guttill, current India head coach Gautam Gambhir, Chris Gayle, Hashim Amla, Ross Taylor, and many others played alongside 110 other legendary cricketers. The league will kick off in Jodhpur and then make its way to the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium in Surat. The third leg will be played at the Maulana Azad Stadium, Jammu. The players' auction for the event will be held here on Thursday.

Dawid Malan, former top-ranked T20 batter, retires from England cricket

AP ■ LONDON

Dawid Malan, the former top-ranked T20 batter who scored centuries for England in all formats, has announced his retirement from the international arena. The 36-year-old Malan told British newspaper The Times of London that he exceeded expectations with his success in the white-ball game but was disappointed that he couldn't

handle the intensity of Test cricket. Malan, a top-order batter, played 22 Tests as well as 30 ODIs and 62 T20 internationals. It was in the T20 game where he excelled, becoming No. 1 in the batting rankings in 2020 and winning the T20 World Cup in 2022. Malan was left out of the squad for the upcoming white-ball series against Australia and hasn't played for England in any format since the 50-over



World Cup last year. It was his inability to forge a career as a Test batter that leaves him with most regrets. "I took all three formats extremely seriously but the intensity of test cricket was something else - five days plus the days building up," Malan told the Times. "I'm a big trainer; I love hitting lots of balls and I'd train hard in the build-up, and then the days were long and intense. You can't switch off. "I found it very mentally draining, especially the long test series that I played, where my performances dropped off from the third or fourth test onwards.

Impact Player rule gives little more value for strategy and makes game fairer: Ashwin



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Seasoned India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin feels that the IPL's 'Impact Player' rule has made the game fairer and added "value for strategy" in the event. Senior India players like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma have been critical of the rule as they feel it holds back development of Indian all-rounders and upsets the balance between bat and ball. However, Ashwin feels the rule, introduced in the 2023 season which allows all IPL teams to substitute a player -- batter or bowler -- during their respective innings as per the demands of the match, makes the game fairer. "Why I think the Impact Player rule is not so bad is because it gives a little more

value for strategy," 'ESPNcricinfo' quoted Ashwin as saying on former India captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth's YouTube show, which is in Tamil. "The other side of that argument is it doesn't encourage all-rounders. But no one is stopping them. In this generation, they don't do it (batters bowling and vice-versa). "It's not like they're discouraged because of the Impact Player rule. Look at Venkatesh Iyer, he's currently rocking for Lancashire. There's an opportunity for innovation and it makes the game fairer," Ashwin added. The 37-year-old backed his stance by citing the Qualifier 2 match in which Sunrisers Hyderabad replaced opener Travis Head with spinner

Shahbaz Ahmed against Rajasthan Royals at this year's IPL. Ahmed went on to become the player of the match, claiming three wickets including Ashwin's. "Sunrisers brought in Shahbaz Ahmed as an Impact Player (after hitting 175 for 9 batting first). He went on to become a match-winner. Ashwin argued that the rule can play a significant role in balancing matches when there is dew. "When dew has the potential to make games one-sided, teams bowling second get an extra option as a counter. If you're batting second, you can tactically make a substitution by off-loading the extra bowler for a batter," he said. "Games are tighter, an extra player is getting to play. Barring Kolkata or Mumbai, where scores skyrocketed, they haven't been a drastic change elsewhere. Like at Punjab Kings' home venue (Mullanpur), they were all 160-170 games." On the other hand, the rule has helped several players advance in their careers, even earning spots in the national team, reckoned Ashwin. "Shahbaz Ahmed, Shivam Dube most importantly, Dhruv Jurel... If not for the Impact Player rule, he may have never gotten the chance. So the emergence of a lot of players has happened. I'm not saying that's the only way for players to emerge, but it's not so bad," he said.

Five-wicket burst from Aayush secures Purani Dilli 6's win over North Delhi Strikers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Pacer Aayush Thakur's five-wicket haul powered Purani Dilli 6 to a 20-run win over North Delhi Strikers at the Delhi Premier League here. Aayush (5/27) wreaked havoc, blowing away NDS's top-order as they were restricted for 172/7 in their chase of 193. Aayush struck in his first over dismissing opener Sarthak Ranjan for a duck. He returned to get rid of Yash Dabas in the third over followed by Kshitij Sharma in the fifth over. Opener Vaibhav Kandpal (57) and Yajas Sharma (41) stitched a 55-run partnership for the fourth wicket and looked on course to chase the target but the latter was run out.



Kandpal along with Vaibhav Rawal then took on the responsibility of chasing the target. The duo started finding boundaries at regular intervals keeping the run rate in their control.

However, Purani Dilli 6 got back in the game as Rawal was run out at a crucial time leaving NDS needing 58 runs off 32 balls. But Aayush swung into action get the key wicket of Kandpal. Aayush completed his five-wicket haul, dismissing Pranshu for a duck. Earlier, Purani Dilli 6 captain Arpit Rana (42) and Sanat Sangwan (47) put up a 94-run opening stand. With Rana back in the pavilion, Sangwan was next to take the long walk back as he was dismissed by Manan Bahadur. Arnav Bugga (39) and Lalit Yadav (9) stitched a 38-run partnership before Mayank Gusain blazed away to 40 off just 12 balls with the help of one boundary and five sixes to provide the final flourish.

Zaheer Khan set to join LSG as team mentor

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Lucknow Super Giants are set to appoint former India speedster Zaheer Khan as their mentor ahead of the IPL mega auction. The appointment marks the return of the 45-year-old left-arm pacer to the IPL fold after two years, having been associated with five-time champions Mumbai Indians from 2018-2022. A formal unveiling is scheduled at the RPSG Group Headquarters here on Wednesday. "Zaheer has been appointed as team mentor and the unveiling will happen later today," sources told PTI. Zaheer will thus take up the role left vacant by Gautam Gambhir last year when he went to join his former franchise Kolkata Knight Riders and guided them to the IPL title in 2024. Gambhir is now the Indian head coach.

Will ensure Test cricket remains priority as it forms bedrock of game: ICC chairman Jay Shah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Newly-elected ICC Chairman Jay Shah says he will look to ensure that Test cricket forms the "bedrock" of the game in his tenure during which he will also try to "dismantle barriers that have hindered cricket's progress". The 35-year-old will relinquish his current position of BCCI secretary to succeed incumbent Greg Barclay on December 1 as the youngest ICC Chairman for a term of two years. "While the T20 is a naturally exciting format, it is equally important that Test cricket remains a priority for everyone

as it forms the bedrock of our game," Shah said in a statement issued by the BCCI on Tuesday. "We must see to it that cricketers are driven to longer format and our efforts will be channelised towards this goal," he added. Shah said he would also like to work towards setting up a separate program for talent search. He emphasised on lifting the standard of the game across the globe. "I want to assure you that I will do everything possible to elevate the standard of our game across the globe. As I step into this pivotal role, I am resolutely committed to meeting your high

expectations and dedicating myself to the beautiful game of cricket," he said. Shah, who is the son of union home minister Amit Shah, will relinquish his position as the BCCI secretary at the board's Annual General Meeting likely to be held towards the end of next month or in October.

West Indies beat South Africa by 8 wickets in 3rd T20, sweep series 3-0

AP ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

Nicholas Pooran blasted 35 runs from 13 balls to lead the West Indies to an eight-wicket win over South Africa in the rain-shortened third Twenty20 cricket international, securing a 3-0 series sweep. Rain delayed the start of play by an hour and returned in the fifth over of the South Africa innings, reducing the match to 13 overs per innings. South Africa was 23-0 when the rain started and Tristan Stubbs dashed 40 from 15 balls to help the visitors post 108-4 after a slow start. Stubbs hit five fours and three sixes for 38 runs from boundaries. He finished the series with 144 runs at a strike-rate of 178. Pooran almost matched him, hitting two fours and four sixes. The West Indies was 60-2 when Pooran was out to the fifth ball of the fourth over and coasted to victory with 22 balls remaining.



Shai Hope made an unbeaten 42 from 24 balls and Shimron Hetmeyer scored 31 from 17 deliveries in an unbroken partnership of 56 for the third wicket. "Obviously coming out on top is what we wanted. We wanted to win the series 3-0," West Indies captain Roston Chase said in a television

interview. "Before the match, at the team meeting after everyone had spoken, I just asked the boys to give me the victory because you want to start well and I just want to thank the guys for the support and the way they played with their heart today." No overs were lost when rain delayed the toss. The West

Indies eventually won the toss and chose to bowl, with an eye on the threat of further rain. South Africa began cautiously in humid conditions and the first boundary of its innings didn't come until the fourth over, hit by Ryan Rickelton from the bowling of Matthew Forde. The first six of the innings came from the next ball. The rain returned and forced the players from the field for 70 minutes, leaving South Africa on the back foot when it resumed. Reeza Hendricks was out three balls after the resumption, but that brought Stubbs to the crease and he did his best to blast South Africa to a competitive total. Stubbs hit 6, 4, 6 from consecutive balls in the 11th over bowled by Obed McCoy and 4, 6, 4 in the final over bowled by Forde. He was out with two balls left in the innings. Pooran then blasted the West Indies into an winning

position with his brilliant 13-ball cameo. He finished with a strike rate of 269. Hope hit four sixes in his innings and Hetmeyer hit four fours and a six as the West Indies completed a comprehensive win. The West Indies beat South Africa 3-0 in a Twenty20 series prior to this year's T20 World Cup, which it co-hosted with the United States, and now has swept South Africa again. But in between, South Africa eliminated the West Indies from the World Cup. "It was a tough one today. Obviously it was stop-start with the rain which hurt us quite a bit," South Africa captain Aiden Markram said. "Conditions changed quite a bit throughout the game as well. "I think we got the tougher of the conditions. That being said I think there are several areas we can improve on as a team to play better cricket in tough conditions.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA E-mail: ipwd_sng@yahoo.co.in
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SUNDARGARH (R&B) DIVISION, SUNDARGARH
"e"-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No - SE-R&B-SNG-17 OF 2024-25
Letter No. 4855Date. 27.08.2024

1.	The Superintending Engineer, Sundargarh (R&B) Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha inviting percentage rate bid in Double cover system on ON-LINE mode from eligible contractors with valid licenses for execution of Road work as detailed in DTCN.		
2.	Nature of Work	:-	Road work
3.	No. of works.	:-	01 (One) No
4.	Tender Cost	:-	Rs.10,000/-
5.	Class of Contractor	:-	B
6.	Availability of bid document in the website	:-	From 10:00 A.M. Date:-30.08.2024 to 05:00 P.M Date:-10.09.2024
7.	Date of opening of Bid	:-	11:00A.M. On Dt.11.09.2024
8.	The bidders have to participate in ON-LINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website (https://tendersodisha.gov.in). Any addendum /corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.		

OIPR-34043/11/0001/2425 Additional Chief Engineer Sundargarh (R&B) Division

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, BARGARH IRRIGATION DIVISION, BARGARH
e-Procurement Notice No.CDT-01 /2024-25 dt.22.08.2024
Bid Identification No. CDT-01 (01)/2024-25 to CDT-01 (08)/2024-25 (Online)

1.	Nature of work	:-	Improvement of canal.
2.	No. of works	:-	08 (Eight) Nos.
3.	Class of Contractor	:-	D and C class
4.	Bid Identification No.	:-	CDT-01 (01-08)/2024-25
5.	Estimated Cost	:-	Rs.5.45 Lakhs to Rs.11.75 Lakhs (Approx)
6.	Period of completion	:-	30 days excluding canal opening period and 45 days excluding canal opening period
7.	Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal	:-	Dt.29.08.2024 at 10:00 A.M to Dt.10.09.2024 up to 05:00 P.M.
8.	Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal	:-	Dt.10.09.2024 up to 05:00 P.M.
9.	Date of opening of Bid	:-	Dt.11.09.2024 at 11:00 A.M.
10.	Name and Address of the Officer	:-	Superintending Engineer, Bargarh Irrigation Division, Bargarh - 758028 email id: - eecanalbgh11@gmail.com

Procurement Officer	Name of the Division	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender on-line for bidding	Last date & time of seeking of clarification	Date & time of opening of tender	Date, Time & place of lottery if required
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Superintending Engineer, Bargarh Irrigation Division, Bargarh	Bargarh Irrigation Division, Bargarh	CDT-01 (01)/2024-25 to CDT-01 (08)/2024-25 (online)	Dt.29.08.2024 at 10:00 A.M	Dt.10.09.2024 up to 05:00 P.M.	Dt.05.09.2024 up to 01:00 P.M.	Dt.13.09.2024 at 11:00 A.M. in the O/o the S.E., Bargarh Irrigation Division, Bargarh

1. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation / erratum of tender can also be seen in the said website.
2. Further details can be seen from Government website <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>

OIPR-32461/11/0001/2425 Superintending Engineer Bargarh Irrigation Division, Bargarh